

# SLY FLOURISH'S FANTASTIC ADVENTURES



MICHAEL E. SHEA

Short Adventures for Your Fifth Edition Roleplaying Game

# ~ SLY FLOURISH'S ~ **FANTASTIC ADVENTURES**

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**W**elcome to Sly Flourish's Fantastic Adventures. You hold in your hands a set of fantasy adventures designed to be played with the fifth edition of the world's most popular roleplaying game.

*All these scenarios have been written with the goal of making it as easy as possible for you, the game master (GM), to run a two- to four-hour game for four to six characters of 2nd to 5th level. You should be able to pick up and run any of these adventures with little to no preparation ahead of time. And if you're a new GM, these adventures will help you learn how to run great fantasy roleplaying sessions.*



There are many different ways to play a 5e game. The flexibility of fifth edition and of roleplaying games in general is what makes them so powerful. However, this product and the adventures within it focus on a few specific ways to play. The book features some core design philosophies that might differ from the ways you're used to playing your games, or from your expectations based on other published adventures. These philosophies include the following:

We believe that the best games come from the imaginations of the players and the game master alike. We don't fill in all the blanks in these adventures, each of which features gaps, seams, nooks, and crannies that you can fill with your own ideas—or with the ideas that spontaneously arise from the actions and decisions of your players.

We believe that great combat sessions can be run without a 5-foot-per-inch gridded battle map or miniatures. All the combat encounters in these adventures have been designed to run perfectly without worrying about fixed distances at 5-foot intervals. You're certainly free to use a gridded map and miniatures for combat if doing so is an important part of your game, but that's not our expectation.

We don't reprint material you can find elsewhere. In particular, you'll need to provide your own monster statistics. All the monsters in these adventures are part of the core fifth edition System Reference Document and the primary fifth edition book of monsters. You can find these statistics through numerous legal and free sources. Just keep in mind that you'll want to have your monster stats on hand before you run any of these adventures.

We hope and expect that you'll twist, morph, steal, reskin, hack, glue, and mold these adventures into the adventures you want them to be. We've designed them to be highly modular, letting you plug in your own nonplayer characters wherever you need to, swap out monsters for the monsters you want, and tune the difficulty to fit the challenge you want the characters to face. Nothing here is sacred. Everything is fluid. Make it your own.

We keep it brief. We try to keep each adventure focused and the word count as low as possible, so that you can skim the text and start playing. We don't expect you to spend a weekend poring over an adventure. We expect that you'll pick it up, give it a healthy five-minute quick read, and then start running your game.





# ADVENTURE SUMMARIES

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## THE NIGHT BLADE

Ralavaz the Night Blade, a notorious bandit chieftain, has been released from prison. Rumors mark him as having returned to the hideout from which he and his band once operated—a ruined watchtower where a new group of bandits now dwells. The local sheriff believes that Ralavaz's return means the Night Blades are back—and that the bandit chieftain must be stopped for good.

## THE DWARVEN VAULT

Miners digging on Goldpeak Mountain recently broke into an ancient dwarven vault lost for centuries, and from which treasure and madness now flow. Monstrous attacks in the local area see the adventurers asked to investigate, leading them to the mines and the discovery of the ancient magic underlying the threat.

## THE WELL OF THE BLACK SUN

The mine known as Deepfathom Well is the only source of the lucrative alchemical substance voidwater. However, a number of recent murders—including the immolation of a head miner—have closed the operation, and the mine's owner hires the characters to investigate. As they explore the mysteries buried deep beneath the ground, the characters discover the dark power lurking in the mine—and expose the activities of a secret cult that seeks to control that power.

## ROSETHORN

A particularly intelligent goblin named Rosethorn has brought the local goblin tribes under his control, and is leading them in devastating raids against trade wagons and farm folk. When the local sheriff seeks help to put an end to these dastardly robberies, the characters uncover multiple levels of mystery and subterfuge, and discover the secret behind Rosethorn's villainous mind.

## THE GLEAM IN THE KING'S EYE

Lord Marlin Whitesparrow hires the characters to join him as he explores the lost chambers beneath his ancient keep. His goal is to claim the Crown of the First Lord—a lost family relic that might help solidify his rule. But within the forgotten spaces beneath the keep, Whitesparrow and the characters will discover family histories that should have been left alone.

## THE CRASHED PALACE

When a celestial palace falls to earth, its destruction unleashes corrupting magic and a bearded devil intent on summoning its master—a powerful pit fiend from the hellish plane of Dyn. A mortally wounded archon begs the characters to travel to the palace and prevent the summoning of this fiend, but dark magic and monstrous creatures transformed by the devil's rituals stand in their way.

## THE FLESH EATERS

Lizardfolk tribes living near settled lands traditionally keep to themselves. So when a lizardfolk attack leaves local settlers dead, the characters are asked to investigate. After discovering that an ancient lizardfolk cult is responsible, the characters must track the cannibal cultists back to their lair, revealing the dark magic that has corrupted the lizardfolk, and standing against their powerful leader.

## THE QUEEN OF RED WATER

At an old dwarven dam, a bugbear matriarch has found the key to holding an entire valley hostage by stopping the flow of the local river. With farms on the verge of collapse from the sudden drought, the characters are charged with negotiating with the bugbear's agents on behalf of the local village. They must then infiltrate the dam to identify the full scope of the bugbear chieftain's threats.

## THE CULT OF DUSK

A deadly attack in the local village leads to the revelation that a dark cult is seeking forbidden magic in the nearby ruins known as the forgotten library. The characters must pursue the cultists and their mysterious leader into the ruins, trying to prevent a ritual that might pull the world into eternal night.

## GLOOM

Lord Whitesparrow's spoiled nephew and heir, Pennin, is marked for death, and the characters are tasked with discovering who is behind the threat. Even as they learn that Pennin recently desecrated a local temple, murder and mayhem lead the characters to discover that one of the temple's priests is a former assassin of great and terrible renown—and that she has kidnapped Pennin to seek bloody revenge.





## THE VILLAGE OF WHITESPARROW

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The adventures in this book take place around Whitesparrow, a settlement of five hundred souls known for raising large, four-horned goats that thrive nowhere but in the local area. Trouble and odd events—known as “the peculiarities” by the locals—seem to home in on the village frequently, but its stout folk struggle on.

You are free to use Whitesparrow in these adventures, or to replace it with a settlement of your choice from your own world or your favorite published setting. Like the rest of the material in this book, the village is a tool for you to employ if doing so is useful, or to discard if not.

## ADVENTURE FORMAT

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If you’re used to traditional published adventures, the adventure format in this book might seem quite different to you. To keep the adventures brief, each one focuses on the key features you need to run a game, while avoiding features that aren’t likely to make an appearance during that game.

Each adventure uses the following format:

**Adventure Summary:** The summary is a brief overview of the adventure and its expected outcomes.

**Notable NPCs:** This section provides a list of important NPCs (nonplayer characters) and villains who might come up during the adventure.

**Secrets and Clues:** Elements of the adventure that the characters can discover are laid out in this section. These secrets and clues provide both you and your players with essential background to what’s going on in the adventure, as well as a bit of history about the adventure’s location. Some of these are simply evocative bits of story, while others are hints that the characters can use to figure out certain aspects of the scenario. These secrets aren’t tied to any particular NPC or location. Rather, the expectation is that you’ll drop them in wherever they fit at the time. Secrets and clues might be discovered through careful investigation, or they could arise as the result of a conversation with an NPC. They might be tied to the history of a magic weapon or painted on the walls of a ruined castle. You can place these elements wherever they make sense as you run the adventure.

**Customizing the Adventure:** This section provides tips for customizing the scenario to fit your own campaign and world, including changing out an adventure’s quest givers and notable NPCs for characters already established in your own campaign world.

**Start:** The beginning of the adventure usually starts with a strong initial scene to draw the players and characters into the action quickly. This section includes italicized text you can read aloud to your players.

**Notable Locations:** These sites and settings of note are sometimes large; sometimes small. Each includes descriptive text displayed in italics that you’re free to read aloud or summarize, as well as area aspects describing interesting and important features of the location that you’ll want to take note of.

**Concluding the Adventure:** This section describes the end state for the adventure and the potential outcomes the characters might arrive at.

**Expanding the Adventure:** Offering suggestions for developing the adventure beyond what’s presented in this book, this section also discusses making use of sites and settings from the book *Sly Flourish’s Fantastic Locations*. That book isn’t required to run these adventures, but it offers a number of additional areas and artwork that can be used to expand the locations in this book.

## IMPROVISED SKILL CHECKS, DAMAGE, AND EFFECTS

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While running these adventures, 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, numbers for improvised attacks and damage, hit points for inanimate objects, ad hoc saving throw DCs, and thresholds for damage.

- **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 15 (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.

## TUNING ENCOUNTERS

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The number of monsters in these adventures is based on what makes sense for the adventure, and is generally built around a party of five 3rd-level characters. Depending on many factors—including the number of characters in your game, the level of those characters, and how experienced your players are—you might want to make encounters easier or harder.

Always feel free to simply replace an encounter in any of these adventures with an encounter of your own that you'd like to run. But if you'd prefer to just tune an existing encounter, you can do so in a few different ways. The easiest option is often just to add or remove monsters from the default number, making the encounter easier or harder accordingly. You can also tune the threat of existing monsters by increasing or decreasing their hit points, or dial up the threat of powerful monsters by giving them an extra action each turn.

Tuning encounters is especially important for 1st-level characters. These adventures have been designed around characters of 2nd to 5th level, but you can still run any of them for a 1st-level group. Just make the first fight easier by removing any creatures above challenge rating 1/4. You'll then likely want to advance the characters to 2nd level after that first fight, after incorporating some suitably intense roleplaying and noncombat challenges.

## FINAL WORDS ON RUNNING THESE ADVENTURES

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The adventures in this book have all been designed to help you run great games at your own table. Never worry about whether you're playing "the right way" if doing so sacrifices your own enjoyment or the enjoyment of the players. Hang on with a loose grip. Add your own details. Wrap these adventures in your own stories and the stories of the characters who live through them. Dive deep, fall in, and enjoy the adventures that unfold at the table.



THE VILLAGE OF WHITESPARROW AND SURROUNDING LANDS







## THE VILLAGE OF WHITESPARROW

Nestled between mountains to the east and west and swampland and forest to the south, the village of Whitesparrow serves as respite for those who travel along the modest trade route running through the surrounding valley. An old keep overlooks this village of five hundred people from an adjacent hill, with banners depicting the settlement's namesake bird fluttering from its square turrets.

After the keep, a great hand carved of black stone is Whitesparrow's second-most-visible landmark, rising up at the center of the village with its thumb and five fingers splayed out. The area around the hand is a great dig, where previous generations tried and failed to excavate whatever lay beneath it.

An open-air stone temple, a two-story inn built atop steaming hot springs, and an outfitters' shop stand among two dozen other buildings that make up the heart of the village, while farmhouses dot the neighboring hillsides, surrounded by broad fields of crops.

**Area Aspects:** Cyclopean hand, old keep, outfitters, open-air temple, hot spring inn

### USING WHITESPARROW IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

The village of Whitesparrow serves as the hub for the adventures in this book, so as to save on the space required to write a new starting location for each adventure, and to give the characters a well-





defined home base. The design of the village is both straightforward and spare, featuring an inn, a tavern, an outfitters, a sheriff, and the village lord. Whitesparrow has thus been designed to fit easily into any fantasy world—but also to be completely replaceable with any settlement of your choice from your own campaign world, another published adventure, or a larger published campaign setting. Use the village as is, modify it to suit your own campaign, or throw it out and replace it completely. It's up to you.

## NOTABLE NPCs OF WHITESPARROW

**Sheriff Ruth Willowmane:** Sheriff Ruth Willowmane is the true protector and unofficial leader of the village. The middle-aged sheriff has served the people of Whitesparrow for twenty years, after serving as a soldier for fifteen years before that. She has a good heart and loves the people of the village, who always look to her when trouble arises. She typically has little patience for adventurers, seeing them as disruptive influences on the normal flow of village life—and fearing the trouble they often bring with them. Still, she understands that the threats represented by the odd events that often transpire around the village require special skills to deal with, and she looks to those with a proven ability to handle themselves to deal with those threats.

The sheriff has eight **guards** under her employ and can call upon another twelve conscripted **guards** when needed.

**Lord Marlin Whitesparrow:** Lord Marlin Whitesparrow is the young lord of the village and the lands around it. He resides in the old castle that sits on a hill above the village, an inheritance passed down through his family for generations. Marlin's father died in his fifties and left his thirty-year old son in charge. Despite his young age, Lord Whitesparrow is a well-respected leader, though he has little patience for the daily drudgery of village life.

Marlin has no wife or children, but the lord has adopted his young nephew Pennin as ward after the boy's parents died of influenza when he was a baby. Pennin will succeed Marlin if the lord dies. If both die, the Whitesparrow line is broken and Sheriff Ruth Willowmane becomes the new elected leader of the village.

**Amanda Jess:** Owner of the Summerspring Inn and the Evershady Tavern, Amanda Jess is the dominant entrepreneur in Whitesparrow. She has three sons—Kinzlow, Balaham, and Wess—who work at the tavern and inn. Amanda enjoys meeting visitors to Whitesparrow, and she has an eye for people. She has a knack for knowing exactly what questions to ask in order to dig deep into newcomers' backgrounds, and always seeks a way to find opportunities for business. Some whisper that Amanda was once a spy for a powerful organization before she retired to the quiet life of Whitesparrow.

**Gavun Grayhorn:** A former adventurer, Gavun is the proprietor of Grayhorn Outfitters. He once traveled far and wide across many lands, but fortune always eluded him. When one adventure left him the only survivor of his group, Gavun retired to start his business and serve the many trading caravans passing through the local area—just as those caravans began to turn to safer paths that took them away from Whitesparrow. Such is the luck of Gavun Grayhorn. He runs the shop with his wife Arianne, whose family has dwelled in Whitesparrow for generations.

**Elovyne Sorrowsong:** An elf priest of the Temple of Light, Elovyne found herself out of political favor in her homeland and was sent on a one-hundred-year pilgrimage into the lands of humankind. Though she still resents being sent on the pilgrimage, and the decades she has spent in Whitesparrow as a result, she has come to care very much for the people of the village. She greatly enjoys the empowerment that comes with being Whitesparrow's only elf in a position of authority. Because of this, she is initially distrustful of other elves who visit the village, afraid they will take away from her mystique.

**Philcock Deadcleft:** The manager of the Summerspring Inn and a longtime employee of Amanda Jess, Deadcleft is a small, ugly rumormonger who spies on his patrons. Yet for reasons unknown, Amanda has always protected and defended him. Deadcleft wears clothes of noble cut but in poor condition, and always smells terrible.



