

HELLFROST LAND OF FIRE

• REALM GUIDE #9 •

THE GREAT DUNE SEA

Introduction

Author & Layout: Paul Wade-Williams
Editing: Danny James Walsh
Graphic Design: Robin Elliott

A land of howling wind, monstrous sand dunes, no standing water, and an ever-changing landscape, the Great Dune Sea is widely regarded as a wasteland. Yet nomads make their home on the outskirts, tending their flocks on the sparse vegetation of the desert and eking a living as traders and guides. Within the dunes, so legends say, lie several ruined cities, mostly covered in sand, but occasionally revealing their ancient buildings to the curious. This supplement expands on material found in *Hellfrost: Land of Fire*.

ORIGINS OF THE DUNE SEA

Before -800, the area now encompassed by the Great Dune Sea was relatively flat desert. Meltwater from the Lizard Tail Mountains flowed into river channels, whereupon it was channelled into *qanats* (subterranean tunnels used to carry water dozens of miles for use in irrigation without it evaporating), and the oases permitted not only settlements, but the building of great cities.

That the wind rose suddenly in that year and has never ceased since has perplexed sages down the centuries. For most, the fact that it occurred a mere one year before the accepted date of the jinn's arrival cannot be ignored. Oral tradition and a few surviving records from before the jinn conquest clearly indicate cities stood in the desert, but there are no indications these could have been a threat to the invaders. Surely so mighty a foe, creatures which stormed through the densely populated Kingdom of Magor like locusts, could have destroyed a handful of cities rather than electing to create a monstrous wind to bury them. Thus the question as to who or what caused the birth of the wind, and the subsequent growth of the Great Dune Sea, goes unanswered.

A related question is where is all the sand that is slowly spreading outward coming from? Surely, scholars argue, such a great wind would have left the core scoured clean while building up the outer dunes. True, no explorers are known to have reached the center of the sea, but even viewing deep into the region from a tall dune reveals naught but dune after dune stretching into the distance. Of course, the true center is often concealed beneath sandstorms, and it may be that no explorer has traveled close enough to the center to view whatever lies there.

With these two questions in mind, savants believe that lurking in the center of the Great Dune Sea is a gateway to the realm of the jinn, specifically those of the majin and kham-sin. Such a portal between realities would explain both phenomena, but until someone reaches the dead center, explores thoroughly, and returns, it remains a hypothesis.

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RULES OF THE REALM

These setting rules apply in the Great Dune Sea.

* **Air Magic:** Within the dunes proper, attempts to cast spells or miracles with an air trapping are made at +1.

* **Tough Going:** The strength of the wind, the steep climbs, the constant rubbing of sand against skin, and the soft sand on the flats make travel exhausting. Each day, travelers must make a Vigor roll to avoid gaining a level of Fatigue. Treat this as Bumps and Bruises. Characters with the Sand Walker Edge roll at +1, and those with the Improved version at +2.

* **Trade at the Oasis:** Blue Water Oasis is an important center of trade. It counts as a town for the purposes of buying and selling goods. When a caravan is present, or during the gathering of tribes, it counts as a city.

* **Trade with the Nomads:** There are no permanent settlements here, and few Bedu walk the land. Trading opportunities are very few and far between. When nomads are encountered, they are rarely in the business of trading. Streetwise rolls to sell booty suffer a -2 penalty. Even with success, the buyer offers only 10% on a successful roll, with a raise increasing the value to 25%.

* **Wind:** For every 20 miles the heroes travel toward the center, draw a card from the action deck at the start of each day. A black card means a sandstorm strikes at some point during the day. Multiple black cards mean the storm lasts for cumulative periods (so drawing three black cards means the storm lasts 3d4+3 hours in total). With a Joker, the storm lasts for 24 hours. When moving away from the center, draw one less card each 20 miles they cover.

While this argument is popular among both Devoted and Faithful, it is not the only one. One outlandish claim holds that the citizens who once dwelt in the region brought doom upon themselves, misusing a powerful relic. Others insist the area contained something powerful the gods did not want the jinn to take possession of, and thus made the region impassable. This argument holds little water, since there is no clear historical evidence the region held anything of value, and even if it were true, the jinn could likely have mustered enough power to remove the sands.

Exploration

Travel through the Great Dune Sea is arduous at best, and fatal at worst. Walking, and sometimes crawling, up the towering dunes is extremely fatiguing and time consuming. Taking detours to remain on relatively flat terrain, which occur infrequently, is little better, for it

greatly increases the distance one must walk to traverse but a short way toward one's destination.

Shock sand, electrically charged areas of desert that can release its static charge in a deadly burst of lightning (see page 12), is a frequent problem. While there are few natural predators, dune storms (see page 12) and free khamsin and majin jinn exist here in larger numbers than most anywhere else in Al-Shirkuh.

Food and water are scarce, though an experienced desert wanderer might strike it lucky on occasion. The need to carry all one's food and water adds a heavy burden for those without access to *feast* spells.

Coupled with the burning heat and lack of sustenance, there is the constant wind. When it rages, the sun is obscured by great black clouds of choking sand for hours on end, turning day into night. As one travels deeper into the sea, so the likelihood of a sandstorm increases. Since the wind always blows outward from the center, this makes progress increasingly more difficult. Erecting tents is a difficult chore, and one can rarely enjoy a good night's sleep out of fear of being buried in a storm.

Because of the wind, the sand is driven into every crack and crevice. No matter how well protected a traveler might be, the fine particles work their way under robes and armor, chafing the skin, leaving it red and sore.

Trade & Tribute

Blue Water Oasis sits on the Southern Trade Road, the only overland link between the western cities of Al-Shirkuh, and part of the great highway that eventually runs to distant Rassilon (by land and sea). The only permanent watering hole between Hulwan, City of Gardens, and Clearwater Oasis, Blue Water is also conveniently located almost exactly halfway between the two distant realms, something generations of rulers have used to their advantage.

Rather than travel the entire route, an epic journey of some 2,000 miles, a great expense in terms of both time and money, merchants from the Emirates and Caliphate quickly began to see the oasis as a convenient marketplace. Here, merchants sell their cargoes to the local nomadic tribes, who transport it on the next leg of the journey, or directly to their foreign counterparts.

While the population of the Great Dune Sea seems high for such an arid and inhospitable region, most of the tribes are scattered along the fringes or spend long months moving up and down the trade road. However, the Dune Sea is considered their homeland.

Several times a year, the outlying tribes, rich with coin and goods from having carried the goods of merchants, send great trade camel trains to Blue Water. This massive influx swells the population fivefold, bringing much wealth to the sheikh, as well as many political problems. In addition to trading wares, the tribes arrange marriages, settle disputes, swap stories and gossip, and honor their gods in mass ceremonies.

