

DUNGEON VAULT MAGAZINE

The Scalding Duchy



No. 49



HIGH RESOLUTION MAPS
VTT - ROLL20 MAPS





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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Credits	2	The Voidwalker's Abode23
		<i>Level 2-3 Dungeon</i>	
Table of Contents	3		
The Scalding Duchy	5	Coppersand Hold . . . . .	.28
<i>Level 1-4 Region</i>		<i>Level 2 Dungeon</i>	
Minsteth Sand.	8	The Silver Bastion . . . . .	.31
<i>Level 1-2 Settlement</i>		<i>Level 2-3 Dungeon</i>	
Desert Creatures . . . . .	.11	House of Gold . . . . .	.34
		<i>Level 3-4 Dungeon</i>	
Traversing the Desert . . . . .	.13	The Radiant Sepulcher. . . . .	.38
		<i>Level 4 Dungeon</i>	
The Way of the Desert . . . . .	.14	Thank You . . . . .	.42
<i>Level 2 Region</i>		Licensing . . . . .	.43
Darkmoor. . . . .	.17		
<i>Level 2-3 Settlement</i>			
Deadly Mirage. . . . .	.21		
<i>Brochure Adventure</i>			



Goblin Conquerors

From distant peaks where frost doth cling,
The goblins march'd 'neath night's dark wing,
Led by Chieftain Minsteth, fierce and bold.

Through crag and vale, o'er barren steppes,
They trod the path where none dare'd crept,
To the fabled Scalding Duchy, vast and wide,
A desert's maw, where all shadows bide.

The sands did seethe 'neath noon's cruel glare,
With iron will and bloodied blade,
They carved a realm where night-shades fade.

In Radiant Sepulcher, deep and dread,
They laid their chieftain's battle-wed,
'Neath walls aglow with death's pale light,
He slumbers now, in endless night.

No cry is heard, no chant, no call,
For Minsteth waits beyond the pall,
In hallow'd halls where none may tread,
Save those who join the silent dead.

THE SCALDING DUCHY

“Strength is not in the might of our arms, but in the endurance of our spirit. In the heart of the desert, reflected in the sand, we shall find our true selves.”

Minsteth, the Bold

The Scalding Duchy, a vast expanse of parched land ruled by goblins, is a territory known for its relentless sun and shifting sands. This immense desert, stretching endlessly to the east, is dotted with ancient and forgotten temples buried deep beneath the ever-shifting dunes. The western border of the duchy is lapped by the Yellow Sea, while the Tourmaline River snakes through the land, bringing life to the scattered goblin towns and cities clinging to its banks. These settlements, resilient and resourceful, thrive despite the harsh conditions, their very survival tied intrinsically to the river’s precious waters.

THE WILL OF THE DESERT GODS

THE SCALDING DUCHY faces a dire crisis. The already brutal temperatures of the desert threaten to rise to levels that even the local hardy goblins cannot endure. The duchy’s existence hinges on maintaining the delicate balance of their harsh environment, a balance that is regulated by ancient rituals performed at four sacred temples: the Coppersand Hold, the Silver Bastion, the House of Gold, and the Radiant Sepulcher. These temples, steeped in mystery and power, are the key to appeasing the gods of the sand and ensuring the desert remains survivable. Alas, reaching them is no easy task.

THE RITUALS

PERFORMING THE ANCIENT rituals at all four temples shall restore the balance, or so the goblins hope. The rituals, shrouded in mystery and lost to time, are meant to prevent their beloved desert from becoming an uninhabitable furnace. For this, the goblins welcome the help of outsiders and offer hefty bounties for this job.

ADVENTURE HOOK

► **The Quest.** The Scalding Duchy is in turmoil as rising temperatures threaten to render the territory uninhabitable. The goblin duke, Grix, the Cunning, looks for heroes who can reach the temples and perform the rituals. The fate of the desert rests in their hands. The reward offered is 750 gp per ritual performed (5 XP each).

Level 1-4 Region

► **Temperature.** Non-desert creatures in the Scalding Duchy without the proper clothes or equipment perish in less than a week. Carrying the right desert gear does not guarantee anything. Besides the heat and the burning sands, traveling through this inhospitable desert consumes 50% more rations of food and water.

► **Danger.** There are tribes of barbarian goblins and emu-rider outlaws in the Scalding Duchy. It is not uncommon to stumble upon these desert dwellers. These encounters are not always friendly and often end up with violence. Furthermore, travelers must also deal with, or avoid, the wild beasts and monsters that inhabit the barren dunes (see **Exploration Encounters** below).

THE SCALDING SUN

Until the rituals are performed at the temples, the duchy experiences something its people call the *scalding sun*. These are viewed as sandstorms; a natural disaster with a skin-melting sun that must be withstood. Days with *scalding suns* can be somewhat predicted and all desert dwellers seek refuge when this happens. *Scalding suns* only occur during the day and last a few hours.

RUMORS

d6

Details

- 1 Legends speak of immense treasures hidden within the four buried temples, guarded by immortal guardians of the past.
- 2 It’s rumored that the Silver Bastion offers a safe haven from the desert’s heat, but no one knows what it is exactly.
- 3 The sands around the Radiant Sepulcher are said to be cursed, causing those who venture too close to be driven mad by whispers from the past. These rumors are also filled with talks of glowing sands and otherworldly crystals.
- 4 Tales tell of mirage pools appearing in the desert, offering a brief respite of cool water, but these stories end with more sand.
- 5 The Scalding Duchy goblins, the ones that live in barbaric tribes, believe the fiercest sandstorms are caused by the gods’ anger and can only be calmed by offerings at the House of Gold. Some of their tribes are located close to the golden temple.
- 6 Some claim the statues within the Coppersand Hold are alive, but no one knows who said this first, or where the rumor began.



EXPLORATION ENCOUNTERS

Roll 1d6 when the characters travel to a new location. Roll twice if they travel during the night, or if they fail to spot monsters and danger (DC 11 Survival check).

1. Four **Scalding Duchy goblins**, two ride **emu mounts**, demand 25 gp each for safe passage.
2. The heroes find a small oasis. They disturb a wasp hive if they approach. Fifteen **desert wasps** attack.
3. Two **desert worms** fight the heroes until slain.
4. The heroes find six **Scalding Duchy goblins** cooking on a pot under the shadow of a tent.
5. The heroes stumble upon a flock of fifteen wild **emu mounts**. The birds are in season, they are territorial, and they do not take intrusions lightly.
6. The heroes get lost. It takes twice as long to reach their destination and twice the resources. Getting lost drains their energy; the heroes make their next check with disadvantage if this occurs.

MINSTETH SAND, THE GOLDEN CITY

This is the most illustrious goblin settlement in the duchy. Founded by the legendary chieftain Minsteth, the Bold along the Tourmaline River, it gleams under the sun with golden-hued buildings surrounded by lustrous, concentric farmlands. Set by the Tourmaline River delta, the goblins' ingenuity has crafted a marvel of engineering in the form of complex irrigation systems for their lands. The large town is spread out in roughly circular arrangements of farmsteads and arable land. At the town's center is Crownhold, a fortress of polished stone that shines like gold under the sun; home of Duke Grix, the Cunning.

DARKMOOR

Nestled between the Tourmaline River and one of its tributaries, Darkmoor goblins are known for their expertise in shadow magic and stealth. The settlement houses a shrine where the goblins perform nightly rituals. Despite its size, Darkmoor plays a crucial role in the duchy's defense, its inhabitants adept at navigating both the physical and mystical aspects of their harsh environment.

DEADLY MIRAGE

This oasis is fraught with unpredictable dangers: sudden sandstorms that can bury wanderers alive, venomous creatures lurking in the undergrowth, and the mirage-ridden terrain that shifts without warning. Only the most experienced adventurers can survive an encounter in this treacherous haven, where the line between life-saving refuge and a fatal trap is perilously thin.

THE VOIDWALKER'S ABODE

Four hornlike stone formations flank a mysterious opening on the sands. Little is known about this dungeon. The goblins of the duchy shun this place; rumors of evil ghosts and spirits are all the information available. For the curious, it would be a thrilling journey to dig a little and discover the secrets of this interesting location.

COPPERSAND HOLD

The first of the four sacred temples of the Scalding Duchy rises majestically from the golden sands, its copper-plated walls glinting under the desert sun. This fortress is a marvel of goblin engineering, with intricate carvings and towering spires that reflect their rich cultural heritage. The temple has immense spiritual significance. Goblins seek strength and resilience from the gods here.

THE SILVER BASTION

The second key temple in the duchy gleams with its silver-coated walls, a beacon of hope amidst the desert's harshness. Renowned for its protective enchantments, this temple is where goblins seek wisdom and sanctuary. Within its shimmering halls, intricate mosaics depict tales of ancient heroes and divine interventions. The central sanctuary houses a grand silvery altar, where rituals are performed to invoke the gods' protection.

THE HOUSE OF GOLD

The third temple stands resplendent with gilded walls that sparkle under the desert sun. This opulent temple is the heart of goblin wealth and sacrifice, where offerings of gold and precious gems are made to appease the gods. Inside, the chambers are adorned with elaborate gilded statues and tapestries. The altar is the focal point for ceremonies that seek to ensure the duchy's fortune.

THE RADIANT SEPULCHER

The fourth temple is a mysterious and revered dungeon nestled deep within the desert. Its walls are veined with a peculiar green material that emits an eerie, otherworldly glow, illuminating areas with an unsettling light. This glowing substance is both a source of power and danger, revered by the goblins for its divine properties. The inner sanctum, where the most solemn rituals are performed, is bathed in this green luminescence, casting a deadly, ethereal glow on the ancient runes etched into the stone.

OTHER LOCATIONS

Manorialde. This is a town of goblin fishermen and farmers. The *scalding sun* has withered and burned their plantations, casting away throngs of refugees.

The Barren Dunes. Many a traveler has gone lost, never to return, in the tricky sands of the Barren Dunes. This is the territory of the goblin barbarian tribes. They have adapted to life with inclement weather and little moisture. But that is not the case for unwary travelers...

Brass Hold. This place is the eyes of the goblins for unwanted presences from the south. But today, this fort is more an outpost than anything else; entire families of emu ranchers and miners live here after decades of peace. Still, many armed goblins fulfill their duties.



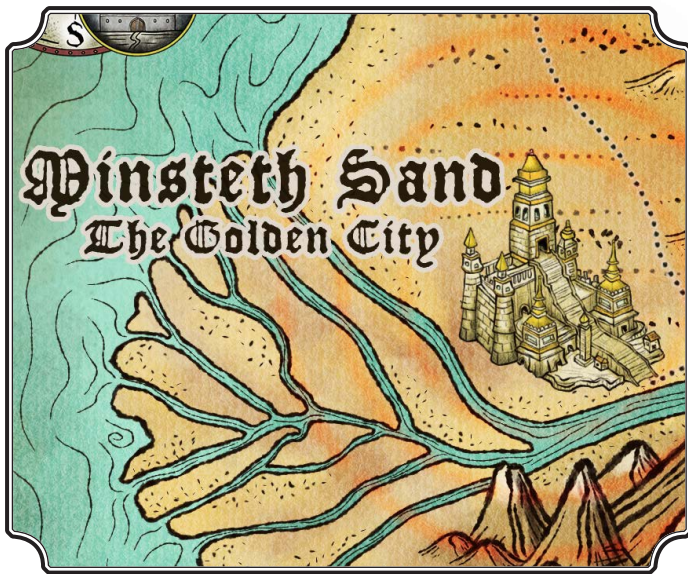
MINSTETH SAND

“It is essential to perform the Sun-Binding Rituals soon. The harvests shall fail unless the implacable, scalding sun is appeased. May the gods help you.”

Duke Gryx, the Cunning

This large town was settled by the legendary chieftain Minsteth, the Bold. His host came from the south and stripped the desert lands away from nomadic human tribes who eventually settled in the east. Minsteth Sand was first a war camp, then a fort, and later on, when the war subsided, it became a farming settlement and the house of the ruling family, Minsteth's descendants. The ruler's title, duke, is equivalent to a king; the current Duke, Gryx, the Cunning, does not owe fealty to anyone but his family.

Life in the desert is never easy but Minsteth Sand's position in the river delta makes farming feasible and allows settlers access to water. Most other settlements in the Scalding Duchy follow the meandering pass of the Tourmaline River too. The town's pride is Crownhold, the duke's fortress. Its stones, polished to silky softness, shine under the inclement sun like solid gold.



Level 1-2 Settlement

► **Special Events.** Check for a **Random Event** in every other area the characters visit (3-in-6 chance).

► **Farmlands.** Minsteth Sand's plantations are irrigated with river water that moves throughout the town on wooden canals. The farms are arranged in roughly circular patterns; water canals distribute water from the center where farmsteads and other buildings reside. With proper watering, fertilization, and care, the soil in the Tourmaline River delta is lush with vibrant greenery.

► **Scalding Sun.** If a *scalding sun* event occurs while in town, the characters automatically succeed in finding shelter as the locals willingly offer their homes.

THE DIRTY FANGS

The largest edifice in Minsteth Sand's docks features a wooden sign with a sharp-toothed desert worm. The sound of laughter and petty squabbles fills the air, as does the scent of spiced wine and ale.

Characters looking for lodging and rumors find what they need in the Dirty Fangs. The inn and tavern are owned by a retired goblin farmer named Blukk. The characters soon learn of Blukk's reputation for loving the nomadic goblin tribes that inhabit the deep desert.

► **Spiced Wine.** The tavern's signature drink is tough for non-goblins (DC 15 Constitution). Foreigners who gulp their first spiced-wine glass without coughing earn the locals' respect and even a decorative wooden plaque.

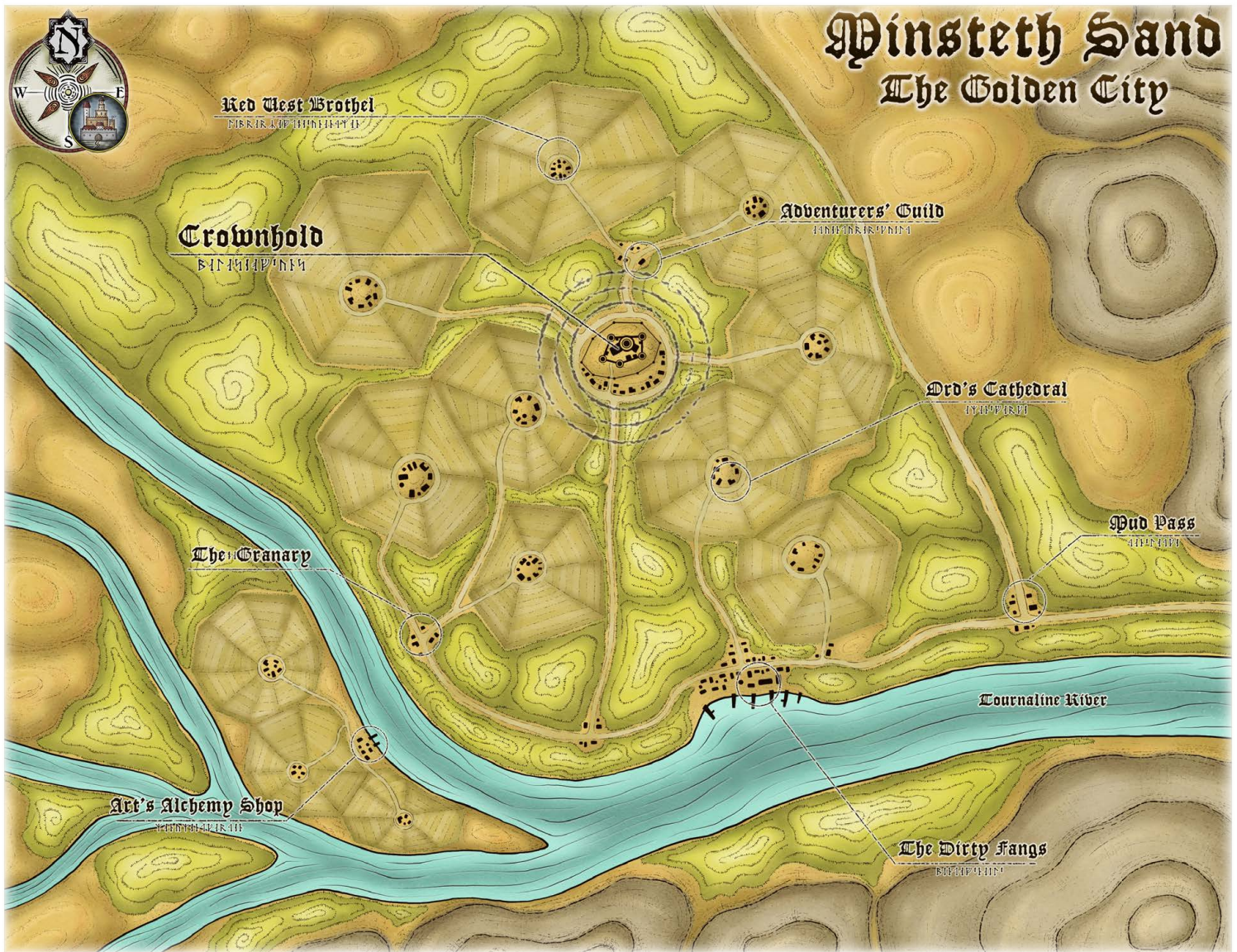
► **Adornment.** Blukk is fond of adventurers; he shares his desire to decorate the wall behind the bar with a traditional priest headpiece from one of the desert nomadic tribes. Blukk offers 100 gp for it.

