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BLACK DESERT

BIOME

A subtropical biome including 3 natural hazards,
13 creature statblocks, 4 plants, and 2 battlemaps

BLACK DESERT

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Cover: Photo by Jeremy Bishop (@jeremybishop) on Unsplash; *with modifications by Ronja Bär*



Trove of Lore

BLACK DESERT

The black desert is a deadly place. Its black sand - created by a large obsidian deposit - heats up immeasurably under the merciless sun. Far away from the sea and shielded by mountains, rainfall is a rarity. The prevailing absence of water and the high temperatures during the day result in reduced flora and fauna. When rain does fall, it is all the more intense and leads to a blossoming of the desert.

On the other hand, sandstorms and mirages are not uncommon. The sand makes crossing the desert an arduous and tedious undertaking, especially with the lack of shade and the temperature fluctuations between day and night. The air and sand temperature drops abruptly at night, and there is even frost in exceptional cases.

Plants. The scarce plants in this barren landscape have adopted different strategies for survival. They either conserve water or store water. In addition, underground survival organs and color adaptations are another way to defy the harsh conditions.

Creatures. The creatures found in the black desert are just like the landscape in which they live: unique and dangerous. And they have to be. After all, both food and water are rare commodities that cannot be shared with anyone—or anything.

BLACK DESERT

Sand and Rocks. The ground of the black desert consists of soft sand, with stones and rocks thrown in. It is easy to twist an ankle or to lose balance. The whole desert is considered difficult terrain for non-native creatures.

Hot Noon. Any creature doing anything more strenuous than light walking for longer than one minute during the four hottest hours of the day gets a heatstroke unless they succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. Creatures with resistance or immunity to cold damage make the saving throw at disadvantage.

Cold Night. Whenever a creature that spent at least 12 hours of the day in the heat of the desert attempts to complete a short or long rest over the coldest four hours of the night, it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw to gain the benefits of the rest, as the extreme temperature difference makes it difficult to adjust to the climate.

WEATHER

At the beginning of every day, roll 2d6 to determine the day's weather. The previous day's weather can have an influence on the rolled total.

2 or less. The sky is covered in dark clouds, surprising you in how close they are to looking like rain clouds. It is very welcome however, as the air is noticeably cooler and more humid than you'd expect for a desert. Creatures have advantage on Constitution saving throws made due to the biome's hot noon and cold night traits. Subtract 3 from tomorrow's result when rolling for weather. Consider running a monsoon encounter.

3-4. The sky is filled with clouds, lightly obscuring the sun, providing welcome shade. Creatures have advantage on Constitution saving throws made due to the biome's hot noon trait. Subtract 2 from tomorrow's result when rolling for weather.

5-6. Luckily there appear to be more clouds than usual, semiregularly obscuring the sun a little. Subtract 1 from tomorrow's result when rolling for weather.

7. The occasional cloud moving over the sky, sometimes lightly obscuring the bright and hot sun. A normal day in the desert.

8-9. Only rarely does a cloud move over the sky, and if one does, it rarely if ever obscures the bright and inescapable sun. Add 1 to tomorrow's result when rolling for weather.

10-11. The air tastes dry, with no cloud to be seen anywhere. Sometimes you feel a hot gust of wind picking at your clothes. Creatures have disadvantage on Constitution checks made due to the biome's hot noon trait. Add 2 to tomorrow's result when rolling for weather.

12 or more. The dusty air is filled with light sand, getting into eyes and nose. The wind is picking up regularly, with sand being whirling across the desert on every gust. Creatures have disadvantage on Constitution checks made due to the biome's hot noon and cold night traits. Add 3 to tomorrow's result. Consider running a sandstorm encounter.

HEATSTROKE

Your body is overwhelmed by unusually hot temperatures.

Hot Blooded. Creatures with resistance or immunity to fire damage are immune to this condition.

Dizziness. A creature with a heatstroke has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

A Rest to Betterment. A creature with heatstroke that finishes a short rest in mild temperatures may expend one hit die to rid themselves of the condition.

HAZARDS

When traveling through the desert, creatures are not the only complication a party might have to face. Sandstorms and monsoons can suddenly alter the entire landscape around them and make an otherwise boring journey exciting and eventful. Additionally, as magical mirages show, not everything in the desert is as it appears to be.

Dealing with Magic. Spells such as *tiny hut* can overcome the sandstorm and monsoon encounters rather easily. Take note of the spells available to your party, and their current level. If the party would expend a significant resource by using such a spell, that should be enough. For a higherlevel party, choose a length of storm or monsoon that is slightly longer than their longest protective spell (8 hours for *tiny hut*). If they did no other preparations, that should keep them on their toes. Also, you might want to consider adding a combat.

SANDSTORM

Duration 7 (2d6) hours

Challenge 9

Phases. A sandstorm encounter is divided into three phases. The first phase deals with preparations for the incoming storm, the second is about enduring its effects. The third and last phase is about getting out of the cover and reorienting in the changed environment.

PHASE 1: PREPARATION

Warning. A Wisdom (Perception) check can warn the party about what's coming. For every 5 points achieved in the check, the party gets one round of preparations, with a minimum of 1. For example, if a character achieves a 22 on their Wisdom (Perception) check, that would give the party four rounds to prepare.

