

Dragon of the Desert

By Morrie Mullins

Living Force Plot Director and Campaign Designer

The primary approach to the landing platforms that surround Forard, on Almas, avoid passing over the desert that covers much of the southern half of the planet. The desert wasteland is not much to see, and the sight of the black monolith, rising out of the pale sand in the haze of green and yellow that is the strange atmosphere of Almas, disturbs many visitors. There are always those who choose this alternate approach, though. These thrill-seekers orbit Almas, watching the desert, speculating on the evil that must lie beneath. They remark on the line where the desert ends and the kaluthin begin - a line which is much more pronounced from orbit than it is from the surface of the planet. And they comment on the series of dunes that seem to wriggle across the sand, the way they appear to curve, coil, and shift like a great snake.



It was from these dunes that the legend of the k'kayeh dragon emerged. At first glance, the dunes greatly resemble something living, yet closer observation has always revealed them to be nothing more than piles of sand, built up over long years. It has never been the place of fact to interfere with legend, though, and stories spread of a great dragon, hundreds of kilometers in length, that lived beneath the sands of Almas.

"It feeds off the kaluthin."

"It was born from the energy of the dark side."

"It was a pet to Darth Rivan, and survived him by over a thousand years."

Many stories, almost all of them born out of hearsay, circulate about what has come to be known as the k'kayeh dragon. Does anyone know the truth of the creature? Even the origins of its name are lost in antiquity. But there's one thing we do know -- lately, expeditions to the desert have been finding teeth: tiny teeth, sharp as razors, and huge teeth, longer than a Wookiee is tall and with edges that slice metal as easily as a lightsaber would. Whatever creature these came from, it's huge, and you don't want to meet it.

While speculation about the creature runs rampant and is used as a tool to scare small children into behaving, the k'kayeh dragon is real, ancient, and wholly evil. While it is unclear whether the dragon ever qualified as a "pet" to Darth Rivan, it was certainly, at least in part, of his design. Since its birth over a thousand years ago, it has roamed the deep recesses of Almas, tearing through layers of rock and ice, swimming through rivers that have been thawed by the environment created by the kaluthin -- and hunting.

The creature itself is over 200 meters in length. Its outer dermal layer can hardly be called "skin," since it most closely resembles armor plating. It is, perhaps not coincidentally, the precise color of the sand that covers the wasteland of Almas, and if the great dragon is not moving, it is almost impossible to spot from above.

The beast spends very little time on the surface, though, preferring the cooler depths of the planet. It breathes equally well in air and water and makes the closest thing it has to a "home" in an enormous underground lake that sits at the conjunction of several of the rivers that move beneath the surface of the planet. It can sleep for weeks at a time before needing to surface and feed.

The k'kayeh dragon eats anything it can get its mouth around - which is to say, almost anything it wants. It has captured foolhardy travelers who insisted on braving the wasteland, swallowing them whole, ships and all. However, the beast requires more food than it can safely get near the surface, since satiating itself on the sentients of Almas would draw more attention to its existence than the creature wants. It subsists primarily on aquatic creatures, such as the blind coboko fish, that

populate the frigid subterranean rivers that it calls home. It also dines on the strangely pungent forfra moss, which grows on the ceilings of many of the tunnels beneath Almas. The moss grows slowly and can actually be toxic to the dragon if eaten at the wrong time in its development cycle, so the creature is careful. It bides its time until the scent of the moss is unmistakable before feasting.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the k'kayeh dragon is that the creature is sensitive to the Force. (This can, in large part, be attributed to the environment in which it has lived for the past millennium. It's also likely due to the influence of Darth Rivan, but exactly how the Sith Lord created the dragon and made it one of the most fearsome, silent guardians in the galaxy is unknown.) The creature is completely immune to any Sense-based Force ability, and something in the makeup of its hide makes it undetectable by sensors designed to detect life-forms. It's possible that the k'kayeh dragon is not "alive" in the sense that we understand the word, but this, of course, has never been proven.

K'kayeh Dragon: Force-Using Armored Subterranean Predator 20; IM -2; Defense 35 (-2 Dex, -8 size, +35 natural); Spd 10m, burrow 20m; VP/WP 540/400; Atk +33 melee (8d8+21 bite, crit 19-20) or +28 melee (4d10+10, 2 claws) or +28 melee (4d20+31, crush) or +18 ranged; SQ Surface Camouflage, Darkvision, DR 25, Sensor Immunity, Swallow Whole, Improved Grab (Claws), Immune to Sense-based Force abilities; SV Fort +32, Ref +10, Will +11; SZ Colossal (200 meters long); Rep 4; Str 52, Dex 6, Con 50, Int 6, Wis 20, Cha 15. Challenge Code I.

Skills: Hide +9, Intimidate +12, Listen +17, Move Silently +2, Spot +12, Survival (desert) +9, Understand Sith.

Force Skills: Force Strike +10, Enhance Ability +31, Battlemind +35.

Feats: Power Attack, Force Sensitive, Track, Cleave, Great Cleave, Frightful Presence, Improved Critical (Bite).

Force Feats: Rage, Alter, Control, Sense.

Special Qualities: Surface Camouflage (the k'kayeh dragon has a +10 species modifier to its hide checks while in a desert environment), Sensor Immunity (does not detect on life-form scanning sensors)

In combat, the k'kayeh dragon is fearsome. Its primary weapon is its bite, with which it frequently will attempt to swallow whatever is proving most annoying at the moment. However, it *usually* won't try to swallow anything smaller than Huge size, preferring to smash small things and grind them into the floor of the desert by flopping on top of them or pummeling them with its enormous claws.

In addition, two times a day, the k'kayeh dragon can shoot Force Lightning out its nostrils - one bolt from each nostril. The bolts emerge simultaneously, four meters apart, and either follow parallel paths, or converge on a single point. An individual who is targeted with only one bolt must make a DC 22 Reflex save against 4d8 wound damage (saving for half). Someone unfortunate enough to be targeted by *both* bolts must make a Reflex save against DC 28 or take 10d8 wounds (saving for half). Each use of its Force Lightning costs the dragon half of its current vitality points, so it calls on the ability only in dire circumstances.

Beyond its raw damage-dealing potential, the k'kayeh dragon has dozens of rows of razor-sharp teeth. These teeth ignore hardness in the same manner as lightsabers, and therefore bypass most forms of damage reduction.

Finally, having been designed to hold off armies of Jedi who might storm the Sith fortress, the k'kayeh dragon will, when faced with a large number of threats, utilize its crush attack. The creature rises up until it's almost vertical, then crashes down atop its targets. Everything in the appropriate range (200 meters x 40 meters, the dimensions of the dragon's body) must make a reflex save with DC equal to the attack roll of the dragon or be crushed for 4d20 damage. Those who succeed at the save manage to get clear of the dragon's crush and take no damage; those who fail take damage and are trapped unless the dragon elects to move. Trapped victims take 4d10 damage every round they remain beneath the dragon (it does not need to roll an attack for this, and can take other actions during the rounds in which victims are trapped beneath it). Each round,

they may try to wriggle free by making Escape Artist checks against a DC equal to the amount of damage they suffered the previous round.

*If you want to learn more about the **Living Force** campaign and how to take part in the adventure, this [introduction](#) will get you started.*