

# Hurtalak's Grave

**Byron**  
**the Bard**







This is a short module for *Dungeons & Dragons v3.5* aimed at introducing the players to the setting of DarkSun. It has been designed for a group of 3 or 4 players new to the world of Athas. This is a rules-light module focused on the story. For rules and statistics, please refer to the *Dungeons & Dragons v3.5* rule books and to the DarkSun campaign setting conversion at <https://athas.org/products/ds3>. The module could also be easily adapted to *Dungeons & Dragons 5e*.

## OVERVIEW

*Hurtalak's Grave* is a survival adventure, designed to introduce new players to the world of Athas. The players will take the role of the inhabitants of a small village in a desertic region. As the action takes place in a remote area far from major centers, the characters have been left removed from the history and the main events taking place in the Tablelands. This will allow the DM to gradually introduce the players and the characters to the wonders and the dangers of Athas.

This adventure can work as a one-shot DarkSun introductory adventure or as the starting point for a longer campaign in Athas. It is a self-contained story in which the PCs are requested to deal with a grave crisis in their village, but it contains several hooks that may be exploited by the DM to set the players off in a longer DarkSun campaign.

Some familiarity with the DarkSun setting on the side of the DM is desirable. Important aspects of the world are remarked upon in this module, but a knowledge of the mood, of noteworthy characters and locations may help making the adventure more immersive. Good sources are, of course, the original modules released for *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* or for *Dungeons & Dragons 4th edition*. The website <https://athas.org/> provides a comprehensive repository of materials and rules adapted to the third edition. Finally, other excellent resources online, such as <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4G1vep6rcCI>

can offer a quick and compelling intro to the world of Athas.

## BACKGROUND

The story takes place in a remote desertic corner of Athas, to the very south-west of the Tablelands. Beyond Kalidnay and Celik, far from the last trees of the Forest Ridge in the north, lies a small village, counting approximately 35-50 inhabitants. The place is known by its inhabitant by different names such as **Last Border**, **Hurtalak's Village**, or **Hurtalak's Grave**; most commonly, though, the locals refer to it simply as *the village*.

The settlement was founded about three generations ago by refugees coming from the

southern periphery of the territory controlled by the city-state of Kalidnay.

Around the Free Year –1331 Kalid-Ma, the sorcerer-king of Kalidnay, dispatched a small party in pursuit of Genaxak, a fugitive reputed to be a practitioner of magic, with the order to kill him and anyone who might be protecting or hiding him. The core of this group of executioners was composed by five templars led by Ib-Kner, a faithful lieutenant of the sorcerer-king. In support, the squad was also assigned five gladiators, expendable lives in case of a confrontation with Genaxak. The gladiators selected for this mission included Hurtalak, an old and fierce mul; Daled, a veteran dwarf; Mysn, a thri-kreen; and two humans, Berdia and Ashornu.

Rumors located Genaxak in the town of White Border, and Ib-Kner swiftly landed in the village. When Genaxak could not be found, an enraged Ib-Kner decided against the evidence that the townfolks were plotting with the sorcerer and ordered his minions to gather all the population of the small town in the city center, where, furious, he gave the order to slay them all. The templars started carrying out the executions, while the gladiators hesitated. Threatened by Ib-Kner, the two humans also started following the orders, but the other demihumans stood their ground. In the middle of the bloodbath, Ib-Kner confronted Hurtalak the mul: he told him that another refusal would be treated as treason. Hurtalak knew the meaning of this threat: death. Yet he did not move. Years of merciless fight in the arena had surely transformed him into a killing machine; but even the arena had its own code, and he never had to kill old and innocent people. In a moment, Hurtalak decided to rebel: he raised his stone axe and felled Ib-Kner. The templars, at the sight of their leader slain, turned on Hurtalak. The other gladiators, feeling the opportunity to grasp their freedom or simply the moment to exact a revenge on their oppressive masters, sided with their comrade. With the help of the locals, the five templars were defeated, although many, including Berdia, lost their lives.

In the following days, the townfolk took care of the wounded and offered unprecedented honor to Hurtalak. The survivors begged the mul to remain and protect them. Hurtalak and the

other gladiators did not have any other choice. Knowing that Kalid-Ma would certainly come to punish the rebels as soon as the news of the event had reached him, they decided that the only hope to survive would be to flee. Within a few days, the survivors, led by Hortalak and the other gladiators, left their hometown on a long march southwards.

The migrants marched for many days, leaving behind them the region nominally under the control of Kalidnay. They crossed desert, and avoided the Forest Ridge. They passed Celik and its ruins. Close to exhaustion, they finally decided to settle near a source of water in the arid place they have reached. Here they founded New Border.

The distance they marched assured them of safety. Kalid-Ma was never able to track them, or simply forgot about their flight. In the mind of a sorcerer-king every minion, even a faithful servant like Ib-Kner, is quickly forgotten. Or maybe, his revenge is just waiting. In any case, the small community, joined by a few other desperates along the way, quickly reorganized itself in the new environment under the leadership of the gladiators.

After a few months, Mysn left for the west. An ancestral call drew it back to the khanates of the thri-kreen to the north-west. However, the tie of gratitude felt by Mysn towards Hortalak has been passed down generations of thri-kreen through their collective memory, and still nowadays friendly thri-kreen come from the north to visit Hortalak's Grave.

Hortalak himself acted as the chief of the community in the following years, but he soon passed away leaving no heir, as it is sadly the fate of the sterile race of muls. The hero was buried with great honors in a tomb outside the town. After that, Daled the dwarf took up the leadership of the community, and since then his descendants have always been in charge of the town, putting in this task all their focus.

In time, the community stabilized, and two important trade routes reached it. The first one came from the north; at regular intervals of about thirty days, a thri-kreen merchant would reach the town with food products (grain, wheat, honey) and sometimes small quantities of metal; goods would be sold at very favorable conditions, due to the ancestral goodwill of the thri-kreen. The second one would reach the community more irregularly from the east; enterprising merchants of the House Maraneth would sometime arrive and sell their products (rice, clothes) for high profits.

**Year of the events.** The numbering of the years refers to the calendar of events defined by TSR; for its conversion to *Dungeons & Dragons* v3.5 refer to the page at: <https://athas.org/events>. However, keep in mind that this calendar is unknown to the PCs or to anyone in Hortalak's grave.

## SYNOPSIS

The events in this module take place around the Free Year –1226, two or three generations after the founding of Hortalak's Grave. The town has grown to its current population of almost 50 inhabitants, and its survival is strictly dependent on the constant arrival of traders; the land is arid, the herds limited, and only the food bought from the thri-kreen can guarantee the existence of the community.

Worryingly, the last expected thri-kreen is overdue by many days. Given the importance of this supply line, the leaders of the community decide to organize a party to be sent investigating the disappearance of the thri-kreen. The PCs are chosen for this task and entrusted with the crucial mission of finding out what happened to the trader, and possibly retrieving the vital goods.

The players are then sent out in the desert, on feeble tracks that no one in town has ever followed since the days of Mysn. Relying on rumors and vague hints the PCs have to make their way through the hostile environment of the Athasian desert.

If they manage to navigate their way across the shifting sands, they will reach an old trading post that in past ages used to be the abode of a preserver. Among the ruins they will discover the corpse of a thri-kreen. A rapid analysis of the body, as well as the missing goods, will allow the PCs to realize that the creature has been killed.

The murder has indeed happened recently, and a set of small tracks may be easily spotted around the trading spot. If the PCs decide to follow them, they will soon catch up with a small group of tari that, while moving eastward in the direction of Celik, has stumbled into the thri-kreen merchant and decided to kill it and rob it of its goods. A final confrontation may then take place between the PCs and the murderers, after which they can successfully return to the village with the long-awaited goods.

**Creatures of Athas.** This adventure uses several creatures native to Athas which are unknown in other settings. This includes playable races like thri-kreen, pterran; herd animals like erdlu, crodlu, carru; wild beasts like jhakar, kes'trekel, tembo; and enemies like tari and magera. Details and statistics may be found in <https://athas.org/products/toa>. The DM is suggested to introduce these new creatures gradually; after all, some wild creatures and enemies should feel exotic to

the characters as much as to the players.

## SETUP

Before the start of the adventure proper, some worldbuilding, alongside character creation, is recommended. These processes are meant to be interactive, allowing the DM to introduce the world of Athas, and giving the players the opportunity to get familiar with the world; more importantly, it will allow Hurltalak's Grave to be brought to life as a joint effort between the DM and the players.

**Worldbuilding.** DarkSun is a very different setting from traditional high-fantasy world, and the DM should try to pointedly convey the specific flavor of the world. However, instead of burying the players in the lore of Athas, it is recommended that the DM and the players perform some shared worldbuilding.

The initiative stands with DM, who should provide the players with the essential elements about the setting to allow immersion. It is suggested that the DM focuses on Hurltalak's Grave and its surrounding and describes the world in which the PCs have lived so far.

Describe the environment: like most places on Athas, the birthplace of the PCs lies in the middle of an arid and inclement desert. Days are long and blazing hot. Stress the heat that blisters the world, the torture of being outside under the inclement skies, the crackling skin under the whip of the sun, the infinite value of water, the unavoidable struggle to survive of every being.

Characterize the town where the PCs live: the village, as they know it, is for the players their whole universe. They have certainly heard stories and legends from the outer world, but they know little of the reality beyond their community, or in the Tablelands. Even the history of their own town is only partially known, normally shrouded in a fearful silence. Their concerns are for the day-to-day survival of their family and their community: the level of water in the well; the health of the herds of crodlu, erdlu and carru; the collection of berries on the few shrubs around the village; the reserves of grain; the few products of pottery and tanning used for barter with traders.

Present the main NPCs in town: among the 50 inhabitants of Hurltalak's grave, a special role is taken up by Daled the Young, a dwarf descendant of Daled and the *de facto* leader of the town, and Ardni, a human cleric of Water, who takes care of the souls of his fellow citizens.

