



# Baastherox's Adventure

Free Sample

DRAGONBOND





# Great Wyrms of Drakha

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**KICKSTARTER**



# THE PRIMORDIAL SHARD

*"Everything is inferior;  
The only company worth keeping is me;  
The rest fear my fury and power".*  
– Baastherox



# WELCOME

Welcome to The Primordial Shard, a Dragonbond tier 4 adventure, part of the Great Wyrms of Drakha adventures.

Aureus Fulgen, has heard a rumor of an artifact that could hold a hint for unlocking the secret of travel between Valerna and Drakha. However, the clue lies deep in the territory of Baastherox, the mightiest and least sociable of all dragons. Not wanting to anger the mightiest, Aureus plans on sending a group of Valernians to investigate, and if the rumor holds true, retrieve the artifact.



## Fighting the Great Wyrms of Drakha

Great Wyrms are gargantuan and intimidating creatures. Fighting them isn't easy, especially if you rely on a disordered strategy and enter the fray without some information on your opponent. Finding the correct way to carry out each encounter and coming out victorious will be a challenge.

Great Wurm Combat is slightly differently from normal 5e encounters, especially regarding the actions of the monsters. In this system, the GM and the players participate in a battle of wits where the players must discover the weaknesses of their foe and apply the correct strategy, while the GM uses a wide range of attacks and actions that make the fight unique.

### Epic Encounters

These rules are an alternative to traditional battles against powerful creatures where —despite relying on legendary actions— players could easily overwhelm the opponent, creating the sensation that the encounter was not challenging enough or simply too similar to others. In order to break the mold, we've introduced a few key mechanics, which are explained below: phases, exploits and action pools. Additionally, all dragons are split into body parts, each with their own stats. This is further explained below as well.

In this supplement, you'll find several paragraphs written in *italics*. These are read-aloud sections, intended as short, flavorful descriptions of a dragon's lair, the first time characters encounter the dragon, or the results of disabling one of their limbs.

### Modes of Play

Epic encounters can be played as one-shot encounters, placing the characters right outside the battlefield, or added to any high-level campaign as an important or final fight.

Whichever you choose, make sure to read the entire Great Wurm section beforehand and fill in the Wurm tracking sheets for quick reference of the dragon's health, attacks, and phases.

### One-Shot Mode

When playing the encounters as a one-shot, each dragon will include a simple guide of how much information to give to the players before the fight. The information provided depends on the difficulty of the encounter you wish to enter. On higher difficulties, the players will start the fight with little to no information and will need to figure out each dragon's weaknesses as the fight progresses. One-Shot Mode sections also give the players possible items allowing them to make the fight more straightforward. Most of the time, this includes items that deal increased damage.

## Fight Mechanics

### Scalability

The encounters herein use a system of scale that adapts to the number of players in the encounter. Many of the characteristics of the fight, such as a dragon's total hit points and number of actions, are determined by the number of player characters in the encounter. Whenever an (N) appears in the rules text, it refers to the number of players that participate.

Although the scalability rule is intended to adapt the Great Wyrms to various gaming group sizes, all the encounters in this supplement are optimized for a party of 4 or 5 player characters.

### Phases

Great wyrms are fought through a series of phases. These are specific to each dragon and determine not only the behavior and state of the creature, but the environment's as well, setting a stage and moving the combat forward. Each phase has conditions that need to be met in order to advance to the next one and get closer to defeating the enemy.

Whenever there's a change of phase, new mechanics and actions may become available while others might no longer be usable. Additionally, the behavior of the monster changes. The trigger for each phase change is given in its respective scene description.

Each phases has the following specifications:



**Actions per round:** the number of actions the Great wyrm can perform every round.

**Phase change trigger:** These are the conditions that need to be met in order to trigger the next phase of combat.

**Special actions or situations:** These apply only to the given phase, to increase the difficulty during a specific circumstance, and may stop applying in following phases.

## Action Pool

Great wyrms have a number of actions defined by the phase and the number of characters they are facing.

A dragon's available action pool is equal to **(phase modifier) + N (number of characters)**. In some cases, a phase or ability may give the pool extra actions.

These actions are expressed as an action pool, from which a dragon may "spend" any number of actions during the fight. Some of a dragon's abilities require more than one action, deducting from the dragon's action pool accordingly.

A dragon may perform one or more its actions after any player character has taken an action. The GM is free to focus all actions on a dragon's single turn, or spread them out after the actions of various player characters. When a dragon performs one or more actions, it may use any of its available actions in sequence, spending the corresponding points from its action pool. The different actions great wyrms can take are specified in their abilities and combat moves sections.

## Upkeep

The Upkeep phase is the moment when an Azhurma recovers its action pool and uses its passive abilities, if any. An Azhurma's upkeep phase takes place at the beginning of its initiative.

Any unspent actions from the previous round's action pool are lost at the beginning of a dragon's upkeep. That is, the action pool never exceeds its limit. Keep track of the dragon's abilities and lair effects activate during upkeep.

## Exploits

Exploits are materials, situations or actions available for use by player characters that can debilitate an Azhurma and turn the tide in the adventurers' favor.

Fighting a Great Wyrms is a hard and highly perilous endeavor. Any party that wants to have any hope of survival or winning can investigate the creature beforehand to find its exploits.

## Body Parts

The Azhurma are so massive that their hit points and statistics are divided into Body Parts. Whenever a player attacks a great wyrm, they should choose the specific part they want to target. Body parts include: left and right claws, left and right legs, wings, head, upper and lower torso. Each body part has its own specifications, which affect only that body part.

As defined by your GM, it could make sense to assume that some attacks automatically hit one specific body part, for example a halfling's sneak attack hitting the legs, or psychic attacks hitting the head.

Area attacks and effects damage all the body parts that are caught in the area effect, as if they were separate targets.

## Scores and Statistics

Great wyrms use a normal 5e creature stat block, with increased hit points divided among body parts. Some body parts have specific saving throws stated; otherwise, they use the saving throws listed on the main stat block.

## Hit points

Each of the Azhurma's body parts has a set amount of hit points. This is expressed as N (number of player characters) x HP (Base hit point value of the body part), which helps scale the encounter to the size of the group.

**Broken:** When a body part reaches zero hit points, it's considered 'broken'. Either the dragon can't use that body part in combat anymore, or it becomes heavily impaired. The text on each body part's "broken" status establishes the effects when each of its body parts becomes broken.

## AC

Armor Class works exactly the same as it does in traditional 5e systems. It is the number required to get a successful hit on the body part.

### Special rules or notes:

Some dragons' body parts have special rules listed in an extra section.



## Damage Reduction

Each dragon has a Damage Reduction (DR) trait equal to its Constitution modifier. The dragon subtracts its DR number from every attack it receives (both magical and physical).

## Special Player Actions

### Mount

Any character may attempt to climb the monster to deal direct melee damage to a body part of the dragon that's higher or out of reach.

The character must start on a low body part (legs, arms, or tail) and use their move action to get to other body parts, by using a Strength (Athletics), Dexterity (Acrobatics), Wisdom (Animal Handling) or Wisdom (Survival) check. While mounted, players cannot be targeted by the dragon's melee attacks, but they are still subject to area effects.

**Shake DC:** This lists the Strength (Athletics), Dexterity (Acrobatics), Wisdom (Animal Handling) or Wisdom (Survival) check DC to climb the corresponding body part via the mount action. If the dragon uses the shake action (see the section "Dragon action"), this is also the DC of the Strength or Dexterity save the character must make to avoid falling.

### Examine

If the GM allows it, a player character may spend an action doing an Intelligence (Arcana), Intelligence (History), Intelligence (Investigation), Intelligence (Nature) or Intelligence (Religion) check to obtain information on the Great Wurm. If the checks succeeds, the player character learns one of the Great Wurm's abilities and their rough action pool percentage at the moment (the dragon has "almost all", "about 50%" or "almost none" of its action pool still available).

### Lure

As an action, a character may attempt to call the dragon's attention. The character makes an Intelligence (History), Intelligence (Nature), Wisdom (Animal Handling), Charisma (Deception), Charisma (Persuasion), Charisma (Performance), or Charisma (Intimidation) against a DC equal to the Dragon's passive Perception.

If the check succeeds, the dragon will focus on that character, moving in that direction if needed, and using their next action or sequence of actions specifically against that character.

Each dragon has a specific condition that allows a character to lure it, explained in the creature stat block.

## Dragon Actions

The actions of Great Wyrms in this supplement have the following format:

Name [action cost per use], target, effect, special notes.





# THE ADVENTURE



**T**he *Primordial Shard* is an epic adventure meant for three to five player characters that will start at 18th level. During the course of the adventure, the players will advance to level 20 by milestones before entering the final battle against the mighty dragon Baastherox. The adventure is set in Drakha, also known as *The Red Moon*, a world of dragons and their kin. The humanoid races of Valerna are scarce here, and most of the native creatures are not friendly to them.

You do not need to know all of Drakha to run the adventure, for most of the places and situations, as well as NPCs and creatures, will be explained throughout the adventure, and you will have all the information you need to focus.

We recommend this adventure for more experienced Dungeon Masters, however, if this is your first time running, follow the advice on “Playing the Dungeon Master” section to get tips on running games, and some specific advice on running high-level adventures.

The *About the Red Moon* section will provide some valuable information on some specific details on how time (days) and some magic work on the Red Moon. The Background section on each adventure tells you everything you need to know to set up the adventure. The *Overview* section of each adventure describes how the adventure is expected to run, and gives you a broad sense of the events and how they will unfold throughout the adventure.





## About The Red Moon

Before you run an adventure in the Red Moon, we will provide some information about details that work differently here than on Valerna, or other Earth-like worlds.

**Day/ Night cycle** - Drakha is a satellite to Rhaava; it completes one full revolution relative to it every 27 days. This means that using a normal day on Rhaava as a metric, the Red moon has 3 days of sunrise, 10 days of *daylight*, 4 days of *twilight*, 10 days of *night*. This means that players will need to know this information, to plan their actions, day and night cycles are longer and thus planning for a “night raid” or attack might be more complex than usual. Players can tell the actual time (relative to a day on Rhaava) by looking at the planet, which turns on its own axis, showing different faces of itself throughout the day, and they have learned to tell time by which side of Rhaava they are looking at. If a player asks what time it is, assume that they look at Rhaava and know an approximate time (Or have them try a DC 20 Intelligence (Nature) check, if you want to add a challenge). Valernians on Drakha are still required to rest daily to avoid exhaustion, as well as to replenish their class skills and abilities.

**Water in Drakha** - Water is very scarce on the surface of Drakha. However, there are methods to find/ obtain water, which most Valernians are aware of. The most frequent are: finding a cave that connects to the underground, where there is a vast underwater cavern system with water; or digging a deep well (usually about 30-60 feet, taking about an hour to dig) to find the natural water level. You can ask your PCs to succeed at a DC 25 Wisdom (Survival) check to find water, too.

**Finding Food in Drakha** - Food is scarce in Drakha. Adventurers can find roots and some plants on the surface that give enough nutrition; for protein, the Vyr is the most commonly found animal throughout the Red Moon. These rodents are hard to catch, but one will provide enough food for a day for six people. Alternatively, insects are present in a lot of shapes and sizes, and can provide enough nutrition as well.

**Dragons and Dragonkin** - Dragons are the rulers of the Red Moon, are divided into broods, descending from one ancestor, traced back to the first dragons born from Kadmos. The dragons rule over thousands of dragonkin, the flightless hatchlings of smaller size and humanoid shape, who diligently serve their masters and see to their wishes.

**Fauna in Drakha** - Because of the dragons, only a few species still remain in the Red Moon. These species all avoid dragons, but some can hunt and kill dragonkin (and Valernians too). Most creatures are very territorial, and will fight to the death if confronted near their lair, hunting whatever they can find.

**Magic in Drakha** - Some magic works differently on Drakha. As the Red Moon is cut off from Vaala, the effects of some spells are diminished or non-existent.

~ *Revivify*, *Resurrection*, and *True Resurrection* only work on bodies that did not have their Vaala taken at death. Any dragon that eats a valernian instantly absorbs its Vaala. Similarly, Va’ra crystal weapons absorb Vaala when used to kill a valernian, meaning they cannot be revived by any means.

~ *Teleportation* is very unstable in the Red Moon. Only Coatl dragons have perfected teleportation means through their studies. When determining the results of a teleport spell, remove the “on target” column and increase the off-target range appropriately. The maximum accuracy a teleport spell has on Drakha is “off-target”.

~ Dragons are not affected by the *Maze* spell.

~ The *Forcecage* spell can be broken with magic or strength; it is considered to have 25 AC and 50 HP on each side.

## Background

Drakha, also known as the Red Moon to the Valernians, is one of the satellite moons that orbit around Rhaava, the most important world in the Dragonbond Universe setting, and the place from where the Player Characters for these adventures originate from.

The most important landmass in Rhaava is Valerna, the biggest continent and where the first sentient beings appeared thanks to Vaala, the Prime Magic, which only exists in the world of Rhaava.



These beings were the Primordials, massive creatures of limitless power which shaped the world, not because they had a clear objective, but by existing because their size and power altered the landscape wherever they walked. Amongst these Primordials was the mighty Kadmos, the Primordial Dragon, who learned to multiply, and so the dragon species was born.

Fearing Kadmos' ambition, the other Primordials exiled Kadmos, along with the other dragons, to Drakha. There, without access to Vaala, the dragons would eventually perish.

The Primordials' plan seemed to work; however, through sheer will and power, Kadmos managed to create a tear in the fabric of the material plane. As Kadmos, along with his progeny, were stranded on Drakha, a portal between Valerna and the Red Moon appeared. Every twenty-seven years, this tear would open a portal between them, allowing the dragons to return to their ancestral home, unleashing their anger against those who exiled them. The Dragons would henceforth wait for the opening and raid Valerna, to gather Vaala and glory.

Once every twenty-seven years, dragons can venture into Valerna, where they ravage, destroy, and plunder the realms. Most dragons seek to bring back "gifts" for their Azhurma; more often than not, these gifts end up being live Valernians.

Valernians tend to not last long in the Red Moon; the dragons eat them for their Vaala, which empowers and invigorates them. But in rare cases, they escape, or in specific situations as presented in *The Golden City*, or other places, they are awarded some sort of livelihood as servants, low-class citizens, or test subjects for the dragons' macabre experiments.

Long have the Azhurmas, especially Aureus and Kuxcoatl, been in search of a way to end the Curse of Kadmos, and gain the power to travel between Drakha and Valerna freely. Aureus has finally found a lead that could develop into a solution for this conundrum: a Coatl dragonkin has found a clue. Aureus is now searching for this clue, and where it could eventually lead to. He has been pondering on how to best approach this, since the clue lies on another Azhurma's territory, one he knows it's not smart to meddle with.

His plan, meticulous and convoluted, involves using the Valernians he keeps in a military unit to get all the things needed to test out this dragonkin's theory. By using the Valernians he has a plan, in case they fail, to just declare that they escaped from his city. He has summoned a secret meeting in his palace to bestow the quest on a specific group of worthy Valernians.

## Overview

*The Primordial Shard* consists of a prologue, followed by four parts. **The Audience** serves as a prologue to the adventure, where the players will have an audience with Aureus Fulgen, and will be given the quest to recover a piece of parchment, and then follow any directions that are present in it. They will promptly be given equipment to aid in their quest and leave the Golden City by night without getting noticed. This prologue is intended to set the mood and theme of the adventure, so it should be handled more like a "cutscene", with limited player interaction, intended more towards roleplay and answering some questions in case the players need some more information.