RANDOM EVENT

d6

Details

- 1 A *scalding sun* event begins, it lasts for 1d6 hours. A goblin farmhand named Fagu invites the characters into his home to shelter. Fagu owns an armor set fashioned from a scalding worm carapace. It belonged to his grandfather who was a warrior.
- 2 A raiding party of four **Scalding Duchy goblins** approach on **emu mounts** and try to rob the people near Mud Pass.
- 3 The Tourmaline River experiences a flash flood that threatens the farms. All hands are called to reinforce the river bed.
- 4 A dozen refugees from Manorialde arrive at the city. The *scalding sun* destroyed their crops and burnt their homes.
- 5 A *scalding sun* event begins, it lasts for 1d4 hours. If the characters are close to Crownhold, they are invited to enter the fortress' cool chambers. The duchess' handmaiden, Gara, claims her nephew is still in the field. She worries deeply for him.
- 6 A merchant caravan wants to travel to Darkmoor. No escort dares accompany them though they offer 200 gp as payment.



MUD PASS

A faded, wooden sign reads “Welcome to Mud Pass, rest before you venture into the duke’s lands.” The dilapidated barracks around it have seen better times.

Long ago, when Crownhold had just been built, Mud Pass was a small thorp close to the duke’s land border. Minsteth Sand plantations grow steadily outward and threaten to overtake this area soon. Mud Pass has now become the stepping stone into the capital and the only defense from ill-adventured travelers. A small garrison of ten **goblin** guards always looks to the east.

► **Dream of Glory.** A **goblin** guard named Luki aspires to become an adventurer. The current state of affairs poses an opportunity; he introduces himself to adventurers as a guide and guard with hopes of joining an adventuring expedition. He only owns a shortsword.

► **The Letter.** The garrison commander, Jakl asks the characters to deliver a letter to his son, Manji, for 80 gp. He is located in a camp outside of the Silver Bastion. The letter is a military promotion for Manji.

ORD’S CATHEDRAL

Almost as tall as Crownhold Fortress, the cathedral of the Secret-Keeper is built from basalt bricks that give the edifice an air of solitude and resilience.

Obedience to Ord’s teachings is a relatively new thing in the Scalding Duchy as this current of beliefs dates back only 80 years. Alas, it is the only religion with a foothold in goblin culture. The priests in this house of worship are all human but three goblins are studying to become religious leaders and shall be ordained priests in a few years; a success in acceptance.

► **Sacred Water.** High Priest Arne Vallagen summons the characters to make a most curious request. The priest claims that a mirage-filled oasis lies to the southwest of Darkmoor, before the Silver Bastion. Water from this oasis is deemed sacred and used in the cathedral’s stoups. The priest lends the party a cart with ten empty barrels and two **emu mounts**. For 400 gp, the characters must travel to the oasis, fill the wooden barrels, and bring the cartload back to Ord’s cathedral.

ART'S ALCHEMY SHOP

This alchemy lab is owned and worked by a motley band of six **goblins**. Their instruments are in disarray, ingredient spillage covers the floor, and they all argue constantly. Still, their concoctions have a good reputation. The characters can purchase *potions of healing* for 135 gp.

► **Potion of Moisture.** A vial of glowing blue liquid that costs 80 gp. Imbibing this potion allows a creature to go without water for 1d6 days and gives advantage on any checks relating to the harshness of desert traveling.

THE GRANARY

A small fortified hold; the granary used to have a garrison of its own as it was a priority target in times of war. Now, it is managed by farmers and merchants.

ADVENTURER'S GUILD

For 5 gp per person, the characters can join this guild. The goblin-owned organization only just started and has a single mission available for the taking.

► **Strange Metal.** A scholar offers 400 gp for 2 pounds of the elusive metal that lines the walls of the Radiant Sepulcher. He claims its glimmer is beautiful.

RED VEST BROTHEL

Characters seeking company and entertainment are welcomed in the Red Vest Brothel. Companions of varied ancestries can be found here. Many of them are also privy to dark secrets and strange rumors.

CROWNHOLD

A tall spire of polished, glimmering stone stands tall above Duke Gryx's formidable fortress. It is a beacon of civilization and opulence, a testament to the engineering skills of goblinkind in the Scalding Duchy.

When the characters approach Crownhold, Ouma, the chamberlain beckons them to enter. The town-wide summons for mercenaries and adventurers to present themselves before the duke were issued mere hours ago.

The characters are admitted to Crownhold along with four other mercenaries (**thugs**) for a private audience with Duke Gryx, the Cunning, in the throne room.

► **Friends or Foes.** The mercenaries, Darlen, Mick, and Fanna, work together and may consider joining the party in the upcoming quests as they own two **emu mounts** but lack spellcasters in their group (DC 14 Persuasion).

► **Saving the Desert.** In the audience, the Duke reveals the grim situation of the Scalding Duchy (see **The Duke's Message**). The duke offers 1,500 gp for acting on his behalf to save the duchy from the *scalding sun*. The heroes are instrumental in this desert campaign!

THE DUKE'S MESSAGE

Duke Gryx, who wears an iron crown fashioned after a mining cap explains that ancient city records describe the *scalding sun* phenomenon. According to these tomes, the weather shall become gradually harsher until life in the desert becomes impossible. The cycle can be reset by performing the *Pact of the Sun* in four ancient temples in the desert. The duke has already dispatched goblin detachments to each temple to investigate but none have been heard back from. This is expected as communication across the dunes is not easy. The duke also mentions that the goblin tribes in the desert believe that the *scalding sun* is a natural process and, according to the records, these tribes always oppose the celebration of the *Pact of the Sun*. Duke Gryx gives the party a gilded lotus flower; it must be used as the focus for the *Pact of the Sun*. The temples' location is marked on a map but little else is known:

- **Coppersand Hold.** Its halls are decorated with effigies of the elusive scalding worm creatures.
- **The Silver Bastion.** A challenge to the characters' resolve shall occur in this fabled place.
- **House of Gold.** Goblins perform sacred offerings to the old gods here. Appeasing the gods with these gifts ensures the duchy's fortune.
- **The Radiant Sepulcher.** A place of death; the very glow of this dungeon's walls can blight life.



DESERT CREATURES

THE GOBLINS OF the Scalding Duchy are a unique breed. They are resilient and resourceful people, thriving in their harsh desert homeland. Living in scattered towns along the Tourmaline River, they have adapted to the extreme conditions with ingenuity and tenacity. Their society is deeply connected to the old temples buried in the sands, where they perform sacred rituals to appease the ancient gods of the desert. Led by the cunning chieftain, Grix, the goblins value strength, shrewdness, and survival skills. Despite their tough exterior, they are a community bound by tradition and mutual support, always ready to face the challenges of the unforgiving environment they call home.

SCALDING DUCHY GOBLIN

Small humanoid (goblinoid), neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (leather armor, shield)

HP 16 (4d6+4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	9 (-1)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)

Skills Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Common, Goblin

Challenge 1/2 (200 XP)

Nimble Escape. The goblin can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

Desert Dweller. The goblin has advantage on Perception and Stealth checks made within the Scalding Duchy sands.

Actions

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

Spears. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6) piercing damage.

EMU

Medium Beast, unaligned

Armor Class 11

HP 13 (2d10 + 2)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	4 (-3)	13 (+1)	7 (-2)

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages None

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Sure-Footed. The emu has advantage on Strength and Dexterity saves made against effects that would knock it prone.

Goblin Mounts. Emus respond to their goblin masters; they imprint on them since birth.

Actions

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

Grab. The emu holds a target it hits with its talons unless they succeed on a DC 13 Strength check. On a fail, they are grappled. The emu cannot hold more than one target.





DESERT WASP

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13

HP 5 (1d8)

Speed 10 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)	11 (+0)	5 (-3)

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages None

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Mob. Desert wasps flee by nature if outnumbered. They never attack alone or show aggression toward larger groups.

Actions

Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw. On a fail, they become poisoned. They can repeat the save each round.

DESERT WORM

Large aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 10 (natural armor)

HP 53 (7d10+ 14)

Speed 20 ft., burrow 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	9 (-1)	15 (+2)	5 (-3)	7 (-2)	6 (-2)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages None

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Tunneler. The worm can burrow through solid rock at half its burrowing speed, leaving a 5-foot-wide tunnel in its wake.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Fire Jet. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (4d6) fire damage. The target must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity save or be caught in flames for one more round, taking 1d6 fire damage.



TRAVERSING THE DESERT



In the wastelands of the Scalding Duchy, a battle of survival occurs each day for all desert travelers: the struggle to find and conserve moisture as the dry weather threatens to take it all away. A way to measure water supplies as a medium for survival and exchange for PCs is presented here.

Characters traveling in the desert are required to have water in their supplies or else they risk suffering from severe dehydration. For adventurers, this is measured in **Water Units** (WU). Each Water Unit measures the party's ability to keep a living creature hydrated for 1 day. They can be traded for other goods like money, as moisture is a valuable resource in the Scalding duchy.

$$\begin{array}{r} 1 \text{ Water Unit (WU)} \\ = \\ 1 \text{ day of water per creature} \\ = \\ 5 \text{ gold pieces (gp)} \end{array}$$

Water Units represent the party's available resources for the inclement journeys through the desert. It does not only represent water. Water-rich foods are included as well. It combines all moisture sources into a single figure, to determine whether the party can stay hydrated. It also opens interesting interactions in the barren territories. Characters can trade Water Units for other goods and services as everyone values them. And active travelers have a dire need for more Water Units.

When Water Units run low, the result is an impending countdown toward the travelers' doom. Having no moisture sources in the desert is, in most cases, equivalent to death. A character can last 2 days without Water Units in the wild. If none are procured, they die of dehydration.

MOVING IN THE DESERT

In general, close locations (less than half the map's length) can be reached within a day of travel. Farther locations take 1d4 days to reach. Bringing emu mounts makes travel faster but has a drawback; the emus drink water too, and more WU would be needed.

► **Inventory.** Each character can carry two Water Units on an inventory slot. Emu mounts can carry four WUs apart from their load or rider. Bringing enough WUs is crucial for the characters to survive the desert.

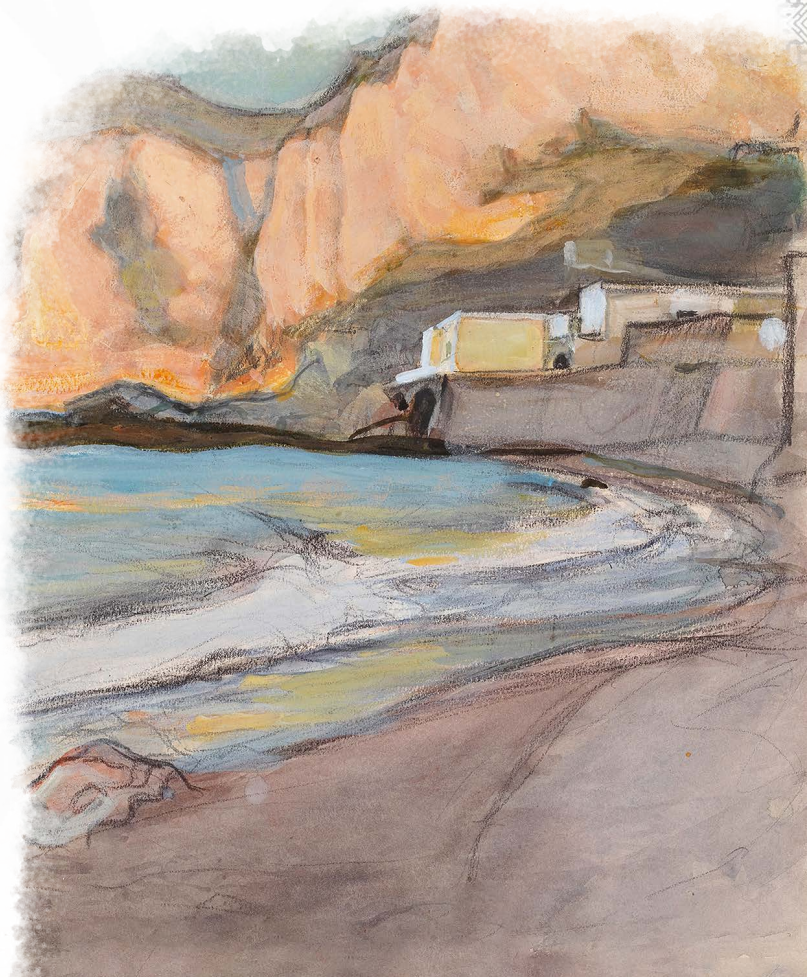
► **Foraging.** Characters can forage at night and dawn to find more Water Units in the wild (catching juicy bugs, hunting game, collecting dew water, or finding water-rich cacti or plants). Finding one WU requires a DC 9 WIS check. On a fail, the travelers take 2 more hours to reach their destination, endangering the group further.

THE SCALDING SUN

USUALLY A RARE event, the *scalding sun* now scourges the realm with increasing frequency. During the *scalding sun*, temperatures rise to unbearable levels, threatening all forms of life. Goblin tribes and desert fauna hide until it ends. The *scalding sun* lasts 1d4 hours. Twice per day, there is a 2-in-6 chance that a *scalding sun* occurs. Desert guides could predict this weather event but scalding suns have become increasingly difficult to foretell.

During the scalding sun event, a character must make an **Exploration Check** to find shelter (2d6 + WIS). Compare the result with the following table:

- 1-5 - No shelter is found. Characters take 1d4 CON damage and spend an extra two WUs per person.
- 6-9 - A meager shelter is found. Characters spend an extra Water Unit per person.
- 10-12 - A good shelter is found. While the characters wait for the *scalding sun* to subside, they forage 1d3 Water Units from water-rich cacti.
- 13+ - The characters find an oasis with freshwater ponds and trees to hide beneath. The party may refill all of their Water Units inventory here.



THE WAY OF THE DESERT

“Be careful when moving through the dunes. Even following the sacred river does not guarantee a safe passage. The Barren Dunes claim lives all the time...”

Desert Guide

Amost settlements in the Scalding Duchy follow the fertile path of the Tourmaline River. Its moisture is a welcome respite from the harsh desert environment. The lands near the river are the only arable land in the realm. With careful irrigation and fertilization, the goblinkind of the Scalding Duchy has managed to create a way of life.

INTO THE EAST

THE CHARACTERS BEGIN their adventure in Minsteth Sand, the Golden City. It is located on the duchy's western shores. The characters' main quest shall bring them to four ancient temples and many perilous locations across the Scalding Duchy. A desert road follows the Tourmaline River from the capital. It connects all settlements and is the only path across the desert. Merchant barges can be seen sailing downstream while caravans and riders move slowly eastward toward their destinies.

The road has become dangerous because of the *scalding suns* that increase in frequency and become less predictable. With passage so restricted by the inclement weather and the desert goblin tribes that become ever more daring, people gather in groups to reach the eastern destinations. Most merchants seek to reach Darkmoor, the second-largest settlement in the Scalding Duchy. When the characters are ready to set out to find the temples, there shall be others looking for protection, passage, or escorts (see **Adventure Hooks**).

But even with the heroes present, the journey to Darkmoor turns into a race for survival as three *scalding sun* events occur (see map); something never witnessed before. How will the characters face this challenge?

ADVENTURE HOOKS

SEVERAL QUESTS AND jobs come up in Minsteth Sand as the characters prepare for their trip. It is assumed that they are part of a larger caravan of travelers. The heroes have the option to do all of the following:

► **Main Mission.** The heroes are called forth by Duke Gryx, the Cunning, to visit four ancient temples and use a gilded lotus to perform the *Pact of the Sun*. The characters must follow the Tourmaline River road to cross the desert and reach these places (1,500 gp).

► **Guards.** The heroes are hired to escort a merchant caravan from Minsteth Sand to Darkmoor. A goblin named Vallik owns four fully loaded carts. He travels with seven **goblins**, and four cargo mules (100 gp).