Don't Panic. Every round of preparation is five minutes long. If the party decides to build a shelter, each player may contribute to building the shelter by making one skill check per round. The player suggests a skill and describes how they are helping and why that skill is appropriate. Only allow each skill to be used once. The result of the check is added to the shelter's hit points. Use the same mechanics to allow the party to search for appropriate shelter.

PHASE 2: ENDURING THE STORM

Complete Darkness. The sandstorm consists of the desert's black sand, preventing light from traveling far. Additionally, the dust makes it impossible to open ones eyes. Any creature relying on sight is considered blinded while outside cover.

No Cover. At the start of every hour, any creature without cover takes 18 (4d8) bludgeoning damage from sand and debris. Additionally, at the end of every hour, the creature must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or lose one hit die, as breathing becomes more difficult. If the creature has no more hit dice left, they instead gain one level of exhaustion.

A mighty Force. At the start of every hour, choose one of the following complications, to be dealt with over that hour (one action per player, or whatever seems reasonable):

Heavy Sand. The sandstorm carries a lot of sand on whatever cover the party managed to prepare. The cover takes 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage. The cover takes the same damage at the start of every following hour, increasing by 3 (1d6) per round unless the weight is lifted. To reduce the damage, a reasonable and successful DC 15 skill check reduces the damage on following rounds by 3 (1d6). Once the cover takes no damage for one round, this complication ends.

Hole in the Wall. A sharp object carried by the storm managed to pierce a hole in the party's cover, or something else allows sand to get in. The cover takes 5 (2d4) piercing damage. The cover takes another 5 (2d4) slashing damage at the start of every following hour, increasing by 2 (1d4) slashing damage each round. Reducing the damage to the cover reduces further damage to it on following rounds. A successful DC 15 skill check reduces the damage on following rounds by 2 (1d4). While the hole is not patched sand fills the inside of the cover, and the sandstorm's complete darkness applies.

Strong Winds. The sheer force of the storm is pulling away pieces of the cover. The cover takes 18 (4d8) bludgeoning damage.

Visitors. The cover attracts other creatures in the area who also search for a safe place (or are using the opportunity for an easy snack). A fight is likely to ensue, possibly damaging the cover further. Depending on the party's level, the following creatures have found a way into their cover (assuming a party of 4):

Level **Creatures**

1-2 1 Black Cave Scorpion Brood

3-4 2 (1d4) Black Cave Scorpion Brood

5-7 5 (2d4) Black Cave Scorpion Brood

8-10 5 (2d4) Sandworm Larva

11-15 3 (1d4 + 1) Young Black Cave Scorpion

16-18 1 (1d2) Black Cave Scorpion

19-20 1 (1d2) Adult Sandworm

No fresh Air. Sand is covering all air gaps, preventing fresh air from entering the cover, and the air inside is getting dusty. Unless an air gap is created (remember that it might damage the cover), at the end of each hour, each creature protected by the cover must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or lose on hit die. If the creature has no more hit dice left, they instead gain one level of exhaustion.

PHASE 3: THE AFTERMATH

Under Load. After the sandstorm is over, it is likely that the party is buried under a big layer of sand. Three successful DC 12 skill checks are enough to escape the sand masses, but any failure results in 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage to any party member trying to escape, as rocks and sand fall on them.

Changed Landscape. The desert looks very different pre and post-storm. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check is required to reorient.

MONSOON

Duration 4 (1d4 + 2) hours

Challenge 4

Phases. A monsoon encounter is divided into three phases. The first phase deals with preparations for the incoming rainfall, the second is about enduring its effects, and the third is about continuing to adventure in its aftermath.

PHASE 1: PREPARATION

Forecast. A Wisdom (Survival) check can warn the party about what's coming. For every 5 points achieved in the check, the party gets one round of preparations, with a minimum of 1. For example, if a character achieves a 22 on their Wisdom (Survival) check, that would give the party four rounds to prepare.

The Arc. Every round of preparation is five minutes long. If the party decides to build a shelter, each player may contribute to building the shelter by making one skill check per round. The player suggests a skill and describes how they are helping and why that skill is appropriate. Only allow each skill to be used once. The result of the check is added to the shelter's hit points. Use the same mechanics to allow the party to search for appropriate shelter.

PHASE 2: THE FLOOD

Dense Precipitation. The sudden and extreme amounts of water falling from the sky make it hard to see very far. Everything beyond 15 feet is lightly obscured (imposing disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight), and everything beyond 30 feet is heavily obscured (a creature effectively suffers the blinded condition when trying to see something in that area).

Cold Water. The clouds block out the sun, and the water helps cool down the desert as if it were deep in the night, irrespective of time of day. Any non-native creature without resistance or immunity to cold damage must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw after every hour exposed to the outside, losing one hit die on a failure. If the creature has no more hit dice, it gains one level of exhaustion instead.

Mass of Water. The sheer amount of water results in sudden rivers and flood waves, often carrying any debris scattered throughout the desert. At the start of every hour, choose one of the following complications for the players to deal with:

Carried Debris. Flowing water is carrying various debris. Any creature in its path must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 5 (2d4) bludgeoning damage. Structures automatically fail this saving throw, taking the full damage.

Flood Wave. A giant flood wave is coming your way. All creatures must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or take 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage, half on a success. Structures automatically fail this saving throw, taking the full damage. Additionally, creatures that failed the saving throw are suffocating. A creature may attempt a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check to rescue itself or another creature within range, stopping the suffocation.