In Part I, **The Inkling**, the adventurers will try to track and recover a piece of parchment with a very valuable piece of information, they do not know what sort of caravan they follow, and have little information other than the piece of parchment will hold their next destination and directions to get to what they are truly seeking. They are led by Palan, their squad captain, and long time friend. Once they retrieve the item they will be betrayed by Fannax, a fanatical Fulgen dragonkin who envies the favor Aureus promised if they were successful, coupled with a hatred for all Valernians. After this incursion Palan will die, leaving some hints of finding an alternate way to return to Valerna, leaving the adventurers to linger on the possibilities presented by this quest.

In Part II, **The Cave of Defeat**, the characters will have to traverse the very inhospitable desert, searching for the first clue marked on the map drawn on the parchment. Here they will fight against a great desert worm, one of the few creatures to inhabit the desert; they will also have to fight thirst and heat. Once they arrive at the cave, the characters will find the first hint of how to fight the Great Wyrms Baastherox in the final encounter, and also some of his weak spots if they pay close attention. After getting some rest, they will have to get to the next cave.



Part III, **Mandate of Strength**, leads the adventurers to a crevice, where they again have to battle the harshness of the environment and some challenges to get to their goal in the best shape they can. When they get there, they find that, unlike the previous cave, this one is inhabited. There is a cult of Fulgen dragonkin here, exiles from the Golden City, who have found a new Azhurma to worship - Baastherox. And, as Baastherox only values strength, they constantly fight to prove themselves worthy of the Great Wyrms, and eventually, the strongest go to challenge Baastherox in hopes of gaining his favor. None have ever returned. After the party fights the leader of this cult, they are allowed to enter the shrine, where they find another of Baastherox's written reflections, this one regarding challenges and worthy opponents.

In Part IV, **The Great Death**, the characters find their way out of the canyon, and finally see the massive skull that serves as Baastherox's lair in the distance. They will traverse the most dangerous environmental dangers here; constant storms and brimstone explosions can be quite dangerous. Finally, they will arrive at the great skull, where the final piece of information about the upcoming fight is carved on a plinth at the entrance. After this, the adventurers will arrive at the final fight. With their knowledge of the Azhurma, its weaknesses, and strategies to fight him, they will have a chance of success.

After the fight is over, the adventurers will find the missing piece of the parchment, where there are clear instructions of a location in the desert and a ritual that, using the shard, can open a portal to Valerna. It will be up to the characters to decide if they will return to Aureus or use the shard themselves to return home.

## Adventure Hook

*Canon* - You belong to the Steelclaws a Valernian squad loyal to Aureus Fulgen you are returning victorious from a quest. Captain Palan is praised by the dragons of the Golden City, many were unsure that a squad of Valernians would be able to carry out this task. Shortly after your return, a dragonkin general approached Palan directly, you are being awarded the great honor to meet Azhurma Aureus Fulgen personally.

*Alternate* - Your party has gained Aureus' attention, humanoid of such power are not common in Drakha. He has captured you and requested you attend an audience with him. He has an offer for you, and you know his favor and whatever he has to give will probably be worth it.

## Character Creation

You can create your character with any available 5e compatible content. There are some basic rules to keep in mind and general rules (especially concerning magic in the Red Moon). But as long as your DM allows it, use any character you like and any race you want.

If you want to create a character in the dragonbond universe we will outline some references so you can make your story and character fit in dragonbond.

When creating your lvl 18 character, make sure you follow the next steps:

- ~ Follow the character creation and give your character a race, and class (or multiclass) then level up your character up to level 18, giving it all the class abilities, spells, and ability modifiers allowed for that character.
- ~ Choose your starting equipment, then choose the following magic items to equip your character; 3 uncommon, 2 rare, 1 very rare items. Additionally, you have 20,000 gp to spend on more items, some items may be hard to come by during the adventure, so make sure to buy supplies as needed.
- ~ Check with your DM along the way to make sure the items and choices you made are OK with them.

## Adventurer Background

The characters can have diverse backgrounds and stories; they must choose one of the following reasons that resulted in them being part of the Steelclaws inside the Golden City. Also when running through this process you can ask the players if they wish their characters to know each other, make sure to note those that already know each other.



**Fresh Capture (combat-tested)** - You were captured during the last Eye of Kadmos, you were lucky enough to be brought to the Golden City, where Valernians still stand a chance. After fighting in the pits, your dragon captor saw your fighting prowess and recommended you join the *Steelclaws* voluntarily. You have been a member of the *Steelclaws* for about a year now, and earned a high rank inside the organization.

**Fresh Capture (worthy)** - Your dragon captor chose not to devour you, and gave you a second chance once it saw potential in your mind, you helped it in whatever it needed and asked for freedom. Eventually, you decided to join the *Steelclaws*, the only official Valernian organization in the Red Moon, to further prove the worth of Valernians in hopes that more dragons (at least of the Fulgen brood) would allow them to live.

**Fresh Capture (escapee)** - You were originally brought by a dragon belonging to another brood, you managed to escape its grasp and ventured the Red Moon for a while, eventually, you arrived at the Golden City, where all Valernians are given a chance to prove themselves. You enlisted in the *Steelclaws* knowing that even though it is a dangerous profession, it remains the easiest way to be allowed prolonged residence in the Golden City.

**Second Generation (revenge)** - You were born on the Red Moon, with diminished Vaala which means you are worthless to the dragons. You grew up hearing stories of Valerna and your parents' home. Your hatred of dragons led you to enlist in the *Steelclaws*, after you found out that on rare occasions they actually get to fight and kill dragons from other broods. You despise dragons, but respect that Fulgen dragons allow you to at least try to fight back.

**Second Generation (honor)** - You were born on the Red Moon; your parents have achieved high standing as aides to one of Aureus' researchers, and accepted as citizens because of their knowledge of Valernian history; however, citizenship is not inherited, it must be earned- So you chose to join the *Steelclaws* in an effort to earn your citizenship in the Golden City as your parents did.

You are allowed to create your own reason to have joined the *Steelclaws*, as long as your DM allows it.



Work in progress





## PROLOGUE: THE AUDIENCE



**T**he Golden City, *Azhurma Aureus* Fulgen's utopia, was founded with ideas and concepts intended to transcend dragonkind and bring order to all civilizations. As it stands, it is the largest city in both Valerna or Drakha; it holds incredible buildings, trade, and it is the closest to a "civilized" place Drakha, at least to Valernian standards. The circular city is divided into a series of rising rings. At the center is the golden palace, visible from all the city, a constant reminder of the one who stands before the law.

The Adventure begins as the adventurers wake up in their barracks; they are members of a military organization made up of Valernians called the Steelclaws; their captain is going to relay news of their impending audience with Aureus.

You wake up in the quarters inside the Steelclaw barracks, inside the Golden City. Palan Ethen, a tall, muscular Ysvalian who was picked up two cycles ago stands before you; he is past his prime, but his fighting experience is unmatched by any Valernian in the Steelclaws. He speaks, in a deep commanding voice.

*"My brothers, I have gathered you here, for you have been chosen by the golden one himself. Aureus has summoned us to an audience at his golden palace.*

*I should not have to say this, but this is more of an order than a request, and we shall comply immediately. Once there, I ask that you keep your wits, Aureus rarely deals with Valernians. I congratulate you beforehand, for this means that he has decided you are the best suited for this task. Since we are going to be fighting together, it is best that you know who stands beside you, so if you haven't yet go ahead and introduce yourselves."*



The players should take this time to make short introductions of their characters, battle roles, and important notes.

Palan will ask the characters to figure out the best fighting formation for this group, this should be considered their formation when traversing the desert, unless they specify otherwise.

After all of the introductions and first decisions are made, Palan ushers the party and tells them it is time to go to the Golden Palace.

## The Golden Palace

Palan guides the party through the first two districts, once the party enters the third district they are joined by a retinue of Goldclaw fulgen dragonkin, all clad in golden armor to guide them the rest of the way.

Every building in the upper district is a work of art. They all have golden decorations and roofs, but at the center of the city is the tallest building, the Golden Palace. It is a beacon of light, reflecting the sun with its curved walls and decorated facade. Just outside of it is the great fountain, with a life-size sculpture of Aureus himself made of pure gold; it is so life-like it looks like it is about to move.

The party reaches the doorway accompanied by the royal guard. Just outside of the door awaits Fannax, a Dragonkin general of silver scales, known for her hatred of Valernians. She glares at the party as they arrive at the massive door, entrance to the golden palace.

The gate opens as they approach it, revealing a great circular hall, surrounded by statues and a great mural depicting Aureus' greatest moments. The door closes behind the party, leaving them in complete darkness. Read the next paragraph as the door closes.

You make your way through the Golden City, its massive palaces and golden domes are a sight that would impress any living being. You arrive at the golden palace and enter its colossal golden gate, through which you enter a large circular atrium; as the gates close, the room is left completely dark.

Suddenly a ray of golden light blinds you. As you are able to open your eyes again, in the center of the atrium you see Aureus, with his scales shining of gold and silver, illuminating everything with his presence. He starts his speech, his voice echoing through the chamber.

*"Steelclaws, your latest achievements have proven your worth, surprising even my ancient self by gaining my attention. Your.. hmm.. limitations as Valernians do not diminish the role you'll play in the construction of our golden utopia. I've chosen a pivotal and privileged role for you, one that might see my radiant guidance expand to those who have yet to benefit from it. March into the Titan Wastes, and find a parchment that will direct you to your final destination and the object of my desire... This endeavor shall not be easy. Another...Azhurma might find your activities unpleasant, and he's not known for being tolerant... disguise your relation to me to the best of your abilities. I'm trusting you with this noble purpose. Fulfill it and earn a place in my city as full citizens of this privileged society."*

When Aureus finishes speaking, he gestures at Palan and asks him if he or any of the Steelclaws have any questions. The Azhurma will be direct and blunt, his answers concise and to the point. He avoids saying what the object is or where it shall take them, but he believes that they can complete the mission. If pressed he gives the players a some hints of where they are headed:

- ~ The desert is known for its scorching heat and almost complete absence of water, water can be found by digging, very deep.
- ~ The desert is home to Stormwurms, giant worms who can summon lightning.
- ~ The desert is known for its dangerous natural disasters, which happen at random almost daily.



For position only



He underlines the fact that they are on their own, any imprudent question will be met by a paralyzing gaze and a chilling “*Anything else?*” by Aureus. When the dragon feels he has answered enough, he will signal them to leave.

## Preparing for the Journey

The party will be escorted to the edge of the upper district; after that, Palan will lead them to the headquarters, where they are supposed to get final instructions on this task. Let the players know their characters are back at headquarters, where Palan has instructed them to remove all Steelclaws insignias from their equipment.

The players will wait at their headquarters until they receive further instructions, they are told not to talk to anyone and to not walk around the city proper. After a while, Fannax bursts through the doors, with her two royal guards who enter and start clearing the room and the adjacent corridors to make sure they are alone. Fannax is a female Fulgen Dragonkin; these dragonkin walk upright in their hind legs, similar to a human, but using their tails for balance. Even female dragonkin like Fannax are taller than most Valernians, and with her armor on, she looks as tough as most Ysvalians, built for battle.

The two guards exit the room briefly and then come back carrying a simple wooden chest, which they place on the table, then they leave and close the door behind them. Fannax takes out two scrolls and says.

*“Soft blooded, I am here to relay His Radiant Majesty’s instructions. Although it baffles me that he chose such weak creatures to carry out his wishes, I will complete the task that was given to me.”*

She unties the first scroll and lays it flat on the table, and continues.

*“You will need to venture East through the mountains for two days and then go south. Once there, you should find traces of a Magnifex Dragonkin expedition; our spies tell us they have the object that we need you to collect first, it is a piece of parchment. Your orders are to follow the parchment to wherever it may lead you, and if you were to fall make sure the parchment is lost with you.”*

Fannax gestures to the chest on the table.

*“We have prepared some supplies to aid your weak bodies through the desert. We have prepared enough for one week; after that, your survival is up to you.”*

Then, Fannax unbinds the other scroll and places it in front of Palan, urging him to sign it.

*“I hope you die fast, so that Aureus can reconsider and award the task to more worthy hands.”*

Palan relays the whole instructions, which start by letting the PCs know they must leave as soon as daylight is gone. He instructs everyone to split up the supplies and get ready to depart when night arrives in Drakha in a couple of Valernian days.

## Departure

The characters gather outside the Steelclaws Headquarters at the start of the long night. When they are ready to leave, read the next text box out loud.

As you reach the last ring of the marvelous Golden City, you witness a crowd gathering around a wooden structure. Hundreds of dragonkin surround the gallows, cheering. Two guards make their way through the mob, escorting a chained Valernian - a Tyverian Vampyr.

The three make their way up the steps and on to the platform. There, a dragonkin executioner stands with a Va’ra great axe. As soon as they place the criminal on the block he is quickly dispatched to more cheers from the witnesses. Palan breaks the silence and whispers, almost to himself:

*“I forgot this was happening today... I knew him, we used to patrol back when I was in the sewer squad. Heard he bumped shoulders with a dragonkin who attacked him, he bested the dragonkin and unfortunately killed it. His defense was not good enough for the dragon that passed judgment on his case. Sometimes I forget that we are always one mistake away from death, even inside the Golden City.*

*No matter, maybe this quest could change everything for us.”*



If asked further, Palan explains that while Aureus is fair in most things, there are some rules that are very unfair to Valernians. Still, in all the Red Moon, this is the best place to be; the only one where they stand a chance to live out a full life, even if their conditions are somewhat unfavorable. If pushed more, he tells the PCs that if he could go back to Valerna he would not look back.

## Palan Ethen

Palan Ethen was born on Ysval, trained as part of the elite griffon riders; at the age of twenty-two he fought against the mighty dragons that raided Valerna. He was defeated and captured by a Fulgen dragon, and carried back to Drakha. There, he quickly realized that he got the best outcome possible: talking to other Valernians in the Golden City, he knew that most of the other Valernians that were brought as gifts for the Azhurma had probably been devoured by now.

This was twenty-nine years ago; he has braved Drakha and its dangers for more than a full cycle, more than most Valernians. His best years are behind him, but more than makes up for it with boldness and strategic awareness, and when in combat he fights as a man half his age.

## Roleplaying Palan Ethen

Palan clearly had a military background even before joining the Steelclaws; he is very orderly and will pull rank if he needs to. In this first part, Palan should come off as someone who is thankful the Golden City exists, in full knowledge that if it didn't all of the Valernians who serve in the Steelclaws would have probably been devoured by now. He wishes Valernians to succeed in the Red Moon so that they can survive it. After the adventurers find there might be a way back to Valerna, he will shift his view and tell the adventurer's he would give everything to go back.

When speaking, Palan is straightforward and bold; he doesn't care for small talk. He does, however, add some light-hearted jokes, and smiles often as he speaks. He knows the effectiveness of stern command, but he also knows that a smile can sometimes be a lot more effective than an order, and even if he didn't he can't really control his smile, he has a way of finding the light through even the darkest moments.

Palan is very knowledgeable of dragon society and structure, especially inside the Golden City. He knows that only a handful of Valernians have seen Aureus up-close, so he understands something important is happening; if questioned he offers the next information.

~ Aureus built the Golden City, the only known place in Drakha where a Valernian has any semblance of rights.

~ Fulgen dragons are one of the few that see value in Valernians more than the Vaala inside their essence.

~ He misses Ysval, and his family, but he wishes to keep living here and making a difference for future Valernians that may be brought by dragons. The way he sees it, if he proves his worth he could be saving more Valernians in the future.

~ He has now lived more time on Drakha than on Valerna, but still after many years he feels that just one mistake may cost his life.



WIP





## PART I: THE INKLING



**T**he adventurers leave the Golden City behind and climb down to where the mountains stop and the desert starts, this takes them four days but they arrive at the bottom, it is still night as night-time lasts for 10 days on Drakha. Read the following text to the players.