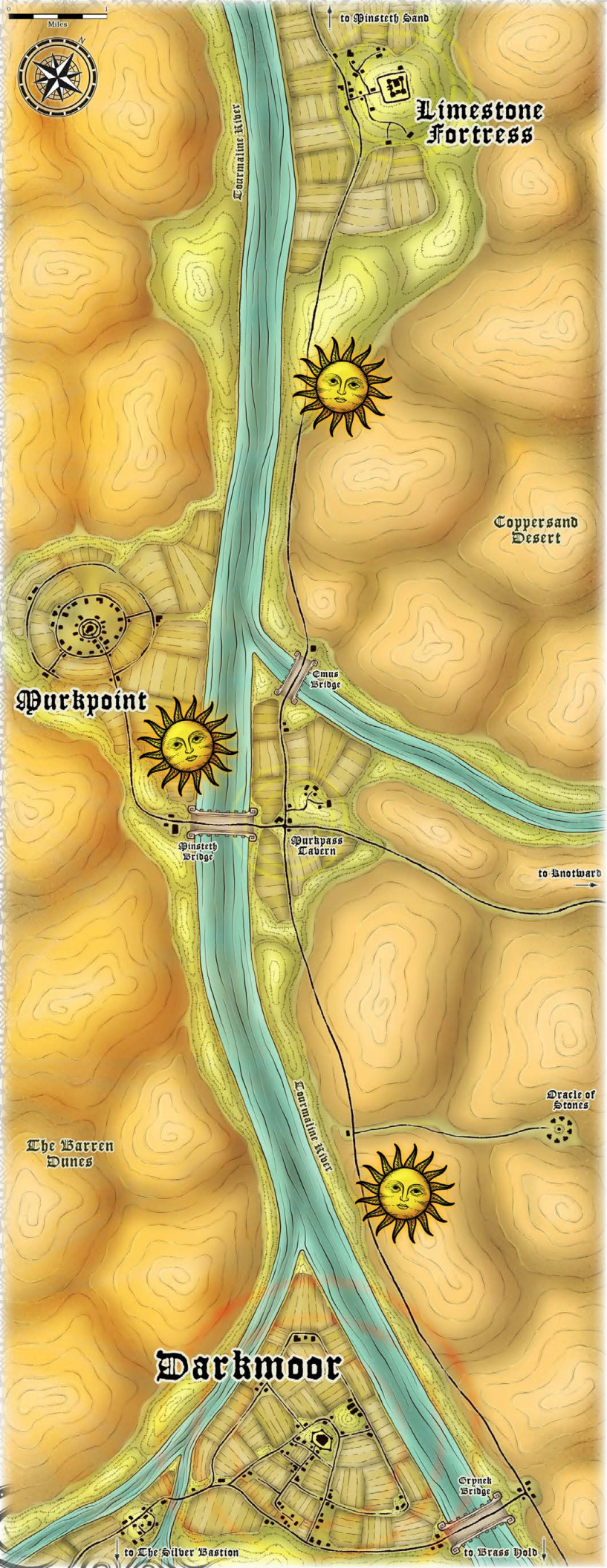
► **Spice Business.** A goblin merchant named Harla travels with three coffers of sea salt and spices on a mule cart. Harla claims the desert tribes crave the salt and she expects trouble from the barbarian goblin tribes. Harla offers the characters a life-long 5% share of her spice business if they escort her to Darkmoor, where she wants to make a living (50 gp monthly).

► **Emu Breeders.** Three **goblins** transport a pack of twenty **emu mounts** to Darkmoor. They are afraid of scalding worms and desert wasps attacking the herd. The characters are hired for protection (200 gp).

► **Other.** Each area the characters visit features more NPCs and people in need. The heroes may make new allies, obtain more gold, and earn a greater reputation. Some people happily offer the little gold they have for a chance of survival against the *scalding suns*. Many also welcome the opportunity of safe passage to Darkmoor.

RANDOM EVENT

d6	Details
1	As the sun rises, the heroes are ambushed by four Scalding Duchy goblins on the road. The tribesmen fight bravely.
2	A cloaked woman named Mara (acolyte) approaches the group at night. She wishes to travel with the group and offers her help.
3	The heroes stumble upon a wrecked caravan by the road, its goods scattered and the few survivors in hiding, greatly needing an escort to safety. It takes 1d4 hours to repair the carts so they can travel again. Ten commoners join the eastbound expedition.
4	While resting by the river, a sinking skiff approaches. The merchant was attacked by brigands and seeks passage to Darkmoor.
5	An additional <i>scalding sun</i> event begins, it lasts for 1 hour and has the increased potency described in the Scalding Sun Procedure . Carts and animals must be sheltered or they catch on fire under the merciless desert sun.
6	A desperate, thirsty guard walks by the road; the only survivor of a scouting party. He can help and fight but requires water.



Level 2 Region

► **Tourmaline River.** The duchy's artery of commerce links Minsteth Sand to Darkmoor and the four ancient temples. The river splits the Scalding Duchy in two, with the Barren Dunes to the south and the Coppersand Desert to the north. Land near the river is fertile enough for farming operations near the many riverfront settlements.

► **Events.** Traversing the desert is perilous; the decrease in travelers has caused the desert goblin tribes to become more aggressive. They ambush and rob all they can. If the tribes find out about the characters' quest to perform the *Pact of the Sun*, they become targets as the locals believe that the sun cycles should be left alone. Travelers face constant threats from goblin scouts, wildlife, and the *scalding suns*. Check for a **Random Event** each time the heroes travel from one place to another, or if they are imprudent in their journey (4-in-6 chance).

ENDANGERED SETTLEMENTS

LIMESTONE FORTRESS

A squat, stone fortress overlooks the territory from a lush hill. It is surrounded by a dozen clay-brick houses and a few patches of farmed land by the river.

Once the second largest fort in the realm, next to Crownhold, the Limestone Fortress is now little more than a granary and a shelter for goat herds and emu mounts.

► **Refugees.** Sheltered by the locals, refugees from the sun-blasted town of Manorialde seek to travel to the capital or Darkmoor. They offer what little they have in exchange for safe passage. If the party accepts, twelve **peasants** join the traveling caravan (138 gp).

► **Edifices.** Both the fortress and the clay-brick houses can withstand the *scalding suns*. The interiors remain barely cool enough to allow the locals to wait it out.

► **Marauders.** As the characters leave Limestone Fortress, six **Scalding Duchy goblins** approach on the road. They demand a toll payment of 5 gp per person.

MURKPOINT

Concentric farms, mimicking the capital's, surround a town square. The wooden buildings are dry and in need of repair. Locals haul water to moisten them.

► **Edifices.** Fearing the Manorialde's fate, the townsfolk keep wooden structures wet to avoid fire. It is a losing battle as the next scalding sun shall dry them all again and cause a terrible fire (see **Scalding Sun Procedure**).

► **Refugees.** After the town and farmlands burn, a crowd of eighty-six goblin **peasants** become homeless. Half stay to rebuild while children and the injured seek safe passage toward Darkmoor. They offer 75 gp.

SCALDING SUN PROCEDURE

Three *scalding suns* occur during the characters' journey from Limestone Fortress to Darkmoor. This frequency has not been witnessed before. It is a rare occurrence that foreshadows how life in the Scalding Duchy shall be if the *Pact of the Sun* is not performed.

The *scalding suns* occur when the characters leave Limestone Fortress, when they reach Murkpoint, and right before reaching Darkmoor (see sun seals on map). The following procedures take place during each event:

1. A *scalding sun* unleashes its energy when the characters leave Limestone Fortress. It is too late to turn back; the best course of action is to push through and seek shelter in Murkpoint. Characters' total HP is reduced by half until they reach Darkmoor and rest (DC 12 Constitution).
2. A second *scalding sun* reaches its apex when the characters reach Murkpoint. Its strength is such that most buildings and plantations ignite, creating a terrible conflagration. The same fate that the town of Manorialde suffered. The characters and peasants can hide in Murkpass Tavern and under Minsteth Bridge, the only structure large enough to protect caravan carts and large animals.
3. Before reaching Darkmoor, a *scalding sun* scourges the terrain between the Oracle of Stones and Grynek Bridge. The characters can proceed at the risk of having their HP reduced by half until they reach Darkmoor and rest (DC 12 Constitution), HP reduced to 0 causes the character to faint from a heatstroke. Otherwise, they can wait for the *scalding sun* to subside. They can visit the Oracle of Stone while the weather event times out.

MURKPASS TAVERN

This watchtower is built with the same clay-bricks as Limestone Fortress's buildings. It is now a tavern and inn. The tavern resists the *scalding sun* event that destroys Murkpoint and serves as a temporary shelter for the homeless goblins as the town is rebuilt.

► **The Seeders.** Two farmers managed to save sacks of seeds from the granary before the fire. They offer 5 gp for allowing them to join the trip to Darkmoor.

ANCIENT BRIDGES

The bridges along the Tourmaline River date back to the reign of Minsteth, the Bold. Their pillars and arches are inscribed with goblin runes that exalt the mandate of the goblin chieftain. Their architecture is envy-provoking.

ORACLE OF STONES

Defying logic, a stone basin filled with crystalline water exists among the dunes. It is surrounded by seven thick pillars. Local goblins shun this place as it is tied to the old draconic deity that the desert tribes still revere.

► **Knowledge from Beyond.** Meditating by the pond for 1 hour summons the spirit of the old goblin gods and grants a spellcaster the ability to ask 1d4 direct questions to the entities beyond in the form of a *commune* spell. The questions are answered truthfully.

DARKMOOR

THE HEROES REACH their destination at last. They either arrive as valorous heroes or as traumatized survivors. Earl Battoni welcomes the large caravan and allows all refugees to settle in the town. The earl shall do his best to aid the characters in his current quest...



DARKMOOR

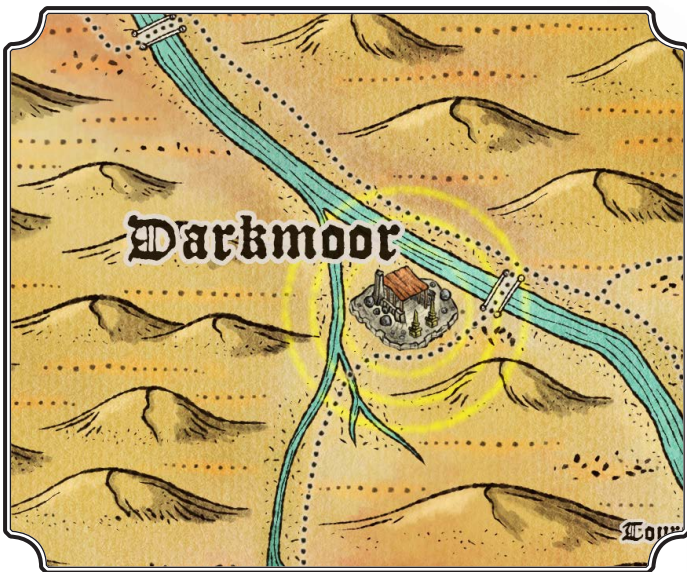
“Where the light fades, our power begins. In the depths of shadow, we forge our destiny. Darkmoor stands eternal, hidden but unyielding.”

Earl Battoni



One of the main goblin settlements in the Scalding Duchy is made from limestone and granite recovered from a canyon where the sun's rays rarely penetrate. Unlike the gleaming dunes of Minsteth Sand, Darkmoor thrives in the cool embrace of the Tourmaline River. The city's architecture shows the skills of goblin craftsmanship, illuminated by glowing fungi and faintly lit crystals.

The city is ruled by Earl Battoni, a calculating and enigmatic goblin leader known for his sharp intellect and iron will. Earl Battoni has transformed Darkmoor into a stronghold of strategy and cunning, positioning it as a critical player in the duchy's intricate web of power. Under his leadership, Darkmoor has become the center of espionage and covert operations within the Scalding Duchy, with its network of spies, informants, and assassins extending far beyond the town's borders.



CULTURAL DETAILS

The city is steeped in tradition and secrecy. Here, goblins revere the shadows, believing them to be ancient spirits that protect their city. And more so today, with the blasting sun rays burning everything they touch. The city's festivals are quiet, introspective affairs, featuring shadow plays and dances that tell the tales of Darkmoor's founding and the deeds of its greatest leaders. Despite the city's ominous atmosphere, the goblins are united in their purpose, living and working together to preserve the secrets and power of their shadowy home.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The heroes leave the capital tasked with escorting a diverse group of goblin merchants and peasants across the unforgiving desert. The characters could be working for the following NPCs: the merchant Vallik and his loaded carts (100 gp), Harla and her cart to start her business (5% share of future gains, 50 gp), the goblin riders and their flock of twenty emus (200 gp), and any other NPC the heroes meet or find on the way to Darkmoor.

Level 2-3 Settlement

- **Special Events.** Check for a **Random Event** in every other area the characters visit (4-in-6 chance).
- **Shadow Veil.** The dark artisans of the House of Shadow have blessed Darkmoor with an arcane veil against the *scalding sun*. This curtain protects the city and the surrounding fields from the harshness of the sun.
- **Boats.** For a small fee (3 gp/person), barges make the hour-long trip back to the capital every day.

RANDOM EVENT

d6	Details
1	Korrin (area 4) is attacked by a scalding worm that escaped the hatchery! The heroes arrive just in time to save the day.
2	Mistress Veshara of the House of Shadows approaches the heroes with a cryptic warning about the four temples they seek to explore. She emphasizes the green glowing crystals of the Radiant Sepulcher, foreshadowing a great sickness.
3	The heroes are asked to remove a drunken goblin from the Emu Dung Inn. They must do so with non-lethal methods.
4	A giant scorpion finds its way into town while the heroes walk from one area to another. Goblins beg them to help.
5	Earl Battoni asks the heroes to investigate the river's flow which has mysteriously deteriorated. The heroes find a hill giant blocking the river. The giant sleeps, bathes, and eats while sitting on the water. The heroes can persuade it to leave or force it.
6	A group of six Scalding Duchy goblins took over Grynek Bridge. They demand 5 gp per person to be allowed passage.



Darkmoor

Hall of Earl Wattoni



1. Tourmaline Road
2. Grynek Bridge
3. Darkmoor Piers
4. Obsidian Jewels
5. Tanners' Ford
6. Worm Hatchery
7. House of Shadows
8. Emu Dung Inn
9. Darkmoor Archives
10. Carl's Manor



1. TOURMALINE ROAD

The road winds alongside the glittering waters of the Tourmaline River. Travelers use the bridge to enter the city. This road leads directly into the city's heart.

2. GRYNEK BRIDGE

The bridge is a masterpiece of goblin engineering that arches gracefully over the Tourmaline River; its sturdy stonework is adorned with intricate carvings. It was designed by the legendary architect Grynek, who gets the merit for most of the city's structures as well. Lanterns crafted from glowing crystals line the bridge, casting a soft, eerie light on those who cross it.

3. DARKMOOR PIERS

The piers are run by the shrewd goblin guild master Vrekka. Besides boarding boats to the capital, travelers can trade rare goods, commission custom-crafted tools, or seek passage to other spots of the desert. Vrekka's network ensures the piers remain well-guarded and lucrative, catering to both merchants and adventurers alike.

4. OBSIDIAN JEWELS

This establishment is a dimly lit, underground emporium nestled in the outskirts of Darkmoor, where rare gemstones and enchanted artifacts are traded. Run by the enigmatic goblin jeweler Korrin Blackeye, this establishment is renowned for its exquisite craftsmanship and the ability to imbue jewelry with potent magical properties. The shop is also known for its discreet dealings, where secrets are traded just as easily as gold.

► **Quest.** Korrin needs a group of heroes to recover a rare and powerful gemstone known as the *Shadow Opal*, which can only be retrieved from the underground desert tunnels. The opal is essential for completing high-profile commissions that could solidify Korrin's dominance in the city's gem trade. For this mission, the heroes need to take a whole day to delve into the city's underground network. Before they find the opal, the heroes stumble upon a **scarab swarm**. An hour later, they find two **scalding worms**. It is only after these challenges that they are rewarded with one shadow opal. If the heroes bring it to Korrin, he rewards them with 300 gp.

5. TANNER'S FORD

The local tannery is an open-air workshop located at the edge of Darkmoor, where the smell of treated leather and curing hides fills the air. Grulka Ironhide, a stern and skilled goblin tanner, produces some of the finest, emu leather armor and goods in the duchy.

► **Quest.** Grulka challenges the heroes to bring her the hide of three desert worms (100 gp). They can spend a whole day outside the city and look for worm nests (DC 9 Survival). One check is enough to find the three. On a fail, the heroes stumble upon a group of four **Scalding Duchy goblins**, two ride **emu mounts**, and a **goblin boss**. The worms appear after fighting the goblins.

