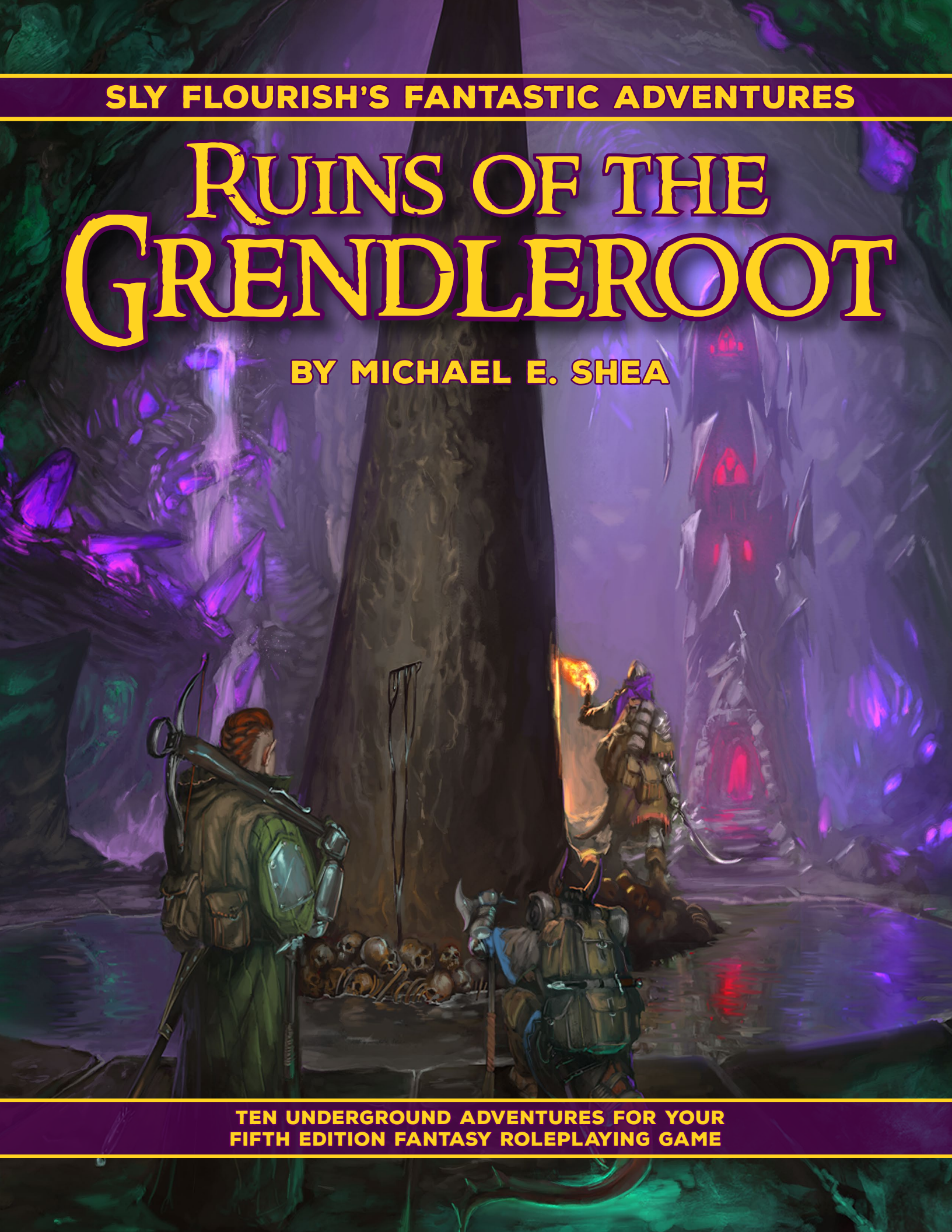


SLY FLOURISH'S FANTASTIC ADVENTURES

RUINS OF THE GRENDLEROOT

BY MICHAEL E. SHEA



**TEN UNDERGROUND ADVENTURES FOR YOUR
FIFTH EDITION FANTASY ROLEPLAYING GAME**

SLY FLOURISH'S FANTASTIC ADVENTURES

RUINS OF THE GRENDLEROOT

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

Endless discoveries within the forgotten caverns, mysterious vaults, and ancient ruins of Blackclaw Mountain await those heroes willing to brave the adventures found in these pages.

R*uins of the Grendleroot* is a series of ten short adventures for the fifth edition of the world's most popular fantasy roleplaying game. Designed for characters of 1st to 5th level, these adventures take place in the caverns, chambers, tunnels, and ruins of the mountain known as Blackclaw, within which lurks the Grendleroot—a strange power of otherworldly sentience.

Any of these adventures can be run independently as single-session games of roughly two to four hours, or they can be tied together as part of a larger campaign. Five of the adventures can be combined together into a five-session minicampaign that focuses on the strange consciousness lying at the center of the mysterious mountain. However you play them, each adventure is meant to be used with story-based level advancement.

This book is designed to make your life easier as a Gamemaster. Each of its ten adventures is designed to get you up and running quickly. If you're familiar with the format of the book *Sly Flourish's Fantastic Adventures* and the concepts in the book *Return of the Lazy Dungeon Master*, the setup of these adventures will be familiar to you. Even if you aren't, though, you'll find this approach intuitive and straightforward. In this book, you'll find inspirational artwork, beautiful maps, fantastic locations, short readable summaries of places and events, evocative keywords to

spark your own imagination, flexible read-aloud text, and piles of ideas to fuel your own stories.

This book is designed to be useful to you in many different ways. All of these adventures are set up so you can play them as written, add elements of your own to them, or pull them apart and use those parts to build your own adventures in your own campaign world. You can use the material contained here to create an underground explorer's outpost, using the book's random encounter tables to help the characters explore the limitless mysteries of the mountain. You can take the fantastic locations in these adventures and fill them with your own stories, or create interesting side treks in your ongoing campaign, memorable sites the characters might encounter in their travels, and more.

You can use the material in *Ruins of the Grendleroot* in any way you find useful. This book is yours now.

Philosophies of this Book

This book is built around a number of core philosophies, all intended to help you, the Gamemaster, get the most out of it—and to help you run great games with your players.

SITUATIONS, NOT STORIES

Great roleplaying stories unfold at your table, not in any book. The adventures in *Ruins of the Grendleroot* give you interesting situations in fantastic locations, plus the hooks to draw the characters into the action. How the players choose to have their characters navigate these situations is up to them, though. Your job is to facilitate the story that takes place during the game, shaping the situations in each adventure in response to the actions of the characters. These adventures don't presume how the characters will succeed in any specific situation or encounter. Instead, you lay out the situation and the players choose how to approach it.

A FOCUS ON UNDERGROUND EXPLORATION

These adventures focus on the exploration of ancient ruins and lost settlements in the caverns and chambers within and beneath a mysterious mountain. The characters' initial home base in the mountain is Deepdelver's Enclave, a settlement built by and for adventurers and explorers. A sense that adventuring is about exploration is reinforced heavily in the enclave, and this idea should be passed along to the players before they build their characters. Players will have the most fun in the mountain if their characters have the skills and the desire to explore it. Opportunities abound for combat and roleplaying, but exploration is the major theme of these adventures.

OPTIMISTIC EXCITEMENT

Other adventures might bring dark and deadly dangers into the spotlight. These adventures do not. Although dangers abound in the mountain, these adventures focus on optimistic exploration as their central theme. The characters should be eager to uncover the secrets contained in the ruins, and even when disasters happen, the people of Deepdelver's Enclave always manage to return to their central desire of uncovering mysteries through exploration. You can help reinforce this atmosphere of optimistic excitement to the players by going big with descriptions, and by being a fan of their characters as they uncover the mysteries of the ancient mountain and the ruins within.

A PLACE YOU WANT TO GO

Though exploring the caverns of Blackclaw and the ruins of the Grendleroot is not for the faint of heart, these locations should be places that the players and

the characters want to go to. Deepdelver's Enclave is a community filled with good cheer and tales of fantastic adventures. Celebrations are common, and the people of the enclave take care of one another. The ruins of the mountain hold great danger, but also fantastic mysteries worthy of exploration. Make this mysterious mountain a place you daydream about when you're not running games at the table, so that your enthusiasm can be passed on to the players and the characters alike.

Ruins of the Grendleroot

The mountain known as Blackclaw, home to the ruins of the Grendleroot, rises at the center of a remote valley. The land around the mountain is actually an impact crater formed millions of years ago when a mysterious celestial body crashed to the world—killing nearly every living thing on the planet, and leaving the mountain behind.

For millennia, humanoid explorers and settlers have sought out the mysteries of the mountain, and have attempted to tame a strange magical energy found within it. The races that once dwelled in Blackclaw are left to your determination, depending on the needs of your campaign, but might include dwarves, duergar, gnomes, goblinoids, orcs, dark elves, and other traditional dungeon races.

For some of those who explored or settled in Blackclaw, the strange energy of the mountain led to remarkable levels of creativity. For others, it added fuel to the arcane magic they practiced. Monsters have also ceaselessly sought out the mountain, though no one knows what calls to them from deep inside Blackclaw. But for eons, intelligent and monstrous creatures alike carved out lairs, tombs, sanctums, cities, temples, and vaults throughout the mountain.

And then disaster came to Blackclaw.

Two centuries ago, tens of thousands of unbreakable black metal spires erupted within the rock of the mountain, spreading through it like the roots of weeds. Most often taking a form resembling enormous claws or teeth, these spires destroyed subterranean cities, collapsed caverns, buried vaults—and uncovered previously lost ruins that had gone unseen for thousands of years.

In the aftermath of the destruction, survivors came to call these spires “the Grendleroot”—a name passed down by the residents of a subterranean gnome settlement known as Violet Falls. For centuries, the gnomes had suspected that the mysterious power

lurking deep in the heart of the mountain was a god that they called “the Grendle.” When the spires tore through the mountain, the gnomes named them the Grendleroot. Refugees from Violet Falls passed that name and lore along, and it stuck with the explorers who would become the founders of Deepdelver’s Enclave.

With the coming of the Grendleroot, the permanent settlements of Blackclaw were abandoned. Now only the adventuring explorers of Deepdelver’s Enclave dare to construct new settlements in the mountain, and only they dare to explore the mysteries of its hidden depths.

The ruins of the Grendleroot serve as the backdrop to the adventures in this book. Much of the detail of this mysterious intelligent entity is left purposefully vague so that you can change it, twist it, or replace it with your own ideas for your own campaign. Likewise, many of the adventures in this book feature the strange black spires of the Grendleroot, but you are free to alter the mysterious details of those spires yourself.

FIVE SECRETS OF THE GRENDLEROOT

The truth of the Grendleroot is the greatest mystery in the mountain, and the ultimate challenge to those who explore its depths. The five initial secrets presented here are known to most of the residents of Deepdelver’s Enclave, and are things the characters can discover as they begin to delve within Blackclaw:

- The stone and iron of the mountain holds great power. Humanoids and monsters alike have explored the caverns and chambers of Blackclaw for millennia, drawn to this mysterious energy.
- Artists, poets, writers, and sages are said to receive great inspiration while inside the mountain. Their dreams are often filled with wonderful otherworldly visions. Sometimes, however, people dwelling in the mountain can experience nightmares whose visions border on insanity.
- The spires of the Grendleroot erupted without warning and grew at great speed, then stopped. They haven’t moved in the two centuries since they appeared. All the spires are slightly warm to the touch, and cannot be broken or damaged by any physical or magical means.
- During the appearance of the Grendleroot spires, many caverns and chambers in the mountain were destroyed or lost, while other areas that had been hidden for thousands of years became uncovered.

A SPIRE OF THE GRENDLEROOT



- Many folk worry that the spires will move again, destroying existing caverns or collapsing the entire mountain. This has prevented the dominant humanoid races of the region from reestablishing permanent settlements in the mountain.

The deeper secrets of the Grendleroot—including the nature and origins of this mysterious entity—can be learned as the characters participate in these adventures. See the “What is the Grendleroot?” section for more information.

WHAT IS THE GRENDLEROOT?

The origin and details of the Grendleroot are ultimately left up to you. For the players and characters, though, the sages of Deepdelver’s Enclave have many theories that they are willing to share over a cup of steaming coffee.

Some believe the Grendleroot is a seed of evil that pierced through the boundaries of the planes to root itself deep within the mountain. Others believe it’s an alien entity that crashed to the planet millions of years

ago, along with the rocky celestial body in which it was held. Some think it was a powerful magic ritual that went awry, and which continues to grow in power in the depths of the mountain. And some believe that the depths of the mountain mark a border between the material world and an indescribable void, in which cyclopean entities float through eternity.

The only things commonly agreed on regarding the Grendleroot is that it is old, powerful, and sentient. It has spread its tendril-like spires all throughout the mountain, and is unlike any other creature or entity known to the intelligent races of the world.

The Grendleroot has a strong presence in a handful of the adventures in this book, particularly in the book's final adventure, "Seed of the Black Cathedral." Even in those adventures, though, you can re flavor the Grendleroot to suit your own campaign however you wish. It might be a cyclopean horror from the maddening void, a powerful demon trapped in the mountain, or an angel fallen from the celestial realm. It might be a godlike child-creature whose awakening could destroy the multiverse, a portal to another plane, a sentience from another world that will continue to grow until it consumes the planet, or anything else that fits into your own story or comes blossoming from your own imagination.

As written, this book assumes that the Grendleroot is an otherworldly seed, conscious of its own existence and calling out to other entities like it across the void. It was captured by beings of great intelligence who placed it for study within a mote of rock and iron floating in the Astral Plane. When an unknown disaster tore through the barrier between that plane and this one, it sent the rock crashing down to the world and left the mountain of Blackclaw in its wake.

The Grendleroot has spent the last million years trying to escape its prison at the heart of the mountain. The coming of the spires was its most recent great attempt—but not its final one.

You can use this origin story or whichever other story best fits your own campaign. Just remember that the origin of the Grendleroot should remain an ongoing mystery throughout these adventures.

Coming to Blackclaw

The mountain known as Blackclaw is the central location of these adventures, and the characters can come to know the mountain in any way that fits your campaign.

If you're running these adventures as part of a short campaign or as single-session scenarios, the characters can begin in Deepdelver's Enclave. Give the players information on how the enclave operates and on the commonly known features of the mountain. This gets characters into the action quickly without having to explain their motivations for coming to Blackclaw.

Read or summarize the following text to familiarize the players with the mountain and the enclave:

Deepdelver's Enclave is situated in a vast cavern, spread along a hundred-foot-high cliff overlooking the ruins of a subterranean city below, once known as Shadowreach. Monsters and intelligent beings alike have long come to Blackclaw, drawn by a mysterious magical power within the mountain.

For millennia, those creatures built lairs, keeps, fortresses, villages, and cities in the countless caverns and chambers of the mountain. But then the strange black spires of the Grendleroot erupted from out of the rock. Tearing through stone like the claws of some great beast or the roots of an unnatural weed forged of metal, the Grendleroot collapsed caverns and buried settlements, and the mountain was abandoned.

Today, Deepdelver's Enclave is the lone permanent settlement inside Blackclaw. Like all the explorers and adventurers who come to the enclave, you seek to investigate the lost wonders of the mountain, and to uncover the mysteries that still lay buried in its depths.

In your own campaign or as part of a larger story, the characters might travel to Blackclaw for a variety of reasons. Perhaps they have business with or seek advice from an NPC in Deepdelver's Enclave. They might need to acquire something in the mountain. Or Blackclaw might just be one fantastic location in a much longer campaign of your own design.

However they come to the mountain, the characters are likely to make Deepdelver's Enclave their first stop. If your own plans for the campaign involve the characters exploring on their own first or needing to seek out Deepdelver's Enclave, you can read or summarize the following when they reach it:

You stand upon a cliff overlooking a vast underground cavern. Multiple tunnels lead into and out of the cavern in addition to the route you've taken from the surface. Massive stalactites hang from the ceiling, above the ruins of a subterranean city. No signs of life in the ruins can be seen. But the red glow of firelight and the faint sound of music come from the far side of the cavern. Some sort of settlement stands there, spread out along the top of a cliff that rises one hundred feet above the ruins below. Two long, winding switchback trails lead up to cliff-top gatehouses offering entrance to this enclave.

Placing Blackclaw Mountain into Your Campaign

Blackclaw Mountain is designed to fit into just about any fantasy world, whether of your own design or part of a published campaign setting. The mountain can be a single peak in a large range, a lonely highland in a great plain, a pocket dimension, or a splinter between worlds. Drop Blackclaw Mountain into your world wherever it makes sense and won't disturb other parts of that world.

Blackclaw Mountain is also potentially infinite in its depth. All the locations and adventures in this book are set up within the mountain, and as a self-contained fantasy environment, the mountain can be expanded however you wish. You can add in borders marking the entrances to other worlds, tunnels to vast cities, and the lairs of monsters of any type and size. If it can be found underground, you can add it to Blackclaw.

The mountain is thus both a self-contained adventure location, easy to drop into any fantasy world, and an infinite portal opening up to a lifetime of stories. Use it as best fits the stories you and your players want to share.

The Adventures of the Grendleroot

This section summarizes the ten adventures contained in this book, which are presented in order by starting character level.

THE CALL OF STARSONG TOWER (LEVEL 1)

Long ago, Starsong Tower served as a beacon of light in the massive cavern that is now home to



Deepdelver's Enclave. The tower went dark with the coming of the Grendleroot, but was somehow reactivated three days ago—and now its corrupted violet light fills the folk of the enclave with nightmares. One of the elders of the enclave asks the characters to enter Starsong Tower and end the corruption, letting them earn the gratitude of the enclave and establish themselves as seasoned adventurers.

This is a two-hour introductory adventure for 1st-level characters, intended to introduce the characters and players to Deepdelver's Enclave, the caverns of Blackclaw, and the ruins of the Grendleroot.

TEMPLE OF THE FORGOTTEN GOD (LEVEL 2)

A young child named Sophie goes missing during Wee Delver's Week, having traveled down recently exposed tunnels leading to the temple of an ancient and long-forgotten elven god. A voice that Sophie claims to hear—once thought to be the girl's imaginary friend—is that of the forgotten god, on the verge of death and desperate for the attention of its one last follower. The characters must travel to the temple and bring young Sophie home, while determining the fate of a god on the brink of destruction.

This is a three- to four-hour adventure for 2nd-level characters.

THE SPIRE OF VIOLET FALLS (LEVEL 2)

A section of cliff top near Deepdelver's Enclave collapses, exposing unknown tunnels—and unleashing a host of gnome zombies that attack the enclave. The tunnels appear to lead to the lost gnome mining village of Violet Falls. That settlement's reclusive folk were known to few even before the spires of the Grendleroot shattered Blackclaw Mountain, and have not been heard from since. The characters travel to Violet Falls, intent on discovering the fate of the gnome village and ending the danger of further attacks against the enclave.

This is a two- to four-hour adventure for 2nd-level characters.

A FISTFUL OF COPPER (LEVEL 3)

Competing gangs of orcs and hobgoblins have come to Blackclaw seeking plunder and glory, and now threaten Deepdelver's Enclave. The characters must find a way to contend with both groups, perhaps infiltrating their lairs, setting one faction against the other, or defending against both groups of foes if they hope to protect the enclave from being overrun.

This is a four-hour adventure for 3rd-level characters.

SHATTER (LEVEL 3)

A blind priest arrives at Deepdelver's Enclave and manages to shatter one of the unbreakable spires of the Grendleroot. He then teleports away from the enclave, leaving undead shadows in his wake. His apprentice, fearful for the danger her master brings to Blackclaw, explains the priest's intent to collapse the mountain by destroying the Worldpillar—a column of Grendleroot spires that holds up the roof of a huge cavern. The characters must travel to the Forest of Iron, a region in which the spires of the Grendleroot grow like trees. There, they can confront the priest and stop his mad plan.

This is a two- to four-hour adventure for 3rd-level characters.

CHUUL (LEVEL 3)

During Deepdelver's Enclave's Festival of Fancy Hats, a halfling explorer returns from an expedition to a series of uncharted caves, and reports having found a temple filled with joy. But his demand that everyone in the enclave follow him to behold his discovery turns to violence when people refuse. The characters travel to the uncharted caves to determine what drove the halfling mad, and what other dangers might lurk within. Upon reaching a once-submerged cavern complex, they find a strange, ancient temple and hear a voice demanding their subservience. In the temple, the characters must face off against an ageless horror and hope to end its eternal villainy.

This is a two- to four-hour adventure for 3rd-level characters.

THE CELL (LEVEL 4)

In Deepdelver's Enclave, an explorer dies in the course of releasing a creature out of nightmare, and an elderly monk of a lost monastic order recognizes it as a sign of impending doom. The magical bonds that hold a powerful creature imprisoned in a long-forgotten monastery deep in the mountain are weakening. The monk begs the characters to travel to the monastery and bind the creature in its cell once again. The characters are not the only ones aware of the creature, however. A pack of mad cultists and a band of knights are already on their way to the monastery—with both factions intent on freeing the creature for their own ends.

This is a two- to four-hour adventure for 4th-level characters

VAULT OF THE WHITE QUEEN (LEVEL 4)

In a vault buried deep within the mountain dwells a being of great age and wisdom—and with a thirst for blood. When a new awakening of the Grendleroot threatens all of Blackclaw Mountain, the characters are sent to seek out this White Queen, named by a sage as the only creature that can calm the Grendleroot. The characters must travel to the strange underground village whose folk protect the White Queen, hoping to earn her favor and convince her to use her power to quiet the quakes that could collapse the mountain.

This is a two- to four-hour adventure for 4th-level characters.

CHILDREN OF THE RED ROSE (LEVEL 5)

Two members of an ancient elven assassins' guild have come to Blackclaw Mountain seeking revenge. Their target, a war hero and retired sheriff named Ruth Willowmane, leaves Deepdelver's Enclave to lead the assassins to the Den of Bones, a vast graveyard that calls to monsters and humanoids alike as life fades from them. Ruth's longtime companion asks the characters to go to the Den of Bones and save her from the two assassins, before her bones are added to those of the dead.

This is a four-hour adventure for 5th-level characters.

SEED OF THE BLACK CATHEDRAL (LEVEL 5)

Betrayal shatters the peace of Deepdelver's Enclave when Alvana, the leader of a band of explorers, murders most of her party after discovering a legendary site holding a powerful relic deep in the heart of the mountain. The survivor who returns to the enclave to tell the tale warns that Alvana intends to enter the legendary Black Cathedral and take control of the Grendleroot. The characters must travel to the site and stop Alvana before her hunger for power threatens the mountain—and the world.

This is a four-hour adventure for 5th-level characters.

The Grendleroot Campaign Arc

The adventures in this book can all be run separately or as part of an ongoing campaign. Additionally, five of the adventures are specifically written so that they

can be connected together into a five-level campaign arc focusing on the mystery of the Grendleroot:

- “The Call of Starsong Tower” (level 1)
- “The Spire of Violet Falls” (level 2)
- “Shatter” (level 3)
- “Vault of the White Queen” (level 4)
- “Seed of the Black Cathedral” (level 5)

If you want to run only these adventures, you'll have the characters gain a new level after each adventure.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURES

Each adventure in this book follows a common format, meant to provide all the information you need to run the adventure as easily as possible.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Each adventure begins with an adventure summary that helps you get a clear idea of what the adventure is about. The summary notes which monsters and NPCs might be involved in combat in the adventure, and the maximum number of them that might appear at one time. If you use miniatures or tokens in your game, this can help you prepare what you need to run the adventure.

NOTABLE NPCs

Each adventure includes information on the most notable NPCs in the adventure, providing a quick reference for alignment, gender, race, stat block, and description. Adventures might also contain other NPCs, which are noted in the locations in which they are encountered.

SECRETS AND CLUES

Each adventure also includes a list of secrets and clues. If you're familiar with *Return of the Lazy Dungeon Master*, you'll recognize the idea of secrets and clues, which summarize some of the significant background details of the adventure. You can keep these details in mind and drop them in during the game when it's time for the characters to learn or discover something. This might be when they're talking to an NPC or when they're examining a fresco on an ancient crumbling wall.

There are no specific points in the adventure when you're told to drop in a secret or clue, and you need not reveal all of the secrets and clues noted for any adventure. **You decide which secrets and clues are revealed, how they are revealed, and when they are revealed while running the game.**

STRONG START AND HOOKS

Each adventure includes a number of adventure hooks to draw the characters into the story. This section also describes ways in which the adventure might be customized to fit the backgrounds of the characters or the current campaign story.

In addition to these hooks, each adventure also has a strong start that draws the characters in. Many of the book's adventures begin with combat, but you can always skip this combat if you want to run a faster game. Each strong start also describes how the characters become involved in the adventure's setup, and guides them on their next steps.

PACING THE ADVENTURES

This section offers advice for tuning the adventures in this book to fit the time you have to run them and the pace you want to set. Each adventure presents options to change the pace, either speeding it up or slowing it down. In addition, most of these adventures identify optional creature encounters. If a particular encounter with one or more creatures doesn't fit the time and pace of the game, remove the creatures from the scene and let the characters move on to the next scene.

Appendix B ("Blackclaw Mountain Gamemaster's Toolkit") includes random locations, environments, features, and encounters the characters might come across during their journeys through Blackclaw Mountain. In shorter games, you might skip these traveling encounters completely. In longer games, you might include a location and a notable feature so that you can decide whether the characters run into an encounter there or not.

Before running any of these adventures, decide how long you want it to last and plan up front what to include or exclude to fit that time. Figure out what you might add or take away later on in the session if things move too quickly or too slowly. Keep your hands on the dials and use these pacing options to run the best game you can run.

LOCATIONS, AREA ASPECTS, AND READ-ALoud TEXT

Location descriptions in each adventure include overall details of an adventure's main locations, in addition to specific details of each smaller area within a larger area.

Individual encounter locations also include area aspects. You can think of these as inspirational tags to help you quickly focus on the important parts of a location. Use them as a reminder when running

the adventure, or to help you narrate your own descriptions when running it.

Adventures also feature italicized read-aloud text for each location. You can read this text out loud to your players, or you can paraphrase and summarize the descriptions. Read-aloud text does not describe the inhabitants of an encounter location, so you'll always be free to change those inhabitants up when running an adventure.

CREATURES AND TREASURE

Specific location descriptions often include creatures and treasure. Though creatures typically appear as combat encounters, many of those encounters are optional, and they can be removed if time is short or if they don't fit the pace of your game. You're also free to replace these optional encounters with your own encounters.

Where they appear in an adventure, monster names and NPC types are in **bold** to identify that they use standard stat blocks. You can find these stat blocks in the official fifth edition book of monsters, or in the fifth edition System Reference Document. The names of magic items (as well as spells) that appear in the adventure are in *italics*. This tells you that you can find information on those items and spells in your fifth edition rulebooks or the System Reference Document.

CONCLUSION

Each adventure ends with a "Concluding the Adventure" section, telling you what happens after the characters' work is done. This conclusion also offers suggestions for how the ending of one scenario might connect to the characters' next fantastic adventures.

CHAPTER 1

DEEDELVER'S ENCLAVE

Nestled in a ruin-filled underground cavern, Deepdelver's Enclave is a beacon of light within a mountain filled with darkness and ancient mysteries.

This chapter describes Deepdelver's Enclave, a small settlement of adventurers and explorers sitting atop a plateau within a vast cavern.

The Enclave, as its residents call it, was once part of the underground city of Shadowreach, and sits some one hundred feet above the wider ruins of the city. Deepdelver's Enclave was founded less than a century ago, and has a permanent population of fewer than two hundred people. The dangers of Blackclaw Mountain and the mysterious threat of the Grendleroot keep the settlement's growth in check. Yet all the people of the enclave have stout hearts, strong backs, and a shared gleam in their eyes that speaks to a hunger for seeking out the unknown.

Deepdelver's Enclave serves as the home settlement for characters undertaking each of the ten adventures in this book. In the enclave, the adventurers will meet nonplayer characters (NPCs) who serve as quest-givers, traders, and allies. Deepdelver's Enclave is a place of good cheer, continual celebration, reasonable comfort, and strong companionship.

Trade in the enclave is robust, and traveling caravans run regularly between the settlement and the outside world. The journey to or from the enclave takes roughly three days, and runs through a set of well-traveled tunnels that lead to the outside of the

mountain. The route is dangerous, however, requiring armed escorts.

The climate in the enclave changes depending on the climate of the cavern that surrounds it. Sometimes it's comfortably warm. Other times, a chill rolls through. None can say exactly why the temperature changes in the caverns of the mountain so far below the surface—sometimes even seeming to mimic the seasons of the world above. But change it does.

History of Shadowreach

As with all the other aspects of this book, you are free to reskin the details of Deepdelver's Enclave and the ruined city of Shadowreach to fit your own campaign world. Your own details, hooks, and character connections might be stronger than any you'll find in this chapter. However, if you prefer to have some details filled out for you, you can use the following section to fill in the history of Blackclaw Mountain. See chapter 2 for a deeper history of the city of Shadowreach.

THE MOUNTAIN COMES TO THE WORLD

One Million Years Ago

Over a thousand millennia ago, an asteroid of rock and iron tore through the fabric of the Astral Plane and crashed down upon the world. The cataclysmic

impact killed nearly every living thing on the planet. Some believe that the asteroid was a vessel—a floating laboratory home to hyperintelligent humanoids known as the Caretakers. In this vessel, the Caretakers studied a creature they had discovered in the deepest reaches of the multiverse, and which was so powerful and dangerous that they could safely contain it only within an isolated rock floating in the planar void.

At the point where the asteroid struck, a great black mountain was thrown up. The world took hundreds of thousands of years to recover after the crash, during which time monsters and intelligent races alike sought out the strange power they could feel deep in the mountain's heart.

THE MAGOCRACY OF THE BLACK STAR

600 Years Ago

Roughly six centuries ago, a cabal of nine powerful wizards known as the archmages of the Black Star came to the mountain. They found a large cavern within it, deeming it perfect for the isolation they sought for their magical research. The nine archmages were served by a host of enthralled servants, devoted half-dragons, undead minions, and goblinoid slaves. Declaring themselves the Magocracy of the Black Star, they used the labor of their slaves and undead to raise the city of Shadowreach and the nine towers around the city that were their private sanctums. Great statues of the nine mages still stand on the outer walls of the vast cavern surrounding the ruins.

For three centuries, the Black Star mages explored the mountain and conducted tremendous and terrible experiments within their nine towers. Like many before them, the mages sought the source of the mountain's power, sending hundreds of slaves to explore the endless tunnels of the mountain. Most never returned. However, through their explorations, the members of the magocracy discovered hundreds of ancient lairs within Blackclaw, including some dating back to the formation of the mountain.

The archmages of the Black Star discovered beings hundreds of thousands of years old in intricate networks of subterranean pools. They found the lairs of beasts and monstrosities never seen or heard of in the world above. They found rifts to the Lower Planes and drew forth demons from inky black pools. For these emotionless wizards, every expedition became a new avenue of discovery and a potential source of power. But though the magocracy was one of the most powerful forces to ever rule within Blackclaw, the

research of the archmages touched only the surface of the mountain's limitless depths.

THE CRUSADE OF THE WHITE SUN

300 Years Ago

Three centuries after the rise of the Magocracy of the Black Star, an order of priests, paladins, and knights known as the Order of the White Sun marched on Blackclaw Mountain to end the experiments of the archmages. The mage-slayer warriors of the order cut deep into the defenses of the magocracy, battering its towers and disrupting its magic. The Magocracy of the Black Star was soon broken. The nine mages were killed, imprisoned, or routed, and the Order of the White Sun took over the city of Shadowreach.

The members of the order replaced the monuments of the Magocracy of the Black Star with testaments to their own gods of light, and to the heroes who brought that light to Blackclaw Mountain. For eighty years, the Order of the White Sun used Shadowreach as a staging ground for missions meant to purge spiritual darkness from every part of the mountain. They were not successful.

THE AWAKENING OF THE GRENDLEROOT

220 Years Ago

Some eight decades after the Order of the White Sun shattered the Magocracy of the Black Star, the Grendleroot awoke. Some believe that agents of the Black Star used the last of their power to accomplish this fell deed. Others whisper that the Grendleroot fed off the energy of both warring groups, until it had gained enough power to shatter the mountain. Whatever its cause, though, the results were devastating.

All at once, the spires of the Grendleroot burst forth throughout the mountain. These great masses of black metal shattered buildings, collapsed tunnels, tore open rifts, and killed thousands of the mountain's denizens. Declaring Blackclaw a site of irredeemable darkness, the survivors of the Order of the White Sun left the mountain and sealed its entrance with magic and iron.

THE HUMBLE RISE OF DEEPELVER'S ENCLAVE

90 Years Ago

For more than a century, the ruins of Blackclaw Mountain sat untouched and shut off from the outside world. Then roughly ninety years ago, a team of

explorers and adventurers broke through the sealed doors of the mountain and began to explore the ruins, chasms, lairs, tunnels, crypts, caverns, and chambers that lay beyond. A relatively secure resting place was found on a plateau marking one edge of the ruins of Shadowreach—the site of one of the nine towers of the magocracy. There, the explorers founded Deepdelver's Enclave, showing no fear of the alien black metal spires of the Grendleroot rising up within the midst of their settlement.

Since then, successive generations of adventurers have set out to explore the limitless depths of the mountain from this subterranean outpost. For nine decades, Deepdelver's Enclave has provided a gateway between the lands above and the dark reaches within the mountain. The denizens of the enclave remain cautious of further expansion into the city of Shadowreach, choosing to keep their outpost small and easily defended. But few adventurers dwell there for long, always setting their sights and their imaginations on the darkness beyond the enclave, where lost caverns and the ruins of the Grendleroot remain to be explored.

Five Truths of Deepdelver's Enclave

This section describes five important facts underlying Deepdelver's Enclave and what its residents stand for. You can use these truths as is or modify them to suit your own campaign. Before the players build characters for a Grendleroot adventure, consider describing these truths to them. Doing so allows the players to build characters that fit within the framework of these adventures.

A SHINING BEACON IN THE DARK

Though they are surrounded by the darkness of the mountain and the threats that lurk within it, the people of Deepdelver's Enclave engage in continual celebration. They celebrate their lives, their friendships, and their love for the mysteries of the mountain. The great cavern surrounding the enclave often echoes with music and cheer, with the lights of the small outpost shining like a beacon in the dark. Though monsters are sometimes attracted to this light and noise, they soon learn the lessons taught by the crossbow bolts, powerful magic, and sturdy shields wielded by the residents of the enclave.

A LOVE OF EXPLORATION

Residents of Deepdelver's Enclave live to explore the depths of the mountain and its endless caverns. They are aware of the dangers of Blackclaw, but refuse to let their fears get in the way of their desire to uncover the mysteries of lost chambers, ancient civilizations, and even more ancient creatures. This philosophy fills all the residents of the enclave—including the many children born and raised here. Youngsters in Deepdelver's Enclave are given much free reign in response to their own wanderlust, and learn at a young age how to face the dangers that lurk in the dark.

ADVENTURE AROUND EVERY CORNER

Every part of Deepdelver's Enclave and the surrounding mountain present opportunities for adventure. Mysterious relics, ancient frescoes, and howling rifts descending into the unknown are scattered throughout the caverns of Blackclaw, and the explorers of Deepdelver's Enclave spend their whole lives uncovering those endless mysteries. Every ruin has a story to tell. Every locked chest contains a mystery to uncover. Adventure lies everywhere.

A MELTING POT OF PEACEFUL COOPERATION

Deepdelver's Enclave has no set laws or organizational hierarchy. Instead, the enclave's tight-knit population of adventurers, explorers, and merchants of all cultures and races take care of each other, working together to keep threats to their peaceful existence at bay. Merchants hire mercenaries to protect their interests, but those mercenaries are equally quick to protect their patrons' neighbors, knowing that those neighbors would do the same for them.

THE MANY RACES OF THE ENCLAVE

The people of Deepdelver's Enclave represent explorers of all different origins and backgrounds, and all who travel to the enclave are welcomed equally. This makes the settlement a fine location for characters of nontraditional races, including races from other worlds. While other cities might treat kobolds, goblins, drow, lizardfolk, or duergar with hostility or disdain, the people of the enclave judge everyone on their own merits, treating even the most unusual folk as any other adventurer seeking to explore the mysteries of Blackclaw Mountain.

SURROUNDED BY MYSTERY

The black spires of the Grendleroot are a constant reminder of the mysterious power in the mountain's depths. The coming of the Grendleroot sundered lairs, dens, crypts, temples, and entire cities within the mountain. The spires shattered rock and steel like eggshell, exposing cracks throughout Blackclaw that have since led to even more mysteries. The residents of Deepdelver's Enclave live with the strange spires all around them, never certain whether the Grendleroot is truly sleeping or if it will awaken once again.

NPCs of Deepdelver's Enclave

The folk of Deepdelver's Enclave are a hearty and cheerful lot. They enjoy their celebrations and the freedom their work allows them. They detest official hierarchy, and are quick to defend any and all of their fellow explorers from the threats of the mountain.

This section describes some of the more notable folk of Deepdelver's Enclave.

BAILON THE BEARDLESS

Bailon the Beardless (a chaotic good male hill dwarf **veteran**) is the unofficial elder of Deepdelver's Enclave. Bailon lost his hair and beard when he accidentally set off an *explosive runes* spell many years ago. Though long since healed, he liked the look and kept it.

Bailon is highly respected in Deepdelver's Enclave. His skills at delving into the ancient ruins within Blackclaw Mountain are legendary, as is the gleam in his eye when he sets his sights on new discoveries. Bailon is often found sitting in a rocking chair in the courtyard of the Dragon's Fangs common house, a pipe in his mouth, a cup of coffee in one hand, and his staff in the other. That weapon is a *staff of striking* he calls "the old man," carved with the visage of a bearded dwarf at its head. It's said that Bailon often speaks to the staff, though whether it responds remains to be known.

JAYCE GOLDSMILE

Jayce (a chaotic good female lightfoot halfling **scout**) runs Goldsmile's Artifacts, a small shop in the Evershady Bazaar that specializes in buying and selling the relics found deep in the ruins of Blackclaw Mountain. Jayce is a joyful halfling who wears her hair in two large ponytails nearly as tall as she is, and who has a powerful jeweler's loupe permanently fixed in

one eye. She often commissions relic hunters, and is known to go on the occasional adventure herself. Jayce loves a good find more than anything.

ARDULVIN THE APOTHECARY

Ardulvin (a neutral male drow **priest**) dresses in unadorned but fine robes. He was once a member of royalty in a fallen drow house, but has since broken off on his own. Ardulvin lives with three nieces he adores (Shavrin, Delonna, and Arys, all female drow **commoners**). It is said that he saved the three from the clutches of the drow's evil goddess and their malevolent priestesses. Ardulvin's cold demeanor is sometimes frowned upon by the enclave's more raucous residents, though all folk of the settlement eventually seek his skills with salves and ointments.

ODRAH WINDVANE

A scholar who has long made her home in the enclave, Odrah (a lawful good female human **mage**) is well loved for the stories she shares at the settlement's numerous celebrations. White haired and white robed,

JAYCE GOLDSMILE



RYAN
SYME

Odrah seeks out all the lore she can find within the ruins, though she does not venture into them herself. Most of the enclave's folk believe that the scholar simply wants to avoid the many dangers found in Blackclaw. However, some have hinted that she avoids those dangers because they might return her to old habits best left in the past.

RUTH WILLOWMANE

Ruth Willowmane (a lawful good female human **veteran**) was once the sheriff of a village called Whitesparrow, several days' ride from the mountain. She has since retired and now serves as armorer and smith for Deepdelves Enclave, along with her longtime friend and fellow soldier, Adren Goldbrook (a neutral good male human **veteran**). Ruth is well scarred from her service in the Thousand Spear War a decade ago, but that conflict between dwarves, humans, elves, and goblinoids is an experience she prefers not to talk about. She enjoys the optimism and wanderlust demonstrated by the enclave's people, but chooses to live a quiet life in the outpost.

ARGORA THE CHIPPED AXE

Argora (a neutral female hill dwarf **veteran**) has turned her decades of experience as a warrior and rebel into a paid protection operation for numerous residents of the enclave. Her mercenary company, the Chipped Axes, consists of about twenty **guards** who are fiercely loyal to Argora—as long as the coin keeps coming in.

CLOUDE WILLOWSPUR

Cloude Willowspur (a neutral good nonbinary half-elf **commoner**) is the owner of the Lucky Lute tavern. Stout and always cheerful, Cloude is usually the best source for current rumors in the enclave. Cloude's husband, a quiet human **commoner** named Berte, works for them, and can usually be found doing odd jobs in the tavern.



ODRAH WINDVANE

BRYAN SYME

MILA WILLOWSPUR

Mila (a lawful good female human **thug**) is Cloude's half-sister. She runs the Raven's Claw Inn along with her two sons, Sygmund and Logan (both human **commoners**). Broad and well muscled, Mila is used to handling rough customers, and she keeps her favorite cudgel close at hand. Unlike her sibling, Mila likes things quiet and orderly. She deeply loves the people of the enclave, and her fine establishment welcomes any adventurers who choose to delve into the mountain.

AYAAN OF VEYR

Ayaan (a lawful evil male-presenting **rakshasa**) serves as the well-known shady vendor of Deepdelver's Enclave. Ayaan deals in items and magic that Jayce Goldsmile will not touch, though the two are close friends and often recommend customers to one another. Some suspect that Ayaan has ties to devils, and whispered rumors speak of a portal to the Nine Hells hidden in a series of tunnels beneath his vendor's stall. Though he shows his fiendish nature openly, the people of the enclave are friendly to Ayaan, and respect him as an honest, if dangerous, trader.

Ayaan's shop is known as Ayaan's Curios—an onion-shaped stall that is nominally part of the Evershady Bazaar of Deepdelver's Enclave. However, the stall is impossible to find unless Ayaan wants it found, whether it is hidden by magic the rest of the time, or actually in some pocket dimension of the rakshasa's own creation.

Locations in the Enclave

Deepdelver's Enclave sits along the edge of a vast cavern, built atop a cliff wall once part of the ruined city of Shadowreach. The ceiling above the cavern rises roughly one hundred feet above the plateau, and is dotted with stalagmites. Huge statues representing the archmages of the Magocracy of the Black Star stand silently in the shadows on the outskirts of the larger cavern, staring out over the ruins below.

The Enclave is lit with everburning lanterns imbued with the power of *continual flame* spells, giving it a cheerful red glow. A number of natural stone columns split the settlement into separate areas, with most of the main buildings and shops lined up along the enclave's main thoroughfare. A number of single- or two-story buildings of rough stone sit beyond that main thoroughfare, serving as residences for explorers and their families.

Two switchback paths lead into the enclave—one to the north and one to the southwest—both of which snake their way up from the cavern floor. Both entrances are easily defended and offer a clear view of the paths below—and any vulnerable travelers on them. Guard towers rise alongside each of the entrances where the paths meet the enclave. Though no official guard force is found in the settlement, merchants pay mercenaries to watch over these approaches, with two **guards** in each tower at any given time.

Residents of the enclave maintain stocks of underground-dwelling goats called grayhorns, and maintain large fungus plots in a nearby side cavern. Traders bring in food and supplies from the surface world as well. A subterranean river flows through Deepdelver's Enclave from the mushroom farm, providing residents with continual access to fresh water.

Numerous chasms, tunnels, and chambers are carved into the rock underneath the enclave. Some of the settlement's buildings have access to these tunnels, but many others remain hidden. The residents of the enclave enjoy describing how potential adventure lies just beneath their feet.

The following sections detail some of the more notable locations in Deepdelver's Enclave. Feel free to change these locations to suit your own campaign, and to expand the enclave with your own shops, temples, and other locations, along with the NPCs to preside over them.

1. THE DRAGON'S FANGS

Area Aspects. Squat compound of three round buildings, two black spires flanking the entrance, huge bulette exoskeleton hanging from a scaffold

Three interlocked, round-walled, three-story buildings form the Dragon's Fangs, the common house of Deepdelver's Enclave and the residence of Bailon the Beardless. A pair of black spires juts up and out of the ground beside the buildings, connected to a worked stone wall. A huge armored carapace hangs from the spires above an open gate leading into a courtyard beyond—some great monstrosity that resembles a shark with legs.

The Dragon's Fangs is the oldest structure in Deepdelver's Enclave. Built by Bailon the Beardless, these buildings serve as the dwarf's residence as well as a common house for the adventurers of the enclave. The exoskeleton is a bulette—a trophy claimed by Bailon back when he was a younger explorer.

The three buildings feature apartments for Bailon and other residents of the enclave, along with a meeting hall and trophy room, and balconies that overlook the plateau. It is said that Bailon's apartment has a secret stairwell that leads down to vaults beneath the enclave, where both treasures and dangers from decades past are hidden.



2. THE LUCKY LUTE TAVERN

Area Aspects. Central stage surrounded by two bars and numerous tables, statue of a dancing halfling with a lute, outdoor balcony lit by monstrous skull lanterns

Cheerful music flows out from the open door of the Lucky Lute tavern. Lanterns formed from monstrous skulls illuminate the open-air second-story balcony. Within the tavern, two bars and numerous tables surround a central stage adorned with the statue of a dancing halfling joyously playing a lute. Though the statue doesn't move, the strings of the lute play a cheerful tune all on their own.

Always a cheerful place, the Lucky Lute is a three-story tavern whose outdoor balconies overlook the hundred-foot drop down the cliff side to the ruins of Shadowreach below. The dancing halfling statue plays music continually, the sound echoing throughout the enclave and the surrounding caverns. Some say that the statue's music helps to keep the attitude of the enclave's residents continually positive. Others say the statue is no statue at all, but a halfling adventurer cursed by an ancient wyrm. When the halfling stole the dragon's favorite instrument, magic forced it into its present form—whose expression is not one of joy, but of pain.

Cloude Willowspur and their husband run the tavern, and offer a free drink to anyone they don't recognize.

3. THE RAVEN'S CLAW INN

Area Aspects. Three narrow spires jutting out of the roof of the inn, balcony overlooking the cliffs, rooms carved into a natural pillar offering the best view in the enclave

The Raven's Claw Inn is a three-story building built up against a natural stone column that rises one hundred feet to the cavern ceiling above. Three of the Grendleroot's black spires have pierced up through the building's roof, and are known as "the raven's claws." The beautiful inn includes an outdoor breakfast patio and rooms on all three floors. Balconies jut out from the huge stone pillar, revealing more rooms carved into the rock.

Mila Willowspur bought the Raven Claw inn from its previous owner, a powerful mage, for an unusually low price. It's generally thought that the mage was happy to be rid of it, though they wouldn't say why. The inn sits against a natural column partially hollowed out by the archmages of the Black Star. A twisting staircase leads up to rooms set fifty feet above the floor of the enclave, and overlooking the ruins of Shadowreach below. A lower cellar in the pillar has a large circular brass door set into the floor, covered with arcane glyphs and locks. If Mila knows what resides below that door, she's not saying.

4. ODRAH'S LIBRARY

Area Aspects. Three-story cluttered library, maze of leaning stacks of books, centuries-old dusty tomes

Dust swirls along the twisted paths that wind between great stacks of books in this three-story library. Many of those book piles stand over a dozen feet high, and lean at dangerous angles. Even the winding staircase to the upper levels is lined with books, some of which appear to be hundreds of years old.

Three huge hollow blocks of stone house the library owned and overseen by Odrah Windvane. Most folk in the enclave assume that she chose this site because it looked like three books stacked on top of one another. Great piles of disorganized tomes and scroll tubes fill the library, seemingly with no clear order. Still, Odrah never has trouble finding the right book at the right time or steering visitors to the appropriate stacks for a bit of research.

Those who spend long hours in the library sometimes note that its rooms seem somehow out of sync with the size and geometry of the building. Rumors are sometimes heard of a mysterious fourth floor, filled with dark tomes too terrible to be seen by the casual reader.

5. THE EVERSADY BAZAAR

The renovated buildings and shops that make up the enclave's bazaar and general marketplace appear normal at a distance. But the farther one wanders into the bazaar's alleyways and stalls, the stranger this area becomes.

Area Aspects. Makeshift shops in ruined stone buildings, central Grendleroot spire, twisted alleyways with odd shadows

A tightly packed cluster of ruined one- and two-story buildings has been renovated into a number of market stalls, each adorned with painted signs depicting the services offered therein. A black spire is thrust up out of the ground in the center of the street. The alleyways that twist between the renovated buildings and shops appear normal at first. But as you step closer, you note strange shadows on the walls, somehow twisting against the light.

These ruined stone buildings have been restored and taken over by numerous vendors offering wares and services to the people of Deepdelver's Enclave. Some are permanent residents of the enclave, but many traveling merchants set up shop in the bazaar to sell to the locals before making their way back outside the mountain.

The small stone buildings are tightly packed, leaving only narrow walkways between them. But these walkways somehow defy the space they take up, creating many more alleys than there should be. Any shadows cast on the walls of these alleys twist and turn in odd directions, giving the bazaar its name. It is said that any visitor who wanders through the alleys of the Evershady Bazaar eventually finds stalls and vendors they've never seen before—including the onion-shaped stall of Ayaan's Curios.

6. THE DROP

Area Aspects. Waterfall cascading down a deep shaft, large natural cavern below with underground pool, howling wind blowing through primitively carved stalagmites, deadly black iron door

The river that flows through the enclave cascades one hundred feet down a natural stone shaft. The pool it crashes into opens up at the center of a large natural cavern deep below the settlement. A howling wind blows through this cavern, resonating through primitively carved and painted stalagmites to create harmonics that sound like mournful singing.

The pool cavern opens up to numerous tunnels below Deepdelver's Enclave. Descending the Drop is a difficult but not impossible climb. Residents of the enclave are forbidden from leaving ropes and other equipment hanging down the shaft, so as to prevent other creatures from ascending.

Countless images and carvings line the walls of the tunnels beneath the Drop, all thousands of years old. One of those tunnels leads west to the ruins of Shadowreach, while another extends north to end at a large black iron door, decorated with macabre images of undead knights and hooded wizards. The door is rumored to mark an entrance to one of the many deadly vaults of the lich Yolon of the Void—one of the four remaining archmages of the Magocracy of the Black Star. (See chapter 2, "The History of Blackclaw Mountain," for more details on Yolon and the magocracy.) No one has dared to disturb the door after the last attempt to open it ended with an explorer's disintegration.

7. THE ALL-FAITHS SHRINE

Area Aspects. Ruined shrine, faceless statues, large stone archway and altar

A ruined circular wall surrounds the enclave's only standing shrine. Three faceless humanoid statues stand on three sides of the shrine, while a fourth statue spreads before it in pieces. A large stone archway stands at the edge of the cliff, overlooking the ruins of Shadowreach in the cavern below. A stone altar sits just beyond the archway, set on a promontory that juts out over the darkness.

Though this shrine serves no specific deity, any priest or cleric who visits the enclave notes a feeling of divine power flowing through the area. The shrine has become an open place of worship for many in the enclave, with services to different gods taking place on different days. An old story tells of a fiendish cultist who committed a sacrifice on the altar decades ago, and who opened up a gateway to another world in the process. It's said that Bailon the Beardless and the apothecary Ardulvin know the truth of the story, but neither of them speak of it.

8. STARSONG TOWER

This long-ruined tower once gave off a pleasant light that filled the enclave's cavern, but it has been dark since the coming of the Grendleroot. At least until recently. This location is fully detailed in the adventure "The Call of Starsong Tower."



OVERLOOKING MUSHROOM LAKE

9. MUSHROOM LAKE

Area Aspects. Large natural cavern filled with multicolored mushrooms, dark freshwater lake, high waterfall, cultivated mushroom plots

A tall waterfall joins with other smaller streams to fill the large lake in the center of this natural cavern. Multicolored mushrooms both large and small fill the area, including phosphorescent varieties that light the cavern with a green glow. A series of cultivated mushroom plots cover the south side of the cavern.

These cultivated mushroom gardens feed the people of Deepdelver's Enclave with their fast-growing savory bounty. The wild mushrooms that grow here include rare varieties sought by the folk of the surface world, but those who attempt to pick more than their share are warned by the permanent residents of the enclave to keep their greed in check.

Many of the enclave's residents seek out the mushroom lake as a place for relaxation and solitude, enjoying the warmth of the cavern and the soothing sound of the waterfall cascading into the lake.

A handful of natural tunnels lead deeper into the mountain from this cavern, including one unusual tunnel running to the southeast. Those who have explored it report that later portions of this tunnel are not natural at all, but show signs of being carved by hand over centuries. Images on the walls deep down this tunnel depict details and twisted geometry said to be too much for mortal minds to bear.

10. THE DEEFINGERS

Area Aspects. Iron cage lift descending hundreds of feet, narrow and treacherous bridges and steps, dozens of caves and tunnels leading deeper into the mountain

South of Deepdelver's Enclave, a huge rift in the cavern floor descends thousands of feet into darkness. A scaffold supports an iron cage hanging above the rift, which is controlled by a large, complicated winch. The cage can be lowered some five hundred feet below the edge of the rift, passing narrow rope bridges, roughly carved steps, and iron-rung ladders that provide access to dozens of crevices and tunnels that line the rift's walls.

The south edge of the enclave abuts a five-thousand-foot-deep rift known as the Deepfingers, said to have formed when the Grendleroot's spires broke the spine of the mountain. The first explorers to return to Blackclaw built a lift that descends past numerous tunnels and passages leading deeper into the mountain, all accessed by a network of bridges and ladders.

Those who have explored these passages have noted that many are of worked stone and marked with old glyphs—and have speculated that some might eventually lead to Deepreach, the vast multilevel dungeon of the Magocracy of the Black Star. Deepreach is said to be filled with traps and monsters still active even centuries after the fall of the magocracy. The farther one delves into Deepreach, the worse the challenges to be faced there.

Events in the Enclave

The people of Deepdelver's Enclave love life, and they celebrate that love often. This section presents a number of the more popular events and celebrations taking place in the enclave, in addition to the festivals and celebrations mentioned in specific adventures. Staging such an event at the beginning of an adventure can help give the players a sense of the community and camaraderie to be found within the enclave.

THE THREE SISTERS AND THE CHAIR

This comedy play, presented in the Dragon's Fangs, tells the story of three sisters trying to outdo each other by finding the perfect chair. Performed by a visiting acting troupe, the Company of Dreams.

THE THREE SONS

A tragedy performed in the Dragon's Fangs tells the tale of three sons who die trying to get their mother to love them. Performed by a visiting acting troupe, the Company of Dreams.

AMATEUR NIGHT

An event hosted by the visiting Purple Plumes Theatrical Band in the Dragon's Fangs. Events include grayhorn lifting, hammer juggling, and "the howler screech."

FESTIVAL OF NEW PATHS

This event sees the folk of the enclave celebrate new successes in their exploration of the ruins and caverns of the mountain.

CEREMONY OF THE SEVEN

Seven priests of seven gods parade through the enclave, extolling their individual faiths and conducting ceremonies.

NEW YEAR'S CELEBRATION

This annual event sees the spellcasters of the enclave put on fantastic displays of magic. Everyone awaits the birth of the New Year grayhorn, which is treated as royalty for the year.

REMEMBRANCE OF THE SPIRES

Through storytelling and ceremonies, the folk of the enclave memorialize the day the spires of the Grendleroot appeared and tore through the mountain.

DAY OF BOUNTY

During this great all-day feast, nearly everyone in Deepdelver's Enclave brings out their own favorite food or special dish.

NIGHT OF THE SKULLS

In this celebration of the dead, folk dress as absent friends and tell ghost stories.

FEAST FOR THE RETURNED

Whenever a large exploration party returns home victorious to the enclave, a great feast is usually held in celebration.

FESTIVAL OF SECRET HEARTS

On this day, potential lovers share their feelings for each other through mediators.

DAY OF THE BLACK STAR

This mocking celebration is dedicated to the fall of the nine archmages of the Magocracy of the Black Star.

MONSTERS' BALL

This celebration of the various monsters found in the depths of the mountain sees most folk in the enclave doing their best to dress up as their own favorite monster.

FESTIVAL OF MUSIC

During this days-long festival, professional and amateur musical performances are presented throughout Deepdelver's Enclave.

RUNNING OF THE GRAYHORNS

This light-hearted festival sees the fat grayhorn goats of the enclave set free to lazily walk through the settlement while crowds cheer them on. At the end of the day, the grayhorns are found and led back to their pens.

WEE DELVER'S WEEK

This celebration sees the children of the enclave either join their families on low-risk expeditions, or gear up and explore some of the mountain's safer tunnels themselves.

WHISPERS TO THE OLD ONES

On this day of quiet reflection, the folk of the enclave speak as few words as possible. When they must speak, they do so in low voices for fear of awakening the Grendleroot in its restless slumber.

NIGHT OF THE UNDERMOON

Each year on this night, a great horn is blown that summons a giant luminescent moth from the unknown depths of the mountain. The moth floats over Deepdelver's Enclave for a time before soaring down the Deepfingers.

FESTIVAL OF THE ARCANES

During this celebration of the arcane in the enclave, wizards and sorcerers attempt to outdo one another in dazzling displays of light and sound.

THIEVES' DAY

On this day, everyone puts an extra purse on their belt holding candies or a few copper pieces. The children of the enclave then do their best to steal these treasures without being caught. Visitors to the enclave who do not wear this second purse risk losing their actual purse.

CHAPTER 2

THE HISTORY OF BLACKCLAW MOUNTAIN

For a million years, civilizations have risen and fallen within the caverns of Blackclaw Mountain, all drawn to the power of the Grendleroot at the mountain's heart.

Blackclaw Mountain's history is vast. Filled with tunnels, crevasses, huge caverns, and pillars of natural stone, the mountain has been home to hundreds of packs, tribes, and civilized settlements. Some six centuries ago, a vast cavern of the mountain became the home of the Magocracy of the Black Star, who built the city of Shadowreach before the magocracy was destroyed by the Order of the White Sun three hundred years later. Then two centuries ago, the Grendleroot awoke, driving the order and most other folk out of the mountain. All but a few of the humanoid settlements of Blackclaw stayed dark for just over a century, before small bands of adventurers began to delve into the mountain's depths once again. It was they who founded Deepdelver's Enclave at the edge of the ruins of Shadowreach.

This chapter details the history of Blackclaw Mountain, with a focus on the vast cavern surrounding the ruined city of Shadowreach and the cliff-side outpost of Deepdelver's Enclave. However, the information here represents only one potential history. You are free to use these details as is, dissect this section and use whatever parts you like for your own campaign, or create a history and background wholly your own.

This chapter is intended to fill your mind with fantastic imagery of the mountain, and to help you

build stories that you and your players will enjoy as you play the game. Most of all, this chapter is here for you to read and enjoy. Flop down on the couch, grab a nice cup of your favorite beverage, and dive into the million-year history of Blackclaw Mountain.

The Caretakers and the Grendleroot

The true origin of Blackclaw Mountain and the Grendleroot cannot be fully known, for most of that history was destroyed when the great rock that became the mountain crashed down to the world one million years ago. The millennia-long efforts of sages and lunatics have pieced together scraps of evidence, visions, and hypotheses to reveal a number of truths and educated guesses. Still, this knowledge likely represents only one small drop in an ocean of lore.

More than a million years ago, a race of powerful humanoids known as the Caretakers sailed through the Astral Plane in an isolated laboratory surrounded by black iron and rock. Within this floating asteroid, they studied the seed of an entity whose nature was far beyond even their advanced understanding of the multiverse. The construction of their craft ensured that their experimentation would be contained, no matter the strength of the entity's power—or so they thought.

An unknown catastrophe caused the Caretakers' craft to tear through the Astral Plane and crash down onto the world. So apocalyptic was this event that nearly all life on the planet died. It took much of the million years since then for life to reestablish itself in the world. During all this time, the Grendleroot lay at the heart of the vast mountain that was formed from the rock and iron of the Caretakers' craft. The power of the Grendleroot leaked out into the mountain, reaching for and calling to monsters and intelligent beings alike. And for one million years, the creatures of the world answered that call.

The Early Days of Shadowreach Cavern

The cavern now known as the home to the ruins of Shadowreach is the largest known single space in Blackclaw Mountain. The eons since the cavern's initial formation have shaped it in numerous ways, splitting its floor and building stalactites and stalagmites that now stand as tall as towers.

For hundreds of thousands of years, creatures both intelligent and monstrous have called the cavern home, with many living their entire lives in this

single vast space. The petrified carapaces of huge worms embedded in the stone walls and the ribcages of ancient dragons jutting up out of the rock floor hearken back to a time when those great monsters ruled over the mountain. Carved stalagmites, cave paintings, and cairns of piled stone mark the later presence of the intelligent denizens of the cavern, and are now all that remains of their history.

