

Grinning Skull Design Studios

Grim's Amazing D100 Tables

100

Desert Encounters

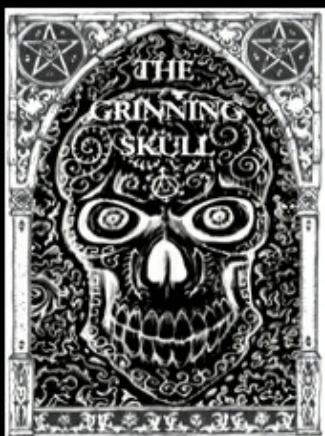
By Allen Farr

Grim's Amazing D100 Tables

Suitable for
ANY FANTASY
ROLE-PLAYING
GAME SYSTEM

100 exciting and dynamic random
desert encounters to throw at your
players in the wild, for use with
pretty much any fantasy RPG.

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Grim's Amazing D100 Tables

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Desert Encounters

For all fantasy RPGs

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Foreword



Here we present to you yet another "Grim's Amazing D100 Tables" with 100 Desert Encounters.

These encounters have been carefully designed and written to easily slip into your existing game campaign when your players are on the road or travelling between settlements or anywhere else encounters may happen in the desert wilderness.

You, as the controlling GM, may either choose one or more to suit your game narrative, or just roll the dice to determine at random.

If more random encounters is what you've been looking for, then also don't forget to check out 100 Wilderness Encounters, 100 Out of Town Encounters, 100 City Encounters & adventure hooks, 100 Strange Townsfolk and other 100 encounter titles from our various storefronts at RPGnow and DriveThruRPG where you purchased this title.

Grim

Choose or Roll D100



1. **A mirage in the shimmering heat takes form. Out of the desert sands rises a scaffold like structure, a single tower with a platform on top. Such is the size of the structure that a mountainous dune has formed at its base. Climbing to the top during the midday sun, the player characters can see something reflecting brightly in the distance.**
2. **In the distance, a pall of dust can be seen rising into the air. At first, it looks like the beginnings of a storm. As the player characters get closer, they realise the sand is shifting beneath their feet. A great sinkhole has opened, and the desert sands are pouring in to fill the void.**
3. **While travelling through a desert valley, the sky turns black. A massive sand storm approaches, forcing the player characters to take shelter. As the storm clears, the player characters emerge to discover much of the sand has been lifted from the valley floor, revealing a white cobbled road running the length of the valley. The road isn't constructed with cobbles, but skulls, millions of them.**
4. **A lopsided stone arch rises out of the desert sand. There is no sign of any other structure. On closer inspection, the arch is carved to resemble two opposing scorpion tails. From the stinger on each tail hangs a manacle and chain.**
5. **An Oasis in the desert is a rare and welcoming sight, but this one is more unusual than most. Not only is there a large body of surface water, but fountains spurt water high into the air, their spray creating beautiful rainbows. Hammocks sway in the shade between the trees, the cooling breeze carrying the aroma of cooked spices and sweet meats. The oasis is home to Mahjar Dal, a jinn. Mahjar is always open about this fact. Travellers are always welcome to the respite his home offers. What he isn't so open about is that his home is a physical representation of his lamp. Should his lamp be rubbed while the player characters take respite, they may be summoned in Mahjar's stead, and unless they can fulfil the task asked of them, they are unable to return to the oasis unless they can physically find it again.**

Choose or Roll D100

6. Silhouetted against the setting sun, a line of wild camels crosses the desert dunes. Without warning, the dune erupts, dozens of tentacles spewing forth. As the camels scatter one unfortunate beast is dragged kicking and screaming under the sand. Moments later the player characters can feel vibrations, and the sand shifting under their feet.
7. Around sunset, the player characters spot something large in the distance, but whatever it is, it is quickly hidden as the sun dips beneath the horizon. A search uncovers a wide smooth trail, as if something large and heavy has been dragged across the dunes. The trail continues as far as the eye can see, but if the player characters are persistent, they eventually catch up with what's making the trail. Hundreds of ghosts, slaves in life, now slaves in un-death, drag a huge obelisk across the desert in search of the city of Apanapolis. The city of Apanapolis has been lost for thousands of years and the ghost slaves can only find peace, by completing the journey they began thousands of years ago, delivering the obelisk to the city.
8. As the wind swirls the sand around the player characters' feet, they can make out distinctive patterns forming. For a few moments before the wind abates, a map of intricate detail is laid out before them.
9. Ahead is a mirage. It looks no different than the hundreds before it. Yet, when the player characters reach it, it doesn't fade or simply shift to the horizon. As the player characters approach, they can see it is a portal, the sand along its edges falling through and vanishing from sight.
10. In the distance something bright and reflective catches the player characters eye. Up ahead lie the remains of a trade caravan. Several upended wagons have deposited their cargo, large ingots of steel, their surfaces polished to a reflective sheen by the wind driven sand.
11. For miles in the direction of travel, the sand thins, giving way to a landscape of broken, razor sharp rock. The player characters have found the Fangs of Verinine. The slightest touch is said to leach the moisture from the body, the smallest cut all but impossible to heal and the blood spilled fuelling the growth of the razor sharp vampiric rock formations.
12. Low in the sky, the sun silhouettes the familiar outline of a tented encampment. If not for the setting sun it could have easily been missed, for there are no tell-tale signs of cooking fires. A distinctive buzzing can be heard, a great cloud of flies erupting from the entrances to the tents, harbingers of the scenes of carnage the player characters are about to witness. Blood and baked viscera coat the canvas, the stench overpowering.

Choose or Roll D100

13. Blinding light washes down the dry valley, causing the player characters to shield their eyes. As the sun dips behind the clouds, the player characters can see a large twisted mirror lying in the sand. The mirror looks as if it has tumbled down the hillside. On investigation the player characters discover an array of mirrors, each one diverting the sunlight into a shaft driven deep into the hillside. Do these mirrors illuminate some ancient underground realm or have they some other function entirely?
14. Light flashes in the darkness, and the constant rumble of thunder can be heard close by. During the next day of travel, the desert sand gives way to the underlying rock formations, giving the impression the desert has been paved by some deity or giant. Lightning flashes along the surface of the exposed rocks for no apparent reason.
15. Great rock formations fill the valleys, giving the desert a distinctive, mountainous feel. Ahead, the sand continuously pours from tops of the largest outcroppings, dry falls that leave the finest grains suspended in the air, filtering the sunlight and turning the valley a dull red. At the bottom of each rock formation is a cone of wind-sieved sand, dust devils dancing around its edges.
16. Lying in the sand, half buried, is a bottle with a message in it. Further along is a gold plated dish reflecting in the sun, and beyond that another rare item can be seen in the shimmering heat of the desert sun. Following the trail, the player characters discover a wagon train. On the last wagon sits a monkey called Rickey. Rickey is bored and is rummaging in the wagon, every so often tossing something it finds overboard.
17. Ahead the Badlands loom. Their rocky outcroppings offer shade from the relentless sun, yet radiate an ominous atmosphere that makes the hairs stand tall on the neck. In the middle of these rocky formations lies an ancient valley. A dry dusty wind blows through it, and the closer the player characters get the more oppressive the atmosphere grows. A distinctive tone can be heard emanating from the valley, and the player characters have the unmistakable feeling of being watched. Along the valley's length are a series of giant wind chimes, each one is carved from polished ivory and inlaid with runes of carved gold. This is the Valley of the Dead, and beneath its cursed surface, straining at the magical shackles holding them back, are the undead husks of every creature and person to have ever died there. Protection of the wind chimes is the sacred duty of an ancient cult that keeps constant vigilance across the valley.



