

# Wilderness Travel Challenges

Making wilderness travel interesting in an old school adventure game can be a challenge; if no wandering monsters are rolled nothing happens. One attempted fix is to include terrain-based encounters on the wandering monster table. By adding landmarks and natural sights to the charts you can make encounters more likely, but if you don't roll an encounter . . . the default is still nothing happening.

Weather charts try to balance interest with plausibility, so usually you have the kind of weather you'd expect for the season and it doesn't change much.

You could just make something happen each day of travel and prepare a big chart but a teeming fantasy city should feel different than the trackless wastes. Do we really want something happening every day of travel or every hex traveled in the wilderness?

So how do we avoid the boredom of nothing happening while giving the feeling of traveling through unique, treacherous terrains? I think a mini-game is the solution. I think it should be complicated enough that players can make decisions and devise strategies. I also think each kind of terrain should have a different mini-game. The challenges of traveling through the Arctic are different than the challenges of the swamp.

These mini-games are meant to be shown to players before they travel.

Note: I would consider any kind of road or known track to be civilization and by using them players can avoid these mini-games. I intend these for going off-road or trailblazing.

Second, these don't have to be used for the terrain they are named for. If you have a different terrain that you want to keep interesting as players travel across it, choose the mini-game that fits it best. So far we have terrains that:

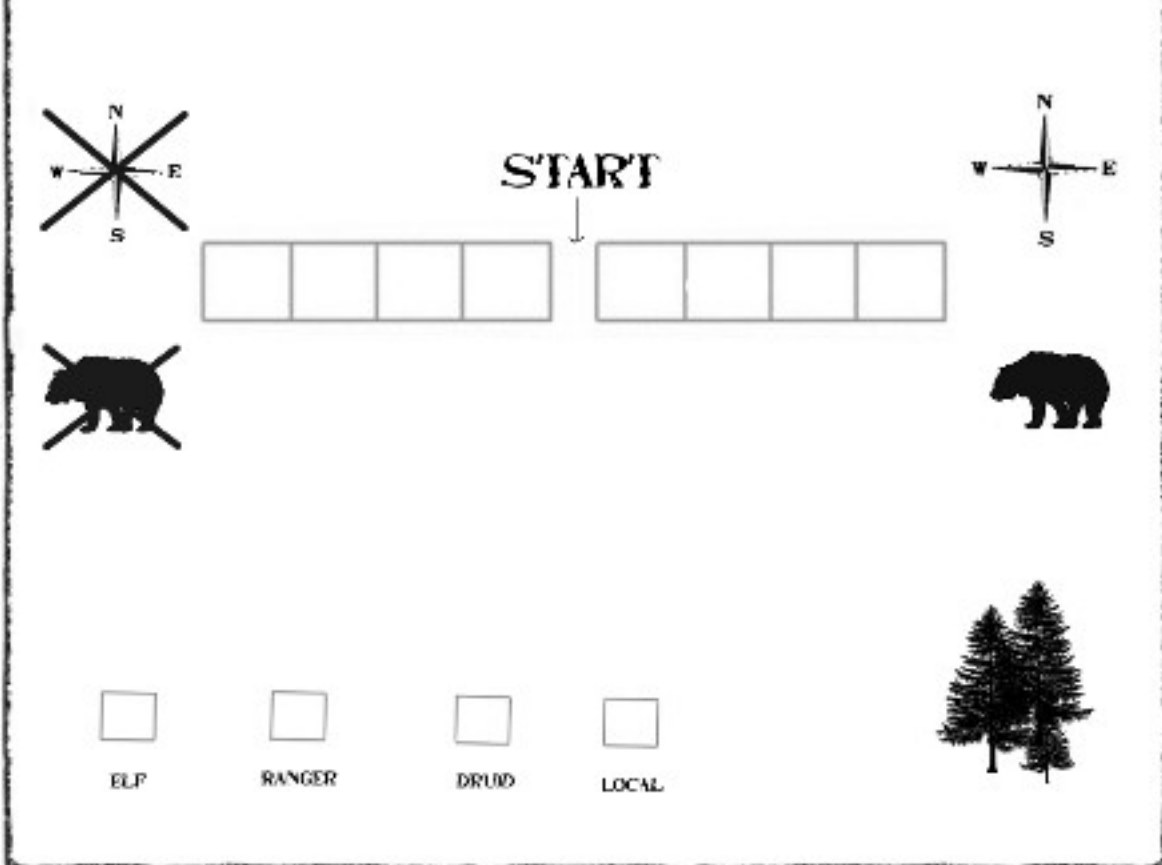
- require balancing two mutually exclusive goals— e.g. safety and getting lost (forest)
- consume gear and require planning (mountain)
- wear parties down with a single, relentless element (swamp)
- consume hirelings with hidden dangers (jungle)
- drive hirelings mad through isolation and discomfort (sea)
- wear parties down with a single, relentless requirement (desert)
- penalize larger parties (planar)

Third, a slit in the paper and a paperclip might be a good way to keep track of progress on the mini-games that require it. If a session ends mid travel, the game can be stored in your DM's bag and still show how far the party is from their doom.