Sheikh Akbar, an astute businessman, charges merchants a flat 1% tax on any transaction carried out at the oasis, be it barter or for coin. While it is an added expense merchants must work into their prices, it is a very reasonable rate, and has done nothing to deter trade.

Major Locales

The Great Dune Sea is a turbulent area, its dunes rolling like waves driven by the terrible wind that howls from its core. Anything on the surface, be they dropped items of little value or entire cities of ancient design, are continually covered and uncovered. Somewhere beneath the sands are numerous ruins.

CITY OF THE SUN

In days of yore, long before the arrival of the jinn, a great city stood in the Great Dune Sea. Opinion is divided between serious scholars and storytellers over its nature.

According to fanciful tales, designed to attract audiences and coin rather than reveal any hidden truth, every inch of the city was covered in beaten gold, causing it to shine like a beacon. The story ends on a typical downbeat moral note. So rich were the citizens, and so lured by material wealth, that they turned away from the gods. Angered as the temples were torn down to make way for warehouses and treasuries, the gods caused the city to be swallowed by the sand.

It is these fanciful but popular tales that draw adventurers into searching for the city, for the rewards on offer are beyond the wildest imagination. While explorers down the ages have claimed to have found the city, usually by dint of uncovering a few gold coins or a golden plate engraved with ancient texts lying in the constantly shifting sands, the true city has yet to be unearthed.

Scholars, on the other hand, believe the city took its name from a magnificent temple of Shamash that dominated the city center. Gold was certainly found here in great quantities, for the temple's dome was covered in gold panels to honor the god of the sun. One ancient story says the hole in the center of the dome was filled with a huge crystal, which magnified sunlight into an intense beam. This focused light served as the high altar.

The end of the city, according to these enlightened thinkers, came about not through greed, but by the arrival of the jinn. However, here scholastic opinion is split. Some claim Shamash buried the city, full as it was of devout worshippers, so as to prevent the jinn from despoiling it. A related story holds that such was the citizens' faith that Shamash took them into the heavens, the city shining as a yellow star in the night sky. Others follow the view of storytellers, claiming the citizens lost their faith in favor of honoring the jinn as gods and were punished. Those of more pessimistic nature say the city was reduced to rubble by the jinn invaders, the treasures taken away along with the inhabitants.

NEW COMBAT EDGE

DUNESWIMMER

Requirements: Novice, Agility d6+, Strength d6+, Vigor d6+, Survival d6+

Whether blessed by a majin jinn or Duamutef, or trained in a secret technique, the character can sink into and move through sand (and only sand).

The Edge functions as the *burrow* power except the character's Pace is equal to his normal Pace (and he cannot run) and he may remain submerged for a number of rounds equal to his Vigor die. After this, he must make a Vigor roll each round with a cumulative -1 penalty per round after the first. Each failure adds a level of Fatigue. If Incapacitated while submerged, death occurs in a number of rounds equal to half the victim's Vigor die. If someone can get to the victim within five minutes of "death," he can be resuscitated with a Healing roll at -4.

THE CRACKLING TOWER

The location of this building, which lies close to the center of the Great Dune Sea, is visible for dozens of miles, not because of the structure's height, but because of the permanent lightning storm that rages in the skies above. Below the boiling clouds, from which bolts of electricity crash into the building with alarming regularity, the circular tower rises three stories from the sands. How far it descends is unknown, but given the height of the dunes in the area, the tower must be at least two dozen stories tall.

Reaching the tower is no mean feat, for the sands for miles in all directions are deadly shock sand. Dune storms roam the region, while monstrous air elementals flit through the turbulent clouds and dance across the charged sand. On rare occasions, storm dragons have been seen frolicking amid the blue-white lightning, adding their own deadly discharge to the constant storm.

Standing before those who survive the approach, the tower rises from the sands like a blue, gently tapering spike. The stones, cut to unusual shapes and slotted together with unearthly precision like a gigantic three dimensional jigsaw, are an unusual shade of blue. Touching them can be fatal, for while much of the energy is transferred into the interior of the building via a metal spike that protrudes from the conical roof, some of it is carried down the exterior face. No windows offer ingress, and if there is a doorway, it is buried deep beneath the crackling sand.

Common opinion regarding the tower is divided. Some believe the structure was once home to a khamsin noble, and the storm is a way of ensuring her privacy. Others say the site is a prison for a khamsin jinni placed here by Suleiman, the lightning, a product of the realm

CLERICS OF TAMARNI

Training: Although Tamarni has many aspects, pleasure ranks highly. Movitantes are inducted into the joys of alcohol, drugs, and sex, gifts granted mortals by the gods to be enjoyed. Followers are great believers in enjoying life, for as Suleiman himself said, “One day your life will pass in front of your eyes, so make it worth looking at.” But there is little joy in pleasure by oneself, and so novitiates are taught to share. This is especially true of wealth—although money enables one to buy pleasure, there is pleasure to be had in giving to the less fortunate. As the popular saying goes, “The miser’s riches are poverty and his kitchen is poor”—there’s no point having money if you don’t spend it.

Regardless of their favored aspect, all candidates are expected to be stealthy—it helps when exploring ruins, hunting rats, and avoiding those who think pleasure is a sin. Tests often involve creeping up on the temple’s sacred cats and snatching their favorite toy without altering the beast. Tests begin with domestic breeds, and slowly work up to the sacred lions and other big cats.

Prayers: Clerics appease their goddess by invoking images of pleasure. For instance, a prayer might begin, “I stroke your belly so you might grace me” or “Let my prayers be as wine to your lips.” When content or feeling lucky, many followers actually purr like a cat, something outsiders unused to the cult’s ways find disconcerting.

Popular sayings center on topics such as the nuances of luck (“All sunshine makes a desert”), the belief that positive action and seizing the moment is better than relying solely on luck (“Wishing does not make a poor man rich”), and enjoying oneself while one can (“The day of happiness is short”).

Adventures: Natural curiosity and the desire to increase their wealth makes clerics open to almost any adventure, even if they are not under any orders. Tomb-robbing is especially favored, since it gives them a chance to plunder, explore new places, and test their abilities. Hunting vermin may not be especially glorious or financially rewarding, but it is something the cult specializes in; sooner or later a cleric will be called upon to battle giant rats.