Washed Ground. Sand and stones move under your feet and any structures built. Each creature exposed to bare ground must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage on a failure. Structures automatically fail this saving throw, taking the full damage.

Accidental Ambush. The water masses carry many things in them, including some unfortunate creatures. Consult the following table to determine which creatures suddenly (and accidentally) ambush the party (mostly trying to survive themselves):

| Level | Creatures |
|-------|---------------------------------|
| 1-3 | 5 (2d4) Rolling Desert Shrub |
| 4-7 | 1 Living Rock |
| 8-11 | 1 Living Boulder |
| 12-15 | 3 (1d4 + 1) Young Sandworm |
| 16-18 | 1 Adult Sandworm |
| 19-20 | 4 (2d4 - 1) Black Cave Scorpion |

PHASE 3: THE AFTERMATH

Abundant Water. After a monsoon the desert carries more water than at any other point in time. It is easy to fill up water supplies, or find enough water for most purposes.

Heavy Fog. After a monsoon, the desert quickly heats up again in the sun, causing the water to evaporate into the air. For 7 (3d4) hours, all saving throws against heatstroke are made at advantage. Additionally, everything beyond 30 feet is lightly obscured (imposing disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight), and everything beyond 60 feet is heavily obscured (a creature effectively suffers the blinded condition when trying to see something in that area).

Changed Landscape. The desert looks very different pre and post-monsoon. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check is required to reorient.

MAGICAL MIRAGE

Area 300-foot-radius sphere

Challenge 7

Large Illusion. A magical mirage is a naturally occurring illusion that wanders the black desert. For any creature within the mirage a *mirage incarnation* takes form and targets that creature.

Dangerous to Believers. At the start of every creature's turn that is in the mirage, it makes DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature further believes the mirage's illusions to be real, taking an additional 2 (1d4) psychic damage whenever it is damaged by a *mirage incarnation's* attack.

Inviting Illusion. A magical mirage looks like anything the creatures outside it might desire, luring them into its area. A creature that succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check can recognize the mirage as an illusion.

Preparing to run. Ask each player about their character's greatest fear before running a magical mirage, preferably with a little time between question and encounter. Think about a way to represent that fear as an illusory creature. Ideally come up with a few ways to describe the illusion's attacks that are specific to each fear.

Running an Magical Mirage. Do not reveal to the players that the *mirage incarnations* are not actual creatures. Have them believe that what's happening is real, only revealing the truth after the encounter. Fighting the *mirage incarnations* is an otherwise standard combat, though you should feel free to describe the environment as ever-changing to increase the tension.

MIRAGE INCARNATION

any size, elemental

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 63 (14d6 + 14)

Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 10 (+0) | 10 (+0) | 13 (+1) | 11 (+0) | 17 (+3) | 16 (+3) |

Saving Throws Dex +2, Wis +5, Cha +5

Skills Insight +5, Intimidation +5, Perception +5

Damage Immunities poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned, unconscious

Senses truesight 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Proficiency Bonus +2

Challenge 3

Mirage-bound. An incarnation cannot leave the area of the magical mirage that formed it.

Targeted Illusion. The incarnation only exists to frighten a single target, chosen when it was created. Once the target is dead, the incarnation withdraws into its ethereal form, waiting for its next target.

Fearful Sight. The incarnation takes the form of its target's greatest fear. When the incarnation's target can see the incarnation and starts its turn within 60 feet of it, the target must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened by the incarnation for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The incarnation attacks twice, using any combination of its *illusory slam* and *illusory bolt* attacks.

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

Illusory Bolt. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) psychic damage.

PLANTS

GLOWING STARBALL

The glowing starball is an impressive tree visible from afar. Its straight trunk, with flaking bark, often reaches 80 feet into the sky. Its branches begin about two-thirds up, forming a canopy of shade with their double-pinnate leaves. The tree's roots reach deep into the earth to get a good grip on the loose sand and access any water supplies. To protect itself from the intense temperature fluctuations, the glowing starball has adopted an unusual technique: it adapts its color to the time of day. During the day, the trunk and leaves are bright white, reflecting the sunlight. Therefore, it is much cooler under these trees than in the surrounding area. At night, the tree is black and slowly releases the day's heat into the air, warming it.

After the tree's fruits ripen in autumn, a natural spectacle can be witnessed throughout the black desert. In a single night, all the fruits detach from all glowing starballs simultaneously and fly as bright white balls for miles across the night sky, illuminating the entire desert.

GLOWING STARBALL

Mild temperatures. The temperatures near the glowing starball are much milder than in the open desert. Creatures within 30 feet of a glowing starball have advantage on Constitution saving throws made due to the desert's hot noon and cold night traits.

RAINBOW FLOWER

After the rare but heavy rains, the black desert practically flourishes. The rainbow flower plays a small role in this. It occurs in small groups, rarely in huge numbers, if it has found a secluded, undisturbed place. The 1-foot tall plant with its two to five fleshy leaves has a flower that shimmers in all colors of the rainbow. Its six petals are arranged to form a funnel in which rainwater collects. Pollen floating within gives the water a shiny, golden color. If you eat the blossom or drink the water, you immediately feel an irrepressible hope arise in you. When prepared as a potion, this effect can last much longer. The roots have healing properties, but no further flower will grow after removal and damage. The leaves are very nutritious and contain a lot of liquid.

