

WORLDWEEP GM'S GUIDE

For Gamemaster Eyes Only

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A great deal of adventuring will occur in the Mana Wastes, so it is useful for GMs to have a guide. This is a guide, nothing more, and GMs are welcome to tell whatever stories tickle their fancy. The Mana Wastes are vast, with plenty of room for exceptions, contradictions, and strange occurrences. However, in the interest of creating a cohesive adventuring environment for players, this guide exists to help GMs understand what the baseline might look like.

1.1 REGIONS

1.1.1 SPELLSCAR DESERT

The Spellscar Desert teems with strange and unnatural creatures spawned by terrible magic, such as living spells, fleshwarps, shardbound animals, oozes, and similar creatures. While a few nomadic bands (many of them fleshwarps) roam the wastes, the desert is so dangerous that bandits find it easier to waylay travelers nearer to their destinations' safer ends.

The town of Grittybank lies in the Spellscar Desert at the confluence of the Gritty River and its largest tributary. Grittybank is an insular community, a status imposed upon it by others rather than chosen by itself. For a very long time, the town saw effectively no trade, and the few wanderers who arrived kept their distance from its predominantly fleshwarp population. Still, a thousand years is a long time, and over the centuries, Grittybank collected a small number of travelers and took in unfortunate orphans. While most non-fleshwarp residents eventually choose to leave, the community remains an open refuge for all. Grittybank is home to the amenities of a small town, including the recently founded College of Magic, which teaches every tradition except divine magic.

The town is a trading partner with Moonlit Junction, and its healers rely primarily on alchemical remedies, though primal and occult healers are also available.

Despite these resources, Grittybank has few citizens interested in adventuring. As the town governs all important decisions by direct

democracy, it can be quite difficult to convince them to assist in any endeavor that does not directly affect them.

UNSTABLE MAGIC

The unstable magic of old is no longer found in most places in the Desert, but it does still linger in some areas. As a GM, you are welcome to decide the Bounty takes place in one of these areas. If you do, make sure you include “This Bounty takes place in a location with unstable magic” or words to that effect in your Bounty notice. You do not need to describe what kind of unstable magic is present as the advent of shardstorms has rendered the unstable magic of the Spellscar Desert entirely unpredictable.

If you use unstable magic, decide on the following parameters:

- **Spell Rank** Spells and magical effects below this rank operate normally. You should generally pick a spell rank close to or a bit below the level of the Bounty divided by two, rounded up, to allow lower-level magic to operate without a ton of dice rolls. (The definition of “magical effects” is subject to GM discretion, but this should include Kineticist impulses and magical monster abilities that function like spells. When in doubt, if it has the Magical trait and costs an action to use, it’s probably a magical effect.)
- **Flat DC** This is the flat DC that will be rolled every time a relevant spell or magical effect is used. This should generally be no higher than 5.
- **Null-type or surge-type** If the zone is null-type, then when a character fails the flat

check, the spell is disrupted, any expended spell slot or resource is refunded, and all but one action is refunded. (So, if the spell cost $\blacktriangleright\blacktriangleright\blacktriangleright$, only \blacktriangleright would be spent.) If the zone is surge type, if the character fails the check, the spell casts as usual, but then roll twice on the wellspring surge table and the player chooses one of the two results.

Use of unstable magic in the bounty does not automatically increase the difficulty rating of an encounter, but do pay careful attention to the encounter guidelines and ensure that, all things considered, your encounter is hitting the intended difficulty. Null-type zones, especially with a high DC, may make combat extremely difficult if there are casters in the party. Surge-type zones are unlikely to make encounters noticeably easier, but are also as unlikely to make them drastically harder.

MANA STORMS

You can also use Mana Storms as a hazard. Here is one mechanism Mana Storms may take, although you're welcome to design your own. Just keep the overall encounter difficulty within the acceptable limits. Also be aware that mana storm mechanics may require a bit more time to adjudicate than most hazards.