Character Guidelines: The wildly varied nature of the cult means there is no such thing as a typical cleric. Those who favor exploration or thievery should invest in Agility, Lockpicking, Notice, and Stealth, with Thief a favored Edge. Clerics seeking pleasure or wealth are better off with Gambling and Persuasion. Suitable Edges are those favoring Charisma, as well as Rich. Luck is a popular Edge, good fortune being one of the goddess’ many aspects. Clerics should avoid the Poor Hindrance—poverty is a major sin.

of air, preventing it from escaping. And yet, those who have visited the tower and listened intently between the thunderous booms and loud crackling swear to have heard faint noises from within. Some say they resembled a monstrous heartbeat, slow but steady, while others insist it was the rumble of immense gears and chains, like those found on portcullises.

GM’s Note: The tower’s width at the top is 18 yards, extending to an impressive 60 yards at the unseen base. Internally, the tower is divided into 20 levels joined by a circular stair. On each level, a circular walkway surrounds a 6 yard wide shaft the runs the entire length of the tower. No safety barrier prevents falling. The metal spike seen at the top of the tower descends down the exact center of the shaft. From the walkway, stretching back to the outer wall of the tower, are numerous rooms and chambers. When lightning strikes the top of the spike, the energy hurtles down its length toward the tower’s base. Arcs of deadly electricity shoot out toward any exposed metal on the walkways. When the spike is charged, the interior lights up with a brilliant blue-white light. Otherwise, it is cast under a cloak of stygian darkness.

CRYPT OF THE FLAMING SWORD

Many are the tales concerning Shihab ibn-Kalim and his flaming sword. One of Suleiman’s closest friends, Shihab was a mighty warrior. After imprisoning an ifrit noble in a scimitar, Suleiman gifted the blade to his lieutenant. So armed, Shihab slew countless jinn, dragons, and giants, as the stories attest, thus making the desert a safer place for the liberated slaves. Virtually every Bedu tribe has a tale detailing how Shihab saved them from some dire threat. Most storytellers agree that when Shihab died, Suleiman had him buried in secret in the southern foothills of the Lizard Tail Mountains (now technically within the Great Dune Sea), for his ancestors had once lived in the area. His flaming sword was entombed with him, for no others were worthy to wield it.

The story of the flaming sword makes for great entertainment, but explorers who take it at face value greatly endanger their lives should they ever uncover the crypt.

In truth, the tale is much older than the era of Suleiman. It came to be associated with the great prophet in the decades after his death, when many existing stories were reworked to include him. The crypt does exist, but it houses no hero of old. Within its labyrinthine corridors lies the withered corpse of a powerful magician. Born in an age before the jinn invasion, when knowledge of magic was far superior to that practised today, the sorcerer was buried with several relics and many texts concerning esoteric aspects of the magical arts.

Afraid his tomb would be plundered, an act which would rob him of power in the afterlife, the magician enchanted a large number of scimitars using permanent *telekinesis* and *smite* powers, the latter having a fire trapping. Still animated, the true flaming swords after which the tomb was named float through the corridors and halls in search of thieves.

THE GOLDEN PYRAMID

The tale of the golden pyramid is beloved by storytellers and audiences alike, for it is a story of greed, betrayal, murder, and vengeance.

It begins in the days after Hekata fell to ruin. Far to the south there lay a small but powerful kingdom, a vassal state of that tainted kingdom and its withered rulers. Long conquered, the rulers of that nation titled themselves pharaohs and fashioned temples and tombs as their royal masters had one done. Among the pharaohs that governed here was a warlike and greedy ruler, whose name history has forgotten. He conquered many lands in the southern desert, demanding excessive tributes from his subjects so as to ensure his treasury was always full. The best items plundered or offered he placed to one side, for they would form his personal burial goods.

Although the pharaoh had a wife and young son, he fell for a maiden offered him in lieu of tribute by a vassal lord, eventually taking her as his second wife. History records her name as Nefermeses, which in the Hekatic tongue means "one born of beauty." And by all accounts she was a creature of exquisite appearance. But whereas her visage was fair, her heart was black, and full of lust for the pharaoh's fabulous wealth, which he shared with no one.

Fearful of tomb robbers, the mighty pharaoh ordered that his pyramid must be impregnable. Architect after architect offered up plans, but in each the lord saw a fatal flaw. Eventually, a humble slave brought before him a plan of devious cunning. While his tomb would include many common features, such as traps and a labyrinth, he planned to use the hydraulic power of sand to lower huge stone blocks once pharaoh had been laid to rest. With a single blow, the entire pyramid, save for the central crypt, would be completely encased in stone. The great secret was known to but three individuals.

While an army of slaves labored under the lash to construct the edifice and pharaoh journeyed abroad to further increase his wealth, Nefermeses plotted against the pharaoh's wife and heir. Through poisoned words, seduction, and hollow promises, she had murdered those who stood before her and the throne. Eventually her greed got the better of her, for she could not resist the lure of the great treasure, and she had the pharaoh murdered on his return from campaign.

The pharaoh had long suspected her hand in the murder of his wife and son, and in secret had moved the entire treasury into his tomb in preparation for his eventual death. Nefermeses was distraught, for her scheming has brought no financial reward. She invoked her claim to the throne, demanding the royal vizir hand over the gold and jewels. The vizir duly bowed, and with forced politeness informed his new queen that she would be allowed to claim the gold only once pharaoh's body was laid in its sarcophagus, a task she herself as successor must achieve.

Thus the ending of the story begins. Unaware of the cunning trap, Nefermeses, led by the vizir and a pha-

TEMPLES OF TAMARNI

As discussed in *Land of Fire*, Tamarni's temples are licentious dens of gambling, drink, drugs, sex, and every other vice one can imagine (and some one can't). Here a worshipper can indulge in almost any pleasure he desires without fear of being arrested for illegal or immoral behavior. Many also serve as thieves' dens, gathering places for spies and information brokers, and centers of black market activity. And it's all completely legal.

While within the temple, patrons are protected by religious tolerance laws. Thus, while the cult of Shamash would dearly love to put an end to the immoral behavior the cult propagates, it has no jurisdiction over another cult, for only Iblis and his subservient minor gods are enemies of the people. Anyway, trying to close the temples would be next to impossible, for many of the high and mighty citizens of the Caliphate and Emirates frequent the cat goddess' temples on occasion.

This is not to say the temples are lawless places. Acts of theft and violence within the temple are strictly forbidden. Any behavior which interferes with the enjoyment of others, such as making excessive noise or being insulting to fellow worshippers, is also prohibited.

Offenders are dealt with by paladins honoring Tamarni's aspect as protector of the home. After a beating, perpetrators are stripped naked and thrown into a room full of angry cats. This is usually enough to deter repeat behavior, but those who cannot control their urges face being arrested and tried. Like all cults, it has the right to carry out any penalty befitting the crime, up to and including the death penalty (mauled by temple lions).

lanx of priests who would journey to the afterlife with their old lord, entered the pyramid. Fully aware of what awaited, for he knew the secret of the pyramid, but unafraid of death, the vizir handed Nefermeses a hammer and told her to break open a clay seal, the act of which would lower the huge granite lid over the mummified corpse and thus complete her rise to full queen. With a gleeful grin, she cracked the seal, causing the sands to flow forth. Throughout the pyramid, the vast blocks slid loudly into place, cutting off the exits and sealing the treacherous queen in with the gold she so craved.