The way down the mountains is harsh, from time to time you see fulgen dragonkin at a distance guarding you and checking your progress. Palan keeps reminding you that this is the easy part of the journey. You arrive at the foot of the mountains, the natural border between Aureus' territory and that of one of his most fearsome neighbors, Baastherox the Mightiest, you have heard rumors of his legendary strength.

You feel the air dry your mouth and throat, the change in temperature and humidity is evident, it is still night as you march into the desert.

From this point on you should take note of what day it is, since day and night work differently on drakha (refer to the day/ night cycle on page XX) you should be aware of what day it is to control some things that are affected by it.

The party travels the first day; any character with a Passive Perception of 16 or above finds the trail and can inform Palan about it. If no character has enough Passive Perception, Palan manages to find the trail but at the cost of an extra day of travel.

After finding the trail Palan will insist on pushing forward until they find the caravan, if the party insists in resting along the way, Palan rolls a DC 22 Survival check at the start of every day to see if he finds the trail even with the careful approach (Palan has a +9 to his survival skill). Alternatively, a PC can make this roll if they think they have better chances, but should they fail, Palan scolds the PCs for losing the trail. Every failure on this roll adds an extra half a day to finding the expedition's exact location. If the PCs choose to follow Palan's orders and march day and night in pursuit, it only takes two days to get close to the expedition.



Every character (including Palan) must roll a DC 19 Constitution saving throw for each day spent tracking the expedition caravan. For each failed roll, the PCs increase their exhaustion level by one. After the DM has narrated whatever happens during the additional traveling time (if any), during the last “day’s evening” and before the PCs set up camp, Palan lets them know they are now close behind the caravan. He then offers to cast three greater restoration spells to reduce exhaustion levels, to be administered to whom the PCs decide needs them the most.

## The Scouting Party

Once the PCs are actually tailing the Expedition, Palan sets up a quick camp and lets the party take a short rest. He starts planning an attack before dawn. As Palan is finishing setting up camp; every character with a Passive Perception of 18 or higher notices a strange silhouette on top of a nearby dune, if any character offers to stand guard or look around they can make a DC 20 Perception check to notice the silhouette. Read the next box if one or more characters notice the silhouette. If no one notices, skip this box and read the next one instead.

You spot a shadow moving on a dune nearby, it seems to move away quickly as you try to get a better look. You notice Palan looking in the same direction, quickly checking that his weapons are in place.

Palan has noticed movement, but remains unsure. His instincts tell him to have a better look.

Palan gets up and starts to move, he leaves with a simple:

*“Rest up, I will come back. I need to check on something.”*

*Following Palan.* At this point, any character can choose to follow Palan as he does not order the PCs to stay back, but he does leave quickly and he will wait for no one. If characters follow Palan, they find five **Magnifex Dragonkin** (pp .xx) lurking nearby, talking amongst themselves, and huddling up together. If the PCs did not move silently, they will be spotted immediately, and a fight ensues.

If the characters chose to move with stealth, they have surprise advantage during the first round of combat. These Dragonkin are all at half HP because they found a nasty **Stormwurm**, which attacked them while they were searching for water. Any PC who decides to inspect them before attacking, will have to make a Perception DC 15 check, to notice the wounds on their scales. If no one followed Palan, do not read the following boxed paragraph and skip to the next section.

You move up the dunes to the north and hear slithering noises from below. In the interdunes, you see five figures with snake-like tails and a draconic upper body, their hissing voices carry over. As soon as they see you approach three of them charge while two of them try to escape.

Palan instructs all that followed to catch the runaways while he deals with the main group.

After the fight, Palan tells the party that they must attack immediately, for the rest of the caravan might notice the scouts have not returned, yet, and thus may prepare for an attack. This means that the PCs will have to fight at their current exhaustion levels. Palan leaves the decision up to them, telling them that he is willing to wait if they think they need to rest.

*Not Following Palan.* If no PC decides to go with Palan when he goes to investigate, he will take on the fight alone. He manages to slay four dragonkin but falls to a fifth one, and is left unconscious on the sand. The party will find him there; he is seriously wounded and will need healing.

In the event any dragonkin escapes, whether from the fight with the PCs or after wounding Palan, there will be no chance for the PCs to take the caravan by surprise, as they will be ready and waiting for an attack.



## The Expedition

When the party finally catches up to the expedition, read the following text box:

You find your way to the Expedition's campsite. There are three campfires, one large and two smaller ones, as well as five-domed tents made from bone and poorly-tanned leather that still shows some gore and blood stains. The largest tent lies at the center. There are nine cheval-de-frise (bone stake wall) blocking portions of the camp's access points. The whole arrangement creates a crude yet effective defensive perimeter for the expedition's campsite.

If the PCs managed to defeat the scouts and attack without resting through the night, read the next paragraph. Skip to the next box if this was not the case.

The camp is silent and the fires are still burning, but the dragonkin seem to have retreated to their tents to rest for the night. There are only five guards outside the camp, slithering circles along its perimeter. Palan orders you to take out the guards as fast as possible so you can take on the rest of the expedition by surprise.

If the PCs take out the guards in the first two rounds of combat, they can make their way into the camp unnoticed if they take longer or make any loud noises the rest of the dragonkin are roused and will join the fight two rounds after that.

The next text box is to be used only if the camp was aware of the attack if this is not the case, skip it.

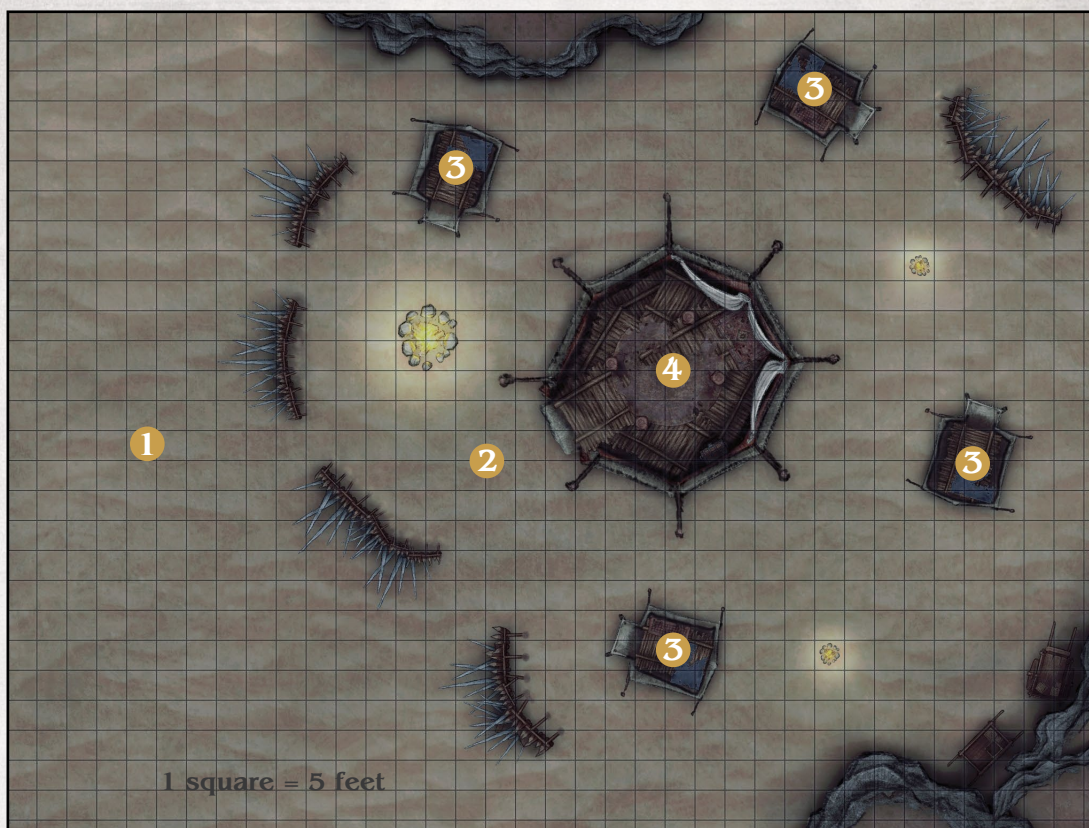
As soon as you approach the camp, it is clear that the dragonkin are ready for an attack. They have gathered into three small squads and are standing behind the stakes walls they set to defend the camp. A slightly larger dragonkin wearing heavy armor and holding a chained mace is standing with the squad deployed in the middle of their formation. Displeased, Palan lets out a heavy sigh, yet he reminds you:

*"If we are victorious, we can take a step into letting the dragons and dragonkin know that Valerians are not to be taken lightly. So fight hard; do not die."*



WIP





## 1. Outside the Camp

The area outside the camp has many tracks of the carts and the tents, you can see the tents inside, protected by palisades of bone stakes, they look sharp and threatening.

This is the area the party arrives from, this open area has the five **Magnifex dragonkin** scouting while the rest sleep inside the camp. The palisades can be jumped over by making a DC 22 Athletics check, if the check fails the character takes 2d8 piercing damage, if the check fails by 10 or more the character does not land inside the camp and is placed just outside, adjacent to the palisades. If the camp has been warned all the dragonkin are inside area 2.

### Developments

This is also the Area where Fannax attacks *Palan* after the adventurer's clear up the camp and find the parchment.

## 2. Camp

The camp looks quite imposing, tents held up by bone and sewn skin. the tent at the middle is quite large, there are four smaller tents scattered inside the campsite.

This area is the camp proper, between each of the palisades is a pitfall trap, noticing the trap requires a Passive Perception of 20 or higher, any player looking for traps can roll a DC 22 Perception check to notice all of the pitfalls. If they fail to notice them once they step in any space between the palisades they must roll a DC 22 Dexterity Save taking 1d8 piercing damage from the stakes and 2d6 bludgeoning damage from the fall as they plummet 20ft in the pit. If the camp has been warned about the attack, this area holds all the dragonkin together.



### 3. Small Tents

The inside of the tent is simple and functional, you find a small rug and a vase with water inside, there is nothing else of note.

These tents each hold a single **Magnifex Dragonkin**, the players must make a DC 14 Stealth roll to avoid waking them up as they enter the tents, the players must declare they are being careful or stealthy. If the **Magnifex Dragonkin** is woken it slithers loudly alerting the rest of the camp. If the camp was warned beforehand all the tents are empty and the dragonkin are in area 2.

### 4. Main Tent

The Main tent is quite large, supported by large wooden columns. Inside are many rugs, the decorations are bizarre and eye catching, not always in the best way. there is a chest on the back of the room with a small altar nearby.

The Main tent holds one **Magnifex Acidbrewer** and two **Magnifex Songmasters**. the players must make a DC 14 Stealth roll to avoid waking them up as they enter the tents, the players must declare they are being careful or stealthy. if any of them wake up the slither loudly alerting the rest of the camp. If the camp was warned beforehand the tent is empty and all three dragonkin are in area 2.

### Treasure

The **Magnifex Acidbrewer** has a simple key on him that is used to open the chest in the large tent. Inside the chest, the players will also find six food rations and a beautifully decorated *Silver Canteen*, which refills magically after every long rest. This contains a daily ration of water for a single person. If the party has no one that can cast *greater restoration*, make sure to include seven greater restoration potions to help through the exhaustion later on. The parchment was made by the Coatl Dragonkin Mzeebal and is torn, but it shows a detailed map of the desert and has three locations on it. Read the following text out loud to your players:

You see Fannax just outside the camp, a Red tinted glass spear on her hand, she is accompanied by 5 Goldclaws, who look confused when you come out of the tent, one of them speaks.

*"They are alive! Our orders are clear, we must only make sure that they continue on their path."*

Fannax, clearly flustered, angrily points her Va'ra spear at Palan and speaks.

*"I have heard rumors of Ysvalian honor, captain. I challenge you to single combat, after you die, I will only take the parchment and let the others live, I promise this by my Azhurma's law."*

Then she looks back at the dragonkin guards and declares clearly and loudly. *"If you dare come between me and this weak womb-born, I will kill all of you first, and take my chances in exile."*

Palan steps forward, looking down at his feet and mutters. *"I accept your challenge, but know that this is the last day you draw breath, lizard!"*

### Roleplaying Fannax

Fannax will attack Palan with all her might, directing all attacks at him, even if the characters step in; she is blinded by rage against him because in Aureus' eyes this Valernian is worth something more than the Vaala he contains. If the characters follow the dragonkin to avenge Palan and wish to question Fannax. She is still blinded by rage then, telling the Valernians how little she thinks of them, and wishing Baastherox kills them slowly. She offers little else, she must seem devoured by anger, only something like that would make her betray a direct order from Aureus.

At this point, the characters must choose if they are going to try and interfere or not. If they do so, Fannax throws a large clay vase at them, as soon as it hits the ground it explodes in a 60 ft. radius all characters caught in the area must make DC 24 Dexterity saving throw, taking 45hp (8d10) of fire damage on a failed save or have the damage halved on a successful one.

Regardless of any attempt to interfere, Palan and Fannax start their combat. She will only focus on attacking him, occasionally using some of her items to deal area damage to the adventurers if they join the fray.



During this encounter Palan keeps his vow to uphold the challenge and reminds the characters it's his honor that is on the line, so he is unwilling to teleport or be moved or have other effects in him that would otherwise remove him from battle. If the players somehow manage to save Palan—which will prove highly unlikely for them—he remains wounded (his health will remain at 25% of his original hp and his exhaustion will be locked at level two) for the rest of the adventure because of the grievous wounds caused by the Va'ra spear, which can not be healed by magical means—not even by high level spells. If the players stand by or let the fight continue, read them the following:

As Palan and Fannax clash in combat, you notice the dragonkin sneer at Palan when she finds they are evenly matched. After a series of thrusts, dashes and parries, Palan manages to gain the upper hand with a downward slash that deeply cuts into Fannax's shoulder and chest. Unfortunately, Fannax maintains her focus and thrusts her spear through Palan's chest.

You notice movement among the dragonkin; seeing how Fannax is now wounded, they charge at her, quickly overpowering and binding her hands and feet in chains. The dragonkin leader takes a step towards you and speaks.

*"We are taking Fannax back to The Golden City to be judged for her disobedience; you will continue on your quest. Remember that it was Aureus, not Fannax, who bestowed this task upon you. Complete your quest Steelclaws, and witness as Aureus stays true to his word, as he always has and forever will."*

The Dragonkin turn around with a now unconscious Fannax being carried and start on their way back to The Golden City.

The adventurers can choose to fight the rest of the dragonkin group or let them go, and check on Palan. If they fail to tend to Palan in 3 rounds, his soul is absorbed completely by the spear.

If they choose to fight the dragonkin here or follow them after checking on Palan, the fight happens in an open area, and they fight against five **Fulgen Guard Dragonkin**.

The dragonkin fight in perfect order; they will focus all attacks on one character and strike until the adventurer dies. Then, they will move on to the next player character using the same strategy.

If the adventurers are victorious after this, they can kill Fannax while unconscious or heal her and interrogate her before deciding what to do with her.

After the fight is concluded, the players can now freely inspect the parchment; give them the handout or show them the image depicting it. It has 3 locations marked on it, and these are numbered one through three.