6. WORM HATCHERY

A cavernous chamber where the goblins breed and train the fearsome scalding worms. Managed by the eccentric goblin wrangler Zarra Quickfang, the hatchery is filled with the low hum of the giant, fire-spitting creatures as they slither through heated sand pits. Heroes visiting can learn more about these creatures. They cannot be trained as mounts, but their saliva, skin shedding, and even their dung are useful resources for the goblins.

► **Quest.** Zarra hires the heroes to retrieve a **scalding worm** specimen. However, the breeder needs the worm alive and healthy. The heroes must employ ropes, sheets, and perhaps even some somniferous (DC 12 Survival and DC 12 Athletics). Two successes mean the worm is caught, safe and sound (250 gp). One success translates into the worm being caught, but it is hurt in the process (150 gp). Two failures mean the heroes go too far and kill the specimen. This outcome yields no reward.

7. HOUSE OF SHADOWS

A dimly lit, labyrinthine structure woven into the sands of the city of shadows. The organization's entrance is obscured by thick obsidian-black curtains.

The clandestine guild, hidden in plain sight where the city's most skilled assassins and spies gather. However, swift, agile goblins dressed in dark clothes are all there is. Led by the elusive and calculating Mistress Veshara, the house offers training in the arts of stealth, espionage, and lethal precision. However, all members are expert dancers, performers, and entertainers of some kind.

The guild does not teach their arts to other ancestries. But in exchange, the House of Shadows is the perfect spot to trade secrets for favors; those who walk in must be careful not to reveal too much. Veshara's influence extends throughout Darkmoor, making this a place of power and danger for those who dare to walk its shadowed halls. The characters may use this as a source of information as long as they have the means to pay for it.

8. EMU DUNG INN

A rowdy and lively tavern, named after the distinct smell that wafts from the nearby emu stables.

Run by the jovial and quick-witted goblin innkeeper, Old Grizz, the inn is a popular gathering spot for travelers, mercenaries, and locals alike. Heroes can rent modest rooms and enjoy hearty meals. Old Grizz sends them to Korrin, Grulka, and Zarra if they ask for employment.

9. DARKMOOR ARCHIVES

This building is a vast library that features underground levels. It houses ancient scrolls, forbidden texts, and detailed maps of the Scalding Duchy. Overseen by the reclusive goblin scholar, Archivist Malgath, the archives offer the heroes detailed maps that shall help them find the four temples hidden among the inclement dunes.

10. EARL'S MANOR

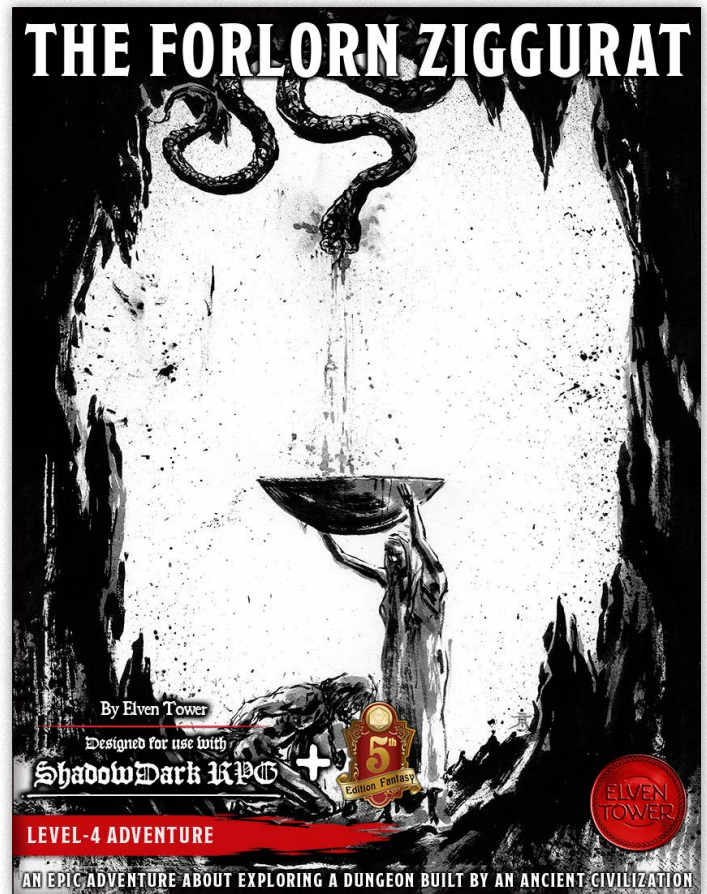
A grand and imposing structure surrounded by a tall stone wall. Within its dark halls, Earl Battoni resides in opulent chambers. The earl receives the heroes in his private study, knowing about the ordeal of their journey here. Impressed by their mission to visit the four sacred goblin temples, the earl offers his support, believing their success to be vital for the duchy's future. He advises them to consult Malgath at the Darkmoor Archives for detailed maps of the treacherous desert paths. He also provides emu mounts, carts, and enough food and water for a week of travel once they decide to leave.



The Forlorn Ziggurat

As the poison pours, so our society pleads itself subservient to you. Please allow our sons and daughters to thrive and keep this tribute of living flesh.

Featured Product



In the deepest reaches of the dwarven kingdom, Ghin Faradum, there lies an ancient, cyclopean construction built by the extinct goblin civilization of yore. This pyramid-shaped edifice is dedicated to warding off an evil entity known as the Poisonous Deity. The goblins learned that this extraplanar being required a flesh tribute to inhabit in the Material Plane. Without it, the Poisonous Deity grows restless and dangerous. 3 years ago, a human expedition visited the place and was never heard of again. The lead explorer was taken over by the evil entity, the man is still there, having his lifespan enhanced by the Poisonous Deity.

Today, the explorer's grandson hires the characters to escort him to the Forlorn Ziggurat. The young scholar wants to learn what happened to his grandfather and, if possible, continue research in his line of work. In the strange ziggurat, arcane powers beyond the comprehension of mortals are at play. The heroes require every ounce of courage to emerge alive from this quest.



Click images to see product page

Deadly Mirage



Deep within the heart of the Barren Dunes desert lies the Deadly Mirage Oasis, a rare haven amidst the unrelenting dunes. From a distance, its emerald palms and crystal-clear waters appear as a blessing from the old goblin gods, a sanctuary for the weary and parched. However, this oasis harbors a dark secret; a hidden threat.

The Veil

AN ANCIENT ENTITY, known only as 'The Veil', resides within the waters. Shrouded in shifting light and shadow, The Veil is a being of pure illusion, born from the desert's forgotten magics. It delights in weaving intricate mirages, luring desperate travelers with visions of shade, water, and companionship, only to twist these illusions into nightmares as they draw near, expectant of some fantasy.

Those who fall victim to The Veil's mind tricks wander aimlessly, trapped in a labyrinth of their own mind's making, slowly succumbing to the desert's cruel embrace. A few fortunate ones have escaped, forever scarred by the encounter, their minds fractured and haunted by echoes of The Veil's taunting whispers. Goblins tell cautionary tales about the dangerous oasis to children, perpetuating the myth.

Yet, despite the dangers, the Deadly Mirage Oasis continues to draw those who dare approach, their hopes blinding them to the peril beneath its serene surface. A site of worship of goblinkind lies nearby, a temple lined with silver inlays. Goblins seek this place as it is sacred to them. Unfortunately, even those who know the desert well often fall to the mirages of the oasis. For in this cursed place, nothing is as it seems, and reality is as fleeting as a grain of sand in the wind...



Adventure Hooks

► **The Artifact.** A scholar deciphered an ancient text that speaks of an artifact hidden within the oasis. This artifact is said to have the ability to control illusions and manipulate reality. Alas, the scholar's expedition vanished without a trace. Desperate for the artifact, the scholar seeks a new group of sellswords to venture into the desert. The promise of great power, local renown, and 500 gp awaits those who can retrieve the arcane item.

► **Recovery.** A merchant begs for help. His caravan, carrying a fortune in rare spices and silks, has gone missing in the Barren Dunes. They were close to an oasis, where they planned to rest. The merchant fears the worst; that his caravan has fallen prey to the sinister entity that haunts the oasis. He offers 500 gp for mercenaries willing to recover his goods and, if possible, rescue any survivors.

Approaching the Oasis

AS TRAVELERS APPROACH the Deadly Mirage Oasis, the desert warps their senses, blurring reality and illusion into an incoherent mix.

The oasis first appears as a distant shimmer of green, with palms swaying and crystal-clear waters beckoning. But as travelers draw closer, unease grows. The dunes shift unnaturally, shadows twist into ominous forms, and the air thickens with tension. Just as the travelers near the verdant haven, its image flickers and recedes, leaving them disoriented and tired.

What seemed like a sanctuary now feels like a trap. The line between reality and The Veil's illusions blurs, turning hope into dread. It is then that the real attack occurs. The Veil's mirages come to life as quasi-material representations of reality; difficult to discern as false.

The Mirages

▶ **Hidden Foes.** As the characters approach the oasis, they encounter a group of resting goblin travelers by the pond. The goblins share their food and drink, and tell ancient stories to the characters. Only the most insightful notice the falseness of these illusory goblins. Otherwise, the **shadow goblins** ambush the party when they least expect it.

▶ **Endless Storm.** The oasis disappears and a sandstorm covers the land. The storm appears to be an insurmountable threat but it is all in the characters' minds; a clever mind trick cast by The Veil. The characters must seek refuge from the storm. However, wise characters might notice that the sandstorm's power resides in their affected minds.

▶ **Loved Ones.** Suddenly separated from their companions, each character catches a glimpse of a loved one in the ever-shifting desert. This illusory person runs away or beckons the affected character to follow. If the character remains unaware of the ruse, they are led into a shifting sand pit, the lair of a scalding worm. This mighty creature is not an illusion.

1. The Barren Dunes Path

.....
A barely trodden path through the Barren Dunes leads the characters to the Deadly Mirage Oasis. The fresh verdant island among the dunes is a welcome sight for weary travelers after a long, arduous journey.

2. Sand Sphinxes

.....
Three feline effigies surround the oasis' pond. These granite statues are three facets of the same goblin deity; a trinity of sphinxes that inhabits the desert, poses riddles, and teases those who brave the dangerous sands. Their eyes glimmer, green-hued, when a mirage occurs. The Veil is but a facet of this trinity; one that represents the cruelty of the desert.

3. The Pond

.....
Swarms of glimmering bugs move above the crystal-clear pond in strange patterns. Frogs on lily pads croak in the background, casting a rhythmic melody in the Deadly Mirage Oasis.

▶ **The Insects.** Only the most perceptive notice that the flying patterns of bugs are not random; they can be deciphered. Alas, this language is too slow for mortals to interpret. The insect's patterns over a week are equivalent to a sentence of speech. The sphinx trinity conveys its will in this manner, despite no one being there to hear its cryptic messages.

▶ **The Goods.** The merchant's spice and silk coffers are half-buried around the pond. Unfortunately, there are no survivors. Their lives were taken by The Veil and the desert.

4. The Magic Circle

.....
A 2-foot-tall, 15-foot-wide, granite circle lies submerged in the middle of the oasis pond. Its surface is carved with intricate runes and scripts in the old Goblinoid language. Modern records speak nothing of this artifact. Its goblinoid construction is a mystery. This is the artifact the scholar seeks, unfortunately, it cannot be removed from the pond's bottom.

▶ **The Runes.** A spellcaster who inspects this circle for 1 hour determines that it is a magical seal meant to contain the spirit of the sphinx trinity bound. Some of the binding spells carved on the circle failed centuries ago after water erosion damaged them. Since then, a facet of the trinity, The Veil has roamed partially free, though it cannot flee the oasis.

▶ **Arcane Repair.** A spellcaster can use a chisel to re-carve the damaged binding spells. If The Veil is defeated after this, it becomes bound to the circle again and the Deadly Mirage Oasis becomes safe to visit for all.

A Being of Darkness

After the characters overcome at least two of the mirages described before, The Veil comes forth and confronts the party. This disconcerting creature is a humanoid being with a porcelain mask. Its ethereal, tattered attire resembles that of a scarecrow. The Veil is a dangerous specter whose only objective is to slay mortals to rob them of their life force.

The Veil seeks freedom to move about the desert. The number of souls it must absorb to reach that goal is in the hundreds. It slowly grinds its way toward this inhumane end. Failing to break the characters with mirages, The Veil attempts to forcefully smother their souls with necrotic attacks. It becomes dormant for 1 month if the characters defeat it. After that, it reappears unless the magic circle is repaired and The Veil is bound to it once more...



The Veil



THE VOIDWALKER'S ABODE

"In the fractured halls where reality bends. The lost sorcerer's soul drifts without end. Tread lightly, or you might suffer the same fate as him".

Voices in the Dungeon

Long ago, a powerful goblin sorcerer named Myridan delved deep into the forbidden arts, seeking to master the very fabric of reality. His obsession with unraveling the mysteries of time and space led him to construct an interesting compound, intended as a nexus for his arcane experiments. The Voidwalker's Abode is unlike other structures, for it was built with chambers that float close to each other. Each area is connected only by rifts in the ether, unseen and unreachable through normal means. Myridan's goal was to move swiftly across matter unimpeded. However, the goblin mage underestimated the volatile nature of the arcane forces required for this. In a catastrophic experiment that aimed to make his body ethereal and capable of unsubstantiated movement, his mortal life was shattered. The goblin mage was transformed into a non-physical creature of mist and arcane energy.

THE VOIDWALKER

MYRIDAN'S FAILURE LEFT him bound to his fragmented creation, cursed to wander the sundered chambers forever. He became a Voidwalker, an incorporeal spirit whose essence is stretched thin across the very fabric of his dungeon. Trapped between worlds, Myridan's spirit drifts endlessly, trying to restore his persona and undo the error that condemned him. Yet, the sorcerer's mind has long since fractured, his memories buried beneath layers of madness and despair. All that remains is an insatiable hunger to reclaim his lost power.

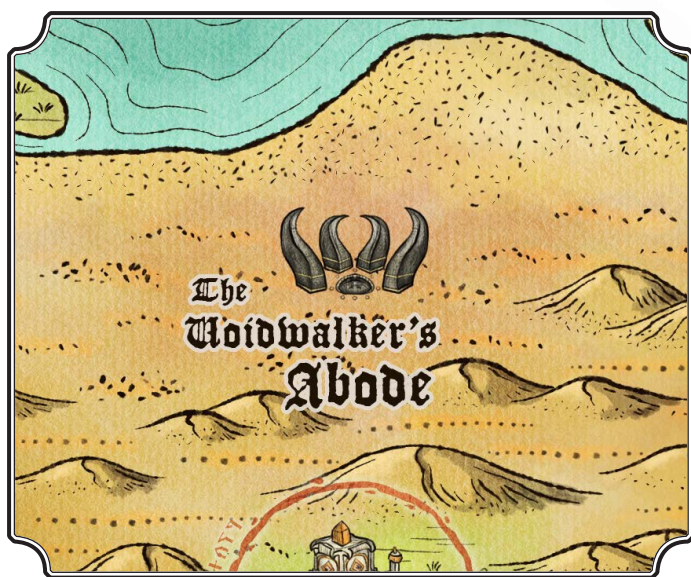
ADVENTURE HOOK

► **The Artifact.** It is said that within the shattered rooms of the citadel lies Myridan's Grimoire, a tome of unimaginable power containing great arcane secrets. The heroes are drawn to this forsaken place by the promise of this grimoire. However, they must navigate the disjointed chambers, each a perilous puzzle in its own right, while evading the wrath of Myridan's tormented spirit.

Level 2-3 Dungeon

► **Special Events.** Check for a Random Event every 20 minutes and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Fragmented Chambers.** All areas have four walls but no doors (except area 1). The heroes cannot walk to areas that are not connected. Magic circles are used instead (see map). Each chamber has a unique way to turn on the circle that communicates with the next area. Creatures that stand on one are instantly transported to the other end. They must do so one by one.



RANDOM EVENT

d6	Details
1	The heroes hear faint whispers in a forgotten language, echoing from the walls. If they listen closely, they may perceive the magic word 'volarium'. The heroes ignore it, but this magic word activates the crystal ball in area 10 (see map).
2	The heroes trigger a hidden pressure plate. A large axe swings and slashes at a random hero (1d8 damage, DC 12 Dexterity).
3	A spectral figure resembling one of the heroes suddenly appears, mimicking their movements. Interacting with the apparition causes the hero to relive a haunting memory from their past (DC 11 Wisdom). On a fail, they take 1d4 Wisdom damage.
4	The ghostly wail of the voidwalker fills the chamber, it appears and fights for 2 rounds before vanishing.
5	Poison darts fly and strike all intruders (DC 11 Constitution). On a fail, they have disadvantage on their next before they rest.
6	A crackling rift opens, sucking everything (DC 12 Strength). On a fail, heroes are sucked in. They reappear in a random area.



