Dry Steppes Campaign: Meshif Sections

Context

The player has arrived in the desert town of Tarsarak with his companion, LORATH, a member of the ancient Horadric order. Earlier in the campaign, the player came across Lorath, deeply hungover and sleeping in a goat pen. Lorath is wracked with guilt for abandoning his decades long fight against evil and taking up the simple life of a mountain hermit, allowing his apprentice to fall to corruption (thus setting the events of the game into motion).

Lorath is deeply depressed, and throughout the previous portions of the Dry Steppes campaign, the player has come to understand the depths of the reasons why.

Now, a sandstorm stands between them and their goal of confronting Lorath's apprentice. Unfortunately, they have had no luck convincing any of the local guides to help them through the storm. Each of them tells the player that they are too afraid of the "evil sorcerer" who conjured the sandstorm to make the attempt.

But, the player hears a rumor that there may be someone crazy enough to guide you through: an old man who spends his days in an opium haze in a flophouse on the banks of a nearby river.

Lorath and the player make their way to the river, and survive a bandit ambush before finding the old man, MESHIF, half asleep, in a basement. Lorath gives him a shove to wake him from his reverie. The player engages him.

PLAYER
Wake up.

MESHIF
(groggily)
Enh? Whassat? I'm paid up. Leave me be.

LORATH
We're not here to collect, we need—

Meshif eyes the Horadric symbol on Lorath's cloak. Through rheumy, intoxicated eyes, he does not see Lorath standing before him, but

another Horadrim, an old friend from several lifetimes ago: Deckard Cain *(A significant character from previous Diablo games)*

MESHIF
Hmm? It can't be… Is that the symbol of the Ho… Hora… uh…

LORATH
Horadrim?

MESHIF
Yes! Horadrim! Deckard? Deckard Cain!? Can it be you, old friend? It's me! Meshif!

LORATH
No, Deckard is gone. My name is Lorath. We need your help passing through the sandstorm to the north.

MESHIF
Sandstorm, eh? The others must've turned you down. Told you some rubbish about a sorcerer I'll wager! (cackles)

MESHIF
Well, what can a sorcerer do to me that time hasn't already! (laughs) Yes, yes! I'll help! There's an old chapel near there, an auspicious spot to begin a new adventure!

LORATH
Good. Gather whatever you need. I'll fetch Taissa and meet you there.

MESHIF
Ah! This is wonderful! Like old times, eh Deckard?

The player prepares for their journey, and meets Lorath and Deckard at the abandoned chapel. Meshif stands outside, checking over his camel's saddlebags.

MESHIF
Ah, you're here! Deckard is inside with your friend.

The player enters the chapel, and an additional scene takes place within, re-affirming the party's goals on the other side of the sandstorm. *(This scene has been omitted as it was written by other writers.)*

The player rejoins Meshif outside the chapel and engages him.

PLAYER
Are you ready?

MESHIF
(cackling) Are you? I hope you've lined your pockets with healing draughts. If not, help yourself to the ones I keep on Isabella here.

MESHIF (CONT'D)
Storm's going to get worse too, I can smell it. When it starts to kick up, we'll have to find something to shelter us, or there'll be nothing left of us but bones and stories.

The player can engage in optional dialog with Meshif

PLAYER
Tell me about Deckard Cain

MESHIF
Hah! Hasn't told you much about himself, eh? I remember when you couldn't stop him from talking!

MESHIF (CONT'D)
We met several lifetimes ago! In Aranoch, I believe, or maybe Lut Gholein? That's right, I was a sailor back then, and a handsome one too!

MESHIF (CONT'D)
Deckard always was such an intense fellow, but kind and dependable. Took it upon himself to right any wrong he found, and we found many!

MESHIF (CONT'D)
To think I would find him here of all places! Still just as intense, and still traveling with interesting company! (laughs)

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Lorath, Meshif and the Player make their way to the edge of a roiling sandstorm that blots out the sun behind it. Meshif pauses, and the player engages him.

PLAYER
Why have you stopped here?

MESHIF

Ah, just savoring the moment!

MESHIF (CONT'D)
This is going to be a trek to remember, eh, Deckard? I can't wait!

The party passes into the cloud of stinging sand, and slowly trudges forward, trusting Meshif's guidance. After a few minutes of walking and fending off desert wildlife, the skies grow darker.

MESHIF
(yelling)
The winds are turning angry! Follow me!

Meshif leads the party behind a low stone cliff, where several old caravans have been abandoned. The rock provides cover from the dangerous storm. Meshif examines the battered caravans.

MESHIF
Could it be? Hah! It is! The gods favor our journey, friends!

Meshif yanks a large crate from the sands, and cracks the lid. Inside are dozens of brown bottles.

MESHIF
Share a drink with me, Deckard! A toast to another life-or-death adventure!

LORATH
No, I… I've had quite enough. It's all yours.

MESHIF
Hah! I won't turn down such generosity!

Meshif takes several long pulls from the bottle, and after a few moments, the sands abate slightly.

MESHIF
Seems it's dying down. (chuckle)

MESHIF (CONT'D)
Onward!

The party continues their journey. Soon though, the wind begins to howl once again.

MESHIF
Storm’s kicking up again! This way, quickly!

Once again, Meshif leads the party to shelter, this time behind the empty carapace of a massive insect, its soft innards long since rotten away.

Meshif begins to pat his pockets, a horrified look slowly spreading across his face.

MESHIF
Oh… oh, no! No! Back! We need to go back!

LORATH
What? What’s wrong?

MESHIF
My pipe! I left my pipe back in the chapel! We must go back and get it!

LORATH
Old man, if you turn your back now, I’ll be the first to bury a blade in it!

MESHIF
Bah! Fine, but I won’t forget this betrayal Deckard, you know I won’t!

The winds relent slightly, allowing the party to continue.

MESHIF
(sour)
Come on then.

The party walks on, periodically beset by the animated remains of unfortunate pilgrims, scoured clean by the winds. For the third time, the winds pick up.

MESHIF
Hah! Storm’s not done with us yet! This way!

Meshif once again leads the party to shelter: this time the facade of a crumbling building. Meshif sits himself down, cross-legged in the sand, a strangely serene look on his face, as though he is not in the middle of a deadly vortex of sand and wind.

MESHIF
Ah, Deckard, do you remember the smell of the salt air on the ocean? No shade or devil could stand in our way!

His face turns serious, almost introspective.

MESHIF
Been all across this world since then. Seen things you wouldn't believe, but it was never quite the same. Wandering without a direction… it was just… waiting…

LORATH
Aye, it's important to have something to work towards.

MESHIF
One foot in front of the other, eh, old friend? If we stop walking, we die!

The party shares a moment before the winds begin to die down.

MESHIF
Sounds like the winds have calmed.

MESHIF (CONT'D)
Stay close.

The party begins the final leg of their journey, eventually passing through the other side of the sandstorm, and finding themselves in the outer gardens of a massive, opulent palace. Men and women lounge around languidly as stern, and well armed, guards keep a close eye on their surroundings.

MESHIF
Eh? That wasn't half as dangerous as the others made it seem!