



RED SHOALS OF DKAR

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The Raiders of Dkar sail out of the storm, plunder the holds of ships and fishing villages up and down the coast, then disappear in a twinkling, leaving only fading wakes and dissipating squalls to mark their passage.

Well, that and looted treasuries, bodies of fallen defenders, and memories of terror.

RAIDERS OF DKAR LORE

A character knows the following information with a successful History or Streetwise check.

DC 15: The Raiders of Dkar are marauders who appear under the cover of storms and other violent weather. They launch their attacks from a ship, and they are singularly adroit at losing any pursuers in the storm who give chase on the open water.

Folks recognize the Raiders of Dkar for the symbol most wear as tattoos or scars on their bodies: a lightning spiral.

DC 18: The raiders might strike a given region several times over the period of a month, then never show up again, or appear subsequently only after a few years have passed since their last visit.

DC 22: The raiders are rumored to be based in a location known as the Red Shoals of Dkar. However, on the rare occasion a raider is captured, they are far more likely to die than to describe in any way the location of their hidden lair.

RED SHOALS OF DKAR LORE

A character knows the following information with a successful Arcana check.

DC 25: The Red Shoals of Dkar are a series of sandy islands that lie in the watery eye of a colossal chaos storm that perpetually rages through the Elemental Chaos. Most of the islands within the eye are impermanent things; they swell and shrink

according to random fluctuations of the surrounding storm. Though many of the shoals are inconstant, the elemental sea of water suffusing the eye seems a permanent fixture of the storm's hollow center.

DC 30: Some of the Red Shoals have been stabilized magically and serve as lairs to various groups of pirates, ne'er-do-wells, and other fearsome forces. These raiders have learned how to sail out of the eye at just the right time and in just the proper fashion so as to slip back into the world for a brief while—a period long enough to launch a raid and return before the tide turns and the passage closes.

DC 35: All the various raiders agree upon one law. Everyone who lives within the confines of the eye on a shoal who wishes to partake in raiding, either back into the world or out into the Elemental Chaos, must submit to bearing the mark of Dkar: a lightning spiral. Any raider who dares and survives Dkar's Maze, a cave system in the centermost isle among the shoals from which all the rest of the isles take their name, gains the lightning spiral mark.

FURY OF DKAR

From the perspective of a native or traveler through the Elemental Chaos, the tempest surrounding Red Shoals is like any other storm of raw chaos sweeping across the Elemental Chaos, though larger than most. All such tempests pose a significant threat to natives and travelers alike (except for slaads, who are immune to the effects).

Chaos storms (*Manual of the Planes*, page 67) come and go. Normal chaos storms are normally limited to just over a dozen feet in radius. Some are much larger, and a few are so large and long lasting that they've acquired names. For instance, the Great Red

MECHANICS OF RAIDING

Raiders can sail their craft out of the protected eye and into the storm until they breach into the greater Elemental Chaos. However, if the storm is churning at the proper frequency (giving it a distinctive red cast) raiders can choose to call upon the magic resident in their spiral marks and sail into the world through an inconstant portal that lasts for several hours. Every raider with a mark is always aware of how long the portal will last and where it is, despite other creatures being completely blind to its existence. However, creatures of the world might stumble, even without a Mark of Dkar, back through an open storm portal and find themselves in Red Shoals.

The focus of the portal created between the world and the Elemental Chaos shifts each time it manifests to a new location in the world. Most assume the focus changes randomly or according to a cycle too complicated to model.

Tempest's roiling, red blot reaches miles in all directions as it rolls across the Elemental Chaos, while the Fury of Dkar might be wider. Of the two, the Great Red Tempest is more well known (*The Plane Below: Secrets of the Elemental Chaos*, page 63), while the Fury of Dkar is an outlier because it doesn't often cross into

Abmelech is known for trade, information, and travelers from the Elemental Chaos and accidental visitors from the storm portal.

view. For this reason, the Fury of Dkar's hollow eye makes a perfect lair for raiders.

ABMELECH ISLAND

One of the largest permanent islands inside the storm's eye is Abmelech. Abmelech Island hosts a busy port town, "Abmelech City," thick with caravan-serai. These trade centers serve the privateer vessels and send trade out to larger metropolises found in the Elemental Chaos; most notably, the City of Brass, though trade between the other islands in the Red Shoals is also brisk. A hard-bitten and no-nonsense merchant djinn named Corinth heads the place.

