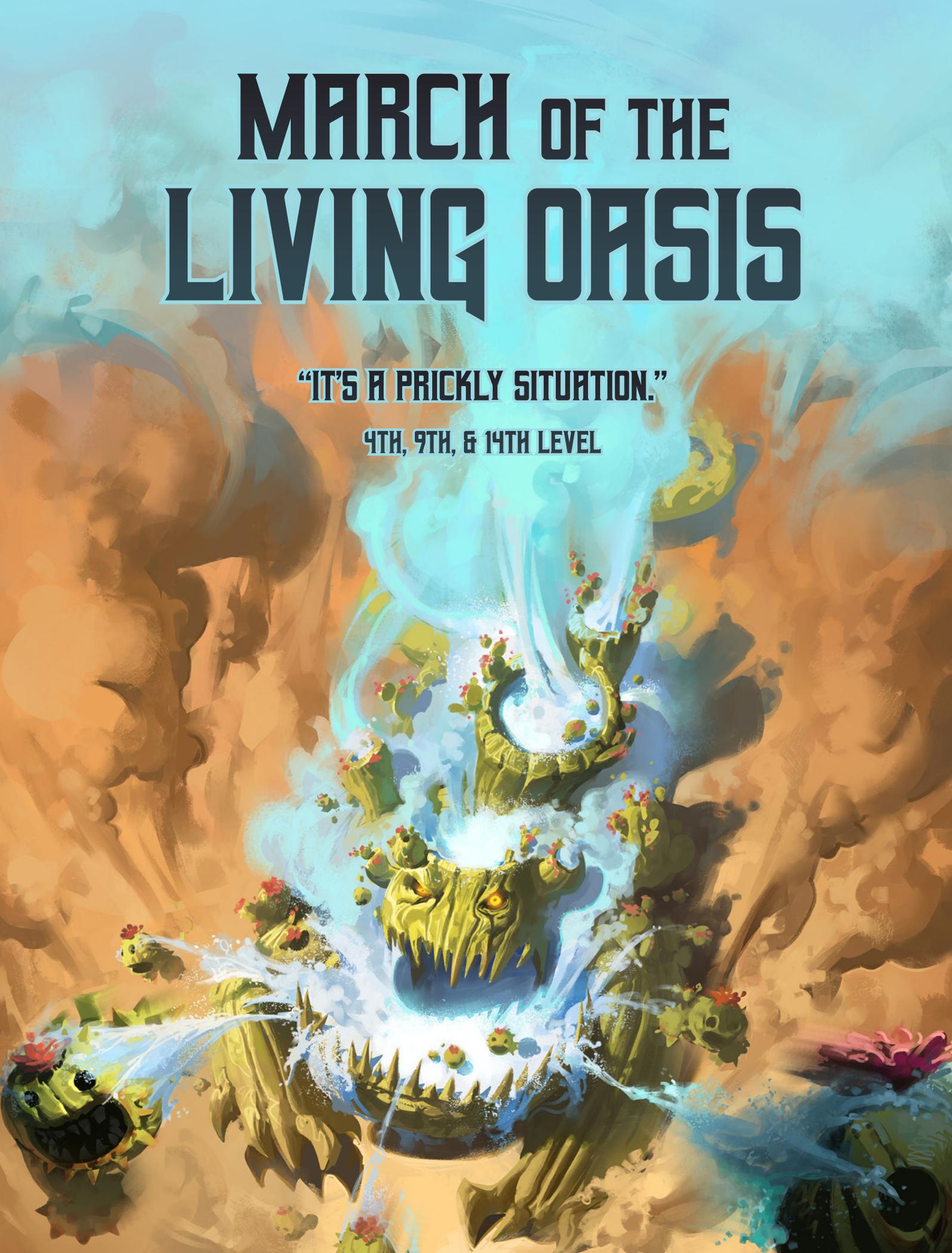


MARCH OF THE LIVING OASIS

"IT'S A PRICKLY SITUATION."

4TH, 9TH, & 14TH LEVEL





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End Times Storyline

This adventure is the second instalment in the End Times storyline, a mini-campaign spanning six character levels, which takes a party of adventurers back and forth in time to prevent an eldritch dragon from consuming the Material Plane. The adventures are designed to be linked together and played sequentially, but can also be played as standalone oneshots with minimal changes by following the instructions in the “Oneshot” sidebars.

LONG AGO, IN THE DISTANT FUTURE

In the distant future, the Timespun Sands experienced a golden age. New advances in arcane science revolutionised the way the people of that land thought about space and time, and entire branches of magic were born. Markets were manipulated with supernatural foresight, natural disasters were retroactively averted, and entire wars were won before they even began.

Decades of security and prosperity blinded the people of the Timespun Sands to the rot festering within: the Cult of the Final Hour, a group of dissatisfied dissidents sought to change the status quo. Employing chronomancy to conceal their actions, they surreptitiously ripped apart the fabric of reality, reached out into the timeless void, and plucked from it the egg of a terrible being: an eldritch dragon capable of feeding upon time and space. For years, they worshipped this egg as an unborn deity, believing that their new god would devour the world once it emerged, only to create it anew, brighter and better than before.

When the dragon finally hatched, the cult’s efforts shifted to provide it with sumptuous meals of its preferred diet: items and people of historical importance. As their god feasted upon these offerings, they were retroactively erased from existence, creating rippling effects on time and causality. These were inconsequential at first—a slight delay in a historic event here, a few extra casualties of war there... But the more the dragon ate, the stronger it grew, and the more it grew, the more it devoured. Soon, time began to fray, and a massive sandstorm grew at the periphery of the world, closing in to swallow entire continents, raze ageless edifices, and scrub clean the annals of history. The people of the Timespun Sands, standing at the centre of a shrinking bubble of safety, became a hotbed of chronomantic survival strategies.

As soon as the threat was detected, the Lemniscate Order—a group comprising the brightest sages and most gifted chronomancers in the Timespun Sands—took action, employing powerful magic in an attempt to halt the death of existence. The Final Hour worked to sabotage these efforts, operating from the shadows to keep themselves and their master a secret. The cultists remain ignorant to the fact that the dragon desires only to consume as much as it can, then seek new worlds to sate its endless hunger, and has no intention of sparing its followers from the impending apocalypse, nor creating a new world for them afterward.

The future is bleak. The Lemniscate Order is in shambles, struggling to keep the end of the world at bay against the constant interference of the Cult of the Final Hour. The encroaching sandstorm has swallowed much of the Material Plane, leaving only a small enclave of survivors in the city of Kasbat Azzaman—the Citadel at the End of Time. And in the vast catacombs beneath the city, the dragon hides, waiting to claim the very last morsel of its feast.

PREVIOUSLY, ON END TIMES

During the previous adventure in this storyline, *Cold Blood on the Scorching Sand*, the party was brought to the city of Kasbat Azzaman, in the distant future, at the request of Falak. A high-ranking member of the Lemniscate Order, Falak sought the help of adventurers against the threat of the timestorm, an ever-growing roil of destruction across the multiverse, but was kidnapped shortly before their arrival.

The party had to investigate several crime scenes in the city to uncover those responsible for the mage’s kidnapping: a group of kaftar—shapeshifting, blood-sucking Monstrosities—led by their matriarch, Oumdabaa. Directed by the Cult of the Final Hour, these creatures sowed chaos in Kasbat Azzaman to stop the Lemniscate Order from interfering with the end of the world.

What happened during the party’s investigation? Did they confront Oumdabaa and her lackeys in the caverns beneath the Last Laugh tavern? Were they successful in vanquishing the threat, or did the kaftar matriarch get the best of them? Did Falak survive the ordeal or succumb to his captors? The outcomes of that adventure will have an impact on the party’s future journeys through the Timespun Sands.

March of the Living Oasis

INTRODUCTION

March of the Living Oasis is a 5th-edition adventure intended for 3 to 7 characters and is optimised for a party of 4 with an average party level (APL) of 4, 9, or 14. Characters who complete this adventure should earn enough experience to progress one-third of the way to 5th level, two-fifths of the way to 10th level, or two-thirds of the way to 15th level. The adventurers must stop an enraged cactus titan from levelling a cactari nursing site and killing a mage who might just hold the key to stopping the end of the world.

In this adventure, the party travels back in time to save the Lemniscate mage Zohra from a mysterious demise. Strange cacticks have been infecting local creatures and the adventurers must investigate Zohra's childhood nursing site for more information. Armed with knowledge, the party must then set off into the Bahr Arrimal desert to find an infected dunedrinker and prevent it from reaching the nursing site. The ability to deal cold and fire damage will be useful in this adventure.

VARIABLE STATISTICS

This adventure uses a shorthand to refer to statistics that vary based on the level of the adventure. **VDC** refers to a variable DC, **Vmod** to a variable modifier, and **Vdam** to a variable amount of damage. These variable statistics can be modified in text; for example, in a 9th-level adventure, VDC + 10 means 15 + 10 = DC 25.

| Adventure Level | VDC | Vmod | Vdam | Vdist |
|-----------------|-----|------|----------|---------|
| 4th | 12 | +4 | 3 (1d6) | 10 feet |
| 9th | 15 | +7 | 10 (3d6) | 15 feet |
| 14th | 16 | +8 | 14 (4d6) | 20 feet |

BACKGROUND

The Lemniscate Order refused to stand idly by as a world-eating sandstorm engulfed the Timespun Sands. The cactar Zohra, master archivist of the order and skilled diviner, visited several of the settlements across the land shortly before their inevitable fall to the end of time. She recorded the histories of those peoples who would soon be lost to the sand, and undertook insightful experiments on the nature of the storm itself. With this data, she hoped to return to Kasbat Azzaman and put her divination expertise to use in creating a magical item capable of finding the cause of the disaster.

Shortly before her trip to the city, she stopped by her birthplace, a cactari nursing site on the edge of the Bahr Arrimal desert, to offer to bring the residents there along. However, the cactari were expecting the birth of a new batch of young, and refused to leave until this happened. With the timestorm still far away, Zohra believed she could afford to wait.

She was wrong. Tracking her movements across the Timespun Sands, the Cult of the Final Hour saw an opportunity to dispose of a crucial member of the Lemniscate Order. They infected a large cactus titan known as a dunedrinker with mind-warping parasitic cacticks. Grown on Aberration blood, these cacticks sent infected creatures into a state of rage and allowed them to be telepathically controlled by the cult, who promptly set the dunedrinker on a collision course with the nursing site.

Taken by surprise, Zohra and her kin fell to the monster. Her research was destroyed, the cactari killed, and the hopes of stopping the timestorm hampered. Over the next few months, the desert sands buried all evidence of these events, including the cult's involvement. But, as Falak is fond of saying, history can be changed, and it's now up to the party to travel back in time and prevent Zohra's demise.

ONESHOT

To play this adventure as a oneshot separate from the End Times storyline, make the following changes:

- ◆ Rather than demanding that the party travel back in time, the events of this adventure take place in the present. Skip ahead to the “Zohra” section (page 10).
- ◆ Falak isn’t a part of this adventure. Rather, the party is summoned to the cactari nursing site by Zohra and asked to investigate the strange behaviour of local creatures that have been attacking travellers unprovoked, and the disappearance of cactari patrols.
- ◆ The Cult of the Final Hour has no involvement in this adventure. Instead, find a different reason why the dunedrinker was infected by the ticks, such as a natural infestation, nefarious fiendish machinations, or a rival cactari community seeking to sic the colossus on its enemies.

SUMMARY

Here’s a summary of the relevant information for this hunt:

- ◆ **Which Monster?** A dunedrinker—a solitary cactus behemoth that calls the deserts of the Timespun Sands its home.
- ◆ **Monster’s Motivations.** The dunedrinker has been infected with arcano-engineered ticks by the Cult of the Final Hour. These have inflamed its rage and allowed the cult to control it, weaponising it against their enemies.
- ◆ **Monster’s Previous Actions.** The dunedrinker has taken out several expeditions sent to find the source of the cacticks. In addition, it continuously spreads the ticks to other creatures, causing them to become enraged.
- ◆ **Where’s the Monster?** The dunedrinker is wandering the Bahr Arrimal desert. Its impressive might makes it difficult for the cult to exert precise control over it, but it is steadily making its way towards the cactari nursing site. The party can’t stay in the past long enough to fight the dunedrinker at the nursing site, so must go out and find it in the desert.



ADVENTURE HOOKS

In addition to rescuing Zohra and the cactari, the party may require an extra incentive to go up against such a colossal foe. Here are a few ways you can provide motivation:

- ◆ **Curiosity: Curious Cacticks.** Sagu Aro, a cactar wizard and scholar, has a burning curiosity about the infectious cacticks. He suspects that they are not natural creatures, and yearns to study the magic in them, believing he may be able to derive some new spells from it. He asks the party to retrieve some cactick samples from their origin, promising to provide them with the fruits of his subsequent research.
- ◆ **Morality: Missing Scout.** Pree Klee, a distraught cactar, informs the party of his concern for his daughter Kwi. Kwi is a promising young scout and the leader of the last party sent to find the source of the cacticks that are making animals enraged. She and her companions haven't sent news in a while, and Pree begs the adventurers to ensure she's safe.
- ◆ **Compensation: The Dunedust Must Flow.** The cactar Thorne, tender of the cactus grove at the nursing site, is worried for the safety of his plants in the face of all the recent attacks. If the party can find the source of the cacticks and put a stop to it, he promises to share with them a refined version of dunedust that he's been concocting.

ADVENTURE REWARDS

| Adventure Level | Rewards per Character | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|--------|
| | Gold | XP* |
| 4th | 550 gp | 1,350 |
| 9th | 2,300 gp | 6,225 |
| 14th | 5,750 gp | 16,375 |

*Includes all monsters, traps, and puzzles, averaged for a party of four.

PARADOX POINTS

Chronomancy is not without risk, and any would-be time traveller would do well to exercise caution when outside of their continuum, lest some of the changes they enact result in unpredictable consequences. (The second risk is one of grammar; deciding whether to use the future semiconditionally plagal past subjunctive or the future modified subinverted imperfect subjunctive when answering a sphinx's riddle has resulted in the demise of more than one tongue-tied adventurer.)

Throughout this adventure, the party's actions may result in them gaining paradox points. In future instalments of End Times, paradox points will be part of a system that can grant characters powerful benefits or, most often, debilitating penalties, as they meddle with the past and future. For now, they exist simply as a means of measuring the extent of their influence on the past throughout this campaign.

Usually, when time-travelling, one seeks to make as few changes to the timeline as possible. However, the party's mission is to change the timeline, which makes gaining at least some paradox points inevitable. In addition, the party may be confronted with situations in which they have the chance to perform heroic actions, saving innocents or securing a better future for the Timespun Sands, at the cost of gaining additional paradox points. This gives them a choice between preserving the integrity of the timeline or taking a risk to change things for the better.

Paradox points are given to the party as a whole. Carefully record these paradox points as the party gains them. You will need to know the total number of points for the final adventure in the End Times storyline, as the timeless dragon gains powerful new abilities depending on the number of paradox points that have been accrued.

MAXIMUM PARADOX

At the GM's discretion, a party may gain paradox points beyond the ones detailed in this adventure, if they take actions likely to result in dramatic change to the timeline. Examples of such activities include:

- ◆ Actions that contradict important facts that have already been established in the present.
- ◆ Actions that directly result in saving or reviving an important creature that should be dead in the present.
- ◆ Actions that directly result in the death of an important creature that should be alive in the present.
- ◆ Relaying important information to a creature in the past that shouldn't know it yet.
- ◆ Interacting with past versions of oneself.

What exactly constitutes an important creature, fact, or piece of information is up to the GM, but try to err on the side of caution and give your party some leeway. Interfering with the lives of lackeys or commoners shouldn't result in significant changes to the timeline. Be aware that giving the party an excess of paradox points will result in them becoming afraid to take action, play along with the adventure, and have fun.

Everyone is Confused. Time travel can be incredibly disorienting, both for those engaging in it and those who have to suffer its effects. It can be taxing for you to try and predict your party's actions in the past in order to preemptively have the present reflect them. For that reason, creatures affected by paradoxes have conflicting memories of differing timelines, which exist in tandem until time is definitively altered, forgetting or remembering facts depending on the situation. This allows you to, for example, have the party meet a creature in the past that they've already met in the present, even if the present version of that creature appeared to have no memory of having met the party before. Some creatures deeply attuned to the flow of time, such as cosmic jinn (see Encounter Chain: Retroactive Loan, page 20), are often capable of keeping better track of chronological mishaps.

IN THE PRESENT

This adventure involves returning to the past to prevent a disaster from taking place. In order to begin their chronomantic journey, the party needs to be informed of their purpose in the present in one of the following ways:

Falak is Alive. If Falak is alive, he invites the party to his residence a few days after his rescue from Oum-dabaa. There, he gives them the information below, and answers any questions the party may have to the best of his ability. In addition, he offers them two potions of healing to aid them on their quest, of a rarity dependent on the adventure level, as detailed in the table below.

| Adventure Level | Potions |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| 4th | <i>Potion of healing</i> |
| 9th | <i>Potion of greater healing</i> |
| 14th | <i>Potion of superior healing</i> |

Falak is Dead. If Falak died at the hands of the kaf-tar, a contingency he put in place in case of his demise activates. The adventurers he brought to the future are visited by an illusory projection of Falak, who delivers the information below in a robotic cadence. This version of Falak can't be interacted with or answer follow-up questions, and doesn't provide the party with any extra supplies.

Information. Either way, the party should learn the following information:

- ◆ The entire Material Plane is threatened by the unravelling of time, which takes the form of a massive sandstorm that turns all in its path to dust. Kasbat Az-zaman is the last city standing in the world, and the storm will soon swallow it up too if nothing is done to stop it. The party is Falak's last hope to do so.
- ◆ The current situation is dire, and Falak lacks resources and the expertise of his peers. The only course of action that he deems viable is travelling back in time to the past. Starting from the most recent events and proceeding backwards, intervening in certain key moments might help prevent things from becoming so terrible in the first place.
- ◆ Months ago, one of the last high-ranking members of the Lemniscate Order disappeared without a trace, along with her floating tower and a small cactari community out in the Bahr Arrimal desert. She was working on a magical item capable of detecting and tracking paradoxes, which was lost with her. Finding out what caused her to disappear and preventing it from happening could be of tremendous help in slowing the timestorm's advance.
- ◆ Changing the past can be dangerous, and should be done with caution. Falak informs the party of actions that may destabilise the fabric of time, as detailed in the "Maximum Paradox" sidebar above.
- ◆ **Only if Falak is alive:** The kidnappings of Falak and other members of the Lemniscate Order have caused him to suspect that there might be someone with an interest in seeing the world end, and who might even be responsible for the timestorm. If the party found Oum-dabaa's hit list during the previous adventure, he draws their attention to the enigmatic symbol on it, and asks them to keep an eye out for it during their time in the past.

