

CROAKING SIROCCO



A GREAT DESERT IS GROWING, DEVOURING fertile earth and threatening towns on the edge of civilization. *Croaking Sirocco* is an adventure for 5th-level characters that takes the party into the heart of a magically warped, blasted land. Deep in the heart of the expanding desert is a tribe of desert-dwelling bullywugs, whose petty power struggle unwittingly endangers the entire outside world.

**A FANTASY ADVENTURE
FOR 4-5 PCS OF 5TH LEVEL**

WRITING KYLE CARTY
COLOR ART RICK HERSHEY
INDI MARTIN
EDITING JAMES HAECK
LAYOUT ERIC LIFE-PUTNAM

BACKGROUND

A **TRIBE OF DESERT-ACCLIMATED DRY** bullywugs is at war; each of its three leaders wants to rule the tribe alone. Their constant feuding has transformed their once-beautiful desert into a blasted wasteland and caused its burning sands to consume the earth around it. Deepwell, a town that was once miles from the desert's edge, is now on the brink of destruction. The reason for the shamans' skirmishing is petty, as bullywugs are wont to be: sharing power with others does not satisfy their lust for power. Each will go to any length to ensure they rule alone. If this conflict continues, Deepwell will soon be nothing but a ghost town in the center of an endless desert.

Deepwell has long been a solitary frontier settlement that neither sought nor required aid from outsiders. Over the past few months, things have changed. The mayor of Deepwell, Lycisus Freyer, has offered a reward to anyone who can halt the desert's rapid expansion. Veeka Leadbottle, a gnomish alchemist who set up shop in Deepwell not long ago, brought Freyer sound evidence that the sand was magically altered and hypothesized that the expansion was the result of a ritual being conducted in the heart of the desert. Lycisus sternly asked her to not share this information with the people of Deepwell. He fears the superstitious people of Deepwell might riot if confronted with the knowledge that *magic* might be responsible for their encroaching doom.

Many adventurers have ventured into the desert over the past month, but none have returned. Freyer feels particularly responsible for not arming those unfortunate souls with the knowledge that the cause may be magical and is determined to not make that mistake again.

DEEPWELL NPCs

Lycisus Freyer

Race: Human

Profession: Mayor

Lycisus Freyer could be described as ruggedly handsome despite his massive, bushy eyebrows. This middle-aged human is the long-serving mayor of Deepwell, and his concern for his people is common knowledge.

Information: Freyer can inform the party of information about the immediate area. He tells them an old local legend about the Witch's Tree. When his father's father was a boy, the rumor around town was that a witch made residence in the hollowed out trunk of a massive tree a few miles outside of town. He informs the party that it should serve as a good landmark that they are heading in the right direction.

Rook Krogthon

Race: Half-orc

Profession: Retired Adventurer

Rook is surprisingly athletic, given his considerable age. A former adventurer, Rook retired once he lost half of his right hand in a skirmish. He set up General Quarters in Deepwell and has lived comfortably ever since. Rook is soft-spoken for a half-orc, and prefers to spend his days tending his shop and making woodcarvings (he's gotten quite good at carving with his left hand). Most notably, however, is Rook's wide knowledge of world events. He regularly sends and receives messenger birds to his former companions and those he met during his travels.

Information: Rook is one of the most knowledgeable individuals in Deepwell when it

comes to the desert. One of the adventurers who disappeared in the desert sent back a message, reporting that groups of bullywugs—unlikely residents for a desert—were fighting one another deep in the desert. Other stories from his contacts tell of a strange outcropping of pitch-black stones in the heart of the desert, surrounded by black, foul-smelling sand. He also marks the Ring of Cacti (see The Desert) on their map as a landmark to indicate the distance they’ve traveled in the original desert.

Veeka Leadbottle

Race: Rock Gnome

Profession: Alchemist

Veeka is a short, sprightly gnome with closely trimmed hair and calculating orange eyes. She moves with purpose and speaks with a startlingly husky, commanding voice. Early in her career, an alchemical accident permanently damaged her vocal chords. Now she speaks only when necessary, and everyone in Deepwell falls silent when she does so.

Information: Veeka has been studying the desert’s weather closely over the past few months. Magical pulses are emanating from the desert, and clouds have been pulled in the direction of these pulses, even when the wind was blowing in the opposite direction. She marks the center of the desert with a red “X” and urges the characters to investigate, convinced that some ritual is causing the rampant desertification. If they have already received the notes on the rocky outcropping from Rook, Veeka is surprised to see that his markings are in the same area as the ones she was going to make.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

THE RETURN TRIP

After successfully delving a dungeon, the party is on their way back to their home base. While traveling, they notice there is a desert where

The Map

Maps of the ever-expanding desert are hastily-made and inaccurate at the best of times. Such a map may be purchased at Rook’s shop for 5 sp, and shows Deepwell on the west, several miles distant from the desert’s edge. The closest landmark, the Witch’s Tree, is two dozen miles due east of Deepwell and well outside the map’s boundaries of the desert. The map shows no other features and is generally useless unless more landmarks are added.

Rook’s additions. If asked for assistance, Rook marks a strange outcropping of black rocks in the center of the desert, noting that—before the expansion began—animals refused to go near it (see “Rook Krogthon”). Rook notes that travelers heading towards the outcropping used to rest at a Circle of Cacti not far from the rocks.