Choose or Roll D100

18. Taking shelter under a wind worn stand of mushroom shaped rocks, the player characters watch as an unexpected storm creates flash floods around them. Rivers, where there were once none, cut deep channels into the desert sands. As the player characters watch from their shelter, the wet sand appears fluid, as if moving of its own accord. Out of the fluid sand a number of terrifying creatures emerge, howling as the rain washes the sand from their bodies. As the rain abates, the creatures sniff at the air, as if they have caught the scent of their first meal in years.

19. Fighting against the strong desert winds and the driven sand is difficult, but continuing on becomes ever more difficult as the power of the wind increases and the ground becomes uneven. Without warning the wind subsides to a breeze and the player characters discover they stand on an ancient battlefield. Everywhere lie the bodies of the fallen, their desiccated corpses perfectly preserved, their weapons gleaming, untouched by rust or rot. Even as the player characters watch, fine grains of sand accumulate on the exposed corpses. In a matter of days, the desert will have once again reclaim the ancient battlefield.

20. Rising up out of the desert is an unusual rock formation. As the player characters get closer, it becomes clear that it's not a single formation, but dozens of individual spires. These are the Spires of Hive Queen, Kelbok Vor, some of which soar to hundreds of feet in height. All around the base of each structure, giant worker and soldier ants can be seen.

21. The distinctive shriek of clashing steel sings out shattering the silence desert night. Illuminated by the full moon, two ghostly figures duel at the edge of an overhanging rock. As one of the figures gains the upper hand, both fade from sight, only to reappear seconds later, once again locked in combat. This time the other figure gains the upper hand, and the scene repeats. Equally matched in life, these ghostly combatants are cursed to engage in eternal combat each night of the full moon. If the player characters get close enough to get noticed they are asked to declare a winner. As a group, if the player characters are split as to who the winner is, the battle continues. If they declare a winner, both ghosts cease combat, salute the other and then the player characters before fading out of existence. As ghosts fade, a ring of pure fire opal falls from the finger of one of the warriors. The ring is both valuable and magical and can bestow great prowess in combat. Unknown to the ghostly warrior, the ring is also the source of the curse. Should the bearer ever gain a nemesis, arch-enemy or re-occurring foe, and should one eventually die at the hand of the other, they both die and at each full moon they return to the place of their deaths to duel for eternity.

22. A single dune of black among the gold sand piques the interest of the player characters. As they approach it become clear that this is not black sand, but a gargantuan swarm of flesh eating beetles. As if sensing their presence, a ripple passes through the dune like swarm. A new meal has just presented itself.

Choose or Roll D100



23. Gradually the desert sands change from the golden colour the player characters have become accustomed to, to that of a dull white. The further the player characters progress, the courser the sand becomes until it become clear that it isn't sand, but small fragments of bone. The further the player characters progress the larger the fragments become until they become recognisable.
24. An early morning rain storm brings life back to the desert. With amazing speed the desert is transformed into a sea of green. Plants grow at astounding speed, some reaching several feet before the sun has reached its zenith. Not all the plants are friendly, however, and one or two of the larger ones require flesh to be able to reproduce.
25. Several columns of smoke rise into the air beyond the next sand dune. Perhaps expecting to see a burning village or an encampment, the player characters are surprised to find a series of tar pits bubbling out of the desert sands. Small fires burn at the edges and every so often a large volume of gas ignites above the pits, creating a fresh pall of smoke.
26. The desert becomes more rock than sand and navigation becomes more difficult. What should have been a shortcut between two rocky outcroppings, has the player characters in a maze of sand filled gullies from which strange noises can be heard at every turn. As the player characters emerge from the next gully, they are surprised to find themselves looking down on an ancient amphitheatre. Even more surprising, they have stumbled upon a council of dragons, an event that happens only once in a thousand years. If they can stay hidden, they can hear the truths of the world laid bare, much of it in stark contrast to what they believed it to be. If they give away their position, they may just become lunch.

Choose or Roll D100

27. A flock of carrion birds circles over a mountainous sand dune on the horizon's edge. The size of the dune is immense and every so often a large slide of discoloured sand pushes its advance a little further. Climbing the dune is an arduous task, but once at the top the player characters can see a city half buried in the sand behind it. The city isn't completely abandoned, however, and it's clear people still live there. Along the rim of the dune is a series of sacrificial altars caked in dried gore. The altars are the source of the discoloured sand. A death cult has established itself in the city, and for many years has been sacrificing the inhabitants. What remains of the city is divided between two warring factions, the death cultists and those that realised the sacrifices to the gods would never end. The cultists do not look like blood soaked maniacs and the player characters might get more than they bargained for if they arrive in the wrong half of the city.
28. The desert gives way to a wide salt plane, little zephyrs of white powder dancing across its surface. Large white boulders dot its surface, behind them, odd trails suggesting they have recently moved. On closer inspection the boulders are the skulls of beholders. As the wind passes over them, they emit a mournful tone charged with magic. Attracted to the magic, small elemental spirits play in the skulls, causing them to roll around.
29. Cresting a large dune, the player characters spot the recent tracks of booted feet. Following them to their source brings them to a scene of carnage. Two travellers lie dead, each surrounded by large winged vultures in a feeding frenzy. Any attempt to simply chase them off fails, and reveals they are not vultures, but harpies, and they are more than willing to defend their latest kill.
30. With a woomph, one of the player characters vanishes into the sand. Under their feet is a buried temple, and the roof of its highest tower has just collapsed dumping the player character into its upper chamber.
31. A dry dusty gully, possibly an old river bed, leads the player characters to a semi-circular outcropping of rocks. Against one of the rocks is a cabin constructed entirely of bone, its front door hanging on a hinge of dried sinew as it swings lazily in the desert breeze.
32. For mile after endless mile, every footfall has fallen silent in the deep desert sand. Without warning the sand becomes shallow, each footfall bringing with it a soft, but distinctive crunch. Clearing away the thin layer of sand underfoot reveals a pavement constructed from slabs of dark obsidian. Through the darkened glass, twisted faces and fanged maws can be seen pressing up against it, as if attracted to the light no longer blocked by the layer of sand. The pathway is all that remains of an ancient civilisation, the pathway a window covering a rift to hell. The pathway is part of pilgrimage where the righteous walked, a reminder of what they faced should they stray from the path of enlightenment.