THE RUNE TITANS

The first rulers of Blackclaw Mountain were the rune titans, thought to be the descendants of primordial giants and the Caretakers, the alien beings who traveled with the mountain when it crashed to the world (see the adventure "Seed of the Black Cathedral"). It is thought that fewer than one hundred rune titans ever dwelled within Blackclaw, but their ability to phase through solid rock let these powerful giants live and feed off the power residing deep in the mountain. Some believe that after the rune titans were destroyed, their residual power gave birth to the stone giants who have resided in Blackclaw Mountain for millennia.

After hundreds of thousands of years in Blackclaw Mountain, the rune titans died out all at once, with

TIMELINE OF BLACKCLAW MOUNTAIN

The following timeline is a rough estimate of the various stages of settlement in Blackclaw Mountain. Hundreds of more detailed timelines might exist for the many tribes, kingdoms, empires, and monsters that ruled over various parts of Blackclaw, but this general information touches only on the most important points of the mountain's history.

1,000,000 to 500,000 Years Ago. The rock-and-iron craft from which Blackclaw Mountain would form crash-lands to the world after tearing through the Astral Plane.

500,000 to 200,000 Years Ago. The rune titans explore the mountain, drawing power from the seed deep within it. Their race ends when they open a rift to another world, and a being of that world devours every titan's life force at once.

200,000 to 100,000 Years Ago. As the world around it changes, the mountain becomes largely submerged beneath the sea. The abolethic Quorum establishes itself throughout the mountain, with an army of millions of grimlocks.

100,000 to 10,000 Years Ago. The waters recede, the aboleths slumber, and the mountain succumbs to tribalism and monstrous rule.

10,000 to 1,200 Years Ago. A night hag named Sakara becomes queen of the remaining grimlocks before being

assassinated by a drow from the city of Ithirix, hidden deep in the mountain. Ithirix is buried in a series of earthquakes, and Blackclaw Mountain returns to tribalism and monstrous rule.

1,200 to 600 Years Ago. The ancient red dragon Aravax Blackflame rules over the cavern that would later become Shadowreach, building a great lair there that is served by twelve tribes of kobolds.

600 to 300 Years Ago. The archmages of the Black Star come to the cavern. They defeat Aravax, and their slave armies build the city of Shadowreach. The Magocracy of the Black Star is formed.

300 to 220 Years Ago. The Order of the White Sun launches a crusade against the Magocracy of the Black Star, killing or routing the archmages and shattering their rule. The order holds the city of Shadowreach and its neighboring territory for eighty years—until the Grendleroot awakes, and its black spires sunder the cavern and the mountain around it.

220 to 90 Years Ago. The Order of the White Sun flees the mountain, sealing all its known entrances with magic and iron. The ruins of Shadowreach become the domain of monsters and the broken remnants of the followers of the magocracy, who return from the shadows.

90 Years Ago to Present. Deepdelves' Enclave is established, and adventurers begin to explore the depths of Blackclaw Mountain once again.

many left half buried in the rock. Some sages believe they used their magical power to open a rift into another plane—and that a being of that plane sucked all magic and life out of every rune titan in the mountain at once, like a vampire feasting on blood. Before the rift collapsed, this being tasted the energy contained in the world, so that it now thirsts for it continually. Some sages believe that this entity might well be the Black Star, while others talk of many such beings existing in the blackness between the stars.

In the cavern that later housed Shadowreach, the rune titans shaped four great monoliths of stone, each over one hundred feet tall. Each monolith is marked with swirling symbols and glyphs that once drew tremendous amounts of arcane energy into the cavern, likely creating the nexus point of the rift that caught the attention of the otherworldly destroyer. Today, the monoliths are inert, with all energy completely drained from them. They still stand—along with the petrified bodies of six kneeling rune giants—along the western edge of the ruined city.

THE ABOLETHIC QUORUM

It remains unknown whether the aboleths of Blackclaw first entered the mountain eons ago, or whether they came with the great planar vessel when it crashed down to the world. Either way, their influence within the mountain thankfully grew slowly, and their numbers have always been few.

A small band of aboleths calling themselves the Quorum established an empire in Blackclaw Mountain two hundred thousand years ago, when much of its interior was flooded beneath the sea. The aboleths transformed primitive humanoids in the mountain into a slave race of grimlocks, who served their masters in all their dealings above the water, and who conquered much of the mountain.

Entire abolethic cities can still be found deep inside Blackclaw, decorated in swirling carved stone that commemorates the infinite memories of these highly intelligent beings. When the waters receded a hundred millennia later, the aboleths of the Quorum lost their hold on the mountain. A series of rebellions sent the remaining aboleths deep into hibernation in the depths of their sunken cities and temples.

Few signs of the Quorum still survive in the cavern surrounding Shadowreach, but an occasional column of stone carved in swirling, intricate, and maddening patterns hints at their former glory. One of the

RUNE TITAN STATISTICS

Though unlikely, it is possible that the characters exploring the deepest reaches of Blackclaw Mountain might come across either a living rune titan or a rune titan ghost.

Rune Titan. Living rune titans spend most of their time embedded in the rock of the mountain, trying to draw what energy they can from the Grendleroot. Rune titans use the **stone giant** stat block with these changes:

- Its size is gargantuan.
- It has 263 hit points (17d20 + 85).
- It has the Intelligence and spellcasting abilities of a **mage** or **archmage**
- The mage variant has a challenge rating of 12 (8,400 XP) and the archmage variant has a challenge rating of 18 (20,000 XP)

Rune Titan Ghost. The spectral remains of a rune giant killed within the mountain uses the **ghost** stat block with these changes:

- Its size is Gargantuan.
- Its Constitution is 20 (+5).
- It has 263 hit points (17d20 + 85).
- It has AC 17.
- It has the Intelligence and spellcasting abilities of either a **mage** or an **archmage**.
- The mage variant has a challenge rating of 12 (8,400 XP) and the archmage variant has a challenge rating of 18 (20,000 XP)

aboleths' ruined temples can be found in the adventure "Chuul."

SAKARA'S CHILDREN AND THE DROW CITY OF ITHIRIX

After the fall of the aboleths, many of the humanoid tribes in the mountain found themselves leaderless and lost. Bloodshed and cannibalism ruled until ten thousand years ago, when a queen arose who would claim control of the mountain. Sakara was a night hag said to have been drawn into the world from the Lower Planes by the grimlocks' desperation, and who ruled over her countless grimlock children for nearly nine thousand years. Her end came when she was assassinated by a band of drow elves from the recently founded drow city of Ithirix, whose folk had continually warred with Sakara's children.

With their mother slain, the grimlocks of Blackclaw fought among themselves until only a few remained. Those survivors were soon chased out of their caverns by the larger monsters that came to prowl the mountain, with many grimlocks returning to the lost lairs of their former abolethic masters.

As for Ithirix, rumors persist that the drow city was buried in a great earthquake. Some say it still stands somewhere in an undiscovered section of the mountain, filled with the undead remains of its drow host.

ARAVAX BLACKFLAME

An ancient red dragon known as Aravax Blackflame was the last ruler of the cavern that would become Shadowreach after the arrival of the archmages of the Black Star. Some twelve hundred years ago, the dragon built his lair within a huge stalagmite that featured a single narrow walkway snaking up to its entrance.

Aravax's thirst for arcane knowledge was eclipsed only by his brutality. Twelve tribes of kobolds were bound to his service, worshiping him as a god for six centuries. But then the first of the archmages of the Black Star, Karek Blackiron, came to treat with Aravax, offering a mutual trade of arcane knowledge. Upon learning of the power in the mountain, Karek betrayed the dragon, and the nine archmages of the Black Star began a war against Aravax and his kobold armies.

Even as powerful as the archmages were, it took three years for them to cut through the last of Aravax's kobold followers, rooting the troublesome creatures out of the seemingly endless warrens surrounding the cavern. Fifty half-dragon champions of the archmages undertook the final assault against Aravax, who felled forty of them before his own end. The lich Yolon tore Aravax's spirit from his body, entombing it in a swirling ruby necklace they wore throughout the height of the magocracy's power—and which is said to now be hidden in a vault deep underneath the cavern of Shadowreach. Grethel the Flame, the half-dragon archmage of fire, took over Aravax's carved stalagmite lair for herself and built it into the Molten Citadel.

THE MAGOCRACY OF THE BLACK STAR

The archmages of the Black Star originally joined together when they learned individually of a vast timeless entity floating in the shadows of the multiverse. Having lightly touched upon this limitless intellect, which each called "the Black Star," the mages became filled with the desire to increase their own power and expand their knowledge, in the hopes of reaching out to the entity once again.

Hounded for decades for their dangerous and deadly pursuit of arcane secrets, the nine archmages found the cavern already home to Aravax and his kobolds to be the perfect location to practice their craft. Hidden away from the cities of the surface world, the

magicians would be able to conduct their experiments undisturbed, and far from the eyes of those who would judge them. The archmages cared little for anything except their pursuit of the unknown mysteries of the multiverse. They did not seek to conquer or enslave, but did both those things to serve their greater thirst for knowledge.

When Aravax was slain, the archmages moved their entire establishment into the cavern that now houses Shadowreach. They brought hundreds of slaves, thralls, and undead servants with them, conquering and conscripting thousands more creatures within the mountain. In the vast cavern, the archmages formed the Magocracy of the Black Star, built the city of Shadowreach, and raised their nine towers. Often addressed as "the Nine," the archmages ruled above all other denizens of their realm, standing equal to one another. They selected governors and warlords from the most capable and loyal among their enslaved, impressing upon them the directive to obey the Nine unquestioningly, and to leave them free to conduct their arcane research.

THE RULE OF THE NINE

The Nine spent the majority of their time in study and in pursuit of their experiments. Most of them preferred to work in solitude, apart from even one another. Only when certain experiments or discoveries required partnerships, or when they required the services of their subjects, did the archmages step out from their towers.

Meetings among the Nine occurred once each year in a hidden chamber completely cut off from the rest of the mountain. The floor of this sanctum contained an ancient rune-inscribed circle said to have been constructed by the Caretakers, along with nine portals each controlled by an archmage. At these meetings, the Nine would decide the future of the magocracy, with their decisions flowing down through the thousands who served and acted upon those decisions without question.

The subjects of the Magocracy of the Black Star came from many different lands. Elves, dwarves, goblins, giants, and humans all served the Nine, with many enthralled by the mages and their spellcasting servants into unquestioning servitude. Others were commanded through sheer force and terror by the Claws of the Nine—half-dragon warlords given ultimate authority over the magocracy's other subjects.

An army of undead created by the vampire necromancer Korvilia proved a most useful addition

to the servants of the Nine. Stocked with all manner of undead from decrepit skeletons to vampire knights riding on the backs of skeletal dragons, this army required no food or rest, and served the will of the Nine through every moment of their existence.

The servants of the mages built the city of Shadowreach to house the people of the magocracy and support the desires of the Nine. The governors and warlords serving the Nine commanded the magocracy's social system, all with the goal of supporting the will of the archmages. Through it all, those archmages cared little for the survival and well-being of their subjects, demanding only that the Nine have access to any resources when they needed them. A rigid hierarchy quickly formed within the magocracy, from the lowest serfs to the governors. But to the Nine, all creatures in the magocracy except themselves were equally inconsequential, living only to support the archmages' drive for power.

THE CRUSADE OF THE WHITE SUN

Word of the magocracy eventually spread beyond Blackclaw Mountain. An order of priests and paladins stood watch over the known entrances into Blackclaw, preparing for an onslaught of demons, undead, or worse to burst forth into the world. Each decade, a halfling archmage of the Black Star named Soram of the Outside would exit the mountain with a retinue of slaves and guardians, ready to renew the nonaggression pacts between the magocracy and the realms nearest the mountain.

The Order of the White Sun was made up of three primary factions. The Priests of the White Sun stood at the head of the order, calm and deliberate in their planning and governance. The paladins of the order, known as the Blades of Dawn, served as crusaders, traveling far and wide across all lands to seek out and quell evil. The largest faction, the Swords of the Sun, was a standing army of sword fighters and archers who defended Sunspire Citadel some two hundred miles from Blackclaw Mountain—the primary headquarters of the order, and a great citadel of the realms the order protected.

For thirty years, a father and daughter headed the Priests of the White Sun and the Blades of Dawn, respectively. High Priest Maelin Avankor led the Priests of the White Sun with calm and thoughtful guidance, while his daughter, Lord Templar Alexa Avankor, led the Swords of Dawn with focus and virtue. For nearly a decade, Alexa tried to convince her father of the growing danger of the magocracy.

Every day, she argued, the archmages of the Black Star practiced their dark craft within the mountain and grew stronger. The stronger they grew, the harder it would eventually be to face them and root them out. But Maelin, thinking of the lives that might be lost in such a crusade, resisted.

One day, during his prayers to the Light, Maelin had a vision. He saw cities destroyed, pierced through with black spires as tall as mountains. He saw the bodies of thousands impaled on black metal trees. He saw a dark, malevolent orb in the sky, as large as a moon and writhing with tendrils that sucked the life out of the world wherever they touched it. The following morning, he met with his daughter, and preparations for an assault against the Magocracy of the Black Star began.

For four years, the Order of the White Sun prepared. The Swords of the Sun were led by legendary commander Lord Korva Vollok, following her directive to train for fighting in the narrow tunnels and wide chasms of Blackclaw. The Blades of Dawn prepared to drive back the undead armies rumored to infest the mountain. The order created a new unit of soldiers known as the Mageslayers, trained to fight against the arcane power of the nine archmages and their numerous apprentices. Led by the bard Sylva Dawncaster, these wizards, fighters, rogues, and bards were specifically trained in the magic necessary to counter, silence, disrupt, and dispel the magic of the magocracy.

CONQUEST AND DESTRUCTION

On the tenth anniversary of the most recent signing of the nonaggression treaty between the magocracy and its neighboring realms, Soram of the Outside stepped out once more from the mountain. But instead of signing a new treaty, he was arrested, tried, and convicted by the Order of the White Sun, then beheaded by Lord Templar Alexa Avankor. The assault on Shadowreach had begun.

The order struck fast and hard. Knowing that the true power in Blackclaw Mountain rested with the nine archmages, the warriors of the Blades of Dawn and the Mageslayers sought them out. They destroyed undead and enthralled guardians by the thousands to reach the archmages. They infiltrated the private lairs of the Nine, bringing them to the sword where they could. In six weeks of fighting, five of the nine archmages of the Magocracy were brought down—some so catastrophically that their passing left permanent wounds in the world. The fate



of the remaining four was never fully determined, though their power was shattered and their lairs either occupied or destroyed.

Of the remaining servants of the magocracy, many were killed, some were liberated, and the rest fled deeper into the mountain. In the aftermath, the Order of the White Sun spent eighty years attempting to wash away the stain of the magocracy in Shadowreach, but with limited success.

Starsong Tower was repurposed into a beacon of light above the city. The other towers and keeps of Shadowreach were converted into barracks and citadels for the order. Yet powerful remnants of the magocracy remained, often not uncovered for decades. Many of those were old vaults accidentally opened, unleashing hundreds of ravenous undead into the city each time. As a result, few civilians were willing to take up residence in Shadowreach, making it difficult for the Order of the White Sun to maintain a meaningful presence in the city. Even the nine statues representing the archmages of the Black Star could not be toppled.

THE TIME OF THE GRENDLEROOT

The Order of the White Sun weakened over long years in the mountain. Those who remained over that time lost sight of the need to hold back the darkness

from the cavern of Shadowreach. Patrols explored the caverns beyond, but many never came back. The tales of the four missing archmages of the Black Star were forgotten.

Then eighty years after the Order of the White Sun liberated Shadowreach, the Grendleroot awoke.

The stone floor of the Shadowreach cavern ripped open. Spires of the Grendleroot tore their way up. Records of the event describe a telepathic scream that ripped through the minds of the city's residents. Some went insane. Many died. The rest left the mountain forever. The remaining members of the Order of the White Sun built a glyph-scribed iron door to seal the main entrance into the mountain. The survivors returned to Sunspire Citadel, which had become a crumbling ruin after decades of neglect. In time, tales of the fall of the Magocracy of the Black Star and the crusade of the Order of the White Sun became little more than legend.

Over a hundred years later, with the glyphs of protection on the door faded, a small band of explorers broke the seal of the White Sun and entered the mountain. When they eventually reached the cavern of Shadowreach, their lanterns illuminated huge statues of sinister archmages standing above the vast, empty city. Shadowreach proved a site full

of mysteries, relics, dangers—and treasure beyond counting. These explorers built a small camp amid cliff-top ruins marking one edge of the ruined city. The camp grew into a walled outpost, and soon, Deepdelver's Enclave opened for business.

The Nine

The nine archmages of the Black Star were drawn together from across the world, united in their thirst for knowledge and their willingness to pay any price to find it. The eclectic origins of the Nine gave them a perspective few other mages have ever achieved. No matter their lineage or history, when they founded the Magocracy of the Black Star, only their thirst for power mattered.

The following sections describe each of the nine archmages, including the four who still remain in Blackclaw Mountain, as well as the towers they built.

GRETHEL THE FLAME

Born of dwarf and draconic parents, Grethel always had fire burning in her heart. A chaotic evil female half-dragon archmage, she was the most brash of the Nine, having destroyed her home city with a single spell in revenge for insults she had received as a child. The other mages understood the need to channel Grethel's fiery heart and temper, letting her serve as the master of evocation for the magocracy. (If you decide to have Grethel play a part in your campaign, she uses the **archmage** stat block with the **half-dragon** template.)

THE MOLTEN CITADEL

Grethel resided in the remains of Aravax's lair, a stalagmite of stone and iron burned by dragonfire, and which came to be known as the Molten Citadel after the red dragon's defeat. Grethel's throne rested on an obsidian platform suspended by adamantite chains over a lake of molten iron far below. Some say that deep within the citadel, she had opened up a permanent portal to the Elemental Plane of Fire, and that she treated regularly with the efreeti of the City of Brass.

THE EVERBURNING CRATER

During their crusade, warriors of the Order of the White Sun, commanded by Lord Korva Vollok, drew Grethel from her citadel and killed her in the streets of Shadowreach. Even as a fatal blow was struck against her, Grethel shattered her *staff of the magi* and caused an explosion that killed Korva and hundreds more on

both sides of the battle. The destruction left a crater behind that still burns white-hot to this day. Those who dare to look into the depths of the crater find their skin and internal organs burned, often leading to a painful death. No sign of Grethel was ever found, though some sages have noted that those who break a *staff of the magi* don't always die.

KAREK BLACKIRON

Karek Blackiron, a male neutral evil dwarf **archmage**, spent decades studying the ways of forging and enchantment under multiple dwarf masters. Each time, he squeezed out all the knowledge he could from those masters before killing them. Banished from more than one wizards' guild, Karek continued to study the arcane arts on his own, until he caught the attention of the Black Star and became one of the Nine.

THE MONOLITH

Karek forged his citadel from a solid block of black iron, and called it the Monolith. The structure appeared seamless, and none but Karek knew how to enter it. The archmage would disappear inside the Monolith for months at a time, coming out only when he needed new components for his creations or when he wished to reveal those creations. Many of the most powerful weapons and armor worn or wielded by the Nine and their warlords came from the Monolith.

Try as they might, the Order of the White Sun could not penetrate the walls of Karek's citadel when they invaded Shadowreach. Some believe that the missing dwarf archmage resides there still, forging a weapon capable of piercing the heart of the Grendleroot.

DEEPREACH

In addition to forging the Monolith, Karek spent decades building a vast dungeon beneath Shadowreach. Said to descend at least twenty levels into the mountain, the halls of Deepreach connected numerous chambers that had already existed below Shadowreach for millennia. Karek and the other archmages of the Nine used Deepreach as a vast laboratory for their experiments. Prisons filled with forgotten foes, vaults containing magic worth more than empires, great vats of sentient primordial ooze, and huge machines of war are all said to still be found in the dungeon's abandoned halls. The Order of the White Sun attempted to explore Deepreach, but with little success and many deaths. The dungeon lies underneath Shadowreach still, its forgotten chambers almost completely unexplored.

THE SWORD OF NIGHT

Though shards of the Grendleroot can be used in the creation of weapons and armor, Karek is so far the only being in the world able to forge the indestructible material of the Grendleroot into new forms. He constructed and wielded a *vorpall longsword* from that material, naming it the Sword of Night. Lost during the crusade of the White Sun, the blade is thought to be somewhere within the endless expanses of Deepreach.

KORVILIA, THE DAUGHTER OF DEATH

Once a neutral good female high elf wizard, Korvilia fell into the ways of necromancy and became a neutral evil elf vampire archmage. (Use the **vampire** stat block with the spellcasting of the **archmage** stat block.) She operated independently for six hundred years before joining the archmages of the Black Star. Haunted by the death of her daughter, Korvilia spent her centuries studying the borderlands between life and death, and built the undead army that protected Shadowreach. Nearly a thousand skeletons and two hundred wights were commanded by the four vampire knights who served her.

When the Order of the White Sun came to Shadowreach, Korvilia escaped to a hidden vault where she remains to this day. See the “Vault of the White Queen” adventure for more information on Korvilia.

MARROWHOLD

Korvilia spent much of her time in Shadowreach in Marrowhold, also known as the Tower of Silent Screams. This edifice was built within the petrified body of a rune titan in the northeast portion of the city. A moat of ravenous ghouls once surrounded the tower, feasting off the exposed lower half of the rune titan, until the Priests of the White Sun came. Those priests turned the ghouls to ash when they took the city and shattered the tower, leaving half of the hollow upper torso of the petrified titan exposed. The paladins and Priests of the White Sun discovered vast catacombs beneath the tower connected to Deepreach, and were never fully successful in rooting out the undead lurking within.

SORAM OF THE OUTSIDE

Soram, a neutral evil male lightfoot halfling archmage, was the master conjurer of the Nine. Always calm and always smiling, he was known for his intricate facial tattoos and beautiful clothing. Soram often acted as

an ambassador for the Nine, and was one of the few archmages who would bother to meet with leaders from outside the mountain.

The Order of the White Sun began their crusade by executing Soram in front of the mountain. Lord Templar Alexa Avankor swung the blade herself, in a public display that marked the beginning of the war with the Magocracy of the Black Star. It was whispered that Soram’s last act before the sword fell was to curse the White Sun, and to call upon the seed within the mountain to destroy the order. Many of those who believe the possibility of this curse maintain that this was the source of the explosive growth of the Grendleroot spires decades later.

BLACKTREE

Soram practiced his magical craft in Blacktree, a twisted stalagmite shaped like a great tree and made of indestructible metal. The tree was said to exist on the border between this world and the world of shadow, marked by a thin veil said to hang in a chamber deep below the tree where the two worlds connected.

ULON THE MIND DANCER

Ulon, a male neutral evil cloud giant archmage, was the magocracy’s master of illusions. (Use the **cloud giant** stat block for him, with the spellcasting of the **archmage** stat block.) Ulon believed that the happiness of all beings could be found in the depths of the mind, and he built vast dreamscapes in which hundreds of slaves worked themselves to death under an illusion of peace and contentment. Ulon’s dream experiments were deemed necessary to understand the worlds beyond reality that mortals could not otherwise grasp. He spent decades in these recursive worlds of his own creation, constructing entire multiverses in his mind in order to conduct his research and experiments.

THE GHOST TOWER

Ulon spent his days in a twisted spire standing half inside and half outside of reality, known as the Ghost Tower. Its form would shift from a spire of magically shaped gray stone into an ethereal beam of light shining floor to ceiling in the great cavern of Shadowreach. When the Order of the White Sun invaded the city, they had to wait until the first new moon of the following year before Ulon’s tower shimmered into existence once more. A team of paladins and mageslayers led by the bard Sylva Dawncaster assaulted the tower, but they never came back out before it blinked away once again.

Every ten years, the Ghost Tower reappears in Shadowreach for three days before it disappears once again. Some who have seen it say that the sounds of screaming and battle still echo from within. Others hypothesize that the members of the order who entered the tower fell into their own illusory worlds, and that even if they yet survive, they will never come back out again.

VRATHE OF WAR

Vrathe, a neutral evil female fire giant archmage, was advisor to two different fire giant kings. Both times, she was thrown aside and banished for her propensity toward careful thought over quick aggression. Both times, the kings who dismissed her ended up with their heads upon the pikes of their enemies.

For two hundred years, Vrathe combined her study of both war and magic. She led the Claws of the Nine, the half-dragon warlords who she raised from birth and infused with her magic. These warlords commanded the mortal army of the magocracy.

THE CITADEL OF THE LONG NIGHT

Vrathe resided in the Citadel of the Long Night, carved from a massive stalactite hanging two hundred feet down from the cavern ceiling above Shadowreach. Largely destroyed when Vrathe was slain by a force of Mageslayers and Blades of Dawn, the citadel remains accessible only from the air.

VRATHE'S ROD OF COMMAND

Vrathe wielded a *rod of lordly might* she used to command her armies. The rod was lost during the crusade of the White Sun, and is rumored to still lie within her ruined citadel.

WAVERLYN STARSONG

Mistress of divination Waverlyn Starsong, a neutral evil female elf archmage, spent most of her days communicating with entities beyond the world. She built Starsong Tower as a beacon and amplifier to let her speak with creatures beyond mortal understanding. Her greatest accomplishment was to touch the intellect of the Black Star, an act that splintered her mind into many separate personalities. Some of these personalities were kind and gracious, while others exploded into wrath and sadism.

Each of Waverlyn's personalities showed itself during the crusade of the White Sun, when she was dragged from her tower weeping and begging for her life. Moments later, she spoke a single word that



shattered the minds of two dozen of her attackers, before Alexa Avankor's *holy avenger* pierced her heart.

STARSONG TOWER

Waverlyn Starsong's sanctum, set along the clifftop edge of Shadowreach where Deepdelver's Enclave now stands, is described in the adventure "The Call of Starsong Tower."

XARVIN THE INFERNAL

Abandoned at an early age by his human mother, Xarvin—a neutral evil male tiefling **archmage**—learned to both hate and revere the infernal half of his heritage. For decades, he studied the bonds, pacts, and contracts of the Nine Hells, binding his first demon at the age of sixteen. He eventually hunted down and bound his infernal father, sealing him in a pocket dimension tied to a *cubic gate* that now sits in a chamber of Deepreach, guarded over by four bound **ice devils**.

Xarvin built a library of true names and infernal contracts, buying, selling, and trading them as deftly as the shrewdest banker. He used his vast network of bound devils to learn more of the Black Star, passing along information to his fellow archmages when it suited him.

When the Order of the White Sun came to Shadowreach, they set fire to Xarvin's library. As parchments burned and bronze disks melted, the devils bound inside them broke free from long years of bondage. They turned on their former master, breaking his body and capturing his soul. It is said that a pit fiend named Vuron the Vile now holds Xarvin's soul trapped in a *ring of spell storing*, and that the archmage's screaming face can still be seen within the ring's amber agate.

THE INFERNAL LIBRARY

Xarvin's tower was built of marble on the western wall of the cavern surrounding Shadowreach. Decorated with pillars carved into the shapes of all manner of fiends, its twenty stories of shelves housed scrolls, tablets, tomes, disks, and other forms of contracts going back thousands of years.

When the Order of the White Sun set the library ablaze, holy fire shattered the shelves, then burned and melted the contracts. One large tablet of black onyx floating in the center of the library melted, releasing the pit fiend Vuron the Vile and carving a shaft down through the floor of the library into magma-filled caverns hundreds of feet below. Those few who have approached the shaft report a scorching blast of air

continually blowing out of the pit, along with a loud rhythmic hammering like some great infernal machine in the darkness below.

Some believe that the **pit fiend** Vuron still resides in the burning caverns and chambers beneath the library, with its four **erinyes** advisors and sixty-six **bone devils** commanding an army of lesser devils. Since the fall of the magocracy, Vuron has been using his infernal machine to open a fiendish gateway to the Nine Hells.

YOLON OF THE VOID

Yolon, a neutral evil nonbinary **lich** and the oldest of the archmages of the Black Star, spent centuries studying the multiverse and the spaces in between. It was said that their mind existed half in and half out of reality, seeing things beyond the comprehension of any other creature.

At the height of their power, Yolon had long forgotten their original heritage and mortality, and cared nothing for the mortality of others. Outside the Nine, mortal creatures were a simple resource to use and expend as Yolon's dark experiments required. It was common for the lich to disappear from Shadowreach for years at a time, stepping away from delicate and intricate experiments to journey into the void between the stars, and speaking to entities whose mere existence would crush the souls of other beings.

During the late stages of the crusade of the Order of the White Sun, Yolon floated out from their tower armed with a *staff of power*, a *robe of the archmagi*, and a retinue of twisted demons. The lich and their demonic host nearly broke the assault, until a paladin named Karvus Whiteiron smashed through Yolon's defenses and smote them with a divine light more powerful than any seen in centuries. The lich turned to ash and the demons dissolved into oily pools. Yet Yolon's phylactery was never found, and many whisper that the lich yet resides somewhere in Shadowreach, still seeking the lost secrets of the multiverse.

TOWER OF THE VOID

Yolon spent much of their time sequestered in the Tower of the Void. This stronghold of black metal floated in the center of Shadowreach above a huge shaft leading deep into the heart of the mountain. Great horrors drawn from other worlds by Yolon once lurked in the depths of that pit, sleek with oily black skin, too many eyes, and far too many limbs. During the crusade, the Tower of the Void collapsed into the pit, cracking open and unleashing the shadowy horrors below. Those horrors remain in the pit to this

day, wailing with blind hunger from the darkness below. For now, some residual magic of Yolon's creation keeps them from leaving the pit, but that magic is weakening.

The Order of the White Sun

The Order of the White Sun was founded centuries ago in Sunspire Citadel, a great fortress roughly two hundred miles from Blackclaw Mountain. The high priests and templars of the White Sun knew of the Magocracy of the Black Star, and had long feared the power wielded by the nine archmages. During their crusade into the mountain, many heroes of the White Sun showed their valor in battle against the magocracy. Four of those heroes are detailed in this section.

HIGH PRIEST MAELIN AVANKOR

The tenth high priest of the White Sun, Maelin Avankor knew it was only a matter of time before the order would be forced to confront the darkness taking root in Blackclaw Mountain. Yet he feared that inevitable confrontation, knowing that the terrible power of the archmages would be turned against his order. Only after receiving his apocalyptic vision of the coming of the Black Star did Maelin approve the crusade, and he helped train the forces who marched on the mountain.

Maelin died the day after the Order of the White Sun declared victory over the magocracy in Shadowreach, his body simply giving out despite any serious injury. He lay upon his small cot in an armory that had been turned into a headquarters for the order. On his person was a parchment written in a troubled hand, which read:

"All my life, I have served the Light. But now I see only darkness below. May the Light forgive me."

The Order of the White Sun commissioned a statue of the high priest, crafted by two dozen dwarf sculptors and standing watch over the great pit at the center of Shadowreach as a symbol of eternal vengeance. Working day and night, the sculptors carved the statue from a block of white marble painstakingly hauled in from outside the mountain. The statue shattered eighty years later, when the first spire of the Grendleroot tore through the ground directly beneath it, replacing the masterwork with a thirty-foot thorn of black metal.

LORD KORVA VOLLOK



"My heart died that day," wrote the twelfth high priest of the order. "I knew in that moment that the darkness of the mountain would never be tamed." The exodus of the Order of the White Sun from Blackclaw Mountain began that same day.

LORD TEMPLAR ALEXA AVANKOR

Daughter of Maelin Avankor, Alexa fought with a stout heart, a stubborn will, and a single-minded desire to drive evil from the world. For much of her adult life, she tried to convince her father of the growing danger of the Magocracy of the Black Star after learning of the archmages' enslavement of sentient races and their defilement of thousands of souls. Over long years, Alexa led a force of some two hundred paladins, twenty of which became her knights templar. Through training and prayer, they prepared in secret for their inevitable assault on Shadowreach, sending in spies regularly to assess the magocracy's power.

After the crusade and the death of Maelin Avankor, Alexa gave up her title as lord templar to her second-in-command, a knight templar named Willam Renvar. With her leadership ended, she prepared a backpack full of supplies and strapped on her *holy avenger* longsword, Sunflare—a blade forged by the finest smiths and empowered by her father's most powerful prayers. She stepped into the darkness of the mountain and was never seen again.

To this day, explorers in Blackclaw Mountain sometimes share tales of seeing an elderly woman in dented, patchwork armor. On an island in the middle of a vast black lake deep in the mountain, she fights off hordes of ghouls with a sword that shines like the sun.

SYLDA DAWNCASTER, THE MAGESLAYER

The paladins and priests of the Order of the White Sun knew that their righteousness alone would not be enough to quell the power of the Magocracy of the Black Star. As such, before their crusade, the order trained bards and wizards in the art of abjuration, building shields of magical power, countering the spells of their opponents, and dispelling any magic that stood in their way. With such arcane experience unknown within the order, Maelin and Alexa sought out the mercenary bard Sylda Dawncaster. At first, they paid her handsomely for her experience and her training of this new force of Mageslayers. But after spending two weeks in Shadowreach as a spy, Sylda took their mission into her heart and joined the order.

One hundred mageslayers were trained under Sylda's leadership—bards, fighters, rogues, and wizards specifically trained to counter the magic of the magocracy. Were it not for this force, the order would have stood no chance against the Nine. But with the mageslayers on their side, the priests and knights of the order were able to cut through the magical defenses and devastating attacks of the magocracy, turning the tide and winning the war.

Sylda Dawncaster led twenty mageslayers into the Ghost Tower of Ulon the Mind Dancer in the final days of the crusade. She and her warriors were never seen again, as the tower blinked out of existence with them inside. Some believe that Sylda and her mageslayers are still trapped in the tower, doomed to live in the torment of their own minds for eternity if no one can break the illusory bonds that hold them.

SPELLSIEVE

Wizards and scalds loyal to the Order of the White Sun forged a weapon for Sylda Dawncaster—a blade befitting the leader of the Mageslayer unit, known as Spellsieve. This black-bladed weapon has five runes etched into its blade.

Spellsieve is a *shortsword of absorption*—a very rare magic shortsword that has the same characteristics as a *rod of absorption*. As it absorbs spells, the glyphs on the blade begin to glow violet. As spells are cast from it, the violet glyphs go dark once again. Sylda used Spellsieve when she and a force of Mageslayers and

Blades of Dawn fought and killed Vrathe of War. The blade then disappeared with Sylda Dawncaster when she stepped inside the Ghost Tower.

LORD KORVA VOLLOK

The paladins, templars, priests, and mageslayers of the Order of the White Sun were backed by over a thousand armored troops and veterans led by Lord Korva Vollok, commander of the Swords of the Sun. These soldiers and veterans trained alongside their spellcasting companions in preparation for the crusade.

During the war, Korva's vanguard smashed through the thrall armies of the magocracy. She battled and cut down Thorvum Raisewing, half-dragon warlord of the Claws of the Nine. During the battle, the archmage Grethel the Flame disintegrated Korva's wife and second-in-command, Molly. In response, Korva drove her radiant *sun blade* through the archmage's magical defenses and into her molten heart—even as Grethel broke her *staff of the magi* to slay Korva and hundreds more combatants. Korva's *sun blade* was recovered by a monastic branch of the Order of the White Sun known as the Keepers, and was hidden in a monastery built to imprison a Black Star agent known as Mother Bloodstone. See the adventure "The Cell" for more information.

One Possible History

The tales and legends of the history of Blackclaw Mountain and Shadowreach are filled with inaccuracies, grandiose bravado, and tall tales. You are free to decide which of these stories, if any, are true, and which are simply legend. The material in this section represents just one possible history out of many. Just as the recursive dreams of Ulon the Mind Dancer create a thousand realities, so can you.

CHAPTER 3

THE CALL OF STARSONG TOWER

From the ruins of an enchanted tower, the Grendleroot calls out into the depths of the Astral Plane, spreading nightmares throughout Deepdelver's Enclave.

In the characters' first exposure to the ruins of the Grendleroot, one of the elders of Deepdelver's Enclave sends the party to investigate a corrupting violet energy emanating from the ruins of Starsong Tower, at the north edge of the enclave. Within the tower, the characters discover the remains of former adventurers, a mad cultist, a harrowed specter, and the mysterious call of the Grendleroot. If they successfully repair a corrupted altar to break the source of the violet energy, the characters earn the respect of the enclave—and can even claim Starsong Tower as their own home base.

"The Call of Starsong Tower" is a two-hour adventure for 1st-level characters, and will take those characters to 2nd level. It is designed to introduce players to the ruins of the Grendleroot and Deepdelver's Enclave, and to introduce you to the setup and style of the adventures in this book. This adventure also offers additional guidance to help new Gamemasters run their games.

Adventure Summary

The adventure begins when Bailon the Beardless, an elder of Deepdelver's Enclave, asks the characters for help investigating a strange energy emanating from Starsong Tower. For long years, the tower served as a beacon of light in the cavern, but it went dark with the

coming of the Grendleroot. However, just three days ago, a beam of violet light erupted from the tower, pulsing up to a large spherical crystal in the ceiling of the cavern. The corrupt magic of this light has brought the normally cheerful folk of the enclave into a state of worry.

Deepdelver's Enclave is home to many adventurers and retired adventurers, but its most renowned groups are all presently away on missions of exploration in the mountain. The one group that was in the enclave entered the ruined tower in the hope of discovering the source of the violet light and disabling it—but none of its members have yet returned. Bailon hopes that the characters can investigate to discover the fate of the previous adventurers, and disable the strange violet light creating chaos in the enclave.

Monsters and NPCs. Cult fanatic, giant rats (3), gargoyle, skeletons (3), specter, zombies (2)

Notable NPCs

The following NPCs have a part to play in the adventure.

BAILON THE BEARDLESS

A former explorer who has spent most of his life in Blackclaw, Bailon is a chaotic good male dwarf **veteran** considered by many to be the primary elder of

Deepdelver's Enclave. Kind and mischievous in equal measure, Bailon believes that self-reliance is the most important trait for anyone who wishes to explore the mountain. He is the first NPC the characters meet in this adventure.

JAYCE GOLDSMILE

Jayce runs Goldsmile's Artifacts, a small shop that specializes in buying and selling relics found by those exploring the ruins of the Grendleroot. A chaotic good female lightfoot halfling **scout**, she knows some of the history of Starsong Tower and is willing to share it. She is always excited to meet new adventurers, and offers to help them however she can (including with *potions of healing*). She is also willing to buy any interesting treasure the characters find in the tower.

SARVIN BLUECASTER

Once a priest of the Order of the White Sun, Sarvin became a kind of caretaker of Starsong Tower after his death, as his soul remained bound to the site. However, the corruption of the tower has twisted that soul, transforming him into a half-crazed **specter**. Sarvin is more tortured than evil (treat him as chaotic neutral), and he does not act with hostility unless provoked. His bond to the tower and dedication to the Order of the White Sun grant him the ability to speak Common, unlike most specters.

ALLICE SHADEWHISPERER

A member of an adventuring company called the Bronze Lions, Allice is a chaotic neutral female human **cult fanatic**—and that company's only survivor. She saw her friends killed by the specter Sarvin, and was badly injured in that fight. Unable to flee, she has succumbed to madness inflicted by the corrupt energy within the tower. She now worships the spire of the Grendleroot that punches through the lowest level of the tower, and attacks only if attacked first.

Secrets and Clues

The following secrets and clues can be revealed in the adventure as you determine:

- Centuries ago, Starsong Tower gave off a beam of radiant light that penetrated a great crystal hanging high in the cavern above. The crystal's light would wax and wane to mark the passage of day and night in the world outside the mountain. With the coming of the Grendleroot and the destruction of the city of Shadowreach in the cavern beneath the tower, the crystal went dark. However, three days ago, it began to pulse with an unsettling violet light.
- A holy altar to the goddess of light was once set up in the cellar of the tower. The altar would channel radiant energy into a crystal at the top of the tower, which in turn would illuminate the much larger crystal in the cavern's ceiling.
- The folk of Deepdelver's Enclave have always avoided the tower. Those who spend time in and around it feel a dark presence that manifests as dire nightmares. (This is the power of the altar, which has been corrupted by the Grendleroot spire. With the sudden release of the altar's power, the tower is safe to any creature that spends less than a day there.)
- Those who have briefly explored the tower have reported hearing whispered voices coming from behind its main door. (This is the guardian specter, Sarvin.)
- The spires of the Grendleroot are imbued with mysterious magical power. Strange things happen when the spires come into the presence of other magic.
- The beam of violet light that now erupts from the tower is filling peoples' heads with nightmares. No one in Deepdelver's Enclave has slept well since the light appeared.
- The energy of the Grendleroot spires can create physical and magical mutations in creatures that dwell too close to them.
- Creative individuals and those attuned to the ways of magic have long claimed to hear a strange wavering buzz coming from around the tower.
- Explorers of note have claimed that the tower is some sort of device meant to communicate with beings from other worlds.
- A long-dead sage who went mad after spending too much time in Starsong Tower claimed that an entity beneath it was attempting to communicate with a larger entity floating in the endless void above the world.
- The altar of light in the tower's cellar was added to the tower after its initial construction. The tower's original purpose is unknown.
- The altar has been corrupted by a spire of the Grendleroot, but the power of the Grendleroot builds slowly. After absorbing that power for hundreds of years, the altar reached a critical threshold that has caused it to erupt with the Grendleroot spire's dark energy.
- The Bronze Lion adventurers went into the tower shortly after the violet light first appeared, and haven't come out. The group wasn't well liked around

the enclave, and its members had a reputation for being jerks.

- The Bronze Lions had a wand they said would help them fix the tower.

Origin of Starsong Tower

You are free to change the details of Starsong Tower to make this your own adventure and have it better fit your own campaign. In particular, you can decide who built the tower and what clues they left behind regarding their identity and purpose after abandoning it. However, if you have no history for the tower in mind, you can use the following information to fill in the details.

Nearly five centuries ago, an ambitious arcane order called the Magocracy of the Black Star built the city of Shadowreach long before the coming of the Grendleroot. The archmages of the Black Star built nine towers around the city's vast cavern, including Starsong Tower, named for the archmage who was its overseer. The nine towers all channeled the energy of the mountain to empower spells and conduct complex magical experiments.

Three centuries ago, a fanatical group known as the Order of the White Sun came to Shadowreach and eradicated the Magocracy of the Black Star. Even as they established control over many sections of the city, the members of the order claimed Starsong Tower for themselves. They built an altar to their goddess in the lowest level of the tower, using its radiance to illuminate the great crystal at the top of the cavern. The crystal then shed light across the cavern that brightened and dimmed to match the state of daylight in the world outside.

Two centuries ago, the spires of the Grendleroot erupted within the mountain. One of those spires pierced through the bottom of Starsong Tower and shattered the altar. The crystal went dark. Since then the Grendleroot spire has been corrupting the altar, slowly filling it with dark energy.

After two hundred years, the slow-acting magic of the Grendleroot spire has fully corrupted the altar. An eruption of dark power now sends a call out through the magic crystal at the top of the cavern—and is driving the folk of Deepdelver's Enclave to despair. Through this connection, the Grendleroot hopes to reach out to another similar entity—perhaps one potentially even more dangerous to the world than the Grendleroot itself.

Tips For Running 1st-Level Adventures

This adventure is written for 1st-level characters, who are *significantly* more fragile than 2nd-level characters. It is much easier to accidentally kill 1st-level characters—even instantly. They also have fewer capabilities to handle threats.

It's up to you how difficult you want to make this 1st-level adventure, but if you're new to being a Gamemaster, or if the players in your group are new to the game, go easy on them and reinforce the joy of high-fantasy roleplaying above the ongoing threat of death.

This adventure has been balanced for 1st-level characters, but you'll still want to keep an eye on how quickly things might turn poorly for the adventurers. In particular, always run fewer monsters than characters, use static monster damage instead of rolling for damage, and ignore the instant death rules for new adventurers.

Be kind at 1st level. You can turn up the heat in the levels to come.

Adventure Hooks

The characters can be inspired to explore Starsong Tower and end its corruption for many different reasons, including the money offered by Bailon the Beardless and the chance to build a reputation among the people of Deepdelver's Enclave.

Alternatively, one or more of the characters might be driven primarily by the need to investigate the mystery of the tower. A character might also receive a dream or vision of the Grendleroot's call and want to investigate.

You can also have one or more of the NPCs who've gone missing in the tower to be known to the characters. The adventure assumes that all the members of the Bronze Lions except Allice Shadewhisperer are dead, but you can decide that NPCs the characters know might still be found alive.

THE CALL OF THE GRENDLEROOT

The spire in the cellar of Starsong Tower is one of the spires of the Grendleroot, the vast and ancient sentience that lurks deep within the mountain. Having burst through the cavern floor and into the tower, the spire now allows the Grendleroot to use the tower to attempt to communicate with another vast sentience somewhere far away.

This other sentience might dwell on another plane, or in the vast emptiness of space. It might even be possible that the Grendleroot is calling forth an elder evil that might eventually devour the entire world. This small adventure in the tower could be the beginning of an epic tale to save civilization from an alien horror beyond nightmare. It might also just be a bit of fun for new adventurers.

Start

The adventure begins with the characters in an audience with Bailon the Beardless, an elder of Deepdelver's Enclave. Read or summarize the following to set the scene:

You stand in the Dragon's Fangs—an adventurers' common house and the largest structure in Deepdelver's Enclave. Your host, Bailon the Beardless, sits in a large rocking chair, a pipe in one hand and a staff topped with a carving of a bearded dwarf in the other. Both Bailon and the wooden dwarf give you the same mischievous look.

"So, you all want to be adventurers? Well, there are few jobs in this world more exciting for those who have the calling. It's a dangerous trade, to be sure, but the rewards are well worth it. And I'm not talking just about the rewards of gold, jewels, or relics. I'm talking about the rewards of discovery. I'm talking about uncovering the mysteries of this mountain, some buried here for a thousand thousand years.

"But there'll be time enough for that. If you're looking to test your mettle as adventurers, I have just the job to see if you're truly cut out for this.

"You know that large crystal you saw in the ceiling of the cavern? The one glowing with that strange purple light? It's been dark for two hundred years, since the coming of the Grendleroot. But three days past, it started glowing like it is now, and no one in the enclave has had a good night's sleep since. That light brings nightmares with it, and it's coming from a ruin at the north end of the enclave, called Starsong Tower.

"Most of the adventurers of Deepdelver's Enclave are out in the mountain on missions of their own right now, and I don't expect the first of them back for days. We sent in one company whose people were taking some downtime in the enclave, but they didn't come out."

You can intersperse Bailon's dialogue with questions from the characters. Look at the "Secrets and Clues" section to get an idea of the background information on the tower that Bailon might know. Eventually, the characters' conversation inspires Bailon to make them an offer:

"You want to prove that you have what it takes to be an adventurer of Deepdelver's Enclave? Head over to Starsong Tower and find out what's causing that light. Fix it, and you'll have friends all throughout the enclave. Plus, I'll arrange a reward of a cool twenty gold pieces. Yes, each."

BAILON THE BEARDLESS



BRYAN
SYME

In addition to the secrets and clues you want to share, Bailon tells the characters that there are three ways to enter Starsong Tower—by way of the front door, through a small tunnel that leads from a nearby river into the tower’s lower level, and by scaling the tower’s broken walls.

The dwarf also suggests that the characters talk to Jayce Goldsmile, the enclave’s relic dealer (see the “Deepdelver’s Enclave” chapter). Jayce can provide more information about the tower from the “Secrets and Clues” section, in addition to giving each character a *potion of healing* as a welcoming gift.

The characters can also talk to any of the other NPCs detailed in the “Deepdelver’s Enclave” chapter.

Pacing the Adventure

This adventure is intended to take roughly two hours to run. The primary method of tuning the length of the adventure is the use or removal of optional encounters in area 2, 3, or 5. You can also shorten this adventure by requiring that the characters fix only the altar in area 4 or the orb in area 6, rather than both.

The Ruins of Starsong Tower

The tower rises atop the cliff at the north edge of Deepdelver’s Enclave. The following “Area Aspects” section presents a list of the most notable features of the tower as a whole. You’ll see similar lists of aspects for each of the major locations within the tower. Use these aspects to help remind you what elements of a location are important.

Area Aspects. Three-story tower, beam of wavering violet light shining up to a crystal above, stone doorway, cracked walls, river canyon

When the characters reach the tower, read or summarize the following. Similar read-aloud text accompanies each of the other notable locations in the adventure.

The ruined three-story tower stands atop a small rise on the north side of Deepdelver’s Enclave. Carvings of sinister hooded faces decorate the corners of the tower’s square walls. Halfway up one side, those walls have cracked and fallen away, leaving the tower’s uppermost floor exposed. A large stone door leads into the tower’s first floor. A river of clear blue water is channeled through a canyon some fifty feet away.

A beam of wavering violet light shoots up from the top of the tower to strike a large crystal embedded in the cavern’s ceiling high above, causing it to pulse with an unsettling violet light.

The characters have three obvious ways into the tower, as mentioned by Bailon the Beardless. They can enter through the front door (area 1), which leads to an old audience chamber. They can go down to the river and follow a natural tunnel (area 3) that opens up in the tower’s cellar (area 4). Or characters can climb the tower walls with successful DC 13 Strength (Athletics) checks and enter through the exposed upper floor (area 5).

Unless otherwise described, the tower is built of worked stone, has ceilings 15 feet high, and is currently lit by the beam of violet light that passes through it, which fills all areas with bright light.

1. FRONT DOOR

Area Aspects. Large stone door, sinister carvings of mages, grinning gargoyle

A large stone door marks the tower’s main entrance. The sinister visages of hooded mages stare out with hollow eyes from each of the doors. A gargoyle statue perched atop the doorframe leers down from above.

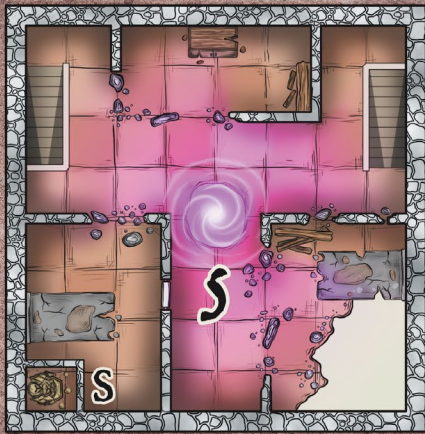
The door can be pushed open with a successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check. Characters can work together to push open the door, granting advantage to the check of the character with the highest Strength score.

CREATURE

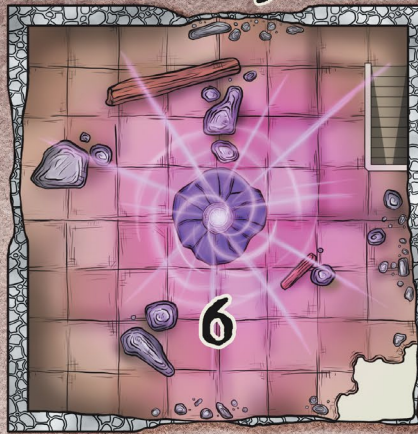
The devilish-looking **gargoyle** above the door was once bound to the service of the Magocracy of the Black Star. Its service ended when the Order of the White Sun took over the tower, but the creature remains magically bound to its perch. It scrutinizes the characters as they deal with the door, swiveling its head around to watch them, and responding in a deep voice if spoken to.

The gargoyle cannot attack unless attacked first. In that event, it makes one attack with its claws, then returns to its perch, lamenting that it is no longer under orders to kill intruders. If addressed with respect, the gargoyle might give up one of the secrets and clues of the tower, described earlier.

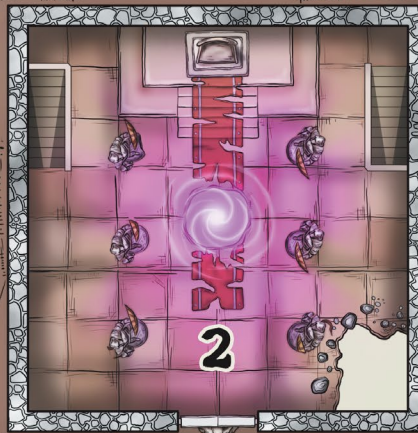
2nd Floor



3rd Floor

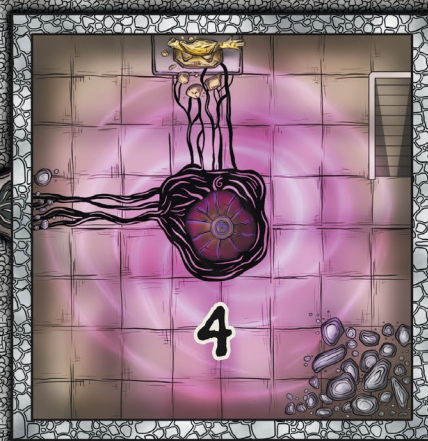


1st Floor



I

Cellar



3



2. AUDIENCE CHAMBER

Area Aspects. Large ornate throne, statues of unknown heroes, mosaics of a bygone age, holes in the ceiling and floor, beam of violet light

The corpses of three adventurers lie on the floor here, all withered and pale. A large ornate throne sits atop a raised platform on the north side of this chamber. Statues of unknown heroes stand at attention, flanking each other in two rows leading up to the throne. Rotting plaster on the walls is peeling away to reveal old mosaics once covered over.

Stairs to the northwest lead up, while stairs to the northeast lead down. The floor and ceiling here have collapsed in the southeast corner, exposing the floors above and below. A circular hole cut into the center of the floor matches one in the ceiling.

If the characters have not yet repaired the altar in area 4, add the following:

A pillar of wavering violet light rises between the two holes.

You can change the details of the decor in this room to fit your own campaign. Otherwise, the old mosaics depict the nine wizards of the Magocracy of the Black Star casting powerful spells, summoning huge demons, exploring lost caverns, and building the nine towers that once rose within the surrounding cavern. The symbol of the magocracy—an eclipsed black star with nine points around the corona—features prominently across the mosaics.

The statues are more recent, and depict the heroes of the White Sun who vanquished the Black Star mages three centuries ago. Each statue features the symbol of the Order of the White Sun—a flaming sword over a blazing white sun.

CREATURES

The corpses are three members of the Bronze Lion adventuring party, all withered by necrotic damage. (The Bronze Lion adventurers made the mistake of attacking the specter Sarvin here and were overcome. See area 6 for more information on Sarvin.)

Two of the corpses rise as **zombies** and attack as soon as any character comes more than 10 feet into the room. Their eyes glow with a violet light—the same

color as the beam of light in the tower. A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check can determine that the zombies have been created by the power of the beam.

If time is running short or the characters have already faced enough battles, you can skip this encounter.

VIOLET LIGHT

If the altar in area 4 is active, the corrupt energy of the beam of violet light is a hazard to those in this area. Any creature that enters the area of the light for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there takes 3 (1d6) force damage and is pushed 5 feet away from the light.

TREASURE

By searching the bodies, the characters can find 18 gp in mixed coin and a jeweled necklace shaped like a beetle (20 gp), along with standard adventuring gear and nonmagical weapons and armor.

On the body that did not rise as a zombie, the characters find a *wand of mending* intended to help repair the tower. This uncommon magic item has 7 charges. While holding it, a creature can use an action to expend 1 of its charges to cast the *mending* cantrip. The wand regains 1d6 + 1 expended charges daily at dawn. If a creature expends the wand's last charge, they roll a d20. On a 1, the wand crumbles into ash and is destroyed.

3. TUNNEL

Characters who explore the river's course through the canyon near the tower discover a subterranean side tunnel leading off the canyon and toward the tower.

Area Aspects. Natural circular tunnel, corrupted water, Grendleroot pillars

A long natural tunnel leads from the rough stone wall of the river to a broken wall of worked stone. A small stream that feeds the river emerges from under the broken wall, but its water has been turned a dirty gray from the presence of a dark liquid dripping out through cracks in the wall. In some areas, the rock walls of the tunnel have eroded away, revealing strange black pillars made of some unknown metal.

The tunnel is roughly 50 feet long and 5 feet in diameter. The black pillars are spires of the Grendleroot that were thrust up from below but did not push above the ground. Like all the Grendleroot spires, they are slightly warm to the touch and



IN THE CELLAR ALTAR

completely impervious to damage. The spires are smooth and have no markings on them.

Any character who succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check can determine that the water flowing down the tunnel is corrupted by the essence of the Grendleroot. It is cold to the touch, and anyone who drinks the water takes 7 (2d6) necrotic damage and is poisoned for 1 hour.

The broken stone wall at the end of the tunnel is one of the walls of the cellar beneath the tower. Characters can easily slip through gaps in the wall and into the cellar.

CREATURES

When the first character moves roughly halfway down the tunnel, three **giant rats** crawl out from clefts in the walls, one in front of the characters and two behind. The rats' eyes glow with a strange violet light, and they attack any creature that tries to reach the tower. A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check can see that the rats are somehow infused with the power of the violet light.

If time is running short or the characters have already faced enough battles, you can skip this encounter.

4. CELLAR ALTAR

Area Aspects. Broken statue, cracked stone altar, black liquid, spire of the Grendleroot, collapsed stonework, hole in the ceiling, beam of violet light

A cracked stone altar carved with religious iconography stands before a ruined statue of the goddess of light. The statue's head has been broken off, and black liquid flows from cracks in its body onto the floor. The liquid pools around a large black spire that juts out of the floor in the center of the chamber, reaching upward like a great claw.

Stairs to the northeast lead up. Collapsed stone from the floor and walls of the level above spreads in the southeast corner of the chamber.

A beam of violet light shoots up from the spire, focused through a hole in the ceiling into the tower above.

The spire of the Grendleroot is the source of the corruption in the tower. Fed by the black blood flowing from the corrupted statue on the altar, the spire uses its energy to attempt to communicate with

an otherworldly being, channeling the thoughts of the Grendleroot through the crystal on the tower's uppermost floor (area 6) and the larger crystal hanging in the ceiling in the cavern above.

CREATURE

Alice Shadewhisperer, a chaotic neutral human female **cult fanatic**, lies prone on the floor here, her arms outstretched toward the spire. She stands when the characters enter, demanding to know whether they too have come in response to the call of the spire. Any character who observes her notes that black ichor appears to be flowing from her eyes.

Alice was one of the Bronze Lions adventurers who came to the tower. Her comrades all fell to the specter Sarvin, and only she remains. Having been corrupted over the three days since she came here, she now spends all her time whispering to the spire and eating rats to survive.

Alice can be convinced that her worship of the spire is folly with a successful DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check. The spire's corruption has broken her mind, but she is not evil. She defends the spire if she feels that the characters are disrupting its connection to her.

In combat, Alice uses *spiritual weapon* to call a spectral black sword that attacks one enemy, while she casts *sacred flame* on others. Her *sacred flame* cantrip evokes black fire that deals necrotic damage instead of radiant damage.

Alice might have become weakened over the time she's spent in the cellar of the tower. You can adjust her hit point total based on her physical state if you want to adjust the pace and difficulty of combat.

If you wish to make the encounter harder (while remembering that 1st-level characters are particularly vulnerable), Alice might be protected by one or two **zombies** risen from her former comrades. The undead fight at her side, but automatically fall when she is defeated. You likely only want to do this if the characters are higher than 1st level, or if there are more than five characters in the party.

VIOLET LIGHT

While the altar is active, see area 2 for information on the hazardous effects of the beam of violet light.

CALL OF THE GRENDLEROOT

The spire of the Grendleroot resonates with a strange buzzing sound as the beam of violet light blazes up through the tower. A character can attempt a DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check to investigate the spire. On a success, a character becomes conscious of the call of the Grendleroot as it is transmitted

through the tower. They know that some form of intelligence is attempting to call out to another entity. You can fill in the details with as much information as you wish, customized for your own campaign. See "What is the Grendleroot?" in the "About this Book" chapter for more information.

If a character fails this check, they suffer a random form of short-term madness for 10 minutes as their mind buckles under the weight of the Grendleroot's call. Appendix B has more information on short-term madness.

REPAIRING THE ALTAR

The statue and the altar can be repaired with three uses each of the *mending* cantrip. The altar can also be repaired with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check.

If the statue and the altar are both repaired, the corrupting power of the Grendleroot spire is broken and the black liquid stops flowing. The room fills with a white radiant light that flows up through the ceiling to the crystal on the roof of the tower. Though the black spire remains in the chamber, its dark power fades when the altar is repaired. Unless the characters have repaired the crystal in area 6, however, the tower's corruption is not ended, and they recognize that more work needs to be done above.

TREASURE

Set atop the altar are a golden bowl and plate (25 gp each) and a small idol of the goddess of light (50 gp).

