

DAVAE BREON JAXON'S

# CINEMATIC ENVIRONS

DESERT WASTES

CALL OF CTHULHU EDITION



# CREDITS

**Writing:** Alex Guillotte, Davae Breon Jaxon

**Rules Development:** Alex Guillotte, Davae Breon Jaxon,  
Rob Davis

**Design & Layout:** Alex Guillotte

**Editing:** Alex Guillotte, Rob Davis, Ian Christiansen

**Art Director & Illustrations:** Alex Guillotte

Copyright 2019 • Alex Guillotte

Call of Cthulhu is a Trademark of Chaosium Inc. and is used with their permission via the OBS Community Content program.

For more information please visit Chaosium's website: [www.Chaosium.com](http://www.Chaosium.com)

The Miskatonic Repository Logo is used under license.



# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
Environmental Hazards	4
Definitions	5
<b>Desert Conditions</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Desert Hazards</b>	<b>12</b>
Flash Flood	12
Salt Flats	14
Sand	16
Sandstorm	17
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>23</b>

# INTRODUCTION

An interesting backdrop can set a story above and beyond the rest, turning a mundane investigation into an epic fight for survival. Just imagine Key Largo without the hurricane or *The Thing* without the Antarctic setting.

The purpose of this scenario is to explore and expand the concept of survival in *Call of Cthulhu*. Besides providing additional challenges and pressures for the investigators to face, the environment also helps to set the mood, which is critical to any horror story.

This book includes some additional definitions, rules, and arctic hazards that the Keeper can use at their discretion throughout the scenario to enhance the cinematic feel of the story.

## THE RULE OF THREE

One of the most important aspects of cinematic role playing is the **Rule of Three**. When adjudicating the dangers presented in this book, be aware of what level of realism you, as a Keeper, are looking to provide.

In a realistic, brutal setting, allowing only **one** skill or ability check or to overcome the obstacle is acceptable.

If you're interested in less lethal, but still gritty setting, allow **two** skill or ability checks before lethal effects befall the investigators. This will give the players a real sense of danger, yet still encourage some heroic stunts.

And for a truly pulp action, over-the-top cinematic feel, allow **three** skill or ability checks before the proverbial hammer falls on the characters.

For example, let's say that the investigators are attempting to climb a sheer cliff face to enter a cave unseen. A deadly setting would see only **one** roll to avoid falling to one's death. In this case it might be that one poor climb check would seal their fate.

A setting that mixes gritty action and heroic deeds would allow **two** rolls before dropping the characters on the rocks hundreds of feet below. In this case, perhaps the climbing roll fails, so an additional strength roll is needed to hold on with their fingertips.

In a pulp setting that reflects a more Indiana Jones sensibility, there would be at least **three** potential chances before tumbling

down the rocky mountain wall. In this case, it might be that the climbing skill fails and the strength check fails, but perhaps a Dexterity roll could save the falling investigator as she grabs a root dangling nearby.

The **Rule of Three** also applies in the opposite direction when a character attempts to perform a stunt. The more skill or ability checks required to achieve the stunt, the more realistic and dangerous the action will be. In other words, asking for more rolls to succeed will lead to barriers when you want your player group to engage in cinematic action.

For example, suppose a player wants their character to grab a coat from a hook, throw it over a security guard and then push them down a flight of stairs. In a realistic setting, that player may have to roll to snatch down the coat, another roll to hit the guard, and yet another roll to knock them over.

In a gritty game, the Keeper may ask for a roll to cover the guard and another to knock them prone.

In a cinematic world, a single roll is enough to give the hapless guard a blanket party and send him on his way to oblivion.

It's important that you communicate with your group to decide collectively what sort of game you intend to run concerning the **Rule of Three**. Make sure all are in complete agreement to prevent conflicting expectations in the game.

## ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

The following hazards are not truly characters or monsters, but it may be necessary to place their effects into the Initiative order. Pick an initiative system and remain consistent from one combat round to the next. Players may have to be tactical, expending an action to remain balanced or hold on, so be aware if a character does not have a movement or action available to maintain safety.

**Flavor.** At the beginning of each entry, there is a small narrative section that can help inspire the scene. After reading the flavor text, the Keeper should describe the scene in their own words as appropriate to the encounter and the mood of your game.

Each entry may also include additional options other than those listed below, or it may omit ones that do not apply. Details on their use will be included with each specific description.

**Pressure.** Sometimes your players will suffer from analysis-paralysis. If they are intent on remaining locked up, refusing to move either forward into danger or around the obstacle, these ideas can help to get the story moving.

**If / Then.** Many scenes are dangerous to traverse. The notes here describe which specific actions could cause certain consequences. This can and should give your players pause as they weigh various actions and what that means for them moving forward. Do they run across a frozen lake or walk carefully? Both options will have merit based on the group and their mission.

**Even the Odds.** This is a simple way to randomly pick targets in a crowd. Each target rolls a die. An **even** number means that subject is not targeted, but an **odd** number means suffering the effects of the environment, be it falling through ice, tripping over roots or being smashed against rocks while being swept away by a raging river.

**Changes.** Even a blizzard can get boring after a while. This section is a prompt to wake up lethargic players. Use one or more of these events to jump start the encounter as things change... for better or worse.

**Fumblecrit.** During any extreme activity, whether it's combat or dealing with a natural hazard, some will fumble while others will enjoy a critical success. This table will list a few events that you can either roll for, or choose from, to add to the drama and energy of the scene.

## AVOIDING REPETITIVE CHECKS

In a survival game, the number of checks can become tedious and interrupt the flow of the story. If this happens, the Keeper can have players make bulk rolls. For example, if a character needs to make a check every hour over the course of twelve hours, simply roll them all at once and narrate the results.

## DEFINITIONS

### BONUS DICE

Having a **Bonus Die** means that you roll a second 10s die when you make your percentile roll. You then use the more favorable of the two rolls. For example, if you have a **Bonus Die** and roll a 10 and a 30, you use the 10. A character can have up to 2 **Bonus Dice** at a time. **Bonus Dice** and **Penalty Dice** cancel each other out.

### BLINDED

A **Blinded** character can't see and automatically fails any skill check that requires sight. Attack rolls against them have a **Bonus Die**, and the character's attack rolls have 2 **Penalty Dice**.

### DEAFENED

A **Deafened** creature can't hear and automatically fails any ability or skill check that requires hearing.

### DESPAIR

Enough time under extreme conditions can wear anyone down. After enduring extreme conditions (cold, heat, isolation, etc.) for 3 days, you must make a successful **Sanity** check (0/1). The character gains 1 **Penalty Die** after 6 days, and 2 after 9 days.

### DIFFICULTY LEVEL

For every skill or ability check, the Keeper decides which of the characters skills or abilities is relevant and the difficulty of the task, represented by a **Difficulty Level**. There are three levels of difficulty: *Normal*, *Hard* and *Extreme*.

A *Normal* difficulty means that the player must simply roll under their character's skill point or characteristic. A *Hard* difficulty means that they must roll under half of their skill point or characteristic. An *Extreme* difficulty means that they must roll under one-fifth of their skill point or characteristic.

For example, if a character has a Spot Hidden skill of 50, a roll of 38 would be a success, a roll of 24 would be a hard success, and a roll of 8 would be an extreme success.

### PENALTY DIE

Having a **Penalty Die** means that you roll a second 10s die when you make your percentile roll. You then use the less favorable of the two rolls. For example, if you have a **Penalty Die** and roll a 10 and a 30, you use the 30. A character can have up to 2 **Penalty Dice** at a time. **Penalty Dice** and **Bonus Dice** cancel each other out.

### EXHAUSTION

Some environmental hazards, such as starvation and the long-term effects of freezing or scorching temperatures, can lead to a special condition called *Exhaustion*.

**Exhaustion** is measured in six levels. An effect can give a character one or more levels of **Exhaustion**, as specified in the effect's description.

Level	Effect
1	Penalty Die on skill checks
2	Speed halved
3	Penalty Die on attack rolls and characteristic checks
4	All Strength checks require an Extreme success
5	Character is unable to walk and Strength checks automatically fail
6	Unconsciousness that only rest can rectify

A character suffers the effect of their current level of exhaustion as well as all lower levels. For example, an investigator suffering 2 levels of *Exhaustion* has their speed halved and has a *Penalty Die* on skill checks.

Finishing a good night's sleep reduces a character's *Exhaustion* level by 1, provided that they have also ingested some food and drink.

## HALLUCINATIONS

Suffering from hallucinations means having visions of things that are not there and an inability to differentiate between fantasy and reality. All mental ability checks have a *Penalty Die*.

## HYPERTHERMIA

This is a state where the body begins to overheat, and can cause headaches, hallucinations, and finally, death. The severity of the hyperthermia depends on whether or not the creature has adequate access to water.

## HYPOTHERMIA

This is a state of deep cold where the body begins to shut down, and the creature's core body temperature begins to drop.

When a character is exposed to extreme cold without protection, they must make a Constitution check every 30 minutes or become hypothermic. The *Difficulty Level* starts at *Normal*, increasing to *Hard* after an hour, and *Extreme* after 90 minutes. The character with hypothermia has 2 *Penalty Dice* on all Dexterity and Intelligence checks and suffer 2 levels of *Exhaustion*.

Every 30 minutes thereafter, they must make a Constitution check at an *Extreme Difficulty Level* or suffer another level of *Exhaustion*. This process continues until they either warm up or die.

## INCAPACITATED

An *Incapacitated* creature can't take actions.

## INVISIBLE

An *Invisible* creature is impossible to see due to darkness or some sort of strange eldritch magic. The creature's location may be discernible by any noise it makes, tracks it leaves, or the displacement of some smoke or vapor in the air. Attacks against the creature have 2 *Penalty Dice*, and the creature's attack rolls have a *Bonus Die*. Spending a round trying to perceive signs of the creature can allow a Spot Hidden or Listen check (depending on which is appropriate) to remove one *Penalty Die* from an attack roll next round.

## PAIN

There are four levels of pain that are considered beyond the normal pain that is regularly encountered by the characters. These include Major, Severe, Extreme, and Crippling.

**Major Pain.** This level of pain is experienced when a character endures serious injuries such as sprains, minor

burns, a broken nose, and so on. A character suffering major pain gains a level of *Exhaustion* until the pain is relieved; either through some sort of pain relieving medicine or healing.

**Severe Pain.** Characters experience severe pain when they suffer a broken leg, a 1st degree burn, a deep cut, and so on. The victim suffers a level of *Exhaustion* and is stunned while the pain remains.

**Extreme Pain.** This level of pain is experienced with 2nd degree burns, severed limbs, deliberately exacerbating existing wounds (such as sticking a finger into a stab wound), and so on. The victim gains two levels of *Exhaustion*, screams uncontrollably and is incapacitated.

**Crippling Pain.** This amount of pain is almost unbearable. Some causes include 3rd degree burns, being dissolved by acid, frostbite, and so on. Anyone unfortunate enough to experience this level of pain suffers three levels of *Exhaustion*, is incapacitated, and must make a *Hard Constitution* check or fall unconscious for 3d6 hours.

## PRONE

A *Prone* character's only movement option is to crawl, unless they stand up and thereby end the condition.

The character has a *Penalty Die* on attack rolls. An attack roll against the character has a *Bonus Die* if the attacker is within 5 feet of the character. Otherwise, the attack roll has a *Penalty Die*.

## RESTRAINED

A *Restrained* character's speed becomes 0, and they can't benefit from any bonus to their speed. Attack rolls against the character have a *Bonus Die*, and the character's attack rolls have a *Penalty Die*. The character has a *Penalty Die* on Dexterity checks.

## SANITY

Sanity is a measurement of the character's mental health and stability. Most characters start off reasonably sane, but as their Sanity points diminish, they become more and more insane, and can develop all sorts of mental problems as a result.

The average character's Sanity would be around 45 or 50 for an every day person, while a Sanity of 20 or less is approaching madness. If a character's Sanity reaches 0, they are completely insane, and are no longer under the control of the player. See *Keeper's Handbook* (p. 154) for more information.