**Scarcity.** It is useful to repeat how harsh the life in Hurltalak's Grave and Athas is. Survival is never guaranteed. Water is especially precious: it is always measured, and any waste is considered a sacrilege. Metal is fundamental for the construction of tools, and yet it is very rare; metal objects are kept like treasures and command high prices on the market. Exchanges mostly happens through barter; metal is too rare to be used for minting coins, and currency, when available, is made out of ceramic and clay. The main unit is the Ceramic piece (Cp), replacing the standard gold piece (gp). For a list of coins and their values, see <https://athas.org/products/ds3>

Once provided with these elements, let the players brainstorm about Hurltalak's Grave and their role in the small society. Who are other relevant characters in the village? Is there any important place in town? What role have the families of the PCs in the community? Are the PCs involved in any economic or social activity? As a DM, let the players be free to conceive their hometown and their place, but also guide their imagination towards a creation that is consistent with the setting and the adventure. If a player suggests the existence of a smith in town, remind them of the nearly complete absence of metal; if someone imagines himself working in a watermill, underline that no river can be found for miles around.

A good shared worldbuilding experience will allow the players to immerse themselves more in the setting, create a more lively starting place, and naturally provide valuable suggestions for character creation and for story hooks.

**Character creation.** Once the players have a good idea of the world they are playing in, the DM should move on to the actual character creation. This phase follows the standard rules of *Dungeons & Dragons v3.5*, with a few exceptions to account for the specificities of Athas.

**Pregenerated characters.** As an alternative, four pregenerated characters are provided in the accessory character pack. Stats for these characters have been computed according to the standard *Dungeons & Dragons 3.5* rules, with a few custom feats and perks coming from the DarkSun handbook <https://athas.org/products/ds3>. Descriptive details, like names, appearances and personalities are left to the initiative of the players. Players are also invited to edit their character sheets according to the rules if they wish.

**Races.** Although the core races of Athas are the same as in the base game, many of them are given distinguishing traits and feature. Before choosing, the DM should illustrate the major features of these races, and be sure that the players are aware of the distinguishing traits of each one.

Although most cities and settlements in Athas are highly segregated, the history and the



location of Hurltalak's Grave justifies a more integrated society. This will allow players a freer choice of race at the beginning of the game, as well as the possibility of learning and discovering prejudices about races while playing.

The following races are suggested to be used in this adventure: **humans**, **dwarves**, **elves**, **half-elves**, **halfling**, and **pterrans**. Notice that races like gnomes and half-orcs are normally not available in DarkSun; other Athasian races, such as aaracokra, half-giants, and muls are discouraged because unlikely to settle in Hurltalak's Grave, and in order to keep complexity limited; finally, thri-kreen are restricted for narrative reasons.

**Races in Athas.** Details and statistics for Athasian races may be found at <https://athas.org/products/ds3>.

**Classes.** Players should choose their classes consistently with the background they envisioned during worldbuilding and with the image they have of their character. Basic classes from *Dungeons & Dragons v3.5*, with restriction on arcane magic, should be available, that is, **barbarian**, **bard**, **cleric**, **druid**, **fighter**, **ranger**, **rogue**. The monk and the paladin classes are not normally available in DarkSun. Athasian specific classes, such as gladiator and templar, are advised against because they have no obvious place in Hurltalak's Grave.

The DM may allow a player to choose a spell-casting class, such as sorcerer, but players should be made aware of the dire cost of performing spells and the condemnation and scorn associated with it. Although the caster may be accepted in Hurltalak's Grave, she or he may become the target of persecution anywhere else in the world.

Players should choose two levels of classes.

**Classes in Athas.** Some classes have specific flavors in Athas: for instance, bards may follow the path of poison-masters; clerics, in absence of deities, worship elements. Details and statistic for Athasian classes may be found at <https://athas.org/products/ds3>.

**Magic in Athas.** Magic is one of the main reasons for the desertification of Athas. Although not everyone is aware of this connection, arcane magic is universally the target of a strong stigma. Common people are fearful and suspicious of magic. This attitude is well-justified by the use of defiling magic: defilers that cast arcane magic dry up energy from the surrounding environment, condemning any form of life. Some spellcasters refuse to become defilers and follow the path of preserving magic; unfortunately superstition and fear are often too rooted in the mind of commoners to grasp the difference between defiling and preserving magic. King-sorcerers are among the few who have enough power to publicly use magic; they jealously treasure this power, and quickly aim at suppressing whoever displays arcane

talents.

**Skills and feats.** Let the players choose skills and feats following the standard rules. However, allow all of them to have *Survival* as a class skill. Anyone living in the world of Athas has learned since childhood the importance of this skill.

**Equipment and wealth.** Hurltalak's Grave is a village with very limited resources. In general, the DM should let the PCs own those basic items that would normally be expected with respect to the background or occupation they have chosen. Unless consistent with their characters, players should not be given ownership of weapons or large amounts of money at the beginning. Moreover, all tools of trade they may own should be simple and basic, made out of bone, stone or wood; metal implements should be granted only within strict limits and only if necessary. The DM may also consider the possibility that tools which are important for the community but are costly (such as a metal shovel or a hammer) are collective properties.

**Magic.** Divine (and possibly arcane) caster can select their spells and domains according to the base rules. The only important exception is that no *Create Water* spell (or equivalent) is available.

**Spells in Athas.** Although arcane and divine magic works according to the standard rules, only specific spells and domains are available in Athas. Clerics, in particular, are unable to choose a deity as their patron, and their domains may look different from the basic ones. Listings of specific domains and spells are available at: <https://athas.org/products/ds3>

**Psionics.** In the absence of magic, psionic powers are widely available in Athas to many characters and creatures. The area around Celik, not too far from Hurltalak's Grave, is a particularly strong hotspot of psionic powers. All the inhabitants of the village may then have some raw psionic power, either latent or in a very weak form.

Players should be introduced to the existence of psionic powers from the beginning. Their PCs should be aware of possessing an innate psionic power that sometimes manifests through the simple expression of their will. They may have had experiences such as extending their arm to grab an object and having the object come to their grasp (basic telekinesis) or looking at a troubled friend and immediately intuiting what was going on with him (basic telepathy). This has made them aware that, by using their will, they may sometimes be able to bend reality to effect small changes on it.

For the sake of rules, the DM could adopt the official psionics systems in the *Psionics*

*Handbook* or in the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*, if he or she wishes; in such a case, it is still recommended that PCs are not given any psionics class (since they would have not had any opportunity to train, either by themselves or under a master), but just a limited number of psionic points and a few powers. Alternatively, to keep things simple, the DM could simply assign one or two powers with daily usage. If instead the DM is happy to keep things more fluid, it may rely on a more flexible approach in which players are assigned a small pool of psionic points, and allowed to use them in a free-form fashion; this rough system risks to be very handwavy, but it preserves the feeling of the characters of having access to a pervasive, but not well understood, source of power.

## SCENE 1: MEETING AT THE VILLAGE

Once Hortalak's Grave has been evoked, and the players have shaped their characters, the chronicle can begin.

**The call for a gathering.** Let the adventure start with the PCs engaged in their own everyday activity and let them take any initiative they want to. In the middle of the day, let them catch wind that Daled, the informal head of town, had called for a gathering of all the members of the village for that same evening. The news may reach the PCs in different ways according to their place in the community: they may be informed by a friend, passed on the news in the family, or provided the information by a messenger dispatched by Daled himself.

The call does not make any mention of the reason, but the sudden gathering of all the villagers may lead the PCs to suspect that something important has to be discussed. In the time before the gathering, the players are free to keep on with their occupation, or wander around questioning and gossiping about the coming meeting. By thinking over the reasons of the meeting, or by exchanging opinions with other villagers, the PCs may come up with a few different hypotheses.

Generic reasons which are often offered whenever a meeting is called are water and external dangers. Water from the local well is vital to the entire community; Daled monitors its level, and collective meetings are often summoned to discuss its use and distribution. Another rumor that is often brought up before such gathering is the *return of Kalid-Ma*; before passing away, Hortalak warned everyone to stay on guard, because one day Kalid-Ma could return to take his vengeance on the town; the

actual explanation on why Kalid-Ma should be attacking has now been forgotten by the current generation, but the phrase the *return of Kalid-Ma* is still frequently used to suggest the possibility of an attack by some external enemy.

A more contingent reason for the coming gathering may be the absence of thri-kreen merchants. Either the PCs or some other NPCs may raise the observation that the roughly monthly thri-kreen merchant has failed to show up. The importance of this event may not be easy to fathom for everyone, but now that the community has swelled to fifty individuals, the food resources provided through commerce are vital.

**The Athasian day.** The surface of Athas is daily scorched by a savage sun, and during the middle of the day temperature easily rises above 40 degree Celsius. Any long and extenuating activity in these conditions may turn into a death sentence. Athasians avoid strenuous tasks in those hours, looking for the shelter of a cool and shaded place. The risk and the danger of being under the sun should constantly be remarked to the players.

**The gathering.** In the late evening, after everyone has concluded their daily tasks, the whole community comes together inside Daled's hut, or in any other suitable place within the village as envisioned during the worldbuilding phase.

The main seats are held by Daled and Adni. Other villagers take their place, mostly joining close relatives or members of their own race. This may be a good opportunity for the DM to illustrate some dynamics between races that are peculiar to Athas; within Hortalak's Grave, the common past has ensured good relationships between the inhabitants, but deeply rooted prejudices may still appear from time to time; for instance, if any halfling is present, the DM may underline the possible fearful or disdainful reaction of local elves.

With the assent of Daled, the matter of concern is soon presented to the community by Adni:

"My friends and fellows... As some of you may have noticed, the usual thri-kreen envoy has not yet shown up. Almost a week has passed since the day its arrival was scheduled, and no information has reached us. This is not a matter of alarm, but certainly of grave concern."

Adni's declaration will raise a number of uneasy whispers among the presents. Let the PCs exchange opinions with their neighbors or even intervene directly. It should quickly become clear to them, if it was not already, that the missing merchant may be a sign of dire problems. Although the town has reserves, if the

trade route with the thri-kreen were to disappear, famine and other problems would soon hit the community.

In order to quiet down the whispering and restore the silence, Daled will step up and repeat:

“As Adni said, this is a matter of concern, not of alarm. The delay is probably caused by some minor accidents.”

And as the presents calm down, he will add:

“Yet, we have decided that it would be wise to investigate into these events. Therefore... we need some volunteers willing to try to track the thri-kreen merchants...”

