

Playing Pieces:

DENIZENS OF THE BRIGHT DESERT

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The sands of the treacherous Bright Desert mask ancient ruins and the lost lore of a dead civilization. Throughout history, men of will and ambition have attempted to plumb those ruins and explore the timelost secrets hidden beneath the shifting sands. Doing so means braving a trackless dune sea inhabited by the monstrous descendants of a people ruled by oblivion-obsessed sorcerer kings. Most who attempt to master the desert instead find misery and death. But one man, the archmage Rary the Traitor, believes he can discover the lost secrets of the Bright Desert, and for now the story of the desert and its would-be conqueror are one and the same.

This article presents additional information on personages and creatures important to the Bright Desert region of the WORLD OF GREYHAWK fantasy campaign setting. For more information regarding the geography and political climate of the region, consult "Into the Bright Desert" (*DUNGEON* #98).

This article makes use of information from the *Epic Level Handbook*, *Manual of the Planes*, and *Tome and Blood*.

Rary the Traitor

Rary's idiom is one of quiet, thoughtful reflection. A contemplative man who carefully weighs each word and action, he is nevertheless unafraid of decisive acts when necessity demands action. He dislikes physical confrontations, preferring to withdraw from the presence of those he finds distasteful. The archmage grew to detest his old Circle of Eight peers Otiluke and Mordenkainen because of their volatile natures. Rary now considers the Circle of Eight an organization riddled with sophistry whose petty intrigues and endless debates prohibit it from becoming a more significant power in the Flanaess.

Rary's great passion is learning, and in this regard he is the archetypal wizard. He feels well at home among dusty tomes and ancient historical commentaries. A knowledgeable historian with an almost unrivaled understanding of magic, Rary is also an expert on the Paynim peoples, for whom he holds great affection. Ironically, it was contact with their violent culture that first awakened Rary's interest in the exercise of power.

Over the course of a decade, Rary studied the histories of the most despotic and influential political powers of the Flanaess—the Great Kingdom, the Scarlet Brotherhood, and even Iuz. The brilliant wizard analyzed the tactical errors that laid each low or prevented it from dominating

the whole continent. With the passionless eye of a scientist, Rary pieced together his own plan for dominance, a brilliant blueprint absent of the flaws that had so vexed his predecessors. But even failed tyrants had lessons to impart, and from his studies Rary came to view two tactics as paramount to his success—surprise and treachery.

Development: Rary's goal is quite simple: he wishes to subjugate a large portion of the Flanaess and impose his notion of right upon its people. His domination of the Bright lands is merely the first step of his grand design. In 593 CY he finally discovered the resting place of the *Scorpion Crown*, the cursed artifact that had transformed the region into a desert more than 1,000 years ago. While he originally desired the *Crown* for its ability to dominate the desert's indigenous scorpions, his research revealed a darker threat. The *Crown's* ancient curse lingered still, and such was its fell potency that anyone donning the *Crown* would fall prey to its malign influence.

He also discovered that destroying the crown would slowly revert the region to its original terrain, that of arid grasslands, which would further strengthen Rary's budding Empire of the Bright Lands. The archmage suspects unmaking the *Crown* could have further less-beneficial consequences, and is certain that unleashing the powerful magic could be devastating if the proper precautions are not taken. Many of the unusual quests and constructions of his armies are in fact meant to prevent collateral damage from the *Crown's* imminent unmaking. The metamorphosis will take decades, but Rary is nothing if not patient.

Due to Rary's advanced level and numerous protectors, encountering the archmage himself should be the focus of an entire campaign or campaign arc. In general, no one under 12th level has a hope of interacting with him personally, and must instead deal with his black-hearted apprentices, retainers, soldiers, and mercenaries.

While Rary concentrates his efforts in the Bright Desert, his long-term plans range throughout the Flanaess. Rumor suggests he holds some unfathomable influence over the young szek of Onnwal, and many believe he cultivates diplomatic relations with groups of note within the Abbor-Alz and surrounding nations. Mordenkainen privately fears that Rary in fact turned traitor long before the Greyhawk Wars, and that he used his Circle-related travels to the Baklunish West to recruit disreputable allies who will aid him once his ambitions extend beyond the natural borders of the Bright Desert. Keenly aware of the shifting loy-

alties and duplicitous natures of men, Rary has taken to building constructs of various types to guard his person. His most taxing creation, an artificial silver dragon, is now finally nearing completion.