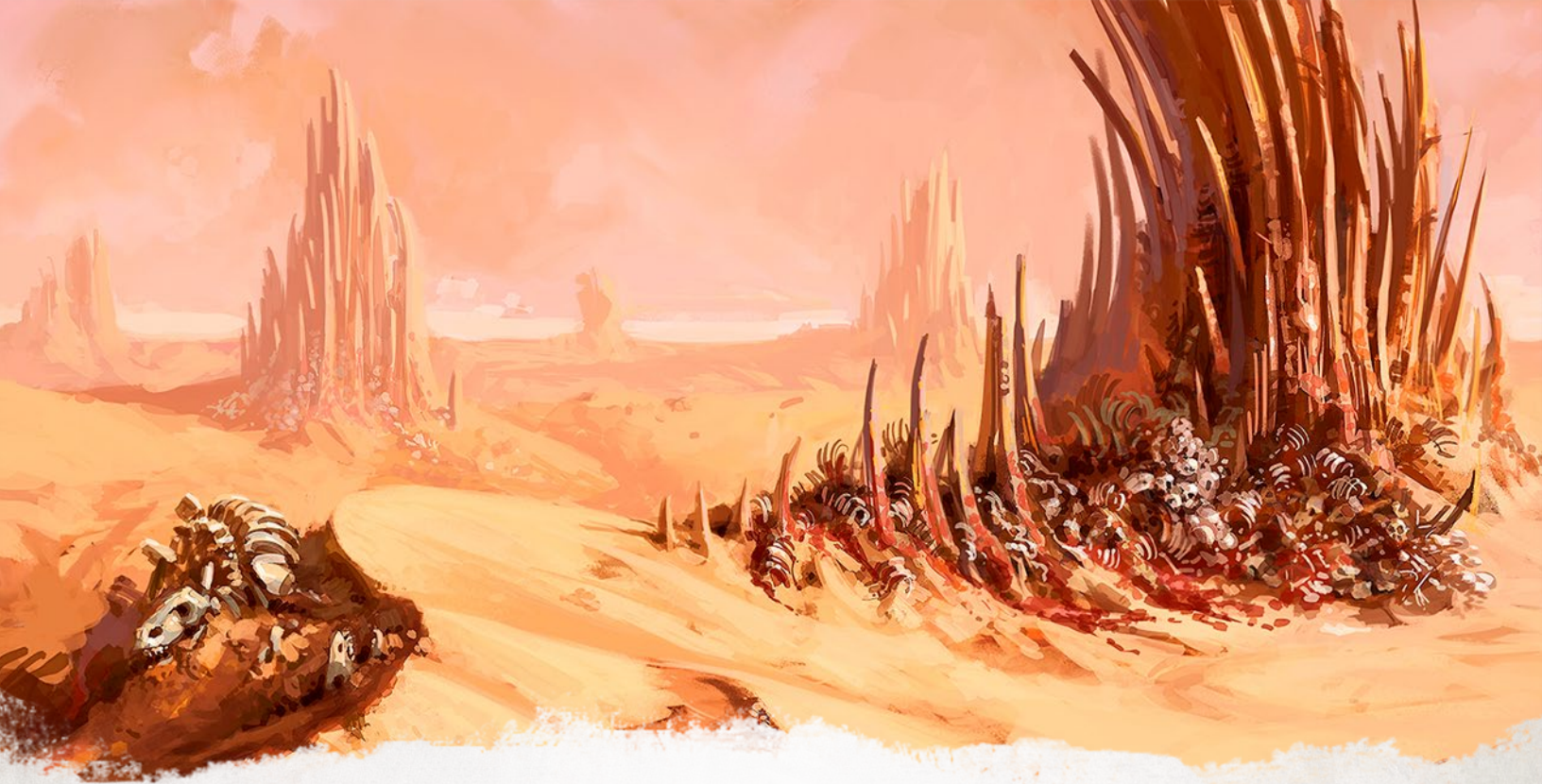
There is a clear inscription that reads:

*"It is clear now, with this I can put an end to the Curse of Kadmos, I wonder if Baastherox can be persuaded..."*

The closest location is marked as a cave and has the draconic word for "scar" next to it.







## PART II: THE CAVE OF DEFEAT

**M**ake sure to show the players the parchment handout or image, and explain the various annotations on it.

The piece of parchment is old and torn, and it depicts a rough map of the Ashen Cracks. This map focuses on the region controlled by Baas-therox, with a border to Aureus' Gilded Lands to the north, and Rawraxxa's Slithering Dunes to the south.

The map has three marked locations. The closest one is marked by two simple hills with a cave entrance; this location is marked with the draconic word for "Scar." The second location is a deep canyon, on it is the word for "Worship." Finally, the third location is one even Valernians have previously heard of: The Titan's Skull, marked with the word for "Death," this is the place where one of the strongest dragons ever to exist waits for any challengers.

There is a small note on the bottom of the parchment where it is torn. It reads, *"I wonder if Baas-therox can be persuaded..."*

The closest point on the map is four to five Valernian days away. The party could choose to travel in any order they want, and they can even decide to go directly to the final encounter from this point. If they do, jump to the appropriate section and start with it. The distance to the other two places from this point is; eight days to the "cult" location and twelve days to "the mightiest" location.

If the players choose to travel to the first marked spot, read them the following:

As you prepare to leave, you notice the sky getting darker and, from time to time, loud thunder rattles the air and pierces your ears.

You notice that unlike other storms, this one has no precipitation, only darkness; and the only light that briefly tears the darkness away comes from lighting as they strike across the red desert.



The party will now leave for the first location. It will take them five days to get there at a normal pace—or three if the adventurers travel more hours than normal and exert themselves. The following section includes random tables with combat and survival encounters; both need to be rolled every day. A detailed description of these encounters is present in **appendix b**; all of the creatures in the combat encounter table can be found in **appendix a**.

**Navigation.** Traveling through the desert is hard, have the party designate one member as the navigator. At the start of each new travel day the DM makes a Wisdom (Survival) check on their behalf to determine whether or not the party becomes lost for the day. The DC for this check is 15, apply a +5 bonus to the check if they are moving at a slower, careful pace (which will cost a full extra day of travel), or a -5 penalty to the check, if the party is moving at a faster pace. If the party succeeds on the check they know exactly where to go and travel efficiently; if they fail they add half a day of travel to get to their destination (only count full days when rolling for combat and survival encounters).

**Exhaustion.** At the end of each day spent traveling, the characters must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or suffer 1 level of exhaustion. The saving throw is made with disadvantage if the character is wearing medium armor, heavy armor, or also if the party is traveling at a fast pace they all roll with disadvantage. If the party is traveling at a slower pace, they get a +5 bonus to the check. You can award further bonuses or advantage if the party is creative in the ways they chose to brave the desert. Characters who fail the save by 10 or more gain two levels of exhaustion. Should an adventurer reach exhaustion level 6 because of this, their score stays at 5 instead.

**Random Encounters.** At the start of every day of travel except for the last before they arrive at The Scar, have a random character in the party roll once in both tables, then run the appropriate encounter(s) as dictated by the results. These can take place at any time throughout the day, and in the order determined by you. Once the party faces any of the encounter options, make sure to mark it as “done.” Should they roll the same result again, make the re-roll. On the final day before arriving at their destination, run the **Colossal Stormwurm** encounter.

### Titan Wastes Encounters

d12	Encounter
1-8	Nothing
9	Magnifex scouting party (night raid) 1d6 Magnifex dragonkin
10	Magnifex scouting party (day raid) 1d8 Magnifex dragonkin 1 Magnifex Acidbrewer
11	Sandbeetle Swarm (Large)
12	Lesser desert wurms 2 Stormwurm Larvae

### Desert Survival Encounters

d12	Encounter
1-2	Oasis
3-5	Extreme Heat
6-7	Quicksand
8	Sulphur Explosions
9	Sandstorm
10	Earthquake
11	Thunderstorm
12	Cataclysm

## Terror from Beneath

When the adventurers are on their last day of travel, they get attacked by a **Stormwurm**. Read the following description when you are ready to run the encounter as the party either declares they are leaving or they are calling it a day.

You have traveled several days through harsh climate, enduring and prevailing the Titan Wastes. As you draw ever closer to the location marked on the map, you can see the small rocky hills rising in the distance.

You are making good time even as you trudge your way through the desert when, suddenly, the sky darkens and a single lightning strikes disturbingly close to you, the sand crystallizing under its destructive energy, forming a glass-like structure in the shape of a basin with spiked edges.



The sand beneath your feet starts to move, creating a swirl in the desert floor, which begins to pull you towards something barely discernible at its center.

Suddenly out of the center in the sand eddy, two pink, slimy tendrils shoot upwards!

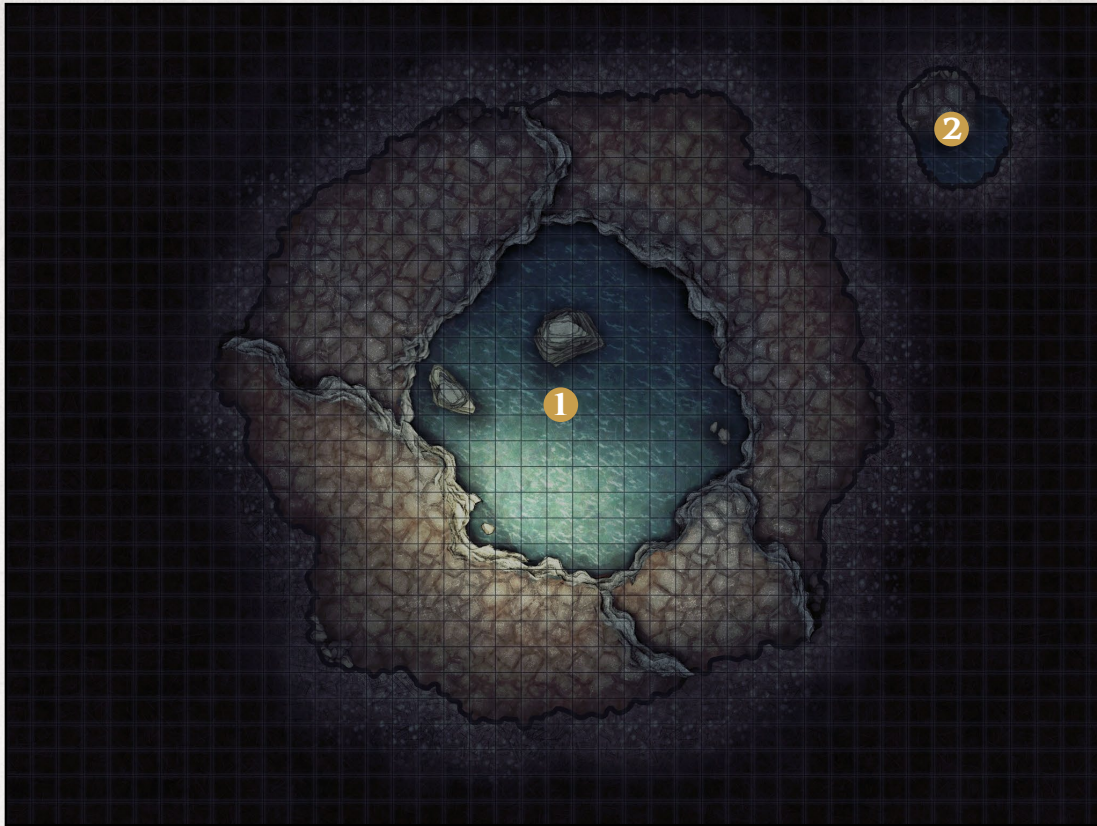
Have the players roll initiative. The encounter begins with the characters making a DC 23 Dexterity saving throw. Those who fail are restrained by the flowing sand and sink up to their knees, they move towards the hole in the sand at a speed of 40 feet per turn, at the start of the second turn if they failed their save and respective checks, they fall into the hole which is 60 feet deep and fall into the cave. The player characters can try to escape by using their action to roll a DC 20 Athletics (STR) or Acrobatics (DEX) check on their turn. After this event, proceed with combat in the normal initiative order.

The **Stormwurm** will use its turns to grapple any character going for those who managed to stay free from the sand eddy. As soon as it has a character grappled, it will descend into the cavern. If it fails the first turn, keep the combat running outside the cave until the Wurm manages to capture a character and retreat inside its cave. Ideally, this will make the players go into the cave to save their companion. However, if they decide they won't, continue combat with the **Stormwurm** attacking the character it pulled into the cave, while the rest of the players take actions above trying to weather out the lightning storm and the sand eddy. Read the text in area 1 as soon as a character falls into the cave.



WIP





## 1. Stormwurm Pool

You find yourself in a deep dark cave, and the only light is coming from the opening on the cavern's ceiling, and there still is sand coming down, but the flow seems to have slowed down significantly. There is a deep pool of water at the center of the cave and many tunnels heading in different directions.

The cave is where most of the battle should take place, the pool is 10 feet under the main cave level. The walls are rocky and have plenty of tunnels heading in different directions. There is a hidden passage underwater that leads to the secret pool in area 2, make any character that ends up inside the pool roll a DC 20 Perception check to notice an entrance about 20 feet under the surface, the tunnel is 45 feet long.

### Developments

The Stormwurm will try to escape when it is close to being killed. it will move through one of the holes.

The party can give chase for two rounds and attack normally, but after that the wurm will dig directly down, dropping a lot of rocks on the tunnel making it impossible for the party to follow.

After the Stormwurm is dead or after it escapes, the cave is safe, and the temperature in it is a lot better. If characters rest here they do not have to roll on either table, and recover two levels of exhaustion.

### Treasure

There is treasure inside the Stormwurm. If a character goes through its entrails they find: one +2 rare ranged weapon (any weapon appropriate for any character in the party), 3 Va'ra crystals (empty).

## 2. Hidden Cave

The dark tunnel leads to a small pool in a separate cave. This cave is very small and humid, you spot a stone chest near some dragonkin bones.



This cave only has the chest, which has no lock and opens easily. The chest contains some helpful items.

### Treasure

**Inside the chest are:** seven greater restoration potions, one ring of endure elements, one +3 very rare armor (any armor type that can be worn by a character), one +2 dragonleech weapon (to replace any weapon already being used by a character), three supreme healing potions.

*Remember to ask the players for their choice of armor and weapons if you feel you can't decide on your own. But ideally, look at their current equipment and give them something slightly better or something suited to complement their current style of play.*

Whenever the party is ready to leave, let them know they safely complete the rest of the journey and reach the mountains on the last day they spent traveling.

## The Scar

The players arrive at a region full of small hills made of sharp stones. As they reach **"The Scar"**, the adventurers find piles of bones from both dragons and dragonkin. The entrance to the cave is a large gash that looks like it was torn from the hill's face. As they enter, read the following paragraph.

The cave is cool compared to the outside, illuminated by a natural skylight at the top. The floor is rough like badly-polished stone and a layer of bones covers most of it. The walls have carvings and these are clearly divided into three sections.

The players arrive at a region full of small hills made of sharp stones. As they reach **"The Scar"**, the adventurers find piles of bones from both dragons and dragonkin. The entrance to the cave is a large gash that looks like it was torn from the hill's face. As they enter, read the following paragraph.

The first section depicts two giant dragons, one towering over the other, clashing in pitched battle. The middle section depicts the larger dragon beating the smaller one, standing over it. The final section has a larger drawing of the smaller dragon, some of the etches in this drawing are filled with shiny metal; these metallic lines represent scars on the dragon's body.

Underneath the final section is a short sentence written in Draconic, it reads: *"My arrogance was my defeat... Kadmos spared me. I bear these scars proudly, for they remind me what true power feels like."*

The final panel is accurate in showing where the scars are located in the dragon's body. If a character inspects it, and spends over a minute looking at the mural in general, or tries to copy the image in parchment or paper, make a note to give that character an advantage when searching for the scars on Baastherox's body. The metal inside the cracks is platinum (worth in total 7000 pp), it is soft, so it can be removed with any sharp object.

If the adventurers search the bones, they find the remains of another Valernian. The man's skin has dried out and looks like he has been dead for a while, mostly because decomposition in the desert sets in faster. He has a simple armor and the clothing he wore when alive. His skeletal hand still holds a roll of parchment in it; most of it is unreadable except for the last part which reads:

*"...death, everything is death around here. The ground is like an oven, and the heat boils us slowly like a stew... Did Aureus really think this was possible? Or was he trying to get rid of us?"*

The end of this section marks the milestone and characters should level up before the next session.