**Daled the Young.** Daled is a dwarf, the grandchild of the gladiator who, together with Hortalak, led the founding of the village. Like his predecessors, he is the chief of the community; although he inherited the position, his commitment to the village and his care for its survival have earned him wide approval. Indeed, his dwarven focus is on the welfare of Hortalak’s Grave. Daled is a robust and hardworking member of the community, often willingly taking up the hardest tasks in town. He is also one of the few people who sometimes keep working under the deadly midday sun, when everyone else is looking for the shelter of shade; this is the cause of a certain pride for the dwarf, but also the reason why the skin on his face and shoulders is severely dark and baked. Daled also owns a short sword of metal he has inherited from his grandfather. He always carries it around with him, almost as a sign of his authority. He takes jealous care in preserving the blade in a good condition, and he uses it only when necessary. Because of this rare use, Daled is not actually proficient with the sword.

**Adni.** Adni is a middle-aged human who has consecrated himself to the service of the Water Element. Deep lines on his face, together with a serious and dignified portmanteau, makes Adni look older than he really is. He normally speaks slowly and sparingly; he puts a strong gravity in all his actions, which enhances his authority. As a cleric of Water, he oversees the use of water across the village, and he is in charge of purifying and blessing water before any civil or religious ceremony. Although his manners may at times seem cold and detached, he is second only to Daled in his sincere care for the welfare and the survival of the community.

**The selection of the volunteers.** The call for volunteers on the side of Daled will certainly generate a reaction among the audience, and, possibly, among the PCs. Have other NPCs step forward, and let the dynamics within the village come to the forefront, possibly raising the tensions. If the PCs are reluctant to take the initiative, have Adni name them explicitly, putting pressure, if not coercion, on them to volunteer.

Ideally, at the end there will be a pool of candidates including the PCs and other notable

characters from the village. At this point, it will be up to the authority of Daled to make the final selection. Daled could choose simply out of his own authority, or have a random draw to select the chosen ones. In this last case, a deck of cards will be produced and an amount of cards equal to the number of volunteers will be set on the table; every candidate will be asked to draw a card, and those with the highest numbers will take the task. Adni, who dislikes chance, will use his psionic power to direct the draw to the outcome he considers the best. If any PC pays attention to Adni, or obtains a good success on a *Spot* roll, she may notice Adni’s eyes following the deck closely; this may raise the suspicion that he may be psionically manipulating the odds. To any accusation, Adni will simply reply that a simple prayer has never led to bad consequences.

Whatever method is chosen for the final selection of the volunteers, the DM should have all the PCs in this final group, plus any NPCs deemed important or necessary for the story.

**Card drawing.** Using a customized deck for the card drawing may be a simple way to enhance immersion and to introduce the players to characters or idea specific to the DarkSun setting. Collect cards from a standard deck, and convert figures or numbers to important Athasian figures. For instance, the following pairings may be adopted: ace of spades for *Rajaat*, ace of hearts for an *avangion*, king of spades for *Borys of Ur Draxa*, king of clubs for *Kalid-Ma*, jack of diamonds for an *id-fiend*, seven of diamonds for a *cloud ray*, five of clubs for a *templar knight*, and ace of heart for the *dark sun*. Let them the players draw a card, and then describe what they see on it; take the opportunity to explain the meaning of the picture and introduce more DarkSun lore. Optionally, the drawing of the card may be also used to assign psionic powers to the PCs.

**A briefing on the road.** Once the volunteers have been chosen, the villagers will start streaming out of the meeting. Let some of them stop by the PCs to express gratitude or offer condolences. When almost everyone has left, Daled and Adni will take the players aside to better explain what they are expected to do.

As it should be clear by now, the thri-kreen merchant has been missing for a week. Given the importance of the goods it is transporting, and in light to the good will the thri-kreen have always showed to the town, it seems right to try to find out what has happened, especially if the trader has gotten lost or found trouble along the way. Finding clues and retrieving the thri-kreen or its wares must be the main objective. Adni promptly warns the PCs:



“A great burden is placed on your shoulders. Be inquisitive, but careful. Do not act hastily. Do not take initiative. We owe a special debt of gratitude to the thri-kreen: without them, of our village would be none. Offending them would be an utter mistake. Were you to discover anything, bring that knowledge back here. All together, we can safely choose the best steps to take.”

The cautious words of Adni, are followed by Daled:

“Indeed! Find out what you can about the fate of the thri-kreen. Its fate is our fate. And if you find any sign of the goods it was transporting, bring them back. Anything that could replenish our stocks means one more day for the town... One more day we can use to sort out what happened with the thri-kreen.”

Although the main task of investigating and the secondary objective of retrieving the goods are clear, the PCs will realize that the details of how to accomplish these missions are dramatically undefined. The responsibility to share this truth with them will fall on Adni:

“We have chosen you for your resourcefulness. The sad truth, my fellows, is that no one here in town has ever traveled the path of the thri-kreen to the north. We have no accounts, no map. We know only what the thri-kreen explained to us. Their settlements lie about a week of march through the desert. The path through the sand is not well-marked, your guide will be the sky. Always follow the direction between *The Kenku* and *The Spider*.”

As explained by Adni, there is no local knowledge in the village about the path the PCs are supposed to travel. Shepherds sometimes take their herds on the north side of town, but never venture far to avoid the risk of getting lost among the shifting sands. Nor there is any map; it may be worth underlining that maps are in general rare, and they are usually carved onto ceramic tablets or on flat bones. The best way for the PCs to proceed is by orienting themselves with respect to the stars: *The Kenku* and *The Spider* are two constellations marking a north north-west direction. Also, the need to follow the stars should provide the players with a hint that it would be better practice to travel by night.

Let the PCs free to ask more questions. Daled and Adni will provide more information on what the PCs may expect to find on the way. According the thri-kreen account, the first two or three days are the most critical, as they will require the PCs to travel through open desert. By keeping the right direction, the PCs are

expected to reach a tall rock formation called the **Head of the Lizard** after about one and half or two days. Leaving this waymark on their right, they will then cross a perilous stretch of desert, known as the **Throat of the Lizard** where strong changing winds blow constantly. After a further half or a full day, the PCs will come in sight of the **Spine of the Lizard**, a long rocky formation stretching for many kilometers. In the shadow of this chain, the PCs should be able to locate a small trading post, where usually all thri-kreen merchants stop. Following the western wall of the Spine, the PCs will then reach a long canyon, the **Tail of the Lizard**, in another day. From there on, they can just follow the canyon and arrive at some thri-kreen settlement within three days.

Neither Daled nor Adni has any direct experience of this journey, only the accounts they heard. Therefore, they can not offer very specific precautions to the PCs, except generic warning about the hazards of the beating sun, of getting lost, and of running out of water. All these dangers should, however, be well-known to any Athasian.

**The preparation.** Preparing for the journey through the desert is one of the main challenges in this adventure. Players should brainstorm and try to plan out how they would cross the desert. If this turns out to be particularly difficult, the DM may offer hints, based on the fact that the characters have likely more experience in how to deal with the desert than the players.

Given the importance of this task, many of the resources in the village will be promptly made available to the PCs. Daled will lead them around town and, as long as the requests of the PCs are reasonable, he will use his authority to procure them what they need. The DM, however, should keep in mind that Hortalak's Grave is a poor settlement, and owns a very limited amount of goods.

Food and water will be collected for the PCs upon their request. Let the players decide how many rations (per day) and how much water they want to transport. If the players are uncertain, make them aware that an estimate of water necessary for a single day of journeying is about 4 liters. The town owns several canisters of water made out of animal skin, each one with a capacity of approximately 4 liters. Daily provisions consists of small packs of nuts, dried meat and fruit.

Other basic equipment that may be found in the village includes desert travel clothes made out of light fabric, which also offer protection for eyes and mouth in case of sandstorm; thick

ropes made out of hemp; bedrolls and blankets for the cold desert night; tent to rest out of the beating sun; torches and flint. Metal objects such as nails or a shovel are likely not available.

Concerning weapons, the village has a limited selection of primitive weapons made out of bone, stone or wood. The PCs may opt for basic weapons such as spears, staffs, clubs, slings or short bows made out of wood; or they may choose more unusual weapons such as a bone mace (*alak*), a bone dagger (*puchik*) or a jawbone axe (*carrikal*). Very simple protective gear, such as padded, leather or hide armors are available, but it should be clear to the players that wearing such an armour while traveling in the desert would be extremely hard; alternatively, the PCs could get simple wood bucklers or small shields.

According to the background of the PCs, or conditional on a successful *Diplomacy* checks, the players can secure the lending of one or two pack animals, such as *erdlus* or *crodlus*. Such beasts are a very important component in the economy of the town, but, once again, the task at hand may be presented in a compelling enough way to justify risking one or at most two of them.

If it fits the gameplay of the group, the DM should require the players to account for the weight of all their equipment, how the stuff would be carried and finally compute what the speed of the party would be. This would add to the realism and to the feeling that the journey ahead will be dangerous and potentially deadly; a good preparation is an essential part to survive the hostile environment ahead. *Appendix A: Tables* collects tables and statistics related to equipment and travel.

## SCENE 2: CROSSING THE DESERT

Whenever they have collected what they deem necessary, the players are free to leave Hortalak's Grave at any time they prefer. Daled, Adni and few other villagers will be present to bid farewell to the PCs. These few figures will remain standing looking at the PCs until they disappear on the horizon.

Slowly, with all your equipment, you undertake the way leading you into the emptiness of the Athasian desert. One by one the figures that took you to the border of town go back to their life, the last one standing there, an arm in the air waving farewell to you, is Adni.

The DM is invited to stress and remark constantly how hostile and deadly is the

environment. The players should never lose focus on how harsh and perilous is the condition in which they now are.

It is not long before your hometown disappears from sight, a point lost on the horizon, a small oasis where life can thrive. Now, you are alone in the deadly vastness of a cruel desert. Nothing else but sand, heat, and death for miles and miles.

To accentuate this feeling, rely on the following rules to make the life of the PCs tough.

**Sun.** The hot sun of Athas is a constant threat to life for whoever lives or travels through the desert. Locals have learned to organize their life around the time schedule of the sun, avoiding being directly under the sun during the hottest part of the day. Even journeying takes place mostly in the relatively cool hours of the morning, evening and night, leaving the afternoon as a time during which to rest in the shade.

For gaming purposes, it is handy to divide a day in three parts: **night hours** from 2000 to 0700 when the sun is set and the desert rapidly cools down; **warm hours** from 1700 to 2000 and from 0700 to 1000 when the sun is setting or rising and the desert is warm; **hot hours** from 1000 to 1700 when sun is high and heat constitutes a threat.