Rary the Traitor, Male Human Wizz4: CR 24; Medium humanoid (human); HD 24d4+72; hp 149 (up to 169 with *false life* spell); Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 40, touch 20, flat-footed 35; Base Atk +12; Grp +11; Atk +16 melee (1d4+3/19-20, *spell storing speed +5 dagger*); Full Atk +16/+16/+11 melee (1d4+3/19-20, *spell storing speed +5 dagger*); SA spells; SQ homunculus familiar, permanent spell effects; AL NE; SV Fort +16, Ref +18, Will +24; Str 7, Dex 20, Con 16, Int 32, Wis 20, Cha 16.

Skills: Appraise +12 (+14 with sculptures), Concentration +31, Craft (sculpting) +21, Decipher Script +21, Diplomacy +11, Knowledge (arcana) +39, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +17, Knowledge (geography) +17, Knowledge (history) +28, Knowledge (nature) +19, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +17, Knowledge (religion) +17, Knowledge (the planes) +17, Ride +15, Search +17 (+19 secret doors and compartments), Spellcraft +44, Survival +11 (+13 following tracks, when underground or on other planes, and when avoiding hazards or avoiding becoming lost).

Feats: Alertness (as long as his familiar is in arm's reach), Craft Magic Arms & Armor, Craft Construct, Craft Wondrous Item, Epic Spellcasting, Extend Spell, Forge Ring, Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Improved Familiar, Improved Spell Capacity, Improved Spell Penetration, Multispell, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Spell Focus (enchantment).

Languages: Abyssal, Ancient Baklunish, Ancient Suel, Common, Draconic, Infernal.

Permanent Spell Effects: *Comprehend languages*, *darkvision*, *detect magic*, *see invisibility*, *tongues*.

Inherent Bonuses from wish spells: +3 Dexterity, +4 Constitution, +4 Intelligence, +4 Wisdom.

Contingency: If Rary is ever affected by a hostile enchantment, alteration, curse, or petrification effect, a *break enchantment* spell activates against the effect.

Wizard Spells Prepared: (4/7/7/7/10/6/16/6/5/5/2; base DC = 21 + spell level): 0—*daze**, *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*; 1—*charm person** (2), *disguise self*, *endure elements*†, *feather fall*, *mount*, *unseen servant*; 2—*charm person* (extended), *command undead*, *detect thoughts*, *false life*†, *levitate*, *Tasha's hideous laughter**, *touch of idiocy**; 3—*greater magic weapon*†, *hold person**, *major image*, *slow*, *suggestion**, *vampiric touch*, *web* (extended); 4—*charm monster**, *confusion**, *crushing despair**, *dimension door*, *dimensional anchor*, *heroism* (extended), *illusory wall*, *phantasmal killer*, *Rary's mnemonic enhancer*, *stoneskin*; 5—*charm person** (quickened), *dominate person**, *feeblemind**, *overland flight*†, *Rary's telepathic bond*, *true strike* (quickened); 6—*bear's endurance* (quickened), *geas/quest**, *greater dispel magic*, *mass suggestion**, *resist energy* (quickened), *wall of force* (extended); 7—*displacement* (quickened), *greater teleport*, *limited wish*, *power word blind**, *project image*, *symbol of stunning**; 8—*demand**, *dimension door* (quickened), *mass charm monster**, *power word stun**, *summon monster VIII*; 9—*dominate monster**, *power word*

*kill**, *time stop*, *wall of force* (quickened), *wish*; 10—*greater heroism** (quickened), *shapechange* (extended).

*Enchantment spell. The base save DC for these spells is 23 + spell level.

†Rary casts this spell every morning after he prepares his spells; the spell has a duration of 24 hours.

Spellbooks: Rary knows all the wizard spells in the *Player's Handbook*, and has researched many unique spells in addition. He generally eschews preparing crude, explosive spells, preferring instead to concentrate on more subtle and complex spells that better serve to augment his realm.

Epic Spells per Day: 2

Epic Spells Known: *Eclipse*, *epic mage armor*, *let go of me*, *peripety*, *Rary's meritorious animation*, *Rary's superlative draconic animator*, *spell worm*.