## SCARRING

Some wounds are likely to leave permanent scars. These tend to be particularly deep wounds or burns, or any major wound that was not healed by unnatural means.

**Minor Scarring.** Characters with minor scarring that is visible will be memorable, and will have a *Penalty Die* if trying to blend into a crowd, go unnoticed, or disguise themselves in some non-magical way.

**Major Scarring.** These scars cause the same difficulties as minor scarring, while additionally making many social

interactions more difficult. The character with major scars will have a *Penalty Die* to any social-based skill check when the scars are visible and appearance is a factor (Keeper's discretion).

## STUNNED

A **Stunned** character is *Incapacitated* (see above), can't move, and can speak only falteringly. The character automatically fails Strength and Dexterity checks. Attack rolls against the character have a **Bonus Die**.

## UNCONSCIOUS

An unconscious creature is *Incapacitated* (see above), can't move or speak, and is unaware of its surroundings. The character drops whatever they are holding and falls prone. The character automatically fails Strength and Dexterity checks.

Attack rolls against the character have a *Bonus Die*. Any attack that hits the character is an *Extreme* success if the attacker is within 5 feet of the character.









## DESERT CONDITIONS

*The gray madman at the last roadhouse had poetically referred to this as the "apotheosis of all deserts," but we simply call it Hell. The sterile, bone white hardpan extends to the horizon in all directions, our boots sending up small clouds of salt dust with each step.*

*After eight days of travel, we can now make out the vague outline of mountains sketched roughly on the horizon. You would think that this would be a relief, but the awareness of the incomprehensible distance that we have yet to travel as been a hard blow to our spirits.*

*Kane took a measure of the water this morning, and if we manage to keep up our current pace, it should last us until we reach the foothills in another week. As the priest keeps saying, there will be water if god wills it.*

No matter where one travels within a particular environ, there will be aspects that are common throughout the entire region. The following section outlines conditions that are likely to effect the characters no matter where they go.

### REGIONAL PRESSURES

A desert is best defined as a region of land where there is very little rainfall. Many mistakenly think that deserts are always hot, but nothing could be further from the truth. Of course there are indeed stereotypical hot deserts covered in vast shifting sand drifts, other deserts are flat salt plains, rocky plateaus, and even frozen tundras.

Between the extreme variations in temperature and the almost complete absence of drinkable water, even the most experienced traveler will only cross them when there is great need or no other choice.

*Note: This supplement will primarily deal with hot deserts, since arctic and high altitude deserts are covered in other supplements.*

### REGIONAL CONDITIONS

Remember to be consistent and adjudicate your gaming table when situations arrive that hinder the party. Listed below are some possible hazards and minor setbacks that a desert region can offer.

Deserts generally vacillate between extreme heat during the day and freezing cold at night, with each presenting its own unique challenges to the anyone unfortunate enough to find themselves in one.

**Heat.** The desert sun is brutal and unforgiving, with the temperatures during the day reaching as much as 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher. Under these conditions, a character can easily become *Hyperthermic*. This can lead to Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke.

**Heat Exhaustion** – Anyone exposed to the heat for two hours, even with adequate water, must succeed on a Constitution check or gain 1 level of *Exhaustion*. After 4 hours, it becomes a *Hard* Constitution check, and after six hours, they must get an *Extreme* success to avoid suffering more *Exhaustion*.

Those who are carrying a heavy load or those wearing heavy, restrictive clothing have a *Penalty Die* on their checks.

Anyone that lives in a desert climate is adapted to this sort of heat and so will have a *Bonus Die* on their check.

**Heat Stroke** – This condition results from prolonged, unprotected exposure to the desert sun and dehydration. This effects the body's ability to regulate its temperature, causing a creature's core body temperature to increase to dangerous levels. The symptoms include a throbbing headache, dizziness, lack of sweat, muscle weakness or cramps, nausea and vomiting, rapid heartbeat, and rapid, shallow breathing.

As the heat stroke worsens, there are behavioral changes such as confusion, disorientation, or staggering followed in the end by seizures, unconsciousness and death.

Once a character has gone without water for at least 12 hours and is exposed to the desert heat for more than an hour, they are at risk of heat stroke. Every hour in the sun, they must make a Constitution check or lose 5 points from Strength, Dexterity or Intelligence (decide randomly). The difficulty increases to *Hard* by the third hour and *Extreme* by the sixth.

When their Strength reaches 20, their movement is reduced to 0. When their Dexterity reaches 20, they begin to fumble objects, stagger and become incapable of performing the most basic tasks. When their Intelligence reaches 20, they become confused, disoriented, and begin hallucinating.

When any of the ability scores drops below 15, the character falls unconscious. Without treatment, they will begin to have seizures 30 minutes later, and an hour after that, they will slip into a coma. Once this has happened, they will never be the same if they manage to recover. If left untreated, the character will die 3 hours later.

Heat stroke can be avoided by remaining protected against the sun and heat as much as possible and staying hydrated.

At any point prior to slipping into a coma, the character can recover by getting out of the heat and rehydrating. Once they are in a coma however, the situation become rather grim. Getting them out of the heat and rehydrating them will allow them to come out of the coma in 3d6 days. When they awake however, their Intelligence will be permanently reduced from its previous maximum by 1d4 x 5 points. Their Strength and Dexterity will return to normal.

Those in heavy, restrictive clothing have a *Penalty Die* on their checks. Anyone who is adapted to this sort of heat will have a *Bonus Die* on their checks.

**High Sun** – This is the 4 hour time period during the day when the sun is at its highest point in the sky, and the effects of the heat are compounded. During this time, everyone will have 2 *Penalty Dice* on their checks.

**Hot Metal** – Wearing metal objects like watches or jewelry in direct sunlight can cause minor burning. These things will become extremely uncomfortable very quickly unless the person is unconscious. If someone is unconscious in the sun while wearing metal, they will take a hit point of damage on top of any other damage they make be taking.

**Limited Resources.** Perhaps more than any other environ, deserts lack the most basic resources necessary for life. This means that travelers must plan to bring whatever they need with them, and ration it appropriately.

**Food & Water** – A character needs 2 gallons of water and 1 pound of food per day, though they can make their supplies last longer by rationing. Characters who don't eat or drink begin to dehydrate and starve.

Dehydration will effect the characters first. Those who drink only half of the amount of water required must succeed on a Constitution check or suffer 1 level of *Exhaustion* at the end of the day. A character with any desert experience can go without water for a number of days equal to 10% of their Constitution score before suffering these effects.

Without any water, the character will dehydrate very quickly, suffering 2 levels of *Exhaustion* per day.

*Exhaustion* caused by lack of water can't be removed until the character rehydrates.

Every 2 days without food causes the character to lose 5 points of Strength, while eating a half ration can reduce this to 5 points every 6 days.

Once the food is gone, the character can last for a number of days equal to 20% of their Constitution score before serious starvation sets in.

Once the character begins to starve, they automatically lose 5 Strength points at the end of each day. A day of normal eating restores their Strength and resets the number of days without food to zero.

**Foraging** – Characters can search for food and water when traveling at a normal or slow pace. The foraging character makes a *Hard* Survival or Natural World check to determine if they find anything. In rare instances, the difficulty may be lower in scrub lands or in an oasis, at the Keeper's discretion.

Multiple characters can forage together, making separate checks. A failed roll finds nothing, while a critical failure finds the searcher in trouble. Check the *Fumblecrit* table to find what event takes place, or generate an encounter.

A success finds the equivalent of ½ ration of food, while a *Hard* success finds 1 ration of food, and an *Extreme* success finds 1 ½ rations worth.

Another forage roll is required to find water. Success means that they find ¼ gallon of water and a *Hard* success means finding a gallon of water. An *Extreme* success means that they find a source sufficient to rehydrate the entire group and replenish their stores, assuming they have the containers to carry it.

**Navigation.** Finding a path during the night and day only requires a Survival check, when appropriate. The trouble begins when trying to navigate by landmarks and features. After the landscape shifts due to sandstorms, earthquakes, dust devils or other phenomena, the difficulty increases to *Hard*. If the party has a map, the roll is made with a *Bonus Die*.

**Fauna.** It would be impossible to list every known creature in the desert, but rest assured that most deserts are far from lifeless, and some even have apex predators that can pose a threat to the characters.

**Nighttime Cold.** Once the sun has set in the desert, the temperature drops alarmingly fast. It can go from 100 degrees Fahrenheit to below freezing in just a few hours.

Without proper shelter or a heat source, resting can be close to impossible and hypothermia is a very real danger.

**Sun Blindness.** In addition to the obvious effects of the sun's heat, its brightness has its own set of dangers.

After 4 hours without some sort of eye protection, a creature who is not accustomed to the sun must make a Constitution check or suffer reduced vision, giving them a *Penalty Die* on all checks that require their eyes. This penalty goes away after an hour or more of rest, assuming that they are able to shade their eyes from the light in some way.

Protective eyewear or a hat that provides eye shade is sufficient to avoid this condition.

**Sun Burn.** To those who are not accustomed to the sun, constant exposure can lead to uncomfortable and even painful burns on exposed areas of the skin. Unprotected skin will begin to burn after 4 hour of exposure, inflicting 1 hit point of heat damage. After 8 hours of exposure, the skin will begin to blister, inflicting an additional 2 hit points of heat damage.

Sunburn can be avoided by covering the body in light, loose-fitting clothes and/or wearing sufficient sunblock.

### ABILITY SCORE LOSS

Unless otherwise stated, any ability score points that are lost as a result of environmental conditions are restored at a rate of 5 points per hour once those conditions have been rectified.

For example, if one is suffering from the cold, then time spend in a warm, dry place will allow the person to recover.

### FUMBLECRIT

- 1 While foraging for food and/or water, the subject falls into a patch of spiky plants. The victim is impaled by tiny needles, piercing even the tiniest opening to hit flesh. The character must remove the needles, taking 1d4 hours to do so or suffer a *Penalty Die* until they are all gone. Medicine or Survival knowledge will reduce the time by half.
- 2 The forager stumbles and twists an ankle. Movement is reduced to half until healed or after a long rest.
- 3 Food and/or water is found, but it is poisonous and causes stomach pains. Anyone who ate or drank this meal will be nauseous for 12 hours. If they do not take 8 hours of rest, they must *Even the Odds* each time they attempt any physical activity. An odd result means that they vomit, leaving them Stunned for 2 rounds. A successful Medicine skill check using a First Aid Kit can reduce the time of the effects by half. If a character is vomiting, their water requirements are doubled for that day.
- 4 After eating and/or drinking, body waste, including gas, has a noticeable scent. This allows predators to track the character with a *Bonus Die* from the last known location.



# Desert Hazards



## FLASH FLOOD

*As we neared the far side of the desert, we descended into an ancient dry river bed that had not seen water in who knows how long. Our guide insisted that we might find water down here to replenish our supply.*

*There is a saying that says "be careful what you wish for" and in this case it was all too true. We had started rationing our water two days ago, and since then, we were all praying to our various deities and spirits for whatever help they might see fit to provide.*

*The guide looked nervously towards the nearby mountains as we heard thunder from the clouds in the distance. "Oh shit!" He shouted suddenly. "Get to the top!"*

*We all began to scramble towards the upper rim of the riverbed, even as we heard a strange rumbling from the west that was not wind or thunder. Just as we reached the upper bank, we saw the wall of brown water roaring through the riverbed, picking up rocks and boulders as it came.*

*Within minutes, what had been a parched canyon had become a raging torrent of muddy water.*

## PRESSURE

The need for water and shade in the desert is a powerful one, and the comparatively cool nooks within a dry riverbeds can be very appealing to the weary traveler.

Flash floods are caused by heavy rains, even from storms that are happening miles away, because the desert ground doesn't soak up water quickly, and so almost all of that water is channeled into the low lands. This can produce flood conditions very quickly and without warning, filling dry riverbeds, ditches and lake beds. The water can be strong and violent, creating a walls of water up to 30 feet high. Remarkably, more people drown in the desert than die of thirst.