If PCs were to travel or undertake any tiring activity during the *hot hours* of the day, the DM should evoke the duress of such a task and the characters should feel the toll of the sun. If the players have not decided from the start to travel outside the *hot hours*, they should quickly learn to do so because of the consequences of being active in the *hot hours*.

**Water and dehydration.** Water is key to survival in the desert. The amount of water the players have decided to carry will determine how far they can get, and how fast they move.

Require the players to consume everyday the amount of water they need to keep hydrated. To make things simple, the DM may require the consumption of the daily amount of water at the end of each day, or every twenty-four hours. The base amount of water per day is 4 liters for the PCs and 3 liters for pack animals (*erdlus* and *crodlus*). To this starting quantity, add the following modifiers:

## WATER CONSUMPTION MODIFIER

Condition	Water required
Traveling without desert clothes	+0.5 l/day
Traveling wearing a light armor	+1 l/day
Traveling wearing a medium/heavy armor	+2 l/day
Traveling fatigued	+0.5 l/day
Traveling during the <i>hot hours</i>	+0.5 l/hour

Penalties for traveling without desert clothes and wearing an armor do not stack, only the highest applies. Penalties for traveling during the *hot hours* applies to pack animals, too.

If a PC does not have enough water, she risks getting **dehydrated**. After a number of hours equal to 6 + Constitution bonus past the moment when she failed to drink enough water, the PC will have to make a Fortitude save every hour with DC 10 +1 for every previous check. Upon failing, the PC will become dehydrated: the character is fatigued, and any nonlethal damage counts as lethal; in addition, since becoming dehydrated, every hour she suffers a 1D6 damages, and has to make a Will save with DC 10 +1 for every previous check. Upon failing, her alignment is temporarily switched to *chaotic evil* as she will try to get hold of water in any way possible.

Dehydration can be cured only by drinking water. Consuming a liter of water will negate the dehydrated condition (but not heal any damage suffered because of dehydration)<sup>1</sup>.

**Desert night and cold.** As the sun sets, the sand will quickly cool and the temperature will drop to negative values. Although the PCs are familiar with this change, the DM should emphasize to the players the sudden fall in temperature, and make them aware that cold may constitute a danger in its own right.

During the *night hours*, as long as they travel or perform physical activities, the PCs will be able to keep warm enough with little difficulty. If for any reason the PCs can not keep warm, have them take a Fortitude save with DC 10 every hour; in case of failure, they will suffer 1D4 nonlethal damages<sup>2</sup>.

**Camping and resting.** At the end of each day, the PCs will need to rest. Setting up camp may pose different challenges during different parts of the day.

During *hot hours* the PCs may want to set up a camp offering shadow and protection from the sun. If they are carrying a tent they may mount it and find shelter inside. The desert is otherwise

<sup>1</sup>These rules are an adaptation of the dehydration rules in the *Sandstorm* handbook. The DM should feel free to tailor the mechanics to the story.

<sup>2</sup>These rules are an adaptation of the rules about the dangers of cold in the *Prostburn* handbook. The DM should feel free to tailor the mechanics to the story.

mostly empty; rock formations that cast any shadow, like the Head of the Lizard or the Spine of the Lizard, are rare enough to become named reference points. Resting under the sun is non-ideal, and it will require the consumption of an additional 1 liter of water. After two nights of sleeping under the sun, a PC will automatically acquire the fatigued condition.

During the *night hours*, if the PCs have a bedroll, a blanket, or a tent they will also be able to pass the night without problems. Alternatively, if they light a fire, they will also be able to spend a restful night. If they just lie down under the stars with no cover or source of heat, they will spend a hard and broken night; after two such nights, a PC will acquire the fatigued condition.

A complete rest requires at least 7 hours of sleep. After two nights with less than 7 hours of sleep, a PC will acquire the fatigued condition.

**Orienteering.** Finding and keeping the way across a flat land with no distinctive features is another big problem. No marked path leads from Hortalak's Grave to the land of the thri-kreen, and the only fixed reference is the stars. During the night, the two moons of Athas, together with the stars, shine very brightly in the sky. There is a low chance of 20% that the sky would be covered.

Keeping the direction explained by Adni (between *The Kenku* and *The Spider*) is immediate during the *night hours* if the sky is not covered; otherwise it requires a *Survival* skill check with DC 15 every two hours. Maintaining the route during the *warm hours* is relatively easy, as some stars are still distinguishable in the early morning or late evening, and it requires only a *Survival* skill check with DC 10 every two hours. Distinguishing the right direction during the *hot hours* under the scorching sun is challenging and it requires a *Survival* skill check with DC 18 every two hours.

### ORIENTEERING IN THE DESERT

Time	Survival DC
<i>Warm hours</i>	10 / 2hrs
<i>Hot hours</i>	18 / 2hrs
<i>Night hours</i> (cloudy)	15 / 2hrs
<i>Night hours</i> (starry)	-

If the check is failed, the PCs may end up moving in the wrong direction; roll a 1D4: 1 means they got so lost they effectively moved backward half their speed; 2 and 3 means they moved in circles covering no distance; 4 means they progressed in approximately the same direction, but covering only half of the distance they were supposed to walk. After the usual two hours, allow for a new *Survival* check to get back to the right route.



## GETTING LOST IN THE DESERT

Roll	Survival DC
1	Negative progression at half speed
2-3	No progression
4	Progression at half speed

**Traveling.** To account for the distance the PCs travel, evaluate the party speed: compute the base speed of each component (pack animals included), calculate their weight, re-assess their speed, and finally select the lowest result. Use this value to track the number of kilometers traveled by the party each hour, modifying it in case the PCs were to get lost.

If the procedure is too cumbersome, the DM is free to change and approximate this procedure, simplify it (for instance, by tracking progress on a squared sheet), or just drop it altogether. These mechanics are just a suggestion, but the DM should choose whatever method guarantees the best immersion and storytelling.

For reference, a map is provided in the appendix for the DM where all the places described in the following pages are displayed. **From Hortalak's Grave to the Head of the Lizard.** The first leg of the journey is one of the most difficult, as it takes the PCs through a uniform land where getting lost seems a real possibility.

You have been walking for many hours, in a land that seems to repeat without end. All around the same grains of sand, the same heavy sky, the same battering sun. It seems like nothing changes, and from time to time you are gripped by the fear that there might be no progress, that you are stuck in an infinite arena of sand.

The distance to the Head of the Lizard is about 40-50km. When they are within 5km of the Head, the PCs will observe a few kes'trekel flying over them. A success on a *Knowledge (Nature)* skill check with DC 10 allows the PCs to recognize the birds as kes'trekel, a carrion eating bird that flies looking for dead creatures to devour; a success at DC 15 adds the fact that kes'trekel are territorial birds, they often live in packs, and they are able to travel far and soar high by mastering wind currents; a success at DC 20 reveals that kes'trekel have mild psionic powers; finally, a success at DC 25 brings the knowledge that kes'trekel eggs are reputed to grant benefits to sight and they command high prices on certain markets.

From a couple of kilometers of distance, the PCs will be able to spot the Head of the Lizard, a not-very-impressive vertical rock formation. The Head stands about 8 meters high; although natural, at the base it resembles a column with

a large circumference. Its summit bifurcates in what may look like the forked tongue of a reptile, or two small horns.

At the top of the rock formation, about twenty kes'trekel observe the PCs. Hidden between the two horns at the top of spire is a nest. Climbing the Head of the Lizard is a relatively easy feat, thanks to several cracks and handles; a *Climb* check with DC 8 is sufficient to get to the top without any problem. The main obstacle will be constituted by the birds; as they will realize that a PC is approaching the nest, they will take off and start circling ominously around the top of the Head of the Lizard. When a PC is almost at the top, the birds will use the *aversion* psionic power, requiring a *Will* save at DC 11 (full description of the power is on the *Expanded Psionic's Handbook*); if a PC fails the saving roll, she will fall and suffer 2D6 damages. If the PC resists the attack, she will be able to get to the top and will see the nest. At this point, most of the kes'trekel will just disperse. The DM can decide whether a few of these birds will attack (statistics for these creatures are available in *Terrors of Athas*). Inside the nest there are three eggs, which can be collected by the PCs. If they decide to eat them, they may remain disappointed: beside the good taste there is no other effect. If they decide to sell them, they may earn up to 40 Cp for each egg.

**Through the Throat of the Lizard.** The Head of the Lizard represents an important waymark, signaling that the PCs have gone the right way, and pointing to the next steps. The following leg is a perilous stretch of desert, extending for about 20km, known for its strong and suddenly-changing winds.

As you leave behind the standing Head of the Lizard, fierce winds starts whipping your body with their cold finger and blinding you with sand in your eyes. The gales are strong and capricious, like spirits sometimes pushing you, other times pulling you. Ahead rise towering dunes where the wind is constantly pouring and removing sand.

The inconstant currents have given rise here to a peculiar landscape characterized by star-shaped dunes. Winds can radically change their direction in a matter of few seconds, and this may induce a rapid transformation of the territory. With the effect of an avalanche, sands will start moving in a new direction, the current ridge of the dunes will crumble under the feet of anyone so unlucky to be on the top, and they will quickly reappear elsewhere, possibly burying passers-by. Seen from afar, it will look like the star-shaped dunes are rotating to align themselves to the direction of the wind.

This totally natural phenomenon may constitute a very real danger to the PCs. Anyone who succeeds on a *Survival* check with DC 15 is savvy enough to have a generic understanding that sand and wind may hide some danger; a success at DC 20 means that a PC has previously heard of moving dunes; only with a success at DC 30 or more a PC is aware of the exact danger ahead.

While crossing this area there will be a 50% chance of a sudden wind change every two hours.

It takes only a few moments. A high-pitched howl of the wind, like a wolf calling the pack to the hunt, announces a sudden change in the direction of the winds. The sand moves and crumbles, so sensitive to the whims of the wind. It's like an earthquake, like an avalanche. All the world around seem to be undergoing a revolution.