## PART III: MANDATE OF STRENGTH



**A**fter the party rests up at the cave, they will now be ready to travel to the second location. This one is even deeper into the desert. The farther they go, the harsher the conditions are, storms and explosions are more frequent, and even the air feels more dense. There are carcasses and evident death throughout.

**Navigation.** This part of the Desert is harder to traverse, the conditions outlined in p.XX remain the same, but the base DC for the Wisdom (Survival) check is increased to a DC 18. The other modifiers still apply as written.

**Exhaustion.** The heat and dry air is even harsher, the conditions outlined in p.XX remain the same, but the base DC for the Constitution save is increased to a DC 20. The other modifiers still apply as written.

**Random Encounters.** At the start of every day of travel, have a random character in the party roll once in the Survival Encounter table and once on the Combat Encounter Table, then run the encounter(s) as dictated by these results. There are no planned encounters for this part of the desert, so if the party rolls do not trigger one, they will only face the environment and the exhaustion.

### Titan Wastes Encounters

d12	Encounter
1-9	Nothing
10-11	Sandbeetle Swarm (Huge)
12	Wounded Exxor Dragon

### Desert Survival Encounters

d12	Encounter
1	Oasis
2-8	Nothing
9	Extreme Heat
10	Earthquake
11	Sulfur explosions
12	Thunderstorm



## The Cult of Might

The party arrives at the second cave located at the bottom of a 300 ft. crevice. The walls to the sides are incredibly smooth, worn down by both wind and sand. The climb downwards is dangerous because the wind tends to rush up the wall making it harder to climb. Have each character roll two DC 20 Athletics checks, the first check at 150 ft. down, when the first gust rushes by and one final check at 50 ft. from the bottom, when another gust rushes through the ravine. Failing this check means the characters lose their hold and fall. Allow them to roll a DC 24 Dexterity check to only get dealt 2d6 bludgeoning damage and manage to hold on to the rope. Characters who have cast either *fly* or *feather fall* spells, need only to roll one DC 22 Strength save halfway down to resist the wind and not get thrown into the sidewall. Failing this check will result in 4d6 bludgeoning damage after crashing into the wall.

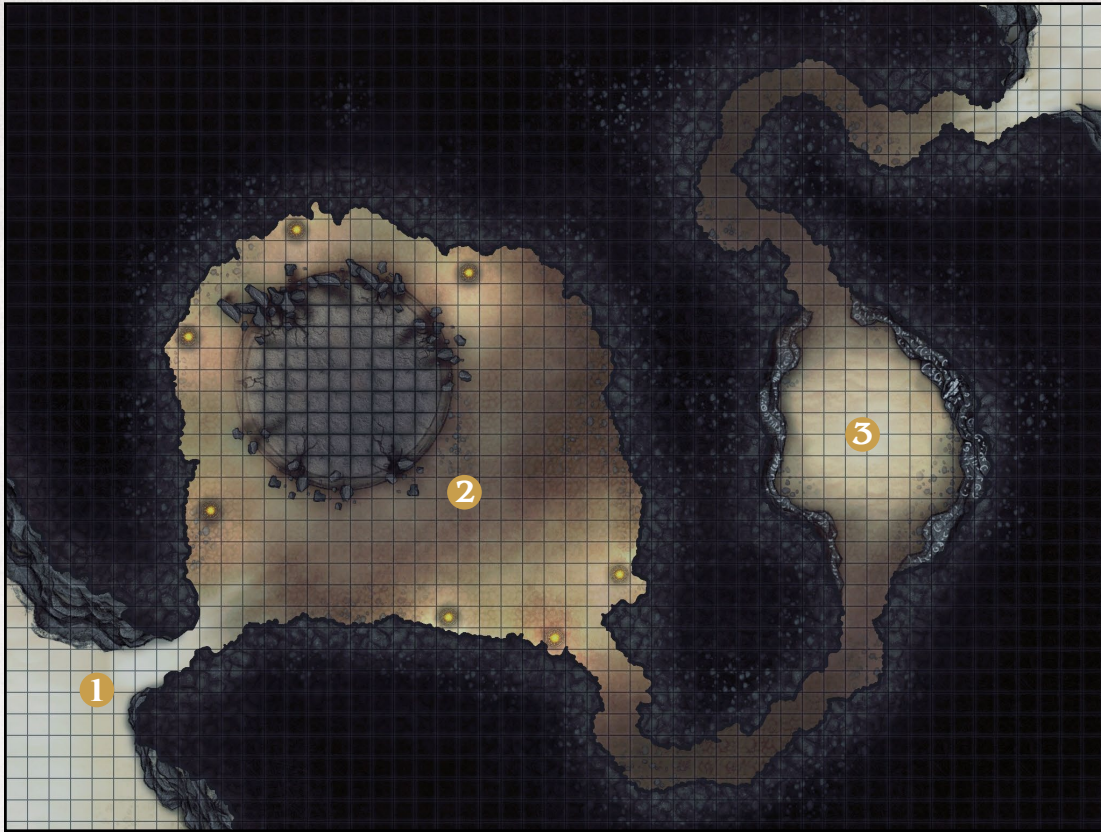
A successful save cancels the damage from crashing, and the party descends without further issues. When the adventurers reach the bottom of the ravine, they see the entrance to a vast cave. Loud cheering and chanting emanate from the inside. As the adventurers enter, read the following paragraph to them:

Once you reach the bottom of the crevice, you walk for a hundred feet and find an entrance on one of the walls. Loud chanting can be heard coming from the inside, and you immediately recognize it as Draconic. The rhythmic and repetitive chant can be translated as: “*arise, overcome; become mighty, become worthy*”.



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## 1. Cave Entrance

The cave entrance is carved into the stone wall, it has clearly been worked on. The sound of loud chanting comes from inside.

As the characters cross the threshold into the cave, they can detect a simple trap with a passive perception of 19. If they are looking for traps or enter carefully, the character who crosses can detect a trap with a DC 18 Perception check. The trap is a simple trip-wire that, if triggered, drops some rocks behind them, sealing them inside the chamber and making a loud noise, which will alert the dragonkin and make them focus on the intruders. If the characters activate the trap, all characters under the entry passage make a DC 22 Dexterity save, taking 28(8d6) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one, players who were outside can decide to jump in as the rocks fall, to end up inside the cave, if they are outside, it takes two DC 20 Athletics checks to clear enough rocks to enter. Triggering the trap alerts the dragonkin on area 2.

If the party avoids this trap the dragonkin will not notice them entering, focused on the fight in the arena.

## Developments

If the characters triggered the trap, all the dragonkin in area 2 will be aware of the intruders and attack.

## 2. Cult of Might Arena

Inside the cave a large group of some twenty dragonkin, all unarmored and with their weapons sheathed, are chanting around a circular arena made of solid stone.

A cult of dragonkin that worships Baastherox is holding a fight between two of its members in an improvised arena. These are dragonkin from all the broods, and upon closer inspection, the characters will notice some are maimed and all are covered in scars. The two in the arena are savagely fighting with no quarter given. There are twenty-one **Cult Dragonkin** plus Ryellus, **champion of the Mighty** inside the cave.



If the party fails a DC 20 group Stealth check, or if they triggered the alarm, they are attacked by groups of five **Cult Dragonkin** at a time, **Ryellus, champion of the Mighty**, only enters the fray if the characters attack by surprise, in which case all the dragons attack simultaneously.

If the characters beat two waves of dragonkin, **Ryellus, champion of the Mighty**, will challenge them to fight him, promising to let them through if they beat him. He will focus attacks on low-defense characters, until they are unconscious before moving to the next. At half his health he will stop the fight. If the characters keep attacking the rest of the dragonkin fight to the death.

If the adventurers beat Ryellus read the next textbox

Ryellus looks at you and smiles, he says “worthy” under his breath. He then commands the dragonkin to stand down. He announces proudly: *“We have met worthy foes in the arena. They will be granted passage to face the final challenge before they have the honor of facing the Mightiest.”* The rest of the dragonkin chant in unison “worthy.”

### Roleplaying Ryellus

The Fulgen dragonkin speaks little, but he speaks of honor and in general has a single purpose, to challenge Baastherox and hope to either prove himself or be killed, he knows that Kadmos forgave Baastherox and even though he knows he could probably never beat the Mightiest, maybe he could prove himself like the dragon did to the dragon-primordial.

What Ryellus knows:

- ~ The mural marking on the next cave shows Baastherox’s pride: a shard from Kadmos’ claw. Ryellus is a smart and very knowledgeable dragonkin; he knows the legend of Baastherox fighting the primordial.
- ~ The Shard is kept beneath Baastherox’s bone plinth, a monument to those who challenged him.
- ~ Many suns ago, Mzeebal the coatl dragonkin set out to try and retrieve it; Ryellus suspects he failed.
- ~ Mzeebal told Ryellus of a cave where the energy of Drakha could be channeled into the Shard; he spoke of a sacrifice, but did not give Ryellus any details on this.

Ryellus also knows the following information, which is also known by all the other dragonkin in the cave, which will share it if tortured or pressed when captured.

- ~ Any captured or allied dragonkin relays that the path to the Titan's Skull is a lot safer during daylight, for at night it becomes twice as dangerous. If players travel while the sun is up, they have advantage on saving throws against environmental threats.
- ~ They tell them of the grand mural in the next cave, but only Ryellus knows its meaning.
- ~ They say none has ever returned from challenging Baastherox, not even “the clever one.” They mean Mzeebal, the one who drew the map and notes on the torn parchment the player characters found, but again they do not know all the information, as only Ryellus knows this.



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### 3. The Chamber of Reflection

This chamber is formed by natural stone arcs, the red rock on the walls has written tracts filled with platinum, which make it look like a Diary.

This chamber was the temporary resting place of Baastherox, where he thought of his life after surviving his encounter with Kadmos. If the players inspect the walls, they find many quotes similar in tone or subject matter, making them realize this part of the cave is actually a shrine. The following quotes to the party if they show interest in reading the walls.

- ~ I will search for a worthy challenge, one that reminds me of that fateful day when my strength proved to be lacking
- ~ Respect the challenge, never take advantage. Take defeat with honor
- ~ Combat is pure, and those who fight will be purified through it
- ~ The weak should be protected so they can become stronger
- ~ Honor the dead
- ~ Strike at your enemies with honor
- ~ Those who slay the weak deserve to be taught the meaning of real strength

Inside the shrine, the adventurers find another mural carved into the stone by Baastherox. Etched on the wall is a shard, a gigantic claw, filled with platinum worth 10,000 GP, and underneath it a text in Draconic reads:

My heirloom from the battle; a proof of my fateful transformation. Mighty Kadmos didn't finish me off; he respected the duel, as do I. There is no greater honor, and this piece will forever be a memento of the day when I was bested.

There is also a hidden chest, inside of which are some shavings of the shard. It can be found with a DC 27 investigation check, alternatively if Ryellus brings the characters here, he digs up the chest and gives them the shavings, telling them that while they do not contain the powers of the shard itself, they can be used to enhance one weapon, he had thought of using them himself on his encounter with Kadmos, but your fight with him proves he still has to train. As they are saying their farewells, a great roar is heard at a distance, followed by thunder echoing in the chamber. One word resounds above the din in the cavern: "Worthy."

#### Treasure

The treasure contains shavings of the shard, enough to enhance one weapon or to be used as spell components (3 uses). Adding them to any weapon requires one hour of work after which the weapon gains the *Dragon Bane* property detailed in appendix C.



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## PART IV: THE GREAT DEATH



**T**he players follow the tunnel and arrive at a canyon. They can march along the canyon or choose to climb its walls. Make it clear for the player characters that it is safer to follow the path, and it will also lead them in the general direction they need to go (provide hints to their destination via more, if sparse, etchings on rocks along the way or other landmarks.) The canyon walls are 500 ft. high, yet easy to climb, and there is constant wind that creates the “roaring” sound as it passes through the canyon. It will take two days for the adventurers to traverse the canyon and two more days to finally reach the Titan Skull.

For each day inside the canyon roll in the following table, once every 12 hours.

### Titan Wastes Encounters

d12	Encounter
1-4	Nothing
5-10	3d6+2 Giant Mosquito
11-12	1 Colossal Stormwurm 1d4-1 Young Stormwurm 1d6 Stormwurm Larvae

### The Great Death

As the party exits the canyon, they arrive in the tract of desert surrounding the Titan's Skull. It is filled with skeletons and carcasses scattered all over the place. It is the battlefield where, for more than two millennia, Baastherox has defended his title as The Mightiest. Countless dragons, dragonkin, and other creatures native to Drakha have fallen here, and the landscape is a testament to that.

“The Great Death” remains true to its name. Countless skeletons, shells and carcasses, both fresh and old, litter the red sands. This expanse is an eternal battlefield and the undeniable proof of Baastherox’s incessant might. At a distance, you can see a colossal skull with an ever-present storm circling around it, while lighting constantly strikes near it.



**Navigation.** The Titan Skull can be seen even in the worst conditions, there is no need to roll for the party to find their way towards Baastherox's Lair.

**Exhaustion.** Every breath and every minute in this last stretch is exhausting, the conditions outlined in p.XX remain the same, but the base DC for the Constitution save is increased to a DC 22. The other modifiers still apply as written.

It will take the party two days to reach the Titan Skull. Roll three times on the following table for each day.

### Desert Survival Encounters

d12	Encounter
1-6	Extreme Heat
7-9	Massive Sulfur Explosion
10-11	Lightning storm
12	Cataclysm

## The Titan's Skull

The party finally arrives at the Titan Skull, which Baastherox claimed as his lair after his only recorded defeat. This place is where he would await all challengers, deciding that he would no longer venture in search of foes, and instead let them come to him, should they prove capable of surviving the trek and thus, worthy of fighting him.

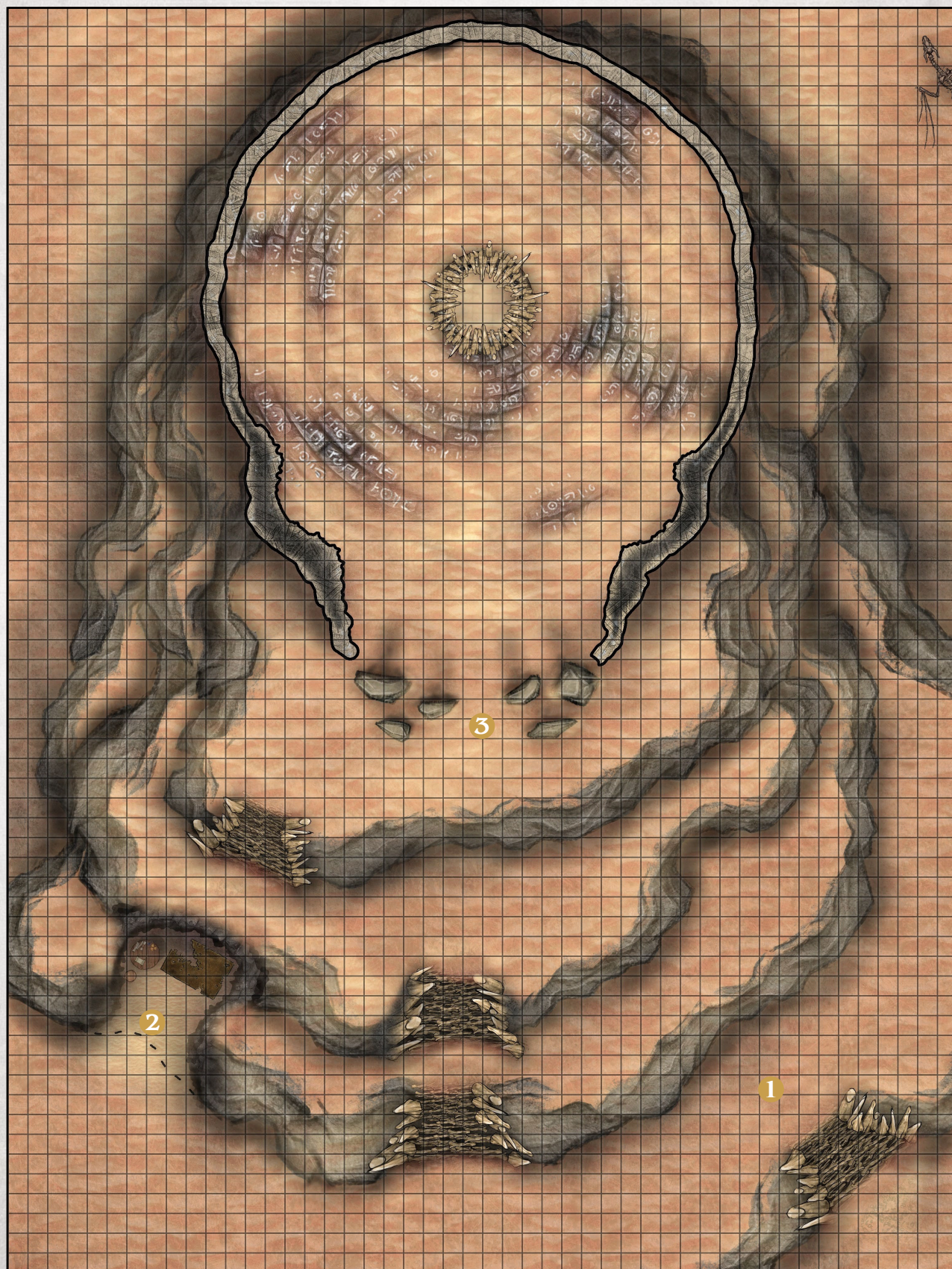
In front of you is the Titan's Skull. It bears similarity to a human skull, yet the eye cavities are larger and its overall proportions stranger and much larger in size. It's not that it is deformed, but something about gargantuan cranium gives out an aura of alienness. It has jagged teeth, and its lower mandible is half buried under the sand, marking the main entrance to the lair itself. There are massed storm clouds surrounding the general area around the skull, yet no rain ever falls from them, only lightning. Curiously enough, these never directly strike the skull.