Telecanter

<http://recedingrules.blogspot.com>

# FOREST TRAVEL

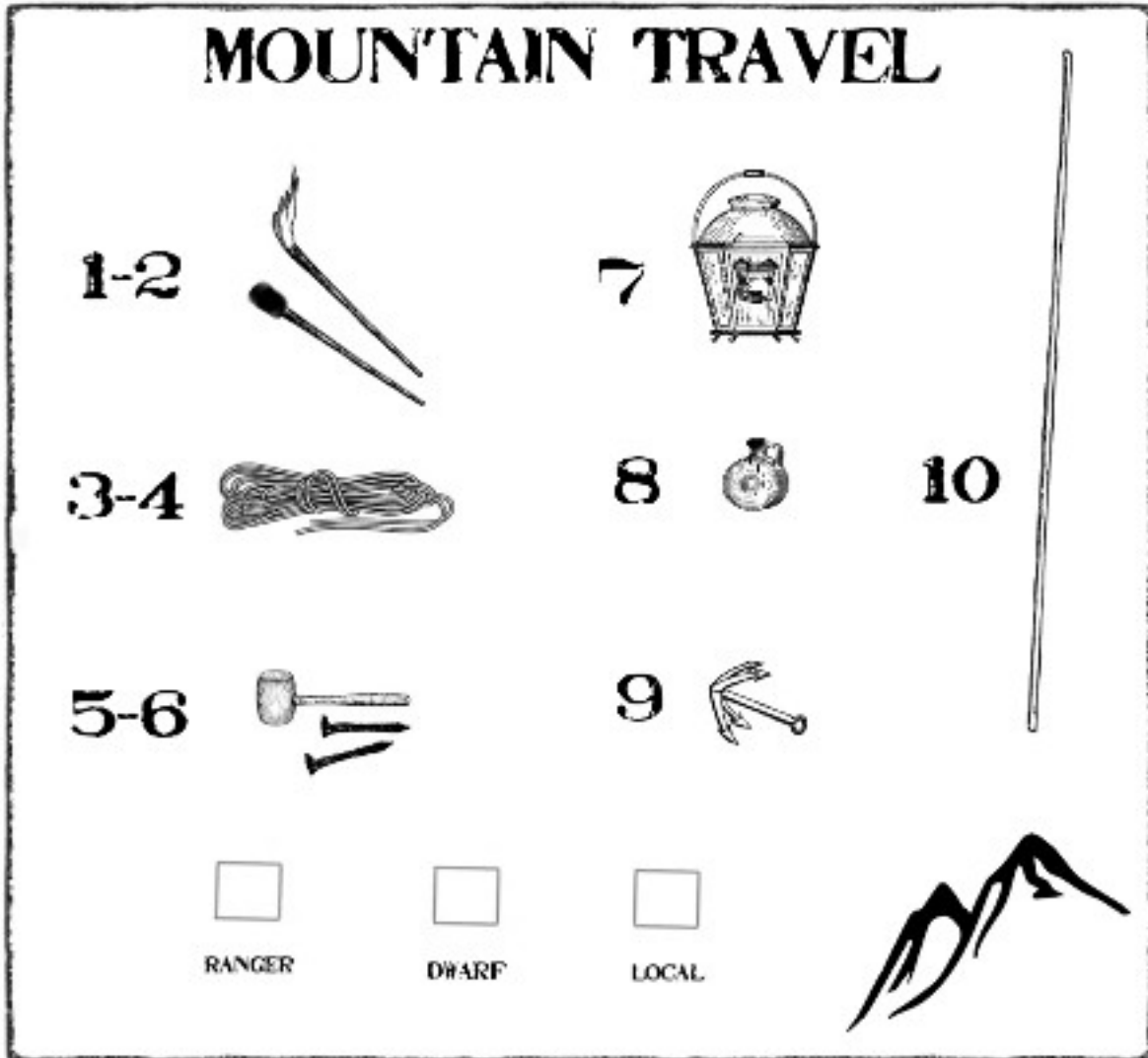


For each day of travel in the forest the party has to move one box from the start. The idea is that in the dark woods you can either be safe or know where you are, but it's hard to do both. Running from encounters leads to getting turned around and all the stands of trees look alike. You can try to mark your way, but your bread crumbs might lead something *to you*. Treat each box as a corresponding bonus or minus to the wandering monster and getting lost rolls.