## NOTABLE LOCATIONS OF WHITESPARROW

### THE CYCLOPEAN PALM

**Area Aspects:** Titanic six-fingered hand rising out of the ground, unknown and indestructible substance, deep excavations, rumored staircase

*A great hand carved of smooth black stone rises in the center of the village, its palm facing the sky and its thumb and five fingers splayed out. The cyclopean stonework is nearly forty feet high—tall enough that buildings have been constructed around it and a tavern sits underneath the shade of the back of the hand. Deep clefts have been dug in around the hand's wrist, confirming that it is attached to a forearm descending far beneath the ground.*

The age of the stone hand jutting out of the ground has never been accurately determined, and its origin remains unknown. Its stone is seemingly impervious to damage, and resembles no other type of local rock. A number of explorers and miners have tried to dig out the rest of this amazing construction over the years. However, most such attempts were abandoned when their crews began to complain of nightmares filled with strange buzzing sounds. Some of the clefts left behind by these excavation efforts still exist, with old rope ladders leading down roughly one hundred feet to the bend at the elbow of the arm.

A rumor continuously floats around Whitesparrow talking of how the hand's wrist is hollow, and of a staircase carved into it that leads down below the surface. A chamber within the arm is said to be the boundary between two worlds. However, most pass this rumor off as a fantasy, spoken of by drunkards and sketched onto false maps sold for a few silver to travelers awed by the spectacle of the cyclopean palm.

### THE EVERSHADY TAVERN

**Area Aspects:** Continual shade under the cyclopean palm, indoor and outdoor tables, circular bar around the wrist

*Underneath the great palm rests the building and outdoor eatery that is the Evershady Tavern. A half-circle bar has been built around the wrist of the upthrust hand, and numerous tables rest beneath the shade of the palm. Ropes and nets filled with foodstuffs hang from the hand's splayed fingers.*

The enterprising Amanda Jess built this tavern four decades earlier, and has since turned it into an enduring and profitable business. The tavern serves travelers and workers for miles around, featuring a spiced lamb stew known far and wide as one of the best dishes in the local area. The recipe is kept secret, but some think that the proximity of the tavern's kitchens to the cyclopean palm plays some part in its potency. The vast cellars below the tavern were dug out by various expeditions seeking the secrets of the cyclopean palm, but which never uncovered anything but bankruptcy and madness.

### THE SUMMERSPRING INN

**Area Aspects:** Underground hot springs, creaking and rotting wood, large support beams

*This large, two-story building seems to sit slightly askew, supported at its corners by heavy beams that keep it from collapsing completely. Whenever the wind blows, the whole building makes a deep creaking sound, like someone trying to get comfortable in a tilting chair.*

The Summerspring Inn's most notable feature is the hot springs on which it sits—and which are also the cause of its potential demise. The continual humidity has soaked into the wood of the building, rotting much of it and putting the entire structure on the edge of collapse. Maintaining the inn is now a full-time endeavor, and workers are continually reinforcing beams and adding new supports where the floors have begun to sag.

The lower rooms of the inn include their own stone hot baths, continually fed by the slightly sulfuric-smelling hot springs. Some of those springs have unexpectedly gone dry over the years, leaving a network of caverns below the inn said to contain untouched gemstone deposits, lost relics, and secret horrors. Amanda Jess owns this inn as well as the Evershady Tavern, but she relegates the inn's daily management to Philcock Deadcleft.

### GRAYHORN OUTFITTERS

**Area Aspects:** Shop and stables, huge horns above door, clutter and mess

*A pair of huge black horns protrudes out from above the heavy wooden door of this large shop. A horseshoe, a bundle of rope, and a pickaxe are carved into the sign that hangs overhead. One side of the building features*

*a stable with twelve stalls, presently holding four well-worked draft horses and a beautiful white stallion.*

Gavun Grayhorn's shop is a cluttered mess holding all forms of tack and equipment, including both adventuring and exploration gear. Gavun reluctantly brings out arms and armor if asked, though he doesn't seem very fond of such items. If asked about the horns above the door, he says he found them out in the woods, attached to the skull of some unknown herbivore. In reality, they are the horns of the black dragon that slew Gavun's companions when he was an adventurer—in response to which he took bloody revenge by feeding the dragon a dead yak concealing six pots of alchemist's fire. The dragon's lair still holds the remains of Gavun's companions and their equipment, all of which he hopes to recover some day—were it not for the monsters that have since taken up residence within the abandoned lair.

## THE TEMPLE OF LIGHT

**Area Aspects:** Open-air nave, statues of elves with hands raised to the sky, floating orb

*The central nave of this large circular temple is open to the sky above and adorned by five ancient statues of elf men and women—including a statue depicting the goddess of light—their faces and arms held up to the sky. An orb hangs in midair in the center of the open nave, glowing with scintillating colors. Rings of stone pews face a central fountain beneath the orb, which bubbles with warm water. A small circular house sits nearby, artfully decorated with symbols of the sun.*

Once an elven site, the temple has stood here for centuries, and was abandoned after the elves left this region to the human settlers who came after them. The main chamber of the temple is open to the sky through a stone entryway, while the stone rooms around it are roofed of clay and slate to protect the temple's ceremonial items. A collapsed floor in the back of one storeroom of the temple leads into catacombs last explored centuries ago.

The scintillating orb has been present in the temple for as long as anyone can remember. Four years ago, enterprising thieves tried to steal the orb armed with an exceptionally tall ladder—only to have the lead thief disappear as soon as her fingers touched the orb, never to be seen again.

A nearby home is the residence of the temple's current priest, Elovyn Sorrowsong.

## WHITESPARROW KEEP

**Area Aspects:** Stone three-story keep, switchback cobblestone road, enormous stone birdbath

*A switchback cobblestone road leads up to the courtyard of Whitesparrow Keep, which stands majestically atop a rocky hill above the village. A large, still pool of water sits in the center of the keep's main courtyard, with a granite statue of a sparrow sitting atop a rock in the pool's center. Dozens of birds sit on perches around the pool's edge, drinking from the pool and splashing about. The keep beyond stands three stories tall, with square turrets in the front and a pitched roof in the back.*

Not counting the temple, Whitesparrow keep is the oldest structure in the village, having survived numerous wars and other notable catastrophes. As castles go, it is not terribly large, although numerous subbasements lead deep into the rocky hill upon which the keep is built. Local rumors talk of how most of those subbasements haven't been explored for hundreds of years.





## THE NIGHT BLADE

Ralavaz the Night Blade, a notorious bandit chieftain, has been released from prison. Rumors mark him as having returned to the hideout from which he and his band once operated—a ruined watchtower where a new group of bandits now preys upon the folk of Whitesparrow and the surrounding vale.

When Ralavaz and his younger brother Gardren led the Night Blade bandits, they were well known in the village of Whitesparrow for their dastardly deeds—including a murder for which Ralavaz was never convicted. Gardren and the rest of the Night Blades were killed when Ralavaz was captured and imprisoned. But Sheriff Ruth Willowmane believes that Ralavaz's return means the Night Blades are back—and that attacks against wagons and travelers around the village will get worse unless the bandit chieftain is stopped for good.

### ADVENTURE SUMMARY

This adventure begins when the party is attacked by members of the new Night Blades. After the fight, the characters investigate the scene of battle to learn more about the bandits. Sheriff Willowmane then recruits the characters to hunt down the new Night Blades and bring Ralavaz to justice.

In Whitesparrow, the characters speak to the villagers to learn more of the history of Ralavaz and the Night Blades. They then make their way through a huge expanse of tangleweed to reach the Lonely Torch—the ruined watchtower that once served the Night Blades as a headquarters. But as they explore the ruins of the tower and face off against the new group of bandits dwelling there, the characters discover that Ralavaz has been imprisoned by his brother Gardren, disfigured but still alive. Learning that Ralavaz has changed his ways and is now trying to turn his brother





away from a life of evil, the characters must make a choice about who to save, who to kill, and who to bring back to Whitesparrow to face justice.

**Monsters:** Bandits (6), shambling mound, guards (2), stirges (10), thugs (2), swarm of rats, bandit captain

## NOTABLE NPCs

**Sheriff Ruth Willowmane:** Sheriff of the village of Whitesparrow, Ruth knows that her younger brother, Dronder Willowmane, was slain by Ralavaz eleven years earlier. But a lack of evidence meant that the bandit chieftain never paid the price for the crime.

**Gardren the Night Lord:** The younger of the brothers who once led the Night Blades, Gardren is thought by most folk to be dead. Ten years ago, the first incarnation of the Night Blades were cornered in a barn near the Lonely Torch watchtower. Angry villagers set the structure ablaze, and only Ralavaz is thought to have made it out alive. Gardren still lives, however, and is secretly leading a new gang of Night Blades when his brother returns.

Disfigured by the fire, Gardren doesn't lead the gang for treasure or profit. Rather, he wants to see the folk of Whitesparrow destroyed in the name of his dead friends and the injury done to him. Among his many dark hobbies, Gardren has learned how to tame stirges—or at least to prevent them from attacking him. He has a particularly nasty pet stirge he calls Heartspine, who is always with him.

**Ralavaz the Night Blade:** Ralavaz is the elder of the brothers who led the Night Blades ten years ago, and the only known survivor of the fire that wiped the bandits out. Having saved a noble's son during a prison riot while awaiting execution, Ralavaz had his sentence commuted, and was recently released after ten years instead of paying with his life for his crimes. He has returned to the ruined tower known as the Lonely Torch, where new members of the Night Blade bandits now dwell. Unknown to most people, Ralavaz has repented his old ways and become a follower of the goddess of light. He wishes to ask his brother's forgiveness, and to turn Gardren away from murder and banditry.

## SECRETS AND CLUES

- ◆ Ten years ago, Ralavaz, Gardren, and the rest of the Night Blades were trapped in a barn near the Lonely Torch. When angry villagers set the barn ablaze, only Ralavaz made it out, with Gardren and the rest of the trapped Night Blades dying in the fire.
- ◆ In former days, many young men and women who could not make a living in Whitesparrow fell to banditry under the flag of the Night Blades.
- ◆ The original Night Blades used the ruined watchtower known as the Lonely Torch for their headquarters. The site is overgrown with an invasive poisonous tangleweed, which covers most of the hills around the tower.
- ◆ A witness claims to have seen Night Blade bandits pissing on their own boots before making their way up to the Lonely Torch.
- ◆ Dousing one's boots with urine protects against the worst effects of the tangleweed and allows creatures to move through it.
- ◆ When the Night Blades were destroyed, the area around Whitesparrow was relatively free from bandit attacks for many years. Over the past year, a new group of bandits has appeared at the Lonely Torch, slowly building power by recruiting independent bandits to their cause—or slitting their throats.
- ◆ A masked figure called the Night Lord has recently been revealed as the leader of this new group of bandits, making many see the group as a new incarnation of the Night Blades.
- ◆ The Night Lord has been seen with some sort of red bird perched on his shoulder.
- ◆ The Night Lord wears a golden mask, whose edges reveal that the skin of his neck is horribly scarred.
- ◆ A cloud of bats has been seen flying over the Lonely Torch. Witnesses have reported seeing the bats descend on a large elk that wandered too close to the tangleweed, swarming it and leaving only a bloodless, wrinkled husk behind.
- ◆ A few weeks ago, a number of villagers saw someone they swear was Ralavaz the Night Blade returning to the Lonely Torch.





## CUSTOMIZING THE ADVENTURE

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You can customize this adventure by replacing either Gardren or Ralavaz with NPCs from your campaign, or from the backgrounds of the characters. Gardren, Ralavaz, or both might have some relationship to one or more of the player characters, either by blood or by having crossed paths in the past. It might even be the case that, before his incarceration, Ralavaz had murdered a character's family member, companion, or friend.

The Night Blades can be customized to represent a particular faction of bandits from your own game world. Add details to the tower and the chambers below it to highlight a previous empire or some other layer of the history of your campaign. Customize the initial story hook by switching out the quest giver to an NPC the characters have worked with in the past. Any NPC who has reason to see the Night Blades (or the equivalent bandit group from your own campaign) as a threat could send the characters in to cut them down.

## START

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*Light rain falls, and a gloomy mist covers the landscape. A large tree has fallen across the road, crushing a wagon under its great weight. More fallen trees lie at the sides of the road.*

Six **bandits** (Artur, Dobarn, Kirci, Dorra, Rhuda and Tasty Pete) lurk at the sides of the road, hiding near the fallen trees and ready to rob passersby. If the characters approach the wagon, one of the bandits shouts out,

*“Your weapons and belongings! Drop them to the ground, and in the name of the Night Blades, we’ll spare your lives!”*

If convinced or goaded into speaking, the bandits reveal that they are eager to look good in the eyes of their leader the Night Lord, who waits for their return at the Lonely Torch.

When the battle is over, the characters can approach local villagers in Whitesparrow to learn some of the information regarding the Night Blades given in the “Secrets and Clues” section. Eventually, the party is approached by Sheriff Willowmane, who hires the characters to root out the Night Blades and bring their newly returned leader Ralavaz to justice.

## CUSTOMIZING THE BANDITS

This adventure includes battles against a lot of bandits. To keep things fresh, we’ve included a few names for these bandits. Feel free to customize those foes by changing their appearance, gender, or weapons, and to substitute names of your own. Consider tying some of these bandits to NPCs the characters might know or have met. Describe some as being small and fast and others as large and strong. Do what you can to make each bandit unique and interesting.

## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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### THE TANGLES

**Area Aspects:** Poisonous tangleweed, sinkholes, statues of ancient lords

*A narrow path leads up a rocky slope to the broken stone walls of the Lonely Torch watchtower. A two-foot-thick carpet of glistening green-and-violet weeds and thorny brambles surrounds the stony hill on which the tower sits. Statues of forgotten nobility peer out from the tangled vines.*

Tangleweed is an invasive, poisonous plant that can lash out against creatures passing close by. Any creature that moves through the tangleweed without protection must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or take 7 (2d6) poison damage and be poisoned for 1 hour. A character with a medical background can spend 10 minutes to aid the victim and attempt a DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check. On a success, the afflicted character is no longer poisoned. Covering one's boots in urine repels the tangleweed and negates the need for a saving throw.

A **shambling mound** (known as Strangleberries by the Night Blades) might be seen wandering through the tangleweed, but this creature is generally not aggressive. Like the tangleweed, it can be repelled by urine.

### SHATTERED DOOR

**Area Aspects:** Ironbound wooden door, grinning gargoyle, narrow arrow slits

*The thin path rising through the tangleweed leads up to an ironbound wooden door at the front of the ruined tower. A stone gargoyle juts out from above the door, its mouth open to reveal that its tongue has been broken off. Arrow slits are cut into the*



*rough stone walls of the tower, angled toward the path where it leads up to the door.*

Two Night Blade **guards** (Osgood and Pulk) are meant to watch over this door by peering out the arrow slits from inside the tower. However, they are often either too drunk or too engaged in a game of knucklebones to notice anyone who doesn't make a lot of noise while approaching. The door is strong ironbound oak and is barred from the inside. The magic that once animated the door's gargoyle guardian has faded, but the residual spark of that magic allows the gargoyle to speak. The gargoyle is lonely for company, and aware of much of the activity undertaken by those inside the tower. The bandits have long since ignored the chatty guardian.