## IF / THEN

If the characters are in a dry riverbed, ditch, canyon or dry lake when a flash flood is about to hit, they can make a *Hard Spot* Hidden check early on to notice the storm clouds in the distance. Anyone familiar with the desert will understand the danger, but everyone else will have to make a *Survival* or *Natural World* check to interpret the signs. If they are successful, they can easily get to high ground in time.

As the flood is about to hit, they can make a Listen check to hear the flood coming. If they succeed on this check, they will have to make a Strength check to get to high ground in time.

The Keeper can adjust the difficulty based on the specific topography of the setting. For example, if the group is in the middle of a vast dry lake, then it may take longer to get to safety, or they may decide to take other actions.

Any characters hit by the flash flood must make a Dexterity check or get pulled beneath the water and are swept away (see *Even the Odds* for details). If they succeed, they manage to stay on top of the water. Swimming along with the current, they manage to avoid drowning for the time being.

## EVEN THE ODDS

Each round in the water requires constantly fighting the current, or else get pulled underwater and get carried away by the force of the muddy waters.

**Chaotic Waters.** Due to the mud, sand and other debris swept downstream by the flood waters, it is nearly impossible to see while underwater. Between that and the constant battering by the current, it can be difficult to determine which way is up. *Even the Odds* to determine if the character knows which end is up while beneath the flood waters, with an even roll meaning success.

**Drowning.** While swimming, the character's movement is halved. At the Keeper's option, gaining any distance in the flood waters might require a successful Strength check to fight against the current.

A character can hold their breath for a minute plus a number of seconds equal to their Constitution score. For example, if the character's Constitution is 60, they can hold their breath for two minutes.

When a character runs out of breath or takes water into their lungs, they fall unconscious, and can't regain consciousness until they can breathe again. They can survive underwater for a number of rounds equal to 10% of their Constitution score, after which they must be revived or remain dead.

Reviving a drowned character must be attempted within the first three minutes, and requires a total of six successful First Aid checks or three Medicine checks. Alternately, the drowned character can spend 30 Luck points to spontaneously revive themselves, if they have the points available.

The Keeper may also want to consider the additional effects of the force of the water. A character who swims or gets carried away will move 2d4 x 10 feet downstream, in addition to moving in their desired direction.

Anyone suffering a physical injury must make a Constitution check or lose their breath and begin drowning as above.

**Debris.** In addition to the dangers of drowning, flash floods often carry debris that was picked up along the way.

This can include rocks, branches and even the carcasses of dead animals that were killed by the flood upstream.

*Even the Odds* to see if they have a chance of getting bludgeoned by debris. They will need to make a Dexterity check (the check will be *Hard* if they are below the surface) to determine if they are struck. If they fail, they suffer 1d4 hit points of damage.

If the water is particularly strewn with debris, the Keeper can decide than anyone in the water automatically takes 1 hit point of damage per minute.

## FUMBLECRITS

- 1 Something particularly large has been swept downstream by the flood, like a cart, tumbling boulder, or small structure. The victim gets hit by the object, suffering 1d6 hit points of bludgeoning damage. They must also make a *Hard* Dexterity check or become trapped underwater beneath it. It will require a *Hard* Strength check to free themselves or they begin to drown.
- 2 Just when you thought you were safe, the water erodes the ground beneath the character, sending them sprawling into the flood waters below. They can make a Dexterity check to avoid an injury. If they fail, they suffer 1d3 points of bludgeoning damage, and of course find themselves swept away by the flood.
- 3 The water sweeps the character towards a rather significant drop (2d4 x 10 feet). Unless the character can stop their movement or get out of the water, they will plunge over the edge and suffer 2d4 hit points of bludgeoning damage.
- 4 The victim is knocked unconscious by a stray branch that was caught up in the torrent. Fortunately, their unconscious form ends up on top of the log, and so they are in no immediate danger of drowning. Unfortunately, they are being carried helplessly down stream and could end up miles away. Hopefully the group can find them.



## SALT FLATS

*Yesterday we smelled what we thought was the sea, and were encouraged that we might be reaching the far side of the desert. However, when we breached the last dune of the seemingly endless expanse of shifting sand, we were met by a vast plain of white that stretched before us in all directions. What we first irrationally took to be snow, turned out to be pure salt.*

*We have now walked many miles across this barren crust and our boots are covered in fine white powder kicked up from the ground. I hadn't thought it possible to dehydrate more, but the salt is pulling the moisture from our very pores.*

*Our guide has handed out bags of grease that he recommends we put on our exposed skin to protect against the savage dryness that threatens to turn our flesh into jerky.*

### PRESSURE

Walking across a salt flat is one of the most grueling journeys that a traveler can experience. The blistering sun reflects off the pure white surface to blind characters and reflect even more of the sun's heat.

If a group finds themselves in such an environment, there is only one choice; get out of it as quickly as possible.

### IF / THEN

The only thing easy about traveling across a salt flat is that it's easy walking. There are no significant features, flora or fauna to provide landmarks or resources. About the only thing that the party will not run short of is salt.

The general conditions of the salt flat provide the greatest threat to the characters.

**Deterioration of Gear.** The salt also has an adverse effect on leather and metals. Each day spent on the salt flats will cause any items made from metal or leather to deteriorate unless they are somehow protected or maintained. Metal can be wrapped in oiled cloth or heavily greased. Leather can be kept oiled as well, though it will require daily maintenance.

Maintaining gear to prevent deterioration requires at least 1 hour and 3 ounces of oil per day.

Unprotected or unmaintained gear will begin to suffer from the effects of the salt. Boots are particularly vulnerable. After 1 day of walking on a salt flat will cause leather boots to begin to crack and weaken. After 4 days, they will begin to weaken and fall apart, and by the 5th day will be useless.

Weapons will begin to lose their effectiveness after 2 days as they begin to corrode. Every 2 days, metal blades will

become dull, inflicting only half damage. The blades can be restored, though this will require 2 hours of maintenance per day to bring them back to their original quality. Firearms will also show signs of corrosion, increasing their chance of malfunction by 5% each day in this environ. The penalty can be removed after 1 hour of maintenance.

**Mirages.** On these flat, white plains, mirages are very common. In most cases they appear to be lakes of water, but can look like mountains, terrain features or even distant travelers. If a character is already suffering from dehydration, the mirages can induce full blown hallucinations.

Every hour of traveling, the characters must make a Spot Hidden check to recognize a mirage for what it is. If they are familiar with the desert or have been fooled by mirages before, they have a *Bonus Die* on their check. If they are dehydrated, they make the check with a *Penalty Die*. The Keeper can also *Even the Odds* to see if the mirage manifests as a hallucination. The form of the vision is up to the player and Keeper, but it is most likely to be influenced by what the character hopes to see more than anything. In many cases it would be an oasis, but it could be a rescue plane, a building, or even dead loved ones.

**Severe Dehydration** – These plains of salt compound the effects of dehydration. All checks related to dehydration are made with a *Penalty Die*.

**Sun Glare.** The white salt reflects much more of the sun than dirt or sand. This glare can cause temporary blindness without some sort of eye protection.

After traveling on the salt flat for 1 day without eye protection, the character makes all visual checks with a *Penalty Die*. After 5 consecutive days without eye protection, the character's vision becomes blurry, and their vision is reduced to 20 feet.

If they are foolish enough to go without eye protection for 10 consecutive days, their vision becomes permanently impaired, reducing their effective vision range to 10 feet for larger objects, 5 feet to identify faces, and 6 inches to read.

## CHANGES

The deceptively featureless landscape of the salt flats can conceal hidden dangers, beyond those obvious in such a caustic environment.

**Quagmire.** Some salt flats conceal pockets of mud beneath the surface. These can be shallow or deep enough to swallow a caravan wagon.

The mud beneath the surface is most often a slurry of dirt, salt and other minerals. In rare cases, this yellowish slurry can be extremely caustic, eating through leather boots in a matter of minutes.

A salt pan quagmire is almost impossible to spot ahead of time, unless someone has broken through recently. When approaching a quagmire, the characters can make a *Hard Spot Hidden* check to recognize the danger. Someone familiar with salt flats makes this check with a *Bonus Die*.

The average quagmire is 1d10 feet deep. When first stepping onto the treacherous ground, there will be an audible cracking that will give the character a Dexterity check to avoid dropping through. If the mud is 1-2 feet deep, the character falls prone and is likely covered with yellow or white sludge. If the mud is 3-5 feet, they are likely to become stuck, requiring a Strength check to free themselves or have someone pull them out. Any deeper than that, and the character will sink below the surface.

If another character moves within 5 feet to assist, they must make a Dexterity check to avoid falling in themselves.

It is not possible to swim in quagmire mud, but if the character remains calm and doesn't struggle, they may be able to keep their head above the surface until rescued. Obviously the Keeper will have to adjust this information based on characters of different heights.

The shallower quagmires can be a simple annoyance, but the deeper ones can prove lethal. A character can hold their breath for a number of seconds equal to twice their Constitution score.

When a character runs out of breath or takes mud into their lungs, they can survive for a number of rounds equal to 10% of their Constitution score. At the start of their next turn, they fall unconscious and begin dying. They cannot regain consciousness until they can breathe again.

Roughly 1 in 20 quagmires will be extremely caustic. If this is the case, anyone in the mud will begin to lose 1d4 hit points per round from acid damage.

Any clothing in the caustic mud will be eaten away. Leather items will become useless after 4 rounds and metal items after 10 rounds.

Once extracted from the mud, it will continue to burn until washed off, requiring the use of at least half a gallon of precious water.

Any beasts of burden that fall through are likely to be hobbled by the sudden drop, even in a shallow quagmire, particularly if they are loaded down with gear. If they fall into a deep quagmire, there will be little hope of rescuing the poor beast without a significant expenditure of energy and/or resources.

The Keeper should note that many items made of glass, precious metals or gems may be unaffected by the caustic mud, and so there may be bits of treasure to be found in these quagmires. Finding remnants of previous victims can not only add depth to the history of the environ, but might encourage them to take risks by delving into these deadly traps. If they do so, some sort of reward is recommended.



## SAND

*I stopped counting at 368. Each time I struggled up a dune and stood upon the crest, all I could see was more of the same; an endless expanse of pale sand. As the winds shifted, so too did the sands, making navigation all but impossible.*

### PRESSURE

Crossing the desert is a feat that will require a monumental amount of courage and expertise. Give your players a goal, both personal and epic, that will get them moving. Adventures that involve a lost city, lost treasure, exacting revenge, or stopping a great evil are as big and bold as the desert they intend to cross. Allow them to make assumptions that push the adventure forward.

### IF / THEN

Crossing an expanse of sand is extremely difficult. Players must be reminded that, without full attention, climbing a sand hill, dune or rampart will likely result in sliding, rolling or falling to the bottom of the sand dune.

Actions which require movement, such as a charging, tackling or grappling, could have both attacker and defender tumbling down a slope of gritty, blinding sand.

**Sand Dunes** – Climbing a dune requires the use of hands and feet. A creature's speed is reduced to half of their normal movement rate. A character that is standing still must make a Dexterity check to avoid sliding down the hill 10 to 40 feet. Combat is still possible, but not without at least one hand free to remain stable on the sand dune.

**Sand Fields** – This is an area that is primarily flat. The soft sand allows the feet to sink into it several inches with each step. Walking is slow, reducing movement to a quarter the normal rate. Most likely, the area surrounding the fields will have hills, dunes and ramparts, blocking a substantive view

from a distance. These valleys or depressions are ideal for large caravans and nomadic tribal outposts.

**Sand Hills** – A hill has a mild grade, slowing movement by half. Scaling a hill may not require the use of hands or stabilizing item, such as a staff, but care must be taken to assure safety. If any physical activity is done on the hill beyond the climb (including combat), the character must make a Dexterity check to avoid sliding down the hill 10 feet.