Possessions: *Spell storing speed +1 dagger* (usually targeted by *greater magic weapon* to raise its enhancement bonus to +5; normally stores a *hold person* spell), *staff of the magi* (34 charges), *cloak of resistance +4*, *gem of seeing*, *gloves of dexterity +6*, *headband of intellect +6*, *Heward's handy haversack*, *pale green ioun stone*, *ring of mind shielding* (does not use a ring slot), *ring of protection +5*, *ring of wizardry IV*, *stone destrier*, *wand of hold monster* (19 charges), five *potions of cure serious wounds*, *scroll of contingency*, *scroll of greater dispel magic* (2), *scroll of greater teleport*, *scroll of limited wish* (2), *scroll of Mordenkainen's disjunction*, *scroll of prismatic sphere* and *prismatic wall*, *scroll of summon monster IX*, *scroll of time stop* and *gate*.

Leukial, homunculus familiar: Tiny construct; HD 24; hp 74; Init +2; Spd 20 ft., fly 50 ft. (good); AC 30, touch 14, flat footed 28; Base Atk +12; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk +11 melee (1d4-1 plus poison, bite); Space/Reach 2-1/2 ft./0 ft.; SA familiar spell (*power word stun*), poison; SQ construct type, deliver touch spells, empathic link, improved evasion, *scry* on familiar, speak with master, spell resistance 29; AL NE; SV Fort +8, Ref +12, Will +13; Str 8; Dex 15; Con —; Int 17; Wis 12; Cha 7.

Skills: Hide +14, Listen +4, Spot +4.

Feats: Lightning Reflexes.

Leukial appears as a clockwork scorpion with dragonfly-like wings, about the size of a housecat. Rary usually leaves Leukial in his tower to help defend it, and so Rary can *scry* upon his tower with ease.

Physical Description: Although now well into his eighties Rary retains his dark Baklunish good looks, maintaining a youthful appearance that seems to place him in his mid-fifties. He exudes an aura of quiet dignity and reflection. Oft encountered dressed in simple tan robes mimicking the style of his homeland, Rary cuts an unassuming figure. Only his sparkling eyes, deep green in hue, give any clue to the almost unrivaled power that lurks within his frame.

Eliazir Razeem Azam'ut of the Muddled Tongue

The half-Paynim bastard son of a Lopollan spice merchant, Azam'ut had a hard life until his "gifts" earned him the attention of a kinder and gentler Rary. Rary recognized his potential and saved Azam'ut from the indignity and humiliation heaped upon him by his father by training the



youth as an apprentice. After the Rary's recovery from his death at Vecna's hand, their relationship became more divisive. As the outbreak of war wracked the continent, Azam'ut left to explore the planes on his own, seemingly estranged from his master.

A year later, Azam'ut returned. His wanderings in far off and unspoken places had had an unmistakable effect on him. Before, he seemed unhappy with Rary and his decisions, but upon his return Azam'ut reclaimed his place in Rary's counsel. The Traitor saw the change that had

Ring of Teleportation

This command-word activated ring allows its wearer to teleport once per day, exactly as if he had cast the spell of the same name.

Moderate transmutation; CL 9th; Forge Ring, teleport; Price 17,000 gp.

occurred in his apprentice, and valued his worth as an emissary. After aiding Rary in his treachery by destroying Tenser's clones, Azam'ut became the political voice for the Empire of the Bright Lands.

Of all Rary's followers apart from Lord Robilar himself, Azam'ut is perhaps the most feared. Rary's norkers and dervish followers whisper that some unknown force touched Azam'ut in his journeys. They bestowed upon him the epithet "Azam'ut of the Muddled Tongue," as his very voice can command folk against their will. Azam'ut has claimed this name as his own, for this mysterious power is certainly the most striking of the abilities he gained on his peculiar pilgrimage.

Development: Azam'ut is Rary's representative in many lands. He makes appearances (welcome or unwelcome) in the courts of the gynarchs of Hardby, the szek of Onnwal, the young king of Nyronnd, and along the Wild Coast. He has a particular hatred for Tenser, but strives to avoid any confrontations with the reborn archmage he once attempted to destroy.

Eliazir Razeem Azam'ut of the Muddled Tongue, Male Human Wiz14: CR 15*; Medium humanoid (human); HD 14d4; hp 42; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 21, touch 15, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +7; Grp +7; Atk +10 melee (1d6+3, +3 *quarterstaff*); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (1d6+3, +3 *quarterstaff*); SA spells, muddled tongue; SQ snake familiar; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +12; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 20, Wis 16, Cha 19.