FALAK

Humanoid (dji), Lemniscate sage, he/him

Personality. Cryptic, eccentric, scatter-brained.

Appearance. Short and hunched over, fluffy white beard, large turban.

Desire. To discover a new chronomancy spell and name it after himself.

Fear. To see the city of Kasbat Azzaman fall.

"You look vaguely familiar... Will we have met before?"

THE PAST AT LAST

When the party is ready to depart, either Falak or his projection can point them to a specially-made teleportation circle hidden within his study. Rather than using the power of present Falak, which is scarce in his weakened state (or completely nonexistent, if he's dead), this circle sends a message to past Falak, instructing him to head to the party's destination, use his magic to transport the adventurers there, and keep them in the past for as long as possible.

AN OLD NEW FRIEND

Upon arriving in the past, the party may be surprised to find that Falak looks quite different in his prime. You can read or paraphrase the following:



FALAK



Buma. Buma is Falak's loyal familiar, a creature consisting of equal parts owl and hourglass. At Falak's request, she follows the party during their adventures in the past and assists them to the best of her abilities. Buma can understand and speak Common, keep track of how much time the party has left to complete their mission, and warn them when they've made a significant change to the past, which occurs whenever they gain one or more paradox points. She stays out of combat, only observing it from afar, and disappears in a puff of smoke if she's reduced to 0 hit points. She then reappears next to Falak and tries to find her way back to the adventurers as quickly as possible.

GM TIP: TICKING CLOCK

Throughout this adventure, the party has several ways to spend time in order to gather clues on the monster, such as doing research in Zohra's library, smoking dunedust to build up a tolerance, or practising removing cactus stems. Allow the party freedom to explore the nursing site at their own place, but gently remind them, through Buma the owlglass, that their time is limited, and that tracking the monster in the desert will take quite a bit of it.

In order to keep time as a factor, track how long a party dedicates to each task, and how much they can do on a given day, following the rules below.

- ♦ A creature can do hard tasks for a number of hours equal to $8 +$ its Constitution modifier each day. Hard tasks aren't just physical labour. Activities such as crafting, research, experimentation, and interrogation all count as hard tasks.
- ♦ A creature can push on beyond that limit, at the risk of exhaustion. For each additional hour a creature works beyond its working threshold, the creature must succeed on a Constitution saving throw at the end of the hour or gain 1 level of exhaustion. The DC for this save equals $10 + 1$ for each hour worked beyond its working threshold. In addition to the normal effects of exhaustion, a creature with 5 levels of exhaustion can't do hard tasks.
- ♦ A creature needs to take one long rest each day. If a creature goes 24 hours without taking a long rest, it must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or gain 1 level of exhaustion. The DC for this save equals $15 + 5$ for each additional 24 hours beyond the first that a creature has gone without a long rest.

The world stops spinning and the swirling colours finally settle into the gold of the dunes below and the blue of the sky above. Waiting for you is a familiar face on a very unfamiliar body.

An old man hovers a foot off the ground, a starry cloak fluttering in the breeze behind him. His muscular torso is partly hidden behind two crossed arms thick as tree trunks, adorned with vivid, blue glyphs that contrast with his violet skin. Colourful crystal spheres orbit his turban of their own volition, their trajectory undisturbed even when he tilts his head to regard you curiously.

"Hello." His tone is warm and jovial. "My name is Falak. I feel as if I should know yours, but somehow, I've forgotten. How odd."

Falak doesn't know the party at this point, as he has yet to meet them during the events of *Cold Blood on the Scorching Sand*, but he knows better than to disregard the instructions of his future self. He can keep the party in this time for a total of 3 days, after which they are abruptly sent back to Kasbat Azzaman, in the present. Their mission must be completed in this period of time. To help the party, Falak lends them the services of Buma, his owlglass familiar.

Saving Falak (Again). If the party was unable to rescue Falak during the previous adventures, they may want to attempt to do so now by somehow changing the past so that he can live. Informing him of the danger that awaits him in the future isn't enough to ensure Falak's safety. Even with this knowledge, future Falak is too weak to oppose the crafty kaftar.

In order to retroactively save Falak, the party must instead provide him with a way of making a quick escape during their invasion of the kaftar hideout, while Oumdabaa and her minions are distracted, as well as a way to conceal it from his captors. For example, this can be a *scroll of misty step* hidden in the lining of his robes, or a phial containing a *potion of gaseous form* that he can shove into his boot. Doing so nets the party **2 paradox points**, but when they return to the present, they find Falak alive and well, having made good use of his gift.

ZOHRA

The cactar Zohra is a high-ranking member of the Lemniscate Order, its master archivist, an expert enchanter, and a diviner of great renown. She travels the Timespun Sands in her mobile home, a floating wizard tower that houses an observatory and impressive library containing all of her personal research. Currently, she's working on what she's dubbed Project Stormstopper—exhaustive research and experimentation that she hopes will result in a magical item capable of stopping the end of the world.

Humble Roots. Despite the heights to which she's risen, Zohra hasn't forgotten her origins in a small cactari nursing site at the edge of the Bahr Arrimal. She regularly returns to her community, not just to check in on their well-being, but also to consult the elders for their wisdom. Even with all the knowledge she's obtained, she still sees the value in the opinions and experiences of others.

Unknowingly Doomed. Zohra has no idea of the fate that will befall her if nothing is done to prevent it. She believes the most immediate threat to be the timestorm, which is still far away, and is ignorant of the dunedrinker headed for the nursing site. The party can inform her that they come from the future and that she and her community are in danger, but giving away too many details of the future causes them to gain **1 paradox point**. Used to dealing with chronomancy and all the shenanigans that come with it, it doesn't take much for her to believe the party's claims, especially if Buma vouches for them. Even then, she refuses to abandon her people in their time of need, and asks the party to defeat the threat rather than help her flee.

ZOHRA

Humanoid (cactar), Lemniscate archivist, she/her

Personality. Curious, passionate. Strong wanderlust.

Appearance. Short, white robes with lemniscate symbol, lemniscate-shaped glasses.

Desire. To amass the largest library in the Timespun Sands.

Fear. To be forced to settle down before she's ready and be unable to travel the world.

"The world is vast and mysterious. Why put down roots when you can go out and explore it?"

ZOHRA





Information. Zohra can share information about her situation and some strange occurrences in the region as of late:

- ◆ She has returned to help her community flee before they're consumed by the timestorm. She's offered to take them to Kasbat Azzaman, where they can find refuge, in her floating tower.
- ◆ The cactari are currently expecting a new batch of young, which will soon sprout from cuttings. Until they do, the cuttings can't be removed from the soil, or the infants will perish. The cactari have refused to leave until the children are born and, believing them to be safe for the time being, Zhora is content to wait.
- ◆ Creatures around the desert have been spotted bearing some sort of infection from oversized ticks, which makes them aggressive and fearless. Several of them have even attacked the nursing site, though these were small, unorganised groups that were easily repelled.
- ◆ Numerous scouting parties have been sent out into the desert to find the source of this infection before it becomes problematic. Out of four, only one has returned—partially, and in dire condition. They are still receiving medical treatment from some of the healers. Zohra encourages the party to visit the local healing ponds to learn more about the scouts.
- ◆ The last scouting party has only been gone for a little over a day, and their camp should still be nearby. They might have gained some insight on the causes of all these strange events, and Zohra suggests that the party meets up with them in the desert.

THE BAHR ARRIMAL

In a land replete with vast deserts, the Bahr Arrimal, or Sea of Sand, stands out as the most magnificent. The Bahr Arrimal is located at the heart of the Timespun Sands, and is well-known as a treacherous expanse, full of danger and opportunity in equal measure. Although many have faltered in their efforts to conquer this arid wasteland, new expeditions are launched regularly into the desert, seeking long-lost tombs buried by time, lush oases teeming with never-before-seen fauna and flora, and more efficient trade routes between settlements.

THE NURSING SITE

On the edges of the Bahr Arrimal, built under the shade of rocky outcroppings that jut from the golden sands, is the nursing site of a modest cactari community. The harsh conditions of the desert make many young adults that depart on the Branching, their traditional coming-of-age journey, decide to settle down elsewhere when their pilgrimage reaches an end. Because of this, the nursing site is rarely home to more than a hundred cactari at any given time.

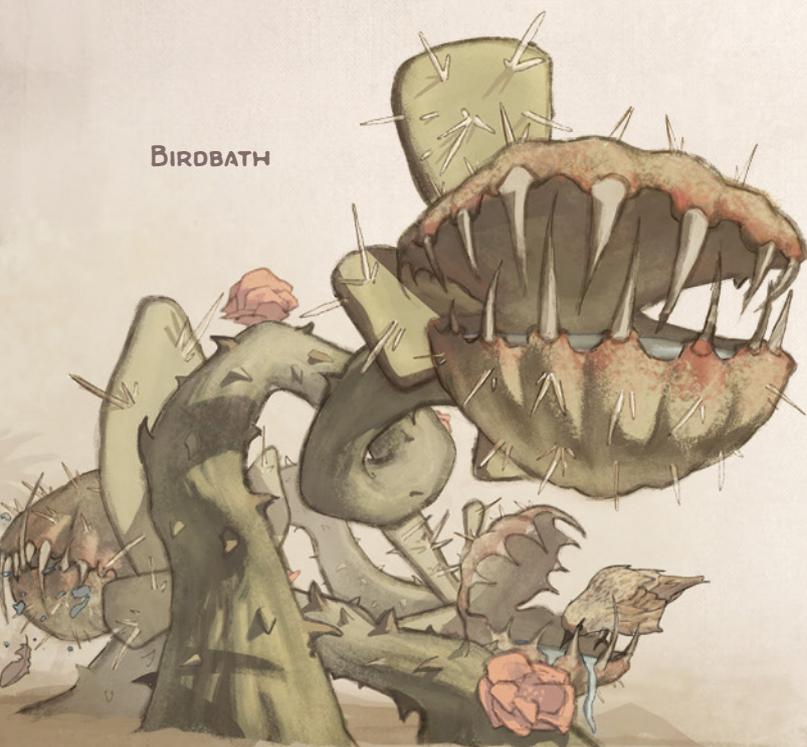
The settlement is the last opportunity for travellers to stock up on food and water and, until the coming of the timestorm, it saw frequent traffic from caravans and expeditions looking to venture into the Sea of Sand. Its cactari residents are accustomed to strangers, and welcome all good-intentioned folks into their fold. Moreover, they regularly form search parties to delve into the Bahr Arrimal in search of any who might have failed to traverse it.

UNIQUE FAUNA AND FLORA

Even in the arid, scorching desert, life finds a way to thrive. Several creatures and plants have adapted to these inhospitable conditions, and the ones described below are some of the Bahr Arrimal's most notable residents.

Birdbath Plants. Birdbath is a name given to several species of carnivorous plant in the Bahr Arrimal, which have adapted their hunting methods to better fit the arid climate. These plants come in various forms, such as pitcher or flytrap, but their predation strategy is the same: instead of drawing in prey with sweet nectar, they do it with water drained from the soil by long, slender roots. Once an unfortunate bird or rodent lands on the plant and begins drinking, the birdbath springs its trap, closing its maw or wrapping around its prey to consume it.

BIRDBATH



Blazes. It's often said that a healthy dose of skepticism is one of the most useful traits one can have during a journey through the Bahr Arrimal. Blazes—lower jinn of elemental fire—abound in the dunes, ready to torment travellers for a moment's reprieve from the monotony of the desert. Their ability to manipulate heat haze makes them formidable illusionists, and incredibly inconvenient to deal with when the sands are teeming with so many other dangers. You won't know if that sandshark heading towards you is just a bored jinn's trick until it closes its teeth around your leg. More information on blazes can be found in Appendix C, page 43.

Oasis Elementals. Arising from bodies of water surrounded by arid wasteland, these peculiar creatures take the form of snails, exchanging some of the freedom and flexibility of their watery form for the added protection of a sturdy shell. They are self-appointed guardians of their havens in the sands, but display considerably more amiability than many other elementals. Oasis elementals see no reason to act aggressive if a visitor refrains from harming their homes, and have even been known to make bonds with Humanoids—it's not uncommon for them to be used as mounts by druids, rangers, or tamers.

OASIS ELEMENTAL







An oasis elemental has the statistics of a **water elemental** (CR 5), with the following changes:

- ◆ It isn't immune to the grappled or restrained conditions.
- ◆ It can't move through spaces as narrow as 1 inch.
- ◆ It gains the following bonus action:

Withdraw. The elemental retreats into its shell.

Until it emerges, it gains a **+4 bonus** to AC and other creatures can't benefit from advantage on attack rolls against it. While in its shell, the elemental is **prone**, its speed is reduced to **0 feet** and can't increase, it has **disadvantage** on Dexterity saving throws, and it can't take actions or reactions other than a bonus action to emerge from its shell.

Sandsharks. Sandsharks are the indisputable apex predators of the Sea of Sand, and the reason for the desert's name. Though they have since spread across the entirety of the Timespun Sands, they remain most abundant in the Bahr Arrimal, from which they originate. There, they rule the dunes with uncontested ferocity, fleeing only from the occasional wandering dunedrinker. More information on them can be found in Appendix C.

Spikeshell Tortoise. Spikeshell tortoises are small, placid reptiles that gather around water sources in the deserts of the Timespun Sands. They get their name from the peculiar relationship they have with the local cacti, whose fruit they feed on. Instead of swallowing the seeds, spikeshell tortoises spit them out into the mounds of dirt that they accumulate on their shells, allowing young cacti to grow on their backs. These cacti serve as a portable food source, a defence against predators, and a camouflage mechanism.

Spikeshells are especially fond of dunedrinker oases, which not only contain an abundance of food and water, but simplify their work immensely. Rather than growing cacti upon their backs, these tortoises cover themselves in the dunedrinker's detachable stems, forming a thick layer of fearsome needles that is even more efficient a detractor to hungry sandsharks.

TRACKING

Zohra provides directions to the cactari scout camp, but the Bahr Arrimal is difficult to navigate even with a map, and the party requires three Tracking checks and one success to reach their destination, with each check taking 6 hours. The Tracking mechanics found in *Heliana's Guide* (page 22) can be used to decide the DCs for any ability and skill combinations the players choose to use for their Tracking checks. On a successful check, the party has a narrative encounter, while a failure results in a hostile encounter.

To determine what happens after each Tracking check, first refer to the encounters in the Keyed Encounters section (see below). After these have occurred, you can use the Desert random encounters in *Heliana's Guide* (page 40), or the encounters provided in the Random Encounters section of this hunt (page 19).

KEYED ENCOUNTERS

The first successful Tracking check should result in the Blaze Bullies encounter, where the party can observe how the jinn easily repel the cactus stems. The first failure or next successful check should result in the Sandsipper Stragglers encounter, where the party is pitted against some tick-infected cacti, letting them experiment with removing the cacticks.

BLAZE BULLIES

Narrative encounter

A group of spikeshell tortoises (see Local Fauna and Flora, page 16), orbit a small watering hole in the desert. They abandoned the dunedrinker oasis when the Cult of the Final Hour first arrived and infected it with cacticks, and they have wandered the Bahr Arrimal since then, searching for another source of water. Unfortunately, this one just so happens to be home to a group of blazes—mischievous jinn of elemental fire, which take great pleasure in tormenting the desperate tortoises.

Learning. The party can observe the tortoises, acting as a unit, as they make another run for the water. They are not defenceless: on their shells, they have a large amount of the dunedrinker stems, which jump out at the blazes when they draw near. Unfortunately, the stems combust as soon as they touch the fiery jinn, and fall uselessly to the ground without ever sticking.

A blaze then spews flames onto the back of one of the tortoises, causing all stems on it to combust and fall off at once. Demoralised, the tortoises retreat for the time being.

Resolution. A successful **DC 12 Nature (Intelligence) or Wisdom (Medicine)** check reveals that the tortoises are severely dehydrated and likely to perish within the next day if they don't find water. The party may want to help by sharing some of their own or dealing with the jinn bullies. As bullies often are, the blazes are cowardly and averse to confrontation against powerful foes. A successful **VDC Intimidation** check or the casting of an aggressive spell of 3rd level or higher is enough to make them flee. Alternatively, the party can calm the unruly blazes with a successful **VDC Animal Handling** check, or distract them with a successful **VDC Performance** check.

Reward. If the party helps the tortoises by dealing with the jinn, they obtain a *blazing ring* (see Appendix A, page 38). This is dropped by the fleeing jinn if they're coerced into leaving, or offered to the party as a token of friendship if they're calmed or entertained.

SANDSIPPER STRAGGLERS

Hostile encounter

A small contingent of sandsippers that have separated from the dunedrinker comes across the party in the Bahr Arrimal. At adventure levels 9 and 14, a sandshark accompanies them. All members of this motley crew are infected with cacticks, and they're heading towards the cactari nursing site. Highly aggressive, they immediately attack any other living creatures they see. The composition of the fight depends on the adventure level:

ENCOUNTER COMPOSITION

| Adventure Level | Composition* | Number of Cacticks |
|-----------------|---|--------------------|
| 4th | 2 Sandsipper Cannoneers, 4 Sandsipper Sluggers | 1 |
| 9th | 1 Sandshark, 2 Sandsipper Cannoneers, 2 Sandsipper Thornshields | 2 |
| 14th | 1 Sandshark, 3 Sandsipper Pollinators, 1 Sandsipper Sentinel | 3 |

*See Appendix C for all stat blocks, page 43

Cacticks. Each creature in this encounter bears a number of cacticks depending on the adventure level, as indicated in the table above. The cacticks are responsible for the creatures' increased aggressiveness and are clearly visible on their bodies. Each time that a creature takes **10** or more cold damage, one of the cacticks freezes and falls off. When a sandsipper loses all its cacticks, it ceases to be hostile to the party and wanders around aimlessly. A sandshark that loses all cacticks remains hostile to the party, but flees once it is reduced to one third of its hit point maximum or lower. Killing a creature also kills its cacticks.

Experimentation. Once the battle is over, the party is able to examine any dead cacticks over the course of **1 hour**. A successful **VDC Wisdom (Medicine)** check reveals that the ticks are highly susceptible to cold damage. A successful **VDC Intelligence (Nature or Arcana)** check reveals that cacticks are not natural, but have been engineered by magical means; not only do they increase a creature's rage, but they are also capable of relaying subtle telepathic directions.