### **BROKEN HALL**

**Area Aspects:** Collapsed beams, broken floor, headless statue of warrior

*Large oaken beams have collapsed from where they once supported the vaulted ceiling of this hall. One has smashed through the floor, revealing basement passages below. A large headless statue of a warrior, its greatsword clasped hilt-up in its hands, stands at*

*the far side of the hall. A stone staircase leads up to the higher floors of the tower.*

In addition to the guards described above, four Night Blade **bandits** (Sanda Sixtoes, Polard the Mule, Juliette, and Longtooth) sometimes reside in this hall when preparing for an imminent attack, or when they need to get out of the stagnant air in the basement levels. They avoid the stirges above, which they call "the Night Lord's children." While in this hall, the characters might hear commotion from below but they hear nothing but silence from above.

### **SHADOWED REACHES**

**Area Aspects:** Hanging curtains of moss, collapsed walls, painted ceiling

*Sections of the walls of this upper level of the tower have collapsed from centuries of decay. Much of the stone ceiling has likewise fallen, leaving the tower open to the elements above. An old yet still beautiful fresco painting covers what remains of the ceiling, but much of it is shrouded by curtains of moss.*

Ten **stirges** lurk behind the cover of the moss, hoping that living creatures will come close enough to feed





their insatiable appetites. The Night Blades know to stay out of this chamber, since only Gardren is safe from attack by these monsters.

### SUNKEN CELLARS

**Area Aspects:** Crumbling stone ceiling, wooden beam supports, ragged bedrolls and hammocks

*The floor of the tower has collapsed, revealing stairs leading to a series of stone chambers below. Cracked wooden support beams hold up the crumbling stone ceiling of the main chamber, whose walls are lined with hammocks and bedrolls. A stone door, carved with an artful depiction of hooded priests, stands at the opposite end of the hall, while a natural tunnel leads off to the right.*

Depending on the time of day, four Night Blade **bandits** (Terra, Duke, Ashe Dragonknuckle, and Two-Cups) and two **thugs** (Victor and Kingsteeth) might be sleeping here. They are generally not alert unless a significant amount of noise has been made upstairs. The carved doorway leads into the lost shrine, while the natural tunnel leads to the mud pit.

### MUD PIT

**Area Aspects:** Slick mud walls, mud pool floor, drainpipe, knotted rope

*A narrow walkway leads to the lip of a ten-foot-deep pit filled with mud. An ancient drainpipe roughly two feet in diameter is closed off by steel bars and trickles fetid water into the pool. A knotted rope hangs from an iron hook hammered into the natural stone wall.*

Two Night Blade **bandits** (Pelpe and Klive Yellowriver) guard this cavern while Ralavaz languishes in the mud, imprisoned and tormented here by his brother Gardren until he comes to his senses and demonstrates a willingness to return to his former life as a bandit and murderer. One of the bandits has a large bag filled with a **swarm of rats**, which he uses to torment Ralavaz. If attacked, the bandit dumps out this bag to add to the chaos.

If Ralavaz is rescued, he reveals that he returned to the Lonely Torch after finding out that his brother Gardren was alive and leading a new group of Night Blades. Ralavaz had hoped to turn Gardren away from murder and banditry, but his failure to do so saw him incarcerated here.

### LOST THRONE

**Area Aspects:** Kneeling armored statues, stone throne on dais, burning stone braziers, wide well leading down into shadow

*Two hulking statues of faceless armored knights kneel in the corners of the room, facing the center of the chamber and a well there that leads down into the shadowy depths. A stone throne sits upon a raised dais opposite the door.*

Gardren, a **bandit captain**, and four Night Blade **bandits** (Avrin, Ragia, Thorn, and Sasha) are usually found in this hall, sorting through recently stolen goods or planning their next attacks. Gardren's pet **stirge** Heartspine hides in the corner and attacks any character who attacks its master. This stirge has 10 hit points and a Dexterity (Stealth) modifier of +5.

Gardren wields a +1 *shortsword* called *Nightculler*—a silvered weapon with a draconic pommel and a line of black onyx along the fuller of the blade. A character attuned to the sword is able to cast the *darkness* spell, requiring no components. Once this feature is used, it can't be used again until the next dawn.

### CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

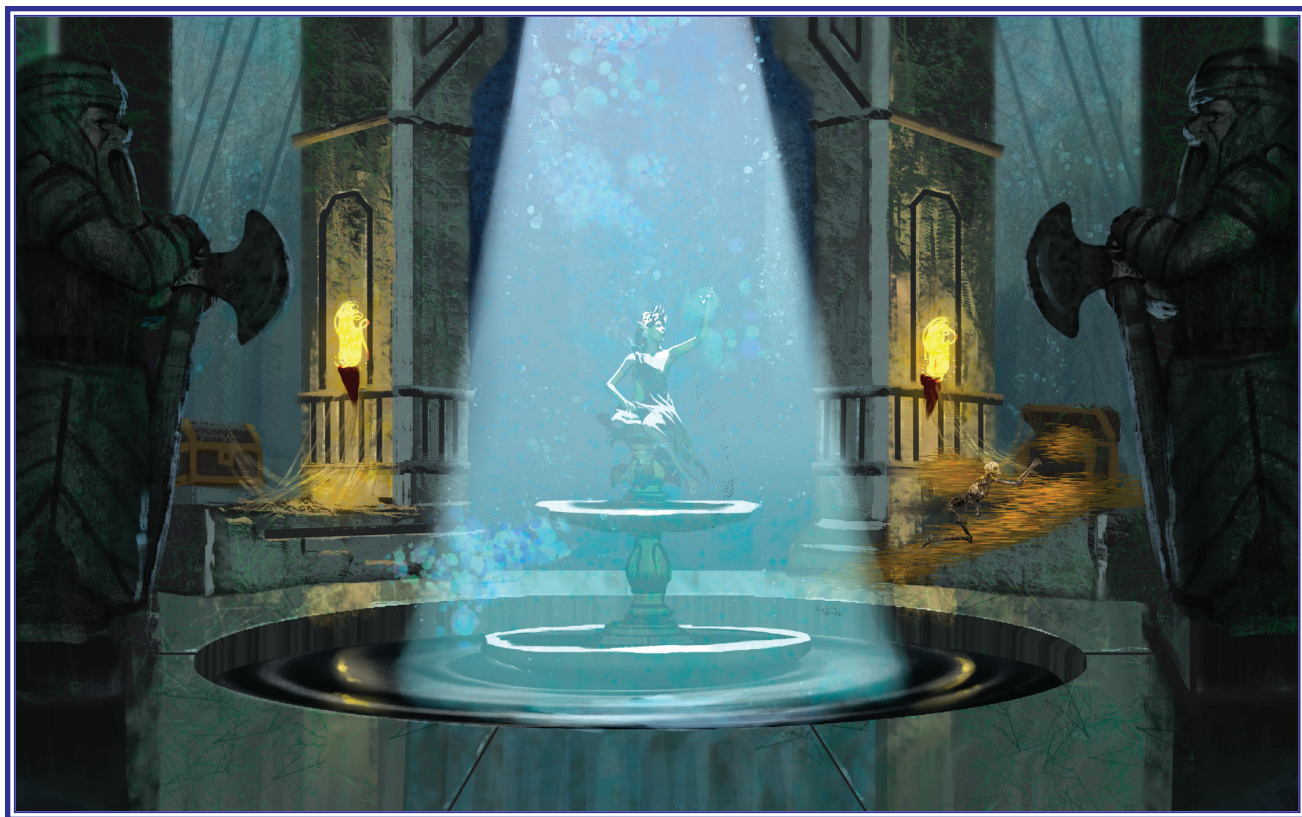
This adventure concludes when the characters have removed Gardren and decided what to do with Ralavaz. Still wracked by guilt over his previous life and feeling responsible for the behavior of his brother, Ralavaz is willing to accept whatever punishment the characters or the folk of Whitesparrow seek for him.

### EXPANDING THE ADVENTURE

The tower can have numerous hidden chambers beneath its upper levels, accessed by way of the hole in the throne room and expanding in multiple directions beneath the rocky hill. You can also replace the tower with the "Dark Abbey" location from *Sly Flourish's Fantastic Locations*, dropping in many additional areas for the characters to explore.

It's also possible that the story of Ralavaz and Gardren doesn't end with this adventure. Depending on how Ralavaz wants to make amends for his past crimes, he might have his own quests that he hopes to have the characters follow.





## THE DWARVEN VAULT

Miners digging on Goldpeak Mountain recently broke into an ancient dwarven vault lost for centuries. A strange dark-elven artifact within the vault once again calls out to terrible monsters in and around the mountain—and has begun to unleash those monsters against the village of Whitesparrow. The adventurers must make their way to the mountain and into the vault to discover what is causing monsters to rise, and to end the call of the artifact.

### ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Crazed dire wolves attack the villagers of Whitesparrow, and the sheriff asks the characters to investigate the strange assault. The investigation leads them to the Evensong farmhouse, where Feria Evensong is the lone survivor of an attack that claimed the rest of her family. A trail from the house can lead the characters to Goldpeak Mountain.

Word around the village suggests that explorers at Goldpeak Mountain recently uncovered fantastic

treasure from a long-lost mine. When the characters investigate, a recently abandoned excavation site shows where those explorers had been digging into old dwarven ruins now occupied by horrid creatures. Deeper in, the characters find the dwarven vault where the unlucky explorers unveiled a dark-elven statue whose magical song drives monsters mad. The characters are free to destroy the statue, recover it, bury it, or leave it be.

**Monsters:** Dire wolves (2), death dogs (2), ankhegs (2), chuul

### NOTABLE NPCS

**Feria Evensong:** Feria is a local farmer and head of the Evensong household. Dire wolves driven to madness by the magic in the dwarven ruins killed her family, and she barely escaped with her life.

**Barnak Rumblestone:** A retired dwarf explorer and sage, Barnak knows the lore of the centuries-lost Deepriver dwarven clan.



**Grenwald Windcastle:** The leader of the expedition that uncovered the lost dwarven ruins, Grenwald is now lost along with the rest of his crew in the mines of Goldpeak Mountain.

**Thomas Windcastle:** The black sheep of the family, Thomas shares none of his brother Grenwald’s adventurous nature, and spends much of his time drinking at the Evershady Tavern. He started working with the Goldpeak explorers a few weeks ago, but quit after something about the site began to unnerve him. Thomas hasn’t heard from the expedition in a few days, and is just starting to get worried—but he doesn’t want to go back up there. He can sketch out a rough map showing the route toward the explorers’ last known location, allowing the characters to get close enough to pick up the trail on their own.

## SECRETS AND CLUES

- ◆ Goldpeak Mountain got its name from the rich veins of gold once found within it. Those veins have long since dried up, but hopeful prospectors continue to dig into the mountain in search of new riches.
- ◆ The dwarves were the first to mine Goldpeak, raising structures outside the mountain and digging their mine tunnels deep within it centuries ago.
- ◆ The dwarves are rumored to have also dug secret chambers deeper within the mountain. In those caverns, they fought dark elves and recovered magic artifacts that they hid away in concealed vaults.
- ◆ Centuries later, the dwarven vaults are long buried and forgotten, though the tapped-out dwarven mines remain. Recently, Grenwald Windcastle and his crew dug deeper in search of veins of gold ore as yet untouched.
- ◆ A week ago, Windcastle and his crew came back to the village of Whitesparrow boasting of great riches. They paid for drinks with strange gold coins emblazoned with a dwarf helm and a battleaxe.
- ◆ The coins once belonged to the Deepriver clan of dwarven explorers, who sought treasure and riches beyond the dwarven mines under the mountain.
- ◆ The Deepriver clan once raided a dark elf outpost, finding and claiming great treasures there.

## CUSTOMIZING THE ADVENTURE

This adventure can fit into many different stories. The characters might run into dwarves or other travelers being stalked by the dire wolves from the start of the scenario. You might also consider tying the Evensong family to one of the backgrounds of the characters, perhaps making them childhood friends or old acquaintances. At the same time, the exploration of the mountain doesn’t require a connection to a village unless you want it to. The hook of helpless folk running from strange monsters that escaped from an old dwarven mine should be enough to draw heroic and curious characters into the adventure.

## START

*A scream cuts through the day-to-day activity of the village of Whitesparrow, followed soon after by the howling of wolves. A villager runs across the street but is no match for the speed of a huge wolf with boney ridges rising from its back that chases him down, then tears him in half. Another dire wolf stalks between nearby buildings, seeking the blood of the villagers fleeing in terror.*

Two **dire wolves** attack indiscriminately within the village. The only guard nearby is quickly dispatched by the wolves.

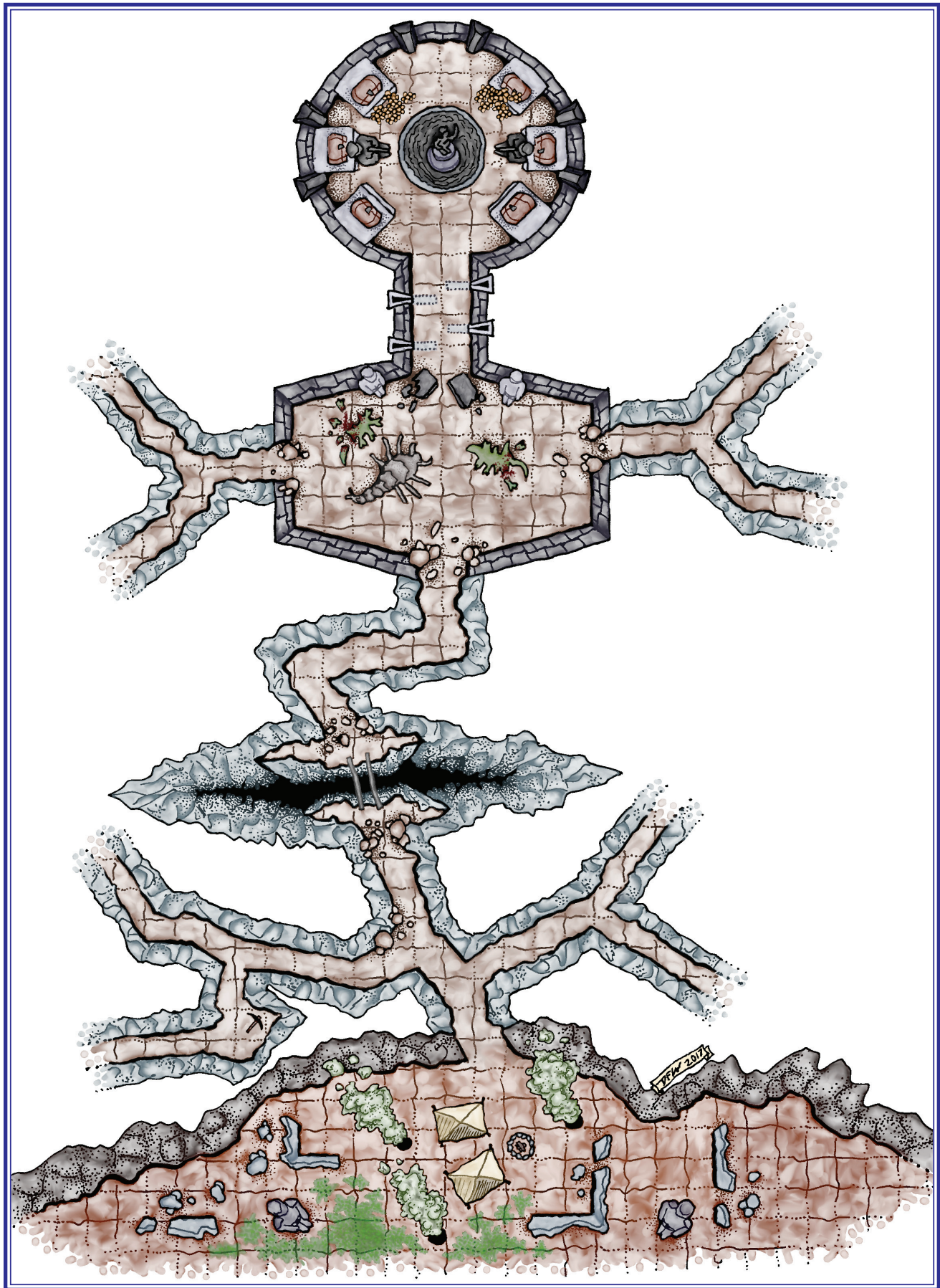
During the fight, the dire wolves are unnaturally ferocious, not caring about the wounds they take and showing no fear of the characters. A character who succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check gets the sense that some magical force drives the wolves’ fury.

