

Cavern Crawls

#014



4th Level Dungeon

Smugglers' Gulch

GrimPress

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5^e

#014 - Smugglers' Gulch

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Smugglers' Gulch

4th Level Dungeon

Preamble

Smugglers' Gulch is a 4th level adventure for a party of 5 players. In this *Cavern Crawl*, the party must confront the sand nereid leader of a band of smugglers making a power play to control a small coastal region.

Background

The halflings of Sandhill Cove make their living transporting goods from the mainland to several islands off the coast. They also do a little crabbing, and sell crafts to travelers and traders from vessels anchored to resupply. They make a comfortable living from the sandy beaches and warm blue waters that allow as much leisure time as work.

That changed when cargos started to go missing, along with boats and even a halfling or two. When it became obvious it wasn't an accident or a fluke, they began to run convoys to the islands for safety. When a convoy was attacked and overwhelmed, a halfling survivor followed the bandits and discovered their lair.

Quest Hook

The adventurers are in a coastal area and encounter a halfling, Sigsegar Leafblower, who is seeking aid. The region's governor has little interest in their backwater hamlet other than collecting taxes, and the island traders are being robbed by villains hiding out in a gulch up the inlet. The halfling is authorized to pay 30% of the value of the goods recovered from the hideout if the adventurers agree to clear the robbers out. He would love to pay in advance, but ... naturally that's impossible, isn't it?

Big Bad Evil Guy

In this *Cavern Crawl*, the characters will meet a **sand nereid**, a CR 4 fey creature.

ROLEPLAYING THE SAND NEREID

The sand nereid is a charismatic leader that increases its power by charming and dominating weaker creatures. The nereid initially appears to each creature as something they consider beautiful and harmless. If it has Initiative, it will attempt to charm its strongest opponent before resorting to direct attack.

Magic Items

In this *Cavern Crawl*, the characters may find the following magic items:

- a figurine of wondrous power (*ivory goats*)
- a potion of superior healing
- a staff of sand shielding

STAFF OF SAND SHIELDING

Weapon (*Quarterstaff*), Rare (*Requires Attunement*)