### EVEN THE ODDS

Each round anyone continues to ascend a hill or dune, there is a chance they will become *Restrained*. A sand slide will pour downhill, trapping them in knee to waist-deep sand. It only requires a normal ten seconds or so to extricate one's self from the sand, but this will make them vulnerable during that time. Anyone who slides down hill must make an *Even the Odds* roll or become *Restrained* until freed.

If someone above a target, they can create a sand slide effect on purpose. An Intelligence check allows them to disturb the sand enough to get it to fall, affecting up to 1d4 targets below.

### FUMBLECRIT

- 1 The victim is covered in sand and is *Restrained* and begins to *Suffocate*.
- 2 The subject tumbles head over heels, becoming disoriented and is *Stunned* for 1d4 rounds.
- 3 The victim is *Blinded* for 1d4 rounds as sand and debris enter their mouth, nose, eyes and ears.
- 4 The target tumbles downhill and is *Stunned* for 1 round while collecting themselves.
- 5 The victim drops whatever is in hand while sliding down hill and lands *Prone*.
- 6 The victim slides to the very bottom of the hill, no matter how far down it is.





## SANDSTORM

*We tried to last through the storm in our tents, but the winds made quick work out of our feeble cloth and sticks. The sand moved with such force it abraded our skin. Walking forward into the storm was like pushing a stubborn ox. One of our group was snatched into the dark boiling mass above us, never to be seen again. We tied ourselves together and marched towards life. We struggled towards the safety of a rocky outcrop hundreds of yards away. A small man was resting at the base of our salvation. His toothless smile and outstretched hand told us everything we needed to know. We needed a guide and would pay any price he asked.*

### PRESSURE

The dark boiling mass of the sandstorm can be seen as a wall of clouds and death stretching across the horizon. Making towards shelter or creating one from current supplies is a must. Those foolhardy enough to wage war or conflict in such weather are more suicidal than brave. Please reinforce how lethal a sandstorm can be.

### IF / THEN

Offer a chance for the party to find shelter or establish a safe zone. Unless the players are totally engrossed in other activities, they should recognize the danger as the sandstorm splits the sky as a wall of darkness. Finding shelter requires a *Hard Survival* or *Spot Hidden* check. The distance to get to shelter should be adjudicated using the Rule of Three. A lethal setting would only offer one chance to make it, while a more cinematic feel would allow three chances. Anyone with desert survival experience has a *Bonus Die* on the roll.

**Stage 1** – The winds stir up dust and sand, limiting visibility and sound to 10 feet. Any ranged attacks are halved and have a *Penalty Die* to hit. Movement faster than half speed may cause one to trip or stumble. If moving faster than half speed, make a successful *Dexterity* check) or fall prone. If heading for shelter, this could cause a very dangerous delay.

**Stage 2** – As above, but vision is reduced to zero! Touch, memory, guide ropes, or other methods beyond sight, are the only ways to keep track of a path or group members. Stumbling and falling is probable, and using anything light or fragile is impossible. Reading a compass or map is futile, and a successful *Luck* roll is required to avoid having the item snatched away by the winds, never to be seen again.

Every 10 minutes in the storm, a character must make a *Strength* or *Dexterity* check. A successful roll means the character stays on their feet and holds on to whatever they are carrying. A failed roll means that they fall down and get pushed 10 to 40 feet in the direction of the wind. Anything light they are holding is blown away. This may mean one step forward and two steps back.

If a character is crawling, they have a *Bonus Die* on their check, but their movement is slowed to half.

**Stage 3** – The sandstorm is so powerful that it can lift mounts, roll over cars, and hurl characters or anything else not tied down securely. Every item up to 250 pounds is blown hundreds of feet in the direction of the wind, inflicting severe damage to it (Keeper's discretion). This is enough to break all but the strongest objects.

Other objects up to 2000 pounds have a 1 in 6 chance of being pushed by the storm up to 100 feet depending on its size and shape (Keeper's discretion).

Characters can use any appropriate ability and skill to resist being blown away if it makes sense. Even if measures are taken to prevent being blown away, those that fail their check will still be lifted off their feet. For example, if the characters are lashed together, one of them can still be pulled into the air and held to the rest by only the rope.

If a character is picked up and thrown by the wind, death is nearly certain. They will be blown 20 to 200 feet (2d10 x 10 feet), suffering 1 hit point of bludgeoning damage for each 10 feet launched. Characters can make a *Hard* Dexterity check to halve the damage. Of course the Keeper should use their discretion if the players come up with other options to resist the wind.

Finding any objects (or unconscious people) in the wake of the storm requires a *Hard* Spot Hidden check. This can be rerolled each hour after the sandstorm has passed. Remember that this will affect unprotected mounts, beasts of burden and pets as well.

Under these conditions, the Keeper will have to decide if a shelter is solid enough to withstand the storm or resist flying debris. Depending on its construction, the shelter itself might take severe damage or even be destroyed completely.

## EVEN THE ODDS

Wind gusts, flying objects, tripping hazards and blinding conditions can randomly effect anyone under the sandstorm's merciless effects.

## CHANGES

Using the above stages can increase the tension of the environment and ramp up any conflicts in the desert storm. The Keeper should decide when additional difficulty is desired. If there is a need for a random time table, roll a d10 to gauge the number of minutes before the storm winds will increase to the next Stage. For example, rolling a 3 would mean the storm will increase to the next Stage in 3 minutes.

**Dust Devils!** This is a smaller and localized form of the sandstorm. Formed from hot air currents, wind and pressure, a dust devil is a relatively small tornado of sand and hot air. Use the above stages to detail the strength of the twister, but

limit its size. They can be as small as 10 feet across to as large as 200 feet (1d20 x 10 feet) moving 10 feet to 40 feet per round in more or less a straight line.

**Dust Clouds!** This is a minor wind that stirs up vast amounts of tiny particles. The dust cloud remains at Stage 1 but lasts all day, obscuring paths and trails. Opponents could take advantage of the cover and disappear before the dust cloud ends.

## FUMBLECRITS


- 1 The victim accidentally sucks down a lung full of dust and sand and begins suffocating. The victim can survive for a number of rounds equal to their Constitution score divided by 10. At the start of their next turn, they fall unconscious and begin dying. If the victim completely stops and begins clearing their lungs, they can catch a breath, but this will leave them Incapacitated while coughing up sand and dust.
- 2 The victim is Blinded by dust and sand for 1d4 rounds or until their eyes are cleared by water or a cloth using an action to do so.
- 3 The storm winds yank an object out of a character's hand. It falls to the ground and is immediately covered by layers of sand. They must then make a Spot Hidden check to find the object. This search takes a full round.
- 4 The victim falls prone. A full round must be spent to stand up and gather one's self, or else suffer a *Penalty Die* on any physical activities for 1 round.

### *An excerpt from the Journal of Brother Leeds*

*It has been several days since the sandstorm and we have yet to find half of our gear. We managed to get our group and most of the beasts into the tent before the worst of the storm hit, but one mule is dead.*

*By the greatest stroke of luck the water was not lost, but our food situation is looking rather grim. Well, as my grandmother used to say, 'waste not, want not.' I hope no one has a problem with mule stew for a while.*





## SINKHOLES & SAND RIVERS

---

*Some may dismiss what I write as heat induced madness, but I swear on my life that today we crossed something that could only be described as a river of sand. It flowed with a force to match any river of water that I have ever seen.*

*Our guide Iman tried to explain these dangers, though we were skeptical, thinking them old tavern tales. We changed our minds quickly however when we came to a flat expanse of smooth sand. Iman wordlessly threw a large rock into a featureless plain. The stone was instantly swallowed up, followed by an area the size of a small ship. A giant sinkhole had opened up beneath plain, and the sand was simply funneled into it, leaving a deep depression in the formerly featureless landscape.*

*Iman turned gravely and said, "In three or four days the winds will fill it, and there will be no trace. The sand river we crossed was caused by the same process. Mark this warning well, my friends."*

### PRESSURE

Going around these hazards would cost valuable time, energy and resources. With careful progression, the party can minimize or even avoid their effects. Attacks by enemies or predators will make this trek doubly dangerous, so pacing and marching speed will be vitally important.

### IF / THEN

Any travel or movement faster than half speed means rolling all Spot Hidden and Dexterity check attempts with a *Penalty Die*. Remember that slow and steady wins the race when it comes to sinkholes and sand rivers.

**Sinkholes** – These are caused by the erosion of bedrock far below the surface. It usually takes place over a long period of time, leaving a thin crust beneath the sand. This crust can be fairly solid, but more often than not, they are rather brittle, requiring only the smallest weight to cause them to fail. When this happens, the sand pours down into the depths of the earth like the inside of an hourglass.

These hazards are difficult, but not impossible to spot. When passing through an area that is prone to sinkholes, the characters can make Spot Hidden checks every hour to notice potential sinkholes.

If the characters decide to cross the sinkhole, they will likely want to take things slow, and spread themselves out so as not to put too much pressure in one area. Each character must make a Dexterity check to avoid triggering the sinkhole.

If a sinkhole is triggered, any creature within 10 to 100 feet (1d10 x 10 feet) will have 1 round to act before the sand begins to suck them down. After that, they will need to make Strength check to resist being pulled down. Each fail means that the sinkhole has pulled them down another 5 feet as the sand slowly funnels into the ground. A success moves them 5 feet closer to the upper edge of the funneling sand.

If they are tethered by a rope to someone outside the sinkhole, they can make their checks with a *Bonus Die*. If they were aware of the sinkhole beforehand, they make their first check with a *Bonus Die*.

Once a character has failed 4 times (meaning that they are now 20 feet down the slope of the sinkhole), they are covered with sand. They now take 1d4 hit points damage per round as they are crushed and begin suffocating. Anyone stuck in the sand is unable to move.

**Sand River.** Caused by the same phenomenon as sinkholes, the sand river occurs when a large sinkhole opens up and begins pulling sand from more distant areas. The river follows the topography beneath the sand and can run for days and cross many miles depending on the scale of the sinkhole event.

A sand river can be anywhere from 10 feet to 300 feet wide, and move between 10 and 40 miles per hour (1d4 x 10 mph), and as such, are easier to spot due to their movement, though an unwitting party can still stumble into them if they are not paying close attention.

When approaching a sand river, the characters can make a Spot Hidden check to notice it. The Keeper can add *Bonus* or *Penalty Dice* at their discretion based on the movement of the characters, the surrounding terrain and the speed of the river.

Crossing a sand river can be even more hazardous than a river of water due to the density of the sand. To move across requires a Strength check each round to resist the current. A successful roll means moving 10 feet across and 5 feet down stream. A failure means moving only down stream 20 feet. Two failures in a row means getting pulled under by the current. They now take 1 hit point of damage per round as they are crushed and begin suffocating until they make a successful Strength check. Anyone stuck in the sand is unable to perform any actions except trying to get out.

If riding an animal or driving a vehicle, use the appropriate skill to guide it across the river safely. If the check is successful, then no roll is necessary for the character on the beast or in the vehicle. A pack animal can be lead across using the beast's Strength score.

Depending on where they encounter the sand river, it is possible that they could be swept into the sinkhole that created it. The Keeper will have to determine if that is the case and what effect it will have on the situation.

Anyone who is heavily encumbered will make their checks to resist the current with a *Penalty Die*.

## FUMBLECRITS

- 1 The victim stumbles backwards, falling headfirst into the sand, leaving them disoriented so they cannot determine which way is up. *Even the Odds* to determine if they move out of the hazard or deeper in.
- 2 The victim starts to fall gracelessly, and they have only an instant to choose whether or not to grab onto the piece of gear that just fell off their person, or stop themselves from falling.
- 3 Sand is cast into the character's eyes, causing minor damage. They are now effectively blind until their eyes are rinsed out with clean water and the eyes have time to heal. This can be done with a First Aid Kit and a successful First Aid check.

- 4 The character's ankle is badly twisted, leaving them a bit lame in one leg. This reduces their movement rate by half until they have had a few hours rest and a successful First Aid check.