Abmelech is known for trade, information, and travelers from the Elemental Chaos and accidental visitors from the storm portal. More than a few visitors from the world wind up being sold to Farkus Island as slaves.

Three raider ships capable of crossing into the world put in at Abmelech: *Chaos Raven* (captained by a human woman named Erenia), *Mist of Shadows* (captained by a male shadar-kai named Mur Kar), and *Velvet Song* (captained by a half-elf male named Blackleaf). Each is crewed by a mix of humanoids and humanoidlike creatures, all of which bear the spiral lightning mark of Dkar.

Captain Erenia: Whenever the storm walls surrounding the shoals turn red, *Chaos Raven* puts to sea. Captain Erenia's black hair streams unbound in the wind, as do her salty curses. No fouler mouth exists in Red Shoals, though few are brave enough to point this out to her. Erenia lives to raid, and she never fails to return with a bounty of looted cargo and wares, though she stops short of capturing live victims for later sale to Farkus Island. In fact, on more than one

occasion *Chaos Raven* and the ship *Slight Bastard* sailing out of Farkus Island have come into conflict. Most believe it is only a matter of time before one craft sinks the other.

Though never substantiated, some mutter that Erenia operates a secret slave salvation route and ferries freed slaves back into the world.

Captain Mur Kar: The captain of *Mist of Shadows* is interested primarily in alchemical substance and drug trade. The shadar-kai captain has a keen nose for ferreting out drug shipments and uses the apparently random portals into the world with amazing success when it comes to disrupting (and commandeering) such trade. Mur Kar doesn't particularly care if a particular substance is banned; he cares only what kind of price he can command when he returns to trade the contents of his hold in the bazaars of Abmelech and Ellasar.

Mur Kar double-crossed the Circle (a mercenary band led by the eladrin Scarvarial of Ellasar Island) a few years back to secure a cargo of "traveler's dust" from destruction. Since then, the Circle and *Mist of Shadows* have waged a secret and often cold war. The Circle has promised to sink *Mist of Shadows*, and for its part, Mur Kar has promised to assassinate Scarvarial.

Captain Mur Kar, Shadar-Kai **Level 14 Controller**
Medium shadow humanoid XP 1,000

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +13; low-light vision
HP 138; **Bloodied** 69
AC 27; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 28
Speed 7

⚔ **Stormblade** (standard; at-will) ⚡ **Lightning, Thunder**
+19 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 lightning and thunder damage, and the target falls prone.

⚡ **Stormbolt** (standard; at-will) ⚡ **Lightning**
Ranged 5; +18 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 6 lightning damage, and the target falls prone.

⚡ **Overboard** (standard; at-will) ⚡ **Charm**
Ranged 5; targets a prone creature; +18 vs. Reflex; slide the target 5 squares.

⚡ **Thunderburst** (standard; recharge [ii]) ⚡ **Thunder**
Close burst 3; targets enemies; +16 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 6 thunder damage, and slide the target 5 squares. *Miss: Half damage.*

Shadow Jaunt (move; encounter) ⚡ **Teleportation**
Mur Kar teleports 3 squares and becomes insubstantial until the start of his next turn.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Arcana +19, Stealth +15
Str 12 (+8) **Dex** 16 (+10) **Wis** 12 (+8)
Con 18 (+11) **Int** 24 (+14) **Cha** 20 (+12)
Equipment leather armor, *inescapable longsword* (*Adventurer's Vault*™, page 70)

Captain Blackleaf: *Velvet Song* spends more time in port than *Chaos Raven* and *Mist of Shadows* put together. It seems Captain Blackleaf has made a name for himself performing songs in local taverns, especially the Edgewater. Rumor is he seeks a buyer for his ship so that he can retire from the business of raiding and settle into the songcraft in which he has found renewed interest. He is often in the company of an energetic woman named Parcilia Keshar, apparently a rich citizen of Abmelech Island (but see more on Parcilia under "Jade Gyre" below).