A Mana Storm has one feature to determine it: the rank. The rank should generally be no higher than the level of the Bounty divided by two, rounded up, but it may be much lower, depending on the role the storm is to play in your story. The rank of the storm determines the rank of any spells it creates the effect of. (If the rank is too low to cast the spell, reroll. This reroll occurs before the GM or player selects their choice of effect.) The DC for any spells or effects is a Hard DC for a spell of that rank, according to the DCs by Level chart in the Core Rulebook.

A Mana Storm can often be detected as it

forms by using Mana Wastes Lore or Arcana. The DC is usually a Hard DC for Mana Wastes Lore or an Extreme DC for Arcana on the Stealth and Disable DCs table in GM Core. The DC may be lower or other skills may be used, however, if the circumstances or the story benefit from it. A creature must be Investigating with a relevant skill in order to spot a Mana Storm forming effectively. A creature that Seeks in an area where a Storm is forming may also roll a Mana Wastes Lore or Arcana check to notice a Mana Storm. Failing to spot it in time usually results in some or all of the party getting caught up in the effect. Succeeding usually lets you know where it is forming and about how long before it does.

You may find it useful to either pre-roll the effect of the Mana Storm or to simply select an effect that fits your Bounty.

A Mana Storm should be calculated as a simple trap of twice its rank for the purpose of its XP budget. All of the standard advice about using traps in combat apply here as well.

MANA STORM HAZARD

Stealth Hard DC for Mana Wastes Lore or Extreme DC for Arcana.

Description A Mana Storm is a microburst of wild magic that erupts from the scarred weave of magic within the Wastes. They are usually very brief and localized, but can be extremely dangerous. Spotting the conditions for a developing Mana Storm is a useful skill indeed in the Mana Wastes.

Disable A Mana Storm cannot be disabled, but a smart adventurer can avoid it if they spot it forming in time.

Effect See the table below for the effect. Some Mana Storms are a one-shot effect, some leave a lingering effect.

d20	Effect	Description
1	Wild Growth (primal)	Fortitude. Creatures and objects within a radius of 10 feet per level that have hair have it grow wildly gaining as much length as it ordinarily would in a year. The hair causes no penalties and can be shaved or cut as usual.
2	Strange Creature (primal)	A strange animal is conjured by the storm. The animal is visually strange in some way, like vivid colors of fur or glowing eyes. Randomly select a creature of the maximum level allowed for a Summon Animal spell of the storm's rank.
3	Tethered (arcane)	Will. Creatures within a radius of 10 feet per rank are affected by planar tether. Creatures that fail their saving throws also have their Speeds reduced by 10 feet (to a minimum of 5 feet) during the effect's duration.
4	Unluck (arcane, misfortune)	Will. A zone of unluck and strange violet illumination fill a radius of 10 feet per rank for 1 hour. Creatures in this area roll attack rolls, Perception checks, saving throws, and skill checks twice and take the lower result.
5	Strange Reversal (curse)	Fortitude. One creature's body and all its possessions reverse into a mirror image of themselves. This effect is permanent, but can be lifted with an effect that removes curses.
6	Gravity Surge (arcane)	Reflex. Creatures within a radius of 10 feet per rank, in random order, are pushed 10 feet per rank away from the nearest creature. A pushed creature that hits an object or another creature stops but takes falling damage equal to the distance moved (a creature hit takes the same amount of falling damage).
7	Psychic Assault (illusion, mental, nonlethal, occult)	Will. Creatures within a radius of 10 feet per rank are affected by phantom pain.
8	Dazzling Mein (illusion, occult, visual)	The creature closest to the center of the storm is affected by cloak of colors; that creature is immune to the effects, but all others around it are affected normally. If multiple creatures are equally distance, select randomly.
9	Geyser (primal, water)	Fortitude. Water erupts from the ground, but rather than spraying directly up into the air, the water bends impossibly to surge along a horizontal path just above the ground, like a floating, torrential flood. This torrent of water manifests as a hydraulic torrent at first, eerily doing so in the most efficient line to catch as many potential targets in its path as it can. The water then splashes down into the desert, remaining as a long, thin swath of water that can provide a drinking source until it's soaked up or evaporates.
10	Sudden Pit (earth, primal)	Reflex. A pit opens beneath a random creature. The pit is as wide as the creature's space, so the creature can Grab an Edge to avoid a fall. The pit is 20 feet deep per rank of the mana storm and remains open even in terrain normally unable to support such a structure. After 1 hour, the pit vanishes and anything that fell in is restored to the surface.
11	Darkness (darkness)	The area within 10 feet per rank is affected by darkness.
12	Death Field (primal)	Fortitude. Normal vegetation within a radius of 10 feet per level immediately dies and turns to ash. Plant creatures take 2d6 damage per rank of the mana storm (basic Fortitude save).
13	Strangers to All (arcane, curse, mental, misfortune)	Will. A number of creatures up to the level of the mana storm within a radius of 10 feet per level are affected by outcast's curse.
14–15	Weird Rain (primal)	A rain of small objects (anything from flowers to rotten fruit) pelts an area with a radius of 10 feet per rank of the mana storm for a number of rounds equal to the rank. This rain doesn't harm creatures in the area. Creatures in the area have concealment. The objects remain even after the rain is over.
16–17	Wellspring (primal, varies)	The mana storm draws magical potential from deep within a random creature. That creature rolls 1d20 and uses the Wellspring Surges table (Secrets of Magic) to determine a wellspring effect.
18–19	Madcap Effect (arcane)	Randomly choose one creature to be a "wielder" and a different random creature to be a "target." Roll d% on the madcap top table (GM Core) to determine what sort of strange effect occurs between the creatures.
20	Double Strength (varies)	Reroll two results and apply both in the order rolled; further results of 20 on these rerolls have no effect. Complete this reroll before selecting which of multiple options will be used.