## ***A letter from Prof. Hale to the wife of William Penrose***

*Dear Lady Penrose,*

*It is with the greatest sorrow that I must inform you of the untimely death of your husband, William. The circumstances of his demise are unpleasant, but since you were aware of the potential dangers, I feel that it would be a disservice to Will's memory to tell you anything less than the whole truth.*

*We had set out into the desert in search of an ancient temple dedicated to a deity simply known as The Blind God. Historical documents indicated that a vast library might be found there.*

*The desert turned out to be much more formidable than we had expected. A vast ocean of shifting sand stretching to the horizon in all directions without so much as a rock or clump of scrub grass to be seen.*

*Our party consisted of twelve seasoned explorers and six mules loaded down with enough supplies for two weeks. For the first few days things went as well as could be expected considering the brutal conditions.*

*On the fourth day however, one of the mules let out a terrible cry as it fell sideways. To our utter horror, it was sucked beneath the sand by a great funnel that just seemed to open up beneath the poor beast. We all watched helplessly as half of our water began to slip from sight. All except for William who lunged forward, grabbing the mule's tether. As the sinkhole began to suck them both down, the rest of us desperately tried to save Will, but he kept refusing our hands, and instead kept passing us more of the precious canteens.*

*The mule must have fallen through into some vast chamber beneath because as William passed the last of the water, he was jerked from my grasp. He disappeared beneath the sand, and we saw him no more.*

*I know it is little comfort to you in this difficult time, but you should know that he saved all of our lives that day, for we surely would have been dessicated by that desert without his sacrifice.*



## WASTELANDS

*We emerged from the foothills a few hours ago, and have entered what must be the wasteland that we had been warned about. I must admit that doesn't look nearly as inhospitable as travelers seemed to suggest, though if I have learned anything in my travels, it is that looks can be deceiving.*

*Although clearly a very arid land, it is not nearly as featureless as the salt flat we encountered in our previous expedition. There are strange rock formations with many layers of different hues and textures. There are also a plethora of strange plants that our guide has warned us to avoid. Now I can see why.*

*Every plant in these lands seems intent on defending itself with some sort of spine, barb or razor-sharp edge. Beyond the deadly flora, we are told to be on guard against the many venomous insects and other creatures that call these dry lands home.*

### PRESSURE

In addition to the normal pressures of getting through a desert as quickly as possible, the wastelands have a great abundance of venomous creatures that can make resting at night nearly impossible.

Due to the wide variety of rock formations, ravines, canyons and natural strongholds, these lands are popular with those who are fleeing the law and see shelter where no one in their right mind would follow. Maybe the characters are fleeing capture, or perhaps they are the pursuers who must catch up to their quarry at all costs.

### IF / THEN

The wastelands are much more dangerous than they might first appear, and it can be easy for a traveler to become complacent enough to make a mistake.

**Falling Rocks.** Whenever walking near a cliff, beneath an overhang, or through some other rock formation, there is a chance that some of the stone will come loose and drop down on the unsuspecting characters.

If they are not actively avoiding these circumstances, there is a 1 in 6 chance each hour that nearby rocks will break loose and fall near the group. This increases to 2 in 6 if the characters are making a lot of noise, 3 in 6 if engaged in hand-to-hand combat, and 4 in 6 if someone discharges a firearm or explosive.

If the characters are actively watching for such dangers, then they can easily avoid falling rocks, though it will slow their movement by 10% or so (Keeper's discretion).

If a rock falls near the characters, have them make Dodge check to avoid it. If any fail, they are hit by the stone or related debris and suffer 1d10 hit points of damage. The damage also determines the size of the rock.

Total Damage	Rock Diameter	Additional Results
1-2 hp	6 inches	Stunned for 1 round.
3-4 hp	1-2 feet	Stunned for 1 round and knocked prone.
5-6 hp	2-3 feet	They sustain a painful bruise, gaining two levels of <i>Exhaustion</i> .
7-8 hp	4-8 feet	Pinned by the rock. They must make a <i>Hard Strength</i> check to escape.
9-10 hp	8+ feet	Critical Injury. In addition to the damage, 1 limb is broken and useless. Maximum damage may require amputation (Keeper's discretion).

**Losing Direction.** The wasteland can be very disorienting, despite having plenty of landmarks. The problem is that many landmarks look very much alike.

When traveling through a wasteland with many tall rock formations, the characters should make a Navigation or Survival check each hour to make sure that they have not lost their way in this maze of stone.

Once lost, finding the correct trail can be difficult, requiring a minimum of 1 hour and a *Hard Navigation* or *Survival* check to get back on track.

Those with any knowledge of the this type of desert will have a *Bonus Die* on this check.

If the characters are only going in a general direction, like due east for example, they are not likely to become lost for long. In this case, a failed check means that they run into a dead end or other obstacle that will force them to retrace their steps and lose 1 hour of precious time.

**Venomous Creatures.** There are an alarming number of venomous insects, reptiles and other exotic creatures in the desert wastelands. The characters are unlikely to run into any of them during the day, unless they are foraging for food and water. After all, foraging involves looking in cool spots and turning over rocks, which is where many of these creatures hide during the day.

If a character rolls a Fumblecrit when foraging, they have accidentally encountered a venomous creature and have been bitten or stung.

At night, things become much more dangerous. The characters can minimize the risks by taking extra time when setting up camp by clearing away rocks and debris that might be concealing potentially venomous creatures. This process is safe enough if the characters are aware of the danger. If not, treat it like foraging.

During the night, if the area has been cleared and there is a campfire, there is a 1 in 20 chance of a character being bitten or stung by a creepy crawly. If there is no fire and the camp is poorly prepared, there is a 3 in 20 chance.

If bitten or stung, the character should make a Luck roll. Failure means making a Constitution check or suffer 1d3 points of poison damage.

As an option, the Keeper can have a roll of 1 on their check mean that the venom is a lethal dose, and unless they receive some sort of anti-venom, they lose 1d4 hit points each hour until dead.

A First Aid Kit that is purchased in the vicinity of the desert will likely have the anti-venom necessary to save the person's life, with no check necessary.

The Keeper may decide that a lethal bite or sting is a bit harsh, and so they can simply reduce the effect to having a level of *Exhaustion* for a day or two.



# Appendix

## NEW OCCUPATION

### DESERT NOMAD

Perhaps you were born to a nomadic desert tribe, or maybe you are running away from your past, choosing instead to wander the desolate wastelands. In either case, you are have learned to survive in one of the most inhospitable environments in the world.

You are equally comfortable being alone or in the company of fellow travelers. All nomads understand that good conversation among strangers, spoken over cups of jaav or hookah vapor, is a gift. For that reason, news travels fast in the desert reaches.

Each moment with family and friends is to be cherished, as the memory of these meetings fuels your tired legs and parched mouth.

**Occupation Skill Points:**  $EDU \times 2 + (DEX \times 2 \text{ or } STR \times 2)$

**Credit Rating:** 0–5

**Suggested Contacts:** Other nomads, water sources, traders.

**Skills:** Firearms, First Aid, Listen, Natural World, Navigate, Spot Hidden, Survival (any), Track.

### FEATURE: DESERT NOMAD

The desert nomad is experienced enough not to be confused or disoriented by the absence of landmarks or shifting sands of the desert landscape.

They can assemble a simple shelter from their robes, klava and a few sticks. This is enough shade to keep themselves cool, even during the hottest part of the day.

They are aware of the dangers of traveling during the hottest portion of the day and the freezing cold at night. Given the option, they will naturally avoid these hazards.

The nomad has an intimate and practical understanding of water and its true value. They have no problems cutting their rations and water intake in half when needed. They may use a *Bonus Die* when calculating the effects of starvation or dehydration.

The desert nomad is an expert in social etiquette when meeting strangers for the first time. Although they may not have any specific knowledge about the strangers, they know how to observe another's demeanor and mannerisms for certain visual cues that allow them to approach in the friendliest manner possible. They can do this up close or from afar.

## NEW EQUIPMENT

**Klava.** This is a large well crafted scarf or towel, and is worn around the face and shoulders in various configurations.

They come in numerous patterns and colors and are often decorated with tassels, beads, and small stones or metal rings to add weight.

This extremely mundane and ubiquitous scarf is worn in most public places and comes in many levels of craftsmanship from simple styles worn by peasants to extravagant works of art worn by royalty to rich merchants.

Socially, the design and manner of wearing the klava provides information about the wearer's faith, politics and the organizations to which they belong. Strangers should be very cautious when dealing with another person's klava, since they are very personal objects that may have been handed down through many generations.

Beyond its cultural significance, the klava is indispensable in a desert environ due to its extreme utility, and can be used for the following purposes:

**Clothing** – Used as clothing, it protects the face from harsh desert sands, brutal sunlight and smoldering heat. If there is water available that may not be fit to drink, the water can be used to wet the klava, and so cool the head through evaporation in extreme heat.

**Childcare** – Babies and small children are carried in the nap of klava tied around the body. This has the dual benefits of protecting the child from the harsh environment, but it also leaves the parent's hands free.

**Combat** – The klava is also an effective weapon. It can be used as a net, a whip and an effective defensive tool.

When used as a shield, the klava can be quickly wrapped around the off hand to defend against bites and claws, as well as deflecting or parrying weapons. When one end is held in each hand, the klava can be used to deflect or bind larger weapons or an enemy's limb. In this way, the klava can be used to disarm, blind, trip or even strangle an opponent.

As a net or whip, it is flung out and snapped back with the flick of the wrist.

**Communication** – The klava can be used to signal other travelers at great distances.

**Shelter** – The klava can be turned into a small shady tent when combined with a few small flexible sticks and some cordage. The shelter is surprisingly robust, and can protect the traveler from any but the most severe sandstorms.

Characters, who are not native to the desert lands, may only use the klava in a manner in which they are currently trained.

In other words, to use it as a whip, they must be proficient with a whip. This requires that they practice with the klava to become accustomed to it, and so must spend at least 1 hour per day for a week training with it.

Obviously, the klava can only be used for one thing at a time, so if it is being used as a weapon, it cannot provide protection from sand or sun.

The klava is a fragile item. It is easy to burn, slash or cut. Unlike a true net, it can tear easily.

**Java.** This is a dark, rich coffee to which small amounts of spice are often added to bring out the flavor. Every nomad has a personal Java that they think is the perfect blend.

Drinking a cup of Java has the effect of temporarily suppressing 1 level of *Exhaustion* for 1 hour. This can only be used for this purpose 2 times per day. Drinking Java more than 4 times per day will give the character a *Penalty Die* on any dehydration checks.

Sharing a cup is honorable and a social norm.

**Hookah.** This is an ornate bottle or tube that is heated from the bottom. Inside is a small amount of water and a dried plant with seeds. This results in an aromatic and slightly hallucinogenic or sedative vapor that can be inhaled from hollow reeds in the tube. It is the height of social etiquette to share the hookah over business, diplomacy or seduction.



Klava



Jaav



Hookah



## DESERT ENCOUNTERS

1 A thin, middle-aged man with pale skin and a receding hairline staggers up to the investigators. He is wearing a suit that is more than 20 years out of date and is badly torn in places. He looks as if he's suffering from severe exposure and dehydration, his wide eyes staring blankly into the distance. The man abruptly turns to the characters as if suddenly aware of their presence and whispers a few words in what sounds like some Scandinavian language. If any of the characters speak Norwegian, they will be able to translate the man's words as: "Have you seen my wife?" A moment later he blows away as if made of smoke.

*[The characters should make a Sanity check (1/1d12).]*

2 The characters happen upon a half-buried burlap sack sticking out of the ground. Inside are twelve clay jars that look to have been sealed with some sort of resin. *[If opened, the characters will discover that they contain an alcoholic beverage similar to beer that still seems to be good. Each jar contains about a pint. The design of the jars matches no cultural style of the region.]*

3 The wind has uncovered the remains of a mummified woman wearing the tattered remains of a casual outfit.

*[A close examination will reveal that her left ankle is broken, and looks to have been crudely splinted with two scraps of airplane aluminum and some wire. In a shoulder bag, the characters find two hot water bottles that she was apparently using as makeshift canteens. The water is a little stale, but is otherwise drinkable. Each contains about a quart.]*

4 The characters see an animal in the distance. As it moves closer, it can be seen to be a wild dog. The creature looks half-starved and dehydrated. [The Keeper can decide whether or not the dog attacks out of desperation or if it can be tamed with the offer of water and food. If the characters are desperate themselves, it could even become food for them.]