It is said by the Bedu that her final scream still echoes around the desert on still nights. The Bedu also believe the queen still lives within the pyramid, a fell shade denied an afterlife by the gods, and forced to spend eternity surrounded by her ill-gotten treasure.

Of course, even if the pyramid could be located, it would take an army of laborers many years to hack through the stones to find the crypt. *Burrow* spells are no use through stone, and *teleporting* blind would be

FESTIVAL TO TAMARNI

CAT DAY

Amt Yaus al-Niwt Baot Alak Arkbet

On good days, cats purr softly and curl up on laps, drive away vermin, and entertain children with their playful antics. Yet they can also be destructive, use the house as a toilet, drag in dead (or half-dead or alive) animals, yowl all night, and hiss, bite, and scratch. As with luck, owning a cat is a mixture of good and bad fortune.

Worshippers spend this day pampering their pet cats, offering them expensive sweetmeats, grooming and washing them, stroking their fur, rubbing their bellies, and scratching their ears in the hope they will be well-behaved over the next year. Some even go so far as to give up their beds to their cats for the night. Many citizens buy bags of treats, throwing one to any cat who crosses their path, for any of them might be a servant of Tamarni in mortal guise. Stroking a cat brings short-term good fortune, so citizens try to stroke as many as possible.

Harming a cat in any way, including scolding it, also brings exceptionally bad luck. In the short-term, it may bring a thump from a cleric, for they are abroad in great numbers tending to the needs of the cities' many strays.

extremely dangerous. There is also the possible matter of the angry shade awaiting those who do reach the treasure.

THE HANGING GARDENS

Not every tale involving buried cities revolves around fabulous wealth. Some 50 years ago, a nomadic hunting party stumbled across a fresh body. Clutched in man's hand was a hastily written scroll, upon which the man had written of a wonder he has seen with his own eyes while within the Great Dune Sea.

His tale told of a colossal wall, 40 feet high and 30 feet wide, which surrounded an enclosure of 10 square miles. Within were many stepped structures, artificial terraces held aloft on forests of thick columns. Staircases allowed access to the upper levels, while thin walkways supported on elegant arches covered in climbing plants permitted travel between terraces of similar height.

Built around an oasis, water was carried to the upper levels by means of magic of unknown origin, which dragged leather sacks up shafts and emptied the water into great cisterns placed atop the highest terraces. After irrigating the upper level, the water trickled down to the lower levels by means of artificial waterfalls and concealed channels. Rather than being built on sand, the entire gardens stood on flagstones sealed with molten

lead. Narrow channels carried excess water back to the oasis, preventing the sand from devouring it.

The garden was, so told in the written account, as richly decorated as the grandest palace of the richest king. The columns were worked to resemble noble animals, while the facing of the terraces was worked with images of birds and beasts. Upon the terraces grew trees and plants of every kind known to man, their roots sunk into fertile soil dragged across the desert from the banks of some long-dried river. The text supposedly went on to describe the scores of plant species found here, but little knowledge of these survives in the stories repeated by the Bedu tribes. The scroll ended with the explorer's party being engulfed in a sandstorm. Bereft of water, the lone survivor used his last strength to record his wondrous find as he staggered toward the oasis.

While the Bedu oft repeat the story to amuse guests, they place no veracity in the existence of the Hanging Gardens, for the great dunes would have concealed such a site centuries ago. In their opinion, the man was suffering from heat stroke, and his story was naught but a memory of distant Hulwan, City of Gardens, and its Floating Gardens. What became of the scroll is unknown, for the Bedu do not prize written texts.

The gardens are very real. Protected by some powerful enchantment, they have resisted the advance of the sands, which now lap at the top of the walls, giving the impression the gardens sit in some natural depression.

Clerics of Ashtart located in Hulwan, City of Gardens, have spent years researching the story, for Suleiman often spoke of creating a paradise in the desert, and the description does indeed closely match that of the city's Floating Gardens. Could the latter have been copied from an earlier design drawn by the hand of the great prophet or based on actual visits to the Hanging Gardens? Until a thorough examination of the site is conducted, who built the gardens and for what purpose must remain yet another mystery of the desert.

JINN OUTPOSTS

While the wind sometimes blankets the trade road in sand, the dunes are, at present, many miles from engulfing the route save in the extreme northwest. Dotted along the eastern fringe of the well-traveled route are numerous structures. Raised by the jinn, they served as outposts marking the end of jinn hegemony and the start of the free lands of old.

Constructed from massive stone blocks cut by majin jinn in distant quarries, transported to the sites by armies of slaves, and raised into position by khamsin jinn, the edifices are impressive monuments to the awesome power of the alien invaders. Viewed from the desert, they appear to be carved from a single block of stone, for no mortar or joins are visible. To prevent cracks forming, ifrits used their fiery heat to melt the stones, giving them a smooth finish. Only on the inside are joins between individual blocks visible, for the jinn cared little about aesthetics in functional structures.

The outposts vary in design. Some are tall, square towers with flat roofs standing inside a courtyard encompassed by a defensive wall. Others contain several single story buildings. Most had cellars, and in many cases these form sprawling labyrinths of corridors and chambers running deep beneath the sand. Those outposts intended to hold slaves had wells excavated (jinn do eat and drink, but it is not a requirement for life). Many of these have dried up, but a few still contain water reachable after excavating the hardened layer of sand that has formed on the surface.

Although the outposts make for ideal fortified resting places, few caravans are brave enough to make use of them. Suleiman never journeyed this far, and most merchants and nomads believe rogue jinn still inhabit the ruins. In some cases they are right, but most are empty, their halls echoing only to the footsteps of curious, foolhardy, or brave explorers searching for ancient records or abandoned relics of the mighty race.

At least one outpost, located ten miles east of the trade road near the start of the dunes, is in the hands of an orc tribe. Frequent raiders of lightly guarded caravans, they have survived only because the nomads refuse to travel near to the building.

SERENDIB

The name of Serendib, the Glittering City, has survived the passage of time by dint that it is a comparative recent construction, at least when compared to other ruins in the Great Dune Sea.

The reason for its survival is purely down to it being a jinn city, and thus it was populated by the ancestors of the modern citizens of Al-Shirkuh and survived in their early oral stories. Constructed using jinn magic, Serendib lay in the northeast of the region, and was finally consumed by sand only in the last century.