If you have any of the folks at the bottom in your party they can shift one box per day as well.

Depending on how you check for monsters and getting lost you might want to cut each side down to 3 boxes. I'm assuming a d6 with results on a one, so you would never completely avoid the chance to have encounters or get lost.

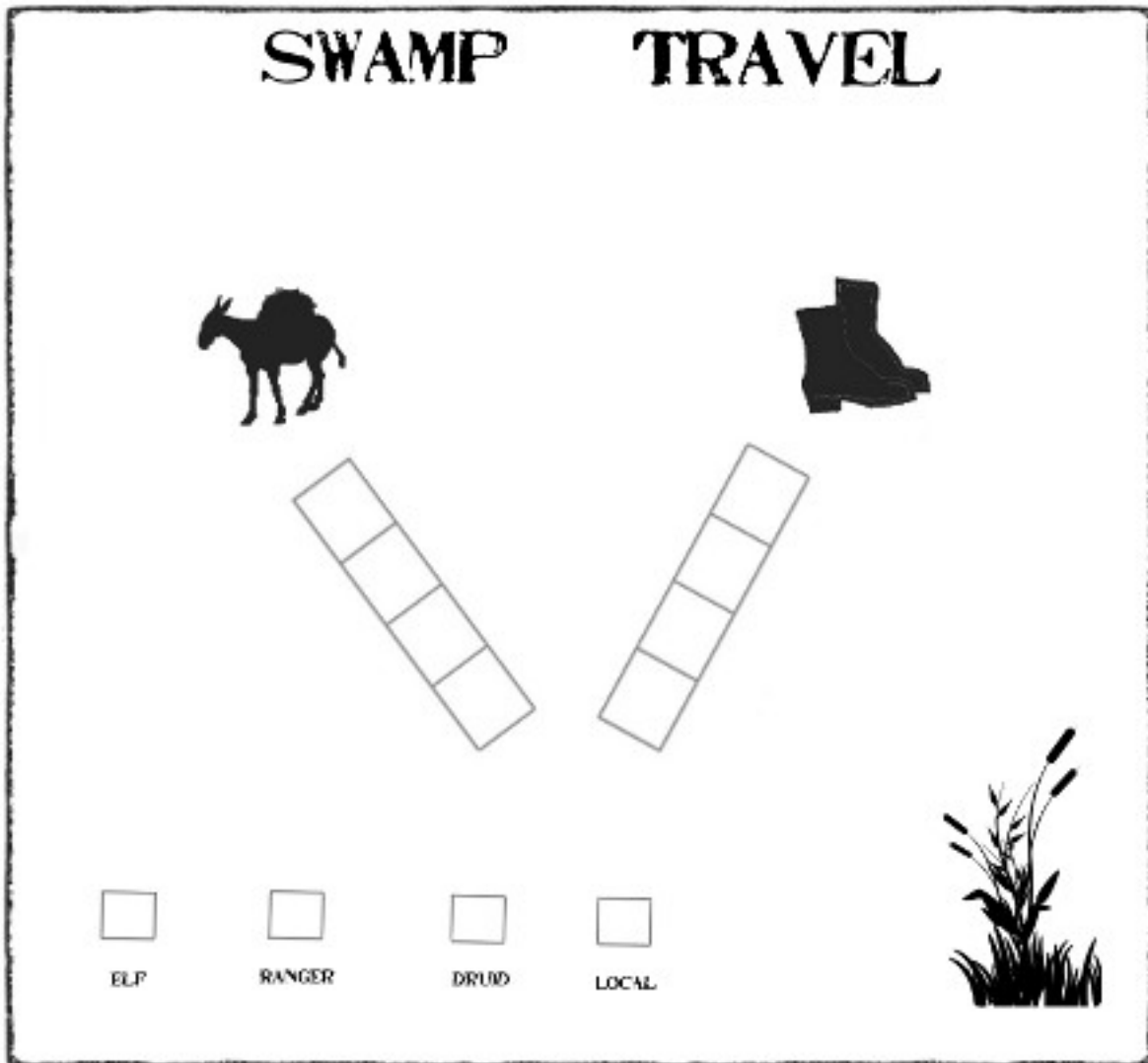
No players will want to get lost, but I'm thinking low level characters may push towards safety just to survive. Hopefully they will stumble upon a road or an interesting ruin before they are finally eaten alive.