If the PCs are walking on the ridge of a dune during such an event, they will have to take a *Reflex* save with DC 15 or a *Jump* check with DC 20 to try to cope with the suddenly disappearing ground under their feet. If they succeed they will be able to slide down in the direction opposite to the wind, and land in a safe spot. If they fail they will find themselves falling into the void and carried by a sand avalanche suffering 1D6 damage; moreover they will risk being buried.

If the PCs are walking under one of the dunes when the winds change, or if they have fallen down from a ridge failing their saving throw, they will have to take a *Reflex* save with DC 15 or a *Run* check with DC 20 to try to escape the sand avalanche. If they succeed they will be able to move quickly enough and to keep their head over the sand. If they fail they will be buried under the sand suffering 1D6 damage. When buried, a PC will take a further 1D6 of nonlethal damage for every minute until freed<sup>3</sup>.

The safest approach for the PCs would be to walk around the dunes, avoiding climbing them or walking in their shadow. Such a policy will secure them from falling in the trap of the changing winds, but it will also significantly slow them down. Crossing the Throat of the Lizard by skirting far from the dunes will increase the travel time of the party by 50%.

Although winds will appear to change in a random fashion to the PCs, there is actually a set patterns in their dynamics. This timing has been learned by thri-kreen merchants, who know when it is safe to cross the Throat of the

<sup>3</sup>This rules are an adaptation of the avalanche rules in the *Dungeon's Master Guide* handbook. The DM should feel free to tailor the mechanics to the story.

Lizard. The wind patterns are also innately known by the kes'trekel, which take off from the Head of the Lizard to cross the Throat at safe times. Observant players may consider this possibility, or PCs with high *Survival* or *Knowledge (nature)* may be tipped off about it. **Towards the Spine of the Lizard.** A further 20km of quiet desert lies ahead after leaving behind the Throat of the Lizard.

It finally seems that the winds have quieted down for good. For once, the flat and dry landscape in front of you seems welcome. No more dunes and sand avalanches. Back to sun and emptiness.

This section will mainly present to the PCs the same challenge as the first leg: heat, thirst, and the danger of getting lost.

Soon the players will start distinguish the profile of the Spine of the Lizard on the horizon. Differently from the Head, this is a tall rocky formation extending for kilometers in the north-west direction. The structure rises for over fifty meters; the walls are not steep, and can be climbed with a simple *Climb* DC 8 skill check; at the top is a flat and sandy plateau, which, during the day, is particularly hot and hostile to life.

Reaching this point is an important checkpoint for the PCs. From now on they can easily proceed keeping the Spine of the Lizard to their right. Going that direction for another 5km, they will be able to reach the trading stop. Although they may have no reason to do so at this moment, if the PCs were to check for footprints, with a *Survival* check at DC 15 they could realize the presence in the sand of several small footprints going in the opposite direction they are walking; the footprints do not belong to a thri-kreen.

If the PCs decide to go the wrong direction, or if, after getting lost, they approach the Spine of the Lizard from the wrong direction, they may stumble into the cave of a magera, a solitary and dull humanoid the size of a half-giant. If provoked by the PCs or attracted by their treasure, the magera may attack the players. Mageras are violent and potentially deadly for the PCs; players may try to subdue the creature with their wile, or simply retreat.

**The pack of jhakars.** To make the desert environment more alive, the DM is invited to introduce at any time she deems convenient a pack of jhakars. Jhakars are predatory animals often hunting in small packs, taking advantage of the territory, and assailing weaker and moribund creatures. One or two jhakars may appear on the horizon, and they may start

following the PCs, waiting for the sun to weaken them to the point of being an easy prey. In time, more jhakars could join the starting pack to partake in the prospective feast.

A *Knowledge (nature)* or *Knowledge (monsters)* check with DC 15 makes a PC aware that jhakars are fierce pack predators; a success at DC 20 allows the PC to know that jhakars are sometimes domesticated and make feared guard animals; a success at DC 25 provides good knowledge of their hunting tactics: trail the potential prey, gather the pack, attack when the target is at the weakest, take down one by one all the preys; finally a success at DC 30 reveals that these desert creatures are sworn enemies of tembos.

The PCs are free to try to approach the jhakars and deal with them at any time. If the jhakars are outnumbered, they simply disperse and they will then look for other prey. Otherwise, they will stand their ground and try to fight back against the PCs. Jhakars are not particularly smart, but they gang together against individual foes, trying to grab and pull them down. Once engaged, they fight until death, knowing that running away wounded would just mean a slower death in the unforgiving desert.

If the PCs do not take the initiative, let the jhakars follow the PCs, getting closer little by little, and attacking at any time the players appear vulnerable. If fitting, a further creature, a tembo, a sworn enemy of the jhakar may appear; this again may happen even during a melee, thus adding a third party to the fight and more uncertainty about the resolution. If that were to happen, jhakars and tembo will fight each other first due to their ancestral enmity.

## SCENE 3: REACHING THE TRADING STOP

After covering the last 5km, the long-awaited trading stop will finally appear in sight.

Unexpectedly something stands out ahead, in the long shadow of the Spine of the Lizard. Something which is not another natural feature of this inhospitable land, but something artificial, made by human hand. It takes you a little effort to believe your eyes, trust that you are not facing a mirage, but far in front of you stands the stone wall of what looks like a small building.

In front of the PCs lies a unnamed building, informally known to the few travelers who cross this region as *Under-the-Lizard*. Thri-kreen merchants bringing their wares to Hortalak's Grave stop here to find shelter from the sun and

rest. In ancient times, this place hosted the school of the preserver Arghaion. Barring exceptional circumstances, it would be reasonable for the DM to assume that none of the PCs has ever heard of this place before.

A rustic stone house measuring about five meters by five meters is the only building of any relevance. The structure has two opposite entrances: a large arched passage on one side, and a smaller entrance preceded by three steps on the other side. There is no door, and the two openings have been oriented in order to maximize the flow of air.

On the side of the main arched entrance there is a small courtyard with two lines of three columns and a well in the middle. The colonnade was part of an older construction and they are not supporting anything anymore. Some hooks have been nailed into the columns: a set of hooks in the upper part of the column is used to hang clothes to shade the courtyard, while a few hooks at chest level are used to tie animals. A cut rope hangs from one of the hooks.

On the side of the secondary entrance, and on another side, stones, broken columns and wood lie all around. A large area is covered by the ruins of what used to be the more ancient construction of the tower of Arghaion. Indeed, simple observation is enough for the PCs to realize that the current stone house is significantly more recent than whatever stood here previously.

**The tower of Arghaion.** Centuries before Under-the-Lizard was converted into a trading stop, this place used to be the tower of a powerful preserver wizard, Arghaion. A small cabal gathered here in the solitude and safety of this place, in order to study and record magic. From time to time, a few of the disciples would leave to travel and acquire new knowledge, and they would return years later bringing artifacts and new spells. In time, the school of Arghaion gained relevance as a place for the study of preserving magic. Unfortunately, this importance started to attract the attention of outsiders. During the age of Eradication, the sorcerer-kings dispatched their minions to kill druids; lacking the subtlety to distinguish between druids and preserver wizards, the servants of the sorcerer kings stormed the tower. The sieged casters resisted bravely for many days. Some stories tell that one of the sorcerer-kings in person had to intervene to break their defenses and kill Arghaion (although, by that time, Arghaion was probably already dead). At the end, all the wizards were slain, the fortress looted, and the tower torn down. Most of the valuables in this place have been long taken away, either by the first attackers or by robbers who stopped in this place in the following centuries. Yet some of the most secretive underground chambers still lie unopened and hold powerful objects.

**The well.** At the center of the courtyard, the presence of the well may immediately attract the attention of thirsty and tired PCs. A wooden



bucket with a rope is left on the side of the well, and in its depths it is easy to notice the sparkle of water.

Unfortunately, the bucket and the well have been recently used by tari who have contaminated its water. Whoever drinks from the bucket has a 10% chance of encountering a tari disease. In such an event, the PC will have to make *Fortitude* check with DC 10; failure will lead to a period of 1D3 days of disease incubation followed by the loss of 1D3 *Constitution* points. This danger may be avoided if the PCs carefully clean the bucket before use or if they cast a spell like *Purify Water*. Also, if any PC were to take a *Spot* check with DC 15 before drinking, she will notice some non-human hairs in the bucket, suggesting that some animal may have been using the bucket. **Inside the building.** The inside of the building is refreshingly cool, but the attention of the PCs will be immediately caught by a large figure leaning against one of the walls.

Out of the shadows, your attention immediately runs toward a large black figure apparently folded on itself. Light seems to reflect on the flat and shiny body, while its head with two long antennae hung forward in the void. The creature is silent and motionless.

Lying dead is the thri-kreen merchant the PCs have been sent to look for. The creature has been dead for more than one day, and its body has been abandoned there. Six holes in its chitinous armor reveals the mortal wounds that killed it. Two of this wounds have an entrance opening and an exit opening, and behind the thri-kreen the PCs can find a couple of small darts; notice that crossbows are unknown to the PCs, so it may be puzzling to them how such a short arrow could have been thrown or used effectively. Also, the PCs will notice that the thri-kreen has only three of the four arms such creatures normally have; indeed next to the junction between the body and the left upper arm there are clear signs of cutting.

About two days ago, the thri-kreen had stopped, as always, at Under-the-Lizard during its journey to Hurltalak's Grave. It had tied its crodlu with the merchandise to one of the columns outside, and then went inside for a break. While resting inside the building, a pack of tari had stumbled into the trading post. Entering silently the building, they had snuck up on the thri-kreen and attacked it by surprise. Shot at blank point with two small crossbows and hit by two daggers, the thri-kreen had died before it could even stand up. The tari had then taken the few coins the thri-kreen was carrying

on its person; one of them tried to steal the gythka that the thri-kreen was holding in its left hand at the moment of death; unable to force the hand open, it had decided to cut the whole arm in the most vulnerable point near the shoulder. The tari had then drank to their fill at the well, rested for the day in holes dug in the ground, and then left the following night taking with them the crodlu with all the goods the thri-kreen was transporting.

**The tracks of the tari.** Confronted with the body of the thri-kreen merchant and the absence of its goods, the PCs may try to find out what happened. Establishing the cause of the death is clear. A success in a *Search* check with DC 15 within the building or right outside the arched entrance will reveal several recent footprints all around; a success at DC 20 allows to conclude that the footprints belong to some form of humanoid smaller than a human; a success at DC 25 leads to number the footprints to five or six pairs; a success at DC 30 gives the certainty that the footprints belong to tari. Inside the building there is nothing else of interest: only sand, dust and the trash produced by merchants stopping by and leaving behind leftovers of food or discarded items.