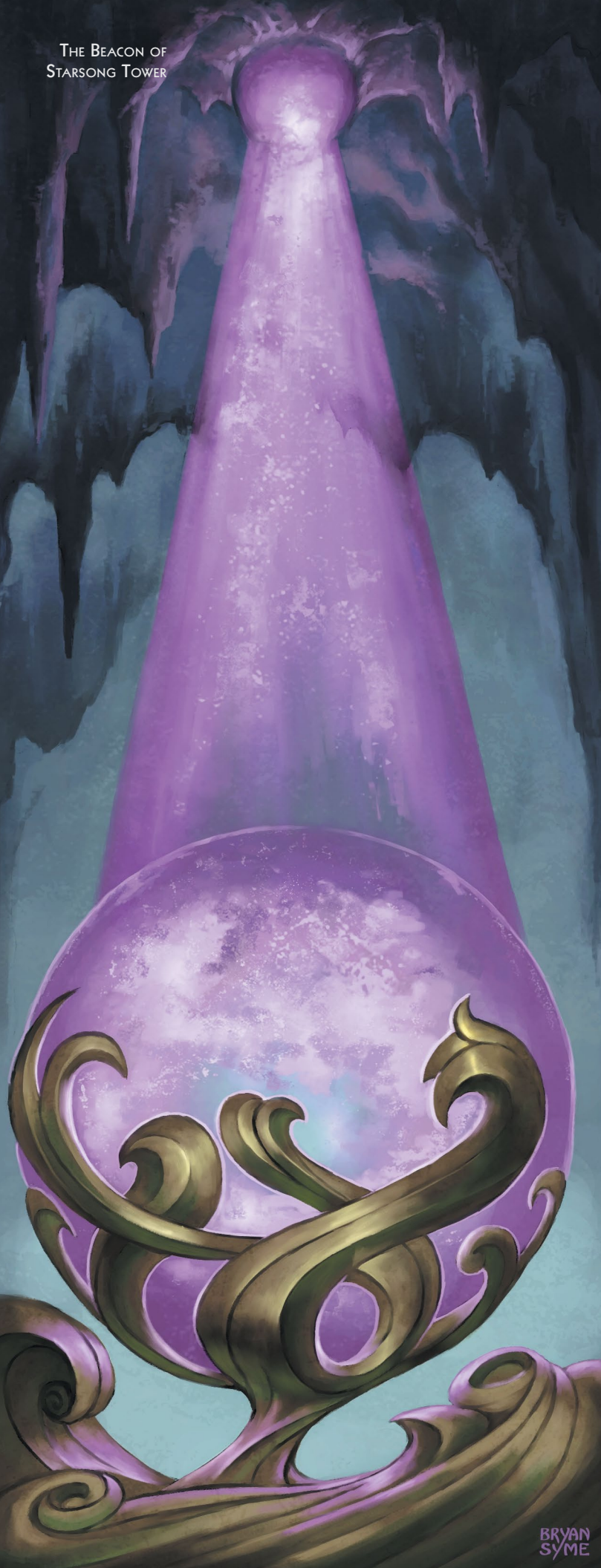
5. UPPER SUITES

Area Aspects. Crumbling walls, ruined chambers, collapsed floor, outset walls, holes in the ceiling and floor, beam of violet light

Time has not been kind to the tower's second floor. Collapsed walls reveal ruined bedchambers and storage rooms. A cracked stone staircase in the northwest extends to the floor above. The southeast corner of the floor and ceiling have both collapsed, exposing the floor above and below. A circular hole cut into the center of the floor matches one in the ceiling.

If the characters have not yet repaired the altar in area 4, add the following:

A pillar of wavering violet light rises between the two holes.



VIOLET LIGHT

If the altar in area 4 is active, see area 2 for information on the hazardous effects of the beam of violet light.

SECRET SHRINE

The far corner of the mostly intact bedchamber to the southwest features two outset stone walls with no visible openings. A character who succeeds on a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers a hidden lever at the foot of the east wall that slides a section of that wall open, revealing a small shrine beyond. The shrine features a bronze statue of a seated knight with arms extended and palms up. A gold-hilted longsword rests across the knight's hands (see "Treasure" below).

CREATURES

If you wish to include a combat encounter here, three **skeletons** wearing the livery of the Order of the White Sun rise from the rubble and attack.

TREASURE

The sword set across the statue's hands is a +1 *longsword* named Goldkiss. This is an uncommon magic item whose design features the sword-and-blazing-sun symbol of the Order of the White Sun. A character attuned to the weapon can use an action to cast a version of the *burning hands* spell that deals radiant damage instead of fire damage. This feature of the weapon can't be used again until the next dawn.

6. ROOFTOP

Area Aspects. Huge crystal, collapsed floor, broken walls, beam of violet light

The walls and ceiling of the upper level of the tower have collapsed, leaving this area exposed to the cavern beyond. A two-foot-diameter crystal sits atop a large pedestal of twisted green-and-gold metal at the center of the floor. The southeast corner of the floor has collapsed to reveal the levels below.

If the characters have not yet repaired the altar in area 4, add the following:

Swirling violet energy flows around the base of the pedestal. A crack in the crystal emits a beam of wavering violet light that shoots upward to a much larger crystal set into the ceiling of the cavern, one hundred feet above.

VIOLET LIGHT

If the altar in area 4 is active, see area 2 for information on the hazardous effects of the beam of violet light.

CALL OF THE GRENDLEROOT

Characters in this area can attempt to listen to the call of the Grendleroot in the same way as described in area 4.

CREATURE

Sarvin Bluecaster, a former priest of the Order of the White Sun transformed into a **specter**, flows around the base of the crystal in incorporeal form. When the characters first arrive, he manifests into his original humanoid form to speak with them.

Sarvin is not immediately hostile. The priest is tortured by the corruption of the crystal, and yet remains bound to protect it. The characters can convince Sarvin of their intent to restore the tower and end the corruption with a successful DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check. On a failed check, Sarvin attacks.

As an action, Sarvin uses Life Drain against three different targets, but each attack deals 3 (1d6) necrotic damage instead of its normal damage. He moves between attacks, provoking opportunity attacks to hit multiple targets instead of just one.

REPAIRING THE CRYSTAL

If Sarvin is defeated or convinced to let them work, the characters can undo the corruption of the crystal with three castings of the *mending* cantrip, or with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check. If this check fails by 5 or more, a bolt of violet energy arcs out to deal 3 (1d6) necrotic damage to the character attempting the check.

The characters can attempt to repair the crystal while battling Sarvin. If they are successful, the specter's madness ends when the crystal is repaired, and he ends his hostility as his pain leaves him.

When the crystal is repaired, the violet light no longer flows to the larger crystal in the cavern ceiling.

If the altar in area 4 is likewise repaired, the crystal instead releases a beam of radiant energy to the crystal above, restoring the tower's original function and filling the cavern with light to reflect the state of night and day in the world above.

Concluding the Adventure

When the adventure ends, the characters have hopefully restored the radiant light of the tower. This light shines down from the cavern's ceiling above Deepdelver's Enclave, creating a simulated day and night cycle for the enclave's inhabitants. The characters reach 2nd level, and the people of Deepdelver's Enclave thank them enthusiastically for their efforts, marking them as valued residents of the enclave.

With the corruption of the altar ended, Starsong Tower is no longer a dangerous site to explore. In recognition of their role in cleansing the site, the characters are given permission to restore the tower as a home base for their adventures to come.

If the characters managed to convince either Allice or Sarvin to let go of their connection to the Grendleroot spire, either of them might choose to remain in the tower. Allice could decide to give up adventuring with her friends now gone, offering to be the caretaker of the tower while the characters are off exploring. Sarvin might remain as a friendly guardian or spiritual guide, and can provide information on the Order of the White Sun.

Depending on your plans for the campaign, the characters can continue with further investigations of the mysteries contained deep within the mountain, as they explore the ruins of the Grendleroot.

CHAPTER 4

TEMPLE OF THE FORGOTTEN GOD

From deep within a vault hidden for centuries, a dying god calls out to their last remaining follower.

A young child named Sophie goes missing in a lost temple to gods long forgotten. Once thought to be the girl's imaginary friend, the voice Sophie has heard in her head for two years is that of a god on the verge of death—and desperate for the life force held within the youngster, who has become the god's one last follower.

Frantic to find the child, Sophie's father asks the characters to find her and bring her home. Along the way, the fate of a god might fall into their hands.

"Temple of the Forgotten God" is a three- to four-hour adventure for 2nd-level characters.

Adventure Summary

During Wee Delves' Week, an event that sees the children of Deepdelver's Enclave join their families on adventures and explorations in the safer ruins of the mountain, the characters learn that a child has gone missing. Rauffe Wyndrunner, the child's father, returns to the enclave pursued by twisted wolves. The characters learn that Rauffe's daughter, Sophie, ventured into a recently discovered set of rough-walled chambers in the mountain containing a lost temple to forgotten elven gods. All her father knows of her reasons for doing so is that Sophie claimed to have heard a voice calling to her in ancient Elvish.

In the lost temple, the characters discover twisted cultists, mutated monsters, and the last signs of the elves who worshiped the lost gods. But to rescue Sophie, the characters must face the forgotten god Aymon the Gray Prince, then determine the deity's fate.

Monsters and NPCs. Cultists (4), cult fanatic, gray oozes (2), mummies (2), shadows (2), specters (1+), wolves (4)

Notable NPCs

The following NPCs have a part to play in the adventure.

SOPHIE WYNDRUNNER

Sophie, a chaotic good half-elf **commoner**, is a young child whose elf mother died two years earlier. Since then, the girl has been known to talk to an invisible friend in an ancient form of Elvish. Like her family and many in the enclave, Sophie loves to explore, and she is often unaware of the dangers around her. She enjoys talking to her invisible friend and thinks the best of everyone, including Thond and his cultists.

RAUFFE WYNDRUNNER

Rauffe, a chaotic good male human **scout**, is an explorer from Deepdelver's Enclave and Sophie's

father. After she became lost on a Wee Delver's Week expedition, Rauffe went looking for Sophie in the deep caverns but was pursued back to Deepdelver's Enclave by mutated wolves. Rauffe loves his daughter and exploration, but he is not the most skilled adventurer. If he attempts to rescue Sophie on his own, he will likely die in the attempt.

ZACHEUS THOND

A chaotic neutral male human **cult fanatic**, Thond has heard the whispers of Aymon the Gray Prince for years but still cannot understand them. He has gone mad trying to piece together what he's heard, but that madness has allowed him to find Aymon's lost temple. He and a band of cultists who follow his mad teachings now reside in the temple ruins, writing their own interpretations of the Gray Prince's message. When he meets Sophie, Thond is torn between his desire to use her to communicate with the Gray Prince and his jealousy that this child can understand what he cannot.

AYMON THE GRAY PRINCE

Aymon the Gray Prince is a long-forgotten neutral male elven god. Once worshiped by elves of all types, his domains include Light, Shadow, Life, and Death. His symbol is that of two crossed open hands, one white and one black. Over the centuries, his followers have died off. Now the last spark of the Gray Prince's godly essence calls from the temple, looking for anyone who will listen to him before he fades away. Aside from the cult fanatic Zacheus Thond, only Sophie Wyndrunner hears his call—and only she understands him.

Secrets and Clues

The following secrets and clues can be revealed in the adventure as you determine:

- The elves of the surface world and the drow shared a temple deep in Blackclaw Mountain over a thousand years ago.
- Some of the priests in Deepdelver's Enclave have recently woken from nightmares, talking of hearing the pleading whispers of a god they do not worship or understand.
- Sophie Wyndrunner has long spoken of an invisible friend that keeps her company. This invisible friend doesn't speak Common, instead speaking an ancient dialect of Elvish.

- Sophie is a bright child, who learned how to read Elvish at the age of two from her mother.
- The elves have many gods, some of which are worshiped by very few followers. When their worshipers die off, so too do the gods.
- A year ago, an explorer of Deepdelver's Enclave brought back a piece of broken rock from an ancient ruin with some form of Elvish writing on it. Only Sophie could read it, translating the words as: "The Gray Prince calls to us."
- A strange priest came to the enclave weeks ago, trying to get some old Elvish script translated. It made no sense to anyone he showed it to. He and a group of followers were last seen heading down one of the tunnels leading off from the mushroom lake.
- Sophie says her mother once spoke to the same invisible friend she has spoken to. Her mother taught her to understand what he was saying.

Adventure Hooks

As fellow adventurers and explorers of Deepdelver's Enclave, the characters should have an instinctive desire to help Rauffe find his missing daughter. Individual characters might already know or have some relationship with either Rauffe or Sophie. Perhaps Rauffe is a friend, or Sophie might be an adopted niece of one of the characters.

At the same time, the thought of discovering what they can of the forgotten god's temple might interest some of the party members. A character with arcane or religious training might also hear the strange call of the forgotten god. Though they cannot understand what the god says to them, the character might feel an unnatural pull toward the lost temple.

You can also replace Sophie, her father, or Aymon the Gray Prince with NPCs and deities from your own campaign that are important to the characters.

Start

The adventure begins during the Wee Delver's Week celebrations in Deepdelver's Enclave. Read or summarize the following to set the scene:

It's the fifth day of Wee Delvers' Week, when children of all ages join their adventurous parents as they delve into the ruins within the mountain. Most children come home with smiles on their faces and wanderlust firmly planted in their hearts. A few come back bruised and in tears, but even more resolved to do better next year.

One has not come home at all.

Sophie Wyndrunner went exploring with her father, Rauffe, and two of his friends, and the group is long overdue to return. Search parties have gone out after the pair with no success, and talk of their fate throughout Deepdelver's Enclave has gotten uncharacteristically grim.

It is late in the evening when a cry echoes out across the enclave. Rauffe Wyndrunner, Sophie's father, has been spotted approaching the enclave—but he is not alone. A chorus of unnatural howls follows him.

Four mutated wolves stalk Rauffe Wyndrunner, father to Sophie. Having already killed the other two members of the expedition, the wolves have pursued Rauffe back to Deepdelver's Enclave, hoping he leads them to more prey. Characters who join the other Enclave residents investigating the cries meet Rauffe as he and the wolves reach the southwest gate. The gate is open to allow Rauffe to reach safety, and the characters can pitch in to prevent the wolves getting past.

Their proximity to the strange power of the mountain has mutated these wolves. Crystalline growths jut out of their matted coats, and their eyes blaze with blue energy. Each uses the **wolf** stat block with these changes:

- It has darkvision out to a range of 60 feet.

Additionally, the lead wolf is a great brute with these changes:

- It has a Charisma of 12 (+1) and 22 hit points.
- As an action, the wolf can roar with the effect of a *thunderwave* spell (DC 11). Once this ability is used, the wolf cannot use it again until it has finished a long rest.

For a shorter adventure, skip the fight against the wolves and begin with Rauffe approaching the characters in Deepdelver's Enclave with his request to save his daughter.

RAUFFE'S STORY

After the wolves are defeated, Rauffe tells all who will listen that on the second day of Wee Delvers' Week, young Sophie ran off into a network of caves newly opened up by a collapsing tunnel. Following her tracks, Rauffe and his two companions, Yen Willowgrove and Gray Roberto, discovered that the caves held an ancient elven temple. But before they could find Sophie, they were attacked by the wolves and forced to flee back toward the enclave. Yen and



SOPHIE WYNDRUNNER

Gray both fell to the wolves while Rauffe made his escape.

Rauffe's wounds are infected by the wolves' Grendleroot corruption, and will be slow to heal. Prevented from being able to lead a rescue party to go after Sophie himself, he begs the characters to travel to the lost temple and rescue his daughter.

Hearing of the recently discovered temple, Ardulvin the apothecary mentions that he too has heard of an elven holy site hidden away within the mountain. He believes that he knows another way into the complex, through an underwater passageway in the caves behind the mushroom lake. He offers a map leading to the underground waterway if the characters want to approach the temple that way instead of following the trail left by Rauffe.

As the characters prepare for the journey, they might learn one or more of the secrets and clues detailed earlier in this adventure by talking to other residents of Deepdelver's Enclave.

COMBAT OR ROLEPLAYING?

You can run this adventure in different ways depending on whether your players prefer combat or roleplaying. For a heavier focus on roleplaying, Thond and his cultists are more curious than violent, beseeching the characters for help communicating with the Gray Prince. For a more combat-focused approach, the cultists are violent and dangerous, seeing the characters as a threat and attacking. Choose whichever approach you and your group will enjoy the most.

Traveling to the Temple

Two potential routes can take the characters to the temple. The first follows the path Rauffe and the others took, and leads to area 1. The second path follows a network of underwater passages that leads to the lake in area 2. Either journey takes roughly four hours of travel from Deepdelver's Enclave.

If time allows, you can add an encounter during this journey by using the locations and encounter descriptions in appendix B. Otherwise, you or the players can describe the characters' uneventful trip through the tunnels and caves of the mountain, and their arrival at the recently uncovered temple.

If the characters choose to travel through the underwater tunnel, it connects eventually to an cave leading to area 2. Air pockets throughout the journey prevent anyone from drowning, but the current flows against the characters. Each character swimming through the tunnel must succeed on a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check or gain one level of exhaustion when they arrive at area 2.

Pacing the Adventure

Set the pace of this adventure by choosing where and how quickly the characters locate Sophie. The characters can track the missing youngster by looking for signs of her passage along the sandy floor of the temple chambers. Any character who succeeds on a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Survival) check can find her footprints. These can either lead the characters right to Sophie's current location, or let them follow her journey through the temple.

For a shorter game, the characters might catch up to Sophie in one of the initial areas they explore. In

a longer game, she might be in the last chamber they check. The characters can easily find her speaking to Zacheus Thond at the shattered tower in area 4, or talking to the Gray Prince in area 8. If they find her before they have gone to area 8, she might run off to that area to say goodbye to the Gray Prince. Sophie is ready to go home, but she also knows that her longtime friend is in pain and would like to find a way to help him.

If you're not sure where to place Sophie, put her in area 4, where she is teaching Zacheus Thond about the Gray Prince.

Temple of the Forgotten God

Over a thousand years ago, a clan of elves of many subraces worshiped a number of deities in harmony. Separated from the larger elven empires of the surface world, this group remained secluded in Blackclaw Mountain for centuries.

The elves built numerous small temples and shrines to their gods, placing those shrines in a series of chambers kept hidden from the larger threats in the mountain. When the spires of the Grendleroot shattered Blackclaw, those chambers were buried, and many of the elves were killed. Those who survived left the mountain, and their gods were soon forgotten.

Now, recent quakes in Blackclaw Mountain have exposed some of these ancient chambers once again. Though many of the deities once worshiped in this temple have faded from the multiverse, one of them—Aymon the Gray Prince—still clings to existence.

FEATURES OF THE TEMPLE

Unless otherwise described, the tunnels connecting the caverns of the temple are 10 feet high, and dark. Larger chambers are 30 feet high and filled with dim light by failing light globes floating in the air.

As the Gray Prince has lost his followers, his spiritual essence has flowed like blood into the sand that covers the floor in all the caverns, giving it a reddish hue.

1. WATERFALL CLIFF

Area Aspects. Flowing waterfall, stepped cliff, inscribed stalagmites

Temple of the Forgotten God



1 Square = 5 ft.

An underground river flows over a cliff in this chamber, dropping twenty feet to a pool below. The river continues from the pool into a cavern, flowing roughly southwest. Steps have been carved into the cliff side, leading to the ground below. Four large stalagmites, two on either side of the cliff, are inscribed with intricate Elvish script. Two tunnels lead off to the northwest and southwest.

The journey through the caverns from Deepdelver's Enclave leads to this entrance to the temple area. The pool is 15 feet deep and the river is 5 feet deep.

INSCRIBED STALAGMITES

Four stalagmites have been inscribed with intricate Elvish script of a dialect not used in centuries. Any character who reads Elvish recognizes enough of the writing to know that it speaks of a number of shrines to strange gods. A character who succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence (History or Religion) check recognizes that the gods named in the inscriptions were worshiped centuries ago, but their faiths have long since died out.

CREATURES

Four **cultists** (Frane, Yolla, Karasith, and Reland) are here when the characters arrive, kneeling before the stalagmites and pressing their hands to the stone. They have come to the temple with Thond, and believe that communing with the stones will help them understand the call of the Gray Prince.

The cultists largely ignore the characters after becoming aware of them, but become hostile if disturbed. A character who succeeds on a DC 13 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check can convince the cultists to relay that they have seen a child, who they refer to as: "The one who speaks to the Gray Prince." They sent her to speak with Thond in area 4.

For a more combat-focused adventure, the cultists can become hostile as soon as they see the characters, claiming that the party's presence defiles the delicate sensibilities of their god.

Each of the cultists carries a divine spark that allows them to use an action to cast the *shocking grasp* cantrip (+3 to hit). Once a cultist has done so, they cannot do so again until they finish a short rest.

If time is running short or the characters have already faced enough battles, you can skip this encounter.

TREASURE

One of the cultists has an amulet showing the symbol of the Gray Prince—a pair of crossed hands, one white, one black (worth 10 gp).

2. BEACH OF DEAD GODS

Area Aspects. Beach of broken stone, statues of forgotten elven deities, large pool

A beach of sharp, broken stone surrounds a large pool of blue water. Dozens of shattered statues are spread around the beach, their dead eyes gazing into infinity. The ruins of small altars and destroyed monuments are likewise buried in the pink sand of the chamber floor.

If the characters chose to take the underwater passageway from the mushroom lake outside Deepdelver's Enclave, they enter the temple in this area. The remnants of numerous objects and icons built for the worship of dozens of forgotten gods are spread across this beach, as though this were the very place where those gods chose to die. The shattered statues of elven deities are likewise scattered across the ground.

If the characters investigate the statues, each successful DC 16 Intelligence (History) check made by a character can identify one of the following deities:

- **Selunvel:** A vindictive god of beauty, this deity took the form of a featureless humanoid with four gossamer dragonfly wings.
- **Karovin the Pillar of Night:** A powerful knight in service to a lost elven empire, Karovin single-handedly fought an army of one hundred orcs to defend a pass leading to a king's defenseless keep.
- **Ferone of the Red Water:** A god of streams and rivers, Ferone appears as a gender-neutral elf lying next to a running stream. They were slain by their sibling on the shores of the river that passes between the mortal world and the afterlife.
- **Kevek the Crawler:** This hulking insectoid god was known to devour the dead and use their remnants to build life anew.

CREATURE

A solitary **specter** of a priestess named Korva wanders through the ruined monuments in this area, seeking a peace she cannot find. Korva once worshiped Aruvín of the Sky (see "Treasure" below), but her god faded from the world and left her aimless after her own suicide. The specter now hunts the spark of life wherever it can, and has done so to two cultists

whose bodies are now dried husks among the objects scattered across this chamber.

The specter seeks peace, which it can find if a character succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence (Religion) check to let Korva's soul travel peacefully to the afterlife. Korva shows the character who succeeded on the check a vision of an idol of Aruvin (see "Treasure" below).

If time is running short or the characters have already faced enough battles, you can skip this encounter.

TREASURE

Characters who successfully help Korva pass on to the afterlife, or who spend 1 hour searching through the rubble of the monuments here, find a small, well-preserved idol of the god Aruvin of the Sky. This forgotten elven god appears as a nonbinary elf with feathered wings for arms. The idol is an uncommon magic item that pulses with divine energy, allowing its possessor to use an action to cast the *spirit guardians* spell (DC 15). Once the spell is cast, the idol's magic fades.

3. POOL OF STARS

Area Aspects. Pool of black liquid, dancing stars, reflected lights on the ceiling

A shining black liquid fills a pool at the center of this chamber. Millions of tiny stars shift and dance in the pool's depths, reflected as shining lights on the ceiling above.

This pool once served as a connection between the realm of the Gray Prince and the material world. That connection has long since vanished.

PORTAL POOL

A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check discovers that this pool was once a portal to another world, but that connection has been broken. Any creature that touches the pool for the first time on a turn takes 5 (1d10) cold damage as they touch the void of space. Full immersion into the pool results in the creature disappearing completely as they are lost forever in the void.

A character can attempt a DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check to try to reconnect the pool portal to the realm of the forgotten god. On a failure, the character takes 10 (3d6) psychic damage. On a success,

the view in the pool shifts and races through the void until it comes upon a plane of high mountains, watery gray skies, and mile-high waterfalls. Strange celestial creatures soar overhead like clouds with gossamer wings. The character whose check inspired this vision has a deeper understanding of Aymon the Gray Prince, and has advantage on any Charisma checks made while communicating with the forgotten god.

CREATURES

Two **gray oozes** dwell in the pool, the remnants of the distant world it once touched. The oozes pull themselves out of the pool and attack any characters who draw near. These gray oozes swirl with starstuff, allowing each to use an action to cast the *magic missile* spell. Once an ooze has done so, it cannot do so again until it finishes a short rest.

If time is running short or the characters have already faced enough battles, you can skip this encounter.

4. SHATTERED TOWER

Area Aspects. Partially collapsed square tower, crumbling staircase, violet flames from heroic carvings

A three-story square tower rises in the center of this chamber, its outer walls collapsed in spots to leave much of the interior exposed. The four corners of the tower still stand, each relief-carved to resemble a heroic figure. Irregular bursts of violet flame erupt from each figures' palms.

Once a domicile for the followers of the gods in this temple, this tower has been crumbling for long years. The outer corners of the tower have each been carved with the likenesses of four elf heroes. A crumbling staircase inside the structure is still sturdy enough to be used, and leads up to the remnants of the third floor where Zacheus Thond has set up a study.

THOND'S STUDY

This area is a mess of diagrams and glyphs drawn onto the floors and walls—an attempt by Zacheus Thond to make sense of the messages he receives from the Gray Prince. Though he can hear the call of the forgotten god, Thond cannot make sense of those messages, and has long since made up his own narrative. His current theory is that self-sacrifice will bring he and his disciples closer to the Gray Prince.



RATHOMER AND IVANON

CREATURES

Thond, a **cult fanatic**, is often found here along with three **cultists** (Mary Velles, Ivek Wanderlust, and Kara of Toth). All have been fasting for two weeks and look emaciated. Thond is attempting to put together a ritual that will open the Pool of Stars to the realm of the Gray Prince once more, allowing he and his followers to step through. They don't know that doing so will result in their deaths.

If Sophie is here, she is engaged in an animated conversation with Thond. Thond's cultists listen from the ground below, and attempt to stop anyone from interrupting. They can be deceived into letting the characters speak with Thond if they think the characters have critical information.

As Sophie talks to Thond, he scribbles notes all over the walls, asking her to slow down so he can keep up. Her accurate interpretations of the god's messages are shattering Thond's previous views, which he finds both painful and obsessively necessary. He has not harmed Sophie. However, in his mad state, anything is possible.

5. MONUMENT OF KINGS

Area Aspects. Statues of elf kings on stone thrones, intricate circle pattern on a worked stone wall, braziers of blue and red fire

The west side of this natural cavern has been shaped into smooth worked stone. Two statues of elf kings sit on ornately carved thrones, each with one hand outstretched along the throne's arm, palm up. Each throne is set with faint inscriptions along its base, and an intricate pattern is carved on the wall between them. Two braziers sit in front of the statues, one burning with blue flame and one burning red.

This wall blocks off the tomb of two elf kings who ruled within Blackclaw Mountain centuries ago. One was said to have a heart of fire, while the other ruled with an icy coolness. A character who can read Elvish can make out the ancient inscriptions at the base of each throne. These tell the history of the two kings who jointly defended the elven realms in the mountain against foes from this world and others. The text ends with the following passage:

“Our lords Rathomer and Ivanon, who ruled with fire and ice. Rathomer’s heart blazed like the core of a sun. Ivanon’s blind eyes remained cool like the dead of winter. Each held the love of our realm in their hands.”

If the characters examine the statues, they note that the figure to the south has both eyes covered with a heavy veil. This is Ivanon.

OFFERING OF FIRE

The brazier to the north burns with cool blue flames, while the south brazier burns red and hot. Both braziers are magical. A character can ignite a torch or other flammable object in either brazier and bring it to the outstretched palm of the correct king. Doing so causes a small blazing fire to rise from the king’s hand.

If the flame is placed incorrectly in the hand of either statue, pulses of blue or red fire lash out (the same color as the incorrect flame), functioning as a *scorching ray* spell. The flames have a +7 to hit and target the three closest creatures in range that are not undead or constructs.

If the correct fire is set into the hands of both kings, the carved circle on the wall slides inward and rotates out of the way, revealing a round tunnel leading to area 6. The tunnel stays open for 1 hour. A lever in area 6 allows the door to be opened from within.

The wall can also be smashed through with a successful DC 16 Strength (Athletics) check. Doing so causes both statues to flare up as though the wrong fire had been placed in their hands.

CREATURES

If any character approaches within 5 feet of the wall between the statues, two **shadows** flow from the walls of the tomb. Each is filled with a divine spark. As an action, each shadow can cast the *sacred flame* cantrip (DC 10), which deals necrotic damage instead of radiant damage.

If time is running short or the characters have already faced enough battles, you can skip this encounter.

6. TOMB OF KINGS

Area Aspects. Dust of centuries, carved stone sarcophagi, sinister message

The dust of centuries fills this tomb, which holds two stone sarcophagi carved with the images of ancient kings. Elvish script is inscribed into the wall above them.

The carved lids on each of the two sarcophagi resemble the two kings portrayed in area 5. The Elvish script on the wall is in the same ancient dialect seen elsewhere. Any character who speaks Elvish can read it with some difficulty:

“Beyond the tomb, we shall continue to serve righteousness and good. Choose only one reward or feel our wrath even in death.”

TREASURE

Opening either sarcophagus requires a successful DC 12 Strength check. The sarcophagi contain the remains of the two elf kings. Each king’s mummified hands are clasped around a set of magic beads. Rathomer holds a *necklace of fireballs* with three beads on it. Ivanon holds a *necklace of prayer beads* with one blessing bead and two curing beads.

CREATURES

Taking one set of beads from a sarcophagus has no negative effect. However, if anyone then takes the second set of beads, the two kings awaken as **mummies** and attack. The mummies pursue characters who flee with the beads, pummeling them relentlessly. If a mummy reduces a character possessing a set of beads to 0 hit points, it takes the stolen beads and both mummies return to the tomb. If the characters take both sets of beads and return one, both mummies likewise return to their sarcophagi.

7. FIVE STONES

Area Aspects. Standing three-sided stone pillars, arcane circle on the floor, shattered pillar

Five three-sided standing stones surround a circle on the floor inscribed with writing and strange geometric patterns. One of the stones has been broken, its upper half lying on the ground.

Each stone represents one of five high priests who worshiped Aymon the Gray Prince. Delicate Elvish runes set within the geometric shapes in the circle on the floor can be read with difficulty by any character who reads Elvish.

The glyphs talk of how five high priests kept alive the worship of the Gray Prince, a member of an ancient elven pantheon. They name the five high priests of Aymon as Evondyl Whitemoon, Ravandor the Clasp Hand, Tharon Stonespeaker, Evonetha the

Whisperer, and Athrade Wyndrunner. From her name, the characters can guess that Athrade Wyndrunner has a connection to Sophie Wyndrunner. (Athrade is, in fact, Sophie's great-great-grandmother on her elf mother's side.)

RESTORING THE CIRCLE

Any character who succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check recognizes that the spirits of these high priests can be channeled using the power of the arcane circle. Doing so requires that one character sit in the center of the circle, while they or another character attempts to call to a specific spirit with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check. On a failure, the creature in the circle takes 11 (2d10) force damage.

On a success, the character who made the check discovers that they are able to speak in the long-lost Elvish dialect seen in the temple. A spectral vision of the elf high priest called forth steps toward the character in the circle, placing their hand on that character's chest or head. The character gains one of the following abilities, based on which spirit was called. Each benefit lasts until the character finishes a long rest.

Whitemoon: The character has advantage on Intelligence checks.

Clasped Hand: The character has advantage on Strength checks and Strength-based attack rolls.

Stonespeaker: The character gains 10 temporary hit points.

Wyndrunner: The character can cast the *mass healing word* spell. Once the spell is cast, this magic fades.

The fifth pillar, which once belonged to Evonetha the Whisperer, has been broken. The characters can attempt to fix it by first lifting the pillar off the ground and into position with a successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check. A character can then either cast *mending* on the break or succeed on a DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check to draw arcane energy into the pillar and seal it. This offers a fifth option to the four above.

Whisperer: As an action, the character can cast the *magic missile* spell at 3rd level. They appear to be hurling magic daggers of arcane energy when doing so. Once the spell is cast, this magic fades.

A creature can have only one spirit in them at a time. Once a specific spirit has been channeled, it cannot be channeled again until the next dawn.

8. ALTAR OF THE GRAY PRINCE

Area Aspects. Floating stone steps leading to floating platform, bottomless drop, huge carving of the Gray Prince

A stone platform hangs suspended over a bottomless gorge, with a set of floating stone steps leading up to it. A fifty-foot-high carving covers the back wall of the chamber, depicting an elf in swirling robes with hands crossed over his chest—one black hand and one white hand.

This chamber holds an ancient altar to the Gray Prince, once used by his followers to connect with the spirit of their god. The gorge underneath the altar drops 200 feet, narrowing as it descends, and is filled with a thick gray mist from 50 feet below the altar. A character who falls takes 20d6 bludgeoning damage, but hopping from step to step does not require an ability check, and any reasonable safety measure should prevent a fall.

The carving on the far wall depicts the Gray Prince.

THE GRAY PRINCE

If she is here, Sophie can speak to the Gray Prince. She might already be present when the characters arrive, sitting cross-legged on the platform, and talking to a large ethereal entity floating above the gorge.

If the characters arrive here without having yet found Sophie, the Gray Prince manifests just beyond the edge of the floating platform as an ethereal humanoid figure. Any character who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) or Wisdom (Insight) check can hear words of old Elvish that cannot be understood, and feels a great sense of longing and loneliness. Eventually, the spirit of the Gray Prince fades away when it realizes it cannot communicate with the characters.

If the characters arrive here with Sophie, she runs quickly up the steps and talks to her friend. She feels the spirit's sadness and loneliness, and wants to help it. Sophie explains that the Gray Prince needs followers to survive. If the characters have met the cultists, Sophie explains that their madness has closed their minds to the Gray Prince, making it impossible for them to follow him.

With Sophie's tutelage, a character can learn the words of the Gray Prince and become a new follower. Each character who agrees to follow the Gray Prince receives the god's blessing, and can choose one spell

from the following: *cure wounds*, *darkness*, *inflict wounds*, or *light*. The character can cast that spell once with this trait, and regains the ability to do so when they finish a long rest. Wisdom is the character's spellcasting ability for this spell.

If no one accepts the will of the Gray Prince, it demands that Sophie stay in the temple to commune with it. Sophie still likes her friend, but quickly becomes frightened and homesick. Desperate not to lose its one remaining follower, the Gray Prince does not want her to leave. Though it has no power to stop her, it becomes hostile if the characters attempt to take Sophie away.

CREATURES

If the Gray Prince's will is thwarted, it manifests into a vaguely humanoid apparition surrounded by tendrils of white light. The Gray Prince uses the stat block of a **specter** with these changes:

- Its alignment is neutral and its size is Large.
- It has 44 (8d10) hit points.
- It ignores features that turn undead.
- It has the following attack option: **Multiattack**. The Gray Prince makes two Life Drain attacks against two different targets.
- Its Life Drain attack deals radiant damage instead of necrotic damage, and does not reduce a target's hit point maximum. A character reduced to 0 hit points by this attack does not die outright but is left unconscious.

If attacked, the Gray Prince summons one **specter** for each additional two characters in the party over

three (one specter for five characters, two for seven characters, and so on). Each specter uses the normal stat block with these changes:

- Its Life Drain attack deals radiant damage instead of necrotic damage, and does not reduce a target's hit point maximum. A character reduced to 0 hit points by this attack does not die outright but is left unconscious.

Each of these summoned specters appears as gray-skinned elves floating above the gorge.

Concluding the Adventure

This adventure can end in a number of ways. If any of the characters chose to become a follower of Aymon the Gray Prince, the god's desires are met. The Gray Prince begins to impart knowledge to its new follower, though it might take years to understand it.

If the characters are not willing to worship the Gray Prince and its spectral form is destroyed, the god fades away.

Sophie wants to go home to her father, though the spark of adventure doesn't leave her. On her return to Deepdelver's Enclave, she immediately wants to go back out and explore, largely forgetting the fear and trauma of her ordeal. If the characters return Sophie safely to Deepdelver's Enclave, her father becomes a lifelong ally.

If Zacheus Thond survives, he won't abandon his quest to follow the Gray Prince, even if he cannot understand the god. If circumstances permit, he might seek out Sophie again to be his teacher, learning the language of the Gray Prince over time, and perhaps eventually becoming the first new priest of the forgotten god in centuries.

CHAPTER 5

THE SPIRE OF VIOLET FALLS

The restless undead of a lost gnome settlement threaten to spread throughout the caverns of Blackclaw Mountain.

Long ago, the rock gnome village of Violet Falls was a burgeoning center of quartz and gemstone mining in Blackclaw Mountain. Hidden far from prying eyes, the folk of the village traded their gems with other hidden settlements for iron and brass that they used to build wondrous machines—including a clock said to record all of time.

With the coming of the Grendleroot, Violet Falls was lost and assumed destroyed. But now an undead villain sends his minions out from that lost settlement to attack Deepdelver's Enclave. The characters are tasked with finding the legendary village, exploring its ruins, and hunting down the evil that now lurks there.

"The Spire of Violet Falls" is a two- to four-hour adventure for 2nd-level characters.

Adventure Summary

A section of the rocky plateau of Deepdelver's Enclave collapses during a celebration, and a host of gnome zombies crawls out. When the threat has been dealt with, newly exposed tunnels within the rock are found to lead to the forgotten gnome mining village of Violet Falls. This hidden settlement was a mystery to most even before the Grendleroot spires tore through the mountain, and has been lost ever since.

In the aftermath of the gnome zombie attack, the elders of the enclave realize that the undead did not act alone. Some unknown entity is directing the undead of Violet Falls, and the enclave is threatened. The characters are tasked with exploring the newly opened tunnels and finding Violet Falls. There, they must come to terms with the final fate of the gnome village if they hope to end its new threat.

Monsters and NPCs. Animated armor, duergar, fire elemental, flying swords (3), ghast, ghouls (2), giant spider, zombies (4)

Notable NPCs

The following NPCs have a part to play in the adventure.

GEMTOOTH

A once-notorious miner in Violet Falls, Gemtooth is now a chaotic evil gnome ghast leading the undead menace in the lost settlement. Gemtooth always wanted to control Violet Falls, but let his greed get in the way. When the village was destroyed and he became undead, he saw a chance to become the ruler he was meant to be.

Gemtooth believes that undeath is the final state of mortal being, and he plans to lead a continually growing army of undead that will eventually take over

the mountain. He sent the zombies to Deepdelver's Enclave to begin the process of transforming the enclave's people into undead thralls. The gnome ghast is arrogant to a fault, believing that all mortals are destined to become his undead subjects.

Gemtooth uses the stat block of a **ghast** with these changes:

- He has 17 (5d6) hit points.
- He has an Intelligence of 14 (+2).
- He is a 1st-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following wizard spells prepared:
Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *mage hand*, *shocking grasp*
1st level (2 slots): *magic missile*, *jump*, *ray of enfeeblement*

Secrets and Clues

The following secrets and clues can be revealed in the adventure as you determine:

- The rock gnomes of Violet Falls kept to themselves. Only outsiders invited by the gnomes had any chance to find the village.
- A hidden lift offered the only known entry into Violet Falls, though quakes and cracking since the coming of the Grendleroot might have opened up others.
- The rock gnomes of Violet Falls were known for their mastery of alchemy, engineering, wizardry, and gemstone mining.
- Nearby settlements traded regularly with Violet Falls, exchanging raw iron for quartz, gemstones, and alchemical supplies.
- The gnomes built a forge fueled by an unknown source of nearly limitless heat.
- The gnomes built a magic clock said to record the beginning and end of the world, and all moments in between.
- All contact with Violet Falls ceased when the spires of the Grendleroot tore through the mountain. With no survivors reported, it was thought that the village was destroyed.
- The always-curious gnomes found a way to cut into the surface of the black spire that jutted up through the center of their village. The results were catastrophic.
- The gnomes of Violet Falls filled a whole tower with magical, mechanical, and clockwork wonders.

GEMTOOTH



- The gnomes often received brilliant ideas after spending time contemplating a large stone head embedded in a wall near their village. Now the stone head brings only nightmares.

Adventure Hooks

This adventure works best when the characters have a strong reason to want to travel to Violet Falls and end its corruption. Any characters with a background or other connection relating to the fey might have a desire to find the legendary lost settlement, and to put the cursed folk of the village to rest. Gnome or dwarf characters might have had ancestors who told tales of Violet Falls.

Religious characters might feel an overwhelming desire to stop the undead menace, and might receive

visions of a grinning, gem-toothed undead gnome with an intelligent malevolence in its eyes.

Although fighting the undead is the primary goal of this adventure, all the folk of Deepdelver's Enclave are excited that the village has been found once again. This is a scenario focused on exploration as much as it is on defending against a threat.

Start

The adventure begins in the midst of one of Deepdelver's Enclave's more boisterous celebrations. Read or summarize the following to set the scene:

A faerie dragon whirls on gossamer wings, dodging the stinging tail of an imp. Two cats chase after a large hound that whirls and twirls as they flank it, tail wagging. An owl sits stoically on a lamppost while a flying snake darts around it, trying to bait it into chase. All around, the people of Deepdelver's Enclave cheer for these creatures as they celebrate the Familiar's Festival, in which the pets of the enclave enjoy a day of wanton merriment.

A pack of dogs chasing a summoned deer race down the enclave's main thoroughfare. "Woop, there they go!" calls Bailon the Beardless, feet up and rocking back in his chair, pipe in mouth and a cup of coffee in his hand. Then suddenly, the ground shakes and a plume of dust rises into the air in the distance. The dogs come running back, fear in their eyes. They are not alone.

A half-dozen small humanoids approach at a run, their torn skin, dead eyes, and the smell of decay making their nature clear. Someone shouts out a warning: "Gnome zombies!"

The gnome zombies appear out of nowhere, attacking the people of Deepdelver's Enclave with wild abandon. While the other members of the enclave battle their own zombies, four undead break off and attack the characters. Each uses the **zombie** stat block with these changes:

- Its size is Small.
- It has 13 (2d6 + 6) hit points.
- It has a speed of 40 feet.
- It can use the Disengage action as a bonus action.

Two NPCs nearby—Cunovin Drakecowl the barber and Nyx Jewelborn the carpenter, both **commoners**—are also threatened by these zombies, and might need rescuing by the characters.

UNFAMILIAR FOES

When the battle is over, the characters can investigate the gnome zombies and the sinkhole from which they appeared. Each of the bodies wears a tattered violet cloak and a pin showing a waterfall flowing over glowing violet rocks. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (History) check recognizes the pin as marking the gnomes as residents of a village called Violet Falls.

That mining settlement was lost more than two centuries ago when the spires of the Grendleroot tore through the rock of the mountain, closing off countless passages and trade routes. (If the characters don't discover this information, Bailon the Beardless can identify the pin. When the characters arrive at Violet Falls, they discover that the waterfall pins can be used to operate the lift in area 1.)

The sinkhole from which the zombies emerged leads down to a series of tunnels that twist deep within the mountain. Any examination shows that the zombies dug their way up from the tunnels to collapse the sinkhole beneath the enclave—decidedly not the actions of mindless undead. Something sent the zombies to attack Deepdelver's Enclave with clear intent and purpose.

Bailon the Beardless asks the characters to follow the tunnels back to Violet Falls, becoming the first explorers to see that settlement in over two hundred years. In addition to learning what they can of the village and the treasures it once held, they must find and fix the source of undeath in the village, then eliminate the threat of whatever entity or magic sent the zombies to the enclave.

Traveling to Violet Falls

The characters can easily follow the trail the zombies left as they made their way from Violet Falls to Deepdelver's Enclave. That trail leads through a number of recently opened caverns and tunnels. Some of these have been carved out by huge worms burrowing through the mountain. Others split off from great rifts opened by recent quakes and leading down into Blackclaw's fathomless depths.

Reaching Violet Falls from Deepdelver's Enclave requires two days of travel. As the characters get close to the settlement, they find themselves on a main path leading to area 1 and the lift. Any character who searches ahead and succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception or Survival) check spots an alternative path leading to area 2.

1 Square = 10 feet



Depending on how long a session you plan to run, you can add an encounter during this journey by using the locations and encounter descriptions in appendix B. Otherwise, you or the players can describe the characters' uneventful travel and their arrival.

Pacing the Adventure

In their exploration of Violet Falls, the characters have two primary goals: seal the scar in the spire in area 6 and defeat Gemtooth the gnome ghast. Gemtooth moves throughout the city, and can be encountered at any location you desire. See "Notable NPCs" for his statistics. He fights alongside two gnome ghouls, each of which use the **ghoul** stat block with these changes:

- Its size is Small.
- It has 10 (3d6) hit points.

You can control the pace of the adventure by determining how soon the characters face Gemtooth. When the time is right, drop the ghast and the ghouls into the next location the characters visit, making that the final encounter in the adventure.

For the quickest adventure, place Gemtooth at the spire in area 6 so the characters can complete both quests at the same time. Otherwise, they can hunt for Gemtooth all throughout the village, exploring each location as they go.

Violet Falls

When the black spires of the Grendleroot sundered the mountain, Violet Falls was lost. The spires collapsed all known paths to the village, and a huge black spike erupted in the center of its cavern. Unable to escape, the surviving gnomes of Violet Falls began to study and experiment on the strange spires, hoping to discover some way to force them back into the mountain and clear a path of escape.

Though the great spike seemed indestructible, a gnome alchemist and engineer managed to use a magic gemstone to break its surface. The resulting explosion killed more of the small folk, and left a scar in the spike that leaked a poisonous gray liquid. Those who came into contact with the liquid where it pooled around the spire's base, or who breathed the vapors that rose from it, turned into undead horrors that soon feasted on the last of the village's living survivors.

Two paths now lead to Violet Falls—an old tunnel that leads to the lift in area 1, and a newly opened

set of passages that leads to area 2. The caverns surrounding the village have 50-foot-high ceilings of natural stone. All the caverns are filled with dim light shed by luminescent blue-green lichen and glowing violet crystals jutting out of the walls.

1. DEEP LIFT

Area Aspects. Deep shaft descending into Violet Falls, massive chains attached to unseen counterweights, brass lift cage, sneering gnome-face decorations, lever and complex mechanism

This small chamber is one of two entrances to the settlement of Violet Falls, and is normally hidden behind a secret door resembling a cleft of rock. The zombie trail leading to the lift makes the secret door obvious, but any character inspecting the door can tell that without the trail, locating the door would be nearly impossible.

A brass cage hangs by a thick chain over a shaft descending into darkness. Brass faces depicting sneering gnomes decorate the cage. Inside it, a large brass lever juts out from a complicated arrangement of gears and pistons.

A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Insight) check made while inspecting the mechanism in the cage suggests that only an intelligent creature would be able to operate the lift. (It was Gemtooth who shuttled the zombies up, then sent them to Deepdelves' Enclave.)

A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check notices small pinholes in the mouths of the sneering brass gnome faces that line the walls of the lift cage.

WORKING THE LEVER

The brass lever inside the cage sends the cage up or down depending on how it is pulled, but anyone trying to do so finds that the lever cannot be moved. A small indentation easily spotted next to the lever is the exact size to accept one of the Violet Falls pins found on the gnome zombies in the beginning of the adventure. Placing a pin into the indentation allows the lever to move freely, as does jimmying the lever with a successful DC 14 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. The lever can also be forced with a successful DC 15 Strength check.



On a failed check to jimmy the lever, or if the lever is forced, the gnome faces breathe out a blast of poison gas. Each creature inside the lift cage or within 10 feet of it must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

With the pin in place or through forcing the lever, the lift travels 500 feet down. During the last one hundred feet of the descent, the characters are given a breathtaking view of Violet Falls that takes in areas 4, 6, 7, 8, and 9.

2. RIFT OF SPIRES

Area Aspects. Deep rift, nest of Grendleroot spires, large spire-pierced stone hand

A deep rift, twenty feet across, cleaves this cavern in two. A thick nest of black metal spires weaves up from the fathomless depths, ending twenty feet below the edge of the rift. Near the height of the spires on the north side of the chasm, a fifteen-foot-long stone hand reaches out of the wall, a twisting spire piercing its palm.

The stone hand belongs to Gorom, whose head is in area 3. If a creature touches or stands on the hand, it moves slightly as though in pain. A character who succeeds on a DC 14 Wisdom (Medicine) check can see that the hand is formed of living stone and connected to a gargantuan creature embedded into the rock of the mountain.

The characters must find a way across the rift to reach Violet Falls. Any safe and reasonable approach to doing so should automatically succeed. Otherwise, determine what ability checks are needed. A creature that falls down the rift can attempt a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. On a success, they manage to grab one of the spires and hang on. On a failure, they plummet into the bottomless depths of the rift and are forever lost.

If the characters enter this area from area 3, they can intuit that the tunnel across from the rift leads out of Violet Falls and back to the tunnels from which they came.

3. THE HEAD OF GOROM

Area Aspects. Huge head of suffering stone giant, spire piercing head, semicircle of low stone stools

This twenty-foot-high cavern exposes a massive stone head half embedded in a wall decorated by beautiful swirls. A black spire juts out of the forehead of the stone face, whose expression is frozen in pain. A semicircle of low stone stools surrounds the massive face.

The head belongs to a millennia-old, gargantuan, nonbinary neutral stone giant named Gorom. Gorom was once a dreamer whose mental influence flowed out and into the dreams of the gnomes of the nearby village. Though the gnomes never connected their ingenuity to Gorom's dreams, they considered the stone giant a silent companion, and spent much time sitting and contemplating in this chamber.

Since the awakening of the Grendleroot, black spires have pierced Gorom's body deep inside the rock. Now the giant's pain sends nightmares to the mind of any creature that attempts to rest in Violet Falls.

Gorom can't speak but can hear. They respond to questions with images and feelings flowing from their mind into the minds of nearby creatures. With a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check, a character can interpret these images, which show that Gorom is in great pain.

SAVING GOROM

A *spell scroll of meld into stone* can be found among the treasures of the tower of spectacles at area 7. If the characters take this scroll and make it known to Gorom, he can use it to escape his torment. The giant's eyes glow as arcane glyphs appear in the air. Then his body begins to fade away as he falls deeper into the rock of the mountain, escaping the nest of spires.

As this happens, Gorom sends a telepathic message of relief and gratitude. Each character feels their mind open for a moment into Gorom's vast intellect. Until the end of their next long rest, each character has advantage on Intelligence and Wisdom checks. The character's next long rest is also filled with soothing and pleasant dreams.

4. STONE APARTMENTS

Area Aspects. Sloped stone bluff, uniquely carved apartments, network of pathways weaving throughout, great bronze lifts and counterweights

The southeast corner of this cavern has been carved into two eclectic blocks of apartments. Winding walkways are set into a sloped stone bluff, interweaving throughout dozens of stone buildings. Lifts rise up to the steepest height of these apartment blocks, with bronze cages raised by large chains and massive counterweights.

The gnomes of Violet Falls dwelled in these cozy domiciles. Many have since collapsed, but those that remain show off unique looks shaped by the mages and stonecarvers who built them. Walkways weave throughout the five-story-high terraces with no clear rhyme or reason to their directions. The lifts are beautifully crafted, and use great counterweights to raise them to the height of the terraces.

Graven artwork inside and outside the apartments show life in the village as it used to be, with gnomes mining crystals and gems, building interesting machines, and celebrating their discoveries.

CREATURES

In any given apartment, you can decide that three gnome **zombies** are shambling through the daily chores they once attempted in life. They are not hostile unless attacked, though they might engage the characters in a mockery of some daily activity, such as helping them put on a rotted coat, or serving them foul, grub-ridden offal on a plate. See the "Start" section or area 6 for the statistics of these gnome zombies.

TREASURE

If they spend 2 hours searching the apartments, the characters can collect 92 gp, 127 sp, and 493 cp, along with four pieces of carved quartz (worth 25 gp each).

The characters also find a beautiful carved-quartz figurine representing the gnome goddess of luck. This figurine is an uncommon magic item that requires attunement and has 3 charges. When a character attuned to the figurine makes an attack roll, an ability check, or a saving throw, they can expend 1 charge to gain advantage on that roll. The figurine loses this property when it has no more charges remaining.

5. MECHANIZED SMELTER

Area Aspects. Massive bronze dome atop stone building, huge mechanical bellows, sunken pit blazing with angry flames

Red light shines out from the doorway of a massive bronze dome that dominates the cavern around it. A huge bellows stands behind the dome, its thick leather sides as large as sails. Heat emanates from the great smelter, with smoke flowing out of its stacks and into chutes high up in the cavern ceiling.

The gnomes of Violet Falls forged items of bronze and iron in this great smelter, fueled by the burning hatred of a creature they summoned and bound here centuries ago.

CREATURE

A magically bound **fire elemental** named Igras still burns in the smelter of the forge, providing nearly limitless heat. Arcane glyphs surround the deep pit at the center of the forge within which the elemental lies trapped. A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check feels a sense of rage coming out of the fiery forge. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that the forge's power comes from the captured fire elemental, and that the arcane glyphs trap and harness the creature.

A character can disable the glyphs with three successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) checks. On each failure, arcane feedback deals 10 (3d6) force damage to the character making the check. With the third success, the glyphs are broken and the elemental is freed.

Igras's gratitude for its release is tempered by the revenge against the gnomes who trapped it here. If there are any gnomes in the party, the elemental attacks at once unless talked down with a successful DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check made by a character who speaks Ignan. Explaining to Igras that the party is not from Violet Falls grants advantage on this check. If the party avoids hostilities with Igras, it is easy to convince the elemental to hunt down any undead gnomes in the settlement and incinerate them.

6. THE BLACK SPIRE

Area Aspects. Scarred black spire, blast crater, pool of gray liquid

In a cracked and charred crater at the center of the cavern, a thirty-foot-high black spire thrusts up out of a gray pool of oily liquid like the claw of some enormous beast. A five-inch scar in the surface of the spire leaks the oily liquid that fills the pool.

The scarring of the spire and the corruption flowing from it is the cause of the death and undeath of the gnomes of Violet Falls. The scar must be repaired for the corruption to end.

CORRUPTED POOL

Any creature that is not a construct or undead that touches the liquid of the gray pool for the first time on a turn takes 7 (2d6) necrotic damage. The creature must then succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or have its hit point maximum reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the creature finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0. A humanoid slain by this effect rises 24 hours later as a zombie or ghoul. Under rare circumstances, the humanoid might rise as a ghost that retains some of its original memories.

REPAIRING THE SPIRE

Any character examining the scar and the pool can confirm that it is the source of the corruption in Violet Falls. Sealing the scar requires three successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) checks. If *mending* is cast on the spire at the same time, these checks are made with advantage.

CREATURES

When the characters begin to repair the spire, three gnome zombies rise up from the gray pool and attack. Until the spire is repaired, another gnome zombie rises from the pool at the start of each subsequent round and joins the fight. A gnome zombie uses the **zombie** stat block with these changes:

- Its size is Small.
- It has 13 (2d6 + 6) hit points.
- It has a speed of 40 feet.
- It can use the Disengage action as a bonus action.

For a shorter adventure, you can replace these zombies with Gemtooth and two gnome ghouls, which confront the characters when they attempt to fix the

spire. A gnome ghoul uses the **ghoul** stat block with these changes:

- Its size is Small.
- It has 10 (3d6) hit points.

DEVELOPMENT

Unless you place Gemtooth at this location, when the characters repair the spire, they hear the gnome gha's laughter echoing out from somewhere in the settlement. "Your efforts matter not! My army of death will still feast on your flesh!" This should reinforce for the characters that they must defeat Gemtooth to keep the enclave safe from future assaults.

7. TOWER OF SPECTACLES

Area Aspects. Tower of stone surrounded by floating plates of iron, relief carving of gnome wizard, red light shining from windows

Large plates of metal float around a forty-foot-high stalagmite. Its surface has been carved into intricate patterns, which appear to flow out from the wand held by the graven image of a gnome wizard carved above the tower's doorway. Red light shines from windows carved into the hollow stalagmite, contrasting the dark-blue hue of its stone.

The gnomes of Violet Falls loved to display their expertise in combining arcane, alchemical, and mechanical design into grand constructs. They displayed many of their greatest inventions here in the Tower of Spectacles. Much of the tower has fallen into ruin since the destruction of the village, but a number of the inventions it holds continue to function.

Floating stones create a stairwell inside the hollow tower. It has three floors, all of which are open to let visitors witness its splendors. The uppermost floor has collapsed under the weight of a fallen red geode that once floated above the tower.

TREASURE

As the characters explore the tower, they might come across a number of odd exhibits. You can choose from the examples below or roll a d10 to determine what the characters might find.

- 1: A mechanical arachnid is fueled by the soul of a captured demon that roars at the characters in Abyssal. The creature uses the **giant spider** stat block but has the construct type.

- 2: Three vats hold blue, red, and yellow liquid. When a small amount of all three liquids is combined, it creates a *potion of clairvoyance*. When one such potion is created, the liquids lose this property.
- 3: A suit of beautiful gilded medium or heavy armor of your choice is sized for a gnome. The armor features clockwork components in its design, with joints and fittings incorporating strange gears and levers.
- 4: A clockwork menagerie of toy underground monsters all move under their own power, including an articulated worm, a chuul, and two ankhegs. Each of the four mechanical creatures is worth 10 gp.
- 5: A small model airship flies around by magic (25 gp).
- 6: A steam-powered harpoon is built to shoot through the thick skin of a purple worm. (It doesn't work.)
- 7: An alchemical light globe sheds light as a torch and is affixed to mechanical spider legs. If a creature speaks the command word "Follow" in Gnomish, the globe follows that creature at a distance of 10 feet.
- 8: A black globe shines lights on the walls and ceilings around it, showing the current position of the stars in the night sky above its location (worth 15 gp).
- 9: A floating orb is painted to resemble an unknown planet (10 gp).
- 10: A golden cooking plate is magicked so that a character can touch the plate as an action to cast *heat metal* on it. Only the plate can be targeted by this spell. Once this ability is used, it cannot be used again until the next dawn.

Along with these other treasures, the characters can also find a *spell scroll* of *meld into stone* in a crystal scroll tube. This spell can be used to free Gorom from his torment in area 3, and the tube is worth 50 gp.

CREATURE

The tower is maintained by a lawful good construct using the **animated armor** stat block, known as Sir Wobbleknees. The gnomes built Sir Wobbleknees as the guardian of the site, and since the tower's collapse, the construct has grown increasingly frustrated and erratic.

Sir Wobbleknees can speak Common and Gnomish, and enjoys taking creatures on tours of the wrecked tower. The construct becomes hostile if it notices anyone stealing or damaging anything in the tower, though it does not leave the tower to pursue thieves.

8. THE SUNLIT HALL

Area Aspects. Glowing carved columns of natural quartz, large splinters of sharp quartz on the ground, glowing amber light

Columns of quartz rise more than thirty feet to the ceiling along the north side of the cavern. The columns are fused together, and have had their interior carved out to turn them into a massive building, with a small doorway at ground level and windows higher up. The crystals glow with an amber light, filling the cavern around them with a golden glow. Large shards of quartz are spread out across the ground nearby.

The gnomes carved out these quartz columns into their village meeting hall and governor's chamber. The inner chamber is 20 feet high, with an upper balcony and a lower central hall. Broken statues of gnome governors stand on the sides of the hall.

Deep cracks and fissures spiderweb through the crystals, which have been slowly falling to pieces over the two centuries since Violet Falls was abandoned.

CREATURE

A chaotic evil male **duergar** named Ironscale lurks within the central hall, hiding behind one of the statues. Ironscale was trapped in here while avoiding ghouls and zombies after his small band of thieves attempted to plunder the village. He is prickly, greedy, and likely to betray the characters even if they offer to save him.

Ironscales knows that Gemtooth is attempting to build up an army of zombies and ghouls to take over the mountain, and might be a source of other secrets and clues.

TREASURE

A small room beyond the central chamber contains a narrow staircase hidden behind a well-crafted secret door. A character can detect this secret door with a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check.

The staircase leads to a small chamber beneath the hall that once acted as Violet Falls' central treasury. It still holds 143 gp in mixed coin and gems; a *potion of animal friendship*, a *potion of growth*, and a *potion of gaseous form*; and a *necklace of adaptation* that the gnomes once used for exploring dangerous areas near the settlement.