Once a day (or hex, whatever works best for your scale) treacherous mountain terrain will consume a random piece of equipment. Ropes and spikes used to cross ravines will need to be left behind, poles will be lost into deep drifts, grapnels irretrievably wedged on ascending rock faces. If the party has a dwarf, ranger or local in it they can absorb one of these losses per journey. Characters with wisdom or intelligence bonuses can substitute one item for another once per journey— think of it as cleverly rigging something up: the torches melt through the ice wall they can't scale, a pole is used to clamber up a steep spot.

As long as the party has one of the item type that the roll says is consumed, then things are okay. If not, movement decreases (halved?) and things start getting harder (food and water consumption double?).

The party could be shown this chart before traveling, so they can see what is consumed more commonly and try to prepare for the trip accordingly, to give the feel of a big expedition. It could even make finding the remains of a previous expedition, with spikes and rope, treasure-like.



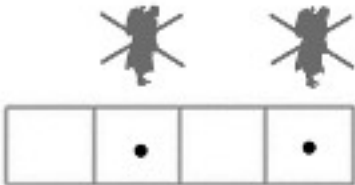
Every day in the swamp (traveling or not) gives  $1d4 + 1$  squares of dampness damage. The damp gets into food, ruins boots, and wears down pack animals trudging through soft, sticky earth. Players can choose where to put this dampness damage: on boots and armor or on pack animals. The idea is, you can privilege your gear, keeping it dry by overloading your animals or save the animals by trudging through the wet muck yourself.

When the dampness bar is full, the animals are through. They are lame. They've been left in sinkholes. For the boots/armor start taking dampness damage off of AC, once the bar is full, one a day. Loss of boots should mean slower movement rate too.

You can reset the bar by finding a dry enough spot to camp— one square cleared per day of fire and rest in camp.

If you have a one of any of the labeled folks in the party you can sink one square of dampness damage per day into them. The idea is that through know-how and experience they help the party avoid some of the most difficult terrain.