FARKUS ISLAND

Farkus Island enjoys a mixed reputation in Red Shoals. This rich island can host powerful travelers from the Elemental Chaos in style, especially rich ones. However, the comforts of Farkus Island are bought on the backs of the slave trade that serves as the islands' primary export. Farkus Island is administered by Maeryn the Whip, a hard-eyed dwarf female who can size up a slave's value within seconds. Maeryn's personal bodyguard and chief slave overseer is Stoneheart, an earth archon.

Stoneheart, Earth Archon **Level 17 Brute**
Medium elemental humanoid (earth) XP 1,600

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +13; tremorsense 20
HP 204; **Bloodied** 102
AC 29; **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 29
Immune disease, petrification, poison
Speed 6 (earth walk)

⚔ **Stone Warhammer** (standard; at-will) ⚡ **Weapon**
+20 vs. AC; 2d12 + 9 damage.

⚡ **Dazing Strike** (standard; recharge [ii])
Close burst 2; +18 vs. Reflex; 2d10 + 9 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). A target with a slave collar must roll a d20 twice and take the lower result when making a saving throw against this effect.

Slave Taker ⚡ **Thunder**
Stoneheart's attack deals 2d8 extra thunder damage if it is attacking a creature wearing a slave collar that was fitted while it was on Farkus Island.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Primordial
Str 24 (+15) **Dex** 18 (+12) **Wis** 21 (+13)
Con 24 (+15) **Int** 15 (+10) **Cha** 17 (+11)
Equipment warhammer

The only law Farkus Island abides by is the Law of the Mark—anyone who bears the Mark of Dkar never need fear a collar fitted on Farkus Island. Or so claims Maeryn.



The slave market in the central (and only) city on Farkus is always brisk, even in the middle of darkest night. Permanent teleportation circles set in the slave market sometimes sparkle into life, providing access to a specific courtyard in the City of Brass where slaves are similarly bought and sold. In fact, Farkus Island might be one of the City of Brass's largest suppliers of enforced labor.

Several ships sail out of Farkus Island to raid for warm bodies in the world, but the two best known craft are *Slight Bastard* (captained by a halfling named Thamus) and *Chain Bounty* (captained by Red Marjorie, who sometimes looks like a woman, other times a bat-winged demon). The crew all bears the spiral lightning mark of Dkar.

Captain Thamus: His ship's name, *Slight Bastard*, is a play on Thamus's own diminutive stature. Having faced the subtle prejudice taller folks have "heaped" on him all his life, Thamus enjoys nothing more than enslaving humans and others of equal stature. For him, it's personal, and few in his own crew who are not diminutively sized themselves can long stand up to the captain's scorn. Though the Law of the Mark keeps his crew safe from being seized as slaves, no law keeps him from making "stubborn" crew dance the hempen jig for the least of slights.

Captain Red Marjorie: The *Chain Bounty* is one of the few ships capable of not only sailing terrestrial seas, but also the fluctuating tempest of elements that boil beyond the storm walls. Bearing a mysterious orb known as an *anarch sphere* (*Prince of Undeath*TM, page 24), the *Chain Bounty* can pass from a body of water into the swirling, sometimes empty maelstrom of the Elemental Chaos, and even (it is rumored) into the Abyss. If the later is true, the ichor stains, scorch marks, and frequent need for Red Marjorie to

replenish her crew after taking a load of slaves for sale makes more sense.

Most people believe that Red Marjorie is a sort of shape-shifting demon or demon-kin, a rumor on which the captain is happy to trade. In truth, she's a doppelganger who takes on a demonic visage. This helps cow slaves in her hold, buyers and sellers, her own crew, and rival captains who might think twice about taking on a ship captained by a demon.

Red Marjorie, Doppelganger Level 15 Elite Lurker		
Medium natural humanoid (shapechanger)	XP 2,400	
Initiative +16	Senses Perception +8	
HP 222; Bloodied 111		
AC 31; Fortitude 25, Reflex 29, Will 29		
Saving Throws +1		
Speed 6		
Action Points 1		
⊕ Dagger (standard; at-will) ⊕ Weapon		
+20 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 damage.		
⊕ Double Attack (standard; at-will)		
Red Marjorie makes two dagger attacks. If she hits two different targets with the attacks, one of the targets of her choice is dazed (save ends).		
⊕ Shapeshifter Feint (minor; at-will)		
+18 vs. Reflex; Red Marjorie gains combat advantage against the target until the end of her next turn.		
⚡ Cloud Mind (standard; recharge ☞ ☞) ⊕ Charm		
Close burst 5; +16 vs. Will; Red Marjorie is invisible to the target (save ends).		
Combat Advantage		
Red Marjorie deals 3d6 extra damage against any target granting combat advantage to her.		
Change Shape (minor; at-will) ⊕ Polymorph		
Red Marjorie can alter her physical form to appear as any Medium humanoid, including a unique individual (see <i>Change Shape, Monster Manual</i> page 280).		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common	
Skills Bluff +16, Insight +13, Stealth +15		
Str 12 (+8)	Dex 21 (+12)	Wis 12 (+8)
Con 15 (+9)	Int 13 (+8)	Cha 19 (+11)
Equipment dagger		