A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Medicine) check or Intelligence (Investigation) check allows a character to assess the dried blood that streaks the wolves, suggesting that they’ve fought many battles over many days. Sheriff Ruth Willowmane asks the characters to investigate the attack and discover what would cause dire wolves to so brazenly enter the village. At this point, the characters might choose to ask around Whitesparrow about recent unusual happenings or follow the wolves’ trail out of the village.

## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

### THE EVENSONG FARM

**Area Aspects:** Large waterwheel, slaughtered animals, bloody tracks





The characters can easily follow the trail of the dire wolves, which leads back toward the Evensong farm outside the village.

*The smell of blood hangs in the air, and streaks of red stain the brook where it runs alongside the road. Ahead, a large waterwheel turns in the bloodstained water, trailing small crimson waterfalls as it rises. In addition to at least a dozen slain farm animals, two mutilated humanoid bodies float in the water nearby, caught on rocks. Past the wheelhouse stands the Evensong farmhouse, its door smashed in.*

As they draw closer, the characters see the terrified figure of Feria Evensong, owner of the farm, outside the farmhouse. In shock and covered in blood, she cradles the mutilated body of one of her children. When questioned, Feria reveals that she was in the fields when the attack came. She hid from the dire wolves until they left the farm and headed for Whitesparrow. The mutilated remains of one other child are in the house, while the bodies of Deren Evensong, Feria's husband, and their eldest son float in the brook.

With a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check, the characters can follow the wolves' bloody tracks to a game trail twisting through the woods. That track eventually winds back to the lower reaches of Goldpeak Mountain. More slaughtered animals can be found along the trail and the mountain's slopes, allowing the characters to follow the wolves' course back to a section of old dwarven ruins where the Windcastle expedition camped.

**Treasure:** Searching the bodies reveals twelve silver coins embossed with a dwarf helm and a battleaxe. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (History) check reveals that this was the symbol of the Deepriver dwarves, who resided in the nearby mountains two centuries past. If she is asked, Feria says that the coins came from members of the Windcastle crew, who purchased flour from the Evensongs on their most recent trip back to the village.

The house also contains a small box with 42 sp and 92 cp, the meager long-term savings of the Evensongs.

## EXPEDITION CAMP

**Area Aspects:** Ancient dwarven ruins, ventilation shafts, signs of terrible slaughter

*A mining camp sits within dwarven ruins that must be thousands of years old. The head of a huge dwarven statue, split in half and lying on its side, serves as a*

*wall and shade for a set of tents and makeshift wooden buildings. Steam rises from a series of narrow shafts cut into the rock, each of which appears to pierce deep into the earth. The bloody remains of a number of humanoids are spread in a wide swath at the center of the camp. Within the carnage, you can make out the head and arm of a dwarf still attached to part of a mutilated torso.*

This campsite is where Grenwald Windcastle and his crew staged their expedition into the deep dwarven mines. The ventilation shafts are too steep and narrow to be descended, but the main entrance to the mines is a short distance from the camp (see below).

The signs of slaughter here are a few days old. A pair of **death dogs** lurk around the campsite, gnawing on the remains of the dwarven corpses and attacking any living creature that happens by. During any fight, a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check reveals that, like the dire wolves, the death dogs are acting even more violent than their monstrous nature would suggest. An investigation of the site reveals that the carnage was likely caused by both the dire wolves and the death dogs, with signs showing that all those creatures entered and left the mines more than once.

**Treasure:** Among the miners' supplies is a lockbox armed with a dart trap. The trap can be discovered with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check and disarmed with a successful DC 12 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. Failure on either check results in the dart firing: +4 to hit; 2 (1d4) piercing damage and 7 (2d6) poison damage. The lock on the lockbox can be picked with a successful DC 12 Dexterity check using thieves' tools.

The box contains twenty-two gold bars worth 10 gp each. Each bar is marked with the same helm-and-battleaxe insignia as the coins found at the Evensong farm and recalled by any villagers who had recent business with the Windcastle crew. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (History) check reveals that the mark belonged to the Deepriver dwarves, who mined gold here two hundred years ago.

## DEEP MINES

**Area Aspects:** Bestial remains, cracked supports, network of shafts, large fissure

*A short distance away from the expedition camp, a network of deep mineshafts leads into the mountain, carved out over centuries. Ancient cracked supports keep the ceilings of these shafts from collapsing. Pools of*





*fresh blood and piles of entrails mark spots where large numbers of predatory creatures have recently fought and fed on each other here.*

A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Survival) check reveals that many of the creatures that fought here came to this area through crumbling side passages. The survivors of those battles then left the cave.

Far down one shaft, a pair of iron rods spans a deep fissure whose bottom disappears into darkness below.

The fissure is twenty feet wide and can be crossed in any number of ways. A character who tries to walk across the beam must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. On a failure, the character falls and strikes the iron bar, taking 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage before grabbing on. Any other reasonably safe approach requires no ability check to succeed.

Once the characters cross the fissure, they enter an area of numerous mineshafts leading off into different areas of the mountain. Some have been blocked off with ancient timbers in response to collapses. The signs of centuries of mining can be seen in the depths of the mountain, and the trail of bestial remains can be followed down deep to the recently uncovered entrance of a long-lost dwarven vault.

## VAULT ENTRYWAY

**Area Aspects:** Huge dwarven statues, concealed halls, monstrous corpses, collapsed tunnels

*Recent mining activity has collapsed the natural rock wall to reveal a vault once hidden behind it. The smooth stone walls of this hidden chamber were clearly worked by skilled dwarf hands. The ceiling arches upward, reinforced by crisscrossing beams of stone. Another well-carved hall flanked by huge statues of armored dwarf warriors continues on at the far end of the chamber, while tunnels to both sides of the chamber show signs of having crumbled where they once led deeper into the mountain. A few still-standing side chambers appear to have once held dwarven treasure, but a number of empty chests suggest that these areas were recently looted.*

*In the main chamber, huge insectoid creatures are digging their mandibles into the thick green flesh of a dead six-legged lizard. Another insectoid horror stands as still as a statue, its carapace turned to gray stone. One of the living creatures lurches up,*

*its mandibles spraying blood across the stone of the vault as it beholds you. With a high-pitched shriek, it rushes over to attack.*

There were no monsters here when the Windcastle explorers first passed through. But since the dwarves exposed the cursed singing statue and rekindled its dark magic, this chamber has become a pit of murder for the numerous monsters that have been drawn to the vault seeking the statue's song. Upon reaching the vault, those monsters immediately battle one another in a continuing game of king of the hill. Two **ankhegs** are currently at the top of that hill, devouring the body of a basilisk they recently defeated. The ankhegs attack any creatures that enter the chamber.

When the fighting has subsided, any character who succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check hears a strange song echoing from the chamber to the north. Chaotic characters might feel the song calling to them, filling their minds with the hint of a desire for bloodshed.

The northern hall is trapped by a clever dwarven mechanism of whirling scythes, empowered by glyphs of lightning triggered by hidden metal plates on the hall's floor. The corpse of a bugbear and two dwarves lie in the hall, their bodies cleanly hacked up and marked with electrical burns. Any creature that steps into the hall triggers the trap, taking 7 (2d6) slashing damage and 14 (4d6) lightning damage. A creature that succeeds on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw takes no slashing damage and half the lightning damage.

A creature can detect the trap with a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools disables the trap. If this check fails, the creature disarming the trap triggers it instead.

**Treasure:** The two dwarves within the mess of corpses in the hall were Windcastle explorers. The dwarves' initial exploration of the formerly hidden vault saw them lay claim to the easily accessed treasure in the outer chambers, some of which they brought with them when they returned to Whitesparrow. But the monsters drawn to the site and the deadly traps of the main chamber did them in when they returned to expand their exploration.

Two dwarven magic items—a +1 *shield* called *Bladecatcher* and a +1 *battleaxe* called *Ironhewer*—can be found within the mass of corpses. The wielder of *Ironhewer* gains advantage on ability checks made



to break down doors or smash inanimate objects. Feel free to change this battleaxe to a weapon type more suitable to the characters.

The dwarf corpses also carry small leather bags containing a total of 24 pp, 92 gp, and 162 sp (much of it in the same style as the dwarven gold seen earlier), along with a bag of ten black jaspers worth 10 gp each.

### CHAMBER OF THE SINGING STATUE

**Area Aspects:** Obsidian singing statue, ornate fountain, rippling and hypnotic black liquid, iron-bound chests

*An alluring song echoes from this circular vaulted chamber. An obsidian statue depicting a beautiful elf woman stands in the center of a huge pool of opaque black liquid. The magical song is emanating from the statue, sending rippling waves along the liquid in hypnotic patterns. Two towering bronze statues depicting armored dwarves stand on opposite sides of the chamber, while six large ironbound chests sit on daises along the wall. Two of those chests have been broken open, the coins they hold spilling out like gleaming rivers. The remains of a mutilated dwarf are spread between the two chests, his dried black blood staining the stone floor and the broken axe close at hand.*

The black pool is deep enough to conceal a **chuul** that was drawn to this chamber by the statue's song. With its ability to detect magic, it enjoys the wonderful feeling of the magical energy flowing off the statue. The chuul senses when creatures enter the room and rises to attack.

The dwarf remains are those of Grenwald Windcastle, who was killed by the chuul.

The singing of the statue and the rippling of the water can hypnotize those who move too close. Any creature that ends its turn within 5 feet of the pool must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or become enthralled for 1 minute, as though under the effect of a *confusion* spell. Once a creature succeeds on a saving throw against this effect, it can no longer be affected by the pool.

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (History or Investigation) check reveals that the statue is of dark-elven make. Whether its original purpose was as a siege weapon of some sort or a cursed gift to give to one's enemies remains unclear. With a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check, a character determines

that the statue draws monsters of low Intelligence to it, drives them insane, and sends them off into the world filled with bloody rage. The longer the statue sings, the more powerful the monsters that come to its call.

Three of the chests in the room (one of the two already opened plus two more of your choice) are sitting on delicate pressure plates that trigger in response to any attempt to open them. These traps cause the two dwarven statues to exhale a cloud of poison that fills the room, equivalent to a *cloudkill* spell (DC 15). The traps can be detected with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check and disarmed with a successful DC 16 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. Failure triggers the trap.

**Treasure:** The three untrapped chests contain 2,342 cp, 452 sp, 243 gp, 23 pp, an assortment of gemstones worth a total of 100 gp, and a golden dwarven +1 warhammer called *Sunrise*. A character who makes a successful attack with the warhammer can choose to have the attack deal an extra 2d6 radiant damage. Once this feature is used, it can't be used again until the next dawn. Feel free to change this warhammer to another weapon type more applicable to the characters.

The three trapped chests contain an additional mix of coins, bars, and gems worth a total of 1,425 gp.

### CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Within the final chamber, the characters find a large black drapery imbued with magic that masks the sound of anything it covers. Originally placed over the statue for safety by the dwarves who built the vault, the drapery was removed by the Windcastle explorers, who didn't understand its purpose.

Before they depart the ruins, the characters can cover the statue to stop its magic calling monsters to it, then unleashing them against the folk of the surrounding countryside. They can also destroy the statue, or simply leave it as it is. Preventing others from discovering the statue and reactivating it might be accomplished by collapsing the closest tunnels to bury the vault once again. But the characters might first journey even deeper into the caves, discovering areas newly exposed by the monsters drawn to the statue. They might also decide whether to take the treasure, leave it, or give it to Feria Evensong and other locals who can be revealed to have suffered similar attacks.

If the characters attempt to take the statue as plunder and don't cover it with the magic drapery, monsters of ever-greater power are drawn to them in a rage. These creatures appear from the surrounding wilderness or burrow up from the earth—ending, perhaps, with a **purple worm** attack.

## EXPANDING THE ADVENTURE

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The dwarven ruins and the mineshafts can lead the characters on to many further adventures. You can add chambers from the “Red Keep” location in *Sly Flourish's Fantastic Locations* to reveal that the dwarves originally established their mines in an area used as a prison for an immortal being.







## THE WELL OF THE BLACK SUN

Located some twenty miles from Whitesparrow, the mining operation known as Deepfathom Well has brought both tremendous profit and tremendous danger to owner Daronith Deepfathom and the miners she employs. The mine is the only known source of a mysterious reagent known as voidwater, which commands a high price from alchemists all across the land. But though accidents have always been a problem at the mine, a rash of recent deaths have seen miners burned alive or torn apart by unknown creatures—and are coming on the heels of the appearance of violent cultists in the small community that serves the mine.

The recent string of deaths, including the incineration of Deepfathom's lead digger, has forced Daronith to close the mine until she can determine their cause. At the same time, the priest of the nearby church of the High Sun has begun to talk of the mine as a place of evil, and tensions are running high. Daronith has placed an enormous brass cap over the top of the mine

to seal away the unknown threats in its depths, and she now seeks out adventurers willing to investigate and put an end to the trouble.

### ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Daronith Deepfathom, owner of the Deepfathom Well, hires the characters to investigate the mysterious deaths plaguing the mine, including the incineration of Ivan Stills, one of the most experienced diggers in Daronith's operation. When they arrive in the small settlement that serves the mine—called Deepfathom by those who live there—the characters are witnesses when a group of cultists attack miners and patrons at the Falling Rod tavern.