9. THE VIOLET FALLS

Area Aspects. High waterfall, lines of violet-glowing quartz, large waterwheel, gears and scaffolding, endless drop to caverns below

The edge of the cavern is lit in violet light by lines of brilliant quartz, and opens up to a wide rift hundreds of feet high and hundreds of feet deep. A waterfall flows down from a river high above, tumbling into the depths below. A waterwheel turns under the power of the falling water, driving dozens of huge gears attached to the cavern wall with iron scaffolding.

On either side of the rift, the floor of the cavern rises up to rough stone stairs that lead across the darkness and over to the scaffolding.

The gnomes built this waterwheel when they first settled these caverns, and used it to power their mining operations.

CREATURES

The rock walls in this area are still worked by three animated hammers, which bang away digging for quartz deposits even though the gnomes have long since departed. If anyone touches a hammer or tries to stop it from working, all the hammers attack. Each hammer uses the **flying sword** stat block, but its longsword attack is replaced by a hammer attack that uses the same statistics but deals bludgeoning damage.

If time is running short or the characters have already faced enough battles, you can skip this encounter.

TREASURE

A tarnished amulet set with a glyph-marked violet gemstone can be seen 30 feet below the scaffolding, precariously hanging from a rock within the rushing waterfall. Retrieving the amulet is a dangerous proposition, requiring a successful DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check to climb down the rock wall. On a failed check, a character takes 7 (2d6) slashing damage as they slide down the crystal-embedded wall before catching themselves. A character who uses a rope or is aided by another character has advantage on this check.

The amulet is an uncommon magic item that allows its possessor to use an action to cast the *magic circle* spell (DC 15). Once the spell is cast, the amulet's magic fades.

10. THE EVERCLOCK

Area Aspects. Stone and brass clock set into the cavern wall, massive pendulums, intricate gearwork

A stone path leads out to the edge of a rift that descends hundreds of feet into darkness. Set between two narrow waterfalls, a massive device of brass gears, levers, chains, and weights is set into the stone wall on the far side of the rift. It has the form of a complicated clock with numerous faces. Huge stone weights hang from chains on either side of a massive pendulum that slowly swings back and forth over the drop below. The dials on some of the clock faces move with tremendous speed, while others appear not to move at all.

The gnomes spent decades building this great clock, an incredibly accurate and durable construct that measures time from the world's birth until its end millions of years in the future. A character who succeeds on a DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check

can understand the vast scope of the clock, and can identify that it is indeed showing the right date and the right time. The clock accurately predicts the end of the world which, given the threats in your campaign, might be soon or far off, as you determine. You can use the clock to portend threats to the world in your campaign, and to reveal that such a threat has ended when the clock pushes out the time of the world's ending far into the future.

The clock's massive construction and powerful magic make it difficult to harm. It is one of the few structures and objects in the mountain that was not damaged by the coming of the Grendleroot.

Concluding the Adventure

The adventure concludes when the characters successfully repair the scar in the black spire and defeat Gemtooth. Any remaining gnome zombies wander off from the village, becoming possible random threats to explorers but no longer seeking to overthrow the folk of Deepdelver's Enclave.

The characters can bring any relics of Violet Falls they have discovered back to the enclave. With the village's corruption ended, explorers might come here and establish a new settlement, hoping to return the village to its former prosperity.

CHAPTER 6

A FISTFUL OF COPPER

Two warbands, one orc and one hobgoblin, are set to invade Deepdelver's Enclave unless a band of adventurers can use guile, subterfuge, or brute force to stop them.

A marauding gang of orcs and a hobgoblin war band have set themselves up in the ruined city of Shadowreach—with both groups intending to attack and destroy Deepdelver's Enclave. Working with the folk of the enclave, the characters must decide how best to deal with the threat, whether taking out troops or leaders on both sides, or focusing on destroying one group to make a fight against the other group winnable. Depending on the success of their actions, they then stand front and center as the attack unfolds and the people of Deepdelver's Enclave fight for their very survival.

"A Fistful of Copper" is a four-hour adventure for characters of 3rd level.

Adventure Summary

On returning from an expedition into Blackclaw Mountain, the characters are attacked by a raiding party of orcs. During the battle, a scouting party of hobgoblins attacks both groups. In the aftermath, the characters learn that both orcs and hobgoblins plan to invade Deepdelver's Enclave within a day.

The characters are tasked with trying to stop or hinder both attacks however they can, learning that the hobgoblins reside in a small ruined fortress on the south side of the Shadowreach cavern, while

the orcs reside in a ruined noble's villa on the north side. The characters can attempt to stop the coming attacks by any means available, including negotiation, assassination, deception, setting an ambush, or shoring up the defenses of Deepdelver's Enclave. With luck and bravery, the characters can help the enclave and its people stand against this dark threat.

Monsters and NPCs. Death dog, dire wolves (2), hobgoblins (30), hobgoblin cultists (2), hobgoblin cult fanatic, hobgoblin veteran, ogre, orcs (40), orc veteran, spy

Notable NPCs

The following NPCs have a part to play in the adventure.

KRAN THE CRIPPLER

A chaotic evil orc veteran, Kran the Crippler is the current war chief of the Gray Razor orcs—a band roughly forty strong. Kran is lazy but occasionally erupts in blinding violence. Seeing the strength of his leadership failing among his minions, he announced the attack against Deepdelver's Enclave, but his heart isn't in it. He is more than willing to unleash his horde against the enclave, but would rather retire.

Kran thinks the hobgoblin commander, Salos Graveblade, is an elitist snob. If he manages to take

over Deepdelver's Enclave, Kran plans to mock Salos from the walls above.

Kran uses the **veteran** stat block with these changes:

- He has darkvision out to a range of 60 feet.
- He has the following trait: **Aggressive**. As a bonus action, Kran can move up to his speed toward a hostile creature that he can see.
- He speaks Common and Orc.

SUUL THE SLICER

Suul, a chaotic evil female orc, is Kran's right hand and the smartest orc in the war band. She secretly hopes to kill Kran, take over the war band, and raid throughout the mountain. She has little desire to attack the well-defended Deepdelver's Enclave.

Suul uses the **orc** stat block with these changes:

- She has Intelligence 14 (+2).
- She has 30 hit points (4d8 + 12).

DROGA THE DESTROYER

Droga, a neutral evil female ogre mercenary, currently works with Kran and the Gray Razors. She has long used her immense strength and survival instincts to earn all the money and food she desires. Though exceptionally greedy, she also considers her own safety in her decisions, and is known to have switched sides rather than be on the losing side of a battle.

Droga uses the **ogre** stat block with these changes:

- She has Dexterity 12 (+1).
- She wears half plate armor that gives her AC 16.
- She wields a massive battleaxe that uses the same combat statistics as the ogre's greatclub attack but deals slashing damage.

SALOS GRAVEBLADE

A lawful evil male hobgoblin veteran, Salos Graveblade commands a war band called the Red Drums. He brought his hobgoblins to Blackclaw to harden them in the depths of the mountain, and he hopes to turn Deepdelver's Enclave into a military outpost for his commander, a half-dragon warlord known as Volixus the Burning Rage.

Salos is ambitious to the point of being suicidal. He is quick to meet any challenge, and cunning enough to pose a strong threat. He hates Kran the Crippler and thinks the orc chief is a drunken oaf. When Salos

holds Deepdelver's Enclave, he plans to have Kran killed and to conscript the rest of the orcs into his army.

Salos uses the **veteran** stat block with these changes:

- He has darkvision out to a range of 60 feet.
- He has the following trait: **Martial Advantage**. Once per turn, Salos can deal an extra 10 (3d6) damage to a creature he hits with a weapon attack if that creature is within 5 feet of an ally of Salos's that isn't incapacitated.
- He speaks Common and Goblin.

WOLFREG WINTERSBANE

The seer of Salos's war band, Wolfreg Wintersbane is a lawful evil male hobgoblin cult fanatic. Wolfreg understands that Salos's desire to die in battle might bring the rest of the war band to their deaths as well. He uses his reputation as the voice of the hobgoblin gods to his advantage, speaking either for or against Salos as he sees fit.



SALOS GRAVEBLADE

Wolfreg uses the **cult fanatic** stat block with these changes:

- He has darkvision out to a range of 60 feet.
- He has the following trait: **Martial Advantage**. Once per turn, Wolfreg can deal an extra 7 (2d6) damage to a creature he hits with a weapon attack if that creature is within 5 feet of an ally of Wolfreg's that isn't incapacitated.
- He speaks Common and Goblin.

CLARA WILLOWSPUR

Clara, a neutral evil female half-elf spy, used to be an explorer for Deepdelver's Enclave but was kicked out after betraying her adventuring party to a band of duergar for personal gain. She now offers her services as a freelance scout in the mountain, and is currently employed as a spy for Salos Graveblade. She has informed Salos about the defenses of Deepdelver's Enclave, and of the tunnel that leads up through the Drop. However, she has no loyalty to the hobgoblins except for the coin Salos gives her.

Clara uses the **spy** stat block with these changes:

- She has darkvision out to a range of 60 feet.
- She has the following trait: **Fey Ancestry**. Clara has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put her to sleep.
- She speaks Common and Elvish.

Secrets and Clues

The following secrets and clues can be revealed in the adventure as you determine:

- Kran the Crippler is quite lazy. He attacks weak targets whenever possible, and spends a good deal of time lounging in a pool at the top of his Shadowreach villa.
- Kran's right hand, Suul the Slicer, seeks revenge against Kran for his role in the destruction of Suul's clan two decades earlier. Suul has climbed the ranks ever since, hoping to take Kran's head at the right time.
- Spirekeep, the ruined villa that Kran has taken as his current lair, has a dank cellar beneath it that the orcs avoid. A grate in the floor of the cellar leads to an old sewer system that exits into a river a hundred feet away.
- Droga the Destroyer loves money and food, but has little loyalty to the orcs she serves.
- Salos Graveblade has a death wish. He yearns to die gloriously in battle against the mightiest of foes.

- Salos's second, Wolfreg Wintersbane, wants to overthrow Salos but knows he doesn't yet have the full support of the rest of the hobgoblin war band.
- The lower level of the Tower of Lords, the ruined watchtower where the hobgoblins reside, is an old temple that features a secret tunnel leading to a cliff-top cave.
- Salos plans to bombard Deepdelver's Enclave before his attack with five trebuchets his hobgoblins have recently built.
- Disgraced explorer Clara Willowspur has been seen scouting in Shadowreach near Deepdelver's Enclave, and near the Tower of Lords.
- Ten years ago, Clara Willowspur was discharged from her unit during the Thousand Spear War for attacking a superior officer. Ruth Willowmane, her former sergeant, knows the details but does not speak of the incident.

Adventure Hooks

The characters can become involved in this adventure in a number of ways. Ideally, their existing connections to Deepdelver's Enclave give the characters clear reasons to protect their home. Alternatively, one or more characters might know of or have a history with the orcs, the hobgoblins, or their leaders. For characters primarily motivated by coin, Bailon the Beardless offers 50 gp to each character if they can prevent the attacks.

If you use this adventure in your own campaign or as a single-session adventure, the characters might stumble into the coming attack without yet having a strong connection to the settlement the orcs and hobgoblins are attacking. You will want to reinforce whatever goal helps motivate the characters to save the enclave, whether moral or monetary.

This adventure takes its name from the spaghetti western film *A Fistful of Dollars* (itself inspired by the Kurosawa movie *Yojimbo*). In the film, a lone gunslinger (played by Clint Eastwood) works two gangs against one another for the betterment of the town they threaten. You can use a similar mixture of greed and morality to steer the characters toward saving Deepdelver's Enclave from the two marauding factions.

Start

The adventure begins with the characters in the ruined city of Shadowreach. Read or summarize the following to set the scene:

After your latest exploration in Blackclaw Mountain, you make your way through the ruins of the city of Shadowreach on your return to Deepdelver's Enclave. As you pass by the rubble of ruined buildings, a javelin suddenly sails past, snapping against the stones.

"Looks like we caught some adventurers away from Deepdelver's Enclave!" shouts an orc, stepping around a ruined building. "Keep one alive. Kran will want what's in their head before Droga smashes it against a rock!"

Two more orcs step out from behind another ruined building, while two more rise from the roofs of ruins to either side of you, javelins in hand.

These five **orcs** (Nog, Settha, Grumoth, Littletoes, and Big Uthok) attack the party. Two of them throw javelins from the rooftops, while the others begin 25 feet away from the characters.

The street is flanked by four ruined buildings, two on each side. Climbing up a ruined building requires a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Creatures on the rooftops have advantage on ranged attacks against those on the street.

At the end of round 2 of the battle, or if three of the orcs are killed before that, a band of four **hobgoblins** (Xen, Kora of Thar, Ivar Clubfoot, and Trox Eyespike) arrives.

"Well, well, look what we have here!" a voice cries out, as four hobgoblins step out from the opposite end of the street. "Kill the orcs, but leave the explorers alive. Salos Graveblade's orders!"

The four hobgoblins then step up to attack both the characters and orcs alike.

DEVELOPMENT

When the orcs and hobgoblins are defeated, the characters can interrogate any survivors to learn the following information. If all the enemies are dead, the characters might find crudely written notes or maps on the bodies that reveal these details. The rest of the adventure requires that the players learn of both pending attacks, including the following information:

- The hobgoblin commander Salos Graveblade and the orc war chief Kran the Crippler both intend to attack Deepdelver's Enclave within a day.
- Each faction has roughly thirty to forty warriors—more than enough to cause serious damage to Deepdelver's Enclave.
- The orcs currently reside at a ruined noble's villa called Spirekeep, on the north side of Shadowreach.
- The hobgoblins reside in a ruined watchtower to the south, called the Tower of Lords.

At your discretion, characters interrogating or searching the orcs or hobgoblins might also learn additional information outlined in the "Secrets and Clues" section earlier in this chapter.

Defending the Enclave

When the characters return to Deepdelver's Enclave, they can bring word of what they've learned to Bailon the Beardless, who gathers the other folk of the enclave at the Dragon's Fangs common house. The people of the enclave come to the conclusion that a direct attack against either war band in their well-defended positions in Shadowreach will be exceedingly dangerous. Everyone is prepared to defend the enclave, but any battle will likely be a costly one, given how little is known of their enemies.

Whether they volunteer, are talked into it through roleplaying, or accept a monetary offer to help defend Deepdelver's Enclave, the characters are tapped to spearhead the plan to thwart the orc and hobgoblin attacks. But at least at the outset, there is no clear sense of what the best plan is.

POSSIBLE OPTIONS

You can allow the characters to undertake any plan the players come up with, and which seems like it might have a chance of success. But the following options are likely to be among the most obvious:

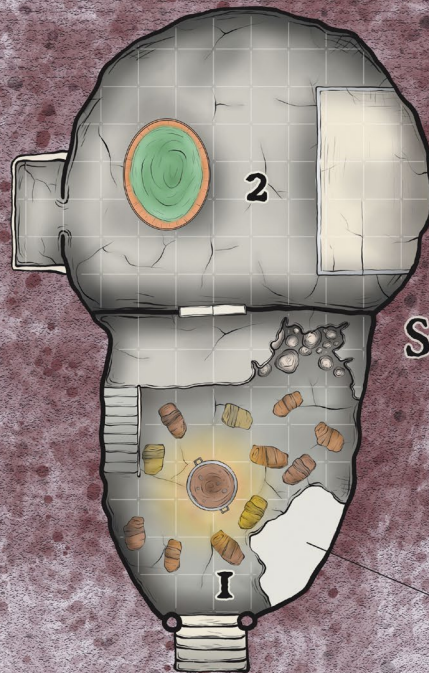
- Convincing one group to attack the other, in the hope of winnowing the numbers down on both sides.
- Killing one or both of the leaders of the two factions, in the hope that whoever takes over decides to abandon the attack.
- Ambushing the orcs, the hobgoblins, or both before they can reach the enclave.
- Accepting the inevitability of the assault, and working on the best possible defense of Deepdelver's Enclave when it comes.

A Fistful of Copper

1 Square = 5 ft.

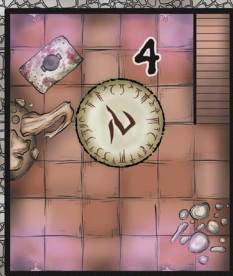


Tower of Lords

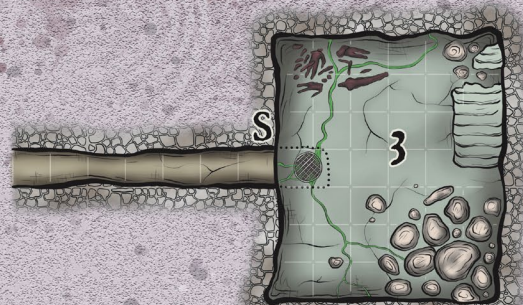
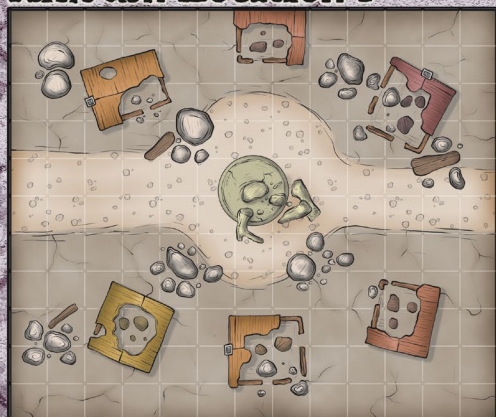


Spirekeep

Open to Area 3



Ambush Location 1



Ambush Location 2



The characters' approach might include variants of any of these options, or the players might come up with another plan entirely. It's up to you to adjudicate how these actions might affect the factions' plans and the defenses of the enclave.

If the characters choose to scout out or interact with either the orcs or the hobgoblins, they can easily travel through Shadowreach to the lair of either group. These locations are described in the "Tower of Lords" and "Spirekeep" sections, later in the adventure.

If the characters decide to ambush one group or the other, the adventure presents two potential sites to stage such ambushes. See "Setting an Ambush" later in the adventure.

If the characters choose to defend Deepdelver's Enclave from attack, you can use the map of Deepdelver's Enclave from chapter 1 as a planning aid as the players describe how their characters and the other residents of the enclave will defend their home. See "Defending the Enclave" later in this adventure for more details.

If the players seem stuck on which plan to choose, Bailon recommends that they scout out either the orcs or the hobgoblins ahead of time to learn what they can.

By the end of the adventure, the characters will have hopefully routed or defeated both groups before they have any chance to conduct a full assault on the enclave.

Adjudicating Big Battles

Depending on how this adventure plays out, you might find yourself needing to adjudicate one or more large battles between the orcs, the hobgoblins, and the defenders of Deepdelver's Enclave. Instead of trying to run these larger battles in the same way that you run combat with a party of characters, you can describe the battles and their results narratively, while keeping the focus of the action on the characters and their own skirmishes.

For example, if a large number of hobgoblins fight a large number of orcs, a smaller group of orcs or hobgoblins might break away and attack the characters. Such encounters can include one orc or hobgoblin per character, along with any leaders and special NPCs you want to make part of the fight.

The actions the characters take before a large battle begins can also help to steer the battle's outcome. Setting fire to the stolen wagons in front of the orc compound means the orcs will be at a disadvantage

against a hobgoblin assault. If the characters have killed Salos Graveblade or his lieutenant, the remaining hobgoblins will be at a disadvantage against the orcs.

It's up to you to determine what factors might swing a battle one way or another. Whatever outcome you determine, describe the larger battle quickly and leave it in the background, then move the spotlight back to the characters and the smaller group of enemies they face.

Pacing the Adventure

For a faster start to the adventure, you can skip the initial attack. The characters can start in Deepdelver's Enclave, where they learn about the coming assault of the orcs and the hobgoblins from Bailon the Beardless or another NPC. That information might have originally come from a caravan that was ambushed by orcs and hobgoblins on its way to the enclave.

You can also help control the pace of the adventure by deciding how quickly the assault against Deepdelver's Enclave begins. If it feels like the characters' attempts to disrupt the attacks are moving slowly, or if time is getting tight, the characters might learn that one or both of the enemy leaders has accelerated the schedule of their plans. By the time the characters return to Deepdelver's Enclave, the assault might already be underway.

The Tower of Lords

The Tower of Lords stands on the south side of Shadowreach, three hours from Deepdelver's Enclave and two hours from Spirekeep. Once a tower holding the slave-knights of the Magocracy of the Black Star, the Tower of Lords now serves as the headquarters for Salos Graveblade and his hobgoblins.

The Tower of Lords is built from worked volcanic stone. Unless otherwise described, rooms in the tower have 15-foot-high ceilings and are dark, but feature unlit torches set into iron sconces on the walls.

HOBGOBLIN FORCES

Salos commands thirty hobgoblins, with sixteen of those out on patrol in the city at any given time. Off-duty hobgoblins are usually found resting or engaging in various forms of recreation in the lower levels of the tower, or are on patrol in or around the tower.

Salos is almost always in area 3 of the tower. He lingers there until it is time to commence the attack against the enclave, at which point he leads the charge. Wolfreg Wintersbane is also at the tower, most



often praying to his hobgoblin gods in the temple in area 4. Clara Willowspur is sometimes at the tower, conferring with Salos. See area 3 for details.

GAINING ENTRANCE

Three potential entry points lead into the tower: the bridge that leads into the tower barracks; a large crack in the back wall of the tower, exposed from the north; and a long natural tunnel leading into the temple in the lowest level of the tower (area 4). The hobgoblins do not expect an attack to come from the river, so they do not guard the crack in the north wall. They are also unaware of the natural tunnel leading to the temple.

1. FRONT ENTRANCE

Area Aspects. Cracked obsidian tower, rushing rapids and sharp rocks, narrow cracked bridge, statues of hooded humanoids, slick cliff walls, recently constructed trebuchets

A tower carved of cracked obsidian stands on an island surrounded by a moat of fast-moving black water and sharp rocks. A narrow bridge set with torches spans the rapids, leading to a set of broken doors at the front of the tower.

Two statues of hooded humanoids, each clutching a greatsword, stand on either side of the door, their faces hidden under cowls. Five recently constructed wheeled trebuchets stand outside the moat, across from the island.

The front gate is the primary entrance to the Tower of Lords. The edge of the moat is marked by slick cliffs rising 10 feet above the river below. Climbing the cliffs requires a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check, while swimming the moat requires a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. On a failed check, a character is dragged along the river before being able to climb the cliff on the opposite bank, and takes 7 (2d6) piercing damage from the sharp rocks.

A crack in the wall of the tower on the opposite side from the bridge leads to the rear of area 2.

CREATURES

Two **hobgoblins** guard the front doors of the tower. Two more **hobgoblins** and a **death dog** often patrol the area around the tower, and keep an eye on the trebuchets.

TREBUCHETS

Salos plans to use the trebuchets to hurl stones at Deepdelver's Enclave, pounding the outpost into submission before sending in his invading host of hobgoblins. Disabling a trebuchet requires a successful DC 14 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check, or it can be attacked and destroyed. A trebuchet has AC 12, 50 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

2. TOWER BARRACKS

Area Aspects. Hall of shattered statues, faded paintings on the walls, straw mattresses

Dozens of straw mattresses line the floor of this broad hall. A staircase in the northwest corner leads to the second floor, while another to the northeast leads down. Shattered statues line the walls, standing before faded paintings of histories long forgotten.

This chamber serves as the barracks for the hobgoblins. A large crack in the north wall leads outside to the edge of the rushing rapids surrounding the tower.

The paintings on the walls were once covered over with plaster, but that has cracked away to reveal the images beneath. Those images depict the rise of the Magocracy of the Black Star (see chapter 2). The one image that can still be clearly seen shows three archmages standing above thousands of thralls lying prone, while ten armored half-dragons stand at attention.

CREATURES

At any given time, four to eight **hobgoblins** are sleeping in this chamber or playing knucklebones in the southeast corner.

TREASURE

The hobgoblins collectively possess 23 gp in mixed coin, and an idol to a hobgoblin goddess (worth 25 gp). Rough but functional swords, daggers, bows, arrows, and scale mail can be found in the room.

3. CHAMBER OF WAR

Area Aspects. Burning metal braziers, map of the city, faded tapestries

Four iron braziers hanging from the ceiling burn with red flames, illuminating a large floor map of the city of Shadowreach. A path has been drawn in red chalk through the buildings, showing an approach from the Tower of Lords to Deepdelver's Enclave, along with positions for five trebuchets close to the settlement. Faded tapestries hang from the walls.

Salos Graveblade retrofitted this chamber to serve as his war room. The tapestries depict the cleansing of the Magocracy of the Black Star by the paladins and priests of the Order of the White Sun. They show hooded mages and half-dragon warlords being cut down by armored knights with blazing white swords, while spellcasting warriors counter the magic of the mages.

CREATURES

The hobgoblin veteran Salos Graveblade spends much of his time here, pondering battle plans and discussing strategy with two other **hobgoblins**. See "Notable NPCs" for Salos's statistics.

The mercenary spy Clara Willowspur is in attendance with Salos from time to time. Roll a d6 when the characters are at the tower. On a roll of 5 or 6, Clara is here, describing the defenses of Deepdelver's Enclave to Salos. Otherwise, she is out spying for him. See "Notable NPCs" for Clara's statistics.

TREASURE

Salos carries two black serrated blades, one of which is a normal longsword and one of which is a magic longsword called Grave. A +1 *longsword*, Grave is a rare magic item that requires attunement. As a bonus action, a creature attuned to Grave can cause the blade to burn with black fire. The next time the weapon hits, the attack deals an extra 2d6 necrotic damage. This property of the blade can't be used again until the next dawn.

4. TEMPLE

Area Aspects. Shattered statue of a forgotten god, red-painted symbols on the floor, altar holding a black goblet, rubble pile

Dark violet torchlight dimly fills this chamber. A shattered statue to some ancient god lies on the floor, while a blood-spattered altar stone to the northwest holds a black onyx goblet. Red-painted glyphs edge a circle on the floor, and a rubble pile rises in the southeast corner of the room.

This chamber once served as a temple to the Order of the White Sun after they claimed the tower from the Magocracy of the Black Star. The torches burn violet as a result of lingering good magic reacting to the evil imbued into the glyphs newly scribed onto the floor.

A secret door on the east wall opens up to a long natural tunnel, which leads to a cliff-top cave out in the ruined city.

CREATURES

Wolfreg Wintersbane, a hobgoblin cult fanatic, prays here to his hobgoblin gods. He usually has two hobgoblin cultists with him. See “Notable NPCs” for Wolfreg’s statistics. Each hobgoblin cultist uses the **cultist** stat block with these changes:

- They have darkvision out to a range of 60 feet.
- They have the following trait: **Martial Advantage**. Once per turn, the hobgoblin can deal an extra 7 (2d6) damage to a creature they hit with a weapon attack if that creature is within 5 feet of an ally of the hobgoblin that isn’t incapacitated.
- They speak Common and Goblin.

TREASURE

Wolfreg wears an amulet bearing the symbol of his dark hobgoblin deity (worth 25 gp).

The goblet on the altar is a rare magic item that contains a dark power, allowing its possessor to use an action to cast the *insect plague* spell. Once the spell is cast, the goblet’s magic fades. (Wolfreg does not know that the goblet is magic.)

Spirekeep

This villa, carved out of a huge stalagmite, once belonged to an aristocratic family loyal to the Magocracy of the Black Star. The Gray Razors now use it as their lair. Spirekeep is three hours from Deepdelver’s Enclave and two hours from the Tower of Lords.

Unless otherwise described, the rooms of Spirekeep are carved out of the natural stone of the surrounding stalagmite. They have 15-foot-high ceilings and are dark, but feature unlit torches set into iron sconces on the walls.

ORC FORCES

Spirekeep is currently the residence of Kran the Crippler and his forty orcs. Kran believes that strength beats strategy, so he orders no formal guards, watches, or rotations. His orcs do what they please until he commands them to attack.

Groups of orcs usually hang around outside the villa, as noted below. Many of the remaining orcs go out raiding the city in groups of eight to twelve. The orcs are violent and rambunctious at all times. Unless an alarm is specifically raised, the orcs at the villa ignore any commotion inside or outside.

Droga the ogre is also found at the villa, either outside or in area 2. Kran also has two pet dire wolves that lurk outside the villa.

GAINING ENTRANCE

The villa has three potential entrances: the front door leading into area 1; a second-story balcony at the rear of the stalagmite, leading into area 2; and a long sewage tunnel leading to area 3. The orcs are aware of the balcony and sewer entrances, but can’t be bothered to guard them.

APPROACHING THE KEEP

Area Aspects. Carved stalagmite villa, impaled heads on thin spires, stolen wagons of provisions

This noble’s villa has been carved out from the stone of a fifty-foot-high stalagmite. The heads of two hobgoblins have been impaled on thin black spires at the front entrance.

A pair of large wagons laden with barrels and crates are parked on the east side of the villa.

The wagons are filled with barrels of ale and crates of salted meats. At any given time, 1d4 + 2 orcs are hanging around the wagons, drinking and brawling if they are not passed out. If a little lamp oil is applied to the wagons, they burn easily.

CREATURES

Roll a d6 to determine the location of Droga the ogre. On a 1 to 3, she is outside the tower practicing her javelin throwing. If not found here, she is in area 2. See “Notable NPCs” for her statistics.

Kran’s two **dire wolves** (Skinny and Retch) lurk behind the villa with their **orc** caretaker, Fourfingers.

1. AUDIENCE HALL

Area Aspects. Collapsed balcony, sleeping furs, large pot of gruel

The smell of rotting meat and dank sweat fills this hall. Moldering furs are spread across the floor, and a fire burns under a large cauldron of thick green gruel in the center of the room. A collapsed balcony has crashed to the floor to the north, but is still accessible by a staircase leading up to the second floor. A collapsed section of floor to the southeast opens up to darkness below.

The orcs use this filthy hall as their primary mess hall and sleeping quarters.

CREATURES

Six **orcs** are resting in this hall at any given time. When the characters enter this area, roll a d6. On a 1 to 3, Suul the Slicer is also here, bantering with those warriors. Otherwise, she is in area 2.

FOUL CAULDRON

The cauldron contains a viscous gruel whose ingredients are best left unknown. The cauldron can be tipped over with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check, spilling its gruel in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

2. DEN OF PLEASURES

Area Aspects. Large brass pool, anatomically impossible wall carvings, raised stage

A large sunken brass pool dominates this chamber. Faded pictures of humanoids twisted together in anatomically impossible erotic positions cover the walls. A raised stage rises opposite the pool.

Kran the Crippler has taken over this den of pleasure as his private residence. It once served as a hedonistic den for the aristocrats of the Magocracy of the Black Star.

CREATURES

Kran the Crippler, an orc veteran, spends most of his time here, reclining in the pool while watching two **orcs** wrestle on the stage. If Kran is attacked, he leaps from the tub to fight naked (giving him AC 13), but has his axe and his shield at hand. See “Notable NPCs” for Kran’s statistics.

If not found in area 1, Suul the Slicer can be found here. See “Notable NPCs” for her statistics.



If she is not outside the tower, Droga the ogre is pummeling the two orcs on the stage while Kran throws coins her way. This infuriates Droga, who dreams of pummeling Kran’s head into the edge of his brass bathtub. See “Notable NPCs” for Droga’s statistics.

TREASURE

Kran keeps 174 gp worth of coin, gems, and jewelry on a silver platter near his bath. He enjoys taunting his fellow orcs with his treasure, daring them to take it.

3. DANK CELLAR

Area Aspects. Rusty iron grate, foul liquids, death masks of magocracy aristocrats

A number of glowing wax death masks line the walls of this dank cellar. Moldering trash and decaying corpses lie in heaps across the floor. Foul liquids drip down a rusty iron floor grate that leads into a tunnel below.

The orcs avoid this cellar, both for the smell and for the strange masks on the walls. The iron grate leads to

a long sewer tunnel that feeds out into a river 100 feet away. The grate can be broken with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check. Repeated attempts to break the grate alert two orcs in area 1, who climb down to investigate.

With a successful DC 14 Intelligence (History) check, a character recognizes the death masks as belonging to known aristocrats and governors of the Magocracy of the Black Star. They hold magic that makes them glow with dim light, but which offers no other benefit.

Setting an Ambush

The characters might set up an ambush against either the orcs or the hobgoblins as they make their way to Deepdelver's Enclave. Two such ambush locations are described below.

AMBUSH LOCATION 1: THE SUNDERED STATUE

Area Aspects. Ruined buildings, large sundered statue, heavy rubble

Crumbling buildings spread along both sides of this stone plaza, in the center of which stands a statue cracked in half. The statue's upper torso lies shattered along the ground, surrounded by heavy rubble.

The tops of the ruined buildings here provide an excellent vantage point for ranged attacks. Climbing a building requires a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. On a failed check, a creature falls, taking 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage and landing prone.

The half of the statue still standing can be toppled onto enemies with a successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check. The statue crashes down to blast rubble in a 15-foot cone extending from the statue's base. Each creature in the area must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

The rubble offers half cover to creatures hiding behind it.

A character who succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence (History) check recognizes the statue as Lord Korva Vollok, a knight of the White Sun who personally slew Thorvum Raisewing and Grethel the Flame (see chapter 2 for details).

AMBUSH LOCATION 2: THE EVERFLAME CAULDRON

Area Aspects. Rocky cliffs, everburning cauldron, glyph-scribed stalagmites

Fifteen-foot-high cliffs on either side of the path create a natural chokepoint for those traveling through. Large stalagmites carved with ancient glyphs rise up along the path, whose center is marked by a large bronze cauldron, burning with green flame.

Creatures on the cliffs have advantage on ranged attacks against those on the path. Climbing a cliff wall requires a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. On a failed check, a creature falls, taking 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage and landing prone.

CAULDRON

The cauldron burns with an eternal arcane fire. Any creature that enters the cauldron for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there takes 14 (4d6) fire damage. A creature can push over the cauldron with a successful DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check, causing the flames to spill out in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

STALAGMITE GLYPHS

With a successful DC 14 Intelligence (History) check, a character can understand the meaning behind the glyphs on the stalagmites. They commemorate the rise of the nine mages of the Magocracy of the Black Star. The cauldron's fire, the glyphs say, will burn as long as the mages rule within the mountain. Though the mages are supposedly long-gone, the fire still burns.

The stalagmites offer half cover to creatures that hide behind them.

Defending the Enclave

If the characters are not successful in routing both the orcs and the hobgoblins before they attack Deepdelver's Enclave, the characters can help defend the enclave from that attack. Use the map of Deepdelver's Enclave from chapter 1 to help the players plan the settlement's defense, with their characters taking charge along with Bailon the Beardless and other NPCs of your determination.

Salos Graveblade plans on hammering Deepdelver's Enclave with his trebuchets before he marches his hobgoblins up the switchback roads from the city below.

Kran the Crippler has learned of the tunnels and caves beneath Deepdelver's Enclave, and plans to send a third of his orcs up through the Drop to attack from inside the compound.

It's up to you to decide how the battle plays out, depending on the results of the characters' previous activities. It's possible that the folk of the enclave face either the orcs or the hobgoblins alone, with the other group already removed. It's possible that reduced forces on both sides attack separately, with the characters' actions having disrupted the attack schedule and taken many potential assailants out of the fight. It's possible that the enclave will face both forces at the same time—or that no attack will come at all if both groups or their leaders have already been thwarted.

TAKING POINT

Once the characters have worked with Bailon to set up the enclave's defenses, he recommends that they choose a specific position to defend. At the time of the attack, while the folk of the enclave defend against rank-and-file assailants, the characters might find themselves facing off against an elite squad of orcs or hobgoblins. Such a group can consist of one or two waves:

Wave 1: One orc or hobgoblin per character.

Wave 2: One orc or hobgoblin per character, plus any surviving mercenaries, lieutenants, or leaders.

If the hobgoblin and orc raiders both attack the enclave at the same time, the characters might face multiple waves of both types of enemies. As with their earlier actions and successes, how well the characters do in their part of the fight can help determine how the rest of the battle goes in Deepdelver's Enclave.

Concluding the Adventure

This adventure concludes when both the orc and hobgoblin threats to Deepdelver's Enclave have been thwarted. However the characters manage to achieve this goal, the residents of Deepdelver's Enclave show their gratitude in the aftermath, and the characters' reputation in the settlement continues to grow.

CHAPTER 7

SHATTER

A blind priest has learned the secret to destroying the Grendleroot. If he is not stopped, his actions might bring down the whole of Blackclaw Mountain as well.

A priest of light has discovered a means of destroying the Grendleroot—but doing so will also destroy Blackclaw Mountain and every creature in it. The characters must follow the priest to the Forest of Iron, a massive cavern wholly supported by the twisted spires of the Grendleroot, and stop him before his mad faith brings ruin to all.

“Shatter” is a two- to four-hour adventure for 3rd-level characters.

Adventure Summary

During the elven Festival of Lights, a blind priest arrives at Deepdelver’s Enclave. Approaching one of the Grendleroot spires jutting up from the ground in the enclave, the priest places his hands on its black surface—and causes it to explode. The priest then grips an amulet around his neck and disappears into shadow, leaving his acolyte behind.

The acolyte explains that the priest, Ardus Fane, has spent his life studying the Grendleroot and has seemingly learned how to destroy it. She knows that Fane intends to travel to the Forest of Iron, a vast cavern filled with Grendleroot spires, deep within the mountain. Using his power, he means to destroy a great pillar of the Grendleroot there, collapsing the cavern and destroying the Grendleroot in the process.

The scholar Odrah Windvane fears that Fane will do more than that. She believes that collapsing the cavern will bring down the whole mountain. With lore given to them by Odrah, the characters race to the Forest of Iron. After contending with threats both natural and unnatural, they locate the priest at the base of the so-called Worldpillar, ready to destroy the mountain unless the characters can stop him.

Monsters and NPCs. Animated armor (1+), blink dogs (2), death dog, giant spiders (3), gibbering moulder, lizardfolk (6), lizardfolk cult fanatic, priest, shadows (3), shambling mound, wererats (2)

Notable NPCs

The following NPCs have a part to play in the adventure.

ARDUS FANE

A neutral male human **priest** of light, the blind Ardus Fane has long studied ancient and otherworldly sentient beings—in particular, the Grendleroot. His research and rituals led the priest to a word of power that can destroy the Grendleroot, though the process of doing so drove him half mad.

Fane fears that the Grendleroot will grow, and that it calls to an otherworldly presence that will eventually devour the whole world. He travels to Blackclaw

Mountain intending to destroy the Grendleroot and end its threat. The priest wears an amulet made from a shard of the Grendleroot, which lets him “see” the network of the Grendleroot’s tendrils throughout the mountain, and lets him travel magically from one spire to any other.

CAVA SUNTOUCHED

Fane’s apprentice, a lawful good female half-elf **acolyte** named Cava, follows her master on his quest but fears that he has lost his perspective and reason. She believes that Fane has forgotten a lesson he taught her long ago: one cannot know the mind of the Grendleroot. She now fears for her master’s sanity, and for the innocent lives that will be lost if he is successful in his mad plan.

ODRAH WINDVANE

A lawful good female human **mage** residing in Deepdelver’s Enclave, the scholar Odrah Windvane has also made a lifetime’s study of the Grendleroot. She cannot discount Fane’s conclusion regarding the danger of the Grendleroot, but she believes that destroying the Worldpillar might collapse all of Blackclaw Mountain, killing every living creature within. Moreover, even if the mountain falls, the Grendleroot might survive.

Secrets and Clues

The following secrets and clues can be revealed in the adventure as you determine:

- The Forest of Iron is a great cavern filled with strange black growths, and monsters twisted by Grendleroot corruption.
- At the center of the Forest of Iron rises the Worldpillar—a great column built of the twisted spires of the Grendleroot. If the pillar is destroyed, the cavern around the forest might collapse, and bring the mountain crashing down with it. Mortal minds cannot know the intellect of the Grendleroot. To attempt to do so is to go mad.
- Bandits and thieves are said to lurk in the Forest of Iron. As well, explorers have met lizardfolk tribes in the area who treat the forest as holy ground.
- The priest Ardu Fane once sought only wisdom and the expansion of the mortal mind. He now believes that the Grendleroot must be destroyed, and that he is the one to do so.

- The spires of the Grendleroot are made of some unknown unbreakable metal. Yet somehow, Fane’s word can destroy them.

Adventure Hooks

This adventure works best when the characters have a clear motivation to stop Ardu Fane from destroying the Grendleroot, even beyond saving Deepdelver’s Enclave and the denizens of the mountain. It’s possible that one of the characters already knows Fane or Cava, and that the character fears that the mad priest will bring harm to himself even if he fails in his quest. Alternatively, the characters might be interested in exploring the Forest of Iron, and in learning more about the mysterious Grendleroot.

If the characters are primarily motivated by personal gain, you can focus on Odrah Windvane’s offer to build one of them a weapon crafted from the material of the Grendleroot, described later in the adventure.

Start

The adventure begins with the characters enjoying a thoughtful celebration in Deepdelver’s Enclave. Read or summarize the following to set the scene:

It’s the Festival of Lights in Deepdelver’s Enclave. On this day, the elves of the enclave sing haunting songs while priests and mages send magical lights soaring up to the ceiling of the cavern in a beautiful display. Children chase floating glimmers of magic through the streets, while a priestess of the god of light tells tales of her ancient mythology.

A young acolyte you have not seen before leads an older priest dressed in traveling robes through the celebrations. His sightless eyes do not look to the lights above. He stops, letting go of the acolyte’s arm, and turns toward a Grendleroot spire thrust up out of the ground near the center of the enclave’s main thoroughfare. Though unable to see it, he moves toward it all the same, gripping an amulet around his neck and placing his hand on the spire’s strange metal.

The priest speaks a word. Then the impossible happens. The unbreakable spire of the Grendleroot explodes.

The people of the enclave shout out in shock and surprise. The lights above fade as the concentration of their casters fails. The dust and shards that is all that remains of the spire rain to the ground. Then the priest grips the amulet around his neck once again, and disappears.

Before anyone can react, three **shadows** arc down from the cloud of dust rising above the exploded Grendleroot spire. They form into the shapes of strange, otherworldly creatures as they attack the people of the enclave, including the characters. The shadows begin spread out, roughly 20 feet from each other.

For a shorter adventure, you can skip the shadows and this combat encounter, going right from the explosion to the next section.

CAVA'S STORY

The elf acolyte accompanying Ardu Fane, Cava Suntuouched, remains behind after her mentor's disappearance. She is horrified by what has happened. Cava describes Ardu Fane, his background, and his desire to destroy the Worldpillar in the Forest of Iron. She didn't believe that Fane truly had the power to destroy a Grendleroot spire, but the event in the enclave has proved her wrong.

Cava offers her assistance to help stop Fane, though she doesn't want him hurt. She has a map of the tunnels leading to the Forest of Iron, taken from Fane's notes.

STOPPING FANE

The scholar Odrah Windvane is more concerned than most about Fane's mad quest. She knows of the Worldpillar and the Forest of Iron. According to her own research, if the Worldpillar is destroyed, the cavern containing the Forest of Iron might collapse, starting a chain reaction that could bring the whole mountain crashing down.

Cava knows that Ardu's teleportation will have drained him of much of his magic, expecting that it will take two days for him to recover before he can attempt to destroy the Worldpillar. Though this isn't enough time to evacuate Deepdelver's Enclave, or to seek the assistance of the many enclave adventuring parties presently exploring deep in the mountain, it gives the characters a chance to travel to the Forest of Iron and stop Ardu.

Although Odrah Windvane believes that Fane will fail to kill the Grendleroot—she doesn't know if such a thing is possible—she is worried that his doomed attempt might awaken the entity instead. Unlike Cava, Odrah believes it might be necessary to kill the priest to prevent this outcome. The characters cannot know how far the priest's power might reach, and even captured, he might still inflict great harm to the enclave.

In return for the characters' help, Odrah can craft and enchant a Grendleroot weapon from the broken shards of the enclave spire for one of them upon their return from the Forest of Iron. The remaining pieces of the Grendleroot spire are too small or too badly broken to be of use.

The "Grendleroot Weapons" section in appendix B has information regarding weapons made from shards of the Grendleroot. Additionally, the weapon to be crafted by Odrah is a rare magic item that requires attunement. The weapon is a *+1 weapon* whose attuned wielder can use a bonus action to cause it to whisper in a language unknown to mortals. The next time the wielder hits with an attack using the weapon, the attack deals an extra 7 (2d6) psychic damage. The weapon can't be used this way again until the next dawn.

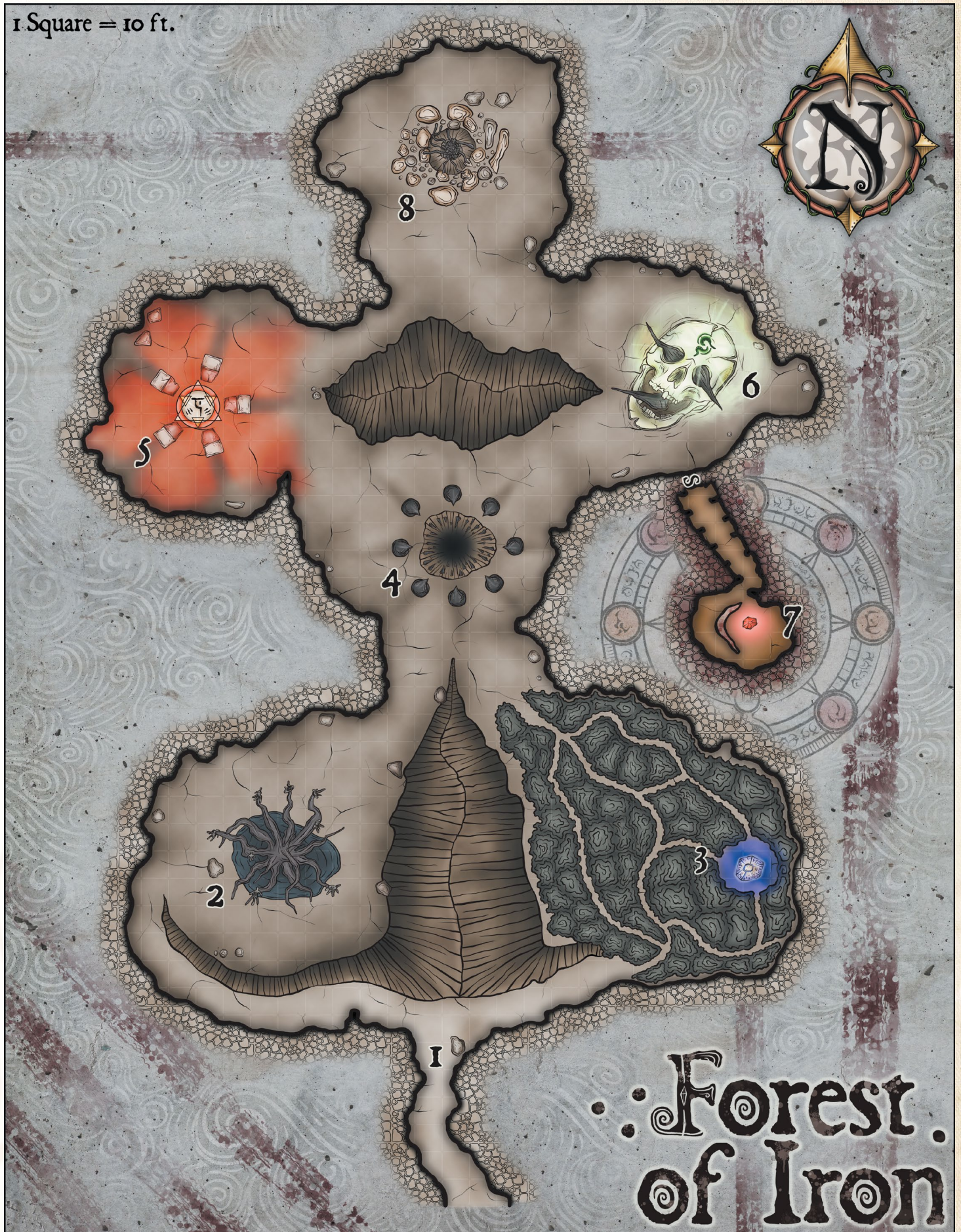
Traveling to the Forest of Iron

The Forest of Iron is a two-day journey from Deepdelver's Enclave. For a longer adventure, you can add an encounter as the characters travel through the mountain by using the locations and encounter descriptions in appendix B. Otherwise, you or the players can describe the characters' journey through the twisted tunnels and caverns of the mountain.

Pacing the Adventure

Depending on how long you have to run this adventure, you can adjust your approach. As always, you can remove noted optional encounters to speed up the adventure. You can also speed things up by turning up the dial on the urgency of the characters' quest to stop Fane before he can destroy the Worldpillar. You can describe quakes occurring throughout the great cavern of the Forest of Iron, or give the characters glimpses of the priest's progress as flashes of white light in the northern section of the cavern. This can help steer the characters and the players toward getting

1 Square = 10 ft.



to the pillar as fast as possible and stopping Fane's mad plans.

If you find the adventure moving too quickly, you can highlight areas of the cavern that might pique the interest of the players, such as the mysterious monoliths in area 5 or the rune titan skull in area 6. The rune titan's remaining essence might reach out to the characters, filling their minds and hinting at the location of the heart of the titan in area 7.

The Forest of Iron

The Forest of Iron gets its name from the wide variety of Grendleroot growths that fill this huge cavern. Unlike the typical claw-like spikes found elsewhere in Blackclaw Mountain, the material of the Grendleroot has here grown into many different shapes, giving the cavern the look of a forest made of black metal.

When the characters arrive at the Forest of Iron, they see a huge cavern whose cracked rock walls rise to a 500-foot-high ceiling. Grendleroot spires thrust up from the ground across the cavern floor, and hang from the ceiling like metal vines. At the far end of the cavern stands the shattered remains of a natural column of stone that once held up the ceiling. Twisted cords of the Grendleroot have replaced the natural column, and now hold the ceiling aloft. The entire cavern is filled with dim green-and-blue-light shed by phosphorescent fungus.

SHARPENED SPIRES

Much of the cavern is filled with what appear to be black trees resembling those of a natural forest, but these trees and all their foliage are composed of the indestructible black metal of the Grendleroot. Like all the Grendleroot spires, the trees of this forest are impervious to all damage and effects except Fane's ritual. Any creature that touches razor-sharp Grendleroot spires, foliage, or other materials for the first time on a turn, or which starts its turn in an area filled with such materials, must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) slashing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

VOIDWATER

Pools of liquid collect among the corrupted Grendleroot growths of the Forest of Iron. This liquid, known to the explorers of Deepdelver's Enclave as voidwater, is highly toxic. Any creature that ingests this liquid or comes into contact with it for the first

time on a turn must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 7 (2d6) necrotic damage and is poisoned for 1 hour. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage and isn't poisoned.

1. OVERLOOK

The characters' approach to the Forest of Iron brings them to this high cliff overlooking the southern part of the cavern.

Area Aspects. Overlook of the cavern, walkways to east and west

The network of tunnels that brought you here ends at a high overlook revealing the Forest of Iron below. Stalactites hang from the five-hundred-foot-high ceiling, and a high ridge of stone splits the huge first cavern of the forest into two halves. Where the cavern narrows at its far end, the Worldpillar rises from the ground—once a massive column of natural stone, now shattered and replaced with Grendleroot spires twisting together like black iron cords.

A narrow walkway leads down and through a forest of black metal ferns to the east, while another rocky walkway leads down to a black-spined tree to the west.

Steep rock walls split this cavern into two sections leading up to the Worldpillar. The characters can travel east to the fern maze in area 3 or west to the spire tree in area 2.

A character who searches the rocky trails for tracks and succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Survival) check deduces that Arduus Fane likely traveled to the east.

2. SPIRE TREE

Area Aspects. Huge tree of twisted metal spires, voidwater pool, impaled corpses

A great spire of twisted trees rises up from a pool of viscous black liquid. Dozens of corpses—some very old and some new—have been impaled on the tree, their blood dripping into the black water below. A large pile of refuse spreads on the southeast side of the cavern.

This huge tree is made completely of Grendleroot material. Any creature that climbs the tree takes damage from sharpened spires. The pool at the tree's base is voidwater.



A character who succeeds on a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check while exploring the cavern notices that the pile of refuse is moving.

CREATURE

A corrupted **shambling mound** has made this area its lair. It prowls the forest and the nearby tunnels for prey, then hangs the corpses of its victims on this tree in a dark ritual. Whenever any creature passes through this area, the shambling mound rises from the heap of detritus to the southeast and attacks, arms outstretched as it seeks a body to impale.

In combat, the shambling mound picks one target at random, then makes slam attacks against that creature. The shambling mound does not use its Engulf attack, instead slamming until the creature is unconscious. The mound then carries the unconscious creature over to the tree, provoking opportunity attacks, and attempts to impale the creature. Doing so requires a successful slam attack that deals 10 (3d6) piercing damage. If the impaled creature is at 0 hit points, it instead gains one failed death saving throw.

Once it has impaled one creature on the tree, the shambling mound returns to its pile of detritus and is no longer hostile, unless it continues to be attacked.

In that event, it picks another target and repeats its actions.

The shambling mound cannot see, so it is possible to bluff it by handing it something roughly the size and weight of a humanoid body. If this is done, the mound impales the object on the tree and returns to its original position.

TREASURE

The bodies impaled on the tree that are fresh enough to be recognizable are three lizardfolk, two humans, one drow, two dwarves, and one wererat. The bodies hold a total of 37 gp of mixed coins.

One of the drow also carries a cracked jeweled idol of a glabrezu demon in a pocket of its leather armor. The idol is a rare magic item whose possessor can use an action to cast the *confusion* spell (DC 15). Once the spell is cast, the idol's magic fades.

3. FERN MAZE

Area Aspects. Beautiful and deadly black iron ferns, glyph-carved stalagmite

A narrow path twists through a garden of five-foot-wide ferns made of black Grendleroot metal. Their bases jut up out of the stone of the cavern floor. A series of glyphs and ideograms have been carved into a natural pillar in the center of a clearing to the east.

These ferns are made of Grendleroot material, and any character entering their area takes damage from their razor-sharp leaves. One of the ferns has been shattered by the priest, leaving a pool of voidwater in its place.

GLYPH-MARKED PILLAR

The glyphs on the pillar are in a strange dialect of Draconic. A character who succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence (History) check recognizes that the glyphs are ideograms describing the many generations of lizardfolk who have worshiped the power of the mountain and the great consciousness in its depths. The characters can learn other secrets of your choice from this pillar as well. The glyphs were carved by ancestors of the lizardfolk who reside in area 5.

CREATURES

Two **wererats** (Jathe Yellowfang and Brex the Hook) lurk inside the maze. Both were once residents of Deepdelver's Enclave, but were expelled for criminal activities.

The wererats first appear in their human forms as a scruffy man and woman, saying that they became lost in the nearby caves and ended up here. They saw Arduus Fane but were frightened of the priest after he blew up a fern, so they let him pass. They wish to accompany the characters but will betray them as soon as their backs are turned.

If one wererat is killed, the other surrenders, offering up information about a treasure in exchange for its life. The wererats know of a powerful relic held in the mouth of the skull in area 6, but fear the spiders lurking there.

TREASURE

The two wererats have a total of 18 gp between them in mixed coin. Brex wears a silver chain with a black gemstone in it (worth 50 gp).

If time is running short or the characters have already faced enough battles, you can skip this encounter.

4. SPIRE-LINED PIT

Area Aspects. Deep shaft lined with sharp Grendleroot spires, winds howling from below, large spires surrounding the pit

A howling wind rises from a twenty-foot-wide pit. The walls of the pit are lined with black metal spires, while bigger spires thrust up from the ground around it, appearing like the teeth of a great worm. The bottom of the pit cannot be seen.

This pit descends 500 feet into the mountain. It is incredibly dangerous to climb down, and any creature doing so takes damage for moving through the sharpened spires. Using ropes to descend is impossible, since the Grendleroot growths easily slice through anything that rubs against them. This shaft leads down to caverns that make up part of the route to the Black Cathedral (see chapter 12).

A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Survival) check to search the ground around the pit deduces that Arduus Fane traveled to the northeast from here.

CREATURES

Two Grendleroot-corrupted **blink dogs** led by a mutated **death dog** attack from the outskirts of this area. The death dog uses its normal stat block with these changes:

- It has an Intelligence of 12 (+1).
- It has the blink dog's Teleport action.

The blink dogs and the death dog use their Stealth skill and their Teleport actions to ambush the party. If the death dog and one of the blink dogs is killed, the remaining blink dog flees the Forest of Iron.

If time is running short or the characters have already faced enough battles, you can skip this encounter.

5. MONOLITHS

Area Aspects. Circle of rectangular stone monuments, ancient arcane circle

A circle of five rectangular stone monoliths ring an arcane circle carved into the stone floor of the cavern. The monoliths do not appear carved or shaped, looking as though they burst up from the ground in their present form.

A successful DC 14 Intelligence (History) check reveals that the arcane circle is centuries old, and yet still pulses with magical energy. The monoliths are much older—perhaps tens of thousands of years.

The powerful arcane circle has been used as both a summoning circle and a teleportation circle for

millennia. While a spellcaster is within the circle, they have advantage on attack rolls with arcane spells and on Intelligence (Arcana) checks, and creatures making saving throws against the caster's spells do so with disadvantage.

DARK CONTACT

It is possible to use the circle to communicate with the Grendleroot by making a DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check. On a failed check, a character takes 10 (3d6) psychic damage and suffers a random form of short-term madness. On a success, the creature can hear the whispers of the Grendleroot, sensing a feeling of great loneliness, fear, and hunger. The Grendleroot is reaching out for its creator across the multiverse, hoping to call it down to this world.

CREATURES

Six **lizardfolk** kneel around the monoliths, while a lizardfolk cult fanatic stands in the center of the arcane circle conducting a ritual to commune with the Grendleroot. (Combine the **lizardfolk** stat block with the **cult fanatic** stat block; see the "Combining Stat Blocks" sidebar in appendix C, "The Rise of the Black Star.")

These lizardfolk are fanatically loyal to the Grendleroot, which they treat as a god, but they are not automatically hostile. They travel here regularly from their settlement in the Gray Swamp, and can reveal information on the Grendleroot or from the "Secrets and Clues" section earlier in this adventure. They do not know of Arduus Fane or his plan, as the priest took a different path to reach the Worldpillar.

6. PIERCED SKULL

Area Aspects. Giant humanoid skull pierced through with Grendleroot spires, stone that appears molten

Twenty-foot-high black spires pierce through the eyes and mouth of a gargantuan humanoid skull. The skull appears frozen in a silent scream, staring up toward the ceiling of the cavern. The stone floor surrounding the skull appears molten, and a large glyph has been carved in the skull's forehead.

The skull is the remains of one of the rune titans that dwelled within the mountain hundreds of thousands of years ago (see chapter 2). A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that the glyph once infused this creature with arcane power, and that it used a form of magic older than any currently known.

When rune titans phased through the stone of the mountain, they temporarily turned that stone into a liquid state that allowed them to pass through it. This titan became stuck in the process of phasing, and the magic in this area has kept up the stone's molten appearance, though it is solid and cool to the touch.

OPEN MAW

The mouth of the skull opens up into a 20-foot-deep pit. Any creature that descends to the bottom of the pit or succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check from above notices a tunnel at the bottom of the pit, concealed by webs and leading southeast. This 5-foot circular tunnel follows the spine of the skeleton into area 7.

CREATURES

On any examination of the skull, three **giant spiders** mutated by the skull's power crawl out from its eyes and mouth. Each spider has a naturally formed glyph on its carapace similar to the glyph on the skull. These giant spiders use the normal stat block and have this trait:

- **Call of the Glyph-Marked Titan.** As a bonus action, the spider fixes its gaze on a creature it can see within 30 feet of it, and its glyph glows red. If the target can see the spider, it must make a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the spider has advantage on attack rolls against the target until the target takes damage or until the start of the spider's next turn. A creature that can't be charmed is immune to this effect. A creature that successfully saves against this effect is immune to it for 1 hour. The spider can't use this feature again until it finishes a short rest.

If time is running short or the characters have already faced enough battles, you can skip this encounter.

7. TITAN'S HEART

Area Aspects. Petrified spinal-column tunnel, heart chamber, pool of bubbling liquid

A tunnel opens up through what is clearly the petrified remains of a great titan's spinal column, leading deep into the stone that surrounds it. A break in the bone tunnel opens into a heart-shaped chamber roughly twenty-five feet across. Walls of petrified skin split the chamber in two. A fist-sized glyph-scribed garnet sits atop a petrified podium of flesh, surrounded by a pool of bubbling black liquid.