As the player characters arrive near the Titan's Skull, they find it surrounded by bones and carcasses. In some places, the sand is not even visible under the remains, making it a veritable field of bones. As the characters approach Baastherox's lair, they find a staircase made out of bones.



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## 1. Bone Stairs

The Titan Skull is atop a leveled hill, on the sides of each level is a staircase made of bones, some look very old and some quite recent, varying in size. At the first level you see a cave digging inside the hill to the west of the second set of stairs.

As the party reaches the hill lighting strikes near them, but never on them, unless they descend or retreat. If any player that goes up the Titan Skull wants to run they are struck by lightning, they must make a DC 20 Constitution check, taking 21(6d6) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one, each turn they retreat away from the Titan Skull for the next minute. This effect ends if Baastherox is slain.

## 2. Mzeebal's Cave

You enter a small cave on the side of the mountain, there is a makeshift cot, a small table with parchment and inkwells, with some empty vials and bottles on it as well. The cave walls have draconic writing on them.

On the table is the other piece of parchment to complete the one the party found earlier. There is also a hidden compartment behind a loose stone near the north wall the party can find it, by making a DC 18 Investigation check. Mzeebal's cave is a safe place, most of the runes carved on the inside are protection runes that can be activated to hide the cave. The party may rest here if needed and no harm will come to them for two days, after this Baastherox will strike the cave down with lightning and command them to enter his lair.

### Treasure

On the desk is a piece of torn parchment that completes the one the party found at the Magnifex Campsite. This piece has the rest of the map, leading to the fourth cave marked as "essence" near the cave are some notes, of where to place the shard inside a pool, and to make the appropriate sacrifice to activate it. Next to the indication is the word Vaala circled, which is the energy that all living beings from Valerna have.

The treasure inside the hidden compartment is: a Va'ra crystal (full), three *greater restoration* potions and three *potions of supreme healing*.

## 3. The Titan Skull

Before you is a skull, the being it belonged to was probably as tall as the city of Ysval, the remains of what the Red Moon was before Kadmos, a time long forgotten. Inside, some steps take you into a circular arena, with a hard floor covered by a layer of sand; Baastherox has crafted his Lair as a perfect Arena.

This room is a perfect fighting arena, completely flat so that moving is not impeded. The room is well lit if it is daytime, and it also has some natural light if nighttime. The Primordial Shard is the centerpiece of the bone plinth in the middle of the arena, after the fight it is clear since it has a different tone and texture from all other bones.

## Battle Against Baastherox

*The Skull of the Titan, the fabled lair of Mighty Baastherox, is so big that it can be seen from miles away. As you walk towards the skull, you step on a carpet of bones - the remains of brave or foolish dragons, and a few humanoids, of all sizes and ages, who once came to disturb the almighty hermit.*

*The sky seems clear, but a greying at the edges suggests a possible coming thunderstorm.*

The battle against Baastherox begins when the player characters enter the skull that serves as his lair, and the dragon comes out from the back of his cave to meet the challengers. This is the *First Phase* of combat.



## Baastherox, the Mightiest

*Mighty Baastherox, the strongest of all Azhurma, lives in the Skull of the Titan, reflecting on his isolation about the loneliness of supremacy.*

To approach Baastherox, adventurers must cross a field filled with the bones of other dragons, dragonkin, and a few adventurers that dared challenge the unchallengeable Azhurma.

Fighting Baastherox is a test of patience, strength and strategy. He is an offense-focused dragon, who will start the fight with physical attacks and then proceed to use his storm powers to destroy the opposition. Nevertheless, Baastherox is not indestructible. He has several wounds along his body, which allow the characters to inflict more damage.

### BAASTHEROX

*Gargantuan dragon, neutral*

**AC** See body parts

**Hit Points** See body parts

**Speed** 40 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	19 (+4)	30 (+10)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

**Proficiency Bonus** +9

**Saving throws** Str +19, Dex +13, Con +19

**Skills** Intimidation +19, Athletics +19, History +12

**Damage Reduction** 10

**Damage resistances** Acid, cold, fire and lightning

**Condition immunities** Charmed, exhausted, frightened, and stunned

**Senses** Darkvision 300 ft., blindsight 20 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages** Draconic, Common

**Challenge** 30 (155,000 XP)

**Magic Weapons.** Baastherox's weapon attacks are considered magical.

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

### ACTIONS

#### Upkeep

During Baastherox's upkeep, he regains his action pool up to its maximum for the current phase, and he may take any of the following actions.

**Focus [0].** On his Upkeep, Baastherox can choose to either Focus on Offense or Defense for this turn.

Offense: Baastherox gains +10 to damage rolls, and -2 to the AC of all his body parts until his next upkeep phase.

Defense: Baastherox gains +5 to AC until his next upkeep phase.

**Shake [1].** Baastherox can shake all of his body parts. Any creature mounted on one of Baastherox's body parts must make a Strength or Dexterity saving throw (DC according to body part) to stay perched. On a failed save, the character falls to the ground, takes 3d6 bludgeoning damage and becomes prone.

**Regenerate [3].** Baastherox heals one body part that has not been reduced to 0 hit points. The chosen body part regains half of its total hit points. Alternatively, Baastherox may use this ability to fully restore the hit points of a scar that is not been reduced to 0 hit points. Baastherox can only perform this action once during his upkeep.

#### Melee Actions

During Baastherox's upkeep, he regains his action pool up to its maximum for the current phase, and he may take any of the following actions.

**Claw attack [1].** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +19 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 32 (4d10+10) slashing damage. Any creature mounted on Baastherox's arms must make a Strength or Dexterity saving throw against the arms' Shake DC to avoid falling.

**Bite attack [2].** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +19 to hit, reach 20 ft., up to two targets 5 ft. apart. *Hit:* 46 (8d8+10) piercing and slashing damage, plus any creature mounted on Baastherox's head must make a Strength or Dexterity saving throw against the head's Shake DC to avoid falling.

**Maul [1].** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +19 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature that Baastherox successfully attacked with his bite this round. *Hit:* 32 (5d8+10) piercing damage and the creature is grappled (Escape DC 27). If Baastherox's head suffers at least 30 damage during a single round, any grappled character is freed.

**Tail Smash [2].** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +19 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 38 (8d6 +10) bludgeoning and piercing damage. Plus, the area in a 10 ft. radius from the target becomes difficult terrain and all targets in the area must succeed on a DC 27 Strength saving throw or become Prone. Any creature mounted on Baastherox's tail must make a Strength or Dexterity saving throw against the tail's Shake DC to avoid falling.

**Wing Flap [2].** All creatures in an area 20 ft. around Baastherox must succeed on a DC 27 Strength saving throw or be pushed back 40 feet and take 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage. Baastherox can then move up to its fly speed in any direction. Any creature mounted on Baastherox's wings must make a Strength or Dexterity saving throw against the wings' Shake DC to avoid falling.

**Full rage [5].** Baastherox makes 3 claw attacks, 1 bite attack and 1 tail smash on the same round. Each attack targets the enemy closest to the relevant body part. Any player mounted on Baastherox must make a Strength or Dexterity saving throw against the Shake DC of the body part it's mounted on, or else fall from the dragon. Baastherox cannot use full rage again until after his next upkeep.



### Breath Weapons

**Dragonfire [2].** Baastherox breathes fire in a 90-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 27 Dexterity saving throw, taking 36 (8d10) fire damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

**Lightning Bolt [3].** Baastherox emits lightning in a 100-foot line 10 feet wide. Each creature in the area of effect must make a DC 27 Dexterity saving throw, taking 55 (10d10) lightning damage on a failed save or half damage on a success.

**Ball Lightning [4].** Baastherox expels a concentrated ball of lightning that explodes on any spot within 100 feet into a sphere with a 30-foot radius. Each creature in the area of effect must make a DC 27 Dexterity saving throw, taking 44 (8d10) lightning damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. Baastherox must spend 1 action during his next upkeep to use this breath weapon again.

**Storm Sphere [6].** Baastherox creates a massive shockwave in a 100-foot radius sphere centered on himself. Each creature in the area of effect must make a DC 27 Dexterity saving throw, taking 110 (20d10) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Baastherox must spend 1 action during his next upkeep to use this breath weapon again.

### Special Actions

**Thunderstorm [2].** Baastherox summons a thunderstorm that causes lightning to strike at everyone on a 20-foot radius, 100-foot height cylinder. Each creature in the area of effect must make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) lightning and sonic damage and becoming deafened on a failed save. A successful save halves the damage and negates the deafened condition.

**Hurricane [3].** Baastherox summons 3 separate cylindrical hurricanes of a 5-foot radius by 60 feet height. Each creature in the area of effect of any of these hurricanes must succeed on a DC 20 Strength saving throw or fall prone and take 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage on. A successful save negates both the damage and the prone condition.

**Lightning storm [4].** Baastherox summons a great cloud that strikes down on up to 5 targets with lightning bolts. Every target must succeed on a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw, taking 27 (5d10) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much on a success.

**Ultimate Storm [5].** Baastherox manifests a storm within a 200-foot radius of himself. Each creature in the area of effect must make a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or take 49 (14d6) lightning, sonic and bludgeoning damage and become permanently deafened. A successful save halves the damage and negates the deafened condition. On his upkeep, Baastherox can maintain the storm and repeat its effects by spending only 3 actions.

To detect a scar in Baastherox's body, a character must perform the Search action against the scar's specific Find DC. A character mounted on one of Baastherox's body parts can perform the Search action to find scars in that specific body part as a bonus action.

### Head

AC 26

Hit Points N x 60

Shake DC 27

### Scars

1 Major scar; Find DC 20

1 Minor scar; Find DC 21

1 Superficial scar; Find DC 21

### Broken

*Baastherox's head is grievously wounded, one eye completely gone, the jaw misaligned. This would be enough to kill most dragons, yet Baastherox powers through the pain.*



## Baastherox Body Parts

**Special:** Baastherox has many hidden scars from his ancestral battle with the Dragon Primordial Kadmos. Finding and damaging these scars can make Baastherox more vulnerable, as specified in **Kadmos Scars** in the **Baastherox Exploits** section below.



When Baastherox's head becomes broken, he gets disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks, his bite damage is reduced to 3d8+10 and the action cost of all his breath weapons is increased by 1.

### Left Claw

**AC** 22

**Hit Points** N x 40

**Shake DC** 27

#### Scars

1 Major scar; Find DC 20

1 Superficial scar; Find DC 21

#### Broken

*Baastherox coils his left claw inward, close to his body. Somehow the limp makes him look more menacing, not less.*

When Baastherox's left claw becomes broken, he cannot use it anymore. He cannot perform more than two claw attacks in a single action. If both of Baastherox's claws become broken, he cannot perform claw attacks.

### Right Claw

**AC** 22

**Hit Points** N x 40

**Shake DC** 27

#### Scars

1 Superficial scar; Find DC 21

#### Broken

*Baastherox's right claw hangs limply at his side; he pays it no mind, as if it was a bothersome load now.*

When Baastherox's right claw becomes broken, he cannot use it anymore. He cannot perform more than two claw attacks in a single action. If both of Baastherox's claws become broken, he cannot perform claw attacks.

### Wings

**AC** 21

**Hit Points** N x 45

**Shake DC** 21 (on the ground) or 27 (if hovering or flying)

#### Scars

1 Minor scar; Find DC 20

#### Broken

*Baastherox painfully folds his wings, but even this goes wrong, as one of its wings refuses to bend and droops to one side. He looks at you with cold fury.*

If Baastherox's wings become broken, he loses his fly speed and he cannot make Wing Flap attacks any longer.

If airborne, Baastherox immediately falls to the ground, suffering 4d6 damage on a random lower body part. Any creature mounted on Baastherox's body must succeed on a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw to jump away or suffer the same fall damage plus 77 (14d10) bludgeoning damage from being crushed under Baastherox. If the save is successful, the character only takes 2d6 falling damage and no additional damage.

### Upper Torso

**AC** 19

**Hit Points** N x 80

**Shake DC** 21

#### Scars

1 Minor scar; Find DC 20

#### Broken

*Baastherox wheezes laboriously, wincing despite himself. A pulsating light glows through the membranes in his chest.*

If Baastherox's upper torso becomes broken, he loses strength and mobility in his arms. He makes all claw attacks with a disadvantage, and the action cost of all his special abilities is increased by 2.

### Lower Torso

**AC** 19

**Hit Points** N x 70

**Shake DC** 19

#### Scars

1 Major scar; Find DC 20

1 Superficial scar; Find DC 21

#### Broken

*Something breaks inside Baastherox with a loud snap, and you can see the increased effort of moving his body across the ground. He roars in pain and fury, shaking you to the core.*

If Baastherox's lower torso becomes broken, some of his internal organs become punctured, lowering his force and flexibility. All saving throws against Shake DCs to remain mounted on Baastherox gain an advantage, and no ability check is required to climb on this body part anymore.



## Left Leg

**AC** 23

**Hit Points** N x 40

**Shake DC** 21

### Scars

1 Minor scar; Find DC 21

### Broken

*Baastherox drags his left leg around, like a limping dog. He looks at you, making sure you know the dog can still bite.*

If Baastherox's left leg becomes broken, his land speed is halved. If both legs become broken, his speed is reduced to a 10 ft. crawl.

## Right Leg

**AC** 23

**Hit Points** N x 40

**Shake DC** 21

### Scars

1 Minor scar; Find DC 21

### Broken

*Baastherox winces when he steps with his right leg. He snarls at you to distract you from the wound.*

If Baastherox's right leg becomes broken, his land speed is halved. If both legs become broken, his speed is reduced to a 10 ft. crawl.