Choose or Roll D100

33. As the sand dunes become smaller, and the desert flatter, a series of conical depressions can be seen in the sand. Every so often one of these depressions erupts in a huge plume of sand that reaches a great height before falling back to the earth. Is this the result of some natural phenomenon or the result of something lurking just beneath the sand?
34. Half buried, an upended chariot lies smashed among the broken rocks, a steady mound of sand growing around it. Underneath are the remains of the chariot's two occupants. Judging by the finery one of the occupants is in, they must be someone very important. With the process of desiccation not yet complete, whatever happened here was a recent event.
35. If the player characters have ever wondered what a mangrove swamp might look like without the swamp, the answer lies before them. A forest of dead trees stretches as far as the eye can see, its complex intertwined root systems supporting what remains of the trees dozens of feet above the desert floor. Combined, the roots form a maze of passageways, a veritable dungeon of twisted weatherworn wood. Providing the only shelter for hundreds of miles, the dead forest is home to all manner of terrible creatures. In the centre of the forest, a lone tree survives. Should the player characters make it there, a spirit appears to them. She is Alethalye, the protector of the dying forest, the last of her kind. Begging the player characters for help, she offers each a small boon if in return they agree to carry away a single seed and plant it near any source of water.
36. A large encampment spreads out before the player characters. Each year all the spice traders gather to journey across the desert for mutual protection. In greater numbers, the small groups of bandits that operate in the region, dare not attack them. It is a welcome respite for the player characters, and the spice merchants are eager to trade and swap tales of the road ahead. After years of being denied their prize, the bandits have themselves grouped together. The player characters awake to discover the encampment in turmoil, men at arms rushing to and fro, and merchants praying to their gods for salvation. The camp is completely surrounded by mounted horsemen.
37. For years, rumours of an ancient desert city has pervaded folk lore. Most who have gone in search for it have never returned, and of those who have, none have found it. A change in the landscape reveals a twisted, rocky gorge. Travelling the gorge is challenging, the desert heat relentless. At the end of the gorge is a towering cliff face, and carved into it is the ancient desert city. This is just an ancient piece of art, but from a distance it looks convincing.

Choose or Roll D100



38. A wall of dark sand in the distance heralds the approach of a massive sand storm. As the clouds billow forward at ferocious speed, a great gaping maw can be seen forming in their midst. As the maw opens, more clouds spew forth. Spreading along the ground the clouds solidify into a regiment of galloping horsemen. The horsemen vanish out of sight, behind a sand dune almost a mile in length. Moments later, the player characters hear the unmistakable impact of a cavalry charge, and the cries of the dying.

39. The wind driven sand reduces visibility to a few yards. Visibility suddenly returns as the player characters unwittingly pass into the lee of large object half buried in the sand. The large object is a dragon having a nap, and is enjoying getting deloused by the abrasive wind.

40. Cries for help attract the attention of the player characters. Not far from their position a number of people have been buried up to their necks in sand and have been left to die. Perhaps they are criminals deserving of their fate, or perhaps they are innocent villagers caught up in a territorial feud.

41. Far from civilisation, the player characters discover a small stand of green trees. Small insects buzz among the branches, and the chirping of birds can be heard. As the player characters get closer a small flock of birds emerge from a crevice in the earth at the base of the trees. The crevice is only a few meters in length and the roots of the trees vanish into the darkness beyond. Delving into the crevice, the player characters discover an underground oasis. Plants grow where the light filters in and small animals scatter at the intrusion. The player characters have stumbled across a previously undiscovered aquifer with enough water to sustain a small city, a rich find indeed.

Choose or Roll D100

42. Desiccating in the hot sand are a large group corpses, a group of vultures in their midst desperately tearing at their rapidly drying flesh. Who these people are is unknown, but they look like a mix of slaves and retainers. Fresh tracks can be seen leading away from the macabre scene. Following the trail for a day, the player characters stumble across another group of corpses, this one smaller. This pattern continues until they finally come across a lone individual, half mad with lack of water.

43. As the desert wind picks up speed, the player characters can see dozens of large objects bouncing toward them. These are giant grains of sand, the result of a sorcerous duel gone badly wrong. The grains weigh no more than any other grain of sand, but at the size of a small house they carry the full force of the wind behind them and are enough to knock the player characters over like skittles.

44. Deep in the desert, the player characters are surprised to see an old woman approaching. She leans heavily on a staff, and carries a large wicker basket laden with dried dung. She offers to sell the player characters as much as they want to keep the evening chill at bay. The old woman is a demon who has wandered the desert for so long she no longer knows what she is and is harmless enough unless attacked. Should the player characters purchase some dung, the next time they light a fire they discover it ignites with the slightest spark and burns ferociously hot. Should the player characters burn more than they need to keep warm there is a 20% chance they open a rift to another plane of existence, letting through some manner of spirit or demon.

45. Earthquakes happen in the desert all the time, there just isn't normally anyone there to witness them. This time the player characters are in the right place. The ground shakes violently and continuously throwing the player characters from their feet. As the ground shakes, objects start to appear, pieces of cut stone, a door, a broken jug and perhaps something valuable etc. Underneath the sand is a buried town.

46. The landscape gradually changes, the sand dunes becoming irregular in shape and frequency. Under the dunes are sand caves, structures created by giant insect larvae, the sand bound together by excreted resin to form a hardened shell, the sand then slowly covering them. Some of the structures have only one or two chambers, others are more extensive. There are signs of life other than giant insects. These abandoned structures are on the periphery of the larger central structure of the desert goblin kingdom of Gyzonvor. Here the goblins breed giant insects, using their larvae to build their city, and the hatchlings as beasts of burden, food and transport.

Choose or Roll D100

47. Tales of a vanishing forest are as old as the desert itself. Many believe these tales have their origins in civilizations swallowed up by the encroaching desert sands. The player characters are about to discover otherwise. In a dell between a series of large dunes, the ground lies covered with dead leaves and twigs. Underneath is a grove of trees, all that remains of a once mighty forest. Anyone standing on the leaves or twigs triggers an attack. Roots explode from the ground, attempting to drag any living thing within reach to their deaths. The forest is carnivorous and if it successfully makes a kill, the trees rise from the ground to bask in the sun shine, before once again retreating beneath the ground at nightfall.

48. Mirages are tricky things by their very nature, but when the player characters have a mirage that follows them, they need to question what is real and what isn't. Each day the player characters are low on rations or exhausted, they witness a mirage following them. They aren't hallucinating, however, this is a living mirage, a spirit unique to the desert, and it wishes to communicate, but doesn't quite know how. As it approaches, light bends around it, causing disorientation, and even nausea as it attempts to use visions to communicate, but eventually reverts to primitive drawings in the sand if necessary. The Game's Master should use crudely drawn symbols to prompt the players to guess what the spirit is asking them to do. Is it trying to bring them somewhere, help save someone or something or perhaps it's trying to lead them to their doom?

49. A cloud of low lying dust alerts the player characters to a disturbance in the sand. The sand is itself the cause of the dust as it flows like a river among the dunes. What magic powers such a river is a mystery, but following it to its source or its confluence might provide answers.

50. Jutting out of the ground is a mesa that just looks out of place. Its grey angular features are unsmoothed by the abrasive desert sand and its constitution is different from any other rocks in the region. Closer inspection suggests the outcropping has been torn from the ground and overturned, lying face down in the sand. Dried moss and other flora on its surfaces suggests it hasn't been here more than a few years. This is the legendary flying city of Grultal Vok, which vanished from the skies almost a decade ago. It has crashed city side down, and is slowly being consumed by the desert sands.

51. Just as its getting dark, there is a flash on the horizon, lighting up the night sky. Moments later a noise like thunder can be heard and shortly after the ground can be felt gently shaking. A large meteor has landed. Should the player character seek it out they discover the crater. The sand inside the crater has been fused to a perfectly smooth glass several feet thick. At the very centre of the crater something, perhaps the meteorite, burns ferociously bright.

Choose or Roll D100

52. Scattered all around, half filled with sand, are dozens of broken egg shells. Scattered amongst the shells are gnawed bones of several large animals. The shells are larger than the average human, and whatever emerged from them isn't a small creature, but perhaps more worrying is what might have laid such a clutch?