Muddled Tongue (Su): Azam'ut can use his *muddled tongue* ability to generate a number of spell-like effects. Doing so is a free action, but Azam'ut must be able to speak aloud to activate his muddled tongue, and he can't cast any spells with a verbal component during a round in which he uses his muddled tongue. He can manifest the following spell-like effects up to three times a day each: *charm person* (DC 15), *command* (DC 15), *daze* (DC 14), *major image* (DC 18), or *suggestion* (DC 18). These DCs are Charisma based.

Skills: Appraise +5 (+7 alchemy), Bluff +17, Concentration +17, Craft (alchemy) +17, Diplomacy +11, Disguise +4 (+6 acting), Intimidate +13, Knowledge (arcana) +22, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +24, Spot +6, Survival +6.

Feats: Alertness (as long as familiar is within arm's reach), Combat Casting, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Forge Ring, Persuasive, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Spell Focus (enchantment), Spell Penetration.

Languages: Abyssal, Ancient Suel, Common, Infernal.

Contingency: If Azam'ut is ever incapacitated by damage or magic, a *teleport* spell returns him to a chamber in Rary's Tower where an apprentice quickly administers aid to him.

Wizard Spells Prepared: (4/6/5/5/5/4/2/1; base DC = 15 + spell level): 0—*daze**, *flare*, *message*, *touch of fatigue*; 1—

*charm person**, *comprehend languages*, *disguise self*, *magic missile*, *mount*, *sleep**; 2—*daze monster**, *detect thoughts*, *eagle's splendor*, *mirror image*, *touch of idiocy**; 3—*deep slumber**, *displacement*, *dispel magic*, *suggestion**; *wind wall*; 4—*charm monster**, *hallucinatory terrain*, *lesser geas**, *rainbow pattern*, *stoneskin*; 5—*dominate person**, *feeblemind**, *mirage arcana*, *symbol of sleep**; 6—*geas/quest**, *mass suggestion**; 7—*project image*.

*Enchantment spell. The base save DC for these spells is 16 + spell level.

Spellbooks: Azam'ut knows all cantrips and all 1st-through 5th-level wizard spells in the *Player's Handbook*. In addition to the 6th- and 7th-level spells he normally prepares, his spellbooks contain the following spells: 6th—*analyze dweomer*, *greater dispel magic*, *greater heroism*, *permanent image*, *planar binding*, *programmed image*, *symbol of persuasion*, *veil*; 7th—*control weather*, *insanity*, *mass hold person*, *power word blind*, *symbol of stunning*.

Possessions: +2 *quarterstaff* (one head enchanted, one head masterwork), *ring of protection* +3, *bracers of armor* +5, *ring of teleportation*, fine Bakluni robes.

*Azam'ut's CR is 1 point higher than normal due to his muddled tongue ability and supernaturally enhanced Charisma score.

Gorgorast, tiny viper familiar: Tiny magical beast; HD 14; hp 21; Init +3; Spd 15 ft., climb 15 ft., swim 15 ft.; AC 24, touch 15, flat-footed 21; Base Atk +7; Grp +6; Atk/Full Atk +10 melee (1 plus poison, bite); SA poison; SQ deliver touch spells, empathic link, improved evasion, scent, *scry* on familiar, share spells, speak with snakes, speak with master, spell resistance 19; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +10; Str 4, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills: Balance +11, Climb +9, Hide +12, Listen +5, Spot +6, Swim +5.

Feats: Weapon Finesse.

Physical Description: A stout man clad in fine Bakluni garb, Azam'ut shines with a preternatural youthful radiance that is both striking and fearful to behold. After a recent journey to places unknown, Azam'ut returned with an eerie otherworldly beauty. His countenance is both pleasing and unnerving, with skin that glows faintly and a silvery tinge to the whites of his eyes. He has a fine eye for detail and dresses meticulously in the finest Baklunish silk robes. In many ways he is the perfect contrast to his scholarly master Rary; strikingly handsome, worldly, and urbane.

Shemaya

Shemaya is the last human survivor of the ancient Flan Kingdom of Sulm. A powerful wizard, she was able to protect herself from the curse of the *Scorpion Crown*, which laid Sulm low and transformed the region into the Bright Desert. Using her extensive knowledge and powers, Shemaya compressed the very fabric of the Material Plane about her tower, creating a time wrinkle to shield her from the curse's effects. Within the wrinkle, time barely passes. Thus she has existed for the last two thousand years.