RAINBOW FLOWER

Nutritious Leaves. A single rainbow flower leaf can nourish an average person for an entire day.

Water of Hope. A creature that drinks rainwater that collected in a rainbow flower's blossoms is *hopeful* for 2 (1d4) minutes.

Rainbow Blossom. A creature that eats a rainbow flower's blossom is *hopeful* for 5 (2d4) minutes.

Harvesting. One rainbow flower grows 3 (1d4 + 1) nutritious leaves and 1 rainbow blossom. A creature can attempt a DC 15 Wisdom check with an herbalism kit to properly harvest both leaves and blossom. On a success, leaves and blossom stay fresh for 2 (1d4) days. On a failure, leaves and blossom lose their properties after 2 (1d4) hours.

Refinement. A rainbow flower's blossom can be pulverized and its effects amplified by combining it with various herbs. A creature can spend 8 hours to attempt a DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check to craft a *potion of hopefulness* from a single rainbow flower's blossom and 20 gp worth of herbs. On a failure both the blossom and the herbs are lost.

HOPEFUL

You are filled with hope and vitality.

Hope. A hopeful creature has advantage on Wisdom saving throws and death saving throws.

Vitality. A hopeful creature regains the maximum number of hit points possible from any healing.

POTION OF HOPEFULNESS

Potion

The liquid in this bottle shimmers in all colors of the rainbow. When you drink this potion, you are *hopeful* for 1 hour.

SHRINKING THORN PLANT

The shrinking thorn plant comes in many different shapes, colors, and sizes. What they all have in common is a cylindrical growth with several side branches and long, pointed thorns that attach themselves to skin with barbs. There they release poison over a long period of time. After rains, the plant absorbs water and swells to five times its size. During periods of drought, it slowly becomes smaller again. Because of the good water availability, creatures often stay around the shrinking thorn plant and defend it from others to ensure their own survival.

SHRINKING THORN PLANT

Attaching barbs. A creature that comes into direct contact with the Shrinking thorn plants thorns (for example when attempting to cut one of its branches) must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 5 (2d4) piercing damage. On a 6 or less, some of the barbs get attached to the creature's skin. A creature with barbs attached to its skin takes 2 (1d4) poison damage every 15 minutes. A creature can spend an action to remove the barbs from any creature in its range.

Harvesting. A creature can spend 20 minutes making a DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check to harvest 2 (1d4) shrinking thorn plant branches. Unless the creature takes precautions, it comes into contact with the shrinking thorn plant's thorns. The branches stay fresh for 2 (1d4) days after harvesting.

Refinement. One fresh branch can be used to create 33 - 2X (6d10 - 2X) gallons of water, where X is the number of weeks with no rain, by spending 1 hour extracting the water. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check is required to successfully extract the water, losing the branches used and their contained water in the attempt on a fail.

ROLLING DESERT SHRUB

A small ball of tightly knotted branches ranging in size from 1 to 3 feet. Sometimes it bears a handful of small fruits inside. These have green, star-shaped skin and a pink, sweet-tasting pulp inside. The rolling desert shrub can catch the wind at its core and use it to move around. It sometimes follows other creatures in search of water, but it is entirely harmless. Only if you try to capture it to get its fruits, it shoots with small branches. If, on the other hand, you offer it water, it quickly becomes trusting.

ROLLING DESERT SHRUB

Green Star Berries. One Shrinking desert shrub carries one to five green star berries. After harvesting, it takes 3 (1d4 + 1) days to grow a new berry. A creature consuming five fresh raw green star berries is sated for one day.

Harvesting. A creature can try to grapple a rolling desert shrub. If it succeeds, it can harvest the berries inside the shrub by making a DC 12 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. On a failure, it takes 3 (1d6) piercing damage, as the branches scratch its skin. A harvested berry stays fresh for 5 (2d4) days.

Making Friends. A creature can spend 15 minutes feeding the rolling desert shrub with water. After three times the creature did this procedure, the rolling desert shrub is friendly to it. It will follow the creature, allow the creature to harvest its berries, and defend it with its shooting branch attack.

ROLLING DESERT SHRUB

tiny plant

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 10 (4d4)

Speed 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 8 (-1) | 16 (+3) | 10 (+0) | 3 (-4) | 10 (+0) | 8 (-1) |

Saving Throws Dex +5

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, frightened, poisoned, prone

Senses blindsight 30 ft., passive Perception 10

Proficiency Bonus +2

Challenge 1/8

Run with the Wind. If the shrub has half of its hit points or fewer, it flees, using its action to dash. Additionally, it accumulates wind inside its branches, adding an additional 20 feet to its speed.

ACTIONS

Shooting Branches. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) piercing damage.

CREATURES

DESERT IBEX

Desert ibexes are perfectly camouflaged against the dark sand with their black fur. With a shoulder height of three feet, the four-legged creatures are not particularly large, but the two twisted horns, which both males and females carry, are definitely not to be underestimated in battle. The females form large herds, often numbering around 50 animals. The males are loners, joining the females only during the rutting season in the fall. The rams defend their females to death from conspecifics or creatures that come too close. When the herds have fawns with them in spring, the females protect their offspring from enemies.