BLAZE





CARTOGRAPHER:
CZE & PEKU

MAP 1. BAHR ARRIMAL

1 GRID = 5 FEET

CZE & PEKU

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

The following narrative encounters can occur after a successful Tracking check. After a failed Tracking check, use one of the Desert hostile encounters from *Heliana's Guide*.

"JINN" OF THE LAMP

Narrative encounter, desert

A soft voice whispers to the party from among the dunes, coming from a golden oil lamp half-buried in the sand. The voice claims to be a powerful jinn trapped in the lamp by a malevolent wizard, pleads to be released, and promises to grant everyone three wishes if they help. A successful **VDC Wisdom (Insight)** check reveals this to be false.

In truth, the creature trapped in the lamp is none other than a devil, which can be deduced from the scent of brimstone with a successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Religion)** check. The party can convince the devil to play nice after its release with a successful **VDC** ability check of their choice, as long as it makes sense, such as an **Intelligence (Investigation)** check to draft a binding contract, a **Charisma (Intimidation)** check to threaten to bury the lamp fully, or a **Charisma (Persuasion)** check to strike up a mutually advantageous deal. The type of devil depends on the party's APL, as described in the table below.

DEVIL OF THE LAMP

| APL | Devil |
|-------|---------------|
| 1-2 | Imp |
| 3-4 | Bearded devil |
| 5-6 | Barbed devil |
| 7-9 | Bone devil |
| 10-12 | Horned devil |
| 13-16 | Ice devil |
| 17-20 | Pit fiend |

If the party releases the devil without first convincing it not to be hostile, it attacks immediately, and fights until it's reduced to one third of its hit point maximum or below. If the party accepts the devil's surrender, or if they convinced it not to be hostile prior to releasing it, the devil offers the party the golden lamp, claiming that it just put a jinn inside that they can call upon in a time of need. A creature can use its action to rub the lamp, summoning a **blaze*** in an unoccupied space within **5 feet** of it. The blaze is an ally to its summoner and obeys its summoner's verbal commands. It remains for **1 hour** or until it's reduced to 0 hit points, at which point both it and the lamp disappear.

*see Appendix C, page 43

SANDS OF TIME

Narrative encounter, desert

The party comes to the edge of a small but dangerous sandstorm, swirling in a **50-foot radius sphere**. Within this storm they can make out vivid colours, indistinct silhouettes, and blurry images obscured by the sand. Whipped up by chronomantic magic gone wrong, this is no ordinary storm—it shows a creature visions of other times and places, and can grant those willing to take a risk a priceless glimpse into the future.

A creature that ends its turn inside the sandstorm must make a **VDC Constitution saving throw**, taking Vdam slashing damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. At that point, the creature can also make a **VDC** ability check to observe the visions. There are three checks that must be made successfully, in this order: a **Wisdom (Perception)** check to see the visions clearly, an **Intelligence (Investigation)** check to interpret their meaning, and a **Wisdom (Insight)** check to tell truth from falsehood. A creature can attempt each check as many times as it likes.

If a creature succeeds on all three checks, it gains the ability to cast the *divination* spell as a ritual, without requiring material components, once within the next **10 days**.

ENCOUNTER CHAIN: RETROACTIVE LOAN

Narrative encounter, desert

Use this encounter only if you're running the End Times storyline and you ran the previous encounter in this chain: Payback Time.

The party once again encounters the cosmic jinn, Emit, who is making his way through the desert to the cactari nursing site. He is haggard and dishevelled, clearly in poorer condition than he was when they met him in the present in Kasbat Azzaman, but his face lights up when he sees them. He is quick to inform them that their plan worked and he is now free, and thanks them profusely for their help. However, his power has not yet returned, and he needs help securing passage to the city and paying for a place where he can recover safely. To this end, he asks the party for a loan, equal in value to the amount he offered them during the Payback Time encounter, promising that he will return it at the earliest possible opportunity.

Emit refuses to answer any follow-up questions, looking conflicted as he explains that "it's not yet time". If the party gives him the money, he professes his undying gratitude once again and goes on his way. If the party accepted his money in the present but refuses to give it to him now, they gain 1 paradox point. Emit doesn't insist too much if this happens, but he's visibly morose as he continues on his journey.

KNOW THY ENEMY

Interacting with the cactari around the nursing site can help the party gather clues that will aid them in the fight against the dunedrinker. Keyed encounters while tracking the monster across the desert can shed further light on the matter. If the party discovers what monster they're facing by healing and questioning the scouts in the healing ponds, they can also spend some time in Zohra's library to search for information. The clues are as follows:

- ◆ The dunedrinker is suffering from a cactick infection, which makes it unusually aggressive. These ticks are susceptible to cold damage.
- ◆ The dunedrinker produces hallucinatory pollen that frightens carnivores. Smoking dunedust and abstaining from meat helps reduce the effects of exposure to this pollen.
- ◆ Spiky cactus stems detach from the dunedrinker to stick to creatures near it. It's easier to remove them with practice, but it can also be done by dealing fire damage to the affected creature.

HEALING PONDS

While at the nursing site, the party is encouraged by Zohra to visit the healing ponds in order to gain more knowledge about the fate of one of the scouting parties. The healing ponds are a series of small caverns that function as the local infirmary, dug into one of the rocks that shelters the nursing site. There, the cactari make use of pools of water with mild restorative properties, pumped from an underground spring under the nursing site, to treat their ill and wounded. The scouts are being kept separate from other patients, and are tended to by one cactari elder at all times.

A rosy haze permeates an isolated room in the healing ponds, where four cactari rest, half-submerged in the pristine water. Their mouths hang ajar, their eyes are unfocused and barely open, and their weakly twitching limbs are the only visible sign of life. Each one bears on their bodies three or four fist-sized creatures with the appearance of prickly ticks, their abdomens swollen and pulsing with a sickly purple glow.

Tending to them is an older cactari woman, who alternates between feeding an unappealing pink paste to the patients and overseeing the censer from which the mist emanates. She beckons you in with a weak wave of her hand, weary eyes resting on your faces for only a second before settling back on the suffering cactari.

Survivors. The cactari in the pool are what's left of the third scouting party sent to investigate the source of the cacticks—the only ones to ever return from their mission. They encountered the dunedrinker, which resulted in the swift death of most of them. The few that managed to escape were infected with some of the ticks. Controlled by the same compulsion used by the Cult of the Final Hour to guide the dunedrinker, they eventually made their way back to the nursing site.

Information. Sue Culent, the cactari elder on duty, welcomes the party to the infirmary as long as they are quiet and respectful of the patients. If they ask questions about the scouts, she can impart the following information:

- ◆ The survivors wandered back to the nursing site several days after they were supposed to, bearing these strange ticks. They were aggressive and had to be subdued by the guards.

- ◆ They have been completely uncommunicative, producing only growls and roars. The cactari have been unable to coax any information about what they encountered or the fate of the rest of their scouting party.
- ◆ To keep them from harming themselves or others, the scouts are kept in a soft trance with the use of dunedust, a special drug that cactari of this nursing site first discovered in an oasis deep in the desert. (This was the buried dunedrinker, although the cactari don't know this.)
- ◆ Dunedust is a hallucinogen that the cactari consume recreationally. The elder needs to control the dosage carefully, as high doses of it can cause frightening, harmful hallucinations. She magically conjures wind to disperse the haze when it becomes too thick.
- ◆ As it happens, Sue is almost out of dunedust, and kindly asks the party if they mind retrieving three doses from the cactus grove in the nursing site. If the party expresses interest in experimenting with it themselves, the elder points them to the same cactus grove, but warns them that the first time trying dunedust might be a little disconcerting.
- ◆ If the party asks about the pink paste, the elder reveals it to be minced sandshark meat. Cactari are typically vegetarians, but the infected need to be fed a special diet in order for the drug to affect them more intensely—curiously, its effects diminish if a creature goes too long without eating meat.

Experimentation. The cactari have been unable to remove the ticks from the scouts. Not only are the creatures' mandibles dug in deep, any attempt to manipulate them, no matter how gentle, causes the infected great pain. A successful **VDC Charisma (Deception, Persuasion, or Intimidation)** check can convince the reluctant elder to allow the party to examine the cacticks, as long as they promise to be careful. A creature has **advantage** on this check if it's proficient in the Medicine skill.

Examining the cacticks reveals they are concentrated on specific spots of a creature's body. A successful **VDC Intelligence (Investigation)** check reveals that they seem to shy away from cold, gathering closer to flames or other sources of heat, and at the edge of the warm waters. Carefully dealing any amount of cold damage to a cactick causes it to harmlessly detach itself from its host. Damaging or forcefully removing a cactick in any other way elicits screams of pain from the infected cactar, and prompts the elder to order the party to stop and leave the healing ponds.

In addition, a successful **VDC Intelligence (Arcana or Nature)** check made to study a detached cactick over the course of **1 hour** reveals that these creatures are not natural, but have been engineered by magical means. Not only do they increase a creature's rage, but they are also capable of relaying subtle telepathic directions.

The Scouts' Tale. Removing all of the cacticks from a cactari scout causes them to pass out. They awaken **1d4** hours later or if they regain any hit points, at which point they are able to relay their story, as described in the Survivors paragraph above. Doing so reveals to the party that their foe is a dunedrinker, which in turn opens up a new avenue for gathering clues: Zohra's library (see Clues 2 and 3, pages 25 and 27). They also reveal that the monster is the source of the cacticks, that it produces hallucinatory pollen similar to dunedust, and that it's steadily making its way toward the nursing site!

SUE CULENT







CACTUS GROVE

To ensure a steady supply of dunedust without having to travel back to the far-off oasis, the cactari took cuttings from the cacti that produced the pollen from which they extract their drug. These cuttings were then used to grow a small grove in the nursing site, which is tended to by a bulky, jovial cactar by the name of Thorne. Thorne is more than happy to receive the party, answer any questions they may have, and guide them in experimenting with the hallucinogen.

Harvesting Pollen. The grove is a dense thicket of cacti in various stages of development, with just barely enough room for a creature to squeeze through without being pricked by the needles. Thorne allows the party in if they say they come on behalf of Sue Culent, warning them of the dangers and instructing them on how to collect the pollen.

Gathering the pollen is a simple process: a creature must first succeed on a **VDC Wisdom (Perception)** check to find a suitable flower in the grove, then on a **VDC Dexterity (Nature)** check to properly extract the substance. However, each time that a creature fails either of these checks, a small stem detaches from the nearest cactus and jumps on the creature, dealing **1d6** piercing damage and sticking to it.

As long as the party doesn't look too badly hurt, Thorne finds it humorous to see them emerge from the thicket covered in cactus stems. Keeping his distance,

he shows them how to remove the stems, which a creature can attempt by using its action to make a **VDC Wisdom (Medicine)** check. On a failed check, a creature takes **1d6** piercing damage. On a successful one, a creature removes the stem, but it immediately jumps onto a different creature within **10 feet** of it. Thorne only informs the party that the stems always find a new home if they look very damaged—otherwise, he snickers a little when it happens.

In addition, he suggests that they get some practice removing the stems if they plan to venture out into the Bahr Arrimal, where they may come into contact with more of these cacti. It takes **2 hours** to practise with the stems, at the end of which a creature can make a **VDC Wisdom (Medicine)** check. On a success, the creature becomes capable of making a check to remove a stem as a bonus action or an action. A creature can repeat this practice as many times as it wishes until it succeeds on the check, taking 2 hours each time.

Trying Dunedust. If the party successfully gathers the pollen for Sue Culent, Thorne offers each member one dose of dunedust for free, as thanks for saving him the trouble (and to make up for his little omission about the dangers of the cactus stems). Otherwise, he sells one dose of dunedust for 5 gp.

A creature can smoke a dose of dunedust with the use of a hookah pipe over the course of **1 hour**, after which it experiences mild hallucinatory effects for **1 hour**. A creature that smokes dunedust must also succeed on a **VDC Constitution** saving throw or be **poisoned** for the same duration. Until this poison ends, the creature is **incapacitated**. Thorne explains that dunedust becomes easier to handle after a few doses, when one builds up tolerance to it (see Clue 2, page 25). Roll a **d6** and consult the table below to determine the effects experienced by a creature that fails the saving throw:

d6 Dunedust Effects

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | You become able to taste colours and smell sounds. |
| 2 | You see cacti sprouting everywhere, and develop a mild fixation with “cactus juice” (whatever that is), believing it to be “the quenchiest”. |
| 3 | Sand looks like water to you, and the desert like a vast ocean. You have no explanation for the fact that you can walk on it. |
| 4 | You mistake certain objects and creatures for giant animated mushrooms, which you're certain are friendly. |
| 5 | You see visions of magnificent palaces and castles, feeling a strange compulsion to recreate them out of sand. |
| 6 | You see other creatures spontaneously burst into flames at random intervals, but can't bring yourself to be alarmed about it. |

THE CACTICKS ARE
HIGHLY SENSITIVE
TO COLD.



HANDOUT 1. TENACIOUS TICKS

CLUE 1: TENACIOUS TICKS

The cacticks on the dunedrinker are susceptible to cold damage. Removing these ticks pacifies the monster.

HEALING PONDS

Examining the cactari scouts in the healing ponds (page 20) lets the party observe that cacticks shy away from cold. Furthermore, they can remove them from the scouts and see how the mind-warping effects cease instantly.

EN ROUTE

The party can find a group of sandsippers bearing cacticks in the Sandsipper Stragglers encounter (page 17), while searching the Bahr Arrimal. This is likely to result in a fight, giving them the opportunity to experiment with removing the ticks from a creature and witness the effects of doing so.

USING THE CLUE

Removing the cacticks from the dunedrinker during wave 3 of the battle allows the fight to end peacefully, without the creature needing to be slain.

CLUE 2: PANIC POLLEN

Dunedrinker pollen causes meat-eating creatures to become frightened. Player characters can become less susceptible to the effects of this pollen by abstaining from eating meat or building up a tolerance to it using dunedust.

HEALING PONDS

In the healing ponds (page 20), the party has a chance to see Sue Culent feed the infected scouts meat in order to keep them highly susceptible to dunedust (cactari are typically vegetarians and tolerate it easily). If the scouts are healed, they can confirm that the creature heading for the nursing site produces a very similar substance and uses it in combat to ward off foes.

ZOHRA'S LIBRARY

If the party knows that their foe is a dunedrinker (as they discover if they manage to cure a scout), they can conduct research on it in Zohra's library. A creature can make a **VDC Intelligence (Investigation)** check after spending **1d4** hours researching. On a success, it learns the effects of the dunedrinker's **Hallucinogenic Cloud** action, as well as how to resist it more easily by abstaining from meat and building up a tolerance to dunedust.

CACTUS GROVE

In the cactus grove, the party has the chance to smoke dunedust and build up a tolerance to the drug. Since dunedust is made from dunedrinker pollen, becoming tolerant to it (see Using the Clue) provides an edge in the fight ahead.

USING THE CLUE

A creature gains **advantage** on saving throws made against the dunedrinker's Hallucinogenic Cloud if it:

- ◆ Hasn't eaten meat for at least 1 day.
- ◆ Successfully builds up a tolerance to dunedust. A creature builds up a tolerance after consuming at least two doses of dunedust and succeeding on the saving throw at least once. The cost and effects of dunedust are described in the Cactus Grove section (see Trying Dunedust, page 24).

If a creature fulfils both of the conditions above, it becomes especially resistant to the dunedrinker's pollen. The next time it fails on a saving throw against the dunedrinker's Hallucinogenic Cloud, it automatically succeeds instead.

GM TIP: SURPRISE VEGETARIANISM

The dunedrinker's hallucinatory pollen doesn't affect creatures that haven't eaten meat in more than 1 month. Therefore, it will become necessary to determine which party members, if any, can benefit from this immunity.

Generally, it's best to assume that a character consumes meat periodically unless it's been established prior to this adventure that they do not. Don't let players adjust their characters' backstories on the fly simply to gain an advantage during combat—they can still gain advantage on the saving throw by abstaining from eating meat for a day or building tolerance with dunedust. The vegetarianism exception exists to explain how the dunedrinker protects the herbivorous creatures that aid it, and it happens to provide a small boon for a roleplaying detail that would otherwise often be irrelevant in a fight.



HANDOUT 2. PANIC POLLEN

CLUE 3: SPRINGING STEMS

The dunedrinker releases jumping cactus stems that damage and stick onto creatures. They can be detached one at a time with a **Wisdom (Medicine)** check (which is either an action or a bonus action, see Cactus Grove, page 24) or all at once by taking fire damage.

EN ROUTE

During their journey through the Bahr Arrimal, the party can stumble onto a group of spikeshell tortoises bearing dunedrinker cactus stems (see Blaze Bullies, page 16). This allows them to witness how fire renders the stems useless, and how a tortoise that takes fire damage loses all of its stems.

CACTUS GROVE

In the cactari nursing site, the party can visit the cactus grove to experience the effects of the jumping

stems and learn how to remove them. Practising this allows a creature to make **Wisdom (Medicine)** checks to remove a stem more quickly.

ZOHRA'S LIBRARY

If the party knows that their foe is a dunedrinker, they can conduct research on it in Zohra's library. A creature can make a **VDC Intelligence (Investigation)** check after spending **1d4** hours researching. On a success, it learns how the dunedrinker's Jumping Cactus reaction works, gains **advantage** on **Wisdom (Medicine)** checks made to remove the cactus stems, and learns about the stems' weakness to fire.

USING THE CLUE

The party can obtain a *blazing ring* (see Appendix A, page 38) during the events of the Blaze Bullies encounter. This ring allows a creature to take a tiny amount of fire damage, ridding itself of all cactus stems at once.

HANDOUT 3. SPRINGING STEMS



THE BATTLE AHEAD

The battle against the dunedrinker begins when the party finds it at the cactari scouts' camp. Driven to madness by its parasitic cacticks, the dunedrinker attacks the party as soon as it spots them.

Waves. The battle is divided into three consecutive phases called waves. Each wave begins with a description, read aloud, and summary of what environmental effects, if any, begin or end. Next, the enemies and their tactics are listed; creatures other than the boss monster flee when reduced to one third of their hit points or fewer, unless otherwise stated. Finally, the conditions for how that wave ends are described.

Helping Hand. If the party is having a difficult time during the battle, you can offer help in the form of Buma the owlglass. When a creature that Buma can see within **60 feet** of her is reduced to 0 hit points, Buma can use her reaction to turn time back a few seconds, causing the creature to regain hit points equal to the damage dealt and the party to gain **1 paradox point**. She always lets the rest of the party decide when she uses this reaction, warning that it might have unpredictable effects on the fabric of time. Once Buma has used this reaction, she can't use it again until she finishes a long rest.