Shemaya researched the curse's nature extensively

during those centuries, and discovered that, should she leave her refugee, the curse will claim her as its final victim. Thus she cannot leave her sanctuary. Such is her puissance, however, that she has devised an esoteric method of shifting her tower through the portions of the Ethereal Plane linked to Sulm's dominions, allowing it to appear nearly anywhere within the confines of the Bright.

Development: Nomads call Shemaya's shining blue-roofed white spire the *Tower of Sleep*, viewing its appearance as a powerful omen. The intense magic field surrounding the tower manifests itself as a luminescent, shimmering, silvery glow that hangs in the very air itself. At night, this effect is visible for 20 miles or more.

Nomadic legends attempt to describe who or what dwells within this tower, but none have completely hit upon the truth. Many explorers have sought to unravel this riddle, but invariably, those who approach too closely discover the tower to be all but impenetrable. The magic itself has a powerful effect on creatures that approach within 100 feet. All creatures in this area must make a Will save (DC 23) once each minute or fall into a deep sleep. This effect does not extend into the structure itself (much of which extends into the Ethereal Plane). Individuals who manage to breach this defense encounter the tower's guardians; advanced invisible stalkers and air elementals, golems, and similar arcane monsters.

Shemaya's overriding desire is to reverse the effects of the *Scorpion Crown's* curse and to restore the land to its original state. She could be a powerful ally to any adventurers who win past her guardians and wards. She is aware of Rary, but not his ultimate ambition, and has not yet decided on a strategy to combat his machinations.

Shemaya, Female Human Wiz19: CR 19; Medium humanoid (human); HD 19d4+19; hp 76; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +9; Grp +9; Atk +11 melee (1d6+2, *rod of thunder and lightning*); Full Atk +11/+6 melee (1d6+2, *rod of thunder and lightning*); SA spells; SQ hawk familiar, permanent spell affects; AL CG; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +14; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 24, Wis 16, Cha 13.

Skills: Appraise +7 (+9 alchemy), Concentration +19, Craft (alchemy) +17, Diplomacy +8, Knowledge (arcana) +29, Knowledge (history) +29, Knowledge (religion) +20, Knowledge (the planes) +20, Listen +6, Sense Motive +8, Spellcraft +31, Spot +9.

Feats: Brew Potion, Craft Construct, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Forge Ring, Heighten Spell, Maximize Spell, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (conjunction), Spell Focus (evocation).

Languages: Ancient Flan, Celestial, Common, Dwarvish, Elvish, Sylvan.

Permanent Spell Affects: *Comprehend languages*, *darkvision*, see *invisibility*, *tongues*.

Inherent Bonuses from wish spells: +3 Intelligence.

Contingency: If Shemaya's hit points are reduced below 15, a *false life* spell activates.

Spells Prepared: (4/6/6/6/5/5/5/3/3; base DC = 17* + spell level).o—*acid splash**, *mage hand*, *mending*, *prestidigitation*;

1—*alarm*, *burning hands**, *expeditious retreat*, *grease**, *magic missile**, *unseen servant**; 2—*glitterdust**, *gust of wind**, *misdirection*, *scorching ray**, *web**, *whispering wind*; 3—*clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *displacement*, *fireball**, *fly*, *lightning bolt**, *stinking cloud**; 4—*dimension door**, *magic missile** (maximized), *minor creation**, *screaming*, *wall of fire**; 5—*cloudkill**, *cone of cold**, *magic missile** (quickened), *major creation**, *scorching ray** (maximized); 6—*chain lightning**, *fireball** (maximized), *greater dispel magic*, *guards and wards*, *web** (quickened); 7—*fireball** (quickened), *prismatic spray**, *project image*, *protection from energy* (quickened), *summon monster VII**; 8—*dimension door* (quickened), *summon monster VIII**, *temporal stasis*; 9—*chain lightning** (maximized), *meteor swarm**, *summon monster IX**.

*Conjunction or evocation spell. The base save DC for these spells is 18 + spell level.

Spellbooks: Shemaya knows all the wizard spells in the *Player's Handbook*. Over the past two thousand years, she's doubtless researched and created many new spells as well; you can include these new spells in her books if you desire.

Possessions: *Rod of thunder and lightning*, *ring of protection* +3, *ring of spell turning*, *bracers of armor* +5, *robe of scintillating colors*, *crystal ball*.