# JUNGLE TRAVEL



**DISAPPEARANCES**

**1-2** SAVE THEM  
1D4 MORE  
AT RISK

**3-4** SAVE THEM

**5-6** RESCUED

STR

DEX


CON

ELF

RANGER

DRUID

LOCAL

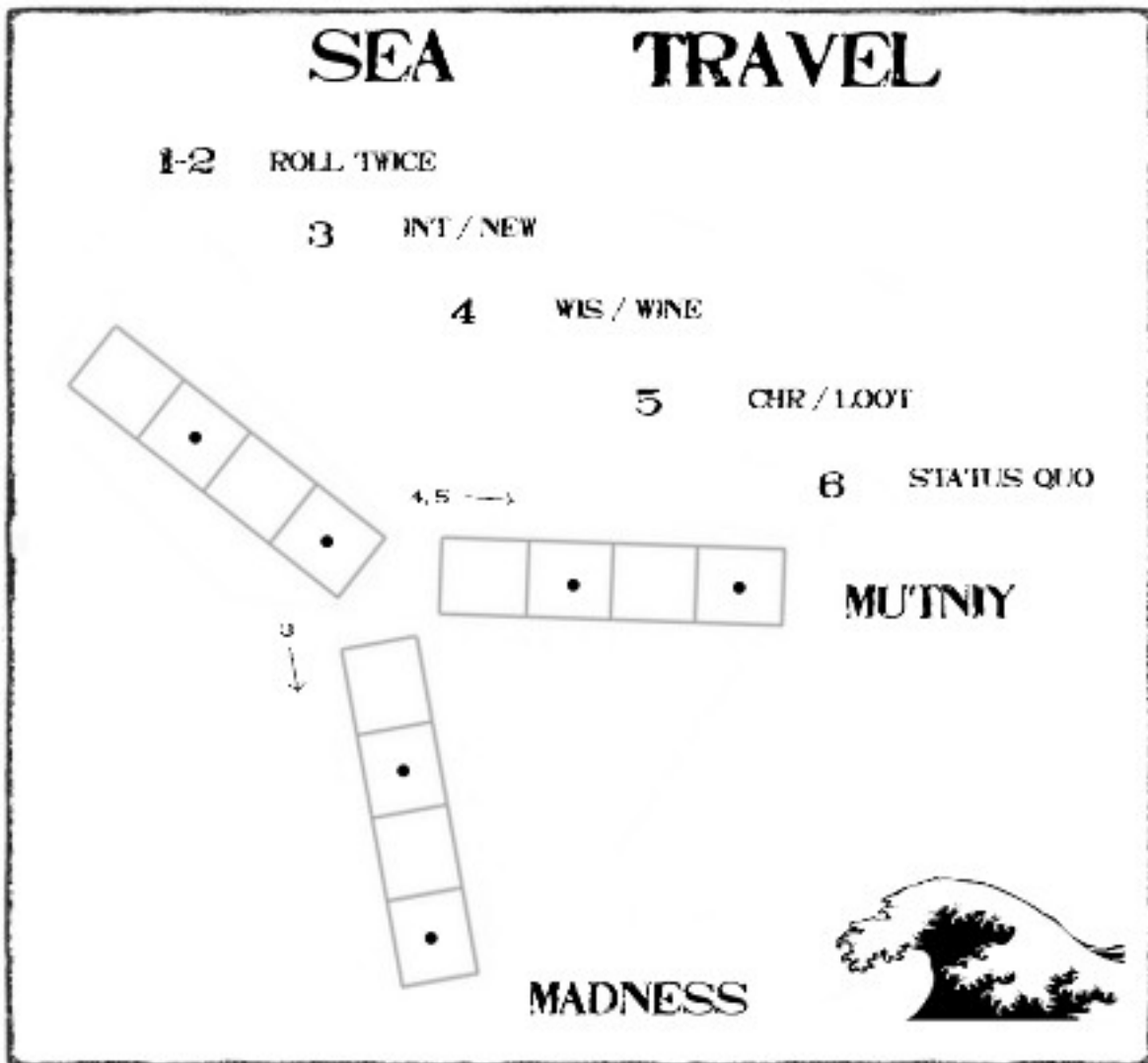


The jungle devours men and women— quicksand, silent constrictors, piranha filled streams. Every other day in the jungle (traveling or not) one hireling will disappear.

Having any of the special folks at the bottom of the chart in the party can save one hireling per journey.

Once per journey, a character with an exceptional strength, dexterity, or constitution can also prevent a disappearance.

Otherwise the party must leave the hirelings to the jungle or challenge this cruel fate by rolling a d6. A result of 5-6 means crisis averted— you grabbed the hireling's hand just as they were about to slip off the cliff trail. A result of 3-4 means the scene becomes a full-blown encounter: determine what the hazard is, whether environmental or wandering monster, and play it out. A result of 1-2 means the scene becomes a traditional encounter as well, but you've escalated the danger of the situation: 1d4 additional hirelings are knocked into the quicksand, are encircled by the giant anaconda, etc.