Cavern. The small cavern in the cactari camp may provide a brief respite from the fight. However, even if the dunedrinker can't fit inside, that doesn't mean it simply gives up on the party. If there's no creature that it can target outside of the cavern, it starts making Slam attacks against the rock, potentially causing the whole thing to collapse. The cavern has **AC 17** and hit points depending on the adventure level, as indicated by the table below. If the cavern is reduced to 0 hit points, it collapses, and each creature inside must make a **VDC Strength saving throw**. On a failed save, a creature takes **Vdam** × 2 bludgeoning damage, is knocked **prone**, and is **restrained** by the rubble. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage and suffers no additional effects. A creature can use its action to make a **VDC Strength** check, freeing itself or another creature within reach from the rocks on a success. After the cavern collapses, its space becomes difficult terrain.

Adventure Level Cavern Hit Points

| | |
|------|----|
| 4th | 40 |
| 9th | 60 |
| 14th | 80 |

LAIR ACTIONS

While in the Bahr Arrimal, the dunedrinker can use lair actions. The saving throw DCs and other statistics of the lair actions depend on the level of the adventure.

VARIABLE ADVENTURE STATISTICS

| Adventure Level | VDC | Vmod | Vdam | Vdist |
|-----------------|-----|------|----------|---------|
| 4th | 12 | +4 | 3 (1d6) | 10 feet |
| 9th | 15 | +7 | 10 (3d6) | 15 feet |
| 14th | 16 | +8 | 14 (4d6) | 20 feet |

Lair Actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the dunedrinker takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects. It can't use the same effect two rounds in a row.

- ◆ **Deadly Mirage.** Extreme heat causes the air to shimmer and undulate, exacerbating the effect of the dunedrinker's pollen. Each creature within **30 feet** of the dunedrinker that is frightened by its Hallucinogenic Cloud action has **disadvantage** on its next saving throw made to end the effect. If a creature fails the saving throw, it takes **Vdam** psychic damage.
- ◆ **Instant Quicksand.** The sand in a **Vdist-radius-sphere** centred on a point within the dunedrinker's lair that it can see transforms into quicksand until the next time the dunedrinker uses a lair action. The area is considered difficult terrain. In addition, each creature that is in the area when this happens or ends its turn in the area must succeed on a **VDC Strength saving throw** or be **restrained** while the quicksand lasts. A creature can use an action to free itself or another creature within reach with a successful **VDC Strength** check.
- ◆ **Needle Field.** Short barrel cacti grow on the ground in a **Vdist-radius-sphere** centred on a point within the dunedrinker's lair that it can see, replicating the effects of the *spike growth* spell. The cacti disappear the next time the dunedrinker uses a lair action.



CARTOGRAPHER:
CZE & PEKU

MAP 2. CACTARI SCOUT CAMP

1 GRID = 5 FEET

WAVE 1: THE THORNY TITAN

When the party arrives at the cactari camp, the dunedrinker has just finished destroying it. Its legs are buried in the sand to protect the cacticks, which can't be targeted at this stage, but can be seen each time the dunedrinker attacks. You can read or paraphrase the following:

Fragments of barricades, tents, and crates join together in an intricate dance through the dry desert air, tossed angrily by a gigantic cactus monster in the midst of a magnificent rampage. Its fury is as great as it is unnecessary—there are no survivors left among the remains of the campsite. Still, apparently dissatisfied with reducing everything to rubble, the great colossus busies itself reducing that rubble to dust. Its lower body is buried in the sand, but each time it raises one of its massive legs, pulsating swarms of verdant ticks can be seen crawling on its flesh, moving as one amorphous, writhing mass.

In addition, the party member with the highest passive Perception score spots an additional detail:

Swinging precariously from one of the monster's upper needles, high above the ground, is a cactari woman in a bloody, tattered uniform, matching the description of the scout leader, Kwi Klee. At first, she appears to be just another casualty, but a twitch of the limbs and a flicker of the eyelids reveals that there is some life in her still, although it seems to be fading fast.

ENEMIES

The only enemy in wave 1 is the dunedrinker, which attacks the party alone.

Level 4. At 4th level, the wave 1 combatant is:

- ◆ 1 young dunedrinker* (CR 5)

Level 9. At 9th level, the wave 1 combatant is:

- ◆ 1 adult dunedrinker* (CR 10)

Level 14. At 14th level, the wave 1 combatant is:

- ◆ 1 ancient dunedrinker* (CR 16)

*See Appendix C, page 44

TACTICS

The dunedrinker fights according to the tactics below:

On the first round of combat, the dunedrinker tries to move to a spot where it maximises the number of creatures it can catch with its Hallucinatory Cloud action, which it uses now and every time it's available on subsequent turns. The dunedrinker uses its Slam attack on the creature with the most cactus stems attached to it (from its Jumping Cactus reaction) that is within its reach, and uses its Bite attack against any other creature within its reach.

For its legendary actions, the dunedrinker uses its Take Root if its foes are immobilised, such as by the effects of its Hallucinatory Cloud action, Bite attack, or Instant Quicksand lair action. Since temporary hit points don't stack, it only uses Take Root a maximum of once per round—other legendary actions are used to make attacks, which is preferable, or to reposition itself if necessary.

The dunedrinker uses its Deadly Mirage lair action only if two or more creatures are under the effect of its Hallucinatory Cloud. Otherwise, it alternates between Instant Quicksand and Needle Field, using them to keep creatures close to itself so that they stay within range of its Jumping Cactus reaction.

CACTARI SCOUT

Kwi Klee, the leader of the cactari scouts, is badly injured but still alive, impaled on one of the dunedrinker's needles 20 feet above the ground and swaying precariously as the battle rages on. She has 0 hit points, 3 levels of exhaustion, and is unconscious and stable with no failed death saves. It quickly becomes clear that she will not survive if she isn't swiftly rescued—in fact, ending Wave 1 without saving Kwi results in her death when the dunedrinker burrows into the sand.

In order to ensure that Kwi survives, a creature can attempt to climb onto the dunedrinker by using its action to make a successful **Strength (Athletics)** check contested by the dunedrinker's **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** check. The creature can then scale the colossal cactus, grab Kwi, and make its way back down.

Alternatively, a creature can attempt to target the large needle on which Kwi is snagged, which has AC and hit points depending on the level of the adventure, as detailed in the table below. Doing so results in Kwi falling and taking damage, which causes her to fail one death save and no longer be stable.

| Adventure Level | Needle AC | Needle Hit Points |
|-----------------|-----------|-------------------|
| 4th | 16 | 5 |
| 9th | 18 | 10 |
| 14th | 20 | 15 |

Even if Kwi is healed, she stays out of the battle, as her exhaustion makes her more of a liability than an asset. Regardless of the method used, if Kwi survives the battle, the party gains **1 paradox point**.

END OF WAVE

This wave ends once the dunedrinker is reduced to 0 hit points and enters its Overgrowth Form. When this happens, it interrupts the current turn and immediately moves to Wave 2.

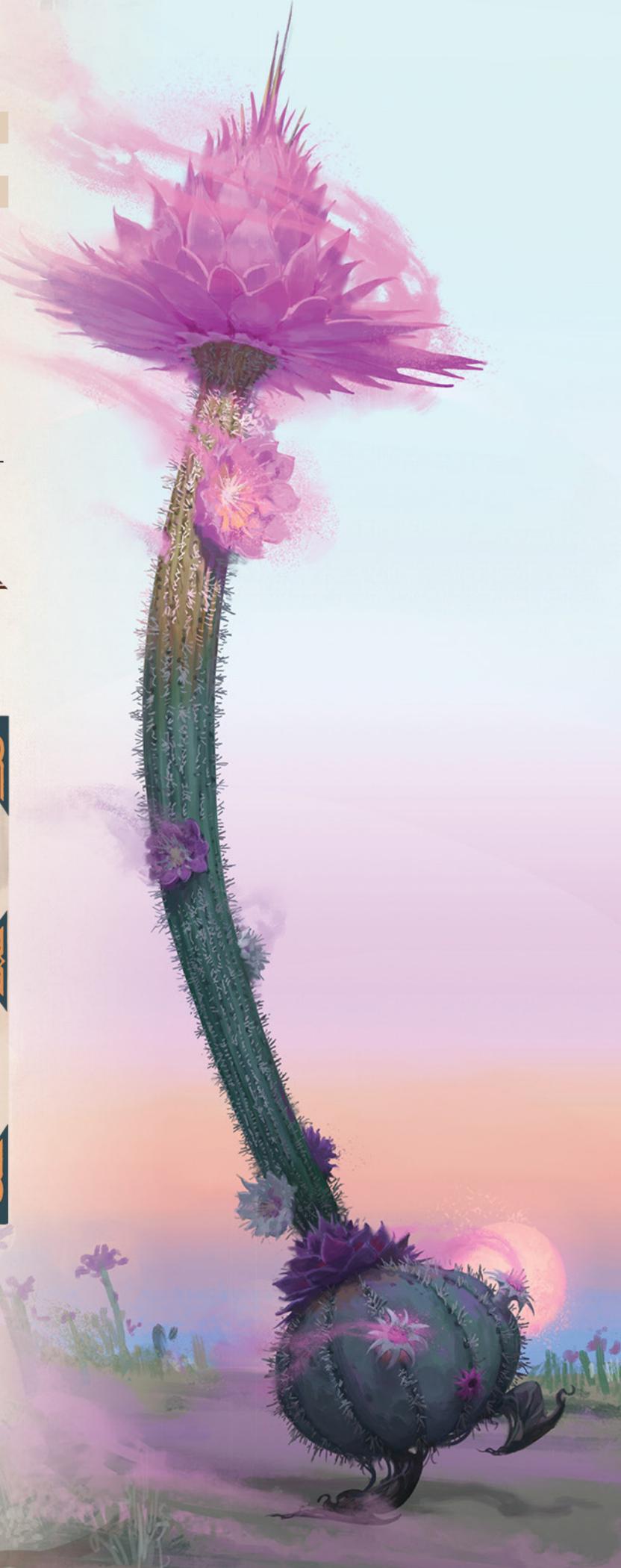
WAVE 2: THE DUNEDRINKER'S LEGIONS

When the dunedrinker's Overgrowth Form activates, it releases a squadron of sandsippers and burrows into the sand. You can read or paraphrase the following:

Deep gashes oozing viscous sap seal shut in seconds as the monster's flesh knits itself back together. Its flowers burst into full bloom, new shoots sprouting rapidly around them as twisting roots coil protectively around its legs and its flesh regains a vibrant, green hue. Despite the punishment it's endured, the desert titan looks healthier—and angrier—than ever.

With a bone-rattling roar, pods dotting its body twist open, releasing smaller cactus creatures that swing from the oversized needles to the ground below. No sooner are its reinforcements summoned than the colossus burrows down, vanishing beneath the dunes. In its wake, it leaves only drops of water from the ponds on its back, which glimmer softly in the air and refract the sunlight into an ephemeral rainbow. That, and the legions of cactus soldiers slowly closing in on you.

SANDSIPPER POLLINATOR



ENEMIES

The enemies in wave 2 are the sandsippers released by the dunedrinker. During this wave, the dunedrinker is underground and can't be targeted or take actions, reactions, or legendary actions. It can still use lair actions, and everything within range of its tremorsense counts as a spot it can see.

Level 4. At 4th level, the wave 2 combatants are:

- ◆ 3 **sandsipper cannoneers*** (CR 1)
- ◆ 3 **sandsipper sluggers*** (CR 1/2)

Level 9. At 9th level, the wave 2 combatants are:

- ◆ 2 **sandsipper pollinators*** (CR 5)
- ◆ 2 **sandsipper thornshields*** (CR 4)

Level 14. At 14th level, the wave 2 combatants are:

- ◆ 3 **sandsipper pollinators*** (CR 5)
- ◆ 2 **sandsipper sentinels*** (CR 9)

*See Appendix C, page 49

TACTICS

The combatants fight according to the tactics below. All of them fight until reduced to 0 hit points.

Sandsipper Cannoneers & Pollinators. On their first turn, these ranged sandsippers try to move to a spot on the battlefield from which they have a good shot on their foes, then use their Root bonus action. Cannoneers concentrate their efforts on the same enemy—preferably one that's restrained or already being targeted by an

ally capable of dealing bludgeoning damage. Pollinators focus on foes that are bundled together, so they can catch multiple with their Pollen Bomb action. Otherwise, they attack the foe with the lowest hit points.

Sandsipper Sluggers. These creatures simply select a foe at random and attack it relentlessly, switching targets only if they absolutely must.

Sandsipper Sentinels. Sandsipper sentinels take up defensive positions ahead of their allies, waiting for enemy creatures to approach and trigger their Sentinel Strike reactions. On their turns, sentinels make as many attacks as possible against the nearest foe. Then, they move back to leave enemies outside of their reach (even if this provokes opportunity attacks), so that those creatures trigger their Sentinel Strike again when they try to move closer.

Sandsipper Thornshields. If their enemies don't have much ranged capacity, thornshields move towards their allies—especially those that can attack at range—and Ready attacks, waiting for their foes to come to them. Otherwise, thornshields cautiously engage their foes, but always try to stay within **5 feet** of an ally in order to make the best of their Prickly Interception reaction, which they use at every opportunity.

END OF WAVE

This wave ends once all of the cactus minions have been defeated.

SANDSIPPER CANNONEER



WAVE 3: THE COLOSSUS EMERGES

When the last of the sandsippers are defeated, the dunedrinker bursts out of the sand, even angrier than before. You can read or paraphrase the following:

The return of the monster is heralded by an intense quake and a deafening rumble. The sand begins to shift and swirl, forming an ominous vortex at the centre of the camp mere moments before the cactus titan resurfaces, erupting from the dunes like a shark breaching the surface of the ocean.

Now fully emerged from the sand, its towering form once again casts a looming shadow over the battlefield. All over its root-like legs, repulsive ticks squirm, their swollen bodies finally exposed to your steel and spells. The soft, orange dust that glitters in the air, seeping from the creature's blooming flowers, does nothing to soften its menacing appearance as it surveys you with vengeful intent.

ENEMIES

The enemies in wave 3 are the dunedrinker in its Overgrowth Form and, at adventure levels 9 and 14, one sandsipper. In addition, the dunedrinker gains access to its Spawn Sandsipper action, which it can use to create more minions and put the party on a short clock before they're overwhelmed by sheer numbers.

Level 4. At 4th level, the wave 3 combatant is:

- ◆ 1 **young dunedrinker*** (CR 5; Overgrowth Form)

Level 9. At 9th level, the wave 3 combatants are:

- ◆ 1 **adult dunedrinker*** (CR 10; Overgrowth Form)
- ◆ 1 **sandsipper thornshield*** (CR 4)

Level 14. At 14th level, the wave 3 combatants are:

- ◆ 1 **ancient dunedrinker*** (CR 16; Overgrowth Form)
- ◆ 1 **sandsipper sentinel*** (CR 9)

*See Appendix C

TACTICS

The combatants fight according to the tactics below:

Sandsippers. The sandsippers fight according to the same tactics they had in Wave 2, but they flee if the dunedrinker is defeated, and stop fighting if it's calmed.

Dunedrinker. The dunedrinker fights according to the same tactics it had in Wave 1, with the following exception: it no longer uses its Take Root legendary action. Instead, it uses its new Spawn Sandsipper overgrowth action every round, with the remaining legendary action left for attacking or moving.

PARASITIC CACTICKS

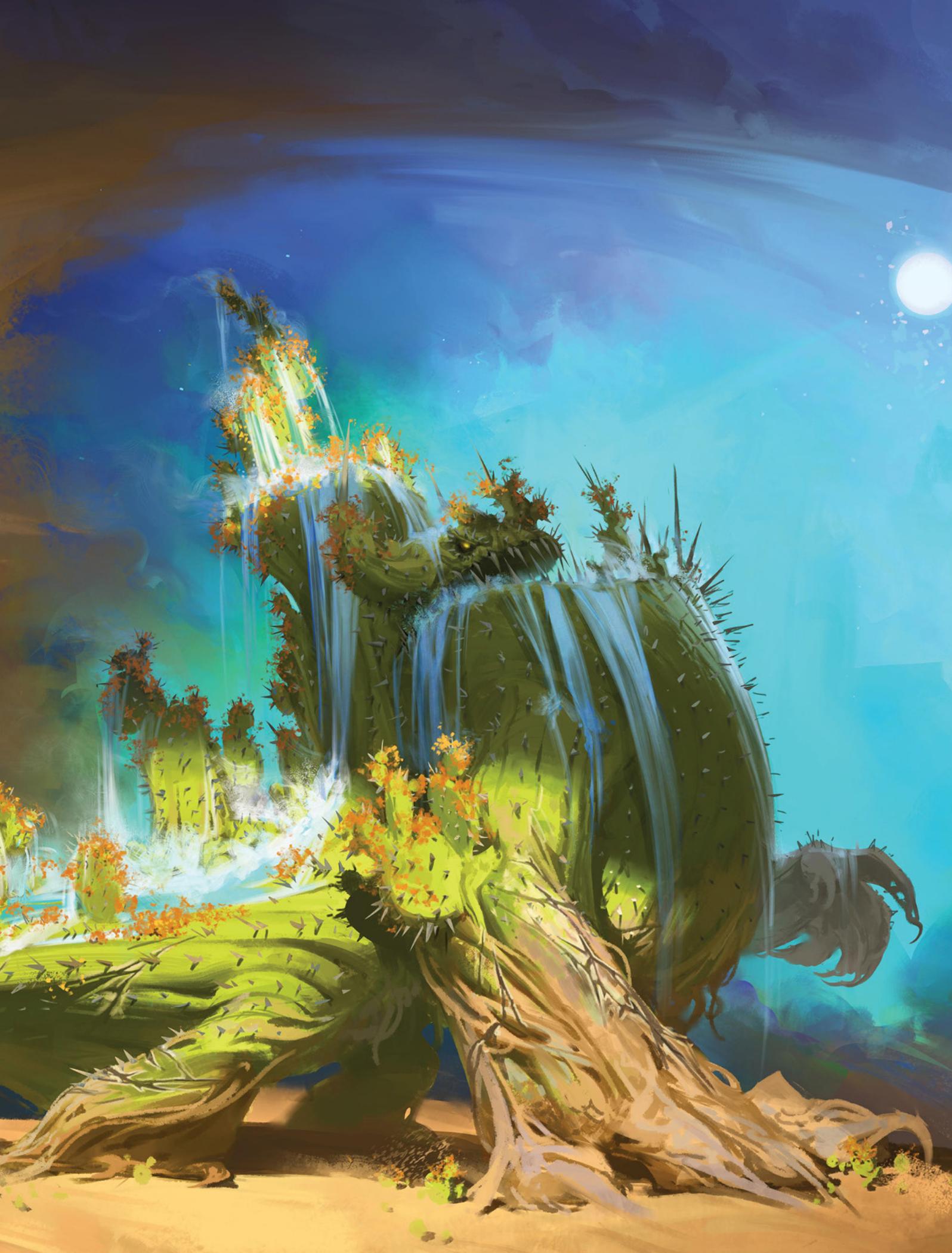
During this wave, the cacticks covering the dunedrinker's legs are exposed and can be attacked or affected by spells. There are four large swarms of cacticks, one on each leg. A swarm of cacticks has **immunity** to psychic damage, **resistance** to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage, and **vulnerability** to cold damage. Each swarm has AC and hit points depending on the adventure level, as detailed in the table below.

| Adventure Level | Swarm AC | Swarm Hit Points |
|-----------------|----------|------------------|
| 4th | 16 | 25 |
| 9th | 17 | 50 |
| 14th | 18 | 75 |

For each swarm of cacticks that the party destroys, describe how the dunedrinker's rage subsides a little. If all the swarms are destroyed, the dunedrinker stops fighting the party.