Sirocco, hawk familiar: Tiny magical beast; HD 19; hp 38; Init +3; Spd 10 ft., fly 60 ft. (average); AC 27, touch 15, flat-footed 24; Base Atk +9; Grp -1; Atk/Full Atk +12 melee (1d4-2, talons); Space/Reach 2-1/2 ft./0 ft.; SA —; SQ deliver touch spells, empathic link, improved evasion, low-light vision, scry on familiar, share spells, speak with snakes, speak with master, spell resistance 24; AL CG; SV Fort +6, Ref +9, Will +13; Str 6, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 15, Cha 6.

Skills: Listen +8, Spot +14.

Feats: Weapon Finesse.

Physical Description: A slightly overweight middle-aged pure-blooded Flan woman, Shemaya wears her short curly black hair swept back from her face. Her skin is deeply tanned and her careworn face is wreathed in wrinkles. Shemaya's amber eyes radiate intelligence and understanding. Clad in robes of ancient cut reminiscent of those depicted on the surviving statutes of Sulm, the sprightly woman moves with a certainty of purpose.

Kumhaik

Kumhaik, master of the neutral trading village of Ul Bakak, is a dour individual who deals in an honest and forthright fashion with everyone he encounters. A veteran of almost three decades of the violence and double-dealings endemic to the region, he takes nothing at face value and is a difficult man to get to know.

Kumhaik is an implacable foe to those who have broken the laws of Ul Bakak. A devout follower of Obad-Hai, Kumhaik believes he is carrying out the will of the Lord of the Wild by protecting the sacred land upon which Ul Bakak stands. His name and reputation for honesty is legendary around desert campfires throughout the Bright Lands, and even the brutal Tareg tribe give him their grudging respect.

Development: Kumhaik is the law in Ul Bakak, and rarely leaves the village's immediate surroundings. On infrequent occasions, he grudgingly leaves Ul Bakak to hunt down a transgressor, knowing that he must prove his ability to maintain order there by preventing anyone to flaunt Ul Bakak's laws and live. Kumhaik makes it his business to speak with every newcomer to the village to make certain that all are aware of the village's neutrality and strict legal code.

Kumhaik, Male Human Ftr12: CR 12; Medium humanoid (human); HD 12d10+36; hp 112; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20, touch 13, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +12; Grp +14; Atk +15 melee (1d6+3/18-20, +1 scimitar) or +17 ranged (1d6+3/x3, bane vs. monstrous humanoids +1 composite shortbow); Full Atk +15/+10/+5 melee (1d6+3/18-20, +1 scimitar) or +17/+12/+7 ranged (1d6+3/x3, bane vs. monstrous humanoids +1 composite shortbow); AL N; SV Fort +11, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 15, Dex 16, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 13.

Skills: Climb +17, Handle Animal +18, Ride +20, Survival +7.

Feats: Animal Affinity, Dodge, Mobility, Improved Initiative, Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, Track, Weapon Focus (shortbow), Weapon Specialization (shortbow).

Languages: Ancient Flan, Common.

Possessions: Bane vs. monstrous humanoids +1 composite shortbow, +1 scimitar, +3 light fortification studded leather armor, ring of sustenance, amulet of natural armor +1.

Physical Description: Approaching fifty, Kumhaik is nevertheless in incredible physical condition. A bandy-legged warrior of Flannish extraction, he wears his greasy hair in an unkempt mass that tumbles over his shoulders. His eyes are similarly dark and deep brown in hue. Kumhaik's deeply burnt skin, which resembles parched leather, stands as a legacy to his hard life. Although he almost always wears his battered and scorched leather armor, Kumhaik never carries his weapons while in Ul Bakak.

Desert Troll

Large Giant

Hit Dice: 7d8+42 (74 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

AC: 18 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +7 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+15

Attack: Claw +10 melee (1d8+6)

Full Attack: 2 claws +9 melee (1d8+6) and bite +4 melee (1d6+3)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Rend 2d6+9

Special Qualities: Camouflage, darkvision 90 ft., immune to fire, low-light vision, regeneration 5, scent, water vulnerability

Saves: Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +3

Abilities: Str 23, Dex 14, Con 23, Int 9, Wis 9, Cha 6

Skills: Hide +8, Listen +4, Move Silently +4, Spot +4

Feats: Improved Natural Attack (claw), Iron Will, Stealthy

Environment: Warm deserts

Organization: Solitary or gang (2-12)

Challenge Rating: 6

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Advancement: By character class

Level Adjustment: +5

This hulking bipedal creature stands half again as high as a human. Its long, spindly arms and legs give it an awkward appearance. Its feet have three wide, flat toes, and its muscular hands bear sharp claws. The creature's leathery, mottled hide slowly shifts in hue to match its surroundings. Its hair hangs in thick ropy locks that seem to twitch on their own accord.