After intervening in the assault, the characters learn of ongoing tension between Daronith Deepfathom and the local priest at the church of the High Sun, Aleith Skyborn. Aleith preaches that a dark power lurks within the mine, and is putting pressure on





Daronith to close her operation down for the safety of all. During their investigation, the characters discover that the deaths in the mine are the result of workers killed in an accident two months before having been transformed into ravening ghouls that now roam the mine's countless caverns. These undead are led by the vengeful ghost Paulson Deepfathom—Daronith's twin brother. In the course of dealing with the undead, the adventurers discover the dark secret that long-term exposure to voidwater has caused this horrid transformation.

But the characters might also discover that the undead are not the greatest threat to the mine and its workers. The Cult of the Black Sun is secretly led by Aleith Skyborn, who uses the church of the High Sun as a front for the cult's activities, and to seek out those who see the futility of worshipping the light. Aleith leads his cultists from an ancient, massive cathedral to the Black Sun, buried beneath the site of his much more humble church.

In the end, when the characters have defeated the undead and Aleith Skyborn, they must choose whether to let Daronith reopen the mine, or demand that she seal the dangerous site forever.

**Monsters:** Cultists (6), cult fanatic, thugs (2), ghouls (4), ghost, black pudding

## NOTABLE NPCs

**Daronith Deepfathom:** A wealthy miner, Daronith discovered the voidwater mine that she named Deepfathom Well while digging for gold. Experienced in deep-shaft mining, she oversaw the construction of the complex machinery that punches down into a large underground chamber, opening up new caverns where pools of voidwater flow freely. Daronith is a middle-aged woman with silvery black hair and a rough complexion. She is highly ambitious and is eager to return the mine to operation. She hires the characters to determine what's behind the deaths that forced her to close the mine a week before, and is paying handsomely for a positive outcome.

**Aleith Skyborn:** A young and charismatic priest of the church of the High Sun, Aleith leads a fervent and rapidly growing congregation composed mostly of mine workers and their families. He is baby-faced, looking little more than a teenager with his piercing dark eyes and a small smile always on his lips. He tries to convince the characters that some evil power

dwells in the mine, and is both the source of the recent deaths and the force drawing cultists to the area. The characters need to discover that Aleith is right about both those things—because he's the one seeking to control that evil power. In the end, his goal is to shut the mine down so that he can claim the site for the Cult of the Black Sun.

**Terris Westmoore:** Terris is Daronith's partner and right hand. He is a good source of local lore and rumors, having worked at the mine since the beginning. However, he has a drinking problem that he struggles to keep under control, and is reluctant to share many of the more outlandish rumors he knows for fear of being ridiculed. Terris is tall, with a hawk nose and a deep voice.

**Paulson Deepfathom:** Daronith's brother died in Deepfathom Well two months earlier, when an accident caused the mine's drilling rig to crash down and seal the entrance shaft. His body was never found, and unknown to anyone else, that months-long exposure to voidwater has caused him to rise as a ghost that now lurks in the caverns of the mine.

**Surina Stills:** Surina is the widow of Ivan Stills, the most recent victim of the mine. Ivan died mysteriously on a routine dig shortly after the mine was reopened, and was found pinned to the ceiling and incinerated. The characters must discover that Ivan was killed by the dark magic bestowed on the undead Paulson Deepfathom by long-term exposure to voidwater, and to deliver the justice Surina demands for her husband's death.

**Gendra Jade:** The owner of the Falling Rod, a tavern that caters to the workers of Deepfathom Well, Gendra was once a miner herself. Then her crushed hand and amputated leg pushed her into a different trade.

## SECRETS AND CLUES

- ◆ Deepfathom Well was created when a dig operation run by Daronith Deepfathom uncovered a natural cavern filled with pools of a unique alchemical reagent known as voidwater.
- ◆ Voidwater is difficult to process and handle, so that manually collecting, storing, and transporting even small amounts of it requires significant labor. Only the extraordinarily high value placed on the substance by alchemists keeps Daronith's operation profitable.



- ◆ Any bright light that touches voidwater ruins its unique alchemical properties, turning it into mundane oily water. Dim candlelight helmets are the only illumination the miners can use while working. They make the mine a grim, shadowy place—and leave the workers vulnerable to the creatures now lurking there.
- ◆ Daronith's twin brother, Paulson, was one of a number of miners lost during an accident two months ago, when the drilling rig failed and the main shaft collapsed. Since the mine reopened, the bodies of Paulson and the other miners haven't yet been found.
- ◆ Dozens of other miners have died in the main caverns and twisting passages of the mine since it opened. The bodies of those claimed by accidents are often returned to the surface, but many disappeared while exploring and have never been found.
- ◆ Exposure to small amounts of voidwater can produce strange and unpredictable physical and mental effects. Many miners are worried about the long-term effects of exposure, but they keep their concerns to themselves for fear of losing their jobs.
- ◆ One of the as-yet-unknown properties of voidwater sees dead bodies that are exposed to the substance for long periods transformed into undead. This is what caused Paulson Deepfathom and a number of other miners to rise as undead over the two months that their bodies were lost within the mine's tunnels.
- ◆ The sermons of Aleith Skyborn at the church of the High Sun have gotten more fervent of late, speaking of the recent deaths as a warning of darkness that lurks within the mines. Aleith has his followers worried that against such darkness, even the power of the light might not stand.
- ◆ Many people who spend time at the church listening to Aleith subsequently quit their jobs and leave the area without a word. But a few fearful miners talk about these missing folk leaving all their personal effects behind, and there is open speculation that their disappearances are a sign of something darker.
- ◆ The cultists of the Black Sun are all known to have once been strong followers of the church of the High Sun. Additionally, all the cultists are numbered among the former miners

who left their jobs without warning, only to subsequently reappear.

- ◆ Aleith and his followers secretly believe that voidwater has its own sentience, and that a dead fiend thought to be its source was an ancient servant of the power of the Black Sun.
- ◆ Aleith was very particular about the location where his humble church was to be built.
- ◆ A few locals (including Terris Westmoore) who knew the laborers working on the church remember tales of those laborers discovering a huge chamber of worked stone deep in the ground beneath it. Most folk dismissed such tales at the time.

## CUSTOMIZING THE ADVENTURE

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The characters can become involved in this adventure in many different ways, including having any of the NPCs replaced with NPCs they already know. Perhaps Aleith is an old comrade or rival of one of the adventurers. Daronith might be a former mentor, a family friend, or a patron of one or more of the characters. The location of the adventure can also be moved to any settlement of interest to the characters or the campaign.

## START

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The characters most likely come to the Falling Rod tavern to meet with Daronith Deepfathom. Alternatively, you can create some other means to get them here and have Daronith introduce herself only after seeing their bravery and combat prowess first hand.

*“The Black Sun will devour you all!” The cry echoes across the splintered wooden walls of the seedy tavern known as the Falling Rod. Before anyone can react, the burlap-cloaked figure who shouted out from the doorway draws a razor-sharp dagger of black glass and slashes an unfortunate server across the throat. Pandemonium ensues as a number of other figures pull off hoods and cloaks of burlap, revealing scarred bodies painted with a single black circle in the center of their chests, and tendrils of black snaking out across their shoulders and stomachs. Each of them draws a black dagger as their leader did, screaming as they attack the tavern's surprised patrons.*



These crazed attackers (Asha, Rayme, Caryn, Big Pete, and Frannie) are five **cultists**. They attack anyone and everyone in the tavern, and are happy to focus on the characters if they attempt to protect other patrons or to stop the fight.

When the cultists are defeated, the characters first witness the shock of recognition from other patrons. All five cultists are former miners who quit their jobs without warning weeks ago. Daronith believes that they were likely driven away by the fearful sermons of Aleith Skyborn, but she has no idea where the cult is based or how the former miners came into contact with it.

If the characters investigate the cultists, they discover stains on their lips showing that they have imbibed some sort of dark, oily substance. Additionally, their eyes are marked by black veins. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals that this effect arises from an unnatural substance of some sort—one that brought the cultists to the brink of death but left them alive. If anyone guesses that this substance might be voidwater, Daronith has no knowledge of it being used in this way, and no idea how the cultists would have obtained it.

No matter how the characters have come to meet with her, Daronith Deepfathom explains that the cultists have been an annoyance for a few months now, but that the greater threat to her operation is whatever caused the recent deaths of her miners. She instinctively feels that those deaths must have something to do with the cult, but she has no idea what the connection is. Workers have begun to flee the mine after the most recent death one week before—the immolation of Ivan Stills, Daronith's lead digger. She offers the group 200 gp to uncover what's happening in the mine, to end the threat to her workers, and to confirm her suspicion that the cult is ultimately responsible.

In reality, the cult attacks are being orchestrated by Aleith Skyborn, who secretly runs the Cult of the Black Sun in a shrine underneath his church. Though Aleith has nothing to do with the recent deaths in the mine, he hopes that the cult attacks increase the fear spreading in the aftermath of those deaths. By creating a sense that Daronith has no ability to protect her miners, Aleith hopes to see the mine shut down—so that he can fully control the voidwater that will allow his cult to spread.

At this point, the characters can arrange to investigate the church of the High Sun; inspect the scaffold and gearworks that mark the entrance to the mine, then explore the caverns below; or conduct any other sort of investigation they wish.

**Treasure:** One of the cultists carries a curved dagger with a large black opal set in the pommel, worth 50 gp.

## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

### THE FALLING ROD

**Area Aspects:** Seedy rough tavern, massive cracked iron rod, rickety upper balcony

*The raucous noise of this mining tavern's regular crowd fills its rickety two-story interior. Miners peer over clay cups of thick beer to assess any strangers who enter the establishment. A huge iron rod runs from floor to ceiling in the center of the tavern, a deep crack splitting it halfway from the bottom. The second-story balcony leans precariously over the lower floor, its bent timbers held up with splintered wooden posts.*

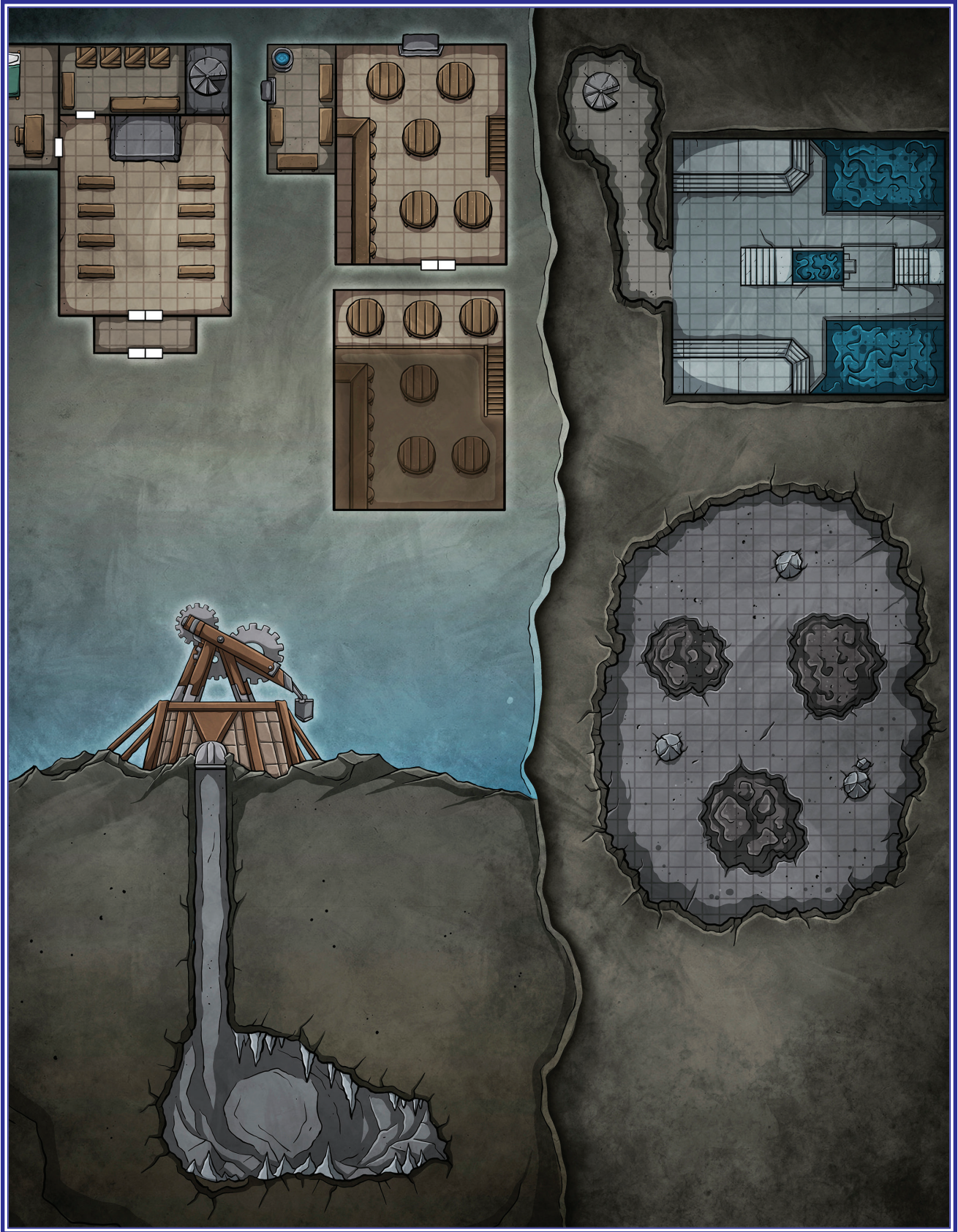
This tavern serves greasy food and strong-but-poor-quality beer to the miners who are its primary clientele. The Falling Rod is owned by Gendra Jade, a former miner who built the tavern around a piece of the huge mining spike that originally pierced into the voidwater chamber—the very spike that later took off her leg and mangled her arm. The tavern seats thirty comfortably, but has been known to pack in twice that many people for special occasions. The folk who sit on the upper balcony know full well that it's going to collapse at some point—many of them even placing bets on the day it might happen. Gendra is loath to fix it, though, her fatalistic attitude marking it as part of the mystique of the place.

**Treasure:** Gendra keeps a lockbox behind the bar containing 25 gp in mixed coins. The box can be opened with a DC 11 Dexterity check using thieves' tools.

### CHURCH OF THE HIGH SUN

**Area Aspects:** Large crystalline sphere, angelic statues along the walls, altar of glowing quartz

*Though the church of the High Sun is not large, the quality of its construction suggests that significant wealth went into it. Statues of angelic figures adorn*





*the front doors, their heads and arms raised to the sun worshipped by the church's followers. Inside, beyond rows of wooden pews, a huge crystalline sphere hangs from the ceiling, turning to send a kaleidoscopic pattern of rainbow hues along the walls. More angelic statues stand along the edges of the nave, hands outstretched. The altar of the church is a large block of quartz that glows with an internal light.*

Aleith performs loud and powerful sermons in the church, shouting of the dangers of shadow and darkness, and the purification that can come only from the High Sun. Many of those who work at the mines attend the church with their families. But for a few of his most fervent followers, Aleith reveals a darker secret truth.

The priest believes that the High Sun cannot win in the struggle against the stronger Black Sun that is the true power he worships—a faceless, shapeless god that will eat all things in the end. Devout followers are led by Aleith down a secret iron staircase that spirals over one hundred feet below the surface—a subterranean tunnel dug on the priest's orders to connect to an ancient cathedral to the Black Sun.