53. The Morning Dew is the rarest of desert plants. Short lived, it only grows in the most isolated and inhospitable of places. Its magical properties are legendary, its fresh petals worth a fortune. Once cut or lifted, the plant's properties only last for a few days, and even then a master alchemist is required to utilize them. When the player characters stumble across one of the plants, they instantly realise its true value. It's worth more than most treasure hauls, but they have limited time, do they give up their current quest and attempt to return it to the city or do they leave it as nature intended?

54. The remains of an old road uncovered by a sand storm leads to an abandoned desert fort. Its gates swing open and closed on screeching hinges, its battlements empty of all but a flapping piece of cloth that was once a regimental flag. Apart from the encroaching sand, the interior buildings look intact, right down to the belongings of their previous owners. There is some loot to be had here, but if the player characters stay past dark they discover the reason the fort has been abandoned. The fort's well has been dug through an ancient prison chamber holding a malign evil. Each night the evil seeps from the earth and takes the physical form of anyone or anything that has ever drank from the well. At first it sows mistrust and attempts to turn the player characters on one another. Eventually it resorts to simply eating them. It cannot be killed, only banished. To stop it, its prison must be sealed.

55. Blood sucking cacti. The player characters find out the hard way when they pass an innocuous looking cactus. Its spines shoot out, each attached to a fibrous tube. Any spines that hit their mark inject a debilitating poison and begin draining their victim's blood via the tubes.

56. A large group of robed hooded figures approaches the player characters' camp. They ask that the camp be dismantled so they may continue the pilgrimage they began almost one thousand years ago. If the player characters resist, the pilgrims cast teleportation spells on the player character's camp, moving it for them. The player characters are then given the option of accompanying their camp.



Choose or Roll D100



57. A line of refugees passes the player characters. The desert has encroached on their land and they have lost everything. As the player characters continue, they come across the desiccated remains of a large number of herd animals. Later, they spot the first abandoned village. A wailing noise attracts their attention. A small child seems to have been left behind. The villagers have left the child as a sacrifice to the desert spirits, believing it will stop the desert spreading further. The Player Characters don't know this, and should they try and return the child, the villagers refuse to take the child.
58. Each morning at the rising sun, coloured lights can be seen flashing in the distance. More than a week's journey to the west is the Crystal Forest of Ungranath. Once a poisoned sea, heavy with minerals, Ungranath's evaporation has left behind a forest of tall multi-hued crystal structures. From a distance unusual noises can be heard emanating from its depths. Legend has it that only those deemed worthy can hear its call, but scholars believe this tale was invented to lure travellers to their deaths. Scholars are divided, some theorising it is simply the wind causing the crystal structures to resonate, while others believe it is not without merit for a dead sea to be home to undead sirens, and perhaps it is the wail of the dead that can be heard.
59. Ahead, the dunes take on an orderly, regimented formation. Occasionally a large puff of dust can be seen rising among them. These are not dunes, but spoil heaps from dozens of small mines that dot the region. The spoil heaps are unstable, as are most of the mines, a partial collapse sending up a puff of dust. There are few miners left. Something has been killing them off, and those that have stayed have barricaded themselves into their mines.
60. The sand becomes patterned with swirling rune-like shapes. As far as the eye can see, the pattern repeats like a tapestry hanging from a wall. As the player characters step in the sand and disturb the pattern the sand reforms behind them. The pattern covers the territory claimed by King Aysonos, ruler of Ibridine, the city known as the Desert Shield. The pattern allows the city's Mage's to track anyone walking on the surface of the patterned lands and anyone caught trespassing must carry out some quest on behalf of the people of Ibridine, or end up in the gladiator pits.

Choose or Roll D100

61. The smell of sulphur and rotten eggs permeates the air. Following their noses, the further the player characters travel the stronger the smell becomes. The source of the obnoxious odour is a series of hot springs and sulphur vents. Hidden by a thicket of trees, its nature is given away by the explosive eruption of a large geyser that rises beyond the height of the trees. The geyser is dangerous enough in its own right, but when the scalding water lands on the hot sulphur vents, and mounds of oozing glass, the resulting mix of hot gases is enough to scald almost any living creature. Imprisoned beneath the sand is the ancient red dragon Abolax, the very creature legend says created the desert.

62. During the night, a low lying mist snakes its way through the dunes, covering all but the highest peaks. The player characters awake to find the sand encrusted with frost and visibility down to a handful of yards. Climbing above the level of the mist is an unexpected sight. Beyond the mist, as far as the eye can see, is sparkling blue water. It certainly wasn't there yesterday and isn't marked on any map. An hour's journey and the player characters find themselves on a beach, large curling waves breaking on the ivory sand. This is the Spectral Sea. All along its coast can be seen the remains of wrecked ships, some nothing more than match wood, others all but intact. Spilled barrels and other flotsam highlight the high tide mark, and interspersed among it all are the skeletal remains of leviathan like creatures. That night the mist begins its retreat, and should the player characters be camped on or below the high tide mark by sunrise, they and the Spectral Sea vanish, reappearing in another land, or even another world.

63. Sitting in the centre of a ring of sun bleached skulls is an old man. Before him stands a stack of ivory bricks, each one engraved with runes. The ivory bricks are stacked in alternating pairs, some having been removed, giving the stack an unstable look. It's cool inside the circle, and not matter how long anyone stays, they feel neither hunger nor thirst. The old man is an oracle, and he asks the player characters if they wish to remove a brick from the stack. Successfully removing a brick gives that character a vital piece of information relating to their quest, each brick removed adding further details. If the stack collapses the old man fades and a new skull increases the size of the circle. Whoever collapsed the stack is unable to leave until the stack is rebuilt and someone else collapses it. The old man has been there for 1000 years.

64. After a few nights sleeping under the clear skies in a small region of the desert, the player characters notice at a certain time the constellations change for exactly twenty minutes. Should any character search or climb to the top of the next dune within those twenty minutes, they discover a vast city before them in the sand. As soon as the twenty minutes are up the city vanishes. The city appears and disappears each night.

Choose or Roll D100

65. The last time the player characters visited this oasis there was plentiful water and there was only a small stand of palm trees. Now there is a small forest of mangrove trees, and there is barely enough water to fill a canteen. Impaled on several of the trees' spider leg like roots are several corpses. One corpse clutches a soft leather pouch in his hand. Inside the pouch are several large seeds (see encounter 35). These poor adventures planted the seeds they were given.

66. Large hollow structures lie half buried in the sand. Despite being half filled with sand, and partially collapsed they offer shelter from the sun and are large enough to crawl into. On closer inspection these are giant snake skins that have been shedded. Inside the skins are a clutch of egg waiting to hatch, just waiting to be disturbed by their first meal.

67. The heat from the furnace like sun is relentless. The mud cracked surface of what must have once been a sea or lake bed shimmers in the heat. The further the player characters venture into this desolate area the greater the features become exaggerated. The desiccation cracks in the hardened mud gradually become wider and deeper, the land becoming a maze like structure of cliffs and gorges. In other areas the mud has curled and baked hard forming overlapping tunnel like structures.

68. Small piles of vertically stacked stones are everywhere. Some stand in small clusters, others stand alone. It's obvious the stones have been like this for hundreds of years, but what their purpose is remains a mystery. Perhaps they mark the burial chambers of some ancient peoples, or perhaps it is a piece of artwork or a map that can only been seen from the sky.

69. During a sand storm, the player characters can see a disturbance just ahead of them. What they are seeing is an invisible staircase. The sand particles buffeting it make it just visible in the right light. Where the staircase goes is another question entirely.