Kin to common trolls, desert trolls are larger and more intelligent than their smaller brethren, and possess chameleon-like abilities that allow them to strike from ambush with terrible efficiency.

In the main, desert trolls are solitary creatures who prey

on anything living near their lairs. In places where the hunting is particularly good, they sometimes congregate in small groups of up to a dozen individuals. They normally dwell in desert hills, preferring this stony terrain to the near-endless dunes of the interior. A few enclaves still exist in the Abbor-Alz, preying on the inhabitants of that dusty range. In the past, desert trolls ranged throughout the Brass Hills. With the coming of Rary and his forces, however, they are slowly being driven to extinction in the region.

Desert trolls speak Giant.

Combat

Desert trolls prefer to attack from ambush. Scavengers, they do not fear death and keep fighting until slain unless attacked with water, which causes them to flee in terror.

Rend (Ex): If a desert troll hits with both claw attacks, it latches onto its opponent's body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals an additional 2d6+9 points of damage.

Camouflage (Ex): Desert trolls can alter the color of their skin to match that of the surrounding terrain. They can change their skin from bleached tan to a mottled rock brown or to any color in between. In desert terrain, this grants the desert troll concealment; successful attacks against the desert troll have a 20% miss chance. Additionally, desert trolls can attempt to make Hide checks without seeking additional cover or concealment.

Regeneration (Ex): Acid and water deal normal damage to a desert troll. If a desert troll loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 3d6 minutes. The creature can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump.

Water Vulnerability (Ex): Desert trolls are particularly vulnerable to water, and contact with it (such as reaching into a pool or being splashed with a vial or bucket of water) inflicts 2d6 points of damage per strike. Complete immersion (including being caught in the rain or being subjected to a high volume of water, as from the geyser function of a *decanter of endless water*) inflicts 6d6 points of damage per round.

Skills: Desert trolls have a +8 racial bonus on Hide checks.

Desert Troll Characters

Desert trolls sometimes become barbarians, rangers, clerics, or rogues. Their favored class is barbarian. Desert troll clerics (which are rare) worship Vaprak "The Destroyer," and choose from the Chaos, Destruction, Evil, or War domains. They wield greatclubs.

Hueleneae (Desert Centaur)

Large Monstrous Humanoid

Hit Dice: 5d8+10 (32 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 50 ft. (10 squares)

AC: 20 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +2 natural, +5 chainmail, +2 heavy wooden shield), touch 11, flat-footed 18

Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+14

Attack: Scimitar +10 melee (1d6+5/18-20) or composite longbow +7 ranged (1d8+5/×3)

Full Attack: Scimitar +10 melee (1d6+5/18-20) and 2 hooves +6

melee (1d6+2) or composite longbow +7 ranged (1d8+5/×3)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: —

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +5

Abilities: Str 20, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 13, Cha 11

Skills: Listen +3, Spot +3, Survival +5

Feats: Endurance, Weapon Focus (hoof)

Climate/Terrain: Warm deserts

Organization: Solitary, company (5-8), troop (8-18 plus 1 leader of 2nd-5th level), or tribe (20-100 plus 10 3rd-level sergeants, 5 5th-level lieutenants, and 1 leader of 6th-10th level)

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: No coins; standard goods and items (weapons and armor)

Alignment: Usually lawful neutral

Advancement: By character class

Level Adjustment: +2

The creature moves across the sandy dunes with assurance and grace. It has the upper torso, arms, and head of a muscular humanoid and the lower body of a large horse. Despite the heat, it wears chainmail and carries a scimitar and a longbow.

Although civilized, the hueleneae, or desert centaurs, are more warlike than their sylvan cousins and dwell only in the Bright Desert. They are a dark-skinned and handsome people, slightly smaller in height but more muscular than their woodland kin.

Hueleneae speak Common and Giant.

Combat

The hueleneae are skilled in the art of warfare and combat, and prefer to utilize skirmishing and guerrilla tactics. When armed for war, they don ancient armor and bear antique weapons forged when Sulm was yet strong. They normally wear chainmail and carry a shield and scimitar. Others act as horse archers, using their maneuverability and firepower to devastating effect on less mobile forces.

Hueleneae Society

The hueleneae live in a highly ritualized, stern society that deals harshly with transgressors. Their society is fractured into more than a score of small, fiercely independent tribal groups. Both genders are expected to fight, raise children, or serve as leaders as circumstances require.