Here, cargoes of precious stones mined in the Lizard Tail Mountains were brought for cutting and polishing before being sent to the jinn homeland further north. When news of Suleiman's rebellion reached the distant city, the jinni overlord, reputedly a majin, ordered the entire population of slaves expelled rather than killed, as some of his peers elsewhere had done. Storytellers claim his move proved prudent, for when Suleiman heard the story he granted the jinn clemency.

By all accounts, Suleiman demanded the jinn hand over the gems stored in the city as recompense for the suffering his people had inflicted. No fool, the jinn complied immediately. However, he neglected to include the polished stones stored in vaults beneath the city, for he took Suleiman at his literal word rather than the spirit of his decree. Alas, Suleiman was not called the Wise for nothing, and thrice he asked the creature if it had handed over all the gems. Thrice it replied in the affirmative.

As punishment, Suleiman bound the jinn into a large diamond, which he then placed in the vaults. Here the jinn, whom Suleiman judged greedy, would be able to stare at his stockpile until the sands of time ran out.

FESTIVAL TO TAMARNI

LUCK DAY

Ansbi Yaus al-Niwt Alak Neteru

Tamarni is a fickle mistress, blessing and cursing mortals in equal measure. It is said that each time a mortal takes an action where luck might play a part, Tamarni flips a coin drawn at random from a pouch. Such is her wealth, that the goddess keeps one pouch for every mortal. One side of the coin is engraved with the image of a cat, the other a rat (one of Iblis' many symbols). If the cat lands face up, then good luck will fall upon the mortal. The vermin gazing upward spells misfortune.

In order to weigh the odds in their favor, mortals sacrifice special coins stamped with two cats. These are available from all temples of Tamarni at a cost of 10 dinars apiece. The coins have no intrinsic value, being of base metal painted in gold-colored paint, and are not legal tender. Some citizens offer these up to the goddess by placing them in a cat's basket. Should the animal voluntarily curl up on the coin before the next dawn, then the supplication has been successful and the coin added to Tamarni's pouch. Once accepted, the coin is destroyed—according to the cult, attempting to use the same coin more than once actually creates a vermin-headed coin in the purse.

Although the surface portions of the city was plundered before the sands encroached, the vaults have yet to be discovered and looted. Storytellers warn against such action, despite the rewards it would bring, for touching the wrong gem could release the jinni, a creature who, after five centuries of imprisonment, is likely to bare more than a passing grudge against mortals.

THE SILENT CITY

Another lost city swallowed by dunes, the Silent City takes its name from the belief the citizens were cursed by Iblis. The emir was a greedy man, and in his lust for wealth made a deal with Iblis. In return for unimaginable wealth, Iblis said he would claim the soul of every citizen on the eve that a day passed without someone in the city uttering a single scream. Believing himself the cleverer of the two, the emir ensured that just before each dusk a citizen chosen at random was tortured mercilessly until he screamed. Being a young man of good health, this practise continued for over 70 years, resulting in over 29,000 innocent souls tortured.

One day, an enemy army approached the city. The sentries tried to call out an alarm, but no sound came forth. They tried ringing the great alarm bell, but it failed to toll. Unable to mount any defense, and with their

FESTIVAL TO TAMARNI

SECRETS DAY

Amt Yaus al-Niwt Alak Neteru

Any mortal who has interacted with a cat is fully aware of its enigmatic look, the appearance of a being that knows something others do not. When a cat has such a look, it is said to have “the face of Hemsut,” the minor god of secrets (p. 10).

On this day in the holy month, worshippers and those with a burden they cannot share with other mortals but feel they must get off their chest, attend the local temple of Tamarni. For a donation of five dinars, the citizen is permitted to whisper his secret into the ears of one of the many temple cats that laze around the building. If the cat responds with that knowing look or blinks, then Tamarni has heard the plaintiff’s secret and will ensure it is kept safe from prying eyes and ears for the coming year. If the cat yawns, licks itself, or otherwise looks bored, then the secret will be revealed to others before the year is out, for Tamarni has already heard the information.

gates wide open, the entire city was put to the sword, their death screams heard only in the Bottomless Pit, where Iblis rejoiced at their beautiful cacophony. Since that fateful day, it has been impossible to produce any sound in the accursed city.

PERSONS of Note

The dunes may be a desolate wasteland, but the surrounding land is home to many nomads. A few of those that may help or hinder the heroes are detailed below.

AWAD IBN-HUDHAFAH

Gruff, blunt, and not one to suffer fools gladly, Awad is a frequent visitor to Blue Water Oasis. He visits several times a year to trade pelts, teeth, and occasionally a small trinket for provisions before disappearing back into the desert. Most denizens of the oasis give him a wide berth, partly because of his temperament and partly because they believe he is completely insane.

Awad’s left leg is missing below the knee, replaced with a stump carved from sand worm bone. In return for filling his waterskin, Awad tells any one willing to spare the time how a monstrous sand worm with scales of purest white burst through the sand of the Great Dune Sea while he was hunting and snatched him up in its colossal teeth. Fortunately, the creature’s aim was poor, and Awad escaped with just a severed leg. He vowed to get revenge for his mutilation. He actively seeks support

for his quest, offering his hunting partners they can keep whatever they find inside the creature’s gut. Many have traveled into the wastes with Awad in search of his white sand worm, but few ever return.

TOUTAK THE VULTURE

A frequent visitor to Blue Water Oasis, Toutak is a sand goblin ushabti mage. A notorious petty thief and scavenger (hence his nickname), he lurks around visiting caravans, ever hopefully of stealing a few scraps of metal or wood. Once he has collected as much as he can carry, he slinks away into the desert. He may be gone for weeks or months, but he always returns. No one knows what the goblin is doing, and to be honest, no one really cares. Jokes abound that he is trying to open a bazaar or sells the items to gullible travelers as antiques uncovered from the shifting dunes.

For all the perceived flaws of his race, Toutak is a skilled golem creator. He has the unsettling habit of muttering to himself about his “machine.” One night, after imbibing too much date wine, he had a fantastic dream in which he was sat inside a colossal golem that could burrow beneath the sand. On waking, Toutak realized that if he could construct such a golem, the shifting dunes of the desert would be no obstacle to him uncovering lost cities and their fabulous wealth. Lacking the funds to buy the components he needs, Toutak has spent the last ten years scavenging for supplies.