THE MARK OF DKAR

This scarlike tattoo appears as a jagged spiral. Bearers share a special bond with the permanent storm sheltering the Red Shoals of Dkar. Someone with the mark is immune to the effects of the particular chaos storm surrounding Red Shoals. Moreover, a mark bearer is transferred from the Elemental Chaos into the world when they pass out of the eye of the storm when the storm's predominant color is red (an event that occurs approximately once every three days). The location of the portal endpoint in the world changes with every opening. Sometimes the endpoint shifts only by yards, other times by miles or the spans of continents.

The "portal" does not appear as a physical opening, but instead manifests as a blot of swirling storm, which remains open for up to 6 hours. Anyone with the Mark of Dkar knows to the second when the opening back to Red Shoals will close, and to the inch where they must be to travel by using the portal. If even one person aboard a ship that passes through a portal storm or storm wall bears a mark, the entire ship, its contents, and its passengers make the trip (in either direction).

Finally, anyone bearing the Mark of Dkar who speaks of, names, or describes the Red Shoals of Dkar to anyone other than another mark bearer drops to 0 hit points. (The Mark of Dkar can be removed by a Remove Affliction ritual if successfully performed against a 23rd-level effect.)

Marks are gained by traversing the Maze of Dkar at the center of the eye.

DRAGON ISLAND

The dragon of Dragon Island is an elder iron dragon (*Monster Manual*[™] 2, page 84) whose true name is hidden, but who enjoys the title Iron Mercy. Iron Mercy's island is not particularly welcoming to raiders or trade, except for those raiders who serve her completely and turn over the greater portion of their takes as tribute to be added to Iron Mercy's hoard. Iron Mercy sometimes invites important captains and heads of other islands to Dragon Island to enjoy a rare feast prepared by Iron Mercy's servitors. Most invited attend, because the iron dragon is one of the most powerful creatures to lair in the Red Shoals, and no one wants to get on her bad side. After all, she has sunk more than a couple raider ships from other islands for perceived slights.

Besides a scattering of humanoid servitors pledged to serve the dragon (as well as several slaves), the island sometimes seems overrun with iron dragon hatchlings and young iron dragons (*Monster Manual* 2, page 84). Iron Mercy is prolific; however, she knows space in Red Shoals is limited, and to keep the dragon population under control, she sponsors yearly dragon hunts. For one day, representatives from each island are permitted to land and hunt dragons. Those who succeed must hand over the body, but they are given a pick from Iron Mercy's hoard in recompense.

Coin and Claw is the only ship that runs under Iron Mercy's flag (which shows a stylized iron dragon on a field of red). *Coin and Claw* is captained by Ferrick Spark.

Captain Ferrick Spark: The male genasi captain of *Coin and Claw* commands a handpicked crew of humanoids loyal to Iron Mercy—a loyalty that is enforced by the shipboard presence of an adult iron

dragon (*Monster Manual* 2, page 84) named Graytalon; Graytalon is of Iron Mercy's brood, and he sees to it that his mother's interests are always represented.

Captain Ferrick takes *Coin and Claw* out when word returns that the storm portal endpoint has opened near a large city. Only the treasuries of rich nobles, merchants, and kings interest Iron Mercy, and by extension, her raiders. More than a few contents of petty (and not so petty) king's vaults have been pilfered from the world and now reside in a place of honor in Iron Mercy's hoard.