5 A tarnished lantern lays on its side, covered in a heavy layer of dust. At a glance it would seem to be in functional condition.

*[It is about half full of kerosene, which would burn for about six continuous hours.]*

6 The wreck of a light aircraft is scattered over a few hundred yards of desert. Most of the pieces are no bigger than a foot or so, but the cockpit is more or less intact. Nothing is functional, but it can serve as a shelter against the sun and wind.

*[At the Keeper's discretion, the characters might be able to scavenge some raw materials (like wire for cordage) or even find some sort of emergency gear, such as a first aid kit, flare gun, survival rations, or bottled water.]*

7 A glint of metal attracts the characters' attention. It is a set of World War II era military dog tags that belonged to Ensign Robert Wilcox (serial number 332-19-26) of the USS Eldridge.

*[Keepers should note that, due to the nature of the experiment that involved the USS Eldridge, these tags can be discovered in any desert, during any time period. If the characters become aware of the implications, they should make a Sanity check (0/1d6). Note that this could be something of a spoiler if the tags are discovered prior to the late 1930s.]*

8 In the distance, one of the characters sees what looks like a small boy running away. None of the other characters will have seen him.

*[Have the characters make a Luck roll to determine who saw the boy. On a tie, the lowest roll wins. If they investigate the area where the boy was seen, they will discover nothing. The Keeper can opt to have the skeletal remains of a child buried nearby if it fits with their story, or the characters might dismiss it as a heat-induced hallucination. The Keeper should give the characters an optional Sanity check (0/1).]*

**9** A ruined wooden crate is mostly buried in the ground.

*[If the debris is excavated, the characters will discover a stone tablet covered in some obscure language similar to cuneiform. Translating the tablet will take about three weeks, after which the character will suffer a Sanity loss of 1d10. It describes a ritual intended to summon a being called The Faceless God. Anyone who makes a successful Mythos check will know this entity to be an avatar of Nyarlathotep. See the Keeper's Rulebook (p.248) for details about the ritual.]*

**10** Natural erosion has revealed the top of some sort of stone, dome-shaped structure. The stones look to have been expertly carved, and they seem to hold together without any sort of mortar.

*[A successful Archaeology check will suggest that the stones are at least five feet thick, but that it is likely hollow within. A Hard Archaeology check will reveal that there is an entrance buried just below the surface that can be cleared with two hours of digging (divided by the number of people). Inside is a thirty-foot-diameter domed chamber lined with hundreds of alcoves. Most are empty, but a few contain scrolls that are remarkably well preserved. The Keeper can decide the nature and content of the scrolls.]*

**11** A rough, three-foot-diameter circle of stones marks the edge of a deep well. Shining a light into the stone-lined shaft reveals that there is water about sixty feet down. If the characters can access it, the water is clean and cool.

*[It is possible for a character to descend the shaft, though it will require a Hard Climb check to do so. Having someone at the top helping them with a rope will eliminate the need for a check.]*

**12** An older model automobile has been abandoned in the middle of this wasteland. It looks to have been here for at least ten years.

*[A brief investigation of the vehicle reveals that the tires are flat and the fuel tank is empty. It looks like it has been scavenged for resources, but it can still serve as cover against the elements.]*

**13** The characters stumble upon a small pool of clear water. There is a yellow crust around its edge of the pool that smells vaguely of almonds.

*[Unfortunately, the water is saturated with naturally occurring arsenic. Drinking it would be quite deadly. Since it's not a biological contamination, boiling won't make it safe to drink. Any character drinking it will experience a strong, bitter taste and suffer Arsenic poisoning (see Keeper's Rulebook p.128-129).]*

**14** One of the characters sees a flash of movement at the corner of their vision.

*[The character with the lowest Luck score inadvertently comes too close to a venomous snake that was camouflaged*

*against the terrain. They must make a successful Dodge check or receive a nasty bite from the creature (see Keeper's Rulebook p.128-129).]*

**15** A red, jerry can stands out against the stark landscape. It is lying on its side and has no identifying markings.

*[The can is filled with 5.3 gallons (20 liters) of kerosene.]*

**16** Several dozen stones mark some sort of burial ground. The stones do not appear to have been found locally, and might have once been carved with some sort of writing or symbols. Unfortunately, time and weather has eroded the surfaces to the point where deciphering the markings is impossible.

*[If the ground beneath a stone is excavated (a process that would take about one man-hour) a mummified body will be discovered, along with some simple grave goods (eg. broken pottery, crude jewelry, a copper dagger, etc.). An Archaeology check will reveal that the remains are not from any known culture.]*

**17** A small drawstring bag of brown leather is spotted by the characters a few yards away. Closer examination will reveal that it has been well preserved by a heavy infusion of wax.

*[If opened, it will be found to contain eight ounces of fine tobacco. A flint and striker are tied to the cord.]*

**18** A leather-bound book can be seen within the remnants of a backpack.

*[It is an English translation of the I Ching (see Keeper's Rulebook p.235). Inside one of the pockets of the pack is a wrapped bundle of I Ching yarrow sticks. If anyone starts to use the stick for divination, they will find them to be eerily accurate.]*

**19** Glinting in the sunlight is a pair of broken spectacles. The wire frame is bent, but repairable. One of the lenses is still intact.

*[The Keeper should note that the lens could be used to reflect the sun to possibly signal an aircraft or it could be used to start a fire with the right tinder.]*

**20** A half-empty bottle of Old Grand Dad bourbon (100 proof) has been carelessly cast aside.

*[It contains about 350ml of whiskey.]*

**21** Bleached bones are scattered across the landscape. They look to have been here for quite some time.

*[Closer examination indicated that they are not human bones. A successful Natural World check will reveal that they are likely from at least three horses. The skulls are nowhere to be seen.]*

**22** Scavenger birds are feasting on a decomposing body in the distance.

*[Closer examination reveals it to be a cow, its swollen corpse smelling of death. It is covered in a blanket of flies and maggots. The birds will squawk in anger but will otherwise leave the*

*investigators alone. Tracks lead from this place back to a ramshackle farmhouse. It is in disrepair but offers ample shelter from the blazing sun. The owner is nowhere to be seen, but a fresh pot of coffee sits on a potbelly stove, and a half-smoked cigar still burns on the edge of a heavy glass ashtray. The Keeper can decide if the inhabitant is anywhere nearby or not.]*

**23** A glint of metal reflects sunlight in the distance. A brand new shovel is jammed into a pile of sand, a price tag still attached to its handle. Two open graves have been dug into the drifting landscape, some distance from the roadway. The body of a pale-skinned man lays in one of the graves with an obvious gunshot wound to the back of his head. The other is empty. Tire tracks and signs of a struggle are apparent.

**24** A billboard (or similar advertisement appropriate to the time period) is weathered and sun blistered. It depicts a smiling family gazing off towards a luxurious new home with a SOLD sign on the front lawn. Behind the sign is a wasteland of unfinished roads and the half-dug foundations of an unfinished housing development.

*[Not much to find here, and no shelter from the sun to speak of, but there are plenty of places to find cover from enemies.]*

**25** A disheveled young man walking along the roadside heads towards the characters. He's wearing a rented tuxedo and carrying an empty gas can. He has a bright and jovial demeanor despite the brutal heat, and introduces himself as Gerry. He explains that he ran out of gas a few miles back. He's headed towards a gas station he thinks is just down the road.

*[If questioned, the characters learn that his full name is Gerald Wolinski, and he was only just married to his new bride Madeline the previous day. He becomes increasingly nervous and paranoid if he cannot find fuel and cannot return to his wife, whom he left in the rented convertible a few miles back. Returning to his car proves fruitless since the car is gone, along with his wife. Gerald could be a helpful NPC, a new character, or simply a victim of some sinister plot.]*

**26** While the characters are resting, one of the characters feels something crawling on them.

*[A scorpion slowly climbs up the arm or leg of the one with the lowest Luck score. Any sudden movement will cause a possibly fatal sting. Cool heads will make this encounter tense, but survivable. Any rash action, such as brushing at the scorpion or suddenly jumping up will cause it to strike. The victim suffers 2d10 points of damage, though a successful Constitution check will reduce the damage by half.]*

**27** A wooden walking stick can be seen on the ground a few yards away. The grip is carved in the shape of a grinning baboon. The detail is quite good. The bottom of the stick is tipped with a brass cap.

**28** Broken splinters of wood and shattered green glass are scattered across the landscape. It looks to be the remains of a crate containing wine bottles that must have fallen from a fair height.

*[The glass shards could be used as crude cutting tools, and the wood could be used to make a small fire if the characters have a means to start it.]*

**29** A leather journal is about three-quarters filled with amateur poetry. Most of them have to do with a man grieving a lost loved one, though it's unclear whether she died or simply left him.

**30** A large carrion bird begins circling overhead. It moves as the characters move, staying right above them.

*[Whether they realize it or not, this could mark their position if someone is trying to find them at the Keeper's discretion.]*

**31** One of the characters steps on a section of ground that sounds hollow beneath.

*[A bit of excavating reveals a four foot pit covered with a thick panel of wood. In the bottom is a military foot locker filled with several dozen bottles of strong brandy. Judging by the style of bottle, these look to have been here for many decades. Hidden in the bottom of the locker, wrapped in burlap cloth, is a loaded .45 Smith & Wesson revolver. The firearm can only be found if some of the bottles are removed.]*

**32** The characters find the bleached bones of a man wearing tattered and decayed garb that is consistent with the American west of the mid 19th century. There's an empty, tightly stoppered whiskey bottle clutched in one bony hand. Rolled up within the bottle is a scroll of paper. Hanging from a rotted leather cord around the man's neck is a black opal about an inch and a half in diameter. It's carved in the shape of a squatting toad with a sinister grin on its features.

*[Closer examination reveals strange symbols etched on the belly of the toad in some unknown language. The paper inside the bottle is a map that allegedly leads to "The Temple of the Toad" in northern Mexico.]*

**33** An indistinct figure can be seen in the distance waving to the characters as if signaling for help. Due to the heat haze, little detail can be discerned about them except that they are probably male, dark-skinned, and dressed in light clothes.

*[If they attempt to approach him, he seems to recede into the distance, never getting any closer. After an hour of this, he stops waving, staggers for a moment, and then collapses to the ground. If they continue towards him, they find nothing but an old pocket watch. The etching on the back reads: To my beloved Daniel. If wound, the watch still works. Optional Sanity check (0/1)]*

**34** The remnants of a campfire disfigures the otherwise unbroken landscape. It is about two feet in diameter and bordered with a ridge of piled dirt or sand.

*[If anyone searches through the ashes, they will find blackened animal bones, a small piece of charred meat, and a gold wedding band.]*

**35** A broken plank sticks out of the ground a few inches. It is old and weathered like driftwood. If it is dug up, the letters G, E, N, and T are found expertly carved into its surface. The board is about six feet long, two feet wide, and two inches thick.

*[Anyone who knows a bit about naval history or related subjects (Keeper's discretion) may be able to figure out (with a Hard success) that this looks like the trail-board from a wooden sailing ship. An Extreme success might allow the character to remember that there was a French frigate called the USS Insurgent that went missing in 1800. A thorough examination in a lab will reveal that this wood does indeed date back to that era.]*

**36** A four-inch square wooden box contains six vials of dark brown liquid with the consistency of syrup. It has an earthy, bitter smell, and if touched to the tongue causes a strong tingling sensation.

*[A successful Medicine, Science/Pharmacy, or related check (Keeper's discretion) will reveal that it is opium. Each vial contains one dose.]*

### Opium

Duration: 1d3+1 hours.