These are the petrified remains of the rune titan whose skull rises from the rock at area 6, including a piece of the titan's heart that has broken away and now lies atop the podium.

CREATURE

When anyone approaches the podium, the pool of liquid erupts with mouths and eyes as a **gibbering moulder** bursts out of it. A character who succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check recognizes that the moulder is a product of the magic of the rune titan and the essence of the Grendleroot.

TREASURE

The stone atop the pedestal is a rare magic item that requires attunement, known as the *Heart of the Titan*. It is an actual fragment of the heart of the rune titan who once dwelled in the mountain thousands of years ago, and it still retains some of the titan's power. As an action, a creature attuned to the stone can speak its command word to cast the *meld into stone* spell. This property can't be used again until the next dawn.

8. THE WORLDPILLAR

Area Aspects. Huge shattered column of stone, twisted Grendleroot spires forming a pillar of black metal

The wreckage of a twenty-foot-wide natural stone pillar lies shattered as a hill of broken rock. From the center of the hill, a thickly twisted mass of black metal cords rises to the ceiling of the cavern, spreading out there like the limbs of a vast tree.

This pillar of the Grendleroot holds up the ceiling of the entire chamber.

CREATURE

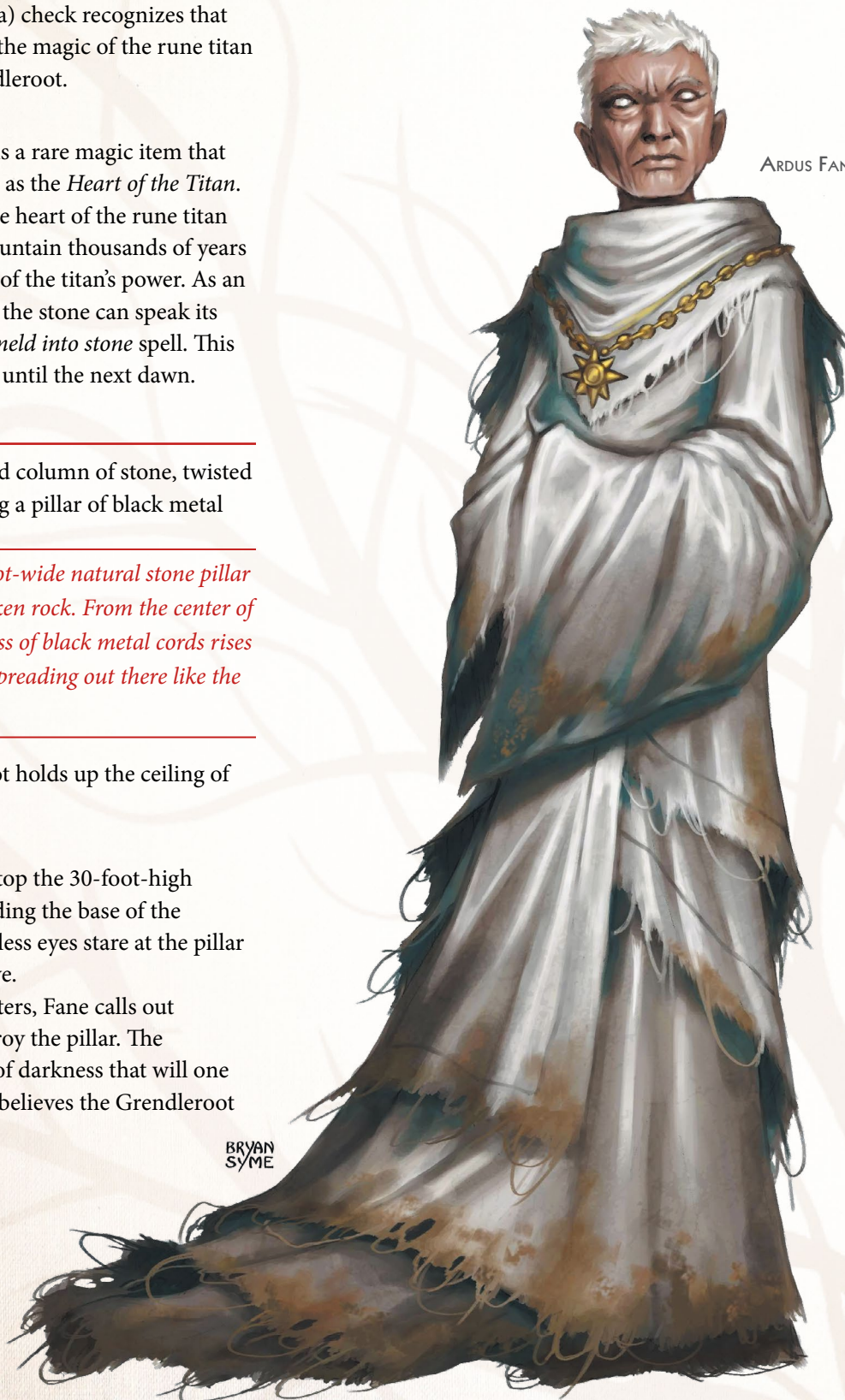
The **priest** Ardu Fane sits atop the 30-foot-high pile of broken rock surrounding the base of the Grendleroot pillar. His sightless eyes stare at the pillar as he considers his next move.

When he hears the characters, Fane calls out to explain that he must destroy the pillar. The Grendleroot is evil—a seed of darkness that will one day destroy the world. Fane believes the Grendleroot

calls to something even worse than itself, and that only he can destroy it.

Fane cannot destroy the entire pillar at once. If he is not stopped, the priest places his hands on the pillar and speaks his word of power as an action. In response, the metal of the spire begins to crack. If Fane channels his magic into the pillar five times, it cracks and collapses. The cavern is destroyed as its ceiling

ARDUS FANE



falls, triggering tremors and additional collapses that bring down much of the mountain. Deepdelver's Enclave is crushed as the cavern of Shadowreach is buried under falling rock. Even as he dies, Fane understands that all this destruction is a small price to pay for the safety of the world.

As the characters approach, Fane has already cast *spirit guardians* and *spiritual weapon*, with those spells manifesting as vengeful angels of light and a spear of white flame. If he is attacked, he responds with his spiritual weapon, *guiding bolt*, and *inflict wounds*. Fane's amulet gives him the equivalent of blindsight out to a range of 120 feet.

For a more challenging fight, increase Fane's hit points to 45. The priest might also have animated pieces of shattered Grendleroot material from the base of the pillar to defend him, using the **animated armor** stat block. If the party has more than four characters, add another defender for each additional character. These defenders fall to pieces when Fane is reduced to 0 hit points.

FANE'S FATE

If Arduus Fane is defeated, the characters must decide what to do with him. With appropriate roleplaying and Charisma checks, they might convince the priest that the end does not justify the means, and that his time is best spent finding other ways to stop the threat of the Grendleroot. They might also decide that Fane is simply too dangerous.

The priest is thankfully unable to teach anyone else the word of power, which took him decades of study to learn and has nearly torn his mind apart. If the characters interrogate or befriend Fane, he might share that in all his studies, he knows of only one other being who channeled such power, and that she is long dead and buried in the mountain. (This is a reference to the White Queen in the adventure "Vault of the White Queen.")

If Fane is left to continue his studies, his mind will indeed break in a few short months, perhaps making him an even bigger threat.

TREASURE

The amulet Fane wears is a rare magic item crafted from a small fragment of Grendleroot material. The continual use of the amulet is part of what drove Fane mad. As an action, a character attuned to the amulet

can sense the world through nearby Grendleroot spires, granting that character blindsight out to a range of 120 feet for 1 minute while within the mountain. However, each time the character uses this power, they must succeed on a DC 16 Charisma saving throw or suffer a random form of short-term and long-term madness as their mind fills with the unrecognizable call of the Grendleroot. The character can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of their turns to remove the short-term madness, but the long-term madness can be removed only with a *greater restoration* or *remove curse* spell.

The long-term madness becomes worse the longer a character wears the amulet. You decide how this growing madness manifests.

Concluding the Adventure

This adventure concludes when the characters stop Fane's threat one way or another, then return to Deepdelver's Enclave with the Worldpillar still intact.

True to her word, Odrah Windvane rewards one character with a Grendleroot weapon, and the people of Deepdelver's Enclave once again find themselves indebted to the characters.

CHAPTER 8

CHUUL

An ancient creature calls out from the darkness of a long-forgotten temple, seeking to devour the unwitting explorers who answer.

Hundreds of thousands of years ago, a sunken temple deep in Blackclaw Mountain was the lair of a group of aboleths that ruled over a kingdom of thralls. Those servants, both humanoid and monstrous, built monuments throughout the temple to their living gods.

Millennia after the aboleths' control of Blackclaw Mountain ended, only one aboleth remained, growing inert over the ages. Most of its thralls died or abandoned the temple—except for one faithful chuul. Now that chuul uses the psychic power of the inert aboleth to draw explorers to it, feeding off their minds and bodies alike. The characters must travel to the temple and end the creature's threat—before the madness it unleashes can spread.

"Chuul" is a two- to four-hour adventure for 3rd-level characters.

Adventure Summary

During the Festival of Fancy Hats in Deepdelver's Enclave, a halfling explorer named Jonath Hollymaker returns from an expedition into a recently discovered abolethic ruin. He speaks strangely, and demands that everyone follow him to the ruin to witness the wonders inside. When the folk of the enclave refuse, the halfling becomes violent.

After the confrontation, the characters are tasked with traveling to the uncharted caves Jonath spoke of, and to determine the source of his strange malady. The characters discover an ancient abolethic temple, lost for hundreds of thousands of years. Monsters, cultists, and dark magic fill the temple, with the ageless horror of a chuul the final challenge the characters must face. Then they discover that the chuul's aboleth master still lives, and must decide whether this ancient creature is friend or foe.

Monsters and NPCs. Aboleth, chuul, cult fanatic, gray ooze, grimlocks (6), grimlock hill giant, grimlock ogres (2), scout, swarms of insects (4), swarms of quippers (3)

Notable NPCs

The following NPCs have a part to play in the adventure.

JONATH HOLLYMAKER

The well-loved leader of the Stonechippers adventuring band, Jonath (a chaotic good male lightfoot halfling **scout**) led his group into the abolethic temple, where they encountered the chuul. After eating the rest of his band, the chuul broke Jonath's mind, sending him back to Deepdelver's Enclave to lure the rest of its inhabitants to the temple.

Jonath still hears the voice of the chuul in his head, pushing out all other thoughts and driving him mad. Nothing can cure the poor scout except the death of the chuul.

ABRIM HESH

Abrim, a chaotic neutral male human **cult fanatic**, is a researcher of otherworldly creatures. On hearing of a creature able to call into the minds of its victims, Abrim headed to the abolethic temple to learn what he can of it. He secretly desires to become part of such a vast intelligence, and is willing to risk anything to do so.

Secrets and Clues

The following secrets and clues can be revealed in the adventure as you determine:

- Ancient aquatic beings of alien intelligence once ruled over Blackclaw Mountain. With memories going back hundreds of thousands of years, these monsters controlled thousands of servant creatures and slaves.
- Some folk in Deepdelver's Enclave have had strange dreams of an underwater temple.
- A recent earthquake opened up a number of once-submerged caverns and chambers long buried within the mountain.
- A traveler named Abrim Hesh recently came to the enclave, claiming to have heard a voice in his mind that called him to an ancient temple.
- Stone in the caves and passageways close to the recently revealed caverns has taken on a slimy texture.
- The powerful aberrations called aboleths are all but immortal, and have memories that go back to the foundation of the cosmos.
- Strange glyphs have appeared on stone walls near the submerged caverns, in a language unknown even to the most erudite scholars.
- Great swarms of insects have been seen pouring like water through cracks in cavern walls. Where they're going remains a mystery.

Adventure Hooks

This adventure works best if the characters have a strong hook to take them to the chuul's lair. Jonath is a well-loved explorer of Deepdelver's Enclave, and Bailon the Beardless is quick to step up to ask the characters for help. No magic known to the residents

of the enclave can cure Jonath of his mental affliction, making it important for someone to retrace his party's route and investigate. Moreover, Bailon fears that the call that took over Jonath might pose a greater danger to the explorers of Deepdelver's Enclave. Such a danger must be neutralized, and Bailon hopes the characters are the adventurers to do it.

It is also possible for Jonath to be a dear friend of one of the characters. Alternatively, for a stronger hook, you can replace Jonath with another NPC well loved by the characters.

One or more of the characters might have had a dream of the temple or heard the voice of the chuul calling out from the depths. Any character who experiences this vision can feel the danger the aberration poses.

For characters whose primary motivation is personal gain, Bailon the Beardless offers to pay 50 gp to each party member to find the source of Jonath's mental enslavement and end it.

Start

A fashion-focused celebration in Deepdelver's Enclave is the starting point for this adventure. Read or summarize the following to set the scene:

"A good day to you!" says Bailon the Beardless, tipping a magnificent admiral's hat complete with a six-foot plume of flaming phoenix feathers. He gives a wink and continues to make his way down the main thoroughfare of Deepdelver's Enclave, tipping his fantastic headgear to each passerby. Each of those others wears their own amazing fancy hat, of course—for this is the Festival of Fancy Hats in the enclave.

Let each player come up with their character's own fancy hat if they wish. As their characters interact with NPCs, you can use the "Fancy Hat Generator" sidebar to describe what the NPCs are wearing.

As they wander through the enclave, the characters eventually see the following:

A halfling in torn clothing wanders along the edge of the street, immediately calling attention to himself for his lack of a fancy hat.

The halfling, Jonath Hollymaker, grabs one of the characters at random.

FANCY HAT GENERATOR

Use the following three lists to generate fancy hats suitable for the festival.

HAT TYPE

1. Tricorn hat
2. Wide-brimmed sunhat
3. Cowboy hat
4. Tall cone
5. Helmet and goggles
6. Knight's helm
7. Royal crown
8. Animal head
9. Furred hat
10. Top hat

HAT STYLE OR ACCESSORY

1. Very large
2. Very small
3. Horned
4. Gilded
5. Large feather
6. Clockwork
7. Flowered
8. Ornately decorated
9. Jangling with bells
10. Long tail

HAT EFFECT

1. Flaming
2. Shimmering with stars
3. Surrounded by fluttering birds
4. Fireworks
5. Spinning solar system
6. Magical glyphs
7. Small flying pegasi
8. Laughing skulls
9. Small musical instruments
10. Flying devils

"I have found it!" the halfling cries out. "A wonderful temple filled with the greatest joy we can hold in our hearts. Please, you must come with me right away. Bring everyone you can. It's so beautiful!"

If the characters ask more about this temple, the halfling says only that it is wondrous to behold and they must see it for themselves. A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check notices that Jonath's skin is wet, clammy, and nearly translucent, showing his pulsing veins clearly underneath. A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check senses that the halfling is under some sort of powerful mind control effect.

For a longer adventure, and if you want to start off with a combat encounter, Jonath is not alone. The halfling is accompanied by three hunched figures cloaked in tattered leather. If a character approaches one of these figures, or if the characters don't immediately follow Jonath, the creatures reveal themselves to be three **grimlocks** and attack. Their goal is to subdue any characters they can and drag them down to the temple. Like Jonath, the grimlocks are mind-controlled, following the chuul's orders and with no conscious thoughts of their own.

THE FATE OF THE STONECHIPPERS

When the battle ends, the characters can determine what's caused Jonath's breakdown from a journal the halfling carries. He and his band of explorers, the Stonechippers, discovered that a recent quake had opened up new tunnels deep in the mountain. While exploring these new tunnels, the Stonechippers discovered a formerly submerged temple, now drained of water, decorated in a manner unfamiliar to them.

All the explorers heard a call to their minds from deep inside the temple, promising them eternal joy and fulfillment. Jonath's notes include a map showing the route to the location from Deepdelver's Enclave, with two potential entrances to the temple—through an underwater tunnel or across a large crevasse. The characters can choose which route they want to take.

Whether Jonath is administered to by the characters or the NPCs of the enclave, it soon becomes clear that his madness does not respond to any healing or restoration magic. Bailon the Beardless asks the characters to find this temple, wanting them to learn what's affected Jonath in the hope of curing him, then ending whatever threat lurks there before it has any chance to spread.

As usual, Bailon and the other folk of the enclave are interested in any discoveries the characters can make about the temple itself, including who inhabited it and what became of them. Bailon offers a *potion of water breathing* to each character to aid their exploration.

Traveling to the Temple

It is a two-day journey to either of the entrances to the temple. Along the way, the characters might encounter other creatures that have either heard the call of the being in the temple, or which have succumbed to that being's control and now hunt on its behalf. As they journey through dank caves and tunnels, you can add an encounter by using the locations and encounter

descriptions in appendix B. Alternatively, the characters might instead witness one of the following events:

- 1: A great carpet of four **swarms of insects** flows out of cracks in one wall, then crawls into a crack in another.
- 2: The characters find a thick slime coating the cavern walls. Touching the slime causes a character's skin to go translucent for 1 hour, during which time the character hears an otherworldly call promising eternal happiness.
- 3: The characters come across an eroded section of cavern wall that reveals an ornate pillar carved with intricate unknown symbols. The pillar shows numerous types of humanoids worshipping a tentacled creature with three vertical eyes.
- 4: One of the characters hears a voice in their mind, calling to them for their servitude as it shows a vision of a great ziggurat and an emerald pool. The character must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or become charmed by the chuul. While charmed, the character must travel to the site of the temple by the fastest route, ignoring any challenges that might hinder them. The character can attempt this saving throw again each time they take damage. If the character remains charmed in this way for more than 24 hours, the charm becomes permanent and can end only with the death of the chuul.

GRIMLOCKS IN BLACKCLAW MOUNTAIN

In the ancient history of Blackclaw Mountain, the aboleths used their magic to mutate humanoid creatures into their twisted servants. Those servants became grimlocks—blind dwellers in the mountain who worshiped the aboleths as unknowable gods. Over hundreds of thousands of years inside the mountain, the grimlocks mutated into variant creatures, including grimlock **ogres**, grimlock **ettins**, and grimlock **hill giants**. These variant grimlocks use the stat blocks of those base creatures with the following additional traits:

- **Condition Immunities** blinded
- **Senses** blindsight 30 ft. or 10 ft. while deafened (blind beyond this radius)
- **Blind Senses.** The grimlock variant can't use its blindsight while deafened and unable to smell.
- **Keen Hearing and Smell.** The grimlock variant has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.
- **Stone Camouflage.** The grimlock variant has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in rocky terrain.

When the characters get close to the temple, they can choose which of the two entrances they want to take. One leads to a chamber split by a large crevasse in area 1. The other leads to a pool and an underwater tunnel in area 3.

Pacing the Adventure

Pacing this adventure to fit the time you have to run it can be done in a number of ways. If time is short, don't use the optional combat encounter with the grimlocks at the adventure start, and remove or limit other optional encounters. You can also steer the characters toward the ziggurat to bring them to the chuul as soon as possible.

If you find the characters are having too easy a time, consider adding the following optional encounter.

THE AWOKEN

A single grimlock **hill giant** (see the "Grimlocks in Blackclaw Mountain" sidebar) periodically wanders through the main area of the temple. The characters might see the lumbering giant from afar, or the giant might charge them without warning. If it drops a character to 0 hit points, the giant attempts to carry them to area 7, where the grimlock ogres will take the fallen character to the chuul.

The Sunken Temple

Hundreds of thousands of years ago, when most of Blackclaw Mountain was submerged beneath the sea, the aboleths ruled here. Their seat of power was a submerged temple carved into the rock by their grimlock thralls, who worshiped the aboleths as gods. After a hundred thousand years of abolethic control, the waters receded and the aboleths slumbered. Many died over the millennia since then, but one in particular still clings to life, even though it has grown inert through inactivity.

Over centuries, the aboleth's psychic power was absorbed by its most loyal servant, a chuul who served it for thousands of years. The chuul has long used this psychic connection to lure creatures to its lair—some to serve it and some to feed it. The abolethic temple lay buried deep in the mountain for a hundred millennia, until a recent quake opened up new tunnels connecting the temple to Deepdelver's Enclave—and to a new source of food for the ancient aberration.

The huge central cavern of the abolethic temple has 100-foot-high ceilings hanging with stalactites. All areas of the temple are filled with dim light shed by

green-and-blue phosphorescent algae. Pools of liquid likewise illuminate the area with swirling blue-green dim light.

1. VERMIN PIT

Area Aspects. Deep crevasse, slime-covered walls, swarming insects

A quake has split this cavern open, leaving a crevasse twenty feet wide and thirty feet deep. The edges and walls of the crevasse appear to be coated in wet slime, and the ground at the bottom is moving.

The walls of the cliff are coated in decaying abolethic slime (see the sidebar). Any creature attempting to climb a slime-coated wall must succeed on a DC 16 Strength (Athletics) check or fall to the bottom of the crevasse, taking 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage and falling prone.

CREATURES

A character who looks into the crevasse and succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check sees that four **swarms of insects** are the source of the movement. Contact with the slime compels the swarms to seek the abolethic temple, even as its slipperiness prevents them from doing so.

TREASURE

If a character's Wisdom (Perception) check made to look into the crevasse is 16 or higher, they spot skeletons buried under the swarms, one of which is holding the haft of a shining axe. A character who falls into the crevasse sees this automatically.

The shining axe is a +1 *handaxe* of dwarven design called Nogginsplitter—a rare magic item that requires attunement. As a bonus action, a creature attuned to the axe can speak its command word and give it a normal range of 60 feet and a long range of 120 feet. After being used to make a ranged attack, the axe returns to the hand of its wielder.

2. PILLARS OF SERVITUDE

Area Aspects. Carved pillars covered in handprints and claw prints, thin layer of slime

Six smooth pillars have been carved from natural stalagmites in this section of the cavern, forming two rows of three. Each pillar is coated in a thin layer of slime, and is covered with the impressions of thousands of hands and claws of all sizes and shapes.

DECAYING ABOLETHIC SLIME

In all areas of the temple, the characters might encounter the decaying remnants of abolethic slime. A character who touches this slime must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or become diseased. The diseased creature's skin becomes translucent and slimy, and the creature can't regain hit points unless it is underwater. A creature can be cured of this disease with a *lesser restoration* spell, or with a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Medicine) check made at the end of a long rest.

While diseased in this way, the creature can hear the call of the chuul. It feels a sense of great hunger and a promise of eternal happiness in exchange for living flesh and organs. The diseased creature is not charmed, and can resist this urge. But the call remains constant until the disease ends.

From this location, the characters can also see the features of areas 5, 6, and 7.

Whenever a being comes to the call of the chuul, it is compelled to leave a handprint or clawprint on one of the pillars and comes into contact with the decaying abolethic slime that coats it (see the sidebar). Every creature charmed by the chuul has left a print here, including humanoids, beasts, and monsters.

A character who touches one of the handprints gains a faint telepathic connection to the spirit of the creature that left it. The thoughts of many of these creatures are completely alien. Others whisper of the great happiness found in servitude to the god below, and of a willingness to give that god their flesh and the flesh of their loved ones. You can use the creatures in the "Blackclaw Encounters" section in appendix B as inspiration for determining which creatures came here and touched the pillars.

A character who succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check made to inspect the pillars determines that a humanoid hand has touched one of them relatively recently. This hand belongs to Abrim Hesh, who wishes to give his life to the god below.

CREATURE

A **gray ooze** has wrapped itself around one of the columns, and is indistinguishable from the decaying abolethic slime. If any creature comes within 5 feet of the ooze, it attacks with a pseudopod.

If time is running short or the characters have already faced enough battles, you can skip this encounter.



3. EMERALD POOL

Area Aspects. Pool of emerald water, slimy walls, strange inscriptions

Glowing light shines up from a deep pool of emerald water at the center of this huge cavern. The walls of the cavern are covered in thick slime, which obscures a strange writing carved into the stone.

The walls are coated in decaying abolethic slime (see the sidebar). A character who studies the inscriptions on the walls and succeeds on a DC 16 Intelligence (History) check determines that it is a primitive form of writing intended to be touched, not seen. A *comprehend languages* spell or similar magic reveals that the writing talks of the need to follow the god below and sate its hunger. (The inscriptions were made by the grimlocks who serve the chuul.)

Any creature that enters the pool finds the water safe, and spots a long underwater tunnel leading to area 4 and eventually to area 5.

4. TUNNEL OF THE CHOSEN

Area Aspects. Ornate underwater tunnel, feral whispers

The narrow natural tunnel from the pool opens up into a larger twenty-foot-wide tunnel of carefully worked stone. Inscriptions in a swirling script cover the walls, at a level of detail that must have taken centuries—or even millennia—to complete.

The script that covers all the walls of the tunnel is a mix of languages, including Deep Speech and other tongues used by the slaves of the aboleths over centuries. A character who understands Deep Speech and studies the writing for 1 hour learns the history of the abolethic Quorum found in chapter 2. A character who spends more time than that reading the glyphs must succeed on a DC 14 Charisma saving throw or suffer a random form of short-term madness for 1 minute.

CREATURES

Characters traveling through the tunnel are attacked by three **swarms of quippers** driven mad by the call of the chuul. The quippers have transparent skin, and

the characters can hear the creatures' animal hunger in their minds as they attack. The swarms of quippers use the normal stat block with this change:

- **Psychic Assault.** As an action, a swarm of quippers can conduct a psychic attack on one creature within 5 feet of the swarm. The creature must succeed on a DC 11 Intelligence saving throw or be stricken with psychic feedback until the end of the swarm's next turn. While the creature is in this state, all other creatures have advantage on attacks against the creature.

If time is running short or the characters have already faced enough battles, you can skip this encounter.

5. CYLINDER OF INFINITY

Area Aspects. Smooth cylinder of stone, blue glowing pool, spiraling writing that grows smaller as it ascends

A twenty-foot diameter, fifty-foot-high pillar of smooth stone stands in a pool of glowing blue water. Delicate runes spiral around the pillar, getting smaller and smaller as they reach for the top.

From this location, the characters can also see the features of areas 2, 6, and 7.

This pillar stands as a stone of history, carved by the aboleth's more artistic thralls. Layers of writing spiral up the pillar, becoming so small near the top that they cannot be read without a magnifying glass. The writing is the same mix of Deep Speech and other tongues seen in area 4.

A character who understands Deep Speech and succeeds on a DC 16 Intelligence (History) check realizes that the pillar records all of history from the time of the foundation of the multiverse to roughly one thousand years ago, in extraordinary detail. It would take a dozen lifetimes to study all of it, and must have taken many thousands of years to carve.

A character who understands Deep Speech and studies the writing for 1 hour learns the history of Blackclaw Mountain found in chapter 2. A character who spends more time than that reading the glyphs must succeed on a DC 14 Charisma saving throw or suffer a random form of short-term madness for 1 minute.

CREATURES

Two **grimlocks** sometimes come to the pillar to trace out its text with their fingers. They cannot understand it, but they enjoy touching it for reasons they cannot comprehend. If they are not attacked, the grimlocks are not immediately hostile to the characters, instead attempting to lead them to area 6. If the characters resist, the grimlocks attack, trying to knock them unconscious, then dropping them into the shaft at area 6.

If time is running short or the characters have already faced enough battles, you can skip this encounter.

6. ALTAR OF THE DEEP ONE

Area Aspects. Altar of carved bone, deep sacrificial shaft, slippery spiral walkway

A carved walkway covered in oily slime twists up the side of a rock hill on the west side of the main cavern. At its top stands an altar of ornately carved bone.

This ancient altar once served as a holy place for those who worshiped the aboleths as gods. Now, Abrim Hesh uses it to preach to grimlocks.

SLIME-COATED WALKWAY

The characters notice that the slime coating the walkway here is not as thick as the decaying abolethic slime seen previously. Still, any creature that moves along the spiral walkway must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or fall prone. The grimlocks are well accustomed to moving on the walkway, and are immune to this effect.

ALTAR

The bone altar is hundreds of thousands of years old, once used by the high priests who worshiped the aboleths, and who preached to the thousands of thralls who served the aquatic tyrants. Carvings on the altar depict an aboleth flanked by two chuuls, one of which has a large scar on the carapace of its head. (This same scar can be seen on the chuul in area 8, revealing it to be the same creature, and hundreds of thousands of years old.)

In front of the altar, a 10-foot-diameter shaft leads 50 feet down to a rushing underground river, flowing to area 8.

CREATURES

Abrim Hesh, a chaotic neutral male human **cult fanatic** with 50 hit points, stands at the altar giving

Sunken Temple

1 Square = 10 ft.



a sermon about the shared desire to feed flesh to the god below in exchange for eternal happiness. Six **grimlocks** stand along the walkway, unable to understand his prattle but somehow responding to his dedication.

Hesh is mostly mad from his continual communication with the chuul. Believing that he alone speaks for the creature, he chose to be its voice rather than its food. He is completely absorbed by his own sermon, as are the grimlocks. If the characters come out into the open, he addresses them as though they have come to serve as sacrifices for the god in the temple.

If conflict begins, Hesh takes partial cover behind the altar and uses his *helm of telepathy* (see “Treasure”) to cast *suggestion* on the strongest-looking character, demanding they lie prone while the grimlocks slay the rest of the party.

If any of the characters fall unconscious during the fight, two grimlocks pick them up, climb to the altar, and throw the body down the shaft so it can feed the chuul. The grimlocks are well practiced at climbing the slippery hill, and reach the pit in 2 rounds.

A character dropped down the shaft takes 17 (5d6) bludgeoning damage when they hit the rocks and the water below. A character can resist the rushing water with a successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check, then can climb back up the shaft with a successful DC 16 Strength (Athletics) check. Otherwise, the fast-flowing river drops them in area 8 after 2 rounds.

TREASURE

Hesh's *helm of telepathy* is shaped from bronze in the form of an aboleth, with its three eyes on the wearer's forehead and the aboleth's tentacles curving down along the face. The helm is an ancient relic once used to grant a stronger connection between the aboleth and its most valued intelligent servants.

7. ZIGGURAT

Area Aspects. Smooth crystalline ziggurat, ornate carvings, cracked entryway

A fifty-foot-tall ziggurat of smooth crystalline stone rises in the northeast corner of the cavern. Ornate carvings depict humanoids and monsters serving a three-eyed tentacled creature. A large crack in the front of the ziggurat exposes a long tunnel leading into the rock below.

A character who succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana or History) check recognizes the creature depicted in the imagery as an aboleth, one of an ancient race of aberrations whose memories go back to the beginnings of the multiverse. The character likewise recognizes that the call heard within the cavern is similar to that of an aboleth, but not as powerful, intelligent, or clear. It is as though some other creature has gained the aboleth's telepathic ability.

CREATURES

Two grimlock **ogres** (see the “Grimlocks in Blackclaw Mountain” sidebar) guard the front of the ziggurat. The chuul has commanded the ogres to disarm any creatures that attempt to enter the ziggurat. The ogres motion to the characters to drop their weapons. If the characters don't do so, the ogres attack.

If time is running short or the characters have already faced enough battles, you can skip this encounter.

8. POOL OF WORLDS

Area Aspects. Blue swirling pool, projection of alien starscape, aboleth image, piles of bones

Light from a blue swirling pool illuminates this chamber, creating the image of moving planets in a vast alien starscape across the ceiling. The walls of the chamber have been carved with images of incredible detail. Piles of bones from all manner of creatures litter the stone floor.

This chamber is the lair of the chuul. Images of the aboleths' temple are carved along all the walls, including one section of wall that bears a life-sized moving image of an aboleth.

INTRICATE ILLUSIONS

The moving image of the aboleth is easily identifiable as an illusion—but the wall it is part of is also illusory. A character can see through the illusory wall with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check, or its magic can be sensed with a *detect magic* spell. Revealing the illusion exposes the tunnel leading to area 9.

CREATURE

The **chuul** lurks in the pool, waiting for the best moment to strike potential prey. As part of its long

exposure to the aboleth it served, the chuul has these features:

- **Enslave (3/Day).** As an action, the chuul targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed by the chuul until the chuul dies or until it is on a different plane of existence from the target. The charmed target is under the chuul's control and can't take reactions, and the chuul and the target can communicate telepathically with each other over any distance. Whenever the charmed target takes damage, the target can repeat the saving throw. On a success, the effect ends. No more than once every 24 hours, the target can also repeat the saving throw when it is at least 1 mile away from the chuul. If a creature is under this effect for ten days, the effect is permanent until the chuul's death or if the creature is the subject of a *lesser restoration* spell.
- **Subjugate.** As a bonus action, the chuul chooses a creature it can see within 30 feet of it, which must make a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the target drops prone in front of the chuul until the end of its next turn, allowing it to be devoured.
- The chuul has telepathy out to a range of 120 feet.

Though the chuul is not intelligent, it continually sends out a telepathic call for food. It has learned how to incite pleasure in the minds of those it enslaves, giving them a glowing sense of satisfaction even as they are devoured.

This battle might prove difficult. If you wish to reduce its difficulty, reduce the chuul's hit points, lower its damage output, or remove its Multiattack action.

TREASURE

Numerous coins, trinkets, and baubles are buried within the piles of bones in the chuul's lair. The characters can collect 160 gp, 99 sp, 34 cp, five pieces



of jewelry (worth 50 gp each), and an idol of an aboleth with emerald eyes (200 gp). The idol is a very rare magic item whose possessor can use an action to cast the *dominate monster* spell (DC 15). Once the spell is cast, the idol's magic fades.

9. POOL OF THE LOST ONE

Area Aspects. Inert aboleth, desiccated worshiper, slime-covered walls

A long, ornately carved circular tunnel opens up into a semispherical room whose walls are similarly carved, but which are covered in gray slime. A rectangular pool has been carved out in the center of the chamber, with a stone statue of a large fish-like creature floating within it. The decayed husk of a kneeling humanoid sits in front of the statue.

This chamber holds the remains of Xen, the last member of the Quorum—the group of aboleths who ruled Blackclaw Mountain for a hundred thousand

years. The desiccated body of the last worshiper of Xen sits near its master. The body turns to dust if it is disturbed.

The walls of this chamber are covered in decaying abolethic slime (see the sidebar).

CREATURE

The statue is actually the neutral **aboleth** Xen. The aboleth still lives, but is effectively paralyzed as a result of not having moved in thousands of years, and is covered in a crust of dust and decay.

If the aboleth is attacked, it breaks out of the stone-like crust covering its body, and defends itself with its tentacle and tail attacks. Because of its long state of inertia, it has disadvantage on attack rolls. The aboleth has no desire to kill anyone, and it ignores any character it reduces to 0 hit points. It also sends out a telepathic message far more powerful than any the

characters have felt so far, saying, “Leave me be.” It ceases its attacks if the characters do so first.

Xen has grown too old to care about the world around it, and is now content with sleeping the millennia away. If the characters try to communicate with the aboleth, it answers freely. It no longer has any desire to enslave sentient creatures.

If this adventure is played as part of an ongoing campaign, the aboleth might have information useful to the characters—and could even become an unlikely ally. The aboleth can communicate with a character wearing Abrim Hesh’s *helm of telepathy* across any distance.

Concluding the Adventure

This adventure concludes when the characters defeat the chuul and end its ravenous call throughout the mountain. Any creatures enslaved by the chuul lose their connection to it, including Jonath Hollymaker. If Abrim Hesh still lives, his madness slowly leaves him, and he begins the long study of the aboleth’s temple and the ancient history found there.

CHAPTER 9

THE CELL

A being of evil as black as the pits of the Abyss projects nightmares through the cracks of its centuries-old prison.

During a day of celebration in Deepdelver's Enclave, an explorer suddenly screams as they are taken over by an otherworldly force. Then a creature of nightmare manifests into reality and lays into the folk of the enclave in a bloody attack. In the aftermath, the last member of a monastic order reveals what the attack means. The magical bonds holding a powerful being in a cell maintained by his order have weakened, and the creature's escape is imminent. It's up to the characters to journey to the cell and ensure that its prisoner is contained once more. But other factions are already ahead of them—with plans to release the creature first.

"The Cell" is a two- to four-hour adventure for 4th-level characters.

Adventure Summary

The peaceful Festival of Secret Hearts in Deepdelver's Enclave is interrupted by the appearance of an invisible stalker that goes on a rampage. A monk of the Keepers, a monastic order connected to the Order of the White Sun, witnesses the attack and knows what it means. Long ago, the Keepers created a special secure cell deep within Blackclaw Mountain to hold the night hag known as Mother Bloodstone. Now the cell has cracked, allowing the hag's malevolence to leak into the mountain.

The monk begs the characters to travel to the remote monastery containing the cell. There, they can try to repair the cell and contain the creature once more. However, the characters learn that two other groups are already on their way to the cell. One is a band of knights known as the Blades of Dawn (another faction of the Order of the White Sun). The other is a group of cultists who worship the Black Star. The cultists want to release the hag, while the knights intend to slay Mother Bloodstone—but will free her for all time if they fail. The characters must choose how to face the cult and whether to thwart the Blades of Dawn by sealing the cell—or to accept the risk of setting the hag free in order to destroy her once and for all.

Monsters and NPCs. Black pudding, cultists (4), cult fanatic, invisible stalker, knight, magma mephits (6), night hag, scouts (4)

Notable NPCs

The following NPCs have a part to play in the adventure.

SARBON OF THE KEEPERS

Sarbron is a neutral good male human **priest** and the last monk of the Keepers, a branch of the Order of the White Sun sworn to protect the cell and the creature it holds. The elderly Sarbron is horrified to learn

that the cell has cracked, and fears that the night hag Mother Bloodstone could escape. His age and physical condition make it impossible for him to travel to the monastery to investigate, compelling him to ask the characters to step up.

MOTHER BLOODSTONE

Mother Bloodstone, a chaotic evil **night hag**, once served as an advisor and ambassador to Ulon the Mind Dancer, one of the archmages of the Magocracy of the Black Star. A millennia ago, Mother Bloodstone birthed and devoured two children whose twisted souls reside within the hag still, fueling her power. Roughly three hundred years ago, the hag was captured by the Order of the White Sun and magically bound into a special cell. The Keepers have guarded the cell ever since, ensuring that the hag's evil and corruption could not spread.

DALMUS SPIRITHEART

Dalmus, a lawful good human **knight**, is the commander of the Blades of Dawn, one of the last orders of warriors upholding the traditions of the Order of the White Sun. Dalmus wants to prove himself by facing and destroying Mother Bloodstone. He is not easy to intimidate or bluff, but reacts well to flattery.

Dalmus is a descendant of Alexa Avankor, the lord templar of the Swords of Dawn when the Order of the White Sun drove the Magocracy of the Black Star from Blackclaw Mountain. He wears a shining breastplate emblazoned with the flaming-sword-and-white-sun symbol of the order—a relic of the crusade of the White Sun, handed down from generation to generation.

FATHER ALTHOTH

A chaotic evil male human **cult fanatic**, Father Althoth has studied the lore of the Magocracy of the Black Star and wants to bring the archmages back into the world. Like the archmages, he worships the elder evil known as the Black Star, which he believes is the otherworldly creator of the Grendleroot. Heeding the call of Mother Bloodstone's evil since the cell was cracked open, Althoth and his band of cultists have headed to the cell with the goal of releasing the hag.

Secrets and Clues

The following secrets and clues can be revealed in the adventure as you determine:

- Three centuries ago, when the Order of the White Sun routed the Magocracy of the Black Star from Blackclaw Mountain, they trapped a powerful servant of the magocracy in a cell they constructed deep in the mountain.
- A monastic sect of the order, known as the Keepers, made an oath to watch over the cell.
- Some members of the Keepers took their own lives when they heard whispers of the trapped creature in their minds. Since then, the sect has watched the cell from afar.
- Dalmus Spiritheart, a descendant of Alexa Avankor of the Order of the White Sun, has seen visions of the creature escaping from the cell, and is determined to kill it.
- The creature is said to be able to implant nightmares into victims, driving them to suicide or devouring their souls.
- The cell's protections prevent the creature trapped within from plane shifting out of this world and back to its own.
- A stone slab in the northernmost chamber of the monastery acts as a seal for the cell. If the slab is broken, the cell will open.
- A monument to a hero of the White Sun within the monastery contains a weapon of great power.
- Cultists who worship the Black Star have made their way to the cell in an attempt to free the creature held within it.

Adventure Hooks

This adventure works best if the characters have a connection to the Order of the White Sun, or have an interest in disrupting any remnants of the Magocracy of the Black Star. One of the characters might remember a story told by a relative about the Keepers sworn to protect the cell. Others might have heard rumors of Mother Bloodstone, an agent of the Black Star whose nightmares were responsible for hundreds of deaths. Or one of the characters might have a relationship with either Dalmus Spiritheart or Sarbron of the Keepers.

Seeing the danger of this creature's potential release, Bailon the Beardless is willing to offer the characters 50 gp each and a relic (see appendix B, "Blackclaw Mountain Gamemaster's Toolkit") if they can either reseal the cell or defeat the creature within it.

Start

The adventure begins with the characters in Deepdelver's Enclave during the romantic Festival of Secret Hearts. Read or summarize the following to set the scene:

It is the Festival of Secret Hearts in Deepdelver's Enclave. On this day, many adventurers confess the attraction they hold for others, always in good cheer and with no rejection held in bad spirit. But the laughter, blushing, friendly hugs, and passionate kisses of the day are shattered by a scream. An explorer of the enclave is seen in the main thoroughfare, hovering above the ground. Blood flows from his eyes, and his mouth is twisted in a snarl.

"I am nearly free," he says with a cackling voice that is not his own. Then with a crack, he is twisted halfway around, his back breaking as he falls to the ground in a heap.

An **invisible stalker**—a manifestation of Mother Bloodstone's wrath—rises from the body of the dying explorer and begins rampaging through the enclave. Because an invisible stalker has resistance to damage from nonmagical weapons, Sarbron quickly enters the fray to cast the *magic weapon* spell for characters who need it. You can also reduce the invisible stalker's hit points if the party has fewer than four characters.

When the invisible stalker is defeated, Sarbron approaches the characters. He informs them that he is the last of the Keepers, a monastic sect of the Order of the White Sun entrusted to protect a cell that contains a great evil. He recognizes the manifestation of the invisible stalker as a sign of that evil, fearing that the bonds of the cell have weakened, and that the creature held within it is beginning to escape.

The murdered explorer was named Jurgen Maethe, and was a recent arrival to Deepdelver's Enclave. Any search of his personal belongings turns up notes and maps, which Sarbron can use to confirm that Jurgen recently passed close to the monastery.

Sarbron has only just arrived in Deepdelver's Enclave, having recently learned that two other groups have been searching for the cell, and hoping that someone in the enclave can help him thwart those groups' plans. One group is the Blades of Dawn—warriors of the Order of the White Sun who seek to destroy the creature held in the cell, but who will have to open the cell to do so. The other is a band of cultists

WHAT'S IN THE CELL?

As written, the creature in the cell is Mother Bloodstone, a powerful **night hag**. But you can replace the night hag with any creature that fits your own campaign. Other creatures that might work well include a powerful **chain devil** summoned by the archmages of the Black Star centuries ago, an **oni** who served as a spy for the archmages, a **hezrou** bound in the cell to keep it from resurrecting in the abyss, a fallen **deva** whose betrayal forced its imprisonment, or a withered **vampire** who once served as an assassin for the archmages.

who follow the path of the Black Star, and who seek to free the monster and serve it.

Sarbron knows little of the creature kept in the cell, other than that it was a servant of the Magocracy of the Black Star and used nightmares as weapons. For their own protection, the members of the Keepers constantly flushed the memory of the monster from their minds, as such memories would otherwise manifest as the evil essence of the creature, as the invisible stalker did.

Sarbron gives the characters a map showing the location of the monastery, as well as his old Keeper's amulet, telling them that it might aid them in their journey. The amulet is in the shape of the Keepers' symbol—a key embossed on a shield. Sarbron doesn't know it, but the amulet is the key to opening the door to the armory in area 7.

Sarbron also gives the characters the phrase that must be spoken to bypass the glyph on the bridge in area 1: "Let the light of the white sun shine in the darkest shadow."

BLADES OF DAWN

This squad of warriors consists of Dalmus Spiritheart, a lawful good human **knight**, and a number of neutral good human **scouts**. Each scout uses the normal stat block with this change:

- The scout wears scale mail (AC 16).

The Blades of Dawn plan on opening the cell to face the entity within. Dalmus is sure of his purpose, but his companions are less convinced, and might be persuaded to recognize that the plan to take on the creature directly is folly.

The Blades of Dawn are ahead of the characters, and have gotten into the cell by the time the party arrives at the monastery.

CULT OF THE BLACK STAR

The **cult fanatic** Father Althoth leads a band of **cultists** in their worship of the Black Star, the same elder evil followed by the Magocracy of the Black Star. Althoth learned recently of the existence of the monastery and the creature held within it. He hopes to set the creature free, yearning to serve a powerful agent of the archmages.

Traveling to the Monastery

The journey to the monastery takes two days. For a longer adventure, you can add an encounter during the journey by using the locations and encounter descriptions in appendix B. Otherwise, you or the players can describe the journey through the remote tunnels and caverns of the mountain.

Pacing the Adventure

You can tune the length and pacing of this adventure by adding or removing encounters with the Blades of Dawn and the Cult of the Black Star. Any interaction with the cult is likely to end in combat, but an encounter with the Blades of Dawn is just as likely to be all roleplaying. For a shorter session, the characters could discover that the Blades of Dawn have already killed the cultists, while a longer adventure could see the characters dealing with the cultists on their own.

Mother Bloodstone's Nightmares

After the battle with her invisible stalker manifestation, Mother Bloodstone becomes aware of the characters. In the middle of a long rest during their journey, the hag reaches forth from the cell to target one of the characters with a version of her Nightmare Haunting action. Because the hag's power is taxed while she remains in the cell, the target still gains the benefit of the long rest, but their hit point maximum is reduced as normal. You might bestow secrets or clues on the characters during these nightmares.

The Monastery

The Keepers built the monastery from volcanic rock as an offshoot of a 40-foot-high natural cavern. Since their arrival at the monastery, the Blades of Dawn have set burning torches around the access cavern, filling the area with bright light. The spires of the

Grendleroot and recent earthquakes have damaged the monastery, opening up a tunnel into a western side chamber.

Inside, the monastery is built of worked volcanic stone inlaid with silver-and-lead rods that prevent telepathic incursion and teleportation (including the use of the *plane shift* spell). Unless otherwise described, ceilings are 10 feet high in hallways and 20 feet high in the chambers of the monastery. Those halls and chambers are set with iron torch sconces, in which the Blades of Dawn have set lit torches.

1. GORGE APPROACH

Area Aspects. Deep rift in the rock descending to molten rock below, glyph and body on a narrow stone bridge

A cracked stone bridge crosses a deep gorge, filled with smoke rising from a smoldering glow below. A glyph has been etched in silver at the center of the bridge. A body lies near the glyph, armored in shining silver and with its skin burned dark red.

The gorge is roughly 100 feet deep and descends to a river of molten rock. The body belongs to a member of the Blades of Dawn, a female human named Arasha Greyowl. She volunteered to be first over the bridge, thinking that her devout nature would protect her from the glyph's magic. It didn't. The rest of the group made it across before the glyph reset.

GLYPH OF warding

The bridge is protected by a permanent, visible *glyph of warding* spell that resets 1 hour after it is triggered. When a creature crosses the bridge without speaking the pass phrase (see the "Start" section), the glyph triggers, affecting a 20-foot-radius sphere centered at the midpoint of the bridge. Each creature in the area must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (5d8) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

2. THE GREAT SEAL

Area Aspects. Wall of black volcanic stone, shattered doors, embedded metal rods, large sparking sigil on the ground, smoldering piles of ash



The natural stone walls of the cavern entrance end at a wall of worked volcanic rock embedded with metal rods. A set of large double doors has been shattered, leaving the front of the monastery open. A rough natural tunnel leads off to the west.

A twenty-foot-wide sigil has been carved onto the stone floor of the cavern, sending forth lightning that arcs up to stalactites on the ceiling. Smoke rises from three small smoldering piles of ash around the sigil.

The natural cave to the west leads to area 3. The broken doorway of the monastery leads in to area 5.

SHATTERED DOORS

The great doors that once sealed off the outer cell were sundered by magic brought here by the Blades of Dawn. Dalmus and his followers then entered the monastery, and continue to explore it.

DAMAGED SIGIL

The sigil was placed here by the Order of the White Sun. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana or Investigation) check suggests that its magic was keyed to preventing something from getting out of the monastery. Unfortunately, the sigil has been damaged and become unstable.

Each round that the characters are in this area, roll a d4. On a 4, lightning arcs from the sigil to a random creature that is not a construct or undead within 10 feet of the sigil. The creature must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

METAL RODS

Examining the metal rods reveals that they are made of silver and lead. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check suggests that they are intended to stop telepathic magic and teleportation.

ASH PILES

The ash piles are the remains of three magma mephits slain by the Blades of Dawn on their way into the monastery. A character can identify them with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check.

CREATURES

When the characters seem the most distracted or vulnerable, six **magma mephits** rise up from the gorge behind them and attack. These creatures have felt the power of the entity bound in the cell, and now come to its call.

If time is running short or the characters have already faced enough battles, you can skip this encounter.

3. SACRIFICES

Area Aspects. Corpses impaled on stakes, blood pool on the ground, strange symbols painted on the walls

Six corpses have been impaled on wooden stakes jammed into cracks in the stone floor of this cavern. A pool of dark blood spreads at the center of the area. Strange symbols have been painted on the cavern wall, surrounding a depiction of a bundle of black roots starting inside a mountain, and reaching up to a multipointed black star in the sky above.

This cavern serves as the camp and sacrificial altar for Father Althoth and his cultists. The bodies are explorers the cultists have captured in nearby tunnels for sacrifice—including one member of the Blades of Dawn. When the characters arrive, the cultists are preparing to sacrifice a second captured Blades of Dawn warrior.

The cultists arrived at the cell before the Blades of Dawn, but were unable to break through the front door. They discovered this back entrance to the monastery and established a camp here, holding the position against the Blades of Dawn. They are now preparing to go inside and release Mother Bloodstone.

PAINTED SYMBOLS

A character who succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana or History) check recognizes that the symbols painted on the wall describe a powerful otherworldly entity—an elder evil called the Black Star. The cultists believe that the Black Star is somehow connected to the Grendleroot, and that it will soon appear in the world—as will the archmages who serve it.

CREATURES

Father Althoth, a chaotic evil male human **cult fanatic** with 45 hit points, and four chaotic evil human **cultists** (Brother Pyp, Sister Ressa, Brother Uthal, and Sister Gretchnyn), each with 16 hit points, attack intruders on sight. They're preparing to sacrifice Borim Oakhammer, a lawful good male dwarf **scout** of the Blades of Dawn who has 4 hit points remaining. They have already killed and impaled Borim's human partner, Jesse Willowborn.

If you want to run a shorter version of this adventure, the characters might find a number of

cultists and members of the Blades of Dawn dead in this area, rather than this encounter. Having met and fought here already, the remaining cultists have already gone into the monastery to face off against the remaining members of the Blades of Dawn.

TREASURE

Between them, the cultists carry 46 gp worth of mixed coin and gemstones.

Father Althoth wears a tarnished black iron necklace bearing a symbol of the Magocracy of the Black Star—an eclipsed black star with nine points around the corona. As an action, the creature wearing the necklace can cast the *fear* spell (DC 15). Once the spell is cast, the necklace's magic fades.

4. RUNOFF WELL

Area Aspects. Deep shaft, runoff of black liquid, collapsed walls

A deep shaft opens up at the center of this obsidian-walled room. Black liquid flows in along a trench cut into the floor of a hallway to the east, spilling into the shaft and falling hundreds of feet into darkness. A large rent where the obsidian walls at the southwest corner of the room have collapsed leads to a twisting natural tunnel.

This chamber channels away the waste expelled from the cell as part of the magic that binds Mother Bloodstone.

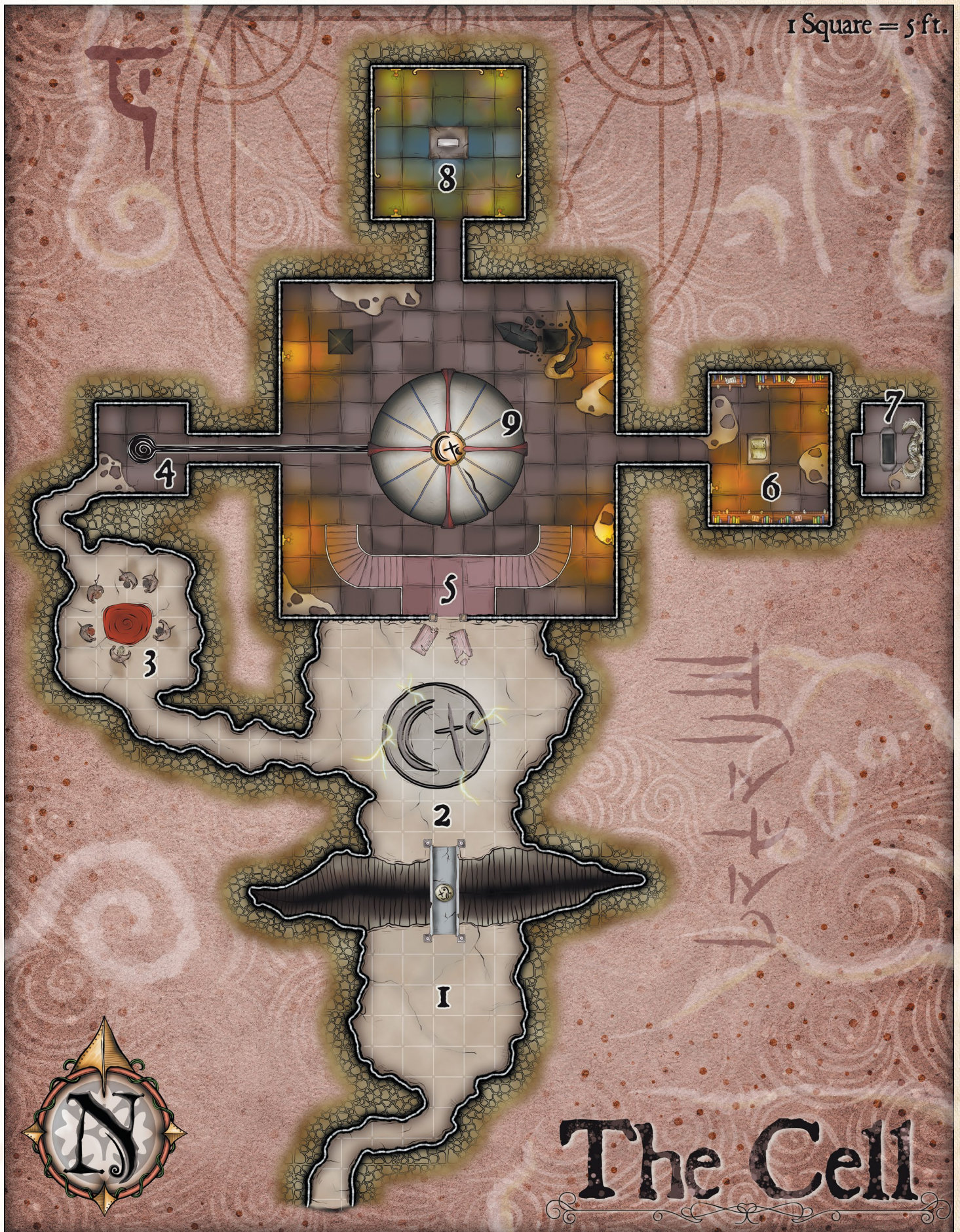
BLACK LIQUID

This part of the monastery was constructed to draw off toxic liquid generated by the cell as it contains the power of the night hag. Any creature that touches this liquid for the first time on a turn or starts its turn in the liquid must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

SHAFT

The shaft is lined with smooth obsidian for 100 feet, then opens up into a wider natural shaft that descends hundreds of feet farther into the depths of the mountain. A huge **black pudding** with 170 hit points resides in the unseen depths below, and ascends in response to any disturbance.

1 Square = 5 ft.



The Cell

5. OUTER CELL

Area Aspects. Cracked dome of iron and lead, black glyph-marked obelisks, black metal spire jutting up from the ground

A cracked dome forged of cold iron dominates the center of this fifty-foot-high chamber. A black obelisk etched with silver glyphs stands to the northwest of the dome, while a second obelisk lies shattered to the northeast. A spire of twisted black metal has thrust up out of the ground near the remains of the northeast obelisk. Torches burn in sconces along the walls to light the chamber. A darker line along one part of the dome shows where the cold iron has cracked to reveal dull lead beneath.

The dome in the center of this chamber is the cell that contains Mother Bloodstone. It is built of cold iron and lined with lead. The two obelisks once provided a magical barrier around the cell, but one of the obelisks was shattered when a Grendleroot spire erupted from the ground and destroyed it.

A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check can hear voices from both the north hall and the east hall. (The voices are members of the Blades of Dawn.)

A character who succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check can sense the broken power of an *antimagic field* connecting the iron dome and the standing obelisk, and understands that the spell has been slowly failing over the two hundred years since the other obelisk was destroyed.

The cell cannot be opened from this area. When the seal in area 8 is destroyed, the cell opens like a clamshell.

CRACKED DOME

Any character who examines the crack in the dome risks being attacked by Mother Bloodstone within the cell (see area 9). Hearing people moving around outside, she readies an action to cast the *dominate monster* spell, attempting to compel a creature to go to area 8, break the seal, and set it free.

CLOSING THE CELL

The crack in the cell and the shattered obelisk must both be fixed to seal Mother Bloodstone away once more. Fixing the obelisk first requires a successful DC 16 Strength (Athletics) check to lift its base into place. The broken obelisk must then be repaired with

a *mending* spell or similar magic, or a character who succeeds on a DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check can refocus the broken obelisk to channel magic through it once more.

The crack in the cell requires three castings of the *mending* cantrip to fix it, or a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check. However, anyone attempting that check risks being targeted by Mother Bloodstone (see above).

Even if it is repaired, the cell can still be opened by destroying the seal in area 8.

6. LIBRARY

If the characters haven't faced the cultists in area 3, they can find them here. Father Althoth, a chaotic evil male human **cult fanatic** with 45 hit points, and four chaotic evil human **cultists** (Brother Pyp, Sister Ressa, Brother Uthal, and Sister Gretchyn), each with 16 hit points, are here finishing off two members of the Blades of Dawn. Four other cultists lie dead on the floor.

If the characters have already encountered the cultists in area 3, the dead bodies of cultists and members of the Blades of Dawn litter the floor here. If time is running short or the characters have already faced enough battles, you can skip this encounter and likewise have only bodies in this area.

6. LIBRARY

Area Aspects. Bound books and scrolls, large tome on pedestal, monastic symbol on the wall

Old cases filled with moldering scrolls and books line the north and south walls of this room. A lectern in the center of the room holds a large open tome. The shield-and-key symbol of the Keepers is etched in silver across the east wall.

Most of the books and scrolls in this library have decayed over the centuries.

TOME

The large book on the lectern is written in Common and describes the great battles between the Order of the White Sun and the Magocracy of the Black Star (see chapter 2). Beautiful illustrations in the book depict the wizards, priests, and paladins who fought on the side of the White Sun.

One section in the book describes the battle in which the White Sun hero Korva Vollok defeated and captured Mother Bloodstone, and talks of how the

Keepers built the cell to contain her forever. However, all the descriptions of Mother Bloodstone have been burned away.

CREATURES

Two members of the Blades of Dawn, both lawful good **scouts** with scale mail (AC 16), named Aryse and Klane, are studying the book and arguing with one another. Dalmus Spiritheart told them to find out how to break the seal on the cell, but the tome has told them nothing useful so far. They are suspicious of the characters, but after the bloodshed with the cultists, they have lost their will to fight whatever is in the cell. Both think that Dalmus has gone too far in his quest.

SYMBOL AND SECRET DOOR

A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check while examining the symbol on the east wall recognizes that the wall can move, and that a smaller version of the Keepers' symbol at the center of the large symbol is slightly indented. The indentation matches the amulet given to the characters by Sarbron.

A character can open the secret door by placing the amulet into the indentation, or with a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check made to channel magical energy into the indentation. When the door is activated, the wall recedes into the floor, revealing a hallway leading to the armory (area 7).

The door can also be popped open with a successful DC 16 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check or Dexterity check using thieves' tools, or forced open with a successful DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check.

7. ARMORY

Area Aspects. Angelic statue, box of black iron on a large stone slab

A box crafted of black iron sits atop a stone slab in this small room. A carved statue of an angelic being hangs on the east wall, hands outstretched and head raised.