70. Any thought the player characters have of quiet respite at the oasis ahead quickly flees, along with the travellers running for their lives. Giant insects flit between giant palm trees and crawl over abandoned wagons and tents. The oasis has been attacked by goblin locust riders. The locusts are busy eating any vegetable matter at hand, while the goblins loot anything of value. A few locusts fly high above the trees, their riders loosing arrows at anyone brave enough to try and intervene.

71. Hoots of laughter alert the player characters to the presence of a small camp hidden among the dunes. Mad with sunstroke, Gryvlin Orstis, a gnome scholar of some renown, has come to believe each grain of sand is in fact a small diamond. He sits cross-legged in front of a perfectly manicured mound of sand with a set of tweezers and a magnifying glass examining and categorising each grain.

Choose or Roll D100

72. A giant beetle with a rider on its back crests a rocky outcropping close to the player character's position. It's not long before a second, then a third rider joins it. These riders are scouts for a vanguard of a much larger force only a few miles behind them. One of the riders pauses to pull the scarf from his face revealing the canine maw of a gnoll warrior.

73. One of the player characters awakes to find a donkey licking their face. The poor creature is thirsty and half starved. It is fully laden with someone's belongings.

74. Vultures pick at the corpse of some large beast. The corpse is that of a giant scorpion with the torso of young woman. A large black spear juts from her back, swiftly thickening blood still running down the shaft.

75. Broken masonry and a tilting obelisk breaks the monotony of the desert sands. At the base of the obelisk is an old woman with a broom and pan. She is cleaning the windblown sand from an ancient tomb that lies beneath it. She doesn't speak the same language as the player characters, but tries to persuade them to help remove a century's worth of sand. Should they help, they uncover all manner of artefacts which the woman insists should be returned to their place of display, be it a plinth or alcove. The old woman is a mummy, and it is her tomb. Should the player characters desecrate the tomb by damaging or stealing something, she throws off her disguise and turns on them. Should they simply help her and move on, the next time the player characters are in need of aid in the desert they are visited by her spirit. Aid can take any form, from the command of undead warriors as they rise from the sand to the loan of an ancient artefact, or perhaps some old fashioned spiritual guidance.

76. A tree so large it can be seen for miles stands like a silent sentinel. A small pool of water at its base is surrounded by the bones of dead animals. The tree isn't the only thing standing guard. Lazing among the lowest hanging branches are a pride of lions. Anything at the water's edge is on their menu.

77. Screams of agony shatter the still of the desert night. Not far from where the player characters have camped sits a large cage with four holes in it. Strapped across each of the four holes is a person. Inside the cage are a dozen vultures. What crime these people committed does not concern the vultures. Their only concern is that they are now hungry enough to eat the living flesh that is between them and their freedom.



Choose or Roll D100

78. A massive wooden sled covered with the tattered remains of a tarpaulin lies heavily to one side, half buried in the sand. Bound to the sled is a statue almost twenty feet in length. The statue is of a woman in warrior's garb, kneeling as if before a god or king. The statue is of Kynandra Valisar, a legendary desert warrior. She is the daughter to King Ximies Valisar and the statue was a gift from Ximies' greatest enemy, the bandit leader, Brinkta Sandscourge. The statue was intended as a Trojan horse and is in reality a powerful golem intended to slay the king and the royal family.
It was one of seven such statues, all lost during a powerful desert storm on their journey to the kingdom of Valisar. There is now a lasting peace between Ximies and Brinkta following her recent coronation as queen of her people. The statues, however, pose a problem. Both Ximies and Kynandra have heard of the intended gift and of their fate and have offered a substantial reward for their discovery, but are unaware of their true purpose. Brinkta has also offered a reward for their return, as she fears they could ignite another war. What she doesn't know is the golems have a simple directive, slay anyone with royal blood, which now includes Brinkta and her family.

79. A giant sits among the dunes with a massive set of scales and a large sieve. It has with it seven hourglasses, each one the size of a person and is filling them with sand.

80. Sections of white crenellated wall rise out of the dunes in the distance. Some sections run for hundreds of yards before the dunes consume them, other sections have only a few yards exposed. The dunes and the shimmering desert heat give the impression the wall is moving, much like a serpent through the hot sands. The object isn't a wall at all, but a gargantuan spinal column of some long dead beast.

81. Standing atop a mountainous dune, the player characters can see what looks like a small stand of trees in the distance and the unmistakable sparkle of the sun on water. Closer up, birds and small animals can be seen. The entire oasis is a construct, a baited trap to lure in unsuspecting travellers. While the animals are real enough, the rest is artificial. Water is pumped from an underground source and the trees hollowed out, contain hidden entrances to a bandit's lair underneath. At night the bandits sneak from their lair appearing right in the middle of the camps, stealing only the most lucrative goods before vanishing. The bandits rarely kill, but they do when they have to.



Choose or Roll D100



82. The terrain becomes ever more rugged. Rocky outcroppings become canyons, cliffs become mountains. At the end of a winding canyon is a sinkhole so large it could swallow a city—and that's just what it is doing. An ancient city lies tilting at an impossible angle at the edge of the sinkhole, the ground on which it sits slowly crumbling into the abyss. Shortly after the player characters arrive at the scene, a large tower breaks away from one of the city walls, crushing all before it, the cascade of rubble plunging into the darkness, a pall of dust rising up to be carried away by the wind.
83. The abrasive desert sands have cut into the softer underlying strata creating a bowl in the rock almost 100 yards across. All around its edge is a massive overhang of harder rock that offers shelter from the relentless sun. Long abandoned, this feature was once used as an arena. Now all that remains is a carved sphinx half buried in the centre. The sphinx is actually the helm of a giant statue buried in the sand, and home to spirit of the last champion of the arena. The spirit wishes to see the glory days of the arena restored. Should the player characters stay there overnight, the spirit visits them, putting before them an audacious plan to build an empire with the arena at its beating heart.
84. When the crescent dune forms in the presence of a blood moon, the gates to other worlds will open, so goes the old desert saying. The player characters witness village after village being abandoned. Every resident has learned of the formation of a giant crescent dune, a dune the wind has cut in two, the remaining sand defying gravity, leaving a crescent moon shaped hole through its centre. As the blood moon can be seen rising in the back drop of the crescent dune, a portal of shimmering light appears. If the player characters are not careful they may get caught in the stampede and dragged to another world, or whatever lies beyond the gate.