DESERT IBEX DOE

medium beast

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 26 (4d8 + 8)

Speed 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 15 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 14 (+2) | 3 (-4) | 12 (+1) | 6 (-2) |

Saving Throws Dex +3

Senses passive Perception 11

Proficiency Bonus +2

Challenge 1/2

Charge. If the ibex moves at least 20 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a *ram* attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 5 (2d4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Sure-Footed. The ibex has advantage on Strength and Dexterity saving throws made against effects that would knock it prone.

ACTIONS

Ram. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

DESERT IBEX RAM

medium beast

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 32 (5d8 + 10)

Speed 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 16 (+3) | 12 (+1) | 15 (+2) | 3 (-4) | 12 (+1) | 6 (-2) |

Saving Throws Dex +3

Senses passive Perception 11

Proficiency Bonus +2

Challenge 1

Charge. If the ibex moves at least 20 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a *ram* attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 5 (2d4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Sure-Footed. The ibex has advantage on Strength and Dexterity saving throws made against effects that would knock it prone.

ACTIONS

Ram. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (3d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

LIVING BOULDER

A cluster of black and gray boulders. At first glance, nothing remarkable. Until a closer look reveals that the boulders seem to tremble, with sand falling off of them here and there. But by then, it is too late, and the living boulder builds up in front of its victim. The 16 feet tall stone colossus with four

LIVING ROCK

large elemental

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 76 (9d10 + 27)

Speed 20 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| 16 (+3) | 8 (-1) | 17 (+3) | 6 (-2) | 6 (-2) | 3 (-4) |

Saving Throws Str +5, Con +5

Skills Perception +0

Damage Immunities poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't adamantite

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses tremorsense 15 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Proficiency Bonus +2

Challenge 4

Immutable Form. The living rock is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The living rock has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 23 (4d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Stone. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, range 30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (4d8 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

Roll. The living rock curls up and rolls up to 60 feet downhill. Any creature in its path must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, a creature takes 32 (5d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage and falls prone. On a success, a creature takes half as much damage and does not fall prone.

arms and two legs wants to crush everyone under its heavy feet. Due to its size and mass, it is not particularly fast, but the stones it throws at its opponents are harder for it. And if you are unlucky, it is not alone but has its children with it ...

LIVING BOULDER

huge elemental

Armor Class 16

Hit Points 115 (11d12 + 44)

Speed 20 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| 18 (+4) | 8 (-1) | 19 (+4) | 6 (-2) | 8 (-1) | 3 (-4) |

Saving Throws Str +7, Con +7

Skills Intimidation -1, Perception +2

Damage Immunities poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't adamantite

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses tremorsense 15 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Proficiency Bonus +3

Challenge 8

Immutable Form. The living boulder is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The living boulder has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Stomp. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 33 (4d12 + 7) bludgeoning damage.

Rock. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 34 (5d12 + 2) bludgeoning damage. All creatures within 5 feet of the target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be blinded until the end of their next turn, as the impact of the rock stirs up the sand around them.

Roll. The living boulder curls up and rolls up to 60 feet downhill. Any creature in its path must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, a creature takes 52 (7d12 + 7) bludgeoning damage and falls prone. On a success, a creature takes half as much damage and does not fall prone.

SANDWORM

A gigantic, black worm burrows under its victims with aimed precision, causing them to sink into the sand. Its mouth, peppered with sharp teeth, rips its prey apart in seconds. The 65-foot-long worm tracks them down via vibrations in the ground. Between its attacks, it repeatedly disappears into the sand to escape possible counterattacks, only to reappear shortly afterward and spit sand at its targets. Therefore, extreme caution is advised if someone notices larger holes or craters in the sand. Especially if a sandstorm is approaching.

Teeth. A creature can try separating a tooth from a dead sandworm's body by spending 1 hour and succeeding on a DC 15 Strength check. On a success, the creature successfully separates the sandworm's tooth.

Carve into Weapon. By spending 6 hours carving a sandworm's tooth into a dagger, or, if the sandworm was an adult, a shortsword, a creature can create a *sandworm's edge*.

SANDWORM'S EDGE

Weapon (dagger or shortsword), very rare (requires attunement)

You have a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

When you unattune from this weapon, it disintegrates.

SANDWORM LARVA

small monstrosity

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 32 (5d6 + 15)

Speed 20 ft., burrow 15 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| 16 (+3) | 5 (-3) | 16 (+3) | 1 (-5) | 4 (-3) | 2 (-4) |

Saving Throws Wis -1

Damage Vulnerabilities cold

Damage Resistances poison

Condition Immunities charmed, poisoned

Senses tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 7

Proficiency Bonus +2

Challenge 2

Blind. The worm cannot see and automatically fails Wisdom (Perception) checks relying on sight.

Sand Regeneration. The worm regains 5 hit points at the start of its turn, if it has at least 1 hit point and is covered by or standing on sand. If the worm takes cold damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of its next turn.

Tunneler. The worm can burrow through solid rock at half its burrow speed.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The worm makes two bite attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) piercing damage.



YOUNG SANDWORM

large monstrosity

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 76 (9d10 + 27)

Speed 40 ft., burrow 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| 23 (+6) | 6 (-2) | 17 (+3) | 1 (-5) | 5 (-3) | 5 (-3) |

Saving Throws Con +6, Wis +0

Damage Vulnerabilities cold

Damage Resistances poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical weapons

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses tremorsense 120 ft., passive Perception 7

Proficiency Bonus +3

Challenge 6

Blind. The worm cannot see and automatically fails any Wisdom (Perception) checks relying on sight.