Ferrick Spark, Genasi		Level 15 Elite Brute
Medium elemental humanoid		XP 2,400
Initiative +8	Senses Perception +9	
HP 358; Bloodied 179		
AC 28; Fortitude 28, Reflex 27, Will 24		
Resist 15 lightning		
Saving Throws +1		
Speed 6		
Action Points 1		
⊕ Falchion (standard; at-will) ♦ Lightning, Weapon		
+18 vs. AC; 2d4 + 9 damage (crit 4d4 + 14), and ongoing 5 lightning damage (save ends).		
⊕ Double Attack (standard; at-will)		
Ferrick makes two falchion attacks. If he hits two different targets, each target takes ongoing 10 lightning damage instead of ongoing 5 lightning damage (save ends).		
⊕ Electric Riposte (immediate reaction, when the genasi is hit by an attack; at-will) ♦ Lightning		
Targets an enemy adjacent to Ferrick; +18 vs. Reflex; the target takes ongoing 10 lightning damage (save ends). If the target is already taking ongoing lightning damage, that damage increases by 5.		
⊕ Lightning Surge (standard; recharge ☞ ☞) ♦ Lightning		
Close burst 1; +18 vs. Reflex; the target takes ongoing 10 lightning damage (save ends), and the target takes a -2 penalty to saving throws against ongoing lightning damage until the end of the encounter.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages Common, Primordial
Skills Endurance +16, Intimidate +12		
Str 22 (+13)	Dex 13 (+8)	Wis 15 (+9)
Con 19 (+11)	Int 17 (+10)	Cha 11 (+7)
Equipment hide armor, falchion		

ELLASAR ISLAND

Ellasar Island enjoys a permanently stabilized core. Where Ellasar Fortress is built, however, sandy edges constantly swell and dissolve, creating short-lived fingers of sand that more often than not extend past the storm wall and out into the Elemental Chaos. Thus Ellasar Island serves as a place where traffic, though infrequent, passes between the eye of the storm and into the greater chaos.

However, when the storm wall turns red, fingers of sand bisecting the storm lead instead to the world (at least for those bearing the Mark of Dkar). Instead of forming inconstant storm portals in the world, bridge portals are created. A bridge portal is a path of sand that connects to dry land somewhere in the world.

Thus Ellasar Fortress is one of the most heavily fortified sites in Red Shoals. High stone walls front on the extendable spits of land, just in case hostile visitors from the greater Chaos or the world stumble (or knowingly travel) into the eye of the storm where Red Shoals shelters.

Despite the daunting walls, Ellasar competes with Abmelech for the trade crown in Red Shoals. Those who wish to sell their raided profit but can't find a buyer elsewhere in the eye of the storm prepare caravans to travel through Ellisar into the greater Chaos. The Lord of Ellisar Fortress is an eladrin warlord named Utúlien.

Several mercenary companies operate out of Ellasar Fortress (though all are pledged to turn a portion of their profits to Utúlien). The two most well known are the Circle, led by an eladrin female named Scarvarial, and the Band of the Hand, led by the human male Gannun Crowfeather.

Captain Scarvarial: Though she doesn't command a ship, Scarvarial is accorded just as much respect by her company of specially drilled eladrin warmages. Skilled in both blade and spell, the Circle is a formidable force, and Scarvarial makes excellent coin when she accepts contracts in the Circle's name.

Scarvarial, Eladrin		Level 15 Elite Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid		XP 2,400
Initiative +14	Senses Perception +8; low-light vision	
HP 292; Bloodied 146		
AC 32; Fortitude 26, Reflex 30, Will 29		
Saving Throws +2 (+5 against charm effects)		
Speed 8		
Action Points 1		
⚔ Brilliant Blade (standard; at-will) ⚡ Radiant, Weapon		
+20 vs. AC; 2d8 + 7 radiant damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls against Scarvarial until the end of her next turn.		
⚔ Double Attack (standard; at-will)		
Scarvarial makes two brilliant blade attacks. If she hits both times, she can teleport 5 squares.		
⚔ Crippling Strike (standard; encounter) ⚡ Weapon		
Scarvarial shifts 3 squares before and after making the attack. +18 vs. Fortitude; the target is weakened and slowed (save ends both). <i>Miss:</i> The target is slowed (save ends).		
⚔ Dance of Brilliance (standard; at-will) ⚡ Radiant, Weapon		
+20 vs. AC; 1d8 + 8 radiant damage, and Scarvarial shifts 3 squares and uses brilliant blade against a different target.		
⚔ Wyvern Strike (standard; recharge [E]) ⚡ Poison, Teleportation, Weapon		
Scarvarial teleports 10 squares, but might break the trip into two segments. At any point during the teleport, Scarvarial can appear and attack: +18 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 8 damage, and ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).		
Combat Shift (minor; requires combat advantage against an enemy adjacent to Scarvarial; at-will 1/round)		
Scarvarial shifts 1 square to a space adjacent to the enemy.		
Fey Step (move; encounter) ⚡ Teleportation		
Scarvarial teleports 5 squares.		
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Common, Elven	
Str 13 (+8)	Dex 21 (+12)	Wis 13 (+8)
Con 18 (+11)	Int 15 (+9)	Cha 18 (+11)
Equipment chainmail, longsword		

