

# LEGENDS & LAIRS™

20  
system

# WILDSCAPE™



A HANDBOOK FOR DESIGNING AND  
SURVIVING SAVAGE WILDLANDS

Requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook,  
published by Wizards of the Coast, Inc.® This product utilizes  
updated material from the v.3.5 revision.

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# WELCOME

Fantasy Flight Games is pleased to present *Wildscape*, the latest volume in our LEGENDS & LAIRS line of sourcebooks for the d20 System. *Wildscape* gives players and DMs everything they need to create and play exciting adventures and campaigns in the savage wilderness.

Chapter 1 presents expanded options for druid and ranger characters. It features druid realms, options analogous to clerical domains that allow players to further customize their druid characters and the ethos they adhere to. The chapter also presents new styles for ranger characters, including the Two-Handed Fighting style and the Spear-Fighter, as well as new options for customizing non-spellcasting rangers. The chapter wraps up with a selection of new feats and tips for surviving adventures in the wilderness.

Chapter 2 introduces the remainder of the book, providing the DM with a broad range of valuable tools for use in creating and running wilderness adventures and campaigns. The chapter offers new skill-based rules for wandering encounters and a general introduction to the threats and hazards found throughout this book.

Chapters 3 through 10 provide a detailed look at the most common environments and terrain types found in the game.

These chapters cover deserts, forests, mountains, plains, waterways, swamps, arctic terrain, and wastelands. Each chapter includes an overview of the environment, a discussion of its basic, mundane traits, and a selection of more advanced traits that allow you to reshape your environments with magic and imagination. All of the traits discussed in these chapters are represented by one or more standardized hazards, which allow you to resolve the effects of the environment on the characters in a single, easy-to-use format.

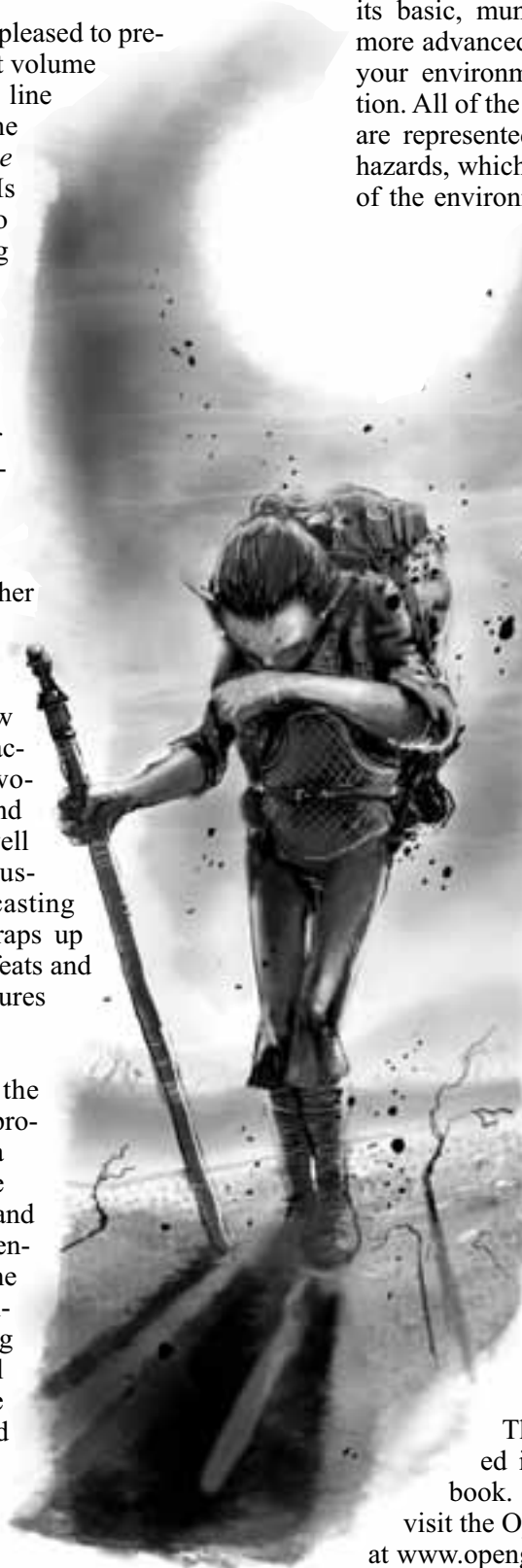
Chapter 11 wraps up the book with expanded rules for determining weather and climate in your adventures. These rules allow you to throw everything from extreme temperatures to sudden storms at your players. Together with chapters 3 through 10, these rules allow you to create any environment you like, whether real or imagined.

## THE OPEN GAME LICENSE

All game rules and statistics derived from the d20 System Reference Document are designated as Open Game Content. The introductions to individual chapters and sections detail specifically the Open Game Content found within them. All other text is designated as closed content.

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# CHAPTER ONE

# CHARACTERS

Wilderness adventures offer many of the same hazards as dungeons along with a whole new layer of risks. Harsh weather, burning deserts, and towering peaks are all as deadly as the monsters and traps found within them.

In some ways, a dungeon offers a comparatively safer environment. While terrible creatures may stalk its halls, you always know how to return home and can rely on dealing with a limited, enclosed environment. Aside from the odd burrowing creature, attacks come from a few easily identified directions.

In the wilderness, danger lurks all around. There are no corridors to provide channels for attacks. There is no roof above you to ward away strikes from above. Without passages to guide your progress, becoming lost in the wilderness looms as a very real threat. Food, water, and other supplies become particularly important in desert regions and wastelands that offer few opportunities to gather supplies. Bedding down for the night takes on a whole new dimension when you're surrounded by a dense forest that holds untold terrors, a risk made doubly hazardous when your campfire shines like a beacon to attract monsters.

This chapter presents optional rules for customizing druid and ranger characters. The

chapter introduces druid realms, a set of options that allow you to modify a character's abilities and spells to fit his alignment. In many ways, druid realms are similar to cleric domains. For rangers, this chapter introduces new styles that characters can select at 2nd level. Rather than choose from archery or two-weapon fighting, you can now opt to create an axeman, a lorekeeper, or a slayer. In addition, expanded rules for these styles allow you to create rangers who drop their spellcasting abilities for more options in their chosen style.

Wilderness feats add new abilities designed for use by druids, rangers, and other characters that specialize in outdoor adventuring. Some general advice on how to survive the great outdoors rounds out the contents of this chapter. The text of this chapter is designated as **Open Game Content**.

## DRUIDS

Druids are priests of the natural world. They revere nature and seek to help it develop in a way that matches their ethos. The cleric class has several options that reflect the alignment of individual characters, from variations on the ability to turn undead to the dif-

ferent domains they can choose from. On the other hand, all druids gain the same talents and spells. Evil druids select from the same class abilities as good ones, leaving it up to a druid to distinguish his aims and beliefs through his actions. The gifts his deity bestows upon him have no bearing on that god's teachings and beliefs.

This section introduces alternate rules for druid realms, packages of spells and abilities that you can use to distinguish druids that follow different gods. These realms work in a manner similar to clerical domains. They define a druid's spells and grant him special abilities built around a central theme.

Choosing a druid realm works much like selecting a clerical domain. At 1st level, look over the list of available realms and pick one. Realms differ from domains in that they offer more powers and spells while covering a greater range of beliefs.

Realms may replace the druid's *wildshape* ability and offer a different selection of spells, though some realms leave *wildshape* intact and others alter it. They also offer a much larger list of spells. All druids have access to a core selection of spells. In addition, a druid gains the spells listed for his chosen realm. The generic druid spells are referred to as the core druid spell list. It includes many spells that offer general utility or form a basic part of the druid's abilities. In addition, some realms offer new options for weapons and armor.

## CORE DRUID SPELL LIST

The following spells are available to all druids. Regardless of the realm you choose, you can prepare and cast these spells. In addition, unlike clerical domain spells, you are never required to prepare a certain number of realm spells. If you want, you could use all your slots to prepare spells from the base list.

## CORE DRUID SPELLS

### 0-Level Core Druid Spells (Orisons)

Create Water  
Detect Magic  
Flare  
Guidance  
Know Direction  
Light  
Mending  
Read Magic

### 1st-Level Core Druid Spells

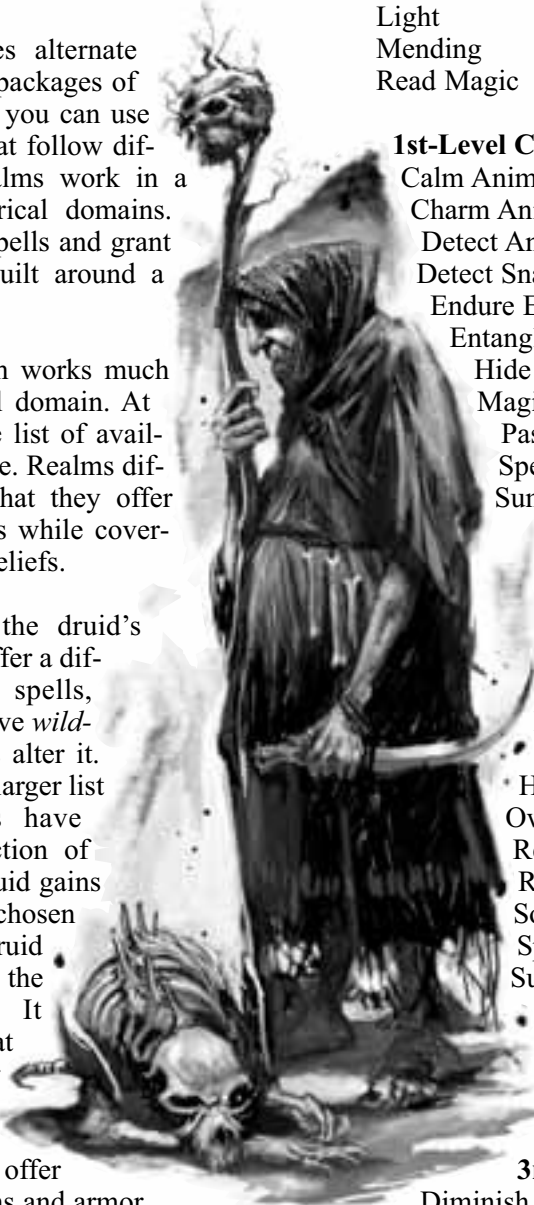
Calm Animals  
Charm Animal  
Detect Animals or Plants  
Detect Snares and Pits  
Endure Elements  
Entangle  
Hide from Animals  
Magic Fang  
Pass without Trace  
Speak with Animals  
Summon Nature's Ally I

### 2nd-Level Core Druid Spells

Animal Messenger  
Animal Trance  
Barkskin  
Bear's Endurance  
Bull's Strength  
Cat's Grace  
Hold Animal  
Owl's Wisdom  
Reduce Animal  
Resist Energy  
Soften Earth and Stone  
Spider Climb  
Summon Nature's Ally II  
Summon Swarm  
Tree Shape  
Warp Wood  
Wood Shape

### 3rd-Level Core Druid Spells

Diminish Plants  
Dominate Animal  
Magic Fang, Greater  
Meld into Stone  
Plant Growth  
Protection from Energy  
Quench  
Sleet Storm  
Snare  
Speak with Plants  
Spike Growth  
Stone Shape



Summon Nature's Ally III  
Water Breathing

#### 4th-Level Core Druid Spells

Antiplant Shell  
Blight  
Command Plants  
Control Water  
Dispelling Magic  
Giant Vermin  
Reincarnate  
Repel Vermin  
Rusting Grasp  
Scrying  
Spike Stones  
Summon Nature's Ally IV

#### 5th-Level Core Druid Spells

Animal Growth  
Atonement  
Awaken  
Baleful Polymorph  
Commune with Nature  
Control Winds  
Insect Plague  
Summon Nature's Ally V  
Transmute Mud to Rock  
Transmute Rock to Mud  
Tree Stride  
Wall of Thorns

#### 6th-Level Core Druid Spells

Antilife Shell  
Bear's Endurance, Mass  
Bull's Strength, Mass  
Cat's Grace, Mass  
Dispelling Magic, Greater  
Find the Path  
Ironwood  
Liveoak  
Move Earth  
Owl's Wisdom, Mass  
Repel Wood  
Spellstaff  
Stone Tell  
Summon Nature's Ally VI  
Transport via Plants  
Wall of Stone

#### 7th-Level Core Druid Spells

Animate Plants  
Changestaff  
Control Weather  
Creeping Doom  
Scrying, Greater  
Summon Nature's Ally VII

Transmute Metal to Wood  
True Seeing  
Wind Walk

#### 8th-Level Core Druid Spells

Animal Shapes  
Control Plants  
Repel Metal or Stone  
Summon Nature's Ally VIII  
Whirlwind  
Word of Recall

#### 9th-Level Core Druid Spells

Antipathy  
Elemental Swarm  
Foresight  
Shambler  
Shapechange  
Storm of Vengeance  
Summon Nature's Ally IX  
Sympathy

## THE DRUID REALMS

Each realm covers a specific aspect of the druid's role as a protector of the natural world. Some of them stay close to the standard druid, offering variations on the specific points of the class's abilities. Others stray far from the druid's role as a defender of the wilderness, particularly those that focus on evil druids. Each of the realms lists one or more required alignments. Only druids of the appropriate ethos can select a realm. If a druid changes to an incompatible alignment, he loses his realm spells and all associated abilities. He is free to pick a new realm that is compatible with his new alignment and he immediately gains all the spells, benefits, and abilities offered by the realm based on his druid level.

The realms provide an alignment's slant on how druids can see the world. There is no true neutral realm. Instead, use the standard class as described in the core rules for those druids. In addition, druids of any alignment may opt to use the standard class rather than select a realm.

### DEFENDER

**Required Alignment:** NG

Druids who select the defender realm worship a deity who seeks to preserve the natural world from the encroaching forces that beset its borders. These gods are benev-



olent and caring towards their followers and allies but they smite their enemies with terrible spells and powerful assaults.

The druids who pray to these spirits and gods adopt a similar attitude. They see the woodlands as a land besieged by orcs, humans, and worse. While they can abide the careful, gentle use of natural resources, they demand that those who enter their realms treat them with the same respect they would afford a mighty king's throne room. Woodcutters who limit their harvest, spread their work out to avoid creating razed wastelands, and plant saplings to replenish the wood they take earn this druid's friendship. Orcs who wantonly hack down trees, light bonfires, and waste the wood they take draw vicious attacks. Druids of this realm can be calm, rational, and friendly, but when incited they can burn with a furious rage.

The defender druid wields many spells that aid him in his role as active defender and warrior. His deity blesses his use of a variety of weapons, particularly bows and other tools of the hunt. His spells boost his abilities in battle, though few of them offer mass destruction. Instead, they focus on hindering the enemy and preventing him from causing any more damage to the natural world. The defender's spells tend to enhance and improve his abilities and his allies or sap the strength from his foes.

**Special Abilities:** The defender realm grants a druid the *wildshape* ability as per the core class. In addition, druids who follow this realm gain proficiency with all bows (except crossbows). They may use those weapons without penalty or punishment from their gods.

**Realm Spells:** Druids who choose this realm add the following spells to their lists. They gain them in addition to the core spells listed earlier in this chapter.

## DEFENDER REALM SPELLS

### 0-Level Defender Spells (Orisons)

Cure Minor Wounds  
Detect Poison  
Purify Food and Drink  
Resistance  
Virtue

### 1st-Level Defender Spells

Alarm  
Bless

Cure Light Wounds  
Doom  
Faerie Fire  
Goodberry  
Obscuring Mist  
Shield of Faith  
Shillelagh

### 2nd-Level Realm Spells

Aid  
Chill Metal  
Consecrate  
Delay Poison  
Enthrall  
Fog Cloud  
Heat Metal  
Hold Person  
Restoration, Lesser

### 3rd-Level Realm Spells

Cure Moderate Wounds  
Daylight  
Neutralize Poison  
Remove Disease  
Slow  
Stinking Cloud  
Suggestion  
Wind Wall

### 4th-Level Realm Spells

Air Walk  
Cure Serious Wounds  
Flame Strike  
Freedom of Movement  
Globe of Invulnerability, Lesser

### 5th-Level Realm Spells

Cure Critical Wounds  
Death Ward  
Hallow  
Hold Monster  
Righteous Might  
Stoneskin  
Wall of Fire

### 6th-Level Realm Spells

Banishment  
Cure Light Wounds, Mass

### 7th-Level Realm Spells

Cure Moderate Wounds, Mass  
Forcecage  
Heal  
Hold Person, Mass

**8th-Level Realm Spells**

Cure Serious Wounds, Mass  
 Holy Aura  
 Power Word, Stun  
 Reverse Gravity  
 Shield of Law

**9th-Level Realm Spells**

Cure Critical Wounds, Mass  
 Hold Monster, Mass

**ORDINATOR****Required Alignment:** LN

The ordinator seeks to keep nature in a perfect balance by following a rigid, specific set of laws. These druids may use their magic and diligent work to catalog every last plant and animal within their domains. With each birth, death, or migration, their rolls change. Over time, they seek to uncover patterns within the wild and manipulate them to reach what they consider to be the perfect organization.

To the casual observer the ordinator's forest or swamp might look like any other overgrown wilderness, but his diligent work ensures that every last tree and major plant fits into a specific arrangement. From the air the forest's clearings and paths might form a holy symbol. A river could be guided to flow along the same channel as magical energy, bringing strength and prosperity to the land.

At their best, ordinators use the controlling nature of law to guide their realms to unprecedented levels of health. At their worst, they are dictators who seek to control every living thing

that enters their domain. Animals, plants, and intelligent creatures unwilling or unable to fit into the pattern must leave the ordinator's realm or face destruction.

Ordinators have a tendency to always expand their domains. An ordinator druid might establish himself in a forested region, but in time he seeks out younger druids to recruit to his cause and extend his web of control. Aside from the reapers, ordinators are the most likely to come into conflict with civilized realms. If a mill or bridge conflicts with their view of the natural world, they destroy it without a second thought. While ordinators are law-

ful neutral, they obey the dictates of nature and their faith. The laws of ephemeral governments play barely any role in their moral calculations.

In most cases, ordinators dwell in lands far from civilization's chaotic, ruinous grasp. These druids seek a level of control that few mortals can claim over the wilderness, making their quest unlikely to bear fruit over large areas. In isolated valleys they can construct their idealized version of nature, while in deserts and other bleak, featureless lands they see the ultimate expression of law's influence.

Some ordinators take an extreme view of nature. These fanatics believe that chaos mars the forests, jungles, and other rich, verdant areas. These renegade druids gladly start forest fires, aid loggers and others who exploit the land, and push for any effort that reduces the life in a region and thus the chaos possible within it. Not all ordinators take their beliefs to this extreme level, but the few who do can cause tremendous problems in a region.



**Special Abilities:** Ordinators can use a variant *wildshape*. Their adherence to law and their belief in order make them unwilling to dabble in capabilities that allow the unrestrained expression of personal preferences and mutable divine energy. Instead, they choose a few animal, dire animal, and elemental forms to use. In exchange, their obsession with details and control grants them superior grace and agility while in animal guise. The ordinator chooses one elemental (air, earth, fire, or water), two plants, and two animals of each of the following categories: Tiny, Small, Medium, Large, and Huge. He can only use his *wildshape* ability to assume these chosen forms.

When using *wildshape*, the ordinator gains a +1 competence bonus to attacks and a +2 competence bonus to all Listen and Spot checks. While the ordinator is forced to restrict himself to a few different creatures, his natural tie to them and his study of their forms grants him an advantage over other druids.

**Realm Spells:** Druids who choose this realm add the following spells to their lists. They gain them in addition to the core spells listed earlier in this chapter.

#### ORDINATOR REALM SPELLS

##### 0-Level Ordinator Spells (Orisons)

Cure Minor Wounds  
Detect Poison  
Purify Food and Drink  
Resistance  
Virtue

##### 1st-Level Ordinator Spells

Cure Light Wounds  
Command  
Detect Chaos  
Goodberry  
Magic Stone  
Protection from Chaos  
Produce Flame  
Sanctuary  
Shillelagh

##### 2nd-Level Ordinator Spells

Align Weapon  
Calm Emotions  
Chill Metal  
Delay Poison  
Fire Trap  
Gust of Wind  
Hold Person

Silence  
Restoration, Lesser

##### 3rd-Level Ordinator Spells

Call Lightning  
Clairaudience/Clairvoyance  
Cure Moderate Wounds  
Daylight  
Magic Circle Against Chaos  
Neutralize Poison  
Remove Disease  
Wind Wall

##### 4th-Level Ordinator Spells

Cure Serious Wounds  
Discern Lies  
Flame Strike  
Ice Storm  
Order's Wrath

##### 5th-Level Ordinator Spells

Call Lightning Storm  
Command, Greater  
Cure Critical Wounds  
Dispel Chaos  
Hold Monster  
Mark of Justice  
Stoneskin

##### 6th-Level Ordinator Spells

Banishment  
Forbiddance

##### 7th-Level Ordinator Spells

Dictum  
Fire Storm  
Refuge  
Sunbeam

##### 8th-Level Ordinator Spells

Dimensional Lock  
Finger of Death  
Iron Body  
Shield of Law  
Sunburst

##### 9th-Level Ordinator Spells

Dominate Monster  
Summon Monster IX (cast as a lawful spell only)

#### REAPER

**Required Alignment:** NE

Death is the ultimate equalizer. In the end, everything dies. Even inanimate objects even-

tually crack and crumble to dust, memories of their existence fading along with the lives of the creatures that remembered them. Druids that follow the realm of the reaper worship the power of death. They see the undead as the ultimate expression of nature, a perfect balance of intelligence and stasis in the face of eternity. Verdant forests, animal herds, and running rivers are merely temporary illusions. In time, they will fade and be replaced by endless wastelands, dry riverbeds, and moldering corpses. The living dead are eternal. Time does nothing to destroy their bodies, while their minds continue to thrive and function for centuries if not millennia. Reapers seek to spread death across the world. By shattering the illusion of life, they can shepherd the seed of death that lies in the heart of all creation.

Reaper druids spread death wherever they go. They work slowly, usually forming small cabals in the midst forests or other isolated, lush environments. They use poison and disease to strike down plants and animals *en masse*, spreading contagions that ravage the trees and cut down entire herds. They summon armies of the walking dead to defeat elves, humans, and others that oppose them. They may ally with orcs and other marauders for a time, but they usually see them as useful tools that merely delay their inevitable fate by working with the druids. In time, they reduce their territory to dead, gray wasteland. Their work completed, they then make plans to expand their holdings and spread their blight. Their ultimate goal is to exterminate all life from the world, leaving behind a perfect, static husk of a world. To these twisted druids, such is the natural state of creation. Living creatures are a twisted blight that must be pruned from the world.

Many of the druids who follow this realm are vampires, liches, and other intelligent, undead creatures. They embrace the power of undeath, using it to sustain their spirits and gain additional power to aid them in their dark crusade. Those druids that are still alive see their state as a temporary, regrettable condition forced upon them by the fundamental flaws in creation. All of them seek to become undead, usually through ancient rites and ceremonies that grant them lichdom.

**Special Abilities:** Druids who select the realm of the reaper gain the ability to rebuke undead

at 1st level as an evil cleric. A reaper druid can rebuke undead a number of times per day equal to 3 + his Charisma modifier. These druids can gain any feats that require the ability to turn or rebuke undead. They count their druid level as their cleric level when resolving rebuke attempts. A reaper druid with levels in cleric stacks his levels in the two classes to determine his rebuke attempts' effectiveness.

In addition to rebuking undead, these druids gain alternate animal companions. Rather than earn an animal's friendship, they use necromantic rituals to summon and bind an undead creature or an evil outsider to their service. These creatures gain all the benefits and abilities an animal companion normally acquires based on the druid's level, modified by their relative strength. The modifier listed after each table header applies to the druid's total level when determining the special abilities and effects the companion gains. For example, if a 17th-level druid selects a bodak as his companion, it gains the benefits that a 2nd-level druid grants to his follower. A druid can have only one companion at a given time.

If a reaper druid wishes to gain a new follower or replace one lost in battle, he must complete a ritual that requires 24 hours of prayer and the sacrifice of an intelligent humanoid.

#### 1st-Level Reaper Druid Companions

Human Skeleton  
Lemure  
Troglodyte Zombie  
Wolf Skeleton

#### 4th-Level Reaper Druid Companions (Level – 3)

Bugbear Zombie  
Ghoul  
Imp  
Owlbear Skeleton  
Quasit

#### 7th-Level Reaper Druid Companions (Level – 6)

Allip  
Chimera Skeleton  
Ghast  
Minotaur Zombie  
Shadow  
Vampire Spawn  
Wight



**10th-Level Reaper  
Druid Companions (Level – 9)**  
Advanced Megaraptor Skeleton  
Gray Render Zombie  
Mummy  
Wraith

**13th-Level Reaper Druid Companions  
(Level – 12)**  
Chain Devil  
Demon, Babau  
Cloud Giant Skeleton  
Spectre

**16th-Level Reaper Druid Companions  
(Level – 15)**  
Bodak  
Hellcat  
Mohrg

Reaper druids never gain the ability to change into animals, plants, or elementals with *wild-shape*. As ardent foes of life, they detest the thought of assuming a blasphemous form.

Druids of the reaper realm gain proficiency with the scythe and may use that weapon without violating their class's strictures against forbidden weapons.

**Realm Spells:** Druids who choose this realm add the following spells to their lists. They gain them in addition to the core spells listed earlier in this chapter.

#### REAPER REALM SPELLS

##### 0-Level Reaper Spells (Orisons)

Disrupt Undead  
Ghost Sound  
Inflict Minor Wounds  
Resistance  
Touch of Fatigue

##### 1st-Level Reaper Spells

Bane  
Cause Fear  
Chill Touch  
Detect Undead  
Inflict Light Wounds  
Ray of Enfeeblement  
Obscuring Mist  
Produce Flame  
Shillelagh

##### 2nd-Level Reaper Spells

Chill Metal  
Command Undead

Death Knell  
 Desecrate  
 Flame Blade  
 Ghoul Touch  
 Fog Cloud  
 Gust of Wind  
 Scare

### 3rd-Level Reaper Spells

Animate Dead  
 Contagion  
 Darkness  
 Inflict Moderate Wounds  
 Poison  
 Speak with Dead  
 Vampiric Touch  
 Wind Wall

### 4th-Level Reaper Spells

Deeper Darkness  
 Enervation  
 Inflict Serious Wounds  
 Flame Strike  
 Ice Storm

### 5th-Level Reaper Spells

Dispel Good  
 Inflict Critical Wounds  
 Slay Living  
 Stoneskin  
 Unhallow  
 Wall of Fire

### 6th-Level Reaper Spells

Create Undead  
 Inflict Light Wounds, Mass

### 7th-Level Reaper Spells

Blasphemy  
 Fire Storm  
 Harm  
 Inflict Moderate Wounds, Mass

### 8th-Level Reaper Spells

Create Greater Undead  
 Earthquake  
 Finger of Death  
 Inflict Serious Wounds, Mass  
 Unholy Aura

### 9th-Level Reaper Spells

Inflict Critical Wounds, Mass  
 Wail of the Banshee

## SHEPHERD OF CHAOS

**Required Alignment:** CN

In the deepest regions of the wilderness, the shepherds of chaos find the ultimate expression of freedom in the plants, animals, and beasts of the wilds. Without the invasive influence of law, they are free to develop to their full potential. These druids see civilization as an evil not for its tendency to take resources without replenishing them or its tradition of exploiting all that falls within its grasp. Instead, a shepherd of chaos views cities, towns, and roads as a fumbling attempt at imposing structure and order over the world. These druids see the world as an interrelated web of life, starting with the merest field mouse and ending with elephants, dire bears, and other gigantic creatures. For the environment to remain healthy it must be allowed to develop as it wishes, unfettered by outside influences. In an ideal environment, the true potential of nature emerges when it never faces interference from outside forces.

Shepherds of chaos work to ensure that the natural world remains free of unneeded interference. They rarely take an active role in cultivating plants or tending to animals. Only the presence of intelligent creatures in the wilds can spur them to intervene. In that case, they are more than willing to use their spells to rally the beasts and flora to aid them in expelling the unwanted influence.

The shepherds see any incursion of civilization as a crime against the natural order. Roads that run through a shepherd's forest may face avalanches, plants that grow across them, and frequent attacks by wolf packs and other animals, all caused by a shepherd eager to destroy the road and expunge its influence on the forest. New settlements, even campsites, face a variety of ills from mosquito infestations to poisoned wells. The shepherds rarely use direct confrontations or diplomacy to achieve their goals. Rather, they prefer to incite nature to solve the problem.

While the shepherds may oppose civilization, they are by no means evil or murderous. They seek to drive encroaching creatures out of the forest, not necessarily kill them and conquer their cities. Some shepherds adventure or journey into civilization in order to better understand their enemies or use alternate means to keep the forests and wilds free. While few of them have the talent or temperament for diplomacy, those who do typically work

to halt development before it can start. Unfortunately, shepherds tend to hold extreme beliefs. They brook little, if any, interference in their gloriously chaotic realms. Compromise is rarely possible when they are involved in a discussion. Extremists who are unable to part with the smallest bit of freedom that their realms enjoy often drown the moderates who are willing to talk matters out.

**Special Abilities:** Shepherds of chaos gain several abilities and features that modify their *wildshape* ability. Unlike other druids, their indulgence in the raw possibilities of chaos makes their abilities less reliable. They also have a greater disdain for manufactured goods, leading them to avoid metal weapons in addition to armor and shields.

When a shepherd of chaos uses his *wildshape* ability, he must fight his internal urge to wallow in his animal nature. These druids surrender their intellects and act out the instincts and drive found within the creatures they mimic. To the shepherds, this is perhaps the ultimate religious experience as it grants them insight into the chaos inherent in the natural world.

Unfortunately, this can cause some problems while adventuring. Fighting the animal instincts is contrary to the shepherd's teachings and beliefs. If a shepherd seeks to do anything other than attack an opponent, flee from danger, or hunt for food while in animal form, he must make a Will save (DC 20) to take action. If he fails this save, he spends 1d4 x 10 minutes simply experiencing the sensations and animal instincts of his new shape. In addition, a shepherd of chaos must use *wildshape* at least once per day to maintain his connection to the chaotic web of life.

While the shepherd's tendency to wallow in his animal form can be troublesome, it does have its benefits. Shepherds readily adapt to a variety of feral roles, allowing them to maintain a set of distinct abilities for their wild and humanoid shapes. Each time a shepherd gains a new feat, he selects one feat that he uses while in animal form and another that he uses while he is in any humanoid form, including his natural one. The shepherd keeps two lists of feats and shifts between them as he changes form. When in humanoid form, he does not count as having his animal feats and vice versa.

For example, at 1st level a shepherd receives a feat. He selects Power Attack for his animal form and Combat Casting for his humanoid feat. He can only use Power Attack while in animal form. At 3rd level, he could take Cleave as his animal feat but not as his humanoid one, since he does not meet its prerequisite in humanoid form. The shepherd can take feats whose ability requirements he does not meet for his animal form. When he acquires the needed ability, such as through *wildshape* or even with a spell such as *bull's strength* when in animal form, he may use them as normal. Note that the shepherd gains feats before he can use *wildshape* to reflect the knowledge he acquires by meditating on animal forms as he builds the mystical skills needed to assume them.

Shepherds of chaos face additional restrictions on the weapons they may wield. Shepherds are proficient with and may use without restriction the club, staff, shortspear, longspear, spear, dart, javelin, sling, and greatclub. Like normal druids, they can only wear padded, leather, or hide armor and can carry only wooden shields.

**Realm Spells:** Druids who choose this realm add the following spells to their lists. They gain them in addition to the core spells listed earlier in this chapter.

### SHEPHERD REALM SPELLS

#### 0-Level Shepherd Spells (Orisons)

Cure Minor Wounds  
Dancing Lights  
Daze  
Ghost Sound  
Resistance

#### 1st-Level Shepherd Spells

Cause Fear  
Color Spray  
Cure Light Wounds  
Detect Law  
Entropic Shield  
Jump  
Magic Stone  
Obscuring Mist  
Shillelagh

#### 2nd-Level Shepherd Spells

Align Weapon  
Flame Blade  
Flaming Sphere  
Fog Cloud

Mirror Image  
Remove Paralysis  
Restoration, Lesser  
Shatter  
Touch of Idiocy

### 3rd-Level Shepherd Spells

Call Lightning  
Contagion  
Cure Moderate Wounds  
Magic Circle against Law  
Neutralize Poison  
Rage  
Remove Disease  
Wind Wall

### 4th-Level Shepherd Spells

Chaos Hammer  
Confusion  
Fear  
Flame Strike  
Freedom of Movement  
Ice Storm

### 5th-Level Shepherd Spells

Call Lightning Storm  
Dispel Law  
Feeblemind  
Mind Fog  
Stoneskin  
Unhallow  
Wall of Fire

### 6th-Level Shepherd Spells

Animate Objects  
Fire Seeds

### 7th-Level Shepherd Spells

Fire Storm  
Insanity  
Prismatic Spray  
Word of Chaos

### 8th-Level Shepherd Spells

Cloak of Chaos  
Earthquake  
Finger of Death  
Prismatic Wall  
Reverse Gravity

### 9th-Level Shepherd Spells

Prismatic Sphere  
Shapechange  
Summon Monster IX (cast as a chaos spell only)

# RANGERS

In the core rules, rangers can currently select from a pair of weapon styles: archery or two-weapon fighting. This section presents rules for building variant rangers, giving you more options for ranger styles. It also gives you alternate rules for ranger characters who lack access to magical spells. These rules build on the concept of ranger styles by giving more abilities to each option in exchange for this class's casting ability. In some campaigns, a wilderness warrior who learns spells is a poor fit. In other cases, you might simply prefer to create a ranger who is better at combat or tracking but incapable of casting spells.

## VARIANT RANGER STYLES

At 2nd level, you may choose one of the following styles in place of archery or two-weapon fighting. These styles preserve your character's spellcasting ability and give you new feats or talents at 2nd, 5th, and 11th levels. Some of these abilities function like weapon styles, giving a ranger additional abilities in combat. Others expand his wilderness lore and knowledge of the land.

### TWO-HANDED FIGHTING

While some rangers prefer bows or two-weapon fighting styles, others utilize heavy, two-handed weapons to fell their enemies with a single, savage blow. The ranger who chooses this style is a woodcutter, miner, or other frontiersman who relies on heavy tools and weapons. Axes are a popular choice for rangers who master this style, but some rangers use greatclubs, heavy flails, and similar weapons. The ranger who follows this path is the master of a single-stroke kill. He puts tremendous strength and force behind his weapon, chopping through orcs and goblins with the same skill he uses to fell trees.

*Two-Handed Defense:* At 2nd level, the ranger learns to use his weapon as both an offensive weapon and a useful shield. By swinging his axe in a wide, sweeping arc, he forces his enemies backward and ruins their attacks. While fighting with a two-handed weapon, the ranger gains a +1 dodge bonus to AC.



*Sweeping Attack:* At 6th level, the ranger wields his weapon in a whirling hurricane of cuts, slashes, and hacks. He gains the benefits of the Whirlwind Attack feat while using a weapon that requires two hands.

*Ferocious Blow:* At 11th level, the ranger can make wild, unbalanced attacks that cleave through his enemies at the cost of his defenses. He can subtract one from his AC to a maximum of -5 to gain a +2 bonus to damage per -1 penalty to AC he endures. For example, a ranger could sustain a -4 penalty to AC for a +8 bonus to damage. The ranger cannot combine this ability with the Power Attack feat. The AC penalty and damage bonus apply until his next action.

## EXPLORER

Some rangers specialize in seeking out hidden ruins, uncovering new lands, and pushing back the boundaries of ignorance. These explorers learn to cope with harsh environments. They are experts in navigating foreign cultures, with their training and intuitive sense of discovery working to unveil a group's customs, expectations, and language. These rangers thrive on the borders between realms, their insatiable curiosity driving them ever onward in search of new challenges.

*Frontiersman:* The explorer learns to adapt to his environment. Starvation, thirst, extreme temperatures, and other hazards mean little to him. His drive to uncover what lies over the horizon pushes him to ignore many discomforts and hazards that would discourage others. At 2nd level, he gains a +1 bonus on all saving throws. In addition, he gains a +4 competence bonus on all saves and checks made to avoid environmental hazards. Hazards are presented later in this

book. If you do not use them in your campaign, apply this save bonus to any save made against effects other than magical spells, poison, supernatural abilities, or spell-like effects.

*Frontier Emissary:* In his travels, the explorer encounters a wide array of cultures, civilizations, and writings. While others pay little mind to tongues they cannot understand, the explorer develops an intuitive

sense of language. At 6th level the explorer gains the ability to speak one additional language. He gains an additional language at 9th, 12th, 15th, and 18th levels.

*Alert Fighter:* The explorer's many travels take him to distant lands, though not without traveling for hundreds of miles through inhospitable terrain. He has faced a variety of deadly monsters, and his keen senses and eye for detail allow him to react to a variety of danger, keeping his cool and his wits despite the chaos around him. At 11th level, the explorer can no longer be flanked. However, enemies with four or more rogue levels above his total levels in ranger may still flank him.

## LOREKEEPER

While rangers usually have a reputation as rough and ready scouts, trackers, and warriors, some of them have a more academic bent. Known as lorekeepers, these rangers study herbs, plants, and animals to better understand nature. While they put an equal emphasis on swordplay and archery, their academic interests allow them to develop several talents that other rangers are incapable of cultivating. Lorekeepers are masters of crafting healing poultices, while their knowledge of animals allows them to develop cunning tactics against them.



*Master Herbalist:* The lorekeeper's expanded knowledge of nature, animals, and plants allows him to create healing draughts and other useful items. At 2nd level, he gains the Brew Potion feat. The lorekeeper may create potions for 1st level spells, even though he cannot cast those spells until 4th level at the earliest. He also adds the spells from the cleric's healing domain to his lists, allowing him to cast *cure* spells at a lower level than other rangers.

*Healing Hands:* At 6th level, based on his studies of anatomy, healing, and magic, the lorekeeper learns to provide his patients with a small amount of relief from their injuries. With a DC 20 Heal check, he cures a number of hit points equal to 1d6 + his Wisdom modifier (if positive). On a failed check, the lorekeeper fails to heal the patient. A lorekeeper can use this ability once per day per subject whether he succeeds or fails. Using this ability requires 10 minutes of uninterrupted concentration and work. Make the Heal check after this time period passes. The lorekeeper must have bandages, thread, and a needle. If anything interrupts the lorekeeper's efforts, his patient gains no healing but he may try to treat him again that day.

*Lore of Beast and Blade:* At 11th level, the lorekeeper's knowledge of animals, beasts, and other creatures allows him to direct his allies' efforts in battle. If he spends a full-round action counseling his allies, they gain a +1 competence bonus on attack rolls and a +2 competence bonus on weapon damage rolls against one of his favored enemies for the rest of the encounter. The lorekeeper chooses the enemy type when he activates this ability. He may use this ability three times per day.

## OUTRIDER

Some rangers prefer to operate from horseback, particularly those who hail from steppes, plains, and other open areas. These skilled horsemen specialize in riding down monsters, bandits, and other threats. They feel most comfortable with a mighty charger at their command, the wind in their hair, and the open steppe before them.

*Horseman:* At 2nd level, the outrider may choose Mounted Combat, Mounted Archery, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, or Trample as a bonus feat. In addition, the outrider suffers no penalty for riding a creature without a saddle.

*Scout:* At 6th level, the ranger's magical abilities and skill with animals allows him to form a close bond with any creature he rides. He gains a +5 competence bonus to all Ride checks. Under his guidance, a mount gains a +1 competence bonus to all attacks, a +2 dodge bonus to AC, and a +2 competence bonus to all saves.

*Rough Rider:* Outriders form such close bonds with the creatures they ride that they gain several benefits in mounted combat. At 11th level, an outrider gains a +1 competence bonus to all attacks made while mounted. In addition, he may guide a creature to attempt daring stunts in battle. He grants his mount a +10 competence bonus to all Jump checks. Any movement the mount completes while jumping does not draw attacks of opportunity. The outrider and his mount move too fast and in an unexpected manner for their foes to take advantage of the opening in their defense.

## RANGER KNIGHT

In some realms, rangers serve as shock troops and knights. Though they rely on speed and wilderness lore in most of their endeavors, when the realm faces a dire threat they march into battle alongside formations of pikemen and archers. These warriors are known as ranger knights. Their training and skill allows them to stand toe to toe with platemail-clad knights, giants, and other threats. In order to survive such battles, they learn to better protect themselves to compensate for their light armor.

Ranger knights are most common amongst the wood elves, as they typically lack the resources to field heavily armored soldiers. To mask this weakness, their knights learn to maximize their speed and agility.

*Ranger Squire:* Ranger knights prefer to fight with a one-handed weapon and a shield, especially when they march together in military formations. When using a shield, the ranger knight gains either a +1 competence bonus to attacks or a +1 dodge bonus to AC. You must choose this bonus before taking any actions for the round.

*Ranger Knight:* At 6th level, the ranger knight's training allows him to dodge blows and protect himself from attacks. He gains a +1 dodge bonus to AC while wearing light or no armor. Dodge bonuses stack,

granting the knight a +2 bonus when carrying a shield.

*Ranger Lord:* At 11th level, a ranger knight masters the art of blending his speed with his weapon-and-shield fighting style. He gains an additional +2 dodge bonus to AC while wearing light or no armor. This bonus stacks with the one he gained at 6th level, giving him a +3 dodge bonus to AC.

## SLAYER

The slayer is a hunter. He tracks down his enemies and dispatches them with a single, well-placed arrow. In battle, he learns to recognize critical points in his enemy's anatomy. Rather than defeat an opponent with a flurry of attacks, he slips a blade between armor plates or into a vital organ. Slayers sometimes operate as bounty hunters and big game hunters. They keep trophies taken from their kills, and many of them tend towards evil alignments.

*Stalker:* At 2nd level, the slayer gains the ability to sneak attack as the rogue class ability. He deals +1d6 points of damage with this talent. This damage stacks with any other sources of sneak attack damage, such as that gained from rogue levels.

*Marauder:* A slayer's sneak attack damage increases to +2d6 at 6th level.

*Death Dealer:* At 11th level, the slayer's sneak attack damage increases to +3d6.

## SPEAR-FIGHTER

Some rangers prefer the spear to other weapons. A spear is well suited for use against charging animals. It makes a handy armament when a ranger can use favorable terrain while attacking enemies with his weapon's reach.

*Agile Spear Fighter:* At 2nd level, a ranger with this combat style gains the ability to use his spear with superior speed and agility. When fighting with a spear that is not a reach weapon, he gains +5 ft. reach. If an opponent moves adjacent to him, he may attack that foe with his spear even if its reach normally prohibits such attacks.

*Precise Spear Fighter:* At 6th level, the ranger's talent with his spear allows him to engage enemies who are already locked in melee with enhanced accuracy. The ranger ignores the standard -4 penalty for attacking a creature in melee when using his spear's reach and he ignores any cover short of complete cover the creature may have.

*Redoubtable Spear Fighter:* At 11th level, a spear-fighter masters the use of his weapon. Whenever an opponent draws an attack of opportunity from him due to movement, he counts as having set his spear to receive a charge. He gains the bonus damage even if his opponent did not charge him.

## NON-SPPELLCASTING RANGERS

While the ranger given in the core rules has access to divine spells, these abilities may not fit with your picture of a specific ranger or their role in the campaign world. This section builds on the idea of expanded options for ranger characters by introducing additional abilities they can gain through their choice of styles. In return for forgoing the ranger's spellcasting ability, you gain the following additional abilities based on your specialization. Note that archery and two-weapon fighting are the standard ranger's default styles.

The abilities listed here are in addition to those either given in the core rules (in the case of archery and two-weapon fighting) or listed above with the new styles.



## ARCHERY

In place of their spellcasting ability, archers become expert sharpshooters. While they may lack the pure skill of a fighter who focuses on the bow, they develop several unique tricks.

*Hail of Arrows:* At 12th level, a ranger who selected the archery style gains the ability to inspire fear in his enemies by subjecting them to a furious volley of fire. The ranger may opt to strike every opponent in a 30-ft. radius with a single arrow. This area of effect can be centered on any spot within range of his weapon. He attacks each opponent at his best base attack bonus but suffers a  $-2$  penalty to his attack for each opponent beyond the first. For example, the ranger suffers a  $-2$  penalty to fire at two targets,  $-4$  to hit three,  $-6$  to four, and so on. This penalty applies to all of his shots. The ranger fires one arrow at each target. The standard penalties and modifiers for range, cover, and other factors apply to each shot as normal.

*Sniper:* At 14th level, the archer masters the art of focusing his concentration and striking a target despite any cover. He may make a sniper shot with a full attack action. He gains one attack at his best base attack bonus but ignores any cover and/or concealment his target gains. He must be able to see the target, making it impossible for him to negate total cover.

*Storm of Arrows:* At 16th level, the archer may use his hail of arrows ability to fire two arrows at each target within a 30-ft. radius. He suffers a  $-4$  penalty per target after the first. Otherwise, use the rules given for hail of arrows.

*Deadeye Shot:* An 18th-level ranger with the archery style gains the ability to fell his chosen enemies with a single, well-placed shot. Against such foes, the archer may make a single shot as a full attack action. If his shot hits, his target must make a Fortitude save (DC  $15 +$  Wisdom modifier) or suffer critical rather than normal damage. This ability functions only against creatures that the ranger counts as favored enemies. In addition, creatures that are immune to critical hits cannot be affected by this ability.

## EXPLORER

The explorer tends to pick up information from a variety of sources and lands. He becomes a

jack of all trades who has an affinity for the wilderness and travel.

*Danger Sense:* At 12th level, the explorer is always on his toes. Unexpected events barely faze him. While others gape in surprise, he takes whatever actions are necessary to survive. The explorer can longer be caught flat-footed.

*Cunning Stratagem:* The explorer's many travels and his experiences in a wide variety of situations have taught him many unorthodox tactics. At 14th level, the explorer may make a Survival check opposed by an opponent's Will save. The target of this ability must be within the explorer's threatened area. This ability counts as a standard action that can be used once per encounter. If his opponent fails this save, he suffers a  $-2$  circumstance penalty to attacks for the rest of the encounter. The explorer yanks his foe's belt loose, throws sand in his eyes, delivers a particularly effective taunt, or otherwise causes his foe to lose his cool or focus. The explorer's player should describe exactly how he completes this action.

*Wanderer's Insight:* At 16th level, the explorer's wide range of experiences and the many stories and rumors he has heard combine to give him an insight into many monsters he faces. Once per encounter, the explorer can learn the basic weaknesses and strengths of a creature he faces. The DM should summarize the creature's special qualities and attacks, though he should use general descriptive terms rather than game mechanics. For example, a creature with DR/silver would be described as vulnerable to silvered weapons, while one with the ability to cast *hold person* would be able to paralyze humanoids with its magic.

*Wanderer's Luck:* By the time the explorer reaches 18th level, he has acquired a wide and deep collection of anecdotes, stories, and legends. While he may lack a sage's in-depth knowledge, he is a treasure trove of important facts and generally useful knowledge. Three times per day, the wanderer may make a skill check using any skill, even ones that are prohibited or cross-class to him, as if he had ranks in it equal to half his total level. The wanderer draws on half-remembered rumors, actions and abilities he has witnessed, and the rest of his knowledge to complete these tasks.

## LOREKEEPER

The lorekeeper's abilities are largely driven by magic, making it a poor choice for a non-spell-casting ranger. As an alternative for low-magic worlds, you could rule that the lorekeeper is the only ranger who gains spellcasting ability. Otherwise, this style cannot function without access to magic.

## OUTRIDER

Experienced outriders further develop the bond they share with their mounts, forging a strong link with them that allows them to excel in many areas. An outrider and his horse, griffon, or other mount are more of a team than master and servant.

*Bonus Feat:* The outrider's talent in riding allows him to develop specialized skills and abilities as a cavalry fighter. He may select any one of the following as a bonus feat at 12th level: Mounted Combat, Mounted Archery, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, or Trample.

*Canny Rider:* At 14th level, the outrider can guide his mount with such skill that he ignores the effects of many types of terrain. If an obstacle costs more than one square of movement to enter, the outrider can reduce the movement required by one square to a minimum of one.

*Driven Rider:* At 16th level, the outrider can coax his mount into producing a burst of speed beyond its normal limits. During combat, his mount gains a +10 ft. bonus to all its movement modes, including flying, swimming, or burrowing if appropriate.

*Overwhelming Attack:* At 18th level, the outrider develops the skill and courage needed to perform a dangerous combat maneuver. When charging an opponent while mounted, he can leap from the saddle to overwhelm his foe and knock him to the ground. The outrider must make a charge attack against his opponent as normal. When he makes his attack, he jumps from the saddle and uses the additional momentum to power his strike. He resolves the attack as normal for a mounted charge, gaining all bonuses that he would gain for fighting while mounted. In addition, he gains a +2 bonus on the attack roll and a +4 bonus to damage. After resolving this attack, the outrider ends his movement standing on the ground next to his mount.

## RANGER KNIGHT

Brave defenders of the realm, ranger knights learn to maneuver in light armor. They develop a combat style that allows them to gain the same level of protection from light armor that traditional knights gain from plate and chain.

*Shield Defense:* At 12th level, the ranger knight can improve his defenses by carefully biding his time to strike at the proper moment. Rather than use his full array of strikes, he uses his shield to block his foe's attacks and lashes out as his guard is at its weakest. The ranger knight can use this ability with the full attack action. Rather than make multiple attacks, he makes a single attack at his highest base attack bonus. In return, he gains a +2 dodge bonus to AC for each attack he did not use. The ranger knight gains this benefit only when he carries a shield.

*Knightly Defense:* At 14th and 18th level, the ranger knight gains a +1 dodge bonus to AC while wearing light or no armor. Dodge bonuses stack, allowing the ranger knight to gain a steadily better bonus to AC from this style's special abilities.

*Defender of the Realm:* At 16th level, the ranger knight learns to tap into his connection to the land and call upon a steely resolve that allows him to face down the fiercest opponents. Once per day, he can tap into his inner reserves and bolster his defenses against spells and other effects. For the duration of one encounter, the knight gains a +2 bonus to all saving throws.

## SLAYER

The fearsome slayer is a dire enemy and a valued ally. As he gains experience, he learns to attack his enemies with increased ferocity. The creatures that he targets as enemies fall before his bow and blade like wheat before a scythe.

*Sneak Attack:* At 12th and 16th level, the slayer gains an additional +1d6 points of sneak attack damage. This damage stacks with any existing sneak attack abilities he has gained from this style or other class abilities.

*Bloodletter:* At 14th level, the slayer learns to deliver horrific wounds against the enemies he studies as chosen targets. Against his favored enemies, he gains the benefits of the Improved Critical feat with all weapons. If he already has

that feat with a specific weapon, increase its threat range by one when the slayer fights one of his favored enemies.

*Reaper:* At 18th level, the slayer masters the art of dispatching foes with a single decisive stroke. When fighting against his favored enemies, he gains an additional +2d6 points of sneak attack damage. This damage, unlike standard sneak attacks, applies against creatures that are normally immune to this ability. Note that only this specific +2d6 damage gains this benefit. The rest of the slayer's sneak attack damage is ignored as normal. Otherwise, the slayer gains all of his sneak attack bonus damage and this +2d6 points of extra damage against his favored enemies.

## SPEAR-FIGHTER

As the spear-fighter increases in prowess, he masters a variety of tactics that draw on his weapon's form and function. While the spear may seem like an easily mastered weapon, the ranger's talents belie that notion.

*Spearman's Defense:* The spear-fighter's jabbing attacks hit with such force that they halt his opponents in their tracks, forcing them to end their movement. At 12th level, the ranger gains the ability to force his opponents to stop if they draw attacks of opportunity from him for moving. If the ranger's attack of opportunity hits, he may make an opposed Strength check against the target of the attack. If he succeeds, his opponent's movement stops in the square it occupied before it provoked the attack. Creatures gain any bonuses they would normally have against bull rush attacks for having four or more legs or for being exceptionally stable.

*Warding Attack:* At 14th level, the spear-fighter can drive his opponents backward by making a furious array of jabs and attacks at them. He stabs at his opponent's head, rains blows on his shield, and forces him to give ground. As a full attack action, the spear-fighter makes a single attack at his highest base attack bonus. If this attack hits, his opponent must make a Strength check with a DC equal to the attack's result. If this check fails, the spear-fighter can force his opponent to move up to 10 ft. away from him. With each space it moves, the opponent must end up farther away from the spear-fighter. The spear-fighter could not compel a creature to move sideways or closer to him.

Creatures cannot be forced to move off cliffs, through lava pools, or into any other hazard that inflicts more than 2d6 points of damage. Each time the creature moves, the spear-fighter can also move 5 ft. in the same direction. Both the ranger and his target incur attacks of opportunity for moving through threatened areas as normal, but the spear-fighter cannot make such attacks against his target.

*Spear Defense:* When equipped with a spear, the ranger can parry blows with his weapon's haft. At 16th level, the spear-fighter can use his weapon as a shield. He gains a +2 shield bonus to AC. If he fights with a one-handed spear, he either gains a +1 shield bonus to AC or the bonus he gains from his shield increases by 1.

*Sweeping Attack:* At 18th level, the spear-fighter learns to use his spear's blunt end in a manner similar to a staff. He follows up his initial stabs with a sweeping smash with the spear's haft, clubbing his enemies into submission. When using the full attack action, the spear-fighter may make an additional attack that inflicts 1d6 points of bludgeoning damage in return for a -4 penalty to all of his attacks for that round. This attack gains all the bonuses, magical abilities, and other modifiers that the spear normally enjoys.

## TWO-HANDED FIGHTING

The ranger learns to channel his savage blows with greater accuracy while improving his ability to fight off his opponents with sweeping attacks with his weapon.

*Steel Cleaver:* At 12th level, the ranger's weapon cuts through wood, stone, and steel with equal ease. When striking objects, he may choose to ignore an object's hardness. Instead, he inflicts damage equal to his current Strength bonus directly to the object's hit points. This ability is best used against steel, stone, and other materials whose hardness can nullify most or all of your damage.

*Nimble Fighter:* At 14th level, the ranger gains an additional +1 dodge bonus to AC while fighting with a two-handed weapon and wearing light or no armor. At 18th level, this bonus increases to +2.

*Mighty Blow:* At 16th level, the ranger can make devastating strikes that hinder his enemies and leave them in a precarious

position. When using the full attack action, the ranger may opt to make a single strike at his full attack bonus. If the attack hits, the target of this blow must make a Strength check with a DC equal to the damage inflicted. On a failed check, the creature falls prone in its current space. Creatures with four or more legs and those that are exceptionally stable (as per the bull rush attack) gain a +4 bonus to this check.

## TWO-WEAPON FIGHTING

Rangers who opt for this style learn to better coordinate their two weapons, employing tactics and abilities that can confuse and overwhelm their opponents.

*Deceptive Strike:* At 12th level, the ranger learns to coordinate his attacks to foil his enemy's defenses. By jabbing and feinting with one weapon, he can create an opening for a decisive strike with his other attack. When using the full attack action, the two-weapon stylist may forgo his off-hand weapon attacks. In return, he can use his full base attack bonus with his primary weapon. In addition, the ranger gains a +2 bonus on attack rolls with all of his attacks as he distracts his foe with jabs and feints with his off-hand weapon.

*Double Strike:* As the ranger masters his fighting style, he masters the ability to make a single, devastating attack with both of his weapons. At 14th level he may make a single attack with his off-hand weapon, forgoing the bonus attacks he gains from Improved and Greater Two-Weapon Fighting. In return, he gains a +4 bonus to damage with his secondary weapon. He strikes just as he attacks with his primary weapon, driving his off-hand blow into a vulnerable point as his foe tries to ward off his primary strike.

*Hurricane of Steel:* At 16th level, the ranger develops the ability to confuse his opponents and ruin their defense with a rapid series of attacks. He slashes wildly with both weapons, forcing his opponent back on his heels. With each attack he makes, he may opt to make a feinting attack with his weapon. If the attack succeeds, it deals no damage but the opponent's AC is reduced by 1 until its next action. The ranger strikes his opponent with such a furious series of attacks that he forces him to disregard his other opponents in order to defend himself. The ranger can mix his off-hand and primary attacks as he wishes when

using this ability, perhaps using his secondary weapon to drive down his foe's AC before attacking with his primary weapon.

*Rapid Strike:* With his experience in carrying and using two weapons, the ranger learns to make swift, decisive attacks with his secondary weapon. At 18th level, the ranger can make an attack with his off-hand weapon while using the standard attack action. He attacks with his primary weapon as normal and may use his off-hand weapon with a -5 penalty, granting him a total of two attacks.

# WILDERNESS FEATS

Survival in the wild forests, searing deserts, and lofty mountains of a fantasy world is by no means a sure thing. Even with modern day conveniences such as global positioning systems, mobile phones, and off-road vehicles, hikers become lost in the wilderness. In a time and place that lacks these technologies, travelers must rely on their own talents and abilities to survive. This section introduces several new feats that are designed for use in the outdoors. Many of them function particularly well for ranger and druid characters, granting them enhanced abilities or expanding on their class traits.

## EAR TO THE GROUND [GENERAL]

With your keen hearing and sense of the environment, you can listen to the ebb and flow of sound and energy through the ground. By spending a few moments in quiet meditation, you listen to the whispers of the trees, study the sounds that resonate through the earth, and learn of the creatures in the area.

**Prerequisites:** Listen 6+ ranks, Alertness.

**Benefit:** By spending one minute in quiet contemplation, usually with an ear held close to the ground, you can determine the relative location and actions of certain creatures within a radius determined by your Listen result. Make a Listen check and divide the result by 10. This total is the radius in miles within which you can sense

activity. You learn the general direction and distance of all creatures of size Large or greater and groups of Medium creatures that number six or more. After making your check, you can pick one group you detect and learn more about it. In addition to its distance and direction, you uncover its current speed and heading if it is traveling.

The concentration and focus required to use this feat drain you physically and mentally. You can use it only once every hour.

## GREATER TRACK

### [GENERAL]

By closely studying your quarry's tracks, you can learn how he thinks and what he is likely to do when confronted with a problem.

The best rangers learn not only to follow a creature's trail but to extract from it how that monster behaves and the tactics that could prove useful in defeating it.

**Prerequisites:** Track, Improved Track, Survival 9+ ranks.

**Benefit:** If you beat the Survival DC needed to follow a creature's tracks by 10 or more, you gain an important insight into how the creature fights and behaves in the face of danger. If you encounter these enemies within 24 hours of your successful check, you gain a +1 insight bonus to attacks against them and a +2 insight bonus on all Charisma and Charisma-based skill checks. In addition, if you spend a full-round action instructing your allies in tactics or shouting instructions to them during the encounter, they too gain the +1 insight bonus

on attack rolls. You can gain this bonus only on the next encounter against these enemies.

## IMPROVED TRACK [GENERAL]

You can determine several important facts about creatures whose tracks you follow such as the equipment they carry, the speed at which they move, and their general disposition and attitude. You study the distance between footfalls, depth of footprints, and their general arrangement to come to these conclusions.