His golem is located on the edge of the dunes, in a ruined caravanserai. It resembles a gigantic crab with wooden legs and huge metal scoops in place of claws. The golem is ugly, crudely patched together from flattened pots and pans held in place with leather straps and nails made from scraps of metal. Unlike other golems, Toutak’s creation requires manual input through a complex series of levers to function effectively. Despite a decade of work, he still requires 5,000 dinars worth of materials and many months of hard labor to finish his project. What he really needs is an investor (stealing roughly 100 dinars worth of metal each visit is not helping productivity).

Unfortunately, Toutak is paranoid that his device would be stolen if others knew its purpose. Thus, he attempts to court investors with tall stories about uncovering a lost city. Fully aware of how much money he could earn with his golem, he is prepared to offer potential investors a return of five-to-one on their investment.

UNCLE NASIM

An elderly Bedu and minor merchant, Nasim, who everyone calls Uncle out of respect, controls the black market at Blue Water Oasis. He demands a hefty cut of any illicit trade, but in return offers genuine protection from the authorities. Those who cross him are usually found dead in the desert soon afterward. Nasim never does his own dirty work—he has a gang of loyal cutthroats more than willing to carry out his orders.

WINDY BADI

A resident of Blue Water Oasis and a cleric of Upuaut, Windy Badi takes his nickname from his chronic flatulence, the result of a greater khamsin's curse for failing to properly flatter the vain creature. Badi earns a good living selling alchemical devices to visitors and nomads alike, but these too are affected by his curse. Most times users note no ill effects, but in times of stress, they are rendered stunned by bouts of extreme and especially potent flatulence.

In game terms, any time a character subjected to a spell from one of Badi's devices draws a deuce as his first action card in a round, he is automatically Shaken at the start of that round, before any actions are taken. In potentially stressful social situations, such as meeting an important dignitary, the GM should draw a single card. A deuce means the hero is beset by flatulence. He suffers a -2 Charisma penalty for the duration of the scene.

Gods & Monsters

This section details three minor deities tied to the cult of Tamarni, two creatures, and two hazards.

ASHNANI

Titles: The Stealthy One, Purveyor of Fine Goods, Collector of Wealth.

Aspects: Thieves.

Affiliation: Tamarni.

Symbol: A key.

Priesthood: Thief Lords (priests); Thief Swords (paladins).

Herald: None.

Holy Days: Tamith Yaus al-Niwt of each month is a holy day. Any day the cleric steals and sacrifices an object is a personal high holy day.

Duties: To acquire wealth for Ashnani through larceny, to defeat any security system.

Sins: (Minor) being robbed, being caught committing a crime, failure to steal and sacrifice an object of at least 100 dinar value once a month; (Major) running out of money, failing to steal and sacrifice an item worth at least 500 dinar once per season; (Mortal) failing to steal and sacrifice an item worth at least 1000 dinar once per year.

Signature Power: *Boost/lower trait* (Climbing, Notice, Lockpicking, Stealth).

Powers: *Detect* (no conceal), *invisibility*, *lock/unlock*, *speed*, *teleport*, *wall walker*.

Trappings: Any except necromancy, though trappings rarely have any physical effects.

Ashnani, a daughter of Tamarni and Qedesht, quickly developed a taste for material wealth. Unlike her father, Ashnani had no desire to work for a living, considering the rewards too small for the effort required. She also questioned the wisdom of having to spend shiny gold coins in order to buy other objects, since all that did was

FESTIVAL TO TAMARNI

TEMPERANCE DAY

Tamith Yaus al-Niwt of each month

Frequently exposed to all manner of physical, mental, and spiritual stimuli, clerics may become desensitized or blasé. In order to ensure this does not happen, Tamarni demands her followers abstain from taking any form of pleasure on the first Day of House of each month. Tabac, sex, drugs, coffee, alcohol, and other such stimuli must be avoided, gambling is prohibited, as are acts of generosity, and even food must be kept bland to avoid giving any form of pleasure. Refusing to enjoy a pleasure is not considered a sin on this day. Instead, engaging in pleasurable activities become sinful (the GM should determine the level of sin based on the level of pleasure the act likely incurs).

The day does not just affect sentient beings. Cats, as servants of Tamarni, must abstain from pleasure. Since cats are prone to idle curiosity, their owners must help them avoid accidental pleasurable acts. Typically, the animal is placed in a small box with enough food and water to last the day. Many cats take this imprisonment with apparent good grace, but many owners claim there is a mischievous twinkle in their eye.

trade one form of wealth for another of equal value. Instead, she turned to thievery, using her natural grace and stealth to sneak into the gods' homes and relieve them of their valuables.

Unlike her mother and many siblings, Ashnani has no tail. According to popular legend, she made the mistake of trying to rob Shamash's celestial palace. Ever vigilant, the sun god caught the feline thief and cut off her tail as punishment. Since then, the two deities have become rivals. Shamash's richly adorned temples are primary targets for Ashnani's mortal agents. It is further said that Shamash vowed to cut off one of her paws next time he caught her stealing. It is from this threat that the mortal punishment of cutting off thieves' hands stems (men having no tails), or so storytellers say.

Unlike many minor deities, Ashnani has temples. These are usually the headquarters of a thieves' guild, and are located in secret places, often in basements or disused buildings. Rich citizens may possess a small shrine to the goddess. Here they offer token sacrifices of coins (which are then given to the local temple of Tamarni as a donation) in the vain hope the goddess will not steal any further wealth. In art, Ashnani is shown as a tailless cat clutching a key in her paws. Many statues show her curled up contentedly on a bed of coins.

Both priests and paladins are thieves. In general, priests operate in the cities, stealing from rich citizens'

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homes, while paladins focus on heavily-guarded buildings and trap-laden tombs. Few clerics ever operate as brigands or bandits—Ashnani is the goddess of stealthy thieves, not thugs and murderers.

Although widely persecuted by the authorities, who see the cult as nothing more than a thieves' guild, clerics can earn honest money as security advisors for temples, rich citizens, and businesses. Instead of accepting a normal payment, clerics haggle for the right to steal one item of an agreed value. This allows them to fulfil both the cult's goals in one act. If he is successful, the thief keeps his reward, so long as he points out the weakness in the client's security so that it may be improved. A wise cleric never highlights every flaw, as doing so prohibits repeat work. If unsuccessful, he goes unrewarded and likely sins for being caught in the act of committing a crime. It is considered very bad form to steal any other wealth from a client during such work, as this tarnishes the cult's name even further.

Ceremonies involve the destruction of stolen objects. The nature of the destruction depends on the object. Metal goods are melted down and impurities added to prevent the thief still benefiting from the offering, paper is burned, ceramics smashed, and so on. The destruction of wealth in the mortal world causes the object to appear in Ashnani's secret palace.

