

THE LAIR OF GHILSH

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Save a Brass Dragon from an evil Fae in this supplement
for the world's greatest roleplaying game



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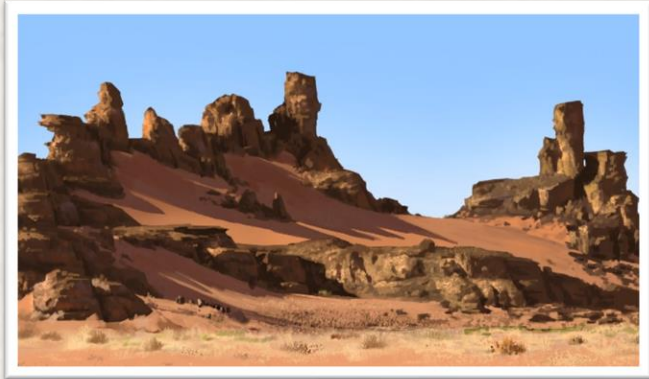
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ON THE COVER



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Credits.....	1
Table of Contents	2
Introduction.....	3
Using this Encounter	3
Key NPCs	3
Into the Dragon's Lair	3
1 – The Canyon Mouth	3
2 – Kandrathalhomekh's Roost	3
3 – Chandramadhuri's Roost	4
4 – Frightened Kobold Den.....	4
5 – Lair of Ghilsh the Corrupted.....	4
6 – Ghilsh's Hoard	4
Epilogue: A Dragon Ally.....	4
Appendix A: Statblocks	5
Appendix B: Maps	7

INTRODUCTION

The Sandwardens, a circle of Leonin wardens, have lost contact with their longtime ally, the ancient brass dragon Ghilsh. Ghilsh makes his lair among the rocky badlands of the local desert, and the Sandwardens have always counted on him to lead them to oases and shelter. Lately, however, the water and shelter has been fouled and unusable. The Sandwardens are concerned something terrible has happened to their friend and ally, and they are right to be concerned.

Iarban the Morning Shadow has sent a creeping nightmare to overtake Ghilsh's mind. He seeded it into the dragon's tea, one of his few vices, as retribution for Ghilsh stealing from Iarban's garden. Ghilsh's nightmares manifest as horrors, stronger the closer the characters get to Ghilsh, until at last Ghilsh awakes, having gone fully insane, and attacks. Fortunately, the characters will have allies in their efforts to kill or cure Ghilsh.

The encounter assumes the characters have already accepted the call to action to aid the Sandwardens with Ghilsh.

USING THIS ENCOUNTER

This one-shot adventure will challenge a group of 3–5 level 15 adventurers. Feel free to equip them as you see fit; however, a good array of magic items for that level of player might include **one** very rare, **three** rare or *uncommon*, and **four** common magic items, all of which must be worn (as armor or jewelry) or wielded (as a focus or a weapon). Characters in this adventure will face an empowered ancient brass dragon, which is more than enough of a challenge on its own for level 15 adventurers; however, they will have NPC allies, and their goal may not be to kill the dragon.

Feel free to use this encounter as part of an existing campaign, as well; the Sandwardens and Ghilsh can exist anywhere that has a badlands-like desert region Ghilsh could occupy. Feel free to choose a different race for the Sandwardens if it fits your world better, as well. The modified Elder Warden and Archwarden statblocks in Appendix A call for “any humanoid” for explicitly this reason. However, all the Sandwardens should be the same race; they view protecting the desert as their divine racial duty.

KEY NPCs

Chandramadhuri, a neutral good gynosphinx who presents players who find her with a puzzle and a clue to rescuing Ghilsh without killing him.

Ghilsh, Light of the Sand, Warden's Ally, an ancient brass dragon with a penchant for tea and stealing from grumpy archfey; ally of the Sandwardens

Iarban the Morning Shadow, a chaotic evil Archfey, does not feature in the adventure except as a distant antagonist and source of the corruption. He may speak through Ghilsh while possessed; his mannerism is plaintive and bleating.

Kandrathalhomekh, a neutral good androsphinx, presents players who find him with a puzzle and a clue to rescuing Ghilsh without killing him.

Phanol, a neutral good Archwarden, leads the Sandwardens. She is humble, but dedicated to the health of the desert.