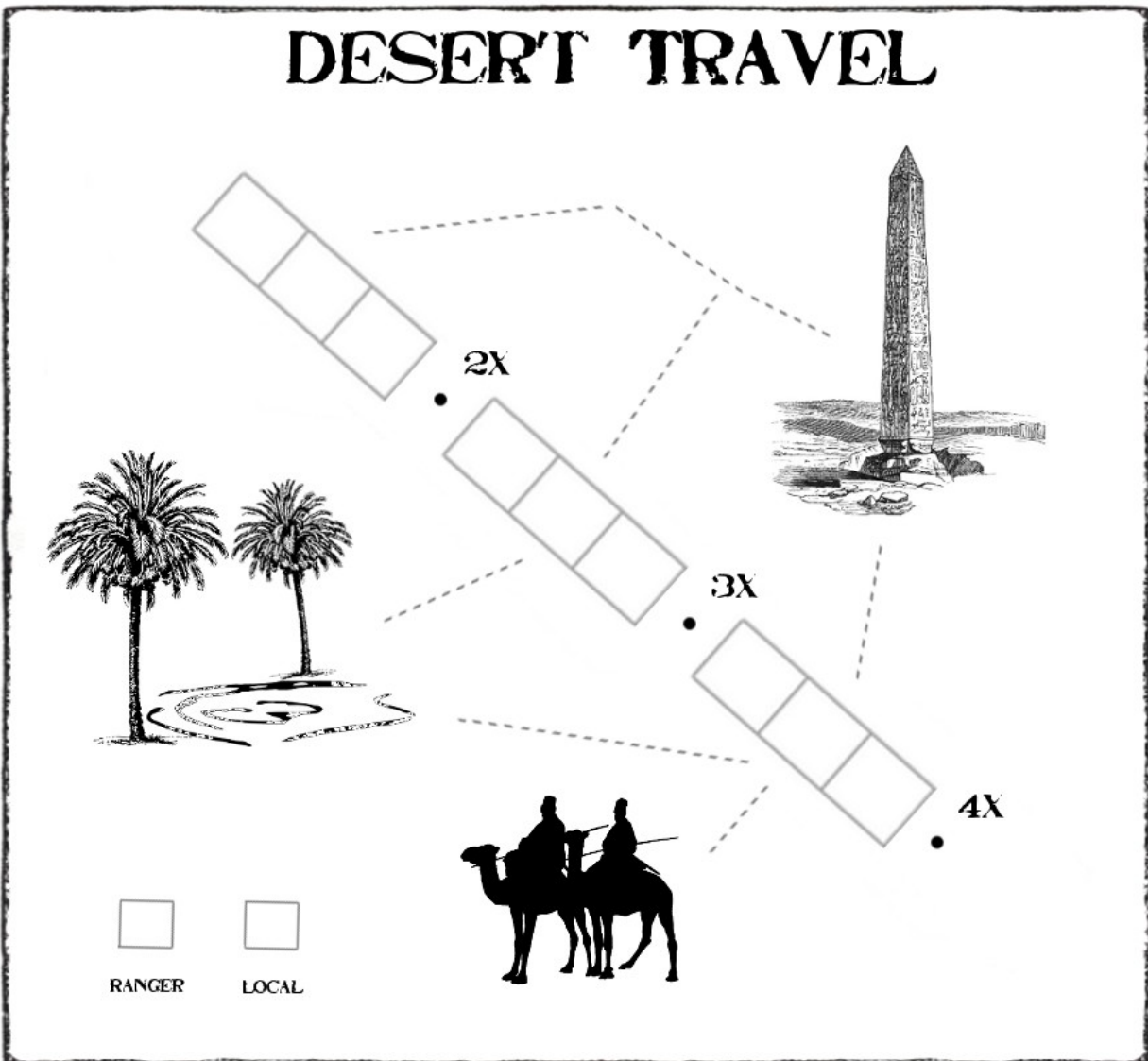


On the second day at sea with no encounter start the game by placing a marker on the first square. Each following day move one square, encounters don't matter any more. When you land on a square with a black spot your crew has become unhappy and is grumbling. Roll 1d6 to see how they challenge you.

Once per journey, a character with an exceptional intelligence, wisdom, or dexterity can appease the crew when that ability results in the challenge. If no one in the party has the right ability bonus you can offer up the secondary item: a change of scenery, wine women and song, or cold hard cash. As long as you meet their challenge you can hold the crew's discontent on that square. But every day you'll have to roll for another challenge.

Fail the challenge and the marker moves to the next box. Once you get to the fork, a challenge failed for 3 starts the crew spiraling into madness, depression, and possible suicide. A failed 4 or 5 will head them toward angry revolt, and either assaulting or marooning the party.