Choose or Roll D100

85. The player characters stumble across a sacred burial ritual, their mere presence an insult to ancient tradition. The priests command that one of the player characters become a human sacrifice, but before there is too much bloodshed, the spirit of the deceased appears before the gathering, ordering the player characters go free. The player characters get to walk free, and when a number of priests try to stop them, they are cut down by the warriors present, who evidently held the deceased in high regard. This act causes a schism among the priesthood that spreads to all the desert cities. Wherever the player characters go, they become both hunted and protected as the different sects vie for power, revenge and honour.
86. Legend has it that the arrival of strangers at the full moon at the height of the Festival of Eldinar when twins have been born signifies they are the messengers of Eldinar. Eldinar is an ancient hero that vanished into the desert to find a new home for his people, but never returned. The player characters arrive at a small village right at the height of the Festival, which is always held on the full moon, which is considered a fortitudinous time give birth. It just so happens that someone has given birth to twins today, and despite the player characters protests, they are hailed as heroes for simply showing up. When the player characters leave, the entire village follows them. Soon entire towns and villages across the region get wind of it, and the player characters discover they have become responsible for the lives of thousands overnight.
87. Close to the desert's edge, the player characters seek shelter at a large oasis, neutral ground frequented by all manner of travellers, from merchants to kings. There are many diverse groups present, including a traveling menagerie. During the night, bedlam breaks out after someone has opened the cages, releasing all manner of vicious creatures into the camps. The creatures are only a distraction, however, and the player characters must discover what is going on behind the scenes.
88. While setting up camp in a desert canyon, the player characters notice a periodic spill of sand cascading from the edge of a large overhang of rock. Deep behind the overhang is an open cast mine run by a group of ruthless slavers. The spill of sand occurs each time one of the ogre slaves pushes a cart to the top of the mine and dumps it along with the other spoil. The operation is vast, yet is almost undetectable unless standing on the edge of the mine looking down.
89. Sharing a camp for the night in the desert is not uncommon. It is considered good etiquette to share a meal and swap tales. The player characters find themselves sharing a camp with a prince from some desert kingdom they have never heard of. The prince becomes intrigued by something the player characters own, but are unlikely to part with. He is willing to go to great lengths to get them to sell it to him. He would sell his own mother, if he knew exactly which of his father's brides it was.

Choose or Roll D100

90. A strange craft floats through the air, coming down close to the player characters. Small figures dangling from the ropes are trailed across the dunes as the craft unexpectedly rises into the air again, some falling to land heavily but unharmed in the sand. This skyship is a prototype built by gnomes, but has a few wrinkles that need smoothed out, such as landing. Some of the gnomes are left stranded as the ship sails off without them and they beg the player characters to help them catch up with it or escort them back to their mountain village. If the player characters help, the gnomes promise to give them one of their prototype sand sails capable of sailing in the sand. It hasn't been tested yet, but what could possibly go wrong!

91. Several days' journey into the desert, the player characters discover a small town surrounded by green fields, orchards and low stone walls. Shrubbery and trees just beyond the town act as a natural barrier to the prevailing wind and drifting sand. A group of druids have made this possible. The town has old roots and was claimed by the desert many years ago. One druid, originally from the town, vowed to resurrect the town and reclaim it. The setting seems idyllic, and it would be, but the residents are terrified and afraid to leave their homes, for there have been a series of grisly murders in the town. Close by, there is an ancient burial ground, and many believe the druids may have resurrected more than just the town. Indeed, all evidence seems to point to some revenant. There is no revenant, but small cabal of druids is responsible for the murders. They believe the desert is a living thing, and reclaiming the town is an unnatural act. Unable to persuade their fellow druids of this, they have begun killing townsfolk, hoping to drive them back to the cities, thus allowing nature to once again claim the town.

92. Some manner of large flying creature can be seen a mile out from the player character's position. As they watch, the creature plummets from the sky, impacting the dunes hard enough to send up a small cloud of dust. The creature is a giant bird, which has become lost and succumbed to the heat of the desert. This is no ordinary bird. In its talons it carries a cage, inside which is a prisoner. The bird is dead, but the prisoner has survived the fall. The prisoner is, however, still stuck in the cage. The bird carries transfer papers identifying the prisoner and their crimes in a leg canister, but the prisoner has managed to wrest these free and bury them before the player characters turn up. Regardless, the prisoner claims their innocence.



Choose or Roll D100

93. As the desert winds pick up, tumbleweeds roll here and there. As one rolls past, the player characters notice a desiccated bird inside one of them. Another rolls past and contains a dead rodent, and in another a number of dead lizards. These are Desert Vampweed. Half vampire, half plant, these creatures normally only feed on small prey, but if a player characters stops one, it uncoils wrapping itself around the character carrying out an attack as if it were a normal vampire. Should a Vampweed successfully kill a player character, it grows to become an enormous tumble weed, big enough to carry the desiccated remains of the player character along with it.

94. An unusual trail winds its way across the desert sands. If the player characters follow it they come across a giant dung beetle pushing the largest ball of turd they have ever seen. There are several objects sticking out of the sand encrusted ball of poop. The beetle won't bother with the player character unless they really annoy it, and they may even find a few items of small value. If the player characters are smart enough to follow the trail back to where the beetle came from, they discover the lair of some bad tempered carnivorous creature the dung beetle cleans house for and accumulated loot scattered about. If they are smart enough to follow the dung beetle to its lair, they discover anything that has been deposited after decades of dung deliveries. The beetle's lair also leads to a much larger complex buried in the desert sands.

95. Patches of sand seem to dance as if air is being blown through it. These are Wyrmholes, patches of sand a few yards across filled with flesh rending worms. They move slowly and normally hunt at night and the player characters should be able to avoid them, but if for some reason they feel the need to see what lies under the surface, they are attacked as if they have fallen into a tank of starving piranha.

96. A rare aurora lights up the desert night purple and blue. The air hums with static, causing a prickling sensation all over the body. Shadows grow long in the strange light, and if the player characters move, causing their shadows to cross, electricity arcs between them. This is enough to give anyone a good jolt. It also imbues any character affected with a one use magical power of the GM choosing. The player character only becomes aware of the power after the aurora fades a few hours later.



Choose or Roll D100

97. The remains of a temple lie partially collapsed, the accumulated weight of sand over the centuries finally proving too much for the ancient structure. Inside what is left of the building, are the temple guardians, patiently waiting to be commanded or to destroy any who dare trespass. The guardians are glass skeletons, animated constructs that once obeyed the commands of the temple priests. The skeletons function like normal skeletons except when they die they explode hurling slivers of glass in twenty yard radius. The glass always splinters forming caltrop like shards that always land pointy side up creating an additional hazard. Deep inside the temple are the ancient texts required to control the creatures.

98. Pacing the camp while on watch, one of the player characters notices how the low hanging moon changes from bright yellow to a dull green each time they pass a certain point. Ironically, this is ancient magic devised so lost travellers might find the City of Gallicyde, which has been lost for over one thousand years.

99. Early in the morning or late evening, the player characters find themselves in a maze like area of sand filled ravines. There are polished mirrors everywhere, each one constructed from some unidentifiable material. The further into the area the player characters travel, the greater the number of mirrors. Eventually the player characters stumble across a number of large shards of glass containing the blackened bones of various creatures. As the sun rises the mirrors reflect the light down the ravines, focusing it into powerful beams, tracking anything that moves. Unless they can escape the maze before midday they are likely to be burnt to a crisp.

100. Boiling clouds of dark dust herald a massive sandstorm on the horizon. After a few days, however, it becomes clear the sandstorm remains static. Around the storm's edges, lightning flashes and large winged beasts circle endlessly. As the player characters travel closer, they encounter a woman standing beside a clutch of eggs, each one the size of a small barrel of ale. She introduces herself as Albrafar, a dragon in mortal form. She has been trying to reach the Crucible, the legendary breeding ground of dragons. Unfortunately, something terrible has happened, and the dragons have been unable to pierce the storm. She asks the player characters to take the eggs through the storm to the Crucible. The only reward she can promise is that if any of her brood makes it, she will ensure each personally owes the player characters a favour. The journey should be arduous, the storm intense and visibility low. Lightning fuses the sand in the air, teardrop shaped globules of hot glass fall continually from the sky. The storm has been corrupted and terrible creatures from other worlds haunt the wind blasted rocks. Once the player characters make it into the eye of the storm an epic battle is in progress. The Crucible's guardians are fighting a desperate last stand to protect several clutches of eggs.