Sand Regeneration. The worm regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn, if it has at least 1 hit point and is covered by or standing on sand. If the worm takes cold damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of its next turn.

Tunneler. The worm can burrow through solid rock at half its burrow speed and leaves a 5-foot-diameter tunnel in its wake.

Collapsing Sand Tunnels. If the worm burrows through sand directly below a creature, that creature must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, as the sand below it collapses into the burrowed tunnel. On a failure, the creature falls prone.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The worm makes two bite attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Sand Spray (Recharge 5-6). The worm exhales sand in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 30 (6d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

ADULT SANDWORM

gargantuan monstrosity

Armor Class 18

Hit Points 214 (13d20 + 78)

Speed 60 ft., burrow 60 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| 28 (+9) | 8 (-1) | 22 (+6) | 5 (-3) | 5 (-3) | 4 (-3) |

Saving Throws Con +11, Wis +2

Damage Vulnerabilities cold

Damage Resistances poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical weapons

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses tremorsense 120 ft., passive Perception 7

Proficiency Bonus +5

Challenge 16

Blind. The worm cannot see and automatically fails any Wisdom (Perception) checks relying on sight.

Sand Regeneration. The worm regains 20 hit points at the start of its turn, if it has at least 1 hit point and is covered by or standing on sand. If the worm takes cold damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of its next turn.

Tunneler. The worm can burrow through solid rock at half its burrow speed and leaves a 10-foot-diameter tunnel in its wake.

Collapsing Sand Tunnels. If the worm burrows through sand directly below a creature, that creature must make a Dexterity saving throw. On a 19 or less, the creature falls prone as the sand below its feet collapses into the burrowed tunnel. Additionally on an 11 or less, the creature is restrained by the sand. A creature can use its action to make a DC 14 Strength check, freeing itself or another creature within its reach on a success.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The worm makes three bite attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d6 + 9) piercing damage. If the target is a Large or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw or be swallowed by the worm. A swallowed creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the worm, and it takes 10 (3d6) acid damage and 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage at the start of each of the worm's turns.

If the worm takes 30 damage or more on a single turn from a creature inside it, the worm must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, which fall prone in a space within 10 feet of the worm. If the worm dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse by using 20 feet of movement, exiting prone.

Sand Spray (Recharge 5-6). The worm exhales sand in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw, taking 51 (12d6 + 9) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

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

Detect. The worm makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Burrow. The worm burrows up to its speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Bite. The worm makes one bite attack.

LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the worm takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; the worm can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

Tail Smash. The worm smashes its tail onto the sand, throwing huge amounts of it into the air. Each creature in a 40-foot-radius sphere centered on the worm must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be blinded for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Sand Drift. The worm chooses a point on the ground within 120 feet of it. A 15-foot-radius sand drift forms, centered on that point. A creature on the ground above where the drift formed must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage and lands prone. On a successful save, a creature moves to the nearest unoccupied space instead.

Deceitful Mirage. Up to 12 creatures of the worm's choosing must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature sees a magical mirage that looks identical to the worm. Until the start of the next lair action, whenever a creature that sees the mirage would target the worm, the creature has a 50 percent chance of targeting the mirage instead.



BLACK CAVE SCORPION

If you are looking for shelter at night, you should give a wide berth to tunnels and caves found in the sand or rock. Inside, the nocturnal black cave scorpion is already lurking for its prey. The ten to 14 feet tall creature is not an easy opponent with its venom-spraying stinger and barbed claws. Especially when dealing with a female carrying her young on her back. The only weak spot is between its black armor plates. However, if the creature is successfully killed, the venom can be extracted from the stinger and used to produce various potions. Of course, the stinger can also serve as a weapon, but it loses its poisonous properties after only a few days. Particularly ambitious adventurers might collect pieces of the scorpion's carapace to craft durable armor.

Stinger. A creature can try separating the stinger from a dead scorpion's body by spending 30 minutes and succeeding on a DC 10 Strength check. On a failure, the creature accidentally stings itself, taking 3 (1d6) poison damage. On a success, the creature successfully separates the *black scorpion stinger*.

Extract Venom. By spending 6 hours extracting the venom from a black scorpion's stinger using Alchemist's Supplies, a creature can create 5 (2d4) vials of acid.

Carapace. By spending 2 hours trying to separate parts of a black scorpion's carapace from its body and succeeding on a DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check, a creature can gather enough carapace to allow a skilled blacksmith to craft one *black scorpion armor* from it. The process will take twice as long as usual.

BLACK SCORPION STINGER

Weapon (dagger), rare

When you deal damage with this stinger, you deal an additional 7 (2d6) poison damage.

The stinger loses all its special properties after 3 (1d6) days.

BLACK SCORPION ARMOR

Armor (breastplate, half plate, plate), very rare (requires attunement)

While wearing this armor, you gain the following benefits:

- You have a +1 bonus to AC.
- You have resistance against poison damage.
- The armor doesn't impose disadvantage on your Dexterity (Stealth) checks.