1.1.2 USTRADI BANKS

Defined by the life-giving waters of the Ustradi River, this region is a hub of activity and a bastion of civilization in the harsh wastes. The town of Moonlit Junction serves as its primary settlement (see the Mana Wastes wiki entry for details).

A diverse array of nomadic groups roams the riverbanks, most commonly composed of Calikangs (who long ago abandoned their quest to heal the land), Kholos, Goblins, Iruxi, and Humans. These bands are sometimes joined by Awakened Animals and Beastkin. In addition to the nomads, small villages and isolated farmhouses dot the banks, though none are larger than a few extended families.

The river provides ample opportunity for aquatic adventure, including the use of sailing vessels. However, its waters are home to many dangerous creatures, from predators seeking a meal to beings with darker agendas. As shards fell into the river, aquatic life is just as susceptible to becoming shardbound as terrestrial creatures.

1.1.3 WESTERN RAVAGE

This rugged region of the Shattered Range is dominated by giants, ettins, and ogres. Despite the dangers, a few small mining villages persist here, capitalizing on the area's rich mineral resources. The Western Ravage is home to typical mountainous creatures, alongside a pervasive population of rust creatures and a wide variety of shardbound beings. The unstable geology is matched by lingering magical anomalies; rumors persist of caves where magic remains unstable. While Mana Storms haven't been seen here for ages, GMs may use the Unstable Magic rules for subterranean bounties in this region.

1.1.4 SHATTERED ALKENSTAR

Alkenstar has indeed returned but not in one piece and not at its exact previous location. And

even beyond Alkenstar proper, it seems that other parts of the area nearby that had gone missing in the Alchemists attack have returned. Relic Seekers Union scouts report various small towers and buildings atop the hills to the east, near the Spellscar Desert, that might be useful for locating and mapping these splinters of ancient city. The RSU has yet to be close to examine, though. The structures here are old watchtowers and outposts, small in size.

Many of the outpost towers have been taken up as residences by creatures of the Wastes or are in occasional use by one or more of the nomadic peoples of the Wastes. These nomads aren't necessarily hostile, though some definitely are. The outpost towers can be very useful in scouting for bits and pieces of Alkenstar in the desert, though.