Character Guidelines: As thieves, Agility is the clergy's primary attribute. For skills, Lockpicking and Stealth are the first obvious choices, with Climbing and Notice close behind. The Thief Edge is a natural choice for all clerics, as is Guild Thief for those who want to excel at one aspect of their craft. Those who want to avoid unnecessary combats should consider the Fleet Footed, Fighting Withdrawal, and Lurker Edges.

HEMSUT

Titles: The Enigmatic One, He Who Knows All, Finder of Secrets, He Who Listens but Never Speaks.

Aspects: Secrets.

Affiliation: Tamarni.

Symbol: A triangle with an oval inside (symbolizing a cat's ear and eye).

Priesthood: Ears of Hemsut (priests); Eyes of Hemsut (paladins).

Herald: None.

Holy Days: Every cleric must pick one Yaus al-Sesht each month to serve as a personal holy day. Secrets Day (p. 8) is a high holy day.

Duties: To learn secrets.

Sins: (Minor) failing to learn a secret each month, engaging in idle gossip; (Major) failure to reveal a secret to Hemsut, revealing you are a cleric of Hemsut; (Mortal) revealing a secret before the next holy day.

Signature Power: *Speak language.*

Powers: *Altered senses, boost/lower trait* (Spirit, Investigation, Notice, Persuasion, and Streetwise only), *charismatic aura, detect* (no conceal), *gravespeak, insight, voice on the wind, wandering senses.*

Trappings: None with game mechanics. Hemsut's clergy try to avoid drawing attention to themselves.

The son of Tamarni and Qedesht, Hemsut was a kitten of immense curiosity. One day, he wandered into Iblis lair, where the fell god was plotting against the other deities. Hiding in the shadows, Hemsut overheard Iblis muttering a great and terrible secret. Suddenly filled with feelings he had never experienced before, Hemsut realized that learning secrets was a source of intense pleasure. Knowing that if he shared this secret he would lose the sensation, Hemsut never revealed what he learned. Critics of the faith claim the young god overheard Iblis' plans to war on the gods, and that his refusal to reveal what he overheard led to untold death and chaos.

Officially, Hemsut has no temples or shrines, but they may exist. As a god of secrets, he is unlikely to reveal the location of such structures, even to his mortal worshippers. Given that his clergy are forbidden from revealing their allegiance, they are a lonely sect.

Hemsut, and thus his cult, is concerned only with learning secrets. How clerics learn secrets is up to their individual nature. Priests are typically silver-tongued souls, capable of loosening tongues with well-placed words or financial incentives, though more than a few act as personal confessors. Paladins prefer a more physical approach, often uncovering written information kept in secure vaults or the ancient secrets of lost cultures now residing in abandoned ruins.

Hemsut gains great pleasure from learning new secrets, but his passion is fleeting and he desires more and more secrets. Between learning secret information and the next holy day, the cleric is forbidden from revealing what they have learned to others. Once Hemsut has learned the secret, the cleric is free to do with it as he wishes. Some sell the information to the highest bidder, others pass it on freely to others, while unscrupulous types blackmail those they learned the secret from.

A faction within the cult, known as the Keepers of Secrets, have taken a more disturbing stance. In their creed, a secret is in danger of becoming knowledge unless steps are taken to destroy or conceal it completely. Considered heretics by the main cult, they actively engage in the assassination of those who reveal secret information, and wilfully destroy written information, an act which makes them enemies of Qedesht's cult as well. Of course, the followers of this creed consider themselves the only ones capable of keeping a secret.

Ceremonies are simple affairs and are held only on holy and high holy days. Clerics write down secrets they have uncovered since the last ceremony on scrolls. These are then burned. The smoke carries the secret to Hemsut, who revels in the pleasure it brings.

Character Guidelines: Social interaction, an eye for detail, and an attentive nature are vital abilities for Hemsut's clergy. Investigation, Notice, Persuasion, and Streetwise are all core skills for those wishing to unlock secrets. Lockpicking and Stealth are handy for spies, and Climbing has its uses. Spirit is important for resisting attempts to wheedle, pressure, or torture secrets from

the cleric. Charismatic and Investigator Edges are useful for boosting one's abilities, and many clerics have the Curious Hindrance.

SEKHMET

Titles: Rodent Killer, The Claws of Tamarni, Ferocious One, She Who Snarls and Spits.

Aspects: Rodent extermination.

Affiliation: Tamarni, Ashtart.

Symbol: A stylized cat's head with a rat's tail dangling from its mouth.

Priesthood: Claws (priests); Teeth (paladins).

Herald: None.

Holy Days: Vermin Killing Day (p. 11) is a high holy day. Each Yaus al-Niwt is a holy day.

Duties: To kill vermin.

Sins: (Minor) not owning a mousing or ratting cat for more than a week, harming or mistreating a mouser or ratter, killing a mouse or rat with a non-melee weapon; (Major) letting a rat or mouse live, using poison; (Mortal) allowing mice or rats to destroy a granary.

Signature Power: *Beast friend* (cats only).

Powers: *Boost/lower trait* (Vigor, Fighting, Notice, and Stealth only), *detect* (mice and rats only; no *conceal*), *fear* (only affects mice and rats), *shape change* (cat only), *smite*, *summon beast* (cats only), *warding* (mice and rats only).

Trappings: Trappings always relate to cats. *Smite* may cause the cleric to grow claws or cause jagged teeth to cover a weapon, while *fear* might summon a spectral cat to put the fear of Tamarni into vermin.

Special: Clerics may take the Disciple of Tamarni Edge, but must be Veteran Rank.

The offspring of a union between of Tamarni and Karmelos, Sekhmet possessed a violent streak unlike any of her siblings. None of the gods could tame the near-feral beast, and even the mighty god of war went away nursing numerous scratches and bites. Summoning all her children to help her rid Ashtart's granary of rats, Sekhmet proved a natural killer. Realizing that the destruction of vermin would be a constant chore, Tamarni promptly promoted her warlike daughter to goddess of vermin slaying.

A rarity among the minor deities, Sekhmet has temples dedicated solely to her worship in every Caliphate city, many towns, and a few villages. She is also popular in the Emirates. Temples serve as the headquarters for rat catching guild, and thus operate as much as a business as a center of worship. Whereas Tamarni's temple cats enjoy a good rub from worshippers, those living in Sekhmet's houses are feral creatures, and stroked at one's peril. Many citizens believe having one of the beasts draw blood is a bad omen, requiring a small donation to the cult lest rodents infest their home.