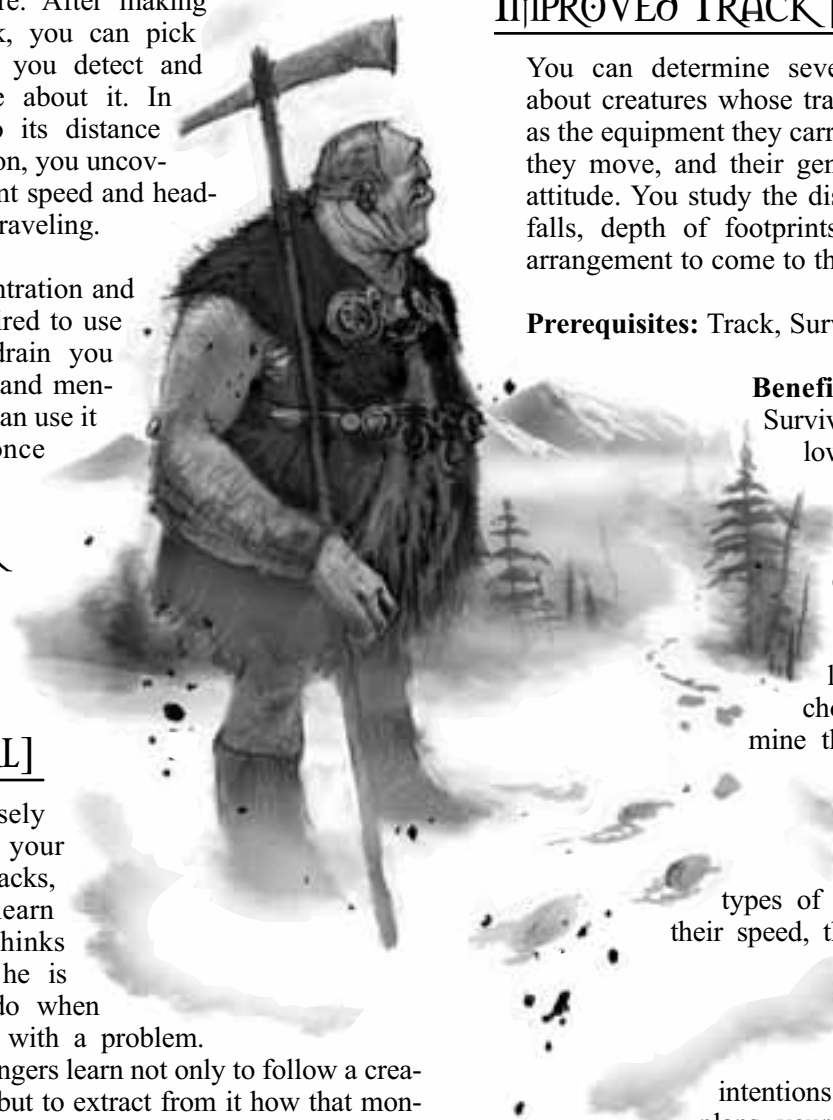
**Prerequisites:** Track, Survival 6+ ranks.

**Benefit:** If you beat the Survival DC needed to follow a creature's signs or group's tracks, you learn more about your quarry. For each successful check you make, you learn one of the following facts of your choice. You can determine the type of creatures you follow, if they wear light, medium, or heavy armor, the types of weapons they carry, their speed, their current distance from you (assuming they maintain the same space), and their general intentions. For their goals and plans, your DM should summarize your target's plans and disposition.

For example, an orc war party might march in a tight formation to avoid detection while moving through enemy territory on their way to a raid, while a pack of wolves may pursue their quarry. In essence, you learn why your target is moving. You do not learn any specific plans, such as how the orcs plan to stage their attack.

**Normal:** You cannot learn anything from tracks, leaving you to follow them in order to discover more about them.

**Special:** You can use this feat once per mile that you follow a set of tracks. You need to see more tracks in order to draw more information from them.





## LIGHT ARMOR MASTERY [GENERAL]

You wear leather armor and similar protective gear like a second skin. You move with speed and agility equal to an unarmored figure.

**Prerequisites:** Light Armor Specialization, base attack bonus +9.

**Benefit:** While wearing light armor, you increase its maximum Dexterity bonus by 2. In addition, you reduce its armor check penalty by 1. You cannot turn a check penalty into a bonus.

**Special:** You may take this feat only once. Its effects do not stack.

Fighters may select Light Armor Mastery as one of their bonus feats.

## LIGHT ARMOR SPECIALIZATION [GENERAL]

You rely on speed and agility while wearing light armor. You have trained to dodge blows with skill and speed, improving your defense as long as you wear flexible armor.

**Prerequisites:** Light Armor Proficiency, base attack bonus +3.

**Benefit:** While wearing light armor, you increase the armor bonus it provides by +1. You dodge and move in such a way as to improve your armor's protective abilities.

**Special:** You may take this feat only once. Its effects do not stack.

Fighters may select Light Armor Specialization as one of their bonus feats.

## MEDIUM ARMOR MASTERY [GENERAL]

You have learned to wear medium armor with maximum efficiency, to the point that when you shed your armor you feel strangely light and exposed. While chainmail might hamper another warrior's movement, you have learned to move with the armor rather than against it.

**Prerequisites:** Medium Armor Specialization, base attack bonus +9.

**Benefit:** You increase the maximum Dexterity bonus while wearing medium armor by 1 and decrease its armor check penalty by 1. You now treat medium armor as light armor for purposes of class abilities, feats, and skills. For example, a bard with this feat could now cast his spells in medium armor, while a barbarian would gain his bonus movement.

**Special:** You may take this feat only once. Its effects do not stack. While you treat medium armor as light, you still suffer the standard movement penalties it incurs (as modified by any feats or abilities you possess.)

Fighters may select Medium Armor Mastery as one of their bonus feats.

## MEDIUM ARMOR SPECIALIZATION [GENERAL]

You have learned to adjust your armor so that it does not hinder your motions as much as normal.

**Prerequisites:** Medium Armor Specialization, base attack bonus +3.

**Benefit:** While wearing medium armor, you increase your speed by +5 ft. (up to your maximum base speed).



**Special:** You may take this feat only once. Its effects do not stack.

Fighters may select Medium Armor Specialization as one of their bonus feats.

## TAKE IT LIKE A MAN [GENERAL]

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You can stave off the effects of pain, magical attacks, and other hindrances for a moment by focusing your concentration to the task at hand.

**Prerequisite:** Endurance.

**Benefit:** When you suffer the ill effects of a poison or any spell, supernatural effect, or spell-like ability that confers an effect or condition other than hit point damage, you can temporarily shrug off the effect. After resolving your saving throw, make a DC 15 Fortitude save regardless of the save type you used to resist the attack. If this save succeeds, you do not suffer the effects until after your next action. Your physical toughness and mental focus allow you to stave off the effects for a few, critical moments. After the duration passes, the spell, poison, or effect takes hold as normal. As with any saving throw, you can opt to automatically fail this check if you wish. For example, you are not forced to delay the effects of *bull's strength* or similar spells.

Note that if a spell hits you during your action and this feat successfully activates, you complete your current action as normal and the effect takes hold at the end of your next action.

## WAR BEAST CARETAKER [GENERAL]

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Animals that you train learn to ignore distractions and better resist spells. In the face of strange supernatural opponents, they keep their resolve.

**Prerequisites:** Handle Animal 4+ ranks, wild empathy class ability.

**Benefit:** With three weeks of training and a successful Handle Animal check (DC 20) you can grant a beast under your tutelage a +2 competence bonus on all saving throws and a +4 competence bonus against mind-affecting attacks and spells.

## WAR BEAST TRAINER [GENERAL]

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You are skilled in training animals to fight beside you. You grant them improved abilities in combat, and they fight better with armed warriors than other trained beasts.

**Prerequisites:** Handle Animal 6+ ranks, wild empathy class ability.

**Benefit:** You can grant an animal you train Light Armor Proficiency and Weapon Focus with one of its natural attacks. You can only grant these benefits to an animal that has been trained for the purpose of fighting. It takes three weeks to grant an animal these feats. This ability does not use any of a creature's available tricks based on Intelligence. Rather, it represents a refinement of the skills it has already learned.

## WAR MONSTER HANDLER [GENERAL]

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You have learned how to handle basilisks, chimeras, and similar monstrous creatures with the same skills you would use against a wild dog or a horse.

**Prerequisites:** Handle Animal 9+ ranks, wild empathy class ability, Wisdom 15+, War Beast Caretaker.

**Benefit:** You can use your wild empathy class ability against magical beasts with Intelligence scores of 4 or less without penalty. In addition, you can use the Handle Animal skill to tame and command them without penalty. These creatures gain one additional trick per point of Intelligence above 3.

## WILDERNESS ADVENTURING

Wilderness adventures present a few challenges that you do not normally encounter in other settings. Supplies, especially food, become more important, while the open terrain leaves you more vulnerable to attacks by large numbers of enemies.

Trees, hills, and other terrain features give your enemies a chance to sneak up on you, while a campsite is invariably the perfect spot for an ambush. This section presents some advice and ideas on successful adventuring in the wilderness.

## ENCOUNTERS

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One of the key differences in outdoor adventuring in comparison to urban and dungeon scenarios is the relatively open terrain. Dungeon passages and buildings within the city serve to channel your opponents and restrict their movement. Large mobs of weaker monsters cannot bring the full weight of their numbers to bear in these environments. In the wilderness, you must cope with terrain that offers long lines of sight and open room to maneuver. If you face a large number of monsters, they can attack from multiple directions to flank you, strike at characters with poor ACs and few hit points (such as arcane spellcasters), and cut off any escape routes.

When traveling, it is best to keep vulnerable characters in the middle of your marching order. All characters, even those who lack weapon proficiencies, should carry a reach weapon to cut down any monsters that try to maneuver through the party to attack weaker members. While many characters lack proficiency with such arms, any attack of opportunity is better than none at all. In addition, the longspear is a simple weapon. Most characters who are proficient with such armaments should carry one to fend off attacking monsters, particularly charging opponents. Even though a spiked chain is an exotic weapon, any character can still use one with the standard -4 non-proficiency penalty.

Armor and shields can prove useful for any character, even those that are not proficient with them. A wizard or sorcerer could carry a tower shield for a much-needed boost to AC in dire circumstances. At higher levels, magic items and spells make these items dead weight, but at lower levels they can prove useful. Once an arcane spellcaster has exhausted his spells, he can use a tower shield to fend off ranged attacks. In addition, a low-level mage without the Combat Casting feat might be better off readying a shield than trying to cast a spell. Use a 5-ft. adjustment to move away from your opponents and then ready the shield. If you

need to make a break for it and must risk attacks of opportunity, the shield can spell the difference between escape and suffering a series of damaging attacks. This strategy works particularly well against ranged attacks, especially since the open terrain in the wilderness allows your opponents to bring many arrows or thrown weapons against you at once.

Ranged weapons are a must for all characters in the wilderness, as the open terrain makes it likely that your opponents can take cover and rain arrows, javelins, and spells upon you. In some areas, monsters might be able to take up positions that you simply cannot storm on foot. A gang of bandits might lurk atop a cliff to attack creatures that pass below, while kobolds may climb trees to find sniper positions. Most characters are proficient with crossbows, and they are particularly useful for non-fighters since Strength has no effect on the damage they inflict. At higher levels, longbows may be a better option. Characters with multiple attacks cannot use them with a crossbow. Wizards and sorcerers probably need a 19 or 20 to hit anyway, making it more important to gain as many attacks as possible. Even with the non-proficiency penalty, a natural 20 always hits.

At higher levels, wands and scrolls become useful in the wilderness. Since encounters tend to take place at longer range than in dungeons, you have more opportunities to let loose with a barrage of *magic missiles* or *fireballs*. Wands also allow you to prepare spells such as *rope trick* that might not be useful during a battle but can prove their worth in allowing you to avoid fights. Divine casters, particularly druids, should load up on wands of the various *cure* spells, allowing them to use their spell slots on other magics. Since druids cannot spontaneously cast *cures*, they can focus on spells that are useful in the wilderness and rely on a wand for healing.

## CAMPING

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The midnight attack by creatures drawn to your campfire is perhaps one of the oldest staples of fantasy gaming, and it persists because it presents an inherently dangerous situation for the party. Many monsters are nocturnal or are adapted to functioning at night, leading them to hunt after sundown. The first few rounds of a night attack are critical. If you can rouse the party and ready a defense, you have a much better chance of surviving unscathed.



The sentinels who keep watch are the first line of defense. Listen and Spot checks can prevent an ambush or give you time to ready your defenses. Every character can use a few ranks in those skills. Try to arrange for at least two people to stand watch at any time, doubling your opportunities to detect an attack. Those two guards should set up on opposite ends of the camp, making it more difficult to hit them both with an area of effect spell.

An alarm bell can help rouse the party, allowing you to wake up everyone with a single action. The characters on guard could each carry one, allowing them to raise an alarm as soon as they can take an action.

If possible, your guards can try to find places where they can hide and watch over the camp. If any potential attackers fail to notice your hidden sentinels, you can potentially ambush the attackers. A rogue hidden in a tree can drop down to sneak attack any monsters that move past his position, cutting down an opponent while forcing the opponents to respond to this new threat rather than attack sleeping characters.

A simple deception can also serve to ruin the advantages your opponents may enjoy. Before bedding down for the night, set up a few empty bedrolls at the edge of camp. Fill them with leaves, grass, or even stones to make them look as if they are occupied. The character who creates these decoys can make a Disguise check to fool the monsters, who must make Spot checks with a DC equal to the Disguise check's result to notice that the bedding is a decoy. Your opponents could waste a few critical rounds attacking the dummies, giving you an opportunity to ready your defenses.

# CHAPTER TWO

# WILDERNESS CAMPAIGNS

Building adventures in the great outdoors requires a bit more work than creating a dungeon or planning out an urban scenario. In the outdoors, the characters are apt to wander in almost any direction. With the entire vista of the world before them, the characters have plenty of options to follow. Wilderness adventures also require a different tone than dungeon and city ones. A forest should offer a different environment than a swamp, while the mountains present unique challenges and creatures. If the environment plays no role in an adventure, or if you present it without any flavor, you lose a lot of the excitement possible within wilderness adventures.

This chapter presents advice for designing wilderness regions, tips on running adventures in the outdoors, and optional rules that can add more depth and a distinct flavor to adventures in the wilds. The text of this chapter is designated as **Open Game Content**.

## Using This BOOK

The bulk of this book is dedicated to detailing the dangers present within a fantasy world's environment. From Chapter 3 onward, each of the common terrain types is given a set of traits, a description of monsters commonly found there, and rules for unique combat terrain present within it. If those chapters are the raw material for constructing wilderness environments, this one is your user's manual.

To start with, you need to determine the terrain and the climate you want to design. Chapters 3 to 10 offer descriptions for a variety of environments. The areas covered are, in order of their appearance in this book, desert, forest, mountains, plains, waterways, swamps, tundra, and wastelands. While most of those environments are self-explanatory, wastelands and rivers bear some additional explanation. The chapter on rivers gives you rules for running encounters on small bodies of water. It approaches them as an obstacle or feature within a larger terrain, such as mountains or a for-

est. The chapter on wastelands describes a wide variety of areas wracked by mundane and magical disasters, just the sort of places that heroic adventurers might need to travel to.

The environment chapters each start with a selection of basic and advanced traits. The basic traits represent characteristics that form the core identity of a particular type of terrain. Most of them lack a magical or supernatural component, instead focusing on effects that you could find in the real world. The advanced traits delve into magical phenomena. Think of the basic traits as the foundation for a region and the advanced ones as seasonings that transform a mundane area into one that could only be found in a fantasy setting.

After picking a terrain type, you need to consider the climate and weather. Chapter 11 gives rules and advice for handling weather events. You can transform any terrain into a snowy, arctic vista or create windstorms and hurricanes to impede the characters' progress. By combining the environments with the weather rules, you can replicate almost any natural region.

Keep in mind that the traits and rules in this book are grouped by environment to make them easier to use and reference. You can swap features from one chapter with those taken from another, creating a mixture of traits and features to create the effect you want. Never be afraid to mix and match rules to achieve the effect you want.

## BUILDING THE WILDERNESS

While the rules in this book give you the building blocks and rules you need for the wilderness, they are only the raw materials. This section addresses techniques and ideas you can use to build fun wilderness adventures. It presents a checklist you can work through when building small areas or regions of wilderness.

### THE BASICS

The first thing you need to do is consider the basic geography and climate of the region you want to build. At this point, forget about the

rules, game balance, and other factors. Instead, picture in your mind what the area looks like. Think of yourself as a novelist working to describe a scene. If you wrote a story about a traveler making his way across this land, what would he encounter? What would that traveler look upon as the characteristics that stood out in his mind after his journey? Make a note of each of those important traits. Now, think of the area in terms of your campaign and in your role as a DM. Some of the traits you wrote down need rules to fully represent them in the game, while others are descriptive details that bring the area to life but have no rules effect.

### DESCRIPTIONS

Descriptive traits allow you to breathe life into your campaign world. If all the wilderness regions you present have the same look and feel, your world can become bland scenery that fades into the background. Creating evocative, memorable descriptions is easier than you may think. You do not need to have a novelist's skill with words to make a land memorable. Usually, one or two unique traits are all you need to set one place apart from another. Go back to the notes you made about the region and pick out a few descriptions that make the land unique. If your notes lack anything that stands out, think about what makes the land unique. You do not need to fill a desert with pink sand or stock a forest with trees made from metal to make them unique. Over-the-top features are memorable, but using them too often can turn your campaign world into a mishmash of strange lands.

Usually, all you need are one or two characteristics that you can emphasize over the course of an adventure. The key to presenting a land's unique traits lies in using them repeatedly over the course of an adventure. During each encounter, set the scene by adding the key traits to your description. Between each encounter, mention them as you talk about the land that the characters cross. If you're a talented orator and a gifted storyteller, then you can probably weave an enthralling description that etches your vision of the land in your players' minds. But for the rest of us, repetition is the key. If the players keep hearing about how hot the land is, or how the trees in the forest are dark, twisted, and foreboding, then their own imaginations will take off and produce an image as vivid as anything a brilliant novelist can create.



To keep track of your descriptions, add details on it to your notes. You can use an index card as a handy reminder during an adventure. Write down each of the key descriptive traits you want to use and then list a few words or images that go with it. A thesaurus is a great resource, especially when you use repetition to describe an area. If you use the same description over and over again, it might leave the players bored. If you have the time to create props for the game, use the Internet or any magazines you have around the house to find pictures that fit the vista you want to present. Use one of the Web search engines that can find images to track down pictures that fit your vision of a region. Show them to players to set the scene, or hang them over your DM's screen. Fold over the upper part of the picture and use that as an impromptu hook to perch it on your screen. As the characters enter different areas, you can swap out the image for a new one. If you're ambitious, you can collect a variety of images and swap them over the course of the game session to mark the PCs' progress across a region.

Many DMs prefer to wing it, relying on improvisation to set the scene. While that

can be fun and if it works for you there's no need to change, keep in mind that some amount of preparation can prove invaluable. You only have so much energy to expend over the course of a session. At some points in the game, you need to draw on your creativity. As you get tired, you can lose your focus as your energy wanes. Other times, the ideas that come to your mind lack the spark that separates the mundane from the captivating. Even the best improvisational DMs suffer from hiccups and dry spells.

Preparation allows you to avoid those pitfalls and focus your creative energy on coming up with a few cool ideas during a session rather than a lot of mediocre ones. Even a few index cards with ideas and descriptions that come to you during the week can make a big difference. If you're busy, carry a small notebook with you during the week and use it to record any ideas that come to you. The night before your next game, organize those notes, write down page numbers for any rules that go along with them that you want to use, and you're ready to improvise from a solid base of prepared ideas and thoughts.

## RULES

After working on your presentation for an area, think about the rules you can use for a region. A captivating description can bring a place to life, but rules that have an impact on characters' actions serve to integrate the setting into the game. Talking about the shifting desert sands influences how the players view the game. Using rules that show how the sand affects their characters forces them to alter their decisions. Look over Chapters 3 to 10 and pick the best fit for what you have in mind. If you want to create a region that doesn't really match any of the chapters, read over the traits and features given in each and pick out specific ones that fit your vision. If you still cannot find anything that fits, the rules for hazards given later in this chapter give you guidelines for creating your own.

Chapter 11 provides details on the weather. Use those rules in combination with the environmental traits to breathe life into your setting. Usually, it makes sense to pair a climate from Chapter 11 with a terrain selected from Chapters 3 to 10. You can simulate almost any environment on earth through these combinations, from steaming jungles to frozen plains.

Throughout this book, the various terrain features and traits list specific rules for their effects on encounters and combat. Sometimes, it might seem a bit daunting to keep track of all the different effects that deep mud, water, undergrowth, and other factors can have on a PC. If you need to remind the players and yourself to apply their effects, invariably you will forget a rule here and an important modifier there. To aid in keeping track of different effects, it helps to have reference cards available that list the effects of terrain.

For example, for an encounter in a forest with thick undergrowth, you could summarize the undergrowth feature's rules effects on a few index cards. When a PC or monster enters that terrain and is subject to its benefits and drawbacks, hand the appropriate index card to the player or place it on your notes with the monster's stats. With the card at hand, you can reread it to check for any rules and modifiers that you need to apply to a situation.

The card serves as a handy, physical reminder that something is different about a situation. It is much easier to remember something if you

are holding an object relating to it rather than juggling it in your head. When the effect no longer applies to a PC, he can hand the card back to you. It takes little effort to work up these cards in your free time. You can even draft the players into doing the work. As the encounter begins, have them each take a card. You can read a brief summary of the rules and have them write down key phrases, DCs, and modifiers. In this manner, you ensure that the players are clear on how terrain works and they have reminder cards ready to use.

Format the cards using a bullet point list, with each entry summarizing a rule or modifier in as few words as possible. If you simply copy the rules out of the book verbatim, it takes longer to create and reference the cards. Here is an example of what you might note for waist-deep water, as described in the swamp entry of this chapter.

### Waist-Deep Water:

- +2 squares movement
- Cover against ranged attacks
- +2 save versus fire-based attacks and spells

This brief list allows you to reference the terrain's effects at a glance. It focuses on issues that are likely to come up in play and players are likely to forget. As you use terrain features in your games, you should build up a full collection of terrain reminder cards.

If creating the cards does not appeal to you, you can use small bits of colored construction paper or other markers to indicate that a character or monster gains some benefit or drawback from the terrain. Write the feature's name on the scrap of paper and tuck it beneath the appropriate miniature, counter, or other marker. Leave enough of the marker sticking out so that you can see it.

## KEY TERRAIN FEATURES

After thinking about the general traits and features of an area, look back at your initial notes and think about any distinguishing landmarks in the area. At this point, you should start working on creating a map. A sheet of graph paper with one square equal to one mile works well for detailed areas, though for regional maps you can increase the scale to 10, 25, or 50 miles. At larger scales, it might be best to avoid going into too many details. At that level, you should focus on general trends



and the very basic details of the continent's geography.

Mark the location of the key features on your map, blocking off any unoccupied areas as forest, plains, or whatever terrain feature you want to use. You can also note any variations in traits over the area. For example, the areas at the edge of the desert might be cooler than its central region. Many of the traits given in Chapters 3 to 11 have three strength ratings you can choose from, allowing you to tailor the danger to the party's level and to allow threats to become more dangerous as the characters venture deeper into a region.

Key terrain features can include exceptionally tall mountains or hills, caves, ruins, and other notable places. Their primary use in running a game is that they offer memorable sites for the characters to encounter as they travel. Directions and maps in the wilds could rely on such sites as landmarks. The characters might receive instructions to ride three days west of Black Spire Rock to the Rainbow River. From there, they must go south until they find the old imperial road. Landmarks allow you to give distinct flavor to a region of the wilderness. They also give long journeys greater substance. The same description of the wilderness can grow old, but if you can summarize the various sites the characters pass, that variation can make a trip feel longer and more epic.

## CIVILIZATION

After considering the natural traits that occur within a region, think about the influence of civilization on the area. If there are any cities and towns in the area, mark them on your map. Each settlement should have a logical reason for its location. There should be resources nearby, such as mines, farmland, and similar goods it can harvest for sale. Sometimes, towns arise simply because they are located along trade routes or important roads. Otherwise, a town might occupy a militarily or politically important area. A mountain pass between two warring kingdoms probably has small towns and castles at each end. A village might spring up near an isolated monastery, as the townsfolk provide goods and services to the monks and those who seek to visit them.

In general, a settlement needs access to other towns via trade routes, farmland to produce food, and a source of water. Some folk

might not need access to trade, especially primitive humanoids that rely on hunting, subsistence farming, and raiding to survive. Otherwise, without food or water creatures cannot survive. In some cases, particularly groups that have many divine casters, magic can mask these shortcomings. An isolated temple might rely on spellcasters to supply food and drink. Since building roads into the wilderness is a daunting task, most settlements on the border between wilderness and civilization are built on rivers and lakes, allowing boats to set forth with supplies to an outpost and load up on the raw materials it produces for the return trip.

For each town or city, create its basic statistics as per the core rules. In addition, you should list the businesses available in each place the PCs might want to frequent. Taverns, weapon-smiths, wizards who produce and sell magic items, temples that provide healing, and other services could all be important to an adventuring party. You should also try to come up with one or two distinguishing characteristics that serve to make a settlement unique. Perhaps its buildings are made with a purple granite unique to the area, or the thieves' guild has grown so powerful that it now runs the government. Just as a unique trait or description can make a wilderness region come to life, so too do settlements need a distinct flavor to make your world feel like a living, vivid place.

Add roads and pathways between the settlements, unless there is a good reason not to. For instance, two towns ruled by competing governments might not have roads between them, while a settlement populated by bandits or pirates might lack any clear paths to it. Many places might rely on rivers and lakes for travel, with barges and boats bringing in supplies and taking away trade goods.

If you want to add ruins and dungeons to an area, you should look at their history and determine how and why they were built. An abandoned city might have ancient roads leading to it, while a dungeon built by an archmage might still be marked by the teetering ruins of his ancient tower. You can progress through the region's history, adding settlements and the roads between them, then converting them into ruins as civilizations rise and fall. This process is a relatively simple, easy way to introduce a lot of noteworthy sites, monster lairs, and adventure locations into a region.



## MONSTERS AND THREATS

At this point, you have the basic geography and physical features of the area designed. Now, you can add monsters and other dangerous threats to menace the characters. Before you start adding monsters to an area, first look at the settlements you created for the region. Armed patrols, particularly in areas wracked with frequent border skirmishes, could be a continuing menace. An evil wizard who rules a small barony might have orcs and ogres in his employ. Those beasts watch over his roads and extract a steep toll from any travelers who use them. A band of elves might seek to expel anyone who enters their forests, while the mountains controlled by a dwarf clan might be heavily patrolled.

After deciding on the threats posed by civilization, read the chapter that corresponds to the terrain you are using. Each section has a discussion on the monsters normally found within it, based on the environment entry for monsters from the core rules. Use those as inspiration for your campaign, though these descriptions are by no means canonical. This is a fantasy game.

If you want to use kobolds in the desert or orcs in a forest, don't let the rules hold you back. Make a list of the monsters that you want to use.

## ROLES FOR MONSTERS

After deciding on your cast of threats, you should look at how they fit together. Sometimes, you can ignore any concerns about ecology and geography in favor of setting up encounters appropriate to the party's level. If realism is not a big part of the campaign or if the wilderness area serves as the location for only one or two adventures, you do not need to spend much time giving every monster a sensible role in the wilderness. The characters will spend too little time there for such details to play a role in the game. Otherwise, for areas that will host multiple adventures or a large portion of a campaign, putting some thought into how the monsters fit together can help create a believable environment.

The easiest way to organize monsters in the area is to assign them to different roles. Listed below are a few basic spots that a creature can occupy in an ecosystem.

Each of the roles has a relationship with the others listed here. Predators need prey to hunt and eat, while intelligent humanoids need space between their settlements to prevent overt conflicts.

Think of these roles as basic classes for monsters and animals. They may give you an idea of their relationship with the land and the other creatures that inhabit an area, but they do not tell the whole story. Use the descriptions given in the terrain chapters as examples and an inspiration for how monsters interact with the environment. Also remember that for intelligent creatures, personality and history can go a long way in determining how they act. If the gnomes and elves in a forest have a long rivalry, they may compete for trade relationships with a nearby human city. In the face of a rising threat, they are slow to form an alliance. An orc tribe led by a powerful cleric of a war god may be more aggressive than normal, while a band of goblins that recently lost a costly war with a dwarf nation might be withdrawn and passive.

**Prey:** Many of the dangerous monsters, such as ankhegs or dragons, are meat eaters. They need sufficient numbers and types of animals to hunt and devour to survive. What animals fill this role in the area? Deer, buffalo, birds, and other herbivores usually fill this niche. The greater the variety of predators in a region, the more prey they need to support them. For each monstrous species, match it up with the animal it hunts. If a single animal type supports multiple species, it probably exists in large numbers. Remember that such creatures need sufficient plants and water to survive, perhaps leading to seasonal hunting cycles and migrations. In an area controlled by a dragon, the wyrm might subsist on great herds of animals that move through the area on a seasonal basis. During the summer, the dragon takes to the sky to hunt. In the winter, it survives on the enormous amounts of food it consumed during the warmer months, it has minions that bring it food from elsewhere, or it spends much of its time in a deep slumber.

**Predator:** Predators might wander through the region, attacking prey where they find it. Otherwise, they could claim an area as a personal hunting ground. Any creatures that enter their domain risk an attack, especially if the predator sees them as a potential competitor.

Predators are wild beasts or monsters that rely on instinct and an animal-level intelligence to survive. They are unable to tend crops, keep herds, or plan for their food and water needs. These creatures are likely to attack adventurers because of hunger or to defend their hunting grounds. They rarely stockpile treasure, though valuables might be discovered amongst the remains of their past victims. These creatures become increasingly rare near settlements, as humanoids hunt them down to eliminate the threat they pose to hunters, farmers, and traveling merchants. Predators usually exist in much smaller numbers than the prey they hunt. If too many of them gather in one place, they can quickly over-hunt an area and leave it barren.

**Settlers:** All intelligent species, even savage orcs and goblins, have a sizable impact on their environment. Intelligent creatures tend to drive away competitors, especially predatory creatures, while seeking to control herd beasts and other prey that can prove useful to them. Generally, the only competition they face is from other settlers and intelligent monsters. Communities can exist close together in peace only if they enjoy a political alliance or if they need each other for trade or mutual defense. Towns and villages controlled by different species, especially those that are on opposite sides of the good-evil alignment divide, inevitably clash. Two potential enemies can avoid conflict in areas with abundant supplies and plentiful resources, as they do not need to compete, but such situations are transitory at best. Usually, it makes sense to place one or two days' travel between groups of humanoids unless you want them to exist in a state of active conflict. The actual physical distance depends on the terrain. In the mountains two settlements could sit close to each other but experience little or no contact, but in the open plains even 30 miles might not be enough distance.

One thing to keep in mind is that some giants and evil humanoids function more like predators than as settlers. They care only for stockpiling food, loot, and other spoils of war. Their settlement might be a crude den established in a cave. While vicious and warlike, they rarely stray far from their hunting grounds unless they run low on food or find an appealing target to strike at, such as a caravan or a newly established settlement.

**Powerful Beings:** Many creatures in fantasy RPGs defy categorization in terms of real-world ecology. Dragons, liches, undead, and other creatures are powerful enough to alter a region's character by the simple virtue of their might. A single, powerful being operates much like a settlement. It can easily cut down the predators in an area, allowing the population of prey to swell in numbers and support the being with ease. A dragon could burn out the orc villages around its lair, either forcing the humanoids to work as its slaves or driving them away to leave the herds of caribou as its personal food source. These creatures only rarely exist in the same region without coming to blows, as invariably they must compete for resources. Only in the most verdant regions can multiple huge monsters survive within close proximity. Usually they are spaced apart in about the same proportion as humanoid settlements, with one or two days' of travel separating them. These creatures leave an undeniable mark on the land around them. Forests might be burned to ash in some regions by a hunting red dragon, while a gray render could topple trees or leave behind the torn, bloody corpses of its victims.

## REGIONS

After you have determined the monsters that inhabit an area, you need to place them on your map. Note the location of each creature's primary lair, hunting grounds, or grazing areas. Draw borders around the creatures' domains to serve as a reminder of where they usually wander. Unlike political boundaries, these borders are very likely to overlap. For example, a predator probably shares space with the creatures it preys upon. Settlers and powerful beings usually live in a town, fortress, tower, or cave. They control (or at least attempt to control) the region around this lair. Predators stake out hunting grounds, while prey usually wanders over a wide area to graze on brush, grass, and other plants. For creatures that have a predator-prey relationship, their regions should overlap. As noted above, settlers and powerful beings usually drive away most competitors in the area directly around their lairs. They may seek to control any prey animals that overlap their territory. Settlers might round them up and shepherd them, protecting them from predators and harvesting them for meat, wool, or whatever resources they produce. A powerful being could patrol an extended area to sweep away the predators that threaten its food supply.

Settlers that are in close proximity might compete for resources, perhaps going so far as to wage war against one another. The nature of the creatures that settle an area also plays an important role in how they interact with neighbors. Chaotic evils raid and pillage to gather food, finished goods, and slaves. Lawful evil ones seek to conquer, forcing their defeated enemies to obey their dictates. Neutral outposts care only for their own needs, attacking neighbors if supplies are low or competition threatens their survival. Otherwise, they may seek to form an alliance during times of plenty or if a neighbor is clearly more powerful. Good creatures prefer to use treaties and trade agreements to keep the peace, though they fight if provoked.

Predators generally seek to meet their own food and shelter needs within their hunting grounds. Intruders can expect a fierce attack, but these creatures rarely wander from their chosen territory. During droughts or other times when food runs short, predators expand their territory or migrate to richer hunting grounds. During these times, nearby settlements may experience repeated attacks from wild animals. Wolves, orcs, and other monsters may stream from the wilderness in small hordes to throw themselves against the bulwarks of civilization, driven to invade by drought, attacks from even more powerful creatures that seized their hunting grounds, or some other force.

Prey tends to stay the course over time, simply following the seasonal patterns of the plants they eat. A herd may venture from one end of a mountain range to another, exhausting the tough, alpine grass in one spot before moving on to the next grazing land. Physical barriers tend to limit their wanderings, with thick forests, steep peaks, barren wastelands, and other features creating a natural fence. Prey animals are generally those that lack the cunning, foresight, or intelligence to make real plans for their development. They tend to react to changing situations, perhaps fleeing an area in response to a forest fire, aggressive hunting, or some other change. Such an alteration in their habits could have severe repercussions for a region, as the predators and settlers that rely on them for food could face rough times.

## HISTORY

Once you have determined what a monster does in the wilderness and what areas it occupies, you can use that information to build a history for the region and to give yourself an idea of its future. Make a few notes on who leads humanoid tribes and the goals of any king-

doms that control parts of the region. A king may order his subjects to push the frontier back in search of new resources, while a frost giant king's greed might be fired by the gold and ore the nearby dwarves mine from the peaks.

Try to define the relationships between settlements and intelligent creatures in terms of their pasts. Unless the area is rife with barriers that prevent contact, most creatures should have a relationship that developed over time. Enemies may have fought skirmishes or wars in the past. A town may have been conquered a few decades ago, with the losers still harboring resentment towards their new overlords. The orc tribes may have spent the past decades licking their wounds since their last raids on civilization, building up a powerful force while the border armies lose their fighting edge. In the years since the last battles, the orcish threat has faded into the background. Even reports from adventurers of increased orc activity are met with disbelief at best, derision at worst.

There are a few basic rules that you can use to quickly create a historical relationship between a settlement and its surroundings. The most important point to keep in mind is that, as noted in the examples above, time tends to cause memories to fade. If a threat has not

menaced an area in a few years, those charged with defending against it might grow lax in their duties. On the other hand, a persistent or recurring danger can consume a lot of energy and resources. If bandits and raiders are common, a town may allow only members of the guard or licensed mercenaries to bear weapons. Villages and settlements may work more like armed camps, with soldiers outnumbering farmers and settlers.

Scarcity breeds competition, which in turn leads to feuds and conflict. Note the resources that a group needs to survive or the ones that it wants to gather. If anything on that list matches its neighbors' goals, then they are likely rivals. Such a relationship does not necessarily mean they engage in open warfare. The two groups could try to lure merchants to their towns to buy and sell goods, offering favorable taxes or trade terms to garner business. The more vital a resource is to survival, such as food or water, the more likely groups are to fight over them if they are scarce. For example, in the desert humanoid tribes might fight

wars over an oasis.

History is most important for intelligent creatures, but it can prove useful for animals and monsters. Consider how recently a creature has moved into the area. The longer a creature has lived in a place, the more likely that other creatures and intelligent inhabitants have adapted to its presence. The locals might know how to best avoid it or they can advise the characters on how to avoid it. On the other hand, a relatively new arrival might pose a hidden threat to the area. A new monster can quickly cut into the prey available while using its strange new abilities to confound hunters and overwhelm



competing predators. In a short time, it can quickly change the nature of a region.

# WANDERING MONSTERS

In forest areas, a wise druid or an experienced ranger can lead his companions safely through dangerous areas. By spotting a dragon's tracks, noting the signs of a giant spider infestation, and recognizing arrowheads as orc craftsmanship, he can use his knowledge of the wilderness to plot a safe pathway through the wilds.

Normally, random encounter systems rely on a single die roll without any modifiers based on the party's actions. This optional system lets you tie the players' decisions and plans into the types of creatures they blunder into. It also allows smart players and characters who are designed for wilderness adventures to turn the tables on their enemies. A cunning druid can discover a monster before it spots him, allowing his party to sneak around it and attack with surprise. This system substitutes the typical random encounter check, usually an unmodified d20 or d% roll, with a Survival check. Characters trained in that skill can use their knowledge to evade enemy patrols, pick out a well-hidden path, and avoid areas where monsters frequently hunt for prey.

Wandering monsters add a sense of believability to your campaign world. In the wide open regions of the wilderness, it makes logical sense that monsters, animals, and beasts would wander the land in search of food and loot. Not every creature is content to sit within its dungeon and wait for adventurers to find it. In terms of game design, wandering monsters add an element of random danger to the game. Whenever the party enters the wilderness, they must be ready for unexpected attacks by dangerous creatures. This sense of uncertainty increases the drama and forces the players to make contingency plans.

## THE BASICS

One member of the party, usually one with the highest total bonus in the Survival skill, makes a check to see if he can lead the party along a path to safety. The larger the party and the more

open the terrain, the more difficult it is for him to avoid detection. Furthermore, areas infested with monsters are more difficult to safely navigate than sparsely inhabited regions. On a low total check result, the party might blunder into an ambush or disturb a powerful creature. With a high result, the party can avoid wandering monsters or it might have the opportunity to launch an ambush of its own.

This section presents the three basic components to these rules. First, a set of basic modifiers applies to the Survival skill check regardless of the environment. Second, the wilderness the party needs to cross may have distinct traits and features that make it easier or more difficult to travel through. Areas with little cover are harder to sneak through, while the total population of monsters in the area can affect the Survival check. Finally, the total result of the party's Survival check determines not only if the PCs meet a monster but the circumstances of that encounter.

**Frequency:** The party must make a Survival check to evade monsters once every four hours in game time. If the party stays in one place, such as when they make camp, make checks at the same frequency. You still use a Survival check with the normal modifiers listed when making checks while the party rests. The party's guide picks out a campsite with an eye towards sheltering them from encounters and could either find a secure place or one near paths that could attract attention.

**Unskilled Checks:** If no one in the party has the Survival skill, it cannot be used untrained. Instead, one party member may substitute a Wisdom check with a -4 competence penalty in place of a Survival check.

**Assisted Checks:** One party member may attempt a Survival check to assist the character checking to avoid random encounters. Any more characters assisting cause confusion and muddle any efforts to pick out a path.

## STANDARD SURVIVAL MODIFIERS

The factors listed on the Survival Check Modifiers table apply to all Survival skill checks made to evade random encounters. They apply regardless of the local terrain and other conditions. As you can see, larger parties have a much harder time

## SURVIVAL CHECK MODIFIERS: TRAVEL

Situation	Check Modifier
For each group member more than four*	-1
For each group member less than four*	+1
Per each group member of size Large or greater	+2
Per each group member of size Small or less	-2
Per party member in heavy armor	-1
Slowest party member speed 30 ft. or more	+2
Slowest party member speed 15 ft. or less	-2
Party clad in camouflaging gear	+2
One or more characters has Track	+2

\* Count characters and mounts they ride as one party member, but unattended animals (such as pack mules) count as a party member.

## SURVIVAL CHECK MODIFIERS: CAMP

One or more characters has Track	+2
The party lights a fire	-4
The characters take up position in a cave or similar shelter	+2
The party rests near a spring, stream, or other source of water	-2
The party rests near a road or path	-2

escaping detection, as do groups clad in heavy armor. If you want to expand this list of modifiers, consider any factors that make it easier or harder for a person to escape notice in the wilderness. While the party makes a Survival check to evade detection, in many ways this check is similar to a Hide attempt. Parties that are quiet and clad in light armor have a much easier time evading detection. They can also move faster to avoid allowing any creatures to overtake them.

A second set of modifiers applies to parties that have stopped to make camp and rest. The modifiers given under the table labeled for travel apply while the characters journey across the land. Use the camp table when the party stops for several hours or sets up camp. If the characters use a spell such as *rope trick* to conceal themselves while they rest, do not make Survival checks for wandering monsters unless the creatures in the area could conceivably uncover their magical shelter.

To save time, it helps to write down the basic modifiers for each party member and the group as a whole. That way, you can easily change the total modifiers if any factors change.

Furthermore, you do not need to recalculate all of the modifiers each time the party makes a check.

For example, a party of six adventurers would face the following modifiers. First, they suffer a -2 penalty for having two more party members than the typical group size of four. Two of their number wear heavy armor for an additional -2 penalty, but everyone wears mottled green cloaks to blend into the environment for a +2 bonus. The party's total modifier is -2. Later, four party members use *teleport* to return to town. The two remaining characters face the following modifiers. Since the group now counts two members, two less than four, it receives a +2 bonus for size. Neither of the two characters wears heavy armor. Both characters carry enough treasure that their movement rates are now 10 ft. Since the slowest party member moves 15 ft. or slower, the group suffers a -2 penalty. Note that the two modifiers based on speed are not multiplied if more than one character is tied for the slowest or fastest speed. Apply those modifiers only once.

## VARIABLE MODIFIERS

Other modifiers are based on the terrain and other environmental conditions. While the basic modifiers apply in all situations, the factors listed in this section change depending on the party's surroundings. To keep the game moving, you can determine the total modifiers for an area ahead of time. When the PCs enter

a region, you can have them make a check with the appropriate modifiers. If the characters move through several areas with different modifiers, make a check using the lower total modifier. In other words, if both are positive use the lower bonus. If both are negative, use the larger (more negative) number. For example, if the party passes through an area with a +2 and +3 modifier, use +2. If they later entered an area with a -2 and -3 modifier, use -3.

**MONSTERS**

Depending on the number of monsters in the area, the characters might have an easier or more difficult time moving through the area. Apply the following modifiers based on your assessment of the hostile population in the general region. In addition, you can use additional modifiers based on the monsters' activity and disposition. If the local orcs actively patrol their domain, they are much harder to evade than the kobolds that rarely leave their forest burrows.

<b>Monster Population</b>	<b>Check Modifier</b>
Low population	+2
Moderate population	+0
Heavy population	-2
Militaristic	-2
Aggressive	-2
Passive	+2
Peaceful	+2

**TERRAIN**

Dense, thick terrain makes it much easier to notice tracks and other signs. It also provides far more places for the characters to hide or take cover as they travel across the wilderness. The following modifiers apply to general terrain types that the party is likely to travel through. If the specific terrain you seek is not listed here, use the listed modifiers to gauge a closest fit.

<b>Terrain</b>	<b>Check Modifier</b>
Forest	+2
Mountains/hills	+1
Plains/desert	-2
Swamp	+1

**WEATHER CONDITIONS**

Rain, snow, and other conditions alter how easily a party can travel in secret. Snow cuts down on visibility, but it also makes it easier to follow the party's trail. Rain can cover up tracks, while

high winds disturb any evidence of a creature's passage. Rough weather also makes it less likely that a creature wanders the land. Bad conditions send both intelligent creatures and animals into shelter, making it much less likely that the party encounters anything or anyone.

<b>Weather</b>	<b>Check Modifier</b>
Hotter than normal	+1
Colder than normal	+1
Average temperature	+0
Heavy precipitation	+2
Light precipitation	+1
Clear day	-2

**CHECK RESULTS**

After determining the total modifiers to the Survival check (keeping in mind that it is easiest to compute them ahead of time), the players should make a Survival check and determine the total result. Only one character attempts this check, with up to one check to aid him. Characters untrained in Survival can substitute a Wisdom check with a -4 modifier. Needless to say, flailing around in the wilderness is difficult without an experienced guide. The total check result determines the type of encounter the characters must handle and the threat it poses.

<b>Check Result</b>	<b>Situation</b>
3 or less	The party blunders into an ambush. They are automatically considered surprised. They face opponents whose total EL equals the party's average level plus 1d2-1. The noise they make plus their poor choice of paths causes the party to alert monsters who gather their strength before making an attack.
4-9	The characters encounter a strong group of monsters. Their opponents gain a +2 circumstance bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks to ambush them, but they do not automatically surprise the party. They face opponents with a total EL equal to the party's level minus 1d2-1.
10-14	The characters run into a group of monsters. Neither group is surprised. The monsters have an EL equal to the party's level minus 1d3-1.



- 15–25 The characters evade the creatures in the area.
- 26+ The party manages to sneak up on a group of monsters. They can avoid their foes or elect to attack them from ambush. They must make Move Silently and Hide checks as normal to close the distance with them, but the characters gain +4 competence bonuses to their checks.

The type of creatures the party faces depends on your campaign world and the terrain the PCs travel through. You can refer to the traits and design sections in the terrain chapters for lists of different monsters commonly found in various types of terrain. You can also use a simple table with 20 entries listed on it, each labeled starting with 1 and up to 20. A d20 roll determines the monster the characters face. You can repeat a monster multiple times on the table to represent its relative population in the area. For example, in a forest dominated by kobolds, up to 10 spaces on the table might be occupied by them. Of the remaining 10 positions, four could be occupied by giant spiders, two more by ettercaps, and the remaining two split between ghillies and assassin vines.

The ELs given on the result table assume that you want wandering monsters to pose a threat to the party but you do not want them to whittle the party's strength down too much. By keeping the EL close to the party's level, you help assure that the PCs do not spend too much time and resources dealing with random encounters.

### PRACTICAL CONCERNS

This system requires a little more bookkeeping and planning than a simple system that relies on a d% roll against a flat percentage, but it gives the PCs more control over random encounters and allows you to give these battles a bit more flavor and more tactically interesting slants. There are a few methods you can use to make this system run faster and smoother.

By noting as many modifiers as possible ahead of time, you can speed up play considerably. Mark the total Survival check modifier for a region on your maps, while keeping a total tally for the party on a piece of scrap paper. As factors change, you can easily update the

modifiers for later reference. It also helps to make checks ahead of time. If you know that the party must spend a full day marching through a forest, you can make checks for them and note the results.

Most of the time, you should make the Survival check for wandering monsters in secret. If the players see that their die roll comes up high or low, that can give them more information than they should normally possess. If the players are reasonably sure that wandering monsters will play no role in a session, they might alter their tactics and plans. Part of the appeal of random encounters lies in the instability it adds to the game. The players can never be certain that a journey between two towns or a march to a dungeon will proceed smoothly. The threat of an attack by monsters or bandits always looms over them.

When it comes time to determine the nature of an encounter, it helps to have a few pre-scripted situations in hand. You can break the encounter table down into its various results and create simple tactical maps for each. You can also work up some simple rosters of monsters ahead of time and reuse them over the course of several encounters. Do not worry about meeting the exact EL listed. If it is easier to use the same EL for each result, go ahead and do that. The EL ranges listed are suggestions meant to model the increased difficulty the party faces on a poor Survival check result. You might want to use a more realistic range of threats, as a wilderness region could hold anything from a pair of sickly kobolds to a rampaging dragon. In the end, the choice is up to you. In general, though, keeping CRs and ELs near the party's level ensures that the game is challenging without being overpoweringly so.

To help stir your imagination, listed below are a variety of encounter circumstances that you can use as the basis for wandering monster battles. They are broken down according to the check result table's various results.

#### Survival Check Result 3 or Less

- The characters march down a ravine or gully. The monsters take up positions above them and open fire with spells and ranged weapons.
- While the party stops to rest, the monsters climb trees or a cliff face nearby. When the PCs set out again, the creatures leap down upon them from above.



- The monsters trail the party for a while. Eventually, the characters follow a dead end path. Perhaps it ends in a cliff face, a steep hill, or a swift river. Once the characters' escape route is blocked, the monsters attack.
- The monsters sneak into the party's camp, attacking them while they sleep.

#### **Survival Check Result 4–9**

- The monsters spot the PCs and dive for cover. They crawl forward, using the terrain to their advantage.
- The creatures split into two groups. One attacks to distract the party while the other sneaks around to strike from behind.
- The monsters take up a position behind a fallen log, atop a steep hill, or some other easily defended position. They pelt the party with missile weapons while a smaller group sneaks around to attack.
- The monsters spot the characters' campsite and take cover to sneak up on it. They surround the PCs before beginning their attack.

#### **Survival Check Result 10–14**

- The characters (or the monsters) come around a bend in the road or path. Both groups gape at

each other for a moment before reaching for their weapons.

- The monsters chase after a deer, fox, or other animal that bounds right through the party. The creatures blunder into the party in a large mob, with both sides surprised by the sudden contact.
- The monsters spot the party but one of them sneezes, steps on a branch, or otherwise gives away their position before they can gain surprise.
- While the characters camp, one of the monsters stumbles across them and yells for help. The creature's comrades run to help him, but his cry also alerts the PCs.

#### **Survival Check Result 26+**

- The characters hear a loud voice or growls and barks ahead as the monsters argue over how to split a recent kill or a collection of loot.
- The PCs come across a monsters' lair or camp. The beasts sleep peacefully, unaware of the intrusion.
- While the PCs camp, the monsters pass within sight of their tents but fail to notice them. The characters could stalk and ambush the creatures if they choose.

# HAZARDS

To help organize the environmental effects of the different traits presented in Chapters 3 to 10, they are presented as hazards. Introduced in Fantasy Flight's *Dungeoncraft*, hazards are a shorthand method for presenting dangers other than traps and monsters. Hazards include freezing weather, raging fires, and similar threats. All hazards can be broken down and described with the following attributes.

**Name:** A generic description of the hazard, such as the searing heat from a lava pit, a devastating blizzard, or a cloud of necromantic energy that drains life from travelers.

**Initial Save:** The saving throw type and DC necessary to resist the hazard's effects. This may change over time, as per the save interval and interval penalty. A character must make this saving throw immediately after he is exposed to a hazard. If a character begins his turn exposed to a hazard, he makes his save before taking any actions.

**Saving Throw Interval:** Some environmental hazards become progressively more difficult to cope with over time. For example, a character marching through the desert in full plate may be able to stave off exhaustion for a short time, but eventually the strain and dehydration becomes too much for him to handle. The interval describes how often a character must make a saving throw as long as he is exposed to the hazard. Even if a character fails a saving throw, he must still make a new one and could take more damage from a hazard over time.

An interval can also be expressed as a distance or some other condition a character's actions can fulfill. For example, a character may have to make a Balance check for every 20 feet he walks across a 60-foot-long high wire. If he stands in place he can maintain his balance, but as he moves he risks losing his balance and falling.

Not all hazards have an interval. Once the characters overcome them they no longer pose a threat. Of course, if the characters expose themselves to the hazard again, they must make any appropriate saves or checks to resist it.

**Interval Penalty:** Some hazards are more difficult to resist over time. A character marching across the desert loses fluids and becomes more susceptible to heat exhaustion. Each time the saving throw interval passes, the penalty increases by its base amount. For example, Boris the Bold is dealing with an environmental hazard that has a saving throw interval of 10 minutes and an interval penalty of -2. He makes his first save without a penalty, but 10 minutes later he must save again at -2. After another 10 minutes, he saves again at -4. After still another 10 minutes, he must save again at -6. Each time Boris fails his saving throw, he suffers the ill effects of the hazard.

Interval penalties always count as circumstance modifiers.

**Damage:** This entry describes the effects inflicted on those who fail their saves against the hazard. These can include temporary or permanent ability damage, hit points of damage, a magical spell or effect such as *slow*, a disease, a poison, a condition, or whatever else you can create.

In some cases, a hazard inflicts damage even if a character makes his saving throw. In that case, the damage on a failed saving throw is listed first, with the effects on a successful saving throw listed second. Some hazards are so incredibly dangerous that no character could ever hope to come into contact with them and escape unscathed.

Other times, a hazard inflicts more damage as a character is exposed to it over time. For example, a character suffering from starvation may not show many outward signs of its effects at first, but over time he rapidly loses strength. In most cases, it is enough to simply apply the same effects with each failed save. However, some effects inflict a rapid spiral that causes progressively more damage over time. These effects and rules for applying them are noted in the hazards' damage description.

**Special Effects:** This entry covers any notes relating to the hazard that make it unique and provides rules to cover any special cases or exceptions it may entail. For example, a character wearing a thick fur coat may gain a saving throw bonus to resist a freezing snowstorm, while one wearing full plate in sweltering heat may suffer a penalty to his saves. Since these

rules cover a wide range of effects with a single set of standardized rules, most hazards have a few special effects and unique traits that are explained here.

**Skills, Abilities, and Hazards:** In some cases, rather than make a saving throw to resist a hazard a character may instead make a skill or ability check. For example, while traveling through a thorny, briar-choked forest the characters may have to make Survival checks to carve a safe path and avoid taking damage. In this case, the skill check takes the place of a saving throw but the hazard otherwise works as normal. To resist the hazard, a character must make a skill check against the hazard's DC. If the hazard has an interval, the character must make another skill or ability check later on, possibly at a penalty if the hazard has an interval penalty listed. In some cases, a single character makes a check for the entire party. You can tell from the hazard's context if the entire party makes a check or if each character must make a check on his own.

## THE HAZARD STAT BLOCK

To make hazards easier to use, the following generic stat block is used to describe them. Not every hazard features all of the attributes listed above. In that case, simply remove the appropriate header from the stat block.

**Name:** Initial Save; saving throw interval; interval penalty; damage; special effects.

Here are two examples to illustrate the format. Many of the threats presented in the various terrains and environments use this hazard stat block.

**Starvation:** Constitution check DC 10; 1 day interval; -1 penalty/interval; 1d6 nonlethal damage; Special: Characters can go three days without food before they suffer the effects of this hazard. A character who takes damage from this hazard is automatically considered fatigued. Damage inflicted by starvation cannot be healed until a character receives adequate amounts of food. If a character is rendered unconscious and would take further nonlethal damage from this hazard, he instead takes lethal damage.

**Thirst:** Constitution check DC 10; 1 hour interval; -1 penalty/interval; 1d6 nonlethal

damage; Special: Characters can go one day plus a number of hours equal to their Constitution without water before they suffer the effects of this hazard. A character who takes damage from this hazard is automatically considered fatigued. Damage inflicted by thirst cannot be healed until a character receives adequate amounts of drink. If a character is rendered unconscious and would take further nonlethal damage from this hazard, he instead takes lethal damage.

## GENERAL NOTES

Listed below are some reminders and explanations for how game rules and other material are presented in this book.

**Challenge Rating:** Some of the hazards presented in this book turn even the simplest encounter into a deadly ordeal. These hazards drain the party's resources, hinder their spells and special abilities, and otherwise force them to operate with less than their full array of resources. To reflect the increased difficulty in dealing with encounters, some hazards have a challenge rating. Count the hazard's CR as a single encounter during the course of an adventure. As a rule of thumb, the party should receive XP for a given hazard only once per adventure. If the hazard is part of an encounter and the creatures the party faces are immune to its effects, count the hazard as a monster of the listed CR that took part in the encounter.

**Movement Costs:** To keep things simple, all movement is expressed in squares. If terrain is difficult to move into, the additional cost to enter it is expressed as a modifier such as +1 square. Add this modifier to the standard cost to enter the square and the cost incurred due to other modifiers. For example, entering an empty space costs 1 square of movement. If you add a terrain feature to that space that has a +2 square modifier, it now costs 3 squares to enter it. Most of the time, you can add 1 to the listed modifier to determine the total cost, but this method makes it easier to stack multiple terrain modifiers on to a single space.

# CHAPTER THREE

# DESERTS

While some wastelands may arise due to magical curses, horrid plagues, and fiery judgment cast from the skies, others develop due to simple geography and weather patterns. A desert forms in any region that receives little rain. High mountain ranges can prevent storms from reaching the area. As clouds hit the mountains, they are forced higher and higher until they cool enough to deposit their moisture as rain. By the time they crest the peaks, they are too dry to bring water to the dunes beyond. In other cases, a desert is located in an area that simply sees few storms. In a fantasy world, this could occur due to a peculiar magical event, the anger of the god of storms and water, or prevailing, long-term wind conditions that send storms on a track far from the desert.

Regardless of how a desert arises, it has a few simple traits that set it apart from other wastelands. The weather is consistently dry and searing hot. To model a desert, use the rules for stifling heat presented in Chapter 11. The intense heat level should be the minimum for most deserts. Later in this section, the dunes trait provides the rules you need to model the shifting, trackless desert sands. In addition, you can use a cold weather hazard from Chapter 11 to model the frigid conditions that strike the desert at night. While a desert usually does not become cold enough to pose a risk to

travelers, you can use those rules to remind the players that traveling by night has its risks. The rules and game mechanics in this chapter, including the names, descriptions, and stat blocks of threats and hazards, are designated as **Open Game Content**.

## BASIC DESERT TRAITS

The heat and endless sands found in a desert stand as its most notable traits. Those two factors form the basis of all deserts. The advanced traits, presented later in this section, work with those two to allow you to create deserts of bone dust, fine particles of powdered metal and gems, and other fantastical vistas.

### DUNES

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The desert sand shifts and moves under a traveler's feet, making it difficult to maintain a steady pace. In other regions, the barren, hard-packed ground makes for easy travel. The dunes trait determines how easily the party can cross a desert. The higher you set it, the longer it takes the PCs to negotiate the terrain. In some

deserts, the dunes remain stable and provide sure footing for camels and walkers. In others, characters sink into the powdery sand and must struggle mightily for each mile they walk.

*Light dunes* indicate that the desert's sand is flat, compact, and much easier to cross than most terrain. This could indicate salt flats or bare, rocky land that is the functional equivalent of an open, grassy plain. The characters can cross the desert at their normal movement rate.

*Moderate dunes* represent the average desert. The shifting sands make travel difficult, as characters stumble through the loose ground. The characters' mounts must measure each step carefully, lest they plunge into a soft patch of ground and send their riders tumbling.