The actual shards of the city itself are of every possible size. Some bits as tiny as a fingernail sliver and others are entire neighborhoods. These places tend to have a much higher-than expected number of extraplanar creatures in and around them. Many of these extraplanar creatures are extremely grumpy likely to engage in hostilities. Some, though, might engage in conversation. These extraplanar creatures report that they were minding their own business doing extraplanar things on their home plane when all of the sudden they found themselves here in the Universe. Protean extraplanar creatures are particularly common, especially in and around the larger pieces of Alkenstar.

The actual pieces of Alkenstar look like they've been though a thousand years of decay in a not particularly hospitable environment. None of the original living inhabitants remain, even if their lifespans would have otherwise allowed it. Bits and pieces of ancient constructs or technology might still be around to be found, though. To the extent that these constructs have memory, they do not recall enough to be useful about their time away. They recall the passage of time, but not what that time contained.

1.2 SHARDBOUND CREATURES

The shards' magic is unpredictable. For most creatures, contact has no effect. For others, it is a transformative event, reshaping them in ways that often reflect the moment of contact—a creature touching a shard while swimming might be imbued with a Water template, while one in a cave might gain an Earth template.

Some animals are awakened, emerging as fully realized people with a new capacity for good, evil, and complex motives. Others become Shardbound, infused with raw power that amplifies their innate nature. Beasts apply their strength with primal instinct, while intelligent beings use it to further their own goals, for better or worse. Choose two of the following abilities, or potentially three if the creature is 9th level or higher, to add to the creature, replacing existing abilities if possible:

- **Pointy Shards** The creature has many sharp shards that have grown out of their body. When a creature succeeds at a melee attack from within five feet, they take slashing damage equal to twice the creature's level (minimum 1). The spikes then break off and do not regrow until the beginning of the creature's next turn.

- **Violet Eyes** The creature's eyes are replaced with violet gems. They gain a gaze attack: **Violet Gaze**  (visual, mental); The creature opens its eyes and spills forth a thousand forgotten memories. Creatures in a 30-foot cone take 1d6 damage per level spirit damage with a basic Will save (use a high DC for a creature of their level). This ability cannot be used again for 1d4 rounds.

- **Shardbound Magic** The creature has a purple patch on its chest. Select a cantrip. The creature can cast that cantrip at will. If it requires an attack roll, use the attack bonus of their best attack. If it requires a DC, use the DC of their best tradition, or a high DC for a creature of their level if they don't otherwise cast spells.

- **Shardbound Chaos** The creature has an intricate moving purple design on its back. They gain the following ability:

Chaos Theory  **Trigger** (Effectfortune); **Frequency** once per day; **Trigger** you fail a skill check or saving throw; Reroll the triggering check and use the new result, even if it's worse.

- **Shardbound Feet** The creature's feet (or whatever appendages it uses for locomotion) are a glittering purple. The creature has a +20 status bonus to speed. It also gains a 5-foot land speed and the ability to breathe air if it did not already have it.

- **Shardbound Retort** The creature's teeth, tail, or claws are shimmering purple shards. Select a part other than one used for the creature's primary attack. The creature gains a new unarmed attack and Reactive Strike with the affected body part. The attack does moderate damage and has moderate attack for a creature of its level. This ability should only be given to a creature of 5th level or higher.

- **Purple Shell** The creature has thick crystalline protuberances all across its body. The creature gains this ability:

- **Defend** The protuberances grow and the creature gains +2 to AC (or +4 to AC if two actions were spent) until the start of its next turn.

Shardbound creatures are uncommon in much of Golarion, but in the regions around the Mana Wastes, they are common. Shardbound creatures the characters encounter do not have the Uncommon trait.

Characters are likely to start remembering these effects if they encounter them often. This is intentional and reinforces the theme that characters are learning about their environment as they go. You should be sure to narrate the visual descriptions of the creatures and include the related shardbound descriptions as appropriate. You're welcome to use variations on these themes as you see

fit, of course, but try to keep the visual indications consistent. For example, if you have a shardbound creature cause bleed damage to its attackers, perhaps it has very sharp bladed shards protruding from its body. Try to avoid using the same visual description for wildly different effects.