Veeka’s additions. If asked for assistance, Veeka marks a red “X” in the center of the desert, noting disturbing weather (see “Veeka Leadbottle”).

previously there was not. As they continue to travel, they notice the landscape has been changed since they passed it previously. The village of Deepwell, previously a prime location to restock on the way back home, now has little to offer in the way of supplies.

A THIRD PARTY

At the end of the party’s previous adventure, a group of **dry bullywugs** led by a **dry bullywug veteran** insert themselves into a seemingly-unrelated battle. They seem far too focused for normal bullywugs, ignoring the combatants if possible. Instead, they’re after a strange powder that is being kept in the area (perhaps by a wizard, cult, or a fire elemental). Once they’ve obtained the powder, they fight their way out. One of the bullywugs carries a partial map of the desert’s edge, noting the town of Deepwell. A note, scribbled on the map’s margin in the bullywugs’ unintelligible script, describes how important it is that the powder be brought back to “The Meeting Ground” (see “The Desert”).

THE ADVENTURE

WHEN THE ADVENTURE BEGINS, READ OR paraphrase the following:

The air has grown hotter and drier over the past few days. In the near distance, the dry grass you've been trudging across turns into an arid expanse of sand and rock. You had heard that this area was near a desert, but not *this* close. It seems like you traveled too far, but the town on the horizon confirms that you are exactly where you meant to be: Deepwell.

DEEPWELL

When the characters come within sight of Deepwell, read or paraphrase the following:

The town is crowded but quiet. The people keep their eyes not to the ground, but to the sky. Whispers ripple from group to group as you pass through. In the distance, the squawking of a buzzard echoes across the dunes.

Deepwell has seen better days. Its wooden buildings stand like tinder waiting for the spark in the heat. The fields on its western end seem fallow. The rolling grasslands, now brown and dead, give way to the sands of the desert. The faces of the people are sullen and defeated. There is an overwhelming sense of dread that plagues the inhabitants. With a population of about 200, Deepwell was once a launching pad for adventurers traveling to one of the larger towns on the other side of the desert. Visitors are few, and merchant caravans have written off Deepwell as a dying settlement.

Deepwell is highly superstitious and mistrustful of magic. There are no spellcasters in the town of any kind. It took Veeka Leadbottle, the local alchemist, immeasurable time and effort to win over the populace. They are not outwardly hostile to sorcerous travelers but the fear and disgust on

their faces is evident when they see actual magic of any kind being performed.

Deepwell has a single inn that doubles as a tavern, a general store, a smithy for farming implements that is capable of maintaining weapons and armor, and an alchemical goods vendor. Life is quiet and has only grown quieter over the past few weeks.

The residents have no idea what is causing the desert's expansion and are desperate for a solution. Any outsider asking about the problem is pointed in the direction of Mayor Lycisus Freyer and informed of the 500 gp reward for putting an end to the crisis.

During their first night in Deepwell, the characters hear a loud, sharp croaking coming from the direction of the desert. The wind is carrying the noise from a traveling group of dry bullywugs that are far from town. Asking any of the townspeople about the sound in the morning elicits shrugs and worried muttering. No one sent to investigate the desert's croaking sirocco has ever returned.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Leadbottle's

It's unclear if the sign above the odorous store reads "Lead Bottles" or "Leadbottle's." Its owner, Veeka, doesn't seem to mind one way or the other. The inside is meticulously organized, with each and every item labeled (including the furniture). The stock in the store is fairly sparse. Beyond the mundane poultices and salves there are also several vials of *alchemist's fire*, *potions of healing*, *eversmoke bottles*, and other common alchemical items.

The Last Drop

The Last Drop is the only inn in Deepwell, and is run by a jovial half-elf named Alistera Lorin. Most of the villagers spend their nights on the

first floor of the establishment since it doubles as a tavern. A night at the Last Drop costs 15 sp per head. If a character mentions that they're working for Mayor Freyer, Alistera's smile fades, and she drops the price to 10 sp per head, saying that she wishes she could do more to help. The Last Drop used to be a rowdy place, but hard times have left the inn a quiet, forlorn house. The establishment still proudly wears the scars of its louder days on its tables, chairs, and counter.

General Quarters

A general store filled with any mundane goods an adventurer might require, General Quarters is owned and operated by the friendly and soft-spoken Rook Kroghon. Collected weapons and hides from his adventuring days line the walls and rafters of the store.

Freyer Homestead

At the edge of Deepwell is Mayor Freyer's home. Should the adventurers speak with him here, he addresses them while sitting on a hand-carved

wooden chair on his porch. If any character looks inside, they would find the rooms are completely bare, save for a corner with a bedroll and pillow. Freyer once had many lovely pieces of furniture and decorations but chose to pawn them off to raise the gold required to pay the reward.

THE DESERT

Should the heroes resolve to put an end to the desert's spread, they must venture deep into its scorching heart. The following scenes assume the party is traveling due east towards the center of the desert. Each scene should be separated by one or two days of harrowing travel for a more realistic pace, but can be presented as encounters within the same day for a more heroic game.