*Heavy dunes* apply to desert regions with exceptionally powdery, deep sand that is sculpted by the wind into steep rises and valleys. The dunes may change their positions on an hourly basis, as the wind builds, scatters, and transforms them. Characters on foot routinely sink into knee-deep sand, while horses and camels must move at a snail's pace in order to proceed safely. Due to the heavy dunes' thick, deep sand, creatures cannot run in this terrain.

Dunes	Movement (Overland/Tactical)
Light	x1 or 1 square
Moderate	x1/2 or 2 squares
Heavy	x1/4 or 4 squares

## HEAT

The sun beats down on travelers like a hammer on an anvil, sapping their strength and draining their life at a slow but steady pace. Spells, copious supplies of water, and other useful tools might stave off its assault for a time, but the desert is patient. Those who stay under its sun for too long eventually face dehydration, agony, and death.

The heat trait allows you to gauge the basic threat level a desert presents. It uses the rules for hot weather hazards given in Chapter 11. The three levels represent basic desert types. Each has a short commentary on how travelers view it and its place in the world. Use this trait as a foundation for the deserts you want to design.

**Typical Desert:** This type of desert presents high temperatures and shifting sand dunes. While more difficult to cross than the typical stretch of terrain, it does not hold any special reputation for swallowing caravans or killing off those foolish enough to venture into it. This setting represents the average desert area, roughly equivalent to the wastelands found in the real world. Use a heat hazard with the desert setting and the dune combat terrain described later in this section.

**Severe Desert:** These regions are feared and avoided even by the tough nomads and experienced rangers who make the desert their home. The heat reaches much higher temperatures than normal, perhaps aided by magical effects. The sand dunes shift in the wind and sometimes swallow a traveler whole. In other regions, the sand gives way to sun-blasted, rocky wastelands. Use the extreme heat hazard from Chapter 11 along with the dunes combat terrain given below.

**Hellish Desert:** Created in part by a gateway, planar instability, or other interdimensional rift that links the material world to one of the regions of hell or the plane of fire, this desert reaches such intense temperatures that few creatures can survive it. Aside from fire elementals, efreet, azers, and similar planar beings, few living things can persist in the extreme heat for long. Use the hellish temperature hazard from Chapter 11. You can use sand dunes or a rocky waste for combat terrain, though the volcanic terrain trait described in Chapter 5 can also prove useful. Planar creatures and those who love fiery conditions might establish fortresses and enclaves in a hellish desert. The efreet could erect a town carved from obsidian and set it to float in the midst of a great sea of lava, while evil elementals might seek to expand the hellish desert's reach by slowly increasing the temperature in the surrounding areas via magic, artifacts, and other methods.

# ADVANCED DESERT TRAITS

A fantasy realm's deserts might have the same basic traits as those found in the real world, but the presence of magic



allows you to add strange and wondrous variations on the basic terrain. The advanced traits reflect magical and planar energies that can serve to separate one desert from the rest.

## DESERT SANDS

This trait allows you to substitute exotic materials for the typical desert sand. A wasteland that develops on the site of a massive battle might become an expansive field of powdered bone. The desert around a mountain chain that is riddled with portals to the plane of fire might have shards of obsidian in place of sand. Other deserts could consist of powdered gems, fine dust that acts much like a watery ocean, or grains crafted from various metals. Each trait given under this header describes an alternate desert material and the effect it has on the environment and characters who travel through it.

### ASH

In this type of desert, a mixture of finely powdered ash and thick chunks of debris replace the sand. Formed in the aftermath of a fiery cataclysm, volcanic eruption, or some other great inferno, this desert presents a daunting

challenge to explorers. Fine particles of ash stir at the slightest breeze, tainting the air with tiny cinders and dust that can choke a traveler. Within the ash desert, ruins of any civilizations that occupied the land before they met their fiery demise poke through the gray and black landscape. While most of the buildings are little more than charred ruins, the basements and passages beneath them may still hold treasures. In many areas, these shelters have long since been filled with ash and dust. Undead creatures, perhaps the spectral remains of those who took shelter and starved to death in the disaster's aftermath, jealously guard their riches. The few open bodies of water that remain in the area are hopelessly choked with ash, debris, and other pollutants, rendering them unfit for drinking. Fires may still burn in some areas, especially if the disaster occurred in the recent past.

The different levels of this trait represent the increased danger of suffocation due to airborne ash and debris. In addition, you can use the rules for fiery hazards from Chapter 10's description of wastelands for regions that are still engulfed in flames.

*Weak ash deserts* feature hazy clouds of debris that swirl and dance on the wind. Characters cough and sputter on the ash, but only the weak or sickly run the risk of dying from exposure. All creatures in this environment suffer a -1 circumstance penalty to Spot checks due to the obscuring aerial debris.

**Weak Ash Desert (CR 1/3):** Fortitude save DC 10; 1 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; 1d4 damage; Special: If the characters are able to take shelter, such as a tent, cave, or similar covering, they can avoid this hazard. A screen or covering filters enough of the ash particles that they do not pose a danger.

*Moderate ash deserts* are the sites of regular storms and wind blasts that kick thick, dense pockets of debris into the air. At times, the thick ash can cause high noon to descend into the equivalent of a starry night. Characters in this hazard's area suffer a -2 circumstance penalty to all Spot checks.

**Moderate Ash Desert (CR 1/2):** Fortitude save DC 15; 1 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; 1d6 damage; Special: As per the weak ash desert hazard.

*A deadly ash desert* is cloaked in a nearly perpetual storm of heavy winds and dark clouds of swirling debris. The ash reduces lighting conditions to the equivalent of a starry night at all times. Characters suffer a -4 circumstance penalty to all Spot checks.

**Deadly Ash Desert (CR 1):** Fortitude save DC 20; 1 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; 1d8 damage; Special: At this intense level, shelter does little to shield characters. PCs that are in a tent or similar enclosure that allows air to filter in from outside suffer a moderate ash hazard. Note that this does not apply to spells such as *rope trick* that create planar enclosures. Characters who delve into caves or enclosed ruins also ignore this threat.

## BONE POWDER

These rare, horrifying deserts consist of endless dunes of powdered bones, grave dust, and other remains churned from thousands upon thousands of tombs and graves. A massive battle at the world's genesis may have resulted in the deaths of millions of humanoids, animals, outsiders, and other creatures. In the centuries since the struggle, the remains of the dead

decayed and formed a vast dead zone. Perhaps a foul necromancer attempted to work a spell that would transform the entire planet into a mausoleum, with the bone powder desert the one region his curse struck before his plans failed. In any event, a bone powder desert is a terrible land of death and decay. Undead creatures form from the dust, taking on physical forms to torment the living who are foolish enough to enter this land of the damned.

A bone powder desert may have scattered ruins of the cities the dead once fought over. If it is located on the site of an ancient burial ground, catacombs and burial chambers beneath it could be stacked with ancient treasure, fearsome undead, and demonic guardians. Necromancers would flock to this region, as they could raid tombs for corpses to animate and intelligent undead beings to bind into their service. A cabal of spellcasters could rule a kingdom of the dead, with skeleton and zombie servants to rebuild ruins and fortify ancient castles. When the necromancers travel through their shattered lands, their skeletal servants carry them about on palanquins to survey their lands. Animated oxen and horses serve as beasts of burden driven by zombie handlers.

*A weak bone powder desert* features the ancient remains of the dead mingled with sand and dirt. The necromantic energy radiated by this area sometimes causes the spontaneous generation of undead creatures, but in most cases travelers can pass through this area without any ill effects. Undead creatures are more common than normal, but they do not overwhelm living beings found in the region. There is a 10% chance per day that the party is ambushed by undead creatures that arise from the sand and dust. These creatures should have a total EL equal to the party's level.

*Moderate bone powder deserts* present a difficult challenge to adventurers who seek to cross them. The fell magical energy that saturates the region counts as a *desecrate* spell cast by a 20th-level cleric. It may be temporarily dispelled as normal, but always returns after 24 hours or when the countering spell's duration ends, whichever is shorter. Living creatures rarely dwell for long in this desert, as the living dead eventually band together to drive them away. There is a 20% chance per hour that the party encounters a band of undead creatures with an EL equal to its level.



These creatures may stumble upon the party or they may rise from the ground, spontaneously formed by the dark magic that infests the remains.

*Intense bone powder deserts* are pregnant with evil and necromantic energy. Undead creatures spontaneously arise from the dust to menace the land, while mohrgrs, bodaks, and worse wander the area. The entire region is under the effects of *deseccate* centered on an altar of evil, while evil clerics gain a +1 caster level bonus when using divine spells. Evil druids commonly dwell in such deserts. They see a perfect balance in undead creatures. Since they have no need to eat or drink, such monstrosities can leave the wilderness in a virgin state indefinitely. There is a 30% chance per hour that the desert spontaneously generates undead creatures to attack the party. These monsters should have a total EL equal to the party's level.

### DUST SEA

Fine, powdery dust dominates the empty waste of this desert. Unlike typical desert sand, this material is imbued with subtle but persistent magical energy that causes it to move and flow much like water. A dust sea usually arises after a powerful magical effect disintegrates a massive area of the world. The disintegrated material floats into the air and remains charged with the arcane magic that powered the destruction. When it drifts to the ground, the dust fills the typically bowl-shaped depression in the earth created by the disintegrating magical blast. Thus, a great sea of shifting, seemingly liquid dust forms. Ships constructed from light materials can sail upon it, while brave explorers with the magical means to survive without air (or perhaps more bravery than sense) dive into the dusty sea to explore its depths.

The dust sea retains its properties due to the magical charge placed upon its individual particles. Each piece rolls and slides off the others, giving it the same properties as a liquid. For all rule purposes, treat the sea as a body of water. Creatures swimming in it cannot see through its material, as the dust blocks sight as normal.

A dust sea serves as the home to many strange creatures and beings. Its arcane origin and magical nature draw many wizards to explore it in hopes of uncovering secret lore. Some of these researchers build craft capable of sailing on or below the silt. In some regions,

ancient buildings and catacombs may endure, their chambers and passages choked with the flowing dust. Powerful beings who desire isolation and peace can build sealed chambers connected via tubes and tunnels beneath the dust. Safe from prying eyes and cut off from the world, they can attend to their business without fear of interruption.

The dust's magical nature sometimes warps and mutates creatures that dwell in or near it. Strange serpents and fish have been sighted swimming in its depths, while weird fungi and plants sometimes grow at its bottom. Any sea-going creature can be adapted to the dust. The creature moves through the dust at the same rate it swims, while you can change its physical appearance to a serpentine or lizard-like form to better fit the hot, dry environment.

### GEM STONES

The desert glistens in the sun, reflecting the rainbow hues of the varied gemstones that comprise its surface. While a greedy treasure hunter might mistake this region for a limitless treasure trove, his joy is invariably short lived. Gem stone deserts consist of broken shards of crystals and gems, but the individual shards within them are melted, pitted, corroded, and ruined. A fistful of the stuff might make a lovely decoration, but it is almost utterly worthless. The ready availability of the gem shards and their ruined condition make them useless as spell components or trade goods.

Even worse, these deserts typically form due to a massive backlash of planar energies. When the gap between two worlds decays to a dangerous level, the sudden surge in power that reinforces the boundary between planes warps and twists the material world. The gems and crystals are the physical representation of the power of law to bind and contain the universe. For a brief moment, the threatened region of the material world locks into a rigid, unyielding pattern of cosmic law. When the pattern relaxes, it repairs the frayed planar boundaries but causes a tremendous shift in the raw substance of the planes. What was once a forest, a bustling city, or a lake becomes a glittering wasteland of emerald, diamond, and crystal debris.

While the remains might be pleasant to look upon, they can prove deadly to travelers. The sundered crystals serve as a powerful device

that focuses and energizes the natural planar harmonics. Spontaneous explosions, sudden beams of focused power, and waves of psionic energy can cut down an entire expedition. Worst of all, the presence of living creatures seems to exacerbate the natural instability in the area. While natural processes have sealed the planar rift, it can take centuries for the local disturbance to settle down. Monsters and strange beings from across the cosmos are common, as they are attracted by the surge and shift in planar energy. Others fall through the frayed planar structure as it knits shut, trapping them in the material world.

*Minor gem deserts* result from minor tremors in the planes. They cover an area roughly 50 miles in diameter on average. The ambient energy they contain sometimes results in sudden explosions or electrical discharges. Travelers in these regions quickly learn to take cover at the slightest sound of crackling energy. Planar creatures sometimes wander this area. While they are more common in these deserts than in other regions, they are still far from a major force. Incursions are limited to elementals, minor demons, and similar creatures.

A minor gem desert also results as a gem desert slowly shrinks and fades. As the ambient planar energy dissipates, usually as a result of the explosions and lightning strikes in the area, it slowly returns to normal. The shattered crystalline patterns and structures gradually crumble into dust.

Plants, ruins, and other structures sometimes have a crystalline appearance to them, as the process involved in sealing the rift transformed them along with the rest of the terrain.

**Minor Gem Desert (Lightning Blast) (CR 1/2):** Reflex save DC 10; 2 hour interval; +0

modifier/interval; 2d4 electricity damage; Special: Characters in metal armor or those who have used a divine or arcane spell in the hour before facing this hazard suffer -4 penalties to their saves.

*A moderate gem desert* has undergone extensive changes. Entire forests of crystal trees replace the once verdant, lush woods. The few stone and wooden buildings that remain standing are similarly transformed into rocky gem or crystal structures. These large formations are always composed of quartz and other worthless materials. In some areas, lifelike, crystalline statues mark where unfortunate victims of the transformation stood at the moment of the desert's violent birth.

Planar creatures are more common in these deserts, as some of them slipped through the unstable planar binding and others seek to investigate the energy fluctuations. Wizards, sorcerers, and others who study magic cluster in these areas, as they seek to tap into the ambient magical energy and bend it to their uses. In

some of these areas, planar gates spontaneously open as the energy levels rise, allowing demons, devils, elementals, and similar creatures to run rampant.

The energy levels and simmering instability sometimes cause spontaneous combustion of the very air in this region. The thunderous sound of distant explosions echoes through the air every few minutes. These explosions sometimes catch travelers in their midst. As the energy and instability in this area fades, it slowly transforms into a minor gem



desert. These deserts usually measure about 100 miles in diameter. They shrink over the course of centuries as their magic dissipates.

**Moderate Gem Desert (Fiery Explosion) (CR 1):** Reflex save DC 15; 2 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; 2d8 fire damage; Special: Characters in metal armor or those who have used a divine or arcane spell in the hour before facing this hazard suffer -4 penalties to their saves.

*A severe gem desert* is marked by violent weather, monstrous blasts of raw sonic energy, and endless dunes of gem and crystal shards. Demons, devils, elementals, and other creatures from distant worlds congregate in the desert in great numbers. The simmering energies draw them to the region, as travel to and from the material world is much easier than in other places. Creatures, trees, and many other objects caught in this area when it changed are transformed into crystal objects, creating a bizarre landscape of rocky outcroppings, statues, and monuments seemingly crafted with inhuman skill.

These deserts result when a massive planar instability resolves or in the first few centuries after a minor disturbance dissipates. Energy swirls and shivers in the area, while gates to other worlds spontaneously appear and disappear. Thunderous flashes of energy pockmark the terrain. These deserts usually measure about 500 miles across, though they tend to shrink at a relatively rapid rate. In time, they dwindle into moderate and minor gem deserts.

Wizards and other arcane casters flock to these places to capture planar creatures, study the ebb and flow of energy, and craft artifacts and magical items within a rich area of arcane energy. Any item created in this area costs 10% less than the total price normally needed to craft it. Unfortunately, the concussive blasts of energy make this a dangerous place to linger and produce an enchanted object.

**Severe Gem Desert (Sonic Blast) (CR 4):** Fortitude save DC 20; 2 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; 4d6 sonic damage; Special: Characters in metal armor or those who have used a divine or arcane spell in the hour before facing this hazard suffer -4 penalties to their saves.

## METALLIC DESERT

These incredibly rare deserts result when the balance between law and chaos wavers and tears at the fabric of reality. Usually, this disturbance results from the direct manifestation of a large number of divine beings in the material world. The great power and energy of such figures causes a stress on the fabric of the world. For this reason, deities typically remain in their distant planes while taking an indirect role in mortal affairs. Through avatars and prophets they can exercise their will in the material world, but only the direst circumstances warrant their personal intervention. As the few metallic deserts that exist in the world attest, divine visitations are rare but potentially destructive.

If more than a dozen gods of various alignments gather in the material world, they can strain the fabric of reality until it frays. So long as the gods refrain from drawing on too much of their divine power, the cosmos remains in balance. The natural clash between their highly polarized alignment energy remains in check.

When the gods allow their power to run rampant, the very fabric of reality bends and twists to accommodate them. Divine energy seethes and boils from the stuff of creation, causing wild fluctuations in the environment. Tornadoes ravage the land. Fires spring up and devour the countryside. Magic flares and sputters as the gods channel it through their material forms, draining the fabric of magic throughout the region. Thankfully, such incidents are rare. They typically result when a number of gods, usually at least nine or 10, meet to do battle. When they do come to pass, the world shudders and groans with the impact. Once the melee ends, its aftereffects linger for centuries. In much the same way that an imbalance of planar energies can transform the land into a gemstone desert, a sudden, massive influx of divine power shreds reality and transforms the terrain into a lifeless, metallic powder desert.

Within this desert, the sand consists of tiny particles of hard, blackened metal. When whipped up by the wind, it can slice through flesh, steel, and bone with equal ease. The heat commonly reaches hellish levels even in frigid climes, as the ambient divine energy slowly burns away. Twisted creatures such as demons, devils, and similar monsters prowl the area. They feast on

the planar and divine power that saturates the land. At some locations, the shattered remains of a divine being cause further fluctuations in the environment.

The borders around this desert seethe with thunderstorms and tornadoes due to the sudden change in atmospheric conditions between the desert and the surrounding terrain. Only metallic deserts in equatorial and other hot climates have relatively stable weather on their borderlands. Within the desert, the weather swings from extreme conditions on an hourly basis. The divine power that formed this place causes snow to fall, miniature hurricanes to form, and massive windstorms to sweep the region. Luckily these freakish weather conditions never leave the desert, though the turbulent weather at its borders helps repel visitors.

The metallic desert's sand consists of scorched, black metal pellets. Swirling winds keep many of these particles howling through the air, obscuring vision and stinging flesh. The endless, black dunes reflect the eternally overcast, stormy skies above. At a range of 100 ft. or more, creatures gain concealment from the black dust and wind. Beyond 200 ft., the dust blocks all vision.

*Minor metallic deserts* consist of blackened, powdered iron ore. They are the coolest of these deserts, with their heat levels lingering at the extreme rating. Any civilizations, towns, and cities once located within these wastelands are mostly intact ruins, with their treasures and other riches hidden within them. Many adventurers enter these regions in search of a fortune in gold, though the outsiders and other strange creatures that wander the land make this a daunting prospect. Pilgrims sometimes seek enlightenment in these deserts. They scour the area for any divine remains, sifting through the sand for a bone fragment, a withered lock of hair, or a bit of sacred, petrified flesh. In some cases, religions that have lost deities in the battle that formed the desert erect minor temples at or near the site of the god's death.

**Minor Metallic Desert (CR 2):** Base attack +6; 1 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; 2d6 damage; Special: This hazard represents the damage inflicted by wind-driven metallic sand. The fine, metal particles can scour a character's skin. Rather than make a saving throw, PCs must withstand an attack. Characters in a tent,

cave, or similar cover do not risk exposure to this hazard.

In addition to the hazard, divine energy seethes and boils in this region. A divine caster must make a Spellcraft check (DC 15) to successfully use a spell while in this region. On a failed check, the spell fizzles out and fails to function. Use some of the extreme weather traits and events from Chapter 11 to represent the chaotic, turbulent environment.

*A moderate metallic desert* results from a massive surge of divine energy. These regions are rare and most date back to the creation of the world. Within this boundary, divine spells rarely function. Strange storms ravage the area, blasting the ground with lightning bolts and sending winds tainted with acid and fire to sweep the land. In some regions, the monstrous corpses of long-forgotten deities poke through the ground. Reduced to little more than skeletons, these bodies have long since spilled their divine power into the ground. Pilgrims, fanatics, and madmen dwell amidst the towering bones, sometimes building small settlements that persist through the use of unreliable divine spells. Rising high above the terrain, these mountainous formations serve as landmarks and beacons to foolish travelers and dire warnings to veteran wanderers. The fanatics who dwell amongst the bones jealously guard their holy sites, capturing invaders for use in their sacrificial rites. They launch raids for food and water against infidel lands, fading back into the hostile desert to frustrate pursuit.

**Moderate Metallic Desert (CR 3):** Base attack +10; 1 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; 2d8 damage; Special: As per the minor hazard, except that the Spellcraft DC to use a divine spell is 20.

*A major metallic desert* occurs perhaps once in a world's history. Usually, they form in the misty days of the gods' first uncertain steps into the embryonic world sphere. Before learning how best to utilize their powers, the gods may have experimented, struggled against one another, or otherwise learned the hard way that their new creation could not endure gods who gather in large numbers. Some of these deserts occupy isolated, distant regions of the world. The highest peaks on a mountain range may hold a plateau where the gods met to hammer out an accord that guides their deal-



ings to the present day. In other areas, this desert marks the site of a great battle that led to the current state of war between the gods. Rather than fight directly, they dispatch their mortal followers to struggle in their stead.

Regardless of its origin, a major metallic desert is perhaps the closest thing to hell on earth. The whistling, razored wind can chop down a stout warrior in the space of minutes. Here and there, bones of dead gods poke through the land. Acid rain, fiery blasts, and other freakish weather systems scour the land. Demons and devils dance in the storms, delighting in the power that saturates the land. Even fanatical pilgrims avoid this region, as few of them have the spells and equipment needed to survive. Wizards and high priests who seek a secure, safe location for their research and work sometimes use magic to build towers and sanctuaries in the desert, while artifacts of the gods and treasure-stuffed ruins await beneath the glittering sands for those brave (or foolish) enough to enter this region.

**Major Metallic Desert (CR 4):** Base attack +14; 1 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval;

2d10 damage; Special: As per the minor hazard, except that the Spellcraft DC to use a divine spell is 25.

### OBSIDIAN SHARDS

Jet black dunes stretch out to the horizon. They glisten and shine in the sun, twinkling like a million stars scattered on a dark field. Under the bright desert sun, the sight of an obsidian desert inspires awe and wonder. Yet for all its wondrous appearances, this realm is perhaps the deadliest wasteland of them all. The small shards of obsidian slice through leather, metal, and flesh with ease. Travelers who lack the means to fly may perish long before they successfully traverse this deadly realm. Each step drives small flecks of razor-sharp rock into a traveler's boots and feet. Every breeze heralds a wave of slicing debris. A single breath can draw in particles that cut into the lungs and throat, slowly sapping a character's strength and consigning him to a painful death.

Thankfully, obsidian deserts are rare. The process behind a desert's genesis involves sustained volcanic eruptions, a traumatic churning and rending of the earth, and an influx of ener-

gy and material from the elemental plane of earth. When these three factors combine, they result in massive eruptions that devastate a wide area. In their aftermath, the scarred land becomes a sprawling obsidian shard desert, a deadly land that few adventurers enter and from which even fewer return.

The elemental forces involved in the creation of an obsidian desert cause several side effects that help draw explorers and adventurers into these regions. The churning force that melts, fuses, and expels the obsidian forms massive caverns beneath the desert. Isolated from many of the underworld regions that harbor fearsome monsters and strange beasts, these caves are relatively easy to navigate. Many of them are strewn with gems, veins of gold and silver, and other valuable rocks and minerals. The forces involved in reshaping the terrain help carry these valuables closer to the surface. Thus, many who enter these regions do so in order to find caves and passages leading down to the treasures they could potentially claim.

The siren's call of a lucrative if dangerous mining operation draws many explorers into an obsidian desert. While relatively safe, these caverns hold many dangers. While isolated from other portions of the underworld, they can sometimes open passages directly into the heart of an orc or goblin empire. Creatures from the elemental plane of earth sometimes make their homes within these underground realms, as the forces involved in the desert's creation spawn gates and passages to that distant world.

Creatures from the elemental plane of earth can survive this desert's hazards with ease. The obsidian shards bounce off their thick hides like rain drops. Any creature with the earth subtype is immune to all damage and effects from this terrain feature's hazards.

*Minor obsidian deserts* are difficult but not impossible to cross. They consist of a mixture of rocks, sand, and sharpened rock. The confluence of elemental energy and volcanic eruptions was too weak to transform a wide area, resulting in terrain that is hazardous but not deadly. Travelers who proceed at a slow pace can avoid most of the hazards this land presents.

**Minor Obsidian Desert (CR 1):** Fortitude save DC 15; 1 hour interval; +0 modifier/inter-

val; 1d8 damage; Special: Characters who lack boots or similar footwear suffer a -8 penalty on their saving throw against this hazard. If the party moves at half its maximum speed or slower, it does not suffer this hazard's effects.

*Moderate obsidian deserts* are almost pure black from edge to edge, with the flat, sharp obsidian shards piled ankle deep in some areas. Beneath them is only bare rock churned up from the heart of the world. A few isolated lakes and rivers break the surface, along with a few earth and rock hills. The water in these deserts is undrinkable unless the characters can somehow strain or otherwise filter it. Specks of sharp rocks and abrasive particles drift within the water, inflicting 1d6 damage to any creature foolish enough to drink it.

**Moderate Obsidian Desert (CR 2):** Fortitude save DC 20; 1 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; 1d10 damage; Special: As per the minor obsidian desert hazard. In addition, there is a 10% chance per day that the party encounters a swirling obsidian storm. Heavy winds pick up shards of rock and carry them through the air, cutting down living creatures that cannot take cover. Creatures that are exposed automatically suffer 5d6 points of damage during the storm. A Survival check (DC 15) allows a character to notice the signs of the coming storm, giving him 3d10 minutes to find shelter.

*Severe obsidian deserts* feature endless dunes of shiny, razor-sharp black rock. Small mountains and hills formed from obsidian rise into the air, creating an alien, endlessly black landscape. The region seethes with the power of elemental earth, allowing creatures from that plane to wander into this land through planar gates that open between the material world and the realm of rock and earth. Clerics of earth gods and similar deities make pilgrimages to this region, holding rites for their gods and offering sacrifices—the victims of evil rituals are typically tied down and left exposed during a shard storm. The water in these deserts is undrinkable unless the characters can somehow strain or otherwise filter it. Specks of sharp rocks and abrasive particles drift within it, inflicting 1d6 damage to any creature foolish enough to drink it.

**Severe Obsidian Desert (CR 3):** Fortitude save DC 25; 1 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; 1d12 damage; Special: As per

the minor obsidian desert hazard. In addition, this desert type features the same shard storms that ravage moderate ones. There is a 20% chance per day that a storm strikes. Otherwise, use the rules given above under the moderate-strength hazard. In addition, characters must continue to make saves as if they suffered from exposure to the minor version of this hazard for 1d4 hours after leaving the desert. The small shards of rock lodge in their throats, clothes, and hair, causing continuing damage.

## LIFE LEECH

The sun soaks into travelers, draining their strength and vitality as they struggle to traverse the desert's burning sands. While the mundane effects of dehydration and hunger can slay the stoutest man, some deserts are tinged with a malevolent, devouring force. These lands literally drain the water and life from a creature's body, sapping its strength through evil magic and leaving it a withered husk.

Usually, a mighty artifact, a strong natural affinity to the plane of fire, or the presence of a powerful, malevolent being is enough to create this effect. An artifact might draw on the life force of plants and animals to power its effects. Over time, it turns fields and forests into withered wastelands. A powerful being could drain the souls from living creatures, feasting on them to increase its power or extend its wasteland empire. The plane of fire generates energy that can flow through a creature's body, draining its strength and vitality.

You can use this trait to represent a particularly deadly region of desert or it can apply to an entire withered, wretched area. Rather than use a magical explanation for the trait's existence, it can represent a particularly hot, dry, and difficult area within a desert.

**Minor Life Leech (CR 1):** Fortitude save DC 15; 1 day interval; +0 modifier/interval; 1 point of temporary Constitution damage; Special: This damage can be healed only after a victim escapes from an area affected by this trait. Apply this trait only if a character spends the majority of a day within a region affected by it.

**Moderate Life Leech (CR 2):** Fortitude save DC 20; 1 day interval; +0 modifier/interval; 1d2 points of temporary Constitution damage; Special: As per minor life leech.

**Severe Life Leech (CR 3):** Fortitude save DC 25; 1 day interval; +0 modifier/interval; 1d2 points of temporary Constitution damage; Special: As per minor life leech.

# DESERT COMBAT TERRAIN

Most deserts consist of the same terrain repeated over and over again in an endless succession. With their open spaces and sparse cover, these areas represent a difficult battleground for most adventuring parties. An orc tribe can bring all its warriors and archers to bear against a small group, surrounding them in order to fire arrows, use spells, and prepare a massive charge. By the same token, area effect spells lose their potency in the desert. Groups of monsters can use the open space to spread out and reduce the casualties they suffer. The key terrain features in a desert are its dunes, small hills and valleys of sand carved by the wind. Most of the terrain you design for desert encounters should involve heavy use of slopes, valleys, and high points.

## DUNES, NORMAL

These shifting embankments of sand usually have a gentle, easy slope. They count as a minor sloped surface in combat, as per the rules for sloped terrain given in Chapter 5. They levy no additional movement cost for going up or down them. However, the footing is sometimes treacherous in the sand. Any character who charges or runs up or down a dune must make a Balance check (DC 10) or fall prone and tumble to the bottom of the dune. The character ends his movement prone at the dune's base.

## DUNES, HAZARDOUS

Dunes formed from dangerous materials, such as sharp slivers of obsidian, can cut and injure a character unfortunate enough to fall down them. These dunes use the rules for normal dunes, except that if a character falls down one he may take damage. Treat this as an attack at +8 against the PC's flatfooted AC with no bonus for shields.

## OASIS

Even the cruelest desert cannot stamp out all life. In isolated areas, springs, wells, and other sources of water are magnets for life. Small trees, short grasses, and other plants flourish in these areas. Animals keep close to oases, with herbivores relying on them for drinking water and predators keeping close watch for unwitting victims who drop their guard while drinking.

## ROCKY GROUND

In some regions of a desert, rocks, rubble, and other debris lie scattered throughout the sand. In these areas, characters can slip, trip, or fall on rocks that lie hidden just beneath the dirt. If a character moves more than his normal speed during an action, he must make a Balance check against DC 5 to avoid tripping and falling prone. Characters who use magic items or spells to increase their movement must make this check if they move farther than their original, unmodified speed.

## SAND, NORMAL

Most of the time, the desert sands rise no deeper than a human's ankle. Characters can run and move as normal on sandy terrain.

## SAND, DEEP

In some areas, the sand reaches much deeper than normal. A traveler might suddenly find himself plummeting a foot deep into loose, shifting sand. Characters move at half their normal rate through this terrain and cannot run. The sand is light enough that it does not hinder a character's ability to dodge and defend himself, while it is too shallow to provide any cover.

## SAND, DEVOURING

In a few rare areas, the sand is so deep that it can swallow a human, horse, or camel whole. Areas of devouring sand are rated by size. Creatures larger than the listed size treat it as deep sand. Smaller creatures must work to avoid sinking below head level if they enter this terrain. A creature caught in this sand must make a Strength check (DC 8) to move at half its normal speed. Creatures that fail this check (or who do



not or cannot attempt it) sink into the sand and are considered trapped. A trapped creature must make a Strength check (DC 8) to avoid suffocation. Characters who fail this check must hold their breath and may begin to suffocate. If a trapped character succeeds in this Strength check, he rises above the sand to breathe. However, he must make a second check (DC 8) to move half his speed. If he fails this check, he is once again trapped. Making a Strength check to move through devouring sand or to work free of being trapped counts as a standard action.

# DESERT MONSTERS

While the desert can swiftly end a creature's life, the few species that survive in the desert are all the more formidable for the dangerous environs that spawned them. Few humanoids dwell within the desert on a permanent basis. Some nomad groups move through them, but most prefer the more fertile plains and highlands that ring these wastes.





## BASILISK

With their ability to transform creatures into immobile stone statues, basilisks are rightly feared by most explorers and adventurers. They prefer to dig burrows in the dirt and sand, lurking there to fall upon prey from ambush. They sometimes seek out oases to claim as their own, picking off creatures as they stop to drink. After converting a creature to stone, they slowly drain the crystallized flesh and water from them. A basilisk can subsist on a single Medium creature for up to a month, allowing it to endure long periods without food or water. Even when faced with a wide array of prey, basilisks prefer to eat as little as possible. By carefully regulating their hunting habits, they can preserve their resources.

## DRAGON, BRASS

As gregarious, talkative creatures, brass dragons make an odd member of the desert ecology. They prefer to make lairs near wells, roads, and other well-traveled areas. When they spot intruders, they eagerly swoop in to

investigate them. Brass dragons might be tied to the desert, but they do not wholly enjoy it. The dry, hot climate presents the most comfortable weather for them, but they crave attention, riddles, debates, and small talk. These wyrms have been known to pay skilled wizards, brilliant sages, famous bards, and eloquent speakers generous sums of money to visit with them in the desert. Sometimes, one of these dragons funds the construction of a small, fortified settlement near an oasis. It then extends invitations to noted thinkers and orators, offering them free, luxurious accommodations and peace and quiet for their work. In return, they socialize with the dragon and provide it with company. These schemes invariably require vast sums of money, one of the many reasons why this dragon subtype craves gold and gems.

## DRAGON, BLUE

The fearsome blue dragons are the most dangerous predators in the desert. Their coloration allows them to fly high in the desert sky without fear of giving away their presence. Vicious and solitary by nature, they ruthlessly hunt down brass dragons, jann, sphinxes, and other

creatures that could threaten their dominant position. Blue dragons create lairs in isolated caves hidden beneath the desert sands. They use their burrowing ability to dig through the loose sand that buries their caves, making it almost impossible for humanoids and other potential thieves to penetrate their treasure troves.

## DRAGONNE

These predators hold no special malice for travelers and adventurers, though the fact that hunger rather than evil motivates them is little consolation for their opponents. Dragonnes wander the desert, flying in short bursts to leap from dune to dune. They tend to find a fertile hunting ground, gorge themselves on food, and then move along to other areas. After devouring a large amount of food, they can subsist for weeks on stored fat and water. They prefer hit-and-run tactics, combining their ability to fly with their magical roar to wear down enemies before pouncing.

## GENIE, JANNI

With their magical ability to create food and water, the janni are free to wander into the deepest, most dangerous regions of the desert. They are consummate nomads, seeking rumors of treasure, magical artifacts, and lost cities. Many inexperienced travelers mistake a janni for a simple desert nomad, an error that can cost a rude or aggressive explorer his life. The janni are perhaps the best source of information regarding a desert's history, its secrets, and the monsters that dwell within it. Their wanderings usually lead them across every square mile of dunes, allowing them to build an unparalleled knowledge of a region. Their information always comes at a steep price, however. They expect service, such as the defeat of a blue dragon or other daunting foe, magical items, or generous gifts of gold and gems.

## LAMIA

Lamias are the epitome of self-interested, aggressive, and manipulative chaotic evil. They seek out orcs, humans, and other weak-willed humanoids to convert into slaves, using their magical abilities to break a target's will and ensorcel him. In their native desert terrain, they seek out tumbled ruins and other locations that provide a ready-made shelter. They set their servitors to rebuilding the place, using tapestries, furnishings, and other decorations stolen from caravans to erect a crude mockery of an elegant mansion. They use their illusions and this elaborate deception to trick explorers into believing they have entered the isolated manse of a powerful and beautiful (or handsome) desert noble. After plying their victims with strong drink, they use their Wisdom-draining touch to soften them up before employing their spells to recruit new slaves. Aggressive, ambitious lamias sometimes organize their followers into patrols and war parties that scour the desert in search of new treasure, supplies, and fresh victims. In some cases, a lamia grows strong enough that it does not need to use magic to compel service from evil creatures.

In addition to the creatures detailed above, a wide variety of evil humanoids and other monsters can be found within the desert. With civilized folk pushing evil creatures away from their settlements, deserts and other forbidding climates serve as natural fortresses and refuges for them. The desert's heat and difficult terrain turn back squadrons of knights, mercenary armies, and other threats that human, dwarf, or elf kingdoms may gather to defeat their enemies.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# FORESTS

From a dark, gloomy wood infested with orcs to a mysterious, faerie-haunted realm cloaked in arcane magic, forests have long been staples of fantasy adventuring. After all, what could better serve to conceal monsters, strange ruins, and other mysteries than a vast, imposing sea of trees? An adventurer can never be sure what lurks behind a massive oak or in the next clearing, just as a dungeon's twisting corridors and imposing doors conceal its secrets and horrors. For this reason, a forest is an excellent setting for your wilderness adventures.

Since a jungle is essentially a tropical forest, the rules given here apply to both of those terrain types. If you want to create a jungle or need rules for them, simply pick out traits from this section and combine them with a hot climate using the weather rules.

Note that specific rules for forest terrain features are given in the core rules. You may want to consult them before reading this section to give yourself a clearer idea of what these rules change and what they leave in place.

The rules and game mechanics in this chapter, including the names, descriptions, and stat blocks of threats and hazards, are designated as **Open Game Content**.

## BASIC FOREST TRAITS

The primary traits of forests include the following: its density, the thickness of trees and other plants; difficulty, how dangerous it is to cross due to brambles, dangerous plants, and similar hazards; and its trees, a set of characteristics you can use to reflect the strange, magical plants found in fantasy jungles and forests.

### DENSITY

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Some forests are choked with undergrowth, vines, and other smaller plants, while their trees grow close together and form a physical barrier to travel. In other regions, the trees grow far apart. Their shade has long since choked off any undergrowth, leaving easily navigable pathways through them. This trait allows you to vary how long it takes the party to move through the woods. In addition, you can use it during encounters to cut down the distance a character can see and add lots of cover to the battlefield.

## FOREST DENSITY MODIFIERS

Density	Movement	Cover	Sight	Skill Penalty	Hide
Light	x1 or 1 square	+0 AC	40/80 ft.	-0	+0
Moderate	x1/2 or 2 squares	+2 AC	20/40 ft.	-2	+2
Heavy	x1/4 or 4 squares	+4 AC	10/20 ft.	-4	+4

This trait helps form natural barriers in forests. Perhaps a druid builds a small settlement in the midst of thick forest growth, making it difficult for anyone but the most dedicated explorer to stumble across his lair. Ancient ruins might be overgrown and nearly impossible to enter without a machete or a fire spell. It also helps you create different regions within a larger forest, with the safer areas on the edge easier to travel through than the dense, goblin-infested interior.

*Light density* indicates that the trees of the forest are set far apart, with little undergrowth sprouting between them.

*Moderate density* represents the average forest. The trees are close together in some areas, while ferns, bushes, and other undergrowth obstruct movement.

*Heavy density* applies to any thick, overgrown forest. Plants grow amidst the trees in great numbers, while in some areas the trees' trunks form virtual walls.

**Movement:** Apply the listed multiplier to the party's long term, overland movement rate. Use the second value during combat. Each square moved within the forest costs the listed movement cost. For example, moving 2 squares in a heavy density forest counts as 8 squares of movement. A character can always move at least 1 square with a move action.

**Cover:** The listed cover bonus to AC applies against ranged attacks or attacks made with reach against foes that are not adjacent to the attacker. All creatures in the forest gain the cover bonus due to hanging vines, undergrowth, fallen logs, and other debris. A character who uses a tree, wall, or other obstacle gains either the standard +4 cover bonus for that object or the forest's standard cover modifier, whichever is higher. This bonus does not apply to melee attacks made against targets adjacent to the attacker.

**Sight:** The distances listed under this attribute determine how far an observer can see before undergrowth and trees block his line of sight. Creatures beyond the first listed range gain standard concealment. Those beyond the second listed range gain total concealment.

**Skill Penalty:** A forest's undergrowth and trees make it difficult to use some skills. Any attempts to use Tumble or Move Silently suffer the listed circumstance penalties.

**Hide:** All Hide checks gain a circumstance bonus due to the thick undergrowth and foliage present in a forest. Remember that creatures with total concealment cannot be seen and do not need to make Hide checks.

## DIFFICULTY

Thorns rip and tear at clothes and skin, leaving travelers badly cut and bruised. Seemingly innocuous berries cause stomach pains and nausea. Shallow holes, roots, and rocks all provide convenient spots for a traveler to trip and sprain his ankle. Forests can tax the patience and endurance of the doughtiest explorer.

Generally speaking, a forest's difficulty rating should correspond with its density level. This trait allows you to slowly drain a party's strength, reminding the players that the terrain can be as dangerous a foe as a troll or giant. Three different hazards model the levels of this trait. If you want to use this trait during a battle or other encounter, use the thorn patch terrain feature described below.

*Light difficulty* indicates a region mostly free of natural obstacles. The plants in the area are rarely poisonous, and clumps of thorny plants are rare or located well away from heavily traveled areas. Most forests fall into this category. Note that this hazard uses a Wisdom check for characters who are untrained in Survival. This test represents a PC's ability to notice and avoid thorns or other dangers.

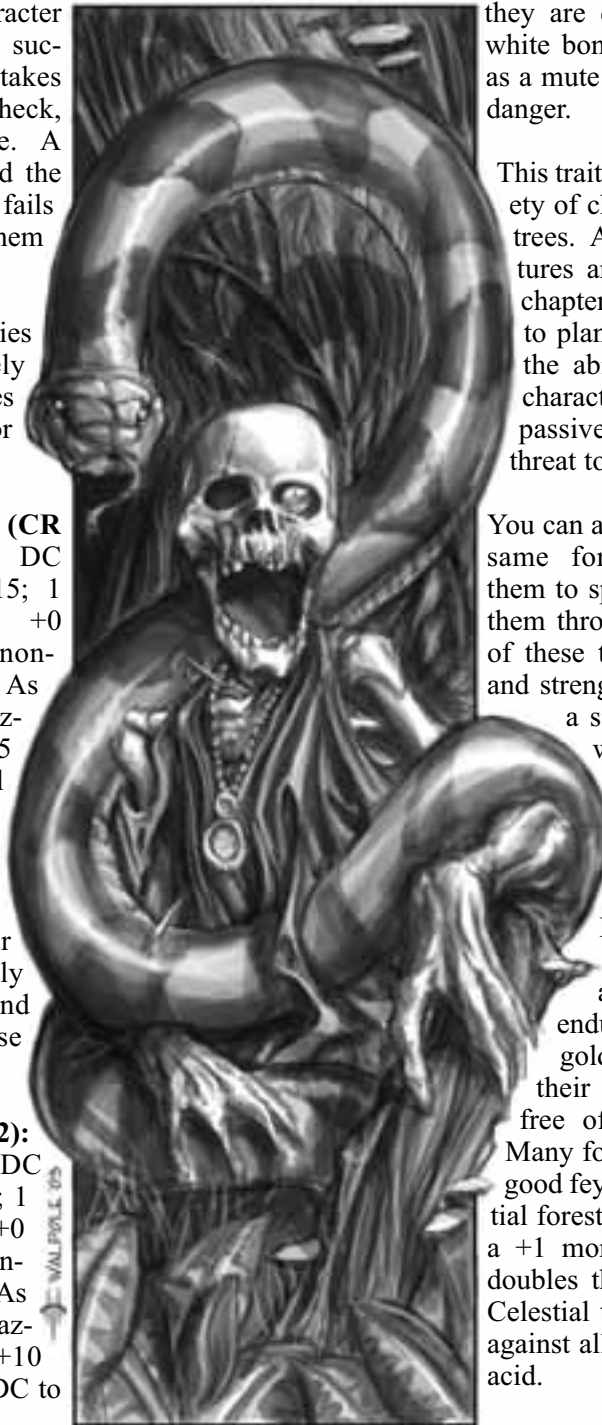
**Light Difficulty (CR 1/4):** Survival check DC 5/Wisdom check DC 10; 1 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; 1d3 nonlethal damage; Special: A single member of a group can opt to make a Survival check for the group as a whole. The DC of this check is  $5 + 5/\text{party member}$  beyond the character making the check. On a successful check, no one takes damage. On a failed check, everyone takes damage. A tracker or ranger can lead the party to safety, but if he fails he inadvertently leads them into dangerous terrain.

*Moderate difficulty* applies to any region that rarely sees travelers or features many patches of thorny or poisonous plants.

**Moderate Difficulty (CR 1/3):** Survival check DC 10/Wisdom check DC 15; 1 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; 1d4 nonlethal damage; Special: As per the light difficulty hazard, through apply a +5 modifier to the Survival DC to guide a group.

*Heavy difficulty* describes forests where thorny, dangerous plants outnumber innocuous ones. Only skilled outdoorsmen and druids frequent these regions.

**Heavy Difficulty (CR 1/2):** Survival check DC 15/Wisdom check DC 20; 1 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; 1d6 nonlethal damage; Special: As per the light difficulty hazard, through apply a +10 modifier to the Survival DC to guide a group.



black, and they seem to lash out at living creatures in hatred and rage. The verdant, healthy trees of the elven forest heal even the most grievous wounds in a matter of seconds. The deadly jungles of the southlands are filled with trees that emit a toxic gas when they are disturbed. The bleached, white bones of their victims stand as a mute testimony to the jungle's danger.

This trait allows you to give a variety of characteristics to a forest's trees. A number of plant creatures are discussed later in this chapter. These descriptors apply to plants that lack mobility and the ability to physically attack characters. Instead, they pose a passive yet potentially deadly threat to foolish travelers.

You can apply multiple traits to the same forest, perhaps assigning them to specific regions or mixing them throughout the region. Some of these traits have CR modifiers and strength levels. Others present a single characteristic along with a set of rules to support it.

### CELESTIAL

Infused with the power of good, the forest's trees are vibrant, healthy, and enduring. Many of them have gold and silver leaves, while their trunks are smooth and free of any wounds or fungi. Many forests tended by elves and good fey exhibit this trait. A celestial forest grants all good creatures a +1 morale bonus to saves and doubles their natural healing rate. Celestial trees have regeneration 6 against all attacks save for fire and acid.

### INFERNAL

The trees in this forest have been infused with the horrific, corrupting magic of demons and devils. They moan in pain and writhe in the wind. Many of them have patterns that resem-

## TREES

Gnarled, twisted oaks and elms stand within a demon-haunted wood. Their sap runs

ble screaming human faces in their bark. Their sap is thick, viscous goo, while their leaves crumble into ash at the slightest touch. Good creatures in an infernal forest suffer a -1 morale penalty to saves, while evil outsiders gain a +1 bonus to damage rolls.

## MUNDANE

The forest's trees are similar to those you could find in a real-world, temperate forest or a tropical jungle. They might include elms, oaks, palm trees, and other varieties that have no special characteristics or dangers.

## POISONOUS

The trees found in the forest have poisonous berries and leaves. Some of them spray deadly pollen on creatures that draw too close to them, killing them so that they may feed off the nutrients that drain into the soil as their corpses rot. Poisonous trees are most commonly found in tropical environs but they can appear almost anywhere due to the influence of druidic magic. This trait is expressed as a set of three hazards, each keyed to a different strength level. Assume that animals and creatures native to the forest have developed immunity to the trees' poison.

**Light Poisonous Forest (CR 2):** Survival check DC 5/Wisdom check DC 10; 1 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; Special: On a failed check, a character is exposed to the forest's poisons. He must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 for both initial and secondary damage) or suffer 1d4 temporary Con damage, with secondary damage of 1d6 Con.

**Moderate Poisonous Forest (CR 3):** Survival check DC 5/Wisdom check DC 15; 1 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; Special: On a failed check, a character is exposed to the forest's poisons. He must make a Fortitude save (DC 13 for both initial and secondary damage) or suffer 1d4 temporary Con damage, with secondary damage of 1d6 Con.

**Heavy Poisonous Forest (CR 4):** Survival check DC 5/Wisdom check DC 15; 1 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; Special: On a failed check, a character is exposed to the forest's poisons. He must make a Fortitude save (DC 18 for both initial and secondary damage) or suffer 1d4 temporary Con damage, with secondary damage of 1d6 Con.

## UNDEAD

Known as forests of the damned, these dark, twisted places are home to trees that have long ago died, rotted, and been brought to a state of unlife by fell necromantic energy. The animated skeletons and zombies of mundane wildlife haunt these grim regions. Liches, vampires, and necromancers erect their towers and fortresses in the forest, drawing on the powerful energy that seeps through the area to aid in their quest for power. The trees in this forest are twisted, rotting, and dead. Many of them can barely support their own weight. Undead and corrupted plants are common in these forests. Worst of all, over time an undead forest's malign influence can spread. Usually, these regions take root as unhealthy growths that spread across an otherwise verdant forest. They usually trace their genesis back to an artifact of evil, a powerful undead creature, or a similar source of black magic. Undead creatures in these forests gain turn resistance +1 (this bonus stacks with any resistance they already have) and a +1 morale bonus to attacks.

# ADVANCED FOREST TRAITS

Several traits are useful in giving forests a unique feel, but they are not applicable to most wooded regions. These optional traits reflect magical conditions, strange effects, and other characteristics that can add a fantasy element to an otherwise mundane region. The advanced characteristics are faerie, a measure of the influence fae, druids, and other magical woodland creatures can have on a region, gloom, an unnatural darkness common in thick, old, and malevolent forests, oppression, a magical, deadening aura that can breed paranoia and terror in travelers, and sentience, a reflection on the level of intelligence and mobility present in a forest's trees.

## FAERIE

Many woodland areas serve as homes to a wide array of magical creatures. A forest may appear to be mundane by day, but at night pixies, sprites, spirits, and other creatures with a magical connection to the land come forth to frolic and dance. Magic flows

through the air, giving the trees increased strength and vigor. Outsiders must beware the strange energies present in these regions. Sometimes, the forest's power may protect them from the elements and provide them with a safe journey. Other times, innocent travelers might fall into a faerie revel and lose themselves in the timeless fete, never to emerge again. In dark and twisted forests, evil faerie folk prey on explorers and woodsmen, luring them to their deaths to feast upon their bodies and souls.

The faerie trait encompasses a variety of effects and templates you can add to a forest to bring its magical nature to life. You can use more than one of these sub-traits on a single forest, though remember that not every combination yields a logical, coherent setting. Some of these traits have several strength ratings, while others come with a single set of rules.

### ETERNAL SEASON

Due to the magical influence exerted by the nature spirits that dwell within the forest, the same weather conditions persist day after day, month after month, year after year. In areas settled by good faeries, warm summer weather keeps the forest forever green and verdant. Dark fey may favor grimmer weather, with their twisted woods under an endless, light drizzle or even the punishing cold of winter. As the PCs trek into the forest, the weather conditions slowly change to match this trait. Some parts of the forest may experience different weather, with swampy areas continually drowned in rain and others enjoying boundless sun.

This trait does not have any strength ratings. Instead, you simply pick weather traits and conditions and apply them to the forest regardless of the conditions outside of it. This trait allows you to demonstrate the forest's magical nature to the players, as their characters stumble from a blizzard into a sunny, warm glade. You can also use it to confront them with an unexpected threat. The lich queen's palace could be cloaked in an eternal blizzard, forcing them to turn back from their quest and find appropriate gear or soldier on in the face of daunting circumstances. Perhaps the fey magic used to maintain the weather fails or suffers some form of alteration, causing it to wreak havoc with conditions in the area around the forest. The PCs might have to venture into

the woods to save the region's crops and stave off mass starvation.

### MAGICAL EFFECTS

To protect their lands and preserve their domains, the fey could exert a subtle influence over spells and magical effects within the forest. You can automatically apply a metamagic feat to spells from a certain school or those that feature a keyword such as acid, fire, or sonic. The most common effects are listed below.

#### EYES OF THE FOREST

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A single powerful figure commands the forest. This being could be a benevolent overlord who communes with nature and strives to protect it. In twisted forests it might be a demon, evil druid, or similar fiend who has perverted nature into his domain and preys upon unlucky travelers who stumble into it. A powerful being within the forest can cast *scrying* and *sending* at will against any target within his domain. This spell is cast as a 20th-level sorcerer.

#### FLAME CHOKER

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Magical fire cannot ignite in the forest, as the region's magical fabric changes and shifts to snuff out such a dangerous threat to the trees. A character must succeed at a caster level check (DC 20) to successfully cast the spell or use a spell-like or supernatural ability that has the fire descriptor or deals fire damage.

#### GLAMOUR

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The forest is infused with fey magic. Travelers are gradually overcome by the forest's magic, and they become increasingly vulnerable to the spells and enchantments of the fey.

**Song of Fey and Forest (CR 0):** Will save DC 10; 1 hour interval; -1 penalty/interval; -2 circumstance penalty on all Will saves against Enchantment school spells cast by fey creatures; Special: All non-fey that enter the woods suffer from dulled senses and a slow degradation of their will. The save penalty stacks each time a character succumbs to this hazard. Travelers who tarry too long within the forest face ensnarement by the feys' spells. They could then be compelled to serve as a slave or forced to leave the forest as quickly as possible, depending on the feys' moral outlook. Any penalties accrued through this hazard disappear when you leave the forest.

## THE SLEEP OF TREES

The magic of faerie creatures can sometimes alter and distort time. A week spent within a forest might pass as a month in the outside world, or a traveler might spend five days in a forest and emerge to discover that only an hour has passed in the outside world. The strange magic of the fey allows them to twist and turn the temporal flow to suit their strange purposes. In a forest with this trait, time passes either faster or slower than normal. Within the forest, everything seems normal. Days and hours pass at their typical rate and creatures age as normal. However, once a creature leaves the forest he finds that much less or much more time than normal has passed.

This trait operates in two ways. It can either speed up time or slow it down. Regardless of its flow, it passes as normal within the forest. Day and night seem to pass as normal, though you can use the eternal seasons trait to prevent the weather from changing in the woods. This trait could apply to certain portions of the wood. Perhaps the faeries' magic operates only in one secluded vale or the deepest heart of the forest.

The time periods given below are meant to keep this trait manageable. If the characters unwittingly spend years in a forest, you should be prepared to alter your campaign world to account for this change. Villains might gain in power or they could be replaced with new foes. The party's friends could pass away, move, or forget them. Their families probably consider them lost. Monuments could be erected in their memory, while they could be treated to the site of their own graves back in their hometowns. This trait provides a convenient tool for adventures involving time travel or it could give you the opportunity to shake things up in your world by advancing the timeline while the PCs are away.

**Light:** Two days pass in the outside world for every day spent in the woods, or vice versa.

**Moderate:** One week passes in the outside world for every day in the forest, or vice versa.

**Heavy:** One month passes in the outside world for every day in the forest, or vice versa.







## GLOOM

A dim glow shines through the thick canopy, casting a spectral, dull light across the forest floor. The trees cast long, deep shadows that keep the woods in a continuous twilight. This trait reflects the gloomy atmosphere of dark, oppressive forests. Ghosts and demons might haunt the region, or perhaps its trees are so old that their thick vines and leaves blot out the sun. Whether caused by age or some malevolent influence, this trait reflects the dark, shadowy interior of a forest.

Gloom allows you to emphasize the dark, suffocating nature of an ancient forest. The characters can barely see beyond a few dozen feet in any direction, while other effects (see *faerie*, above) might prevent them from lighting a torch or lantern. The encroaching darkness provides a convenient source of cover for any monsters in the area, while it breeds paranoia and fear in the players as their characters are unable to see what lies no more than a few feet away. Use this trait for dangerous areas infested with dark monsters or mysterious, magical forests that have acquired a sinister reputation.

*Light gloom* indicates an area that is dim and dark compared to normal daytime conditions, but is much brighter than even the night of the full moon. Few unbroken patches of light filter down to the forest's floor.

**Light Gloom:** Under these conditions, all creatures count as having bright illumination to a range of 60 ft. and shadowy illumination to a range of 120 ft. Characters with low-light vision double these ranges. At night, creatures have shadowy illumination with a range of 40 ft.

*Moderate gloom* is brighter than nighttime conditions but still shadowy and dim, much like a dark night illuminated by torchlight. The available radiance is scattered and shadowy, and the sun fails to directly penetrate to the forest floor.

**Moderate Gloom:** By day creatures have bright illumination to a range of 30 ft. and shadowy illumination to a range of 60 ft. Creatures with low-light vision double these ranges. At night, creatures have shadowy illumination to a range of 20 ft.

*Heavy gloom* drowns out almost all light. Within the forest, the brightest day can barely match the light of the full moon. The tree

trunks and undergrowth are cloaked in an eternal twilight. By night, the darkness drowns out the brightest stars.

**Heavy Gloom:** By day, creatures have bright illumination with a range of 15 ft. and shadowy illumination to a range of 30 ft. Double these ranges for creatures with low-light vision. At night, the forest plunges into total darkness.

## OPPRESSION

The towering trees, musty air undisturbed by breeze or wind, and claustrophobic environs of the forest weigh on the minds and hearts of even the most experienced travelers. The oppression trait reflects the overwhelming sense of doom and defeat that an evil forest can exert on those who travel through it. The close quarters, stagnant air, and dim lighting combine to plant seeds of fear and doubt in those who remain within a dark forest for too long. This trait works best when it is used in concert with gloom (see above) but the two are not linked. While gloom might apply to any ancient forest, only forests with a sinister reputation or those infested by evil monsters feature the oppression trait.

The oppression trait is a handy tool to reflect the terror and fear that a primeval, sinister forest can evoke in the characters. As the PCs wander through it, they slowly lose their nerve and grow to yearn for open spaces, the bright sun, and the wind on their faces. Use it for the dark corners of your campaign world that are flooded with evil energies. You can also use this trait to slowly sap the party's strength as they travel to face a powerful foe.

Oppression affects creatures that are foreign to an area. Native animals, monsters, and creatures do not suffer from its effects. They have learned to adapt to the area or dwell there because they find the suffocating atmosphere to their liking.

*Light oppression* takes the form of thick, cloying air and trees that seem to crowd close to the pathways through the forest. After a few minutes of physical exertion, travelers must stop to rest as they have trouble breathing. At times it feels as if hostile eyes peer down from the trees upon travelers.

**Light Oppression (CR 1/3):** Will save DC 10; 1 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; -1 morale modifier to attacks and checks; Special: Morale modifiers do not normally stack. However, the penalty caused by this hazard increases over time. The penalty remains until the characters leave the forest or find secure shelter and rest for the night. After two hours of rest, the penalty disappears.

*Moderate oppression* indicates thick, oppressive air, trees that seem to crowd around travelers and glower over them menacingly, and shadows that are never quite dispelled by the wan light filtering down through the drooping branches. Trees creak and snap as if unseen creatures scurry through them, and the thick atmosphere seems to muffle even the loudest sound.

**Moderate Oppression (CR 1/2):** Will save DC 15; 1 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; -1 morale modifier to attacks and checks; Special: As per light oppression. In addition, all Listen checks made within this area suffer a -2 circumstance penalty.

*Heavy oppression* feels like a smothering blanket dropped upon hope and desire as soon as a character sets foot within the forest. The air is thick with dust and pollen, causing sudden coughing fits. The light is a sickly gray at best, while the thick branches and foliage seem to loom overhead like a hammer ready to fall. Few travelers dare enter these regions, for their sinister reputations and dark aspects scare off all but the bravest explorers. The thick air stifles all sound, making even conversation difficult.