The Voidwalker's Abode

11

10

8

10 FEET

9

10 FEET

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T

5

40 FEET

7

4

40 FEET

2

40 FEET

3

1

1. DUNGEON'S ENTRANCE

A small stone table features a leather-bound log. Four sets of armor stand to each side. The armors reflect the light cast by the two braziers by the main door.

A magical feather pen flies and writes down the characters' names on one of the pages of the central log. The four **animated armors** become alive and attack. The circle that goes to area 2 activates after the fight ends.

2. CENTRAL HUB (BELOW)

This area communicates to three other areas, each through a different teleportation circle (see map). All circles are off, including the one to go back. They must be activated (see below). An arcane elevator rests on ground level. The platform moves upward whenever a creature stands on it. However, it does not come back down.

► **Guardians.** Three **zombies** appear on each of the circles. They fight until slain. The circles are activated and work as normal after defeating these enemies.

3. SIDE CHAMBER

► **Treasure.** The characters find some useful items stored here. A 60-foot-long hempen rope, a backpack, a set of leather armor, one longsword, an empty flask, and a set of polished, shiny dice (60 gp).

4. PITFALL TRAP

The heroes can help a friend who fell for the trap in area 6. Impaled targets must make a DC 12 Athletics check to climb out. They roll with advantage if a friend helps.

5. CENTRAL HUB (ABOVE)

The four skulls on pedestals turn and stare at the center whenever a creature ascends with the elevator. Four **skeletons** appear before each skull and attack!

► **Advancement.** When the enemies summoned are defeated, the elevator descends back to area 2, and the two magic circles in this area start working as well.

6. CLEVER TRAP

This area contains a large shelf with varied books and items. Three wooden chests stand at the far end.

► **Ruse.** The chests are an illusion. Creatures that walk toward them fall into the spiked pit (area 4). A *detect magic* spell reveals there is magic involved. Creatures that fall take 3d6 damage (DC 12 Dexterity for half).

7. STORAGE AND TRAPDOOR

Lots of mundane and varied items are stored here. The trapdoor is locked. A thief can pick the lock (DC 12 Thieves Tools). The chamber contains three flasks of oil, three torches, a set of leather armor, one shield, two daggers, and one longsword (85 gp for all).

VOIDWALKER

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 13

HP 60 (8d8+24)

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

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
5 (-2)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	9 (-1)	11 (+0)	8 (-1)

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages The languages it knew in life.

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Incorporeal Movement. The voidwalker can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 1d10 force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Sunlight Sensitivity. The voidwalker has disadvantage on attacks and Perception checks that rely on sight, in sunlight.

Actions

Dissolve. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: (2d8 + 3) force damage. (DC 14 Wisdom save, on a fail, 1d4 Wisdom damage). This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target becomes a voidwalker if this ability reduces its Wisdom score to 0 on the next round.

8. UPPER LEVEL

The bone remains coalesce into five **skeletons**. The circles activate only after the undead are defeated.

9. WEST WING

The containers here have luxury linens, clothes, sheets, and curtains (150 gp). The gold vases below are worth 25 gp each. But grabbing them triggers a trap. Darts fly from small holes in the walls and strike all creatures. They take 1d6 damage (DC 12 Constitution for half).

► **Altar.** A stone structure holds a variety of small gifts to Memnon. The heroes may leave an item as a tribute and gain **inspiration**. Removing the items incurs damnable disrespect. This foul act summons a vengeful **wraith**.

10. EAST WING

This area contains a few barrels with clean water and spices. An incantation maintains it all in good condition.

► **Crystal Ball.** The heroes may learn the word to use the artifact during **Random Event 1**. If they know the word, they have one use of the *scrying* spell.

11. THE VOIDWALKER

Myridan's ghost appears (**voidwalker**). With his mind and sanity lost forever, the restless spirit attacks. When defeated, the voidwalker vanishes in black mist. Then, Myridan's grimoire materializes and falls to the ground, a spellbook with eight random Wizard spells.



The Scalding Duchy



In the Scalding Duchy, where the sun's breath scorches the earth and the sands shift like a living beast, every step must be taken with reverence. To journey through these lands without care is to invite death's embrace, for the desert is unforgiving to the proud and the reckless. The dunes quickly erase the footsteps of the foolish, and the wind whispers the names of those who perished for their arrogance. In these barren wastes, haste is a folly, and caution is a traveler's truest, most loyal, companion.

Water in the Scalding Duchy is a treasure beyond gold, more precious than any jewel. Each drop is a lifeline, the difference between life and the sun-bleached bones that litter the endless sands. The wise ration it as though it were the breath of the gods themselves, for once the water is gone, so too is hope. Those who waste it, who think the desert can be conquered by will alone, soon learn that the Barren Dunes show no mercy, and that pride has no place in a land where the very air conspires to drain the life from your veins.



The Four

Desert

Temples

COPPERSAND HOLD

Within these sacred copper walls, the omniscient scalding gods reside. Disturb not their eternal slumber, lest the mighty desert itself awaken.

Dungeon's Inscription

The Coppersand Hold is a sacred goblin temple. They were built by the desert goblin founders. This location is considered a holy temple to the people of the Scalding Duchy.

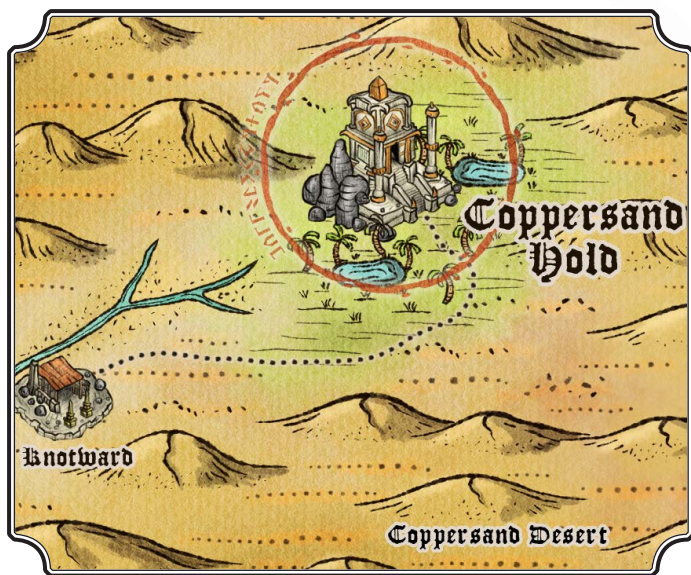
Goblins in the Scalding Duchy visit the Coppersand Hold often to pray and pay respect to the old gods. However, since the *scalding suns* strike the desert, not many people make the journey here. However, the capital's duke, Grix, the Cunning, knows that performing the *Pact of the Sun* ritual in the temples is crucial. He sent a scouting party to this temple to investigate the place and to facilitate the heroes' job; the ones with the gilded lotus. The goblin expedition's leader camps outside the Coppersand Hold. His group made it to the main copper chamber but had to leave. The goblins are scared and talk of statues coming to life. They welded the doors together and decided to wait for the duke's envoys.

CURRENT SITUATION

The explorers welded the copper doors of the main chamber, sealing the temple and its secrets away from the world. They have been camping outside for the past two weeks. They are confident that the duke will send help but their patience runs low as their location is a little vulnerable to the weather and local monsters. But the time for a new *Pact of the Sun* has arrived. The heroes must delve inside the dungeon and face the moving statues. Only after this challenge can they perform the ritual.

ADVENTURE HOOK

► **The Quest.** Grix, the Cunning, the goblin duke of Minsteth Sand hired the heroes to use the gilded lotus and perform the *Pact of the Sun* ritual. The reward is 750 gp per ritual performed at each of the four temples. The Coppersand Hold is the first of the four temples, located deep within the Coppersand Desert.



Level 2 Dungeon

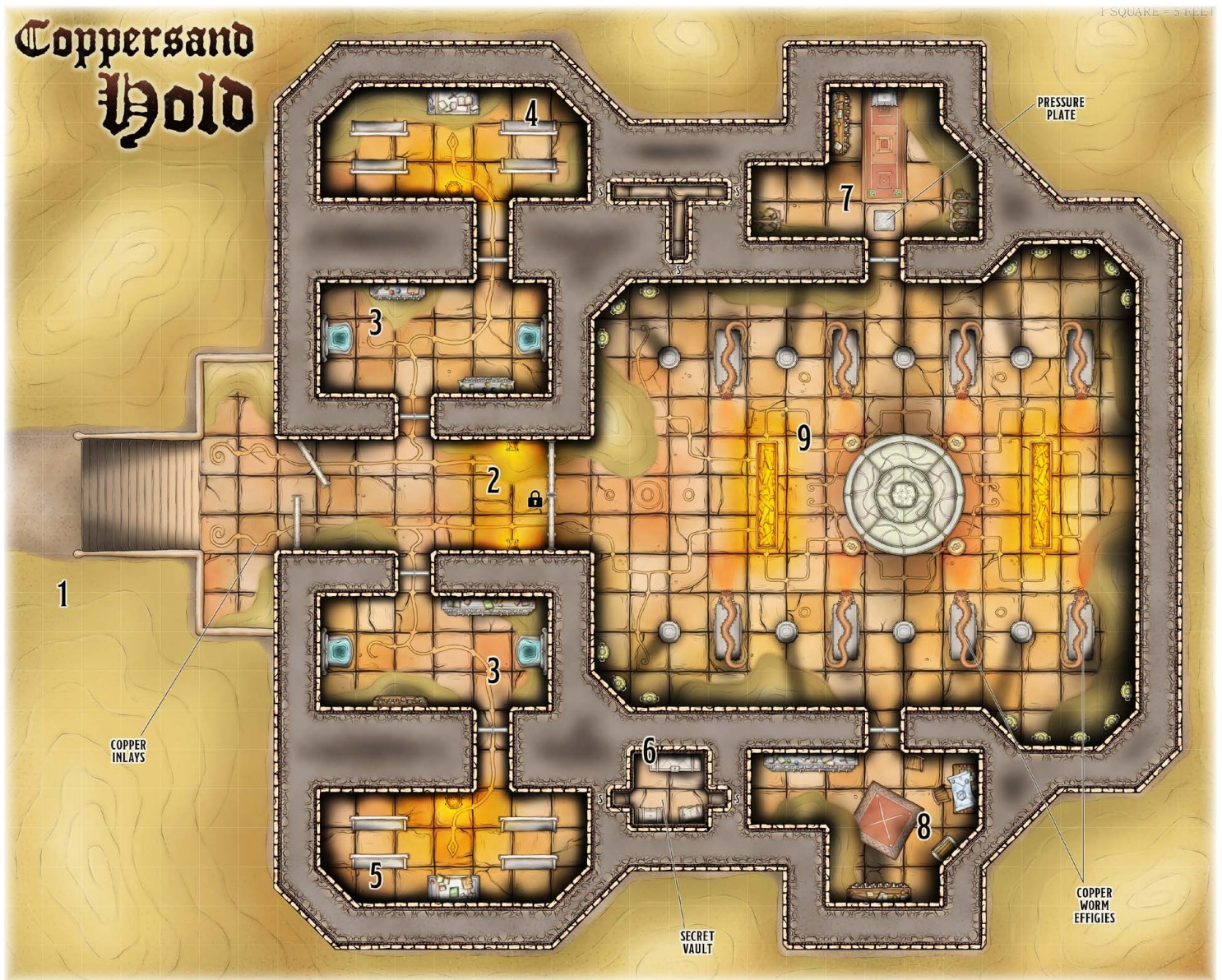
- **Events.** Check for a **Random Event** every 20 minutes and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).
- **Welded Doors.** The heroes must find a way to bypass the blocked, welded, double doors (see area 2).
- **Light.** The areas of the dungeon that feature braziers are well-illuminated. Copper inlays encrusted on the floor traverse most of the dungeon (see map). These ground copper inlays faintly glow but provide little light.
- **Secret Passages.** Hidden corridors are marked by an 'S' (see map). A perceptive hero finds the pushable bricks or buttons to reveal them (DC 12 Perception check).

RANDOM EVENTS

d6	Details
1	A plate is triggered and molten copper pours from the ceiling. A random hero takes 1d10 damage (DC 13 Dexterity/half).
2	The heroes hear faint whispers in Goblin. The spectral voices give a cryptic warning, describing worms made of copper.
3	Immortal guardians block the heroes' path. Six Scalding Duchy goblins made of sand attack the intruders until destroyed.
4	The heroes experience a sudden vision of the goblins camping outside fleeing in terror. The heroes may be deeply affected by this vision and become scared or doubtful (DC 13 Charisma). On a fail, they have disadvantage on the next check they make.
5	The copper inlays become crimson-hot for a minute, and the heroes' feet are burned. They take 1d6 damage (DC 11 Dexterity).
6	The heroes notice the shadows cast on the ceiling and walls slowly growing longer and darker, creeping toward them as if alive. They can leave and press on to leave these shadows behind. But if they stay, two shadows materialize and attack!

Coppersand Hold

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



LOCAL EXPLORERS

A group of five goblin explorers sent by the duke await help or further instructions. Led by the determined Grokk Ironjaw, they debate how to deal with the monsters they trapped inside. They welcome the outsiders.

► **Possible Allies.** On the other hand, if the heroes are open to parley and negotiation, they realize the goblins are explorers too. Their purpose is to do the duke's job and find treasure simultaneously. They wish to come back home wealthier. The goblin explorers are open to navigating the dungeon along with the heroes as long as both parties agree to share the valuables found. If the characters tell Grokk about their purpose in the Hold, the goblins do not hesitate and tell them all they know about the areas they stepped in. And Grokk becomes determined to help and be part of this great journey.

► **Enemies.** If the heroes act hostile toward the goblins camping outside, the four **goblins** and their boss Grokk (**goblin** Level 2 Fighter) defend themselves.

1. SCALDING DUCHY DESERT

The heroes climb the steps and push the large doors to walk into the antechamber of the Hold. Grokk's exploring party could be part of their group, depending on how the heroes played their cards (see **Local Explorers**).

2. ANTECHAMBER

The heroes can advance to either area 3 without effort. Regarding the blocked, welded doors, there is a way to overcome the obstacle if the characters choose this path.

► **Welded Doors.** The heroes employ shovels, pickaxes, crowbars, hammers, or similar tools to break down the melted copper. It takes 40 minutes of hacking at the door non-stop, the tools become blunt and useless after this ordeal, but the doors give in. This triggers two **Random Events**. Alternatively, a mage can use a fire spell to melt the copper and separate the doors. This takes 1 minute and triggers no events, but the caster must employ at least a level 1 spell twice. The heroes can also find the secret passages to enter this area (see map).

3. SACRED STOUPS

Identical chambers with two piscinas, their stone structures fused to the walls of the hold. The heroes may refill their waterskins here. The stoups never stop pouring clean, fresh water. Shelves filled with tomes and documents in Goblin can be found in both areas.

► **Lore.** Ancient incantations protect the documents and scrolls here from the passage of time. The heroes may spend 10 minutes searching and reading. Doing so reveals that Minsteth, the Bold, one of the founders of the Scalding Duchy and its capital Minsteth Sand, was one of the minds behind the construction of the temples. His architects worked for decades to build them.

4. ORATORY ROOM (NORTH)

Four stone pews and a simple, yet decently populated, table of offerings. The heroes can either spend 10 minutes praying or leave a trinket as a tribute to earn **inspiration**. They cannot do this twice (see below).

5. ORATORY ROOM (SOUTH)

Use the same description as area 4. The heroes may pray and leave more tribute but do not earn any **inspiration** if they already did so in this chamber's counterpart.

6. SECRET VAULT

If the heroes find this area (see **Secret Passages**):

► **Treasure.** A silver-and-gold circlet (40 gp), a fragment of a sapphire (30 gp), a polished pearl (40 gp), a suit of dwarf-made chainmail (60 gp), a set of fine fabrics and linens (50 gp), and a total of 374 gp.

7. SIDE CHAMBER (NORTH)

The heroes notice the trap if they enter this area from its side (see **Secret Passages**). Otherwise, three bolts fly and hit the first person who enters and steps on the pressure plate (3d6 damage, DC 12 Dexterity for half).

► **Treasure.** The chest has three silver-tipped javelins (4 gp each), a silver dagger (8 gp), a silver mace (10 gp), a suit of chainmail (60 gp), and a total of 43 gp.

8. SIDE CHAMBER (SOUTH)

The heroes can find this area before reaching area 9 (see **Secret Passages**). Spending 10 minutes searching this area reveals the following information:

- The scalding worm statues in the main chamber of the Coppersand Hold are magical guardians.
- The PCs find a map with precise locations of the Silver Bastion and the House of Gold. Two of the temples they must visit later on. The map grants advantage in their checks to find these places.
- Characters that know the Goblin language learn the *Ode of the Sands and the Sun God* from a tattered tome. Reciting this prayer before Scalding Duchy goblins has a 2-in-6 chance of making them neutral toward the group of adventurers.