BLACK CAVE SCORPION BROOD

medium swarm of tiny beasts

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 26 (4d8 + 8)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 10 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| 8 (-1) | 13 (+1) | 14 (+2) | 2 (-4) | 8 (-1) | 1 (-5) |

Skills Stealth +3

Damage Vulnerabilities lightning

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 10 ft., passive Perception 9

Proficiency Bonus +2

Challenge 1

Black Sand Camouflage. The brood has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in black sand.

Swarm. The brood can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the brood can move through any opening large enough for a tiny insect. The brood can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

ACTIONS

Stingers. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the brood's space. *Hit:* 5 (2d4) piercing damage and 7 (2d6) poison damage, or 2 (1d4) piercing damage and 3 (1d6) poison damage if the brood has half of its hit points or fewer.

BLACK CAVE SCORPION

huge beast

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 136 (13d12 + 52)

Speed 50 ft., burrow 20 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| 21 (+5) | 16 (+3) | 19 (+4) | 4 (-3) | 12 (+1) | 10 (+0) |

Saving Throws Dex +7

Skills Stealth +7

Damage Vulnerabilities lightning

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical attacks

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 20 ft., passive Perception 11

Proficiency Bonus +4

Challenge 10

Black Sand Camouflage. The scorpion has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in black sand.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The scorpion makes two claw attacks and either uses its stinger, or shoots its poison. If it has a target grappled, the scorpion can also make a bite attack against that target as a bonus action

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage, and the scorpion's barbs get stuck in the target's skin.

A creature with the scorpion's barbs stuck in its skin takes 4 (1d6 + 1) poison damage at the start of each of its turns. A creature can use its action to remove the barbs from itself or another creature, ending the effect on that creature.

Additionally, the target must succeed on a DC 17 Strength saving throw, or be grappled (escape DC 15). A creature grappled this way takes 5 (1d10) bludgeoning damage at the start of each of its turns. The scorpion can grapple a maximum of two creatures

Stinger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 15 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the target takes 3 (1d6) poison damage at the start of each of its turns. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Shoot Poison. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 60/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) poison damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw, or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

BONUS ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target grappled by the scorpion. *Hit:* 27 (4d10 + 5) piercing damage.

Sacrifice Brood (3/day). The scorpion shakes its body, forcing some of its brood off its back. A black cave scorpion brood appears in an empty space within 10 feet of it.

REACTIONS

Carapace Grip. When the scorpion is hit by a melee weapon attack, it can use its reaction to force the attacker to make a DC 17 Strength (Athletics) check. On a failure, the weapon is stuck in the scorpion's carapace. A creature can use its action to make a contested Strength check against the scorpion, freeing the weapon on a success.



YOUNG BLACK CAVE SCORPION

large beast

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 85 (10d10 + 30)

Speed 40 ft., burrow 15 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 18 (+4) | 14 (+2) | 17 (+3) | 3 (-4) | 10 (+0) | 9 (-1) |

Saving Throws Dex +5

Skills Stealth +5

Damage Vulnerabilities lightning

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical attacks

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 15 ft., passive Perception 10

Proficiency Bonus +3

Challenge 5

Black Sand Camouflage. The scorpion has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in black sand.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The scorpion makes two claw attacks and either uses its stinger, or shoots its poison

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage, and the scorpion's barbs get stuck in the target's skin.

A creature with the scorpion's barbs stuck in its skin takes 3 (1d6) poison damage at the start of each of its turns. A creature can use its action to remove the barbs from itself or another creature, ending the effect on that creature.

Stinger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d4 + 4) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the target takes 3 (1d6) poison damage at the start of each of its turns. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Shoot Poison. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) poison damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

VENOM BREATH VULTURE

Death is not far away if you see these creatures circling in the sky. The black and white birds are easily recognized by their long, bare necks with a blue stripe on the back and their red ruff. With a body size of four feet and a wingspan more than twice that, they are definitely among the largest flying creatures encountered in the black desert. These scavengers are always on the lookout for cadavers to break open with their claws and powerful beaks. They also like to pursue living creatures, hoping for a quick death. If they are impatient and hungry, they sometimes attack in larger groups. Their poisonous breath helps them bring their prey into a state of decay acceptable to them.

VENOM BREATH VULTURE

medium beast

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 66 (12d8 + 12)

Speed 10 ft., fly 50 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 16 (+3) | 14 (+2) | 13 (+1) | 2 (-4) | 12 (+1) | 4 (-3) |

Saving Throws Dex +4

Skills Perception +3

Damage Resistances acid

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 13

Proficiency Bonus +2

Challenge 3

Keen Sight and Smell. The vulture has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight or smell.

Pack Tactics. The vulture has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the vulture's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The vulture makes two attacks: one with its beak and one with its talons.

Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) piercing damage.