**Heavy Oppression (CR 1):** Will save DC 20; 30 minute interval; -1 modifier/interval; -1 morale modifier to attacks and checks; Special: As per light oppression. In addition, all Listen checks made within this area suffer a -4 circumstance penalty.

## SENTIENCE

Trees rustle and move on windless days. Travelers tell of whispers in the dark, trees that move to block pathways and roads, or a rising sense of tension and anger if anyone is fool enough to brandish an axe or light a fire. The forest, they say, is alive and watching. While such tales are usually little more

than overactive imaginations and harmless superstition, in the magical worlds of fantasy sometimes a forest acquires an intelligence of its own. The trees may slumber much of the time, but when a traveler passes they awaken and observe him. While they cannot move fast enough to attack, they can shift their positions to block roads, alter pathways, and confuse foresters. A forest can have an alignment, a personality, and goals that it pursues. Perhaps it only wants to be left alone, or it might seek to spread across the continent and slowly choke away civilization. Sentient forests may not pose a threat in terms of days or months, but in the course of years and decades they can alter the course of history.

The sentience trait indicates either that a forest has developed a collective awareness or that individual trees are aware of their surroundings and fully intelligent. In either case, they can take limited actions against intruders and may swat away unwelcome guests, offer advice and guidance to travelers, or merely mind their own business so long as visitors refrain from cutting live timber or lighting fires. You can stock a sentient forest with a wide variety of intelligent plants and trees found in the core rules and secondary sources.

When using the sentience trait, you need to choose an alignment for the forest along with the trait's strength. Generally speaking, a forest acts according to its alignment. A short summary for each ethos is given below.

Lawful good forests maintain their borders, treat visitors with respect and dignity, and prepare and present a set of guidelines and rules for visitors. Anyone entering the woods may find themselves asked to meet the forest's expectations or face the consequences.

Unless an intruder resorts to violence, the forest prefers to forcibly escort troublemakers beyond its borders. These forests make an effort to control the wildlife populations within them, hunting down overly aggressive predators and magical creatures that can disrupt their carefully cultivated order.



Neutral good forests exist to benefit the creatures that dwell within them. They may be willing to accept a limited amount of logging and small fires for the good of all as long as such operations are restricted to sickly or dying trees. They react aggressively to obviously evil creatures, but otherwise keep a low profile. As long as visitors refrain from starting large fires or chopping down healthy trees, they may never realize the forest's true nature.

Chaotic good forests believe in maintaining the natural world above all else. They may grow and expand to absorb neighboring territories if they feel it is in their best interests. Intruders might be barred from entering the wood unless they surrender weapons and any tools that can light a fire, though such goods are usually returned when they leave the area.

Lawful neutral forests behave in a manner similar to lawful good ones, save that they are more apt to use violent methods to enforce their dictates. They seek to construct a perfectly regulated system within the woods, with each animal accounted for and given a place within nature. Intruders may be attacked on sight if they introduce too much chaos into the system.

True neutral woods maintain a largely passive attitude. They keep to themselves, though they sometimes communicate with each other when a dire emergency is at hand. They care only that

## SENTIENT FOREST COMBAT ABILITIES

Rating	CR	Base Attack	Strength	Dexterity	Damage
Low	1	+4	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	1d3
Moderate	2	+8	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	1d4
High	4	+12	22 (+6)	20 (+5)	1d6

the natural order's strength is left undisturbed. Any animal or creature can wander into the forest, so long as it is a creature of nature and it does not work to destroy the land. Humanoids might be tolerated, though travelers with an obvious reliance on technology and magic might suffer an attack if they disrupt nature.

Chaotic neutral forests are wild, tangled woods traversed by unreliable and even treacherous paths and trails. The roads through the woods never remain stable for more than a day or two, as the trees shift and change positions. Over the course of years or even months, the entire forest might change its position as the trees migrate seemingly at random. The trees may care little for the environment around them, seeing incursions by orcs and trolls as part of the natural whim of fortune. At other times, the trees may ruthlessly stamp out intruders.

Lawful evil forests care only for their own structure and survival. Intruders might be robbed of weapons, armor, and other goods, all of which could go to bribe powerful monsters to leave the area. A green dragon or similar monster might live within the woods, its loyalty purchased through the fruits of robbery. The trees and sentient plants are ruthless in destroying unwanted visitors. Every last creature has its place in the forest's order, and those that deny their duty face death or banishment.

Neutral evil forests are strange, contested places of twisted trees and horrific creatures. The trees bicker and fight amongst themselves, driven by a malevolent urge to collect treasure and recruit humanoids and other monsters as followers. Some primitive creatures, such as orcs and goblins, worship the trees as deities. Usually led by druids, these tribes launch raids on nearby settlements to collect sacrifices for their verdant overlords.

Chaotic evil forests disdain the weak, soft flesh of humanoids and animals. They ruthlessly purge any intruders from their borders. Over time, they seek to spread into civilized lands and crush stone and wood beneath their roots.

Within these forests, daring adventurers can find the shattered remnants of ancient towns and cities long ago overrun by the forest's relentless advance.

*Low sentience* forests have a dim, shadowy awareness of events. Treants and other plant creatures are common in the area, but the trees slumber for much of the time. Travelers can expect paths and roads to sometimes change without warning, and if the characters make any attempts to chop down a tree or light a fire there is a 10% chance that the trees in the area animate and attack. The forest might shift its location a mile or two every decade.

*Moderate sentience* indicates that the trees have distinct, awakened personalities, but few of them take an interest in the world around them. Most of the trees are content to remain passive observers or they lack the intelligence to take action, but a few of them are active in the forest. Each hour, there is a 20% chance that the characters encounter an intelligent tree. The forest can shift its location one or two miles over the course of a year.

*High sentience* means that a third or more of the trees in the forest are intelligent. The woods are the plant equivalent of a city. The characters automatically encounter intelligent trees when they enter the forest, and they can find places free of the forest's observation only with great difficulty. The forest can move one or two miles in any direction each month, and any aggressive actions or calls for help are answered in a matter of minutes.

**Sentient Forests and Combat:** In addition to the increased chances of encountered intelligent trees, the characters risk the forest's interference when they face opponents in battle. Evil trees could try to trip the characters or lash at them, while good ones may assist them against invading creatures. The forest's rating in this trait determines its combat abilities.

Each round, the forest can take 1d3 standard actions to make the following maneuvers: attack, aid another, disarm, trip, or grapple. The forest can only use one action against a given target per round. These attacks use the attack bonus and appropriate attributes as given in the combat abilities table. The trees and undergrowth reach out to grab at characters, roots shift and flex to catch the feet and send adventurers tumbling to the ground, and long grasses wrap around spellcasters and hold them in place. These actions take place in addition to any intelligent trees and plants that attack the party.

The seemingly immobile plants of the forest take action to defend their domain. Use the CR listed for the different trait ratings to determine the experience award for any encounters that involve the trees. Use that CR along with the monsters' ratings to determine the total EL. The party does not face these attacks if they are in open areas that lack plant life capable of moving and delivering these attacks. The attacks end once the characters defeat their enemies.

Keep in mind that the forest's actions can tip an encounter in the monsters' favor. Use the standard guidelines given in the core rules to balance the difficulties the party should face during the course of the day. While it might be realistic for the forest to continually attack the party and wear it down, the CR system shows you how many encounters you should use each day to avoid overwhelming the party. Perhaps the forest can become active for only short periods of time, requiring it to expend magical energy to animate trees, grasses, and undergrowth.

Remember that good-aligned forests can help the party defeat encounters. The trees may claw at orcs or grapple werewolves, giving the PCs a useful ally. In these cases, the party should receive less XP for the encounter. Treat the forest as an additional party member and give it a share of XP for that encounter as normal. Sometimes, the forest might be too weak to make a meaningful contribution to an encounter. If the party's level is three or more than the forest's CR, do not give it a share of the experience.

# FOREST COMBAT TERRAIN

Crowded with trees, undergrowth, and other obstacles, an encounter in the forest is liable to force the party to forgo their ranged attacks and distance spells. Monsters can usually use the cover provided by trees to sneak up on the characters and attack them from ambush. Large clearings have the advantage of offering an open space, yet they leave any characters or monsters that take up a position in them vulnerable to ranged attacks from opponents hiding in the woods.

Keep in mind the density of trees and undergrowth when designing encounters in a forest. A penny or similar marker can represent a tree on your battle mat, saving you the time needed to draw tree trunks and erase them once the encounter ends.

The following terrain features can make a fight in the forest more interesting and dangerous for the characters. Use these features to constrict line of sight, establish areas that the PCs and monsters cannot move through, and add an unexpected element to an encounter.

## THORN PATCH

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The plants in one or more squares have sharp, dangerous thorns that can cut into an unarmed character. For each square you move into this area, you suffer a single attack with a +3 base attack bonus. You do not gain your Dexterity bonus to AC against this attack, as the thick spines and barbs are impossible to dodge. On a hit, you suffer 1d3 points of non-lethal damage. A thorn patch can cover a single square or an entire battlefield. Moving through a thorn patch costs +3 squares of movement.

## TREES

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A creature standing in the same square as a tree gains a +2 bonus to Armor Class and a +1 bonus on Reflex saves (these bonuses don't



stack with cover bonuses from other sources). The presence of a tree doesn't otherwise affect a creature's fighting space, because it's assumed that the creature is using the tree to its advantage when it can. The trunk of a typical tree has AC 4, hardness 5, and 150 hp. A DC 15 Climb check is sufficient to climb a tree. Medium and dense forests have massive trees as well. These trees take up an entire square and provide cover to anyone behind them. They have AC 3, hardness 5, and 600 hp. Like their smaller counterparts, it takes a DC 15 Climb check to climb them.

## UNDERGROWTH

This tactical feature represents exceptionally dense branches, leaves, and other obstacles. A space covered with light undergrowth costs +1 squares of movement to move into, and it provides concealment. Undergrowth increases the DC of Tumble and Move Silently checks by 2 because the leaves and branches get in the way. Heavy undergrowth costs +3 squares of movement to move into, and it provides concealment with a 30% miss chance (instead of the usual 20%). It increases the DC of Tumble and Move Silently checks by 5. Heavy undergrowth is easy to hide in, granting a +5 circumstance

bonus on Hide checks. You cannot run or charge through heavy undergrowth.

## UNEVEN GROUND

Small holes, partially buried rocks, and other small obstacles can prove difficult to spot in the forest. With the sun partially obscured by branches and leaves, a traveler must take care to pick his way along a path. In combat situations, the stress and danger of the moment can cause you to miss an obstacle and stumble to the ground. Any square with this terrain feature requires a Balance check (DC 10) to enter. On a failed check, you enter the square but fall prone in it. Otherwise, you move through it as normal. If you move at half-speed or slower, you do not have to make the Balance check to stay on your feet. In this case, you move slowly and carefully to avoid any hidden dangers.

## FOREST MONSTERS

In addition to sentient and mobile trees, there are a variety of creatures presented

in the core rules that make ideal enemies for forest-based scenarios.

## ARANEAS

These shape-changing spiders can use their ability to climb and spin webs to form small communities in the upper reaches of trees. When confronted with enemies, they can spring down upon their foes from above, using spells and physical attacks to overwhelm their enemies. Araneas are intelligent and usually form simple communities. They prefer to keep to themselves, but can sometimes be driven by their desire for arcane items and knowledge to raid areas or attack travelers. Frequently, they demand a toll in the form of simple magic items for safe passage through their domains.

## CENTAURS

While normally peaceful, centaurs can be incited to attack intruders who abuse the environment and threaten their territories. As neutral creatures, they prefer to avoid contact with outsiders. Normally, they shy away from strangers and keep out of sight. They try to lure their enemies into clearings and other open spaces to gain the advantage of their sharp lances and powerful charge attacks.

## DIGESTERS

A common predator in many warm forests, the digester is hated by treants and druids for its ability to melt away even the stoutest vegetation. These creatures are known to burn pathways through forests, even carving tunnels into large trees. Many explorers have stumbled into a pack of these beasts while inadvertently following their trails. To the untrained eye

(Survival check DC 10 to determine if a path is natural or melted) a digester pack's trail looks like a well-traveled, safe pathway.

## DRAGON, GREEN

The fierce tyrants of many forests, green dragons have a subtle effect on the woods around them. Orcs, dark fey, and other evil creatures flock to the area to serve them. Evil druids see them as the ultimate enforcers of nature's will. They sometimes lead their twisted congregations into a dragon-dominated wood in hopes of serving the wyrm.

## DRYADS

These forest spirits can be both beneficial and baneful to travelers. While good-aligned, their fey nature usually compels them to consider the good of the forest and their people more important than the health and safety of humans, elves, and other intruders into their domain. They have been known to use magic to compel humans to serve them, especially when orcs and goblins threaten their lands. While these unwitting recruits might fight for a good cause, some characters might object to the magical compulsion that forces them to serve. Furthermore, dryads can show a disturbing lack of concern for their servants. Their magical gifts sometimes cause them to look at mortals as simple-minded, easily manipulated thralls.

## ELEMENTAL, EARTH

These creatures sometimes dwell in wooded areas. When using their earth glide ability, they like to slide through and between tree roots. While they are content to ignore most travelers, they can be driven to violence if their preferred



resting grounds face any threats. The characters might find that felling the wrong tree or starting a fire can anger these creatures.

## ELVES

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Forests inhabited by elves are invariably bright, verdant, and free of monsters. However, these noble defenders of the woodland realms are overly protective of their lands for good reason. The centuries of work needed to tend a forest can be brought to ruin in a few hours of violent action. Elves patrol their realms with a ferocious vigor. Intruders face questions and arrest, with dwarves often ordered to leave the area without an opportunity to explain themselves.

## ETTERCAPS

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Vicious predators, ettercaps sow webs throughout the forest areas they infest. They prefer to string them across pathways through shadowy areas, ensnaring travelers and feasting upon them at their leisure. In some rare cases, a powerful ettercap gathers spiders as its servants. It uses these vermin to raid surrounding areas and expand its domain in the woodlands.

## KOBOLDS

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The vicious, evil kobolds prefer to remain out of sight until the perfect opportunity to strike presents itself. They use their small size to hide within areas of thick undergrowth, holding their slings and spears ready for a single devastating attack. Kobolds burrow caves and passages amongst the roots of great trees, taking care to disguise the entrances to these burrows. In combat, they prefer a rapid strike followed by a retreat to the nearest, hidden entrance to their lairs. They usually operate by night, slipping into human and elf settlements to steal food and weapons, though they sometimes carry off a lone guardsman or traveler to supplement their larder.

## SPRITES

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Both grigs and pixies are common in forests that are under the influence of fey magic. They tend to spend most of their time on song and dance, paying little mind to intruders aside from evil beings. However, they grow angry when outsiders stumble across their revels and have been known to steal items from them or use their magical abilities to confuse and

frighten them. Many travelers have mistaken the lights and music of these creatures' festivities for a welcoming beacon, much to their chagrin.

## TREANTS

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The shepherds of the wood, treants see themselves as the caretakers of the forest. They are quick to intervene in any conflicts. Luckily for them, most fey consider them wise and trustworthy. Many humans have avoided a severe beating or robbery at the hands of wild fey when a treant intervened on their behalf. Unlike many forest folk, treants have a keen understanding of the outside world. In many ways, they consider it their duty to serve as a buffer between the wood and the environs that border it.

## UNICORNS

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While rare, any forest graced by these magnificent creatures invariably grows and flourishes. Their mere presence fills a wood with the invigorating energy of purity and light. In many forests, unicorns act as leaders of the fey and treants, serving as kings and queens in the woodland realms. Their noble bearings and kind hearts make them the ideal caretakers and guardians of the wood. Sometimes, they bid their followers to find paladins, good clerics, and similar champions to defend the forest against encroaching threats or to aid against evils across the region. Unicorns are wise creatures that recognize that the forest cannot survive without the rest of the world around it.

Other forest monsters include the assassin vine, girallon, krenshar, lycanthrope, nymph, giant owl, owlbear, pegasus, pseudodragon, satyr, spider eater, and tendriculos.



## CHAPTER FIVE

## MOUNTAINS

From a distance, the mountains soar into the sky like tremendous hands that cup the lowlands in their grasp. They typically bear a sinister reputation, for the craggy peaks serve as an effective barrier to civilization's encroaching grasp. Orc tribes, giants, and other monsters take cover amongst the hills and mountains, using them as a convenient, natural fortress against forces of men, elves, and dwarves. From this roost, they can swoop down upon cities and towns like birds of prey striking from the heavens. They put fields to the torch, kill any who oppose them, and carry treasure and slaves back to their caves. As a defensive barrier, the cliffs, perilous trails, and harsh conditions are as effective as a stout castle guarded by a thousand heavily armed warriors.

Mountains and hills present the most intimidating physical barrier to explorers, in some ways even more so than deserts and arctic regions. Most other climates and terrains pose challenges that adventurers can easily overcome with specific solutions. A party venturing in the desert needs to store enough water or bring along a divine caster who can create sustenance with his magic. In the arctic, simple spells can ward away the cold and careful planning ensures that the group has enough food and supplies to last throughout the trip.

The mountains present a more direct but equally deadly series of threats. Avalanches, landslides, and perilously narrow paths can all send an explorer plummeting to his doom. A single misstep can bring an adventure to an abrupt and fatal end. In contrast, areas wracked by extreme temperatures slowly wear away a character's resistance. A bout of ill luck can make things difficult, but it does not instantly doom an explorer. The mountains offer a narrow margin of error, punishing the simplest mistake.

Exploring mountains and hilly terrain requires careful planning and patience. In terms of physical distance, a mountain range might lie close to friendly territory and require a short trip to cross them, but in terms of effort they offer a daunting challenge. Parts of an expedition's journey may include scaling sheer rock faces, climbing down rocky, unsteady slopes, and inching along narrow ledges set along towering cliffs.

The rules and game mechanics in this chapter, including the names, descriptions, and stat blocks of threats and hazards, are designated as **Open Game Content**.

**Organizing Mountains:** For most terrain, you can organize different sections by location. The western edge of a forest might be dense and impenetrable, while the eastern reaches are safe and easy to travel through due to the work of rangers and druids. Mountains are a different story. Many of the variations within them are due to elevation. There might be only a few miles between two points in a range, but they could have widely disparate climates and physical terrain. When designing mountains, it makes sense to tie conditions and effects to the elevation trait. As the characters ascend a mountain, travel becomes more difficult and the conditions they face change.

# BASIC MOUNTAIN TRAITS

The two basic mountain traits are elevation and daunting cliffs. Elevation covers how high a peak soars into the sky. It can range from low, simple hills to towering aeries that skirt the edge of the breathable atmosphere. The daunting cliffs attribute covers how much effort and expertise is required to cross a mountain region. A pass might offer a convenient highway straight through an entire range, while in other areas the characters must use rope and pitons to progress mile by mile, day by day.

Mountains also can include traits from other types of terrain. The low hills around a mountain might be covered in a thick forest, while its upper snow-covered peaks could have frigid, arctic conditions due to their great altitude. In many cases, you should use mountains as a backdrop for other terrain types. The elevation trait offers advice and ideas for using other terrain features in combination with mountains.

## ELEVATION

At the base of a mountain, an oppressively hot, steaming jungle hosts a multitude of plants and animals. Warm breezes from the nearby ocean bring plenty of heat and moisture to the land, and it teems with life. Meanwhile, a few miles into the mountains and a few thousand feet up, explorers don thick furs, heavy coats, and skis

to make their final ascent to the peak. The farther up one travels, the colder and drier the climate becomes. A lofty mountain range can produce almost any known climate, based on its height, position relative to bodies of water, and location on a continent.

The elevation trait allows you to gauge the relative height of a mountain and introduce a variety of factors to complicate the party's journey and model how a mountain range can alter the climate. As the party ascends a peak, they face thin air, snow, freezing temperatures, and other threats.

Rather than define this trait in terms of precise elevations in feet, the various levels give a basic description of their effects and provide a relative, rather than absolute, measure.

*Sea level* represents hills and the area at a mountain's base. It poses no special threat to the party and usually features the same climatic and physical conditions as the lands surrounding the peaks. Foothills fall into this category. Hilly and mountainous regions with this elevation should have traits and features drawn from the regions around the mountains. The characters still face sloped ground and more difficult travel than the surrounding lowlands, but the elevation has a minimal effect in terms of the environment. This setting has no associated hazard.

*Low elevation* covers the initial slopes and high hills that cluster at the lower reaches of a mountain range. At this level, temperatures tend to cool. If the surrounding area features extreme heat, reduce its effects by one or two levels (see Chapter 11) unless the mountains are volcanic wastelands or feature some other trait that would help maintain a higher than normal temperature. The cooler temperature helps encourage rainfall, resulting in more rainfall than the lowlands. Trees and other plants are common, as the cooler air and frequent rain combine to make it hospitable to life. The air at these elevations is not yet noticeably thinner. As such, this elevation level lacks an environmental hazard.

*Moderate elevation* features the upper areas of low mountains and the middle regions of taller ones. At these heights, the temperature becomes noticeably cooler. Reduce the average temperature by one to four levels



compared to the sea-level regions, with high the uppermost heat limit. This change could result in snowfall and similar effects, perhaps capping a mountain in a never-melting layer of ice and snow. Rain falls infrequently, due to a combination of the cold and the change in elevation. Most of the time, precipitation takes the form of snow, while the cool temperatures allow it to remain on the ground for much of the year.

The trees become increasingly thin at this level, as the forest of the lower slope gives way to meadows with scattered trees. Soon, only small bushes and other scrub remains.

At this level, the air begins to thin noticeably. Most fit humanoids can withstand this change without ill effects, but feeble creatures and those that try to engage in strenuous activity for extended periods may become winded and lose their strength.

**Moderate Elevation (CR 1/2):** Fortitude save DC 15; 1 hour interval; -1 modifier/consecutive interval; fatigue; Special: Creatures are exposed to this hazard only when they exert themselves, such as by traveling or fighting at any point between intervals. On a failed save, a character becomes fatigued. Fatigued PCs cannot run or charge. They suffer -2 penalties to Strength and Dexterity. A character is no longer fatigued if he rests for eight hours. A fatigued character must continue to resist this hazard. If he fails another saving throw, he becomes exhausted. Exhausted characters move at half speed and takes a -6 penalty to Strength and Dexterity. One hour of rest shifts a character from exhausted back to fatigued. After two weeks of exposure to this trait, a character becomes immune to it. He loses this immunity after a week spent without exposure to a hazard caused by thin air.

*High elevation* resembles a barren, rocky wasteland. The thin air and cold temperatures make it difficult for creatures and plants to survive. Only the hardest beasts eke out an existence. Most plant life fades away, leaving small bushes, lichen, and similar growths that can withstand the harsh conditions. The tempera-

ture is typically three or four ranks lower than the surrounding sea-level terrain. In areas that receive snowfall, high-altitude elevations are generally snowcapped year-round—the endless cold and harsh conditions make it impossible for the snow to melt. The air at these elevations becomes dangerously thin, making it difficult for even the stoutest warrior to exert himself for long.

**High Elevation (CR 1):** Fortitude save DC 20; 1 hour interval; –1 modifier/interval; fatigue; Special: Use the rules given under the moderate elevation hazard with the following changes. This hazard's modifier applies whether a character engages in intense physical activity or remains sedentary. The air is so thin that even at rest a PC can suffer from oxygen deprivation. If a character runs, fights, or travels, he automatically becomes fatigued after 15 minutes of work. If the PCs move at half their normal speed, they can avoid this effect and can nullify the interval modifier for this hazard. The thinner air makes it harder to recover from exhaustion and fatigue. Double the rest periods needed to remove both of them. A character can become acclimated to this hazard and avoid its effects by spending one week in it. He loses his acclimation if he spends more than one week away from it.

*Extreme Elevation* represents the conditions found at the highest peaks in your campaign world. Barren rock, interrupted here and there by snow that may have fallen decades ago, stands in stark contrast to the bright, blue sky. At this level, oxygen sickness can deprive a character of his physical and mental abilities. Unlike at lower levels, characters can never fully adapt to extreme elevations. At best, they can journey into these areas for short periods of time before descending the slopes for safer areas. Death due to exhaustion and air deprivation looms as a likely possibility for expeditions that linger too long at these elevations. Making matters worse, the weather is invariably freezing cold. It moves above frigid only in the presence of active volcanoes or other heat sources.

The terrain is unremarkable, with little to be found aside from bare rock. In some areas, gods, outsiders, and other beings that can survive without air may erect hidden temples and isolated vaults. The deadly environment and intense effort required to climb to this level

prevents the vast majority of explorers from ever reaching this height. Only undead creatures can survive in comfort, though the bright sun and clear sky dissuade even the creatures of darkness from using mountain peaks as strongholds. In some cases, a lich or other powerful undead being might erect a stronghold at these elevations, but otherwise these realms are utterly desolate.

**Extreme Elevation (CR 3):** Fortitude save DC 20; 1 hour interval; –1 modifier/consecutive interval; exhaustion; Special: Characters in this area automatically become fatigued. Quadruple the time required to recover from exhaustion. Living creatures can never recover from exhaustion in this region, nor can they acclimate themselves to the thin air.

**Altitude Sickness (CR 3):** Fortitude save DC 15; 1 hour interval; –1 modifier/consecutive interval; ability score damage; Special: Each time a character fails a saving throw against this threat he suffers 1 point of damage to each of his ability scores. This damage can only be healed if the PC returns to an area that does not feature any of the hazards detailed under this terrain trait. Spells and similar effects have no effect on the damage. Once he returns to such an area, he heals at a normal rate and can receive magical treatment.

## DAUNTING CLIFFS

Sheer rock walls rise to confound the characters, forcing them to seek a new route. A landslide destroys a pathway, causing the party to waste precious time as their guide looks over his map and tries to determine an alternate pathway. In the mountains, the only thing reliable about many paths is that they are unreliable at best. Tectonic activity, storms, and other natural processes can cause slight changes to the terrain that have tremendous effects on travel. Even well-charted courses are a daunting barrier to explorers. A twisted ankle can delay the party's progress for an hour. A cliff that normally takes a few hours to scale becomes much more difficult when an overnight rain turns it into a slippery death trap.

The daunting cliffs trait represents the danger inherent in any trip across the mountains. Broken terrain, steep slopes, and unsteady ground all combine to make any journey into the peaks more difficult than an

experienced guide or ranger can predict. Despite sensible precautions and thorough planning, bad luck can turn a routine journey into a trying ordeal.

This trait inflicts damage on the party's members and increases the time they need to travel through mountainous areas. Without an experienced guide to lead them, the party could become hopelessly lost or even suffer deaths when they blunder into deep ravines or attempt to scale crumbling, unsteady cliffs.

This trait is optional for hilly regions. In such areas, the terrain rarely becomes so difficult that the party must find an alternate route or spend precious hours working to overcome an obstacle. On the other hand, mountainous terrain presents an array of cliffs, ravines, and chasms that can bring the group's progress to a dead halt. Mountain passes allow the characters to avoid this threat, as do trails and roads carved into the peaks.

*Minor daunting cliffs* represent the typical obstacles that a party of explorers can expect to encounter within a mountain range. In these areas, the party can face the occasional climb and ravines that take time and effort to cross. Many valleys and other areas of flat easily crossed ground dot the mountains, allowing the characters to find a simple path through the peaks by journeying from valley to valley. This trait works best for lower elevations and older, smaller mountain rangers.

**Minor Daunting Cliffs (CR 1/2):** Survival check DC 15; 4 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; Time lost and damage; Special: On a failed Survival check, the party makes a wrong turn. The party wastes 1d2 hours doubling back on their trail or working to overcome an obstacle. Each member of the party must make a DC 10 Balance, Climb, or Jump check (DM's choice) or suffer 2d6 points of damage due to a fall, minor rockslide, or some other hazard.

*Moderate daunting cliffs* are appropriate for rugged mountain ranges and the middle regions of tall peaks. In these areas, few trails cross the rocky slopes, while the crevasses and cliffs the PCs face are steep, high, and difficult to negotiate. Few valleys are found in these locations, with most of them inhabited by humanoids. Herders and farmers might control a few,

while gnomes, dwarves, and others could establish mining camps. In any case, these sites are heavily defended. Pathways leading into them feature gates and other defenses, as orcs, trolls, and ogres likely seek to raid and despoil these pockets of civilization.

**Moderate Daunting Cliffs (CR 2):** Survival check DC 20; 4 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; Time lost and damage; Special: As per the minor daunting cliff hazard, except the party loses 1d3 hours of time. The DC to avoid damage is 10 and characters who fail this check suffer 3d6 points of damage.

*Severe daunting cliffs* offer some of the most difficult terrain that adventurers can encounter. Most trails are little more than uneven pathways along cliffs and steep slopes. In many areas, the characters must edge along paths that measure no more than one or two feet across. A single wrong step can end an inexperienced adventurer's life. Valleys are rare and the few that exist are the objects of fierce struggles. Hardy mountain men, dwarves, or gnomes maintain isolated bastions of civilization in a seething wilderness of monsters, barbarians, and other enemies. These locations resemble armed camps, with any visitors facing a barrage of questions to ensure that they pose no hidden threat.

**Severe Daunting Cliffs (CR 3):** Survival check DC 25; 4 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; Time lost and damage; Special: As per the minor daunting cliff hazard, except the party loses 1d3 hours of time. The DC to avoid damage is 15 and characters who fail this check take 4d6 points of damage.

## ADVANCED MOUNTAIN TRAITS

The advanced mountain traits allow you to inject a sense of magic and mystery into your campaign world. These traits focus on the arcane and divine effects that can mold and create mountain ranges. In some regions, mountains crafted of bone and metal rise above the terrain, while in other lands the gods are whis-

pered to descend from the heavens and hold court in the uppermost reaches of the peaks.

## BOONES OF THE OLD ONES

In the ancient days the gods battled a host of strange, mighty creatures from another reality for control of the earth. The humanoid races cowered in fear as these beings battled for dominance of the world. The sky flashed with bolts of energy, the earth groaned and shuddered, and the fabric of the planes stretched and shuddered. In time, the gods were victorious. They cast down the powerful beings that opposed them, hurling them into the earth from the heavens. Where these monstrosities fell they gashed tremendous wounds in the world, creating deep impact craters that flung earth and stone into the sky. In time, mountain ranges grew over these devastated regions as the world sought to devour these abominations in its earthen embrace. These mountains remain to this day, and while the beings entombed within them are long dead their malevolent influence continues to shape the world.

The bones of the old ones trait covers mountain ranges formed in the early days of the world when the gods still walked the earth. Even after centuries or millennia, the creatures they cover still exert a mild influence over the world. So great was their power that time and death have done little to snuff it out. These beings could be ancient gods, powerful demons and devils, entire legions of dragons, or some other strange beings. Regardless of their origin, they were once mighty and their strength still runs through the stony roots of the mountains.

Within regions that have this trait, monsters run rampant and whispered blasphemies haunt the dreams of spellcasters who draw too close to them. Sages believe that the beings trapped within these mountains are not wholly dead. Rather, they struggle to find mortal followers who can work to unleash them. Others claim that these peaks are merely haunted by spirits of forgotten ages. While their effects are undeniable, there is no driving, malevolent force behind them. What is known is that sometimes the inquisitors and paladins of the more aggressive churches sweep through the mountain folks' villages and strongholds in search of heretics and blasphemers. Such unfortunates face imprisonment, but not before a long period of physical and magical interrogation. Even



the hardy barbarians in these ranges keep certain regions taboo, with whispered tales of lost tribes, madness, and cannibalism serving to warn away outsiders.

This trait is best used to develop specific peaks and regions within a mountain range. The effects they have could be too severe to use for an entire region of mountainous or hilly terrain. However, if you want to create a desolate, uninhabited chain of peaks that have a sinister reputation you can use this trait for an entire range.

*Slumbering bones of the old ones* represent mountain ranges that have weak, ancient, or barely conscious beings trapped within them. Madness and hysteria tends to affect a small number of people, typically only those who have a strong affinity for magic but lack the experience to properly handle their abilities. Within these mountain ranges, acolytes, apprentices, and other neophytes rarely travel alone. In some areas, mad hermits keep watch over deep caves, standing stones, and other mystical sites. In some cases, menhirs and plinths carved with strange symbols

seem to arise from the rock overnight, but such events happen perhaps once a decade.

**Slumbering Bones of the Old Ones (CR 1/2):**

Will save DC 5; 1 day interval; -1 modifier/interval; 1 temporary damage to Int, Wis, and Cha; Special: Only characters with the ability to cast divine or arcane spells are susceptible to this hazard. The damage it deals can be healed as normal, but it cannot be cured via mundane or magical means within the mountain range. Characters who suffer this damage have horrible dreams and visions of the strange creatures lurking beneath the mountains. Each night they go to sleep, they must make Will saves (DC 10) or suffer a bout of sleepwalking. The PC seeks out an isolated area and carves or scribes strange runes and symbols in the stone, builds small pyramids from tiny stones, or offers up a wild animal as a sacrifice.

If a PC has any stat reduced to 0 due to this hazard, he becomes an insane thrall of the beings beneath the rock and dirt. His attributes return to normal, but he becomes an NPC who wanders the mountains as a hermit. His alignment changes to chaotic evil. He completes strange rituals, sacrifices, and other tasks to aid his masters' escape. In time, he could summon demons and devils, monstrous humanoids, and other beasts to complete the task. *Remove curse* cast by a 10th-level cleric can restore a PC to normal.

*Watchful bones of the old ones* have an eerie sense of dread and fear associated with them. The beings trapped within the stone are alert and aware of their fate. While they lack the strength to free themselves, they can project their senses across the peaks and observe creatures that enter their domain. While they care little for mortal worshippers, they take joy in spreading pain and fear. Their magical nature allows them to project a variety of effects on the creatures they watch, slowly wearing away at their sanity and fraying their nerves with constant, psychic pressure.

Some of the caves in this region are decorated with murals depicting alien worlds and strange beings that defy an easy description. Some of them resemble a madman's view of the humanoid form, while others are indistinguishable blurs. While no adept, cleric, or priest is ever seen tending these sites, they are always well kept. Some of them feature smoldering

torches, incense, and other items that must be brought in from elsewhere, but if any cultists linger in the area they rarely make themselves known. Some locals speak of black-robed figures who keep their features obscured with their garments, but such beings are always glimpsed in the distance. Perhaps they are pilgrims from other worlds who seek to offer sacrifices to the forgotten gods beneath the mountains, or they could be creatures from deep within the underworld that uncovered the gods and seek to restore them to the surface. What the truth could be, none can say.

**Watchful Bones of the Old Ones (CR 2):**

Will save DC 10; 4 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; -1 morale penalty to attacks and checks; Special: All characters are susceptible to this trait. The penalties it causes accumulate over time. For example, a PC who fails two saves suffers a -2 morale penalty. Affected characters feel as if some hidden observer watches them, while at night they dream of strange, dark figures that chase them through an endless maze of dark tunnels. If the PCs leave the area affected by this trait, they can remove the morale penalty after 24 hours.

*Hungry bones of the old ones* represents restless spirits barely slumbering, gods that greatly desire to escape their confinement. Earthquakes frequently rock the region, as the beings writhe and twist within their stone tombs. Their restless sleep borders forever on awakening, but their defeat at the dawn of time has thus far consigned them to their earthen prison. Within these mountains, madness and bizarre murders run rampant. At times, entire tribes have been known to gather their belongings and journey high into the peaks, never to be seen again. Many of the expeditions sent to these lands never return, but rumors of the treasures left by archmages and high priests who erect strongholds in the high places continue to draw adventurers. Most tribesmen consider these regions forbidden to their people, and those who enter them are looked upon as touched by the gods, madmen, or worshippers of foul beings. Dwarf prospectors have been known to pull up their operations and forbid all future delving into these regions, lest the legendary greed of their people arouse some dark, slumbering being deep within the world.

The malevolent influence of these beings compels weak-minded individuals to fall into their

worship. Sometimes, this drives them to become hermits who stalk the peaks in search of appropriate sacrificial victims. Other times, the curse works in a subtler manner. An afflicted character might pass through the mountains and receive traumatic, though vague, dreams. By day, he hears faint whispers that are inaudible to others in his group. When he finally leaves the mountains, the curse remains with him. When given the opportunity, he slips back to the mountains bearing prisoners for sacrifice, as well as gems, gold, and other valuables. The cursed character maintains no memory of these events, turning him into an unwitting agent of his newfound gods. The bizarre magic at work allows the scattered followers of these deities to recognize each other on sight, giving them the ability to easily work together.

**Hungry Bones of the Old Ones (CR 4):** Will save DC 15; 1 day interval; -1 modifier/interval; curse; Special: The beings beneath the mountains select one person from a party of adventurers to target with this curse. Usually, they prefer arcane spellcasters but will attempt to corrupt divine ones if no better target is available. Otherwise, they seek out characters skilled in wilderness survival. A character who suffers from this curse acquires a driving need to remain within close distance of the mountains. He creates elaborate stories to remain behind and may cut off contact with his companions. Most of the time, he behaves as normal, but once per week the dead gods' influence takes hold of him. For 1d3 days he gathers prisoners, treasures, and other objects to carry to the mountain. The curse compels him to use the most convenient methods possible. A powerful fighter might ambush hunters and take them prisoner, while a ranger could hire himself out as a guide and lead his charges into an ambush. In essence the afflicted character acts as an agent for the gods, feeding their hungers by sending a steady stream of sacrificial victims and treasure to their priests. A *remove curse* spell cast by a 12th-level cleric counters this effect and frees the character. Unfortunately, a cured victim remembers only shadowy details of the crimes he committed and the paths he took to the dark gods' temple.

## DIVINE NEXUS

In the teachings of many temples, mountains serve as a beachhead into the mortal realm for a variety of divine beings. Sometimes, the gods

descend from the heavens to survey the world they crafted. At other times, they convene in secret mountaintop locations to forge pacts, treaties, and other agreements. The material plane offers a neutral location for such discussions, preventing any deity from gaining an upper hand on his fellows. Other peaks are the reputed homes of gods who prefer to dwell near mortals. From their isolated aeries, these gods can monitor the world without taking an unduly active role within it. Mountains that serve this purpose are notorious for attracting creatures from across the planes. Their frequent exposure to divine energy also alters the pattern of magic within the area, causing divine magic to work in slightly different ways than normal.

Divine mountains are often forbidden to humans and other mortal creatures, as the gods have no desire for spies to watch over their proceedings. Legends tell of heroes and villains who ambushed and defeated minor gods, while other stories depict mortals as meddlers who can sow anger and rivalries amongst divine beings. Mountains with this trait usually feature barbarian tribes who have a long tradition of xenophobia and hatred for outsiders. Perhaps due to divine influence or an ancient pact with the beings who visit and dwell atop the mountains, these folk serve as guards and watchmen. Few explorers can evade their watchful eyes, and many expeditions to the peaks never return.

Divine mountains give you a way to introduce powerful beings into the campaign without planar travel. The characters may have to travel to an isolated area at the top of a great mountain to confer with a divine sage or uncover an artifact or an important clue to handle some threat. This trait typically applies to the uppermost reaches of a mountain range. At the lower elevations, the gods' passive influence is too weak to have an effect on the environment.

This trait causes divine magic to experience unexpected fluctuations in its power. In addition, those who follow the gods of the mountains gain divine bonuses in all their efforts, while any who oppose them are plagued by misfortune. When using this trait, pick one or more alignments that correspond with the beings found in the mountains and choose ones that oppose them. Alternatively, you can name specific gods and their enemies from your campaign. Characters who fol-



low the mountains' divine figures gain several bonuses, while their enemies receive penalties. In some cases, all creatures count as enemies. This condition could apply to areas where gods of a variety of alignments gathered. The gods' wildly divergent natures strain and tear the flow of divine magic, making spells difficult for all casters.

*Minor divine mountains* represent areas that the gods infrequently or no longer visit. In the ancient days, this place may have had significance to the pantheon, but no longer. At the uppermost reaches of these peaks, explorers can find stone tables, thrones, and other adornments crafted for beings that were easily 50 ft. tall. Despite their great age, these artifacts remain in perfect condition. The barbarians and other folk of the mountain might be taller than normal, and many of them have an affinity for clerical and druidic magic. Both of these traits are sure signs that divine blood runs in their veins, a legacy of their connection to the mountain.

**Minor Divine Mountains (CR 1/2):** Will save DC 10; 1 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; +/-1 divine modifier to attacks, checks, saves; Special: Characters who enter this region tread on holy ground. Those who revere the divine spirits that inhabit or visit this mountain gain a bonus, while their enemies suffer a penalty. This modifier does not stack. Once a character gains it, he no longer saves to resist this hazard and retains it until he leaves the mountains. Characters automatically gain the bonus if they qualify for it.

In addition to the divine blessings and curses this trait provides, all divine spells suffer slight alterations due to the ebb and flow of energy in this area. When using a divine spell, a caster opposed to the gods of the mountain must make a Spellcraft check (DC 15) or his spell fizzles, squelched by the inimical energy around him. Allied and neutral casters must also make a check, but their DC is 5. In this case, the sheer volume of energy overwhelms the caster and destroys the spell.

*Moderate divine mountains* witness infrequent but recent incursions by divine beings. A magical effect makes these peaks noticeable even from the lowlands. Clouds may eternally obscure its peak, while natural rock formations could resemble the holy symbols or visages of divine beings. Pilgrims stream to the

lower slopes of these peaks, offering up prayers and sacrifices in hopes that the gods will listen. Monasteries, temples and small villages dedicated to the gods spring up amongst the peaks, but only the desperate, curious, or mad dare venture farther up the mountain trails. In some cases, religious edicts may prevent believers from seeking the uppermost mountain regions, lest a pilgrim anger the gods and call down curses and maledictions from them.

**Moderate Divine Mountains (CR 1):** Will save DC 15; 1 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; +/-1 divine modifier to attacks, checks, saves; Special: As per the minor variation on this trait, with the following changes. The Spellcraft DC to cast a divine spell is 20 for characters who oppose the gods of the mountains, 10 for their allies.

*Major divine mountains* play host to frequent divine councils or they might serve as permanent homes for minor deities. In this case, the divine mountains' nature is usually concealed from the mortal realm. While the lesser strength version of this trait can produce important holy sites, at this level the gods generally prefer to avoid direct contact with mortals. These mountains are typically found far from civilization. In the distant lands that border the edge of the world, the peaks rise high enough into the sky that the gods can easily breach the gap between worlds. In these isolated sites, they can hold their councils and dwell in relative peace. The guardians arrayed at these mountains include demons, devils, or angels, depending on the moral outlook of the gods that dwell in the mountains. The signs that indicate this place's divine status are many but subtle. Storm clouds may rumble at their peaks, while the peak's uppermost reaches might be bare of snow, a stark contrast to the white-capped mountains that surround it. The valleys and paths that crisscross the mountains could form the shape of a holy symbol if someone took the time and effort to map them in painstaking detail.

At the mountain's peak, a traveler might find a fiery plain flowing with lava and infested with demons, a glittering emerald mansion, or a verdant forest that is warm and comfortable despite the extreme altitude. The gods can shape these areas as they wish, building realms that suit their needs and reflect their temperaments.

**Major Divine Mountains (CR 3):** Will save DC 25; 1 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; +/-1 divine modifier to attacks, checks, saves; Special: As per the minor variation on this trait, with the following changes. The Spellcraft DC to cast a divine spell is 25 for characters who oppose the gods of the mountains, 20 for their allies.

## ROOF OF THE WORLD

In some places, the mountains rise so high that they pierce the sky and bleed into other planes of existence. A mountain climber might find himself suddenly falling upward to land on a peak that resides on the other side of the sky. A curious explorer could venture into a dark cave only to emerge in a mountain range that stands worlds away from his starting point. These mountains are generally known as the roof of the world. In some locations, the membrane between worlds includes physical barriers and supports to maintain the planar divide. These mountains are rife with planar energy, while naturally occurring gates allow curious explorers to wander the multiverse. These peaks sometimes occur in close proximity to divine mountains, as the presence of gods can either weaken the planar divides or indicate that a region is easily accessible from other worlds.

Mountains that serve as the roof of the world feature more outsiders than other regions, as these creatures can merely wander through gateways and blunder into the material plane. Demons and devils might wander down from the peaks to raid settlements. Air elementals play amongst the upper peaks, while earth elementals reshape and sculpt the mountain to their liking. The planar energies that infuse this area make it possible for such otherworldly creatures to venture into the material world, and even make these mountain reaches comfortable for the extraplanar beings.

*The minor version* of this trait indicates that a mountain realm serves as a bridge between the worlds in a few, limited areas. Only at the highest regions of the peaks can characters find gateways and physical paths to other planes. The locations they can reach are few in number, with most areas connecting to a limited number of closely linked planes. For example, a volcanic mountain range could have ties to the plane of fire, while one known for harboring bizarre, dangerous creatures bridges to a





plane of evil. In some areas, the planar nature of these peaks is apparent in the plants and wildlife that inhabit the area. Native species might be slowly forced out in favor of creatures from beyond the gates. Luckily, the limited number of gates prevents any major incursions from threatening the entire regions. Still, sages know that strange flowers and alien trees can point to a gate's presence.

*Moderate* areas feature more gates spread over a wider area. These passages lead to a variety of worlds, though they usually share a few common traits or qualities. The increased number of gates makes extraplanar creatures more common, with plants and animals from other worlds overrunning the upper regions of these mountains. In some places, mundane plants and animals might be completely eradicated by invaders. Outsiders might form colonies in these mountains, while small sects devoted to worshipping the most powerful creatures that travel through the gates erect minor shrines and small temples. The influx of planar energy leads to unstable weather patterns, possibly causing the mountains to feature warmer, colder, or wetter conditions than the rest of

the region. The upper mountain peaks may even feature warmer, more comfortable weather as energy flows through the gates. The opposite could be true in mountains that connect to frigid, ice-bound worlds.

Eldritch weather events such as acid rain and meteor showers (see Chapter 11) develop due to the ebb and flow of planar energies, spawning weather systems that have been imbued with alien energy. For this reason, the lowlands near these peaks might be uninhabited, while long-term changes in the weather could turn them into wastelands.

*Major roof of the world* peaks feature a multitude of planar gates, rifts, and other passages. Outsiders drive off many of the terrestrial species that would normally inhabit the mountains, leading to the rise of demonic or saintly strongholds. The gates lead to a wide variety of planes, and this sometimes results in pitched battles between powerful outsiders as they struggle for control of the peaks. To the lowland folk, ominous flashes of arcane energy, strange cries, and the thundering echo of explosions high in the mountains are an almost weekly event. Storms pregnant with arcane energy roll down the peaks to ravage the surrounding region on a regular basis, driving many settlers to seek out safer lands. Over time, the mountains may change to reflect their planar connections. Mountains of glass, obsidian, or bronze could exist within this chain, their rocky substance transmuted by the intense flow of energy from across a million worlds.

In these lands, wizards, sorcerers, and clerics gather to harvest magical energy and craft magic items. An accomplished caster could use his power to carve out a stronghold, his spells and fierce reputation enough of a deterrent to keep the outsiders at bay. Cults dedicated to demonic creatures flock to these lands bearing treasure and sacrifices for their dark lords. In some cases, the mountains could acquire such a terrible reputation that nearby kingdoms forbid any traffic to or from them. A massive wall could be erected around them, with spellcasters and elite soldiers tasked with driving back the planar incursions that sometimes boil up from the peaks and sweep down the mountain slopes.

Brave or foolish prospectors may seek out these lands, as the planar energy could produce

rich veins of gold, mithral, or adamantine. These rare metals might form only under such conditions, making this mountain range a dangerous location not only for the monsters that dwell within it, but because of the armies and factions that fight to control them.

## VOLCANIC

Jets of molten lava soar into the air, driven by pressure and forces bottled within the earth for centuries. Magma flows cut a swath through the lowlands, forming scorched, rocky pathways through forests and plains when they cool. Volcanic gasses, poisonous to many creatures, erupt from cracks and vents to sweep the area clear of living things. These hell-blasted, fiery peaks present a daunting challenge to even the most experienced adventurers. The temperature soars to extreme levels, providing an insidious threat to go along with the obvious danger posed by molten rock and sudden, explosive eruptions.

Volcanic mountains develop along areas with active fault lines. They can also arise due to magical effects or the influence of elemental forces. A mighty dragon, spawned at the birth of the world, slumbers beneath the mountains. The fire that glows within him melts the rock, encasing him in a womb of magma and causing eruptions in the world above. Subterranean passages to the plane of fire cause a cataclysmic reaction as fiery energy melts through the earth, spawns tremendous pressure that thrusts the mountains upward, and blasts through the surface in fiery eruptions.

In addition to the environmental hazards outlined below, you should also use a heat hazard from Chapter 11 to model the extreme temperatures in this area. The molten rock and occasional eruptions drive the heat to unbearable levels even at the uppermost elevations. Ignore the general guidelines given for elevation earlier in this section unless the characters are in a section of the peaks that does not feature any active lava vents or flows.

Areas that feature *minor volcanism* are relatively stable. Explosion eruptions are rare, as whatever force drives the volcanic activity rarely builds up to such extreme levels. Rather, molten rock bubbles from vents along the mountain at a sporadic rate. At times, the mountains can slip into a state of near-hiberna-

tion for long periods. During these times, the magma vents push forth occasional bursts of molten rock. At their worst, these mountains produce lava flows that damage villages, towns, and fields perched along their slopes or nestled in the lowlands directly around them. Over time, the activity in these regions slowly dwindles to a halt.

The only hazards characters need to worry about in mountains with this trait are lava flows and the sometimes perilous heat. Generally, the mountains never produce volcanic events that compare to the more active areas. Use the daunting cliffs trait to represent the difficulties in travel caused by lava flows. In addition, the inner caves of these mountains could feature extreme heat and areas of volcanic activity. Dungeons in these regions might feature pools of bubbling lava with stone or magical bridges crossing them. Fire creatures are common, as efreet, azers, and fire elementals find the environment comfortable. The pressure and heat sometimes yield diamonds and other gems that these beings harvest and carry back to their home planes.

*Moderate volcanism* applies to areas with active volcanoes that erupt on a fairly regular basis. Travel is hazardous due to the frequent explosions and eruptions that wrack this area. Even creatures accustomed to extreme heat, such as fire elementals and demons, seek shelter within this environment. Rock and debris ejected into the air pummels creatures and smashes all but the stoutest structures. Wooden shelters function as temporary shelter at best, as the heat and flaming debris set them alight in a short period of time.

Wastelands or deserts ring these mountain ranges, as the regular lava flows foil most efforts to raise cities and towns. Only creatures specifically adapted to this environment can survive for long periods. Sooner or later, a major eruption takes place and wipes the ecological slate clean.

Three separate hazards represent the dangers this region presents. Volcanic gasses can erupt from the ground, poisoning travelers foolish or unlucky enough to be caught near them. Eruptions shower areas with rock and debris, battering anyone caught in the open. Major eruptions are the greatest threat these volcanoes pose, as they can occur on a reg-

ular basis. Travelers caught in the mountains during such an eruption had best move fast or use magic to escape, as they can find little shelter on the slopes.

**Moderate Deadly Gas (CR 1):** Survival check DC 15; 1 day interval; +0 modifier/interval; inhaled poison, 1d3 Con/1d3 Con, Fortitude save DC 14; Special: A single character makes the Survival check against this hazard, with up to one character assisting him. If no one in the party has the Survival skill, a single member of the party may substitute that skill with a Wisdom check at a -4 competence penalty. The gas bursts from a vent in the ground in a 40-ft. spread centered on a randomly chosen character.

**Moderate Debris Showers (CR 1):** Reflex save DC 15; 1 day interval; +0 modifier/interval; 2d6 damage; Special: This hazard inflicts physical damage, not fire injuries, from the rock and debris that shower from the sky in the aftermath of a minor eruption.

**Moderate Volcanic Eruption (CR 8):** This hazard works a bit differently from the ones presented elsewhere in this book. Each day the characters spend in this mountain area, there is a 1% chance that a volcano erupts. Make this check at the start of each day. If the result indicates an eruption, the event takes place in 1d4 days. The characters see signs of the coming explosion. The deadly gas and debris shower hazards now have intervals of 12 hours on the first day before the eruption. Cut this time period in half each day until the volcano blows. Plumes of smoke burst from the mountain's upper reaches, and minor earthquakes rock the area. On the day of the eruption, roll to determine the hour on which it occurs. The easiest way to do this is to roll 1d12 and 1d6. The d12 result is the hour during which the eruption takes place. If the d6 result is 4-6, add 12 to the d12 result.

When the eruption takes place, lava pours down the mountain slopes. Use the debris and poison gas hazards at their current, reduced intervals. Increase the check and save DCs to avoid them by 5. If the characters are still on the mountain, they must find a safe, secure spot as lava flows down the slopes. The temperature soars to hellish levels (see temperature hazards, Chapter 11). These conditions persist for 2d6 days, after which the mountain calms and the volcano returns to normal.

Characters at the uppermost areas of the volcano are exposed to a tremendous blast of heat and force when the mountain unleashes its power. They are hit by dense clouds of poisonous fumes. Use the deadly gas hazard with a +10 modifier to its Fortitude save DC. The characters are not allowed a Survival check against this threat. They suffer 20d6 points of damage from the blast, with a Fortitude save for half damage. Half of this damage is from heat and flames, the other half comes from the impact of falling rocks and the shock of the detonation.

You can base an entire adventure around an eruption, with the characters charged with evacuating any intelligent creatures that dwell near the mountain. Perhaps the volcano erupts while the characters seek to recover an artifact hidden somewhere in the mountain. If the PCs are in a dungeon within the peak, passages and chambers could be flooded with magma and deadly gas as channels in the mountain crumble. The PCs could be trapped in the underworld as their route to safety collapses behind them.

*Severe volcanism* indicates an unstable area that hosts repeated minor eruptions, sometimes culminating in a titanic, devastating blast. These regions could be wracked by a conflict between elemental fire and earth, unstable gates to other worlds, or natural geological processes. Few creatures, aside from those adapted to extreme heat, dwell in these regions.

This version of the volcanism trait uses the same hazards as the moderate setting, though they are more difficult to resist and pose a greater danger.

**Severe Deadly Gas (CR 2):** Survival check DC 20; 1 day interval; +0 modifier/interval; inhaled poison, 1d3 Con/1d3 Con, Fortitude save DC 18; Special: As per the moderate version of this trait.

**Severe Debris Showers (CR 1):** Reflex save DC 20; 8 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; 2d6 damage; Special: This hazard inflicts physical damage, not fire injuries, from the rock and debris that shower from the sky in the aftermath of a minor eruption.

**Severe Volcanic Eruption (CR 10):** Use the rules given above for the moderate volcanism

trait, with the following exceptions. Double all the damage listed for the eruption. Use all the same modifiers for the volcanic hazards, but remember to apply them to the severe, rather than moderate, versions. Finally, the chance for an eruption in this region increases over time. The ebb and flow of energy beneath these mountains produce blasts three or four times per year. The base chance for an eruption is 1%, but this increases by 1% each day until an eruption takes place. Afterwards, the probability drops back down to 1% and continues to rise again.

## MOUNTAIN COMBAT TERRAIN

Fighting in the mountains is never an easy task. Cliffs, steep slopes, and other obstacles give tremendous advantages to creatures that can seize higher ground. Flying monsters can swoop in to attack then disappear behind a rocky outcropping, making it difficult to draw a bead on them. The environment also offers a variety of devastating weapons. A boulder rolled down a pathway can send your enemies diving for cover.

### BOULDERS

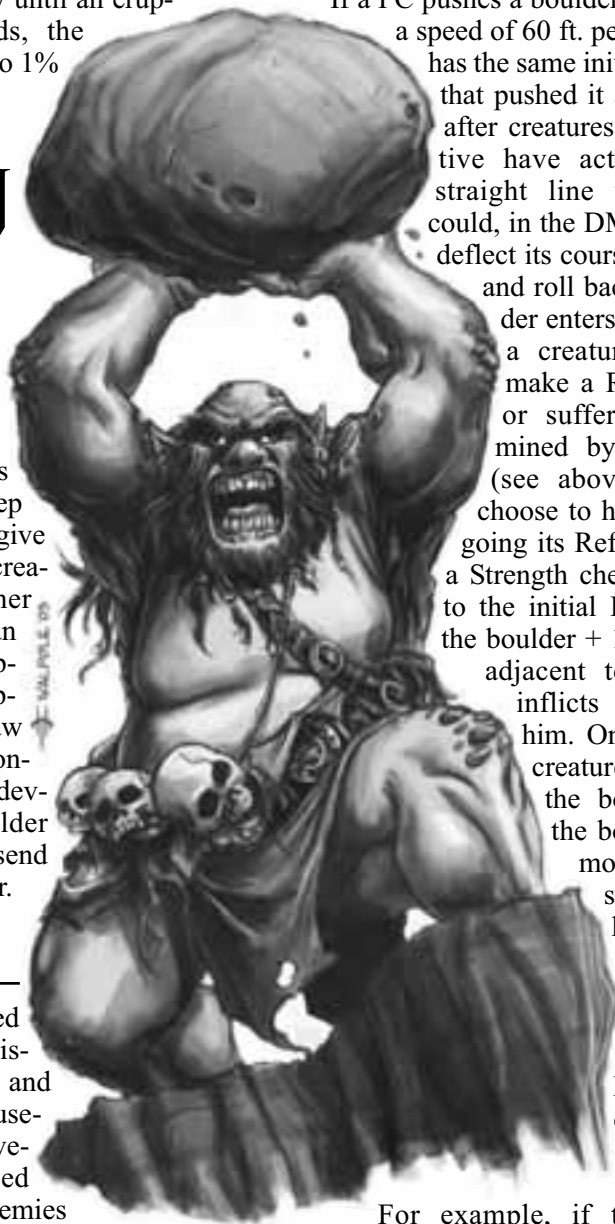
Usually boulders are best used as cover against spells and missile fire. Strong characters and monsters can turn them into useful weapons. A boulder conveniently placed atop a sloped path can slam into your enemies like a bowling ball. To roll a boulder, a character must be able to push it to the edge of a slope. You can move a boulder with a successful Strength check at half your normal speed as a full-round action. If your check fails, you waste your action pushing against the stone. The DC to move a boulder is based on the damage it can inflict as a weapon. Heavier boulders inflict more damage when they crash into tar-

gets, while measuring them in terms of damage allows you to give the players a chance to injure their enemies without unleashing a weapon that crushes them all in a single strike. The base DC to push a boulder is 5 per d6 of damage it inflicts. A boulder occupies one square per every 2d6 points of damage it can inflict.

If a PC pushes a boulder down a slope, it has a speed of 60 ft. per round. The boulder has the same initiative as the creature that pushed it and it always moves after creatures on that same initiative have acted. It moves in a straight line unless an obstacle could, in the DM's judgment, halt it, deflect its course, or cause it to stop and roll backwards. If the boulder enters a space occupied by a creature, the target must make a Reflex save (DC 15) or suffer damage as determined by the boulder's size (see above). A creature can choose to halt a boulder by forgoing its Reflex save. If it makes a Strength check with a DC equal to the initial DC needed to move the boulder + 10, the boulder stops adjacent to the creature and inflicts no damage against him. On a failed check, the creature takes damage and the boulder continues. If the boulder would end its movement in the same space as a creature, keep the boulder there but the creature may move as normal. A boulder cannot force a Reflex save or inflict damage against a given creature more than once per round.