Shrines, usually no more than a stone inscribed with the goddess' holy symbol or a statuette, are found in crop fields and outside granaries in all Faithful settlements. The underside of entrances to sewers and the doors of

FESTIVAL TO TAMARNI

VERMIN KILLING DAY

Varies

Tamarni was curled up beside the fire, enjoying a long nap, when Ashtart rushed into her house. "There are rats in the granary!" Ashtart exclaimed. Tamarni opened one eye, said she did not eat grain, thus the matter was of no concern to her. Ashtart said that if there was no food, then no one would have the energy to stroke Tamarni. The cat goddess opened both eyes, and said she knew many forms of pleasure, thus the matter was of no concern to her. Ashtart spoke a third time, claiming she knew a pleasure that Tamarni did not. This time the cat sat upright, demanding to know what this could be, for Tamarni knew all the gods' secrets. Ashtart pulled a small leaf from her robes and gave it to Tamarni, who immediately went into ecstasy upon licking it. Tamarni demanded more of the mysterious herb, but Ashtart refused, saying that she would supply more only if Tamarni kept the granaries free of rats. From that day forth, cats become voracious vermin hunters.

Vermin are a serious threat to the citizens of Al-Shirkuh. Vermin Day is held the same day as reaping begins. While the farmers harvest the crops, followers of Tamarni descend on the granaries with a small army of howling cats. The day is spent killing every vermin in sight, while lowly *musbaf* clean up any droppings to prevent contamination. Once darkness falls, priests take to the streets and paladins to the sewers, bringing terror and death to all vermin until sunrise.

Even non-worshippers take a swipe at passing vermin, for each one they kill means an extra lick of the wondrous herb for Tamarni. In return for their act of devotion, it is believed the goddess will keep the mortal's house free of vermin. The more mice and rats one kills, the longer the protection lasts.

It is widely believed kittens born on this day will grow up to become fierce mousers and ratters.

citizens' cellars and larders are often marked with the glyph as a warning to rodents.

Sekhmet is depicted in statuary as a snarling cat with her front claws extended. Usually she is surrounded by images of dead rats, though in many temples dead rodents are actually laid at the statues' feet as offerings. In temples of Ashtart and Tamarni, she is shown as a feral kitten toying with a dead rodent.

By tradition, priests handle infestations of mice, while paladins hunt rats. Despite being clerics and a necessary part of society, Sekhmet's clergy are very much viewed as lower class citizens. They rank among the *musbaf*, rather

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than the *shabrum*. Frequently dirty, often carrying dead rodents with them (food for their cats), prone to sniffing the ground and tasting rodent droppings, and willing to crawl through dank sewers without hesitation, they are renowned for their lack of social graces.

Ceremonies involve nothing more than sacrificing vermin. This is done by feeding them to temple cats or a cleric's vermin hunting companion. Such offerings feed Sekhmet, ensuring she and the cats she commands remain fit, healthy, and ready for duty. Once the sacrifice is completed, worshippers relax by inhaling an infusion of dried catnip mixed with tabac.

Character Guidelines: Dedicated to the eradication of rodents, clerics require Notice to detect hidden vermin, Fighting to deal with their foes, and Tracking to follow them back to their nest. Vigor is important for combating any infection carried by the foul beasts.

DUNE STORM

Dune storms appear as roughly formed, man-sized humanoids made of sand. Their gritty bodies are illuminated from within by blue-white flashes of lighting, and rumble like thunder when they move.

It is widely held they are created by majin and kham-sin jinn working together, though some scholars say they were created by Duamutef and Upuaut. According to one tale, Upuaut sent a thunderstorm to bring rain to the desert at the behest of Ashtart, but Duamutef, who did not want his sandy domain spoiled by plants, trapped it in a sandstorm. Occasionally, a fragment of this terrible storm, which still rages in the heavens, breaks away, manifesting in the mortal realm as a large sandstorm or thunderstorm. On rare occasions, a lightning bolt striking the desert spontaneously gives rise to a dune storm.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d8, Stealth d4, Tracking d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Death Gale:** When a dune storm is slain, the thunderstorm raging in its interior is released as a powerful blast of wind. Every adjacent creature must make a Strength roll (adding Size as a modifier) or be knocked prone.
- * **Electric Shock:** An attacker who rolls a 1 on his Fighting die (regardless of Wild Die) suffers 2d6 damage with an electrical trapping.
- * **Elemental:** No additional damage from Called Shots; Fearless; immune to disease and poison
- * **Improved Sand Walker:** Treats ash and soft sand as normal ground.
- * **Touch Attack:** +2 to Fighting. On a raise, the victim is struck by a powerful electrical charge that arcs across his body. He is automatically Shaken for 1d4 rounds. He can attempt to unShake only after this time (though he may spend a benny). This counts as a physical attack.

DUNE THUNDERSTORM

Dune thunderstorms are larger, more powerful versions of a dune storm. They use the same stats as above except as noted below.

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

- * **Release the Storm:** If the creature does not move, it may unleash part of the storm held within its body. This fills a Cone Template. Anyone caught in the template must make an Agility roll or suffer 2d8 damage with an electrical trapping and be knocked prone.
- * **Size +2:** Dune thunderstorms are 10' tall.

HAZARDS

BOOM DUNE

Also known as thunder dunes, these dunes produce a deep, vibrating boom when their surface is disturbed. Stealth rolls made on a boom dune suffer a -4 penalty. The penalty drops to -2 if the trespasser has the Sand Walker Edge, and -1 with the Improved version. Bedu prefer to make camp in an area flanked by such dunes.

SHOCK SAND

In the deep desert, sand particles can build up a powerful static charge as they are blown by the wind, storing and releasing it as a bolt of crackling electricity in the presence of metal objects. This type of sand is known as shock sand, or more poetically as kham-sin sand.

The air within a large region of shock sand is very dry, and the faint aroma of ozone is ever present. Identifying shock sand for what it is requires a Survival roll at -2. The roll made be attempted each hour of travel through a region of shock sand.

For each hour spent in shock sand, the characters must make an individual Survival roll. Individual rolls suffer a penalty equal to any armor protection granted by metal armor (e.g., chain mail would be -2). A further -1 penalty applies if the hero is carrying a small, unsheathed metal weapon (spear, short sword, or smaller), -2 for larger weapons (long sword, pole arm, or similar). Sensible precautions, such as sheathing weapons, covering hilts and buckles, wrapping oneself in a cloak to avoid exposing armor, and so on, grant a +2 bonus. Failure causes 3d6 damage to the unfortunate victim as he is struck by lightning emanating from the sand.

Spellcasters invoking magic or miracles with an electricity trapping gain a +1 bonus to their arcane skill die while in shock sand.

Sandstorm Variant: Shockstorms, as the Bedu know them, are particularly hazardous, the sand generating a more powerful charge as it rides the gale force wind. Anyone caught in a shockstorm must make a Survival roll each hour (modifiers as above) or suffer 3d8 damage with an electricity trapping.