END OF WAVE

This wave ends once the dunedrinker is reduced to 0 hit points or when every swarm of cacticks is destroyed.



FINALE

If the dunedrinker is killed, go to The Dunedrinker Slain. If the cacticks are removed and the dunedrinker is pacified, head to The Dunedrinker Calmed. Either way, the party is welcome to stay with the cactari for the rest of the time they have available. Alternatively, they can speak to Falak in order to return to the present early.

THE DUNEDRINKER SLAIN

If the party slays the dunedrinker, they gain 2 **paradox points**. You can read or paraphrase the following:

A tremor rocks the ravaged cactari camp as the dunedrinker falls, kicking up a cloud of dust that settles on its corpse like a burial shroud. The wind howls mournfully in your ears, wailing at the loss of this desert titan. Even in death, with the rage gone from its vacant eyes and the dead ticks dropping from its skin one by one, there's an undeniable majesty to it. It almost looks peaceful.

OPTIONAL ENDING: DESERT DELUGE

If you're running a one-shot, there might not be much point in harvesting the dunedrinker's corpse. Instead, you can use this optional ending to give an epic, climactic conclusion to the hunt. As the dunedrinker dies, the water that it carries is released in an explosive burst and rapidly absorbed by the surrounding sand, transforming it into quicksand. You can read or paraphrase the following:

A veritable tsunami spills from the dunedrinker's back and washes across the dunes as the creature collapses under its own weight. For a moment, it looks as if the wave might sweep you up, but the thirsty sand drinks it up so quickly that it barely even wets your toes.

After the last drop is gone, it's only a matter of seconds until you feel yourself start to sink into the ground. You're not alone—all around you, the remains of the cactari camp are engulfed by the insatiable desert. Turned into a viscous paste under your feet, the sand now threatens to swallow you up like the water couldn't.

The ground in a **60-foot radius** centred on the dunedrinker's corpse is turned into quicksand, and becomes difficult terrain. A creature that ends its turn in the area sinks into the sand, suffering the effects described on the table below depending on how many times it has sunk.

A creature can use an action to make a **VDC Strength** check, freeing itself or another trapped creature on a success. However, if the creature making the check is trapped in the sand and fails, it sinks further into the sand.

| Times Sunk | Effect |
|------------|--|
| 1 | The creature sinks to its knees, and its speed is reduced to 0 feet . |
| 2 | The creature sinks to its waist, becoming restrained . A creature can't sink any further than this unless it fails the Strength check to free itself or another creature. |
| 3 | The creature sinks to its neck, gaining disadvantage on Strength checks. |
| 4 | The creature sinks fully into the sand, becoming blinded and unable to breathe. |

THE DUNEDRINKER CALMED

If the party is successful in removing the cacticks plaguing the dunedrinker, it ceases to attack at once, allowing for a peaceful resolution to this adventure. Sparing the dunedrinker alters the timeline even more dramatically, netting the party **3 paradox points**. You can read or paraphrase the following:

The slamming, the thrashing, the roaring, all of it stops abruptly the moment the last cactick drops from the dunedrinker's body. The sound of its plump abdomen hitting the sand is muffled by the howling desert wind. The dunedrinker is left frozen on the spot, blinking slowly, as if coming out of a trance.

Only after a minute does it seem to notice you. With a low hum, it inclines its massive head in a gesture reminiscent of a bow, spilling some of its pristine water on you—a refreshing shower after a heated battle. Then, without ceremony, it departs, leaving behind the ravaged cactari camp, littered with needles, broken stems, and dead cacticks, as a reminder of its fury.

END TIMES - A NEW CLUE

If you're playing through the End Times campaign, the party is able to find one additional clue in either of the scenarios above if they inspect the dunedrinker. Stuck in one of its needles is a ripped piece of purple cloth bearing a symbol of a dragon, coiled in the shape of an hourglass.

This is the same symbol present in the kaftar's hit list (if the party found it), and it connects the individuals responsible for the kidnappings to the source of the cacticks. The party can present this clue to Falak or Zohra back in the present, to further their investigation.

AFTERMATH

The result of this adventure has a variety of possible outcomes, depending on how the party decided to approach it. Here are some possible outcomes:

THE DUNEDRINKER SLAIN OR CALMED

- ◆ Zohra and the cactari are saved. Before long, the cuttings grow into young cactari, and the community prepares to leave its nursing site.
- ◆ Zohra takes the cactari to Kasbat Azzaman, and the party is able to find them when they return to the present, fully integrated into their new home. A few of them open a new store in the city, Needle Ned's Extraordinary Emporium, and the party is offered a generous discount on any of their wares.
- ◆ If Kwi Klee was rescued from the back of the dunedrinker, she joins the city guard of Kasbat Azzaman and is promoted to sergeant in only a matter of months. Her presence may help smooth interactions with the guards if the party ever runs afoul of the law.
- ◆ Thorne attempts to start another cactus grove in Kasbat Azzaman. If the party seeks him out, he makes good on his promise, rewarding them with **1d4** doses of *refined dunedust**.
- ◆ If they were given any of the cacticks from the dunedrinker, Sagu Aro is well into their research by the time the party returns to Kasbat Azzaman. So far, he hasn't been able to produce anything but a *spell scroll of enrage*** , which he gladly gives to the party as thanks, but the future is promising!



- ◆ In her floating tower, Zohra puts her services as an enchanter at the party's disposal, as well as her considerable library. She reconnects with Falak and promises to lend her aid to uncovering the truth behind the timestorm and stopping whoever's responsible.
- ◆ Before long, Zohra's research bears fruit and she finishes her latest work: the *chronocube*. At the same time, Falak identifies another event in the past that must be prevented from happening. The story continues in the next adventure!

*See Appendix A, page 40

**See Appendix B, page 42

THE DUNEDRINKER CALMED

- ◆ Sensing the approach of the timestorm, the dunedrinker follows Zohra's floating tower to Kasbat Azzaman, settling down outside of the walls and beginning to draw water from the ground. Its presence reduces the water scarcity in the city, and the grateful Kasbatians nickname the creature "The Last Oasis".
- ◆ The abundance of water has a rippling effect on the Kasbatian economy, and the prices of goods all across the city lower.

THE DUNEDRINKER WINS

- ◆ If the party fails to find the dunedrinker in time or is defeated by it in battle, the enraged colossus razes the cactari nursing site and destroys Zohra's tower, exactly as it already came to pass.
- ◆ If Zohra was told of the impending danger, she manages to teleport away just in time with a handful of cactari. When the party returns to the present, they can find her in Kasbat Azzaman.

With all of her research and the cactus cuttings lost, however, she falls into a deep depression. Work on the *chronocube* slows down, and she isn't able to complete it in time for the party's next adventure.

- ◆ If the party failed to rescue Zohra or simply wants to try for a better outcome, they can retry the adventure by having Falak (or his projection) transport them to the past once more. However, meddling with the same point in time repeatedly can have grave consequences. The second time that the party travels to this moment in the past, they gain **2 paradox points**. This number is increased by **2** for each additional time they travel to the same moment afterward. Furthermore, the party risks coming in contact with past versions of themselves, which can result in gaining even more paradox points.

TREASURE

Once the party has defeated the dunedrinker, they can attempt to harvest components and craft unique items using the remains. For further information, refer to the Harvesting and Crafting chapters in *Heliana's Guide to Monster Hunting*.

HARVESTING

The following components can be harvested from the remains of the dunedrinker, in addition to those normal for a Plant. If the dunedrinker isn't slain, the party can still harvest components from fallen stems or roots, but fewer are available.



THE NEEDLER

DUNEDRINKER HARVEST TABLE

| Component | DC | Number Available | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------|
| | | Slain | Calmed |
| Phial of sap ^{E+} | 5 | 10 | 5 |
| Bundle of roots ^{E+} | 5 | 10 | 5 |
| Pouch of needles | 10 | 20 | 10 |
| Pouch of pollen^{VE+} | 15 | 5 | 2 |
| Thornrib | 20 | 2 | 1 |

CRAFTING

The following unique items can be crafted from the dunedrinker's components.

| Item | Item Type | Rarity | Attunement | Components | Essence | Value* |
|----------------------|---|-----------|------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|-----------|
| <i>Prickleplate</i> | Armour (light, medium, or heavy) | Uncommon | Optional | <i>Plant (dunedrinker)</i> | <i>Frail</i> | 710 gp |
| | | Rare | | | <i>Robust</i> | 3,090 gp |
| | | Very rare | | | <i>Potent</i> | 12,250 gp |
| <i>Splinterstaff</i> | Staff | Rare | Required | <i>Pouch of Plant (dunedrinker)</i> | <i>Robust</i> | 3,280 gp |
| | | Very rare | | | <i>Potent</i> | 14,600 gp |
| | | Legendary | | | <i>Mythic</i> | 68,330 gp |
| <i>The Needler</i> | Weapon (revolver or rifle ^{**}) | Uncommon | — | <i>Pouch of Plant (dunedrinker)</i> | <i>Frail</i> | 450 gp |
| | | Rare | | | <i>Robust</i> | 2,110 gp |
| | | Very rare | | | <i>Potent</i> | 10,110 gp |

* This is the 'off-the-shelf' purchase cost and can vary significantly from the crafting cost.

** These are new weapon types introduced in *Heliana's Guide*.

APPENDIX A - ITEMS

MUNDANE FIREARMS

MAGITECH FIREARMS

Magitech firearms (martial ranged weapons) use a small arcanomagnetic engine to propel their ferrous projectiles at incredible velocities. Though their means of propulsion is magical, the damage they deal remains nonmagical. Such firearms are always loud and tend to have poor accuracy over long ranges, although the recently-introduced rifling found in revolvers and rifles increases their effective range.

Extra Reloads. More expensive models of magitech firearms have a self-reloading mechanism that harnesses the arcanomagnetic engine to re-cock the weapon. If you wish, you can increase the magazine capacity of a magitech firearm up to a maximum of 6, ensuring that the price increases proportionally. For example, a pistol typically costs 200 gp and has Reload (2). If you increased this to Reload (6), you would multiply the price by 3 for a new cost of 600 gp.

Types. There are several types of magitech firearm currently found in the world.*

Revolver. A small, personal firearm with a rotating barrel and accuracy-enhancing rifling that deals **1d10** piercing damage on a hit. It has the Ammunition (range 60/240), Loud (500), Reload (6) properties.

Rifle. The longest range of all the firearms, typically equipped with a multi-bullet magazine, it deals **1d12** piercing damage on a hit. It has the Ammunition (range 120/480), Loud (500), Reload (6), and Two-handed properties.

*For a full list of magitech firearm types, see *L'Arsene's Ledger*, page 6.

Blazing Ring

Ring, uncommon

Component: Elemental (blaze) volatile mote of fire

Everyone knows the saying “no pain, no gain”. Fewer are familiar with some of the alternative versions that are popular across the Timespun Sands, such as “no flame, no fame”, or “no burning, no earning”, but they hold just as true.

This ring can hold a maximum of **15 charges**. As a bonus action while wearing the ring, you can take **1** fire damage, which can't be reduced or prevented in any way, and the ring gains **1 charge** if it has less than 15.

Flaming Discharge. When you hit a target with a weapon attack while wearing this ring, you can expend all of the ring's charges to deal extra fire damage equal to the number of charges expended. Once this property of the ring has been used, it can't be used again until the next dawn.



MAGITECH FIREARM

Prickleplate

Armour (light, medium, or heavy), rare (optional attunement)
Component: Plant (dunedrinker) thornrib

"Mess with the cactus, you get the thorns."

— *Cactari proverb*

Thorny Troubles. When a creature within 5 feet of you hits you with a melee attack while you're wearing this armour, that creature takes **1d8** piercing damage. Once this damage has been dealt, it can't be dealt again until the start of your next turn. In addition, whenever a creature fails on an ability check to avoid or escape being grappled by you, it takes **1d8** piercing damage, and when you fail an ability check to avoid or escape being grappled by another creature, that creature takes **1d8** piercing damage.

Optional Attunement. If you choose to attune to this item, you can use the Needle Burst property while you remain attuned to it.

OA: Needle Burst. As an action, you can expel all the needles on the armour at once in an explosive burst. Each creature within **10 feet** of you must make a **DC 15 Dexterity saving throw**, taking **6d8** piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Once this property has been used, it can't be used again until the next dawn, and the Thorny Troubles property doesn't function until you use an action to cause the needles to regrow.

Uncommon variant: Reduce the **DC** to **13**, each instance of damage of the Thorny Troubles property to **1d4**, and the damage of the Needle Burst property to **4d8**.

Very rare variant: Increase the **DC** to **16** and each instance of damage of the Thorny Troubles property to **1d10**. You gain a **+1 bonus** to AC while wearing this armour.



PRICKLEPLATE



SPLINTERSTAFF

Refined Dunedust

Wondrous item, uncommon

Component: pouch of Plant (dunedrinker) pollen

Aside from a dunedrinker's pollen, other ingredients of this unique mixture include brain devourer cerebrospinal fluid, hallucinogenic toad venom, and just a hint of shaved truffle for an earthy aftertaste. It's an experience you won't soon forget!

Impenetrable Mind. You can smoke a dose of *refined dunedust* over the course of **1 minute**, sending you into a mild psychedelic state that fortifies your mind against intrusion but tricks your senses. For **1 hour** after you do so, you're immune to effects that would allow other creatures to read your thoughts or determine whether you're lying. In addition, you have **advantage** on saving throws against spells of the enchantment school, and **disadvantage** on saving throws against spells of the illusion school, as well as ability checks made to see through illusions.

Splinterstaff

Staff, very rare (requires attunement by a spellcaster)

Component: pouch of Plant (dunedrinker) pollen

Splinterstaves are typically wielded by cactari elders in defence of their nursing sites. Witnessing a different Humanoid in possession of one is often indicative of friendship with the cactari people, mastery over the desert, and remarkably calloused hands.

This staff has **8 charges** and regains **1d4 + 4** expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a **d20**. On a **1**, the staff bursts into a harmless cloud of pollen and is destroyed. You have resistance to poison damage while holding this staff.



THE NEEDLER

Spells. While holding this staff, you can expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it (**save DC 16**): *cloudkill* (5 charges), *hallucinogenic cloud** (2 charges), *fog cloud* (1 charge), *gust of wind* (2 charges), or *stinking cloud* (3 charges). Whenever you use this property to cast a spell that produces a cloud, it's always centred on you and caused by a type of magical pollen expelled from the staff. You are immune to the effects of the *cloudkill*, *hallucinogenic cloud*, and *stinking cloud* spells cast from the staff.

Rare variant: Reduce the DCs to 15. Remove the resistance to poison damage, and remove *cloudkill* from the Spells property's list of spells.

Legendary variant: Increase the DCs to 17, the charges to 12, and the recharge to 1d8 + 4.

*see Appendix B, page 42

The Needler

Weapon (revolver or rifle), uncommon

Component: pouch of Plant (dunedrinker) needles

These firearms are crafted with deliberately sensitive triggers, to allow for maximum control over the amount of needles released with each shot. True masters are said to be capable of giving themselves a relaxing acupuncture session. Most people are far more likely to end up with an accidental lip piercing when they try to blow smoke from the barrel.

This weapon doesn't require ammunition. Instead, it fires its own needles, which it regrows when you reload it.

Rapid Fire. When you take the Attack action while holding this weapon, you can replace one of the attacks with a rapid discharge of multiple needles against a creature within this weapon's normal range, forcing it to make a **DC 13 Dexterity saving throw**. On a failed save, the creature takes **4d8** piercing damage and is embedded with needles until the end of its next turn, at which point they fall off. When a creature embedded with needles takes bludgeoning damage, it takes an extra **2d8** piercing damage and loses the needles. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much initial damage and isn't embedded with needles. Once this property of the weapon has been used, it can't be used again until the next dawn, and the weapon must be reloaded before it can be used to make more attacks.

Rare variant: Increase the DC to 15 and the initial damage of the Rapid Fire property to **6d8**. You gain a **+1 bonus** to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

Very rare variant: Increase the DC to 16 and the damage of the Rapid Fire property to **6d8** and **4d8**, respectively. You gain a **+2 bonus** to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

APPENDIX B - SPELLS

Enrage

3rd-level enchantment

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 feet (20-foot-radius sphere)

Components: V, S, M (a red handkerchief)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

Class: Bard, Sorcerer, Warlock

You attempt to create violent emotions in a group of people. Each humanoid in a **20-foot-radius sphere** centred on a point you choose within range must make a **Charisma saving throw**; a creature can choose to fail this saving throw if it wishes. A creature that fails this saving throw becomes enraged for the duration.

While enraged, a target becomes hostile towards all creatures. An enraged creature that is concentrating on a spell must succeed on a **DC 10 Constitution saving throw** at the start of each of its turns or lose concentration on the spell.

As an action, you can force an enraged creature to use its reaction to make one melee weapon attack against one randomly determined creature within the enraged creature's reach. If the enraged creature was friendly towards the target of its attack before this spell was cast, the enraged creature can repeat the saving throw immediately after making the attack, ending the effect on itself on a success.