For example, if the boulder moves through two of the squares a big creature occupies, that monster needs to make only one save.

As an optional rule that makes boulders more random and dangerous, a rolling boulder's speed increases by 10 ft. and it inflicts an additional 1d6 points of damage each round it moves. For example, a boulder



that inflicts 2d6 points of damage would move 60 ft. on its first round, 70 ft. on its second round of movement, and so on. Its damage would go from 2d6 on the first round, to 3d6 on the second round, to 4d6 on the third round, and so on. If this rule is used, the DC to stop the boulder increases each round as well (from DC 20 on the first round to DC 30 on the fourth round, etc.).

## CLIFFS

When designing combat terrain, keep in mind that cliffs provide a nice, impenetrable barrier to creatures and PCs that lack magical means to climb or fly. A gang of orc archers atop a cliff can rain arrows down upon the party. This terrain gives any PCs who specialize in ranged weapons a chance to shine. Consult the Climb skill for complete rules on scaling cliffs.

In addition to serving as convenient walls against the party's movement, cliffs can also serve as hazards in an encounter area. The bull rush attack becomes a deadly option when you can use it to send a target tumbling over a ledge. As a rule of thumb, when using cliffs in this manner keep their height to roughly five times the party's level in feet. The damage such a fall poses is enough to injure most PCs, but it does not result in instant death. Remember that if a PC lacks the ability to fly or climb, knocking him over a cliff takes him out of the fight. Try to restrict this use of cliffs to important battles or give PCs who fall a chance to return to the combat area by running up a path or using some other means to aid the party.

## ROCK PILES

Loose debris presents a difficult obstacle during a fight, as creatures moving over it have trouble maintaining their footing. This terrain feature includes any large piles of small rocks, shifting dirt, and similar material. It costs two squares of movement to enter a rock pile square. In addition, these piles are usually sloped. Fighting on this material is difficult at best. A creature standing in this terrain suffers a -2 circumstance penalty to all attacks, as his feet slip out from under him. Steady creatures, defined as any character or monster that receives the +4 bonus for stability against bull rush attacks, do not suffer this penalty.

## SLOPES

Terrain that slopes upward is more difficult than normal to move through, as a character must expend significant energy to move up the incline. By the same token, moving down a slope is easier than normal. In addition to the standard modifier for attacking from a higher position, slopes offer the following benefits and drawbacks.

The rules given here apply to exceptionally steep slopes, those that rise up or drop down more than 45 degrees relative to level ground. They give you the option to add some interesting terrain features to a mountain encounter area.

Moving up a steep slope increases the movement needed to enter a square by +1. Thus, moving into a clear, upward-sloped square costs two squares. In essence, this modifier halves a creature's movement.

Moving down a steep slope works as normal unless a creature makes a double move, runs, or charges. In these cases, a creature can opt to move farther than normal. For every two downward-sloped squares it moves along, it can move one extra square as part of the double move, run, or charge. If a charging creature does not spend any of these extra squares, it gains a +2 bonus to weapon damage rolls when it makes its attack as the added momentum carries its attack forward. For example, a creature with a move of 30 ft. (6 squares) makes a double move down a slope. Its normal double move is 12 squares. If it moves 6 squares down a slope, it can move an extra 3 squares at the end of its normal movement.

# MOUNTAIN MONSTERS

The high peaks play host to a wide variety of creatures. Isolated in the upper peaks far from civilization, creatures can develop and grow without the interference of adventurers and settlers. Left unchecked, evil humanoids, wyverns, dragons, and other menaces can multiply and make their plans for conquest. Flying creatures have a tremendous advantage in this

environment, as they can easily cross chasms, crevasses, and other obstacles that hinder creatures that are trapped on the ground.

The wide variety of creatures found in mountainous and hilly terrain prevents the presentation of detailed advice and ideas for all of them. Instead, this section discusses a few of the more noteworthy mountain foes.

## BUGBEAR

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Despite their size and strength, bugbears are renowned for their penchant for stealth and treachery. From their lairs in the hills and mountains, they slip down into the lowlands under cover of darkness, quietly raid isolated villages and farmhouses, and return home with food, treasure, and slaves. Under the best of circumstances, the nearby human lord launches a raid on the nearby orc caves and never suspects the bugbears' involvement. Their emphasis on stealth and trickery leads them to carefully camouflage their homes. They keep away from established trails and take care to destroy any that lead to their lairs. If a nearby tribe or human noble becomes too active against them, they either move away in secrecy or use a swift raid to assassinate their enemies' leaders and throw them into chaos.

## DRAGON, BRONZE

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Compared to their fellow wyrms, bronze dragons are relatively pacifistic. They prefer to use their magical abilities to lure creatures away from their lairs, using bribes of food and treasure to keep them at a distance. When faced with a stubborn, obviously dangerous foe they resort to violence, but only if other options proved fruitless. Bronze dragons prefer to dwell within caves or isolated islands found within mountain and hill lakes. Their preference for peace and isolation can prove maddening to other creatures, as they have a disturbing tendency to see recent events as mere inconveniences when compared to their centuries-long life spans. An invading army might be ignored as a temporary problem best solved by others. This passive stance makes them unlikely to ally with the forces of good unless their lairs are directly threatened.

## DRAGON, COPPER

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Where bronze dragons are passive and isolated, copper dragons explore their surroundings and take an active role in their development. Anyone wandering through a copper dragon's territory can count on the wyrm observing and perhaps stopping him. These dragons are somewhat vain and arrogant. They like to play jokes and tricks on others for their own amusement, though these actions never take on a dangerous aspect. If a party of adventurers can accept the dragon's jests in good humor, it can offer them aid and shelter. Those who are rude or arrogant earn an aloof dismissal. Areas controlled by copper dragons are generally free of evil monsters. Since these dragons actively travel their lands, they take care to exterminate or drive away orcs, trolls, and other threats.

## DRAGON, RED

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The mighty red dragons are known as flame tyrants amongst orcs, ogres, trolls, and other evil humanoids. Shortly after one of these creatures establishes its lair, it embarks on a crusade to dominate and control the monsters in the area around it. Powerful creatures are slain by the dragon's claws and fangs, while weaker ones that the dragon can dominate end up as its slaves. Dragons use a combination of ferocity and intimidation to keep their followers in line. A young wyrm might slay an orc king and his successors and then support one of the minor warlords that vies for the throne. By throwing the tribe into chaos, the dragon can handpick a successor that it can easily manipulate. Over time, a red dragon can unite the scattered monsters and tribes of the mountains into a conquering army poised to sweep across the land.

## DRAGON, SILVER

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Amongst the metallic dragons, silvers are known as ardent champions of good. While copper and bronze wyrms are childish or arrogant in their dealings with humanoids, silver dragons see the great power and strength they have as an important responsibility that they must utilize with careful wisdom. At times, they can be arrogant in dealing with humanoids, assuming that such lesser creatures cannot understand what must be done to combat evil. They feel most comfortable when in charge of a situation, and their egos need constant attention in order to



keep them happy and motivated. However, in the face of a direct threat they are fierce warriors and valuable allies. For this reason, silver dragons prefer to keep to their own kind. Only when a dire threat appears in a region do they freely associate with elves, dwarves, and humans.

## GIANT, HILL

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These brutes fancy themselves as the most powerful warriors and strongest creatures in all the land. They underestimate the skill and strength of smaller folk and consistently fling themselves into hopeless battles against skilled wizards, paladins, and fighters. Hill giants are at their most dangerous when a more powerful, intelligent creature commands them. When faced with a powerful being, their resolve evaporates and they readily fall into obedient service as slaves. Red dragons and similar tyrannical monsters prefer to gather hill giant followers as their first step in controlling a region, for these brutes make excellent enforcers. They are easily intimidated and love to terrorize smaller creatures.

## GIANT, STONE

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In contrast to the brutal hill, fire, and frost giants, stone giants are simple, peaceful creatures that prefer to spend their time in games and quiet meditation. While they jealously guard their mountain homes, they accept travelers who pay them proper respect and make no action to disturb the mountains. Many stone giants become druids, reflecting their deep connection to the natural world. During thunder storms and similar harsh weather, these creatures ascend the peaks to commune with their deities of earth, wind, and sky.

Some stone giants descend into savagery, especially those that come to regard the mountain as their personal, private domain. These giants are notoriously intractable, and red dragons and other would-be conquerors must fight them to the death rather than incorporate them into their armies. These brutes particularly hate dwarves and others who mine the earth, as they see them as thieves who pillage the mountain for its sacred treasures. They have sometimes been known to pursue caravans bearing gems and ore for hundreds of miles.

## HOBGOBLIN

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Strictly organized and ready for war at a moment's notice, hobgoblins are perhaps the most dangerous of the evil humanoid species. Their militaristic society breeds highly trained warriors, while their leaders are willing to make short-term compromises, such as allying with a red dragon, in order to reap long-term conquests and gains. Hobgoblins have the distinction of being the one race of evil humanoids that is likely to send envoys seeking an alliance with a dragon, evil human lord, or devil.

Veteran dwarf warriors have a saying regarding hobgoblins: "For every one you fight, there's 10 more on their way." Hobgoblins dispatch regular patrols to sweep their territories. When these groups encounter foes, they raise an alarm via horns or drums to draw more troops to the area. Hobgoblins sometimes cultivate potatoes and other plants, and they tend herds of goats and cattle to support their armies. In many ways, the lands they control resemble civilized lands, with small towns and castles serving as their primary defensive points.

## OGRE

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While ogres are known as raiders and thieves, they have little effect on the environment. They prefer to slumber in their caves when not engaged in attacks, and their idea of hunting or gathering consists of raids on hobgoblin villages or orc caves. Even experienced trackers must take care to watch for these creatures. The areas they inhabit show little signs that anything dwells there aside from scattered trails and the occasional pile of discarded broken weapons, sundered armor, and bones.

## ORC

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The most common of the evil humanoids, orcs breed in large numbers and regularly throw themselves against their enemies in search of food, weapons, and loot. They disdain physical labor, seeing it as best left to slaves. For this reason, they tend to conquer castles and underground halls constructed by other creatures. When not warring against dwarves and men, they raid hobgoblin settlements and sometimes conquer them for their own use. Orc tribes tend to have a pronounced effect on their environment. Trees are chopped down for wood or simply for the joy of it, while any animals in



the area are hunted to exhaustion for food and fun. As an orc tribe spends the resources of an area, it simply pulls up camp and seeks out more prosperous areas. A druid can trace a large tribe's movements up to several decades in the past by the damage it has inflicted on the natural world.

## WYVERN

These distant kin of dragons are cruel, vicious creatures that pounce upon any living thing that seems weak to their hungry eyes. Deer, groups of humanoids, and even smaller giants are all potential prey. Even a wyvern that has already gorged itself on a meal attacks for the sheer

pleasure of inflicting pain and misery on others. Amongst the hobgoblins and orcs, these beasts are highly prized as mounts and guardians. For this reason, wyverns keep a sharp watch over their territories lest a thief make off with their young. They prefer to establish nests in high, inaccessible locations atop cliffs. The first sign that a wyvern inhabits an area is usually the sharp, whistling of the wind as it swoops in to strike. Only stealthy creatures can hope to navigate these creatures' lands without drawing an attack.

Other mountain and hill monsters include athachs, behirs, bulettes, chimeras, ettins, griffons, hippogriffs, phase spiders, rocs, trolls, and yrthaks.

# CHAPTER SIX

# PLAINS

In a world of thick jungles, towering mountains, and fetid swamps, plains stand out for their unremarkable nature. Little more than flat, open areas perhaps dotted with small stands of trees, the occasional town, and a few regions of low rolling hills, plains can be viewed as the generic, vanilla outdoor terrain. That does not mean that plains must be featureless, empty regions of flat earth. Instead, think of them as an empty stage ready to be adorned with a variety of different effects.

In some ways, the expectations your players may have for empty, featureless plains can work to help make the surprises you have in store for them more effective. When looking over a map of your world, they might assume that the featureless gaps between oceans, mountain ranges, and forests contain nothing of note. In their view, the danger should be safely contained within the borders that surround more exotic terrain features.

On the other hand, the fact that you can add strange traits and effects to your terrains does not mean you have to. If you use too many features in your campaign world, you can end up creating a seemingly chaotic, random, and overly hazardous place. The plains make a good setting for agriculture. The major kingdoms of the world could carve out their

domains in the fertile lands that can support growing civilizations. Over time, any hazardous features could be cleared out. Irrigation canals transform wastelands into fields of grain and orchards. Frequent patrols push monsters back into the shadowy mountains and swamps. Powerful spells and blessings from the gods ward off destructive storms.

The rules and game mechanics in this chapter, including the names, descriptions, and stat blocks of threats and hazards, are designated as **Open Game Content**.

## BASIC PLAINS TRAITS

Unlike the other types of terrain discussed here, plains have no basic traits. The average plain has flat terrain, short grasses, scattered clumps of trees and brush, and the occasionally cluster of hills. You can use weather traits (see Chapter 11) or the advanced traits given here to create unique plains regions.

# ADVANCED PLAINS TRAITS

While plains frequently lack the traits and sites that make other regions memorable, not all of them are fully tamed by civilization. In some areas, plains hold threats every bit as dangerous as a mountain's treacherous pathways and a swamp's devouring quicksand. The advanced traits allow you to customize plains regions. Keep in mind that you can also use these features to make specific areas within a larger plains region more dangerous or exotic than the norm. Even in realms under the control of a monarchy or other government, many areas lie beyond the control of the law.

## BURROWS

Ankhegs and purple worms dig into the ground, forming tunnels that lie only a few feet below the surface. A seemingly verdant, peaceful field could hold unspeakable horrors beneath its placid surface. Plains infested with such creatures receive the burrows trait. This feature describes a region where creatures from the underworld dig through the dirt and rock to attack the surface. Usually, the surface world is too rocky or wet for burrowing creatures to venture into it. In the mountains, the thick rock foils many digging creatures. In swamps and regions that feature heavy rainfall, even the largest purple worm can drown if it carves a tunnel into a lake or a muddy bog. These creatures remain deep within the earth for good reason, as they can learn a region's characteristics and develop hunting grounds that avoid potential trouble spots.

A region of burrows offers two hazards to explorers. First and foremost, creatures that tunnel into the earth are active hunters in the area. The characters could find themselves on the receiving end of an ankheg ambush, or a bulette swarm could surround them while they camp. When you use this trait for a region, you should consider the creature responsible for the many tunnels in the soil. Possible candidates include ankhegs, bulettes, purple worms, and umber hulks. Other creatures might use burrows and tunnels even though they cannot normally dig through the ground without the use

of tools. Ghouls might create a series of passages beneath the dirt to trap their prey, particularly in areas where ancient civilizations and long forgotten necropolises once stood.

In other regions, the tunnels that honeycomb the ground could be the remains of an ancient civilization. Perhaps a great metropolis once covered the region. Though it was destroyed in a magical cataclysm, the sewers, passages, and vaults beneath it still exist. Travelers could tumble into these chambers in areas where wind and rain have worn away the rock and dirt above them. The characters could literally stumble into a dungeon while traveling across the land. In this case, a few, isolated signs of the ancient city could persist. A few tumbled walls, the mighty remnants of the realm's defensive fortifications, might denote its outer borders. Perhaps the people who built the civilization still dwell within the tunnels. Centuries of inbreeding and a lack of sunlight may have turned them into something other than human, with isolation and degeneration combining to transform them into a horrific race of evil humanoids. Who knows what terrors may have been locked away beneath the earth, waiting for a band of curious explorers to unlock them?

When using the burrows trait, you can chart the location of major tunnels, caves, and labyrinths beneath the surface world. To reflect the frequency of passages and their relative distance from the surface, you can vary this trait's level across a single region. In a region infested by purple worms, a few areas might be rife with the monsters and their burrows, while outlying regions might feature a few deep tunnels.

This trait functions as both a general modifier that affects overland travel and a terrain feature that can alter the conditions for a single encounter. On a failed Survival check, the party blunders across a burrow and one of them falls in, taking damage as per a normal fall. Optionally, you can use a failed check as the basis for an attack from below by whatever creatures created or currently infest the tunnels.

**Scattered Burrows (CR 1/3):** Survival check DC 10; 2 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; Random character falls 2d10 ft. into a hidden burrow; Special: If no one in the party is trained in Survival, one PC can make a Wisdom check with a -4 competence penalty.

**Moderate Burrows (CR 1/2):** Survival check DC 15; 2 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; 1d2 random characters fall 4d10 ft. into a hidden burrow; Special: As per the scattered burrows trait.

**Thick Burrows (CR 1):** Survival check DC 20; 2 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; 1d4 random characters fall 6d10 ft. into a hidden burrow; Special: As per the scattered burrows trait.

**Combat Terrain:** In battle, the tunnels and holes that pockmark this area can prove troublesome to PCs who fail to notice them. Monsters burst from the soil, while an unlucky character can fall through the ground. During a battle, you could decide where burrows run beneath the field. When a PC or monster walks over one of these points, they must make a falling check by rolling 1d20 and taking a -1 penalty for every 20 lbs. they weigh, including armor and gear. As a rule of thumb, Small creatures suffer a base -4 penalty, Medium ones -8, Large ones -16, Huge ones -32, and so forth. Creatures with a size less than Small do not need to make a weight test. This check must beat a DC based on the thickness of the earth or the creature or character falls through the surface. The typical DC is 10, with DC 5 for thick, deeper passages, 15 for shallow ones, and 20 for those that are just beneath the surface.

A character that falls into a tunnel drops a total of 4d6 feet, taking falling damage as normal. Clambering out of a tunnel requires a DC 15 Climb check, as the loose soil offers few stable points.

## DUSTBOWL

On some plains, long periods of dry weather combined with over-farming can produce loose, dry soil that a strong wind can pick up and carry great distances. In these regions, the swirling clouds of dirt and dust make it difficult to see. Unprotected travelers choke and cough on the fine particles, making it difficult to journey far without finding shelter. A dustbowl region suffers this fate due to natural processes or perhaps magical or monstrous interference. Air elementals might be drawn to the area, the whirlwinds they form wearing away the topsoil and kicking debris high into the air. A planar gate could cause a persistent, heavy wind to blow across the plains. Regardless of its origin, this terrain trait makes it difficult for travelers to make steady progress in their journey. The high winds and thick dust force even the toughest adventurers to take cover.

In some cases, a dustbowl is little more than a wasteland. Usually, this trait applies to otherwise fertile areas that have endured long periods of drought or a sudden, radical shift in climate. In time, the dust storms may fade and farming can resume. Peasants and other settlers may stream from the area, eager to find more hospitable land. Food and drinkable water might run

short, especially if these conditions have persisted for some time. The party might encounter abandoned farms, ghost towns, and similar signs of happier days. Bandits, looters, and monsters freely roam the area, taking advantage of the lax defenses to seek out any treasures that may have been left behind. Thieves may prey on refugees, robbing them of all their belongings.



The dustbowl trait measures how far the party can see and the danger they face from the thick dust and dirt that clogs the air. At higher levels it can cause an incautious PC to choke to death, while even the weak settings of this trait leave explorers vulnerable to ambushes and similar dangers.

**Minor Dustbowl (CR 1/3):** Fortitude save DC 10; 2 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; 1d4 subdual damage; Special: Characters who have taken cover, such as within a closed tent or a boarded up house, do not suffer this trait's ill effects. Each hour, the characters can see up to 2d100 ft., with any objects beyond that range gaining concealment against attacks. This variable range represents the wind's ebb and flow. With a short range, the wind howls and kicks up tremendous amounts of obscuring dust. When the range is long the air is relatively calm, with ambient haze and minor winds obscuring vision at longer ranges.

**Moderate Dustbowl (CR 1/2):** Fortitude save DC 15; 2 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; 1d6 subdual damage; Special: As per the minor dustbowl, though the range for clear sight equals 1d100 ft.

**Severe Dustbowl (CR 1):** Fortitude save DC 20; 2 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; 1d8 subdual damage; Special: As per the minor dustbowl, though the range for clear sight equals 2d20 ft.

You can vary the trait's rating over time and geography as the winds diminish or strengthen. Rather than pick a strength rating and apply it all across an area, you can select a single general dustbowl type for a region and use the tables below to determine the hourly variations in local conditions. Pick a strength level: minor, moderate, or severe. For every two hours that pass in the game as the PCs travel, roll on the appropriate table to determine the conditions they face.

d%	Minor	Moderate	Severe
1-10	Minor	Minor	Minor
11-20	Minor	Minor	Minor
21-30	Minor	Moderate	Moderate
31-40	Minor	Moderate	Moderate
41-50	Minor	Moderate	Moderate
51-60	Moderate	Moderate	Severe
61-70	Moderate	Moderate	Severe
71-80	Moderate	Moderate	Severe

81-90	Severe	Severe	Severe
91-100	Severe	Severe	Severe

## TOWERING GRASS

In some areas, the grass and other normally small, low weeds and undergrowth attain a prodigious height. In these areas a humanoid must use a sword or machete to hack a path through the thick vegetation. Monsters could lurk no more than 10 or 20 feet away, but the tall, densely packed grass blocks all sight of them. Ruins, passages leading deep within the earth, and other notable features might be visible only from the air.

Towering grass can arise for a number of reasons. A druid who controls an area of plains and uses his magic to tend the area could cause unrestrained growth of otherwise minor plants and grasses. A magical event could infuse the soil with arcane or divine energy, causing many creatures and plants to grow to gigantic sizes. Dire animals are the norm on these plains, while dinosaurs and similar threats walk the land in great herds. Hill giants might take the place of humans, while the few trees are visible from the edge of the horizon. In some cases, simple neglect and natural development could lead to tall grass. In an area free of humanoids and many large animals, the plants could grow taller year after year, especially in a region that enjoys warm weather month after month. In that case, the absence of winter prevents a killing frost from restraining the grass's growth.

Towering grass is rated according to its size. It uses the same scale as creatures, with categories such as Huge, Large, Small, and so forth. The grass is considered to reach about waist-height on a creature whose size matches its rating. If the grass is one or more size categories taller than a creature, it towers just above its head. Shorter grass reaches knee or ankle height, so it is of little concern to larger monsters.

**Travel:** Creatures that must journey into regions of grass with a size greater than their own move at half their normal overland speed. Grass of a size equal to a creature's forces it to move at three-quarters its full speed. This reduction in speed is caused by the time needed to hack down thick areas of grass. Note that the grass is a greater hindrance

in combat because under such stressful conditions characters cannot carefully pick their way through an easy path. Smaller grass has no effect on a creature's progress.

**Combat and Encounters:** It costs +1 square to enter grass with a size greater than or equal to a creature's size. In addition, the grass provides a +1 cover bonus to AC for each square that a creature must fire through if the grass's size is greater than the size of the target or attacking creature. If the grass is the same size as the target or attacking creature, it provides a +1 cover bonus to AC for every two squares a creature must attack through to a maximum of +4. In both cases, count the square that the target creature occupies.

The grass also blocks vision. If a creature is one or more size categories smaller than the grass, it can only be seen within a range of 30 ft., or six squares. Beyond that, the creature has full cover and cannot be seen. A creature gains a +2 circumstance bonus to Hide checks for each square between it and any creatures trying to spot it. Larger creatures gain no such benefits from the grass since they stand above it.

## PLAINS COMBAT TERRAIN

Compared to most other regions, the plains offer a relatively simple, easy setting for a battle. The flat land, clear sight lines, and lack of obstructing trees, bushes, and other hazards combine to remove most difficulties that normally plague adventurers. That does not mean that plains offer few dangers to unwary combatants. Instead, the few hazards present on a plains battlefield are all the more insidious because they are unexpected.

In addition to the terrain features given below, rules for exceptionally tall grass, dust storms, and tunnels dug beneath the plains' surface are given above under advanced plains traits.

### BROKEN GROUND

In some areas, the light grass and flat ground can combine to conceal potholes, openings into gopher burrows, and similar hazards that can trip up a fighter. This terrain feature

indicates that a given square or group of squares is rife with small, overgrown holes and pits. Characters moving through them must be careful to avoid tripping and falling. If you move through one of these areas at greater than half-speed, you must make a Spot check (DC 10) to notice a hole or gully. On a failed check you fall prone in the square with broken ground, ending your movement. If you move through more than one square, increase the Spot DC by 2 per additional broken ground square, and you fall prone in a randomly determined square that you tried to move through. Make one check for a character's entire movement and resolve the results before any attacks of opportunity prompted by movement.

## PLAINS MONSTERS

A wide variety of monsters dwell on the plains, primarily because this terrain supports plenty of fertile land, thick grass, many plants, and large herds of grazing animals. Even a dragon could find enough to eat on the plains without straining the local environment. The primary danger that arises from plains adventures lies in the exposed nature of travel. The characters stand out against the terrain, as there are few places where they can find cover from prying eyes. Gnoll raiders might shadow their footsteps for days, slowly building their numbers from amongst local tribes before swooping in for an attack. While the clear terrain allows the PCs to spot monsters before they can launch an ambush, it also leaves them open to continual attacks. Speed is the characters' most valued ally, especially if the monsters of the region band together to fight them. With the open space of this area, news of battles travels fast. Even a campfire is prone to attract scouts and marauders from miles away, with the light and smoke it sheds serving as a clear beacon to raiding beasts.

Worst of all, in an open area a tribe of monstrous humanoids can bring its numbers to bear against the adventurers. A goblin horde surrounds its victims before closing to attack, denying them an easy escape route and allowing dozens more warriors to attack. Creatures that utilize spells, ranged attacks, and magical abilities can rain fire down upon the party from



many directions. On the plains, the characters are best served by moving fast, doing little to attract attention, and keeping their presence a secret.

If you use the optional rules from Chapter 2 that replace the standard rules for random encounters with Survival checks, you can use these additional rules to reflect the increased danger present in traveling an open plains area. The basic rules include a  $-2$  modifier to the Survival check to avoid wandering monsters. To simulate the increasing danger of travel on the plains, apply an additional  $-1$  penalty per hour that the characters travel. As time passes, they run an increasing risk of encountering creatures that might spot them just over the horizon. At night, remove this penalty—it represents the chance that monsters spot them at a distance. Without the sun shining, most creatures stand little chance to spot the characters. The rules already provide modifiers for lighting a campfire and similar actions.

## ANKHEG

These vicious insectoid predators are the bane of farmlands. Their burrowing can create disastrous sinkholes in the fields, while their penchant for human flesh can destroy small villages. Ankhegs rarely work together, but they have been known to use diabolically effective tactics against humanoid prey. They sometimes burrow holes along roads and paths, lying in wait for a victim to tumble in before pouncing upon them. Ankhegs burrow into cellars, smashing through homes from the inside out to grab victims before they can ready weapons and armor. In some cases they dig into the midst of a village, burrow beneath several buildings to cause their collapse, and pick off victims in the resulting panic and confusion. In terms of the environment, ankhegs can depopulate an area of most herd animals and other herbivores. They attack seemingly for the joy of it, though some sages believe that their aggressive natures are caused by an inherent drive to stake out and defend territory against competing ankhegs. Most experienced landowners rally hunting parties



and roust out these monsters at the first sign of their habitation in an area.

## BLINK DOG

These benevolent, friendly canines are a boon to any wilderness area populated by elves, dwarves, and men. Relentless hunters of evil predators, particularly gnolls, blink dogs travel in large packs that wander across wide regions. In areas these creatures inhabit, monsters, raiders, and other threats are much less common than normal. While they fight all attempts to domesticate them, these intelligent, cunning animals actively work to defend the territories they claim from all threats. They have been known to lead adventuring parties to tombs and dungeons that spawn monstrous raiders, while almost every village has a story that tells of how a blink dog saved a lost child or fought off an orc raiding party. Blink dogs usually hunt elk, deer, and similar animals for food. They only devour their enemies in the face of severe hunger, preferring to leave gnolls and similar monsters for carrion birds.

## COCKATRICE

This monster's almost comical appearance belies its deadly nature. Cockatrices rely on their ability to petrify opponents to run down and defeat a wide variety of prey. Utterly fearless (though some naturalists describe them as stupid) these beasts have been known to charge dragons, heavily armed parties of adventurers, and hill giants with

equal fervor. Luckily for travelers, the stone forms of the cockatrice's victims serve as a convenient clue to its presence. The cockatrice adds nothing to the ecosystem. It is merely an overly aggressive, vicious beast that would gladly depopulate an area through over-hunting if its mindless aggression did not serve to guide it to an early death. In some isolated regions, these twisted beasts have driven away all other life, forcing them to rely on migrating prey or cannibalism.

## DRAGON, GOLD

The benevolent gold dragons serve much the same service to their territories as blink dogs and other good creatures. They see themselves as caretakers burdened with great power and the responsibility to use it wisely. The area that falls under a gold's watch is noteworthy for its tranquility and safety. Soon after a monster appears in the area, the dragon takes action. Of all the draconic species, gold dragons are the most likely to approach nearby settlements with offers of alliance.

Their lawful nature compels them to treat nobles and government agents with respect, though typically a dragon considers itself an independent landowner with the same rights and obligations of any recognized noble. In some areas, these dragons have formed simple monarchies with themselves installed as rulers. Elves, dwarves, and men serve under them, enjoying peace and relative freedom in return for military service and a reasonable tax used to build fortifications and hire guards to patrol the region. While not always recognized by human realms, these lands can become

regional powers in the military, economic, and political arenas.



## GNOLL

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A blight upon the plains they wander, gnolls live to torment other creatures and consider humanoids little more than tasty morsels that require a bit more work than normal to hunt. They travel in large packs, usually scavenging weapons and armor from caravans and settlements they raid. They lack the foresight, planning, and skill to craft their own tools and goods, giving them yet more reason to prey on civilized realms. Amongst their own kind, bullying and cruelty provide the surest way to power. Chieftains lead by browbeating their followers until they face an inevitable rebellion, at which point the chief either consolidates his hold on the tribe or is killed and replaced.

When stalking prey, gnolls are notorious for their cowardice. Experienced caravan guards know to strike at a group of gnolls as soon as they come within sight. Any show of weakness, such as restraining from violence, is a sure invitation for the gnoll war party to grow in number. As word spreads of easy prey, more and more gnolls gather to prepare an attack. Smoke signals, bonfires, and other beacons serve to gather these creatures from across the plains, particularly if a juicy target presents itself. Several gnoll packs might gather for an attack, uniting long enough to defeat their shared enemy before fighting amongst themselves for loot.

## GOBLIN

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The sniveling, scheming goblins use tactics similar to the gnolls. They rely on strength of numbers to overwhelm their enemies and often flee from a battle in which they do not outnumber their opponents. Goblins sometimes form small settlements with crude defensive walls and a ragtag defensive force. They lack the patience and skill to erect their own fortifications, requiring them to utilize ruins, abandoned towns, and villages they have conquered. Despite their cowardice, goblins' greed and curiosity drive them to explore tombs, ruins, and other forgotten sites. Once in a while, a goblin lord uncovers a useful magical item to use against his enemies, but most of the time the poor goblins merely uncover treasure that other, stronger creatures take from them through force.

When goblins are unable to find useful shelter, they dig burrows and tunnels into the ground. In some areas, they unearth large chambers from hills and gullies, sowing the area with observation posts, escape tunnels, and hidden treasure caches. In the face of an attack, the goblins lure intruders into their tunnels, collapse them, and flee through escape routes. Usually, the lower-ranking warriors of the tribe are left behind to delay invaders while the nobility escapes. In terms of the environment, goblins engage in crude farming and rely on hunting for most of their needs. They raid caravans and patrol their lands in search of travelers to rob, but lack the foresight to launch attacks far enough from home to throw off any pursuit.

## GORGON

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The feared gorgon is the scourge of the plains, a powerful hunter that roams far and wide in search of fresh victims. Unlike the reckless, overly aggressive cockatrice, a gorgon is a natural hunter. While vicious in battle, it wanders far and wide over the plains, preventing even experienced rangers from identifying its hunting ground. Usually, natural animals panic and run at the sight of a gorgon, but sometimes these creatures can acclimate a herd to their presence. Gorgons sometimes mingle with herds of cattle, buffalo, and other wild animals, picking off isolated victims while hiding amongst the herd. This deception also hinders efforts to track gorgons, as their signs become lost amongst the rest of the herd. Gorgons usually devour the creatures they petrify, gnawing on them with their thick, grinding teeth. As this process takes some time, they drag their victims off to secluded, isolated locations before feasting on them. This tendency makes it difficult to detect a gorgon's presence through the remains of its petrified victims.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

# WATERWAYS

Water rushes through the forest, carrying sustenance to a distant town and serving as a natural barrier that divides the haunted Mistwood from the realms of the elf king. A great lake sits within a valley high in the mountains. Legend has it that ancient ruins lie at its bottom, though the difficult trails and forbidding pathways leading to it have foiled most attempts to explore its depths. The rivers of the Plains of Fire boil in the ground, killing most mundane creatures but providing a fertile ground for strange fish and fiery beasts. A band of explorers paddles down the rapids, desperately working to avoid the jagged rocks as goblins gather on the riverbanks to pelt them with arrows and spears.

Rivers and lakes are present in almost every environment save for parched deserts and frozen tundra, yet in a way they form their own separate world. While the land that surrounds them can influence their development, they provide a radically different adventuring experience. A raging river or a wide, deep lake can serve as a difficult obstacle for adventuring parties. Without a watercraft, the PCs must make a long detour to find a bridge, ford, or similar crossing. You can use them to form natural barriers to travel, to channel the PCs towards a specific area, or to provide a change of pace that requires the PCs to cope

with a new, radically different environment. After marching through mountain valleys, thick forests, and wide plains, a journey downriver aboard a canoe or crude raft offers an interesting new experience.

This section works a bit differently from the other portions of this book. Rather than focus on creating different types of rivers and lakes, it provides rules for river travel, including navigating difficult areas such as rapids and waterfalls, and gives notes and ideas on running encounters that take place on bodies of water. It does provide several traits and modifiers you can use to create magical and exotic waterways, but it focuses on rivers and lakes more as pathways than as settings for entire adventures.

For extensive rules on sea-borne adventures, ships, and naval combat, consult Fantasy Flight's *Seafarer's Handbook*. A complete set of rules for underwater adventuring, sailing, and shipbuilding is beyond the scope of this book. Instead, this section focuses on rivers and lakes as parts of a wilderness adventure.

The rules and game mechanics in this chapter, including the names, descriptions, and stat blocks of threats and hazards, are designated as **Open Game Content**.

# NAVIGATING RIVERS AND LAKES

The core rules provide many of the basic mechanics for running encounters that take place on the water and keeping track of the party's progress as they travel downriver. This section provides rules for exotic situations and combat on rafts, canoes, and other small craft. It does not provide rules for ship-to-ship combat, but it does provide you enough detail that you could resolve an artillery shot against a boat.

## RIVERS AND STREAMS

The speed of a river's flow is determined by a few factors. The downward slope of the land, the total volume of water flowing through, and the width and depth of the river's channel all combine to determine its speed. Narrow, sloped, and shallow rivers move the fastest, as the tremendous volume of water must move through a small area. Larger, wider rivers move slower. The river speed table gives you some examples to determine how fast a body of water moves.

River	Speed	Swim DC
Wide, flatlands river	10 ft.	10
Typical lowlands river	20 ft.	10
Narrow, jungle/forest river	30 ft.	10
Mountain river	40 ft.	15

Anything floating in a river moves downstream at the river's listed flow speed. Consult the Swim skill description for check DCs. The ones listed in the example river table serve as a guide to how you should set a DC. In all but the most extreme conditions, a DC of 10 or 15 is sufficient. Reserve DC 20 checks for rough water, heavy storms, and rapids. A character who swims in a river automatically moves a distance downstream equal to the river's flow. Enforce this movement at the end of a swimming character's turn unless a PC uses up part of his movement to prevent this. For example, a character who can swim 15 ft. could spend 10

ft. of movement to prevent 10 ft. of downstream movement. If a character spends movement in this manner, subtract the movement he spent from the total distance the river should carry him.

If a river's movement carries a character into an object, he takes damage based on the nature of the object and his speed. Only barriers that could bring a PC to a complete stop can inflict damage, such as rocks, boats, or walls. Otherwise, a character moves through the object. If a PC would move through a creature's threatened area, he suffers attacks of opportunity if the creature gains them while in the water (see aquatic combat, below).

If in the DM's judgment an object is solid enough to cause injury, a PC takes 1d4 points of damage for every 20 ft. of downstream movement, rounded down. Remember to account for any movement a character spent to reduce the distance the river dragged him. Also, use the total speed, not the distance the character moved, to determine damage. For example, a river that flows at a speed of 40 ft. would cause 2d4 points of damage if it swept a character into an obstacle whether his actual, physical movement for the round was less than the full 40 ft. If a PC spent 20 ft. of movement to reduce the downstream movement to 20 ft. for that round, he would take only 1d4 points of damage. When a character strikes an object, his movement ends for the round.

If a character wants to move upstream, he must spend enough movement to cancel out the effects of the river's current. If he still has any movement left, he can then spend it as normal to move up river.

A character adjacent to an anchored or otherwise immobile object can remain in place by making a Strength check with a DC equal to the river's speed divided by 4. If this check fails, the character is swept around the object and downriver. A PC can attempt this Strength check as a free action at any time during his downstream movement, but he can only make one such attempt per round.

## RAPIDS

The fastest rapids send swimmers bobbing downstream at 40 to 90 feet per round. The Swim check DC to navigate these



difficult waters ranges from 15 for rapids with a speed of less than 60 ft. to 20 for anything faster. Use the rules given above for moving characters due to the river's current and damage inflicted by colliding with solid objects.

The primary danger offered by rapids is their great speed. While a character can swim with or against a river, the rapids move at such a fast rate that even skilled swimmers might be pulled beneath the water. Characters swept away by a river moving 40 feet per round or faster must make DC 20 Swim checks every round to avoid going under. Make this skill check at the start of a character's action, before resolving anything else. If a character succeeds at this check, he can take his actions as normal. The rapids sweep him downstream at their movement rate as normal, and a PC could spend his movement to swim against the current.

If this check fails, a PC is swept beneath the surface and must hold his breath. See the Swim skill description for full details. The PC can take only limited actions for the round, as he struggles in the current. The buffeting water prevents all spellcasting and attacks are impossible. A PC can attempt to use a potion or other magical item. He can take one standard or move action per round and must make a DC 15 Swim check to complete the action. If he fails, he does not complete the action but suffers no further penalties. For example, a character who fails to drink a potion can attempt to use it again the following round. The potion is not swept downstream or ripped from his hands. A character cannot use this action to make another Swim check, as his initial failure represented his inability to stay above water.

A character being dragged downstream can receive help from others. A PC who is adjacent to him and has not been swept away or one who can reach him with a pole, branch, or similar aid gives him the opportunity to make a DC 10 Strength check as a standard action. If this check succeeds, the PC is no longer caught below water. If the person who aided him stands on solid ground, on a boat, or in a similar position, the PC can move to safety.

# RIVER ENCOUNTERS

With all the downstream movement and threats that face PCs trapped in a river, waterborne encounters can be difficult to run. If you use a battle mat, many of the combatants might be quickly swept off of it. You can use a scale of one square equals 10 ft. to essentially double the size of your mat, though if you use miniatures this can cause problems with fitting creatures together in the same space. This problem is particularly pronounced for larger creatures that occupy more than one 5-ft. square. Another option is to use a sheet of graph paper to diagram a large section of the river. You can divide your battle mat into several sections, each depicting an area of the river where PCs and monsters fight. Use nickels, pennies, or even stones gathered from the side of the road or your backyard to represent rocks and other hazards. Such markers make it easier to rearrange the battlefield than drawing and erasing notes with the markers you use on your mat.

Use rocks, piers, fords, and other hazards to add some spice to the encounter. An empty, featureless river is merely a pathway that drags the characters along as they fight monsters. Rocky outcroppings force them to move to avoid slamming into obstacles and taking damage. Overhanging trees give a convenient place for smaller characters and monsters to perch over the river and either fish characters out of the water or rain missile fire down upon them. A team of goblins may throw nets into the water to capture PCs, while a gang of bandits could gather on the shore to rain arrows on explorers who travel by raft or canoe. Waterfalls and other terrain features in the rapids (see below) provide some daunting challenges that force the players to alter their plans and adapt to a difficult situation. The best terrain features compel the players to change their tactics and otherwise react to the new situation.

## WATERCRAFT

Canoes, rafts, and other small watercraft serve as convenient tools for adventuring parties. They are small, relatively easy to carry across

dry ground, and provide enough space to accommodate an adventuring party and their gear. These watercraft have a few stats used to determine their utility in battle. They have ACs, hardness, and hit points just like any other inanimate objects. In addition, they provide modifiers to how easily characters can pilot them through the water. Canoes are more maneuverable and stable than rafts, but they can hold less gear.

Piloting a raft or canoe requires one of three checks. A character can choose to make a Strength, Survival, or an appropriate Profession check. For example, Profession (boater) allows a character to guide a raft or canoe. In addition, a character can opt to use Wisdom or Strength to modify either his Survival or Profession check. In this case, an intuitive sense of the river's dangers or raw physical power can serve a character equally well. Up to two characters can aid in this skill or ability test. Any more helpers than that simply get in the way and negate any aid they could offer.

The total result of the skill or ability check is the total movement available to guide a craft. Since canoes are more maneuverable than rafts, they grant a +5 bonus to checks to guide them. Even inexperienced characters can guide a canoe through rapids and other dangers.

Rafts and canoes move in the same manner as swimming characters. The craft's pilot determines how to spend the movement, such as rowing against the current or maneuvering to avoid rocks and other hazards. The river's current carries a craft along in the same way that it drags a swimmer. However, characters piloting a canoe or raft have more control over their direction and speed when moving down a river. The controlling character can save any movement he gained from his check to spend during his craft's compulsory downriver movement. He can use it to move sideways, forward with the current, or diagonally forward at a cost of 1 square of movement. Ignore the standard cost for moving diagonally. He can spend this movement at any point during his craft's movement downstream. Usually, it is a good idea to save movement to avoid rocks and other treacherous spots along a river. This option becomes particularly important when navigating rapids. If during his downstream movement a pilot has the option to move

his craft on to land, he can beach it. Its movement immediately stops.

The following stat blocks represent the typical rafts and canoes that the party might use. The modifiers that apply to them are summarized within each craft's description.

### CANOE

A simple, narrow canoe offers ease of use and maneuverability when moving down a river. In addition, canoes are relatively easy to build. A character with Craft (woodworking) or a similar skill related to creating large, wooden objects can hollow out a log and produce one. In addition, the Survival skill can replace a Craft check, though at a -5 competence penalty. A canoe costs 40 gp to purchase, along with paddles and other tools needed to guide it. Use that listed price to determine how long it takes a PC to craft one.

**Canoe:** Size Large; AC 9; hardness 5; hp 40; passenger capacity of three Medium creatures, four Small or smaller, or two Large; cargo capacity of 400 lbs., with a -2 penalty to any checks made to control a canoe for every additional 50 lbs. Due to their size and shape, canoes offer a +5 bonus to all skill or ability checks made to control them.

### RAFT

A raft is usually capable of carrying much more gear than a canoe, but its flat, awkward construction makes it difficult to control. In rough waters a raft is more likely to capsize and sends its passengers and cargo tumbling into the water. Rafts are also much easier to build. Even an inexperienced outdoorsman can lash together a few logs to build a floating platform. A character with Craft (woodworking) or a similar skill can build a raft so long as he has rope or vines and timber available. A PC can use the Survival skill in place of Craft with a -5 competence modifier. Characters untrained in both Craft and Survival can make a Wisdom check to build a raft, though at a -10 competence modifier. In both cases, the check works just like the Craft skill. A raft costs 10 gp if the party wants to buy one. Use that value as per the Craft skill when a PC tries to build a raft.

**Raft:** Size Huge; AC 8; hardness 5; hp 60; passenger capacity of six Medium creatures, eight Small or smaller, four Large, or one

Huge; cargo capacity of 1,600 lbs., with a -2 penalty to any checks made to control a raft for every additional 50 lbs. Rafts have problems in rough water or when attacked. They impose a -5 competence penalty on all checks made to prevent them from going out of control or capsizing. See river hazards below for more information.

## FIGHTING IN WATER

Combat in an aquatic environment is difficult at best for creatures adapted to life on land. Water is harder to move through than air, throwing off a warrior's timing and rendering many ranged weapons useless. The slower movement makes rogues and other characters who rely on speed for their defense more vulnerable to attack. The following rules are adapted from the core material, though in some cases they have been refined, expanded, or altered. These rules assume that you are familiar with the basic rules for fighting underwater.

### ATTACKS FROM LAND

Water provides little cover against most attacks since sword blows and arrows can easily push right through it. However, it does grant a creature concealment. Normally, concealment represents the difficulty inherent in seeing a target. Water works much the same way. It does not make a creature any more difficult to hit, but it does obscure part of its form. Creatures that are at least half submerged in water gain a 30% miss chance against attacks due to concealment. (Note: In the core rules, water gives cover. However, this gives a tremendous advantage to aquatic creatures that merely stand on a beach and attack land dwellers. Granting them concealment can better reflect water's ability to conceal a target's location without physically preventing attacks.)

### ATTACKING WATERCRAFT

Rafts and canoes function just like any other inanimate objects. Attacks against them must inflict enough damage to overcome their hardness ratings. A craft reduced to 0 or fewer hit points immediately falls apart and sinks. Characters riding on it must make Swim checks as normal as they fall into the water, while any cargo either floats or sinks as appropriate.

## CAPSIZING WATERCRAFT

A creature can attempt to tip over a canoe, raft, or other small watercraft. This attack requires a Strength check from the attacking creature that draws an attack of opportunity. The creature must be adjacent to the craft in order to use this attack. It cannot rely on reach. The controller's Survival, Strength, or Profession check (as appropriate) opposes this Strength check. The attacking creature gains a +4 bonus for each size category it has above the target vessel. If the creature is smaller than the boat, it suffers a -4 penalty for each category below the target. If the creature is able to attack from below, such as by submerging and swimming beneath the craft, it gains a +4 competence bonus to its check.

If the attacking creature succeeds, the raft or canoe tumbles over. Each character within the craft is dumped into the water in a square adjacent to the craft along with any loose cargo. The attacking creature (the DM in most cases) may place the passengers as he wishes. Characters who are tied down to the craft remain attached to it. There is a 50% chance that the craft ends up overturned. Otherwise, its passengers and gear fall off but the craft returns to its upright position. Flipping an overturned

raft or canoe requires a DC 15 Strength check if the craft and those attempting to right it are still in the water. Otherwise, the DC is 5.

Characters who end up in the water must make Swim checks as normal. Any gear and equipment either floats along with the current or sinks to the bottom, as appropriate.

# RIVER TERRAIN FEATURES

The following mundane terrain features all serve to introduce variety to a river or other waterway. You can use them to construct dangerous areas that the characters must navigate, forcing them to dart between sharp rocks or risk tumbling into the water and losing their equipment.

## ICE

Full rules and ideas for using ice in an encounter are given in the chapter on the arctic environment. In addition to the material presented there, ice presents a unique threat to par-







ties that travel by water. It counts as an obstacle that inflicts damage on anything that crashes into it. In addition, it provides a convenient hiding place for cold-water aquatic creatures. Monsters can lurk beneath the ice and swim out to attack characters that swim or float by.

## RAPIDS

No river maintains the same flow throughout its entire length. A broad, slow river can turn into a roaring torrent when it reaches rocky terrain that forces it into a narrow channel. The party might grow complacent as they float down a river, giving you an opportunity to throw an unexpected stretch of rapids at them.

An area of rapids presents a threat not only because of the speed of the water flow, but because of the frequent, sudden dips in the river and the many rocks and other obstacles. In this difficult terrain, there is a chance that the characters could lose control of any rafts or canoes they use. Swimming characters proceed as normal.

At the beginning of each round, the character guiding a raft or canoe must make a Strength, Survival, or Profession check (player's choice) to maintain control of his boat. The DC for this check is 10 for simple rapids, 15 for difficult ones, and 20 for severe rapids. If this check fails, the character cannot handle his boat for that round. The craft counts as out of control. It moves directly with the river's current and collides with any obstacles in its path. Rafts are unstable and difficult to handle, granting a -5 penalty to this check.

In addition, the swirling water makes collisions more dangerous in the rapids. The swift current could overwhelm a boat and swamp it. When a craft collides with an object and takes damage, even if its hardness absorbs it, the character guiding the craft must make a Strength, Survival, or Profession check with a DC of 15 for simple rapids, 20 for difficult rapids, or 25 for severe rapids. If this check fails, the craft capsizes. See capsizing watercraft above under combat for more information.

## ROCKS

Sharp, jagged rocks serve as dangerous obstacles for the party's raft or canoe, while any PCs who tumble into the water could be battered into unconsciousness as they slam into them. Bandits and other monsters could use a series of rocks to take up a position in the midst of a river, allowing them to leap upon passing rafts or use ranged attacks against river travelers. Try to place rocks so that the party must make Survival, Profession, or Strength checks to guide their boat to safety. Remember that the party must score a total result of at least 5 to move their boat one square to the right or left to maneuver around an obstacle. As you can see, placing several rocks next to each other requires a higher total result to dodge them. On average, the party should need to beat a DC of 15 to safely maneuver through a dangerous area, though checks of 20, 25, and even 30 make sense for perilous stretches of water. A single failure does not doom the party, as their craft can probably afford to take several hits before it starts to break apart.

## SUNKEN DEBRIS/SANDBAR

In some areas, the river's water level is much lower than normal. Rock formations, debris, and other barriers can lurk just below the sur-

face. Creatures that attempt to enter a sandbar or area choked with debris count as having collided with it if they are aboard a boat. Otherwise, they can swim or walk over it. Sunken debris is difficult to spot. A character must make a Spot check (DC 10) as a standard action to notice submerged hazards. If a character moves within 20 ft. of sunken debris, he can automatically make a Spot check as a free action (DC 20) to notice it.

## WATERFALL

In mountainous regions, waterfalls pose a threat to anyone who travels down an unexplored river. Luckily, experienced outdoorsmen can note this hazard's presence before it threatens the party. When the group comes within 400 ft. of a waterfall, each member of the party can make a Survival (DC 15) or a Listen (DC 20) check to hear the waterfall or notice the change in the river's flow. Decrease the DC for these checks by 2 for every 100 ft. the party moves closer to the waterfall. Obviously, when the party comes within sight of the waterfall they no longer need skill checks to notice it.

The water around a set of falls moves slightly faster. Increase its speed by 10 ft. within 400 ft. of the falls and by 20 ft. within the final 100 ft. This heightened flow makes the falls more dangerous, as the PCs might have to paddle furiously in order to reach shore or some other safe spot.

If the characters go over the falls, treat this as a normal fall into water. Consult the core rules for complete rules for resolving damage and the effects of landing in water.

The character guiding the party's craft can attempt to maintain control of it as it goes over the fall. He must make a Strength, Survival, or Profession skill check (player's choice) with a DC equal to the distance fallen in feet. If this check succeeds, the craft lands right side up and its cargo remains in place. Anyone aboard the craft avoids falling in the water, counts as landing in water for purposes of falling damage, and takes only half damage from the fall. Otherwise, its cargo and passengers fall into the water (unless they were tied down) and there is a 50% chance that it overturns in the water. The craft suffers damage for the fall as normal in either case.

## WEEDS

Some waterways are choked with aquatic vegetation. These areas offer some comfort to characters swept away by a strong current but they can be trouble for rafts and boats. If a creature moves through an area choked with weeds, it can use a standard action to grab hold of them. The creature can make a Strength check (DC 10) to avoid any compulsory movement due to the current. Even if this check fails, the creature or character moves only half the normal distance due to the current. Watercraft that move through weeds can become caught in them and have difficulty maneuvering. If the DM rules that the weeds are thick enough to hinder a boat's movement, it costs two squares of movement (10 ft.) to enter the weed-choked square. This movement is paid from either the movement available to the pilot or from the current, as appropriate. Immediately after a craft leaves a square with hindering weeds in it, its pilot must pay double the standard movement cost for any maneuvers he attempts. For example, if the character guiding a canoe wants to move it 5 ft. to the right, he must have 10 ft. of movement available to use.

## WHIRLPOOL

A whirlpool can form in any area where a narrow hole or channel in a river's bed drags water downward. Perhaps an ancient cavern opened beneath a river, giving the PCs a chance to delve into a flooded cave in search of treasure. A gateway to the elemental planes could suck water through to another world, possibly dragging along any travelers unlucky enough to fall into it.

To design a whirlpool, you must first determine its size and speed. A whirlpool can range from the width of a river to a small area at its center. Usually, it is best to give the party some space to maneuver around a whirlpool unless you plan on their falling through to another realm. A whirlpool's speed determines how fast water flows into it. Increase the river's flow around the whirlpool by 10 ft. for small or minor whirlpools, 20 ft. for moderate ones, 30 ft. for major ones, and 40 ft. for intense whirlpools. The water flows at this speed within the whirlpool and at a distance equal to four times its width upstream. The water's speed returns to normal downstream beyond the whirlpool's reach, though the

water level might be lower due to drainage caused by the pool. Intense whirlpools might drag all of the river's flow down into the earth, ending the river in a muddy, empty channel.

Swimmers and boats move as normal through a whirlpool, though the current drags them towards its center. When the whirlpool catches an object, it drags it along a spiral from its outer edges to its central point. The current whips a swimmer or a boat along its outer edge. Once the object has completed its first circuit, it moves 1d4 squares down the whirlpool and makes another lap. Continue this process until the whirlpool sucks the object into its central opening.

Objects move within the whirlpool at their normal rates as per the speed of the current within the pool. Escaping a whirlpool is no easy task. A swimmer cannot move against the flow, nor can a boat maneuver within it. A Swim check (for characters caught in the water) or a Survival, Profession, or Strength check (for those in boats) with a DC of 25 allows a character to slip one square towards the whirlpool's edge. For every 5 by which the check beats the DC, the character can move an additional square towards the edge. This check counts as a full-round action.

Characters caught in a whirlpool automatically count as dragged under by rapids (see above). They may make a Swim check (DC 20) to take any actions in the water. A character can always attempt to swim to safety even if this check fails, though that is the only action he can take.

## ADVANCED RIVER TRAITS

In addition to the mundane features found on rivers, the magical nature of most fantasy campaign worlds allows for a wide variety of unique effects, sites, and events. The advanced river traits focus on the magical abilities that some rivers possess. It also provides rules for creating rivers of strange substances, such as molten lava.

## ELEMENTAL WATER

These incredibly rare lakes and rivers consist of pure, unadulterated water drawn from the elemental planes. This water exhibits several unique traits that separate it from the mundane water found in terrestrial ponds and streams. A light aura of magic surrounds it, and any caster using *detect magic* or a similar spell to analyze it notes a faint display of alteration magic around it.

Elemental water is always crystal clear. Creatures looking into it can see directly to the bottom or surface of a river or lake, though distance can obscure details. The water is especially invigorating. It allows a creature to sustain itself on half the normal required volume when compared to mundane water.

Lighter and more buoyant than regular water, elemental water flows faster than other rivers. Increase its speed by 20 ft. compared to a normal river with the same physical characteristics and geography. In addition, moving through elemental water is easier. Swimming creatures need much less effort to push themselves through it, while vessels move with superior speed and agility. All Swim checks and Strength, Survival, and Profession checks made to guide a boat gain a +5 circumstance bonus.

The elemental aura that surrounds large bodies of this water foils spells that deliver fire damage and can dampen mundane flames. All creatures within 40 ft. of an open body of elemental water gain fire resistance 5, while creatures standing within it gain fire resistance 10. This modifier applies only to large bodies of water, such as rivers and lakes. Small concentrations, such as a tub full, are too small to exert this effect. The aquatic versions of fire spells do not function within elemental water. Instead, this fluid breaks the line of effect for any fire spell as long as it exists in large volumes.

Elemental water invariably springs from a portal to the planes. Tojanidas, water elementals, and even aquatic demons and devils infest these regions. While the physical conditions may make travel easier, the many planar creatures lurking within the water can destroy watercraft or drag swimmers to their doom. When using a body of elemental water, be sure to include more encounters with outsiders and elementals to reflect this increased danger.



## LAVA RIVER

A sustained torrent of molten rock can develop in areas wracked with frequent earthquakes, fiery wastelands infused with energy from the plane of fire, and other regions torn by magical and natural disasters. These rivers can kill most creatures that fall into them, requiring either magical protection or special vehicles designed to withstand the intense heat. Volcanic lands are described under the wasteland and mountains chapter.

A river of lava rarely flows for long unless magical forces or intense geothermal activity allow it to persist. Usually, the lava cools into a long, flat, smooth pathway of volcanic rock. The characters could encounter this terrain feature in the aftermath of an eruption or in a region with a strong affinity for elemental fire.

Obviously, lava is far more dangerous than water. The following rules are summarized from the section on wastelands. Falling into lava is almost instantly fatal. The melted rock sears flesh and melts all but the hardest metals.

Partial exposure is less deadly, but can still overwhelm a low-level character or an injured hero. Characters exposed to lava suffer 2d6 points of fire damage (no save). Those exposed to more than knee-deep molten rock suffer 8d6 points of damage. Those exposed to waist-deep magma endure 14d6 points of damage, while those exposed to even higher levels take 20d6 points of fire damage. Characters suffer this damage for each round of exposure.

The shock and heat of lava exposure continues to injure a character even after he escapes the molten rock. He suffers half damage from the hazard for 1d3 rounds after he escapes it. If a character moves from deeper to shallow magma or vice versa, he suffers damage from the more dangerous of the two threats. For example, a character wades into waist-deep lava. He takes 14d6 points of damage. If he immediately escapes, he takes 7d6 points of damage for 1d3 rounds. If he instead moves to knee-deep lava, he suffers 8d6 points of damage. If the character moved to shallow magma, he would take 7d6 points of damage because that is more than the 2d6 he would normally take from minor lava exposure.

If a creature is immune to fire or can otherwise survive exposure to molten rock, treat it just like water with a few exceptions. Lava is thicker and denser than water, making it harder to move through. All Swim checks to move through it and all Strength, Survival, and Profession checks made to navigate a craft in it suffer a  $-5$  circumstance penalty.

Most craft designed for use in lava have fully enclosed cabins. Use the standard rules for maneuvering through water with the additional modifiers given above. Listed below is a sample vehicle that explorers frequently use to plumb the depths of lava vents and other areas of molten rock.

### FLAMERUNNER

This spherical craft uses a set of paddles, simple jets, and rudders to make its way through liquid rock. The runner's construction allows it to fully submerge within lava, while the variety of propulsion systems installed around its hull gives it the ability to move up, down, and sideways through liquid with equal ease.