Most of the contracts Scarvarial accepts are in the world—even though easy “natural” access to the Red Shoals is too infrequent to be reliable. Once the mercenaries have finished up a particular job, Scarvarial and at least one or two of her lieutenants know the Planar Portal ritual and can return to the safety of Ellisar Fortress at need.

A few years back, one of the Circle's contracts required that it travel into the world and secure a hold filled with an illicit drug known as “travelers dust” (whose users invariably end up dead after first becoming addicted). The Circle commandeered the hold, but was foiled in completing its contract because the raider Mur Kar of Abmelech Island and Captain of *Mist of Shadows* double-crossed Scarvarial. Since then, the *Mist of Shadows* and the Circle have engaged in an off-again, on-again skirmish.

Captain Gannun Crowfeather: Like the Circle, the Band of the Hand mercenaries travel only by ship when they take a commission by someone who owns one. Unlike the circle, the Band of the Hand doesn't seem particularly concerned with the nature of the contract they accept—they have no qualms about murdering apparent innocents, as long as the Band is paid. Since the entire economy of Red Shoals is based on thievery, no other group has found the moral ground to oppose Captain Crowfeather; however, as more stories of contracts taken on behalf of demons and massacres of children make the rounds, someone might well challenge the group. If Crowfeather has any allies at all, it is Red Marjorie and Thamus of Farkus Island, as well as the island's administrator, Maeryn the Whip.

JADE GYRE

Lacking knowledge on how to stabilize one of the impermanent shoals, the ambitious tiefling called Jade created an artificial “island” from lashed-together rafts, driftwood, and barely seaworthy ships. Thus Jade Gyre was born. Also called the Drifting Island, the impermanent nature of the structure means it is dangerous to move too far across its expanse, lest an unexpected wave knock a citizen through one of the many gaps in the city’s “surface” and into the cold unforgiving waves.

As such, Jade Gyre has become a place filled with Red Shoal’s undesirables, which indicates a higher level of danger given that most of Red Shoal’s “desirable” inhabitants are happy to be called raiders, pirates, and worse. For the most part, undesirables in Jade Gyre include escaped slaves, those suffering from strange afflictions or curses, and those who’ve run afoul one of the other island administrators, captains, or other politically powerful personages.

Because Jade Gyre lies outside the trading relationships, such as they are, that most of the islands enjoy, it now also houses the secret headquarters to a group interested in stamping out the activities of the Raid-

These dreams, or nightmares, reveal how the twisted, seamed, and compacted gray stone is the severed head of the ancient, dead, mummified, and petrified primordial named Dkar.

ers of Dkar. Composed of only a handful of people, the so-called Gyre Wardens want to find ways to put an end to the activities the Red Shoals allows. So far, their attempts have been mild, but as their failures

mount, so does their desperation to take meaningful actions.

The Gyre Wardens are led by a human woman named Parcilia Keshar. Parcilia is a devotee of Ioun, though few enough in Red Shoals know it. Currently, Parcilia assumes the role of a rich citizen of Abmelech Island. What started as a spying mission on one of Abmelech’s most prolific raiders (Captain Blackleaf) developed into an actual relationship. Blackleaf doesn’t realize Parcilia’s true goals and might be put off to realize that her encouragement to give up raiding and pursue his “music” might be more than personally motivated.

MAZE OF DKAR

At the center of the storm’s eye sits a barren, twisted mass of stone. Every other land mass within the eye is either temporary or magically stabilized. Only the Maze is permanent. It remains permanent because this mass of half-submerged stone is the focus of the entire storm that surrounds Red Shoals—it somehow generates and mystically maintains the chaos storm.