INTO THE DRAGON'S LAIR

Night has fallen by the time the party, accompanied by Phanol, two Sunsight Elder Wardens, and three Sandblood Wardens reach the dragon's lair. The Sunsight Elder Wardens shed bright light for 10 ft and dim light for an additional ten, so the characters can see one another as they approach. If they have not met before, use this as an opportunity for each player to describe their character and introduce themselves. Characters enter the canyon in the south and must work their way to the north to rescue Ghilsh from the evil fey influence.

The entire canyon is lit by eternal flames set into the walls of stone.

1 – THE CANYON MOUTH

As characters arrive, read the following:

The setting sun seems to drain away the heat of the day and a dreadful chill sets in almost immediately. Shadows seem to grow longer than they should, moving unnaturally. Phanol holds her hand up to indicate that the group should proceed cautiously just in time to hear howling from the darkness ahead. The temperature drops precipitously.

Iarban has called upon 1d6+4 Brumal Banshees to guard the canyon entrance. They fight to the death.

2 – KANDRATHALHOMEKH'S ROOST

As characters enter this area, read:

A narrow passage between stone hewn rough by ages of wind erosion gives way to a large clearing. Ledges decorate the walls of the bowl, which rises to a plateau fifty feet up. Perched on one of the ledges halfway up the wall opposite the entrance, a majestic, winged, lion-like creature with a stoic male humanoid face gazes down at you and asks with a booming voice, “What brings you to the roost of Kandrathalhomekh?”

Kandrathalhomekh refers to himself only in the third person. He is aware of Ghilsh's predicament and wishes to help, but he does not immediately trust adventurers. If the characters indicate the intend to assist Ghilsh, he sets

Kandrathalhomekh gently flaps his wings and the disturbed dust on the bowl floor coalesces into four torches. He commands simply, “Light all four at the exact same time without using magic.”

them a puzzle. Read:

The solution is as simple as it seems; four separate creatures must light each torch simultaneously. When the players solve this, read:

Pleased, Kandrathalhomekh intones, “None of us acts alone or independently, nor can we solve our problems alone. Not any single one of you can successfully purge Ghilsh of his fey-borne curse, but together, you can restore him to his former glory.”

Kandrathalhomekh will offer no further assistance and, if pestered for much longer, flies off in annoyance.

3 – CHANDRAMADHURI’S

ROOST

As characters enter this area, read:

A narrow passage between stone hewn rough by ages of wind erosion gives way to a large clearing. Ledges decorate the walls of the bowl, which rises to a plateau eighty feet up. Perched on one of the ledges halfway up the wall to the left of the entrance, a majestic, winged, lion-like creature with a delicate female humanoid face gazes down at you and asks with a booming voice, “What brings you to the roost of Chandramadhuri?”

Chandramadhuri’s speech pattern is more standard, although the characters are unlikely to get much chance to talk with her, as she attacks as soon as they indicate they have come to save Ghilsh. As she does so, she demands they prove their loyalty; any character with a passive Wisdom (Insight) below 14 is surprised by her attack.

When she drops below half health, the version of Chandramadhuri the characters have been fighting fades to mist and she reappears on the ledge where she originally was. Read:

“Well fought, adventurers. You may yet stand a chance against Ghilsh, but he is changed. You will have to harm him if you hope to save him, but I do not recommend killing him.”

Once she has delivered her message, Chandramadhuri flies away in the direction of Kandrathalhomekh’s Roost.

4 – FRIGHTENED KOBOLD DEN

Normally, Ghilsh is attended by 2d10+5 brass-scaled kobolds, but with their master’s transformation, they have retreated to this space. They have little to offer, but beg the characters not to kill Ghilsh, but to instead “make him better”. If the players attack the kobolds unprovoked, Ghilsh awakens early and joins the battle, aware enough to recognize the kobolds as his allies, but not in control of himself enough not to include them in his breath weapon attacks.

5 – LAIR OF GHILSH THE

CORRUPTED

As characters enter this area, read:

“No, no, no,” a wheedling voice echoes through the canyon, entirely mismatched to the location’s majestic timbre. “This is his just punishment for stealing tea leaves from me! Hrmph. Fine, if you’re so intent on rescuing him, then you can fight me *though* him!”