**Flamerunner:** Size Huge; AC 8; hardness 10; hp 200; passenger capacity of six Medium creatures, twelve Small or smaller, or three Large; cargo capacity of 800 lbs., with a  $-2$  penalty to any checks made to control a canoe for every additional 50 lbs. Flamerunners can move up and down through lava at no penalty. The pilot can opt to use the movement he gains through his skill check to make vertical maneuvers. The runner is immune to fire damage and it shields its passengers from all attacks. If reduced to zero hit points, its hull crumples and any creatures inside are immediately engulfed in lava. The flamerunner's magical properties draw on the heat and energy of the lava it moves through, rendering it inoperable in other mediums. Flamerunners cost 18,000 gp and require the Craft Wondrous Items feat and a 10th-level caster to complete.

### MUD RIVER

Thick, viscous mud slowly flows through the land, leaving behind only isolated rocky islands. Elemental forces, particularly the interaction of earth and water, can produce these sludge flows. Usually, a mud river rolls down from an upper mountain location and channels down to the sea. Over time, it forms an increasingly large delta where it empties.

These rivers rarely remain in place for more than a few decades. The magical forces that produce them eventually wane, leaving behind either a dry, rocky channel through the land or a normal waterway.

Mud rivers are fraught with a variety of dangers. Treat them as water with the following changes. Mud flows much slower than water, halving the speeds given for normal rivers above. Swimming in a mud river is much more difficult than normal, but the thick mud allows a creature to partially walk. All Swim checks suffer a  $-5$  competence penalty. Moving a vehicle through the mire is much more difficult than navigating one through water. All Strength, Survival, or Profession skill checks made to guide a watercraft suffer a  $-5$  competence penalty.

Drowning in mud works the same way as water, but escaping is much more difficult. The thick, heavy mud weighs down anyone trapped within it. Any character who fails a Swim check while in mud immediately counts as having gone under. A trapped PC must make a DC 25 Swim check at the beginning of his action. If this check fails, he can move only with the mud current. Otherwise, he can act as normal.

A creature with a burrowing movement speed can use it to move through mud as normal. The burrowing creature ignores the effects of the current and can move upstream with ease. For shallow areas, consult the mire trait in the chapter on swamps.

Unlike water, mud gives a creature cover rather than concealment. A creature that is at least half-buried in mud gains cover against all attacks.

Earth elementals and burrowing creatures sometimes dwell within mud rivers, lurking within them to attack creatures that pass by. Ruins, old caves, and other sites can be hidden within the muck. Since it effectively blocks all sight, mud can hide lost objects and even entire small towns for centuries before explorers uncover them. An entire dungeon could be flooded with mud, requiring special magical aid to reach the few areas that are free of its influence. Alternatively, a mud river could eventually dry up. As its level runs lower, ruins, forgotten towers, and other adventure sites could rise from the riverbed.

# RIVER MONSTERS

Fighting on the water is doubly threatening to most characters. Not only can monsters use their attacks and special abilities against them, but PCs with poor Swim skills or heavy armor must avoid tumbling into the water and drowning.

Unlike the other environments, sometimes the best monsters you can throw at the characters are ones not normally found in or near a river. Flying creatures, humanoids, and monsters with magical abilities all make ideal selections for watery encounters.

A flying creature's maneuverability allows it to attack from above. If the PCs are aboard a raft or canoe, they cannot easily escape such an attack without beaching their craft and running for cover. This advice applies doubly to creatures with breath weapons and other area attacks. Normally, veteran players try to position their characters to avoid exposing the entire party to an effect. On the river, the party has a lot more difficulty scattering, especially if a strong current and obstacles force them to maneuver.

Humanoid attackers can take advantage of beaches, bridges, and the obstacles in a river to set up an ambush. A gang of bandits might drop rocks on boats that drift below a bridge they control. A second team sets up on the beach or on rafts downstream from the bridge, ready to prey on adventurers clinging to the wreckage of their canoes.

The key to designing challenging river encounters lies in negating the disadvantages this environment offers for the monsters while maintaining them for the characters. This idea does not mean that you simply disallow abilities such as *water breathing* or *freedom of movement*. Instead, design terrain and settings that allow the monsters to maximize their abilities. Set up dry land where creatures can stand and use their ranged attacks and spells. Use an aquatic creature's Hide skill, or allow it to swim near the riverbed, to spring upon the party from below. In addition, creatures that

can survive in the water usually try to drag their opponents into the river. Remember to use the aquatic combat rules from the core rules. Creatures that are native to a watery environment enjoy a variety of advantages over most characters.

This section lists a variety of non-aquatic monsters that make for good opponents in river-based encounters. Most aquatic creatures follow the same basic patterns. They exist as the most important predators in an area, usually supplementing their diets of fish with victims who wander too close to shore.

## ASSASSIN VINE

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These dangerous plants sometimes take root near rivers and streams. Using their reach, they can grab characters who swim or float by, perhaps dragging them into a watery grave.

## SPIDERS

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With their clinging webs and climbing ability, spiders can wreak havoc with against a party that travels by river. The arachnids can lurk beneath bridges or on cliffs or trees that overlook the river. With their webs, they can attempt to pluck characters off their rafts or even drop down on a craft to attack

## UNDEAD

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Zombies, skeletons, and other creatures no longer need to breathe. Thus, a necromancer could hide his followers within a lake or river. When he needs them, he can call them forth. The PCs could find their raft overrun with ghouls who swim out to attack them, while a clever wight might cling to the bottom of the party's raft for a day or more, emerging at night to raid their camp before returning to its hiding spot.

# CHAPTER EIGHT

# SWAMPS

Mosquitoes, horseflies, and worse things buzz through the air in thick clouds. Sickly trees draped with moss and rot cluster amongst the muddy, murky waters. Weeds and long grass sprout from the water, hindering movement and disguising the quicksand and deep, muddy pools that form throughout the area. Swamps are amongst the most difficult areas to traverse. Most wise travelers give them a wide berth, preferring the vagaries of forests, mountains, and other vistas over the sinister, vermin-infested swamps of the land.

Marshes and fens have long held a sinister reputation, and for good reason. Evil creatures flourish in the swamps, as civilization's long reach always seems to fall short when it extends into these lands. The water, disease, and insects all conspire to prevent any attempts to settle the area. Short of draining a swamp and razing the sickly plants that remain, swampland is largely useless for civilized realms. Criminals, outcasts, and other undesirables can find a safe haven in the marsh—if they can avoid the trolls, hags, and other horrors that lurk within it.

Many swamps are basically flooded forests, and you can use the forest chapter to add traits to your marshlands. Swamps usually feature thick plant growth, as the ample water pro-

vides nutrients and sustenance for a variety of weeds, grasses, fungi, and trees. For similar reasons, flies, rats, and other vermin flourish within swamps. The diseases common to swamps are sometimes spawned by evil magic in the area, but usually they find their origin in the thick population of creatures with a natural tendency to carry and transmit diseases.

The rules and game mechanics in this chapter, including the names, descriptions, and stat blocks of threats and hazards, are designated as **Open Game Content**.

## BASIC SWAMP TRAITS

All swamps share a few basic traits in common. Flooding determines how deep the water is in various areas. It affects how easily a band of adventurers can move through the swamp and comes into play during any battles fought within it. Vermin measures the density of mosquitoes, gnats, rats, snakes, and other troubling creatures in the area. They make it difficult for characters to sleep restfully at night and increase the chance that the party faces expo-

sure to diseases and illness. Disease measures the different strains of illness the party can face. It determines how frequently the characters must check to see if they have been exposed to an illness. Some swamps have parasites and other dangers in their waters, forcing travelers to carry all the food and water they need. Finally, the mire trait describes how frequently the party may face quicksand and deep mud that could suck them down into the water.

Unlike most other terrain types, a swamp does not have to have a rating in all of the basic traits listed for it. When picking out traits, you can choose to assign what amounts to a zero rating in disease and vermin. You can also choose to use flood or mire but not both. Those options are given under the traits' descriptions.

## DISEASE

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Swamps have a well-earned reputation for breeding disease. The waters that run through them are thick with dirt, rotting plant life, insects, and deadly microbes. Drinking the water leads to stomach pains and nausea, while the most inviting berries and fruits are riddled with worms and other foul vermin. Only a desperate or foolish traveler enters a swamp without plenty of potable water and fresh food. Even with such precautions, a simple insect bite can lead to a debilitating illness.

This trait measures the strength and effects of the diseases the characters face while traveling through swampy terrain. You can replace the hazards presented here with diseases specific to your campaign. Rather than present an exhaustive list of the contagions present in swamps, the hazards use a generic disease.

*Disease-free* swamps are wetlands and fens that do not harbor any specific ailments. Most swamps near civilized lands feature this level of the disease trait.

*Light disease* is common to most swamps that are infested with relatively low populations of disease-bearing vermin. The sicknesses that persist rarely spread beyond the swamp's borders, while most travelers can pass through the swamp for a day or so without risk of exposure. Settlers could slowly build up immunity to the common illnesses, as they are fatal only in the sickly or if left untreated for extended periods of time.

**Light Disease (CR 1/2):** Fortitude save DC 5; 2 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; Special: On a failed save, a character contracts a minor disease from a bug bite, a parasite in the water, or a similar exposure. This disease has an incubation period of 1d3 days and a Fortitude save DC 10 to resist it, and it inflicts 1d3 Con damage.

*Moderate disease* indicates that the area is a common breeding ground for contagions and plagues. The cities and towns near the swamp must remain vigilant against outbreaks, and travel to and from the region might be severely limited. Rats and flies carry a variety of illnesses, while merely wading through the water invites a parasite, tapeworm, or similar infection.

**Moderate Disease (CR 1):** Fortitude save DC 10; 2 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; Special: As per the light disease threat, except that this illness has an incubation period of 1d3 days and a Fortitude save of DC 15, and it inflicts 1d3 Con damage.

*Severe disease* applies to regions where few travelers can wander without contracting a severe illness. The undead, usually ghouls, ghosts, and zombies of those who succumbed and died before they could reach civilization, are sometimes common in these regions. The trees are warped, twisted, and blighted, while even the rats and flies appear sickly under close inspection.

**Severe Disease (CR 2):** Fortitude save DC 15; 1 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; Special: As per the light disease threat, except that this illness has an incubation period of 1 day and a Fortitude save of DC 20, and it inflicts 1d6 Con damage.

## FLOODING

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The swamp waters run deep in many areas, forcing travelers to rely on skiffs, canoes, and rafts to travel across them. Falling into these stagnant waters invites attacks by alligators, chuuls, and other swamp predators. In other regions, the water reaches no higher than waist level on a human. While uncomfortable to walk through, these marshes can be traversed on foot. Finally, some portions of a swamp are higher and drier than their surroundings. These areas are wet and muddy but easily traveled by anyone with a pair of stout boots.





The flooding trait determines how easily a party can travel across a swamp. Areas with deep water are impossible to cross on foot, though a group with access to rafts can make their way across them with relative ease. In addition to using the flooding trait for an entire region, you can use it as terrain in tactical combat. Portions of an encounter area might have light flooding, while others feature moderate or heavy flooding levels.

*Light flooding* areas are mostly dry. Pools of water, ponds, and small streams are common, but for the most part the ground is muddy but solid. In some areas, patches of deep mud and quicksand might threaten to engulf explorers. Travel is difficult owing to the mud and the frequent detours caused by ponds and pockets of deep water. Characters move at half their daily overland movement rate. In combat, it costs 2 squares to move 1 square in this terrain.

*Moderate flooding* indicates that the water reaches depths of up to 2 or 3 ft. over much of the area. Since the water is mostly stagnant, parties of adventurers can move through the area on foot at a snaillike pace. Submerged

threats such as alligators, aquatic monsters, and pits pose a constant danger. Creatures submerged beneath the water are impossible to see at ranges of less than 30 ft., and within that distance they gain a +4 circumstance bonus to Hide checks.

*Heavy flooding* submerges the entire swamp-lands beneath water that reaches over a Medium creature's head. Even Large monsters must take care when crossing these areas, as they could fall into a gully or sinkhole and drown. Creatures larger than Medium size count this terrain as moderate flooding. Otherwise, travelers must use rafts and similar watercraft to navigate this area.

	Land Movement	Water Movement
Light	x1/2 or 2 squares	—
Moderate	x1/2 or 3 squares	x1/2
Heavy	—	x1

## MIRE

Thick mud clogs the area, making it difficult for travelers to keep their footing. Boots and

walking sticks can plunge into the muck, perhaps leaving a traveler short a critical piece of equipment. Monsters can lurk in the mud, rising up to attack with surprise. Wagons, carts, and other vehicles are typically useless in this terrain. They bog down in the muck as their wheels sink into the mire.

Mire slows down travelers in much the same way as the flooding trait, though you cannot have both mire and flooding in the same area. Generally, this trait applies to areas with light flooding or to drier swamp areas. While the water is not deep enough to engulf the area, it does turn the ground into a morass of sludge and mud. If you combine the two traits, apply the overland movement modifier from one trait or the other, not both. The two factors do not combine their movement modifiers for long-distance travel.

You can use this trait to describe an entire region or, like the flooding trait, you can apply it to encounter areas. The swamp as a whole might lack mire or flooding, but individual encounter areas or small patches within it can feature either or both in combination. You can use these traits in combination on a tactical scale. In that case, the mud beneath the water is exceptionally viscous and thick. See the swamp combat terrain section below for rules on quicksand, deep mud, and similar hazards. The rules given here cover mire's effects on overland movement, not how you can use the trait in encounters.

*Light mire* features a layer of mud deep enough that a human can sink down to a few inches above his ankles. Travelers must proceed slowly to avoid slipping and falling, while wagons and carts frequently slide from a pathway or become stuck in the muck. Under these conditions, travelers proceed slower than normal if they have any sort of wheeled vehicle with them. Otherwise, they can proceed as normal.

*Moderate mire* is the equivalent of knee-deep mud. Travelers can proceed at a slow pace through the muck, as they must choose their steps carefully and stop frequently to recover trapped boots and similar items. Carts can make their way through this mess at a snail's pace. Wagon wheels frequently become bogged down in the mud, requiring a difficult effort to free them.

*Thick mire* represents mud that can reach up to waist-deep in some areas. Travel on foot is difficult at best, requiring hours of intense effort to travel only a few miles. Carts and wagons cannot penetrate this terrain. They quickly become bogged down and unable to move. Even with a concerted effort to free them from the muck, they become trapped again in a matter of minutes.

	<b>Land Movement</b>	<b>Cart/Wagon Movement</b>
<b>Mire</b>		
Light	x1	x1/2
Moderate	x1/2	x1/4
Thick	x1/4	—

## VERMIN

Bugs crawl between the gaps in a warrior's armor, stinging his flesh and causing him to itch at exactly the wrong moment during a battle. Clouds of gnats swarm around a wizard, disrupting his ability to see and distracting him just as a troll lumbers from behind a nearby tree. Rats burrow into the characters' supplies, ruining the food and water they carefully loaded on to their pack mule. In the swamp, vermin are a constant threat. At best, they are a vexing nuisance. At worst, they can disrupt a character's concentration during a moment of stress. In any case, they are a continual thorn in a traveler's side, a problem that must be endured rather than solved.

The vermin trait describes the frequency of flies, rats, and other pests. A high rating indicates that large swarms of vermin move through the area, harrying travelers and posing a serious threat to anyone hoping to move through the swamp in peace. At lower levels, isolated swarms of insects and hordes of rats exist in the swamp but they are easier to avoid. Vermin can distract characters, causing a penalty to skill checks and attack rolls. In extreme cases vermin can drain the characters strength.

Creatures native to a swamp ignore the vermin trait. Their years of living within the marshes have rendered them immune to the pests. Their skin grows thicker, they become immune to their bites, they exude odors or chemicals that vermin avoid, or they simply learn to ignore the pests.

You may decide that the swamp lacks any appreciable level of vermin. Perhaps the

area was drained to make it difficult for large numbers of insects to spawn in its waters, or the efforts of a druid have curbed the disease-bearing creatures' populations. In any case, you do not have to assign a strength level to vermin if you do not want to. In addition, you can set different strength levels based on the season and even the time of day. Perhaps by night large swarms of insects fill the sky, but during the day they are absent. In the depths of winter, the killing freeze may cut vermin down to a fraction of their population, but during the summer months the place buzzes with activity.

*Light vermin* indicates that large swarms of rats and bugs are rare but present within the swamp. Flies and mosquitoes are common, but most adventurers can shrug off the distraction with little trouble. The insects rarely gather in massive clouds, while rats move in small groups rather than large packs.

**Light Vermin (CR 1/4):** Fortitude save DC 10; 1 hour interval; -1 penalty/interval; -1 competence penalty to attacks, checks, and saves; Special: Note that as a competence penalty, this hazard does not stack with successive failures. Characters can remove this penalty with a hot bath and change of clothes.

*Moderate vermin* consists of thick swarms of rats and insects that crawl over the swamp and fill its dense, stagnant air. Most travelers cannot help but become distracted by these pests, as they burrow into armor, bedrolls, and other warm, dry places for comfort. Many of them bite, leaving behind itchy, red welts or scabby lesions.

**Moderate Vermin (CR 1/3):** Fortitude save DC 15; 1 hour interval; -1 penalty/interval; -1 competence penalty to attacks, checks, and saves; Special: As per light vermin. In addition, any character who fails a save has a 10% chance to lose a day's worth of rations if he carries any in a mundane sack or backpack. Maggots, worms, and other pests crawl into the food and partially devour it, rendering the rations unfit for human consumption. Magical containers, such as a *bag of holding*, hold the insects at bay.

*Heavy vermin* consists of clouds of insects so thick that they can briefly blot out the sun. Rats run rampant through the area, stripping the flesh from corpses in a matter of hours. Few

organic items brought into the swamp emerge without signs of insects at least attempting to bore into and devour them. Travelers must rely on magical spells or enchanted containers to keep their food safe. Otherwise, the many insects in the swamp devour their supplies and leave what remains wholly unfit for consumption.

**Heavy Vermin (CR 1/2):** Fortitude save DC 20; 1 hour interval; -1 penalty/interval; -1 competence penalty to attacks, checks, and saves; Special: As per light vermin. In addition, any character who fails a save has a 50% chance to lose a day's worth of rations if he carries any in a mundane sack or backpack. Maggots, worms, and other pests crawl into the food and partially devour it, rendering the rations unfit for human consumption. Magical containers, such as a *bag of holding*, hold the insects at bay.

## ADVANCED SWAMP TRAITS

In addition to the basic traits that apply to most swamps, the advanced traits allow you to add a touch of magic and fantasy to marshlands. The traits listed in this section draw on magical effects to give swamps a more sinister, threatening feel. Some of them rely on magic, while others exaggerate or lend a more threatening punch to mundane phenomena.

### Mist

A thick fog drifts from the swamp's murky waters, obscuring vision and granting the terrain a ghostly haze. Trees in the distance appear as inky shadows against the white wisps of fog. The shriek of a marsh bird echoes through the air, muffled and distorted. Terrible monsters could lurk within a few feet of a traveler, but with the mist obscuring his sight he might never notice them until it is too late.

Misty swamps present a subtle danger to travelers. In some cases, they contain the same poisons and diseases that infest the swamp's water and soil. Other times, they display strange magical effects that can cause even an experienced ranger to lose his bearings or alter the fabric of magic.

**Obscuring Mist:** The thick fog blocks sight and muffles sound, making it difficult for even sharp-eared elves or wary rangers to detect enemies until they are upon them. By the same token, monsters can blunder through the swamp, oblivious to an adventuring party's presence. Obscuring mist takes the form of thick, billowy clouds of fog that rise from the swamp's water. It could arise due to weather conditions, or a magical effect might produce the mist. Optionally, you can decide that this trait comes into play during specific times of year or during a limited number of hours during the day or night. A haunted swamp could appear normal by day, but once the sun slides beneath the horizon it belches forth a thick cloud of mist to hide the ghouls, wights, and ghosts that caper within its waters.

**Light Obscuring Mist:** The mist appears as wispy, light clouds that fade quickly as travelers approach them. They provide little cover, but do prevent explorers from seeing too far ahead. Characters can see as normal up to a range of 90 ft. Beyond that, creatures gain the benefit of concealment.

**Moderate Obscuring Mist:** Thicker cloud banks conceal creatures, trees, pools of water, and other obstacles. Anything more than 40 ft. away from an observer gains the benefits of concealment. All Listen checks in the swamp suffer a  $-2$  circumstance penalty as the fog muffles any noise.

**Heavy Obscuring Mist:** The dense layers of fog block most vision and turn the swamp into a mysterious, frightening vista. Anything more than 10 ft. away from an observer gains concealment, while objects more than 60 ft. are impossible to see. Listen checks suffer a  $-4$  circumstance penalty in the swamp's wet, dense atmosphere.

## SWAMP VAPORS

In some swamps, the baneful influence that produces disease, hordes of vermin, and other unpleasant effects takes the physical form of a nauseating, poisonous gas. The swamp water bubbles and churns, unleashing a sickening vapor generated by the influence of fell magic on the rotting plant and animal matter buried within the mud and slime. Foolish travelers or those who lack the skill and experience to pick a safe pathway through the swamp risk stum-





bling into the sickly water, exposing themselves and their comrades to the vapor's baneful effects.

This trait works like a hazard, but only one character checks to avoid it rather than each member of the party. The PC with the highest total bonus in Survival makes a check to avoid the hazard. If he fails, every PC must make a Fortitude save to avoid the poisonous gas. If no one in the party has ranks in Survival, one character may make a Wisdom check with a  $-4$  competence penalty to avoid the hazard. Whether the party uses a Survival or Wisdom check to avoid the swamp vapors, no one can aid in the skill or ability check.

**Light Swamp Vapors (CR 1/3):** Survival or Wisdom check DC 10; 4 hour interval;  $+0$  penalty/interval; Special: On a failed check, the entire party faces exposure to noxious swamp gases. Each character must make a Fortitude save (DC 10) or suffer a  $-2$  competence penalty to attacks and checks for one hour.

**Moderate Swamp Vapors (CR 1/2):** Survival or Wisdom check DC 15; 4 hour interval;  $+0$  penalty/interval; Special: On a failed check, the entire party faces exposure to noxious swamp gases. Each character must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or suffer a  $-2$  competence penalty to attacks and checks for 1d2 hours.

**Heavy Swamp Vapors (CR 1):** Survival or Wisdom check DC 20; 4 hour interval;  $+0$  penalty/interval; Special: On a failed check, the entire party faces exposure to noxious swamp gases. Each character must make a Fortitude save (DC 20) or suffer a  $-2$  competence penalty to attacks and checks for 1d4 hours.

## SWAMP OF GRAVES

In some evil regions, swamps serve as a sort of magical sink for foul energies. The natural fluctuations in arcane energies cause evil influences to gather and grow within a swamp. Pregnant with the dark power of black magic, the region can become a massive breeding ground for undead monstrosities. The mud and water, infused with necromantic energy, grant unlife to the creatures that fall within them. In the space of days, hours, or perhaps even minutes, any creature that dies within the swamp returns as a skeleton or zombie. These mindless creatures seem to obey some organizing intelli-

gence. In some cases, a dark god commands them and lends them to his clerics and champions as servants. In other cases, a powerful lich or necromancer attunes himself to the swamp and seizes control of the undead. In game terms, this allows a spellcaster to control far more undead than is normally possible with *animate dead*.

Invariably, this trait can trace its source to an artifact of evil buried within a swamp, a series of mystic plinths designed to channel necromantic energy into the area, or even a traumatic event in the distant past that cursed the region. A great battle that saw thousands of warriors die, a tremendous flood that swamped a city and killed its inhabitants, or a terrible plague that drove nearby cities and towns to deposit their dead in the swamp could all create the negative energy needed to create a swamp of graves.

This trait's strength determines the time required for a corpse to animate as an undead creature. You can also use optional rules to add a random factor to the type of undead generated and limits on the total HD of undead the region can generate. In most cases, a spellcaster can gain control of the creatures spawned by the swamp by swearing allegiance to the god responsible for its creation or seizing control of the artifact or monuments that maintain the energy needed to power it. In this case, the caster treats the undead as creatures he created with *animate dead*. They obey his commands, though if the swamp creates any intelligent undead those creatures are fully independent.

**Faint Swamp of Graves:** Undead creatures animate after 1d4 days in the mud. They always function as skeletons or zombies, as appropriate to their condition when they were buried within the swamp. Any creature that dies in the swamp sinks into the mud and water in 2d6 rounds. A Strength check (DC 10) is needed to pull a creature's body free of the muck. A creature will not animate unless it completely submerges in the water and mud.

**Moderate Swamp of Graves:** As per the faint rating, though creatures animate in 1d4 hours rather than weeks. In addition, the swamp can sometimes create more powerful undead creatures. Any creature with 10 or more class levels animates as a lich. The creature's alignment changes to either chaotic evil or to the align-

ment of the god or spellcaster who controls the swamp.

**Powerful Swamp of Graves:** As per the faint rating, except that it takes 1d4 minutes for a creature to animate. Any creature with three or more class levels animates as a lich as per the moderate rating.

## SWAMP COMBAT TERRAIN

The thick mud and stagnant waters in a swamp combine to make even the most straightforward battle a risky proposition. A heavily armored warrior might attempt to charge his opponents only to find himself sinking deeper into the muck with each step. Alligators and other threats can burst out of the cloudy, murky waters and surprise even the most experienced ranger. The swamp's primary danger during an encounter lies in the unreliability of its terrain. What looks like a secure perch in a tree could be a deathtrap as the rotted, teetering branches send a sniper tumbling to the ground. Firm ground gives way to quicksand and thick mud without warning. Many of the monsters found in swamps have learned to adapt to these conditions and take advantage of them, placing the characters at a further disadvantage.

In addition to the terrain features given here, you can use trees and uneven ground from the chapter on forests to add some variety to swamp encounters. By using thick undergrowth and trees to block off convenient pathways, you can force the characters to face their enemies in waist-deep water, thick mud, and other swamp hazards. High, secure ground is a valuable tactical asset in swamp encounters. If the PCs blunder into an ambush, their opponents might enjoy a secure place to rain arrows down upon them while the party slogs through difficult terrain.

### MUD

Thick mud can slow down even the strongest character, forcing him to waste precious moments pulling his feet and

legs free of the devouring muck. Mud can also prove difficult to spot. A stretch of swamp might seem relatively solid, only to suddenly give way to a deep pit of slime and sludge. You can create areas of thick mud using two different attributes, depth and detection.

Depth determines how deep a character can sink into the mud. For ease of use, it is expressed in terms of creature size categories rather than in feet. The size listed for the mud's depth means that creatures of that size can sink up to waist-deep into it. Creatures one size category larger can sink knee-deep, while creatures larger than that are unaffected. Creatures one size category or more lower can sink up to their necks, possibly suffocating in the muck if they cannot escape.

When a character enters mud that is equal to or greater than his size, he automatically sinks knee-deep immediately upon entering the mud. He must make a Balance check (DC 10) to avoid sinking waist-deep if he ends his movement action in the mud and he is the same size or smaller than the mud's relative depth. Each time the character ends his move in the mud, he must make another Balance check to avoid sinking waist-deep.

A character that is waist-deep in the mud could sink further if his size is less than the mud's relative depth. If his movement ends in the mud, he must make a Balance check (DC 20) to pull himself free of the muck. If he makes this check, he remains at waist-deep level. Otherwise, he sinks to neck-deep level.

A character neck-deep in the mud cannot escape unless he can reach solid ground. In that case, he can make a Strength check (DC 15) to pull free and move to the stable ground. Otherwise, he begins to drown. Consult the core rules for full details on drowning. A character who can reach the trapped PC can make a Strength check (DC 15) to pull his comrade free.

If a creature's face extends to any patch of solid ground, it does not suffer any of the mud's effects. A creature can sink into mud only if its face is fully contained within the mud.

Creatures that can fly gain a +10 competence bonus on all Balance and Strength checks to escape or avoid sinking into the mud.

*Knee-deep* mud costs +1 square to enter. In addition, characters and monsters at this mud depth have trouble dodging to avoid blows. They suffer a -2 circumstance penalty to AC. With their feet stuck in the mud, they cannot change their footing to dodge blows, block them with their shields, or parry them with their weapons.

*Waist-deep* mud costs +2 squares to enter. A character trapped at this depth loses his Dexterity bonus to AC but gains cover against all ranged attacks.

*Neck-deep* mud renders a character nearly immobile. With a Strength check (DC 10) he can move one square as a full-round action. A character neck-deep in mud gains a +6 cover bonus to AC against ranged attacks as he presents a small target, but he loses his Dexterity bonus to AC and is considered helpless. Characters neck deep in mud cannot cast spells with somatic components, nor can they attack. They can activate magic items and complete all other actions as full-round actions.

A character's current depth in mud determines the movement penalties and other effects he suffers due to it. A character could enter neck-deep mud, but if he makes his Balance check he remains at knee-deep level. In that case, apply the modifiers listed for knee-deep mud to him. In all cases the character's current depth in the mud, not the deepest possible level he could sink to, determines the effects he suffers. The absolute depth does not normally come into play.

A mud patch's detection rating determines how easily a character can spot it. Most inexperienced travelers cannot tell a shallow mud pit from a deep one. The detection rating equals the Spot or Survival check DC needed to determine the mud's depth. A character can make this check as a free action, and he only needs to check once per separate region of mud. Make this check in secret. On a successful check, the character determines the mud's relative depth. On a failed check, the character mistakes the mud's true relative depth for a randomly determined size rating. Most of the time, this DC should be set to 10.

## QUICKSAND

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A patch of quicksand appears as a mixture of loose dirt, sand, and mud suspended in deceptively fluid water. What looks like solid ground turns into a deadly quagmire when a character steps into it. A character approaching a patch of quicksand at a normal pace is entitled to a DC 8 Survival check to spot the danger before stepping in, but charging or running characters don't have a chance to detect a hidden bog before blundering in. Characters who lack ranks in Survival may instead make a Wisdom check to note that something is amiss. A character who stops and scans an area as a standard action can make his Wisdom or Survival check with a +5 competence bonus. A character who inadvertently runs into a patch of quicksand moves up to 10 ft. into it. His forward momentum is never enough to pull him free of the morass.

Characters in quicksand must make a DC 10 Swim check every round to simply tread water, or a DC 15 Swim check to move 5 feet in whatever direction they desire. If a trapped character fails this check by 5 or more, he sinks below the surface and begins to drown when he can no longer hold his breath (see the Swim skill description).

Characters below the surface of a bog may swim back to the surface with a successful Swim check (DC 15, +1 per consecutive round of being under the surface).

Pulling out a character trapped in quicksand can be difficult. A rescuer needs a branch, spear haft, rope, or similar tool that enables him to reach the victim with one end of it. Then he must make a DC 15 Strength check to successfully pull the victim, and the victim must make a DC 10 Strength check to hold onto the branch, pole, or rope. If both checks succeed, the victim is pulled 5 feet closer to safety. If the victim fails his Strength check, he must make a DC 15 Swim check immediately to stay above the surface. The act of grabbing hold of the branch or pole causes him to lose his momentum and could cause him to sink into the muck as he loses his grip.

## WATER

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Much of a swamp's area is covered with stagnant water that plays host to weeds, tall grass, and insects. Wading through these murky







ponds and waterways is slow going, though not as difficult as slogging through mud. Water follows rules similar to those given for mud. Its depth is given a size rating, such as Huge or Small. This rating indicates that creatures of the listed size stand waist-deep in the water. The water is neck-deep or higher for smaller creatures, while larger ones can slosh through it at knee depth. Creatures more than one size category smaller than the water's listed depth must swim through it. They are too small to walk along its bottom. Unlike mud, creatures cannot sink deeper in the water unless its depth changes.

*Knee-deep water* is harder to move through. It slows down characters and makes it harder for them to be sneaky, costing +1 square to enter.

*Waist-deep water* costs +2 squares to enter. A character moving through water at this depth gains cover against all ranged attacks. Water does not provide any additional protection against most spells, since magic can easily slice through it. The one exception is fire-based spells and effects. Characters in waist-deep water gain a +2 bonus on saves against them.

*Neck-deep water* grants a character a +6 cover bonus to AC against ranged attacks as he presents a small target. Against fire-based spells, he gains a +4 bonus on saving throws.

## SWAMP MONSTERS

Isolated from civilization and difficult to traverse for most explorers and settlers, swamps are ideal spawning grounds for a variety of strange, dangerous, and evil monsters. Even the most ardent crusading army can never hope to fully sweep through one, as the casualties from quicksand, disease, and other threats mount.

### DRAGON, BLACK

Black dragons lair in the midst of swamps and marshes precisely because of the environment's hostile nature. Amongst their own kind, they are arrogant, greedy, and given to treachery. From their isolated swamp lairs, they can count their treasures and keep watch for intruders in relative peace. Other dragons frequently

compete for living space in mountains and forests, leaving these wyrms free to claim whatever marshlands take their fancy. Black dragons are known to aggressively patrol the inner regions of their domains. They usually allow travelers to pass unmolested through the outer areas of a swamp, but anyone who draws too near to their lairs faces a sudden, vicious attack. Black dragons take care to keep their lairs secret and have been known to follow elaborate escape routes from their raids into civilization in order to throw off pursuit.

Most of the time, these dragons prefer sunken ruins for their lairs. Their ability to breathe water allows them to take refuge within flooded caves, an especially attractive option considering that most humanoids cannot venture into such environments.

## HAGS

The various hag subtypes frequently seize control of vast stretches of marshland. From their watery lairs, they use their magical abilities to cloak their presence and recruit monsters to serve them as guardians. They typically use *disguise self* to adopt the guise of an old crone who tells fortunes, sells herbs, and offers minor spells in return for a fee. Using this cover, they prey on travelers who seek visions of the future that indicate their access to wealth and magical items. Usually, hags send their victims into a situation that leads to their doom. Otherwise, they use their illusions to shadow their steps and ambush them.

Hags that gather in a coven pose a particularly daunting threat to a region. They use their ability to manipulate weather to send storms and strong winds into nearby towns and farmlands, while illusions secure and conceal their lairs and spells such as *dream* and *bestow curse* plague travelers and important figures in the region. Hags prefer subtle methods to direct confrontation. They may kidnap the king's child in return for a ransom, or uncover secrets they can use to extort loyalty and tribute from minor officials. Adventurers who seek to strike against the coven find that local rulers work to oppose them, while the hags' illusions make finding their lair difficult at best.



## HYDRA

Difficult to slay and vicious in battle, these beasts are perhaps the most powerful of the common swamp predators. Owing to their magical natures, hydras can survive for hundreds of years. Their only natural enemies in the wild are lizardfolk, who hunt them to serve as offerings to their gods, and black dragons, who consider them a tasty delicacy. A single hydra in a swamp may grow to immense size over time, until it depletes the region of resources and moves on in search of fresh food. Hydras are fiercely territorial. They tolerate others of their kind only during mating season or if fed and kept by handlers.

## LIZARDFOLK

Sometimes known as swamp orcs, lizardfolk are known to mount raids on settlements near their territories for metal weapons, magical objects, and other useful trinkets. Yet, for every violent, aggressive tribe of these creatures there are two or three that desire only marshland for hunting and enough space to live in peace. Lizardfolk tend to be wary of out-

siders, preferring to observe them for a time to determine their intentions. Invaders can expect ambushes, particularly from watery areas. These humanoids are well aware that their enemies are poor swimmers and their “metal shells” (plate or chain armor) drag them to their doom in the muck. Lizardfolk prefer to charge and overwhelm their enemies with physical attacks, grappling to pull an opponent down into the water where he drowns. While normally peaceful, these creatures are vicious in battle. They aim to prevent any word of their settlements from filtering to the outside world. Their traditions maintain that so long as no one knows of their settlements, they can remain untroubled.

Friendly lizardfolk ally with those who respect the natural world and are not overly reliant on metal weapons, armor, and other tools. They are naturally suspicious towards arcane casters. As a primitive people, they count few casters aside from druids in their clans. If faced with a bizarre threat, these creatures gladly act as guides for outsiders who can aid them, leading them to the site of any strange magical effects or recent, bizarre activity.

## STIRGE

Perhaps the deadliest of the many pests travelers face in swamps, these creatures can pose a dangerous threat to even experienced and skilled travelers. They attack in massive groups, fluttering from the nests they create in shaded, stagnant waters in an endless search for fresh blood. Many kingdoms have chosen to devote time, energy, money, and lives to draining a swamp to halt the threat posed by stirges. Sadly, any disturbance in a marsh can send massive flocks of these beasts on great migrations. A black dragon could move into the area and drive them out, causing a swarm of hundreds of stirges to descend on a nearby town as they seek out new territories. More than one caravan has rolled into a town bordering a swamp to find barricaded doors, drained corpses, and no visible signs of life save for the few bloated stirges that straggle behind the rest of the flock. Only those townsfolk who barricade themselves in a secure cellar could survive the horror of a mass stirge attack.

## UNDEAD

Undead creatures, from mindless skeletons and zombies to deadly wights and lichs, find swamps to be an ideal hunting ground. Many of these creatures lurk beneath the marsh’s stagnant water, waiting patiently for days or weeks for prey to stumble by. Ghouls caper and dance in the moonlight in these regions, delighting in the rot and decay around them and using the swamps as a convenient stronghold in between raids to nearby settlements and graveyards. Undead creatures are naturally drawn to a marsh’s landscape. The hollows and trees give them plenty of natural shelter, while the living rarely disturb these places.

In some regions, strange cities of the dead arise when powerful undead lords gather followers to them. A city that has slid into ruin can come alive again with the spectral lights and weird cries of these creatures. Ghouls might hold a grim mockery of a royal court, complete with great feasts featuring still-living captives taken from nearby settlements and caravans. Zombies and skeletons shamble through the streets, reenacting the dim memories they still hold of their living days. Within this city of the damned, vampires and lichs reign supreme, serving in the place of kings and emperors. Adherents of dark cults, necromancers, and evil clerics might flock to this place in hopes of building alliances with powerful undead figures. Safely ensconced within a vast swamp, such an unholy place could grow in power to launch an invasion of its neighbors before they are aware of its presence.

In addition to the creatures listed above, chuuls, gray renders, harpies, manticores, medusas, rakshasas, shambling mounds, shocker lizards, and will-o’-wisps all frequently make their homes in the lonely, desolate marshes.

# CHAPTER NINE

# ARCTIC TERRAIN

CHAPTER NINE: ARCTIC TERRAIN

In the far north, a punishing cold chokes off most signs of life before they can establish themselves. The endless sheets of ice, freezing temperatures, and slicing winds drive even the hardiest creatures to seek shelter.

In many ways, the arctic presents a more dangerous environment than desert. Oases and the rare spring or well provide relief from the dry climate, while travelers can move by night and rest during the day to sustain their strength. In comparison, the arctic offers little relief from its hazards. Only shelter, warm clothes, or a campfire can fend off the brutally cold temperatures. With caves, food, and wood all absent or hard to find, travelers must rely on themselves to provide those remedies. Once supplies run low, the characters must find a safe haven or risk death from exposure. This pressure on the characters to maintain their supplies and stock up on mundane items lends an added sense of fear and pressure to adventures set in this terrain. This section provides you with rules and guidelines for creating frigid regions that can prove a worthy threat to powerful adventurers.

Tundra is at its core a frozen desert. Like that sandy, heat-blasted terrain, it throws a combination of extreme weather and few useful local resources at the party. The characters must not

only cope with dangerous monsters, they must also shield themselves from the environment and carefully track their supplies.

The rules and game mechanics in this chapter, including the names, descriptions, and stat blocks of threats and hazards, are designated as **Open Game Content**.

## BASIC ARCTIC TRAITS

Snow and cold are the two basic traits used to describe a region of tundra or arctic terrain. With year-round temperatures hovering below freezing, snow and ice can remain in place for decades. Even when the area warms, it rarely sustains high temperatures long enough to have an appreciable effect.

### COLD

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The wind scythes through the thickest furs and clothing, driving a deadly chill into an explorer's bones. Without a ready source of heat, such as a campfire, even the hardiest warrior soon feels the numbing, painful



effect of the bitterly frigid weather. The tundra's greatest threat is the relentless cold it presents to the party. Like a fearsome ghost that drains a victim's life force, the arctic cold saps heat and vitality from all who wander its trackless wastes. While a remorhaz or yeti can rend and tear an adventurer with their claws and fangs, they are creatures of flesh and blood. Swords, spells, and shields can defeat them. The cold is a relentless, patient killer. Only thick clothing, fire, and magic can keep it at bay.

The cold trait draws on the weather rules from Chapter 11 to set the environmental conditions in an arctic region. Use this trait as a guideline for the climates you use in your polar scenarios.

**Typical Tundra:** The cold is intense, but not so severe that it drives away all signs of life. Hearty natives can eke out a living by hunting seals, fishing, and gathering the few scattered plants that survive in the region's brief summer months. This area poses a deadly threat to poorly prepared expeditions, but in general it holds no special reputation as a deadly region. Use the frigid setting with the cold weather hazard. This region might have a two- or three-month-long summer period. During this time, the freezing weather gives way to cool temperatures that pose no threat to travelers who don typical adventuring gear. The snow trait shifts with the season. During the summer, use the light setting. During the winter, the moderate and heavy settings apply.

**Deep Tundra:** The punishing cold drives away all but the toughest creatures. Aside from hermits, druids, and mages with a vested interest in studying ice magic, few folk dwell in these regions. In this area, the feared monsters of the freezing climes thrive. They can carve out lairs with little fear of interference and travel to warmer areas to hunt. White dragons in particular favor these regions, as they can hide their treasures in isolated caves with little fear that adventurers will stumble across them. Use the severe cold weather rating from Chapter 11. The year-round cold prevents snow from melting and keeps that trait firmly lodged at the moderate or heavy ratings.

**Arctic Tundra:** Few creatures wander in this region of bitter, deadly cold. Even monsters adapted to arctic conditions, such as frost

giants, rarely venture into these areas. The intense environment drives away herd animals and makes it impossible for plant life to develop. With food levels dangerously low, only magical, planar, or elemental creatures remain in this region for long. The snow level can range from light to heavy. When it falls, it remains in place for long periods of time unless the wind eventually spreads it across the land. However, the intensely cold temperature prevents snow from falling for long stretches of time. The only signs of civilization are isolated temples dedicated to gods of cold and snow. Sustained by their clerics' ability to conjure food and water, these outposts are the most venerated sites of such faiths. Those who can endure the pilgrimage to them are amongst the ice god's most-favored worshippers.

## SNOW

In the far north and polar south, a cloak of thick snow covers the land for most, if not all, of the year. The thick snow slows travelers, as they must blaze their way through deep snowdrifts. Even relatively light snow provides a vexing obstacle. Parties that lack sleighs, sledges, and other vehicles adapted to the terrain must slog through it on foot. The snow trait determines how easily a group of travelers can cross an arctic region. With a low setting, the light snow makes travel relatively easy. At higher levels, the characters proceed slowly across the terrain.

Not every frozen region is buried in snow. In some of the coldest arctic regions, the temperature dips low enough that snow rarely falls. Intensely cold air is unable to hold moisture, making precipitation impossible.

This section presents rules for snow's effects on tactical combat under the tundra combat terrain header below.

*Light snow* indicates a region of tundra relatively free of the stuff. The characters can travel across the land at a steady pace, their progress generally unhindered. In areas where snow has accumulated, it rarely piles higher than a character's ankles.

*Moderate snow* represents the average arctic region. Years of steady snowfall combined with swirling winds yield drifts that commonly reach knee or waist depth. Without sleds and similar equipment, parties proceed slowly.

*Heavy snow* applies to regions with exceptionally heavy snowdrifts. An inexperienced traveler might blunder into areas where the snow reaches above his head, requiring careful probing and a slow pace to avoid disaster.

Density	Movement
Light	x1 or 1 square
Moderate	x1/2 or 2 squares
Heavy	x1/4 or 4 squares

## ADVANCED TUNDRA TRAITS

The distant, arctic regions of the world harbor many bizarre and frightening effects. Few explorers brave these regions, leaving their horrors and threats undisturbed for centuries at a time. The advanced traits allow you to add supernatural effects and traits to an arctic area. Perhaps the arctic ice shelf slowly expands, driven by a malevolent force to encase the entire world in ice. The polar clime could be the physical manifestation of an outer plane, a strange region where the material world collapses and gives way to the laws of an alien realm.

### ENCROACHING SNOW AND ICE

The ice marches ever forward. Its progress is slow enough that most folk pay little mind to it. A borderlands town receives slightly increased snowfall year after year, but not enough to raise an alarm. Rangers and hunters who venture into the cold wastes probably never notice that their journey to the ice shelf takes a few minutes less with each passing winter. Finally, the ice wall reaches a forest, river, or other landmark. Sages consult maps and are shocked to discover that the last time the king's men took a survey, the ice was dozens of miles farther to the north. Finally, a winter passes into summer and snow remains on the ground. The summer never grows quite warm enough to melt it. From the town wall, a sharp-eyed observer might note the glacial ice just over the horizon. With time and complacency as its greatest weapons, the ice has conquered yet another territory.

This trait allows you to imbue an arctic region with a guiding malevolent force. The ice marches forward, though literal-

ly at a glacial pace, to conquer the world. In time, it will cover all but the warmest climes. The key to the ice's success lies in what appears to be its greatest weakness: its slow pace. Year after year passes with little change, lulling the civilized folk into complacency. By the time they realize the ice's threat, it may be too late to turn it back. Worst of all, the ice works to destroy all who would oppose it. While at its borders it moves slowly, within its interior it moves with a frightening speed. Explorers who camp for the night awaken half-trapped in ice. The unlucky ones never wake up, their corpses sealed within frozen tombs. When faced with intruders, the ice works in subtle ways to destroy them. It grows to trap sleeping travelers, or forms empty spaces covered with thin ice that they can fall into. In battle, the ice forms small pits and bumps to trip its enemies and leave them vulnerable to the horrid yetis and ice fiends that dwell upon it.

Usually, a powerful evil figure drives the development of a sentient, malevolent ice field. The god of snow and ice might push it forward, particularly if he is an evil being who represents the insidious, destructive nature of the cold. A powerful archmage, probably a lich who has spent untold millennia in an arctic region, could work a mighty spell that gives him control over the land. In this case, a band of heroes could drive back the ice by defeating the being that controls it. The ice could have an inherently evil quality, making it a force driven by its own will rather than the machinations of some outside force. In this case, a powerful artifact, ritual, or spell may be necessary to defeat it. Perhaps the ice forms massive spires that transmit its will to the edges of its domain. By smashing these constructs, the characters can turn back the encroaching cold.

In any case, the monsters and beasts that dwell upon the ice usually work with it. Yetis, arctic orcs, demons, and similar monsters might directly obey its orders or, influenced by the aura of evil upon the land, unwittingly seek to further its aims. After all, creatures of the arctic lands may welcome the prospect of spreading their domain farther south. Human, elf, and dwarf barbarian tribes could lead the charge towards the equator, venturing out to smash civilization and thwart any plans to defeat the ice.

As the characters journey across the ice, they must watch for the environment's attempts to hinder their progress. The ice is as cunning as it is evil. It might shift gold, gems, and other treasures trapped within it to lure explorers into dangerous areas, such as patches of thin ice that conceal frigid pools or bottomless pits. The ice can alter its structure to shift and move objects embedded within it. A powerful lich might dwell within a tower that remains encased in the ice. When he wishes to leave his lair, the ice drives the tower above the surface. Later, it can engulf the tower to keep it safe from attack or to foil intruders.

In terms of game mechanics, a set of hazards represents the malevolent ice's effects on a party's journey. Each hazard gives information on what the ice can do to directly injure the party and how it can move and alter its structure to prepare its defenses and march against the world.

*Minor encroaching ice* has a limited ability to change its form and actively oppose explorers. At this level, the ice moves forward at a slow but steady pace. A mindless, supernatural process rather than a malevolent, driving force could explain the ice's behavior. The world could be cooling naturally, ushering in an ice age. The arctic zone might grow due to the presence of gates that allow frigid, planar energy to flow into the world. When faced with an alien source of heat, the environment naturally seeks to preserve itself by driving away intruders or killing them. It takes these actions out of self-preservation much like an intelligent forest may attack a party that lights a fire. Druids who seek to preserve the arctic regions against civilization's encroachment might work to imbue an icy area with this trait, as could a group of nature spirits or fey with similar aims.

**Minor Encroaching Ice (CR 1/2):** Fortitude save DC 10; 1 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; 1d3 cold damage; Special: Apply this hazard only to characters who sleep or otherwise remain in one place for the listed interval. If a character remains asleep or otherwise motionless for several hours, he may become trapped in the ice. When the character awakes or tries to move he must make a Strength check with a DC equal to 5 plus 2 per consecutive hour he remained motionless. A freed character can assist with this check or can make one against the DC to chop a PC free. Characters with

weapons can hack away at the ice, freeing a character if they inflict 5 points of damage per hour the trapped victim remained motionless.

*Moderate encroaching ice* manifests the first glimmers of evil or conquering intent. It seeks to slowly absorb the southern regions, as it extends its reach ever farther. The ice moves faster and with a more malevolent intent, and it sometimes creates traps for unwary travelers. Caves that look like promising campsites turn into deathtraps as they seal shut over night. Few creatures dwell on the ice shelf aside from those that have adapted to the cold. The influence that controls the ice could originate with an ancient lich buried within it, a cult that worships a powerful evil god of ice and cold, or a polar civilization that wants to extend its grasp to the south. The ice works in relatively subtle ways, and the civilized climes may be unaware of the threat it poses.

**Moderate Encroaching Ice (CR 2):** Fortitude save DC 15; 1 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; 1d4 cold damage; Special: This hazard functions as per the minor encroaching ice threat, though the Strength DC needed to escape it equals 10 plus 2 per consecutive hour the victim remained motionless. Otherwise, the rules given above apply.

*Major encroaching ice* drives forth like a conquering army to transform the world into a frozen tomb. The glaciers move forward at an alarming pace. Within a decade, they can swallow a small town whole. Creatures that venture into this region may have the strange feeling that something with malevolent intent keeps watch over them. Tumbling rocks and ice, collapsing passages, and pools of freezing water hidden beneath thin layers of ice all lie in wait to claim adventurers. This trait invariably finds its genesis in a driving, rapacious intellect. While the other strength levels of this trait might be spawned by natural or uncaring forces, this version is always formed by an evil intellect.

**Major Encroaching Ice (CR 4):** Fortitude save DC 20; 1 hour interval; -2 modifier/interval; 1d6 cold damage; Special: This hazard functions as per the minor encroaching ice threat, though the Strength DC needed to escape it equals 15 plus 2 per consecutive hour the victim remained motionless. Otherwise, the rules given above apply.







In addition to the threat posed by growing ice, a region with this trait can spontaneously produce passages and cracks in the ice. It can create a 5-cubic-ft. space in an amount of time determined by the trait's strength. See the ice growth/reduction speed table for details. By the same token, it can close off these passages at the same rate. If you want to figure out how long it takes to form a cave or similar space, draw a map of the area on graph paper with each square equal to five feet. For each square the mapped area contains, it takes the time listed on growth/reduction table. For higher ceilings, multiply the number of squares by the height divided by five. If you want to be very exact, you can separate the squares into groups by how high the ceiling rises above them, factoring the time needed for each area.

#### Ice Growth/Reduction Speed

Strength	Time	Damage	Str DC
Minor	1 minute	1d4	10
Moderate	30 seconds	1d6	15
Major	6 seconds	1d8	20

In addition to forming and closing passages, this hazard may crush characters. If a PC remains in a 5-ft. square long enough for the ice to fill in that area, he takes damage as per the ice growth/reduction table. Each round, the trapped PC must make a Strength check as a full-round action to escape. If he fails this check, he cannot move and takes the listed damage. Trapped characters lose their Dexterity bonus to AC but gain cover from the ice. They may cast spells without somatic components and even then only with a successful Concentration check (DC 20). A trapped character can receive assistance to his Strength check from freed allies. A free character can also make a Strength check (DC as per the growth/reduction table) to rescue a trapped victim. If the party deals 20 point of damage to the ice in one round, the trapped character is automatically freed.

The moderate Strength ice counts as a CR 1 obstacle, while the major level is CR 3. Use these CRs for each encounter that includes the growing ice as an obstacle. For each character attacked by the ice, count the hazard as a separate trap of the appropriate CR. For example, attacking each member of a party of four at the same time counts as four CR 3 traps combined into one encounter. These CRs are separate from the ones listed for the hazard stat block

effects. If you use both versions of encroaching ice, be sure to award the party XP for both of them.

In addition to crushing characters or trapping them in sealed caverns, the force behind this effect might drop chunks of overhanging ice on the party and make other attacks against them. You can use a set of generic hazards and traps to represent these attacks.

The encroaching ice trait is deceptively powerful. The ice could continually attack the party, setting up traps and obstacles or simply sealing them in a long passage into a glacier. Remember to use the CR guidelines from the core rules to keep track of how many encounters are appropriate for the party each day. Perhaps the ice has a limited amount of psychic or arcane energy it can expend each day, preventing it from going all out to destroy the party. The key to using this trait lies in presenting the characters with enough obstacles to represent the danger in this region while never overwhelming them. If you think of the obstacles and traps as monsters with the same CR, you can accurately gauge how many you can set against the party each session without unfairly destroying them.

**Falling Ice:** The malevolent force behind encroaching arctic realms can use its ability to grow and shrink its domain to drop giant blocks of ice on to intruders. An icy overhang shudders and twists, showering the area below with heavy chunks of debris. The ceiling in an ice cave cracks, dropping a huge block onto an unlucky character. The stat blocks for a variety of these effects are presented below and organized by CR. Treat them as traps that cannot be disabled. The encroaching ice does not rely on mechanical processes to trigger its hazards. Rather, it simply times them to cause the most damage possible. The falling ice table lists the CR, damage, attack bonus, and targets or area of effect for a variety of hazards. If a hazard has a dash listed for its attack bonus, it automatically hits its targets.

Falling Ice CR	Damage	Attack Bonus	Area of Effect
1	1d6	+6	1 target
2	1d8	+8	1 target
3	2d6	+10	1 target
4	2d6	+12	2 targets
5	4d6	+10	1 target
6	6d6	+15	1 target
7	6d6	+15	2 targets
8	8d6	+20	10-ft.-by-10-ft. area
12	12d6	—	10-ft.-by-10-ft. area
13	18d6	—	1 target

**Ice Pit:** As the characters travel across an ice shelf, the demonic force that controls the land can weaken the ground and form concealed pits that the party can tumble into. Use the stats for pit traps as presented in the core rules, except that a thin layer of ice that shatters as a PC walks across it covers the pits. Depending on this trait's rating, it might be able to form pits in the midst of an encounter. While the PCs fight off a monster, a pit forms around them to trap them as they fight.

## MAGICAL WASTELAND

The frozen north drains what little heat reaches its icy expanse. The sun's feeble rays do little more than provide light, as their warmth is lost in the harsh environment. This absence of energy sometimes extends to the fabric of magic. Just as the environment saps heat and warmth from living creatures, it may also drain the magic energy from the land. Calling the power needed to form a spell is like trying to gather the last wisps of smoke in the air as a mighty wind sweeps away a sputtering fire. The energy may be there, but it exists in a temporary, ephemeral state. Spellcasters must concentrate and take their time when casting spells, lest they lose control and fail to properly form them.

Regions with this trait force divine and arcane spellcasters to use additional actions when casting spells or risk having them fizzle out and fail to function. A caster must make a Spellcraft check unless he wants to increase the spell's casting time. This trait does not apply to supernatural abilities, spell-like abilities, or magic items. These abilities draw on a creature's natural energy reserves or an item's magical nature.

*Faint magical wasteland* means that a character needs to spend a moment or two to pull the energy he needs into his spell before unleashing it. Before casting any spell, a spellcaster must use a free action to focus his attention and find a usable stream of energy. He cannot use this free action and cast a spell during the same round. On his next action, he may cast the spell as normal. If he attempts to cast the spell without using this action, he must make a Spellcraft check (DC 20 + the spell's level) to successfully complete it. If this check fails, the spell fizzles. It counts as used but has no effects.

*Moderate magical wastelands* feel like desolate, empty realms within the magical fabric. Casters must draw magical energy from other planes or from distant areas that are free of this feature. In order to use a spell, a caster must spend a standard action to gather the energy to him. The caster must declare how much energy he wants to gather in terms of a spell level. On his next action, he can cast a spell of the declared level or lower. When gathering energy, the caster must maintain his focus while completing this action, or his efforts fail. Treat this action as the equivalent of casting a spell of the declared level. If the PC takes damage or is otherwise interrupted, he must make a Concentration check as if he tried to cast a spell of the declared level. If this check fails, he breaks his focus and must try to gather energy again. If a caster tries to cast a spell without first summoning energy, he must make a Spellcraft check with a DC of 25 + the spell's level. If this check succeeds, he casts the spell. Otherwise, the spell fizzles and has no effect.

*Severe magical wastelands* are holes in the magical fabric. Spellcasters can immediately feel that something is amiss in the region, as the flux of arcane and divine energy they can normally sense becomes utterly lost to them. In these regions, a caster must spend a standard action on two consecutive rounds to gather energy before he can use a spell. Use the rules given under the moderate version of this trait for Concentration checks and declaring the energy level a caster wants to collect. If a caster tries to use a spell without gathering energy, he must succeed at a Spellcraft check with a DC of 35 + the spell's level. If he uses one standard action (rather than two) to gather energy, the DC is 30 + the spell's level.

## OTHERWORLDLY REALMS

The cold winds of the arctic plains do not always originate in the terrestrial realm. Planar rifts, ancient magical spells, and powerful artifacts can spawn an unnatural cold that spreads and chokes the natural environment. In time, a verdant forest or even a sun-blasted desert can transform into frozen tundra. This trait allows you to give a frigid region a supernatural origin. Spirits can sing on the wind, demons or devils might lurk amongst the icy peaks, or fey of snow and ice could maintain an enchanted, wintry realm.

### DIABOLIC INFLUENCE

While images of demonic or devilish realms usually conjure scenes of fiery caverns and burning pools of oil, some regions of the dark realms are encased in a deep, relentless freeze. Sometimes, the borders between worlds blur and crumble, allowing energy to flow between them. When the boundaries between a frozen region of hell and the material world are sundered, the inescapable cold overwhelms the geography and climate in the affected region. Oceans freeze, forests wither and die, and glacial ice shifts through the gap. Demons, devils, and other outsiders populate the area, thinning it of natural creatures and slowly replacing them with strange creatures from their home worlds. In an arctic realm spawned by diabolic influence, the cold not only banishes heat: It saps a creature's life force, slowing draining his soul and turning him into a lifeless husk. Only evil outsiders are immune to this effect.

**Light Diabolic Influence (CR 1):** Fortitude save DC 10; 12 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; 1 point of Constitution damage; Special: Any damage inflicted by this trait heals at the normal rate, but no magical or natural means can cure it while the victim remains in an area affected by this trait. While the bitter cold and diabolic energy continue to wear away a character's strength, he can find no succor in spells or mundane treatment.

**Moderate Diabolic Influence (CR 2):** Fortitude save DC 15; 12 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; 1 point of Constitution damage; Special: As the light diabolic trait.



**Heavy Diabolic Influence (CR 4):** Fortitude save DC 20; 12 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; 1 point of Constitution damage; Special: As the light diabolic trait.