## Tail

**AC** 27

**Hit Points** N x 55

**Shake DC** 27

### Scars

1 Superficial scar; Find DC 21

### Broken

*Baastherox winces when he steps on his right leg. He snarls at you to distract you from the wound.*

If Baastherox's tail becomes broken, his tail smash attack suffers a disadvantage on the roll and its damage is halved.

## Baastherox Exploits

The following exploits can be used to take advantage of Baastherox during the battle if the characters discover them.

### Worthy Challenger

A character may attempt to draw the attention of Baastherox by proving themselves a worthy opponent.

The character must attempt a DC 20 Charisma (Deception), Charisma (Persuasion), Charisma (Performance) or Charisma (Intimidation) check. If the check is successful, Baastherox spends the rest of his turn targeting that character with melee attacks, and won't use any more special abilities or breath weapons until his next upkeep.

### Protective Instinct

Baastherox will go out of his way to protect any endangered dragon or animal hatchling or cub. If he witnesses the killing of a dragon or animal hatchling or cub, he will focus all his future attacks on the killer and only on the killer until his attention is drawn to a new target.

### Elemental Dissonance

Whenever Baastherox becomes immune to a type of elemental damage, he also becomes vulnerable to another type of damage.

### Kadmos Remnants

Any weapon or element that is related or has been close or in contact with Kadmos, the Dragon Primordial, inflicts direct damage to Baastherox. Such an item will ignore Baastherox's Damage Reduction and deal double damage, both as a weapon or on all spells cast using the item as a spellcasting focus.

### Kadmos Scars

Baastherox has permanent scars from his battle with Kadmos. The scar tissue is softer than his scales and can be opened if targeted directly. Each scar has its own AC and hit points. If a scar is opened by reducing it to 0 hit points, all future damage against that body part is increased.

**Major Scars.** AC 24, HP 40. These scars easier to spot but Baastherox is very aware of them and defends against attacks towards them. If the scar is reduced to 0 hit points, all subsequent hits targeting this body part deal double damage and ignore Baastherox's Damage Reduction.

**Minor Scars:** AC 22, HP 45. These scars are harder for Baastherox to protect because they are smaller. If reduced to 0 hit points, all subsequent hits targeting this body part ignore Baastherox's Damage Reduction.

**Superficial Scars:** AC 20, HP 50. These scars are very small and Baastherox does not know they exist. If a superficial scar is reduced to 0 hit points, all subsequent hits targeting the scar ignore half of Baastherox's Damage Reduction.



## First Phase

The battle begins as soon as a character attacks Baastherox. If no character attacks Baastherox one minute after entering the cave, Baastherox initiates combat by attacking the intruders himself.

*As you approach the lair's core, Baastherox rises in his colossal glory. This is no ordinary dragon, not even an ordinary great wyrm - this is an ancestral, immortal entity, one that has been annoyed by your kind countless times, and not challenged once.*

*Thunder cracks outside the lair. Baastherox steps towards you, silently accepting your challenge.*

## Lair Conditions

*The Area is well-lit with natural light. Small drakes flutter in the distance, completely indifferent to the battle.*

1d10+2 small drakes (12 AC, 10 HP) scurry around the area. The drakes do not attack the player characters; they are either hidden or moving around the perimeter close to the walls.

## Baastherox's Actions

**Actions per round:** Number of players + 2

**Special:** During this phase, Baastherox uses only his melee attacks.

## Phase Change

The encounter continues in this phase until one of these conditions are met:

- ~ One of Baastherox's body parts is *broken*.
- ~ The characters have opened 1 of Baastherox's Major Scars.
- ~ Two or more of Baastherox's body parts have half or less of their maximum hit points.

When *one* of the conditions for phase change occurs, Baastherox starts making a storm around him. The light inside of the skull begins dimming.

## Second Phase

Baastherox has sized up the player characters as worthy enemies, and begins bringing down his full fury down on them.

## Lair Conditions

*A mighty thunderclap explodes outside. The walls of the skull vibrate, and small cracks begin to form in the bone.*

*The wounds and scars on Baastherox's body release steam as he roars menacingly. As if summoned by his wrath, storm clouds start to gather inside the cave.*

*The lights dim. The hour darkens.*

Under the new lighting conditions, all ranged attacks from beyond 90 feet have a disadvantage.

There are still 2d4 small drakes (12 AC, 10 HP) in the area, as per the previous phase of combat.

During Baastherox's upkeep, roll 1d12. On an 11, lightning strikes a random character for 11 (2d10) lightning damage. A successful DC 20 saving throw halves the damage. On a 12, lightning strikes two characters, with the same effects.

## Baastherox's Actions

**Actions per round:** Number of players + 4

**Special:** During this phase, Baastherox uses only his melee attacks and breath weapons.

## Phase Change

The encounter continues in this phase until one of these conditions are met:

- ~ Three or more of Baastherox's body parts are *broken*, and three of more of his remaining body parts are at half of their maximum hit points or less.
- ~ The characters have opened all 3 of Baastherox's Major Scars.
- ~ The characters have opened 2 or more of Baastherox's Major Scars and 3 or more of his Minor Scars.

When one of the conditions for phase change occurs, Baastherox's storm increases in strength and the lair is engulfed in darkness.

## Final Phase

Baastherox has reached the peak of his wrath now, his storm clouds become a full blown Thunderstorm.



## Lair Conditions

*The top of the skull shatters, the area completely open to the storm outside. Baastherox's eyes turn pure white. Where once there was a sharp-minded dragon, now only a being of pure rage and primal power remains. The steam emerging from the wounds is now venting and you can feel the heat around the dragon even from here. His movements seem more erratic, mightier than before. The sky turns completely dark; when lightning strikes it is blinding and powerful.*

The Arena is now completely dark, and all objects are heavily obscured.

All small drakes have fled the area now.

During Baastherox's upkeep, roll 1d12. On a roll of 5-10, lightning strikes a random character for 11 (2d10) lightning damage. A successful DC 20 saving throw halves the damage. On a roll of 11-12, lightning strikes two characters, with the same effects.

### Baastherox's Actions

**Actions per round:** Number of players + 5

During this phase, Baastherox uses all of his attacks and abilities.

**Special:** Any creature that starts their turn mounted on one of Baastherox's body parts takes 2d8 fire damage (no save).

### Phase End

The encounter ends when Baastherox is killed. This requires fulfilling one of the following conditions:

- ~ Five or more of Baastherox's body parts are broken, and his remaining body parts are at half of their maximum hit points or less.
- ~ The characters have opened all of Baastherox's Scars.

*Baastherox struggles to keep himself up; a stubborn attempt at keeping the fight going. The rage in his eyes is fading, being replaced by something that looks like peace - like contentment.*

*The low panting slowly dies away as the dragon falls to a side.*

*He rises again.*

*In his death throes, Baastherox crawls atop the bone sculpture in the center of his lair, so that his remains may now become part of the monument to his many victories.*

*As the Great Wyrms falls, a new darkness descends on his lair, yet this time it's not the darkness of storm and chaos, but the utter quiet of death.*

*So the creature that fought a Primordial to a standstill dies in complete, oppressive silence.*

## Special Ending

If at least one of the characters followed all the following during the fight:

- ~ Did not kill any of the drakes inside the Skull
- ~ Did not attack from atop Baastherox
- ~ Forfeit advantage when attacking at least once, or did not get advantage during the encounter.
- ~ Must not have used insults or tricks (illusions and mind-affecting spells are considered tricks)

Change the ending description to what follows.

Baastherox finally lies shattered and defeated, his now body torn and destroyed. There should be no way that he should be able to move, yet he does. The massive dragon stands up and he approaches you. As you prepare to face it again, he speaks.

*"I have found one, at long last. One as mighty as Kadmos, you shall now carry on the title of Mightiest, and it is now up to you to endure the weight of what it represents. You will be hunted, but as long as you remain the mightiest, you shall prevail."*

With his dying breath, he utters a draconic rune. The rune engraves itself on the character's chest, burning the flesh and leaving a curse impossible to remove. Baastherox collapses, all life abandoning his body, leaving a massive carcass inside his lair, to forever rest along the countless others that died here during his millenary rule as *the mightiest*.

The character who gained this rune should feel empowered; make them know in subtle yet undeniable ways, there's now great power surging through them, and this will have future repercussions.



## Conclusion

The final outcome of this adventure is deliberately left up to the players, as they have two options.

### Use the Shard

If the characters use the Shard, they must travel to the cave, the storms are less constant and they face overall nice weather. Once there, they must perform the ritual, which requires a sacrifice. If they found the Va'ra crystal in Mzeebal's cave, it can be used to activate the Shard once inside the cave. If they took the spear that killed Palan, this one can also be used to open the portal. Otherwise, one of the characters will need to sacrifice themselves to activate the Shard.

This will teleport them to Valerna, Such an ending, requires the to vividly depict a land of green, near a waterfall, with birds and other creatures and a sense of relief, in stark contrast to the prevailing ambience in Drakha.

### Return the Shard to Aureus

If they return to the Golden City with the Shard, they will be hailed as heroes, granted high status ('high' for non-draconians, anyway) and citizenship. The characters are the first Valernians to get such status. Aureus will hold a public audience to present them to the city during which, with a great speech, he will congratulate them and bring Fannax to them. Her fate will now rest on the adventurers. Aureus tells them they can choose to either execute her themselves, let her rot in prison or sentence her to exile. Of course, the party can offer other alternatives.





## Appendix A: Creatures and NPCs

### Palan Ethen

The leader of the humanoid squad in charge of the mission was a knight back in Valerna, and his abilities all stem from his military training and his unyielding honor.

#### PALAN ETHEN

*Medium humanoid (human), lawful good*

**AC** 19 (magic armor)

**Hit Points** 161 (19d8 + 76)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	11 (-)	18 (+4)	11 (-)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)

**Saving throws** Str +11, Con +10

**Senses** Athletics +11, Perception +9, Persuasion +9, Survival +9

**Languages** Common, Draconic

**Challenge** 9 (5 000 XP)

**Spellcasting.** Palan can use limited blessings from his Galadyan faith. He is a 19th level spellcaster, using Wisdom as his spellcasting ability.

**Spell Attack Modifier:** +9. **Spell Save DC:** 17.

**Cantrips Known:** Light, Sacred Flame, True Strike

#### Prepared Spells

1st Level (4 slots): Cure wounds, Detect Magic, Healing Word, Shield of Faith

2nd Level (3 slots): Continual Flame, Prayer of Healing, Warding Bond

3rd Level (3 slots): Beacon of Hope, Glyph of Warding, Protection from Energy

4th Level (1 slot): Death ward

#### ACTIONS

**Galadyan onslaught.** Palan makes three Maul attacks and regains 1d4 + 3 hit points.

**Galadyan faith.** *Ranged Magical Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (4d8) lightning damage.

**Maul.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6+5) bludgeoning damage plus 3 radiant damage.

**Sacred flame.** Targets one creature within 60 ft. range. The target must succeed on a DC 17 Dex save or take 18 (4d8) radiant damage.

### Dragonkin

Besides dragons, the Red Moon of Drakha is populated with dragonkin—lesser dragons of roughly humanoid size, who walk (mostly) upright and use tools and gear to complement their lesser power and inferior status.

Dragonkin are not the actual kin of dragons, but belong to several breeds and types.

Each dragon brood chooses one dragonkin breed as its servants or followers, according to their physical or cultural similarities. Thus, every brood has its own class of dragonkin subjects. As a result, each dragonkin breed looks and behaves like a diminished reflection of their dragon masters; and of course, all dragonkin are utterly subservient to their dragons.

Some dragonkin are content with their lot, worshipping their dragons as almighty masters, while others grumble and dream vainly of freedom, and yet others are not even sentient enough to feel anything about their lesser status.

In combat, the attacks, tactics and abilities of dragonkin roughly resemble scaled-down versions of their corresponding dragon masters' power.

### Fulgen Dragonkin

The dragonkin of Fulgen brood are haughty and proud, like their dragon masters. They serve as guards and soldiers at the Golden City and other Fulgen dominions with loyalty and discipline.

Fulgen dragonkin are bipedal, upright and honorable. Their scales are metallic in color, from iron or steel to silver or bronze. They often wear ornate armor and impressive golden weapons.

### Fulgen Guard

Fulgen guards are the perfect soldiers - utterly disciplined, fanatically loyal, and ruthless in battle. They always attack in formation, using massive halberds they can easily wield in one hand, and following tactics drilled into them during all of their life, which consists of nothing but fighting for their Fulgen lords.

### Fannax

This mighty Fulgen warrior is the 2nd sector general of the Golden City, and one of the most renowned leaders in the city of Aureus. She dislikes Valernians, and just doesn't trust them. She believes that they will eventually betray the city and that they don't have a place there.

Fannax has overseen trials and purges against Valernians in high ranks, especially against "Steelclaws", an elite fighting force of kidnapped Valernians, or their descendants.

Through her allies, she discovered the objective of the Steelclaws mission.



She went mad with rage, and could not understand why the Azhurma would send Valernians instead of her. So she began to plot herself and is waiting for the opportunity to take advantage of the situation presented by the adventurers current mission.

## FULGEN GUARD

*Medium dragonkin, lawful neutral*

**AC** 20 (plate, shield)  
**Hit Points** 110 (13d8 + 52)  
**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	13 (+1)	18 (+4)	11 (-)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)

**Saving throws** Str +9, Con +9, Cha +6  
**Skills** Athletics +9  
**Damage resistances** Cold and lightning  
**Damage immunities** Fire  
**Senses** Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11  
**Languages** Common, Draconic  
**Challenge** 7 (2 900 XP)

**Troop Training.** A Fulgen guard gains advantage on all weapon attacks if there is another Fulgen guard within 5 feet.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The Fulgen dragonkin makes two weapon attacks.

**Halberd.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6+4) slashing damage.

**Javelin.** Targets one creature within 60 ft. range. The target must succeed on a DC 17 Dex save or take 18 (4d8) radiant damage.



## FANNAX

*Medium dragonkin, lawful evil*

**AC** 22 (magic plate, magic shield)  
**Hit Points** 161 (19d8 + 76)  
**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	15 (+2)	19 (+4)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)

**Saving throws** Str +10, Con +10, Cha +9  
**Skills** Athletics +10, Intimidation +9  
**Damage resistances** Cold and lightning  
**Damage immunities** Fire  
**Senses** Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11  
**Languages** Common, Draconic  
**Challenge** 13 (10 000 XP)

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Fannax makes three Va'ra spear attacks.

**Va'ra spear.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6+4) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution save or gain 1 level of Exhaustion. Any target killed by the damage or Exhaustion effect of a va'ra spear becomes a dry husk, which cannot be brought back to life by any means.

## Magnifex Dragonkin

As Magnifex dragons are haughty and splendid, so are their dragonkin sniveling sycophants, abjectly accepting any command or humiliation that comes from their masters. Most magnifex dragonkin have no legs, and move by slithering on their snake-like lower bodies.

They fight with speed and agility, maiming and weakening their opponents before finishing them off. They are easily distracted by Charisma checks such as deception, bluffing or intimidation, as well as by shining things.

### Magnifex Songmaster

An elite combat unit among Magnifex dragonkin, songmasters can sing in sibilant tones that inspire their kin and hurt the ears of humanoid creatures. Every dragonkin squad has at least one songmaster to coordinate the troops.

### Magnifex Acidmaster

The alchemists of the Magnifex brood, acidmasters can spit acid from their mouths, and are also expert alchemists, carrying an array of dreadful acid bombs and poisons into battle.



## MAGNIFEX SONGMASTER

Medium dragon, chaotic evil

AC 16 (natural armor)  
Hit Points 105 (14d8 + 42)  
Speed 30 ft.