9. THE SCALDING CHAMBER

Eight towering columns surround it, each etched with ancient symbols that pulse faintly with energy. Two braziers illuminate the elongated, copper statues of scalding worms that stand vigilant on either side.

This is where the heroes must perform the *Pact of the Sun* ritual, helped by the gilded lotus given to them. However, the guardians of the Coppersand Hold come to life before they can interact with the arcane circle altar.

Four statues (**scalding worms**) come to life and attack the intruders. **Random Event 5** becomes active during this battle. The heroes must make a DC 11 Dexterity check each round or take 1d6 damage. One **Scalding Duchy goblin** made of sand appears in a sandy corner each round until the worms are defeated.

THE HEROES PERFORM the *Pact of the Sun*. The ritual appeases the gods of the sand; all braziers turn off, and the copper inlays stop glowing. The heroes may leave victorious. One ritual is done. Three temples remain...



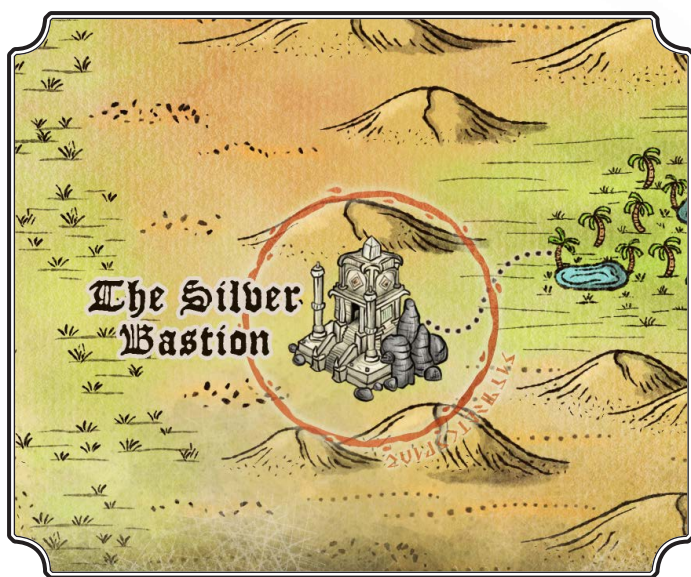
THE SILVER BASTION

Your worst enemy hides within yourself. The moment of hesitation before life's trials is a betrayal of the self. Overcome your fears and step forth to glory.

Dungeon Inscription

The Silver Bastion, one of the four goblin-made, ancient temples hidden among the dunes, is located in the southeast reaches of the Scalding Duchy. The seldom-trodden desert path that leads to this temple passes through a perilous oasis. Legend has it that a trickster spirit lives there.

The Silver Bastion is sacred to the goblins. It houses an enigmatic effigy of one of the old goblinoid deities. The altar statue portrays a polygonal entity with a single eye and lush wings of silver. Normally, both desert communities put their squabbles aside when they come to the temple seeking guidance. But now, the desert tribes disagree with the duke's approach; they want to impede the celebration of the *Pact of the Sun*. A small group of scouts, sent by the duke, camps outside the dungeon. The scouts lied about their mission and have a tenuous truce with the desert goblins inside the temple halls.



CURRENT SITUATION

A **DESERT SHAMAN** and his entourage arrived at the Silver Bastion four days ago. They found the group of explorers from Minsteth Sand, sent by the duke, and demanded the reason for their presence. The leader of the scouting expedition claimed they came only to pray to the Eye of the Desert, the entity in the main altar. The desert tribe allowed them to stay for 1 more day before driving them away. The scouts, outnumbered and cut off, bid their time and wait for the duke's envoys.

THE DESERT TRIBES

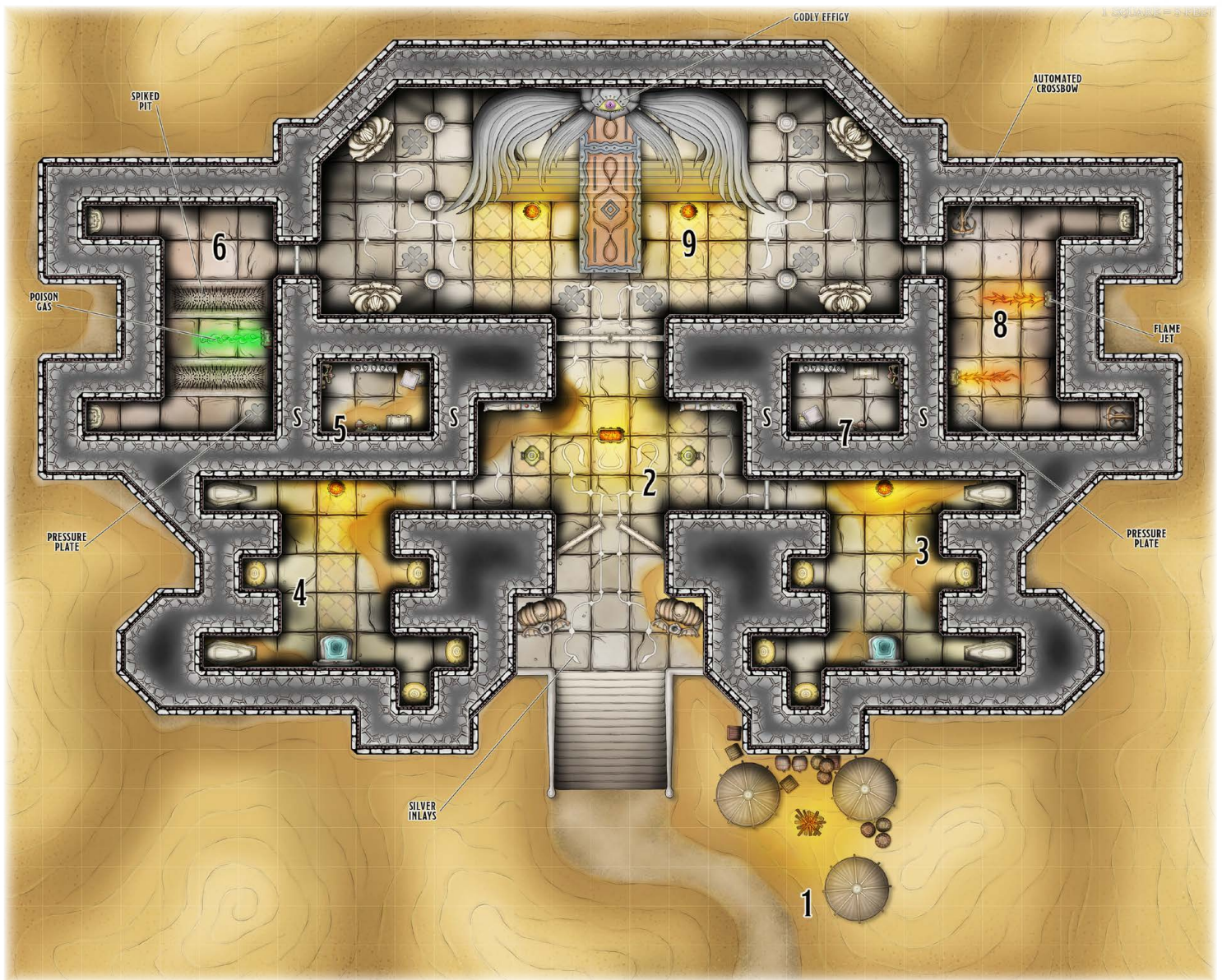
The increased activity of the *scalding sun* events has awakened the extraplanar avatar in the altar. The desert shaman noticed this when praying in area 9. He then commanded his entourage to guard the entrance (area 2) and lock the door to area 9 from within. The shaman knows that someone shall come eventually to perform the *Pact of the Sun* ritual, he intends to impede it.

Level 2-3 Dungeon

- **Events.** Check for a **Random Event** every 20 minutes and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).
- **Light.** Some chambers contain braziers with *light* spells. The rest are dark. Denizens have **darkvision**.
- **Silver Inlays.** Metal inlays encrusted on the floor traverse areas 2 and 9. These silver inlays conduct the otherworldly energy from the effigy in area 9. **Random Events** 5 and 6 and the **Maze Vision** occur near them.
- **Secret Passages.** Hidden passages are marked by an 'S' (see map). Perceptive characters find the pushable bricks or buttons to reveal them (DC 14 Perception).

RANDOM EVENT

d6	Details
1	The heroes trigger a hidden pressure plate. A spear thrusts from a wall at a random character (DC 14 Dexterity or 1d8 damage).
2	Poison darts fly and strike all creatures (DC 15 Constitution). On a fail, they fall asleep for 1 minute and take 1 damage.
3	Three Scalding Duchy goblins return from patrol and enter the dungeon. They hear the characters from afar.
4	A giant scorpion arrives at the temple. It stays outside and attacks the goblin campsite when the characters exit the dungeon.
5	The characters experience a vivid vision of walking through an endless compound of rock walls with the desert sun above. This labyrinthine vision conveys a feeling of desperation and anxiety. The vision lasts for 1 minute.
6	Darkness envelops everything as only a narrow, stone path remains; the potent <i>scalding sun</i> of the Barren Dunes appears above, coalescing the darkness into two shadows . As the characters fight, the ephemeral vision gradually fades away.



1. GOBLIN CAMP

Two statues of armored goblins flank the Silver Bastion's entrance. By the desert path, a small campsite awaits. Huts of emu leather surround a campfire.

The scout leader, Manji (**goblin**, Level 2 Fighter) is happy to see the duke's envoys. He informs the characters of the goblin tribes' takeover of the Silver Bastion and how they have locked themselves in the Altar Chamber.

► **The Promotion.** If the characters deliver the letter from Manji's father, Jakl, the scout leader is honored by their dedication. The letter informs Manji of a military promotion. Eager to prove himself worthy, Manji pledges his meager force of five goblins to the characters' cause.

► **Dangerous Camp.** Manji admits that his campsite is hazardous as they have spotted desert creatures nearby. Manji would love to relocate to area 2 but the desert tribe goblins forbid their return to the temple. Alas, Manji explains that fighting the tribesmen shall inevitably start a war with the warring desert tribes.

2. ANTECHAMBER

Beyond the imposing temple doors, a group of goblin tribesmen cook morsels of meat on a lit brazier.

The six **Scalding Duchy goblins** act neutral to Manji and his explorers but they ask the heroes to leave at once when they learn their purpose. If push comes to shove, the desert goblins fight bravely. However, a player may recite the *Ode of the Sands and the Sun God* (learned in the Coppersand Hold) to try to appease the goblins.

3. TOMB OF PRIESTS

This chamber contains two ornate sarcophagi, a stoup filled with fresh water, and three gilded urns. They contain the remains of goblin priests from a bygone era.

► **Guardian.** Opening any of the enclosures, disregarding the sanctity of the dead, causes a goblin **wight** to emerge from one casket. It fights to the death.

► **Treasure.** The wight's casket contains 100 gp, a +1 dagger, and two spell scrolls (*bless* and *gentle repose*).

4. TOMB OF WARRIORS

In a mirrored configuration of area 3, this chamber instead contains the bodily remains of valiant soldiers who upheld the values of the old goblin deities.

► **The Ghost.** The characters find no valuables if they plunder the enclosures. Instead, the ghost of a forgotten warrior appears to curse them: “*Wretched fools who plunder the dead instead of honoring them. Henceforth you are cursed for your greed.*” All plunderers have -2 to all checks until they undergo atonement in a church.

5. CONTROL ROOM (WEST)

This room contains machinery that controls the poison gas machine in area 6. Fine tools can be used to stop this device, making the room safe (DC 15 Thieves’ Tools). Destroying the machines does not stop the trap in area 6 from functioning but causes it to fail after 1d3 hours.

6. GAS CHAMBER

Stepping on the pressure plate causes a poison gas jet to emerge after 30 seconds (DC 12 Perception). Creatures standing in front of the gas machine take 2d6 damage (DC 15 Constitution). The room also features two 10-foot-deep, 5-foot-wide spiked pits. Most creatures can jump this distance with little effort (DC 12 Athletics). On a fail, they fall into the spikes and take 1d8 damage.

7. CONTROL ROOM (EAST)

This chamber contains machinery similar to that in area 5 but this room controls the devices in area 8.

► **Treasure.** The stone coffer in the room contains 400 gp, two *potions of healing*, and a *wand of detect thoughts*.

8. FIRE CHAMBER

Stepping on the pressure plate causes the two automated crossbows to shoot. The bolts impact whoever stands on the plate, dealing 2d6 damage (DC 12 Dexterity).

► **Fire Engines.** The machines spew fire jets. Fast-moving characters or clever use of objects as shields against the fire allows them to cross both fire jets unscathed (DC 12 Dexterity). Otherwise, the PCs take 2d8 damage.

9. ALTAR CHAMBER

A polygonal effigy with a large eye and lush, angel wings oversees this chamber. This deity was crucial in the old goblinoid religion. Now, mostly forgotten...

Praying in front of the altar are six **Scalding Duchy goblins**. The shaman is a level-3 priest. The characters’ intrusion enrages them. They see the characters’ presence as a terrible insult against the desert tribes. The *Ode of the Sands and the Sun God* is ineffective here.

► **The Effigy.** Historians know that this goblin deity is a facet of Ord, the Secret-Keeper. In the goblinoid religion, this was the god of the mind, dreams, and deep secrets.

► **The Ritual.** The heroes perform the *Pact of the Sun*, using Duke Gryx’s gilded lotus as the magic focus. The ritual causes all braziers to turn off and triggers the Maze Vision for all characters (no save). After their otherworldly experience in the mind labyrinth, the altar becomes dormant for centuries. Alas, two temples remain...

MAZE VISION

Casting the *Pact of the Sun* ritual in area 9 causes the godly energy accumulated in the effigy to pour into the Material Plane. The characters fall unconscious by the altar while their minds are transported to a dreamscape that contains a seemingly, never-ending maze.

While the vision lasts only 1 hour, the characters’ subjective perspective in the maze lasts 1d12 months. During this time, they attempt to solve the maze and find a way to its center. During this ineffable journey, they sometimes glimpse the outline of an observer in the sky. Spellcasters identify this presence as the Eye of the Desert, the goblin deity in the oneiric demiplane.

Characters must roll a DC 15 Wisdom save to find the center of the maze. They gain a *Blessing* (GM’s choice). Failing means the ordeal was too much for their minds: 1 week of migraine while awake (-2 to all checks).

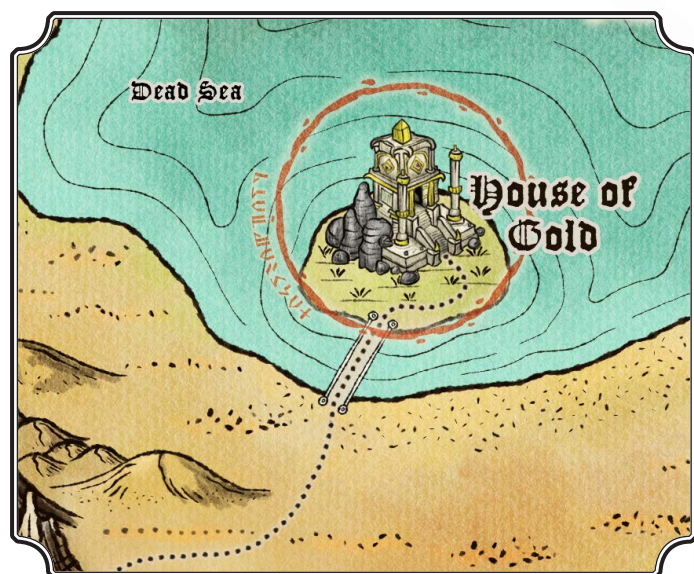


HOUSE OF GOLD

Our gold is sacred. Claim it and become one with the dunes; a thousand cursed grains. Forever bound to the desert, and easily lost to the wind.

Cryptic Warning

The third of the four sacred temples in the Scalding Duchy is revered and feared by the goblins who dwell within the desert's most unforgiving regions. It is nestled on a lonely island, reached only by a bridge. The barbaric goblin tribes that inhabit the harsh lands surrounding the temple believe that the most violent sandstorms, capable of swallowing entire settlements, are manifestations of the gods' wrath. To appease these deities and prevent their fury from devastating the land, the tribes regularly journey to the House of Gold to offer tributes of gold and precious items. These offerings are believed to soothe the gods' anger, restoring balance to the desert. The main chamber is a sight to behold, filled with thousands of gold ingots that shimmer under the dim light filtering through cracks in the ceiling. However, these riches belong not to mortals but to the goblin gods themselves.