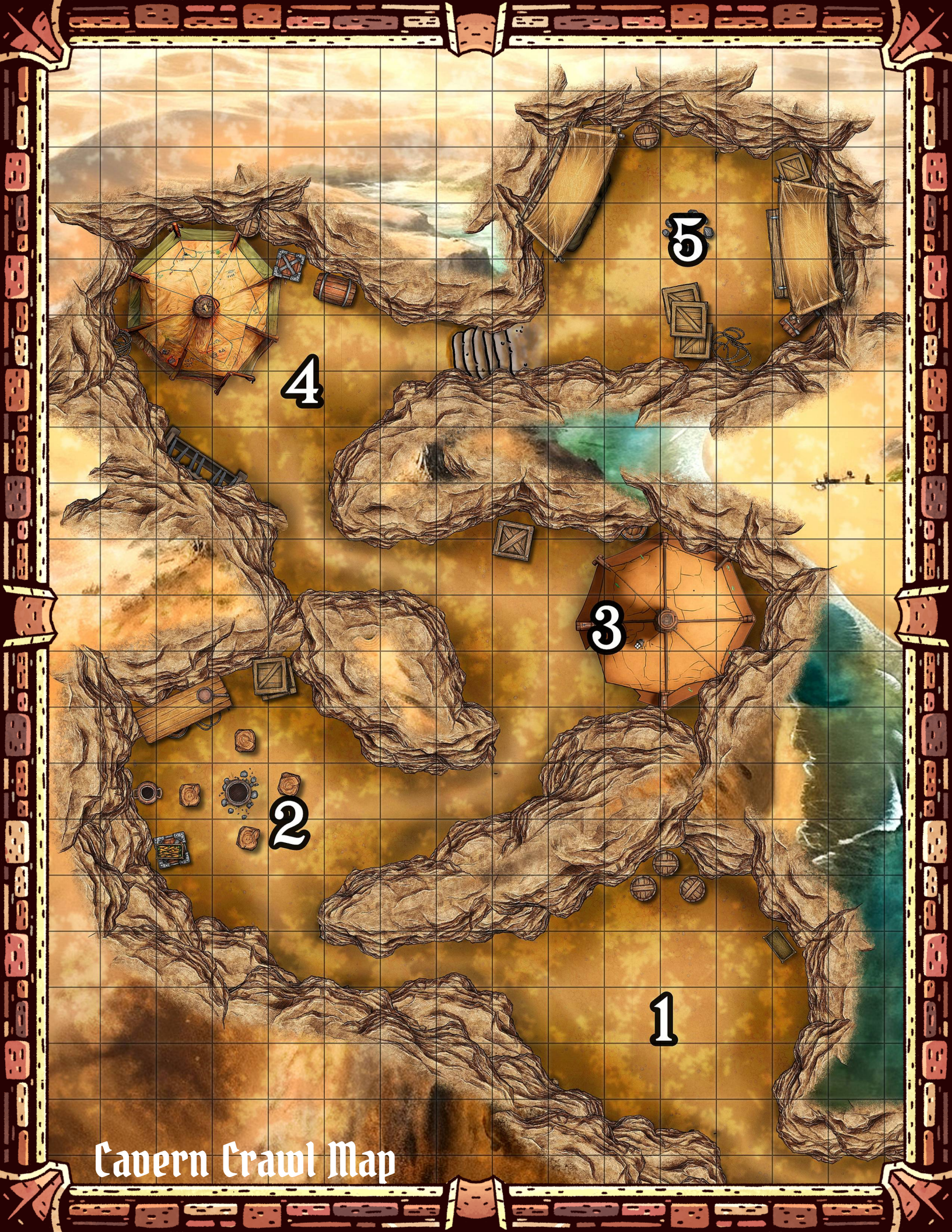
You gain a +1 to attack and damage rolls with this weapon.

When hit with a melee attack while attuned to this item, you can use your reaction to create a sand shield that causes the attack to miss. The attacker must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or be blinded until the start of their next turn. This item regains this ability after a long or short rest.

Staff of
Sand
Shielding

3

Cavern Crawl Introduction



Cavern Crawl Map

A1: Entrance

When the adventurers locate the entrance, the narrow ravine opens into an alcove about 25-feet in diameter. Two lookouts sit here with their pet wolves. They're not particularly alert, but the canyon walls echo. When the party reaches this area, read or paraphrase the following:

Two men, dressed only in traveling clothes, sit on barrels across from you. Both are armed and one is using his shortsword to whittle on a piece of driftwood. A pair of shaggy wolves lounge nearby. They are alert, and snarl at your appearance. You notice an opening in the canyon to the left.

The two lookouts are **spies**. If the adventurers don't engage them fast enough, one may try to run for the far opening. The **wolves** simply attack. **Roll Initiative.**

The spies each have pouches with 3d4 *gp*.

A2: Kitchen

Three **bandits** sit around a fire in this alcove, and a **bandit captain** stands watch. Unless the spy escaped, the canyon walls and the crackling of the fire prevent them from hearing the commotion at the entrance. When the adventurers enter, read or paraphrase the following:

Three men sit around a fire while a well-armed woman stands by, watching. She sees you and brandishes her scimitar, saying, "Well! She's not gonna wanna see you lot today, is she?!"

Roll Initiative!

The bandits each carry 3d6 *sp* while the bandit captain has a pouch with 4d6 *gp*. An open crate by the canyon wall has a false bottom. A successful **DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check** will locate a *figurine of wondrous power (ivory goats)* hidden beneath.

Figurine of Wondrous Power (Ivory Goats)

A3: Supply Tent

Another narrow defile takes the adventurers into an alcove with a supply tent. This area is unoccupied, but it's difficult to tell if anyone is inside the tent. When they enter, read or paraphrase the following:

You find yourself in another alcove similar to the one you just left. Half of the space is taken up by a hide tent. No one seems to be about. Another passage leads off to the left.