This room is the hidden armory of the Keepers, and holds the *sun blade* of Lord Korva Vollok. She was the commander of the Swords of the Sun, the infantry of the Order of the White Sun during their crusade against the Magocracy of the Black Star (see chapter 2).

ANGELIC STATUE AND BLACK CHEST

A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check recognizes that the statue

KORVA VOLLOK'S *SUN BLADE*



is filled with radiant energy. If the check is 15 or higher, the character understands that a creature of good alignment can open the box and take what is inside. If any other creature touches the box, the eyes of the statue blaze with beams of radiant energy. The triggering creature must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw, taking 28 (8d6) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

TREASURE

When a good-aligned creature opens the box, the silver hilt of a fine sword is seen within it. When the hilt is picked up by a creature of good alignment, the blade blazes to life, revealing itself to be a curved *sun blade*. Korva Vollok used this sword to defeat Mother Bloodstone three centuries ago.

8. STONE SEAL

Area Aspects. Tall stone slab bearing the Keepers' symbol, frescoes showing the construction of the cell

This chamber contains only a tall stone slab etched with the symbol of the Keepers. The walls are decorated with colorful frescoes depicting knights and smiths constructing the cold-iron-and-lead dome in the main chamber, and masons raising the slab in this very room.

This chamber contains the main seal that keeps the cell closed.

SEAL

A character who succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana or History) check recognizes that the slab itself is the magical seal keeping the cell closed, and that breaking it will open the cell. If the seal is broken, the domed shell of the cell in area 5 opens, releasing Mother Bloodstone.

With the magic that seals the cell having slowly failed after the fall of the obelisk in area 5, the slab's defenses have been compromised. It can be destroyed now with three successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) checks, or it can be attacked. It has AC 14, 50 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

CREATURES

Dalmus Spiritheart, a **knight**, is here with two lawful good human **scouts** (Squire Andros and Squire Sira) wearing scale mail (AC 16). Dalmus is trying to understand how the seal works, but has had no success so far. In frustration, the knight begins to smash the slab when the characters arrive. If they don't stop him, his third time smashing the slab breaks the seal and opens the cell.

If the characters delay entering this area after hearing Dalmus from area 5, you can decide that Dalmus destroys the seal and opens the cell before the characters confront him. In that case, when the characters return to area 5, they find Dalmus and his scouts torn apart by Mother Bloodstone, who takes on the form of a young girl covered head to toe in blood. The characters must then face the hag alone (see the next section).

9. THE CELL

Area Aspects. Opened dome of cold iron and lead, pool of black liquid, floating stone island
When the cell is opened and the characters return to area 9, read the following:

The dome has opened like a clamshell, revealing a circular stone floor edged with silver, floating in the center of a pool of black liquid.

DALMUS SPIRITHEART



CREATURE

The cell once featured multiple layers of protection to imprison Mother Bloodstone, but most of those have already been broken or were disabled when the cell opened. With the cell open, the hag has access to her spells, but the monastery's magic still prevents her from casting her *plane shift* innate spell or using her *Etherealness* action.

Mother Bloodstone uses the **night hag** stat block with these changes:

- She has this additional action: **Multiattack**. The hag makes two claws attacks, or makes one claws attack and casts a spell whose casting time is an action.
- In addition to her existing innate spells, Mother Bloodstone has the following innate spells:

At will: *chill touch*, *eldritch blast*

2/day each: *dominate monster*, *fear*, *hypnotic pattern*

1/day each: *blight*, *eyebite*, *phantasmal killer*,
polymorph

Before the cell opens, Mother Bloodstone has already used her Change Shape action to appear as a young girl, and attempts to convince the characters that she has been trapped and bound here through no fault of her own. She remains in this form even in combat, hurling spells and tearing flesh with her claws (which she can use even in this innocent-looking form).

If Dalmus Spiritheart and any members of the Blades of Dawn are still alive, Dalmus fights with the party but his followers either cower in fear or flee.

If Mother Bloodstone is attacked by six or more characters, she can use a bonus action to manifest a piece of her being into an **invisible stalker**. She can do this only once, and the invisible stalker dies if the hag is reduced to 0 hit points.

If Mother Bloodstone faces fewer than four characters, reduce her hit points to ensure that the fight doesn't overwhelm the characters.

If Mother Bloodstone defeats the characters, she forgoes killing them to quickly step outside the monastery. There, she casts *plane shift*, returning to the Lower Planes—and plotting an eventual return to terrorize the people of Blackclaw Mountain.

If Mother Bloodstone is reduced to one quarter of her hit points, she attempts to flee the monastery so she can use *plane shift* to escape. Otherwise, she begs for her life, trading information about the return of the archmages of the Black Star in exchange for her freedom (see chapter 2 and appendix C).

Concluding the Adventure

This adventure has many potential endings. If the cell is repaired, Mother Bloodstone is imprisoned once more. If the cell is opened, the adventure can conclude with the night hag's defeat—or it can end with her fleeing the monastery and escaping back to the Lower Planes.

Depending on circumstances, the characters might have found new allies in Dalmus Spiritheart and the Blades of Dawn. Or they might be enemies of those NPCs if they actively opposed Dalmus's plans. Moreover, if Mother Bloodstone escaped, it might create a climate of fear in Deepdelver's Enclave, as folk are forced to accept that the hag might return at any time. With Mother Bloodstone free, Blackclaw Mountain is likely never the same.

CHAPTER 10

VAULT OF THE WHITE QUEEN

The Grendleroot awakens and Blackclaw Mountain begins to crumble. Only the whisper of an ancient being once feared throughout the mountain can lull the Grendleroot back to sleep.

Deep in Blackclaw Mountain dwells an ageless being with power, wisdom—and a thirst for blood. Known today as the White Queen, this vampire has slept undisturbed in her hidden vault for centuries. Each year, the White Queen is given a yearly offering by her followers, the people of the subterranean village of Redstone, who receive a sacrament of long lives and safety in return.

The White Queen is rumored to be the only creature that can communicate with the Grendleroot without being driven to madness. When the Grendleroot begins to move for the first time in centuries, the resultant earthquakes threaten Blackclaw Mountain—unless the characters can travel to the White Queen’s vault and convince her to quiet the Grendleroot’s alien mind.

“Vault of the White Queen” is a two- to four-hour adventure for 4th-level characters.

Adventure Summary

During a talent show, a gnome sage runs into Deepdelver’s Enclave and warns everyone of a coming Grendleroot quake. Moments later, the quake occurs as predicted. The sage explains that more quakes are coming, and might be powerful enough to devastate the entire mountain—unless someone can calm the Grendleroot.

Bailon the Beardless asks the characters to travel to vault of the White Queen, a legendary figure said to be able to safely communicate with the Grendleroot. Two possible routes lead to the vault, taking the characters either through the secluded village of Redstone, or through the field of bones—a hunting ground for the White Queen’s vampiric guardian, Threx. They must then find a way into the vault and convince the White Queen to quiet the Grendleroot’s recent quakes, or Blackclaw Mountain will be lost.

Monsters and NPCs. Cultists (24), dire wolves (4), ghastr, ghouls (6), phase spiders (4), priest, shadows (4+), skeletons (8), vampire, vampire spawn, zombie

Notable NPCs

The following NPCs have a part to play in the adventure.

GONKIN OF PEAAVLEY

A lawful good male rock gnome **commoner**, Gonkin is an explorer and philosopher who has studied the signs of beings from across the multiverse for much of his life. Using incredibly complicated calculations, he successfully predicts a tremor of the Grendleroot that he says is just the beginning of a more explosive awakening. Gonkin comes to Deepdelver’s Enclave to warn its people of the coming quake, and to ask the

characters to speak to the one being in the mountain who can quiet the Grendleroot.

KORVILIA, THE WHITE QUEEN

Once one of the nine archmages of the Black Star (see chapter 2), Korvilia has given up her mantle as the “Daughter of Death” and chosen to sleep away the centuries in her hidden vault since the fall of the magocracy. In her time with the magocracy, Korvilia studied the consciousness of the Grendleroot, and might be the only creature able to quiet that alien entity. Korvilia’s only link to the living world is the memory of her daughter, Sylara, who died tragically over a thousand years ago, before Korvilia became a vampire.

Korvilia is a neutral evil female elf vampire with these changes:

- She has an Intelligence of 20 (+5).
- She has the Spellcasting feature of a **lich**.
- She has a challenge rating of 21 (33,000 XP).

THREX

Threx, a neutral evil half-orc vampire spawn, has served as Korvilia’s guardian for centuries. The half-orc was a fearsome gladiator during the time of the magocracy, when Korvilia gifted her blood to him and bound him as her most loyal servant. When the rest of Korvilia’s armies were cut down by the Order of the White Sun, Threx and Korvilia fled to her hidden vault, where she slept and he stood guard. Threx is a powerful half-orc with blazing red eyes and armor of black and red. He spends his days guarding Korvilia’s tomb and hunting in nearby caves.

Threx is a **vampire spawn** with these changes:

- He has 112 hit points.
- He has a Strength of 20 (+5).
- He does not provoke opportunity attacks when he moves out of an enemy’s reach.
- His proximity to the White Queen makes him immune to any effect that turns undead.
- He has the following attack option: **Greatsword**. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit*: 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.
- Replace his multiattack option with the following: **Multiattack**. Threx makes three greatsword attacks. In place of one of those attacks, he can cast the *command* spell (DC 12), demanding that the target grovel.
- He has a challenge rating of 7 (2,900 XP).

Threx has a number of trained **phase spiders** that travel with him or patrol the caverns around the White Queen’s vault in his absence.

CABEL OF THE WHITE MANTLE

The high priest of the White Queen, Cabel (a lawful good male human **priest**) spends much of his time in his temple at the north end of the village of Redstone. He preaches about Redstone’s symbiotic relationship with the White Queen, and leads the villagers in a yearly offering of blood given to her at the vault’s doors.

Cabel possesses an amulet that belonged to the White Queen’s daughter Sylara, but he has not revealed it to Korvilia for fear of her reaction. Above all else, Cabel loves the people of Redstone and the White Queen, and he wishes to serve them both.

Secrets and Clues

The following secrets and clues can be revealed in the adventure as you determine:

- The Grendleroot has an alien intelligence. None can hope to understand it, but some believe that communication with the entity is possible.
- The White Queen is the only known creature able to “speak” to the Grendleroot without inevitably being driven mad.
- A human village near the White Queen’s vault is known as Redstone. The folk of Redstone have no children, and are known to live many decades beyond a normal life span.
- The villagers have built their small community around a stream, a mushroom farm, and a herd of horned pigs native to the mountain.
- Each year, the people of Redstone offer their blood to the White Queen and accept her sacrament in return.
- Korvilia was once known as the “Daughter of Death.” From her tower of Marrowhold, she ruled over the undead armies of the Magocracy of the Black Star.
- Though fearsome during the time of the magocracy, she escaped to her vault when the forces of the archmages were destroyed, choosing to sleep the centuries away in solitude.
- Korvilia’s bodyguard, Threx, was an accomplished gladiator during the Magocracy of the Black Star.
- The people of Redstone treat Threx like the emissary of a god. In turn, Threx protects them as a shepherd protects lambs from wolves.

- Threx does not guard Korvilia's vault continually. He regularly goes out hunting, commanding other creatures to protect the vault when he does so.
- The password to enter the vault is "Sylara," the name of Korvilia's daughter who died over a thousand years ago.

Adventure Hooks

This adventure works best if the characters have a clear motivation to save Deepdelver's Enclave from the quakes of the Grendleroot. If the characters have played through the adventure "Shatter," the new quakes might be caused by Arduus Fane's previous attack against the Grendleroot. Although the characters prevented Fane's destruction of the Worldpillar, the Grendleroot continues to react to that threat and must be quieted.

Followers of the Order of the White Sun are likely to recognize the White Queen as Korvilia, one of the archmages of the Black Star. Those who do might wish to confront her to assess what threat she poses to the mountain.

For characters seeking monetary rewards, Bailon the Beardless offers 100 gp to each character for successfully quieting the Grendleroot.

Start

The adventure begins on a pleasant evening in Deepdelver's Enclave. Read or summarize the following to set the scene:

The annual enclave talent show at the Dragon's Fangs is in full swing. Odrah Windvane has just entertained a packed house with her haunting rendition of Stars in the Darkness, and Cloude Willowspur is getting ready to start his yearly crowd-pleaser, A Bottomless Mug of Mead. Then suddenly, the cracked voice of a gnome breaks the silence.

"The Grendleroot awakes! Protect yourselves!" The folk in attendance don't bother to hide their confused looks as they try to spot the gnome who called out. A moment later, the ground begins to shake. Through the open front doors, the two Grendleroot spires in front of the Dragon's Fangs can be seen to twist like screws. The larger spire along the enclave's thoroughfare lurches five feet higher, great cracks spreading through the stone around it.

As the quake continues, buildings shake and begin to collapse, and the people of the enclave panic. You can have the characters witness one or more of the following events (chosen or rolled for randomly), then step up to aid the enclave residents under threat:

- 1: A wall of a nearby building begins to collapse. Yvona Richvalley doesn't appear to see it.
- 2: A young boy, Obrian Tressel, looks as though he is about to be trampled by a panicking crowd of townsfolk who don't notice him.
- 3: A deep crack forms under three members of the Archiball family, who stumble and begin to slip in.
- 4: Old man Peldor is knocked back and impaled through the shoulder by a newly risen Grendleroot spire. The spire shudders as though threatening to rise again—whereupon it will take his arm clean off.
- 5: A lantern has fallen from a rafter and set the hay ablaze in the Grelleth stables.
- 6: Felix the mutt is barking at a pile of collapsed rubble. The small hand of the halfling Lucy Browntoes pokes out from under the gray stone.

You can improvise ability checks appropriate to how the characters choose to aid the other folk of the enclave during the quake.

As the quake suddenly ends, a crack opened up in the ground releases four **dire wolves** mutated by the Grendleroot, which attack any creatures they can see. They use the normal stat block with this trait:

- **Spider Climb.** The dire wolf can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

If you are running a shorter version of this adventure, you can skip the encounter at the end of the earthquake.

AFTERMATH OF THE QUAKE

When the quake ends, the gnome who predicted it introduces himself as Gonkin of Peavalley. Gonkin is a wandering scholar, known to have spent much of his life studying the Grendleroot—and he claims to have recently determined that the great entity is waking. As it does so, the spires of the Grendleroot will move again, potentially destroying Deepdelver's Enclave and perhaps the whole mountain around it.

Though Gonkin can predict the quakes, he can do nothing to stop them. Only one creature he knows of has the power to do so—a being known as the White Queen. This queen is no mortal, he explains, but a vampire who has slept in a hidden vault in Blackclaw Mountain for centuries. Gonkin can also reveal any

of the other secrets and clues described earlier, as you determine.

Gonkin knows of two ways to reach the White Queen's vault. The first is through the subterranean village of Redstone, a settlement of humans who worship and venerate the White Queen. He isn't sure how the villagers will react to the characters' arrival, but those who are comfortable with diplomacy might want to choose this course. The second route is through a vast cavern filled with the bones of the dead—hundreds of humanoids hunted and killed by the White Queen's guardian, the vampire gladiator Threx. Those who are stronger with steel and spell than careful words might choose this course.

Convincing the White Queen to aid the characters will be its own challenge, Gonkin admits. She is not mortal, and her desires are unknown. She is a powerful figure, and attempting to convince her of anything by force will be folly. It is possible that Threx or the high priest of the village of Redstone, known as Cabel of the White Mantle, might know how to gain her trust. Otherwise, the characters must determine the best way to sway the White Queen to quiet the Grendleroot.

Gonkin gives the characters a map showing the route of the three-day journey through the mountain, and the two possible entrance points to the White Queen's vault.

Traveling to the Vault of the White Queen

Reaching either of the two access points to the vault takes roughly three days of travel through the tunnels and caverns of Blackclaw Mountain. If you are running a longer version of this adventure, you can add an encounter during this journey by using the locations and encounter descriptions in appendix B. Otherwise, you or the players can summarize the characters' journey through the mountain.

Pacing the Adventure

Many of the encounters in this adventure can swing easily between roleplaying and combat. You can decide how friendly or hostile Cabel, Threx, and the people of Redstone are in response to the characters' appearance, depending on what outcome brings the most fun to the game and how much time you want the adventure to take. If the characters are enjoying talking their way through the adventure, both Cabel

and Threx might be more willing to listen to them. If your group prefers combat, any or all of the NPCs the characters encounter might start out hostile and need to be talked down during a fight.

Many of the encounters in the adventure are optional. If you find that time is running short, you can cut out nearly all of the combat encounters except the encounter with Threx. And even that encounter might not end up as a fight.

If you want to extend the adventure, you can add an encounter with up to four of Threx's trained **phase spiders** anywhere they might fit. For example, in area 5, the characters might be initially attacked by phase spiders, then have to face Threx when he shows up later in the battle. If you want to shorten the adventure, Korvilia can quiet the Grendleroot without spawning any shadows.

Vault of the White Queen

The tunnels leading up to and connecting the areas of the vault are 10 feet wide and have 10-foot-high ceilings. Unless otherwise described, the larger caverns are natural rock and have 30-foot-high ceilings. The village of Redstone (area 2) is filled with dim light shed by guttering lanterns. The rest of the caves surrounding the vault are unlit.

BLACK WATER

A river flows through the caverns surrounding the White Queen's vault, its waters tainted long ago by the blood of the White Queen. The villagers of Redstone have been drinking this water their whole lives, and it has both rendered them sterile and extended their lives by many decades.

Any character who drinks from the black water must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 7 (2d6) necrotic damage and be poisoned for 1 hour. While poisoned this way, the character can hear the whispered voice of the White Queen as she dreams of her daughter, Sylara. Sylara's emerald-encrusted amulet fixes prominently in the mind of the dreaming character. If more than one character drinks the water, other dreams that can be tapped into include battles between the Order of the White Sun and the Magocracy of the Black Star (see chapter 2), and visions of the twisting spires of the Grendleroot worming their way through the mountain.

1. FIELD OF BONES

Area Aspects. Large natural cavern, impaled corpses on spears, black river cutting across the cavern, tunnels leading north and east

The rough natural tunnel you follow opens up into a large cavern, fifty feet high and over one hundred feet long. The bones of monstrous creatures and humanoids alike litter the floor, along with the impaled bodies of dozens of armored orc skeletons. A black river flows from the west across the center of the cavern, disappearing into a natural tunnel to the east. A huge ogre skull hangs above that eastern tunnel. Orc script drawn in dried blood decorates the opening of another tunnel to the north.

This cavern serves as Threx's hunting ground. The script painted on the north tunnel says in Orc, "DO NOT ENTER."

A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (History) check recognizes the impaled skeletons as members of the Sundered Shields, a once-mighty orc raiding party that disappeared roughly twenty years ago. The character can guess that the skull hanging above the east tunnel belonged to their ogre leader, Sagreg the Sunderer.

The cavern contains the bones of hundreds of other dead humanoids and monsters, all victims of Threx's thirst for blood.

CREATURES

Six **ghouls** and one **ghast** hunt through the remains of the dead, sucking marrow from bones and tearing into what leathery flesh remains. The undead and Threx largely leave each other alone, as the ghast has learned to keep the pack away from the tunnels leading to Redstone. If the ghouls detect the characters coming into the cavern, they hide among the bones and try to ambush them. If captured, the ghast is intelligent enough to share what secrets it knows of Threx in exchange for its freedom.

If time is running short or the characters have already faced enough battles, you can skip this encounter.

TREASURE

Threx and the undead here care little for material possessions, and have left numerous treasures on the corpses. As the characters move through this area, they catch glimpses of gold, silver, gemstones, and

jewelry among the bodies. It takes 1 hour to search all the dead, turning up a total of 122 gp, a jeweled bracelet (worth 50 gp), three rings (20 gp each), and an oily evil-looking dagger. The dagger is an uncommon magic item whose possessor can use an action to cast the *vampiric touch* spell. Once the spell is cast, the dagger's magic fades.

2. THE VILLAGE OF REDSTONE

Area Aspects. Small village of red clay houses, white stone temple, black river and pond, mushroom farm, pen holding horned pigs

Dim lantern light illuminates a small village within this long natural cavern. The simple houses here have been built from wood and red clay. A pen holding horned pigs stands against the east side of the cavern. Large phosphorescent mushrooms cover a hill to the south. A black river flows from a tunnel to the west, filling a pool at the center of the village. Two other tunnels lead into the cavern—one to the south and one to the north.

A temple constructed of white stone stands at the north end of the cavern, its construction more elegant than the houses.

This cavern holds the entire village of Redstone. The villagers tend their stable of horned pigs and the mushroom farm for food, but are mostly sustained by the blood of the White Queen. They are largely cut off from the other denizens of the mountain—and they prefer it that way.

NORTH TUNNEL

A pair of statues portraying hooded women, hands crossed over their chests and fangs visible over their lips, have been carved into the stone walls flanking the north tunnel. If the characters are seen attempting to go through the north tunnel without having received Cabel's permission, the villagers might become hostile or even violent.

REDSTONE HOMES

Each of the village's small homes is furnished only with straw mattresses, and features a modest kitchen inside and a pit toilet outside. The families of Redstone all live in groups. One of the houses serves as a pantry holding salted meat and dried mushrooms. A character who succeeds on a DC 14 Wisdom (Medicine) check can tell that the amount of food grown in the cavern isn't enough to sustain even a village as small as Redstone.



The Vault of the White Queen

1 Square = 10 ft.

CREATURES

Two dozen villagers (all lawful neutral **cultists**) call Redstone home. The villagers all appear to be between thirty and ninety years old, but are actually much older thanks to the White Queen's blood.

The villagers view the characters with suspicion, and they are not easily intimidated. If threatened, they proudly state that they are protected by the White Queen's guardian, and that the characters should be careful.

If the villagers are attacked, the **priest** Cabel of the White Mantle leads the response. He resides in the White Temple on the north side of the village.

If combat begins in this area, Threx hears it and appears in 1d3 rounds, coming in from either area 1 or area 5. He attacks the characters without mercy. See "Notable NPCs" for Threx's statistics.

THE ANCESTORS

In the attic of one of the houses, eight desiccated bodies sit in chairs facing a carved wooden bust of the White Queen. These are extremely old but still-living members of the village, known as the Ancestors. These ancient villagers use the **skeleton** stat block but are humanoid, not undead.

If the characters enter the attic, the head of one of the bodies turns toward them. The Ancestors cannot speak, and do not defend themselves if attacked. If the villagers hear of any attack against the Ancestors, they become hostile toward the characters, as does Cabel.

TREASURE

Each of the families of Redstone keeps a little bit of wealth, amounting to 43 gp in mixed coinage, all minted over three hundred years ago; and a mixture of gems and jewelry worth a total of 150 gp. A character who succeeds on a DC 16 Intelligence (History) check notes that the coins are marked with the images of the archmages of the Black Star, including Korvilia (see chapter 2).

3. THE WHITE TEMPLE

Area Aspects. White stone temple, open stone windows with beautiful engravings, altar of white stone, statue of the White Queen

This large temple built of white granite stands in sharp contrast to the red clay buildings to the south of it. Beautiful engravings depicting kneeling figures bowing to a robed woman surround the tall open windows high up on the temple's walls.

THE PEOPLE OF REDSTONE

All the people of Redstone are lawful neutral **cultists**. As the characters explore the village, you can use the following list of villagers as examples of the kinds of folk they might interact with:

- **Tenis Rockbottom:** Male farmer who cares for the horned pigs
- **Scarlet Titanstone:** Female caretaker of the mushroom grove
- **Wevel Graysinger:** Male leatherworker
- **Elydine and Grayce Waverun:** Twin female cooks
- **Dava Glasscloak:** Female mason
- **Zakus Gloomson:** Male lantern lighter

Wooden pews line the interior of the building, leading up to an altar of white stone in front of a statue of a beautiful elf woman. Her hands are outstretched, her mouth open in a caring smile—revealing sharp, pointed fangs.

Cabel of the White Mantle resides in this temple, where he gives weekly sermons and prepares the villagers for their yearly offering to the White Queen.

CREATURES

Cabel, a lawful good male human **priest**, spends much of his time here. When the characters arrive, six villagers (Camilla Willowsong, Laird Treehand, Wynefreede Lyss, Sophie Crowkin, and David and Jovesh Moonmaker) sit in the pews listening to Cabel's sermon on the importance of the symbiotic relationship between the village and the White Queen. Each villager is a lawful neutral **cultist** and defends Cabel if the priest is attacked.

Cabel is not initially hostile to outsiders, but he warns the characters that the White Queen is not tolerant of intruders, nor is her guardian, Threx. If the characters describe the risks to Redstone from the awakening of the Grendleroot, Cabel admits to having recently seen the tree of blades in area 4 sway, something it has never done before.

The priest is torn between the risk to Redstone and his determination to not awaken the White Queen, who he says has slept for three hundred years. He gives the characters what information he can, but will not approach the vault. If convinced of the importance of the characters' cause, he might offer the amulet that once belonged to the White Queen's daughter, Sylara.

TREASURE

A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a crack in the altar that exposes a hollow underneath it. The altar can be moved with a successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check, revealing a hidden compartment. Cabel keeps a handful of relics hidden here from the rest of the villagers, including an emerald-encrusted amulet once belonging to the White Queen's daughter.

The amulet was the possession of one of Korvilia's rivals in the Magocracy of the Black Star, the archmage Waverlyn Starsong, to be used as leverage in case of betrayal or factionalism within the magocracy. After the Order of the White Sun destroyed the magocracy, the amulet was discovered in Shadowreach, and came into Cabel's hands more than a century ago.

The compartment also contains a mix of gemstones (worth a total of 124 gp) and an obsidian figurine of Threx from his gladiatorial days. The figurine is an uncommon magic item whose possessor can use an action to cast the *haste* spell. Once the spell is cast, the figurine's magic fades.

4. THE TREE OF BLADES

Area Aspects. Branching Grendleroot spire in the form of a tree, sharp branches, hanging skulls and offerings

Runoff from the black river flows north where a side cavern opens up. A tree formed of a branching Grendleroot spire twists out of the ground in the center of the black pool where the runoff collects. Skulls hang from some of the tree's branches, as do small dolls and other offerings.

This cavern holds a Grendleroot spire that takes the form of a tall dead tree. Threx uses the tree to display the skulls of villagers who have displeased him over the years, a continual reminder in Redstone of what happens to those who fall out of line. The villagers in turn leave offerings here to show their fealty.

If the characters convince the White Queen to quiet the Grendleroot, she comes here to do so (see "Whispering to the Grendleroot" below).

CREATURES

Two of Threx's trained **phase spiders** sometimes lurk in this cavern if they are not in area 5. They know to avoid the villagers of Redstone, but will attack any outsiders not accompanied by Threx or a villager.

If time is running short or the characters have already faced enough battles, you can skip this encounter.

5. VAULT DOOR

Area Aspects. Polished iron door, fanged elf statue, huge glyph on the ground

This eighty-foot-high natural cavern ends at a double door made of polished iron. A statue of a hooded elf woman stands next to the door, her hands outstretched and her mouth open to reveal sharp fangs. A huge glyph has been carved into a stone circle on the ground before the door.

This large vault door leads to the chamber of the White Queen. The door can be opened only by one or more characters with a combined Strength score of 20 or higher.

GLYPH OF WARDING

The huge glyph on the ground is a visible *glyph of warding* that protects the door. The glyph uses the

WARNINGS AND
OFFERINGS



explosive runes option and deals necrotic damage (DC 15). Threx knows the password to enter the vault—“Sylara,” the name of Korvilia’s daughter. The glyph activates if anyone attempts to open the door without the proper password. The glyph reactivates 5 minutes after it is triggered or dispelled.

STATUE OF OFFERINGS

If any creature moves within 5 feet of the statue next to the door, the statue animates and attempts to grab and bite them. The creature must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the statue pulls the creature in and bites it on the neck, draining its blood and dealing necrotic damage equal to half the creature’s current hit points before letting it go. This blood flows through a series of channels that lead into the sarcophagus of the White Queen inside her vault. It is through this statue that the villagers of Redstone give their blood offering to the White Queen each year.

The statue has AC 18, 50 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. Attacking the statue triggers the *glyph of warding*.

CREATURES

When he is not out hunting, Threx, the White Queen’s guardian, sits in the center of the glyph, his greatsword across his knees and his eyes closed. Threx does not attack the characters immediately, instead listening silently to what they have to say. But no matter what the characters reveal to him, his only response is: “No one enters the vault.”

In addition to appropriate roleplaying, it takes a successful DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check to convince Threx that the Grendleroot is a danger not just to Deepdelver’s Enclave, but to the White Queen and the folk of Redstone as well. (The vampire spawn does not respond well to threats or subterfuge.) If the characters convince him, he agrees to open the vault and let them speak to the White Queen. As he advances, he begs her forgiveness for interrupting her slumber.

If the characters try to force Threx to obey them, attempt to hinder him, or prepare to attack, he responds with violence. See “Notable NPCs” for Threx’s statistics.

If Threx is not in this area, he leaves two trained **phase spiders** to guard the door. These spiders attack anyone who travels through the room or approaches



the vault. If they are not here, the phase spiders might be lurking in area 4.

If the party contains more than four characters, add one **phase spider** for each character above four. If the party has fewer than four characters, reduce Threx’s hit points as needed.

TREASURE

Threx wears a suit of black-and-red *+1 studded leather armor* that is a rare magic item requiring attunement. As an action, a creature attuned to the armor can cast the spell *fire shield*, requiring no material components. This property of the armor can’t be used again until the next dawn. Threx uses the armor to cast *fire shield* as soon as he senses strangers approaching.



6. VAULT OF THE WHITE QUEEN

Area Aspects. Burning braziers, black pool, delicate carvings, statue of the White Queen

A long walkway of smooth stone stretches across a large square pool of black water. Six braziers, three floating in the black water on each side, illuminate this large chamber, whose walls are decorated with delicate carvings. At the far end of the walkway, a twenty-foot-high statue depicts an elf woman sitting atop a white throne.

No one has entered this vault in hundreds of years. The carvings depict the rise and fall of the White Queen, from her time as a mortal elf, to her rise as a vampiric archmage of the Magocracy of the Black Star, to the fall of the magocracy during the crusade of the White Sun (see chapter 2).

An ancient desiccated figure (use the **zombie** stat block) sits at the foot of the White Queen's statue, an iron chisel worn down to a nub in one loose hand. This was an artist of Redstone, who the White Queen conscripted to carve her life's story so she could contemplate it during her rest.

If the White Queen is called forth, a mist flows out from small vents at the base of the statue, then transforms into the White Queen. See "Notable NPCs" for Korvilia's statistics.

The White Queen is not initially hostile, but she does not take kindly to being woken from her slumber. If the characters describe the awakening of the Grendleroot to her, she speaks at first of the quakes of the Grendleroot being a part of the natural world, and not up to either mortals or her to question. No one can understand the mind of the Grendleroot, she explains. It has both the intellect of a god and the hunger of a newborn child.

CONVINCING THE WHITE QUEEN

Success in this adventure requires that the characters convince the White Queen to quiet the Grendleroot. They can do so most easily by showing her the amulet that belonged to her daughter (see area 3). If they do so, drops of blood flow from Korvilia's eyes as she remembers her lost mortality. She agrees to stop the Grendleroot's quakes.

If one of the characters agrees to serve her as Threx has served her, the White Queen is likewise convinced to quiet the Grendleroot. She turns the character into a

vampire spawn who must serve her at the vault for all time.

Any reasonable argument followed by a DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check can also convince the White Queen to calm the Grendleroot and save the mountain. If the check fails, she might ask the characters to perform some task or sacrifice of your determination.

WHISPERING TO THE GRENDLEROOT

When convinced to help by the characters, Korvilia leads the party to the tree of blades in area 4, taking the path through Redstone. As she passes, the astounded villagers lie face down in the dirt. When she arrives at area 4, Korvilia wades into the black pool and places her hand on the tree. She then whispers words that no mortal mind can comprehend or replicate.

VIOLENT RESPONSE

The Grendleroot does not react well to Korvilia's whisper. One **shadow** for each character in the party flows out from the pool and attacks, appearing as malformed beasts bristling with tentacles, claws, and teeth. Korvilia calls on the characters to stop the shadows from interrupting her ritual.

At the start of the second and third round, one more shadow for every two characters rises from the pool and attacks. If Threx or Cabel are with the characters, they fend off their own attacking shadows. Once all

the shadows have been defeated, Korvilia is able to quiet the Grendleroot.

For a shorter conclusion to the adventure, Korvilia's whisper does not result in a violent response and no shadows appear. Instead, after her whisper, the chamber begins to rumble, then quickly stops.

Once the rumbling stops, Korvilia turns and tells the characters that it is done, and that the Grendleroot will remain quiet for a time. If the characters ask how long, she tells them it might be years—or it might be centuries.

Concluding the Adventure

This adventure concludes when the characters have either succeeded or failed to convince the White Queen to quiet the Grendleroot and save the mountain. If they fail to convince Korvilia, she returns to her crypt and the Grendleroot's quakes grow larger and more devastating. Over the next one to two years, the adventurers of Deepdelver's Enclave leave the mountain due to the Grendleroot's continuing instability.

If they succeed, Gonkin confirms that the Grendleroot is quiet, and that the mountain is stable for the time being. The White Queen returns to her crypt—but perhaps not for long. This brush with humanity has awakened a sliver of sympathy in her. Furthermore, her period of waking might warn her that some of her former colleagues in the Magocracy of the Black Star have risen again—and that a great darkness is coming to the world. See appendix C, “The Rise of the Black Star,” for details on these possible developments.

CHAPTER 11

CHILDREN OF THE RED ROSE

Two assassins come to Deepdelver's Enclave seeking revenge. The hero they hunt, Ruth Willowmane, leads them to the Den of Bones, where monsters and heroes alike come to die.

Two members of the Red Rose assassins' guild have come to Blackclaw Mountain, seeking revenge for the death of a fellow assassin named Gloom. Their target is Ruth Willowmane, who before she came to Deepdelver's Enclave was the sheriff of the village of Whitesparrow, where Gloom died. To draw the assassins away from the enclave, Ruth flees for the Den of Bones, a legendary graveyard that calls to monsters and people alike as their life fades. Her longtime friend and companion, Adren Goldbrook, asks the characters to travel to the Den of Bones and save Ruth before she finds her own end among the bones of the dead.

"Children of the Red Rose" is a four-hour adventure for 5th-level characters.

Adventure Summary

During a ceremony in honor of veterans of the Thousand Spear War, a band of hired killers attacks Deepdelver's Enclave—then blames the attack on Ruth Willowmane. These hirelings were sent by the Children of the Red Rose, a long-forgotten guild of elf assassins, as a warning. Two assassins from the guild are coming to the enclave, intending to kill Ruth as revenge for the death of their fellow assassin, Gloom.

That night, Ruth leaves Deepdelver's Enclave and heads to the Den of Bones, a cavernous graveyard of

monsters, beasts, and explorers. She hopes to lead the assassins away from the enclave to prevent any further bloodshed, and believes the Den of Bones to be a fitting location for her end if the assassins best her. Adren Goldbrook, Ruth's longtime companion and a fellow veteran of the Thousand Spear War, asks the characters to go after Ruth and stand by her when the assassins come.

The characters travel to the Den of Bones, first meeting the challenges of exploring that ancient site, then determining how to use the hazards and creatures there against the coming assassins. Their goal is to rout or kill the assassins before they can kill Ruth Willowmane.

Monsters and NPCs. Ankhegs (3), assassins (2), bulette, ghost, gricks (2), minotaur skeletons (1+), otyugh, purple worm, spies (2), swarms of insects (3), thugs (8), troll, veteran, will-o'-wisps (12)

Notable NPCs

The following NPCs have a part to play in the adventure.

RUTH WILLOWMANE

Ruth is a lawful good female human **veteran** of the Thousand Spear War, and the former sheriff of the village of Whitesparrow, several days' ride

from Blackclaw Mountain. Long since retired to Deepdelver's Enclave, Ruth now works as a tanner and leatherworker, and enjoys the excitement of a life surrounded by adventurers and explorers. The death of an assassin named Gloom in Whitesparrow years before now makes Ruth a target for revenge, and puts everyone in Deepdelver's Enclave in danger. Fearing for the safety of her friends, Ruth leaves the enclave and goes to the Den of Bones before the assassins arrive.

RAIN

Rain is a four-hundred-year-old neutral evil male high elf assassin, and one of the oldest living members of the assassins' guild known as the Children of the Red Rose. Rain trained Gloom, and felt her loss painfully when she died. A long-ago wound has given Rain a permanent limp, but his skills otherwise remain sharp. He is known for his ability to lie in wait for an entire day, nearly unmoving, to catch his quarry.

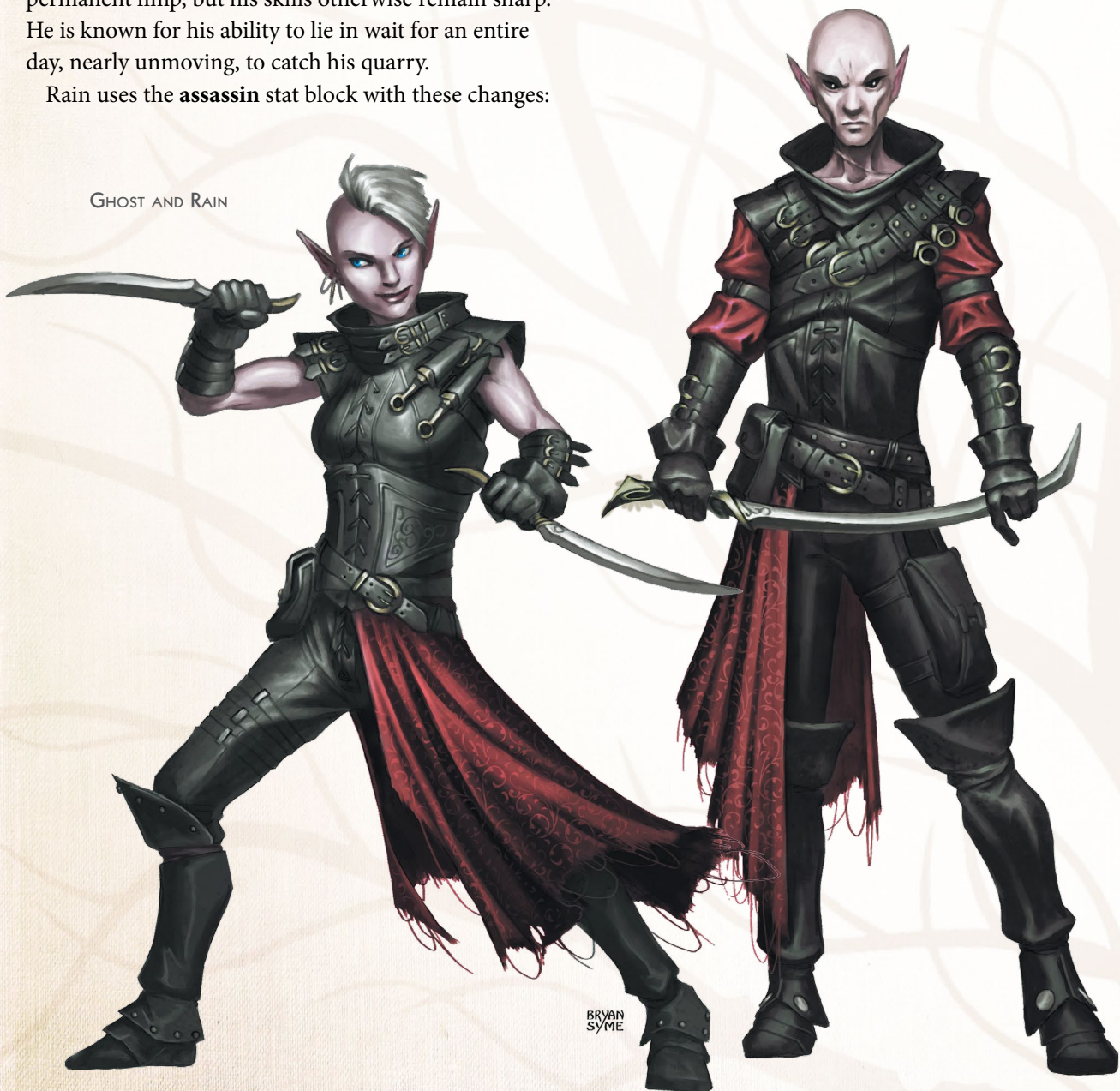
Rain uses the **assassin** stat block with these changes:

- He has darkvision out to a range of 60 feet.
- He has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put him to sleep.
- He knows the *shocking grasp* cantrip. Intelligence is his spellcasting ability for this cantrip.
- He speaks Common, Draconic, Elvish, and Thieves Cant.

GHOST

Rain's current apprentice is the chaotic evil female high elf assassin named Ghost. She has eagerly taken to the blade, and enjoys murder a little too much for Rain's tastes. She treats Rain like a parent, and will fall on her own knife for him if the need arises. She has always hated living under the shadow of Gloom's death, knowing how much Rain loved the

GH0ST AND RAIN



dead assassin, and she secretly hopes that killing Ruth Willowmane will finally push Gloom from Rain's mind.

Ghost uses the **assassin** stat block with these changes:

- She has darkvision out to a range of 60 feet.
- She has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put her to sleep.
- She knows the *ray of frost* cantrip. Intelligence is her spellcasting ability for this cantrip.
- She speaks Common, Dwarvish, Elvish, and Thieves Cant.

ADREN GOLDBROOK

A neutral good male human **veteran** of the Thousand Spear War, Adren owes his life to Ruth Willowmane. He followed her from Whitesparrow to Deepdelver's Enclave, where he serves as her apprentice and friend. He would gladly give his life for Ruth, but a wound he sustained in the war prevents him from going after her. He thus begs the characters to save her from the assassins.

Secrets and Clues

The following secrets and clues can be revealed in the adventure as you determine:

- A decade past, dwarves, humans, and elves battled against a tremendous force of goblins and hobgoblins in the Thousand Spear War. It was a bloody and brutal conflict.
- Gloom, an assassin of the Children of the Red Rose, was killed in the village of Whitesparrow after she attempted to assassinate the lord's nephew over vandalism at a local temple.
- Gloom had turned away from her life as an assassin, and had served the Temple of Light peacefully for more than a century before returning to her deadly ways.
- The Children of the Red Rose accepts only elves into its ranks, and members of the order have long memories. They might hunt their targets for decades.
- The Den of Bones is a vast graveyard where creatures both monstrous and mundane go to die.
- Some monsters use the Den of Bones as their own hunting ground.
- Three twisted Grendleroot spires thrust up out of the rocky ground at the heart of the Den of Bones. These claw-like spires radiate a call throughout Blackclaw Mountain, somehow calling dying creatures to them.

- The Children of the Red Rose like things chaotic and messy. They often hire thugs and killers to inspire fear in their prey before they go in.
- The Children of the Red Rose arrange to be paid in red rubies with a small Elvish glyph for the word "blood" etched within them. These rubies are worth 50 gp, but few who know their origin will trade for them.
- A single assassin is a deadly foe for anyone in Deepdelver's Enclave. Two assassins could easily wipe the folk of the enclave out.
- Ruth Willowmane was a veteran of the Thousand Spear War, and a sheriff of the village of Whitesparrow in years past.
- The Children of the Red Rose work in pairs—one master assassin and one apprentice. Gloom was Rain's apprentice centuries ago, and he took on Ghost when Gloom left the order.

Adventure Hooks

This adventure works best if one or more of the characters have a connection to Ruth Willowmane or Adren Goldbrook. If the players have previously gone through the adventure "Gloom" from *Sly Flourish's Fantastic Adventures*, the results of that adventure might feed into this one. For example, Ruth Willowmane might be replaced with one of the player characters from that adventure (now retired and an NPC), who steers the assassins to the Den of Bones.

If profit primarily motivates the characters, Bailon the Beardless offers 100 gp to each character to save Ruth from the assassins.

Start

The adventure begins in Deepdelver's Enclave during a celebration of the end of the Thousand Spear War. Read or summarize the following to set the scene:

It is a somber day in Deepdelver's Enclave. Warriors and former warriors, dressed in their finest armor, stand in formation along the main thoroughfare with spears pointed high. Behind them, Bailon the Beardless describes the battles of the Thousand Spear War, in which dwarves, humans, and elves fought back an army of goblins and hobgoblins threatening the lands of peaceful folk.

A handful of the residents of the enclave stand and are remembered for their part in the war, including Ruth Willowmane. The former veteran reluctantly stands next to her comrade-in-arms and longtime friend Adren Goldbrook. As Bailon finishes speaking, the explorers of the enclave cheer, their voices echoing off the ceiling of the cavern. Then everyone makes their way toward the Lucky Lute, to toast comrades in attendance and those who have been lost.

Even as the crowd moves toward the tavern, six human **thugs** (Mad Grace, Thormon, Shy Richard, Lyvette the Hammer, Yurtin Bedrash, and Chiptooth) draw weapons and begin randomly attacking residents of the enclave. Any character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 14 or higher sees the threat of the attack before it begins, and can call out a warning.

During the attack, the thugs shout out that Ruth Willowmane is to blame for the violence that's come to the enclave, which is revenge for the death of someone named Gloom. "Death is coming for Ruth Willowmane! The Children of the Red Rose do not forget!"

If captured alive, the thugs do not hide their intent. They state that two assassins from the Children of the Red Rose are on their way, and will be at Deepdelver's Enclave in less than two days. These assassins will kill Ruth Willowmane and anyone else who protects her. The thugs do not beg for their lives.

The folk of Deepdelver's Enclave are rightfully worried about the two assassins, but most of them announce that they will stand by Ruth even if they die defending her. Ruth, however, has other plans. She will not stay in Deepdelver's Enclave if it means putting her friends at risk. Instead, she plans to face the assassins alone in the Den of Bones.

ADREN'S PLEA

The next day, Adren Goldbrook tells the characters that Ruth has fled the enclave. She left word that she has gone to the Den of Bones, knowing that the assassins will hear of her flight and pursue her there. When the time comes, she means to defeat the assassins alone or die trying. She believes the Den of Bones to be a fitting location for her end, and one whose hazards might aid her when facing the assassins.

Adren begs the characters to save his friend and comrade. He knows the location of the Den of Bones and its two entrances—one that passes through the

burial crypt of a warrior tribe lost centuries ago; the other of which passes through a monstrous warren. If the characters want to get to the Den of Bones ahead of the assassins, they must leave quickly.

For a faster start to the adventure, you can skip the thug attack. Simply begin with Adren Goldbrook coming to the characters after Ruth has already left the enclave, having received word that two assassins are coming for her and not wanting to put her friends in danger.

TREASURE

As the characters get ready to depart, they are visited by Jayce Goldsmile, who cares for Ruth as much as anyone in the enclave. Jayce gives the characters a pristine figurine of an elf bard forged from the black metal of the Grendleroot. She has no idea who created it, or how. This figurine is a very rare magic item whose possessor can use an action to cast the *dominate monster* spell (DC 15). Once the spell is cast, the stone's magic fades.

Traveling to the Den of Bones

It takes a day to travel through the caverns and tunnels of Blackclaw Mountain to reach the Den of Bones. If time allows, you can add an encounter during this journey by using the locations and encounter descriptions in appendix B. Otherwise, you or the players can describe the journey and the characters' arrival.

Den of Bones Defenses

It should be clear to the characters and the players alike that the two assassins are deadly threats if faced in direct combat. The characters have roughly two hours to prepare for the assassins' arrival. During this time, they will want to explore the Den of Bones, gather resources, and put together a plan to deal with the threat.

Among the resources that might help the characters in this fight are Jayce's figurine, the ring in area 6, and the worm poison in area 7. Potential allies of the party include the ghost in area 1, the troll in area 2, and Ruth Willowmane in area 7. You might also want to place other monsters in the Den of Bones that the characters can charm or manipulate to help their cause.

If the players are having trouble sorting through all these possibilities, feel free to offer suggestions based on things their characters might recognize, even if the players do not.

Whenever a monster fights on the characters' side, give the players a copy of that monster's stat block so one of them can run the monster. If a player's character dies, that player might want to take over all the monsters joining in on the fight against the assassins.

As the players come up with strategies to face the assassins, remind them of the potential benefits presented by the environment, and steer them toward ideas with a higher chance of success. The assassins are cocky, believing that nothing can stand against their skills. They expect Ruth Willowmane to be an easy mark, and thus will not plan to take advantage of the environment or look for allies as the characters will.

The Arrival of the Assassins

Two hours after the characters arrive at the Den of Bones, the Children of the Red Rose appear. This gives the characters enough time to prepare and to take a short rest.

The two **assassins** are traveling with two **spies** (Relva and Nix) and eight **thugs** (Tintin, Asha Redknife, Podrick, Lyese, Karak the Devil, Sylva, the Thresher, and Jill Threeface). See "Notable NPCs" for Rain and Ghost's statistics.

The spies take the lead, using Dexterity (Stealth) checks to stay concealed while they use Wisdom (Nature) checks to track Ruth Willowmane. The thugs follow openly, and so might be the first part of the group the characters see. The assassins make Dexterity (Stealth) checks to hide as they follow behind. As soon as they spot the tracks of multiple humanoids, the assassins split their group into two raiding parties, with one spy, four thugs, and one assassin per group. The assassins consider the spies and thugs expendable, and allow those raiders to clear away any initial hazards.

As the raiders make their way through the Den of Bones, any hazards or monsters the characters left in place are likely to kill off the front-rank members of the assassins' party. You can describe this rather than play it out mechanically, reinforcing how the plans and earlier actions of the characters are responsible for thinning the assassins' ranks.

Given the dynamic nature of the environment, you will need to decide how the assassins and their raiders act. Play the assassins smart, but not so smart that the characters have no chance at success. Bad luck and poor choices can affect the assassins just as easily as it can affect the characters. It isn't your job to run the

assassins as effectively as possible, but instead to run them as a dangerous but surmountable threat. Use them as a vehicle to create a suspenseful story, not as an easy way to kill the whole party.

Pacing the Adventure

This adventure is broken into two parts—the exploration of the Den of Bones and the confrontation with the assassins. The arrival of the assassins is your best tool for changing the pace and timing of the adventure.

The confrontation with the assassins can take sixty to ninety minutes, leaving the rest of the session for the exploration of the Den of Bones. As the characters explore, make sure it's clear to the players that they should be preparing for the arrival of the assassins. If they stray from this goal, be prepared to steer them back again.

If the characters take a long time to explore the Den of Bones, consider removing the combat encounters with the bulette or the ottyugh. The characters can still see these monsters and potentially use them in the confrontation with the assassins, but they don't necessarily need to face the creatures themselves.

If things are going too quickly, you can add additional monsters to the Den of Bones. For example, you might expand the dragon skeleton encounter in area 6 by adding in additional creatures from one of the encounter descriptions in appendix B.

If things are going too slowly, you can speed up the confrontation with the assassins by removing or killing off some of the thugs and scouts as the raiders make their way to the Den of Bones. This leaves a smaller raiding force for the characters to thin out before taking on the assassins in the final encounter.

The Den of Bones

The Den of Bones is a huge natural cavern complex where creatures come to die. The ground of the central cavern is littered with the bones of dead beasts and monsters, as well as the bones of humanoids drawn to the site's otherworldly call in their dying days, or who pursued monsters here and were killed for their trouble.

The ceiling of the cavern is 100 feet high and covered in huge stalactites. The cavern is filled with dim light shed by hundreds of **will-o'-wisps** floating slowly around the ceiling, drawn by the energy of death that suffuses this place.

Den of Bones



1 Square = 10 ft.

The smaller tunnels leading to the main cavern are 10 feet high and are not illuminated.

1. CAVES OF REMEMBRANCE

Area Aspects. Ancient cave paintings of monstrous battles, urns of fallen heroes, monstrous bones

Primitive cave paintings depicting battles against twisted monstrosities decorate the walls of this rough tunnel. Large urns stand against one wall, each marked with the image of a monster. In a large alcove, weathered bones have been pieced together to create the twisted form of a nightmarish creature, set up as some sort of shrine.

Primitive warriors painted these cavern walls centuries ago, setting this area up as a resting place for the cremated remains of their greatest heroes, and as a shrine to mythological monsters built from the bones of real creatures.

CREATURES

Rogah the Gray Owl, the **ghost** of one of the warriors interred here, continues to protect this shrine. Rogah speaks only the tongue of her people, a language long dead, but she can sense the thoughts and motives of those who approach her and can communicate by manipulating the drawings on the walls. Characters without access to a *comprehend languages* spell or similar magic can communicate with Rogah either with drawings or pantomime.

Rogah deals with deception and aggression harshly. She respects melee combatants and despises spellcasters. On seeing the strength and resolve in Ruth Willowmane, Rogah let the veteran pass through the hall safely. If attacked, she uses her Horrifying Visage and attempts to possess one of the stronger warriors in the party before attacking any arcane spellcasters.

Rogah can also animate the monstrous bones into **minotaur skeletons** that defend her. She can create one minotaur skeleton, plus one additional minotaur skeleton for each character in the party above four.

TREASURE

A hidden compartment behind the monstrous skeleton is easily seen if Rogah animated the bones, but needs a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot otherwise. It holds a magic spear called Gale, a rare magic item that requires attunement. The tip of this +1 *spear* is made from a shard of the

Grendleroot and decorated with ancient glyphs. A creature attuned to the spear can use an action while holding it to cast the *gust of wind* spell. This property can't be used again until the next dawn.

Rogah might reward one of the characters with the spear if they impress her enough.

2. BURROWS

Area Aspects. Network of carved stone tunnels, monstrous hatchery, dying troll with burst stomach

A vast network of narrow corridors weaves through the rock of the mountain, leading into a large cavern filled with a luminescent green light. Piles of large cracked eggs spread along the walls of the cavern, with a larger mound of eggs at the center of the area. Atop the mound lies the eviscerated body of a troll, its belly burst open.

This cavern is the central hatchery for a pack of ankhegs that use the troll as a continuous source of food. When the characters arrive, the troll's head turns toward them.

CREATURES

Threk the **troll** has seen better days. Incapacitated and kept in a permanent state of continual regeneration, the troll has become a food source for the residents of this cavern, which feed off his festering, regenerating body. Immature ankhegs (treat as three **swarms of insects**) crawl over and inside the troll, while three **ankhegs** guard the eggs piled around the cavern. The adult ankhegs attack on sight.

Threk is in no state to defend himself, and desires only death. It is possible to rid the troll of its immature ankheg infestation with *lesser restoration* or any other magic that cures disease, for which Threk is grateful. The troll has no interest in becoming a longtime ally of civilized humanoids, but it can be convinced to lend its aid in the battle against the assassins.

The path through the burrow opens up to the west side of the tar pit at area 4.

3. OVERLOOK OF THE FORSAKEN

Area Aspects. High overlook above the Den of Bones, mummified corpses of twisted humanoids, idol to tentacled god

This cliff is one of the two entrances into the Den of Bones. It overlooks areas 4 and 5, and offers a view where the cavern floor ramps up into areas 6 and 7.



A twenty-foot-high cliff overlooks a cavern hundreds of feet in diameter, festooned with the bones of countless creatures. Lights dance along the cavern's ceiling, slowly spinning, but their glow somehow only adds to the gloom here.

At the cliff's edge, dozens of misshapen mummified corpses kneel in prayer, surrounding an obelisk topped by the head of a tentacled abomination. Below you, a large pool of black tar filled with old bones opens up to the west. To the east lies a pit filled with the bones of thousands of dead creatures—and the skull and clawing hand of a huge humanoid. A skeletal dragon and the ribcage of some even larger creature jut up from the ground farther back in the cavern, while three black spires rise up like claws from a stone hill against the cavern's far wall.

A path to the east leads down to the cavern floor, or characters using ropes can lower themselves from the overlook without difficulty. Descending without a rope requires a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check. On a failure, a character falls and takes 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage.

MUMMIFIED CORPSES

The misshapen, mummified corpses turn to dust if touched. Identifying these monstrous humanoids is impossible, but a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check suggests that they are thousands of years old.

OBELISK

The obelisk and the statue atop it represent no known deity. Any creature that touches the obelisk receives twisted visions of a spherical cyclopean entity of tentacles and mandibles, dwelling beyond the edges of the cosmos. (This is the image of the Black Star, an elder evil floating in the Astral Plane. See chapter 2 and appendix C.) The creature that touches the obelisk must then succeed on a DC 16 Charisma saving throw or take 10 (3d6) psychic damage and suffer a random form of short-term madness.

CREATURES

Hundreds of undead **will-o'-wisps** illuminate the Den of Bones from above, drawn by the deaths of the creatures that have fallen here. If anyone tries to attack the mass of will-o'-wisps, four of the creatures break off from the rest and return the attack. Any area-effect

damage that impacts the ceiling might cause as many as twelve wisps to break away and attack.

Two **gricks** lurk among the stalactites, hanging 60 feet above the path where it leads down to the east. A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the recently well-gnawed bones of an explorer who attempted to walk down that way. The gricks can be avoided with stealth or by climbing down the cliff, leaving them to attack the assassins and their retinue.

4. TAR PIT

Area Aspects. Pit of tar and animal remains, huge bones, bubbling geysers

The smell of rot and sulfur rises from the thick, bubbling tar that fills this large pit. The bones of huge creatures jut up above the oily surface. On occasion, a geyser of hot tar erupts from the pit, spraying into the air.

For thousands of years, dying creatures have fallen into this natural tar pit, creating a horrid mix of tar, charred remains, and slowly decaying fat.

TAR PIT

The 20-foot-deep tar pit is difficult terrain. Any creature that enters the pit for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 21 (6d6) fire damage and become restrained. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage and isn't restrained. At the start of each of its turns, a creature restrained in the pit takes 21 (6d6) fire damage. A restrained creature can make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw at the end of each of its turns to escape the pit, ending the restrained condition on a success. If any creature outside the pit tries to help the restrained creature, it has advantage on the save.

Each round that the characters are near the tar pit, roll a d6. On a 1, a geyser of hot tar bursts up from the pit, spraying a random creature within 20 feet of the pit. That creature must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

CREATURE

A mutated otyugh thrives in the environment of this tar pit, sating itself on charred offal and melted fat. Inky black in color, it uses its tentacles to investigate any disturbances on or around the surface of the pit, attacking anything it believes it can eat. If it finds

something particularly tasty, the otyugh claws its way out of the pit to seek it. The otyugh retreats down to the bottom of the pit if reduced to half its hit points or fewer.

This creature uses the regular **otyugh** stat block with these changes:

- It has tremorsense out to a range of 60 feet.
- It has immunity to fire damage.

5. BONE PIT

Area Aspects. Pit of bones, titanic skeleton reaching up, swirling cloud of bone dust

A gargantuan skull and skeletal hand push up above the surface of a sixty-foot diameter pit filled with the bones of monsters and humanoids alike. A cloud of dust hangs above the pit, swirling slowly.

The bones of hundreds of dead creatures fill this deep pit, the oldest of them ground to dust that floats on the air here.

TITAN SKELETON

A character who succeeds on a DC 16 Intelligence (History) check recognizes that the skeleton belonged to a rune titan—one of the earliest peoples to rule Blackclaw Mountain (see chapter 2). This titan likely came to die in this cavern many thousands of years ago.

CREATURE

The bone pit is the den of a **bulette** that rises up and attacks in response to any movement around the pit. The bulette uses its burrowing speed to move through the bones to surprise and attack foes. If characters quickly flee this area, the bulette does not pursue.

TREASURE

A character who succeeds on a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a jeweled humanoid skull carved with strange glyphs set among the bones. The skull is a rare magic item whose possessor can use an action to cast the *stoneskin* spell. When they do so, their skin appears to be covered in shining gemstones for the duration of the spell. Once the spell is cast, the skull's magic fades.

6. GREAT WYRM

Area Aspects. Huge draconic skeleton, large black spire impaling the creature, golden ring on a skeletal claw

A thirty-foot spire of black metal thrusts up from the ground to pierce the skull of an enormous dragon, its crumbling skeleton sprawled out behind it, half buried in mud and rock. One massive claw is buried in the rock, as though the creature tried to crawl through the stone. A large golden ring is set upon that claw, carved with strange symbols.

This skeleton is the remains of a silver dragon named Yovanrethax the Silver Star, who came here to die two hundred years ago. She was impaled by a Grendleroot spire at the moment of her death, as though the spire sought out the release of the last of her life energy.