A GOLDEN TEMPTATION

ANY WHO DARE to take even a single ingot shall face the temple's ancient and deadly curses, with the wrath of the gods descending upon the thief (see **The Cursed Treasure**). The chamber features the massive statue of the headless goblin idol with dragon wings. The otherworldly guardian ensures the sacred treasure remains untouched. Goblins, knowing the ancient warnings, approach the chamber with reverence and caution, offering their tributes with bowed heads and whispered prayers.

THE QUEST

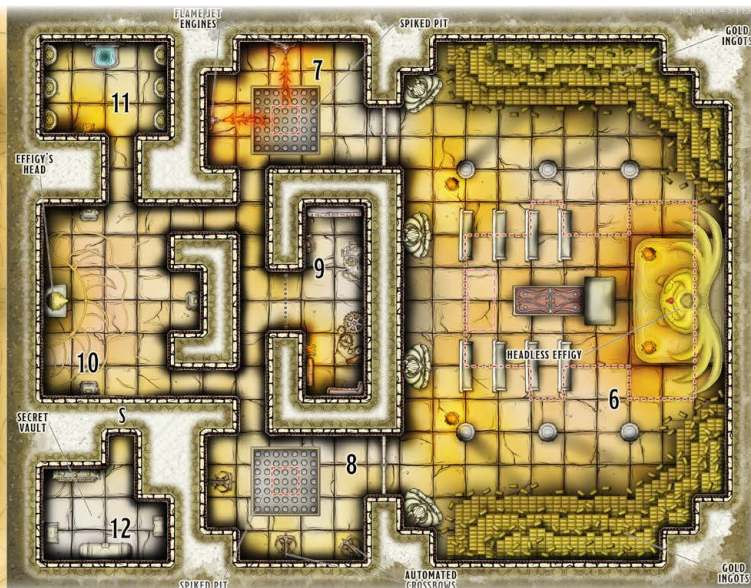
THE HEROES MUST perform the *Pact of the Sun* to calm the desert and prevent an impending cataclysm. To do so, they must locate the sacred goblin head, hidden within the temple's labyrinthine passages. The head must be placed atop the god's statue in the Golden Nave (area 6), only then can the sacred ritual be performed.

Level 3-4 Dungeon

- **Events.** Check for a **Random Event** every 20 minutes and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).
- **Light.** Some chambers contain braziers with *light* spells. The rest are dark. Denizens have **darkvision**.
- **Inlays.** Golden inlays in any area (see map) have a 1-in-6 chance of spawning two **animated armors**. They become liquid when defeated (see **Random Event 1**).
- **Curse.** No one can take the gold without suffering the goblin's curse (see **The Cursed Treasure**). The heroes have no way to nullify this effect. It is up to them to risk their integrity for a chance to get away with this gold.

RANDOM EVENT

d6	Details
1	When the heroes enter a new area, three gold-coated suits of armor (animated armor) attack the intruders. When defeated, the armors become liquid gold and, as if alive, the pools of gold slither toward the closest gold inlay on the ground.
2	A misplaced cursed gold ingot is found. What the heroes do with it after the warning is up to them (see The Cursed Treasure).
3	The heroes trigger a trip wire. Poison darts fly and hit all creatures in the area. They take 2d8 damage (DC 12 Constitution).
4	Four Scalding Duchy goblins made of sand stumble upon the heroes. The immortal guardians fight the intruders until slain.
5	The floor beneath the heroes begins to shift like sand (DC 12 Dexterity). On a fail, they get sucked in and appear outside the dungeon. This effect occurs instantly and they take no damage. This event can adversely split the party.
6	The ghost of a dead adventurer throws a cryptic warning before vanishing: "Beware of the golden spirals... They killed me..."



1. GOBLIN CAMP

A goblin camp huddles among the dunes, led by the wary explorer Rukkar. The goblins refuse to enter the temple, terrified by the rumors of curses and the fate of their scout, who valiantly volunteered to peek inside and has still not returned. The goblins offer a place to rest and eat. The heroes may refill their canteens and waterskins.

2. ANTECHAMBER

The heroes cross the entrance threshold and step inside the House of Gold. There are three paths to choose from (see map). Large doors block the option east (area 5).

► **Double Doors.** The heroes may use force (DC 15 Athletics) or a DC 13 Thieves' Tools check to bypass the locks of these doors. On a fail, the character involved becomes stressed (roll the next check with disadvantage).

3. NORTH OFFICE

The small chamber is dimly lit. A wooden shelf holds several scrolls and a desk features an open tome. At the far end, a sturdy chest rests against the wall, its iron bindings worn but still secure, waiting to be opened.

► **Lore.** The heroes may spend 10 minutes searching the area. The documents reveal that goblins have brought tribute here for generations. It is said that the Golden Nave holds so much gold, that it has become impossible to calculate its weight or value. The scrolls show a warning for would-be robbers and gutless treasure-seekers: *"Our gold is sacred. Claim it and become one with the dunes; a thousand cursed grains. Forever bound to the desert, and easily lost to the wind"*.

► **Gold Urn.** The artifact is worth 50 gp. Taking it summons the anger of a restless spirit (**shadow**).

► **Trap.** The chest contains fine sand. Stepping before it triggers the trapdoor (DC 12 Dexterity or fall to area 7).

4. SOUTH OFFICE

This chamber is similar to area 3. It has an identical golden urn and the same sand-filled chest and trap.

► **Lore.** If heroes spend 10 minutes searching the area, the documents reveal the magic word "sabled'hor". This is the keyword to unlock area 9. Additionally, they obtain three random Wizard spell scrolls, and three Priest spell scrolls, all scrolls are Level 1 or Level 2.

5. GOLDEN NAVE (UPPER LEVEL)

A grand chamber with eight standing sarcophagi surrounding a large irregularly-shaped opening. Two stone counters rest on each side of it. Piles and piles of gold rest below, they can be seen from here.

► **Guardians.** The characters have no time to interact with anything in the room; four sarcophagi open, their lids cast aside violently. Four **Scalding Duchy goblins** made of sand step out to fight the intruders. The remaining four sarcophagi release their goblin guardians at the start of the 3rd round of combat. The characters can interact with the chamber only after the battle.

► **Stone Counters.** Spending 10 minutes inspecting the open journals on the counters reveals an arcane command word, 'abajo'. It activates the levitating platform that safely descends to area 6 (see below).

► **Descent.** The two dungeon levels are 40 feet apart. To jump down unscathed is improbable (4d6 damage). Characters can jump down and roll on their back to minimize this damage (DC 12 Acrobatics for half damage). If they have climbing gear, the characters descend with little effort (DC 10 Athletics, roll with advantage). They take the fall damage shown above if they fail this check.

► **Skulls.** Goblin skulls rest on stone plinths within 5-foot-wide alcoves. Their empty eye sockets seem to witness and monitor all that occurs in this chamber.

6. GOLDEN NAVE (LOWER LEVEL)

The main chamber is vast and ominous, dominated by a massive headless statue at the far end. Eight stone pillars flank the effigy and support the chamber's upper level. Four towering suits of goblinoid armor stand as silent guardians, their hollow, yellow eyes watching over the endless piles of gold ingots that line the north and south walls of this chamber.

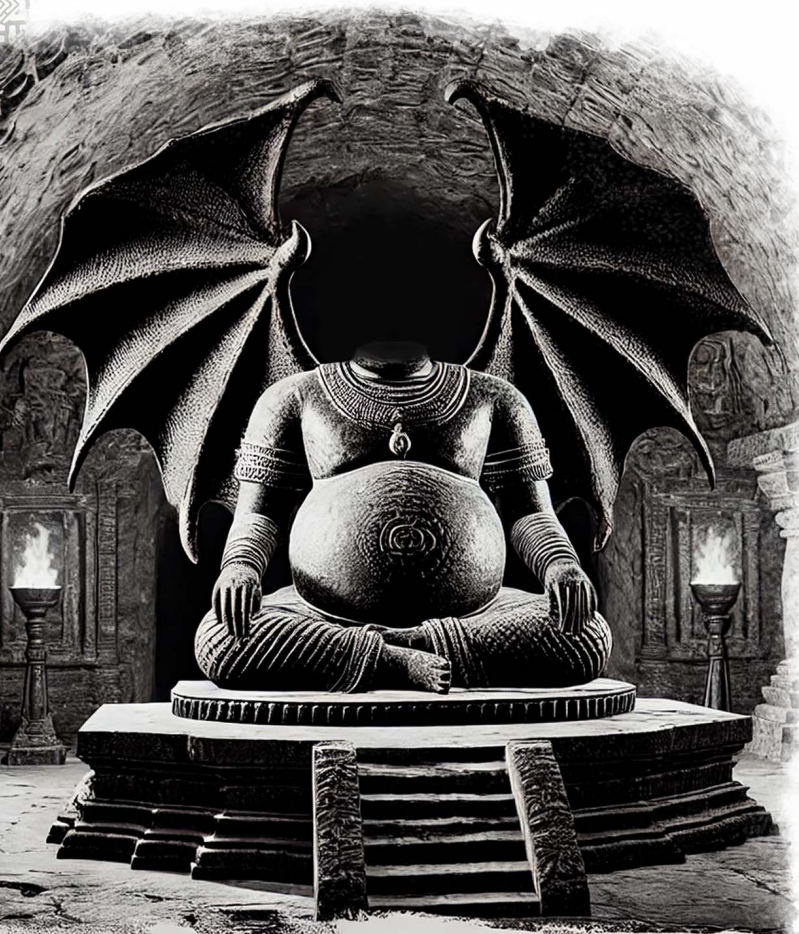
► **Headless God.** The incredible gold formation has the shape of a corpulent, fat goblin. Two long wings sprout from its back, granting it a divine allure. If the heroes investigate the area, they notice that the walls and ceiling show old frescoes that depict the same golden statue but complete, with its head, and a crowd praying.

► **The Mission.** The heroes have come here to perform the *Pact of the Sun* ritual. However, starting to do so with the incomplete statue makes the ritual fail instantly.

► **The Gold.** This treasure belongs to the goblin deities of yore, the dune gods. Touching this treasure comes with a great punishment (see **The Cursed Treasure**).

7. SPIKED PIT NORTH

Creatures that fall from area 3 are impaled and take 3d10 damage (DC 13 Acrobatics for half). Victims must quickly get away or be burned, taking 2d8 damage (DC 14 Acrobatics, roll with disadvantage if they failed the impaling check above). The gates that take to area 6 are locked (DC 12 Thieves' Tools to open).



THE CURSED TREASURE

The heroes experience a vision; in this reality, they see their hand approach the gold and turn to dust before reaching it. Then, everything around them becomes grains of sand and they are swallowed whole. They wake up where they were, their hand stretched out, a few centimeters away from a tempting gold ingot.

The heroes are free to ignore this warning; they can grab gold ingots with no consequence. The curse makes itself tangible when they leave the area. The robber's body turns to sand in a matter of seconds, becoming unable to keep their armor or gear on. They crumble and fall apart. In seconds, all that remains of that person are grains of sand. And a **Scalding Duchy goblin** made of it rises. They remember nothing of their past life. And their only purpose is to protect the House of Gold now.

8. SPIKED PIT SOUTH

Use the same description as in area 7. Same DCs too.

9. ENGINES AND DEVICES

The heroes may learn how to bypass the barred door in area 4. These engines fuel the traps in areas 7 and 8. They can be shut off (DC 12 Arcana). Otherwise, they must be wrecked but this causes an explosion. All creatures take 1d8 damage (DC 11 Dexterity to move aside).

10. GOLDEN SUN

This goblin head belongs to the statue in area 6. Before it can be retrieved, one **wight** and two **zombies** come out of the standing sarcophagi to fight the intruders.

11. GOLDEN URNS

Each golden urn is worth 40 gp. They hold the ashes of important goblins of yore that built this place. Taking these as treasure summons the anger of four **shadows**.

► **Stoup.** The heroes may spend 10 minutes praying to the goblin gods. They gain **inspiration** in exchange. However, the opposite occurs if they take the golden urns; they lose any **inspiration** they had when they arrived.

12. SECRET VAULT

The heroes find this area if they notice the secret button behind the goblin's head in area 10 (DC 12 Perception).

► **Treasure.** This loot is not cursed. A longsword with a pearl set in the pommel (50 gp), a gilded helm plumed with roc feathers (95 gp), a suit of crimson chainmail with matching shield (goblin size, 70 gp), a flawless diamond (360 gp), and several leather bags with thousands of old goblin coins (the lot is worth 1,654 gp).

THE HEROES PERFORM the *Pact of the Sun* once the statue's head is back in place. The ritual appeases the gods of the sand. The heroes may leave victorious once the ritual is done. Only one more temple remains...

The Brukesian Duchy



Hexcrawl Region

The Brukesian Duchy is a human territory by the northern border of a kingdom. The kingdom's capital is so far south that the crown's influence is negligible. It is surrounded by dangerous forests that a court of cruel fey princes rule. The regional map is generic in its contents and geography. It is easy to insert this region into any campaign setting. Both the human duchy and the fey-realm in the region are self-contained and require little to no modification to use.

The regional setting and map favor a hex-crawling approach. This document contains rules for traversing and exploring the duchy and the forest. This is an OSR product with no rules-talk or predefined RPG system. All encounters are described without rules or in-game mechanics.

[Click images to see product page](#)

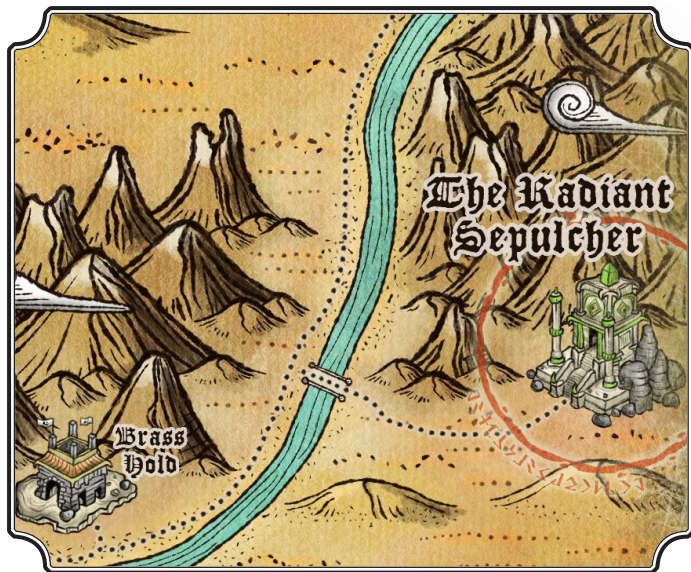
THE RADIANT SEPULCHER

“No one dares approach... Rumor has it that the radiance within the temple halls can wither your strength and have you become a lifeless, unrecognizable husk.”

Desert Guide

The Radiant Sepulcher, unlike its other three sacred counterparts in the Scalding Duchy, is a somber place that not even the fearless desert tribes visit. Oral tradition dictates that no one can enter the sepulcher as the embodiment of death inhabits its chambers. Rumors say that those who ignore the warnings and visit this forsaken compound succumb to its power sooner rather than later.

To reach the Radiant Sepulcher, the characters must follow the Tourmaline River upstream from Darkmoor. Close to their destination, an emerald beacon shines in the Barren Dunes. Upon approaching, a huge skull with glimmering, green eyes awaits. The descending stairs in its maw lead down to the dungeon. The characters, close to the climax of their quest, must explore this place fast because an invisible but relentless threat looms over them the longer they remain in this radioactive dungeon.



Level 4 Dungeon

► **Events.** Check for a **Random Event** every 20 minutes and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Some chambers feature green-flame braziers that provide bright light but also are a source of **Radiance** (see below). All denizens have **darkvision**.

► **Inlays.** Green inlays of an unknown metal circumnavigate the dungeon floors and walls. They glow faintly and are a source of **Radiance** that may hinder the party.

RADIANCE

Glowing gemstones, green-flame braziers, floor inlays, and the ponds in area 8 are all sources of a strange, life-sapping effect known as **Radiance**. As characters interact with the dungeon and spend time in it, they slowly become poisoned by this quasi-arcane effect.

Activities in the dungeon cause the characters to accumulate **Radiant Points (RPs)** at a pace of 1d4-2 RPs every 10 minutes. Other actions or objects may yield additional **Radiance** as described in each area.