About the Author



Like many gamers, Allen's first introduction to Role Playing games was Dungeons & Dragons. This in no way helped calm his already overactive imagination, but did surprisingly give it an outlet for the many crazy adventure stories he would frequently invent.

Already an avid fan of Enid Blyton's "Famous Five" novels and having just read Lord of the Rings, Allen discovered Dungeons & Dragons and thus his RPG addiction began.

Eventually Dungeons & Dragons ran its course, but gaming shifted to FASA Corporation's Shadowrun cyberpunk RPG, and eventually its prequel setting, Earthdawn. Now approaching his mid-forties Allen still runs a regular Earthdawn game.

In that time Allen has published two short stories and had his work published in number of RPGs. Some of those works include:

Tales From The Frontier: A Game of Death -

Official companion fiction to the epic
Elite: Dangerous video game

Arcane Synthesis: Spectre of war - Fiction set in the Cosmoverse campaign setting

Like Moths to a Flame: An adventure framework for Earthdawn

Ugly Things: A monster compendium for End Transmission Games' Splinter RPG

Codex Infernus: The Savage Guide to Hell – A Savage Worlds compatible setting



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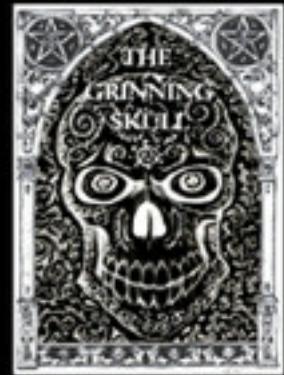
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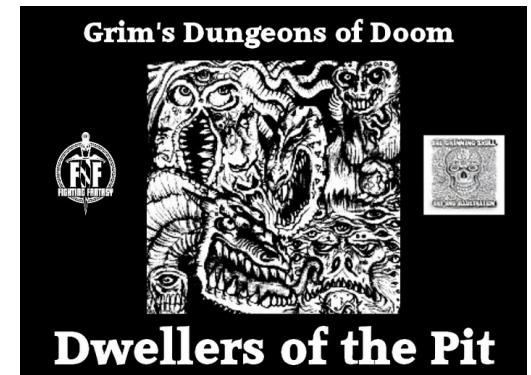
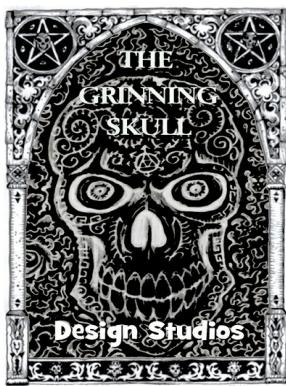
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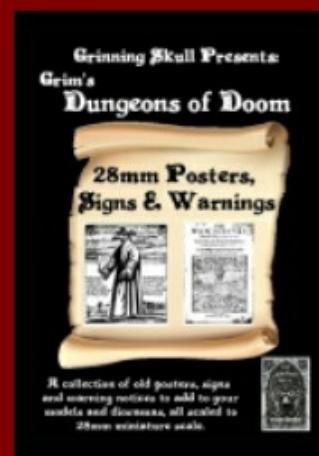
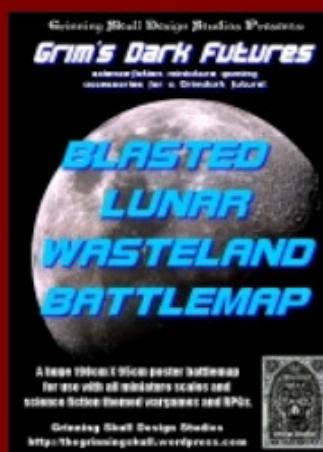
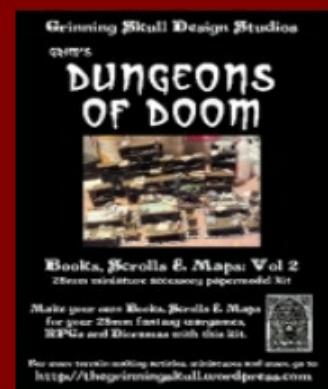
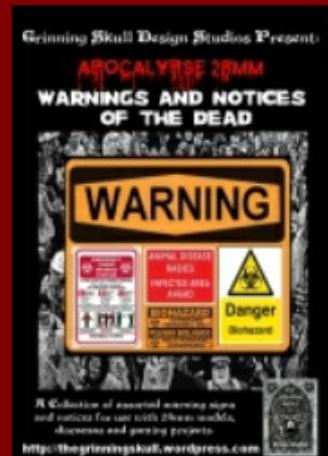
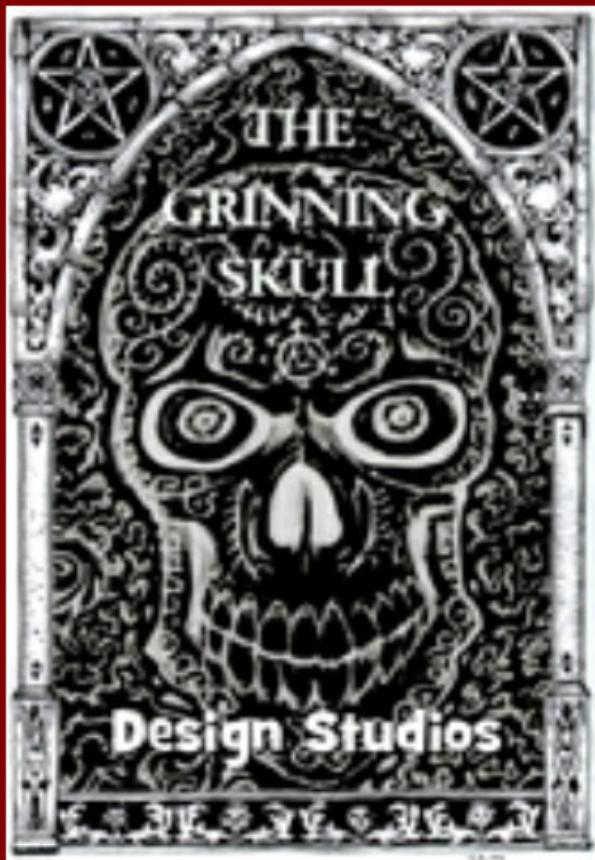
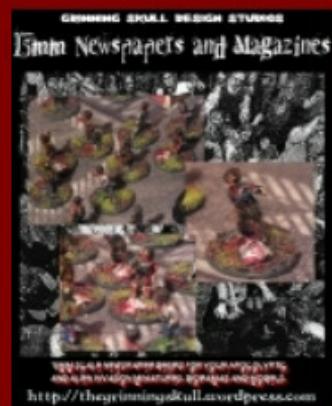
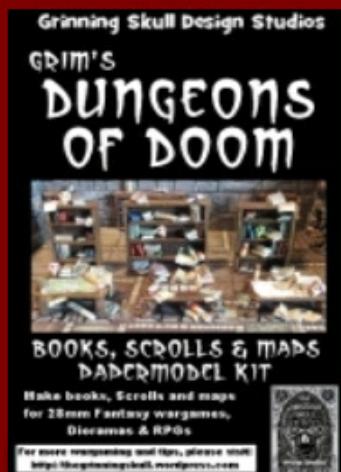
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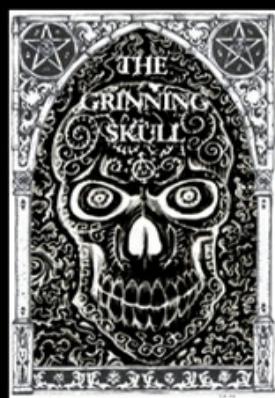
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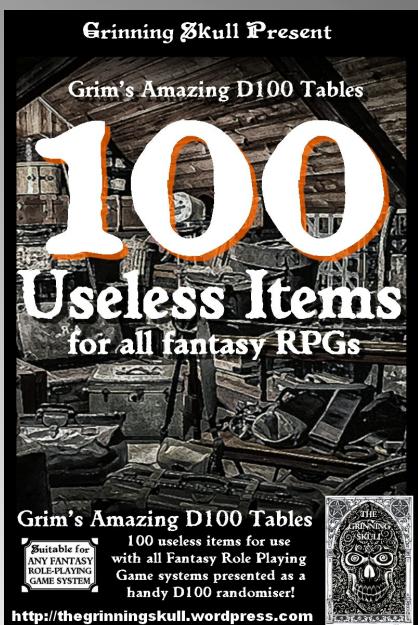
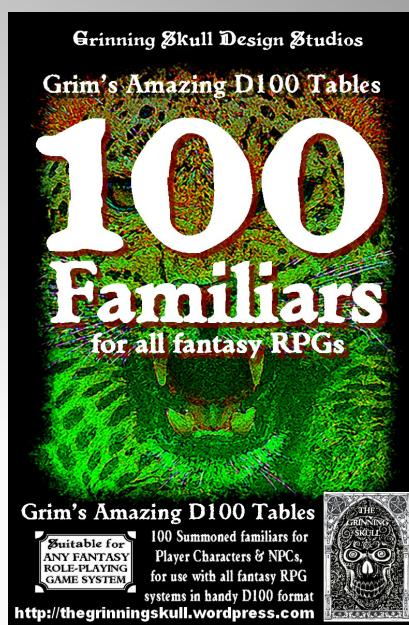
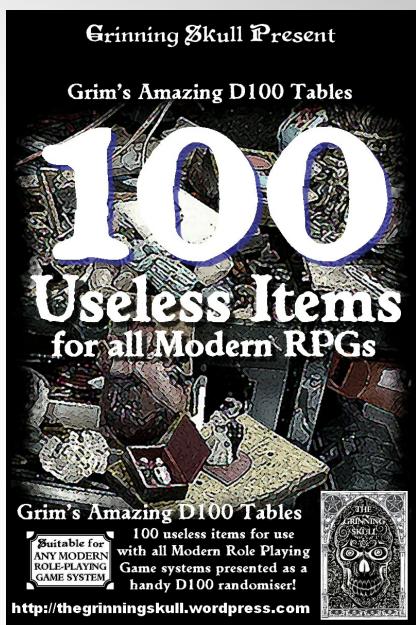
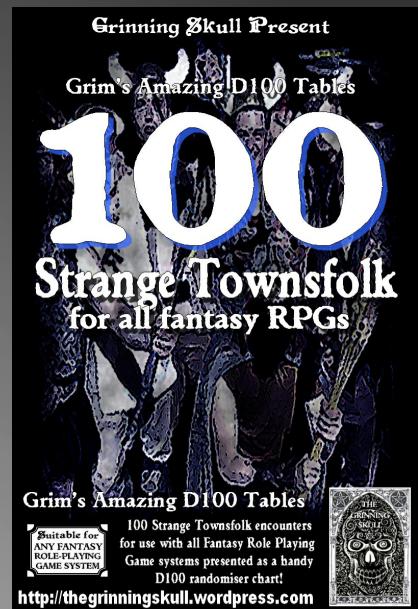
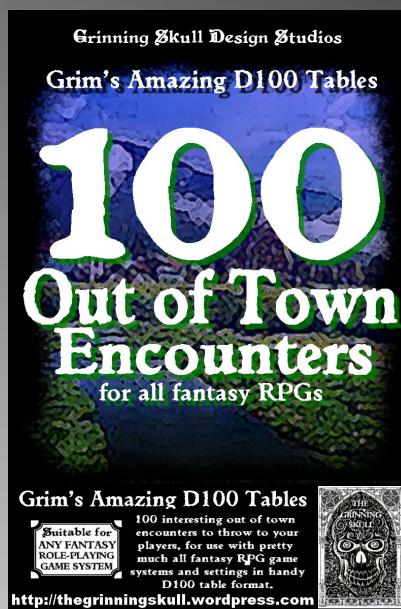
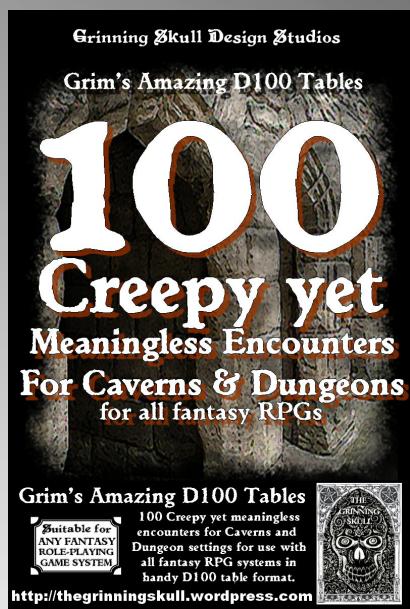