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

Acid Breath (Recharge 5-6). The vulture exhales acid in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 17 (5d6) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

APPENDIX

ENCOUNTERS BY CHALLENGE RATING

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| 3 | Venom Breath Vulture | 16 |
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| 7 | Magical Mirage | 7 |
| 8 | Living Boulder | 10 |
| 9 | Sandstorm | 3 |
| 10 | Black Cave Scorpion | 15 |
| 16 | Adult Sandworm | 12 |

ENCOUNTERS 4 PLAYERS LEVEL 1-3

d4 Encounter

- 1 1 Venom Breath Vulture
- 2 1 (1d2) Sandworm Larva
- 3 1 Desert Ibex Ram, 2 (1d2 + 1) Desert Ibex Doe
- 4 1 Black Cave Scorpion Brood, 1 (1d2) Desert Ibex Doe

ENCOUNTERS 4 PLAYERS LEVEL 4-6

d6 Encounter

- 1 1 Magical Mirage
- 2 1 Young Sandworm, 0 (1d2 - 1) Sandworm Larva
- 3 1 Monsoon
1 Young Black Cave Scorpion, 1 Black Cave Scorpion Brood
- 4 2 (1d4) Venom Breath Vulture
- 5 2 (1d4) Living Rock

ENCOUNTERS 4 PLAYERS LEVEL 7-9

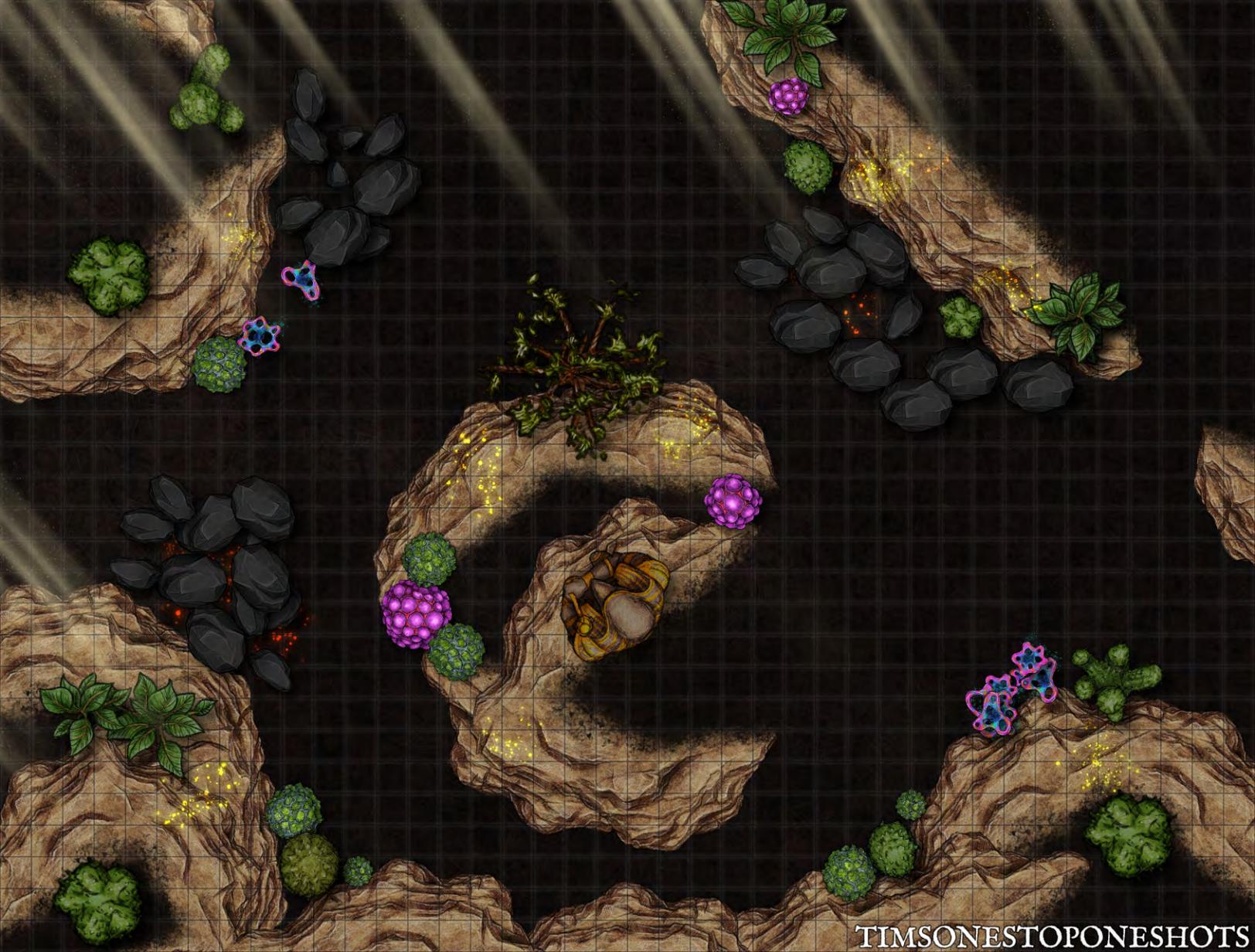
d6 Encounter

- 1 1 Black Cave Scorpion
- 2 1 Magical Mirage, 1 Living Rock
- 3 1 Living Boulder, 1 Living Rock
- 4 1 Young Sandworm, 1 (1d2) Sandworm Larva
- 5 1 Young Black Cave Scorpion, 2 (1d4) Living Rock
- 6 4 (1d8) Venom Breath Vulture

ENCOUNTERS 4 PLAYERS LEVEL 10-12

d4 Encounter

- 1 1 Adult Sandworm
- 2 1 Living Boulder, 3 (1d6) Living Rock
- 3 3 (1d4 + 1) Young Sandworm
1 Black Cave Scorpion, 1 (1d2) Young Black Cave Scorpion
- 4 1 Black Cave Scorpion





Black Desert

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