Players, especially those who are GMs and are reading this right now, should be reminded to only base their actions on what their character knows, not what they know.

1.3 THE CULT OF THE BRONZE WHISPERS

Only limited information is known about the Cult of the Bronze Whispers, but they are gaining members and influence at an alarming rate, despite the best efforts of the Adventurer's Guild. The Cultists have a particular interest in right and acute angles. They find obtuse angles and, even worse, curves to be abhorrent and foul. They have interests in architecture, geometry, mathematics, and time.

The Cult seeks to obtain and understand the Shards, much as the Adventurer's Guild does, but they have different methods and goals. Most Cultists are Shardbound, but they still seek to destroy other Shardbound creatures, perhaps to retrieve their shards, to eliminate competition, or for some other more nefarious and secret purpose. If you use PC rules to build a Cultist NPC, use the Shardbound Paragon feature, just as you would for a PC, then give it the Perfect Order ability described below.

1.3.1 CREATING A CULTIST

Any intelligent creature can be a member of the cult. You can turn a intelligent creature into an Order of the Bronze Whisper Cultist by taking the following steps.

First, increase the creature's level by 1 and adjust its statistics as follows.

- Increase the creature's AC, attack bonuses, DCs, Perception modifier, saving throws, and skill modifiers by 1.
- Increase the damage of its Strikes and other offensive abilities by 1. If an ability can be used only a small number of times (such as a dragon's breath weapon), increase the damage by 2 instead.

Then, increase the creature's Hit Points by the amount listed on the table:

Starting Level	HP Increase
1 or lower	10
2–4	15
5–19	20
20+	30

Then, give the Order of the Bronze Whisper Cultist resistance to mental damage equal to its level and the following ability:

Perfect Order A creature adjacent to the Order of the Bronze Whisper Cultist can attempt to disrupt the geometric precision of the Cultist's attire by making a check using Thievery, Athletics, Performance, Crafting, or Occultism. This check is a two-action Interact activity, uses a Hard DC for the Cultist's level, and on a success, the Cultist must spend at least one action on each turn Interacting to adjust its clothes. This effect ends once the Cultist has Interacted three times. It is then immune to this effect for 24 hours.

Finally, give the Cultist two of these abilities:

Angled Ecstasy The Cultist becomes quickened if it begins its turn adjacent to an angle

of 90° (or more acute) in the structure or environment around it. They can use this extra action only to Step, Stride, or Strike.

Quadrilateral Crush  Creatures within a 10-foot-by-10-foot square within 20 feet of the Cultist take 1d6 spirit damage per level with a basic Reflex save (use a high DC for a creature of the Cultist's level). This ability cannot be used again for 1d4 rounds.

Sabotage Shard  An adjacent Shardbound creature must make a Will save (against a high DC for a creature of the Cultist's level) with the following effects. Regardless of the result, the affected creature is immune to Sabotage Shard for 1 day.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature is sickened 1.

Failure The creature is sickened 2.

Critical Failure As failure, but the creature also takes mental damage equal to 1d8 times half the Cultist's level, rounded up.

Geometric Calculus  **Frequency** 1/day;

Trigger You make a check and you do not like the result; **Effect** You replace the result of your d20 roll with a 10.

Wall of Quartz  You shape a wall out of precisely interlocked shards. You create a 1-inch-thick wall of crystal made up of two sections, each 10 feet long and 5 feet tall. These sections are placed along the borders of the Cultist's current square and must form a perfect 90° angle. The wall blocks movement by creatures larger than Tiny, and has gaps between the shards that allow spells and attacks through. It is sufficient to provide standard cover, and creatures adjacent to the wall can make ranged attacks through it without penalty.

Each section has AC 10, Hardness equal to the level of the Cultist, and Hit Points equal to the Cultist's level times 5. It is immune to critical hits and precision damage. When the wall is destroyed, the shards forming it fall apart and litter the ground harmlessly.

2.0.1 SEASON ONE CREDITS

By ink

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