Following the tracks takes the PCs out of the building to one of the columns in the courtyard (where the merchant's crodlu was tied), then to the well (where the tari drank), and finally outside the courtyard. On the way they will also notice a strange wooden object with the shape of a little bow; this is a small and primitive broken crossbow that one of the tari had with it that fell apart after the ambush; unable to fix it, the tari just discarded the object. Once again, the PCs have no knowledge of crossbows, and the nature of such an object will appear to them obscure. A successful *Intelligence* check with DC 15 allows them to put together somehow the dart found in the building with this strange bow-like object; a success at DC 20 allows to figure out how the mechanism worked. PCs with relevant *Craft* or *Profession* skills may want to take the object with them and study it with more care in order to figure out how to fix it or replicate it.

Beyond the courtyard, the footprints lead to a small area where the PCs can notice a few stones and ashes (the remains of a fire the tari lit in the night) and six small underground pits (where the tari rested). A success on *Survival* or *Knowledge (nature)* at DC 15 reveals to the PCs that certain creatures may escape the heat of the day by burrowing. In this particular case the creature must have been half the size of a human.

Finally, further tracks leave from this place in

the direction from which the PCs arrived. An additional success in *Survival* at DC 12 reveals that the small humanoid footprints are now associated with the footprints of a beast of burden, likely a crodlu.

**The tari gang.** The group of tari responsible for the murder of the thri-kreen merchant is part of a larger tribe of tari living in the west. This splinter group has left its homeland to move east. Their leader is Mazir, an old and fanatical druid, who received a summon from another druid, Rinch Whitefang, to join the Ythri Colony in Celik. Only five young tari responded to the call of Mazir and together set off for Celik. They have been traveling using a rough map carved on a shell, and they got lost a few times, thus consuming their limited resources. When arriving in Under-the-Lizard they did not think twice about killing the thri-kreen to get hold of its food and goods before moving again eastward. More on the tari of the Ythri Colony can be read at <https://athas.org/articles/Tari-of-the-Ythri-Snarl>.

**Under the ruins of the tower.** Even if no tari track leads among the ruins, the PCs may decide to search this area as well. It will not be hard to realize that other visitors and travelers have previously moved across and searched this zone. Narrow open paths do indeed snake through the ruins in between stones and clutter.

PCs scouting through the ruins should be allowed a *Search* check with DC 20; this DC may be lowered according to the DM's discretion if a PC decides to spend more than thirty minutes searching or if she explicitly looks for trap doors. In case of success, a very well hidden secret passage is revealed.

Something has captured your attention. A sort of line in the ground. A large pile of debris has to be moved, but at last it reveals something: under the broken axes and the large stones hides the contour of an old wooden trap door.

The secret door is shut, but, given the wood is very old, it will be easy for the PCs to force or break it open. A vertical chimney plunges into the dark for about 5 meters. A wooden ladder is still laying against the wall; close inspection will reveal that the wood is old and fragile. If a PC uses the ladder, there is a 50% chance that the old wooden steps of the ladder will break; if so, the PC will have to take a *Reflex* save with DC 20; in case of success she will manage to hold to the ladder and slow down the fall; in case of failure she will fall to the bottom suffering 1D6 damages. PCs can also drop down to the bottom of the chimney; a success of a *Jump* skill check with DC 15 guarantees a safe landing; otherwise the character will incur 1D6 damages.

A small, dark and damp room opens in front of you. Along the sides shelves with broken jars and pots are aligned along the walls. On the flat wall in front of you a large rough stone door stands ominously. As you look around, you start panting. The air down here is very heavy and it is hard to breathe.

Having been sealed for centuries, this underground crypt now has dangerously low levels of oxygen. In a couple of rounds the PCs will feel dizzy; lack of oxygen will affect the clarity of mind and coordination of the characters, imposing a -2 on any skill check. After a number of rounds equal to their Constitution bonus they will have to take a *Constitution* check every round with DC 10+1 for every additional round. Upon failure, the PC will pass out, and after three rounds die of suffocation. Leaving the entrance wide open and waiting half a hour will be enough to guarantee a safe rebuilding of oxygen inside the underground room.

The room in the basement has a semicircular shape, with a radius of approximately three meters. On the old and fragile shelves jars, small vases and little crates are piled. In these containers the scholars of the tower of Arghaion kept magical components and ingredients. After centuries, however, everything is consumed and reduced to dust.

The stone door is extremely heavy and it requires a successful *Strength* check with DC 28 to force it open; PCs can also try to break it (hardness 8, hp 60). Once opened, the door gives access to a small dark square room. This room is an underground storage area converted into a secret deposit for a few treasures and artifacts during the last days of the school Arghaion. The place was then sealed and hidden before the enemies broke in. Notice the absence of any magical trap, as the cost of casting spells is high and placing permanent magic traps is against the tradition of this preserver school.

On the right of the inner chamber stands a statue of a human in desert clothing, holding a staff surmounted by three green magic leaves (*green seeds of Arghaion*); on the pedestal, writing in an old alphabet spells the name *Arghaion*. On the left, a small wooden chest with iron reinforcements lie on the ground; inside there are 15 gp, 124 Cp, the *amulet of Aodzig*, and the *sword of Zharrakan*. Finally, in the front wall three rectangular niches are carved; inside, richly decorated amphorae with now fainting colors are located; within each vessel the PCs will find a single net of thin silk threads woven into a complicated web pattern. The PCs can freely collect any of the items in this chamber.

**The treasury under the ruins.** The inner chamber contains several precious treasures.

- **Green seeds of Arghaion:** on the top of the staff held by the statue there are three magic seeds with the shape of a green elongated leaf. They are one of the last and most treasured products of the school of Arghaion. Wherever buried, even in the driest desert of Athas, these seeds will sprout and develop into a large plant. The plant will undergo a fast growth reaching the peak of its development in 1D10 years; at this point, it will have a canopy large enough to offer shelter from the sun to a small group of travelers; after this period it will keep growing at normal speed. The plant feeds only on the light of sun and does not need water. For the actual type of plant roll a 1D6 on the *Green seeds of Arghaion plants* table; description of Athasian plants can be found at <https://athas.org/articles/plant-life-of-athas>.
- **Amulet of Aodzig:** this small amulet is made out of a flat shell with the rough shape of a waterdrop; in the middle of it a small blue lapislazuli gem, also with the shape of a teardrop, is set. This item is an amulet of protection from *Water Drain*. It belonged to a ranger name Aodzig who traveled the outskirts of the Tablelands hunting down thraxes, powerful undead creatures with the power of draining water from their enemies.
- **Sword of Zharrakan:** at first sight, the sword of Zharrakan looks like a broken weapon; only the hilt and short part of the blade is left. The hilt is covered with refined and complex carvings; this decoration actually spells the word *Zharrakan* in gith characters. The blade is shattered, but still sharp. The broken object can still be used as a weapon, and it should be treated as a dagger with a -1 on the roll to hit. The real nature of this weapon is a psionic blade. Its original owner was Zharrakan, a githyanki fighter trained to summon a blade of psionic energy; he would evoke a bright and translucent blade of blue color, as hard as steel, that would then complete the broken sword. The DM could allow the PCs to generate the blade using their innate psionic power and treat it as a +1 *mind blade* of the *soulknife* class from the *Expanded Psionic's Handbook*.

## GREEN SEEDS OF ARGHAION PLANTS

Roll	Survival DC
1-2	Chiffon Tree
3-4	Fanna Tree
5-6	Pagafa Tree

**Rope scrolls.** Scrolls and paper are very rare in Athas, and magicians had to find other ways to note down their spells. Clay tablets and animals shells carved with mystical writings are a common solution, but, given their limited size and resolution, they can hardly be used to note down more complex spells. Complex patterns of threads and knots are a viable alternative to encode spells; they are flexible and can store long formulations; however, they need proper training to be interpreted, read, and cast. In the three amphorae, three precious nets have been preserved: a net made of silvery threads for the *Cooling Canopy* spell (1st level wizard), a net made of greenish thread for the *Conservation* spell (3rd level wizard), and a net made of cerulean thread forms the *Caerulean Hail* spell (5th level wizard). These spells are described in detail in <https://athas.org/products/ds3>.

## SCENE 4: CHASING THE TARI

At this point, it should have become clear to the PCs that the merchant they have been looking for has been treacherously killed and the murderers have fled with its wares.

**Following the tracks.** Trying to follow the fresh tracks left by the tari is not a hard task for the PCs. The party of tari has left the trading stop making no attempt to hide its movements, so a simple success on a *Survival* check at DC 10 will be enough to be on the right track.

With no rush and no fear of being followed, the tari moved in the opposite direction of the PCs, keeping the Spine of the Lizard to their left for some time, and then setting off for the emptiness of the desert. The gang of tari is weighed down by the loot they just acquired, constantly delayed by the stubborn stolen crodlu, and slowed down by their chronic low levels of discipline; therefore, the group does not have a significant edge on the chasing PCs. Within six to nine hours of sustained pursuit, the PCs will be able to spot their enemies.

**Random encounters.** At the discretion of the DM, random encounters may be interposed between the PCs and their prey. If it has not come into play yet, a pack of jhakar may cross the way of the PCs; or, alternatively, the players may stumble into the magera who lives not too far from the route followed by the tari. However, in general, the area the PCs will traverse has been crossed a few hours earlier by the tari: any significant threat would have had to be confronted by the tari first.

**Reaching the tari.** Very likely the PCs will catch up with the tari as they are camping. The tari party does not like walking under the sun, they prefer hiding underground during the hot hours, and march during the night.

A few hundred meters ahead, the wavy and sandy terrain seems to be interrupted by a flat greenish surface slightly raised above the ground. It resembles a large sheet of some fabric, maybe hung up to offer shelter and shadow, although too close to the ground to allow any humanoid to sit under it. You estimate that there would be barely enough space to crawl under it. Around the large sheet, a small humanoid figure walks with a lazy pace, apparently unaware of your presence. You can not make out its traits from this distance, except for a pointy face.