### FEY INFLUENCE

In some regions, magical creatures that have a mystical link to frigid weather and ice use spells, magic, and their innate abilities to form an environment they find comfortable. Typically, these regions arise in areas that are already held in the grip of freezing conditions. None aside from the mightiest fey have the ability to radically alter a region's climatic and physical conditions.

In this region, the fey magic adds a beguiling, seductive touch to the bitter cold. As the cold grips a character, it befuddles his senses and clouds his mind, making it difficult for him to spot threats and leaving him vulnerable to the illusions and enchantments commonly used by fairies.

**Light Fey Influence (CR 1/3):** Will save DC 10; 6 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; -1 penalty on all saves against spells from the

Illusion and Enchantment schools; Special: This penalty persists until an affected character spends at least one hour in a region free of this trait. As an unnamed penalty, the effect of this hazard stacks with itself.

**Moderate Fey Influence (CR 1/2):** Will save DC 15; 4 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; -1 penalty on all saves against spells from the Illusion and Enchantment schools; Special: See the light fey influence stat block.

**Severe Fey Influence (CR 1):** Will save DC 20; 4 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; -1 penalty on all saves against spells from the Illusion and Enchantment schools; Special: See the light fey influence stat block.

### STRANGE ICE AND SNOW

In a world pregnant with magic, not all snow and ice is made of frozen water. A magical cataclysm can spawn freezing temperatures and freakish weather, dropping snow from a distant world into the material plane. Planar gates, ancient rituals, and other methods imbue magical qualities into mundane precipi-



tation. Usually these conditions persist for the storm's duration, and they fade once it passes. In the cold latitudes, magical snow can fall and accumulate for years before the sun melts it. In areas where enchanted weather is more common than normal, the repeated snowfall can cause strange conditions to arise and persist for years. This trait allows you to select different magical conditions caused by the ice and snow created by such weather effects.

## ACIDIC

The snow in this land is a strange, greenish color. A slight but steady stream of smoke rises from it at all times, as the acid burns away rock, dirt, and grass that lies beneath it. Created by hellish storms spawned in the depths of hell, acidic snow can ruin armor, scar a creature's feet, and even kill a traveler unfortunate enough to fall into it. Traveling across a wasteland covered in this snow requires special, acid-proof footwear or similar protective gear.

For all versions of this hazard, the party can attempt to use items such as boots, tents, sleds, or wagons to avoid exposure to the snow. The acid weakens these items,

destroying their ability to resist damage by reducing their hardness. Whenever an object takes damage, the full effects of its hardness apply as normal. Reduce the object's hardness by the total damage inflicted by the acid.

*Example:* The typical pair of boots has hardness 2 and 5 hit points. The weak acidic snow hazard inflicts 1 point of damage against them. The boot's hardness prevents that point of damage but drops by 1. On a later interval, the boots take another point of damage. Their hardness is 1, which prevents the damage. However, the boots' hardness is reduced by an additional point, making it 0. Any further damage sustained by the boots is applied directly to their hit points. To restore an object's hardness, you must use the Craft skill to create an item with a gp value equal to a quarter of the object's value. This represents the effort and materials needed for repairs. Obviously, you need to use the proper Craft skill to repair a specific item.

**Weak Acidic Snow (CR 1):** Fortitude save DC 5; 1 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; 1d6 damage; Special: This acid snow is relatively weak. The water within the natural snow dilutes it, reducing its potency.

**Moderate Acidic Snow (CR 3):** Fortitude save DC 10; 30 minute interval; +0 modifier/interval; 1d6 damage; Special: The acid in this snow is more concentrated. In some areas, it exists as small, foul pools of yellowish fluid. A character who falls prone in this snow must immediately make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or suffer 1d6 points of acid damage.

**Strong Acidic Snow (CR 6):** Fortitude save DC 15; 15 minute interval; +0 modifier/interval; 1d6 damage; Special: Strong acid flows through this putrid, yellow snow. The air is thick with smoke and fog as it burns into the ground. Should this snow ever melt, it leaves behind a scarred, barren land. A character who falls prone in this snow must immediately make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or suffer 1d12 points of acid damage. The fumes in the air causes an additional hazard (Fort save DC 10, 1 hour interval, -1 penalty/interval; 1d3 points of damage). In addition, it gives targets concealment at a range of 30 ft. or more and blocks all vision at ranges of 60 ft. or more.

## COMBUSTIBLE

Sometimes, the power of elemental fire combines with elemental air and cold to produce black snow that resembles a fusion of coal, snowflakes, and ice. This baffling phenomenon has attracted intense academic scrutiny, but the sages have yet to determine its cause. Despite its cold temperature, this substance bursts into flames in the presence of an open fire. Invariably, this snow produces a fiery holocaust, burning itself and the landscape beneath it into a fine, powdery ash. In addition to the dangers the snow presents, adventurers must take care to avoid igniting an inferno.

This hazard's strength ratings correspond with the snow's volatility. The combination of two elemental forces and one quasi-elemental energy creates an unstable mixture. Sometimes, the snow unleashes blasts of elemental energy. Luckily, these eruptions manifest as pure force and are unable to cause the snow to ignite.

**Steady Combustible Snow (CR 1):** Reflex save DC 10; 1 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; 1d4 damage; Special: The force of this blast can knock a character prone, requiring a Balance check (DC 10) for characters who take damage from it to remain on their feet. Any fire effect that causes more than 15 points of damage causes the snow to explode. All creatures within 100 ft. of the center of an area effect spell or the point at which the attack strikes suffers 4d6 points of fire damage. A Reflex save (DC 15) halves this damage.

**Unstable Combustible Snow (CR 2):** Reflex save DC 15; 1 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; 1d6 damage; Special: As per the steady version of this hazard with the following changes. The Balance check DC is 15, and the snow explodes in a 150 ft. radius if it takes more than 10 points of fire damage. This detonation inflicts 6d6 points of fire damage and has a Reflex save DC of 20.

**Seething Combustible Snow (CR 4):** Reflex save DC 20; 1 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; 1d8 damage; Special: As per the steady version of this hazard with the following changes. The snow explodes in a 200 ft. radius if it takes more than 5 points of fire damage. This detonation inflicts 8d6 points of fire damage and has a Reflex save DC of 20.

## FOUL

In some regions, the snow and ice acquire a repulsive, sickening taint. Travelers must struggle to avoid falling ill, as the putrid material seeded through the snow and frozen within the ground rots despite the low temperatures. This snow usually results in areas infested with undead or afflicted with a curse that renders the land barren of life. Both the snow and ice typically acquire a sickly, dull gray color. As it melts, the snow turns into a thick, slimy liquid that befouls the land and renders it poisonous to plants. It can take years and even decades for a land cursed with foul snow to recover.

Travelers must take care to cover their faces when traveling through these regions. The horrific odor can weaken even the stoutest adventurer, sapping his strength with nausea, dulling his senses, and causing dizzy spells.

**Mild Foul Snow (CR 1):** Fortitude save DC 10; 6 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; 1 point of Strength damage; Special: This hazard inflicts temporary damage as normal. However, it cannot be healed via mundane or magical means until an afflicted character enters an area free of this hazard.

**Sickening Foul Snow (CR 2):** Fortitude save DC 10; 4 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; 1 point of Strength damage; Special: As per mild foul snow.

**Disgusting Foul Snow (CR 4):** Fortitude save DC 10; 2 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; 1 point of Strength and Dexterity damage; Special: As per mild foul snow.

## MIRRORED

Under the polar sun, this snow shimmers and gleams with an unnatural brightness. At times, light flashes on it with such intensity that an unlucky traveler can be struck blind by the intense glare. Worst of all, the snow reflects all types of energy, not just light. Magical spells sometimes flash back at their casters. The snow reflects the incantation's energy, causing the spell's trajectory to make a dramatic, and usually unfortunate, alteration.

Close inspection of this snow reveals that its flakes form small, circular disks of icy glass. They crumble easily and never form shards capable of cutting flesh.

When exposed to heat, this snow melts in the same manner as its mundane version. Wizards sometimes gather this snow in magical containers that preserve it in the hottest climes, as it can prove a useful component in forging items designed to repel spells.

When a caster uses a spell in an area covered with this snow, he must take care to form the spell and project it so that the snow does not bend and alter his casting. The stronger this hazard, the more difficult it is to cast spells properly within it. When a caster uses a spell that targets a creature at range of 10 ft. or more, he must make a Spellcraft check (DC listed in the hazard stat blocks below). If this check fails, the spell has a 50% chance to target the caster. Otherwise, it affects a randomly determined target within its maximum range. Spells that have an area of effect center on the caster or the randomly determined target, as appropriate. If a creature has a magic item, special ability, or other resource that turns spells away from it, randomly determine a new target from all creatures that stand within the spell's range.

Mirrored snow also affects supernatural and spell-like abilities. The snow has no effect on abilities that take the form of a cone. Technically, the cone targets the squares adjacent to the caster and then grows from there. Thus, it does not meet the requirements given above. By the same token, any area of effect spell centered at a range of 10 ft. or less from the caster does not suffer a random re-targeting.

If a spell has an unlimited range, such as *scrying*, it affects a randomly picked creature within 1d100 feet of the initial target if it does not bounce back at the caster. If no such targets are in that area, the spell fails to function. Its energy bounces around at random, reflected again and again by the snow until it loses its potency.

As an optional rule, you can randomly re-center area of effect spells rather than force them to target a creature. Roll 1d100 to determine the distance from the initial target area in feet, and then roll 1d4 to determine the direction. Treat a 1 as north, 2 as east, 3 as south, and 4 as west. If the spell would center in the middle of a solid object, such as a cave wall, place it at the object's upper surface or at its edge.

**Weak Mirrored Snow (CR 1/2):** Fortitude save DC 8; 24 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; temporary blindness (4d6 hours); Special: Spellcraft DC 15 to avoid altering spell target.

**Typical Mirrored Snow (CR 1):** Fortitude save DC 13; 12 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; temporary blindness (4d12 hours); Spellcraft DC 20 to avoid altering spell target.

**Strong Mirrored Snow (CR 2):** Fortitude save DC 16; 24 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; temporary blindness (1d4+1 days); Spellcraft DC 25 to avoid altering spell target.

## ARCTIC COMBAT TERRAIN

Snow and ice present daunting obstacles for adventurers when they merely wish to cross them in peace. During a fight, a slippery patch can spell a warrior's doom. Snow slows down characters while concealing some creatures from sight. A patch of ice might hide a freezing pool of water, a hazard that can end an unlucky character's life. This section presents rules for several unique terrain traits that you can use to spice up your polar combat encounters.

### ICE

It costs 2 squares of movement to enter a square covered by ice, and the DC of Balance and Tumble checks increases by 5. A DC 10 Balance check is required to run or charge across an area covered with ice. Moving up or down an icy, sloped surface is difficult under the most favorable conditions. A creature can spend 4 squares of movement to enter a sloped ice square, whether he moves up or down, to avoid making a Balance check. Otherwise, he can spend 2 squares of movement to make a DC 10 Balance check or 1 square to make a DC 20 check. On a successful check the creature moves as normal. On a failed check, the creature slips, falls, and slides down to the slope's base. The creature takes 1d6 points of damage for every 30 ft. it slides, taking no damage if it slides less than that distance. The creature is



prone in the square at the slope's base and its action immediately ends.

Ice has hardness 0 and 3 hit points per inch of thickness. Aquatic creatures in cold climes sometimes lurk beneath it, watching for moving shapes above to attack. Ice must be several inches thick to support the typical Medium creature. Assume that 1 inch of ice can support 100 lbs., 2 inches 200 lbs., and so on.

An experienced wilderness traveler can spot patches of thin ice, but greenhorns can unwittingly blunder into them. A character who stops to scan an area must make a DC 10 Survival check to note areas of thin ice, while a DC 20 check allows him to notice them without making any special effort. A character who weighs less than 50 lbs. above the weight that the ice can support causes it to crack and shatter for one round. If his turn ends on the ice, a spider web of cracks forms in the squares he occupies. If he ends his next action on the cracked ice, it breaks and he falls in. The space he occupies becomes a hole, with the ice broken and unable to support any weight. Obviously, if the character moves off the ice before it breaks he

avoids plunging beneath it. A creature does not fall in if any part of its face occupies a non-ice square, though the ice still breaks beneath it.

## SNOW

A thick, monotonous blanket of snow obscures the land and makes for difficult going. Explorers must push it aside and work to move through it, slowing their progress considerably. Arctic creatures hide within it, waiting for prey to pass by before arising to attack. While a fresh snowfall may provide a beautiful sight, it also heralds hazardous and exhausting days of travel ahead.

The snow's depth determines its effects as a terrain feature. Rather than measure it in absolute terms, these rules assign a creature size rating, such as Small, Large, or Colossal, to it. Creatures with the same size as the snow stand waist-deep within it, making it difficult but not impossible for them to move. Larger ones have an easier time, since it comes up to about the level of their knees. Smaller creatures must toil to slog through it.





It costs a creature 3 squares of movement to enter a square that has its size in snow depth. Smaller creatures must spend 4 squares, while larger ones need only spend 2 squares. Creatures that are more than two size categories larger than the snow spend only 1 square as normal. Creatures that must pay more than 2 squares to enter a snowy region cannot run or charge through it.

Snow provides some cover to smaller creatures, and in some areas monsters can hide beneath it. A creature with a size less than or equal to the snow's depth gains a +2 cover bonus to AC. A creature with a size two or more categories smaller than the snow can burrow into it, gaining complete cover from attacks. However, the creature cannot see its opponents unless it has blindsight or a similar ability. It takes a full-round action to burrow into the snow. A creature that does so cannot move unless it has a burrow movement speed. It must use a move action to break free of the snow. A creature that breaks free loses complete cover but may use subsequent actions to move or attack as normal. A creature that burrowed in the snow gains a +10 circum-

stance bonus to Hide checks. Though it is out of sight, the signs of disturbed snow can still tip off an observer to its presence.

As an optional rule, you can introduce much more detail into these rules. Creatures with the same size rating as the snow pay 3 squares to enter it as a normal. Smaller creatures pay 1 extra square for each size category lower than the snow's size. Larger ones pay 1 less square, to a minimum of 1, for each category larger. Use this rule if your campaign is set in an arctic region and snow will play a much larger role in the action. It provides for more exact simulation and makes creature size a much more important factor in combat.

## WATER

Freezing cold water is much deadlier than the typical hazard. Not only must a character hold his breath, but the frigid conditions sap his strength and vitality. An explorer unlucky enough to fall through ice must find his way back to the gap above him. When a PC drops through, he loses his sense of direction and must struggle to orient himself in the water.

Cold water inflicts 1d6 points of nonlethal damage per round against any character submerged in it. A Fortitude save (DC 15) halves this damage. If the PC falls through the ice, he must make a Will save (DC 20) to keep his wits about him. On a successful save, he calmly keeps track of his position and can swim back to the gap he fell through as normal. Otherwise, he must make a Spot check (DC 15) as a standard action to find his way to safety.

Once a character makes it back to safety, his troubles are not yet over. Wet clothing can be deadly in an arctic environment. Until he finds warm, dry clothes, the character suffers double damage from any cold-related hazards and a -4 circumstance penalty on saves against them. These penalties apply only to hazards, not cold attacks or spells.

# ARCTIC MONSTERS

Few creatures can survive in the extreme arctic cold, but the ones that manage to find a place amongst the ice and snow are perhaps the most dangerous creatures a party of adventurers can face. Like deserts and other dangerous environs, the cold regions of the world force creatures to adapt or die. This process breeds tough, deadly monsters.

## DEVIL, ICE

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While the rigid laws of hell compel most devils to serve within a strictly defined hierarchy, in some cases these fiends strike out on their own to serve their personal interests and goals. Ice devils sometimes flee to arctic environs in the material plane, seeking isolated, desolate corners of the world where they can hatch their plans. These ice devils have the physical and magical strength to dominate clans of monstrous humanoids and compel service from evil wizards and ambitious high priests. Many of them have levels, as their inherent abilities qualify them for prestige classes without taking core classes first.

An ice devil tyrant slowly gathers strength to its side. The mightiest of these fiends imbues the arctic ice with the encroaching trait (see above), forming an unstoppable legion of ice that slowly swallows the world. As beings that do not age, they can afford to wait for hundreds or even thousands of years for their plans to come to fruition. Characters who struggle against these villains may find themselves allied with the forces of hell, though only temporarily. Renegade ice devils are a threat to hell's order, as they represent the potential for lesser fiends to ignore their duties and gain personal power. Diabolic assassins, cultists, and others may want to see an ice devil defeated just as much as a crusading paladin or cleric.

## DRAGON, WHITE

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While other dragons are acknowledged as the masters of the regions they inhabit, white dragons are met with much less fear. As the smallest and least intelligent of evil dragons, they are

more akin to wild animals than calculating, conquering tyrants. Only the oldest of these wyrms commands respect, with many of their lesser kin hunted by other monsters or kept as pets and slaves by frost giants and other intelligent races. The region around a white dragon's lair is usually desolate and empty of life. These creatures viciously attack any morsels that enter their domains, as the younger ones usually lack the self-control and intelligence to keep a low profile. They prefer to carve their lairs from ice, relying on their claws and strength to gouge a suitable opening in a glacier. With their ability to walk on ice, they craft tunnels with steep vertical climbs, forcing humanoids to make slow progress to invade their chambers.

White dragons are fiercely territorial. The eldest amongst them love intensely cold environments, forcing the youngest of this species to cluster at the edge of the arctic environment. For this reason, younger white dragons are always a threat to cities and towns on the border of a cold region. Over time, an attack is inevitable as the white dragons push their young closer and closer to the edge of the zone they can inhabit. Worst of all, some exceptional young white dragons may find clans of goblins, kobolds, and other easily dominated creatures. By bullying these creatures, a young white dragon can form a small army to conquer towns and villages and claim loot and fresh food.

## ELEMENTAL, AIR

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Icy winds scour the frigid lands of the world, and air elementals are more common in cold areas than in other climates. Sometimes, evil elementals swoop down to the surface in search of treasure or the simple joy of tormenting humanoids and animals. These vicious hunters prefer to use their whirlwinds to pick up a victim, carry him miles from his allies and supplies, and dump him into the middle of nowhere. The elementals then watch over him, patiently waiting for the freezing cold to finish him. The greediest, most aggressive elementals sometimes keep small treasure vaults in areas inaccessible by foot. They gather up any shiny, interesting bits left behind by those who succumb to the cold and guard them with a miser's vigilance.

## FROST WORM

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Sages theorize that these vicious predators are the creation of some mad wizard who delved into the secrets of ice magic. Regardless of their genesis, these creatures are amongst the most feared of arctic predators. They ambush travelers from below, bursting through earth and ice to attack. They rely on their hypnotic call to lull enemies into a defenseless state before blasting them with their icy breath. Few creatures can survive such an assault, leaving the worm with a feast of icy flesh. In some rare cases, a pair of mated frost worms hunts together. In this case, the worms alternate the use of their call, with one attacking while the second trills, then reversing their roles once their enemies have resisted the effect.

## GIANT, FROST

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One of the few intelligent species that makes its home in frigid climes, frost giants are renowned for their great strength and brutality. They sweep across their territory in search of slaves and useful monsters, slaying any adults they encounter and taking young white dragons, frost worms, and other creatures as pets. To the frost giants' way of thinking, they are the true inheritors of the cold regions. Any other creatures that set foot in their realms are nothing more than potential servants. During the coldest winters, they range farther into civilized lands in search of treasure and food. These raids can last for months as the giants live off the land and follow the cold weather farther and farther from their homes. As the weather warms, they follow a different track homeward in search of new victims. While these raids can turn a kingdom into a wasteland, they provide a convenient opportunity for a cunning strategist to strike at the giant's homes when they are poorly guarded.

## REMORHAZ

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This deadly predator provides an unwelcome surprise for explorers, as the great heat its body emits can melt steel and scorch a monk's hands. Luckily, these beasts operate with little more than an animal's cunning. They prefer to attack from ambush, burrowing hollow gaps beneath the ice from which they can assault their prey. Sometimes, they leave thin layers of ice intact. Explorers who blunder into these traps fall into the remorhaz's burrow,

giving them no chance to recover before they are devoured. In some cases, powerful wizards and frost giants capture and domesticate remorhaz grubs, using them to carve tunnels and fortresses in the ice. A remorhaz might even be rendered nearly mindless and passive through heavy doses of mind-affecting poisons combined with simple but effective surgery, turning them into motionless, biological heating units. Evil priests who establish temples in the cold north use their spells to produce sustenance for them, providing their lairs with nearly limitless protection against the cold. Best of all, these living engines provide an intimidating display for guests.

## WINTER WOLF

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These predators possess a vicious cunning that many travelers have underestimated, much to the wolves' pleasure. When faced with a weaker opponent, the wolves attack from all directions. They unleash their breath weapons as often as possible, even choosing to blast their pack mates as they possess immunity to cold attacks. In the face of stiffer opposition, the wolves use cunning tactics to overcome them. A sole wolf might attack and run away, hoping to split up their enemies. In other cases, they carry clothes, bits of armor, small treasures, and other scraps from previous victims in their teeth. The wolves are aware that some travelers may rush to aid those in danger, while others could be drawn by the promise of treasure. Regardless of the stratagem they employ, the wolves rely on a few of their number to lure prey into an enclosed area where the rest of the pack can cut off their escape and catch them all within the range of their breath attacks.

Winter wolves sometimes work with frost giants, but they are too intelligent to function as mere pets. The giants grudgingly treat them as allies, exchanging food and shelter in return for the wolves' aid in battle. Sometimes, a party of adventurers can bribe winter wolf guards into abandoning the giants with food, treasure, and other valuables, particularly if the giants have mistreated them.

# CHAPTER TEN

# WASTELANDS

Volcanic vents eject magma in great explosions, scouring the land of all life and turning it into a scorched wasteland. An ancient magical cataclysm turned the once verdant fields of a great empire into a shattered dustbowl of swirling, magical storms. Far to the east, magicians navigate mystic vessels that sail on a sea formed from the bone dust left in the aftermath of a cosmic battle at the beginning of time.

While wastelands may have a few details in common, their origins and natures are varied and unique. In terms of fantasy worlds, there are countless reasons why a region could become devoid of wholesome life. Demons could invade an area, devouring everything they encounter and driving the survivors from their newly claimed territory. A magical experiment could go horribly wrong, blasting an area with magical fire that incinerates everything within 100 miles. Of course mundane causes such as an extremely cold climate, long periods without rain, and rocky, infertile terrain can all produce wastelands.

Wastelands have a few basic traits in common for the purposes of these rules. They cannot support plants and animals in great numbers. Their environments are simply too harsh for most creatures to survive. Some factor, whether climatic or magical, prevents forests or grasses

from taking root. On the other hand, strange and bizarre creatures could flourish in these regions. Tribes of orcs might take refuge within a rocky, broken region of active volcanoes to avoid the armies of civilized realms. They emerge to raid and plunder cities unfortunate enough to lie close to their territory, returning to their lands with captives, treasure, and supplies.

Creating a wasteland is somewhat different from generating the other terrain types in this book. Before you can add traits and features to a wasteland, you need to consider how it became a lifeless, unforgiving region of wilderness. Weather effects drive some of the origins featured in this chapter. Others have their source in powerful magic and strange effects that can warp and twist the landscape.

Note that while deserts and arctic terrain could be considered wastelands, they receive their own sections in this book. This section focuses on the types of wasteland that might appear in fantasy worlds but are mostly unknown in the real world.

The rules and game mechanics in this chapter, including the names, descriptions, and stat blocks of threats and hazards, are designated as **Open Game Content**.



## WASTELAND ORIGINS

The following origins can apply to the wastelands you create. Each of them introduces an environmental factor into the region that explains why plant and animal life cannot flourish there. Some of these effects refer to Chapter 11's rules on weather and climate. In those cases, you can wait to fill out the details on the wasteland until you are ready to determine the wasteland's weather effects. The rules that deal with weather serve to guide you in picking a climate that fits the feel and terrain that you want to use.

The origins that do not focus on weather list a few effects and traits that you can use to customize them and bring their unique characteristics into play during game sessions.

### CHAOS WASTELANDS

The winds swirl and twist in the air, sometimes producing hurricane-force gusts and heavy rains. The next day, the sun beats down with an unrelenting fury, while the day after heavy snow chokes the land beneath a thick, white carpet. The creatures of these mad lands exhibit an array of strange deformities, growing new limbs, acquiring bizarre powers, and shifting and changing at the same rate as the environment around them.

Within these lands, the power of chaos rules all. While the basic, cosmic principles of law still hold enough strength to bind reality together, the rising tide of chaos throws the physical world into a blender that warps, twists, and changes it at will. These realms are known as chaos wastelands, and no sane creature seeks them out. Civilization as known to most creatures is impossible in these lands, while the life forms that do dwell within the wastes resemble a wide variety of creatures. Some are legless humanoids that drag themselves along with their arms. Others resemble

fusions of lizards, fish, and mammals. In some cases, humans, orcs, goblins, and other creatures seek out these lands. Driven by the siren call of the chaos gods, they stumble through the wastelands in search of enlightenment. Mad priests, bloodthirsty marauders, and power hungry wizards establish their homes here, venturing into civilized lands to raid villages for food and treasure or simply to buy supplies.

Chaos wastelands arise for a number of reasons. Sometimes, a catastrophic surge of planar energy rends and tears the border between worlds, causing a tremendous influx of chaotic energy to twist and change the land. Stone melts, creatures change and shift, and storm clouds erupt in boiling water, thick snow, and flaming coals. Even after the rift seals, the lingering effects of chaos remain. Perhaps in time the region can return to normal, but in the meantime the power of chaos keeps it in a perpetual state of upheaval.

The border between the planes could be ruptured by a powerful spell, a ritual enacted by the followers of a chaos god, or even the natural flux of energy between the planes. In any case, little remains unchanged in the aftermath of the chaos incursion. The creatures once found in the region, from lowly herd animals to intelligent humanoids, assume a wide range of new forms. Most of them die as a result of the transformation, leaving behind barren fields littered with dead, twisted plants.

Cities and entire kingdoms become vast mausoleums, their streets, buildings, and roads left empty. For this reason, chaos lands hold a sometimes irresistible lure for adventurers. In some cases, the stone and wood of a city remain intact along with the treasures held within them. The subtle effects of chaos can also transform a city's structures to resemble almost any urban area erected by cultures across the multiverse. A band of explorers could discover a red clay city sculpted in the style of the wind folk of G'nar, a sea coral city of the reef kings, and a grim, stone structure of the dwarf lords. All these cities would be found on the sites of pre-disaster settlements. With the destruction of life caused by the chaos flood, these streets are invariably deserted, with little more than dusty bones to suggest that they were ever anything else.

Chaos lands present a variety of threats to travelers. Their ever-changing nature makes them difficult to map, as storms of chaos energy can spawn new landmarks while destroying old ones. Ravenous beasts, both creatures created with the flood of chaotic energy and those drawn to this land because of it, roam the land in search of prey. Hydras, chaos beasts, demons, undead, and other monstrosities find the flux of energy comforting. They occur in much greater numbers than normal, as the chaos tides draw them to the wasteland from across the continent. Cultists of the gods of chaos, primarily chaotic neutral and chaotic evil deities, enter these lands in hopes of finding gateways to their lords' realms, powerful beings of chaos to worship, and enlightenment in the swirling madness that infests these places.

Chaos lands offer several environmental hazards that travelers must contend with. The raw energy of chaos can warp and twist a creature's body and mind, turning it into a grim parody of its original form.

*Faint chaos-tainted lands* have only a minimal level of background chaotic energy. Over long periods of time, creatures slowly change their forms as a result of the warping effect of chaos. A goblin may grow a head that resembles a fly's, or an elk's tongue could elongate like a tentacle.

**Faint Chaos Taint (CR 1/2):** Fortitude save DC 5; 1 day interval; -1 modifier/interval; Special: A creature that fails its saving throw against this hazard suffers a dramatic change to its physical form or mental balance. Select an ability score at random by rolling 1d6, with 1 indicating Strength, 2 Dexterity, and so forth. There is a 50% chance that the ability increases by 1d4 points. Otherwise, it loses 1d4 points. This loss is permanent unless the creature receives a *remove curse* spell at any time after suffering the change. After the creature fails a saving throw, its total interval penalty returns to 0. To model the physical change the creature suffers, select a page at random from a monster book of your choice. From the creatures listed there, select a physical trait from one and give it to the warped creature. This trait represents an alteration to the creature's physical body. It does not gain any magical or special abilities due to the transformation.

*Moderate chaos-tainted lands* are wracked with frequent storms of chaotic energy, resulting in strange weather and dangerous conditions. Many of the monsters and creatures found in these lands have been repeatedly warped by the raw, chaos energy that floods the area. Only those creatures that have spent a few days in the area remain untouched.

**Moderate Chaos Taint (CR 1):** Fortitude save DC 5; 12 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; Special: See the faint chaos taint hazard above.

*Severely chaos-tainted lands* have suffered intense, continuous floods of chaos energy. Only the newest visitors to the land lack signs of change, while in many areas the terrain and surviving plants resemble nothing found on the material world. Cultists flock to these lands, eager to receive the blasphemous favors of their dark, mad gods. Entire orc and goblin tribes can disappear into these lands and emerge with forms that hide their true nature.

**Severe Chaos Taint (CR 3):** Fortitude save DC 5; 6 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; Special: See the faint chaos taint hazard above.

In addition to the warping power of chaos, adventurers must cope with a land rife with hazardous areas and infested with deadly monsters. Volcanoes arise from the midst of plains, rivers run red with blood, and horrid beasts lurk within every shadow. The magical weather conditions given in Chapter 11, such as acid rain and meteor showers, are both relatively common in these wastelands.

When designing encounters, use the mutation guidelines to give the monsters strange traits. A tribe of orcs may have dog heads and leathery, scaled skin. You do not need to give every individual monster a set of unique traits. It may become tiresome to choose unique traits for each of the 30 orcs that the party must fight. In that case, you can create a generic set of details and apply them to all the monsters in the group.

## CONTAGION

To one ignorant of history, this wasteland might appear as a lush, vibrant land. The forests are green and healthy. Birds flutter through the sky, and deer, rabbits, and squirrels wander amongst the trees. Only the occasional growl of a bear or bobcat dispels the pas-

toral scene. Yet, a traveler who wanders a day or more may find the first signs of the fallen civilization that once ruled this land. The city's streets are choked with undergrowth, weeds, and the bones of hundreds of humanoids. Its treasure scattered amongst the ancient dead or resting forgotten on abandoned shelves and in ancient chests. Soon after this grim discovery, the traveler develops the first signs of the illness that scythed through the region's populace, turning what was once a bustling kingdom into a mass grave.

A contagion can turn a bustling city into a mausoleum in a matter of weeks or even days. Perhaps sustained by black magic and other evil forces, the disease continues to thrive even decades after it first erupted. Worst of all, mundane animals, plants, and other creatures could remain unharmed by it. Visitors ignorant of the cataclysm could blunder into these lands and seal their dooms, mistaking a cursed city for the find of a lifetime. Alternatively, the disease could kill all forms of life. Trees turn brown and rot from the inside out, animals die en masse, and the soil turns a sickly, yellow hue. In this case, only the most foolhardy explorer could stumble into this region unawares.

Despite the risk posed by the contagion, treasure hunters and explorers could be tempted into visiting these wastelands. Perhaps the illness spreads and the cure can only be found within the ruins of the first city it struck. A mighty, forgotten artifact may have been kept in the stricken region. The characters must cope with the disease, undead creatures that stalk the area, and perhaps cultists of a god of death and disease who revere this area as holy ground. Protected by their god, the disease warps and twists them into forms he finds pleasing while sustaining their lives.

**Light Contagion (CR 1/2):** Fortitude save DC 5; 2 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; Special: On a failed save, the wasting disease that wiped out the region's people takes hold on a character. Luckily, over the years it has grown weaker, though feeble characters could still be quickly overcome by it. This disease has an incubation period of 1 day, a Fortitude save to resist it of DC 10, and it inflicts 1d3 Con damage.

**Moderate Contagion (CR 1):** Fortitude save DC 10; 2 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval;



**Special:** The terrible illness that killed the region's inhabitants infects the character, eating away at his body and sapping his vitality. His skin turns a sickly green and begins to fall off in small clumps. This disease has an incubation period of 1 day, a Fortitude save to resist it of DC 14, and it inflicts 1d4 Con damage.

**Severe Contagion (CR 3):** Fortitude save DC 15; 2 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; **Special:** The character contracts a vicious disease that can kill or cripple victims in a matter of days. The long years since it first struck have done nothing to weaken its potency. Red blisters and runny sores erupt across his skin. This disease has an incubation period of 1 day, a Fortitude save to resist it of DC 20, and it inflicts 1d6 Con damage.

## CURSE

In ages past, or perhaps in recent history, a great curse befell the land and rendered it unfit for man, beast, or tree. The curse can take on a wide variety of forms. A subtler effect could make it impossible for any animal or plant to grow and flourish. Fields planted in the spring

failed to bring forth even the smallest plant by midsummer. Any attempts to breed cattle, horses, and other animals failed. The population in the region slowly dwindled as no children were born and many families sold their land and fled for more welcoming lands.

The gods could be behind this curse, perhaps punishing a wicked people who turned to evil and decadence. The high priests of a powerful deity may have been executed by an impious king who refused to listen to their counsel, earning the god's wrath. In other cases, the curse's source could be related to a powerful spellcaster or a broken taboo. A traveling band of halflings may have been wrongfully imprisoned for the kidnapping of a young child. With mobs of commoners demanding justice, the king may have put them to death. The halfling matriarch could name a dreadful curse upon the land, with her unjust death sealing the pact that ruined the land.

In general, most curses have their origins in crimes against nature, offenses rendered towards the gods, and foolish acts driven by malice, greed, and hubris. All of them





have a subtle, devastating effect on the region, slowly making it uninhabitable for living beings. Fire and brimstone effects are covered below under the variety of different cataclysms that can strike a region. A curse is driven by the actions of the region's inhabitants. It chokes off life over a period of time rather than blasting it into ruin. If a cataclysm burns a civilization to the ground in the course of a night, a curse inflicts a subtle but distracting rot upon it that slowly drives away its inhabitants. After months or years, the place becomes a vacant, overgrown, abandoned ruin.

A curse's primary trait rests in its origin. The being or event that spawned the curse determines its effects. You may decide that you want to match one set of mechanics with a different origin. Feel free to do so. The examples given here are just that, examples you can use as a basis for your own creative endeavors.

### DIVINE

For whatever reason, the gods have turned their backs on this place and its people. Divine magic sputters and fails, while fell energy gathers to strike at any living creatures

unfortunate enough to wander into this land. Plants fail to grow, and the only creatures that remain are twisted and misshapen. Explorers who spend too much time in this wasteland risk arousing the gods' anger, calling divine wrath down upon themselves.

A land affected by a divine curse is strangely quiet. Birds and other animals avoid this area, leaving it to strange, twisted monsters. Many aberrations seek refuge in a wasteland, as they are beyond the reproach of humanoid deities. Within the ruins of great cities, savage, cannibalistic descendants of the original inhabitants might worship demons and dark gods who oppose the deities responsible for the judgment against them. The few trees and grasses that grow show signs of weird tumors and bizarre mutations.

Areas under a divine curse are usually forbidden to the faithful. To prevent future generations from forgetting the sins of the past, the gods levy a steep price on those who remain in a cursed place too long. This effect can have one of three different strength levels. Note that evil creatures are usually immune to these



effects unless an entire pantheon gathered to punish a civilization. Otherwise, the lords of evil protect their followers and other enemies of justice from the curse. If the characters enter a cursed land on a holy quest, they ignore the hazards arrayed against them.

**Curse of Ill Favor (Minor Curse) (CR 1/2):** Will save DC 15; 24 hour interval; -1 penalty/interval; -1 luck penalty to saves; Special: The gods curse the transgressors with bad luck. Clerics and paladins suffer a -2 penalty on saves against this hazard. Evil characters are unaffected by it. Only a sacrifice worth 100 gp made in the name of the god responsible for the curse can lift this penalty. One sacrifice removes the curse from all party members.

**Mark of Heresy (Moderate Curse) (CR 1):** Will save DC 20; 24 hour interval; -1 penalty/interval; -2 penalty to AC and all Charisma-related skill checks; Special: The gods cause painful boils to develop on any who linger too long in the areas they have declared forbidden. In addition, arrows and sword blows seem drawn to the cursed characters with uncanny accuracy. Clerics and paladins suffer a -4

penalty on saves against this hazard. Evil characters are unaffected by it. Only a sacrifice worth 250 gp made in the name of the god responsible for the curse can lift this penalty. One sacrifice removes the curse from all party members.

**Baneful Divine Judgment (Major Curse) (CR 3):** Will save DC 25; 24 hour interval; -1 penalty/interval; -4 penalty to attribute of DM's choice; Special: Angered by those who would ignore their dictates, the gods drain the heretic's strength, agility, or wits from him until he repents. Clerics and paladins suffer a -4 penalty on saves against this hazard. Evil characters are unaffected by it. Only a sacrifice worth 500 gp made in the name of the god responsible for the curse can lift this penalty. One sacrifice removes the curse from all party members.

#### JUDGMENT†

The residents of this accursed land violated the natural order in some way, committing crimes against nature or their fellow man that eventually led to their downfall. Curses brought about as a judgment stem



from specific incidents and the powerful will of a single wronged individual. An unjustly executed man declares a curse upon his accusers moments before the headsman's axe slays him. A conclave of wizards completes a mighty ritual as the commoners gather to burn their tower and kill them. Typically, mass hysteria, greed, or arrogance drives an entire society to commit a grievous crime. The victims of this act, with their dying breaths, inflict their judgment upon the land. Sages believe that a powerful, subtle god of judgment and justice created this phenomenon. While rare, its effects are undeniable.

In a land damned by an innocent victim's judgment, the baneful energies conjured by the curse wreak havoc with the natural order. While a divine curse visits bad luck and personal ruin on a character, a judgment takes on a much more violent, terrible aspect. Characters affected by it may fall ill with a wasting illness. Divine magic fails to function properly, as the life-giving effects of the gods' spells flicker and die. If the gods' curses work in a subtle, quiet manner, a damning judgment upon the land is a sledgehammer.

Aside from the mechanical effects of the curse, a wasteland burdened with this type of curse is similar to one under divine punishment. Natural creatures avoid the land, while its sinister reputation keeps travelers from visiting it. Abominations, twisted creatures, and aberrations may dwell in the cursed land, safe from the prying eyes of civilized men. Evil creatures are immune to the curse's effects, as these judgments are typically weighed against good or neutral peoples that violate their ethos in some manner.

A judgment can be removed from the land if the root cause behind it is somehow remedied. Perhaps an unjustly slain man can be raised from the dead or given a proper burial. The parties responsible for the baneful judgment might linger on as undead creatures. Their destruction returns harmony to the land.

**Levy of the Righteous (Minor Curse) (CR 1):** Will save DC 15; 6 hour interval; -1 penalty/interval; -1 circumstance penalty to checks, attacks, and saves; Special: The land itself reacts to destroy any who would enter this blasted region. Insects crawl into tunics and bite at exposed flesh, sudden gusts of wind knock a character off balance just as he tries to dodge a spell, and sword pommels seem forever coated in a slick layer of moisture no matter how often the party wipes them down. The curse gathers around each party member and turns the natural world against them. Once a character leaves this area, the curse no longer affects him.

**Death Curse (Moderate Curse) (CR 3):** Will save DC 20; 6 hour interval; -1 penalty/interval; +2 bonus to opponents' damage; Special: This curse calls to its victims' blood, causing it to well forth with alarming speed when they suffer even a minor injury. When blood splatters on the ground, the soil quickly absorbs it. Awakened by the baneful curse of an innocent, the land hungers for the blood those who would violate its sanctity. Note that as an unnamed bonus, the effects of this curse stack with each unsuccessful save. Leaving the cursed territory removes this hazard's effects and resets its bonus to zero as normal.

**Judgment of the Innocent (Major Curse) (CR 8):** Will save DC 25; 12 hour interval; -1 penalty/interval; 2 points of temporary damage

to all attributes; Special: The air of the cursed realm has a foul, unhealthy odor. The soil has turned into a gray, ash-like material, while the water runs black as oil or red as blood. Damned to an eternity of punishment by some horrible crime against humanity, this region has been turned into a realm of anti-life. Travelers who wander into it slowly lose their life force until they crumple into a withered husk. The attributes heal as normal for temporary damage once a PC leaves the cursed area.

## MAGICAL CATAclySM

The practice of magic presents many risks to even the most powerful spellcasters. Wizards have researched and created a wide assortment of spells, exhausting the safest, easiest-to-understand aspects of magic. In many cases, all that remains for intensive research are magical practices that delve into energies and practices that might be better left alone. Most investigators into eldritch matters proceed with caution, carefully making forays into the great unknown that lies beyond the bounds of arcane knowledge. They uncover new affinities between magical forces and physical objects, unique formulas that yield novel spells, and other useful discoveries.

Normally the mundane world continues to go through its daily paces without any knowledge of the great work that proceeds in its midst. Tragically, in a few rare instances a magical experiment runs out of control. In the space of a few heartbeats, a city can transform from a bustling metropolis to a burning wasteland as a wizard unleashes forces he cannot control. A wizard's spell could have unintended consequences. He may gather undreamed of power that slips from his control and causes a massive explosion. A gateway to another world could form the slightest imperfection, causing the stuff of the material world to unravel and devastate the region. In any case, the widespread destruction transforms the area for miles around into a blasted wasteland. The fabric of magic, warped, twisted, and torn asunder by the cataclysm, alters spells cast within the area. Given hundreds of years the damage might repair itself, but until that time the area remains a wasteland.

Areas wracked by an arcane cataclysm feature two distinct effects. The high level of ambient magical energy scorches living flesh over time,

slowly but surely cooking a creature from the inside out. The longer a traveler remains in this area, the more damage he takes. The fluctuations in magical energy make it difficult to use even the simplest spells. Casters find that the power their incantations should draw and focus either fizzles out and fails to appear or flows over them like a tsunami, possibly causing a magical backlash.

The rampant energy hazard represents these two threats. They are linked in their strength and overall effects, as the higher the fluctuation in energy, the more damage has been dealt to the fabric of magic.

**Mild Arcane Fluctuation (CR 1/2):** Fortitude save DC 10; 1 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; 1d4 damage; Special: The changes in the ambient magical energy make it difficult for arcane spellcasters (bards, sorcerers, and wizards) to form their spells. Each time they attempt to use one, they must make Spellcraft checks (DC 1d20+5) to properly complete the incantation. The variable spell DC represents the changes in local conditions that can make spells easier or harder to complete. On a failed check, there is a 75% chance that the spell fizzles harmlessly. The caster counts as having used the spell, but it has no effect. Otherwise, the magical backlash causes a fiery burst of energy in a 20-ft. spread centered on the caster that inflicts 2 points of damage per level of the spell. No save is allowed against this effect as the area flashes with energy.

**Moderate Arcane Fluctuation (CR 1):** Fortitude save DC 15; 1 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; 1d6 damage; Special: As per the mild arcane fluctuation, save that the Spellcraft DC is 1d20+10 and the damage caused by a catastrophic failure is 3 points per spell level.

**Severe Arcane Fluctuation (CR 2):** Fortitude save DC 20; 1 hour interval; -1 modifier/interval; 1d6 damage; Special: As per the mild arcane fluctuation, save that the Spellcraft DC is 1d20+15 and the damage caused by a catastrophic failure is 4 points per spell level.

## NATURAL CATAclySM

Volcanoes erupt in the mountains, raining ash and dust on the cities below and blotting out the sun. Locusts swarm from the sky, stripping crops from the land and laying

bare entire forests within the space of a moment. A river overflows its banks, sweeping away entire cities and expunging all traces of a kingdom from the land. While magic and divine power can level civilizations, the forces of nature are equally adept at making a mockery of humanity's plans.

An area sundered by a natural cataclysm suffers damage far beyond the sort that could be repaired within a few weeks or months. The disaster is so widespread and the changes so severe that it renders an area uninhabitable. A meteor can slam into a region, blasting it into oblivion. A previously dormant chain of volcanoes could erupt in a massive flare, burying cities in lava and ash. The environment changes in such a way that settlers and travelers avoid it.

This type of wasteland comes in a variety of forms, each with a unique origin and a set of traits you can use to model it. Some of these wastelands also draw on the advanced traits given later in this section and the weather rules from Chapter 11.

**Flooding:** A great tsunami washes over the land, turning fertile terrain into a flooded mire. An ancient dam collapses, allowing a long-restrained river to return to its natural course. Endless days and months of rain, perhaps a freak occurrence or a curse from the gods, drench the land until new rivers and lakes form. In this wasteland, previously inhabitable land becomes a massive swamp in a short period of time. Consult the section on swamp terrain for traits and guidelines you can use for this wasteland. In addition, ancient ruins might peak through the water at its lowest levels. Great treasures lie trapped within the muck, while magical artifacts buried in the mud exert a warping influence on the mundane animals and plants that grow near it.

**Volcanism:** The ground cracks and shudders as molten rock, driven by relentless pressure, erupts from the surface. Rivers of lava cleave through the landscape, as volcanoes eject ash and dust into the sky. The ruins of ancient cities are choked with molten rock. In some areas, the magma may have cooled to allow explorers relatively easy access to the treasures and sites hidden there. Planar creatures with an affinity for hot regions, such as azers and fire elementals, are probably common in a volcanic

wasteland. Areas wracked by volcanism are as hot as a desert. Consult Chapter 11 for full rules on heat dangers. The hellish and extreme heat traits are the best options you can use. The chapter on mountains also covers volcanic peaks and ranges. In addition, the volcanic advanced trait, given later in this chapter, models a land with rivers of lava, hot steam geysers, and other dangers.

## SUPERNATURAL CATAclysm

While natural events can transform a region into a lifeless waste, magical disasters prove equally adept at rendering such destruction. Chapter 11 presents a pair of destructive weather types, acidic and meteoric rain, fuelled by magical, planar, and divine energies. If any of these storms lasts for an extended period of time or repeatedly strikes a region, they can transform it into a wasteland. This section gives you some ideas for how wastelands wracked by such hazards could develop and the unique terrain that can result. If you have not yet read Chapter 11, this section provides a basic overview for each effect.

### Acidic Rain

Foul, unwholesome liquid rains upon the land, melting rock, destroying forests, and slaying anything caught in the open. An acid rain is perhaps the deadliest weather effect, as it can kill most plants and many animals in a short period of time. Even powerful civilizations are helpless against this threat unless they foresee it. Even the most skilled wizards can do little to combat this threat if it persists over time. A week of acidic rain can transform a sprawling, vibrant empire into a shell of its former glory.

Wastelands wracked by acid rain consist of dead forests, melted and twisted fields of brown grass and crumbled rock, and empty cities that have long since crumbled into ruin. Obviously, acid rain might still be a hazard in this wasteland. Use the weather rules from Chapter 11 for acid storms and their effects. The few remaining creatures that dwell in the wasteland either have resistance to acid or they have found caves, buildings, and other locations that offer safety from the storms. Dwarves might endure, safely tucked away in their mountain homes. The few cities and towns that survive or have usable shelter might be hotly contested by survivors, with bandits, the remnants of any kingdoms and baronies,

and monsters all struggling mightily to claim safe ground. The acid could twist and transform creatures, especially if a magical event or curse brought about the rain. The undead could grow in numbers. Those slain by the storms have their flesh melted from their bodies, leaving behind skeletal undead that have an immunity to acid rather than cold.

Civilizations that persist in these areas might develop a strange assortment of beliefs and myths to cope with the disaster. Religious cults could form around worship of the rain or the beings that supposedly brought it about, complete with the sacrifice of strangers to appease the burning rain. Divine magic could provide enough fresh food and water to sustain a small settlement, placing tremendous power in the hands of clerics of all religions.

Lands wracked by acid rain are usually located far from civilization, as good realms would send aid to them while refugees would flee to safer areas rather than linger near their homes. This terrain provides a dangerous, alien environment that the characters might be forced to cope with while they are far from their homelands.

### METEORIC RAIN

Fiery stones hammer the ground, a punishing salvo sent from the heavens to blast the earth into dust and dirt. Forests burst into flames, cities burn and die, and even mountains tremble and collapse under the furious strength of a meteoric rain. While rare and usually lasting only a few minutes, a meteoric rain can shatter a civilized realm and turn a wilderness area into a blasted wasteland. In areas where this magical effect is common, intelligent races barely pull themselves above a barbaric level. Only those groups and creatures that can find and secure stout shelter, usually networks of natural caverns and similar havens, can endure. The lack of arable land (for the meteors destroy crops whenever they strike) keeps the population low and helps breed tension and violence between humanoid groups. With both food and space at a premium, the factions that must keep on or close to the surface struggle to eke out an existence. Most advanced civilizations dwell below ground, building fortified strongholds within great caverns and relying on trade from the underworld and subterranean animals and fungi for sustenance.



Lands wracked by meteoric rain are usually fire-blasted wastelands. The forests consist of blackened, charred tree trunks denuded of their branches by meteor blasts. Burned and splintered timber covers much of the forest's floor. The few ruins that remain are charred, wrecked, and empty. Here and there, stout stone ruins might provide shelter for the few survivors of the initial series of storms. In some cases, a large enough group can organize an effective defense of a city, repairing its walls or claiming a smaller area in town and driving away the monsters and raiders that inevitably sweep through the area.

Monsters and wild animals encountered in the wasteland are more aggressive than normal, as they must cope with the sudden, massive reduction in available prey. Many of the creatures the party encounters show obvious signs of starvation. Food and fresh water can turn even the wariest opponent into an ally, while wild animals stop attacking a foe that drops a fresh slice of meat to the ground before fleeing a fight.



In some areas, the explosive impact of a meteor can open up passages to caverns beneath the earth. Attracted by the fire, light, and fresh air, many strange animals normally found at the center of the earth could make their way to the surface. If the meteoric rain hammers an area for a time before abating, such creatures could establish control over the area. Underworld humanoids have access to supplies, are better organized than the survivors are, and can attack in force. The defenders are most likely scattered, poorly equipped, and reeling from the disaster. Drow, troglodytes, and similar creatures could seek slaves and treasure, while an outpost on the surface could prove useful in their plans of conquest or trade. Natural underworld monsters, such as purple worms, might seek out the easy prey that wanders the surface, attacking villages and even cities from below. In time, the underworld's ecology could expand to overrun and conquer a small area on the surface. By day, the region appears uninhabited, but by night the strange monsters of the underworld assume control of the land.

## ADVANCED WASTELAND TRAITS

So far, this chapter has covered the origins that can shape a wasteland and give it a basic character. This section covers the various hazards that can mark a twisted, damaged section of the earth. From active volcanoes to streams of acid, the rules given here allow you to model a variety of deadly terrain features. In addition, these features are useful in creating dangerous environments in any terrain.

### DEADLY GROUND

Boiling mud bubbles and simmers, promising to mire and roast any character who becomes trapped within it. A river of green-hued water reveals its true nature when a metal pole thrust into it smokes and melts. Lava flows down a mountain's slopes, burning the land before it and creating an impenetrable barrier. The deadly ground trait encompasses a variety of different factors and obstacles that can slow a party's progress and potentially injure a character. When you use this trait, you should determine the exact nature of the threat it poses. If you prefer, you could simply use this trait as a generic representation of the dangers the party faces in traveling through a wasteland.

As described above, the deadly ground trait covers a lot of territory. It assumes that you want to handle these dangers in an abstract manner when the PCs embark on long, cross-country trips. The combat terrain section below provides more detailed rules for using threatening terrain on a more detailed scale.

**Light Deadly Ground (CR 1/3):** Fortitude save DC 10; 2 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; 1d6 damage; Special: You may optionally select an energy type to represent the damage this hazard inflicts, such as fire or acid. Otherwise, assume that it inflicts physical damage.

**Moderate Deadly Ground (CR 1/2):** Fortitude save DC 15; 2 hour interval; +0 mod-

ifier/interval; 1d8 damage; Special: See light deadly ground, above.

**Severe Deadly Ground (CR 2):** Fortitude save DC 20; 2 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; 2d6 damage; Special: As per the light deadly ground hazard.

## PHYSICAL BARRIER

Wastelands can sometimes present terrain that is virtually impossible for a party to cross on foot. The characters follow an ancient road for a time, only to find that it ends in a vast, wide field of boiling mud. Unless the party has the ability to fly, they must turn around and find a new path through the wasteland. Even worse, if they face hazards that can damage them they must endure them for a few hours more before they reach safety. The physical barrier threat represents the possibility that the PCs can encounter terrain that halts their progress and forces them to find a new route. Unlike most hazards, it does not inflict damage or confer penalties against the party. Instead, it lengthens the time they must spend trying to travel through an area.

If you have extensively mapped out a region, this trait may not work for you. It uses an abstract measure to determine if the party blunders into difficult terrain or makes a wrong turn and must double back. If you have a detailed map of an area, you can simply rely on the PCs' route to determine if they enter territory they cannot pass or encounter any other barriers. If you would rather use an abstract measure to determine if the party has difficulty making its way through a region, then this trait is for you.

You may decide that this trait applies only to certain areas within a region. For example, as long as the party keeps to the roads that cross a wasteland they do not have to check against this hazard. As soon as they venture into the countryside, they may waste a lot of time trying to find a useable track through the wilderness.

*Light physical barriers* represent ravines, gorges, cliffs, and other simple barriers that could occur almost anywhere, not just within a wasteland. The party must spend time skirting the outer edge of these obstacles in order to pass them. It also includes smaller versions of more hazardous dangers, such as acid lakes, lava streams, and similar threats.

**Light Physical Barrier:** Survival check DC 15; 4 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; Special: On a failed check, the party must spend 1d2 hours traveling without making any progress. Subtract that time from the total they spent moving for the day to determine their progress. If the party does not include anyone with ranks in Survival, a character may instead make a Wisdom check with a -4 competence penalty. You may decide that this hazard does not apply if the party has protection against the barrier they face or the means to move around it. A party mounted on griffons can fly over most physical barriers, while a group that has immunity to fire can pick a path along the cooler parts of a lava stream.

*Moderate physical barriers* represent twisted, broken terrain that makes it difficult to navigate anything but clearly marked roads and trails. Cliffs and deep ravines sunder the land, while bubbling pools of magma, acid, and other deadly materials are scattered across the region. Only an experienced outdoorsman can pick out a safe trail through this terrain.

**Moderate Physical Barrier:** Survival check DC 20; 4 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; Special: As per the light physical barrier hazard, except the party wastes 1d3 hours.

*Severe physical barriers* are a daunting challenge to even expert rangers and barbarians. The land serves as a physical barrier, with pits, steep rises, and a variety of more exotic hazards serving to discourage travel. These wastelands can serve to anchor a realm's borders, as any attempts to move soldiers and supplies through them in large numbers is doomed to fail.

**Severe Physical Barrier:** Survival check DC 25; 4 hour interval; +0 modifier/interval; Special: As per the light physical barrier hazard, except the party wastes 1d4 hours.



# WASTELANDS

## COMBAT

### TERRAIN

Wastelands present a variety of hazardous conditions that can transform the simplest melee into a deadly struggle. Bubbling pools of mud eject geysers of searing hot water. Lava offers a quick death to any creature thrust into it, while pools of acid can melt and ruin armor and weapons. These hazards greatly increase the danger an encounter presents, but since they can be equally deadly to both the monsters and the party they do not normally alter an encounter's CR. If the monsters are prepared for the terrain, such as casting spells to protect themselves from its effects, you can increase the encounter's total EL by 1 or 2.

### ACID POOLS

In some wastelands, the sickness and foul vapors contained within the broken earth combine to transform water into a caustic, burning substance. These acid pools can turn a creature into little more than a skeleton in less than a minute, making them deadly hazards on the battlefield. Strong monsters may try to bull rush their opponents into the pools, while creatures with an immunity to acid might take cover in their shallow edges, raining spells and missile fire on opponents who do not dare close with them.

Moving into or through an acid pool costs +1 square of movement. A creature stepping into a pool of acid suffers 1d6 points of acid damage per round in knee-deep or lower areas, with no save allowed. This damage increases to 4d6 in waist-deep acid, 8d6 in neck-deep pools, and 10d6 if a character becomes completely immersed. You can double this damage for stronger acids and halve it for weaker ones.

The fumes produced by an acid pool may also be poisonous. Creatures that move within 10 ft. of the pool must make Fortitude saves (DC 13) or suffer 1 point of temporary Con damage. This poison's secondary effect deals 1d4 temporary Constitution damage. A

Fortitude save (DC 13) resists it. You can increase the save DC to 18 for potent acids and drop it to DC 8 for weak ones.

### BUBBLING MUD

Boiling water erupts from geysers in the earth, transforming the soil into a searing, bubbling pool of mud. Over time, this mud pool grows in size to pose a hazard. In battle, a bubbling mud pool represents more than a static terrain hazard. The water pressure beneath the pool sometimes builds up and releases in a sudden burst, spraying the area with fist-size chunks of scalding water and mud.

Moving into or through a mud pool costs +2 squares of movement. Bubbling mud works a bit like acid in that the deeper a creature wades into it the more damage it takes. A creature stepping into a pool of hot mud suffers 1d4 points of fire damage per round in knee-deep or lower areas, with no save allowed. This damage increases to 2d4 in waist-deep mud, 4d4 in neck-deep areas, and 5d4 if a character becomes completely immersed. Characters can drown in mud if they slip into deep areas. Use the standard rules for drowning. Treat the deep mud as quicksand, as described in the section on environmental threats in Chapter 4.

As time passes, the pressure builds beneath a pool of mud. Sooner or later, it erupts in a minor blast of heat and scalding water. On the first round of combat, there is a 10% chance that the mud bursts. Check again on subsequent rounds, increasing the chance of an eruption by 10%. If the mud erupts, all creatures standing in it or within 30 ft. of the edge of a mud pool must make Reflex saves (DC 15) or suffer 3d6 points of damage. Of that damage, 2d6 is from the heat and 1d6 from the impact of flying mud. On a successful save, a character takes half damage. After the mud erupts, reduce the chance for a burst to 10% and start the process again.

### ELECTRICAL FIELDS

In some blasted wastelands, particularly those wracked by magical forces, electrical energy flows through the ground and air. Characters walking through these areas feel their hair stand on end, while sparks fly whenever metal strikes metal. These areas represent a hidden threat, as aside from those signs they offer no

warning to combatants. When using electrical fields in an encounter, keep their size and location secret. Offer the players the clues given above, and give the characters a chance to react to them. You may allow *detect magic* to reveal a faint aura of evocation magic in areas affected by electrical fields.

An electrical field inflicts a  $-4$  penalty on all saving throws against electricity damage from spells, attacks, and all other sources. In addition, characters in metal armor risk taking damage from periodic discharges of energy. Each round, a creature or character wearing metal armor or carrying a metal weapon must make a Fortitude save (DC 10). The penalty against electricity damage does not apply to this save. This DC increases by 2 for each round a character spends within a field. On a failed save, the creature suffers 2d6 points of electricity damage and is stunned for 1d4 rounds. Creatures with resistance or immunity to electricity damage are not stunned if they take no damage. After a failed save, the creature does not need to make another save for five rounds. After this period, his save DC resets to 10 and the process starts over. The energy building up around him dissipates in a sharp crack. After it discharges, it eventually accumulates around him again. Note that a stunned creature continues to suffer exposure to this effect and must make saving throws as normal.