Ghilsh the Corrupted (Statblock in Appendix A) attacks immediately, bringing the full fury of a fey-corrupted brass dragon to bear against the characters. The characters have several choices. They could flee, but Phanol is unlikely to assist them with any future problems they might have. They can kill Ghilsh; doing so enrages the kobolds and they run in to attack immediately. Or, they can attempt to purge Ghilsh of his curse. This is the outcome the sphinxes hinted at; they must damage Ghilsh to below half health and then hit him with Remove Curse or Greater Restoration at least three times in the same round. Phanol can contribute one on her turn, but she will only do so if the characters are explicit about their intent.

6 – GHILSH’S HOARD

If the characters kill Ghilsh, Phanol will not stop them from looting his hoard. She has no use for material goods. If they save him, Ghilsh will offer each character 3,000 pp and 4,000 gp, as well as a Universal Solvent.

His hoard contains 41,000 gp; 31,000 pp; Universal Solvent; Scroll of Wish (9th Level); a jeweled platinum ring worth 7500 gp; a gold jewelry box with platinum filigree worth 7500 gp, and a jade board game with solid gold playing pieces worth 7500 gp.

EPILOGUE: A DRAGON

ALLY

If the characters kill Ghilsh, this encounter has little lasting benefit for them. The Sandwardens are unlikely to call on them for help again, or come if they call for aid. However, if they saved the dragon, they will discover that having an ancient brass dragon ally can have its benefits. Feel free to have Ghilsh keep an eye on them and give them a helping hand here and there, as it fits into your campaign!

APPENDIX A: STATBLOCKS

BRUMAL BANSHEE

Medium elemental, any evil

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 153 (18d8+72)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Wis +8, Str +7

Skills Stealth +6, Perception +8

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Resistances Bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical weapons

Damage Immunities cold

Senses blindsight 30 ft, darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages Primordial, Sylvan

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Ancient Fey Ancestry. The banshee is immune to effects that would cause it to sleep and has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Brumal Presence. A creature that begins its turn within 10 ft of the banshee takes 2d6 cold damage as the banshee drains the warmth from its surroundings.

Grotesque Visage. As a bonus action, if the banshee begins its turn within 5 ft of a creature, it can cause its form to become hideous. All creatures hostile to the banshee when it does this must make a DC18 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened of the banshee. Creatures frightened in this way must use their action to dash and their full movement to move as far away from the banshee as possible. If they cannot move further from the banshee, the creature loses its action. At the end of each turn, and when it takes damage from the banshee, a creature can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. A creature who passes the saving throw, either initially or on a later save, is immune to the visage of all brumal banshees for 24 hours..

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The banshee can make 3 attacks; two with its claws, and one with its frigid blast.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. Hit: 16 (3d8+3) slashing damage and 9 (2d8) cold damage.

Frigid Blast. Ranged Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 30 ft, one target. Hit: 9 (2d8) bludgeoning damage and 18 (4d8) cold damage.

Brumal Wail (1/day). The banshee unleashes a screaming wail, infused with all of the ice energy of the Frostfell. Any creature within 120 ft that can hear the banshee must make a DC18 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature drops to 0 hitpoints and falls unconscious and unstable. On a successful save, the creature takes 36 (8d8) cold damage.

PHANOL (STONEHAND ARCHWARDEN)

Medium humanoid (any), neutral good

Armor Class 17

Hit Points 190 (28d8+64)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13(+1)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Con +8, Wis +10

Skills Perception +10, Insight +10, Survival +10

Senses blindsight 60 ft, darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 20

Languages Common, Druidic, and one other language

Challenge 15 (13,000 XP)

Spellcasting. The archwarden is an 18th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following druid spells prepared, and it can replace any of the leveled spells it has prepared on a long rest with any other spell on the druid spell list of the same level:

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

1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds*, *entangle*, *faerie fire*, *speak with animals*

2nd level (3 slots): *animal messenger*, *beast sense*, *hold person*

3rd level (3 slots): *call lightning*, *meld into stone*, *water breathing*

4th level (3 slots): *dominate beast*, *greater restoration*, *stoneskin*, *wall of fire*

5th level (3 slots): *commune with nature*, *mass cure wounds*, *tree stride*

6th level (1 slot): *heal*, *heroes' feast*, *sunbeam* 7th level (1 slot): *fire storm*

8th level (1 slot): *animal shapes*

9th level (1 slot): *foresight*

Purifying Fury (1/day). The archwarden channels the purity of its environment through itself and exudes a powerful cleansing aura for 1 minute. Fey, fiend, undead, aberration, and monstrosity creatures that begin their turn within 60 ft of the archwarden take 55 (10d10) radiant damage. The archwarden gains a level of exhaustion when this effect fades, and it cannot be used again until the archwarden completes a long rest.