A character who succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check recognizes the bones as belonging to a silver dragon. With a successful DC 16 Intelligence (History) check, a character recalls tales of the Silver

Star, an ancient silver dragon who disappeared two centuries ago.

TREASURE

The ring on the dragon's claw possesses a small piece of the spirit of Yovanrethax. It takes a successful DC 16 Strength (Athletics) check to break the claw of the skeleton, freeing the ring. When a creature touches the ring, it shrinks down to a size appropriate for that creature.

A character who wears the ring can hear the draconic whispers of Yovanrethax in the back of their mind, lamenting a too-long life and a painful death. The ring is a rare magic item whose wearer can use an action to cast the *cone of cold* spell. Once the spell is cast, the ring's magic fades.

7. THE BLACK CLAW

Area Aspects. Large black spires thrust up out of a rocky hill, psychic hum calling to doomed creatures, body of a stony purple worm, pool of poisonous green liquid

Three black spires have pierced up through the top of this stone hill, like claws reaching out of the ground below. The hill is surrounded by a smoothly segmented stone barrier. Green liquid pools on the ground at the rear of the hill.

The segmented barrier is an ancient purple worm curled around the stone hill, and which appears as stone itself. Three spires of the Grendleroot jut up from the hill, and are the source of the strange call that brings dying creatures to the Den of Bones.

GRENDLEROOT SPIRES

A character who succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check feels a harmonic hum coming off the three spires. The hum affects creatures drawing close to death, dismissing all doubt and pain, and filling them with restful ease. The longer such creatures stay in the Den of Bones, the more powerful the desire to rest and die here.

RUTH WILLOWMANE

Ruth Willowmane sits atop the stone hill, awaiting the assassins. When the characters appear, Ruth is initially angry that they have put themselves in danger for her. But when she comes to understand that their help is freely given, she accepts it. If the players are not already thinking about how to use the features of the



RUTH WILLOWMANE

RYAN SYME

surrounding caverns as a defense against the assassins, Ruth can offer her thoughts on that subject.

Ruth Willowmane is a lawful good female human **veteran**. You can run her as an NPC, or offer her stat block to one of the players to run.

CREATURE

The **purple worm** isn't dead yet, but has been lingering near death for centuries. It hasn't moved in so long that its skin has taken on a stony appearance. The worm does not move or attack unless provoked. If disturbed, it shifts so that its stony skin begins to crack, revealing the worm's true nature. If attacked, the worm attempts to sting its assailants with its tail, then return to its original position.

POISON POOL

Poison periodically drips from the stinger of the worm, creating a small, shallow pool behind the hill over time. A character can harvest poison from the pool with a DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check, or an Intelligence check using a poisoner's kit. With a successful check, the character harvests a single dose of purple worm poison. On a failed check, the character is exposed to the poison and must make a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw, taking 42 (12d6)

poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Only one dose of poison can be collected from the pool.

If successfully harvested, the poison can be applied to an edged weapon. When this weapon hits a target, the target must make a DC 19 Constitution saving throw, taking 42 (12d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The poison is expended once it is successfully used.

Concluding the Adventure

The adventure concludes either when the two assassins are killed and Ruth Willowmane is saved, or if the assassins kill Ruth. If Ruth is slain, Rain and Ghost do not bother to kill the characters as they depart the Den of Bones.

If any of the thugs and scouts are still alive when the assassins are killed, they surrender and can be returned to Deepdelver's Enclave to face justice.

If she survives, Ruth Willowmane thanks the characters and returns with them to Deepdelver's Enclave. There, she petitions for the thugs and scouts to be sentenced to labor for their crimes rather than being put to the sword, as she wants no further blood on her hands. Ruth acknowledges her debt to the characters, and becomes a lifelong friend.

CHAPTER 12

SEED OF THE BLACK CATHEDRAL

Betrayal and murder have led villainous adventurer Alvana Heverax to the lost chambers of the Caretakers. She seeks the artifact known as the Seed of the Grendleroot—which will grant her control of the alien entity.

Deep in the heart of Blackclaw Mountain lies the Black Cathedral—the central chambers that hold the Grendleroot. Built by the otherworldly Caretakers before the core of the mountain crashed to the world, the Black Cathedral houses an artifact called the *Seed of the Grendleroot*, said to allow the Grendleroot to be communicated with or controlled.

After betraying a band of fellow explorers, the once-beloved adventurer Alvana Heverax travels to the Black Cathedral and attempts to acquire the *Seed of the Grendleroot*. If she should succeed, it might mean the destruction of the mountain—and the world around it.

“Seed of the Black Cathedral” is a four-hour adventure for 5th-level characters.

Adventure Summary

The adventure begins when the sole surviving member of the White Rabbit adventuring company, Cerin Grayhat, returns to Deepdelver’s Enclave pursued by suits of animated armor. After his rescue, Cerin explains that the leader of the White Rabbits, a mage named Alvana Heverax, had her shield guardian murder the other members of the explorers’ band once they found the entrance to the legendary Black Cathedral. This site is rumored to be the resting place of the *Seed of the Grendleroot*, an artifact said to let

mortals communicate with the Grendleroot, and perhaps even control it.

The characters travel to the Black Cathedral through one of two potential entrances, eventually entering the vast complex of the Caretakers. There, they witness the last remnants of the Caretakers’ legacy and memories before facing off against Alvana. Preventing the mage from gaining control of the *Seed of the Grendleroot* allows the characters to decide the artifact’s fate. Then, deep in the heart of the Black Cathedral, they might even come eye-to-eye with the Grendleroot itself.

Monsters and NPCs. Animated armor (4), black pudding, grimlocks (6), grimlock ettin, mage, shield guardian

Notable NPCs

The following NPCs have a part to play in the adventure.

ALVANA HEVERAX

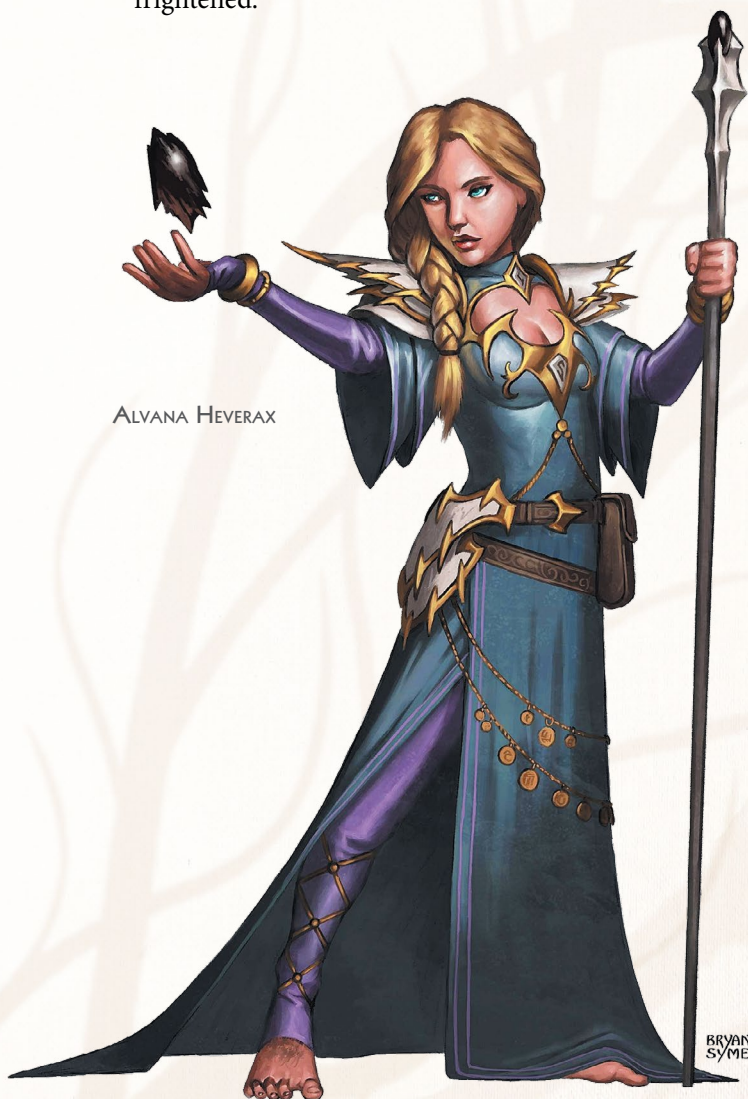
A neutral evil female lightfoot halfling explorer and mage, Alvana has spent much of her life studying the Grendleroot and seeking its power. She is the direct descendant of Soram of the Outside, one of the nine archmages of the Magocracy of the Black Star (see chapter 2), and has recovered some of his works. In Soram’s texts, Alvana discovered the existence of the

Seed of the Grendleroot, and soon yearned to control it. Laboriously studying Soram's lore eventually led her to discover the location of the Black Cathedral, which not even the archmages of the Black Star had managed to do.

On a previous expedition within Shadowreach, Alvana discovered and learned to control one of Soram's long-dormant shield guardians. When the White Rabbit Company found the Black Temple after months of searching, she used the construct to murder her fellow explorers, wanting to ensure that the temple's location stayed a secret known only to her.

Alvana is a charismatic explorer, but she has no real interest in other people—only in what they can do for her. She uses the **mage** stat block with these changes:

- Her base walking speed is 25 feet.
- When she rolls a 1 on the d20 for an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, she can reroll the die and must use the new roll.
- She has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.



ALVANA HEVERAX

- She can move through the space of any creature that is of a size larger than hers.
- She speaks Common, Draconic, Halfling, and Infernal.

CERIN GRAYHAT

A chaotic good male rock gnome **scout**, Cerin belonged to the White Rabbits, an accomplished band of explorers operating out of Deepdelver's Enclave. Cerin and Alvana were both members of the group when their previous leader, Urburn the Tankard, fell into a rift three years previous. Now Cerin suspects that Alvana likely killed Urburn to take over the group, and to steer them toward uncovering the Black Cathedral and the *Seed of the Grendleroot*.

Cerin is an energetic explorer of the mountain, who enjoys the freedom of living in Deepdelver's Enclave. He fears what he saw at the Black Cathedral, and chooses not to join the characters on their journey.

Secrets and Clues

The following secrets and clues can be revealed in the adventure as you determine:

- Alvana took over the White Rabbits when their previous leader, Urburn the Tankard, fell into a rift. (In truth, Alvana had her shield guardian throw Urburn down the rift so she could take over the adventuring band.)
- Alvana is a direct descendant of Soram of the Outside, one of the nine archmages of the Magocracy of the Black Star who once ruled over the city of Shadowreach.
- Alvana spent decades cross-referencing newer maps of the caverns of the mountain with Soram's ancient texts.
- Alvana's research showed her the location of the long-lost Black Cathedral, said to house the Grendleroot and the artifact that can control it.
- The Grendleroot is not from the world. It crashed here millions of years ago, nearly killing every living thing on the planet.
- The Caretakers are a mysterious group of humanoid plane travelers who communicate telepathically. They captured the Grendleroot deep in the Astral Plane and studied it within the structure known now as the Black Cathedral, before their vessel crashed to the world.
- Over millennia, quakes in Blackclaw Mountain have damaged the cell holding the Grendleroot. Two hundred years ago, it sent forth black spires all

throughout the mountain. Many fear it will do so again.

- The Black Cathedral was discovered and named long ago by early explorers of the mountain. Though its legend persisted, its location was lost. Not even the archmages of the Black Star were able to locate it.
- Some believe the Black Cathedral to be the greatest find in the mountain. Others believe it should stay lost forever.

Adventure Hooks

To customize this adventure, you might replace Alvana with any important NPC the characters have known, met, or heard of. This could be someone known to be a villain, or simply a character they might have suspicions about. It's also possible that one or more of the characters knew the members of the White Rabbit adventuring company, and now seek justice for their deaths.

If the characters are seeking to learn more of the Grendleroot, entering the Black Cathedral is the best possible chance to see it up close and get a better understanding of what it is. If the characters are more materially motivated, Bailon the Beardless can offer them 100 gp each to seek out the Black Cathedral, or the party's choice of a valuable relic from his collection.

Start

The adventure begins at a wedding celebration in Deepdelver's Enclave. Read or summarize the following to set the scene:

Wedding bells sound, music plays, and the two grooms, Relph and Idin, are carried forth atop the shoulders of cheering residents of the enclave. Ardulvin the apothecary, the facilitator for the event, smiles at the two newlyweds before his eyes focus on something in the distance, and his smile turns into a frown. Following his gaze, you see a bloodied and bedraggled gnome stumbling in through the distant gate.

"She killed everyone," the gnome says as he draws closer. "She was my friend and she killed everyone."

The characters and the other folk of the enclave recognize the gnome as Cerin Grayhat of the White Rabbit adventuring company. Cerin collapses as the crowd gathers around him and Ardulvin begins casting healing magic. Then suddenly, four suits of

animated armor appear, having pursued Cerin into the enclave, their blades covered in blood. The people of Deepdelver's Enclave scramble for weapons, but the characters are in the best position to save the gnome from the rampaging constructs.

When the suits of animated armor are defeated, Cerin explains that the leader of his band of explorers, Alvana Heverax, murdered the rest of their party after she discovered the entrance to the legendary Black Cathedral—the supposed resting place of the Grendleroot. Alvana believes that the Black Cathedral houses the *Seed of the Grendleroot*—an artifact that she hopes to use to control the Grendleroot. Wishing to keep the discovery to herself, she had her shield guardian murder the rest of the group. Cerin alone escaped to make his way back to the enclave, but Alvana sent a pack of animated armor after him. Those constructs, long used by the White Rabbits as guards on their expeditions, tracked him down and caught up to him just before his arrival.

The enclave is in shock at the news of Alvana's betrayal. Though known as a charismatic and ambitious adventurer, she has hidden her evil nature well. There can be no doubt of the truth of Cerin's story, however, as the suits of animated armor clearly show Alvana's sigil.

Bailon the Beardless and the folk of the enclave look to the characters to hunt down Alvana Heverax, and to stop her before she claims the *Seed of the Grendleroot*. Cerin Grayhat maps out the path to the Black Cathedral and identifies two possible entrances: a cave occupied by strange gray-skinned humanoids, and a crack in the ceiling of the site's central chamber.

Traveling to the Black Cathedral

Reaching the Black Cathedral takes seven days, and the journey is not an easy one. The site lies at the deepest point of the mountain's many passageways. Over the seven days, the characters must traverse deep gorges, climb down dangerous shafts, and scale steep cliffs pierced through with the spires of the Grendleroot.

During the journey, you can add one or more encounters by using the locations and encounter descriptions in appendix B. For a shorter version of the adventure, you or the players can describe the challenging journey through the mountain.

Pacing the Adventure

How you choose to focus on the end goal is your best tool for adjusting the length of this adventure. If you are running a faster-paced version of the adventure, things can end relatively quickly if the characters head straight down to the seed chamber in area 8. You can also increase the urgency by reminding the players that Alvana acquiring the seed could be catastrophic. The characters might feel the ground shake beneath them or hear the cracking of her lightning bolts from below to reinforce the primary goal of moving quickly. You can also seal off the passages leading to areas 3, 4, 6, and 7 to focus on the endgame.

For a slower-paced version of the adventure, shift the spotlight toward the side chambers, mentioning the strange things the characters see or the alien voices that guide them to explore. Characters with a background in divine or arcane magic might feel the power of the *staff of thunder and lightning* in area 4 while still in area 1. They might hear the whispers of Vim in area 7 while in area 5. They might have heard of the vast multiverse map in area 6, or could remember that Jayce Goldsmile, Ayaan of Veyr, or one of the other NPCs in Deepdelver's Enclave wants to learn more of the map and recover any artifacts tied to it.

It's also possible that the lift in area 5 can't be activated after Alvana used and sabotaged it. Vim might be able to reactivate it if the characters recover the staff in area 4, the map sphere in area 6, or both, ensuring that these relics do not end up in villainous hands. These kinds of dynamic quests can be used to change the pace by drawing the characters into areas they might otherwise skip.

The Black Cathedral

The characters can enter the Black Cathedral from one of two points. The White Rabbits dug a deep shaft that broke through the ceiling above the center of area 1. When Alvana realized she had found her goal, she had her shield guardian throw her companions down the shaft to their deaths, sending a squad of animated armor after Cerin Grayhat when he fled. She then used a *fly* spell to descend into the chamber. Her shield guardian leaped down after her, smashing into the ground and using its regeneration to rebuild itself—though with only partial success.

Alvana has been exploring and studying the Black Cathedral since Cerin fled. She has only just learned

enough to begin to break down the protections surrounding the *Seed of the Grendleroot* in area 8.

A set of natural caverns inhabited by a tribe of grimlocks and their two-headed ettin chieftain, named Grinn and Gunn, also leads into the central chamber of the Black Cathedral. The ettin and the grimlocks worship the Caretakers as gods, and do not allow anyone to enter the site. The characters must trick, sneak, or fight their way past the ettin and the grimlocks to do so.

The Black Cathedral is built of magically constructed and shaped black stone, looking almost organic in its design. Unless otherwise described, the Black Cathedral is unlit and has 20-foot-high ceilings in its hallways, and 30-foot-high ceilings in its larger chambers.

1. THE BLACK CATHEDRAL

Area Aspects. Vaulted hall, organic-looking black stone, statues of the Caretakers

This vast hall opens up one hundred feet below its vaulted ceiling. Six statues, three on each side of the hall, stand seventy feet high and depict strange humanoid beings. The walls are shaped from black stone, appearing almost organic, and making a sharp contrast to the rough stone of the surrounding mountain. Black spires are thrust up from the stone floor in several areas.

This is the central hall of the Black Cathedral. Though the Caretakers worshiped no gods, the mortals who first saw this hall gave it that name due to its vaulted structure and otherworldly style.

The statues depict the Caretakers—tall, thin humanoid beings with featureless faces and four long fingers on each hand.

If they enter through the hole in the ceiling, the characters must descend 100 feet to the center of the floor. Otherwise, they can enter by way of area 2 through a large crack in the west wall.

Raised platforms reached by oversized stairs stand along the east and west walls. Large trapezoidal doorways lead east and south. The sphere in the center of area 3 can be seen from this area.

If they come through the ceiling, the characters recognize that the break in the west wall leads to the entrance they did not follow.

The doorway in the southeast corner of the room leads to a steep staircase descending to area 5.



CREATURE

A **black pudding** lurks underneath the hole in the center of the ceiling, appearing as a black, oily pool on which a number of bones and scraps of leather float. (These are the remains of the White Rabbit adventurers, whose bodies have been consumed by the ooze.) The ooze's long proximity to the Grendleroot has mutated it, so that when it attacks, it rises up and appears almost humanoid in its movement. Additionally, it has this feature:

- The black pudding can cast the *command* spell (DC 13) as a bonus action, with the target forced to instinctively grovel so that the black pudding might more easily devour it. This feature cannot be used again until the black pudding finishes a short rest.

If time is running short or the characters have already faced enough battles, you can skip this encounter.

TREASURE

The black pudding holds a cache of gold and jewelry that it hasn't yet dissolved—73 gp worth of coins, gems, and jewelry, including a fine cloak pin with the insignia of the White Rabbit adventuring company.

2. GRIMLOCK LAIR

Area Aspects. Decrepit sleeping furs, rough hut, discarded bones, cracked stone face

The smell of rotting meat permeates this rough-walled natural cavern, which opens up to tunnels to the north and east. Torn animal furs cover part of the floor, while discarded bones—both animal and humanoid—are scattered to the corners of the cave. A roughly built hut of bone and leather stands on the north side of the cavern. A huge stone face juts out from the rock of the south wall, cracked in half where a cluster of Grendleroot spires have pierced it.

Any inspection of the stone face confirms that it is not, in fact, a sculpture or carving. A character who succeeds on a DC 16 Intelligence (History) check recognizes that this is the head of a rune titan, one of the long-vanished ancient rulers of Blackclaw Mountain, embedded into the cavern wall and slain when its head was split apart by the Grendleroot. (See chapter 2 for more information on the rune titans.)

CREATURES

Six **grimlocks** and a grimlock ettin named Grinn and Gunn reside in this cavern, with the ettin ruling from the hut to the north. (See the “Grimlocks in Blackclaw Mountain” sidebar in chapter 8, “Chuul,” for more information on grimlock variants.) They all worship the Caretakers as gods, and defend what until recently has been the only entrance to the Black Cathedral.

Grinn and Gunn use the **ettin** stat block with these changes:

- They are immune to the blinded condition.
- They have blindsight out to a range of 30 feet, or to a range of 10 feet while deafened, but are blind beyond this range.
- They can't use their blindsight while deafened and unable to smell.
- They have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.
- They have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in rocky terrain.

The ettin and the grimlocks do not willingly let anyone into the Black Cathedral, which they consider a holy place. However, trickery, stealth, or violence can convince them to let the characters pass.

If the characters enter this area from area 1, the grimlocks are initially astounded to see them, taking them as emissaries of the gods. Grinn and Gunn are suspicious, though, and demand that the characters prove that they are chosen. If the characters can do so (according to whatever terms you set), the grimlocks might offer tribute or service. If they can't, the grimlocks and the ettin attack.

If time is running short or the characters have already faced enough battles, you can skip this encounter.

TREASURE

A mixture of old coins, gemstones, and jewels (worth a total of 210 gp) are mixed in with the bones along the walls.

A bloodstained crown of black metal, crafted in an elven style and set with spikes pointing inward, sits on a skull above Grinn and Gunn's hut. A creature must put on this uncommon magic item to use it, taking 1d6 piercing damage from the spikes. A creature that wears the crown can cast the *hypnotic pattern* spell (DC 15). Once the spell is cast, the crown's magic fades.

3. MAUSOLEUM

Area Aspects. Central sphere floating above triangular pyramid, dozens of spheres embedded in the walls, enormous faceless statue

A large sphere hangs suspended in the air above a smooth triangular pyramid at the center of this chamber. Dozens of other spheres are embedded into the walls. A twenty-foot-high statue of a faceless creature stands, arms outstretched, on the south wall.

This chamber served as the mausoleum for the Caretakers, and is the entrance to their secret armory (area 4).

SPHERE OF MEMORIES

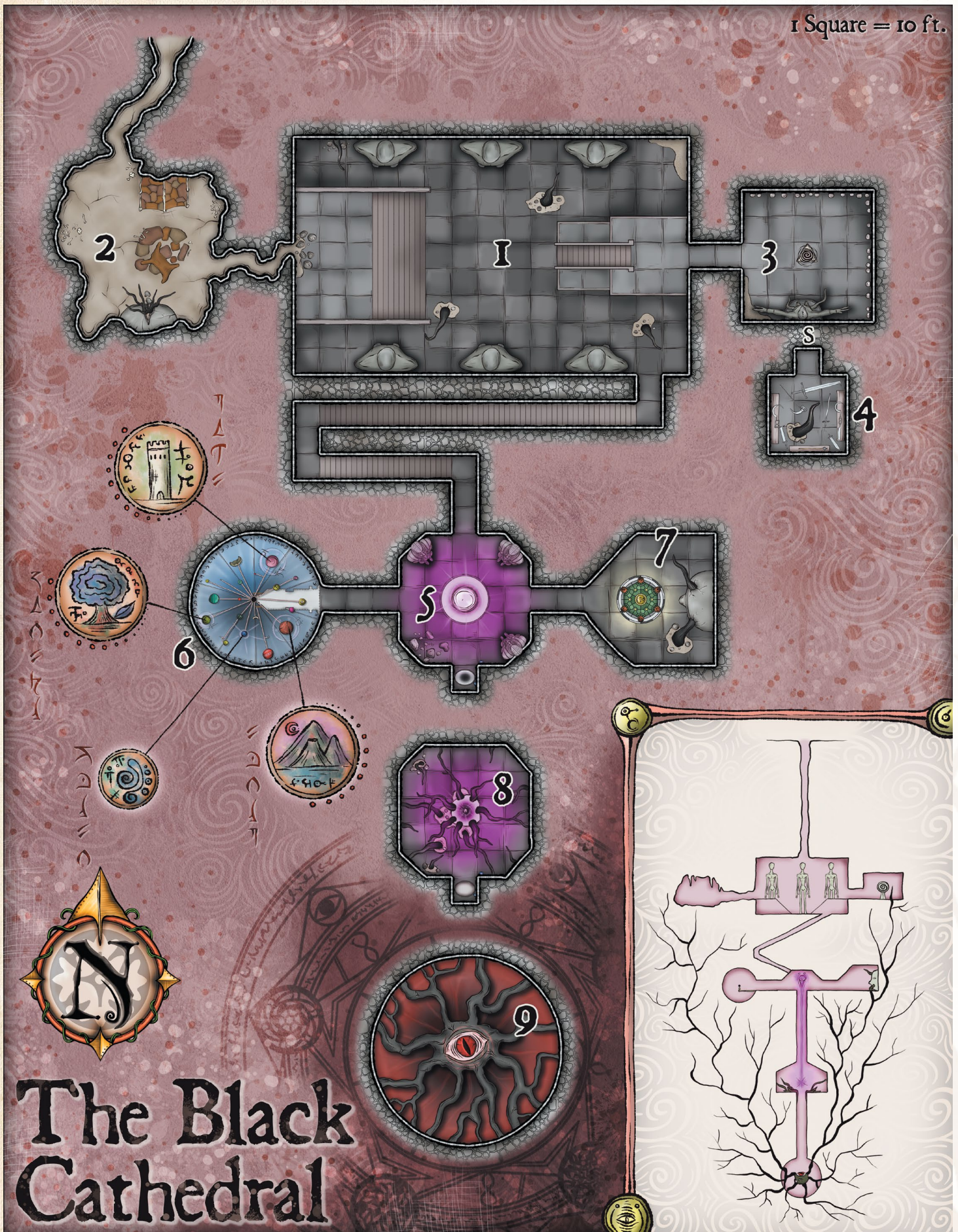
The central sphere contains the memories of the dead Caretakers, but accessing those memories is no easy feat. A creature that puts its hands on the sphere and succeeds on a DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check can connect to the memories within. On a failed check, the creature must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or take 14 (4d6) psychic damage and suffer a random form of short-term madness. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage and suffers no madness.

Characters who tap into the memories held in the sphere can learn many of the secrets and clues described earlier in the adventure. They can also learn about the history of the Grendleroot, as described in chapter 2. Characters accessing these memories might see the asteroid floating in the Astral Plane, in which the Caretakers captured and studied the Grendleroot. They might see a tear in the fabric of the Astral Plane and the asteroid crashing down to the world. They might see the planet shrouded in dust that killed nearly all life, or receive visions of the awakening of the Grendleroot two centuries past.

FACELESS STATUE

The statue on the south wall protects the secret entrance to the Caretakers' armory. A character who touches or attempts to communicate with the statue is the target of a telepathic assault that demands to know the character's intent. In particular, the statue wants to know if the character is here to free the Grendleroot or to keep it imprisoned. If the character confirms the latter truthfully, the statue crosses its arms over its chest. Then it and a section of the wall shifts to the left, opening up a secret passage to area 4.

1 Square = 10 ft.



If the character gives any impression that they want to set the Grendleroot free, the statue unleashes a psychic blast on that creature, dealing 21 (6d6) psychic damage and breaking the telepathic connection. That character can no longer communicate with the statue, although another character can attempt to do so.

The mechanisms of the secret door are extremely intricate. Without the statue's assistance, opening the door requires either a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check or a DC 20 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. A character who fails a check takes the statue's psychic attack, as above.

4. ARMORY

Area Aspects. Grendleroot spire shattering the floor, scattered weapons, lightning arcing from staff

A hallway of black stone leads into a thirty-foot-square vault. A Grendleroot spire has shattered the floor, scattering broken weapons and suits of strange armor around the room. A staff hanging on the back wall arcs with lightning, which flares out to strike the tip of the spire.

This room served as the armory of the Caretakers. Numerous weapons litter the floor, forged of black iron and sized for Medium creatures. Glaives, greatswords, greataxes, crossbows, and more all feature strange alien designs, but use the same statistics as normal weapons of their type.

ARCING STAFF

The staff on the south wall is a magic item whose power is being corrupted by the presence of the Grendleroot spire. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check can disrupt the flow of lightning long enough for a character to grab the staff off the wall. Likewise, a character who succeeds on a DC 17 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check can pluck the staff between blasts of lightning. Anyone who grabs the staff without such precautions must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 31 (9d6) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The staff stops arcing once removed from the wall.

TREASURE

The staff is a *staff of thunder and lightning*. It is the only magic item left in the vault that still functions, with all other magic having been corrupted by the negative energy of the Grendleroot.

5. CONTROL ORB

Area Aspects. Pulsing energy from floating cracked sphere, hole in the floor where beams of energy disappear, guardian statues, shaft dropping down

Large statues of armored humanoids stand in three of the four corners of this room, with the remaining corner filled with broken shards of a fourth. An alcove to the south opens up to an oval shaft dropping down into darkness. Two smooth blue gemstones are set into the walls around the alcove.

In the center of the room, a large sphere shifts and rotates with abrupt, chaotic movements and great speed. Violet beams of energy arc out from the bottom of the sphere and down a hole in the floor. A large, jagged crack cuts across the surface of the sphere.

This chamber contains part of the magical machinery that keeps the Grendleroot in check. The characters can see swirling lights shining from the hallway to the west, and a carving of a large alien face shot through with a Grendleroot spire down the hallway to the east.

SPINNING SPHERE

The sphere directs tremendous energy down through the pit below and into the *Seed of the Grendleroot* in area 8. Anyone who touches the sphere or the violet beams must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw, taking 35 (10d6) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check made to inspect the sphere reveals that it is moving to counter the movement of something below it. The sphere's chaotic shifting keeps the beams lined up with some target below the hole.

MAGICAL LIFT

Touching the blue gemstone on the wall in front of the alcove calls a translucent floating disk the same size as the shaft, which ascends 100 feet from area 8. If the disk is called, Alvana becomes aware of possible intruders and prepares herself for battle in that area. Once the disk has been called, touching the gemstone inside the alcove causes it to descend to area 8.

REPAIRING THE SPHERE

The crack in the sphere is hindering its control of the *Seed of the Grendleroot*. Three successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) checks or three castings of the *mending* cantrip can repair the crack in the sphere, greatly improving its reliability and curtailing the

spread of the Grendleroot in Blackclaw Mountain for centuries to come. If an Intelligence (Arcana) check fails, a spark arcs out from the sphere to a random creature in the room, which must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or take 21 (6d6) lightning damage.

CREATURE

Alvana's **shield guardian** stands invisible over the remains of the smashed statue, having been given a relic holding the *invisibility* spell by Alvana, along with instructions to use it if any intruders descend the stairs. The construct was badly damaged in its fall and cannot fully repair itself, giving it these changes:

- It has 90 hit points.
- Its Regeneration trait does not function.

If the characters are particularly robust, you can remove these limitations.

The shield guardian attacks if anyone discovers it or when a character approaches the lift. As it attacks, it activates the *fire shield* spell Alvana has stored within it, using the cold option.

6. MULTIVERSE MAP

Area Aspects. Narrow walkway to the center of a spherical chamber, floating black orb, projected map of the multiverse

A narrow walkway made of dull gray metal leads to the center of this fifty-foot diameter spherical chamber, where a small black orb hangs in midair. A swirling image of the entire multiverse expands out across the inner surface of the room. It moves and shifts continually, showing the Nine Hells, the bottomless Abyss, the Astral Plane, the Elemental Planes, and beyond. Studying it completely would take more than a lifetime.

This room serves as a great map of the multiverse. Caretaker sages once spent whole lifetimes studying the details of the map, but doing so required great mental fortitude. Anyone who studies the map for more than 1 hour must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or suffer a random form of short-term madness.

Any character who touches the orb and succeeds on a DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check can move and shift the map to study various parts of the multiverse. The map moves down to world-level resolution, but

whether it shows the world as it is now or at another time is difficult to determine.

TREASURE

The orb at the center of the chamber can be removed and reactivated in any area, but the projection is much less accurate if the room is not completely spherical. It takes a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check to activate the sphere each time it is used. This relic would be worth a tremendous sum to any scholar desiring the knowledge it holds.

7. CHAMBER OF VIM

Area Aspects. Large stone face shattered by Grendleroot spire, arcane circle on the floor

A huge humanoid face carved of stone dominates the far wall of this thirty-foot-square chamber. A Grendleroot spire has shot up through the floor, piercing the face's cheek and erupting up through the top of its head. An arcane circle of complex design is scribed on the floor.

This is the former resting place of Vim, the last of the Caretakers. Vim's spirit was moved into the stone face on the back wall so they could continue to monitor the Grendleroot for millions of years. However, a Grendleroot spire pierced the statue during a recent quake, causing Vim great pain.

Vim communicates telepathically, but can do so only through images and feelings. A creature sitting in the circle can attempt to create a telepathic bond with Vim. When the bond is established, the creature must succeed on a DC 14 Intelligence saving throw or take 10 (3d6) psychic damage as feedback from the bond crushes their psyche. The bond is established regardless, and visions from the Caretaker begin to flood the bonded creature's mind. You can choose what this bonding might reveal to the characters from the secrets and clues earlier in this adventure, or from the information described in area 3.

If Alvana has damaged the lift in area 5, Vim can telepathically fix it if convinced to do so. They might require that the characters retrieve and protect the map orb in area 6, the staff in area 4, or both before they help. You can use this request to tune the length of the adventure, removing these requirements for a shorter adventure or adding them for a longer one.

Vim has been trapped in the Black Cathedral for over a million years, and they have watched the Grendleroot grow during that time. They don't

understand the minds of mortals at all. They hope, however, that the characters can slow down the Grendleroot's growth. Vim has felt Alvana Heverax's intentions and sees the danger in her desire to control the Grendleroot.

If Vim trusts a bonded character and their companions to stop Alvana and contain the Grendleroot, they impart a single alien word into all the characters' minds. This control word allows any character to influence the activity of the Grendleroot using the *Seed of the Grendleroot* (see area 8).

8. CHAMBER OF THE SEED

Area Aspects. Wavering beam of energy, pulsing black stone, pit leading deeper into the mountain, Grendleroot spires tearing through the room

A wavering beam of violet energy arcs down from the ceiling to a black stone floating at the center of the chamber. The stone is the size of a human fist, and pulses when the beam strikes it. A large pit below the stone opens up to darkness below. Black Grendleroot spires have erupted from the pit to burrow into the floor and walls around it, all currently frozen in place.

This chamber holds the *Seed of the Grendleroot*, an artifact of great power. The pit descends 100 feet to the cradle of the Grendleroot (area 9). The wavering beam keeps the seed in check, but the crack in the sphere in area 5 has allowed the Grendleroot to spread outside its cradle. The Grendleroot spires that tore through this chamber long ago have since extended all throughout the mountain, thickening and splitting as they grew.

CREATURE

Alvana Heverax, a neutral evil female halfling mage has just finished breaking through the Caretakers' protections guarding the *Seed of the Grendleroot*. See "Notable NPCs" for Alvana's statistics.

If Alvana sees the lift ascend the shaft, then come down again, she prepares herself by casting *greater invisibility*. She then blasts the characters with *cone of cold* when the lift first appears, hitting as many of them as she can.

If the party has more than four characters to face Alvana, she has animated one suit of armor for each additional character before the fight starts, and has bound them to the same amulet that controls her shield guardian. Each suit of **animated armor** has this additional trait:

- **Bound.** The animated armor is magically bound to an amulet. As long as the animated armor and its amulet are on the same plane, the amulet's wearer can telepathically call the armor to travel to it, and the armor knows the distance and direction to the amulet. If the animated armor is within 60 feet of the amulet's wearer, half of any damage the wearer takes (rounded up) is transferred to the armor.

Alvana places these constructs near the lift, so as to keep them between her and her adversaries. She uses their Bound trait to transfer half of any damage she takes to an animated armor of her choice. You can also adjust Alvana's hit points to account for more characters, increasing them to 72 if the party has six characters or more.

SEED OF THE GRENDLEROOT

The *Seed of the Grendleroot* is the black stone floating above the pit and within the beam arcing down from area 5. A creature pulling the seed from the beam must succeed on a DC 16 Strength (Athletics), Dexterity (Sleight of Hand), or Intelligence (Arcana) check. On a failure, the creature takes 21 (6d6) lightning damage as the seed is pulled free.

The *Seed of the Grendleroot* is an artifact with the potential to control the Grendleroot. Its beneficial and detrimental properties are left to you to determine, in addition to which it has the following property:

- **Summon Spire.** A creature attuned to the seed, or who knows its control word (see area 7) can use an action to call forth a 6-foot-high Grendleroot spire that shoots up through the floor under a target of their choice within 50 feet of them. The target must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The Grendleroot spire that erupts from the ground becomes a permanent object, and destroys any other mundane object through which it passes.

If the seed is not placed back in the beam within 10 minutes of its removal, the Grendleroot begins to move, twisting its spires and causing untold damage throughout Blackclaw. Within days, it will shatter the whole mountain.

Replacing the *Seed of the Grendleroot* requires a successful DC 16 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) or Intelligence (Arcana) check. On a failure, the character making the check takes 21 (6d6) lightning damage as the seed is replaced. The seed can also be replaced safely using a *mage hand* cantrip or similar magic. When the seed is placed back in the beam from area

5, the Grendleroot falls back under the control of the Caretakers' magical machinery.

SPIRE SHAFT

The shaft leading down to the Grendleroot is 100 feet deep. Climbing down the shaft within the mass of almost frictionless spires without a rope or suitable magic requires a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check. A creature that falls down the shaft takes 35 (10d6) bludgeoning damage and lands on 1d4 Grendleroot spires. Each spire deals 22 (4d10) piercing damage.

TREASURE

Alvana wears an *amulet of proof against detection and location* once worn by Soram of the Outside (see chapter 2). The amulet is shaped like an eye with a black opal in the center. (This is the amulet that Alvana used to control the shield guardian. If the shield guardian survived its encounter with the characters, they discover that the damage it took from the fall into area 1 means it cannot be claimed or controlled.)

9. CRADLE OF THE GRENDLEROOT

Area Aspects. Cracked spherical chamber, dozens of piercing spires, the Grendleroot and its single eye

The shaft leads down one hundred feet before ending in a large spherical chamber. At the center of that chamber sprawls the Grendleroot, a fifty-foot-wide irregular black mass pulsing with malevolence and unknown energy. The spires of the Grendleroot shoot out from the central mass, driven through cracks in the walls of the chamber and into the surrounding mountain. At the center of the sphere, a single huge eye stares out.

This chamber houses the Grendleroot, which is trapped here by the power of the Caretakers' magical machinery. The damage seen in the chambers above is what let the Grendleroot send its spires all throughout the mountain more than two centuries ago, and what allows it to remain conscious now as it seeks a final escape.

The Grendleroot cannot be damaged or affected by any attacks or magic available to the characters. Any creature that tries to damage the Grendleroot or touches it for the first time on a turn must make a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw, taking 70 (20d6) psychic damage on a failed save and suffering a random form of short-term and long-term madness. A creature

that succeeds on the saving throw takes half as much damage and does not suffer the madness effect.

A creature that survives touching the Grendleroot can feel its tremendous ancient power and its desire to escape the cradle. They feel the Grendleroot's eternal loneliness and fear. They hear its call to its creator across the Astral Plane—a twisted sentient planetoid known as the Black Star.

Concluding the Adventure

Success in this adventure comes if the characters thwart Alvana's attempt to acquire the *Seed of the Grendleroot*, leaving the seed contained in area 8. If the characters also repaired the sphere in area 5, they can slow the Grendleroot's growth, perhaps for centuries.

If the *Seed of the Grendleroot* isn't put back in place, the Caretakers' binding of the Grendleroot fails. Within days, the Grendleroot destroys Blackclaw Mountain. In months, it will have burrowed deep into the core of the world. Great earthquakes will split the land. Floods will destroy whole coastlines. Black spires erupt within every town and city, killing millions. The Grendleroot calls out across the planes to the Black Star. The Black Star comes. And thus the world ends.

But with the Grendleroot safely bound by the Caretakers' magical machinery, the heroes can return to Deepdelves' Enclave and share their latest tale of adventure over a cup of hot coffee.

APPENDIX A

BLACKCLAW MOUNTAIN PLAYER'S GUIDE

Light your lantern and tighten your pack. Loosen your sword and ready your rope, as you get set to explore the depths of the unknown.

This appendix is a short guide to help players understand the place of their characters in Blackclaw Mountain. Use the information here to help you build characters with a strong connection to the adventures to be found in the ruins of the Grendleroot.

Starting Point

Your adventures in Blackclaw Mountain begin in Deepdelver's Enclave. This lively settlement is found deep within the mountain, on a high cliff overlooking an enormous cavern and the ruined city of Shadowreach. Deepdelver's Enclave is the central outpost and home base for the explorers and adventurers who work their way through Blackclaw, intent on uncovering the secrets of the Grendleroot.

Who Are You?

Characters of all stripes are drawn to Blackclaw Mountain. You might be an explorer seeking the treasure and lore that can be found throughout the mountain's tunnels, caverns, vaults, and ruins. You might be a historian intent on uncovering remnants of the countless civilizations that have risen and fallen within Blackclaw. You might be a sage seeking to understand the mysteries of the Grendleroot. Or you

might be a servant of the Order of the White Sun, dedicated to ensuring that the darkness within the mountain does not spread.

Whatever your specific purpose, though, you are first and foremost an adventurer who seeks to explore the mountain with your companions.

Four Truths of Blackclaw Mountain

All explorers who spend time in the tunnels and caverns of Blackclaw Mountain know the following truths.

ANCIENT LEGACY

The mountain is deep, vast, and impossibly old. Hundreds of monstrous lairs and civilized settlements have been carved out within Blackclaw, and now lie forgotten in its depths. The mountain is filled with lost caverns, tunnels, vaults, warrens, ruins, graveyards, keeps, lakes, dungeons, and lairs. No one has ever fully explored the mountain, whose history goes back over a thousand thousand years.

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Deepdelver's Enclave serves as a beacon of civilization and hope against the endless night of Blackclaw. The Enclave is a place of refuge, trade, companionship,

joy, and camaraderie. Its people all share a sense of curiosity and wonder, and a hunger for exploration. They come to Deepdelver's Enclave to uncover the mysteries of the mountain and study its ancient secrets.

LAYERS OF HISTORY

The ruins of countless civilizations can be found within the ancient caverns and chambers of the mountain. Explorers can find remnants of lost history everywhere, from the enormous shrouded statues of the archmages of the Black Star to the monuments of the Order of the White Sun; from the half-buried remains of the rune titans who were the first rulers of Blackclaw Mountain, to the primitive paintings of the mysterious Caretakers who traveled with the mountain when it crashed to the world. Explorers of the mountain seek the lore and relics of these ancient civilizations, trading them in the enclave or studying their lost magic.

MYSTERY OF THE GRENDLEROOT

Throughout Blackclaw, the presence of large black metal spires thrusting out of solid rock mark the presence of the Grendleroot, an otherworldly sentience buried deep within the mountain. None know for sure what this entity is or what it wants, but the indestructible spires and the energy that thrums throughout the mountain speak of the Grendleroot's tremendous power.

Ruins of the Grendleroot Backgrounds

This section provides suggestions for connecting four classic character backgrounds to Blackclaw Mountain, in addition to two new backgrounds customized for your campaign: the Blackclaw Deepdelver and the Grendleroot Scholar.

ACOLYTE

A character with this background in Blackclaw Mountain could be an acolyte of the Order of the White Sun. Such acolytes serve as assistants to priests, squires to knights and paladins, and caretakers to the order's few remaining temples and fortresses. As the order continues to fade into obscurity, the number of new recruits continues to fall, giving acolytes more responsibilities in already thankless positions.

As an acolyte, you might have been sent to Blackclaw by the Order of the White Sun, charged with investigating recent happenings in the mountain,

or to seek out lore and relics from the fall of the order centuries ago.

OUTLANDER

Characters with this background are likely Blackclaw outlanders—folk who have lived their whole lives within the caves and tunnels of the mountain. As an outlander, you are intimately familiar with the mysteries of Blackclaw Mountain, and with its dangers. Instead of the Wanderer feature from this background, you could take the Deep Survival feature from the Blackclaw deepdelver background.

SAGE

If your character has the sage background, you might study a subject specific to Blackclaw Mountain, rolled on or chosen from the Blackclaw Sage Specialties table.

BLACKCLAW SAGE SPECIALTIES

d6	Specialty
1	Magocracy of the Black Star
2	Order of the White Sun
3	Legends of the Black Star
4	Origins of the Grendleroot
5	Flora of Blackclaw Mountain
6	Fauna of Blackclaw Mountain

SOLDIER

As a character in Blackclaw Mountain with the soldier background, you might be a veteran of the Thousand Spear War—a deadly conflict between dwarves, humans, elves, and goblinoids a decade ago. Perhaps you found yourself ill-suited to life in the settlements of the surface world, but discovered that the freedom and choice of work in Deepdelver's Enclave is much to your liking. Moreover, you have the respect of Ruth Willowmane, another veteran of that bloody conflict.

Alternatively, a character with this background in Blackclaw Mountain could be a knight of the Order of the White Sun. Such knights are sometimes sent by the order to assess the dangers of newly uncovered areas within the mountain, to look for signs that the magocracy is active, and to destroy any evil in Blackclaw, whether descended from the Magocracy of the Black Star or not.

BLACKCLAW DEEPELVER

You are a longstanding member of Deepdelver's Enclave, knowledgeable in the mysteries, dangers, and treasures to be found in Blackclaw Mountain.

You might have previously undertaken some minor missions of exploration, but you are ready now for greater things. What have you experienced on your previous expeditions? What do you expect to face now? What do you hope to gain? And what might you lose?

You have friends and rivals in the enclave who have witnessed your victories, your teamwork, and your reveling—but they also know your failures and fears. The folk of Deepdelver's Enclave are your family, and you have embraced the love of exploration common to all of them, and their goal of standing out as a light in the dark.

Skill Proficiencies: Perception, Survival

Tool Proficiencies: Cartographer's tools, thieves' tools

Equipment: A small piece of black metal found in the mountain and carved with a mysterious rune, a bullseye lantern, a map drawn by a friend who never returned from a delve, a set of common clothes, a two-person tent, and a purse containing 15 gp

d8 Personality Traits

- 1 When I am faced with a mystery or puzzle, it consumes my thoughts until I uncover a solution.
- 2 I am always the first to volunteer for a dangerous task.
- 3 I find a way to have fun no matter where I go.
- 4 I like to tell exciting stories of my adventures whenever I can.
- 5 I can work with almost anyone.
- 6 If I see someone who isn't smiling, I do my best to change that.
- 7 I prefer the safety and comfort of darkness to bright light.
- 8 I seek novelty in all things and become bored easily.

d6 Ideal

- 1 **Community.** I would do anything for my fellow delvers. (Any)
- 2 **Knowledge.** Blackclaw Mountain holds secrets I must uncover. (Any)
- 3 **Protection.** I delve into the mountain to keep its horrors from spilling into the world. (Good)
- 4 **Freedom.** Delvers don't need laws because Blackclaw Mountain requires constant adaptation. (Chaotic)
- 5 **Fun.** Every day in Blackclaw Mountain is blissfully unique. (Chaotic)
- 6 **Destiny.** I cannot resist the mystery and adventure within Blackclaw Mountain. (Any)

FEATURE: DEEP SURVIVAL

You are experienced at traveling and surviving the caves and tunnels of Blackclaw Mountain. While in the mountain, you can retrace your steps to any place to which you have previously traveled. Additionally, when you enter a new location in the mountain, you immediately recall a single piece of lore about that location, provided by the GM. The lore could be about hazards or monsters rumored to be in the area, edible or harmful fauna or flora, or a historical fact or legend.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Deepdelvers are shaped by the truths of the enclave. Most are curious team players who embrace life, but living in Deepdelver's Enclave isn't all fun and games. Regardless of the dangers they have faced, the deepdelvers hang on to their love of the mystery of the mountain. Nothing excites them more than an unexplored crevasse or a statue of an ancient people not seen in millennia.

GRENDLEROOT SCHOLAR

The mysteries of Blackclaw Mountain call to you—sometimes literally. You know that the Grendleroot connects the mountain to other worlds and unknown

d6 Bond

- 1 I am determined to uncover the origin of an unidentified object I found in the mountain.
- 2 I left friends behind after a cave-in separated us, and I have yet to find them.
- 3 I have a rival in Deepdelver's Enclave who tries to show me up.
- 4 Deepdelver's Enclave is the only home I have ever known.
- 5 There is a puzzle in a cavern of Blackclaw Mountain that I cannot crack.
- 6 I wield the weapon of a delver ally who died in Blackclaw Mountain.

d6 Flaw

- 1 My obsession with exploring the mountain is more important than all other tasks and relationships.
- 2 I take credit for the accomplishments of others.
- 3 Everyone I meet must surely love me.
- 4 I act before I think.
- 5 I deserve a bigger share of treasure because I am better at adventuring than everyone else.
- 6 I love pranks—especially dangerous ones!

beings through eldritch power. These entities leave mysterious messages in the mountain that you are determined to decipher. As a Grendleroot scholar, you have studied the strange, maddening lore surrounding the mountain, and are always searching for the answers you seek.

Your reasons for choosing to study the Grendleroot are your own. Perhaps you search for someone you lost to the mountain, or you hunger to control the eldritch power contained in the Grendleroot. Perhaps you simply can't resist the mysteries the mountain has to offer. Whatever the reason, your studies have helped you touch the mountain's otherworldly madness, and you sometimes hear the thoughts of the Grendleroot through the eldritch power it channels.

Skill Proficiencies: Arcana, History

Languages: Two of your choice

Equipment: A small bag of sand, a bottle of ink, a quill, a journal, a mysterious tome found in Blackclaw Mountain and written in a forgotten language, and a purse containing 25 gp

FIRST TOUCH

Many sages study the Grendleroot and never experience the madness connected to Blackclaw Mountain. You are not one of them. What were the terms of your first brush with the Grendleroot's madness, shaping your connection to Blackclaw Mountain? You can roll on or choose from the Grendleroot First Touch table to answer this question, or let the options on the table inspire your own story.

GRENDLEROOT FIRST TOUCH

d6 First Touch

- 1 You read the journal of another Grendleroot scholar, exposing you to the Grendleroot's mysteries.
- 2 You deciphered a coded message carved on the walls of a tunnel in Blackclaw Mountain, exposing you to the Grendleroot's ancient history.
- 3 You first experienced the Grendleroot's vast intellect during a dream while you slept within the mountain.
- 4 A mad arcanist worshiping the Black Star awakened your mind to the Grendleroot's awareness.
- 5 You touched a relic found in Blackclaw Mountain that connected you to the Grendleroot's intellect.
- 6 You ate a unique fungus found in Blackclaw Mountain, exposing you to the Grendleroot's call.

FEATURE: VOICES OF THE GRENDLEROOT

Whenever you take a long rest in Blackclaw Mountain, roll a d20. On a 19 or 20, you receive a message from the eldritch powers connected to the Grendleroot.

The message you receive might be vague or need to be deciphered. It could take the form of a vision, alien whispers, or any other medium the GM chooses. This message contains a warning or piece of information that pertains to an upcoming adventure.

Additionally, when you enter a new location in the mountain bearing signs of the Grendleroot, you immediately know a single piece of lore about the location, provided by the GM. The lore could be about hazards or monsters rumored to be in the area, edible or harmful fauna or flora, or a historical fact or legend.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Grendleroot scholars touch madness with their minds, giving them strange idiosyncrasies. They are often distracted and temperamental, as though their thoughts were consumed with the mysteries of the mountain. Even those scholars most in control are still eccentric, and those with no control are downright mad.

d8 Personality Traits

- 1 I mutter to myself about mysteries I have yet to solve.
- 2 I often get distra ... what were we talking about?
- 3 I speak so quickly that no one can keep up with me.
- 4 Speaking of toast, you can always count on me for a non sequitur.
- 5 I really don't like being touched, okay?
- 6 I don't care about my personal appearance.
- 7 I have a catchphrase that I yell whenever I discover something or solve a puzzle.
- 8 I rarely provide context when I present my thoughts and ideas.

d6 Ideal

- 1 **Knowledge.** If I can unravel the Grendleroot's mysteries, I can solve any puzzle. (Any)
- 2 **Power.** Once I harness the Grendleroot's power, all will bow before me. (Evil)
- 3 **Greater Good.** I am sacrificing my mind studying the Grendleroot so that others can benefit without harm. (Good)
- 4 **Discovery.** I want to uncover a secret that will change the world for the better. (Good)
- 5 **No Limits.** People should be able to study any subject they choose, regardless of taboos. (Chaotic)
- 6 **Beauty.** The turmoil of madness is the only true beauty in this world. (Chaotic)

d6 Bond

- 1 I consider one of the Grendleroot's voices a personal friend.
- 2 I have a recurring dream about the Grendleroot.
- 3 A shard of the Grendleroot is embedded in my body.
- 4 I have a student who is learning the mysteries of the Grendleroot from me.
- 5 My mentor has not been heard from since delving into Blackclaw Mountain on an adventure.
- 6 I have a favorite cavern in the mountain where I can most clearly hear the voices of the Grendleroot.

d6 Flaw

- 1 My mood changes for absolutely no reason.
- 2 My temper is shorter than a kobold.
- 3 I place no value on the opinions of others.
- 4 I don't have time to bathe while there are mysteries to be solved!
- 5 I talk around the problems I have with others rather than speaking directly.
- 6 Personal space isn't something I understand.

APPENDIX B

BLACKCLAW MOUNTAIN GAMEMASTER'S TOOLKIT

Blackclaw Mountain holds mysteries as endless as the imaginations of those who dare to explore it.

This appendix explores a number of options that can help you run encounters and adventures in Blackclaw Mountain. Use these tools as a way to shape and share stories that show off the infinite depths of the mountain and the mysteries contained within it. You can use these tools while running any of the ten adventures in this book or when building your own adventures in the mountain.

Expanding the Journey

The ten adventures in this book each include a journey from Deepdelver's Enclave to the primary location of the adventure. You can expand or condense the representation of this journey depending on the pace of the adventure and the time you have to run it. These journeys typically include navigating natural passageways, traversing underground rivers, scaling the walls of deep rifts, and exploring the ancient ruins within the mountain.

This chapter presents a number of interesting locations, fantastic features, and potential encounters the characters might stumble into during their journeys. These encounters can open up interesting opportunities for roleplaying, exploration, or combat. Using such encounters randomly can help add a unique edge to any adventure, creating situations and scenarios that might surprise even you.

The way in which you use the locations, features, effects, and encounters in this chapter gives you a way to increase or decrease the amount of time an adventure takes, or to increase or decrease the pace and challenge of the adventure. Use these options to help you build the story you want to build.

SHORT SESSIONS

For sessions taking roughly two to three hours, you can describe a location through which the characters travel without having them run into any creatures. For example, they might come upon an abandoned goblin ruin surrounding a strange angelic statue. Though they find no actual creatures there, the characters might uncover a secret or clue while studying the statue. Such a scene usually takes about ten minutes to run.

LONGER SESSIONS

If you're running a session of three to four hours or longer, you might expand a location with one of the encounters from the "Blackclaw Encounters" section below. Each encounter can offer opportunities for roleplaying, combat, or exploration. Such a scene usually takes from thirty to sixty minutes to run, depending on how hard the encounter is and how long the players spend at the location.

LOCATIONS IN BLACKCLAW

Limitless caverns, tunnels, and chambers fill Blackclaw Mountain. You can roll on the Blackclaw Locations table to quickly set up a new location for the characters to pass through, or use the table for inspiration to develop locations of your own.

BLACKCLAW LOCATIONS

d20	Location	Description
1	Waterfall	A tall waterfall erupts from the rock wall to fall to a pool or river.
2	Large rift	A large crack in the stone floor of this area leads down into darkness.
3	Ancient ruin	The depths of the mountain hide an outpost of the Order of the White Sun, a temple to the Grendleroot or the Black Star, a primitive settlement established in ancient caves, or an abandoned kobold mining expedition.
4	Monstrous lair	Natural caverns give way to the lair of an underground monster such as a bulette, chimera, sphinx, or dragon.
5	Underground lake	A large lake hides ancient mysteries in its black depths.
6	Large sinkhole	A collapsed cavern floor opens up to a shaft leading down.
7	Charnel pit	The bones of creatures both humanoid and monstrous fill a deep pit.
8	Uncovered burial cairn	The cairn of a primeval hero has been revealed by recent explorers.
9	Dark druidic circle	A circle of black metal trees channels dark nature magic.
10	Collapsed ceiling	A large mound of shattered rock rises underneath an open shaft extending higher up into the mountain.
11	Goblinoid lair	Twisted caves and makeshift stone hovels mark the extents of a goblin warren.
12	Chasm-spanning bridge	A narrow, cracked stone bridge crosses over a wide chasm.
13	Towering spiral stairs	A set of spiraling stairs carved from rock are too large for a normal humanoid where they rise up into darkness above.
14	Colossal rib cage	A massive petrified rib cage forms supporting pillars in this arched chamber.
15	Dragon's lair	The cavern gives way to the clear signs of a dragon's lair—freezing ice, poison gas, stalactites arcing lightning, pools of acid, or rivers of red-hot magma.
16	Lava flow	An open rift belches out a river of red-hot magma.
17	Crystalline cave	Huge crystalline growths jut out of the rock walls of this cavern, all of them humming.
18	Floating earthmote	A large piece of carved rock floats in the center of a vast cavern.
19	Fey rift	A small tear in reality leads into a secret underground fey grove from which alluring music can be heard.
20	Mushroom grotto	Mushrooms of all different sizes and colors fill this multilevel grotto. The largest of them have been hollowed out to serve as dwellings for gnomes, halflings, goblins, or other small humanoids.

RUINED STRUCTURES OF SHADOWREACH

Deepdelver's Enclave sits on a high plateau that marks the edge of the ruined city of Shadowreach. Use the Shadowreach Structures table when you need to describe key structures for players whose characters are exploring the ruins.

SHADOWREACH STRUCTURES

d20	Structure	Description
1	Slave cells	A set of sunken cells once held some of the many slaves forced to serve the magocracy.
2	Forge	Smiths crafted the weapons of the magocracy's armies in these huge forges.
3	Armory	Soldiers, both living and undead, stored their weapons in a number of armories strategically placed throughout the city.
4	Kitchens	Vast and efficient kitchens cooked the tasteless sustenance that fed most of the magocracy's living slaves and servants.
5	Apartments	Skilled laborers were permitted to stay in tiny, stark apartments stacked into tall towers across the city.
6	Noble's villa	The few aristocrats of the magocracy were permitted to stay in small villas, where they could escape into hedonistic pleasures.
7	Watchtower	The guardians of Shadowreach stood sentinel in the many watchtowers throughout the city, all decorated with iconography of the magocracy.
8	Statue	The nine archmages of the Black Star created huge, grim statues in their own images, to remind the people of Shadowreach who they served.
9	Granary	Large silos stored the grain that provided minimal sustenance to the people of Shadowreach.
10	Mill	Vast mills ground grains for baking into flatbread or distillation into bread-beer, to sustain the workers of Shadowreach.
11	Storage cellars	A vast network of interconnected cellars stored food and supplies for the people of the city.
12	Citadel	Huge citadels were home to the half-dragon guardians who ruled over Shadowreach on behalf of their archmage masters.
13	Courthouse	Cursory trials and quick executions served by corrupt aristocrats and bloodthirsty executioners took place daily in Shadowreach, staining the stones in front of each of the city's courthouses with blood.
14	Temple	Temples to false gods kept the people of Shadowreach in a perpetual state of hope and despair.
15	Tomb	Guardians and generals who served the magocracy were sometimes given elaborate tombs guarded by undead.
16	Market	Well-rotted wooden shacks and cracked stone stalls once served as bartering hubs where the people of Shadowreach traded for scraps.
17	Crier's theater	Public criers shouted from the stages of these semicircular tiered theaters, speaking the lies of the magocracy.
18	Crematorium	The smokestacks of these large, circular stone buildings continually billowed smoke into the cavern around Shadowreach.
19	Prison	The blood of thousands of victims caked the walls of the dark and horrifying prisons scattered throughout the city.
20	Clock	These massive stone clocks once informed the people of Shadowreach of the start and end of their long working days.

FANTASTIC FEATURES

For any of the previous locations in Blackclaw Mountain and Shadowreach (or any locations of your own design), you can use the Blackclaw Features table to add an interesting centerpiece feature. Such features might reveal a secret or clue from your adventure, might act as the source of a strange environmental effect, or could show off the unusual discoveries to be made within the mountain.