Burning sand crunches beneath your feet, stings your eyes with each gust of wind, and rubs your skin raw from the first instant you enter the desert. There is no beauty to be found in this endless expanse. The sun beats down as you venture forward.





Many deserts have a natural beauty and majesty to them, but not this one. The rampant magic that turned this area from grassland to wasteland has imbued the entire environment with an overwhelming sense of tragedy. The luster of the sand is wrong, the sun is tinged blood-red, and the howling, tearing winds seem possessed by an unseen malevolence. Use rules for extreme heat while exploring the desert.

While in the desert, roll on the Random Encounters table once per day at noon. Each day, after rolling for random encounters, the party must make a group DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check to ensure they are heading in the correct direction. If the roll fails the characters briefly lose their way and must roll on the Random Encounters table an additional time that day.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Roll 1d12 + 1d8 twice per day and resolve the resulting encounter. For shorter or more heroic games, roll on the table once between scenes.

Desert Random Encounter Table

d12+d8	Result
2	One territorial ankheg .
3	A pack of 2d4 giant scorpions migrating across the desert. They attack only if threatened.
4	Four dry bullywugs , and one dry bullywug veteran .
5	A mated pair of manticores .
6	The corpse of a stone giant . Its flesh has been worn away by the sandy winds. It appears to have been slain by countless puncture wounds. The pouch on its belt contains an <i>earthbind pebble</i> (see “Magic Items”).
7	One giant hyena and three ravenous hyenas .
8	Four dry bullywugs , two dust mephits , and one dry bullywug druid .
d12+d8	Result
9	The sound of angry croaking heralds three dry bullywugs , one dry bullywug veteran , and one dry bullywug berserker appearing on the horizon five minutes later.
10	Two gnolls and one gnoll pack lord dragging a bullywug corpse. The gnolls are wounded and start at half hit points.
11–13	A lone lizardfolk wanderer named Meeka. She willingly offers some of her rations to the party. Additionally, the GM chooses one of the shamans (see “The Meeting Grounds”). Meeka has information about the shaman, the way they fight, and their unique plant companion. If the party wins her over, she offers to accompany them if they wish. Meeka is a lizardfolk shaman capable of speaking Common and casting <i>tongues</i> .
14	A group of lizardfolk and bullywug skeletons, picked clean by buzzards and bleached white by the sun. If Meeka has joined the party, she lowers her head and refuses to speak. The next day, she asks one of the characters to help her ensure that the shaman responsible suffers.
15	One basilisk in a field of petrified bullywugs.
16	One helmed horror , and two suits of animated armor initially contained within a large wooden crate that juts out of the sand. They pretend to be normal armor until the helmed horror feels the party has let their guard down.
17–18	Sand as far as the eye can see. A DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals three small, blue pearls glinting in the sand. A DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check reveals the pearls to be water that has been affected by <i>dust of dryness</i> .
19–20	An abandoned merchant wagon. Some of the cargo is missing, but much of it remains. 267 gp, 388 sp, and 113 cp are scattered about the sand and cart. Additionally, one <i>spell scroll (2nd level)</i> , five <i>potions of water breathing</i> , and a <i>potion of growth</i> can be found amongst spoiled food and textiles.

RANDOM TERRAIN EFFECTS

The desert hasn't only grown; its rampant magic has also warped existing terrain. Whenever an encounter occurs, roll 1d8 and use the magically altered terrain in the table at right. The terrain does not affect the entire encounter area, but can be placed at the GM's discretion.

SCENE 1. THE WITCH'S TREE

The Witch's Tree juts awkwardly out of the desert, like a shadowy giant buffeted by the wind. Its spindly branches twist and turn, the ground beneath it a spider web of shadows. The trunk of the tree is hollow like Deepwell's mayor said, but there doesn't appear to be anything inside. If the party arrives during the day the tree seems unremarkable. Under moonlight, strange orbs of light blossom and hang from the tree like fruit. The orbs are beautiful but cannot be plucked. Touching one results in a small electric shock.

An aura of fear emanates from the hollow of the tree in the late hours of the night. Creatures who take a long rest within a half mile of the tree must make a DC 13 Charisma saving throw. Creatures who succeed sleep peacefully, but those who fail are plagued by nightmares, forced to fitfully relive memories from their past. Until they take another long rest they have disadvantage on all Wisdom (Survival) and Wisdom (Perception) rolls.

SCENE 2. THE OASIS

Between the Witch's Tree and the Ring of Cacti is stunning green meadow nearly a mile in diameter. In the center of the field is a small pool of crystal-clear water. If characters drink from the pool or refill their waterskins, a water spirit bursts from the depths and attempts to drive the intruders away. The spirit shouts first in Bullywug and then in Common that the party must "leave this place" and that they "will never capture me!"

