



Valley of Dust and Fire

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Introduction

The Valley of Dust and Fire, an accessory for the DARK SUN™ campaign setting, describes the most terrible, most dangerous spot in the entire Tyr Region of Athas—the realm of the Dragon King. No other place in that warped landscape rivals the sheer grandeur or the stark evil of Ur Draxa, the City of Doom.

You need the DARK SUN boxed set and *The Complete Psionics Handbook* to use *The Valley of Dust and Fire*. It expands your DARK SUN campaign with new locations in the vast Sea of Silt, east of the Tyr region; new rules for traveling and surviving in the silt; detailed description of the greatest and deadliest of secrets: the Valley of Dust and Fire; and lastly, new monsters of the deep silt and the Valley itself.

Use this information cautiously; some of the oldest mysteries of the DARK SUN campaign world permeate these pages. If you are ready to face the greatest secrets of the world of Athas, then hesitate no longer. The Valley of Dust and Fire awaits you.

The Legend

It is said that in the heart of the Sea of Silt there is a city among the sands, a lush and verdant paradise where people live in ease and wealth. There is no want and no thirst, no slaves and no masters. There the image of Athas as it might once have been is preserved in these dying days.

Once in a lifetime a man standing at the shores of the Sea of Silt may be granted a glimpse of this place, a sweeping mirage of rich fields and pleasant fountains, hovering beyond the endless silt. One traveler claims to have seen the city from the road that goes from Draj to Ket; another traveler claims she saw it while standing in the shadow of the Bleak Tower; and yet another swears it lies beyond the isle of Waverly. Great heroes and powerful warriors have sought the city in all these places. Most likely they met their deaths in the suffocating dust, or at the hands of hostile giants. Few ever return from such a quest.

Yet another, darker tale is sometimes whispered about caravan campfires, or shuddered at by scholars in the golden palaces of the sorcerer-kings. Some people believe nothing but death and madness lie in the Sea. Scattered hermits and wandering traders claim to have seen the Dragon racing ashore from the very depths of the Sea, breaking on the shores like a dust-storm. Those who have collated these scattered accounts claim that the paradise in the center of the Sea is the Dragon's home—death to any so foolish as to venture there.

Perhaps the strongest evidence that this is true lies in the tattered journal of Galek Sandstrider, a famed traveler and adventurer who lived nearly 100 years ago. The journal was lost for many years after the death of Galek, but turned up in Tyr recently, sold by a renegade elf to a nobleman of that city. No one knows how Galek met his death; some say the Dragon came upon him in the wastes and devoured him because of his dangerous knowledge.

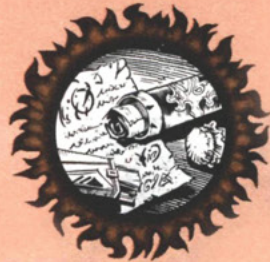
From Galek's Journal

“Who has not heard of the mystical city of the silt, the green and fair realm in the heart of the choking dust? Too many people have seen it for such a place to not exist; of that we can be certain. But what is it? How does life exist in the depths of the Sea of Silt? And why is it that none who have sought the wonderful city have ever returned?”

“I am Galek, who once on this ruined world would have been called mage. In these bitter times I am an outlaw and a renegade. I have dedicated my life to answering questions, leaving the wars and squabbles of slaves and sorcerer-kings for other men. Now I grow old, and the scant knowledge I have gathered must be recorded or lost again.

“I know that this was once a green world, a world of seas and forests. I know that this cruel and tormented world in which we live was shaped by our own hands. Sorcery, dark and evil, made Athas what it is today.

“But of all the things I have learned, of all the



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riddles I have answered, the greatest and darkest defies me still. I have seen the city in the Silt, that wonderful and magical place that dances before the eyes of men dying of thirst. I have been there.

“And I tell you this: it is stark hell.

“In the very center of the Sea of Silt is a valley, a wound in the very earth itself. A furnace wind screams endlessly through this devastated realm, carrying away the silt in an eternal pall of choking dust, scouring the earth to bare rock. I passed into this valley, and I found fire and death. The earth is warped and barren, devoid of life. The sun is hidden behind the endless clouds of blowing dust. And at the heart of this tortured place a ring of burning rock encircles a city so large my eye could not encompass it in one glance.

“I could not pass beyond the sea of molten rock; my companions were dead, and I was at the end of my strength. But before I turned away I studied the city long and hard; though you may think me a madman to say it, I know that city was a hundred times greater than any I have ever seen—and I have visited every one of the cities of Tyr, from far Balic to ancient Raam.

“It was at that nameless city in the sea of molten rock that I saw the Dragon.

“It came as I turned to retrace my steps through that shattered land. I heard a horrid cry and saw the beast, flying away from the city, arrowing straight for me. Its scales glowed red with the heat of the naked magma, and the clouds gathered beneath its wings like a storm of fire. I threw myself to the hard ground, averting my eyes; my doom was at hand. Yet the creature missed me (or did not deign to trouble over one insignificant human), and I lived to tell this tale. The Dragon vanished in the winds and the dust, and I saw it no more.

“To this day I do not know who built that terrible city or why. I cannot even say whether the place is still inhabited or simply the greatest of ruins; but it is there, in the center of the Sea of Silt, and so is the Dragon.

“Is it his city, his kingdom? I cannot answer. I can only say it is true. I have seen it.”

The story of the green city in the heart of the dust is nothing more than a daydream, a tale retold because people want to believe it. The darker tale, of a terrible death in the heart of the silt, is the truth. Galek Sandstrider is the only known traveler who has seen the Valley of Dust and Fire and returned to record his journey.

The search for the mystical city makes a fantastic adventure. The heroes face enormous challenges—dreadful monsters, scathing storms, and, most significantly, the vast Sea of Silt itself. The sway of the Sorcerer-kings halts at its border; characters of the city-states find a world unlike any they have ever known.

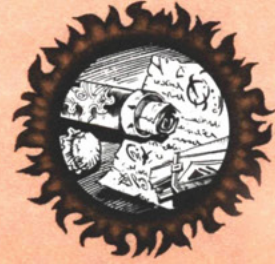
Considering the risks of the search, why go?

First, the characters could mistakenly believe that the Valley is the utopian city of legend. Seeking out a land of wealth and ease has sent many an explorer off to adventure—just look at Marco Polo and Christopher Columbus. The wild tales of the Orient they heard helped inspire their journeys. Player characters could decide all by themselves to seek out the hidden city.

Characters ready to accept great risk in the hope of rich reward might come across Galek Sandstrider's account and read of his journeys. Any AD&D® game player worth his or her salt should jump at the chance to explore what might be the greatest treasury of knowledge and power in the entire DARK SUN™ campaign world.

Lastly, very powerful characters might decide to take a shot at the Dragon. Their research should show that it frequently travels the silt, implying that it maintains a lair in the wastes. Of course, destroying the Dragon in its own demesne is a herculean and probably doomed task—but your players can find that out the hard way.

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The Sea of Silt