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

**Saving throws** Dex +8, Cha +8  
**Skills** Acrobatics +8, Performance +8, Persuasion +8  
**Damage resistances** fire and slashing  
**Damage immunities** acid  
**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11  
**Languages** Draconic  
**Challenge** 6 (2 300 XP)

**Hissing song.** The outlandish songs of a Magnifex songmaster can disturb and even hurt the ears of humanoid listener. Any non-reptilian, non-draconic creature that begins their turn within 20 feet of a Dragonkin Songmaster must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom save or take 2d6 points of sonic damage. A creature that fails its save is incapacitated until the start of its next turn.

### ACTIONS

**Coordinating strike.** The Magnifex Songmaster makes one scimitar attack, and one dragon ally within 20 feet regains 2d6 hit points.  
**Rallying strike.** The Magnifex Songmaster makes one scimitar attack, and it can end one condition affecting a dragon ally within 20 feet.  
**Scimitar.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit. Hit: 8 (1d10+3) slashing damage.

## MAGNIFEX DRAGONKIN

Medium dragonkin, chaotic evil

AC 17 (natural armor)  
Hit Points 90 (12d8 + 36)  
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	19 (+4)	16 (+3)	9 (-1)	11 (-)	11 (-)

**Saving throws** Dex +8, Con +7  
**Skills** Acrobatics +8, Stealth +8, Survival +4  
**Damage resistances** fire and slashing  
**Damage immunities** acid  
**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10  
**Languages** Draconic  
**Challenge** 6 (2 300 XP)

**Voulge.** Magnifex dragonkin carry vicious voulges into battle, which can maim or bleed a target to death. If a magnifex dragonkin succeeds on a voulge attack against any target that is under maximum hit points, the target loses 1d6 additional hit points after the attack.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The Magnifex dragonkin makes two voulge attacks.  
**Voulge.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6+4) slashing damage.





## MAGNIFEX ACIDMASTER

*Medium dragon, chaotic evil*

**AC** 17 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 104 (16d8 + 32)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (-)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	3 (+1)	13 (+1)

**Saving throws** Dex +8, Wis +6

**Skills** Knowledge (arcana) +7, Stealth +8

**Damage resistances** Fire and slashing

**Damage immunities** Acid

**Senses** Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

**Languages** Draconic

**Challenge** 7 (2 900 XP)

**Acid pools.** Some of the Magnifex acidmaster's attacks (see Actions) create acid pools. An acid pool is a 10 ft. x 10 ft. acid surface that remains for the rest of the encounter. Any creature that enters the acid pool or begins its turn on it must make a DC 15 Constitution save, taking 14 (4d6) acid damage on a failed save or hal. as much on a success.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The Magnifex acidmaster makes two melee or ranged attacks.

**Acidstaff.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d6+4) slashing damage and the target must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or take an additional 10 (3d6) acid damage.

**Acid bomb.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, range 40 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (4d6) acid damage. An Acid Pool (see above) is created within 5 feet of the target.

**Acid explosion.** The Magnifex acidmaster chooses a point within 60 feet. Every creature within 20 feet of the target point must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or take 7 (2d6) acid damage. An Acid Pool (see above) is created within 5 feet of the target point.

**Breath weapon.** The Magnifex acidmaster spews acid in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 17 Dex saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) fire damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. An Acid Pool (see above) is created in the cone area.

Despite coming from diverse broods, Dragonkin of the Cult of Might have similar characteristics and combat tactics: they charge recklessly, focusing only on putting their enemy down, and giving no thought to their own protection.

## Ryellus

The champion of the cult is also the epitome of its beliefs - a burly, fearless dragonkin that seems larger than he is by his sheer muscle mass. He is ruthless and relentless in battle, weakening his enemies with every hit, and shrugging off blows that would kill a creature several times his size.

## MIGHT CULTIST DRAGONKIN

*Medium dragonkin, neutral*

**AC** 17 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 102 (12d8 + 48)

**Speed** 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	10 (-)	9 (-1)	11 (-)

**Saving throws** Str +8, Con +8

**Skills** Athletics +8, Intimidation +4

**Damage resistances** Acid, fire, cold and lightning

**Senses** Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

**Languages** Draconic

**Challenge** 7 (2 900 XP)

**Raging onslaught.** The might cultist gains advantage on all melee attack rolls. All attack rolls against the might cultist gain advantage.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The might cultist makes three weapon attacks.

**Serrated sword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8+4) slashing damage.

**Spiked hammer.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d8+4) bludgeoning damage plus 4 (1d8) piercing damage.

## Might Cultist Dragonkin

The Cult of Might, which worships raw aggression, bold action and brute strength above all, fancies itself the brood of Baastherox, the mightiest of all azhurma - a dragon so powerful that he has no brood, either of dragons or dragonkin. But the Cult of Might venerates Baastherox as their azhurma, even if he doesn't acknowledge them.



## RYELLUS

*Medium dragonkin, neutral*

**AC** 20 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 210 (20d8 + 120)

**Speed** 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	17 (+3)	22 (+6)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)

**Saving throws** Str +11, Con +12

**Skills** Athletics +11, Intimidation +7

**Damage resistances** acid, fire, cold and lightning

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

**Languages** Common, Draconic

**Challenge** 13 (10 000 XP)

**Raging onslaught.** Ryellus gains advantage on all melee attack rolls. All attack rolls against Ryellus gain advantage.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Ryellus makes three weapon attacks.

**Lightning net.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (2d8) lightning damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution save or become incapacitated.

**Maul.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d6+5) bludgeoning damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution save or fall prone.

## Exor Dragon

Brood exor are the hunters and stalkers of the Red Moon, the most dangerous predators in Drakha - which makes them the most dangerous predators in the setting. They are dragons with the color of rock or sand and the cunning of born killers. They like to attack stealthily, hiding underground and springing upon their prey, unexpected and deadly.

This particular exor was bold enough to hunt in the territory of Baastherox, and paid for it with a limp and a wounded pride. It is not in fighting mood when it encounters the players, but for mortals it will make an exception.

## EXOR DRAGON

*Gargantuan dragon, chaotic evil*

**AC** 22 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 283 (22d20 + 110) (wounded)

**Speed** 60 ft., burrow 60 ft., climb 60 ft., fly 90 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
25 (+7)	15 (+2)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	17 (+3)	17 (+3)

**Saving throws** Str +14, Dex +9, Wis +10

**Skills** Athletics +14, Acrobatics +9, Intimidation +10, Perception +10, Stealth +16, Survival +10

**Senses** Blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 20

**Languages** Common, Draconic

**Challenge** 18 (20 000 XP)

**Burrowing.** The dragon may burrow underground as a bonus action, moving downwards at its full burrow speed. While the dragon is burrowing, characters can only detect its position by magical means or by tremorsense.

**Sneak Attack.** Once per round, one of the dragon's melee attacks may deal +10 (3d6) damage if it has advantage on the attack roll.

**Wounded.** This particular specimen is wounded after crossing Baastherox. It cannot use frightful presence or legendary actions, and its hit points are reduced. It still believes it can present a challenge to four Valernians, though.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The exor dragon makes one bite attack and two claw attacks.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 18 (2d10+7) piercing damage plus 11 (2d10) slashing damage.

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d6+7) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) slashing damage.

**Tail.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d6+7) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) slashing damage.

**Burrowing Ambush.** The dragon may only use this action if it is burrowing. The dragon surfaces at any point of the map and immediately makes 2 claw attacks and 1 bite attack with advantage on the die roll. Any character within 10 feet of the dragon must succeed on a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone from the force of the burrow and move 5 feet away from the dragon.

**Breath Weapon (recharge 5-6).** The exor dragon breathes a 60-foot cone of scorching sand. Each creature in the area of effect must make a DC 20 Constitution saving throw, taking 38 (11d6) fire and 38 (11d6) slashing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a success.

**Sand wall.** The dragon may raise a dust cloud around itself as a bonus action. Any attacks against the dragon are made at a disadvantage until the start of its next turn, and all of its melee attacks gain advantage until the start of its next turn.



## Giant Mosquito

Drakha is home to many monstrous horrors that would be nightmares in the mortal world, but for dragons are mere pests; this is the case of giant mosquitoes, which swarm the nights of Drakha buzzing after dragon blood. For dragons, giant mosquitoes are a nuisance, and they swat them mercilessly; like their lesser counterparts, giant mosquitoes remain stubborn and unrelenting, always coming back for more.

Giant mosquitoes are not used to picking small prey, but any source of blood is good for their endless thirst.

### GIANT MOSQUITO

*Large beast, unaligned*

**AC** 15

**Hit Points** 65 (10d10 + 10)

**Speed** 20 ft., fly 90 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	20 (+5)	13 (+1)	1 (-5)	10 (-)	5 (-3)

**Saving throws** Dex +9, Con +5

**Senses** Blindsight 20 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

**Languages** -

**Challenge** 4 (1 100 XP)

**Flying advantage.** While a giant mosquito is flying, all weapon attacks against it suffer disadvantage.

**Sting and run.** The giant mosquito may disengage as a bonus action.

### ACTIONS

**Sting.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d8+5) piercing damage and the target must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution save or become poisoned.

## Sandbeetle Swarm

Sandbeetles are a common, seemingly innocuous, but horrible threat from the Titan Wastes, which even dragons take seriously.

Looking like a dust cloud in the distance, a sandbeetle swarm is actually made of millions of tiny bugs, armed with burrowing pincers and voracious hunger, which can devour a human-sized creature in minutes, leaving only a bloody lump behind.

### SANDBEETLE SWARM

*Gargantuan swarm of Tiny beasts, unaligned*

**AC** 13 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 300 (25d20+25)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (-4)	13 (+1)	10 (+1)	1 (-5)	6 (-2)	1 (-5)

**Damage resistances** Bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

**Condition Immunities** Charmed, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

**Senses** Blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 8

**Languages** -

**Challenge** 17 (18 000 XP)

**Swarm.** The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa. It can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny insect. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

### ACTIONS

**Cloud of Doom.** The swarm makes a bites attack against every character in its space or within 5 feet of its space.

**Bites.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. Hit: 29 (8d6+1) piercing damage, or 15 (4d6+1) piercing damage if the swarm has half its hit points or fewer.

## Stormwurm

Massive creatures from the Titan Wastes, evolved over millennia from Baastherox's storms and Drakha's frightening weather, stormwurms are building-sized grub with the ability to turn water into energy. Their bodies are so full of energy that they can summon lightning, and evaporate near water sources, which lets them absorb the ambient moisture and thus generate more energy.

A stormwurm can swallow human-sized creatures whole, the moisture in their bodies immediately feeding the monster's body furnace.

### Young Stormwurm

When not fully-grown, stormwurms don't generate enough energy to evaporate water around them, so they need to swallow their prey to burn their moisture. This makes them much more aggressive and predatory than in their mature stage, even if they are smaller.



## Stormwurm Larvae

The most predatory stage of the stormwurm, larvae still need to eat to convert their food into energy, so they never stop hunting and eating if they can.

### STORMWURM

*Gargantuan monstrosity, unaligned*

**AC** 19 (natural armor)  
**Hit Points** 317 (18d20 + 126)  
**Speed** 30 ft., burrow 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	9 (-1)	24 (+7)	1 (-5)	10 (-)	7 (-2)

**Saving throws** Con +13  
**Senses** Blindsight 30 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 10  
**Languages** -  
**Challenge** 18 (20 000 XP)

**Energy aura.** Any creature that begins its turn within 30 feet of a stormwurm must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw or take 10 (3d6) heat damage as it dries, its moisture absorbed by the stormwurm. If a creature fails its save, all nonmagical liquids it is carrying completely evaporate, and magical liquids lose one dose each. If a creature dies from a stormwurm's energy aura, the stormwurm can immediately make an energy release attack as a reaction.

### ACTIONS

**Lightning Storm.** The stormwurm makes one energy release attack against every target within range. The stormwurm can only use this ability if it has swallowed a creature during this fight.

**Energy Release.** *Ranged Magical Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 60 ft., one target. **Hit:** 18 (4d8) lightning damage.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 10ft., one target. **Hit:** 22 (4d6 + 8) piercing damage. If the target is a Large or smaller creature, it is swallowed by the Stormwurm. A swallowed creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the stormwurm, and it takes 14 (4d6) acid damage plus 14 (4d6) fire damage at the start of each of the stormwurm's turns. When a swallowed character takes damage, they lose one single nonmagical item from their gear, randomly determined or chosen by the GM.

If a swallowed creature dies, the stormwurm can immediately make an energy release attack as a reaction.

If the stormwurm takes 24 damage or more on a single turn from a swallowed creature, the stormwurm must succeed on a DC 22 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 stormwurm. If the stormwurm dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse by using 20 feet of movement, exiting prone.

### YOUNG STORMWURM

*Huge monstrosity, unaligned*

**AC** 17 (natural armor)  
**Hit Points** 161 (14d12+70)  
**Speed** 40 ft., burrow 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	9 (-1)	20 (+5)	1 (-5)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

**Saving throws** Con +10  
**Senses** Blindsight 20 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 9  
**Languages** -  
**Challenge** 10 (5 900 XP)

**Energy aura.** Any creature that begins its turn within 30 feet of a young stormwurm must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or take 7 (2d6) heat damage as it dries, its moisture absorbed by the stormwurm. If a creature fails its save, all nonmagical liquids it is carrying completely evaporate.

### ACTIONS

**Energy Release.** *Ranged Magical Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 60 ft., one target. **Hit:** 18 (4d8) lightning damage.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10ft., one target. **Hit:** 16 (3d6 + 6) piercing damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it is swallowed by the Stormwurm. A swallowed creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the stormwurm, and it takes 10 (3d6) acid damage plus 10 (3d6) fire damage at the start of each of the stormwurm's turns. When a swallowed character takes damage, they lose one single nonmagical item from their gear, randomly determined or chosen by the GM.

If the stormwurm takes 18 damage or more on a single turn from a creature inside it, the stormwurm must succeed on a DC 23 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 stormwurm. If the stormwurm dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse by using 10 feet of movement, exiting prone.

### STORMWURM LARVAE

*Large monstrosity, unaligned*

**AC** 17 (natural armor)  
**Hit Points** 106 (12d10+40)  
**Speed** 40 ft., burrow 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (-)	18 (+4)	1 (-5)	6 (-2)	3 (-4)

**Saving throws** Con +8  
**Senses** Blindsight 20 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 8  
**Languages** -  
**Challenge** 4 (1 100 XP)

### ACTIONS

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



## Appendix B: Survival Encounters

**Oasis** - The oasis is a small patch of land that will help the adventurers recover one exhaustion level because it has water and food available. Very few of these are present in the desert, and any found unclaimed can become a very prized location... and a challenge to protect.

**Extreme Heat** - Immediately causes the adventurers to roll a DC 20 Constitution saving throw, giving them an additional exhaustion level if they fail.

**Quicksand** - Players will need to roll a collective DC 21 Dexterity saving throw, and more than half must pass this check. If they fail, their journey is delayed for half a day unless they exert themselves, thus triggering the normal penalty for their next daily Constitution saving throw against exhaustion.

**Sulfur Explosions** - Players will need to roll a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw to avoid being hit by powerful blasts dealing 35(10d6) HPs worth of fire damage on a failed save. If the roll is successful, this damage is halved.

**Earthquake** - Players will need to roll a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw, or be subjected to 17(5d6) HPs worth of bludgeoning damage on a failed save (damage is halved if the roll is successful) as they tumble to the ground or are hit by debris. Additionally, if at least half of the player characters fail their saving throw, the party loses half a day worth of travel unless they exert themselves, thus triggering the normal penalty for their next daily Constitution saving throw against exhaustion.

**Lightning Storm** - Roll 1d4 per player, each one will get struck by that many lightning bolts, each requiring a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw, or receive lightning damage for 21 (6d6) HPs on a failed save. If the roll is successful, the damage is halved.

**Cataclysm** - Roll on the table until you get two events that are neither “nothing” nor “Oasis” and simultaneously resolve both events.



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