Aleith is a **cult fanatic**, who will be found in the church if he is not in the cathedral of the Black Sun below it. At any point in the day, six **cultists** (Caryn, Roford, Adrana, Brick, Lenda, and Dren) are in the church of the High Sun, praying to the goddess who is the sun's manifestation. These new recruits to the cult are current employees of the mine and act that part, revealing their true natures only if they come to Aleith's defense. If the priest is attacked, the cultists all fight to the death.

**Treasure:** A golden sun medallion worth 100 gp hangs above the altar. A cupboard in the back room holds a silver goblet worth 25 gp. Aleith's bedchamber contains a small lockbox containing 22 gp in mixed coins. The lockbox can be picked with a DC 11 Dexterity check using thieves' tools.

## CATHEDRAL OF THE BLACK SUN

**Area Aspects:** Huge black orb above altar, pool of voidwater, drop-offs to black water below

*A pale gray light with no visible source illuminates this huge subterranean cathedral. At the center of a worked stone chamber, a stepped platform rises above a still, square pool of gleaming black liquid. At the back of the cathedral, a smooth-walled crevasse*

*is traversed by a suspended walkway set with an altar, above which a huge black orb floats in midair, wrapped by tendrils of shadow. At the bottom of the crevasse, black liquid bubbles and roils.*

The origin of this subterranean cathedral remains a mystery, but its location came to Aleith in a dream. Taking advantage of his former relationship with Daronith, Aleith was able to secretly dig beneath the church site while it was under construction, linking the church and the cathedral. Daronith has never had any knowledge of Aleith's secrets.

Aleith uses the cathedral to induct his closest followers into the ranks of the Black Sun cult. Part of this ritual includes the ingestion of small amounts of voidwater from the pool. This twists the minds of those who drink it, making them particularly susceptible to Aleith's poisoned words.

Aleith is a **cult fanatic**. If found in the cathedral, he is accompanied by four **cultists** (Yonda, Barin, Ophilia, and Roust) and two **thugs** (Aarin Two-Fist and Tomas the Oak). If the characters confront him down here, Aleith shouts orders to slay them as sacrifices to the Black Sun. He wears a pair of *bracers of defense* emblazoned with symbols of the Black Sun.

The floating orb is a permanent manifestation of a *black tentacles* spell, which targets any creature that does not worship the Black Sun by sensing whether those creatures have ingested voidwater. The area of effect of the tentacles covers the back half of the cathedral, including the altar and the suspended walkway, and has a saving throw DC of 14. The orb can be dispelled with *dispel magic* cast using a spell slot of 4th level or higher. Additionally, any characters able to cast either arcane or divine spells can disrupt the orb with two consecutive successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) checks, all of which must be made from within 20 feet of the orb.

**Treasure:** An onyx carving depicting a floating black sun over mountains sits near the altar, and is worth 150 gp. Six vials of unopened voidwater are found nearby, worth 50 gp each.

## SCAFFOLD

**Area Aspects:** Massive iron and wood gearworks, large waterwheel, huge iron spike

*A huge array of wooden beams and iron brackets forms a scaffold above the mine pit. The current of an artificially constructed canal running alongside the*





*scaffold turns a large waterwheel, which in turn drives a huge gearworks of iron and wood. A massive iron spike weighing tens of thousands of pounds hangs from the upper center of the scaffold, aiming downward like a spear set above the heart of the world.*

It has taken years of labor and great sums of gold to construct the complex machinery that rises over the mine pit and the voidwater wells below. Whenever a pool of voidwater goes dry, the huge spike is dropped down into the caverns, its impact creating cracks in the ground and exposing new tunnels and caverns that have been hidden for millions of years. An extendible drill apparatus also powered by the gearworks is then moved into position by the miners to open up full access to each new area.

When the spike punches down, the vibration of its impact can be felt for hundreds of miles, ending only when the black voidwater begins to flow again. Though the waterwheel continually spins, a series of levers allows it to be disconnected from the gearworks, preventing the mine's machinery from operating. While the mine is shut down, only the ventilation system that constantly replaces the tainted air of the voidwater caverns is in operation.

## MINESHAFT

**Area Aspects:** Huge brass cap, oil-slick walls, 150-foot-deep shaft

*A huge brass cap covers the mouth of this deep mineshaft. Grinding gears pull up the large iron chain that holds the cap in place. When the cap lifts off the mineshaft, a blast of hot and foul-smelling air blows free. The walls of the shaft are slick, as though their rough stone sweats oil.*

This is the central shaft leading to the caverns of the voidwater wells below. The brass cap was put in place to seal the shaft in the aftermath of the recent deaths in the mine. A large basket lowered from the scaffold brings miners into the main cavern below, from which the mine's uncountable side caverns and passageways split off.

## VOIDWATER CAVERNS

**Area Aspects:** Large oily stalactites and stalagmites, organic-looking walls, pools of voidwater

*The mineshaft opens up into a cyclopean main cavern of black oily stalactites and stalagmites. The curved*

*walls of the chamber appear almost organic, resembling the exposed ribs of a beast long dead. Pools of black oily liquid open up across the cavern floor, all of them sending tendrils of foul-smelling vapor into the air.*

Any light brighter than faint candlelight disrupts the alchemical nature of the voidwater where it pools in the caverns of the mine. On Daronith's orders, the miners work in near darkness—the same conditions she insists on for the adventurers as they investigate the caverns. The characters will have been warned to avoid contact with the voidwater, which can produce strange physical and mental effects left to your discretion—driving the characters mad, poisoning them, draining one of their attributes, unlocking a mysterious power, and so on. Additionally, one of the pools has taken on a kind of malevolent life, forming into a **black pudding** if any creatures approach it.

Four **ghouls** lurk in the darkness of the voidwater caverns, led by Paulson Deepfathom, Daronith's dead brother. Now a **ghast**, Paulson is covered in a black oily liquid. Tainted by the power of voidwater, he is able to cast the sacred flame cantrip at will, but it deals fire damage instead of radiant damage.

During their explorations, the characters might find Paulson's badly stained journal, containing any of the secrets or clues mentioned earlier.

**Treasure:** Paulson still wears a ring on his finger bearing the Deepfathom family crest, worth 50 gp.

## CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

This adventure concludes when the characters have dealt with the undead threat in the mine, discovered the subterfuge of Aleith, and ended the threat of his dark cult, whether they choose to bring him to justice or kill him outright. The characters might also attempt to close the mine, having confirmed the supernatural effects of long-term exposure to voidwater, as well as the dark uses it can be put to.

If the characters convince the miners to abandon Daronith Deepfathom or attempt to collapse the mine or destroy its machinery (with the process of doing so left up to you), they earn Daronith's eternal enmity. The mine owner might attempt to have the characters killed at some later date, or might even hunt them down herself to exact vengeance for the loss of her livelihood.



## EXPANDING THE ADVENTURE

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The caverns below the mine can be expanded into a sprawling alien or underworld complex featuring vast chambers, strange creatures, and lakes of black oil. By adapting the “Structure in the Ice” location in *Sly Flourish’s Fantastic Locations*, you can add to the mystery of the Black Sun by making the cathedral the entrance into a long-buried structure built by impossibly complex and alien life forms.







## ROSETHORN

Goblin attacks have always plagued the farmers and merchants who live and travel along the roads leading to Whitesparrow. But a recent rash of new attacks are something different. The goblins of one particular tribe have gotten particularly smart, attacking with careful tactics and cunning ambushes. The village guards haven't been able to outwit the goblins, even when laying traps of their own and hiring mercenaries to stop them.

Even as goblins go, Rosethorn isn't much to look at. He's small and runty, and yet a lucky break placed him in charge of the Brownleaf goblin tribe. When he claimed a powerful magic relic from a dead wizard three months ago, Rosethorn found his intellect multiplied many times over. The world began to make a more intricate kind of sense to him, and he saw patterns in the ways other folk traveled the roads. After hiring a spy in Whitesparrow to tell him which

wagons to pursue, Rosethorn cunningly bribed the wagons' guards to throw battles in the goblins' favor. He then moved the lair of the Brownleaf tribe away from their dank caves and into the ruins of the Bearded Man—an enormous dead tree at the center of the Howling Wood. There, Rosethorn continues his campaign of ambush against the foolish villagers, increasing his wealth and power with each robbery.

### ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure begins as the characters find themselves in the middle of a cunning goblin ambush. After the ambush, Sheriff Ruth Willowmane hires the characters to investigate the recent rash of unusually clever goblin raids. These investigations can take the characters to a former ambush site, the nearby bog where a powerful ally of Rosethorn resides, or the goblin tribe's original hideout, now abandoned.





During this time, the characters might uncover the corrupt mercenary wagon guards or Rosethorn's spy, Ilundar. Following Ilundar to a ruin known as the Ivy Church brings them into contact with Wiggletoes, Rosethorn's second-in-command. After discovering that Rosethorn resides at the Bearded Man, an ancient dead tree, the characters face the cunning goblin and his clan. At the end of the adventure, they must then decide Rosethorn's fate.

**Monsters:** Goblins (12), guards (4), ogre, ochre jellies (2), spy, bugbears (2)

## NOTABLE NPCS

**Rosethorn:** A goblin who found a *headband of intellect* that made him the smartest goblin in the land, Rosethorn is dedicated to creating a better life for the Brownleaf goblin tribe.

**Ilundar Sunspear:** Rosethorn's eyes and ears in Whitesparrow, the elf scout Ilundar is in awe of the goblin's vast intellect and serves him loyally. He spends most of his time in the village looking out for lucrative targets and hiring corrupt wagon guards. Ilundar regularly meets with Wiggletoes, Rosethorn's second-in-command, at the Ivy Church to pass information to Rosethorn. He has the statistics of a **spy**.

**Wiggletoes:** Rosethorn's second-in-command, Wiggletoes has above-average Intelligence compared to most goblins. She is the enforcer who enacts Rosethorn's will.

**Dash Lionroar:** Leader of the Lionroar Company of wagon guards, Dash has been accepting bribes from Ilundar to take part in Rosethorn's ambushes. When an attack comes, his guards pretend to chase goblins into the woods, thereby leaving wagons unprotected.

**Teblex the 'Troll':** A cowardly **ogre** named Teblex resides in a bog near Whitesparrow, and spreads the rumor that he is actually a troll so as to make himself sound scarier. Teblex works for Rosethorn to scare away anyone trying to pursue or locate the goblins. From Teblex, the characters might learn of the goblins' former hideout at Greendepth Caverns, or their current lair at the Bearded Man.

## MAKING GOBLINS UNIQUE

There are a great number of goblins in this adventure, so think about ways to put a unique spin on them when you can. You can change up their weapons

and fighting styles, or even ask your players to define interesting characteristics to help differentiate one goblin from another.

Additionally, you can select names from the following list for goblins the characters interact with: Sreak, Stain, Grobs, Cort, Yellowfoot, Glung, Hyve, Dimwit, Nord, Slealz, Wonax, Jit, Spikefoot, Bib, Cokz, Strort, Greevax, Kosnard, Chux, Chipper, Myles, Wroh, Top-Hat.

## SECRETS AND CLUES

- ◆ The Brownleaf goblins have always been a threat to wagons and farmers along the roads leading to Whitesparrow. But the tribe has grown far more cunning in recent months.
- ◆ Once content with sloppy hit-and-run tactics, the Brownleaf goblins now lay complicated traps and cunning ambushes against travelers.
- ◆ Brownleaf goblins have recently conducted complex ambushes against large shipments of equipment, textiles, and coin.
- ◆ The goblins always seem to know which trade wagons contain the best goods.
- ◆ Bloodshed doesn't appear to be a priority for the goblins. They're just out to steal.
- ◆ The goblin leader, Rosethorn, often makes compelling arguments for the merchants and wagon drivers he attacks to stand down rather than fight. As a result, no one has yet died as a result of the goblins' raiding.
- ◆ Caravan guards known as the Lionroar Company have been hired to protect wagons coming to and from the village, but have had little luck against the goblins.
- ◆ An elf scout named Ilundar came to Whitesparrow to seek the goblins' lair. So far, though, he spends most of his time around the village and hasn't found much of anything.
- ◆ Ilundar has been seen scouting around an old abandoned temple known as the Ivy Church.
- ◆ One recent ambush forced a wagon into a bog where it became stuck. The wagon's driver and guards were chased out of the bog by a fearsome troll.
- ◆ That whole ambush was a setup. The Lionroar guards were hired by Ilundar to steer the wagon



into the bog, and were paid out of the proceeds when the goblins looted the wagon.

- ◆ A few months ago, a wizard named Vestimond of Craye was ambushed along the road and killed by goblins. Rumors said that he was in possession of powerful magic items at the time.
- ◆ The Brownleaf goblins are known to dwell in a squalid lair at Greendepth Caverns, but that place has been quiet over the past few months.
- ◆ An ancient tree at the heart of the Howling Wood was once known as the Bearded Man. In ancient times, folk worshiped the tree as the manifestation of a nature god, but it died long ago. Now its trunk has been hollowed out and is home to spirits and monsters.

## CUSTOMIZING THE ADVENTURE

Rather than being hired by the sheriff, the characters might have a personal stake in the goods stolen by the Brownleaf goblins, or might have had something valuable stolen from the village in another recent raid. The missing wizard could also be someone the characters once knew, inspiring a mission to find out what happened to him. Additionally, the Lionroar wagon guards hired by Ilundar and Rosethorn might be known to the characters as a shady band of mercenaries, creating suspicion as to why they've taken on such a trivial assignment.

## START

The adventure begins as the characters enter a scene of chaos along the road to Whitesparrow. A large dead tree has been dropped to block the road, with a wagon forced to stop behind it.

*The quiet and serenity of this well-traveled road is broken by shouts of alarm and the sounds of battle. A large tree has fallen to block a wagon laden with goods. From the other side of the tree, short, barbed arrows come whipping out of the foliage to embed in the wagon's frame and the driver's empty seat. The driver can be seen hiding underneath the wagon, while four guards with drawn blades hide behind the fallen tree, arrows whizzing over their heads.*

Twelve **goblins** in two separate groups have set up this ambush. Any character who gets close to the fallen tree and succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception)

check notes that it smells strongly of lamp oil. The four **guards** are surprised to see the characters, but ask for their help in routing the six goblins who fire at them from well-covered positions in the woods. The guards then leap over the dead tree, in response to which the goblins quickly fire flaming arrows at it, setting its dry, oil-soaked wood ablaze.

The wagon guards (Jessie, Lydia, Will Steelbrow, and Ester the Falcon) have all been paid off by the goblins. They pretend to help out by running into the woods to rout the archers, but this leaves a second set of six goblins—currently well hidden in the surrounding forest—free to pillage the cart in their absence. This they do with great precision and practice, leaving behind less valuable goods such as cotton cloth and barley to claim sacks of wheat and bolts of silk.