If anyone attempts to reason with the terrified spirit, she agrees to speak to them on the condition that they keep their distance and refrain from using any magic. The spirit explains that many years ago, this oasis was once the home to

Random Terrain Effects Table

d8	Result
1-2	Choking Sand. Patches of sand are notably whiter than the areas around it. When a creature enters an area with choking sand, its ash-white grains violently bursts upward in a chalky cloud. Any creature in or adjacent to the patch must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or become incapacitated and begin suffocating until the beginning of their next turn.
3-4	Razorweed. The grassland in this area was overtaken so quickly that the large blades of unkempt grass still stand tall. Razorweed patches count as difficult terrain and provide half cover, but creatures passing through take 2 (1d4) slashing damage for every 5 feet of razorweed they move through.
5-6	Deep Silt. Soil has mingled with the encroaching sand and created a field of silt. It is mostly ankle-deep, but there are large patches that are much deeper than the others. These 10-foot-by-10-foot patches can be spotted with a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check. A creature that enters one a deep patch immediately sinks 5 feet into the ground. As an action, they can attempt to claw their way out with a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check, or an adjacent ally can spend an action to pull them up with a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check. Failing this check results in the character sinking 2 feet deeper into the silt. Creatures within the silt are restrained, and creatures fully immersed in silt cannot breathe and have disadvantage on all Strength checks.
7-8	Blighted Sand. These huge swathes of stinking, ebon sand are the most dangerous side effect of the ongoing war. The earth here has been corrupted with necromantic power. When a creature in an area of blighted sand regains hit points in any way, the amount of hit points restored is halved. Additionally, any spell or ability that deals necrotic damage deals an extra 3 (1d6) damage when used within blighted sand.

a tribe of bullywugs. When they defiled its pure waters, the spirits who protected it exiled them to the desert. This tribe is now known as the dry bullywugs, and their three Great Shamans have captured her fellow spirits and are using them to fuel their terrible rituals. She doesn't know what the purpose of the rituals is, but she begs the characters to free the captive spirits.

If the party is friendly toward the spirit, she lets them drink and grants them a blessing of water: they will not need to roll against the extreme heat of the desert for the next day.

Should the party not reason with the spirit and attack, she splits into three **water weirds** and defends herself. The spirit pleads for mercy when only one weird remains, and dies if all three weirds are killed.

SCENE 3. BULLYWUG BATTLEFIELD

At the beginning of a fresh day of travel, the party comes across the site of a battle between two groups of dry bullywugs. The patterns on the bullywug corpses differ depending on the war paint they wear. Many of the bullywugs are tannish-yellow and have painted themselves a vibrant green. Substantially fewer bullywug corpses of another shade (a deep orange with bright red paint) litter the area. Tracks in the sand are easily found on the edge of the skirmish, leading to the northeast.

After following the tracks for half a day, a DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check must be made in order to continue following them. If the roll succeeds, the party comes across the corpse of an escaped bullywug that succumbed to its wounds much later. If the roll fails, or if the characters continue eastward without following the tracks, they are ambushed by 6 **dry bullywugs** (the yellow-painted survivors of the previous skirmish). The bullywugs demand the characters surrender and be taken before Haboob (see "The Meeting Grounds"). If questioned, they say that the characters are enemy spies, and will be eaten by Haboob if found guilty. If questioned further, they grow impatient and attack.

Treasure. The dry bullywugs carry treasure looted from their enemies. Each one carries 3d10 gp and a silver necklace worth 20 gp. One carries a *potion of healing* and a *potion of jumping*. These potions also quench thirst like water.

SCENE 4. RING OF CACTI

Several tree-sized cacti form a perfect ring, in the center of which is a small group of smaller, flowering cacti. These flowers can be identified with a DC 12 Wisdom (Nature) check. If the check is successful, the character learns that the flowers are valuable alchemical reagents. If all of the flowers are plucked they can be sold to Veeka for 75 gp. The cactus juice can be harvested and consumed like water, but the drinker suffers disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks for the next 3d6 hours as bright colors swim across their field of vision.

SCENE 5. THE MEETING GROUNDS

As you crest the dune you spot it: jutting from the sand like blackened teeth is an outcropping of jagged rocks. Brown specks move to and fro in the distance. As the wind picks up it carries a harsh, discordant melody of croaking from the rocks.

In the dead center of the desert is a towering ring of jagged rocks. If the characters' map has been annotated by Rook, they realize these are the rocks he indicated. Groups of brightly-painted **dry bullywugs** mill about the outside of the rocks. Occasionally, the bullywugs scuffle. Four stone arches lead inside the rocks, revealing an arena-like crater within. The characters may attempt to sneak up to the outcropping with a DC 11 Dexterity (Stealth) check during the confusion. If the characters surrendered in Scene 3, they face no resistance as they are brought inside the ring to face Haboob (see below).

Should the party directly engage the bullywugs, resistance is incredibly fierce as the factions briefly unite to slay the filthy outsiders. The outer guards (twenty **dry bullywugs**) call for

reinforcements. In 1d6 rounds, all the bullywugs inside the ring (six **dry bullywug veterans**, four **dry bullywug berserkers**, three **dry bullywug druids**, **Harmattan** and his **Tumblefiend**, **Haboob** and his **Saguarus**, and **Thorned Leveche**) pour out to destroy the interlopers.

As you peer over the crater, your gaze shifts down the slope to the three corpulent bullywugs, all crouched around a pool of stagnant water. Resting next to each of these figures are bizarre plants that seem to move of their own accord, not unlike a tamed beast. The huge bullywugs croak violently at one another in a heated, toadish debate.