## LAVA

Pools of molten rock can accumulate in areas wracked with volcanic activity. These formations usually cool and harden over time, but in some cases they can be maintained by the heat and pressure produced by continued volcanic activity. Lava pools present two separate risks. First, they heat the air around them. Consult Chapter 11 for full rules on heat hazards. The extreme and hellish categories fit best with this terrain. While their intervals are too long to cover most fights, the party might be exposed to them on their way to and from the encounter area.

Falling into lava is almost instantly fatal. The melted rock sears flesh and melts all but the hardest metals. Partial exposure is less deadly, but can still overwhelm a low-level character or an injured hero. Characters exposed to lava suffer 2d6 points of fire damage (no save). Those exposed to more than knee-deep molten





rock suffer 8d6 points of fire damage, those exposed to waist deep magma endure 14d6 points of fire damage, and those exposed to levels above that take 20d6 points of fire damage. Characters suffer this damage for each round of exposure.

The shock and heat of lava exposure continues to injure a character even after he escapes the molten rock. He suffers half damage from the hazard for 1d3 rounds after he escapes it. If a character moves from deeper to shallow magma or vice versa, he suffers damage from the more dangerous of the two threats. For example, a character wades into waist-deep lava. He takes 14d6 points of damage. If he immediately escapes, he takes 7d6 points of damage for 1d3 rounds. If he instead moved to knee-deep lava, he would take 8d6 points of damage. In this case, half of the character's damage from the previous round is less than the damage he suffers from the knee-deep lava. If the character moved to shallow lava, he would take 7d6 points of fire damage because that is more than the 2d6 he would normally take from minor lava exposure.

## WASTELAND MONSTERS

Regions of wasteland are notorious for hosting a wide array of dangerous beasts. From orc tribes that find shelter in them to twisted beasts that naturally prefer tormented lands, the wastes reflect the sort of creatures that seek them out and establish lairs within them. In many cases, the kingdoms of men, elves, and dwarves expand so rapidly and aggressively that evil humanoids are left with areas that civilization does not want. In other cases, the evil deities that monsters commonly worship rend and twist the land to suit their followers while driving away the forces of good. In this case, these shattered lands are grim reminders of what is at stake in the endless war between good and evil.

The wastelands have few native creatures. Instead, most monsters and humanoid tribes

adapt to them. The creatures listed here represent the monsters that are most likely to find a wasteland to their liking.

## ATHACH

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This bizarre, giant monster is sometimes spawned by sudden environmental changes that twist and warp humanoid creatures. They arise as the mutated progeny of ogres, hill giants, and other bestial humanoids. In these environments, athachs gather in large numbers to claim control of the area. They hunt down humanoids for use as slaves, forcing them to rebuild shattered cities in a crude mockery of civilization. Athachs prefer to hole up in fortified ruins, with slaves dispatched under close watch to gather food and other supplies. Orcs and ogres can serve as taskmasters and mercenaries for these settlements, earning a safe place to settle and a share of the treasure in return for handling many of the dull or difficult tasks required to keep a settlement functioning.

## BODAK

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While normally confined to the utterly evil realms of the outer planes, these monstrosities sometimes arise in wastelands that were destroyed via planar energy or divine intervention. The influx of pure evil energy instantly kills mortal creatures exposed to it, with the stronger willed amongst them arising as bodaks. These terrible creatures hunt all living things, slaughtering good and evil beings with equal fervor. They are solitary creatures, usually keeping to isolated caves that they keep decorated with bones, skins, and scalps taken from their victims. They remain within these grim strongholds during the day, venturing out by night to hunt down all who enter their territory. In some cases, a bodak with spellcasting ability may animate a pack of skeletal hounds to aid in its attacks. These beings hate humanoid life with such intensity that they rarely, if ever, animate such corpses. Some sages believe that bodaks relish the fear they inspire almost as much as the kill, for in the wilds they sometimes use horns, drums, and other signals to herald their approach.

## CHAOS BEAST

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Common in realms wracked with chaos energy, these beasts flow across the land in search of stable beings to transform into seething masses

of organic chaos. Travelers experienced in crossing these wastelands know that abandoned weapons and armor strewn about an area are a sure sign of a chaos beast incursion. In some cases, these creatures seem propelled by the mad gods that create chaos wastes. At times, they mass on the wasteland's borders and launch incursions into civilized areas. Supposedly areas that come under repeated chaos beast attacks slowly transform into chaos wastelands, allowing the domain of chaos to spread mile by mile over the years. While sages have not yet proven this theory, it could prove a troubling development for all civilized realms.

## CHIMERA

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Perhaps the most common of the chaos-spawned monsters, this creature can arise when multiple animals combine to create a new life form. In other wastelands, the influx of magical energy and environmental pollutants can cause mundane animals to give birth to these creatures. They are common enough that some sages believe they embody the will of a forgotten deity of magic or chaos, and their ability to breed true indicates that they are a true race. Regardless of their origins, few wastelands are free of their chaotic mood swings and terrible anger. At times, a chimera may simply demand food and supplies from travelers. Otherwise, they swoop down and attack with vicious abandon. Chimeras rarely have the intelligence necessary to serve as anything more than dangerous wild animals, but at times they ally with evil druids and clerics of chaos or deities of black magic, further evidence of their divine origin.

## COCKATRICE

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Spawned from mutated birds' eggs, these monsters represent the sort of strange, twisted creatures that adventurers could encounter in the wastelands.

## DERRO

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These mad, twisted humanoids could swarm out of their subterranean burrows to conquer the land above. In the aftermath of a great disaster, they could overwhelm the damaged cities and reeling civilizations. They might do this to acquire more slaves, loot fallen cities, or even at the dictate of a mad priest or a capricious monarch. Derro rarely can

hold on to their conquests for long, as they are too adapted to the underworld to survive long in the upper realms. The sun is a terrifying apparition of fire and light that drives them into their caves by day, while their ignorance of surface animals, seasons, and weather leaves them vulnerable to natural disasters. Their naturally chaotic personalities can cause them to scatter into the wilderness, with petty overlords gladly throwing off their leaders' authority and forming isolated, tyrannical enclaves. These factions could swiftly become enemies, with civil war erupting across the devastated countryside and the few survivors caught in the middle.

## DIGESTER

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These strange beasts are common in areas wracked with acidic rains, as their invulnerability to such hazards allows them to adapt to the environment and out-compete other predators. Humanoid races forced to survive in acidic environments might capture these beasts and use them as mounts or beasts of burden, though it takes tremendous time and effort to learn how to train these normally vicious beasts.

## GIANT, FIRE

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These towering brutes love hot environments, making them natural candidates to inhabit volcanic wastelands. They erect great castles of black rock, usually ringed with successive rivers of lava. Invaders must somehow cross deep channels of molten rock that the giants can easily wade across. Sometimes, the giants try to dig channels in the rock to funnel lava towards nearby cities and towns, allowing them to expand their lands and making it easier to launch raids on their neighbors.

## GIBBERING MOUTHER

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These creatures thrive in areas of raw chaos, though they are not themselves chaotic. They still embody many of the traits of madness and confusion, making them well-suited to chaos wastelands despite their animal-like intelligence and actions. Gibbering mouters sometimes congregate in large numbers, their massive chorus of voices creating a deafening chatter. Some sages, particularly those who worship chaos gods or lords of madness, claim that an enlightened soul can capture fragments of every statement ever spoken within this

babble. They sometimes herd mouters in enclosed pens, feeding them fresh victims while meditating on their gibbering and seeking cosmic truths within it.

## UNDEAD

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The undead stand to gain tremendous power in an area struck with a disaster that turns it into a wasteland. Mindless undead go about their business as normal, while ghouls and other creatures that prey on the living have the perfect opportunity to rise up and feast upon their now defenseless prey. With food hard to find and protection at a premium, a lich or similar powerful being could find many living creatures willing to serve him in return for safety. A hungry vampire could compel a village to provide it with blood and sacrifices. In return, he uses his undead servants to defend the village by day, while at night he personally drives away any monsters that draw close to the place. Undead creatures with access to divine magic can create food and water, trading these now priceless commodities for service and obedience. Furthermore, the great devastation wrought by the disaster grants necromancers and undead spellcasters new legions to animate and control. Graveyards and mausoleums stand unguarded, as the living must abandon the needs of the dead in favor of their own. Even in older, established wastelands, undead creatures hold an important advantage. They can survive in almost any environment that does not cause them direct physical harm, allowing them to ignore food shortages and other obstacles that drive away living creatures. A kingdom of the dead, with skeletons walking the streets as servants and lich lords building pyramids and palaces could be hidden within a vast wasteland.

## WILD ANIMALS

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In wasteland areas, the shortage of food and drinkable water makes wild animals act aggressively towards travelers. Normally these creatures are afraid of humanoids, but desperation and hunger can drive them to desperate measures. A bear might ambush the party, while a pack of domesticated dogs could turn feral and hunt down travelers. If a ruined civilization kept many pets, they could grow into a deadly menace for inexperienced adventurers.

# CHAPTER ELEVEN

# WEATHER

From a driving rainstorm to a howling tornado, the weather can leave its mark on an adventure just as deep as a mighty red dragon. This chapter presents a system for modeling a variety of weather effects. Wind, precipitation, and temperature are all given hazard ratings much like the terrain features given earlier in this book. By selecting several different hazards, you can combine them to create blizzards, sweltering heat, and thunderstorms.

The rules and game mechanics in this chapter, including the names, descriptions, and stat blocks of threats and hazards, are designated as **Open Game Content**.

## WEATHER CONSTRUCTION RULES

For purposes of these rules, weather consists of three basic ingredients: temperature, wind, and precipitation. Each of these categories is presented as a hazard. To create a weather condition, just pick a hazard for each and combine

their effects. The hazards are designed so that they do not conflict. You can match any temperature effect with any wind effect, and the two function independently of each other.

In some cases, you can select more than one hazard for a type. Precipitation covers fog in addition to hail and rain. In addition, you could create a storm that delivers both rain and hail. The sample storms given below serve as a guide to illustrate how you can combine these effects. Common sense serves as your best guide in putting together storms and effects. In addition, the section on long-term weather provides ideas and guidelines for creating sensible weather patterns for an area.

Note that in some cases the weather traits draw on material presented in the core rules. While the basic rules remain the same, they have been adapted to fit into the design and classification scheme presented here.

Keep in mind the standard rules for stacking modifiers and effects. If a modifier does not have a specific label, such as competence, assume that it is a circumstance modifier that stacks with all other types, including other circumstance modifiers.



## PRECIPITATION

This aspect of the weather covers rain, hail, snow, and even fog. In addition, a few magical weather effects are included here. These phenomena may be the result of arcane instability, holes in the planar structure, or magical or divine curses.

### Acidic Rain

Green, sizzling acid falls from the sky, scorching grass and melting exposed rocks, metal, and flesh. These deadly storms can sweep the living creatures from an area, transforming a verdant forest into a dead wasteland in the span of a few days. Acidic storms are a common hazard in wastelands and other areas wracked with strange magical effects. This precipitation type is represented with a series of hazards. Even at its weakest rating, it still presents a potentially deadly threat.

**Light Acidic Rain (CR 1):** Fortitude save DC 10; 1 minute interval; +0 bonus/interval; 1d6 damage; Special: Acid rain inflicts damage against any armor worn, shields carried, and

clothing. In addition, it leaves behind pools of acid much like rain puddles. Consult the core rules for information on acid exposure. Finally, as it burns away rocks, plants, and other material, it generates the equivalent of light fog.

**Moderate Acidic Rain (CR 3):** Fortitude save DC 15; 1 minute interval; -1 penalty/interval; 2d6 damage; Special: As per light acidic rain, except that the acid creates moderate fog as it burns.

**Severe Acidic Rain (CR 5):** Fortitude save DC 20; 1 minute interval; -1 penalty/interval; 4d6 damage; Special: As per light acidic rain, except that the acid creates thick fog as it burns.

### Fog

Whether in the form of a low-lying cloud or a mist rising from the ground, fog obscures all sight, including darkvision. The extent to which it obscures vision depends on its strength.

## FOG AND VISIBILITY

Fog Strength	Clear	Concealment	Total Concealment
Light	0–20 ft.	21–60 ft.	61+ ft.
Moderate	0–10 ft.	11–30 ft.	31+ ft.
Thick	0–5 ft.	6–15 ft.	16+ ft.

## HAIL

This precipitation effect can range from small, fine shards of ice to deadly chunks that can hammer a man into unconsciousness. Hail storms are relatively rare and when they strike they usually persist for only a short period of time. Hail storms have no effect on visibility or open flames, as even the fiercest ones create relatively scattered precipitation.

Most hail storms are too light to have any effect on travelers, though they may drive most folk indoors. Usually, they occur as part of other forms of precipitation. However, some hail storms are powerful enough to threaten anyone caught out in the open,

**Heavy Hail (CR 1):** Fortitude save DC 10; 10 minute interval; +0 bonus/interval; 1d6 non-lethal damage; Special: Creatures caught in this storm suffer a –4 penalty to Listen checks due to the loud din the ice makes as it hits the ground.

**Severe Hail (CR 3):** Fortitude save DC 15; 1 minute interval; +0 bonus/interval; 1d6 non-lethal damage; Special: Creatures caught in this storm suffer a –4 penalty to Listen and Spot checks due to the thick hail.

## RAIN

Rainstorms reduce visibility and make it harder to use ranged attacks in addition to a variety of other effects. The table below lists the various rain storm strengths and the modifiers they impose on ranged attacks and Listen, Spot, and Search checks. The modifiers for ranged attacks apply only to bows, crossbows, and other portable weapons. They do not affect siege weaponry.

*Light rains* are steady drizzles and showers. They have a 50% chance to extinguish any unprotected flame.

*Moderate rains* represent the typical storm. They automatically extinguish any unprotected flames. They cause protected flames (such as those of lanterns) to dance wildly and have a 50% chance of extinguishing these lights.

*Heavy rains* represent thunderstorms and other severe but not necessarily dangerous weather. They affect fires as per moderate rains.

*Severe rains* accompany deadly weather effects, such as hurricanes and severe thunderstorms. They affect flames as per moderate rains.

Rain Strength	Skill Checks and Ranged Attacks
Light	–2
Moderate	–4
Heavy	–6
Severe	–8

## METEORIC RAIN

Fiery stones streak through the sky, slamming into the earth with an explosive force. Meteoric rain pockmarks the land with craters and scorched clearings.

If the characters take shelter from this hazard within a building or other structure, assess damage against it from the explosive blasts. Estimate the roof's thickness, determine the hit points based on that, and record the damage it sustains each minute. Do not worry about determining the hit points for the entire roof. Instead, this method allows you to use an abstract method to see how long it takes before the storm smashes a hole in the roof. The average roof has hardness 5 and 60 hit points. Once the storm punches a hole in the roof, the building provides a +8 bonus on saves against this threat. Start the process over against the roof's full hit points. Each time they are reduced to zero, decrease the save bonus by 2 to a minimum of 0.





**Light Meteoric Rain (CR 3):** Reflex save DC 14; 1 minute interval; +0 bonus/interval; 3d6 damage; Special: This hazard represents explosive blasts from fiery rocks that descend from the sky. In addition to the effects given here, this hazard most likely results in forest fires and other infernos. If you want to use a random method to determine the chance that a fire erupts, there is a 5% chance per minute that large-scale fires ignite in a given area.

**Moderate Meteoric Rain (CR 6):** Fortitude save DC 18; 1 minute interval; +0 bonus/interval; 6d6 damage; Special: As per light meteoric rain.

**Severe Meteoric Rain (CR 9):** Fortitude save DC 22; 1 minute interval; +0 bonus/interval; 8d6 damage; Special: As per light meteoric rain.

## SNOW AND SLEET

Snow has the same effects on combat and other actions as rain except that it has half the listed chance to extinguish a flame. Use the modifiers given for the various rainstorm strengths above. Of course, snowstorms

leave behind drifts that characters must move through.

A snowdrift's depth is defined in terms of size. Just like creatures, it is rated Medium, Large, Tiny, and so forth. Snow's effects depend on the size of the creature trying to move through it. As a rule of thumb, snowfall of a given size category reaches waist-deep on a creature of that same size. A creature counts snow as moderate if its size is equal to the snow's rating. The snow is light if its size is less than the creature's, and heavy if it is greater.

*Light snow* has no effect on movement.

*Moderate snow* cuts a creature's speed in half. During combat, it costs 2 squares of movement to enter a moderate snow square.

*Heavy snow* reduces a creature's speed to one quarter. During combat, it costs 4 squares of movement to enter a heavy snow square.

Sleet tends to accumulate in lower quantities than snow, as it is partially melted when it hits the ground. The table below lists the average

snow fall amounts based on time for the various storm strengths as per the rain description. Increase the snow or sleet's size by one category for every eight hours after 24.

<b>Snow Storm</b>	<b>1–8</b>	<b>8–16</b>	<b>16–24</b>
<b>Intensity</b>	<b>hours</b>	<b>hours</b>	<b>hours</b>
Light	Fine	Diminutive	Small
Moderate	Diminutive	Small	Medium
Heavy	Small	Medium	Large
Severe	Medium	Large	Huge

<b>Sleet Storm</b>	<b>1–8</b>	<b>8–16</b>	<b>16–24</b>
<b>Intensity</b>	<b>hours</b>	<b>hours</b>	<b>hours</b>
Light	—	Fine	Diminutive
Moderate	Fine	Diminutive	Small
Heavy	Diminutive	Small	Medium
Severe	Small	Medium	Large

## TEMPERATURE

The temperature scale given here allows you to pick out an appropriate hazard based on the geography and climate of a region. Remember that the temperature serves as the basis for most weather effects, particularly precipitation. Warmer weather leads to fog and rain, while cold temperatures see snow rather than rain.

The temperature hazards are listed from the hottest to the coldest.

**Hellish (CR 4):** Fortitude save DC 15; 5 minute interval; –1 penalty/interval; 1d4 nonlethal damage; Special: In addition to the effects of this hazard, this intense heat automatically deals 1d6 points of lethal damage per minute as characters sustain burns to their skin and lungs from the intensely hot air. Characters wearing metal armor are affected as if the target of a *heat metal* spell. A character cannot heal nonlethal damage dealt by heat until he cools off.

**Extreme:** Fortitude save DC 15; 10 minute interval; –1 penalty/interval; 1d4 nonlethal damage.

**High:** Fortitude save DC 15; 30 minute interval; –1 penalty/interval; 1d4 nonlethal damage.

**Hot:** Fortitude save DC 15; 1 hour interval; –1 penalty/interval; 1d4 nonlethal damage.

**Moderate/Cool:** Most temperatures have little effect on the characters' health. They might not

be comfortable, but they are by no means deadly.

**Cold:** Fortitude save DC 15; 1 hour interval; –1 penalty/interval; 1d4 nonlethal damage.

**Freezing:** Fortitude save DC 15; 30 minute interval; –1 penalty/interval; 1d4 nonlethal damage.

**Frigid:** Fortitude save DC 15; 10 minute interval; –1 penalty/interval; 1d4 nonlethal damage; Special: There is a 10% chance each hour that any water and potions a character carries freeze solid. It takes 20 minutes for a vial to melt. Exposing the frozen liquid to an open flame reduces this time to 5 minutes.

**Abysal (CR 2):** Fortitude save DC 15; 5 minute interval; –1 penalty/interval; 1d4 nonlethal damage; Special: There is a 10% chance each hour that any water and potions a character carries freeze solid. It takes 20 minutes for a vial to melt. Exposing the frozen liquid to an open flame reduces this time to 5 minutes.

## Wind

The basic wind rules are given in the core rulebooks. These rules do not modify or change them. Rather, they simply categorize and summarize them as hazards. For full details on these rules, consult the *DMG*. The wind effects table summarizes the basic rule material for your reference.

In addition to the obvious dangers inherent in strong winds, the following hazards may apply depending on the characters' location and the geography of your campaign world.

**Falling Trees (CR 3):** Reflex save DC 10; 1 hour interval; +0 bonus/interval; 4d6 damage; Special: There is a 10% chance per hour of hurricane-force or stronger winds that a tree falls close enough to the party to activate this threat. You can increase this chance to 20% in forests with many old, dead, or dying trees, or decrease it to 5% in healthy forests, such as those tended by druids or elves.

**Obscuring Dust:** In areas of loose dirt, sand, dust, and other debris, strong winds can create hazardous conditions. The obscuring dust hazard is linked to the strength of winds in an area. This hazard is an optional threat

## WIND EFFECTS TABLE

Wind Force	Wind Speed	Ranged Attacks <sup>1</sup>	Creature Size <sup>2</sup>	Wind Effect on Creatures	Fort Save DC
Light	0–10 mph	—/—	Any	None	—
Moderate	11–20 mph	—/—	Any	None	—
Strong	21–30 mph	–2/—	Tiny or smaller	Knocked down	10
			Small or larger	None	
Severe	31–50 mph	–4/—	Tiny	Blown away	15
			Small	Knocked down	
			Medium	Checked	
			Large or larger	None	
Windstorm	51–74 mph	*/–4	Small or smaller	Blown away	18
			Medium	Knocked down	
			Large or Huge	Checked	
			Gargantuan or Colossal	None	
Hurricane	75–174 mph	*/–8	Medium or smaller	Blown away	20
			Large	Knocked down	
			Huge	Checked	
			Gargantuan or Colossal	None	
Tornado	175–300 mph	**	Large or smaller	Blown away	30
			Huge	Knocked down	
			Gargantuan or Colossal	Checked	

\* Ranged attacks are impossible.

1 Normal weapons/siege weapons. The siege weapon category includes ballista and catapult attacks as well as boulders hurled by giants.

2 Flying or airborne creatures are treated as one size category smaller than their actual size, so an airborne Gargantuan dragon is treated as Huge for purposes of wind effects.

*Checked:* Creatures are unable to move forward against the force of the wind. Flying creatures are blown back 1d6+5 feet.

*Knocked Down:* Creatures are knocked prone by the force of the wind. Flying creatures are instead blown back 1d6+10 feet.

*Blown Away:* Creatures on the ground are knocked prone and rolled 1d4+10 feet, taking 1d4 points of nonlethal damage per 10 feet. Flying creatures are blown back 2d6+10 feet and take 2d6 points of nonlethal damage due to battering and buffeting.

you can add to an adventure. It does not automatically manifest whenever the winds grow strong enough.

*Strong Wind:* Whirling sands obscure all sight beyond 20 feet. A creature within 20 feet away has concealment (attacks have a 20% miss chance). Creatures farther away have total concealment (50% miss chance, and the attacker cannot use sight to locate the target). The dust does not blow strong enough to injure a character.

*Severe Wind:* These storms function as per the strong wind dust effects, save that the thick dust is much harder to see through. A creature within 5 feet of an attacker has concealment. Creatures farther away have total concealment.

*Windstorm (CR 3):* These storms have the same effects as a severe wind dust storm. In addition, they deal 1d3 points of nonlethal damage each round to anyone caught out in the open without shelter and also pose a choking hazard. A character must hold his breath or suffocate. Anyone with a scarf or similar protection across her mouth and nose does not begin to

choke until after a number of rounds equal to 10 + her Constitution score.

## SAMPLE STORMS AND CONDITIONS

While the basic building blocks are enough to cover most situations, sometimes it is easier to have a few ready-made storms on hand to throw at the characters. These generic storms represent typical hazards the characters may face in the wilderness. The long-term weather system given below references and uses these standard storms.

### THUNDERSTORM

These storms usually last 1d6 x 10 minutes and feature lightning, thunder, heavy rains, and severe winds. There is a slight chance that it features heavy hail. To vary a thunderstorm's conditions, re-roll its conditions every 10 minutes.

*Wind:* 1–60 moderate; 61–90 strong; 91–100 severe.

*Rain:* 1–40 moderate; 41–85 heavy; 86–100 severe.

*Hail:* 1–90 none; 91–98 light to moderate; 98–99 heavy; 100 severe.

### RAIN, EXTREME

This storm represents a hurricane, cyclone, or similar catastrophic event. It lasts 2d6 hours and features severe rain and hurricane-force winds. To vary the storm conditions, roll again on the following tables each hour.

*Wind:* 1–20 moderate; 21–75 strong; 76–90 windstorm; 91–100 hurricane.

*Rain:* 1–30 moderate; 31–100 heavy; 71–100 severe.

*Hail:* 1–80 none; 81–90 light to moderate; 91–97 heavy; 98–100 severe.

### RAIN, HEAVY

The typical rainstorm can range from a brief soaking to a slow-moving storm system that drenches an area and leads to flooding. Roll Xd12, where "X" is the result of a roll on 1d6, to determine how many hours the storm persists. Use the tables below to determine the storm's features. You can roll once for the entire storm or roll every 1d4 hours to represent its changing characteristics.





*Wind:* 1–50 moderate; 51–90 strong; 91–100 severe.

*Rain:* 1–50 moderate; 51–90 heavy; 91–100 severe.

*Hail:* 1–90 none; 91–98 light to moderate; 98–99 heavy; 100 severe.

### RAIN, LIGHT

These storms are usually shorter than most others and feature less extreme conditions. A light rainstorm lasts 2d6 hours.

*Wind:* 1–60 light; 61–95 moderate; 96–100 strong.

*Rain:* 1–60 light; 61–95 moderate; 96–100 heavy.

*Hail:* 1–98 none; 98–100 light or moderate.

### SNOW, EXTREME

Blizzards and other extreme storms, these conditions can drop a tremendous amount of snow on a region in a short period of time. An extreme snow storm can last 2d6 hours. You can roll once for the entire storm or re-roll every hour to model its changing conditions.

*Wind:* 1–40 moderate; 41–90 strong; 91–100 windstorm.

*Snow:* 1–20 moderate; 21–60 heavy; 61–100 severe.

### SNOW, HEAVY

The typical snowstorm features moderate winds and strong and steady snowfall. This storm has a 20% chance to drop sleet rather than snow. You can roll once for the entire storm or use the following qualities to model the snow's conditions on an hourly basis. Roll to determine if the storm drops snow or sleet each time you randomly determine its conditions. Roll Xd12, where "X" is the result of a roll on 1d6, to determine how many hours the storm persists.

*Wind:* 1–80 moderate; 81–97 strong; 98–100 severe.

*Snow/Sleet:* 1–50 moderate; 51–90 heavy; 91–100 severe.

### SNOW, LIGHT

This storm provides a light dusting or moderate accumulating. There is a 20% chance that it

drops sleet rather than snow. The storm lasts 2d6 hours. If you determine its characteristics on an hourly basis, re-roll to determine if it carries snow or sleet each hour.

*Wind:* 1–60 light; 61–90 moderate; 91–100 strong.

*Snow/sleet:* 1–70 light; 71–95 moderate; 96–100 heavy.

## LONG TERM WEATHER

Sometimes as a DM, you may have specific plans for weather events. A journey to a nearby town might be more interesting if the characters must march through searing heat. While the characters adventure in a dungeon, they might emerge to find that a blizzard has dropped several feet of snow on the ground. At other times, random weather generation relieves some of the burden of creation from your shoulders. It can also yield extreme results that make for an unexpected but fun backdrop to an adventure. This section allows you to pick out a basic climate type and use several tables associated with it to create weather. This system refers back to the storm templates and the environmental hazards given earlier in this section.

### COLD, EXTREME

Tundra and other environments that are relatively dry and locked in an endless frost fall into this category. Use this table for tundra and other areas that experience fleeting summers.

d%	Temperature	Storm/Wind
1–5	Frigid	None
6–10	Frigid	Roll on wind table
11–17	Frigid	Light snow
18–19	Frigid	Heavy snow
20	Frigid	Extreme snow
21–35	Freezing	None
36–45	Freezing	Roll on wind table
46–62	Freezing	Light snow
63–67	Freezing	Heavy snow
68–70	Freezing	Extreme snow
71–80	Cold	None
81–87	Cold	Roll on wind table
88–94	Cold	Light snow
95–98	Cold	Heavy snow
99–100	Cold	Extreme snow



### COLD, MILD

These areas endure cold temperatures and occasional snow, but they rarely see blizzards or heavy accumulations. Use this table for a temperate region's winter.

d%	Temperature	Storm/Wind
1–8	Frigid	None
9–12	Frigid	Roll on wind table
13–14	Frigid	Light snow
15	Frigid	Heavy snow
16	Frigid	Extreme snow
17–30	Freezing	None
31–38	Freezing	Roll on wind table
39–45	Freezing	Light snow
46–50	Freezing	Heavy snow
51–55	Freezing	Extreme snow
56–75	Cold	None
76–85	Cold	Roll on wind table
86–95	Cold	Light snow
96–98	Cold	Heavy snow
99–100	Cold	Extreme snow

**COLD, WET**

Cold, wet, and miserable, these regions see frequent snow. Civilizations in these areas may grind to a halt in the winter months as roads are rendered impassable. Use this table for snowy, frigid regions that are short of becoming tundra.

d%	Temperature	Storm/Wind
1-4	Frigid	None
5-7	Frigid	Roll on wind table
8-10	Frigid	Light snow
11-14	Frigid	Heavy snow
15	Frigid	Extreme snow
16-29	Freezing	None
30-36	Freezing	Roll on wind table
37-42	Freezing	Light snow
43-47	Freezing	Heavy snow
48-49	Freezing	Extreme snow
50-72	Cold	None
73-80	Cold	Roll on wind table
81-91	Cold	Light snow
92-96	Cold	Heavy snow
97-100	Cold	Extreme snow

**HEAT, EXTREME**

Deserts, lands wracked with intense heat during the summer months, and other areas noted for their searing temperatures fall into this category.

d%	Temperature	Storm/Wind
1-20	Extreme heat	None
21-27	Extreme heat	Roll on wind table
28-29	Extreme heat	Light rain
30	Extreme heat	Heavy rain
21-65	High	None
66-75	High	Roll on wind table
76-77	High	Light rain
78	High	Heavy rain
79-90	Hot	None
91-97	Hot	Roll on wind table
98-99	Hot	Light rain
100	Hot	Heavy rain

**HEAT, MILD**

Warmer than normal and occasionally marked by heat waves, these regions are a middle ground between extreme areas and tropical, wet ones. Use this table for a temperate region's summer. On days that lack rain, there is a 5% chance of thunderstorms.

d%	Temperature	Storm/Wind
1-7	Extreme heat	None
8-10	Extreme heat	Roll on wind table
11-12	Extreme heat	Light rain
13	Extreme heat	Heavy rain
14	Extreme heat	Extreme rain
15-30	High heat	None
31-35	High heat	Roll on wind table
36-38	High heat	Light rain
39	High heat	Heavy rain
40	High heat	Extreme rain
41-80	Hot	None
81-87	Hot	Roll on wind table
88-94	Hot	Light rain
95-98	Hot	Heavy rain
99-100	Hot	Extreme rain

**HEAT, WET**

Hot and steamy, these regions usually support dense, verdant jungles. Use this table for jungles and other tropical areas. If a random weather result lacks rain, there is a 50% chance of thunderstorms.

d%	Temperature	Storm/Wind
1-4	Extreme heat	None
5-7	Extreme heat	Roll on wind table
8-10	Extreme heat	Light rain
13-14	Extreme heat	Heavy rain
15	Extreme heat	Extreme rain
15-26	High heat	None
27-32	High heat	Roll on wind table
33-36	High heat	Light rain
37-39	High heat	Heavy rain
40-43	High heat	Extreme rain
44-70	Hot	None
71-77	Hot	Roll on wind table
78-90	Hot	Light rain
91-98	Hot	Heavy rain
99-100	Hot	Extreme rain

**TEMPERATE, DRY**

This table models grasslands, prairies, and other areas that receive little rain but rarely experience extreme temperatures. Alternatively, use this table to represent a dry season or the winter months in hot, dry regions.

d%	Temperature	Storm/Wind
1-19	Hot	None
20-26	Hot	Roll on wind table
27-28	Hot	Light rain
29	Hot	Heavy rain
30	Hot	Extreme rain
31-59	Moderate	None

60-65	Moderate	Roll on wind table
66-67	Moderate	Light rain
68	Moderate	Heavy rain
69	Moderate	Extreme rain
70-86	Cold	None
87-95	Cold	Roll on wind table
96-98	Cold	Light rain
99	Cold	Light snow
100	Cold	Heavy snow

TEMPERATE, MILD

This area has moderate temperatures and occasional storms that rarely pose a threat. Use these tables for the fall months in a temperate region, fall and spring or the winter months in a hot region, or the summer months in a frigid one.

d%	Temperature	Storm/Wind
1-19	Hot	None
20-24	Hot	Roll on wind table
25-27	Hot	Light rain
28-29	Hot	Heavy rain
30	Hot	Extreme rain
31-55	Moderate	None
56-60	Moderate	Roll on wind table
61-66	Moderate	Light rain
67-68	Moderate	Heavy rain
69	Moderate	Extreme rain
70-84	Cold	None
85-92	Cold	Roll on wind table
93-97	Cold	Light rain
98-99	Cold	Light snow
100	Cold	Heavy snow

TEMPERATE, WET

Steady rain and moderate temperatures mark this region. This table models temperate, coastal areas that receive lots of rainfall or the cool, wet months in a hot region or the warm, moist season in a frigid climate.

d%	Temperature	Storm/Wind
1-16	Hot	None
17-21	Hot	Roll on wind table
22-26	Hot	Light rain
27-29	Hot	Heavy rain
30	Hot	Extreme rain
31-50	Moderate	None
51-58	Moderate	Roll on wind table
57-64	Moderate	Light rain
65-68	Moderate	Heavy rain
69	Moderate	Extreme rain
70-82	Cold	None



83-89	Cold	Roll on wind table
90-95	Cold	Light rain
96-99	Cold	Light snow
100	Cold	Heavy snow

WIND TABLE

d%	Wind Strength
1-50	Light
51-75	Moderate
76-90	Strong
91-99	Severe
100	Windstorm



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# GRIMM Preview

## Free Preview: Grimm

The following section is a special preview of *Grimm*, a d20 mini-game of children trapped in a world of twisted fairy tales. *Grimm* is the latest title in Fantasy Flight's HORIZON line, a collection of standalone games based on d20 System that explore a wide range of themes and genres. HORIZON games can serve as a brief respite from your regular campaign, or can even support long-term adventures that you return to again and again.

## Introduction

*Our project is almost finished. The length and breadth of Germania have been scoured by Jacob and I, and I believe the land to have been raped of all it can give us. We are rapists, I am certain. The creatures and folk behave exactly as that vile book said they would. I pity them, and hope their souls find sanctity in their new world, as it was not granted to them in ours.*

*Or should I pity myself instead? We brothers do this under duress, I have always claimed. But there is a reward. And we could have said no, all those years ago, despite the temptations she offered and the promises she gave. But we did not. Mere humans, we, unlike the tales we have bound. Those are immortal. And immortal, I would guess, must be their hatred of us.*

*—Wilhelm Grimm, the eleventh day of October in the Year of our Lord Eighteen Hundred and Seventeen.*

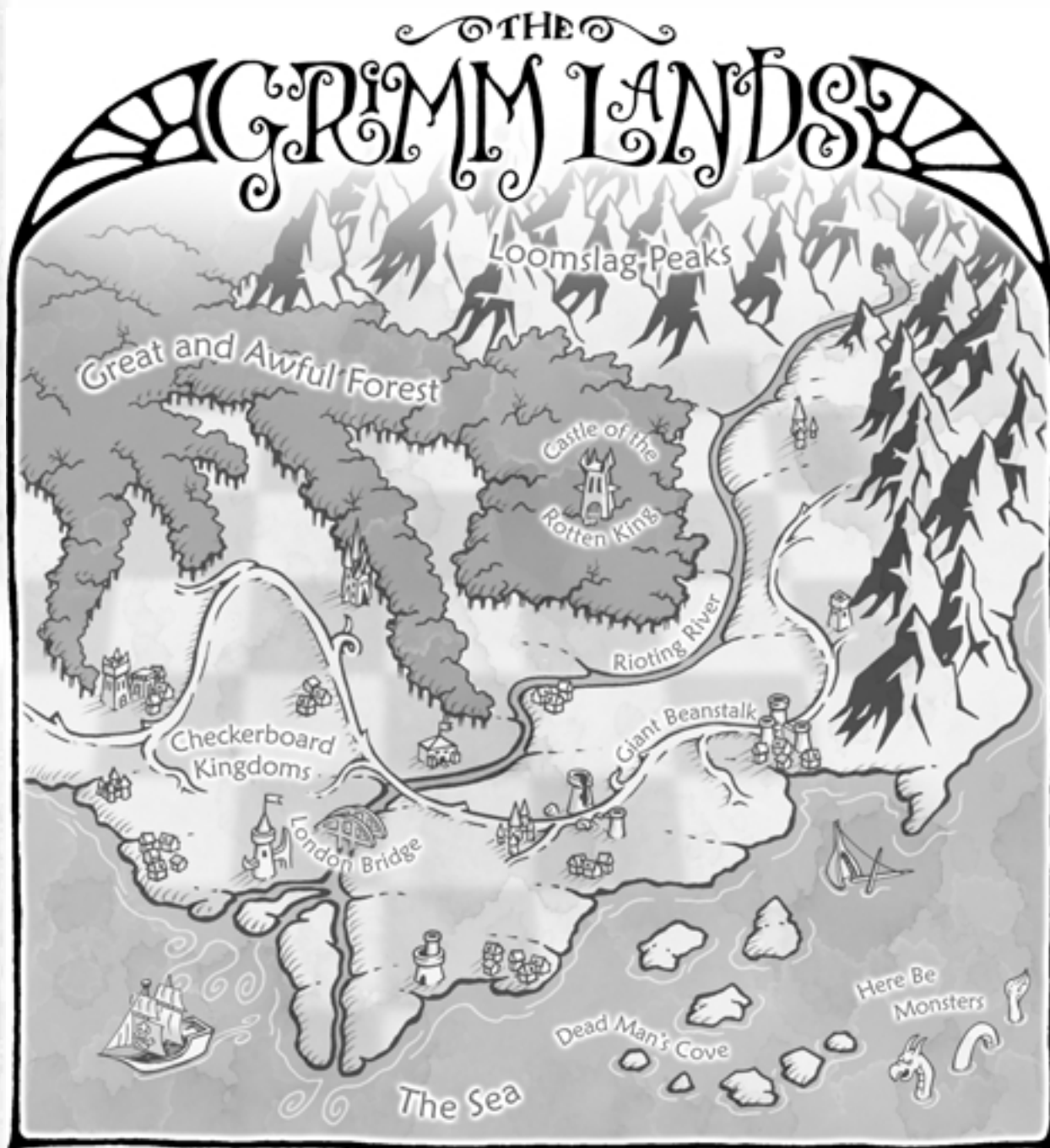
*Grimm* is a roleplaying game of imagination, dreams, and nightmares. Players take up the roles of children, drawn from our world to a place strangely familiar but thoroughly terrifying. In the Grimm Lands, a rotting, patched-together Humpty Dumpty rules from a broken

wall; the Great and Awful Forest moves of its own volition; the Dragon amuses himself with the capering skins of those who sought to escape from the Grimm Lands and failed. It is a place where the Devil is a constant nuisance and the Seven Dwarves want more than simple housecleaning. *Grimm* is a d20 game of twisted fairytales, where children face horrific corruptions of the cherished stories that once amused and excited them, and the monsters are eager to find out what little boys and girls are *really* made of.

Everyone knows that the Brothers Grimm scoured their native land for folk stories and compiled them in a book called *Kinder-und Hausmarchen* (*Children and Household Tales*), which the world eventually came to know as *Grimm's Fairy Tales*. What few know is that their search served another purpose. The characters of the tales and the monsters of legend were real. Some believed that the devil himself created these monsters to plague humanity. Others held that the monsters arose from the minds of the people of Europe as personifications of humanity's darkest fears. The exact nature of the monsters is lost to time, but it is known that the Brothers Grimm undertook an obsessive quest to locate and record their times' strange people, places, and events.

Why exactly they chose to do so, and how they did so, is unknown. There are occasional references in their journals to a creature named Melusine. She is described as a woman, yet seemed more and less than a mortal. She alternately threatened, cajoled, seduced, and begged the brothers to complete their cataloging, hounding their heels to the last story and rhyme. The brothers do not admit to the reward offered by this dark temptress, nor do they even fully explain what she demanded of them. They hint only that, whatever their actions, they were not pure of heart.

The results of their efforts are not known to the general populace. To those who have entered the Grimm Lands, however, and found their way out, it is all too obvious: In cataloging these stories for Melusine's amusement, they formed a world apart. Those whose stories were mystically captured were damned to populate this other place, the Grimm Lands, for eternity. The Grimm brothers are long since dead and dust, and Melusine may or may not have



shuffled off a mortal coil. Regardless, their legacy lives on.

Of all people, it is only children who see the doors to the Grimm Lands, and of them, only the most imaginative can make their way through. Oftentimes, a child slips through by accident, the Lands themselves groping hungrily for new victims. When a much-coveted morsel of humanity slips into the Grimm Lands, all of its creatures compete for the child's attention. How the denizens of the Grimm Lands deal with the children varies. Some enjoy the children, exulting in their laughter and joy. Most, however, have far darker desires. They may crave the succulent flesh

of a plump child to feed their inhuman desires. Or perhaps they simply enjoy dealing out sugary spoonfuls of horrific pain, reveling in the shrieks of the frightened and desperate captive. The children unlucky enough to find themselves in the Grimm Lands are sure to find that they have a very deadly and treacherous path to tread if they ever hope to leave it sane, much less alive. These are their stories . . . and there might not be a happy ending.

The following section presents two of the archetypes, special character classes, in *Grimm*. The text of this section is designated as **Open Game Content**.

# Grimm Archetypes

*Grimm* assumes the player characters, boys and girls, are all children between 8 and 12 years of age. Children are always more receptive to the fantastic; they fabricate all sorts of weird and unusual explanations for how the world works. This ability, unfortunately for them, allows them to slip into the Grimm Lands.

Adults lack the imagination to cross over into the land of dark fairy tales, so the experience is exclusive to children. Those who get pulled in have no correlating characteristics, except for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Some are dreamers with overactive imaginations, some are callous bullies with nary a new thought in their heads.

This section presents all the necessary information to generate the boys and girls trapped in the Grimm Lands. The game uses the d20 System, but there are several variations essential to the flavor of the game. For instance, races and classes have been bundled into single entities called archetypes. Spells have become more an adventure reward than a class ability, and the use of imagination points is a new mechanic that allows players to influence the story unfolding around them.

Characters in *Grimm* advance similarly to classes as described in the PHB. Rules for base attack bonuses, Hit Dice, saving throws, and skill points can all be found there. Starting kids receive 4x their normal number of skill points at 1st level. Variations on normal class mechanics are listed below.

**XP:** *Grimm* is a direct and simple game, with survival as the most prominent reward. Therefore, kids advance to the next level of their archetype after each adventure. See the appendix for more details.

**AC Bonus:** Children have few advantages in the Grimm Lands, and even fewer ways to improve their AC. Therefore, each archetype provides an inherent AC bonus that increases as the character advances. The AC bonus is applied at all times, even when the character is encumbered or flat-footed, but does not stack with equipment bonuses to AC.

**Feats:** All children gain one normal feat and one origin feat at 1st level. Because *Grimm* is a mini-game rather than a full-length campaign, characters gain feats more quickly than standard d20 System characters. Rather than the normal feat every three levels, *Grimm* characters may choose new feats every two levels, at 2nd, 4th, and 6th.

**Imagination Points:** Each archetype provides a random number of imagination points at 1st level, modified by the character's Wisdom score. Every level thereafter, the character gains additional imagination points as determined by his class and Wisdom modifier. All kids start with at least one imagination point and gain at least one imagination point per level. Additional imagination points may be awarded, as determined by the GM (see Chapter 3 for more details). Children spend imagination freely and frequently, as imagination fuels spells and archetype abilities.

This number is relatively fluid and increases and decreases throughout the game session.

**Flaw:** Just as their opponents have secret weaknesses, kids in *Grimm* have their own Achilles' heels. Each archetype has a flaw that is triggered by certain game situations.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** *Grimm* does not use weapon or armor proficiencies. Any kid can pick up an axe and start hacking apart bad guys. Likewise, anyone can pick up a shield or don a suit of armor, just so long as it fits.

## The Bully

*I'm gonna pound you into next week, shrimp!*

You are the subject of fear and loathing in the eyes of other children. You are the kid who beat up Johnny, you are the maker of wet willies, and you are the troll in the boy's bathroom that makes nerds pee their pants rather than ask to use the toilet. The cornerstone of your personality is the procurement and retention of power. Everything you do is to ensure your place at the top of the pecking order in your class. You're used to surrounding yourself with sycophants that are motivated by fear and the allure of your power. You employ force only when necessary, relying instead on the threat of pain.

While the bully is used to being a leader, even if only of his small gang of toadies, being sucked into the Grimm Lands changes all that. He may still push others around, cajoling the kids through force, intimidation, and sometimes even violence. However, when push comes to shove, he's as scared as anyone else, and will follow orders if it means surviving. Surprisingly, the bully can become stalwart protectors of the group; on one hand, such heroism distracts him from his own fear, so no one else can see that he's shaking in his boots. On the other hand, even if that nerd with the runny nose is the same kid he gave wedgies to on a daily basis, he's *his* nerd with the runny nose, and no one but the bully is going to pick on him without his say-so!

## Game Rule Information

Bullies have the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Bullies rely on terror, coercion, and intimidation to retain their place at the top of the pecking order—none of their threats mean anything if they lack the means to back them up. Since so much of his effectiveness relies on tricking, taunting, and the maltreatment of kids around him, his Charisma is far more important than any other attribute. Strength and Constitution are also vital, as they substantiate the physical threat.

**Ability Score Modifiers:** +2 Constitution, +2 Charisma, -2 Dexterity and -2 Wisdom

## Children as Small Creatures

All children are Small creatures, and as such they receive a +1 size bonus to AC and attack rolls. Unlike the standard size rules in the PHB, size in the Grimm Lands does not affect carrying capacities. All children in *Grimm* have a movement rate of 30.

**Hit Die:** d12

**Imagination Points at 1st level:** 1d3 + Wis modifier

**Imagination Points at Each Additional Level:** 1 + Wis modifier

**Flaw:** The bully's key weakness is that he is only comfortable when he has the upper hand, hence the classic aphorism that most bullies back down when you stand up to them. Whenever the bully drops to less than half of his hit points, he loses confidence and suffers a -4 morale penalty to Will saves or attack rolls (player's choice). When reduced to less than one quarter of his hit points, he must attempt a Will Save (DC 15) or be panicked. A panicked bully must drop anything he holds and flee at top speed from the source of his fear, as well as any other dangers he encounters, along a random path. During this time, he cannot take any other actions. In addition, he suffers a -2 penalty on all saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks. If cornered, the bully cowers and does not attack, typically using the total defense action in combat. Even if his saving throw is successful, for as long as he is below one quarter hit points, the bully must attempt this save every time he takes additional damage.

## Archetype Skills

The bully's archetype skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Booby Trap (Int), Industrial Arts (Dex), Ride (Dex), and Trick (Cha).

**Skill Points at 1st Level:** (2 + Int Modifier) x 4.

**Skill Points at Each Additional Level:** 2 + Int Modifier.

## Archetype Features

All of the following are features of the bully archetype.

**Brawler:** Bullies are well-practiced in the art of brawling. At 1st level, a bully gains Improved Unarmed Strike or Improved Grapple as a bonus feat.

**Smite Weakling (Ex):** A bully may attempt to smite a weakling with one normal melee attack. He adds his Charisma bonus (if any) to his attack roll and deals 1 extra point of damage per level. A weakling for these purposes is any target with a Strength score lower than that of the bully. If the bully accidentally smites an illegitimate target, the smite attack has no effect and the ability is used up for that day.

**Taunt (Ex):** A bully knows how to quickly ascertain a person's doubts, weaknesses, and misgivings, and may exploit them to his advantage. He uses them to provoke a reaction from his target, sliding expertly under his skin, provoking feelings of fear, anger, or alienation. As a standard action, once per day per level, the bully may attempt to taunt a foe with an Intelligence of 3 or higher. The foe must be able to hear the bully clearly and must understand his language. Having suffered a torrent of jibes, insults, and abuse, the target must make a Will save or suffer one of the effects listed below. The DC is 10 + ½ the bully's level + Cha modifier. If the target succeeds, it is immune to the bully's taunting for the rest of that day. Creatures that have at least four more Hit Dice than the bully are immune to this effect. This ability may be used more than once per day per level, but doing so costs 1 imagination point per use.

**Hesitation:** A bully with 4 or more ranks in Trick may use his taunts to instill doubt in his target's mind. The target's place in the initiative order is reduced to half its original number. Creatures may still adjust their initiative normally through the readying and delaying special actions.

**Doubt:** A bully with 5 or more ranks in Trick may ridicule a target to such an extent that the creature loses confidence in its fighting prowess. The target becomes fatigued, meaning that it can neither run nor charge and takes a -2 penalty to Strength and Dexterity. Unlike normal fatigue, the effects of this taunting only last for one round per level of the bully.

**Worry:** A bully with 6 or more ranks in Trick may threaten and intimidate a target creature. It is shaken for one round per level of the bully, taking a -2 penalty on attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks and ability checks.

**Anger:** A bully with 7 or more ranks in Trick may infuriate a target with his taunts. The target flies into a blind rage, singling out the bully as his sole opponent. The creature immediately attacks the bully in melee to the exclusion of all other actions. If it cannot attack the bully in melee, it must immediately move to do so. Only if the creature cannot gain access to the bully will it resort to ranged attacks, supernatural abilities, or spells and spell-like abilities. This



# Bully

	Base					
Class Level	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Defense Bonus	Special
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	+2	Brawler, smite weakling 1/day, taunt
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	+2	Intimidating
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	+3	Smite weakling 2/day
4th	+4	+4	+1	+1	+3	Pile-on
5th	+5	+4	+1	+1	+3	Smite weakling 3/day
6th	+6/+1	+5	+2	+2	+4	Protector

effect persists until the creature has successfully hit the bully with at least one melee attack.

**Shock:** A bully with 8 or more ranks in Trick can release a stream of profanities so foul and offensive that they shock even the monsters of the Grimm Lands. Targets are dazed for a single round, taking no actions.

**Fright:** A bully with 9 ranks in Trick knows the cruelest jibes and most ferocious threats, terrifying even powerful opponents. Targets are frightened for one round per level of the bully, and must flee from him as best as they can. If unable to flee, they may fight. A frightened creature takes a -2 penalty on all attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks. A frightened creature can use special abilities, including spells, to flee; indeed, the creature must use such means if they are the only way to escape. If the target succeeds in a save against this taunt, it has instead become enraged by the bully's insults, gaining a +2 morale bonus to attack and damage rolls against him for the remainder of the encounter.

**Intimidating (Ex):** Bullies are experts at appearing threatening and dangerous, regardless of the reality. The malleable nature of the Grimm Lands only increases that menacing aura. Bullies may double their Charisma modifier whenever they use the Trick skill to intimidate an NPC (see Chapter 2).

**Pile-On (Ex):** While most kids gain a +2 circumstance bonus to their grapple checks for each ally participating in the grapple, bullies are even more used to backup during beat-downs. Bullies gain a +4 circumstance bonus to grapple checks for each ally participating in the grapple.

**Protector (Ex):** At 6th level, the bully finally realizes his true purpose in the group: not to threaten and control those smaller than him, but to protect them. Once per round when an adjacent ally is the target of an attack, the bully may interpose himself and take the target's place. This must be decided before the attack roll is made. The bully and the target switch spaces, and the attack is resolved normally.

## The Dreamer

*There, in the sky... do you see it? It looks like a phoenix, rising from its own ashes!*

You find the world outside the classroom to be much more interesting than the dry stuff of Mrs. Applegate's lectures. You like to read about fantastic stuff like dragons,

unicorns, and knights, or maybe you dream of being a ball player in the major leagues. It's hard to be a dreamer. Your mother nags you about paying more attention. Your teachers have special meetings with your parents. The teachers always shoot you dirty looks down their long and crooked noses. Some of the other kids pick on you, but you have learned to overcome it. For you know about special places, windows into other worlds. When you look off into the distance, and before a sharp word brings you back, you see yourself as a brave hero saving the day, or yourself at bat for the big team about to hit a home run. But now you see the strange world of *Grimm* . . . and it scares the hell out of you.

The dreamer is the kid who spent more time in her head than in the world with other children. She was so distracted and preoccupied with flights of fancy she often got into trouble for it. Now that she's in the Grimm Lands, all those supposedly wasted hours are paying off. While her fellow kids are stumbling around trying to understand their new powers, the dreamer has a natural control over her imagination. While the rest of the party is desperately trying to remember what it takes to pacify a troll, the dreamer is intimately familiar with the world they are trapped in. In small groups, she sometimes rises to a position of leadership, as she, and she alone, truly understands the world of *Grimm*.

## Game Rule Information

Dreamers have the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Dreamers develop a keen understanding of the Grimm Lands, and to do so, they must be aware of the subtle details that can mean the difference between life and death. Wisdom is the surest course to developing their skills in awareness. Second is Dexterity, as this ability aids the dreamer in avoiding attacks, traps, and other nasty things that would do her harm.

**Ability Score Modifiers:** +4 Wisdom, -2 Constitution and -2 Charisma

**Hit Die:** d6

**Imagination Points at 1st level:** 2d4 + Wis modifier

**Imagination Points at Each Additional Level:** 3 + Wis modifier

**Flaw:** Dreamers tend to lose themselves in their thoughts and imaginings. Dreamers are more susceptible to illusions and charms than other characters. When attempting a saving throw against spells or spell-like abilities from the Enchantment or Illusion schools, or with the mind-affecting descriptor, she uses her Charisma modifier instead of her Wisdom modifier for Will saves. If the dreamer fails her save against an effect, in addition to the results of fail-

# Dreamer

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Defense Bonus	Special
1st	+0	+0	+2	+2	+2	Aware, happy thoughts, rapid recovery
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+3	+2	Observant
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+3	+3	Bonus focus
4th	+3	+1	+4	+4	+3	Believe
5th	+3	+1	+4	+4	+3	I think I can
6th	+4	+2	+5	+5	+4	Avatar

ing the save, she is dazed for 1 round per 3 points by which she failed the save.

## Archetype Skills

The dreamer's archetype skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Animal Empathy (Cha), Art (acting) (Cha), Art (fine arts) (Wis), Art (music) (Wis), Art (writing) (Int), Knowledge (athletic games OR fairy tales) (Int), Notice (Wis), Puzzles (Int), and Ride (Dex).

**Skill Points at 1st Level:** (6 + Int modifier) x 4.

**Skill Points at Each Additional Level:** 6 + Int modifier.

## Archetype Features

All of the following are archetype features of the dreamer.

**Aware:** A dreamer's flightiness in the real world is inversely proportional to her being in touch with her surroundings in the Grimm Lands. At 1st level, a dreamer gains Skill Focus (Notice) or Improved Initiative as a bonus feat.

**Happy Thoughts (Su):** To a dreamer, anything can be fixed with the power of belief, even dire wounds. Using her imagination, the dreamer may heal the wounds of one of her allies as a standard action. The dreamer and the wounded character must hold hands, and must both give their full attention to the healing process. This action provokes attacks of opportunity. The dreamer may heal 1d4+1 points of damage per imagination point spent with this action.

Alternatively, the dreamer may heal all of her allies within 30 feet, simply by willing everyone to be okay. This is a standard action that provokes attacks of opportunity. All allies within 30 feet, including the dreamer, regain 1 hit point per imagination point the dreamer spends.

**Rapid Recovery (Ex):** Imagination is the cornerstone

of the dreamer character, and as such she may recover spent imagination points more rapidly than normal. Once per day, by spending half an hour doing nothing but enjoying idle daydreaming, the dreamer may recover 1d4 imagination points per level.

**Observant (Ex):** Dreamers are so in touch with the stuff that makes up the Grimm Lands that they have almost superhuman awareness of their surroundings. A dreamer doubles her Wisdom modifier when making Notice checks.

**Bonus Focus:** The dreamer's imagination imbues a mundane item with power, manifesting as a new focus. Refer to Chapter 3 for details on these special items.

**Believe (Ex):** By 4th level, the dreamer is so skilled in using her imagination that she can produce spectacular effects at a lower cost. The dreamer may reduce the cost of all imagination-fueled spells, effects, and archetype abilities by 1 point. Thus, a 4-point incantation for the dreamer costs only 3 points of imagination. Reducing the imagination cost in this manner cannot reduce the cost of any imagination-fueled effect below one.

**I Think I Can (Ex):** By believing in herself, the dreamer can accomplish nearly anything. She may take 20 on any skill check as a standard action, even when circumstances and time would prohibit it.

**Avatar (Su):** When the dreamer reaches 6th level, she can become the hero she always imagined herself to be. By spending half of her maximum daily imagination points, she may transform into a shining humanoid figure of power and grace, such as a knight, a

hunter, or a guardian angel. Dreamers in this state become Large creatures, gaining a +12 to Strength, +4 to Dexterity, +4 to Constitution, a +4 deflection bonus to AC, and either +20 feet to their land speed or a fly speed of 40 (average). The transformation lasts for a number of rounds equal to her Wisdom modifier.



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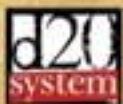
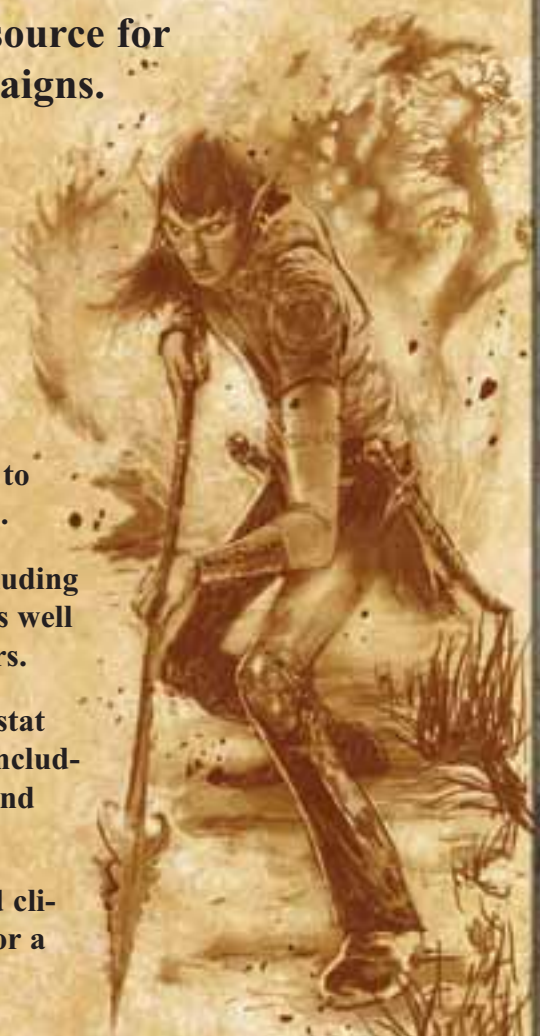
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