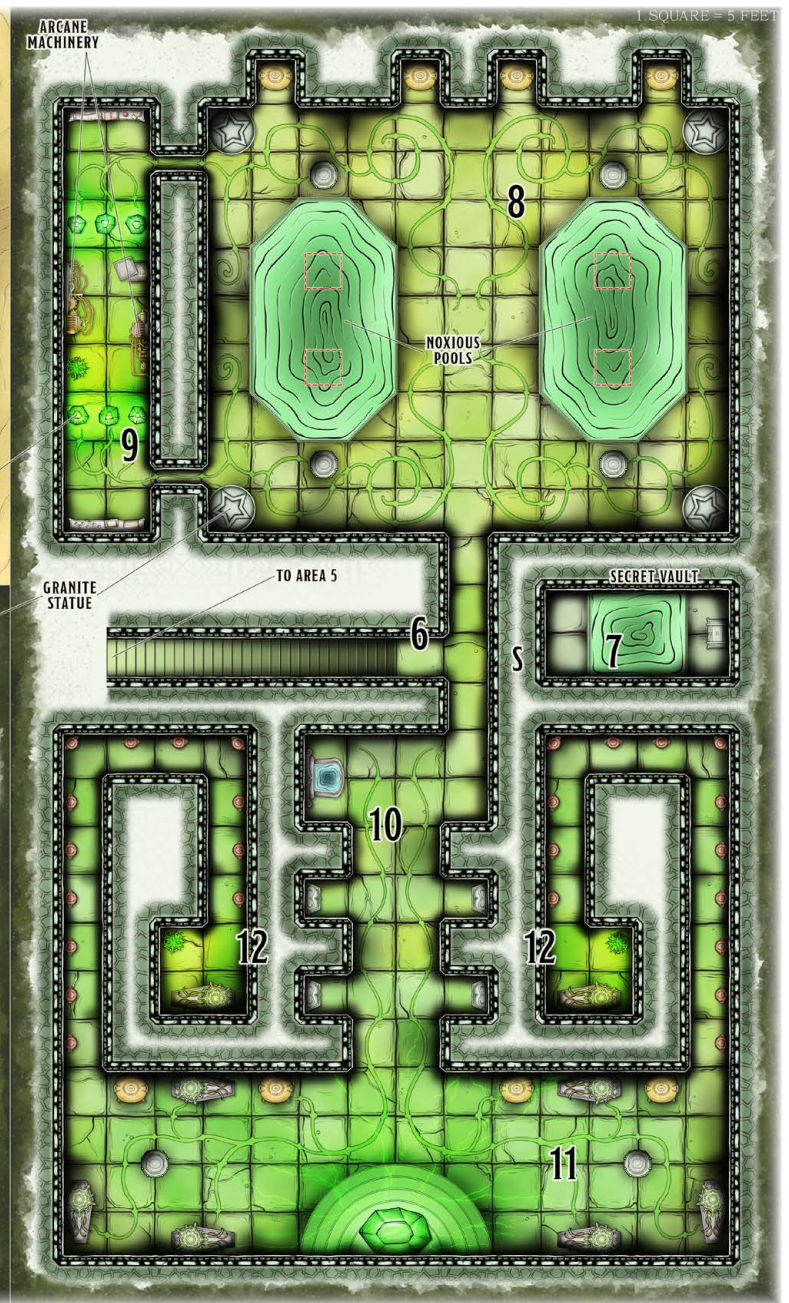
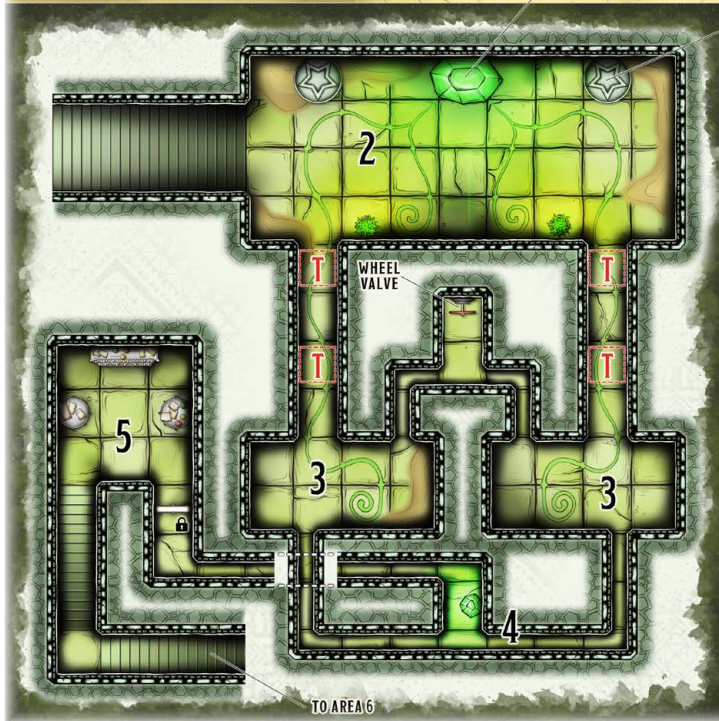
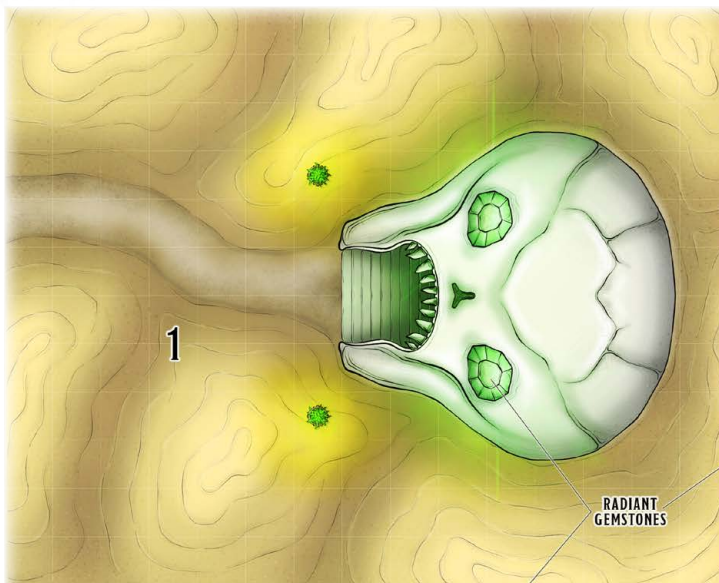
Every 2 **Radiant Points** equals a penalty of -1 to any Constitution and/or Strength related checks. A creature with **Radiant Points** equal to or higher than their Constitution score suffers from **Acute Radiant Poisoning**. The creature is too weak to move and dies unless they leave the dungeon within 10 minutes. Outside the sepulcher, creatures heal 1d4 **Radiant Points** per long rest. Creatures that die from this ailment suffer from terrible pain and organ failure. A common symptom is the blackening of the skin as if it had been deeply burnt. The corpses soon decay into glowing dust.

RANDOM EVENT

d6

Details

- 1 The radiant gemstones pulse simultaneously and breathe out a wave of deathly **Radiance**. Living creatures inside the dungeon gain 1d4 **Radiant Points** unless they are resilient enough to withstand this wave of blight (DC 12 Constitution).
- 2 Two **shadows** shrouded in an emerald glow emerge from a nearby wall. The undead fight until destroyed.
- 3 Four **Scalding Duchy goblins** arrive at area 1 after tracking the party across the desert. The tribesmen do not dare follow the characters into the dungeon but might appropriate the party's belongings if a camp was set outside the dungeon.
- 4 **Radiance** flows through walls and, for a moment, characters can see through skin and flesh. Their skeletons bare for an instant.
- 5 **Radiance** increases and causes terrible headaches (DC 12 Constitution check). Those affected gain 1 **Radiant Point**.
- 6 Two goblin **ghosts** appear before the characters. They warn them about the **Radiance** and beg the party to leave at once.



1. THE EMERALD SKULL

A house-sized goblinoid skull lies at the end of the path. Its eyes are two glimmering, crystal-like stones that paint the barren soil with their emerald glow.

Unlike the other temples, no goblin scouts are in the dungeon's vicinities. Whatever happened to the hapless, goblin scouts sent by Duke Gryx remains unknown.

► **The Skull.** Close inspection of the skull reveals it is made from granite and not actual bone. Its surface has been polished by the desert wind for centuries.

► **The Gems.** The gemstone eyes of the skull entrance are sources of the deadly **Radiance**. The *detect magic* spell reveals a strong necromantic aura coming from them; it cannot be dispelled. A creature that climbs within 5 feet of the gems, even with protective gear, gains 2 **Radiant Points** per round of exposure to its light.

2. ANTECHAMBER

A thick layer of fine dust covers the floor of this chamber. It is all that remains of those who came here and succumbed to the **Radiance**. The dust is not magical.

► **The Statues.** Two granite statues of armor-clad goblins flank the glimmering stone. A lever on their backs can be pulled to open a secret compartment in the base. Inside each base, there is a bag with 200 gp.

► **Guardians.** Four **Scalding Duchy goblins** made of dust coalesce by the glowing gemstone and attack living creatures. Creatures struck by their ethereal attacks have a 1-in-6 chance of gaining 1 **Radiant Point**.

► **The Gemstone.** It is a source of **Radiance** (see area 1) but a spellcaster can attempt to harness its power (DC 18 INT). On a success, the gains an extra spell slot for that day. The spellcaster still earns 1 **Radiant Point**.

3. RUNES ON THE WALLS

Viridescent inlays slither through the floor and walls of two hallways that lead to rooms where these green incrustations form arcane runes on the stone walls.

► **Pitfall Traps.** Each of the hallways in area 3 features two pressure-sensitive pitfall traps (see map). The trapdoors are directly above the ponds in area 8 (DC 15 Perception). Creatures that step on the traps fall into the ponds (DC12 Dexterity to avoid it). Roll for each hallway.

► **The Runes.** The walls of this chamber have a higher amount of the green ore that produces the **Radiance**, RP. Inspecting the Goblinoid runes for 10 minutes reveals that this temple was built by the chieftain Minsteth after founding the capital. The green ore on the walls was mined from the nearby range and thought to be sacred as few could handle it for long. Dozens of blacksmiths perished when building this dungeon.

► **The Valve.** Hidden in a narrow tunnel dead-end, this valve can be operated to open the door to area 5.

4. THE RADIANT PASSAGE

Passing by this glimmering stone is the only way to reach area 5. The characters must squeeze by it, gaining 1d4 RPs in the process. This occurs only once per day. The characters must pass through to reach the lower level unless they fall or climb down the trapdoors in area 3.

5. UPPER LEVEL LANDING

The door is locked (DC 15 Thieves' Tools) but the wheel valve in area 3 opens it. Most documents here have decayed; they crumble to fine, viridescent dust when touched. There are a few items of value, though.

► **The Ingots.** Two gold ingots rest on the bookcase. They are identical to those in the House of Gold but they are not cursed. Each ingot is worth 150 gp.

► **The Map.** Tucked into a time-resistant, magical scroll case is a detailed map of the Radiant Sepulcher.

6. LOWER LEVEL LANDING

Two flights of stairs descend 45 feet to the lower level. The walls flanking the stairway are decorated with intricate frescoes that depict a goblin chieftain taking over a large realm, earning the respect of his brethren.

► **Secret Passage.** The wall features a mosaic of Minsteth. Touching his hands causes the wall to slide aside and reveal a path to area 7 (DC 15 Investigation).

7. SECRET VAULT

The characters must jump across the pond of noxious water (see area 8) to reach the chest (DC 12 Athletics).

► **Treasure.** The chest contains 750 gp, 2,500 sp, two *potions of healing*, and a +2 *longsword*.

8. THE NOXIOUS POOLS

Two ponds of faintly glowing water are surrounded by four statues of armor-clad goblins. The roar of machinery filters through a passage on the west wall.

► **Noxious Water.** Each pond is 20 feet deep and contains a solution of water tainted with the dungeon's **Radiance**. Creatures submerged in the water, like those who fall from the pitfall traps in area 3, take no damage, instead, they gain 2d3 **Radiant Points**. Submersion in this water is the highest source of **Radiance** in the dungeon.

► **Guardians.** The golden urns in the northern alcoves contain the half-burnt bones of dozens of individuals who died building this dungeon. When characters reach the chamber's center, the urns open, the remains levitate out of them and coalesce into eight angered **skeletons**.

9. ENGINES AND DEVICES

The eldritch machines in this room control the flow of water in areas 7 and 8. They can be operated to drain the ponds or to start a filtration process that turns their contents into normal water after 1d6 days (DC 12 Arcana).

► **Glowing Gems.** Radiant gems flank the devices. Creatures must jump over the gemstones to operate the machinery, gaining 1d3 **Radiant Points** in the process.

10. TOMB OF PRIESTS

Blessed with divine magic, a stoup contains clean water that replenishes itself. It can be used to refill waterskins. The standing sarcophagi in the alcoves are marked with Goblinoid Runes that describe the names of important priests who were, at the time, loyal to Chieftain Minsteth.

11. SEPULCHER OF CHIEFTAINS

Ornate caskets and gilded urns surround a large, radiant gemstone. Emerald lightning bursts from its crystalline surface, like a violent thunderstorm.

► **Radiance.** **Radiant Points** accrued in this area are doubled as the gemstone amplifies this adverse effect.

► **Chieftains.** Inspecting the caskets' inscriptions for 10 minutes reveals that the bodily remains of the last six chieftains (including Minsteth) are interred here. Forcibly opening any of the caskets summons the wrath of a **Radiance**-infused **wraith** (successful attacks deal an additional **Radiant Point**). Each casket contains 400 gp in valuables worn by the desiccated body.

12. TOMB OF BODYGUARDS

Clay urns line the wall of this circling hallway; a sarcophagus lies at the far end. An iridescent rune glows on each enclosure. Valiant members of the chieftain's guard rest here. A **wraith** emerges from each sarcophagus if any of the urns or caskets are forcefully desecrated by visitors.

PACT OF THE SUN

THE CHARACTERS USE Duke Gryx's gilded lotus as the focus of the *Pact of the Sun* ritual before the glimmering gemstone in area 11. If the characters have performed the ritual in all four temples, they experience a vivid vision: *Against a blurry background, four deities bow to the characters. The gods recognize their bravery and resolve, taking their sacrifice and recent experiences as the ultimate tribute to honor their divinity. The deities then turn to dust and are blown by the desert wind.*

When the characters return to the surface, they soon discover that the scalding sun events occur no more. The desert remains a treacherous, inhospitable place, but not more than it is expected for such a territory. The celebration of the *Pact of the Sun* rituals is the climax of this quest. The characters can return to the capital now.

A HEROES' WELCOME

WORD OF THE characters' deeds precedes their arrival in Minsteth Sand. The populace welcomes the characters' traveling caravan as if they were foreign dignitaries or well-loved rulers. The throng of townsfolk follows the party as they reach Crownhold. The characters are offered quarters in the castle for as long as they wish to stay; Duke Gryx is grateful to the characters as the characters have helped him solidify his ruling position.

A day later, in an audience, the duke pays the promised reward of 3,000 gp to the party. As an additional reward, the duke names them '*Heroes of Sand*' and allows them the possibility of purchasing real estate in the capital.

THE DESERT TRIBES

THE DAY IS saved for the civilized folk but the desert tribes of goblin simmer in their anger. Once again, the *Pact of the Sun* ritual has been performed against their wishes. Ancient records mention that a war against the sand tribes often occurs after the *scalding suns* are abated. While the Scalding Duchy enjoys momentary respite and a time to rebuild, struggles with the desert tribes soon erupt as the sand chieftains threaten to wage war against Duke Gryx, whom they refer to as a heathen.

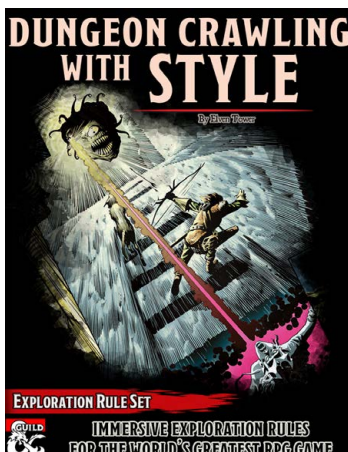
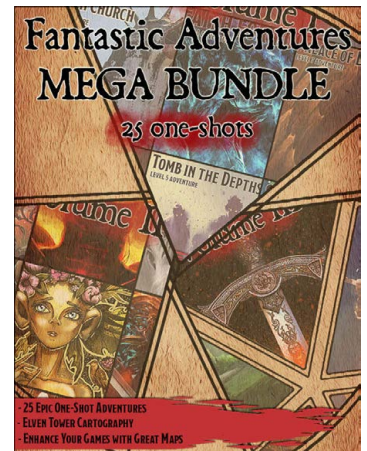
The desert tribes lack the strength to attack Minsteth Sand directly but they soon rally their forces and march toward smaller settlements like Darkmoor, Murkpoint, and Manorialde which just began rebuilding. These are trying times for Duke Gryx as this war threatens to unravel the work he has done. The duke summons the characters once more and begs them to stay in the Scalding Duchy as he needs strong allies to contend with the desert tribes. Alas, these are adventures for another day...



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