The large sheet the PCs have spotted is a sort of blanket the tari use to set up to get more cover from the sun. After digging their small burrows where they spend the day, they hung



the sheet in order to provide an improved cover to their resting place. A member of the party is normally awake, rambling around the campsite to guard from potential threats.

The attention of the watch is limited, stunted by the sun and by sleepiness. Tari have better auditory and olfactory systems than sight, so the guarding tari has a  $-2$  on *Spot* and  $+2$  on *Listen* against *Hide* and *Move Silently* attempts by the PCs. This could allow the PCs to approach the camp unseen until very close if they move carefully.

**Talking to the tari.** The tari have an overall hostile attitude towards the PCs, however they may be available to parlay, especially if this gives them time to come out of their holes and be better prepared for a fight. The tari will chaotically issue requests and threats to the PCs, until their leader Mazir will use its authority to shut them down. Mazir will present itself as the leader in broken common tongue, and will try to uncover what the PCs' business is.

To proceed by negotiations will be difficult, and talks may fall apart any moment. The tari are unwilling to part with the crodlu and its loot, and they will swear that the animal has belonged to them for a long time. Mazir will not stand insinuations of theft or murder, and will start hostilities if so accused. The tari will also attack if the PCs were to show any weakness or if they appear to present only a small challenge.

**Clashing with the tari.** Whether because of a collapse of negotiations or because the PCs had decided from the beginning to assault the camp, the encounter with the tari may end up in a physical confrontation.

If the PCs manage to approach the location stealthily, they can take the tari flat-footed and enjoy a surprise round. If the watch catches wind of the players, it will issue an alarm call. Waking up and getting out of their burrow takes 1D4-1 rounds for each tari. Treat the action of popping out of the hole in the ground as a movement action equivalent to going from a prone to a standing position. Tari keep their weapons in their burrows, so they will come out armed. The first round, though, they may suffer a  $-1$  on rolls to hit because of being suddenly awoken.

There are in total six tari, including the watch and their leader Mazir. The watch and two other tari are armed with puchik (bone daggers). One tari owns a rough crossbow which has a  $-1$  on damage rolls and which will break down on a 1 or 2 on a roll to hit (this is what happened to the other crossbow that was abandoned at the trading stop). The last tari fights using the

gythka that it has stolen from the thri-kreen merchant; indeed, since the clasped hands of the thri-kreen froze at the moment of death and the tari could not force the hand open, the tari cut the thri-kreen arm near the joint of the shoulder, and so the arm of the insectoid still hangs from the shaft of the gythka; the tari fights with this weapon because of its impressiveness, despite its lack of proficiency and the imbalance due to the hanging arm ( $-4$  on all rolls to hit).

The leader Mazir is a tougher enemy, with two levels of fighter and basic psionic skills. It holds a puchik, but before joining the melee he will try to use its powers to sow confusion among the PCs; it will activate powers such as *Daze*, *Cause Sleep*, or *Mind Thrust*, and then join the fray. See *Expanded Psionics Handbook* or <https://athas.org/products/ds3> for a description of the powers.

The tari are chaotic creatures, and will not follow any sophisticated tactic in battle. They will not bother protecting their leader, and they will follow orders only if shouted loudly enough. Yet they are fierce warriors, and they will fight to death. The PCs may try at any point to flee, potentially taking with them the crodlu carrying the goods. Unless the tari have been severely decimated, they will chase the fleeing PCs. Tari can be fast when they want to be, and if the players are weighed down by the crodlu, it will not be hard for their pursuers to reach them.

The DM should feel free to tune the level of the encounter according to the players; the challenge may be increased or decreased by changing the number of tari, or by changing the statistics of Mazir.

**The caravan.** Once they have dealt with the tari, the PCs will be able to recover the crodlu. Luckily, the beast of burden is still carrying most of the goods that the thri-kreen merchants were bringing to Hortalak's Grave. This includes four sacks of wheat, two pots of honey, a kilo of dried meat, a couple of locks, a buckle, and a shovel. The PCs can take all the stuff back to their village, or pocket whatever they want.

The players may also want to check the bodies of the tari and their burrows. The warriors did not carry anything else than their clothes and the weapons they used to fight. In the holes the PCs will find a small amount of food rations: enough for the tari to survive for a couple of days; the shortness of food was one of the reasons for attacking the thri-kreen merchant. The food, however, is contaminated like the water in the well at the trading stop; after eating, a PC will have to make a *Fortitude* check with DC 10; failure will lead to a period of 1D3 days

of disease incubation followed by the loss of 1D3 *Constitution* points. The bad smell of the food and the presence of hairs should be a clear enough sign for the PCs; allow a *Spot* check with DC 8 or an *Intelligence* check with DC 12 to reveal to the players that eating tari food may not be healthy; in extreme circumstance, PCs may still prefer eating than starving.

A curious PC may recover the crossbow that belonged to one of the tari. The object still looks very exotic, but having seen it in action in battle will make it much easier for a PC to work out its use. Assuming the crossbow is still functioning, a successful *Intelligence* check with DC 5, or a success at the same DC with any relevant *Craft* or *Profession* skill, allows the player to understand the mechanism of the crossbow and use it properly.

PCs may take a *Search* check in each tari hole. Success at DC 20 will bring to light 12Cp, 7Cp, 0Cp, 0Cp, 9Cp from the burrow of each tari warrior. Most of the wealth of the party was in the hands of the leader, but some tari managed to sneak and hide some coins of their own.

On the body of Mazir, the PCs can retrieve a larger amount of money (22Cp and 3gp), its puchik, a large flat shell with engravings, and a small stone seal. A successful *Knowledge (geography)* check at DC 15 or a successful *Survival* at DC 20 allows to interpret the engravings on the shell as a map; a success in *Knowledge (geography)* check at DC 20 identifies some of the features on the map as, potentially, the Spine of the Lizard and the Head of the Lizard; a success on a *Knowledge (geography)* check at DC 25 allows a perfect reading of the map as a guide to travel from the west of the Spine of the Lizard to the eastern city of Celik. It would be a simple guess for the players to assume that the tari were following the map. The stone seal has the size of a fist, and it is engraved with the image of a stylized labyrinth and a monogram.

**The map to Celik and the seal of Rinch.** The main possessions of Mazir are a few items he acquired (or possibly stole) after receiving the call by Rinch Whitefang to join its tribe in Celik. The shell reports an approximate map representing the region going from the western reaches where the tari lived, all the way east to the city of Celik. As this territory crosses several places in the adventure the PCs may be able to recognize some features like the Spine of the Lizard and the Head of the Lizard. An anonymous dot marks the location of Under-the-Lizard. No sign is instead present for Hortalak's Grave: the village is too small and too recent to be known to the tari. The seal of Rinch is a small identification object created by Rinch Whitefang. It is carved with a maze, a common symbol used by tari to denote the old and legendary Labyrinth City of Ythri; below, a monogram is engraved with rough rune-like symbols that represents the sounds *R* and *W*; a

primitive signature for Rinch Whitefang.

## EPILOGUE

The journey of the PCs will naturally come to a conclusion when they will decide to head back to Hortalak's Grave. They may return successfully, after tracking down the tari and recovering the thri-kreen goods, or they may decide to withdraw because they were defeated by the environment or unable to find the tari.

It is up to the DM to decide whether the return journey should present a challenge in itself, or whether to narrate it. If they go back along the same way, the PCs will now be more knowledgeable about the environment and its dangers, and so it should likely present a smaller challenge. In any case, they will still need enough food and water to make their way back; food on the crodlu and (potentially tainted) water from the well at Under-the-Lizard may be of help. If the DM decides to play out the return journey, it may be fun to add some new encounters and variations in order to avoid the story becoming monotonous.

In any case, when they will arrive back at Hortalak's Grave, the PCs will be welcomed in town like long-lost friends:

As you approach your hometown, you spot a figure standing tall and looking in your direction. When you get closer, you distinguish Adni. It seems as if he has never left that spot since you have left. And now, before knowing anything, his arms open towards you, he welcomes you back to your hometown.

As they will make their way through the known roads of the village, people will gather around them, taking in their exhausted outlook, following them, and asking questions. The crowd will stop only when Daled himself will join.

If the PCs have managed to recover the goods, this will signal the beginning of a joyful time:

From afar, Daled comes in your direction with swift steps. The cheery crowd around you drops silent and opens to let the chief the pass. Daled stares at you, and as he notices the crodlu, his eyes get moist. With great effort he represses his tears of joy and then starts towards you to thank and embrace each one of you individually. Everyone else exults. Adni congratulates you once again.

It is a time of victory. Hortalak's Grave is safe. At least for now. How to guarantee the survival of the town in the longer term is a problem for tomorrow.

If the PCs has come back defeated or empty-handed they will be consoled by their families and friends:

From afar, Daled comes in your direction with swift steps. The silent crowd lowers its eyes and parts to let the chief go through. Daled stares at you, at your beaten faces. A look of compassion is in eyes as he comes towards you and embraces you, thanking you without words for your effort and sacrifice. Some people sob, some people leave.

You are back, safe in your hometown. But gray clouds are gathered over Hurtalak's Grave and its future. The very tomorrow is uncertain.

**Further adventure hooks.** This adventure was meant to be an introductory module to the world of DarkSun. During the story, several hints have been dropped that could be used as hooks for further adventures or for a whole campaign. Here are some directions that the PCs may follow to look for more adventure:

- *Crossing the Tail of the Lizard:* after reporting back to Hurtalak's Grave, the PCs may decide to volunteer to reach the thri-kreen lands and re-establish contact with them. This would take them back along the road to Under-the-Lizard and then on in the canyon forming the Tail of the Lizard. This will lead them to the border of the country of the thri-kreen. The PCs will be welcome by the descendants of Mysn, who, as thri-kreen, have inherited memory and gratitude towards Hurtalak. Visiting the thri-kreen country will bring the PCs face to face with a new culture, and it may present them with local challenges and plots.
- *Towards Celik:* in the other direction, the PCs may decide to leave their hometown behind to travel towards Celik. Several reasons may lead them there: (i) willingness to explore the establishment of new trade routes; (ii) desire to sell some of the wares they may have found during the adventure (e.g.: kes'trekel eggs); (iii) curiosity to follow the map the tari had; (iv) willingness to identify some of the objects they found in the school of Arghaion (e.g.: the sword of Zharrakan) or making sense of the scrolls they have found. All these reasons would allow the PCs to explore a mysterious city full of adventure opportunities (<https://athas.org/articles/celik-and-the-southern-estuary>).
- *The dungeon of Arghaion:* the little basement room below the trading stop and Under-the-Lizard proved full of valuable treasures. Although the ruins have been already raided, an entrance to a wider subterranean dungeon may have been remained unnoticed or magically protected until now. This would give the PCs access to the true refuge of Arghaion, where the magician stored (not without due protections) his most precious treasures.
- *The shadow of the thrax:* if retrieved, the amulet of Aodzig represents a precious item that may find use against dangerous undead like thrax. As the shadow of such a powerful enemy lengthens over Celik, Kalidnay or other neighboring regions, the PCs may heed to the call of duty (or money) to confront this threat. This would provide the DM with the possibility of setting up a noteworthy villain that may become the antagonists of the PCs across multiple individual adventures.
- *The grave of Hurtalak:* the hometown of the PCs has a short history, but the background of the characters may be easily interwoven with the life of some of the founding figures and families. Investigating on the deeds, and possibly the secrets, of its founder, Hurtalak the mul, the PCs may be taken from the small stone tomb on the outskirts of their birthplace all the way to the Tablelands. This, once again, would provide the PCs with the

opportunity to learn more about themselves and, at the same time, explore the richness of Athas.