An enraged creature can repeat the saving throw whenever it takes damage, ending the effect on itself on a success. When the spell ends, the creature reverts to its previous disposition again, unless the GM rules otherwise.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher and use an action to force an enraged creature to make a melee weapon attack, you can force one additional enraged creature to make a melee weapon attack for each slot level above 3rd.

Hallucinogenic Cloud

2nd-level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet (20-foot-radius sphere)

Components: V, S, M (a cactus flower)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

Class: Druid, Ranger

You create a burst of brightly coloured, hallucinogenic pollen in a **20-foot-radius sphere** centred on a point within range. Each creature in the area must make a **Wisdom saving throw**. On a failed save, the creature sees hallucinations of horrifying monsters all around it, and is **frightened** of those visions for the duration. A creature that ends its turn frightened in this way takes **2d6** psychic damage and must immediately use its reaction to uselessly attack one of the hallucinations, after which it can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, the damage increases by **1d6** for each slot level above 2nd.

Spikeskin

1st-level biomancy (*can be replaced with transmutation)*

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a handful of needles)

Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes

Class: Druid, Ranger, Tamer

You touch a willing creature, causing spikes to grow from its skin like needles on a cactus or quills on a porcupine. For the duration, whenever the creature becomes grappled or is hit by a melee attack from a creature within **5 feet** of it, the attacker or grappler takes **1d6** piercing damage.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, the damage increases by **1d6** for each two slot levels above 1st.

APPENDIX C - CREATURES

BLAZE

Blazes are a type of lower jinn—wild, extraplanar spirits governed by instinct rather than intelligence. Abhorring cold and humidity, they typically manifest in locations such as deserts or grasslands, where they promptly make the lives of all around them as difficult as possible. Blazes aren't inherently malicious and they don't actively seek to hurt other creatures, but they seem incapable of understanding that the elemental fire they wield so effortlessly isn't quite as harmless to others as it is to them.

Incorrigible Pranksters. There are few things blazes love more than a good laugh at the expense of others. Their ability to manipulate heat in order to create illusions or hide their presence grants them the perfect toolkit to prank unwary creatures trudging through their territory. They are especially fond of giggling at the disappointment on a traveller's face when the third oasis in a row turns out to be a mirage, or posing as a campfire to toss sparks and ashes in someone's eyes. For such restless creatures, blazes can lie in wait for hours, ready for the perfect opportunity to pull their little tricks.

BLAZE

Medium Elemental (Jinn), Chaotic Neutral

Armour Class 13

Hit Points 66 (12d8 + 12)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 7 (-2) | 16 (+3) | 12 (+1) | 6 (-2) | 10 (+0) | 3 (-4) |

Damage Vulnerabilities cold

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, paralysed, petrified, poisoned, prone, unconscious

Senses darvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

False Appearance. If the blaze is motionless at the start of combat, it has **advantage** on its initiative roll. Moreover, if a creature hasn't observed the blaze move or act, that creature must succeed on a **DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation)** check to discern that the blaze isn't a flame.

Heated Body. A creature that touches the blaze or hits it with a melee attack while within **5 feet** of it takes **3 (1d6)** fire damage.

Illumination. The blaze sheds bright light in a **15-foot radius** and dim light in an additional **15 feet**.

Actions

Touch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) fire damage. If the target is a creature or a flammable object, it ignites, taking an extra 4 (1d8) fire damage at the start of its next turn.

Spit Flame. The blaze spits fire at a creature it can see within **20 feet** of it. The creature must succeed on a **DC 13 Dexterity saving throw** or take 9 (2d8) fire damage.

Innate Spellcasting. The blaze's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (**spell save DC 10**). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

At will: *invisibility*, *silent image*
1/day each: *blur*, *mirror image*

Reactions

Haze Shift. When the blaze is targeted by an attack, it can transform into a shimmer of heat in the air, giving the attacker **disadvantage** on the attack roll. After the attack is made, if it was a melee attack, the blaze can teleport to an unoccupied space within **5 feet** of the attacker.

BLAZE

DUNEDRINKER

Scattered across the Timespun Sands, dunedrinkers, often confused for mundane oases, are actually biospheres unto themselves. Dunedrinkers roam the desert in search of suitable spots to roost—preferring caverns or cliffs that provide some shelter from the elements—at which point they bury their bodies in the sand until only the topmost portions remain exposed. Long roots extend from their legs, searching for aquifers deep in the earth, which the dunedrinkers slowly pump into large pools on their backs. Ignorant of the science of hydrogeology, the inhabitants of the Timespun Sands originally believed these creatures magically transformed sand into water—hence the name they were given.

Havens in the Sands. A dunedrinker doesn't consume most of the water it drains from the ground. Rather, by accumulating it on the surface, it makes it more accessible to other plants and animals, creating an oasis around which whole new ecosystems form. Helpful detritivores clean the dunedrinker by consuming the dead portions of its body, and pollinators flit between its perfumed flowers, feeding on nectar and fertilising its sandsipper buds. To protect these symbiotic relationships, dunedrinkers produce a hallucinatory pollen that binds to specific proteins found only in carnivorous creatures. Such meat-eaters become terrified of the dunedrinker, keeping the menagerie of herbivorous creatures, which experience only mild hallucinatory effects from the pollen, safe within the dunedrinker's domain.

Shifting Oases. Dunedrinkers can stay in the same location for several years, until the underground water reserves run out. When this happens, they uproot themselves and embark on a long journey across the sands in search of their next resting spot. The creatures that relied on the dunedrinker for sustenance are forced to scramble for other means of survival, but the most tenacious try to keep pace with the migratory oasis. This leads to the temporary formation of strange herds comprising multiple different species, which band together for protection as they journey to their new home.

LAIR ACTIONS

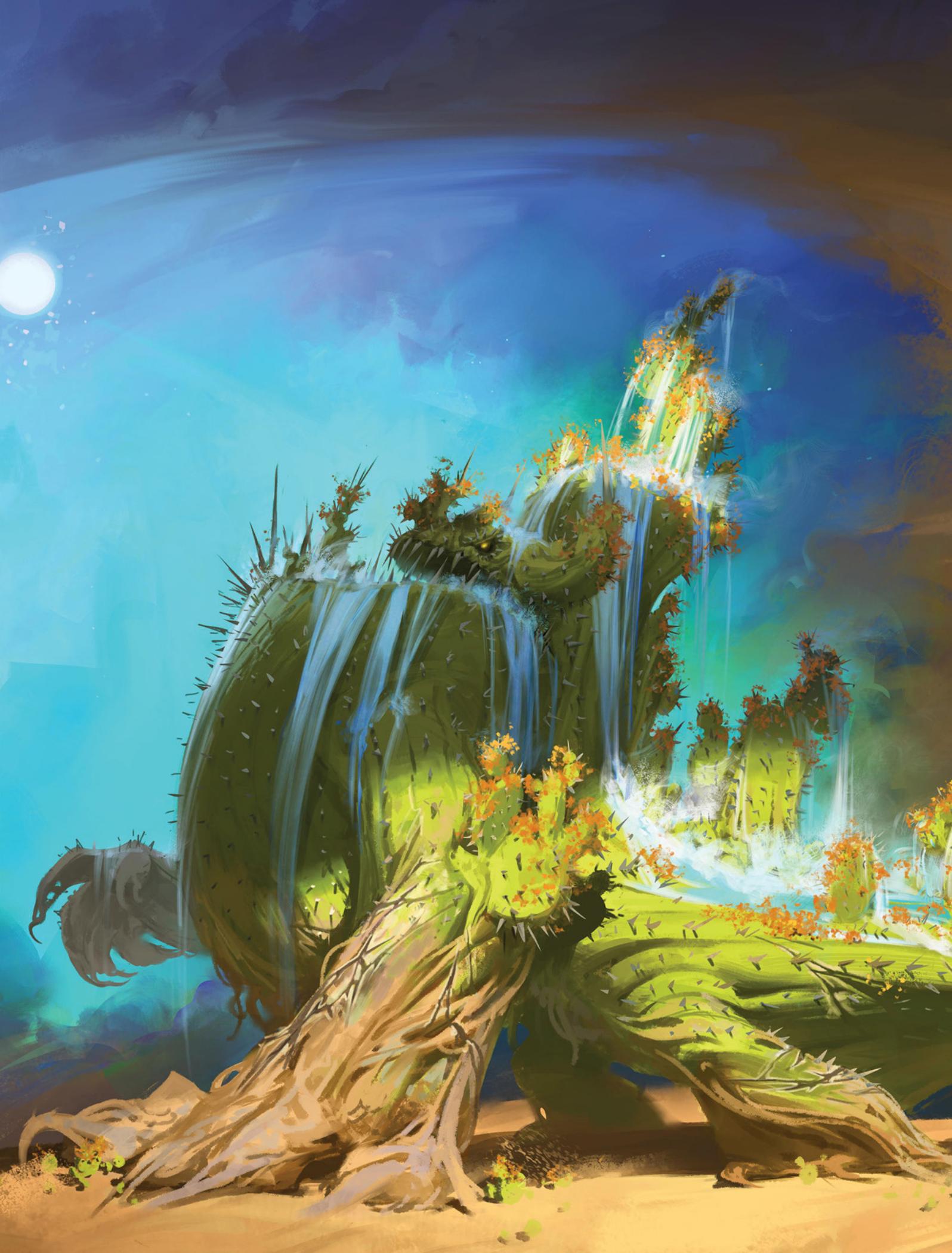
While in its lair, a dunedrinker can use lair actions. The saving throw DCs and damage of the lair actions depend on the type of dunedrinker.

VARIABLE LAIR ACTION STATISTICS

| Dunedrinker | VDC | Vmod | Vdam | Vdist |
|---------------------|-----|------|----------|---------|
| Young Dunedrinker | 12 | +4 | 3 (1d6) | 10 feet |
| Adult Dunedrinker | 15 | +7 | 10 (3d6) | 15 feet |
| Ancient Dunedrinker | 16 | +8 | 14 (4d6) | 20 feet |

Lair Actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the dunedrinker takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects. It can't use the same effect two rounds in a row.

- ◆ **Deadly Mirage.** Extreme heat causes the air to shimmer and undulate, exacerbating the effect of the dunedrinker's pollen. Each creature within **30 feet** of the dunedrinker that is frightened by its Hallucinogenic Cloud action has **disadvantage** on its next saving throw made to end the effect. If a creature fails the saving throw, it takes **Vdam** psychic damage.
- ◆ **Instant Quicksand.** The sand in a **Vdist-radius-sphere** centred on a point within the dunedrinker's lair that it can see transforms into quicksand until the next time the dunedrinker uses a lair action. The area is considered difficult terrain. In addition, each creature that is in the area when this happens or ends its turn in the area must succeed on a **VDC Strength saving throw** or be **restrained** while the quicksand lasts. A creature can use an action to free itself or another creature within reach with a successful **VDC Strength** check.
- ◆ **Needle Field.** Short barrel cacti grow on the ground in a **Vdist-radius-sphere** centred on a point within the dunedrinker's lair that it can see, replicating the effects of the *spike growth* spell. The cacti disappear the next time the dunedrinker uses a lair action.



YOUNG DUNEDRINKER

Huge Plant, Unaligned

Armour Class 16 (natural armour)

Hit Points 85 (9d12 + 27)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 17 (+3) | 11 (+0) | 16 (+3) | 6 (-2) | 11 (+0) | 3 (-4) |

Saving Throws Con +5, Wis +2

Condition Immunities charmed, paralysed, stunned

Senses tremorsense 30 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands Sylvan but can't speak

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Flammable Stems. If the dunedrinker takes **10** or more fire damage in a single instance, it can't use its Jumping Cactus reaction until the start of its next turn.

Legendary Resistance (2/Day). If the dunedrinker fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Sand Strider. The dunedrinker ignores difficult terrain caused by sand.

Siege Monster. The dunedrinker deals double damage to objects and structures.

Overgrowth Form

If the dunedrinker would be reduced to 0 hit points, its current hit point total instead resets to **85 hit points**. It recharges its Hallucinogenic Cloud, regains any expended uses of Legendary Resistance, and stops being under any effects that reduce or limit its movement, such as the restrained condition. Additionally, for **1 hour**, its Hallucinogenic Cloud action becomes more powerful and it can use the options in the "Overgrowth Actions" section. Award a party an additional 1,800 XP (3,600 XP total) for defeating the dunedrinker after its Overgrowth Form activates.

Actions

Multiattack. The dunedrinker uses its Hallucinogenic Cloud action, if it can. It then makes one attack.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage and the target must succeed on a **DC 13 Strength saving throw** or be **grappled** by the dunedrinker (**escape DC 13**). Until this grapple ends, the target is **restrained**, and the dunedrinker can't use its Bite against a different target.

If the target is Large or smaller and already grappled by the dunedrinker, that creature is swallowed, and the grapple ends. While swallowed, the creature is **blinded** and **restrained**, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the dunedrinker, and it takes 7 (2d6) acid damage at the start of each of the dunedrinker's turns.

The dunedrinker's stomach can hold up to two creatures at a time. If the dunedrinker takes **10** damage or more on a single turn from creatures inside it, the dunedrinker must succeed on a **DC 15 Constitution saving throw** at the end of that turn or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, which fall **prone** in a space within **10 feet** of the dunedrinker. If the dunedrinker dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse using **15 feet** of movement, exiting **prone**.

Hallucinogenic Cloud (Recharge 5-6). The dunedrinker releases a cloud of potent hallucinogenic pollen from its body. Each non-Plant creature within **30 feet** of the dunedrinker must make a **DC 13 Wisdom saving throw**. On a failed save, a creature sees hallucinations of horrifying monsters all around it, and is **frightened** of those visions for **1 minute**. A creature that ends its turn while frightened in this way must immediately use its reaction to uselessly attack one of the hallucinations, and also takes 3 (1d6) psychic damage if the dunedrinker is in its Overgrowth Form. After that, a creature can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. Creatures that haven't eaten meat in **30 days** are **immune** to the effects of this action, and creatures that haven't eaten meat within the past 1 day have **advantage** on their saving throws against it.

Reactions

Jumping Cactus. When the dunedrinker takes damage, it can release several small cactus stems, which jump from its body onto each creature within **10 feet** of it. A creature in that area must succeed on a **DC 13 Dexterity saving throw** or take 2 (1d4) piercing damage as one cactus stem sticks to it. When a creature with one or more cactus stems attached to it takes bludgeoning damage, it takes an extra 2 (1d4) piercing damage per attached stem. If a creature with attached stems takes fire damage, all stems fall off. A creature can remove one stem from itself or another creature within reach by using its action to make a successful **DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine)** check, but when it does so, the stem jumps to a different creature within **10 feet** other than the dunedrinker. That creature must make the **DC 13 Dexterity saving throw** against this reaction.

Legendary Actions

The dunedrinker can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dunedrinker regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Slam. The dunedrinker makes one Slam attack.

Move. The dunedrinker moves up to its speed without provoking opportunity attacks. **Take Root.** The dunedrinker sends its roots to gather nutrients from the soil, reducing its speed to 0 feet until the end of its next turn, at which point it gains 7 (2d6) temporary hit points.

Overgrowth Actions

If the dunedrinker's Overgrowth Form has activated in the last hour, it can use the option below as a legendary action.

Spawn Sandsipper (Costs 2 Actions). The dunedrinker attempts to create sandsippers to aid it in battle. Roll a **d8**. On a roll of **4 or lower**, nothing happens. On a roll of **5-7**, the dunedrinker creates a **sandsipper slugger**. On a roll of **8**, the dunedrinker creates a **sandsipper cannoneer**. A created sandsipper is ejected from the dunedrinker's body onto an unoccupied space within **5 feet** of it, and defends the dunedrinker against its foes.

ADULT DUNEDRINKER

Gargantuan Plant, Unaligned

Armour Class 17 (natural armour)

Hit Points 145 (10d20 + 40)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 19 (+4) | 11 (+0) | 18 (+4) | 6 (-2) | 12 (+1) | 3 (-4) |

Saving Throws Con +8, Wis +5

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, paralysed, stunned

Senses tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages understands Sylvan but can't speak

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +4

Flammable Stems. If the dunedrinker takes **20** or more fire damage in a single instance, it can't use its Jumping Cactus reaction until the start of its next turn.

Legendary Resistance (2/Day). If the dunedrinker fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Titanic Force. The dunedrinker can use an action to move through any object or magical barrier as though it were difficult terrain, destroying it in the process. In addition, it deals double damage to objects and structures, and its weapon attacks are considered magical for the purpose of overcoming resistance and immunity to nonmagical attacks and damage.

Sand Strider. The dunedrinker ignores difficult terrain caused by sand.

Overgrowth Form

If the dunedrinker would be reduced to 0 hit points, its current hit point total instead resets to **145 hit points**. It recharges its Hallucinogenic Cloud, regains any expended uses of Legendary Resistance, and stops being under any effects that reduce or limit its movement, such as the restrained condition. Additionally, for **1 hour**, its Hallucinogenic Cloud action becomes more powerful and it can use the options in the "Overgrowth Actions" section. Award a party an additional 5,900 XP (11,800 XP total) for defeating the dunedrinker after its Overgrowth Form activates.

Actions

Multiattack. The dunedrinker uses its Hallucinogenic Cloud action, if it can. It then makes two Slam attacks, or one Slam attack and one Bite attack.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage and the target must succeed on a **DC 16 Strength saving throw** or be **grappled** by the dunedrinker (**escape DC 16**). Until this grapple ends, the target is **restrained**, and the dunedrinker can't use its Bite against a different target.

If the target is Huge or smaller and already grappled by the dunedrinker, that creature is swallowed, and the grapple ends. While swallowed, the creature is **blinded** and **restrained**, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the dunedrinker, and it takes 10 (3d6) acid damage at the start of each of the dunedrinker's turns.

The dunedrinker's stomach can hold up to four creatures at a time. If the dunedrinker takes **20** damage or more on a single turn from creatures inside it, the dunedrinker must succeed on a **DC 20 Constitution saving throw** at the end of that turn or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, which fall **prone** in a space within **10 feet** of the dunedrinker. If the dunedrinker dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse using **15 feet** of movement, exiting **prone**.