The meeting grounds consist of a crater in the sand 200 feet in diameter surrounded by thick rock walls. In the crater are three flat stones and a small pool of brackish water. The leaders of the tribe, **Haboob**, **Harmattan**, and **Thorned Leveche**, (see “Creatures”) each sit on one of these flat rocks and are accompanied by their plant companion (Leveche’s **bloodthorn** companion is constantly wrapped around her body). A character that speaks Bullywug or is under the effects of a *comprehend languages* spell can eavesdrop on the conversation.

The “debate” consists primarily of hurled insults over perceived slights, and is a discordant, pointless affair. Notably, one of the shamans shouts about how the new sands that have formed are thanks to their doing. The others croak in protest about how the new sands are *their* doing and how *their* magic is strongest.

If *detect magic* is cast on the shamans, the caster notices each shaman is wearing a totem that overflows with magical energy. These items were created through vile, destructive rituals to allow them greater control over the wind and sand of the desert. These totems contains an air spirit and an earth spirit—the guardians of the oasis.

After the argument comes to a conclusion (with no compromises having been reached) the shamans leave the crater, croaking at their kinsmen, and depart in separate directions.



Harmattan heads east, **Leveche** heads south, and **Haboob** heads north while the various other **dry bullywug** scatter to fulfill their current duties. The party may choose to follow a shaman in order to ambush them. Ever cautious, Leveche fuses with her **bloodthorn** plant companion as she departs.

Alternatively, a particularly bold party that can speak Bullywug or cast *tongues* might attempt to parlay with the petty shamans. Depending on how well the player presents their case (or hides their bluff) while stoking the despots’ egos, the DC should range from 18 to 22. If the party turns the shamans against each other, the entire meeting ground explodes into a fierce melee. On the first round of combat, one shaman will flee, choosing survival over pride. They can be tracked (DC 14 Wisdom [Survival]) once the combat is

resolved. Once one of the shamans is dead, the remaining shaman realizes the ruse and sets half of the remaining bullywugs on the characters while fleeing to their village (see “Scene 7” and “Scene 8”) with the other half.

SCENE 6. DESERT PURSUIT

The first shaman the characters choose to track is accompanied by 4 **dry bullywugs** and their plant companion. The party may choose to attack in the open desert rather than allowing the enemy to return to their village.

The remaining shamans can be tracked back to their villages by first returning to the Meeting Grounds and succeeding on a DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check. The DC increases by 2 with each passing day. If the check fails, they are still able to follow the tracks, but must roll once on the Encounter Table. If the check fails by 5 or more, they must roll once on the Encounter Table and are led in a circle back to the Meeting Grounds.

Defeating a shaman gives the party access to their ritual totem (for a physical description of each totem see the shamans’ Creatures entry). While the party searches the corpse of the first shaman for the totem they also find a large pouch of blue pearls marked “bag of water.” These pearls are the result of *dust of dryness* absorbing a pool of water. If they have not encountered the beads before, they may make an Intelligence check as listed in encounter 17–18. If they are traveling with Meeka, she can easily identify the pebbles.

SCENE 7. FIRST BULLYWUG VILLAGE

The following scenes assume that the first shaman was attacked and killed in the desert. The first village the party encounters is likely where the second escaped shaman is lurking. The village is made up of ten shoddy stone hovels built around the shaman’s wooden hut, and is surrounded by large, dried trees that burst into flame if dealt fire damage. The trees produce a billowing clouds of smoke while burning, which can be used to aid the party or the bullywugs by obscuring vision. Creatures attacking through a wall of smoke do so

Totem Information

- DC 7.** The totem is filled with overwhelming primal magic. A wind spirit and an earth spirit were violently bound to the totem. Shattering the totem will release the spirits.
- DC 10.** The totem is used to greatly enhance the potency of air and earth spells, allowing the shamans to conduct some kind of ritual.
- DC 13.** Because the totems were used rampantly to send powerful storms against the other shamans, the storms’ destructive magic seeped into the ground and corrupted the soil.
- DC 15.** The earth suffered with each successive storm. Each storm’s winds were hotter and sandier than the last, and the dying, corrupted earth soon succumbed to the desert.
- DC 18.** Destroying the totem will release the spirits within it and undo some of the damage. If *dispel magic* is used on the totem, it will destroy the totem’s spirit in the process.

with disadvantage. The village is defended by five **dry bullywugs** and two **dry bullywug druids** in addition to the shaman.

In the shaman’s hut are two pouches of *dust of dryness*, a *jumping totem* (see “Magic Items”), more blue pearls, and *horseshoes of speed* that are still attached to the severed hooves of the unfortunate horse they originally adorned.

SCENE 8. SECOND BULLYWUG VILLAGE

The final shaman is found cowering in a village at the bottom of a 60-foot-deep gorge. A winding, natural path leads down into the chasm. Five **dry bullywugs** lurk on the cliff side to actively scan for outsiders. Dexterity (Stealth) checks are made against their passive Wisdom (Perception), and such checks are made at disadvantage if the characters are descending down the open path. A DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check is required to scale the cliff walls per 15 feet of movement. Failure by 5 or more results in a character falling.