This encounter can play out in different ways, depending on whether the characters follow the guards into the woods or hang back—perhaps because they smell out the goblins' ruse. If the characters pursue, they can see hints of the goblins breaking and running in response to the guards. If they hang back, they are in a perfect position to ambush the second group of goblin raiders. As soon as it becomes clear that their chance to safely loot the wagon is lost, this second group of goblins flees into the woods after their companions.

The goblins have covered their escape route with bear traps spiked deep into the ground. Any character who chases after the goblins must make a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check to try to notice the bear traps. With a successful check, a trap must then be leaped over or dodged around with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. On any failed check, a character steps into a bear trap, which makes an attack roll at a +6 modifier and deals 7 (2d6) piercing damage on a hit. Any creature hit by a bear trap is restrained. The restrained creature or another creature adjacent to the trap must succeed on a DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check to open the trap.

The goblins have also filled these woods with underground tunnels and boltholes, connected to burrows that they can dive into, then collapse behind them to prevent pursuit. Finding the other end of a tunnel requires a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check.



Any captured or wounded goblins hiss smugly at the characters, and at least one offers up a warning.

*“You think you smart? You not so smart. Rosethorn is smarter.”*

Among the other secrets and clues they might reveal, captured goblins will try to falsely direct the characters to Teblex’s bog or the old goblin hideout at Greendepth Caverns.

When the characters arrive back at the village with the looted wagon, Sheriff Ruth Willowmane hires them to investigate the recent rise in well-orchestrated goblin attacks, offering 200 gp to the group. The characters might start out by investigating another recent ambush, heading to the known goblin hideout at Greendepth Caverns, or seeking their own line of investigation.

## INVESTIGATING THE GOBLINS

This adventure does not follow a linear style. Instead, it’s up to the characters to seek out leads and go where those leads take them. While asking questions around Whitesparrow, the characters learn that many of the villagers know the goblins have long occupied Greendepth Caverns, which might take them there. At other points, they might also discover that Ilundar Sunspear is watching and following them, and that Ilundar regularly meets with Wiggletoes at the Ivy Church to pass information to Rosethorn. Additionally, Rosethorn might send word to the characters himself, seeking to hire them as he has hired the Lionroar wagon guards.

The fact that Rosethorn and his goblins now reside at the Bearded Man should be the final clue the characters uncover. It’s up to you how soon you want to give that clue to them, depending on the length of the session you want to play.

## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

### RECENT AMBUSH

**Area Aspects:** Twin fallen trees, signs of battle but no blood, wagon tracks leading into the swamp

*An overturned cart riddled with small, splintered arrows lies near two fallen trees that block the dirt road. Axes, broken swords, and more arrows are*

*scattered nearby. The road is torn up from horse hooves and wagon tracks that appear to turn abruptly and lead off into the forest.*

This is the site of the most recent ambush conducted by the Brownleaf goblins. Though all signs point to a fierce battle, there are no traces of blood in the area and no bodies. The tracks show that another wagon came this way, in addition to the one that now lies on its side. That larger wagon was driven off into the nearby swamp, on a route leading into Teblex’s bog. There is nothing of value left in the wreckage.

### TEBLEX’S BOG

**Area Aspects:** Boot-stealing bog holes, half-sunken wagon, spewing sulfuric gas

*Plumes of gas smelling of sulfur bubble up from this dank bog. The ruins of a large wagon lie half submerged in a long patch of what would otherwise appear to be solid ground.*

Much of what looks like solid ground in the bog is actually a cover of tall grass growing in deep mud. Any wrong step can sink a character thigh-deep into the muck, creating incredible suction that has stolen more than its fair share of footwear. Any character entering the bog (or the character who leads the others while moving single file) must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check to avoid a sucking bog hole. Any character who fails this check must subsequently succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or lose a boot to the bog. It takes 10 minutes to recover a boot lost in this fashion.

The ruined wagon has been well picked over. In the mud around the wagon, the characters can find signs of where small rafts were used to ferry goods from the wagon to the nearby shore. From that point, the characters might either lose the trail, follow old tracks to the abandoned goblin hideout at Greendepth Caverns, or follow new tracks to the Bearded Man (if you are ready to have them confront Rosethorn).

Teblex the ‘troll’ (actually an **ogre**) lurks nearby. He arrives covered in a coat of rattling bones and wearing the skull of a bull with horns on his head, roaring and rattling in an attempt to scare away intruders. Teblex is a coward, though, and if the characters attack, he cowers and runs into the swamp. If pursued and threatened, he admits that





he was paid by the goblins to scare away the wagon guards, hired adventurers, and anyone else who comes around the bog.

At this point, the characters might learn of Greendepth Caverns from Teblex. Or, if you are running an abbreviated version of this adventure, Teblex knows and can reveal that Rosethorn and his tribe have left the bog, and that the goblins now reside at the Bearded Man.

**Treasure:** Careful searching and a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check uncovers clues revealing where Teblex has buried his stash. This includes 52 gp, 96 sp, and 121 cp, along with 14 opals worth 10 gp each, and a jeweled tiara worth 75 gp. If threatened or badly hurt, Teblex offers this treasure in exchange for his own safety.

## GREENDEPTH CAVERNS

**Area Aspects:** Festering waste pit, goblinoid drawings, remnants of arcane scrolls and papers

*Green iridescent water drips from stalactites throughout a series of abandoned caves. The remnants of goblinoid refuse litter the floors and corners of these caverns. A festering waste pit fills all the caves with the horrid smell of filth and decay. Abandoned bedrolls are strewn around a large central cavern, whose walls are adorned with lewd drawings of goblins chasing and abusing other humanoids.*

In one corner of the main cavern, drawings and glyphs of much higher quality are marked in ash on the walls, as well as in a circular pattern across the floor. On the other side of the cave, half-burned scrolls and papers are scattered next to bloodied and tattered robes, broken vials, and the shattered remnants of a number of crates and boxes.

Whether the characters arrive here after learning of the site from Teblex or from villagers who know where the goblins were rumored to dwell, they find that the goblins have recently abandoned the caves.

The place where the walls and floor are marked by glyphs was Rosethorn's quarters. It was here that the goblin first tried on the *headband of intellect* found among the possessions of the wizard Vestimond, ambushed and killed by the Brownleaf goblins. With the benefit of the vastly increased mental powers the headband gave him, Rosethorn began

to study the wizard's spellbook, scribing his own notes on the stones around him. With a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana or Investigation) check, a character can determine that the notes reflect the arcane study of someone possessed of newfound levels of intellect.

Vestimond's body is in the goblins' waste pit, being devoured by the two **ochre jellies** that reside there.

**Treasure:** Rosethorn left a set of three *spell scrolls* in an open cubbyhole near his quarters. Two of the scrolls contain *burning hands* and *scorching ray*. The third holds a spell trap that casts *magic missile* at the first creature to read it, hitting that creature with three missiles to automatically deal 10 (3d4 + 3) force damage. With a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check, a character notices the trap before it triggers and can quickly close the scroll. A peal of high-pitched laughter fills the cavern if the trap activates, as an aftereffect of the spell.

## THE IVY CHURCH

**Area Aspects:** Thick overgrowth, crumbling walls, vine-wrapped statue

*Centuries of overgrown vegetation covers nearly every inch of this ruined stone church. Half the building has collapsed under its own crumbling weight, leaving only two walls and part of a domed ceiling intact. A tall statue of a praying woman stands in front of the church, wrapped with thick, thorny vines. Half her head has been broken off and lies on the ground, staring wistfully up into the sky.*

The characters might arrive at the ruins after following Ilundar Sunspear, who comes here to pass information to Wiggletoes, Rosethorn's second-in-command. They might also come here if Rosethorn reaches out to them in an attempt to hire them, as he did the Lionroar mercenaries.

If the characters followed Ilundar, Wiggletoes is here along with ten other **goblins**. If the opportunity arises to negotiate with the characters, Rosethorn chooses the church as a meeting place, arriving with twelve **goblins** and his two **bugbear** bodyguards (Whisper and Grash Two-Knives). The vegetation that surrounds the church makes it easy for the goblins to sneak in undetected.

**Treasure:** Ilundar has stashed weapons, armor, traveling gear, and gems here in case he needs to



make a fast getaway. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that one of the larger stones in the ruins of the church is hollow. Within this hollowed rock is a set of elven-made leather armor, a jeweled dagger worth 100 gp, a hand crossbow with ten quarrels, and a small bag containing sixteen carnelians worth 10 gp each.

## THE BEARDED MAN

**Area Aspects:** Cracked arrow slits, beard of dead white vines, moat of brambles

*Towering above the surrounding forest stands the formidable ruin of the Bearded Man. The long, bare limbs of this gargantuan dead tree stretch out for hundreds of feet, and a webwork of dead white vines hangs from its trunk like a beard. A ravine opens up at its base where huge, twisted roots have collapsed to form a moat filled with brambles. A large crack at the dead tree's base leads into its hollow core.*

The characters arrive here after determining that Rosethorn and his goblin clan now reside within the dead tree. They might learn that information from Ilundar Sunspire, by following the goblins from the Ivy Church, or from Teblex.

The Bearded Man was once the mightiest tree in the forest known as the Howling Wood, but it died long ago. Now the Brownleaf goblins call its hollow remains home. Large cracks in the trunk and the larger limbs of the tree give the goblins a wide view of the area around it. The tree's deep, rotten roots create numerous narrow entrances and exits across hundreds of feet of forest in all directions. So small and tangled that even goblins must squeeze through them, these access points cannot be used by the characters.

Any creature that wants to reach the central crack must cross a bridge of brambles, requiring a successful DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. On a failure, the creature falls into the brambles and takes 3 (1d6) piercing damage. Rosethorn has four **goblins** guarding the approach to the tree, either hiding in the brambles or watching from arrow slits high up along the trunk.

## ROSETHORN'S THRONE

**Area Aspects:** Hooded figure on throne, huge etched leaf, hidden alcoves above the floor

*A throne of twisted vines stands atop a raised dais of graying wood. A hooded figure sits on the throne, its eyes blazing with fiery light. The floor of the chamber has been etched and stained with a depiction of a single huge leaf.*

This throne room is Rosethorn's deadliest trick. The goblin does not sit upon the throne, but rather hides above it in one of many alcoves obscured behind bark and dead vines. Six other **goblins** and Rosethorn's **bugbear** bodyguards (Whisper and Grash Two-Knives) are likewise out of sight above the floor. The echoing walls of this chamber let Rosethorn throw his voice to make it appear to come from the mannequin on the throne. A character notices this effect with a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check.

The well-made mannequin is filled with alchemist's fire. If struck, it explodes and sets the flammable stain of the leaf on the floor ablaze, filling the room with fire and smoke, and letting the goblins and bugbears rain arrows down from above. Anyone within 20 feet of the exploding mannequin must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

If the characters attempt to negotiate with Rosethorn and can convince the goblin of his safety, he, the other goblins, and the bugbears slide down ropes from their alcoves to face the party. Rosethorn is highly wary and suspicious, however, and the goblin enters into conversation only if thoroughly convinced that the characters are trustworthy.

If the characters try to engage the goblinoids in combat, Rosethorn sends the bugbears down to the floor while the goblins fire arrows from their alcoves. In addition to his *headband of intellect*, Rosethorn possesses a *wand of magic missiles*, concentrating his attacks on the weakest-looking characters.

Hidden under the throne is a heavy ironbound lockbox, which contains the highest-quality loot from the goblin raids. The box is devilishly protected with both a mechanical and a magical trap. When the box is opened, tiny darts erupt from it to attack all creatures within 15 feet: +6 to hit; 2 (1d4) piercing damage. A creature struck by a dart must also make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) poison damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much damage on a success.



At the same time, a magic rune inside the box unleashes a blast of fire equivalent to a *burning hands* spell. Any creature within 15 feet of the box 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. No visual cues give the traps away, but both can be identified with a single successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Disarming the dart trap requires subtle manipulation of the box's lid with a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check, while the magic trap can be disarmed with a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check.

**Treasure:** The chest contains 204 pp that have been painted to look like copper pieces, as well as a small, ugly goblin doll with gleaming red eyes. Each of the doll's eyes is a ruby worth 100 gp, while its stuffing conceals various gemstones worth a total of 132 gp. The true nature of the coins and the doll can be discovered with suitable handling and a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

A nearby side chamber contains the other spoils of the goblins' raids, including bolts of silk, barrels of ale and mead, dried meats, and farming equipment worth a total of 400 gp.

## CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

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This adventure has many potential outcomes, depending on what the characters discover and what actions they choose to take against Rosethorn. Some groups might attempt to negotiate a truce of sorts with the goblins on behalf of the village, trusting that the extremely intelligent Rosethorn can keep his followers under control. Others might see the goblinoids as a threat under any leadership and simply cut him down.

## EXPANDING THE ADVENTURE

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You can expand the chambers of the Bearded Man by using the "Blighted Evertree" location in *Sly Flourish's Fantastic Locations*. Even the Brownleaf goblins dare not delve too deep into the tree where they have made their new home, fearful of the corruption within.







## THE GLEAM IN THE KING'S EYE

Lord Marlin Whitesparrow has grown bored. As the young lord of a small realm, he foresees a life of relative drudgery even as he yearns for adventures—including those to be had right beneath his feet. Whitesparrow Keep holds many mysteries in its subbasements, crypts, and catacombs. Lord Whitesparrow and his servants have all heard whispers from the deeps below, and dreamed of secrets great and terrible. In truth, evil lurks in the chambers below Whitesparrow, along with the dark and secret history of the Whitesparrow line.

Centuries ago, the rulers of that line named themselves the kings and queens of their frontier lands, serving no other. These days, Lord Marlin Whitesparrow's power is less clear. Many locals still consider him their sovereign, though he is nominally only a lord in service to the higher kings of the land. But recently, in a dusty and forgotten book, Marlin read of a crown worn by the earliest Whitesparrow kings, lost in the chambers below the keep. He hopes now to recover this Crown of the First Lord to solidify his rule, renewing the

independence of his territories and raising his stature among his peers in neighboring lands.

### ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Lord Marlin Whitesparrow, ruler of Whitesparrow Keep and lord of the settlements and lands around it, calls for a grand melee among adventuring groups. The winners will dine with the lord and learn of an opportunity for fame, fortune, and glory. Upon the characters' success in the tournament, Lord Whitesparrow's chamberlain, Brinley Ottershot, invites them to dine with the lord at Whitesparrow Keep. Marlin wants to hire the adventurers to escort him down into the keep's subbasements and catacombs in search of a family relic called the Crown of the First Lord. The chambers beneath the keep have been sealed off for decades, and dangers no doubt fill those empty halls. But the young lord is confident that he can face and overcome those dangers with a stout party at his back.





As they travel through the levels beneath the keep, the characters learn more of the history of the Whitesparrow lords—both good and bad. After facing monsters and undead, they finally locate the tomb of Levendus Whitesparrow, who was a king in the days before the Whitesparrow rulers were made to pay fealty to others. There, the characters must defeat a dark, spectral presence possessing the old king if they hope to retrieve the Crown of the First Lord.