Duration Effects: All Sanity checks are made with a Bonus Die. The effects of any insanities that a character might be suffering are negated for the duration, and the character can ignore all Constitution rolls related to pain.

Duration Side Effects: Immobility for 1d2 hours, constipation, and nausea. Each time opium is smoked the character makes a Luck roll, a failure results in the loss of 1d2 hit points.

Addiction: After 1d6 uses the character is addicted, needing to take the drug once a day. Failure to do so results in agitation, with all skills except Cthulhu Mythos being made with a Penalty Die. If the character can stay off opium for 1d3+3 weeks, requiring a Hard Power roll each week to do so, they lose the Penalty Die.

Cthulhu Mythos: Characters have a chance equal to their current skill level of receiving frightening otherworldly visions costing 0/1d3 points of Sanity each time they smoke opium.

**37** A six-foot shaft of wood sticks out of the ground at a slight angle. Carved into its heavily oiled surface are countless intertwined serpents. A two-inch copper ankh pendant hangs

from a leather thong tied near the top. The craftsmanship of both the ankh and the walking stick is extraordinary.

*[A successful Mythos check will reveal that the symbols are similar to those used by several cults dedicated to Nyarlathotep.]*

**38** A bit of cloth flutters on the ground, seemingly attached to something buried beneath the surface.

*[If it is excavated, the characters will find a human leg that looks as if it had been severed just below the left knee. A Medicine check will reveal that the ankle is broken and that the foot was becoming gangrenous. A Hard success will reveal that it was likely removed by a professional in order to save the life of its owner. The boot style and a tag on a scrap of clothing seem to indicate that the person was American.]*

**39** A fresh trail of footprints crosses perpendicular to the path of the characters. It is obvious that two adults passed by within the past few hours.

*[If the characters follow the footprints, they will lead to a makeshift lean-to fashioned from some sort of beige tarp and a few aluminum poles. The two men huddled beneath are barely coherent, and are likely suffering from severe dehydration or possibly heat stroke. One of them is murmuring about snakes while the other is just staring off into the distance. They are both dressed in light clothes typically worn by tourists who know little about actual desert survival. Their beige pants are tattered at the cuffs, and their shirts are tied about their heads. A Medicine check will reveal that, although dehydrated, their mental state does not seem related to the heat. An hour later, both men die. If their blood is eventually tested, there will be indications of opiates and some unknown alkaloid.]*

**40** The dessicated carcass of a horse lays on its side, its saddlebag open and the contents scattered across the ground. Among the detritus can be found a compass, several empty canteens, a wool horse blanket, a .30-06 rifle (though no ammunition is found), and a first edition of the book Don Quixote.

*[The saddlebags are in good shape as well, though getting them off the horse will take at least thirty minutes.]*

**41** A weather-worn sign advertises a series of roadside attractions that include: *The Living Fetus in a Jar*, *The Three-Headed Serpent Man*, and *The Blob from Outer Space*. An arrow at the bottom of the sign indicates that these attractions are 2.4 miles to the northwest.

*[If the characters follow the arrow, they find no attendant building, road, or apparent attractions of interest. Instead they find an area where natural ground cover has been pushed away in a circle, forming a low crater about fifty feet across. The porous ground within seeps a yellowish vapor that forms a low, oily cloud over the surface. Any vegetation within a hundred yards (if any) has all turned the color of dried blood.]*

**42** A ten-foot-square wooden shack stands improbably in the middle of this wasteland. Its steeply-pitched roof is shingled with weathered shakes of gray wood. There is a single, open doorway on one side, but no windows. A small trough sits against the structure on the left side. Inside there is a small table with a pair of spindly chairs. A faded deck of playing cards sits on the table. In the far corner is a well pump that will, after a few minutes of pumping, produce cold, clear water. A small basin beneath the spout directs any unused water into the trough outside.

**43** A small aircraft approaches the characters, circles them once, flashes a light three times, and flies off on its original heading. It was too high to pick out much detail except that the aircraft isn't likely to hold more than four people including the pilot.

*[The Keeper can add more to the description based on the time period of their campaign, and weave it into their scenario if it seems appropriate. If the Keeper chooses to include this event in a time period prior to manned flight, then they should describe the object in terms that would make sense to a person of that era, such as referring to it as a "large silver bird".]*

**44** The remains of a canvas tent is half buried by dust and sand. A coil of rope sits in a heap in the remains of the tent, along with a pile of fifteen steel tent spikes. Each spike is about eighteen inches long.

**45** The characters find a pile of garbage left by some thoughtless travelers. It consists mostly of discarded food packaging that includes crumpled aluminum foil, a few empty bean cans, a few scraps of fabric, and a green glass bottle. This refuse looks as if it's at least a few years old.

*[If the characters are desperate, they may find a few useful items at the Keeper's discretion.]*

**46** A leather book has been carelessly tossed aside. Closer examination reveals that it's a King James Bible.

*[If anyone opens it, they will find dried, bloody fingerprints on the pages. Scrawled on the first page, presumably in blood, are the words God Has Abandoned Us. If anyone takes the time to look through it, they will discover that the Book of Revelation has been torn out and is missing.]*

**47** The characters find a few pieces of paper scattered across the ground. If they take a closer look, they'll discover that there are pages torn from a Bible, and specifically the Book of Revelation. A few of them have blood stains.

**48** The characters hear a howling shriek in the distance. It didn't sound entirely human or animal. It doesn't repeat, so it's impossible to tell the specific distance and direction.

**49** The wind stirs up a massive dust devil that moves towards the characters.

*[They have just a moment (1 round) to prepare before it hits. For about a minute the characters' vision is reduced to zero and their speed is reduced by half. All skill checks attempted while in the dust devil have a Penalty Die. Lighter objects made of paper or cloth that are not secured are blown away unless the character makes a successful Dexterity check.]*

**50** A length of thick hemp rope leads to a slight depression in the sand and disappears into the ground.

*[Anyone who has encountered these hazards before will recognize it as a sinkhole. If any of the characters move within ten feet, the Keeper should refer to Sinkholes & Sand Rivers (p. 19). Pulling on the rope will require a successful Strength check to get it to move. Attached to the other end is a burlap sack containing five pounds of preserved meat and cheese that, due to how carefully it was wrapped, is still edible. The meat is dried and heavily salted and the cheese is sealed in thick wax. The Keeper should note that the wax could be useful in starting a fire if the characters think of it.]*

**51** A perfectly smooth, gray-green stone is expertly etched with a star-like symbol.

*[Anyone with Mythos knowledge may recognize it as an Elder Sign. Any character with the Natural World or Science/Geology skill will know that the stone is not native to the region, and that it likely came from a river or sea shore. A successful Science/Geology check will reveal that the stone does not match any known mineral.]*

**52** An old fifty-gallon drum sits on its side. The contents have long since drained away, but the steel drum itself is in fair shape except for some minor surface corrosion. The interior has a faint bitter smell.

**53** The remains of an automobile lays on its side. It looks as if it burned a long time ago, and so only metal remains.

*[The characters might be able to harvest raw materials from the wreck and the Keeper's discretion.]*

**54** An old wagon wheel is half buried in the ground. The wood is dry and the metal banding is slightly rusted. A thick layer of grease clings to the inside of the wheel hub.

**55** A dilapidated wooden shed is near collapse. An empty stone cellar hole sits a few yards away. Bits of charred wood seem to indicate that the house burned down long ago.

*[Within the remains of the shed are a few simple gardening tools such as a rake, hoe, and shovel. There is also a sack of fertilizer, galvanized metal watering can, and a pair of gray leather work gloves.]*

**56** A stone slab is mostly covered with sand and dust. If uncovered, the characters will discover that it is four feet by six feet, and is roughly six inches thick. A strange symbol is engraved into the center.

*[If the characters decide to move it, they will find a stone-lined staircase descending into the ground. About twenty feet below the surface is some sort of burial chamber. The mummified body of a young woman is laid on the floor; a roll of paper clutched in her hands. If the paper is examined, the characters will find a child's drawing of a family consisting of a mother, father, and daughter.]*

**57** Some sort of handle sticks out of the ground. If it is excavated, the characters will discover it to be a Bowie-style knife embedded in a human skull.

*[Further excavation will uncover the remainder of the skeleton, and a Medicine check will reveal that the victim was likely an adult male. The knife is still useful with an hour of maintenance once it's removed from the skull.]*

**58** A tattered, white flag on a thin stick of wood flutters in the breeze. There seems to be no indication of what it was intended to mark.

*[A Hard Spot Hidden check will allow a character to notice another similar flag in the distance, off the character's chosen path. If they choose to follow it, they will find a series of ten flags stretching over two miles. At the end of this path they find an unfinished railroad track that continues off in the same direction. The Keeper can decide where this track could lead, or it might mysteriously end after a few more miles.]*

**59** A reflection on the ground catches the eye of the character with the highest Luck score. It's a gold coin. The profile of a stern-looking man is embossed on the front, and a wide, thick-trunked tree adorns the back.

*[A Hard History check will reveal that it is more than 2000 years old. The Keeper can decide on the culture of origin based on the location.]*

**60** A single stunted tree grows out of the otherwise barren ground. The leaves are lush and green, and the tree seems healthy apart from its short stature. Digging near the tree's base will find moist earth, and at a depth of four feet, water will begin pooling in the bottom of the hole.

*[If the characters let the water sit undisturbed for thirty minutes or so, the contaminants will settle and they can collect some reasonably clean water. It will still have a slight grit to it along with an earthy taste, but it's better than no water.]*

**61** A glint of metal in the sand turns out to be a small, unmarked tin about four inches square and a half inch deep. When picked up, it rattles as if filled with a quantity of small, hard

objects. If opened, the character will find several dozen buttons of various types and sizes. Some are decorative brass ones, while others are plain wood or bone. No two buttons match.

**62** A piece of driftwood is embedded in the ground as if recently uncovered by the wind. It's about three feet long, six inches wide, and smells strongly of some unknown sea.

**63** A broken bracelet with a Lapis Lazuli scarab beetle catches the attention of the characters. If anyone takes a closer look, they will see something that might be dried blood on the inside edge.

*[The bracelet is not terribly old, but could fetch a few dollars at a pawn shop.]*

**64** A piece of paper is seen blowing across the ground. If picked up, the character will see what seems to be a map of what looks like an ancient tomb or temple. The corner of the map is missing.

*[The Keeper can choose to incorporate this into the current scenario, or perhaps use it for a future plot hook.]*

**65** The characters spot an elaborately decorated sandal with various bits of silver adornment and semi-precious stones. It appears to be well worn, and one of the leather straps is broken.

*[The materials alone could be sold for a fair amount, though a collector might pay more at the Keeper's discretion.]*

**66** The Bones of a large fish like creature has been uncovered by the wind.

*[A Natural World or Science/Biology check will reveal that they belong to some rare or possibly unknown species.]*

**67** Pieces of a crashed hot air balloon litter the ground. The passenger basket is intact, but the burner is beyond repair. Scraps of the balloon's envelope are mostly buried, but a few bits stick out of the ground and flutter in the breeze. There's no indication of why the balloon came down, but it probably happened many years ago.

*[A few things could potentially be useful. For example, the basket could provide shelter; parts from the burner could be used for makeshift tools; and of course there is quite a bit of cordage that could be scavenged.]*

**68** A perfect twelve-foot cube of sandstone stands in stark contrast to the surrounding landscape. Well-worn logs are positioned beneath the block and thick hemp ropes are tied around it.

*[A Science/Engineering or Geology check will reveal that the surface is incredibly smooth with no obvious signs of tool work.]*

**69** The characters find a small obsidian pyramid that fits in the palm of the hand. It seems hollow, but there is no obvious way to open it.

*[If anyone shakes it, something rattles around the inside. If it is broken, a small seed or pod is found within. It's about the size of a walnut, and is dark green with a heavily textured surface. After a moment it cracks, releasing a greasy, purple vapor. The Keeper can decode what this means, if anything.]*

**70** The characters spot an aluminum cylinder on the ground. It is about a foot long and two inches in diameter. The end looks as if it unscrews.