For all these quests, Adni and Daled may act as the ones suggesting and supporting the PCs undertaking these tasks. Furthermore, the DM is also invited to use and exploit hooks specific to the party, taking advantage of particular events happening in the story or considering the specificities of the DarkSun setting or characters' background. For instance, PCs may have to travel to find a cure to the tari disease if any one of them was infected; if one of the characters is a cleric, she may have to reach an elemental temple for official initiation rites; dwarf characters may be led to the road by their focus or elves may be taken by the call of their ancestral tribe; if any character wants to learn magic, finding someone who could interpret the nets found in the school of Arghaion would be an excellent starting point - remember, after all, that researching any spell in Athas is extremely hard, and stumbling into any form of arcane knowledge rare and dangerous!

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# APPENDIX A: EQUIPMENT AND TRAVEL

This appendix brings together several tables that could be useful to the DM and the players in preparing for their journey to the desert.

Data about the equipment for the journey is taken from the *Dungeons & Dragons v3.5* handbooks: weights for standard objects from Table 7-8 in the *Player's Handbook*; weights and statistics for simple weapons and armors from Tables 7-5 and 7-6 of the same handbook; weights and statistics for Athasian weapons from Table 5-4 in *Dark Sun v3<sup>4</sup>*. Carrying capacity and loads come from Tables 9-1 and 9-2 of the *Player's Handbook*. Statistics for erdlus and crodlus are derived from descriptions in *Terrors of Athas<sup>5</sup>*.

## BASIC EQUIPMENT

Object	Weight
Water (4l canister)	4.5 kg
Rations (1 day)	0.5 kg
Desert clothes	1.5 kg
Rope (15 m)	4.5 kg
Bedroll	5 kg
Blanket	1 kg
Tent	9 kg
Torch and flint	0.5 kg
Pot (clay)	3 kg
Shovel	3.5 kg

## BASIC MELEE WEAPONS

Object	Weight	Dmg(M)	Crit
Spear (wood)	3 kg	1D6-1	x3
Staff (wood)	2 kg	1D6-1	x2
Club (wood)	2 kg	1D6	x2
Alak (bone)	1.5 kg	1D6-1	x2
Puchik (bone)	0.5	1D4	19-20/x2
Carrikal (bone)	2.5	1D6	x3

## BASIC RANGED WEAPONS

Object	Weight	Dmg(M)	Crit	Incr
Sling	0 kg	1D4	x2	15 m
Bullets (10)	2.5 kg	-	-	-
Short bow	1 kg	1D6	x2	18 m
Arrows (20)	1 kg	-	-	-

Notice that several weapons have negative modifiers to the damage because of the poor manufacturing quality and absence of metal.

<sup>4</sup><https://athas.org/products/ds3>

<sup>5</sup><https://athas.org/products/toa>

## BASIC ARMORS

Object	Weight	AC	Max Dex	Penalty
Padded	5 kg	+1	+8	0
Leather	7 kg	+2	+6	0
Hide	12 kg	+3	+4	-3
Buckler	3 kg	+1	-	-1
Small shield (wood)	4 kg	+1	-	-1

Remember that hide armor decreases the base speed of a character.

## PCs CARRYING CAPACITY

Str	Light	Medium	Heavy
8	12 kg	24 kg	36 kg
9	13.5 kg	27 kg	40.5 kg
10	15 kg	30 kg	45 kg
11	17 kg	34 kg	51 kg
12	19.5 kg	39 kg	58.5 kg
13	22.5 kg	45 kg	68 kg
14	26 kg	52.5 kg	78 kg
15	30 kg	60 kg	90 kg
16	34.5 kg	69 kg	103.5 kg
17	39 kg	78 kg	117 kg
18	45 kg	90 kg	135 kg
19	52.5 kg	105.5 kg	159 kg
20	60 kg	120.5 kg	181.5 kg
21	69 kg	139 kg	208.5 kg
22	78 kg	157 kg	236 kg

## PCs HOURLY SPEED

Base	Light	Medium	Heavy
12 m/rnd	6 km/h	4 km/h	2.5 km/h
9 m/rnd	4.5 km/h	3 km/h	2 km/h
6 m/rnd	3 km/h	2 km/h	1.5 km/h
4.5 m/rnd	2 km/h	1.5 km/h	1 km/h

## PCs DAILY SPEED

Base	Light	Medium	Heavy
12 m/rnd	48 km/day	32 km/day	20 km/day
9 m/rnd	36 km/day	24 km/day	16 km/day
6 m/rnd	24 km/day	16 km/day	12 km/day
4.5 m/rnd	16 km/day	12 km/day	8 km/day

## PACK CREATURE CARRYING LOAD

Creature	Light	Medium	Heavy
Erdlu	20 kg	40 kg	60 kg
Crodlu	90 kg	180 kg	270 kg

## PACK CREATURE HOURLY SPEED

Creature	Base	Light	Medium	Heavy
Erdlu	15 m/rnd	8 km/h	5 km/h	4 km/h
Crodlu	12 m/rnd	5 km/h	4 km/h	3 km/h

## PACK CREATURE DAILY SPEED

Creature	Light	Medium	Heavy
Erdlu	64 km/day	40 km/day	32 km/day
Crodlu	40 km/day	32 km/day	24 km/day

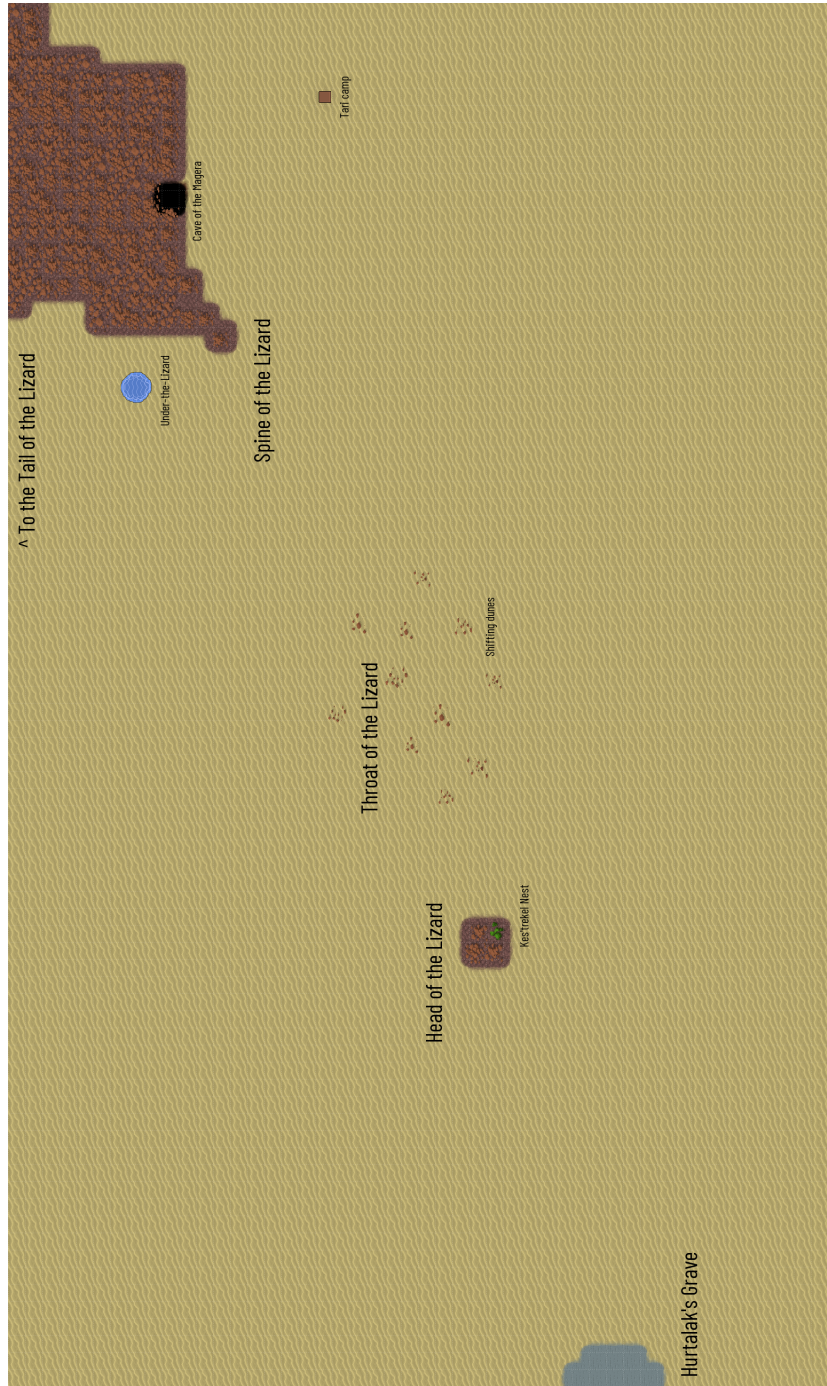


Figure 1: Map of the desert north north-west of Hurltalak's Grave. The map is not in scale; it is meant to illustrate only the relative position of locations relevant to the adventure.