The Hueleneae are a product of a harsh environment and an unbending moral code. Stories speak of ancient times when they were beholden to the despotic rulers of Sulm, and it is for these reasons that they resist the approaches of Rary and his minions.

Desert Centaur Characters

Desert centaurs sometimes become bards, rangers, or occasionally barbarians. Their favored class is ranger. Centaur clerics and druids worship Skerrit. Clerics can choose any two of the following domains: Animal, Good, and Plant. They wield shortspears. ●

digital revolution



By Rodney Thompson

Illustrations by Omar Dogan and Udon Entertainment

The world's movement into a new age of electronics, computers, and high-speed

computations has bred a new type of person. Power, once measured in brute strength and influence, is gradually shifting to those with intelligence and skill with new technologies. Where heroes and villains of the past were sword-swinging or gun-toting warriors, this new age of technology has seen the rise of a new kind of protagonist: the hacker. Modern-day clashes between governments, corporations, and power brokers have encouraged the growth of loosely organized rebellious hacker communities, the most famous of which is the Digital Revolution.

Like most hackers, the members of Digital Revolution see themselves as rebels, pirates, and rogues who fight the power using their proficiency with computers. Although their illegal activities could put them in prison, most members of the group pay little attention to legal threats from the authorities. They believe they're part of a rebellion fighting against an insidious force (although each hacker has a different idea about who this ultimate foe might be), a conviction that makes them cocky and fearless, fueling their desire to expand their knowledge and keep the fight alive.

Within the past decade, the Digital Revolution has had a profound (if behind the scenes) impact upon United States and world politics. Members of the group uncovered a massive conspiracy within America's intelligence community in 1999, exposing the illegal plans of rogue agents who sought to sell nuclear weapons to foreign terrorist operatives. The arrest and conviction of 14 members of the nation's top intelligence communities kept the weapons from being transferred, although Digital Revolution's role in the scandal is known only within the hacking community.

Last year, the group claimed responsibility for cracking the encryption used by orbital spy satellites, posting impossibly accurate aerial photography of the private lives of several U.S. politicians to prove their success.

Not content to simply target government computer systems, the Digital Revolution has diverted funds from international banks, pirated high-level security software from major corporations, created backdoor entries to secure database servers, and performed any number of private espionage operations as hackers for hire. The list of government and industry allegations against the unknown members of the group reads like a near-perfect resume for potential illicit employers.

Digital Revolution's anonymity makes them dangerous.

As skilled computer experts, they can cover their trails and prevent identity traces, keeping the proper authorities at bay. Rival hackers have, on occasion, attempted to root out the group, but at best they have produced information leading to the arrest of a single group member, who invariably is sprung from detention by unknown fellows within weeks of his capture.

Thus far, the Digital Revolution has done nothing overtly malevolent, though they have routinely demonstrated their power by seizing control of important systems (like the coolant systems in a nuclear power plant) and leaving mischievous messages behind. There is no question that with the right motivation the members of Digital Revolution could cause a lot of harm, but so far they seem to be content to play information wargames and aim for bigger and more secure targets.

There is no set roster for Digital Revolution, especially given that the organization has more than 50 members. The following four team members, however, are among the most prominent and talented of the group.

GURU

A poster child for the stereotypical hacker image, the young programming prodigy and Digital Revolution founder known as Guru possesses unparalleled skill at bypassing security and gaining access to computer systems. When a system needs to be broken into, Guru is the man to call. An expert in computer security and anti-intrusion countermeasures, Guru is responsible not only for getting other Digital Revolution hackers into remote systems but also for protecting them from external investigation. He leaves "backdoors," easy entranceways for hackers, in every system he's ever penetrated, allowing others to get in at their leisure and pilfer corporate secrets or financial information as they wish. As he says, "I'm just the guy who opens the doors and lets in the horde."

The Revolution knows well enough to keep "the horde" from its own systems, however, so Guru constantly tests the security of their computer networks, carefully removing and repairing any weaknesses that might be exploited by enemies or wannabe hackers.

Guru got his start in academia—he boasts a Master's degree in Computer Science from MIT. By day he works as the lead designer for a major computer security corporation based in London, making sure that big business feels secure in an increasingly dangerous digital world. He uses his position to scope out new security systems, install backdoors in his clients' networks, keep up to date on the latest anti-hacker