Some sages in Red Shoals recognize that the Maze is a bit of Elemental Chaos flotsam that draws the per-

manent storm all around it. They guess that deeper secrets lie within this heavily tunneled stone. A few have experienced disquieting dreams regarding the great mass. These dreams, or nightmares, reveal how the twisted, seamed, and compacted gray stone is the

severed head of the ancient, dead, mummified, and petrified primordial named Dkar.

Regardless of whether these dreams touch on a deeper truth or are subconscious fancy, no one denies the power that the “island” can confer on anyone hardy enough to dare its narrow, tunneled mazes. These seekers want to find the stone’s heart, which is a glowing red stone that transfers a jagged spiral mark once it is touched. The raiders informally call this stone the Heartstone.

Those seeking the Heartstone can attempt a skill challenge to simulate success or failure in attempting to reach the center of Maze. Unfortunately, maps are of little use, since the most expedient route changes day by day.

GAINING THE MARK

Waves smash upon the twisted, fused gray stone of the island called Dkar’s Maze. A dozen or more tunnels plunge into the island’s interior. Some shine with strange illumination, and others are completely dark. It’s up to the adventurers to choose which route to take into the Maze.

In this challenge, the adventurers must enter one of the tunnels and make their way into the island’s center by intuiting the best route while avoiding the dangers that beset them.

Level: 11 (XP 3,000).

Complexity: 5 (requires 12 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Acrobatics, Arcana, Athletics, Dungeoneering, Nature, Perception.

Acrobatics (DC 16 or 21): After the first success using Acrobatics, the DC increases to 21. Shifting floors, falling stones, and the ability to squeeze through openings by folding one’s body just so (or helping an ally do the same) become important on

a couple of occasions while spelunking through the Maze's tunnels.

Arcana or Nature (DC 16 or 21): After the first success using either Arcana or Nature, the DC increases to 21. Is that odd glow magical fire or phosphorescent algae? Does the odor of sulfur wafting up the passage to the left presage a dangerous obstacle or a natural occurrence? And what about these odd stone marks—magical glyphs, or just how this kind of mineral looks when scratched? Avoiding the dangers helps the adventurers farther into the Maze.

Athletics (DC 16 or 21): After the first success using Athletics, the DC increases to 21. A rough wall, a deep rock chimney, or a wide chasm that must be jumped are all challenges that adventurers must face when wending toward the Heartstone.

Maze Island is indeed the remnant of a bound primordial named Dkar.

Dungeoneering (DC 16 or 21): After the first success using Dungeoneering, the DC increases to 21. When deciding between which of the plethora of tunnels might provide the best entry, someone's general knowledge of tunnel grade, size, and "feel" is a benefit to all.

Perception (DC 21): Odd noises, dire smells, movements of air, and hidden secondary tunnels make movement deeper and deeper into the bowels of Maze Island a job suited for someone with sharp senses.

Success: The adventurers reach the center of the Maze. They consequently gain a jagged spiral tattoo somewhere on their bodies, as well as the benefits that go with having such a mark. See the Mark of

Dkar sidebar on page 58 for more information on the mark, and the Chamber of the Heartstone below for conditions in the final chamber.

Failure: The adventurers are injured by a collapsing tunnel that sends them back to the surface to try another route, and start all over again. Each adventurer loses 1 healing surge, and worse, finds an awakened Avatar of Dkar back on the island's surface ready eager to deal with the intruders. See Waking the Avatar below for statistics on the wakened guardian.

CHAMBER OF THE HEARTSTONE

The correct route into Maze Island finally leads to the Chamber of the Heartstone.

This roughly spherical chamber is sheathed in quartz crystal. A ten-foot-diameter scarlet stone pulses in the center of the bowl-like floor of the chamber, dimming and brightening over the course of several natural heartbeats.

Anyone who doesn't already have the Mark of Dkar who touches the red crystal takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends). When the target finally saves, a new lightning spiral tattoo now adorns its flesh.

The red crystal is as vulnerable to damage as any large stone, but if any visitors begin to smash away at it, the entire complex animates and mimics the effects of a stomach regurgitating all its contents back to the surface. Creatures subjected to this unpleasant mode of travel lose 2 healing surges, fall prone on the surface, and stand up in the presence of an awakened Avatar of Dkar.