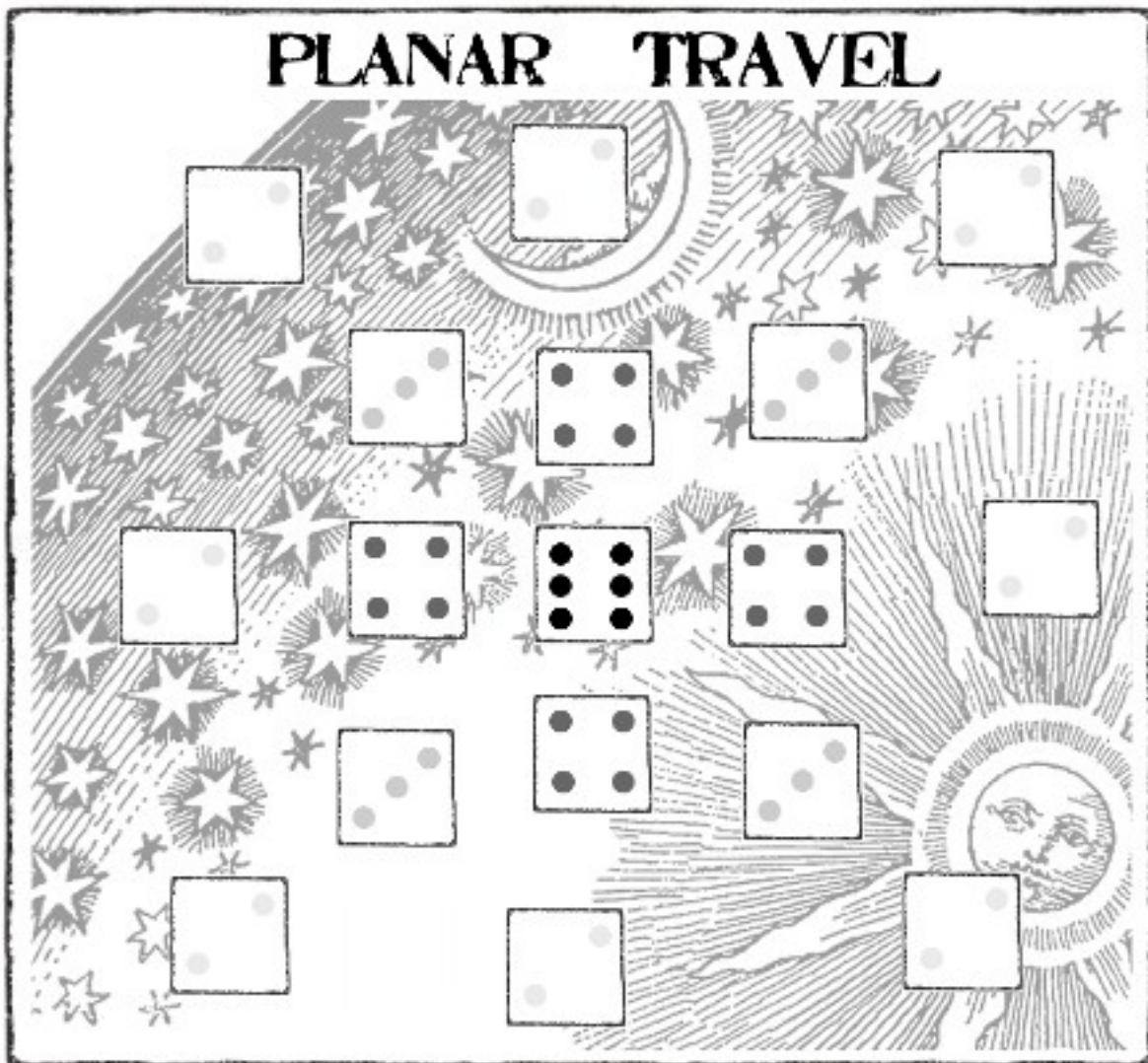
Once the game is started the only thing that can reset the board is port, or at least having the majority of the crew go ashore somewhere.



The desert is a grueling waste and the best way to deal with it is spend as little time there as you can. For every three days the party travels in the desert their water needs will multiply. Each day the party will see features that they can choose to explore or ignore. Exploring them will require an extra day. The features that might be seen during each three-day-span are linked with dotted paths. Landmarks are tombs and ruins or ancient stelae which might hold riches in gold or ancient knowledge. An oasis will provide food, water, and shade to a party for as long as they like; will allow them to re-stock their supplies; and will reset their place on the chart to the start. Caravans can offer food, water, and unerring transport, but may also be hostile bandits or slavers. Unfortunately, 50% of the time any of these three feature types will be mirages. And 25% of the time they will be one of the other two features.

Once a party member cannot meet the water requirements they must make a save each day to continue. Failing this save means they are unconscious. Each day after they are unconscious they must save or die.

Every landmark visited will offer a bonus against getting lost on subsequent journeys through the same area.



The character that initiated the travel begins in the center. The rest of the travellers are arranged around the initiator concentrically.

Every unit of travel each traveller must move one position as they are jostled about in the aether. Before moving each player rolls a d6. The position they can move to can only be their die roll or lower. Only one player can occupy a spot at a time.