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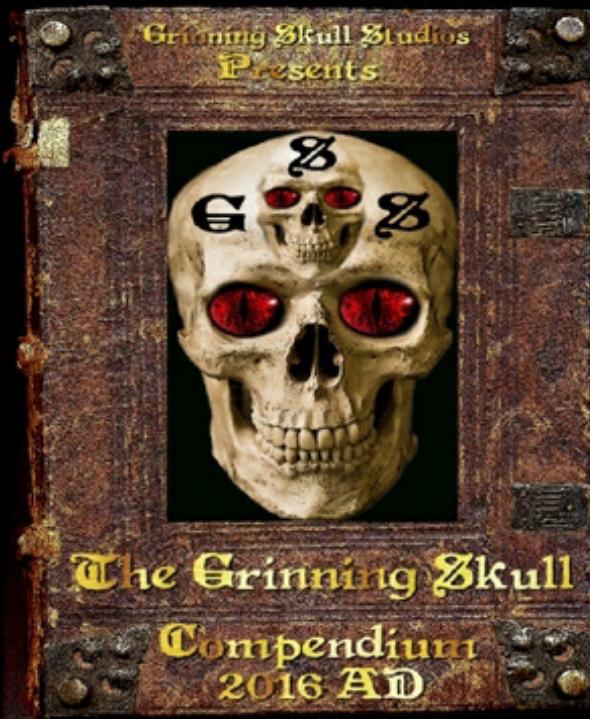
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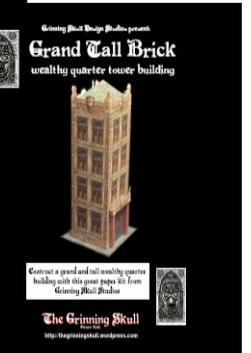
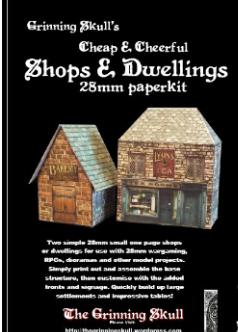
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