Hallucinogenic Cloud (Recharge 5-6). The dunedrinker releases a cloud of potent hallucinogenic pollen from its body. Each non-Plant creature within **30 feet** of the dunedrinker must make a **DC 16 Wisdom saving throw**. On a failed save, a creature sees hallucinations of horrifying monsters all around it, and is **frightened** of those visions for **1 minute**. A creature that ends its turn while frightened in this way must immediately use its reaction to uselessly attack one of the hallucinations, and also takes 7 (2d6) psychic damage if the dunedrinker is in its Overgrowth Form. After that, a creature can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. Creatures that haven't eaten meat in **30 days** are **immune** to the effects of this action, and creatures that haven't eaten meat within the past 1 day have **advantage** on their saving throws against it.

Reactions

Jumping Cactus. When the dunedrinker takes damage, it can release several small cactus stems, which jump from its body onto each creature within **10 feet** of it. A creature in that area must succeed on a **DC 16 Dexterity saving throw** or take 3 (1d6) piercing damage as one cactus stem sticks to it. When a creature with one or more cactus stems attached to it takes bludgeoning damage, it takes an extra 3 (1d6) piercing damage per attached stem. If a creature with attached stems takes fire damage, all stems fall off. A creature can remove one stem from itself or another creature within reach by using its action to make a successful **DC 16 Wisdom (Medicine)** check, but when it does so, the stem jumps to a different creature within **10 feet** other than the dunedrinker. That creature must make the **DC 16 Dexterity saving throw** against this reaction.

Legendary Actions

The dunedrinker can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dunedrinker regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Slam. The dunedrinker makes one Slam attack.

Move. The dunedrinker moves up to its speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Take Root. The dunedrinker sends its roots to gather nutrients from the soil, reducing its speed to **0 feet** until the end of its next turn, at which point it gains 11 (2d10) temporary hit points.

Overgrowth Actions

If the dunedrinker's Overgrowth Form has activated in the last hour, it can use the option below as a legendary action.

Spawn Sandsipper (Costs 2 Actions). The dunedrinker attempts to create sandsippers to aid it in battle. Roll a **d8**. On a roll of **4 or lower**, nothing happens. On a roll of **5-7**, the dunedrinker creates a **sandsipper thornshield**. On a roll of **8**, the dunedrinker creates a **sandsipper pollinator**. A created sandsipper is ejected from the dunedrinker's body onto an unoccupied space within **5 feet** of it, and defends the dunedrinker against its foes.

ANCIENT DUNEDRINKER

Gargantuan Plant, Unaligned

Armour Class 18 (natural armour)

Hit Points 232 (15d20 + 75)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 21 (+5) | 11 (+0) | 20 (+5) | 6 (-2) | 12 (+1) | 3 (-4) |

Saving Throws Con +10, Wis +6

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, paralysed, stunned

Senses tremorsense 120 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages understands Sylvan but can't speak

Challenge 16 (15,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +5

Flammable Stems. If the dunedrinker takes 30 or more fire damage in a single instance, it can't use its Jumping Cactus reaction until the start of its next turn.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dunedrinker fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Titanic Force. The dunedrinker can use an action to move through any object or magical barrier as though it were difficult terrain, destroying it in the process. In addition, it deals double damage to objects and structures, and its weapon attacks are considered magical for the purpose of overcoming resistance and immunity to nonmagical attacks and damage.

Sand Strider. The dunedrinker ignores difficult terrain caused by sand.

Overgrowth Form

If the dunedrinker would be reduced to 0 hit points, its current hit point total instead resets to **232 hit points**. It recharges its Hallucinogenic Cloud, regains any expended uses of Legendary Resistance, and stops being under any effects that reduce or limit its movement, such as the restrained condition. Additionally, for **1 hour**, its Hallucinogenic Cloud action becomes more powerful and it can use the options in the "Overgrowth Actions" section. Award a party an additional 15,000 XP (30,000 XP total) for defeating the dunedrinker after its Overgrowth Form activates.

Actions

Multiattack. The dunedrinker uses its Hallucinogenic Cloud action, if it can. It then makes two Slam attacks, or one Slam attack and one Bite attack.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) piercing damage and the target must succeed on a **DC 18 Strength saving throw** or be **grappled** by the dunedrinker (**escape DC 18**). Until this grapple ends, the target is **restrained**, and the dunedrinker can't use its Bite against a different target.

If the target is Huge or smaller and already grappled by the dunedrinker, that creature is swallowed, and the grapple ends. While swallowed, the creature is **blinded** and **restrained**, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the dunedrinker, and it takes 14 (4d6) acid damage at the start of each of the dunedrinker's turns.

The dunedrinker's stomach can hold up to eight creatures at a time. If the dunedrinker takes 30 damage or more on a single turn from creatures inside it, the dunedrinker must succeed on a **DC 20 Constitution saving throw** at the end of that turn or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, which fall **prone** in a space within **10 feet** of the dunedrinker. If the dunedrinker dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse using **15 feet** of movement, exiting **prone**.

Hallucinogenic Cloud (Recharge 5-6). The dunedrinker releases a cloud of potent hallucinogenic pollen from its body. Each non-Plant creature within **30 feet** of the dunedrinker must make a **DC 18 Wisdom saving throw**. On a failed save, a creature sees hallucinations of horrifying monsters all around it, and is **frightened** of those visions for **1 minute**. A creature that ends its turn while frightened in this way must immediately use its reaction to uselessly attack one of the hallucinations, and also takes 10 (3d6) psychic damage if the dunedrinker is in its Overgrowth Form. After that, a creature can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. Creatures that haven't eaten meat within the past **30 days** are **immune** to the effects of this action, and creatures that haven't eaten meat within the past 1 day have **advantage** on their saving throws against it.

Reactions

Jumping Cactus. When the dunedrinker takes damage, it can release several small cactus stems, which jump from its body onto each creature within **10 feet** of it. A creature in that area must succeed on a **DC 18 Dexterity saving throw** or take 4 (1d8) piercing damage as one cactus stem sticks to it. When a creature with one or more cactus stems attached to it takes bludgeoning damage, it takes an extra 4 (1d8) piercing damage per attached stem. If a creature with attached stems takes fire damage, all of the stems fall off. A creature can remove one stem from itself or another creature within reach by using its action to make a successful **DC 18 Wisdom (Medicine)** check, but when it does so, the stem jumps to a different creature within **10 feet** other than the dunedrinker. That creature must make the **DC 18 Dexterity saving throw** against this reaction.

Legendary Actions

The dunedrinker can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dunedrinker regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Slam. The dunedrinker makes one Slam attack.

Move. The dunedrinker moves up to its speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Take Root. The dunedrinker sends its roots to gather nutrients from the soil, reducing its speed to 0 feet until the end of its next turn, at which point it gains 16 (3d10) temporary hit points.

Overgrowth Actions

If the dunedrinker's Overgrowth Form has activated in the last hour, it can use the option below as a legendary action.

Spawn Sandsipper (Costs 2 Actions). The dunedrinker attempts to create sandsippers to aid it in battle. Roll a **d8**. On a roll of **4 or lower**, nothing happens. On a roll of **5-7**, the dunedrinker creates a **sandsipper pollinator**. On a roll of **8**, the dunedrinker creates a **sandsipper sentinel**. A created sandsipper is ejected from the dunedrinker's body onto an unoccupied space within **5 feet** of it, and defends the dunedrinker against its foes.

SANDSIPPERS

Sandsippers are animated cacti that wander arid deserts and windswept plains, sworn to protect the fragile and sparse flora of these desolate regions. They are often called the dryads of the desert, although this nomenclature is somewhat inaccurate. In fact, sandsippers and dryads often coexist in verdant oases or lush cactus groves, working in tandem to nurture the precious greenery that thrives there against all odds.

Dunedrinker Guardians. A dunedrinker is capable of producing sandsippers from buds spread across its body, relying on them as a final line of defence when its hallucinatory pollen fails. It takes months for a single sandsipper to grow into a combat-ready state, a process which requires copious amounts of water and nutrients. Consequently, dunedrinkers are conservative with the use of their cactus soldiers, releasing them only when they feel their lives are threatened. Sandsipper buds grow as the dunedrinker ages, enabling the production of larger and stronger warriors that fight tooth and needle to protect their progenitor.

Sharp Warriors. Sandsippers are fierce fighters, respected by desert dwellers and feared by defilers of cactus groves. Among these, the formidable sentinels stand above all, their combat prowess and discipline rivalling those of the finest soldiers in the Timespun Sands. This is illustrated in the legend of Pharaoh Opuntia, said to have captured an ancient dunedrinker and forced it to produce sentinels for her army. The ruins of her palatial residence are a popular tourist destination to this day, serving as a reminder of the mighty rage wielded by those desert titans.

SANDSIPPER SLUGGER

Small Plant, Unaligned

Armour Class 13 (natural armour)

Hit Points 31 (7d6 + 7)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 14 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 13 (+1) | 6 (-2) | 10 (+0) | 5 (-3) |

Senses darvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands Sylvan but can't speak

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Protective Needles. When a creature successfully grapples the sandsipper, the creature takes 3 (1d6) piercing damage.

Sand Strider. The sandsipper ignores difficult terrain caused by sand.

Actions

Multiattack. The sandsipper makes two Slam attacks. If both attacks hit the same target, the target also takes 3 (1d6) piercing damage and has **disadvantage** on the next attack roll it makes before the end of its next turn.

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

SANDSIPPER SLUGGER



SANDSIPPER CANNONEER

Small Plant, Unaligned

Armour Class 13

Hit Points 45 (10d6 + 10)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 13 (+1) | 16 (+3) | 12 (+1) | 6 (-2) | 12 (+1) | 5 (-3) |

Skills Perception +3

Condition Immunities blinded

Senses tremorsense 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 13

Languages understands Sylvan but can't speak

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Protective Needles. When a creature successfully grapples the sandsipper, the creature takes 3 (1d6) piercing damage.

Sand Strider. The sandsipper ignores difficult terrain caused by sand.

Actions

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) slashing damage.

Stem Shot. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 2 (1d4) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, a cactus stem sticks to it. When a creature with one or more cactus stems attached to it takes bludgeoning damage, it takes an extra 2 (1d4) piercing damage per attached stem. If a creature with attached stems takes fire damage, all stems fall off. A creature can remove one stem from itself or another creature within reach by using its action to make a successful **DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine)** check, but when it does so, the stem jumps to a different creature within **10 feet** other than the sandsipper. That creature must succeed on a **DC 13 Dexterity saving throw** or have the stem attach to it.

Bonus Actions

Root. The sandsipper roots itself to the ground until it's moved against its will or uses a bonus action to unroot itself. While rooted, the sandsipper has a speed of **0 feet**, **disadvantage** on Dexterity saving throws, **advantage** on saving throws to resist being moved against its will, and it gains 4 (1d8) temporary hit points at the start of each of its turns.

SANDSIPPER CANNONEER



SANDSIPPER THORNSHIELD

Medium Plant, Unaligned

Armour Class 18 (natural armour)

Hit Points 90 (12d8 + 36)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 13 (+1) | 16 (+3) | 12 (+1) | 6 (-2) | 12 (+1) | 5 (-3) |

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages understands Sylvan but can't speak

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Protective Needles. When a creature successfully grapples the sandsipper, the creature takes 7 (2d6) piercing damage.

Sand Strider. The sandsipper ignores difficult terrain caused by sand.

Actions

Multiattack. The sandsipper makes two Bash attacks. If both attacks hit the same target, the target also takes 4 (1d8) piercing damage and must succeed on a **DC 13 Strength saving throw** or be knocked **prone**.

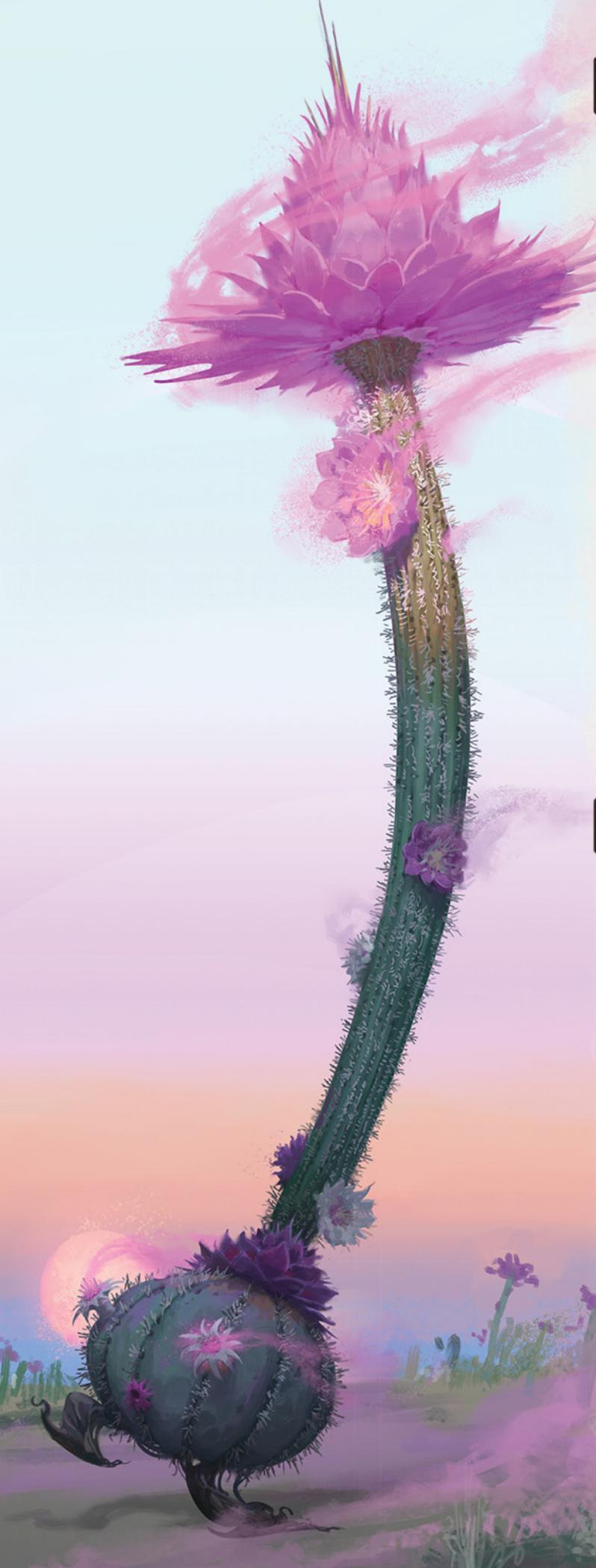
Bash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Reactions

Prickly Interception. When a willing creature within **5 feet** of the sandsipper is targeted by an attack, the thornshield can make itself the target of the attack. Whether the attack hits or misses, if the attacker is within **5 feet** of the sandsipper, the attacker takes 9 (2d8) piercing damage.

SANDSIPPER THORNSHIELD





SANDSIPPER POLLINATOR

Large Plant, Unaligned

Armour Class 16 (natural armour)

Hit Points 119 (14d10 + 42)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 12 (+1) | 12 (+1) | 17 (+3) | 8 (-1) | 15 (+2) | 5 (-3) |

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages understands Sylvan but can't speak

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Protective Needles. When a creature successfully grapples the sandsipper, the creature takes 7 (2d6) piercing damage.

Sand Strider. The sandsipper ignores difficult terrain caused by sand.

Actions

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.
Hit: 5 (1d8 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

Pollen Bomb. The sandsipper tosses an explosive bloom at a point within 30 feet of it, where it bursts in a 10-foot-radius sphere. Each creature in the area must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 18 (4d8) poison damage.

Bonus Actions

Root. The sandsipper roots itself to the ground until it's moved against its will or uses a bonus action to unroot itself. While rooted, the sandsipper has a speed of 0 feet, **disadvantage** on Dexterity saving throws, **advantage** on saving throws to resist being moved against its will, and it gains 9 (2d8) temporary hit points at the start of each of its turns.

SANDSIPPER POLLINATOR

SANDSIPPER SENTINEL

Large Plant, Unaligned

Armour Class 17 (natural armour)

Hit Points 161 (19d10 + 57)

Speed 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 18 (+4) | 13 (+1) | 16 (+3) | 8 (-1) | 12 (+1) | 5 (-3) |

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages understands Sylvan but can't speak

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +4

Protective Needles. When a creature successfully grapples the sandsipper, the creature takes 7 (2d6) piercing damage.

Sand Strider. The sandsipper ignores difficult terrain caused by sand.

Actions

Multiattack. The sandsipper makes three Pike attacks.

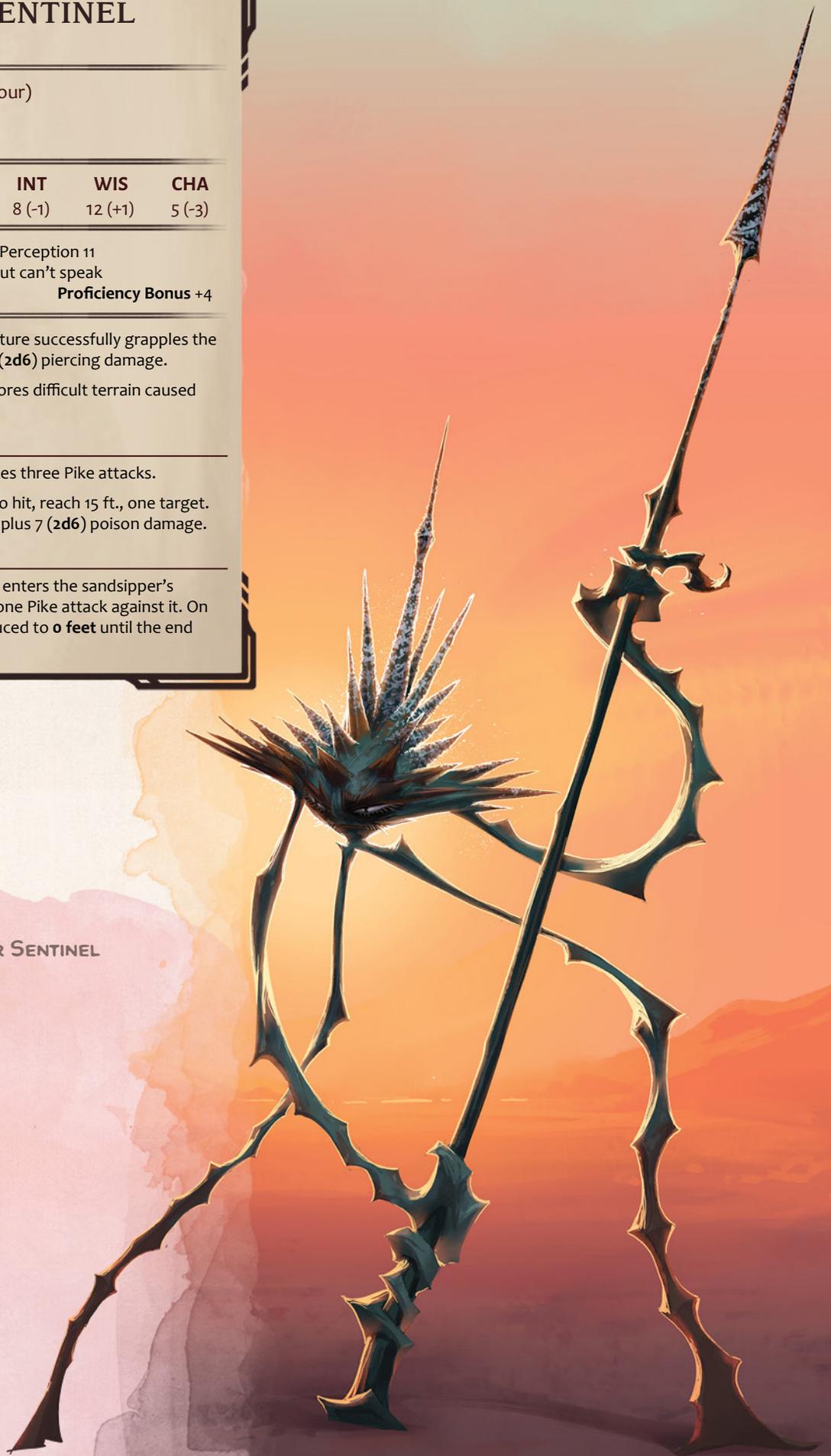
Pike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target.