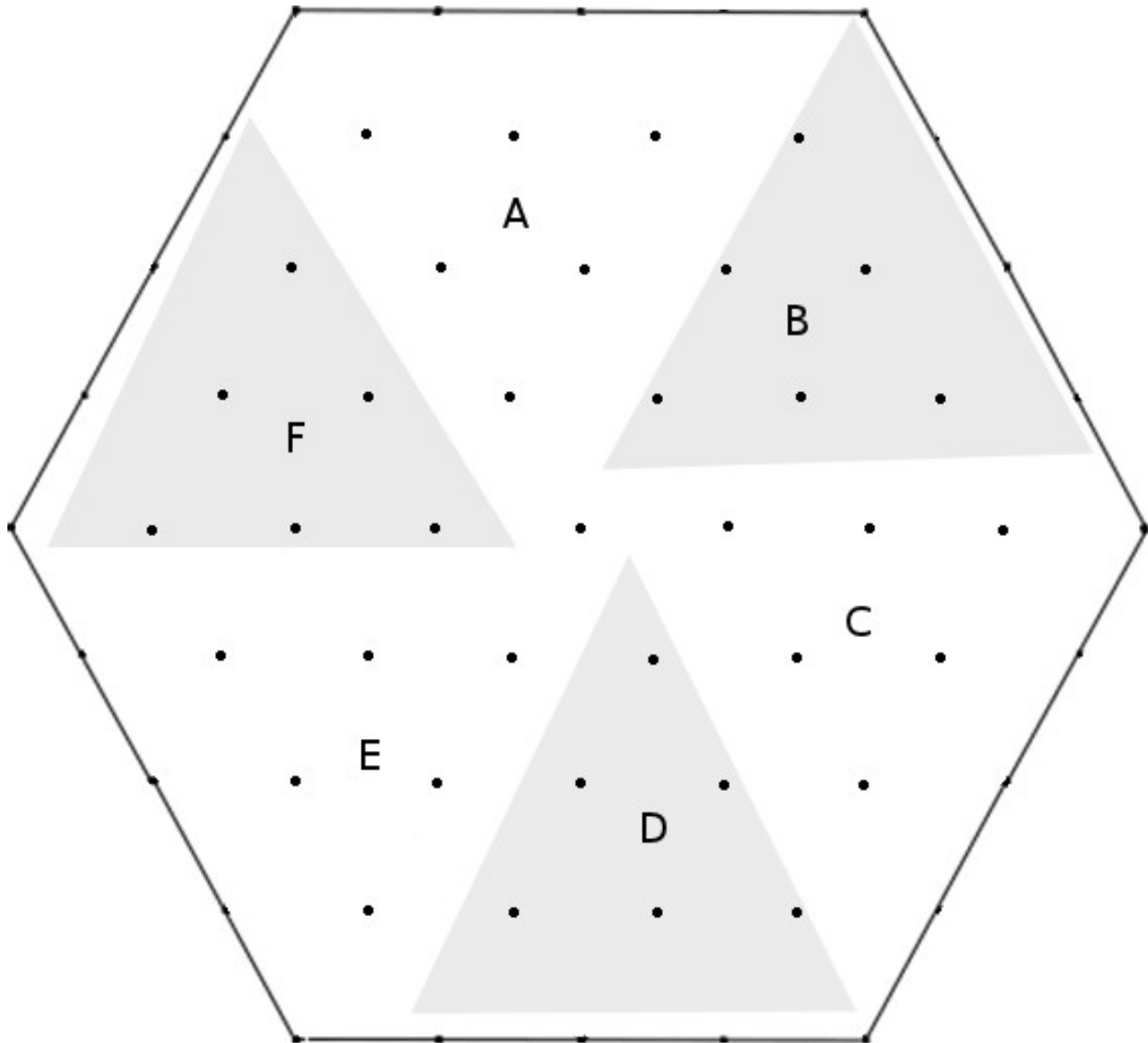
If a player rolls lower than all adjacent spaces they must move to the lowest space next to them. If a player on a 2 spot rolls a one or has adjacent spots blocked, they slip into the void.

Once a journey, players with exceptional intelligence can add their bonus to any persons die roll.

If the party is attacked while travelling, characters receive penalties to combat depending on which ring they have been jostled to: the three spots are -1, and the two spots are -2. A player lucky enough to be on the six spot receives +1 to combat that round.



# Trackless Wastes



Some areas, like the ocean, are so featureless that it's hard to help players maneuver around them. This idea uses a grid like the old Battleship game. The party enters the hex from a particular point, then, in searching for their destination, they tell the DM to which point they head.

You'll need to decide on visibility-- how many dots away can the party see. You can also decide on a certain number of dots moved depending on whether they are fighting the wind or not. And obviously the more they have to wander around the hex searching the more chances to encounter wandering monsters and interesting local encounters.

Keep in mind, this isn't a map, so players can still get lost. If the navigator fails a check or something maybe they think they are at D3 when they've actually drifted to C6.