In addition to the sentries, the third shaman is accompanied by two **dry bullywug veterans** and three **dry bullywugs**. The terrain for the fight

should feature many slopes (difficult terrain) and have plenty of vantage points for ranged attackers. The bullywugs freely climb on the walls of the chasm to put themselves into better positions. In the shaman's hut are many empty pouches and one full pouch of *dust of dryness*, more blue pearls, and a *javelin of lightning*.

BREAKING THE TOTEMS

After the first totem is broken, read or paraphrase the following.

Two ethereal forms burst from the totem in the instant it breaks. Just as suddenly as they appeared, one surges into the heavens and the other burrows into the sand. The winds whip violently and the earth trembles beneath your feet. After a moment of uncertainty, the earth calms, but the winds continue to vent their fury around you. A storm is descending on the desert.

One thing that the characters were unable to predict is the anger of the spirits upon their release. The spirits make no attempt to converse with the party and fly into the sky and ground. Though not hostile to the party, the spirits begin to alter the weather in the desert. The weather worsens every time a totem breaks.

Ranged weapon attack rolls and Wisdom (Perception) checks suffer a -1 penalty after the first totem is broken.

After the second totem is broken, read or paraphrase the following.

Two more spirits erupt from the totem, and vanish into the earth and sky just as before. The sand beneath your feet begins to blacken in massive patches, hissing and crackling with elemental fury. The howling wind begins to scream in anger, casting sand wildly in all directions.

The sand created as a result of the rampant rituals turns black and becomes Blighted Sand (see Random Terrain Effects). All encounters now have



large patches of Blighted Sand in addition to any other terrain effects that might also exist.

Ranged weapon attack rolls and Wisdom (Perception) checks are made at disadvantage after the second totem is broken.

After the final totem is broken, read or paraphrase the following.

The mounting storm finally breaks as the final totem shatters. The shrieking wind pierces your ears and its sandy gusts tear at your exposed flesh. It is as if the desert itself is screaming. Then, as suddenly as it began, it stops. The black sand around you dissolves into nothing, and the razorweed slowly shrinks back to normal blades of grass. You are left with only the sound of gentle wind in your ears.

With the totems destroyed, the desert will no longer expand, but even the spirit's magic cannot return it to its original size.

CONCLUSION

After days of travel across the rejuvenated desert, Deepwell appears as a silhouette on the horizon. The grass beneath your feet is brown and wilted, but small flecks of green grass dot the ground and the earthy smell of rain hangs in the air. It's not much, but life is returning.

The people of Deepwell have kept watch on the edge of the village facing the desert. When the weather began to change, the villagers grew concerned. As it worsened they were certain that their end was at hand. Many chose to load up carts and wagons to depart Deepwell. When the storm finally broke, the clouds that had formed over Deepwell and the land around it unleashed a downpour of rain.

When the party arrives, the watchman runs to gather the remaining villagers who erupt into sobs and cheers of utter elation. Mayor Freyer embraces the first PC he spots and thanks them all repeatedly. He places a pouch of gold into the hands of the PC he embraced. The pouch contains 600 gp (100 gp more than the original reward, mostly in stray pieces of copper and silver). If questioned about the discrepancy, Freyer tearfully thanks the party again and informs them that the townspeople scrounged up the last bit of money they could to thank the heroes for everything they've done.

The water pellets that the party found over the course of the adventure can be used to refill the now-shallow well that was once Deepwell's namesake. These pellets will greatly aid in the restoration of the village.

The heroes are free to stay in Deepwell as long as they wish. Rook is more than willing to add the party to the growing network of current and former adventurers he corresponds with. He may even be able to find information through his network to aid the party in a later adventure or inform them of an interesting piece of information that could be the start of a new quest.

LEAVING DEEPWELL

The area around Deepwell will never truly return to the way it was. Though the desert no longer threatens to overwhelm the town, the damage is done. Still, the looks on the faces of the people assure you that they will find a way to survive.

If Meeka the lizardfolk wanderer aids the heroes in the desert and survives to the end, she can be found at the edge of town as they leave, looking wistfully at the desert horizon. Before they part ways, she asks if the characters are willing to make one more expedition into the desert....

Adventure awaits!



APPENDIX

CREATURES

Dry Bullywug

Dry bullywug use **bullywug** statistics with a few minor changes. Their hit points become 16 (3d8 + 3), their Swamp Camouflage ability becomes Desert Camouflage and affects rolls in sandy terrain, and their bite and spear attacks become +4 to hit.

When an encounter calls for a **dry bullywug druid**, a **dry bullywug veteran**, or a **dry bullywug berserker**, use the stats for the appropriate nonplayer characters with bullywug racial abilities and Desert Camouflage.

Haboob and Saguarus

Haboob, a massive dry bullywug, works in tandem with his **saguarus** to safely blast foes from afar with his spells. Once an enemy is grappled, he uses *catapult* to pelt the hindered target. In a pinch he will imbue his bolts with *flame arrows* and pepper enemies.

Haboob's totem is easily the most beautiful of the three. It is made from blown glass banded with stone rings and packed with sand. From the tip of the totem a single, white saguaro flower blooms during the day and closes during the night. The flower withers away when the totem is destroyed.



Haboob

XP 1,100 (CR 4)

NE Large humanoid (dry bullywug)

Initiative: +1

DEFENSE

AC: 13 (hide armor)

hp 97 (13d10 + 26)

OFFENSE

Speed: 20 ft.