Hit: 9 (1d10 + 4) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage.

Reactions

Sentinel Strike. When a creature enters the sandsipper's reach, the sandsipper can make one Pike attack against it. On a hit, the creature's speed is reduced to 0 feet until the end of turn.

SANDSIPPER SENTINEL





SANDSHARK

With a mean streak as wide as the Bahr Arrimal, sandsharks prowl across the deserts of the Timespun Sands, their sleek bodies cutting effortlessly through the rolling dunes. These voracious hunters are governed primarily by their solitary and possessive nature, and encounters between neighbouring sandsharks often escalate into brutal, bloody conflicts over territory or mates. As the cactari are fond of saying, “nothing hates a sandshark more than another sandshark”.

Patient Ambushers. Sandsharks are opportunistic ambush predators, stalking their prey by scent across the desert for days until it weakens. When the time finally comes to strike, they dive into the sand and stealthily burrow until they’re right underneath their target. The last thing most unfortunate souls who fail to traverse the desert glimpse is the tip of a dorsal fin poking through the dunes, just seconds before the sandshark jumps out and seals their fate.

Evasive Combatants. Even those who manage to muster enough strength for a fight find themselves struggling against the hit-and-run tactics employed by sandsharks. During combat, a sandshark surfaces just long enough to inflict a vicious bite on its opponent before sinking back into the safety of the sand, poised for its next attack. Cactari advise using nets or similar implements to immobilise sandsharks, creating an opportunity to retaliate or flee for one’s life.

SANDSHARK

Large Monstrosity, Unaligned

Armour Class 17 (natural armour)

Hit Points 127 (15d10 + 45)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 50 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 19 (+4) | 12 (+1) | 17 (+3) | 2 (-4) | 14 (+2) | 5 (-3) |

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +4

Condition Immunities blinded

Senses tremorsense 120 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 15

Languages —

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Blood Frenzy. The sandshark has **advantage** on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.

Emergence. If the sandshark burrows at least **20 feet** up in a straight line and reaches the surface, it emerges from the ground in a burst of dirt or sand. Each creature within **5 feet** of the sandshark when it does so must make a **DC 15 Strength saving throw**. On a failed save, a creature takes **9 (2d8)** bludgeoning damage, is pushed back **10 feet**, and is knocked **prone**. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage and suffers no additional effects.

Keen Hearing and Smell. The sandshark has **advantage** on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Sand Glide. The sandshark ignores difficult terrain caused by sand, and can burrow through sand without leaving tracks behind it.

Actions

Multiattack. The sandshark makes one Bite attack and one Tail attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 17 (3d8 + 4) piercing damage and the target is **grappled** (escape DC 15) if it is a Large or smaller creature. Until the grapple ends, the sandshark can't use its Bite against a different target. The grapple ends if the sandshark burrows underground.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Bonus Action

Sand Pit (Recharge 4-6). If the sandshark burrows in a **5-foot-radius circle** while 5 feet underground, it can cause the ground in that area to collapse. Each creature standing in the area must succeed on a **DC 15 Dexterity saving throw** or sink into the ground and be **restrained**. A creature can use an action to make a **DC 15 Strength** check, freeing itself or another creature within reach on a success.

APPENDIX D - FAMILIAR

CACTUSK

TAMER
LEVEL

1

GROWTH I
PREREQUISITE: BECOME COMPANION
"This little piggy has yet to grow..."

3

SOOTHING SIP
PREREQUISITE: —
"The cactusk taketh..."

CHARGE I
PREREQUISITE: —
"It's a pig, not a goat!"

5

POLLEN CLOUD
PREREQUISITE: —
"My allergies!"

MULTIATTACK
PREREQUISITE: —
"Go HAM on them, Tusky."

GROWTH II
PREREQUISITE: GROWTH I
"...this medium piggy is raring to go..."

9

THORNY HIDE I
PREREQUISITE: —
"These bandages on my hands?..."

CHARGE II
PREREQUISITE: CHARGE I
"...but it can still RAM!"

13

GREEN THUMB
PREREQUISITE: SOOTHING SIP
"...the cactusk giveth back."

GROWTH III
PREREQUISITE: GROWTH II
"...this large piggy will crush every foe."

17

THORNY HIDE II
PREREQUISITE: THORNY HIDE I
"...Well, Tusky likes pets."



"My lengthy research has resulted in fascinating insights on how to approach an angry cactusk. My second best piece of advice? Appear small and non-threatening. Speak in a low, soothing tone. Watch its reaction and back away if necessary. My best piece of advice? Don't approach an angry cactusk."

— Falak, Living Pin Cushion

Type: Plant

Creature Component: Any dunedrinker

Bonus Tamer Improvement: Growth I and +2 Hit Dice

Cactusks are highly protective of anything they consider their property—fortunately, this can include creatures to whom they've bonded—and fight fiercely to defend it against the slightest perceived threat—unfortunately, this can include creatures to whom they've bonded. They are irascible, territorial, and stubborn, a volatile combination that has left many amateur tamers laboriously pulling needles from their bodies at the end of the day. The best way to handle this irritable little creature is to give it space and allow it to approach you at its own pace. When a cactusk finally gives in and comes to the campfire asking for cuddles, well, that's the highest praise a tamer can receive. Just make sure you keep a pair of tweezers handy for after...

If any of the cactusk's traits or actions require a saving throw, it is always against the cactusk's **save DC**, as calculated below.

Save DC = 8 + the tamer's proficiency bonus + the cactusk's Strength modifier

MONSTER TRAINER

GROWTH I

Prerequisite: Become a tamer's companion

Type: Passive (companion)

The cactusk's size increases to Small, its Hit Die size increases to a **d6** (its hit point maximum consequently increases by **1** for each of its Hit Dice), and the damage die of its Tusk attack increases to a **d8**.

CHARGE I

Prerequisite: 3rd-level tamer

Type: Passive (companion)

If the cactusk moves at least **20 feet** straight toward a target and then immediately hits it with a Tusk attack, the target takes an extra **3 (1d6)** piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a **Strength saving throw** or be knocked **prone**.

SOOTHING SIP

Prerequisite: 3rd-level tamer

Type: Active (action)

As an action, the cactusk can root itself to the ground and begin to absorb water. While rooted, the cactusk's speed is **0 feet**, and it can unroot itself as a bonus action. If the cactusk stays rooted for **1 hour** uninterrupted, it gains **10 (3d6)** temporary hit points. If this is done while the cactusk is half-submerged in a body of water, it gains the maximum amount of temporary hit points instead of rolling.

Once the cactusk has gained temporary hit points in this way, it can't do so again until its tamer finishes a long rest.

GROWTH II

Prerequisite: 5th-level tamer, Growth I

Type: Passive (companion)

The cactusk's size increases to Medium, its Hit Die size increases to a **d8** (its hit point maximum consequently increases by **1** for each of its Hit Dice), and the damage die of its Tusk attack increases to a **d10**.

CACTUSK

Tiny Plant, Unaligned

Armour Class 12 (natural armour)

Hit Points 4 (1d4 + 2)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 15 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 14 (+2) | 7 (-2) | 10 (+0) | 8 (-1) |

Senses tremorsense 10 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Bad Temper. When a creature rolls a **20** on an attack roll against the cactusk, the cactusk gains **disadvantage** on attack rolls against all other creatures until the end of its next turn.

Prickly. A creature grappling the cactusk takes **3 (1d6)** piercing damage at the start of each of the cactusk's turns.

Actions

Tusk. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

MULTIATTACK

Prerequisite: 5th-level tamer

Type: Active (action)

As an action, the cactusk can make two attacks.

POLLEN CLOUD

Prerequisite: 5th-level tamer

Type: Active (action)

As an action, the cactusk can release a cloud of potent, hallucinogenic pollen from the flowers on its rear, in a **20-foot-radius sphere** centred on itself. Each other creature in the area when the cactusk uses this action must make a **Wisdom saving throw**. On a failed save, a creature sees hallucinations of horrifying monsters all around it, and is **frightened** of those visions for **1 minute**. A creature that starts its turn frightened in this way must immediately use its reaction to uselessly attack one of the hallucinations. A creature that ends its turn frightened in this way must immediately use its reaction to uselessly attack one of the hallucinations. After that, a creature can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Once the cactusk has used this action, it can't do so again until its tamer finishes a short or long rest.

When the cactusk's tamer reaches 13th level in the tamer class, a creature frightened by the cactusk's Pollen Cloud improvement takes **3 (1d6)** psychic damage at the start of each of its turns.

CHARGE II

Prerequisite: 9th-level tamer, Charge I

Type: Passive (companion)

The damage of the cactusk's Charge I improvement increases to 7 (2d6). In addition, a creature that fails its saving throw against the cactusk's Charge I is embedded with needles until the end of its next turn, at which point they fall off. When a creature embedded with needles takes bludgeoning damage, it takes an extra 7 (2d6) piercing damage and loses the needles.

THORNY HIDE I

Prerequisite: 9th-level tamer

Type: Passive (companion)

While not wearing armour, the cactusk gains the following benefits:

- ◆ It gains a +2 **bonus** to AC.
- ◆ The damage of its Prickly trait increases to 7 (2d6).
- ◆ The first time on each turn that a creature within 5 feet of the cactusk hits it with a melee attack, the creature takes 3 (1d6) piercing damage.

CACTUSK



GREEN THUMB

Prerequisite: 13th-level tamer, Soothing Sip

Type: Active (action)

The cactusk can gain temporary hit points from its Soothing Sip improvement any number of times without its tamer needing to take a long rest.

In addition, while the cactusk has temporary hit points from its Soothing Sip improvement, it can use an action to lose them all, flushing the water back into the ground to cast the *plant growth* (as an action only) or *spike growth* spells.

GROWTH III

Prerequisite: 13th-level tamer, Growth II

Type: Passive (companion)

The cactusk's size increases to Large, its Hit Die size increases to a d10 (its hit point maximum consequently increases by 1 for each of its Hit Dice), and the damage die of its Tusk attack increases to a d12.

THORNY HIDE II

Prerequisite: 17th-level tamer, Thorny Hide I

Type: Passive (companion), Active (bonus action)

While not wearing armour, the cactusk gains the following benefits:

- ◆ It gains a +2 **bonus** to AC. This improvement is in addition to the bonus from Thorny Hide I.
- ◆ The damage of its Prickly trait increases to 10 (3d6).
- ◆ Whenever a creature within 5 feet of the cactusk hits it with a melee attack, the creature takes 3 (1d6) piercing damage, not just the first time each turn.

In addition, while not wearing armour, the cactusk can use a bonus action to expel a shower of needles from its hide. Each creature within 5 feet of the cactusk must make a **Dexterity saving throw**. On a failed save, a creature takes 7 (2d6) piercing damage and is embedded with needles (as per the Charge II improvement) until the end of its next turn, at which point they fall off. When a creature embedded with needles takes bludgeoning damage, it takes an extra 7 (2d6) piercing damage and loses the needles. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage and isn't embedded with needles.

Once the cactusk uses this bonus action, it can't do so again until its tamer finishes a short or long rest.

APPENDIX E – RACES

CACTARI

“Don't mind their prickly exterior; they're quite welcoming. And, lucky for us softskins, they hate giving hugs.”

— Falak

Among hot dry dunes that many would deem inhospitable, the resilient cactari form tight-knit communities. Despite their prickly appearance, these green-skinned plant-humanoids are typically welcoming to visitors, offering oasis to weary travellers and sanctuary from the roaming predators and blistering sun of the desert. Indeed, such is a cactar's propensity to foster community that, wherever they settle, they form bonds as deep and trusting as any biological family.

PROPAGATION

Cactari have no biological gender, though many choose to identify with one upon reaching maturity. In place of the sexual reproduction between two individuals common to most fauna, cactari begin the reproductive process by taking a cutting from themselves, which they plant in a community's nursing site. Such cuttings are non-sentient plants that, during the first full moon of spring, produce a bouquet of tiny flower-like openings at their crown.

On this night, known as the *aizdihar*, the cactari community gathers for an evening of dance and celebration. During their dervish-like movements, the cactari release plumes of pollen that settle on the cuttings, fertilising them, and starting the process of personification. At the start of summer, the cuttings mature into fully sentient cactari infants, each the genetic child of the entire community.

THE NURSING SITE

Cactari infants remain rooted in the community's nursing site for the first two seasons of their lives. Such sites are sacred, shady spaces, selected to give cuttings and infants just enough direct sunlight to grow, while protecting the fragile youths from desiccation. These nurseries can take the shape of a hardy tree, a rocky outcropping, or a shallow ravine. Come winter, the infants separate from their roots—the umbilical cord through which they were succored by the land—and take their first tentative steps as saplings.

THE BRANCHING

No journey is more important to a cactar than the Branching, a formative first pilgrimage that marks the transition into true adulthood. At the beginning of their second decade, cactari adolescents leave their family to seek something with which they might enrich their community. While some set forth knowing exactly what they want to find, others use the journey as a means of self-discovery. Regardless, each youth is guided by their own perspective, seeking that which they deem important. Riches, the cultural wisdom of music or stories, and new arcane technologies are all valued by their familial recipients. While some Branchings may take only a few months, other cactari never end their search, revelling in the wonders of the wilds until they return to mulch.

CACTARI TRAITS

Suggested Ability Score Increase. Your Constitution score increases by 2.

Age. Cactari grow very quickly while rooted, but very slowly throughout the rest of their lives. They reach maturity at around 10 and can live up to 200 years.

Anatomy. You have two arms and two legs.

CACTARI FEMALE



Languages. You can speak, read, and write Common and one other language of your choice.

Creature Type. You count as both a Plant and a Humanoid.

Speed. Your walking speed is **30 feet**.

Desert Blossom. You have proficiency in your choice of two of the following skills: Insight, Nature, Persuasion, or Survival.

Photoabsorption. As a reaction when you take radiant damage, you can halve the amount of radiant damage you take and gain temporary hit points equal to the amount of damage you reduced, up to a maximum equal to your Constitution modifier plus your proficiency bonus (minimum 2 temporary hit points).

Photosynthetic. If you spend **6 hours** in direct sunlight, or **12 hours** in indirect sunlight, you do not need to eat to sustain yourself for that day.

Sand Sipper. Your body needs much less water than average. You only need to consume one quarter the normal amount of water.

Sharpened Spines. Your skin is covered in long, needle-like spines. Whenever you end your turn grappling or grappled by a creature, make a **Constitution** check with a DC equal to the creature's AC. You add your proficiency bonus to this check. On a success, the creature takes a number of **d4s** of piercing damage equal to your proficiency bonus.

Subrace. Cactari have evolved many different morphologies, each of which can exist within the same community. Choose one of these subraces

BROADBARREL

Broadbarrel cactari are a stout, powerful people whose heft makes them formidable melee combatants. With the swift pumping of their legs, these cactari can become spiky cannonballs, knocking down foes in their path.

Suggested Ability Score Increase. Your Strength score increases by 1.

Size. Most broadbarrel cactari are as wide as they are tall, typically standing around 5 feet tall and weighing 200 to 400 pounds. Your size is Medium.

Barrel Charge. If you move at least **20 feet** directly towards a creature no more than one size larger than you and then immediately hit it with a melee attack, the creature must succeed on a **Strength saving throw** or take **1d8** piercing damage and be knocked **prone**. The DC for the saving throw equals 8 plus your proficiency bonus plus your Strength modifier.

CHOLLASPRING

Chollaspring cactari are named after the flora whose defence system they emulate. Like the cholla cactus, these cactari are capable of ejecting small cactus balls replete with barbed spines onto an assailant, discouraging further conflict. Despite this bristly adaptation, chollaspring are the most affable of the cactari, jumping in to help in times of need and sticking around when times are tough.

Suggested Ability Score Increase. Your Wisdom or Charisma score increases by 1.

Size. Depending on the surroundings where a chollaspring grows up, they can stand anywhere from 4 to 6 feet tall and can weigh between 90 and 250 pounds. Your size is Small or Medium (choose when you select this race).

Jumping Cactus. When a creature within **10 feet** of you hits you with a melee attack, you can use your reaction to release a barbed stem that sticks to the creature. The creature immediately takes **1d4** piercing damage and, each time it takes bludgeoning damage while it has the stem attached, it takes an additional **1d4** piercing damage per attached stem. You can use this reaction a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

If a creature with attached stems takes fire damage, all stems fall off. A creature can remove one stem from itself or another creature within reach by using its action to make a successful **Wisdom (Medicine)** check. The DC for the check equals 8 plus your proficiency bonus plus your Constitution modifier.

SPINDLESPEAR

With torsos that are tangles of interwoven spindly stems, spindlespear cactari tend to be the tallest of the desert-dwelling subraces. Their long, skinny limbs hang almost to the floor, giving them an extraordinary reach.

Suggested Ability Score Increase. Your Dexterity score increases by 1.

Size. Spindlespear cactari are generally tall and sinewy, standing between 6 and 7 feet tall and weighing 90 to 160 pounds. Your size is Medium.

Long-Limbed. When you make a melee attack on your turn, your reach for it is **5 feet** greater than normal.



LEGAL

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