*[The tube is empty but, judging by the odor, once contained maps or other documents. On the inside of the cover is an embossed Nazi swastika. Note that the Keeper could change the embossing to fit their setting or scenario.]*

**71** An oddly shaped gray stone turns out to be some sort of ancient bust buried face down so that only the back of the head is visible.

*[If the characters dig up the bust, each person will perceive that the face is startlingly like their own, but not at all similar to any of their companions. This is true regardless of the race or sex of the person looking at the face. If anyone takes a photograph of the bust, the face will appear exceedingly plain and will not have the same effect as the actual bust itself. The stone is an unknown mineral similar to granite.]*

**72** Tucked against a rock is a cowboy-style hat with a snake skin band. The inside band bears the name L. Smith.

*[Tucked into the sweatband of the hat is a folded scrap of paper with a series of eight numbers: 2, 3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 17, 19. Any character who has a Scientific skill can make a check to notice that these are all prime numbers.]*

**73** A galvanized metal pail lays on its side. It is slightly dented and worn, but it will still hold water.

**74** A glass icosahedron reflects the sunlight and casts rainbows across the ground. It is about three-inches in diameter at its outermost points. Etched just below the surface of each of its twenty sides are strange symbols. They look vaguely alchemical or astrological.

*[If it is picked up, the weight will suggest that it is some sort of crystal, and not glass as it first appeared. Anyone with a Science skill can make a Hard check to notice that the spectrum of the rainbows that it casts seem a bit off somehow. If the object is taken out when there is a star-filled sky overhead, it will project star constellations that don't match what's in the sky. Anyone with a skill in Astronomy can make a Hard check to realize that it appears to show a series of star maps of an unknown region of space. The character realizing this should make a Sanity check (0/1d4).]*

**75** An abandoned tent village is gathered around what used to be an oasis. Unfortunately, all that remains of the once lush island

in the desert are the lifeless trunks of a dozen trees and a dried-up watering hole. This appears to have been the site of some long ago battle judging by the bones of men and horses that litter the ground. All of the remains show signs of having come to a violent end. The clothes have long faded and are unrecognizable.

*[An investigation of the area will reveal no weapons or other goods, leading to the conclusion that this place has been thoroughly looted. Even the footwear of the victims is conspicuously missing.]*

**76** A cloudy, crystal figurine stands atop a small mound of stones. It appears to be some sort of queen or goddess dressed in flowing robes, her hands held up to the sky. The figurine stands about eight inches tall, and has a vaguely Greco-Roman feel to it.

*[If it is removed from its spot, the characters will feel a slight tremor in the ground that will pass a moment later. Beneath it within the pile of stones is a mummified head that, as soon as it is exposed to the air, turns to dust and blows away. Anyone who succeeds on a Power check will hear a faint sigh on the wind, and perhaps a woman's distant laugh.]*

**77** The characters find a small, leather diary on the ground.

*[If anyone picks it up, they immediately notice that it smells faintly of frankincense. The pages within are filled with entries written in a Chinese script. If anyone can read Chinese, they will learn that this is the journal of a woman named Liling who had left her home to avoid an arranged marriage to an abusive husband. Her journey seems to have spanned more than ten years and several continents. The last entry describes the loss of her horse and supplies in a dust storm, and her desire to see home one last time.]*

**78** The characters spot a cracked wedding band on the ground. A closer look will discover an inscription that reads: "May we always find our way."

**79** A rook from a brass chess set stands on the ground as if placed there deliberately.

**80** A set of oddly shaped bones, dark as onyx, are scattered across the ground. They do not appear to have been charred by heat or fire, but are fairly uniform in color.

*[If the bones are brought together, someone with basic knowledge of biology will be able to discern that they belonged to some sort of quadruped about the size of a dog, though it does not appear to be a dog. In fact, the skull appears to be more bird-like than anything, despite the fact that the rest of it seems more feline. Detailed examination of the bones will indicate that black is their natural color.]*

**81** A pool filled with dark water can be seen in the distance. No plants or animals are visible in the vicinity, but there are a

few low plants. As the characters get closer, they can see that it's an almost perfectly circular hole about thirty feet across. A yellowish slime clings to the edges, but there seems to be no life within. The water is clear, but the inside of the hole is a dark charcoal color. It looks quite deep.

*[If the characters test the water, they will find that it has a strong acrid taste that burns the lips slightly. If they take a sip, they will have to succeed on a Constitution check or suffer severe abdominal muscle cramps and 1d4 points of damage. A full drink will require a Hard Constitution check. Failure in this case means violent muscle spasms, asphyxiation, and suffering 4d10 points of damage. The victim will die within hours without medicinal treatment.]*

**82** The head of a massive statue has been uncovered by the wind. It appears to be a man with strong, angular features. A brief examination reveals that there is likely more to the statue still buried.

*[An Intelligence check will allow a character to calculate that, if the head has a body that is standing upright, the full statue would stand at least fifty feet tall. Excavating the statue would take at least a week, even with a full team of experienced archaeologists. Digging it out with just a few people would obviously take much longer. The style does not suggest any specific culture that might have created it.]*

**83** Up ahead there is a large dune composed entirely of black sand that does not appear to disperse with the wind.

*[If the characters attempt to do so, they can scoop some sand from the dune into their hand or other object, but the wind still appears to have no effect on it. If thrown or dropped, it will fall straight down as soon as it is released.]*

**84** The characters stumble upon a buried camp site. Judging by the set-up, it looks like it might have been some kind of an archaeological dig. It looks to have been abandoned long ago. The tents are still intact.

*[The characters can find shelter here, and if they search around, they might find a few useful items (Keeper's discretion), though no food or water. If they spend the night, they will hear voices talking in German outside the tent, though the exact words will be too muffled to hear clearly. If they go outside to investigate, they will see no one.]*

**85** One of the characters spots a silver pocket watch on the ground. A closer look reveals that it has celestial alignments instead of numbers. The maker's mark on the back indicates that it was made in Germany.

*[If they experiment with the watch for a month or so, they'll discover that it actually gives extremely accurate predictions of planetary alignments, eclipses, and so on.]*

**86** A half-buried piece of burlap catches the eye of the characters. A bit of dark metal can be seen within.

*[If it is uncovered, the characters discover an antique flintlock rifle wrapped in oil cloth. A successful Spot Hidden check will discover a hidden compartment in the stock. Inside is a French military document dating back to the Napoleonic era. If translated, they learn that messenger was supposed to pick up a package from "an Arab" by the name of Ali Alhazred. On the back is some strange scribbings in an unknown language.]*

**87** In the remains of a small campsite, the character see a small cloth bag next to a rock.

*[If they look inside they will find what appears to be a dream journal. At first glance it seems mundane enough, but one of the characters (choose randomly) notices a name they recognize. If they read further, they realize that this person dreamed about that character's life. Even more bizarrely, this journal was written many years before the character was born. The Keeper can decide if it goes into the character's future. The characters must all make Sanity checks (0/1d12), but the one who is the subject of the journal will suffer a greater loss if they fail (1/2d12).]*

**88** Wrapped in a bundle of tattered linen are ten black arrows made entirely from obsidian. From the arrowheads, to the shaft, to the fletching, each arrow has been painstakingly carved out of the delicate material.

*[Each arrow will function once. They pierce flesh effortlessly (causing maximum damage), though any armor will cause them to shatter. Their extraordinary quality would make them extremely valuable to a museum.]*

**89** The characters find a matchbox with the name "Bob" written on it. Faint scratching can be heard within.

*[Inside is a small, docile scorpion. If anyone talks to it using its name, it will crawl out onto the person and sit there calmly.]*

**90** An intricate compass carved from stone sits on the open ground. At a glance, the black needle appears to point north.

*[If picked up and examined, the characters discover that it functions perfectly as a compass. The body of the compass is a blueish soapstone, the face is inlaid with bits of Turquoise, and the needle is an insanely sharp shard of obsidian. This object is extremely fragile. If dropped, the character will have to succeed on a Luck roll or it breaks, even on the softest surface.]*

**91** A piece of sandstone on the ground has a fissure running through it. Something within the gap catches the sunlight, reflecting a glint of metal.

*[If it's picked up, the stone falls in half, revealing a small copper skeleton-style key encased within. A Science/Geology*



check will allow the character to realize that the sandstone containing the key is millions of years old. This realization means that the character has to make a Sanity check (0/1d4.)

**92** A strange, non-native cactus sits alone in the desert landscape. It is covered with inch-long spines and grape-sized purple fruit on its surface.

*[A few basic tests will indicate that the fruit is edible, but a few minutes after eating, the character will learn that they also have extremely hallucinogenic properties that last for three hours.]*

**93** The characters notice a desert fox (or similar animal) following them. It seems very skittish, and will pause when the characters stop walking.

*[If they attempt to shoo it away or move towards it at all, it will run off. The next time they set up camp however, it will attempt to sneak in at night and take some of their food. If they take precautions to protect it, they should be fine. If they don't take precautions, they can make a Listen check (a Hard Listen check if they are asleep) during the night to notice the intruder. Failing to notice and stop the theft will mean that the equivalent of several meals will be missing in the morning.]*

**94** An old boot containing a desiccated foot is covered with red ants. Judging by the size, it likely belonged to a man.

*[If anyone tries to pick up the boot, the ants will attack, inflicting several extremely painful bites and 1 point of damage. The victim must also make a Constitution check or pass out from the severity of the pain, regaining consciousness 1d10 minutes later. Little can be learned from the boot and foot except that they probably belonged to an average-sized British man, and if he is still alive, he must be walking with a limp. At this point, there is no way to tell how or why the foot was severed.]*

**95** A simple wooden box with a handle made of hemp is held closed with a shard of bone through two copper loops.

*[If opened, it appears to be some kind of toolbox filled with crude iron tools. A Hard History check will indicate that they were probably made in the 8th or 9th Century BCE.]*

**96** A child's Lassie lunch box lays battered on the ground.

*[The lunch box contains a desiccated half-eaten sandwich and two shriveled apple slices wrapped in wax paper.]*

**97** An abandoned Ford pickup truck is resting on four flat tires that have started to crumble as a result of the harsh desert conditions. In the bed of the truck are four fifty-gallon steel drums with yellow biohazard symbols stenciled in each.

*[The truck is old and looks to have been stuck here for several years at least. If anyone opens the drums, they will have to make a Constitution check or begin vomiting from the stench of an almost black liquid. If the characters search the cab of the truck, they find a clipboard that describes the barrels as containing "Contaminated Blood", though there is nothing indicating the type of blood or what contaminated it. The Keeper may want to give the characters psychosomatic symptoms of some kind, just to make things interesting.]*

**98** The characters find two pieces of chewing gum that have been fashioned into a crude crucifix. The gum is hard and brittle, crumbling at the slightest touch.

**99** A rough wooden pole is standing about eight feet out of the ground. A tattered flag is tied to the top of it, though little of the material is left. What little does remain has been so bleached by the sun that identifying the nationality of the flag is impossible.

**100** A massive white canine tooth, about ten inches long, has been left on the ground. The bleached white surface is covered with fine scrimshaw depicting strange runes and symbols.

*[A Natural World or Science/Paleontology check will reveal that it is the tooth of a Smilodon.]*



# Davae Breon Jaxon

Davae Breon Jaxon is an archaeologist and collector of rare antiquities. [REDACTED] to the infamous [REDACTED] [REDACTED] in Asia and the middle east.

Shortly after, Jaxon set out into the world in search of [REDACTED] spending more than three decades traveling [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. During his wanderings, he managed to amass [REDACTED] and has an extraordinary number of rare books. In the past few years, Professor Jaxon established a private research library dedicated to the [REDACTED] ever seen.

Professor Jaxon has recently turned all his attention to the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] in extreme environments, and this book has benefited greatly from his experience.



**CRITICAL HIT**  
  
**PUBLISHING**