Melee Attack—Bite: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Ranged Attack—Crossbow: +3 to hit, range 30/90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

STATISTICS

STR 15 (+2) **DEX** 13 (+1) **CON** 14 (+2)

INT 14 (+2) **WIS** 13 (+1) **CHA** 17 (+3)

Languages: Bullywug, Common

Skills: Arcana +4, Bluff +5, Intimidate +5, Nature +3

Senses: passive Perception 11

TRAITS

Toadish Corpulence: Haboob has advantage on Constitution saving throws.

Speak with Frogs and Toads: Haboob can communicate simple concepts to frogs and toads when he speaks in Bullywug.

Desert Camouflage: Haboob has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in sandy terrain.

Spellcasting: Haboob is a 5th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +6 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following druid spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *blade ward*, *vicious mockery*

1st level (4 slots): *faerie fire*, *catapult*

2nd level (3 slots): *warding wind*, *moonbeam*

3rd level (2 slots): *flame arrows*, *protection from energy*

A saguarius is a massive, cactus-like creature with spined “arms” that puncture creatures it strikes. Its preferred method of hunting is to strike and then attempt to squeeze the prey until all struggle ceases.

Saguarius

XP 450 (CR 2)

NE Large plant

Initiative: +2

DEFENSE

AC: 14 (natural armor)

hp: 51 (6d10 + 18)

OFFENSE

Speed: 20 ft.

Melee Attack—Multiattack: The saguarius makes two slam attacks.

Melee Attack—Slam: +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.
Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning or piercing damage.

STATISTICS

STR 17 (+3) **DEX** 14 (+2) **CON** 16 (+3)

INT 5 (–3) **WIS** 11 (+0) **CHA** 8 (–1)

Languages: —

Skills: Athletics +5, Perception +2

Senses: Tremorsense 30ft., passive Perception 12

TRAITS

Envelop: When the saguarius hits with its slam attack, it may attempt an opposed Strength check with the creature it hit. If it succeeds, the creature is grappled and takes 1d6 piercing damage at the start of each of its turns until it escapes the grapple. The saguarius may grapple two creatures in this way at a time.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Desert

Organization: Solitary or group (3–4 saguari)

Harmattan and Tumblefiend

Harmattan, a tan dry bullywug with green paint, goes out of his way to knock enemies prone for his tumblefiend and create difficult or damaging terrain to force enemies into compromising positions.

Harmattan’s totem is carved from dried wood carefully bound with plant fiber around a glass

capsule that contains black sand. When destroyed, the black sand returns to a normal color.

Harmattan

XP 1,800 (CR 5)

NE Medium humanoid (dry bullywug)

Initiative: +2

DEFENSE

AC: 15 (studded leather armor)

hp 76 (17d8)

OFFENSE

Speed: 30 ft.

Melee Attack—Multiattack: Harmattan makes one bite attack and one spear attack.

Melee Attack—Bite: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Melee Attack—Spear: +4 to hit, reach 5ft., one target.
Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

STATISTICS

STR 14 (+2) **DEX** 15 (+2) **CON** 10 (+0)

INT 11 (+0) **WIS** 20 (+5) **CHA** 10 (+0)

Languages: Bullywug, Common

Skills: Arcana +2, Athletics +4, Nature +7, Perception +7, Stealth +4

Senses: passive Perception 17

Languages: Bullywug, Common

TRAITS

Speak with Frogs and Toads: Harmattan can communicate simple concepts to frogs and toads when he speaks in Bullywug.

Desert Camouflage: Harmattan has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in sandy terrain.

Standing Leap: Harmattan’s long jump is up to 20 feet and his high jump is up to 10 feet, with or without a running start.

Spellcasting: Harmattan is a 5th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 17, +8 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following druid spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *poison spray, thunderclap*

1st level (4 slots): *longstrider, entangle, earth tremor*

2nd level (3 slots): *spike growth, heat metal, earth bind*

3rd level (2 slots): *wind wall, wall of sand*

Tumblefiends are unique to magically-defiled deserts and grasslands. The foul magic of the desert corrupts withered clumps of razorweed and imbues them with supernatural malevolence. A tumblefiend allows itself to be carried along by the wind like a mundane tumbleweed before violently lashing out and rolling over unsuspecting prey.

Tumblefiend

XP 700 (CR 3)

NE Small plant

Initiative: +4

DEFENSE

AC: 15 (natural armor)

hp: 45 (10d6 + 10)

OFFENSE

Speed: 40 ft.

Melee Attack—Slash: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 6 (1d4 + 4) slashing damage.

STATISTICS

STR 11 (+0) **DEX** 18 (+4) **CON** 12 (+1)

INT 5 (-3) **WIS** 12 (+1) **CHA** 7 (-2)

Languages: —

Skills: Acrobatics +6, Perception +3

Senses: tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 13

TRAITS

Charging Slash: If the tumblefiend moves at least 10 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a slice attack on the same turn the target takes an extra 3 (1d6) slashing damage.

Rolling Rampage: The tumblefiend uses its Dexterity modifier for attack and damage rolls. Additionally, the tumblefiend deals an extra 3 (1d6) slashing damage against prone targets.