Inside the tent are boxes, crates, and barrels containing various goods. This appears to be the bulk of the goods stolen from the halflings. It has a total value of about 580 *gp*.

A4: Bunkhouse

Two **thugs** and another **bandit captain** occupy this area, which has a tent with bedrolls inside. It is where most of the bandits sleep when they aren't otherwise occupied. When the party arrives here, read or paraphrase the following:

A woman with a mace, wearing leather armor, loiters by a weapon rack near the entrance to this alcove. A similarly armed man stands by a barrel across the way. A large man with a scimitar bursts out from a hide tent and starts to speak. Instead, he spots you and shouts, "Get them!"

Roll Initiative!

The two thugs each have 3d4 *gp* and the bandit captain has a pouch with 4d8 *gp*. A successful **DC 11 Intelligence (Investigation) check** of the tent will discover a *potion of superior healing*. The adventurers will also have noticed a stone stairway leading up to another area of the ravine.



Sand Nereid

Medium Fey (Nymph), Neutral Evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 82 (15d8 + 15)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 20 ft. (sand only)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	21 (+5)

Skills Deception +7, Persuasion +7

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Elvish, Sylvan

Challenge 4 (1100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Magic Resistance. The nereid has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Speak with Beasts and Plants. The nereid can communicate with beasts and plants as if they shared a language.

Staff of Sand Shielding The nereid wields a magical staff that adds +1 to its attack and damage rolls (included below).

ACTIONS

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, or *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit with *shillelagh*, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 2 + 1) bludgeoning damage, or 7 (1d8 + 2 + 1) bludgeoning damage if using two hands, or 10 (1d8 + 5 + 1) bludgeoning damage with *shillelagh*.

Sand Fist. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage, and the target must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or be blinded until the end of their next turn.

Fey Charm (3/Day). The nereid targets one humanoid it can see within 30 feet of it. If the target can see the nereid, it must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed. The charmed creature regards the nereid as a trusted friend to be heeded and protected. Although the target isn't under the nereid's control, it takes the nereid's requests or actions in the most favorable way. Each time the nereid or its allies do anything harmful to the target, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. Otherwise, the effect lasts 24 hours, until the nereid dies, or the nereid ends the effect as a bonus action. The nereid can have only one creature charmed at a time.

Spellcasting. The nereid casts one of the following spells, requiring no material components, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 15):

At will: *druidcraft*, *shillelagh*

3/day each: *charm person*, *entangle*

1/day each: *counterspell*, *pass without trace*, *fog cloud*

REACTIONS

Sand Shield (1/Day). When hit by a melee attack the nereid can prevent the damage by calling up a shield of sand with its staff.

A5: Upper Lair

At the top of the steps is a box canyon where the **sand nereid** and her two **mastiffs** wait. She has a chaise lounge beneath a linen shade and a seating area under another. A few premium goods are stashed here as well. When the adventurers arrive, read or paraphrase the following:

At the top of the steps, you see a box canyon with shades set up and a few crates stacked to one side. A mesmerizing female wearing a strange headdress and filmy robes stands near the far shade. Two large, sand-colored dogs stare at you intently. The woman considers the staff in her hands for a second, then smiles kindly at you.

The sand nereid is fine with talking. It gives her time to assess which character might be most susceptible to her charms. When a fight is inevitable, if she feels she can spend an action to use *fey charm* on a melee character she will. When a fight is inevitable, **Roll Initiative!**

The walls are rock so the nereid can't burrow her way out of the encounter. When she is defeated, the adventurers can recover the staff, a *staff of sand shielding*. They can also recover the remainder of the halflings' stolen goods, worth about 320 gp.

The adventurers can either haul the goods back, if they have the means, or bring Sigsegar to the gulch to assess the recovered goods. Either way, the adventurer's cut should be about 300 gp and a job well done on behalf of the halflings of Sandhill Cove.