BLACKCLAW FEATURES

d20 Feature

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1 | Arcane circle on the floor |
| 2 | Monstrous altar |
| 3 | Dormant planar gateway |
| 4 | Desiccated remains of a large beast or monster |
| 5 | Glyph-marked obelisk |
| 6 | Carefully dissected corpse |
| 7 | Giant skull |
| 8 | Clockwork machine |
| 9 | Angelic statue |
| 10 | Demonic statue |
| 11 | Giant hand or claw |
| 12 | Sacrificial altar |
| 13 | Sarcophagus |
| 14 | Everburning brazier |
| 15 | Pillar marked with divine symbols |
| 16 | Statues of soldiers impaled on stakes by unknown foes |
| 17 | Sparkling sacred pool |
| 18 | Ancient fountain |
| 19 | Black-iron tree |
| 20 | Unholy font filled with blood |

MONSTROUS ALTAR



ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Many locations in Blackclaw Mountain contain environmental effects, whether natural or unnatural. Use the Blackclaw Environment table to add an effect to any location as desired.

You choose how the effect manifests and what kind of game effects it might have. Many effects can simply provide flavor to exploration or combat, with no mechanical benefit or detriment. Other effects might provide advantage or impose disadvantage to certain types of attacks or checks, or might mirror the effect of a spell. Some effects might result in a particular monster showing up, or could deal damage of their own.

BLACKCLAW ENVIRONMENT

d20 Effect

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1 | Unnatural darkness |
| 2 | Infestation of rodents, insects, or other vermin |
| 3 | Unstable rocks |
| 4 | Strange lights |
| 5 | Unnatural heat |
| 6 | Unnatural cold |
| 7 | Arcane instability |
| 8 | Strange whispers |
| 9 | Poisonous gas |
| 10 | Sharp stalagmites |
| 11 | Humming black spires of the Grendleroot |
| 12 | Fetid water |
| 13 | Acidic pools |
| 14 | Lightning discharges |
| 15 | Psychedelic mushrooms |
| 16 | Razor-sharp stones |
| 17 | Ancient illusions |
| 18 | Pools of blood |
| 19 | Glyphs left behind by the rune titans |
| 20 | Necrotic fog |

Blackclaw Encounters

To add a quick encounter to any location as the characters travel through Blackclaw Mountain, roll or select an option from the Blackclaw Encounters table, then see the encounter descriptions that follow. You can use the scenario described in the encounter directly, build your own encounter based on the creatures noted in the encounter description, or let these encounters inspire your own ideas. Any details not provided in the encounter description (including the race of some NPCs and the alignment of NPCs and intelligent monsters) is left to your determination.

The difficulty of these encounters varies. All are built to accommodate a group of four characters of 2nd through 5th level. If the characters are at the low end of that level range and you roll (or simply want to use)

the maximum number of monsters, give the characters advance notice of the encounter and opportunities to deal with the situation without automatically entering combat.

ABYSSAL CULT LEADER

A **cult fanatic** is seen surrounded by humanoid corpses. As the cultist completes a ritual, 1d4 + 3 of the corpses explode and transform into **dretches**, then attack.

ACOLYTE OF SPIDERS

A **cultist** prays at a web-covered idol of a spider queen. If attacked or threatened, she yells out, "I am delivered!" Then her body bursts and 1d2 + 1 **swarm of insects (spiders)** pour out, joined by 1d4 + 1 **giant**

BLACKCLAW ENCOUNTERS

d100 Encounter

1–2	Abyssal cult leader
3–4	Acolyte of spiders
5–6	Ankheg tunnels
7–8	Basilisk
9–10	Black pudding
11–12	Bugbear ambush
13–14	Cursed lizardfolk
15–16	Darkmantles' temptation
17–18	Defending owlbear
19–20	Drow spies
21–22	Duergar shrine
23–24	Echoing minstrels
25–26	From iron to rust
27–28	Gargoyles
29–30	Ghast's lure
31–32	Gibbering moulder
33–34	Gnome wall breakers
35–36	Grick ambush
37–38	Guardians of memory
39–40	Hag's child
41–42	Hell knight
43–44	Hobgoblins preparing for war
45–46	Hungry like a wolf
47–48	Hunters

d100 Encounter

49–50	Incubus fight
51–52	Kobold traps
53–54	Lives of the dead
55–56	Lost actor
57–58	Mad mage
59–60	Mimic statues
61–62	Ogre metaphysics
63–64	Ooze lure
65–66	Orc raiders
67–68	Phase spiders
69–70	Pilgrims of the dark relic
71–72	Priest and knight
73–74	Regarding doppelgangers
75–76	Shady vendor
77–78	Skeletal watch
79–80	Spy and ettercap
81–82	Squirming pillar
83–84	Statue makers
85–86	There-rats
87–88	Thieves of the ages
89–90	Vampire thralls
91–92	Voice of the dead
93–94	Webbed hobgoblins
95–96	Wet rats
97–98	Worm riders
99–00	Worshipful rats

spiders that drop down from the ceiling to attack the characters.

ANKHEG TUNNELS

Numerous tunnels break through the walls, ceiling, and floor of this area. As the characters explore, the ground bursts upward and 1d2 + 1 **ankhegs** attack.

BASILISK

A cavern or chamber is filled with half-destroyed statues, all of which depict humanoids in combat. One of the statues is known to the characters as an explorer missing from Deepdelver's Enclave. A **basilisk** lurks among the statues, hoping to make a new meal out of the characters. One of the statues holds an unpetrified relic in its petrified hand.

BLACK PUDDING

A **black pudding** lurks in this cavern or chamber. Roll a d4 or choose one of the following setups:

- 1: The ooze surrounds a cracked statue of a draconic wizard, like a moat of black water.
- 2: The pudding hides on the ceiling among stalactites and drops down on its victims.
- 3: The black pudding covers a small Grendleroot spire, giving the spire an oily sheen.
- 4: The black pudding has been split into a number of smaller puddings, which are in the process of devouring 1d4 **kobolds**.

BUGBEAR AMBUSH

A pack of 1d6 + 3 **goblins** appear to be surprised when the characters meet them. However, the goblins are bait, and allied with 1d4 + 1 **bugbears** that attack from the shadows.

CURSED LIZARDFOLK

The sound of combat is revealed to be 2d6 **lizardfolk** merchants battling 1d4 + 1 **minotaur skeletons**. The disembodied voice of Yolon of the Void (see chapter 2) whispers that the lizardfolk must return a relic they possess to the lich's vault or suffer a curse of a thousand years.

DARKMANTLES' TEMPTATION

A relic lying at the center of a cluster of Grendleroot spires is surrounded by a pile of bones—including a hand that reaches for the relic. This site is a hunting ground for 1d4 + 1 **darkmantles** that use the relic as bait. Some of the creatures hang among stalactites above, while others stand hidden within the

Grendleroot spires. When any creature comes close, they use their Darkness Aura and attack.

DEFENDING OWLBEAR

An **owlbear** viciously defends an archway depicting elven royalty from any creatures that approach it. The archway was once a gate to the realms of the fey.

DROW SPIES

A scout party of 2d4 **drow** is en route to Deepdelver's Enclave. They pretend to be merchants hoping to sell a relic in the enclave, but that relic is secretly the focus for a scrying ritual.

DUERGAR SHRINE

A work party of 1d4 + 1 **duergar** are forging a new shrine to an archdevil with four heads and a draconic body. They do not take kindly to interruptions or criticism of their work, and are happy to make the characters their first sacrifices.

ECHOING MINSTRELS

A band of 1d3 + 2 minstrels play beautiful music in a chamber or cavern with perfect acoustics. The minstrels might be **commoners** who became lost while seeking out this perfect performance place, or they might be **specters** spawned by explorers who were lost and died centuries earlier.

FROM IRON TO RUST

Some kind of iron construct is covered with corrosive rust and posed as if cowering from something. If examined, the construct bursts apart to reveal 1d2 + 1 **rust monsters**.

GARGOYLES

A pair of **gargoyles** follow and torment a known **spy** kicked out of Deepdelver's Enclave. The spy begs the characters for help.

GHAST'S LURE

The screams of three explorers (all **commoners**) echo from the shadows ahead. The explorers have been ambushed by 1d4 + 2 **ghouls** and a **ghast**, which will consume them unless the characters intervene.

GIBBERING MOUTHER

A statue of a wizard stands in a pool of red-black liquid. As the characters approach, eyes and mouths appear in the pool, revealing it to be a **gibbering mouter**.

GNOME WALL BREAKERS

The characters spot 1d4 + 2 rock gnome **bandits** attempting to use a clockwork machine to break through a worked wall of iron. As they break through the wall, roll a d4 or choose a result:

- 1: The rotted hand of an **ogre zombie** reaches out.
- 2: A **specter** flows out.
- 3: A **vampire spawn** posing as a commoner calls out from behind the wall, claiming to have been magically trapped there for centuries.
- 4: The clawed hand of a **bearded devil** lashes out.

GRICK AMBUSH

The decayed bodies of four armored knights have been piled into the center of this area. On the ceiling above the bodies, 1d4 + 2 **gricks** wait to ambush anyone who draws close to investigate.

GUARDIANS OF MEMORY

A band of 1d6 + 4 **tribal warriors** protects a **stone giant** embedded into the wall of this area in a state of magical slumber, leaving only the giant's occasionally moving legs exposed. The warriors demand that each character touch a magic stone they carry, which bestows the effect of a *modify memory* spell to erase the characters' knowledge of what they've seen—if they wish to leave the area alive.

HAG'S CHILD

The characters come across Bibi Redorchard, a child who has escaped from the lair of a **green hag** named Auntie Blacktongue. Bibi is cursed by the hag, which must be slain to undo the curse. But at the hag's lair, the child reveals itself to be a younger rival green hag who wanted to get rid of its vexing foe.

HELL KNIGHT

A **knight** prays to her archdevil patron at a gore-covered altar while her pet **hell hound** lurks nearby. She is not immediately hostile, but does not hide her worship of the devil. The power of the altar grants the knight an extra 3 (1d6) fire damage on successful attacks, and grants her the ability to cast the *fire shield* spell once per day as a bonus action. The altar has AC 15 and 25 hit points, and it can be destroyed with a successful DC 13 Strength (Athletics) or Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check. If the knight is defeated, she is revealed to possess an evil relic.

HOBGOBLINS PREPARING FOR WAR

A band of 1d6 + 3 **hobgoblins** prepares for battle, practicing formations and sharpening weapons. They plan to attack a nearby **chimera** that guards a relic they desire. The hobgoblins might attack the characters, or they might attempt to recruit them for the coming battle.

HUNGRY LIKE A WOLF

An explorer named Rogan Rockstomper (a hill dwarf **veteran** with 10 hit points remaining) cowers in the shadows. He claims that a **dire wolf** named Blacktooth leads a pack of 1d6 + 3 **wolves** in the tunnels, and is hunting him and the characters alike. Roll a d6. On a 1–3, Rogan is telling the truth. On a 4–6, he is actually a **werewolf** who leads the described pack, and who attacks the characters in hybrid form once the pack arrives.

HUNTERS

The characters stumble across 1d6 **cultists** willingly letting themselves be devoured by 2d4 **hyenas**, under the command of 1d6 + 3 **gnolls**. The cultists and gnolls are conducting this dark ritual in the service of their demonic lord, who they believe walks the tunnels of Blackclaw Mountain.

INCUBUS FIGHT

Two **thugs** fight over an **incubus** who loves the attention it's getting. The incubus turns its attention randomly to one of the characters, and the thugs do not take kindly to being upstaged.

KOBOLD TRAPS

A scout party of 3d6 **kobolds** work to set up a complicated series of traps. To determine the types of traps, roll a d8 twice, rerolling duplicates, or choose from the following options:

- 1: Moldy crossbows
- 2: Firepots
- 3: Sharp rocks
- 4: Bags of snakes
- 5: Fungus-encrusted caltrops
- 6: Acidic snares
- 7: Barbed nets
- 8: Diseased spears

Then roll a d4 or choose from the following options to set the scene:

- 1: The characters arrive while the kobolds are still setting up their traps.
- 2: The characters arrive with the kobolds ready and waiting to spring the traps on them.
- 3: The kobolds are busy springing the traps on 1d6 **orcs**.
- 4: The kobolds have all been killed by their own traps.

LIVES OF THE DEAD

This cavern or chamber is occupied by 1d4 **specters**, which move around conducting what appear to be daily activities—eating, bathing, sleeping, and the like. These restless spirits do not realize they are undead, and do not react well to finding out the truth.

LOST ACTOR

A famous actor named Antovio Delemonte (a **commoner**) has gotten lost while exploring the mountain in search of inspiration. He begs the characters to help him find his missing *boots of striding and springing*. Roll a d4 or choose who stole the boots:

- 1: Boot-worshipping **kobolds**
- 2: A stylish **wererat**
- 3: A **gray ooze**
- 4: His biggest fan, the scarred **gladiator** Marsha Crowdstopper

If Antovio's boots are recovered and the characters lead him to safety, he gifts the boots to the party in thanks.

MAD MAGE

A wandering **mage** who has burned out her own eyes wants to share the secrets she's uncovered. She whispers into the ear of any character who allows it, with that character forced to succeed on a DC 16 Charisma saving throw or suffer a random form of both short-term and long-term madness. "Now you know the truth," the mage says as she wanders off.

MIMIC STATUES

A lone treasure chest sits in the middle of a cavern or chamber, flanked by two statues. The chest is real but the statues are a pair of **mimics**.

OGRE METAPHYSICS

Three **ogres** argue about the nature of reality, and whether they truly exist or are simply figures in a grand illusion created by Ulon the Mind Dancer (see chapter 2). They demand that the characters prove whether or not they dwell in an illusory world.

OOZE LURE

A **gelatinous cube** sits in the middle of this chamber or cavern, with a relic suspended within it.

ORC RAIDERS

A group of 2d4 **orcs** prowls the tunnels of Blackclaw, hoping to jump unwary explorers and take any loot they might have.

PHASE SPIDERS

The area around the characters appears to shift in and out of reality, as a result of phase spiders lurking in the ethereal darkness. Roll a d4 or choose the nature of the encounter:

- 1: 1d2 **phase spiders** are busy wrapping up a human **scout** from Deepdelver's Enclave.
- 2: 1d2 + 1 **phase spiders** are hidden and waiting to ambush the characters.
- 3: 1d2 + 1 **phase spiders** are making handy work of a band of 2d4 **orcs**.
- 4: 1d2 **phase spiders** guard 1d4 **drow** hunting for a powerful relic.

PILGRIMS OF THE DARK RELIC

A group of 1d6 + 3 **cultists** is led by a **cult fanatic** leader, and protecting a relic they hope to use to conduct a dark ritual. The relic is difficult to destroy, and members of the cult constantly seek it if it is taken. No one in Deepdelver's Enclave will purchase the relic.

PRIEST AND KNIGHT

A **priest** and a **knight** are traveling through the mountain on a pilgrimage. Roll a d4 or choose one of the following options:

- 1: The pair are benevolent, and aid the characters with blessings and healing.
- 2: They are suspicious of the characters, and are secretly transporting an evil relic.
- 3: The two are followers of a fiendish god, and seek to capture the power of the Grendleroot.
- 4: The priest and the knight are both found slain. Roll again on the Blackclaw Encounters table to determine who was responsible.

REGARDING DOPPELGANGERS

An NPC the characters recently met in Deepdelver's Enclave is found wandering, looking bedraggled and much older. Roll a d6. On a 1–2, the NPC is a **doppelganger**. On a 3–4, this is the real NPC and the characters previously met the doppelganger. On a 5–6,

this is the doppelganger, but the actual NPC is secretly evil and the doppelganger is good.

SHADY VENDOR

A **wraith** cloaked and hooded in black offers to sell the location of a powerful relic for 10 gp—and a drop of each character's blood.

SKELETAL WATCH

A group of 4d6 **skeletons** stands in tight, unmoving formation. Their rotting armor and rusted weapons are from the age of the Magocracy of the Black Star (see chapter 2). If any skeleton is attacked, all of them shift into fighting stance and enter the fray. They otherwise ignore intruders.

SPY AND ETTERCAP

A **spy** is enjoying a sumptuous picnic lunch as the characters arrive, while his **ettercap** partner lurks in the shadows. The two hate all fey and fey-related creatures, and have been sent to kill a prominent elf in Deepdelver's Enclave.

SQUIRMING PILLAR

A twisted pillar of the Grendleroot appears to be squirming in the distant shadows. The pillar is actually surrounded by 3d6 **stirges** that swarm into violence if disturbed. Once the Grendleroot pillar is exposed, the characters can see a humanoid form half encased in its black metal.

STATUE MAKERS

Statues visible ahead turn out to be 2d4 petrified orcs standing as if in the middle of combat. As the characters approach or retreat, they are attacked by 1d2 + 1 **cockatrices**.

THERE-RATS

The party encounters a band of 1d2 + 1 **wererats**. Roll a d4 or choose one of the following options to set the scene:

- 1: The wererats are in humanoid form and want to sell a relic to the characters.
- 2: The wererats are in hybrid form and attempt to ambush the characters.
- 3: The wererats spy on the characters in rat form, waiting to steal from them when the characters rest.
- 4: The wererats are in battle with another foe. Roll again on the Blackclaw Encounters table or choose their adversary.

THIEVES OF THE AGES

A group of 2d6 **bandits** work at the behest of a **bandit captain**, trying to put jeweled eyes back into a draconic statue. When asked why, they reply, "The curse, of course!"

VAMPIRE THRALLS

A party of 2d6 **bandits** searches for a specific child to bring to Redstone, a settlement in Blackclaw that worships the White Queen (see the "Vault of the White Queen" adventure). The bandits have been charmed and sent by Threx, the queen's vampire spawn guard. The White Queen's reasons for wanting the child are left to your determination.

VOICE OF THE DEAD

The ancient corpse of a stone giant is half buried in rock and surrounded by 2d4 **will-o'-wisps**. As the wisps flutter about, the characters hear the voice of the giant calling out to them for help. This might be a trick the will-o'-wisps use to move closer to their victims. Or perhaps the giant wants to pass along ancient lore—or doesn't realize it's dead.

WEBBED HOBGOBLINS

Tight webbing holds 1d4 **hobgoblins** plastered to a cavern wall. The two **ettercaps** and 1d4 **swarms of insects (spiders)** that overwhelmed and placed the hobgoblins there attack anyone else who comes close.

WET RATS

A mob of 1d4 **swarms of rats** flee from a **water elemental** that threatens to drown them.

WORM RIDERS

The wall of the cavern ahead explodes outward as a **purple worm** emerges and roars past. The worm is followed by 3d6 **goblin** worm riders, who carry hooks, ropes, skis, and sleds that let them ride behind the great monstrosity.

WORSHIPFUL RATS

A podium holding a relic is surrounded by 2d6 **giant rats**, all standing motionless and twitching. The relic sends strange vibrations through the minds of those near it.

Twenty Grendleroot Mutations

Creatures that dwell in Blackclaw Mountain for generations sometimes begin to mutate due to their longtime proximity to the power of the Grendleroot. If you want to add new features to the monsters within the mountain, roll on or choose from the Grendleroot Mutations table. These traits might increase the challenge rating of the monster to which they are applied, so use them carefully in large numbers or against low-level characters.

GRENDLEROOT MUTATIONS

d20	Mutation	Effect
1	Black plates	Strange plates of black stone or metal cover parts of this creature's body, granting a +2 bonus to its Armor Class.
2	Darkfire	This creature is wreathed in unnatural violet flames. When another creature strikes this creature with a melee attack, the attacker takes 3 (1d6) fire damage. This damage increases to 7 (2d6) if the creature is challenge rating 3 to 5, or 14 (4d6) if the creature is challenge rating 6 or higher.
3	Savage scream	When this creature feels pain, its broken mind screams out toward the source of that pain. As a reaction when it takes damage from a creature within 60 feet of it, the mutated creature deals 7 (2d6) psychic damage to the creature that damaged it.
4	Psychic illusions	The abnormal energy of the mountain allows this creature to create duplicate images of itself. The creature can cast the mirror image spell as a bonus action. This feature recharges when the mutated creature finishes a long rest.
5	Mental tremor	This creature's broken mind can infect those around it, obscuring it from their vision. The creature can cast the blur spell as a bonus action. This feature recharges when the mutated creature finishes a long rest.
6	Arcane splinters	This creature's bond with the strange energy in the mountain lets it cast the magic missile spell, at a level equal to half the challenge rating of the creature (minimum 1st level). This feature recharges when the mutated creature finishes a short rest.

d20	Mutation	Effect
7	Arcane shield	This creature's bond to the energy of the mountain lets it cast the shield spell. This feature recharges when the mutated creature finishes a short rest.
8	Spire claws	This creature's claws have taken on the unnatural strength of the spires of the Grendleroot. When the creature hits with its claws or an unarmed strike, the attack deals an extra 3 (1d6) slashing damage.
9	Sticky paws	This creature's limbs are coated in a strange, tacky slime that lets it move as though it were under the effect of a spider climb spell.
10	Twist time	By tapping into the power of the mountain, this creature can alter the flow of time around itself. As a bonus action, the creature can cast the haste spell on itself, requiring no material components. This feature recharges when the mutated creature finishes a long rest.
11	Open mind	This creature's long exposure to the call of the Grendleroot has given it telepathy out to a range of 60 feet.
12	Shooting spines	As an action, this creature can fire a volley of Grendleroot shards in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a Dexterity saving throw (DC 10 + half the challenge rating of the mutated creature). A target creature takes 10 (3d6) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. This feature recharges when the mutated creature finishes a long rest.
13	Poisoned weapons	The natural weapons of this creature are coated in a sticky black poison. Once per turn, when this creature hits a target with a natural weapon attack or an unarmed strike, the target must succeed on a Constitution saving throw (DC 10 + half the challenge rating of the mutated creature) or be poisoned. An affected target can repeat this saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the poisoned condition on a success.
14	Scream of the void	As an action, this creature can telepathically scream out the dark thoughts of the Grendleroot to nearby creatures. Each creature within 15 feet of it must make a Wisdom saving throw (DC 10 + half the challenge rating of the mutated creature), taking 10 (3d6) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. This feature recharges when the mutated creature finishes a long rest.

d20	Mutation	Effect
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15	Call to the Grendleroot	As an action, this creature can summon a Grendleroot spire from the rock beneath an enemy within 50 feet of it. The target must make a Dexterity saving throw (DC 10 + half the challenge rating of the creature). On a failed save, the target takes piercing damage equal to 7 (2d6) times the challenge rating of the mutated creature, and its speed is halved until it regains at least 1 hit point or finishes a short rest. Where the Grendleroot spire thrusts up out of the ground, it is a permanent and unbreakable Medium object. This feature recharges when the mutated creature finishes a long rest.
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16	Breath of the void	As an action, this creature breathes a blast of necrotic energy in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a Constitution saving throw (DC 10 + half the challenge rating of the mutated creature), taking 10 (3d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature that fails the saving throw has the veins in its exposed skin turn black until it has finished a long rest. This feature recharges when the mutated creature finishes a long rest.
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17	Vision of the beyond	As a bonus action, this creature can impart a vision beyond mortal comprehension to a target it can see within 60 feet of it. The target must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw (DC 10 + half the challenge rating of the mutated creature) or suffer a random form of short-term madness. An affected creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. The creature can automatically succeed on any saving throw against this effect if it willingly takes 10 (3d6) psychic damage. This feature recharges when the mutated creature finishes a long rest.
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18	Impart the maker's curse	As an action, this creature can cause small pieces of Grendleroot material to tear out through the skin of a creature within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed on a Constitution saving throw (DC 10 + half the challenge rating of the mutated creature) or take 10 (3d6) piercing damage. The Grendleroot pieces then crumble to dust. This feature recharges when the mutated creature finishes a long rest.
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d20	Mutation	Effect
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19	Burst of the one below	This creature can call upon the Grendleroot's thoughts of destruction. As an action, the creature can cast the shatter spell, requiring no material components. This feature recharges when the mutated creature finishes a long rest.
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20	Call to the one above	This creature has a connection to a being beyond mortality known as the Black Star. As an action, the creature can cast the sacred flame cantrip, which deals necrotic damage instead of radiant damage.
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Grendleroot Weapons

Though the spires of the Grendleroot are indestructible, explorers sometimes find lesser shards of those spires that can be converted to use as tools, weapons, and armor. Such items are extremely rare and seldom offered for sale. Adventurers who wield Grendleroot items garner great respect from all those who explore Blackclaw Mountain, as the possession of such an item speaks to an adventurer's bravery and resourcefulness.

Items crafted from shards of the Grendleroot are treated as magical and adamantine. Grendleroot shard weapons overcome the same damage resistances overcome by adamantine, and Grendleroot shard armor has the same properties as adamantine armor. Melee weapons and ammunition made of Grendleroot shards are especially effective when used to break objects, and whenever such a weapon or piece of ammunition hits an object, it is treated as a critical hit. A suit of armor, a melee weapon, or ten pieces of ammunition crafted using Grendleroot shards costs 500 gp more than the normal version.

The shard portion of a Grendleroot item is indestructible, though the item as a whole can still be damaged. For example, the blade of a Grendleroot-shard dagger cannot break, nor can the head of an axe built around a wedge-shaped Grendleroot shard. The handle and bindings of such weapons might still break, but the shard will not. Likewise, a suit of scale mail crafted with thin flakes of Grendleroot shards is still vulnerable to damage at its seams.

Relics

Thousands of relics of the past lie hidden in the caverns and chambers of Blackclaw Mountain. As the characters explore the mountain, they might uncover many such relics, some of which are mere curiosities—and others of which hold mysterious power.

You can use the following tables to generate unique relics that the characters might discover as they adventure in the mountain. Some relics might be found as treasure to reward the characters for their adventures. Others might channel useful magic. These tables can also be used to generate unique traits for permanent weapons and armor.

You can roll on one or more of the tables to generate relics of different types, from minor curiosities to powerful and fantastic objects. Curiosities usually have no useful power, but might show signs of magical effects or be valuable simply as treasure. Other more powerful relics can have an associated spell effect, allowing them to be treated as magic items of a rarity determined by the spell's level. The character who possesses the relic can normally cast the spell

RELIC STATE

d20	State
1	Smoking
2	Hot
3	Cool
4	Radiant
5	Bloody
6	Jeweled
7	Carved
8	Rough
9	Humming
10	Shrouded
11	Chipped
12	Ornate
13	Rune-scribed
14	Decorated
15	Rough
16	Smooth
17	Plain
18	Glyph-marked
19	Cracked
20	Shifting

OPTIONAL RULE: RELIC INSTABILITY

Carrying a number of relics close to one another can be dangerous. At your determination, relics in proximity to each other might potentially erupt in a surge of wild magic, drive their possessors mad, or simply be drained of their magical power. This optional rule helps ensure that the characters do not hoard large numbers of relics, forcing them to either sell or use them.

If you use this optional rule, when any party collectively carries more than four relics, each character possessing a relic must make a DC 13 Charisma saving throw at the end of each long rest. On a failure, the character suffers a random form of short-term madness and a random form of long-term madness as entities from outside the bounds of reality whisper into their mind.

contained within it once, after which the relic loses this power. For especially powerful relics, you might decide that the object regains the ability to cast its spell each dawn. Such relics are extremely powerful, so include them in your games with care.

RELIC ORIGIN

d20	Origin
1	Draconic
2	Dwarven
3	Elven
4	Primeval
5	Divine
6	Arcane
7	Abyssal
8	Cyclopean
9	Orcish
10	Undead
11	Goblinoid
12	Ghoulis
13	Vampiric
14	Dark elven
15	Astral
16	Ethereal
17	Infernal
18	Celestial
19	Elemental
20	Gnomish

RELIC TRAIT

d20 Trait

- 1 Made of Grendleroot material
- 2 Etched with the writings of the rune titans
- 3 Hums when it gets close to a Grendleroot spire
- 4 Marked with the alien sigils of the Caretakers
- 5 Made of old gnomish clockwork
- 6 Scrawled with the sigil of the Magocracy of the Black Star (an eclipsed black star with nine points around the corona)
- 7 Carved with swirling abolethic geometry
- 8 Carved with the symbol of the Order of the White Sun (a sword on a blazing sun)
- 9 Causes nightmares of cyclopean worlds
- 10 Inspires otherworldly dreams in the mind of its possessor

RELIC TYPE

d100 Type

- 1–2 Amulet
- 3–4 Bell
- 5–6 Bone
- 7–8 Bowl
- 9–10 Box
- 11–12 Bracelet
- 13–14 Brooch
- 15–16 Buckle
- 17–18 Candle
- 19–20 Coin
- 21–22 Crown
- 23–24 Cup
- 25–26 Dagger
- 27–28 Disk
- 29–30 Earring
- 31–32 Eyepatch
- 33–34 Figurine
- 35–36 Finger bone
- 37–38 Flute
- 39–40 Gemstone
- 41–42 Glove
- 43–44 Goblet
- 45–46 Holy symbol
- 47–48 Idol

d20 Trait

- 11 Decorated with an eyeless humanoid face
- 12 Marked with a fiendish rune
- 13 Marked with a divine rune
- 14 Inspires its possessor to travel in a particular direction within the mountain
- 15 Holds the soul of an adventurer who doesn't believe she is dead
- 16 Etched with a map to an undiscovered area of the mountain
- 17 Changes color with the rise and fall of the sun outside the mountain
- 18 Marked with the symbol of the Keepers (a key on a shield)
- 19 Inscribed with beautiful poetry in ancient Elvish
- 20 Shifts with moving pictograms showing scenes of tribal warfare

d100 Type

- 49–50 Jewelry box
- 51–52 Key
- 53–54 Lamp
- 55–56 Mask
- 57–58 Medallion
- 59–60 Mirror
- 61–62 Necklace
- 63–64 Opal
- 65–66 Orb
- 67–68 Pick
- 69–70 Pipe
- 71–72 Quill
- 73–74 Rat skull
- 75–76 Ring
- 77–78 Rod
- 79–80 Satchel
- 81–82 Skull
- 83–84 Spear tip
- 85–86 Sphere
- 87–88 Spike
- 89–90 Stone
- 91–92 String of beads
- 93–94 Tiara
- 95–96 Tooth
- 97–98 Vial
- 99–00 Wand

SPELL ABILITY

d100	Spell	Relic Rarity
1–2	Acid splash	Common
3–4	Light	Common
5–6	Shocking grasp	Common
7–8	True strike	Common
9–10	Bane	Common
11–12	Bless	Common
13–14	Burning hands	Common
15–16	Charm person	Common
17–18	Color spray	Common
19–20	Comprehend languages	Common
21–22	Cure wounds	Common
23–24	Detect evil and good	Common
25–26	Detect magic	Common
27–28	Fog cloud	Common
29–30	Guiding bolt	Common
31–32	Inflict wounds	Common
33–34	Jump	Common
35–36	Shield of faith	Common
37–38	Sleep	Common
39–40	Thunderwave	Common
41–42	Acid arrow	Uncommon
43–44	Blindness/deafness	Uncommon
45–46	Detect thoughts	Uncommon
47–48	Invisibility	Uncommon
49–50	Misty step	Uncommon
51–52	Ray of enfeeblement	Uncommon

d100	Spell	Relic Rarity
53–54	Scorching ray	Uncommon
55–56	Shatter	Uncommon
57–58	Silence	Uncommon
59–60	Web	Uncommon
61–62	Bestow curse	Uncommon
63–64	Dispel magic	Uncommon
65–66	Fear	Uncommon
67–68	Fly	Uncommon
69–70	Gaseous form	Uncommon
71–72	Haste	Uncommon
73–74	Lightning bolt	Uncommon
75–76	Slow	Uncommon
77–78	Stinking cloud	Uncommon
79–80	Banishment	Rare
81–82	Black tentacles	Rare
83–84	Blight	Rare
85–86	Fire shield	Rare
87–88	Ice storm	Rare
89–90	Stoneskin	Rare
91–92	Cloudkill	Rare
93–94	Cone of cold	Rare
95–96	Flame strike	Rare
97–98	Insect plague	Rare
99–00	Disintegrate	Very rare

BUYING AND SELLING RELICS

Relics are highly valued as treasure in Deepdelver's Enclave. Both Jayce Goldsmile and Ayaan of Veyr deal in relics, and might have as many as three random relics for sale or trade at any given time.

Curiosities (relics that do not hold a spell) are typically worth $3d6 \times 10$ gp. Magic-infused relics able to cast a single spell increase the relic's cost as follows:

Spell Level	Cost
Cantrip	+ 50 gp
1st level	+ 100 gp
2nd level	+ 200 gp
3rd level	+ 500 gp
4th level	+ 1,000 gp
5th level	+ 2,000 gp
6th level	+ 5,000 gp

Relics able to cast a spell each day are worth five times as much as those whose spells are cast only once. It's rare to find anyone who has the means to buy such an item, however.

Improvised Ability Checks, Damage, and Effects

While running adventures in Blackclaw Mountain, you might want to add your own traps, hazards, or environmental effects. When you do, make use of the following guidelines for determining the Difficulty Class for ability checks, statistics for improvised attacks and damage, hit points for inanimate objects, ad hoc saving throw DCs, and thresholds for damage.

These numbers typically work well for characters of 1st through 5th level:

- **Skill DCs:** 10 (easy) to 20 (hard)
- **AC:** 10 (rotted wood) to 20 (hard stone or iron)
- **Attack Bonus:** +3 (weak) to +7 (strong)
- **Hit Points:** 5 to 30
- **Saving Throws:** DC 12 (weak) to DC 17 (strong)
- **Low Damage:** 3 (1d6)
- **Medium Damage:** 7 (2d6)
- **High Damage:** 14 (4d6)

For certain traps or hazards, you might have failed saving throws impose conditions such as blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, grappled, incapacitated, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned, or unconscious. Use these conditions sparingly.

Mountain of Madness

Many locations and relics found in Blackclaw Mountain impose the effects of short-term or long-term madness, as detailed in the accompanying tables. Some forms of madness that appear in the mountain, particularly those imposed during combat, allow the afflicted creature to make saving throws at the end of each of its turns to end the madness, as noted in the applicable area or encounter. Other forms of madness last the full duration noted on the table.

SHORT-TERM MADNESS

d100 Effect (lasts 1d10 minutes)

01–20	The character retreats into their mind and becomes paralyzed. The effect ends if the character takes any damage.
21–30	The character becomes incapacitated and spends the duration screaming, laughing, or weeping.
31–40	The character becomes frightened and must use their action and movement each round to flee from the source of the fear.
41–50	The character begins babbling and is incapable of normal speech or spellcasting.
51–60	The character must use their action each round to attack the nearest creature.
61–70	The character experiences vivid hallucinations and has disadvantage on ability checks.
71–75	The character does whatever anyone tells them to do that isn't obviously self-destructive.
76–80	The character experiences an overpowering urge to eat something strange such as dirt, slime, or offal.
81–90	The character is stunned.
91–00	The character falls unconscious.

LONG-TERM MADNESS

d100 Effect (lasts 1d10 × 10 hours)

01–10	The character feels compelled to repeat a specific activity over and over, such as washing hands, touching things, praying, or counting coins.
11–20	The character experiences vivid hallucinations and has disadvantage on ability checks.
21–30	The character suffers extreme paranoia. The character has disadvantage on Wisdom and Charisma checks.
31–40	The character regards something (usually the source of madness) with intense revulsion, as if affected by the antipathy effect of the antipathy/sympathy spell.
41–45	The character experiences a powerful delusion. Choose a potion. The character imagines that they are under its effects.
46–55	The character becomes attached to a “lucky charm,” such as a person or an object, and has disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws while more than 30 feet from it.
56–65	The character is blinded (25%) or deafened (75%).
66–75	The character experiences uncontrollable tremors or tics, which impose disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws that involve Strength or Dexterity.
76–85	The character suffers from partial amnesia. The character knows who they are and retains racial traits and class features, but doesn't recognize other people or remember anything that happened before the madness took effect.
86–90	Whenever the character takes damage, they must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be affected as though they failed a saving throw against the confusion spell. The confusion effect lasts for 1 minute.
91–95	The character loses the ability to speak.
96–00	The character falls unconscious. No amount of jostling or damage can wake the character.

APPENDIX C

THE RISE OF THE BLACK STAR

The coming of the Black Star awakens the remaining archmages who once sought that alien entity's endless power. The plots of the archmages will end the world—unless brave adventurers can stop them.

The adventures in this book are intended take characters from 1st through 5th level. This chapter introduces a campaign arc set in Blackclaw Mountain that can take characters from 6th to 20th level. Building on the adventures in this book, this campaign description is designed to inspire you to create your own higher-level adventures for characters exploring the mysteries of the Grendleroot.

The first section below talks about the adventures in this book as the first part of a full campaign, running from 1st to 5th level. Where that section talks about how the remaining archmages of the Black Star react to the coming of the Black Star, those events largely happen off-screen from the adventures of the characters. Then the rest of the chapter divides the continuing campaign into three further sections: part 2 (6th to 10th level), part 3 (11th to 15th level), and part 4 (16th to 20th level).

Each section contains five adventure seeds, each of which is intended to cover one level of play. You are, of course, free to rearrange the order of these seeds, or move them from one section to another. You can rebuild or omit certain seeds entirely as you add your own ideas to the mix. As you think of ways to make use of these adventure ideas, you'll come up with your own hooks to connect the characters to the

adventure setup, making use of the secrets and clues you introduce in previous adventures.

Part 1: Awakening of the Archmages

When the characters investigate Starsong Tower in “The Call of Starsong Tower” adventure, the Grendleroot has just used the tower to call out into the cosmos. A moon-sized entity of obsidian and shadow covered by the ruins of a thousand worlds, the Black Star has heard that call—and it is coming, tearing its way across the multiverse toward the world.

After the crusade of the Order of the White Sun centuries ago, four of the nine archmages of the Black Star remain within Blackclaw Mountain still. They too hear the call of the Grendleroot, and awaken to prepare for the coming of the Black Star.

Three of the four archmages of the Black Star return to a secret area hidden deep within the mountain, known as the Chamber of Doors. Nine stone doors etched into the walls of this circular hall surround a million-year-old glyph-marked circle etched into the floor. Large cracks cut through four of the nine doors represent the four archmages killed during the crusade of the White Sun. One door, smoking with hellfire,

represents the door of Xarvin the Infernal, who remains trapped in a ring worn by an archdevil.

Three of the mages step through three of the remaining doors and into the chamber—Yolon of the Void, Ulon the Mind Dancer, and Karek Blackiron. The three begin preparations for the Black Star's arrival. But the fourth door stands closed, its mage refusing to join her former companions. Known previously as Korvilia, the Daughter of Death, that mage has reconnected with her lost humanity and become the White Queen. She no longer answers the call of the Black Star, instead contemplating how to save the world from that otherworldly entity's inevitable arrival.

Each of the three archmages puts their own plan into motion, using their talents to connect to the Black Star and channel its near-infinite power. Karek Blackiron builds massive black spikes forged of the metal of the Grendleroot, planning to use them as conductors that can channel the infinite energy of the Black Star. Ulon the Mind Dancer wishes to tap into the Black Star's vast stores of psychic and telekinetic energy, using that energy to create reality from dreams. Yolon of the Void wants to become one with the Black Star, bringing the void of emptiness to every part of the multiverse.

As the Black Star travels to the world, the archmages and their servants push deep into Blackclaw Mountain, seeking ancient relics and powerful allies to help advance their dark plans. The White Queen comes to Deepdelver's Enclave to warn the heroes who convinced her to quiet the Grendleroot (see "Vault of the White Queen"). She speaks of the coming of the Black Star, of how her former companions are channeling its power to serve their own agendas—and of how the world will end unless someone stops the Black Star's arrival.

PLOTS OF THE ARCHMAGES

Each of the three archmages of the Black Star moves forward with their plans to tap into the power of the elder evil they serve. The following sections outline the primary plans of each archmage as they pursue their goals.

YOLON OF THE VOID

Awakened after centuries of slumber, Yolon of the Void returns to their lifelong study of the Black Star. Seeking to understand the language of that vast sentience, Yolon sends agents throughout Blackclaw Mountain to hunt for relics of the Caretakers, who knew the nature of the dark entity.

COMBINING STAT BLOCKS

In this campaign summary, you'll see references to combining the stat blocks of two creatures, creating hybrid creatures such as a cloud giant mage or a vampire assassin. If you choose to use these creatures, you do so by combining the attributes of one creature's stat block with another in whatever way makes sense to you.

When building a creature with combined stat blocks, choose one creature to be the primary stat block, then take applicable attributes from another. For example, a vampire assassin might use the base stat block of a vampire and the key combat abilities of an assassin, including Assassinate, Sneak attack, and Evasion. A cloud giant archmage might use the base stat block of a cloud giant but take the archmage's Intelligence score, proficiencies, and Spellcasting feature.

Be aware that adding new combat features and spellcasting can make a creature significantly more dangerous, increasing its challenge rating above either of the original stat blocks.

Yolon also seeks to understand the nature of the Grendleroot, and how they might use it to bind themselves to the Black Star when the moment is right. Above all else, Yolon desires to use the unlimited energy of the Black Star to bring the void to the entire multiverse.

Like the other remaining archmages, Yolon seeks the Black Gate—a lost, dormant gateway built by the Caretakers. When reactivated, the Black Gate opens up a portal leading to the surface of the Black Star. Yolon is served by a cabal of drow **mages, priests, and veterans** known as the Children of the Void, and a band of vampire assassins known as the Red Six. (Combine the **vampire** stat block with the **assassin** stat block; see the "Combining Stat Blocks" sidebar.) Yolon's undead forces have taken over the remains of the tower of Marrowhold, once the throne of Korvilia. The site is now home to the vampire knight Vorun the Bone King (combine the **vampire** and **knight** stat blocks), his forty **wight** champions, and hundreds of warrior **skeletons**.

It is rumored that Yolon has split their black spirit into three distinct simulacrum bodies, making it even more difficult to destroy them. All the simulacrum **liches** work together to bring Yolon's agenda to fruition.

ULON THE MIND DANCER

During the crusade of the White Sun, the archmage illusionist Ulon the Mind Dancer escaped into his

sanctum, known as the Ghost Tower. There, he trapped the White Sun hero Sylda Dawncaster and her mageslayers in an illusory perpetual war lasting nearly three hundred years. With his awakening, Ulon brings the Ghost Tower back to Shadowreach and joins his fellow Black Star archmages in seeking to reveal the Black Gate.

Ulon is served by cloud giant mages, nightmarish **shadows**, **invisible stalkers**, and **oni** dream invaders posing as an acting troupe. (For the cloud giant mage, combine the **cloud giant** stat block with the **mage** stat block; see the “Combining Stat Blocks” sidebar.) He hopes to use the telepathic and telekinetic power of the Black Star to enable him to build reality from his own dreams. Ulon’s centuries of study of illusion have awoken an imagination greater than that of any other mortal mind, and the archmage hopes to channel that imagination as he creates an entirely new multiverse based on his own whims.

To accomplish this, Ulon must learn how the Grendleroot communicates with the Black Star. He hopes to travel to the Black Cathedral and recover the *Seed of the Grendleroot*, perhaps even tapping into the Grendleroot’s own alien intellect. As his influence grows in the mountain, Ulon’s illusions begin to flow out from the Ghost Tower and into Shadowreach. A number of those illusions take the form of creatures that eventually manifest into real forms, including **adult silver dragons**, **planetars**, **androsphinxes**, and **gynosphinxes**.

These ambassadors walk through the ruined city’s streets, preaching of the coming of a new multiverse. If left unchecked, Ulon’s false multiverse grows beyond the borders of the mountain, eventually surrounding the Black Star. The illusory multiverse is then able to feed off the Black Star’s energy as it expands infinitely from Ulon’s mind.

KAREK BLACKIRON

The forgemaster archmage Karek Blackiron awakens in the Monolith, his impenetrable citadel, hearing the resonance of the Black Star spires of the Grendleroot.

Served by a clan of **fire giants**, **azers**, and an **ancient red dragon** named Fume, Karek plans to shape massive Grendleroot spires that he will implant into the Black Star, channeling that elder evil’s arcane energy into a planetary forge. Within that forge, Karek will build massive constructs and send them to conquer the multiverse.

After Karek awakens, he fires up the forges of the Monolith once again. From across the cavern of

Shadowreach, heat can be seen rising off the dark metal of the massive citadel, and the ringing of iron can be heard from within. **Iron golems** and suits of **animated armor** issue forth from the Monolith to push deep into Blackclaw Mountain, seeking freestanding pieces of Grendleroot material that Karek can use to forge his massive superconducting spikes.

The archmage’s minions prepare to move the spikes to the Black Gate when it is found. From that site, Karek plans to transport them to the Black Star and drive them into the surface of the sentient planetoid. Then he will channel the energy of the Black Star to build city-sized warships that can travel between worlds and planes.

Part 2: Return of the Archmages

Over the course of further adventures covering 6th through 10th level, the characters explore more of the lost caverns of Blackclaw Mountain and learn of the return of the archmages of the Black Star. They discover that the Black Star is coming, and that at least some of the archmages are still alive and plotting to draw power from that otherworldly entity.

GRAY SWAMP

In the Gray Swamp, a subterranean mire filled with the bones of ancient dead dragons, Syrrec the lizardfolk king has collapsed a bridge over a great chasm, sealing off the Bonespear lizardfolk tribe from the trade routes of Deepdelver’s Enclave.

Bailon the Beardless asks the characters to travel through the swamp, which is home to **giant crocodiles**, a **green hag** named Mossteeth, a host of **trolls**, and a **young black dragon** named Zorvrothon the Black Death. Once they do so, the characters must treat with Syrrec and find out why the lizardfolk have cut themselves off from the rest of the mountain. The characters learn from Syrric that a goblin tribe known as the Dwellers has been more violent than usual of late, and that their hill giant leader, Grega, plans an assault on the caravans and adventurers of Deepdelver’s Enclave.

GOBLIN WARRENS

A tribe of **goblins**, **bugbears**, and **ogres** known as the Dwellers has spent centuries in Blackclaw, having survived the Magocracy of the Black Star and the coming of the Grendleroot. They carve their dwellings

out of huge domes of ancient mud, waste, and bone. Recently, though, large numbers of goblinoids have started to go missing while away from these warrens.

The Dweller chief, a **hill giant** named Grega, believes the explorers of Deepdelver's Enclave are responsible for the disappearance of her people, and has started to send raiding parties to attack explorers who leave the settlement. In reality, the archmage Karek Blackiron has begun enslaving the goblinoids, as he did hundreds of years ago during the rise of the Magocracy of the Black Star.

The characters must travel to the warrens and face Grega, her three **hill giant** concubines, a host of **goblins** and **bugbears**, and the tribe's pet **hydra**, named Nine Maws. There, they must help the giant leader accept that the kidnappings mark the return of the archmages of the Black Star.

SUNKEN TEMPLE

The coming of the Black Star has awakened the **aboleths** of Blackclaw Mountain. Once known as the Quorum, these aberrations have slumbered for some ten thousand years but have recently returned to the Sunken Temple (see the adventure "Chuul"). The aboleths send their **chuul** servants and hundreds of **grimlocks** to fully flood the temple as it was thousands of years ago.

The aboleths debate whether to support or thwart the surviving archmages of the Black Star, but there is no agreement among them. A prophet of Deepdelver's Enclave warns the characters of the flooding of the temple, and of the return of the aboleths. The characters are asked to investigate the site, convince those aboleths they can to side against the archmages, and destroy those that will not.

TWILIGHT FOREST

In the lower reaches of the mountain lies a once-beautiful fey forest, now corrupted by the spires of the Grendleroot and bathed in the violet light that emanates from strange crystals. Spreading among the ancient cairns and dead remains of rune titans, the forest is now home to **treants**, corrupted **centaurs**, and drow **druids** who tend to the Grandfather—an elder **treant** nearly as old as the mountain, and who knows many of its secrets. The characters must travel through the dangerous forest, then treat with the Grandfather in hopes of learning about the plans of the archmages and how they might be stopped.

YOLON'S SHADOWS

Yolon and the Children of the Void have learned how to transform living creatures into shadows of their former selves, allowing them to move between the mortal world and the world of shadow. Creatures converted into their shadowy forms by the dark magic of Yolon or his children gain these traits:

- **Damage Resistances.** The shadow creature has resistance to necrotic damage.
- **Living Shadow.** While in dim light or darkness, the shadow creature has resistance to damage that isn't force, psychic, or radiant.
- **Shadow Stealth.** While in dim light or darkness, the shadow creature can take the Hide action as a bonus action.
- **Sunlight Sensitivity.** While in sunlight, the shadow creature has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.
- **Energy Drain.** When the shadow creature hits a creature that is not a construct or undead with a melee weapon attack, the target creature's Strength score is reduced by 1d4. The target dies if this reduces its Strength to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest. If a non-evil humanoid dies from this attack, a new shadow rises from the corpse 1d4 hours later.

OBSIDIAN VAULT

In the centuries since Yolon was last seen, drow **mages** and **priests** known as the Children of the Void continued the archmage's work in the Obsidian Vault—a vast arcane laboratory buried in the lower depths of Deepreach. There, these Children of the Void reached out into the space between realities, slowly learning the language and nature of the Black Star.

Upon awakening, Yolon commanded his servants to find the Black Gate, a portal connected to the surface of the Black Star. In the course of their research, the Children of the Void have drawn forth entities from the depths of shadow. They have infused the traits of undead **shadows** into the creatures of the mountain, including **bulettes**, **wyverns**, and a **purple worm** now known as Voidmaw (see the "Yolon's Shadows" sidebar). The characters must travel to the Obsidian Vault and dismantle the work of the Children of the Void.

Part 3: Forge of the Grendleroot

In the third section of the campaign, covering 11th through 15th level, the characters work to dismantle the dark plans of the three remaining archmages of the Black Star.

WORLD EMBER

The White Queen warns the characters that **mage** agents of the Black Star, escorted by **stone golems**, are attempting to acquire a powerful ally in the Lake of Molten Metal. There, the **efreeti** Arktura the World Ember rules over a host of **fire giants**, **salamanders**, and **fire elementals** while his **magmin** servants seek out relics he can trade through his portal to the City of Brass. The characters must travel to the Lake of Molten Metal and convince Arktura to break ties with the archmages of the Black Star—one way or another.

BLACK OBELISK

In a chamber deep within Blackclaw Mountain, a huge and ancient obelisk has been raised up from the molten depths of a five-hundred-foot-deep spiral mine. Believed to be a potential source of magical power built by the Caretakers, the obelisk has been claimed by Karek Blackiron, with its restoration overseen by a stone giant archmage lieutenant of Karek named Drune (combine the **stone giant** and **archmage** stat blocks; see the “Combining Stat Blocks” sidebar).

The obelisk now hangs suspended above the molten inferno by four massive iron chains. Corrupted **stone giant** guardians and **wyverns** patrol the site, while **xorn** and **azer** servants work to restore the obelisk to its full power. The characters must travel to the site of the dig, kill Drune, and destroy the chains to send the obelisk back into the molten lava below.

GRENDLEHIDE’S LAIR

Black Star agents are attempting to recruit a corrupted **ancient black dragon** named Grendlehide. The dragon lairs in the City of Decay, a site of ancient dwarven ruins overtaken with Grendleroot-corrupted vines and acidic geysers. The characters must travel to Grendlehide’s lair and get past her guardians, including **shambling mounds**, **basilisks**, and a coven of **green hag** advisors known as the Dread Three. They must then face Grendlehide, either convincing

the dragon to not join with the Black Star mages, or defeating her in combat.

DEMON QUEEN

An obsidian slab containing a prophecy foretelling the coming of the Black Star is housed in the tomb of a marilith mummy lord, whose abyssal-tainted chambers have lain untouched for thousands of years. The tomb is protected by a host of vrock wights and hezrou mummies, and an army of skeleton dretches. (Combine the **marilith**, **vrock**, **hezrou**, and **dretch** stat blocks with the **skeleton**, **wight**, **mummy**, and **mummy lord** stat blocks to create these unique fiendish undead.) The slab hangs over a swirling portal leading into the depths of the Abyss. The White Queen sends the characters to the tomb to recover the slab, and to witness the prophecy of the Black Star’s arrival.

QUEEN’S HAMMER

A series of barrows rest on an island in the middle of a lake deep inside the mountain, fed by five half-mile-high waterfalls. From stalactites two hundred feet above, lightning arcs down constantly to the surface of the lake below. One of the barrows is protected by gladiator wights (combine the **gladiator** and **wight** stat blocks; see the “Combining Stat Blocks” sidebar). Within can be found the remains of a half-giant barbarian queen and her maul *Worldforger*—a *hammer of thunderbolts* that is the only object known to be able to smash through the doors of the Monolith, citadel of Karek Blackiron.

The characters must travel across the lake and to the barrows. As they journey to the island, an ancient **kraken** awakens at their intrusion, summoning **water elementals** and **giant sharks** to harry the characters. Once at the barrow, the characters must contend with the **ghost** of the barbarian queen if they wish to recover the hammer.

Part 4: Rise of the Black Star

During this series of adventures, covering 16th through 20th level, the characters face off against the three archmages of the Black Star before uncovering the Black Gate—the portal leading to the surface of the dark planetoid.

As the characters take on and defeat the archmages, those who remain fight to advance their dark agendas even faster. When the characters step through the Black Gate, they face the last of the archmages on the

surface of the Black Star, with the fate of the world held in their hands.

IRON HEART

With the barbarian queen's hammer in hand, the characters travel to the Monolith fortress of Karek Blackiron and smash down its impenetrable doors. Inside the Monolith, they face off against iron golem mages and stone golem priests (combine the **iron golem** and **stone golem** stat blocks with the spellcasting of the **mage** and **priest** stat blocks), as well as Karek's **fire giant** forgemasters. Hundreds of **azers** labor over vast pools of molten iron, fed by the only forge in the multiverse able to smelt the metal of the Grendleroot. At the forge, the characters must stand against Karek Blackiron, a dwarf archmage possessing the power of a storm giant (combine the **storm giant** and **archmage** stat blocks, but Karek remains a Medium creature), along with Fume, the **ancient red dragon** who fuels the fires of the forge.

MIND DANCE

The Ghost Tower of Ulon the Mind Dancer has reappeared in Shadowreach. This is the characters' one chance to infiltrate the tower, break the hold it has had on Sylva Dawncaster and the mageslayers, and face Ulon the Mind Dancer in his world of dreams. Within that strange dreamscape, the characters find themselves in an alien land of violet skies with three moons, and vast mountains hundreds of miles high. Sylva Dawncaster and her force of mageslayers battle eternally against a force of dream-crafted **veterans**, **devas**, and **planetars**, along with a **solar** who describes the mageslayers' presence as an affront to the holy land.

The characters must convince Sylva of the truth of her imprisonment while defending against Ulon's **djinni** dream masters and cloud giant mages (combine the **cloud giant** stat block with the spellcasting of the **mage** stat block). Then in the end, they face Ulon, a **cloud giant** archmage (add the spellcasting of the **archmage** stat block).

PHYLACTERY HUNT

Before they can defeat Yolon of the Void, the characters must find and destroy the lich's phylactery—a jeweled skull that holds a dark secret of your devising. After a dangerous negotiation and a questionable deal with a **pit fiend**, the characters learn that the phylactery is stored in an extradimensional vault filled with deadly traps, vampire knights

(combine the **vampire** and **knight** stat blocks), bound **erinyes**, a pair of fell-armored **iron golems**, and one of the simulacra of Yolon the **lich**. To make matters worse, only an intelligent undead creature can open the vault and destroy the phylactery.

BLACK GATE

Deep in Blackclaw Mountain, the last surviving archmage has uncovered an alien city of twisted towers, huge archways, and violet fires that blaze from hundred-foot-high stacks of obsidian. Within the city, a citadel of obsidian spires and floating geodes hides the Black Gate, the dormant portal to the surface of the Black Star. The last archmage has activated the gate, leaving a host of demons to defend it, including **hezrous**, **glabrezus**, **nalfeshnees**, and a pair of **mariliths**. Before the characters can intervene, the archmage steps through the gate onto the surface of the dark alien planetoid, and begins their transformation into the avatar of the Black Star.

AVATAR OF THE BLACK STAR

The characters step through the Black Gate and onto the surface of the Black Star. Across the obsidian deserts of the planetoid stand the remains of thousands of civilizations devoured over eons by the malevolent alien moon. There, the characters must battle through swarms of alien predators (use the **hell hound** stat block), flying horrors (use the **young black dragon** stat block), and black star titans (use the **storm giant** stat block) before reaching the Black Star Temple—a billion-year-old edifice forged from the alien mind of the Black Star.

In the temple, the characters face the final surviving archmage, transformed into an avatar of the Black Star—a combination of the **tarrasque** stat block with the spellcasting of the **archmage** stat block. When the avatar is defeated, the Black Star goes dormant and falls into orbit around the world, becoming a new black moon in the nighttime sky.

Additional Adventure Locations in Blackclaw Mountain

This section presents short descriptions of locations that adventurers might discover during their time in Blackclaw Mountain. You can use these descriptions as inspiration as you develop additional adventures

in which the characters unlock the secrets of the Grendleroot.

LOST CITY

An aboveground city was long ago transported to one of the mountain's vast caverns. The dead spirits of its former residents don't realize they're dead, and that their city has been destroyed. They continue to live their false lives each day, stuck in a perpetual cycle of suffering.

CELLS

Heavily protected tunnels lead to a forgotten prison whose cells hold terrible monsters, demons, and villains. At the center of the prison stands a chained evil titan who hasn't moved for so long that they appear as stone.

INFERNAL MACHINE

Deep within the mountain stands a terrible machine intended to draw out the screaming souls of the countless slaves fed into it long ago. The horrors of the machine are so great that it has developed its own malevolent personality—and it yearns to feed again.

CELESTIAL FALL

A fragment of the upper planes has fallen through the multiverse to become embedded in the rock of the mountain, lost in space and time. Angels lie here, eternally dying as their blood flows like quicksilver to fill lakes beneath the celestial ruin.

RUNOFF POOL

The decay and dregs of the mountain pour down into this dark pool—a huge pit of primordial ooze where strange and discarded creatures somehow thrive.

FLOATING OBELISK

A vast chamber hosts dozens of floating rocks hanging over a broad black lake. A 50-foot-high obelisk hangs over the lake at the center of the chamber. A consciousness in the obelisk calls out in an alien voice to those who draw close enough.

SKULL OF FEASTING

A massive titan's skull has become a warren for festering monstrosities and undead that feed off the titan's screaming spirit.

GRAY CITADEL

A drow keep carved into ancient rock floats in and out of the Ethereal Plane. Within the keep, a drow vampire seeks revenge against the descendant of a hated foe, who now lives in Deepdelver's Enclave.

LAIR OF THE RED DEATH

An ancient red dragon known as the Red Death lairs in a vast cavern shaped of red-hot rock, and which holds a mountain of gold melted and shaped into the image of its lost mate, Aravax Blackflame. The Red Death has been served by fifty generations of kobolds, who treat the dragon as a god.

ROOTS OF THE UNDERWORLD

Deep inside the mountain, a series of lost chambers reveal the deepest tendrils of the Grendleroot. Massive spines of indestructible metal twist and weave throughout these areas, some sprouting strange black pods that pulse with a great rhythmic heartbeat, and which birth alien creatures never before seen in the world.

IRON TOWER

Centuries ago, a crazed wizard built a tower of iron that serves as a support pillar in a large cavern. The tower sits in the center of a green lake, whose water is said to strip the flesh from the bones of any creature daring to enter it. Though many believe that the tower is now abandoned, some say the wizard still lurks inside, hoping to spring devious traps upon those foolish enough to venture within.

LAKE OF MOLTEN IRON

In the depths of the mountain lies a lake of molten iron. Rivers of lava flare red throughout the surrounding cavern, flowing around pillars of the Grendleroot that remain ever cool regardless of the heat. A powerful band of fire giants that call these caverns home guard a portal here that leads to the Elemental Plane of Fire.

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TEN FANTASTIC FIFTH EDITION ADVENTURES

Ruins of the Grendleroot is a book of ten short adventures for the fifth edition of the world's most popular fantasy roleplaying game. Designed for characters of 1st to 5th level, these adventures take place in the caverns, chambers, tunnels, and ruins of the mountain known as Blackclaw, within which lurks the Grendleroot—a strange and otherworldly sentience.

Ruins of the Grendleroot reinforces the sense of mystery and wonder that comes from exploring ancient ruins. The central hub of these adventures, Deepdelver's Enclave, is a frontier outpost overlooking the ruined city of Shadowreach, set deep within the mountain. In Deepdelver's Enclave, adventurers and explorers recount tales of their explorations, trade treasure and artifacts, and enjoy their shared love of uncovering the mysteries of the mountain.