Avatar of Dkar	Level 15 Solo Soldier
Huge natural magical beast	XP 6,000
Initiative +14	Senses Perception +12; darkvision
Lightning Storm aura 5; each enemy that starts its turn within the aura takes 10 lightning damage.	
HP 596; Bloodied 298	
AC 31; Fortitude 28, Reflex 27, Will 26	
Immune disease, petrification, poison; Resist 15 lightning, 15 thunder	
Saving Throws +5	
Speed 6, fly 8 (hover)	
Action Points 2	
⊕ Lightning Trawl (standard; at-will) ⚡ Lightning Reach 3; +22 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 lightning damage.	
⚡ Thunderous Strike (standard; at-will) ⚡ Thunder Reach 3; +20 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 6 thunder damage.	
⚡ Avatar Blitz (standard; at-will) The avatar of Dkar makes a <i>lightning trawl</i> attack against each enemy within reach. It also attacks one creature with a <i>thunderous strike</i> .	
⚡ Envelop (standard; recharges when no creature is affected by this power) Reach 3; +20 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 6 damage, and a Medium or smaller target is enveloped. An enveloped target is grabbed and restrained. An enveloped creature has line of sight and line of effect only to the avatar, and no creature has line of sight or line of effect to it. A creature that escapes the grab is no longer enveloped and appears in a space adjacent to the avatar. An avatar can move normally while it has a target grabbed in this way. When the avatar is destroyed, the target can escape as a move action, appearing in the avatar's former space. <i>Sustain Minor:</i> The avatar sustains the grab, and the target takes 15 damage.	
⚡ Howling Winds (standard; at-will) Close burst 5; +20 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 7 damage, and the target falls prone.	
⚡ Storm Lash (standard; recharge Ⓜ Ⓜ) ⚡ Lightning Close blast 5; +20 vs. Reflex; 3d10 + 7 lightning damage, and the target is dazed until the end of its next turn. <i>Miss:</i> Half damage.	
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Primordial
Str 22 (+13)	Dex 21 (+12) Wis 20 (+12)
Con 21 (+12)	Int 6 (+5) Cha 12 (+8)

OTHER ISLANDS

A handful of other permanent and semipermanent islands also exist in Red Shoals, as well as two or three times as many actual shoals whose existence rarely exceeds more than a few months.

Temple Island: Several temples crowd this small island. The largest temple is sacred to Melora, and many of the devout in Red Shoals hold her as most sacred. The head priest of Melora's temple in Red Shoals is an elf named Taveral Silkwave.

Demon Island: What used to be the private island of a wizard named Garderian of the Seven Wands is now a blasted expanse of dense sand holding the ruin of a wizard's tower from which horrendous, demonic screams regularly sound. No one knows what has become of Garderian, because no one has had the curiosity or courage to do much more than sail by the island and wonder.

The Dump: This collection of refuse has grown over the years from the place where other islands dumped their garbage to a visible, growing heap of stagnation and filth. Many believe that a colony of ghouls have somehow gained a foothold in the refuse pile, and it's only a matter of time before one or more of them find their way to a populated island and wreak mayhem.

WAKING THE AVATAR

Maze Island is indeed the remnant of a bound primordial named Dkar. Dkar is unlikely ever to make a reappearance. If it did, all Red Shoals would be destroyed as it absorbed material all around it to form a new elemental body for itself. However, lesser versions of Dkar do wake from time to time (when those attempting the Mark of the Heartstone skill challenge fail, and when those who succeed physically attack the Heartstone).

An avatar of Dkar appears as a distinct blot of boiling stormcloud constantly sparking with lightning, rumbling with thunder, and flashing odd, chaotic colors. Between peals of thunder, the visage of a furious humanoid face briefly resolves before being wiped away by the next onslaught.

About the Author

Bruce R. Cordell is an Origins and ENnie award-winning game designer whose long list of professional credits include the new FORGOTTEN REALMS® Campaign Guide, *Keep on the Shadowfell™*, *Draconomicon™: Chromatic Dragons* and *Open Grave: Secrets of the Undead™*. Bruce is also an author of FORGOTTEN REALMS novels, including *Plague of Spells*, first book in the Abolethic Sovereignty series.