Tumbler: Opportunity attacks against the tumblefiend are made with disadvantage.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Desert

Organization: Solitary, pair, or field (4–10 tumblefiends)

Magic Items

The characters might run across the following items in the course of this adventure.

Jumping Totem

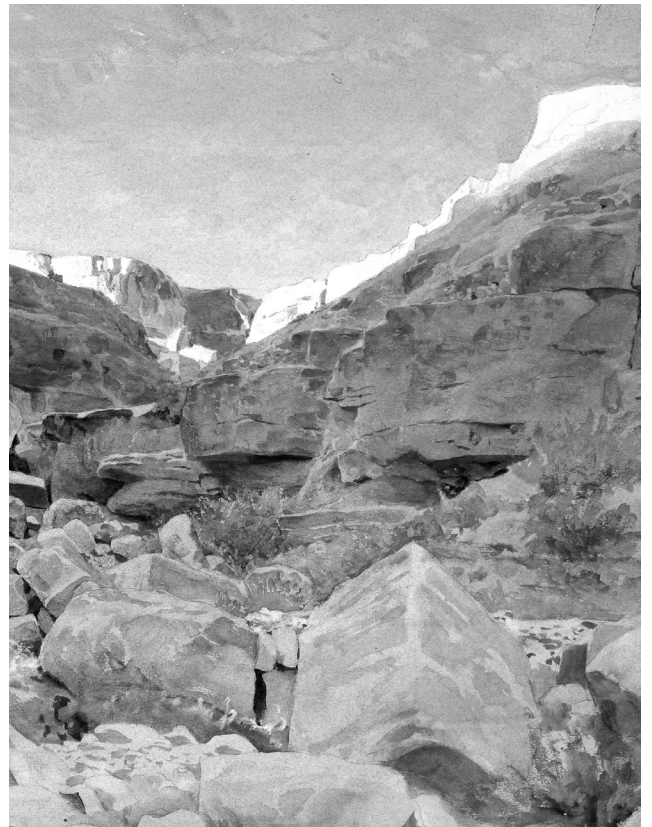
Wondrous item, uncommon

While holding this totem in one hand, a creature gains the bullywug's Standing Leap racial ability and has advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks made to jump.

Earthbind Pebble

Wondrous item, uncommon

While you hold this pebble in your hand, you gain the ability to cast *earthbind*. The saving throw for this ability is a DC 15 Strength saving throw. To cast the spell, the pebble must be thrown at a target within 100 feet. The pebble then magically carries itself towards the target automatically. The *earthbind pebble* can be used once per short or long rest.



Leveche

Leveche is an orange dry bullywug decorated with scarlet war paint. She and her plant companion, a bloodthorn, fight as one. When threatened, the bloodthorn wraps itself around her body and sinks its thorns into her flesh. It absorbs some of her blood and infuses her with a powerful, strength-enhancing sap.

Leveche prefers to lead from the front, but will retreat if she feels outmatched. During her retreat, she casts *spike growth* and unleashes salvos of thorns at her enemies.

Leveche's totem is made of a bone wrapped in surprisingly intricate thorny roots. Grasping it causes pain as the thorns seem to reposition themselves in order to pierce the skin. When the totem is destroyed, the thorns embed themselves in the ground.

Thorned Leveche

XP 1,800 (CR 5)

NE Medium humanoid (bullywug)

Initiative: +2

DEFENSE

AC: 12 (16 with *barkskin*)

hp: 117 (18d8 + 36)

OFFENSE

Speed: 30 ft. (40 ft. with *longstrider*)

Melee Attack—Multiattack: Leveche makes one bite attack and one thorn jab attack, or two launch thorn attacks.

Melee Attack—Bite: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Melee Attack—Thorn Jab: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Ranged Attack—Launch Thorn: +7 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target.
Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

STATISTICS

STR 14 (+2) **DEX** 15 (+2) **CON** 14 (+2)

INT 7 (–2) **WIS** 19 (+4) **CHA** 9 (–1)

Languages: Bullywug, Common

Skills: Arcana +0, Athletics +4, Nature +6, Stealth +4

Senses: Blindsight 10 ft., passive Perception 14

TRAITS

Fused Form: Leveche allows her plant, the bloodthorn, to attach itself to her body and absorb some of her blood in order to greatly enhance her fighting ability. While fused Leveche and the bloodthorn count as one target. Leveche can cast *shillelagh* on the bloodthorn (this is reflected in the Thorn Jab and Launch Thorn actions).

Speak with Frogs and Toads: Leveche can communicate simple concepts to frogs and toads when she speaks in Bullywug.

Desert Camouflage: Leveche has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in sandy terrain.

Standing Leap: Leveche's long jump is up to 20 feet and her high jump is up to 10 feet, with or without a running start.

Spellcasting: Leveche is a 3rd-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +7 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following druid spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *shillelagh*, *thorn whip*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic*, *jump*, *longstrider*,
beast bond

2nd level (2 slots): *barkskin*, *spike growth*

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Leveche can take 2 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Leveche regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

Strike: Leveche uses *thorn jab*.

Withdraw: Leveche moves up to 20 ft. This movement does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