Stonehand Mastery. The archwarden can use its stone hands for any tasks it would use its normal hands for, including the somatic components of spells

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The archwarden makes two stone fist attacks against up to two targets within 60 of both it and each other.

Stone Fist. Melee Spell Attack: +10 to hit, 2 targets, range 60 ft. Hit: 31 (4d12+5) bludgeoning damage. A large or smaller target hit by this attack is grappled and restrained (escape DC 18) as the ground itself obeys the archdruid's barest gestures, becoming an extension of their limbs.

SUNSIGHT ELDER WARDEN

Medium humanoid (any), neutral good

Armor Class 16 (Heartwood Breastplate)

Hit Points 117 (18d8+36)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Wis +7

Skills Perception +7, Insight +7

Senses darkvision 120 ft., truesight 120 ft, passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Druidic, and one other

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Spellcasting. The elder warden is an 11th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following druid spells prepared:

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

1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds, entangle, healing word, speak with animals*

2nd level (3 slots): *animal messenger, beast sense, healing spirit*

3rd level (3 slots): *conjure animals, meld into stone, water breathing*

4th level (2 slots): *dominate beast, locate creature, stoneskin, wall of fire*

5th level (1 slots): *commune with nature, mass cure wounds, tree stride*

Spirit Glow. The warden sheds bright light for 10 ft. and dim light for an additional 10 ft. This light is sunlight.

Sunsight. The warden sees normally in normal and magical darkness

ACTIONS

Multiattack. If the warden uses its Searing Gaze, it can cast a cantrip with the casting time of one action on the same turn..

Searing Gaze. Ranged Spell Attack: +7 to Hit, One target, Range 60 ft. Hit: 22 (4d8+4) fire damage.

GILSH THE CORRUPT

Gargantuan dragon, *fey, chaotic evil*

Armor Class 20

Hit Points 656 (32d20+320)

Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft, burrow 40 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27 (+8)	14 (+2)	30 (+10)	16 (+3)	25 (+7)	25 (+7)

Saving Throws Dex +10, Con +18, Wis +15, Cha +15

Skills History +11, Perception +15, Persuasion +15, Stealth +10

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons; cold

Damage Immunities fire

Senses Blindsight 60 ft, darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 24

Languages Draconic, Common, Sylvan

Challenge 25 (75,000 XP)

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

Corrupt Fey Step (Recharge 4-6). Ghilsh can form shadows around himself and vanish, re-appearing in any unoccupied space within 120 ft. Any creature within 10 ft of him when he does this must succeed on a DC 21 Charisma saving throw or be dragged along.

STAT BLOCK HEADING

Multiattack. The dragon can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +14 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 19 (2d10 + 8) piercing damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +14 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 15 (2d6 + 8) slashing damage.

Tail. Melee Weapon Attack: +14 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (2d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 120 feet of the dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours

Breath Weapons (Recharge 5-6). The dragon uses one of the following breath weapons:

- **Fire Breath.** The dragon exhales fire in an 90-foot line that is 10 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw, taking 56 (16d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.
- **Spike Blast.** The dragon blasts thorny wooden spikes from its throat in a 90 foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw, taking 56 (16d6) magical slashing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Ghilsh can take 5 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. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Tail Attack. The dragon makes a tail attack.

Thorn Whip. *Melee Spell Attack.* +15 to hit, range 60 ft, one target. Hit: 19 (3d12) piercing damage and the target is pulled up to 30ft closer to the dragon.

Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions). The dragon beats its wings. Each creature within 15 feet of the dragon must succeed on a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw or take 15 (2d6 + 8) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The dragon can then fly up to half its flying speed.

APPENDIX B: MAPS