**Monsters:** Thugs (3), acolyte, ochre jelly, animated armor (2), flying swords (2), erinyes, specter, skeletons (6)

## NOTABLE NPCs

**Lord Marlin Whitesparrow:** Lord Whitesparrow is the young lord of the village that bears his family name and the surrounding frontier lands. He hires the adventurers to help him explore the ruins beneath his keep in the hope of claiming the Crown of the First Lord.

**Brinley Ottershot:** As chamberlain of Whitesparrow Keep, Brinley has served the Whitesparrows for three generations. He knows a little bit of the family's dark past but speaks of none of it. His primary goal is to uphold the Whitesparrow name and protect the lord, and he disapproves of Marlin's desires to go into the catacombs on both accounts.

**Pennin Whitesparrow:** Marlin's thirteen-year-old nephew and heir desperately wants to join his uncle and the adventurers as they travel into the catacombs. A spoiled and headstrong lad, he might easily sneak down into the tunnels after the characters and get into trouble.

**Rayze:** An erinyes servant and advisor to one of Marlin's ancestors, Rayze has been bound in the levels beneath the keep for long years. The devil desperately wants to be set free, either to return to the Nine Hells or to wander the world, and it might bargain or threaten for the chance to do so.

**King Levendus Whitesparrow:** The first lord of Whitesparrow Keep, Levendus was a king in the days when the area's remote location allowed its rulers to do as they pleased. A strict but fair sovereign who cared for his subjects but never forgot his standing, Levendus believed in the growth and longevity of his family name. He was assassinated by his own servants—an act orchestrated by his violent son,

Darnton Whitesparrow, whose heavy taxes forced the area's villages and farms into starvation and riots.

## SECRETS AND CLUES

- ◆ Marlin Whitesparrow is a fine lord, but he doesn't much care for the day-to-day activities of the village that bears his family's name and the frontier lands that surround it.
- ◆ Marlin loves reading tales of adventure, and he fancies himself quite the duelist.
- ◆ Though many of the local folk consider him their only sovereign, Lord Whitesparrow's independence is debatable. He hopes that by recovering the Crown of the First Lord, he can solidify his power as King Marlin.
- ◆ The Whitesparrow line has had fourteen lords over the years. Some were good; some were not.
- ◆ Chamberlain Brinley Ottershot knows more about the Whitesparrow line than anyone else, but he is extremely tight-lipped about the family's history.
- ◆ Brinley is not fond of his master's thirst for adventure, but he loves the lord nonetheless.
- ◆ Certain periods of the Whitesparrow line ended in violent overthrow by the people, but the specifics are long forgotten.
- ◆ Old tales talk of children who discovered caves in the rocky hills under Whitesparrow Keep, and who said they heard scratching sounds within the rocks and calls for help.
- ◆ After a heavy rain, the rocks on one side of the hill sometimes leak a red substance. Some who have seen it say the liquid resembles blood, but others have said it smells and tastes like sweet wine.

## CUSTOMIZING THE ADVENTURE

You can customize this adventure by switching Marlin Whitesparrow with a different noble who has more relevance to the characters, or whose history ties in more closely with your world or the characters' backgrounds.

Depending on what work the characters have done for the village in the past—and particularly if they played through "Gloom" and saved Lord Whitesparrow's nephew, Pennin—Ottershot might invite them to dine with Lord Whitesparrow without



needing to see them win a contest. Characters who have played through “Gloom” also already know Pennin, which might shape their interactions with him if you have him tag along on this adventure.

## START

*“Hear ye, all who seek fortune in our lands!” calls the red-faced and rotund village crier. “Our noble Lord Marlin Whitesparrow calls for a tournament of combat among our fine adventurers! The winner will receive a grand banquet in their honor, and a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for fame, glory, and wealth! On one side, we have the Brown Mead Adventuring Company! Who will challenge them in combat for this fine prize?”*

The adventure begins with the call for a grand tournament—a nonlethal melee in a ring built near the center of the village. Standing within this ring, the Brown Mead Adventuring Company consists of Thom Underwing, Lionel Grandrock, Rachel Hollowharp, and Surrin Willowspire. Thom and Lionel are **thugs** of human and dwarf stock, respectively. Surrin is a half-elf **acolYTE**. Rachel is an elf **thug** who dabbles in a bit of wizard magic, allowing her to cast *burning hands* or *magic missile* up to twice per day, and *acid splash* at will. Saving throws against her spells have a DC of 12.

The melee is not a fight to the death—and is not likely to even be a particularly tough challenge. The characters are free to use whatever weapons and spells they choose. Any character dropped to 0 hit points is knocked unconscious and out of the match, but is not killed.

After the characters’ success in the tournament, Chamberlain Brinley Ottershot (a **noble**) approaches them, offers a free night of rest at the local inn, and invites them to dine with Lord Marlin Whitesparrow at Whitesparrow Keep to discuss their reward.

**Treasure:** After the characters successfully complete the melee, Brinley gives them 20 gp each.

### LORD WHITESPARROW’S OFFER

When Marlin Whitesparrow dines with the characters, the lord tells them tales of his father and the history of the Whitesparrow line, excitedly describes the age of the keep, and talks of the many mysteries it holds. The evening culminates in Marlin

offering the characters the unique opportunity to join him in exploring the locked-off subbasements and chambers hidden below the keep. A long line of former Whitesparrow rulers are said to have hidden treasures in those chambers, even as rumors of hauntings and monsters have always kept the curious from exploring too far. But Marlin hopes to enter the darkness in search of one of those treasures—the coveted Crown of the First Lord.

Though Marlin trusts that the characters will be able to deal with any dangers that might be present in the depths beneath the keep, he uses the statistics of a **noble** if necessary.

**The Grand History of the Whitesparrows:** Marlin Whitesparrow possesses an ancient tome called the *Grand History of the Whitesparrows*, which contains descriptions of the lords who were his forebears. Throughout the adventure, he uses this book to identify the lords who built and abandoned the chambers he and the characters explore. You can use this as a way to narrate the history of the chambers as described in each area. However, the book describes each lord of Whitesparrow only in his or her most favorable light. The true natures of Marlin’s ancestors wait to be discovered by the characters.

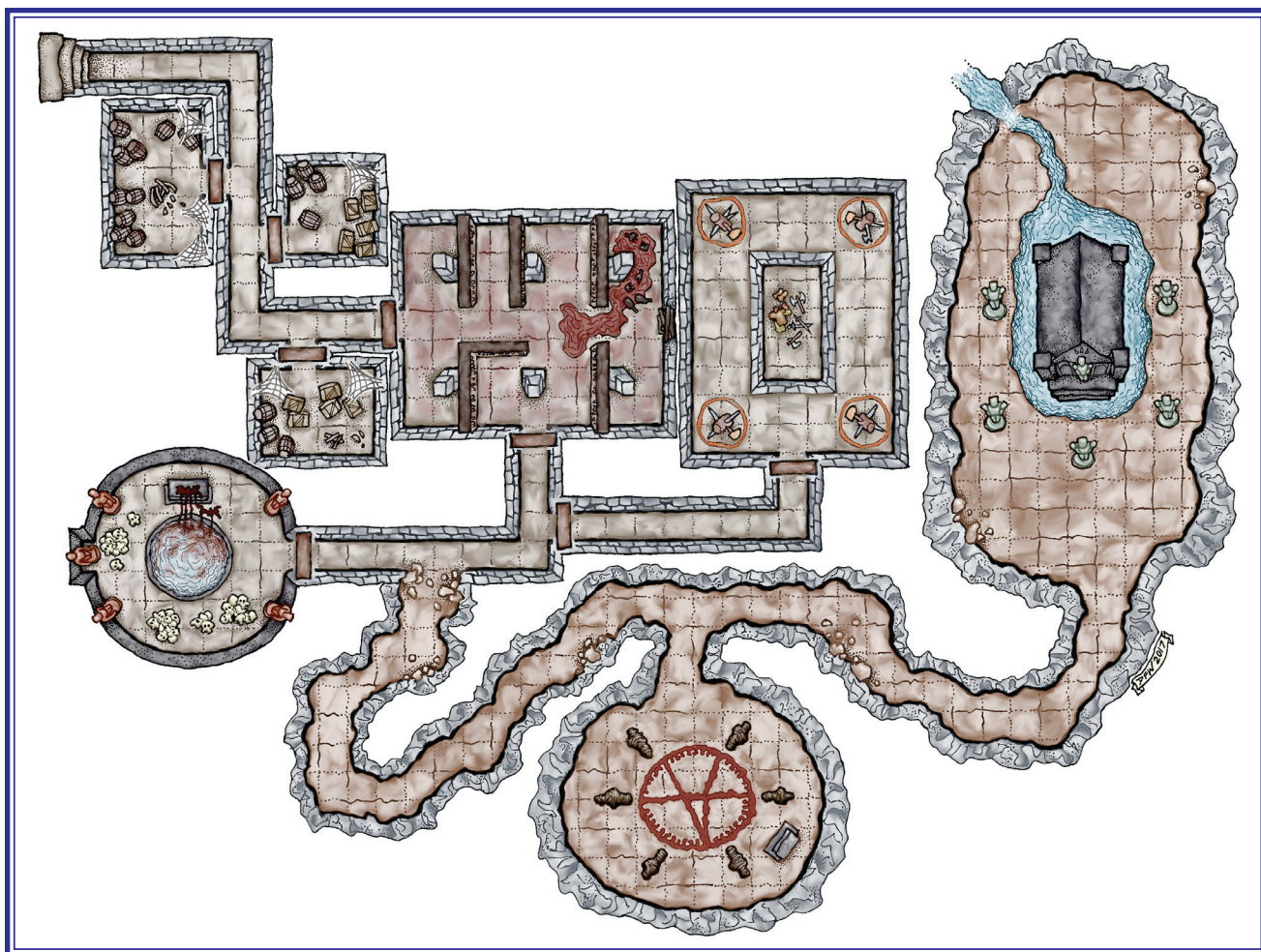
## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

### CONNECTORS: CRACKED TUNNELS

**Area Aspects:** Cracked stone tunnels, grasping roots, old inscriptions

*Water drips from deep cracks in the brick walls of these old tunnels. Roots burrow through the cracks, reaching in like the tentacles of some pale beast. Certain stones contain the faded inscriptions and paintings of royal and noble figures.*

Use these connectors whenever the characters are traveling between chambers. The age of the cracked tunnels increases the farther the adventurers explore. From time to time, Lord Whitesparrow might find a particularly interesting inscription or painting that reveals a piece of his family’s history. Some of these tunnels might also contain traps appropriate to the temperament of the particular lord whose chambers they protect. Others contain natural obstacles resulting from the age and state of disrepair of the tunnels.



Lord Whitesparrow finds traps particularly exciting. The following are examples of traps that might be found in multiple tunnels beneath the keep.

**Crossbow Trap:** Triggered by stepping on a loose rock. Four crossbows fire from both sides of the tunnel, striking 1d4 random targets: +4 to hit; 5 (1d10) piercing damage. The trap can be detected with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check and disarmed with a successful DC 13 Dexterity check using thieves' tools.

**Flame Glyph:** Triggered by stepping over a concealed glyph on the floor. The trap creates a blast of flame equivalent to a *burning hands* spell that targets all creatures within 15 feet of the glyph (save DC 13). The glyph can be detected with a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check and disarmed with a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check. Failure on either check triggers the glyph.

## LOST WINE CELLAR

**Area Aspects:** Stone pillars, wooden shelves, racked bottles, exploding bottles, flammable vapors

*Stone pillars support the arched ceiling of this large chamber, which is divided into sections by old, freestanding wooden shelves. Hundreds of dusty bottles are stacked in wooden racks upon the shelves. A sticky red film covers the floor, and the smell of alcohol is thick in the air. In the distance, you hear a loud pop.*

Three hundred years ago, Lord Tharmond Whitesparrow kept his most valuable wines in this great cellar. In the far corner of the chamber, a special rack of magically sealed bottles has broken (including the bottle whose pop was heard when the characters entered the area), sending forth shards of glass and magic-imbued wine in a large pool. When approached, the pool of magic wine rears up to attack as an **ochre jelly**.



The presence of magic in the wine has also caused an alchemical transmutation that fills the chamber with flammable vapor. If the room is exposed to any open flame larger than a torch, the vapor ignites and each creature in the room takes 7 (2d6) fire damage, or half as much damage with a successful DC 12 Dexterity saving throw. Any creature who fails the save takes 1 point of damage at the beginning of each turn and repeats the saving throw until it succeeds.

An old stone door at the back of the chamber has been sealed off with rotted wood. Beyond, a tunnel leads deeper below the keep.

**Treasure:** A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check identifies seven bottles of a particularly valuable vintage, worth 75 gp each. Marlin Whitesparrow claims five of these bottles, but offers the characters the remaining two.

## RED BATHS

**Area Aspects:** Beckoning statues, sunken pool, stained slab, piles of small skulls

*Bronze statues of nude men and women stand along the walls, gesturing toward a large sunken bath in the middle of this round chamber. The water still magically swirling in the bath is tainted with streaks of dark red, which flow along small grooves in the floor from a stained stone slab at one side of the room. Piles of dozens of small skulls stand here and there across the floor.*

*The look of the statues and the age of the room dates this chamber to the reign of Wynonna Whitesparrow, roughly three hundred years ago. Known for her long-lasting beauty and her love of children, she is said to have adopted dozens of orphans in her time—though dark rumors suggested that many of those children never left the keep.*

Wynonna's successor was her adopted daughter, Clarissa Whitesparrow, who became lord after her mother died peacefully at 120 years of age. But what few know is that Lady Wynonna secretly sacrificed children in this chamber, then bathed in their blood to maintain her youth and beauty. When Clarissa learned this, she murdered her mother and locked this chamber forever.

When the characters enter this room, one of them begins to hear the crying of children. This character, chosen at random, must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or become cursed. While cursed, the

character has the trait: "I eternally hear the crying of children." The character knows that this room must be sanctified if they are ever to be rid of the curse. If the character succeeds on the saving throw, the crying moves to a new random character until one of the characters is affected. If no one is affected, all the characters begin to hear the crying, but it does not follow them out of the room.

A character with proficiency in the Religion skill can sanctify the room with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Religion) check. Doing so cleanses the evil from the chamber, but the curse and its trait persist until the affected character is subject to a *remove curse* spell.

**Treasure:** A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check made to search around the stone slab reveals a curved and serrated jeweled dagger with a hook at its tip, worth 50 gp. Marlin has no interest in this item (particularly considering its likely use), and has no issue with the characters claiming and disposing of it.

## CHAMBER OF BLADES

**Area Aspects:** Ancient weapons and disassembled armor, wooden training dummies, sunken training pit, floating greatsword

*Large square pillars hold up the vaulted ceiling of this chamber. Tall wooden poles with blades and shields attached to rotating arms stand at the corners of the room, each inside a painted circle. A large rectangular pit dominates the center of the chamber, with a pile of weapons and armor scattered across its floor—and a glowing greatsword floating above it, just out of reach.*

High Lord Grandel Whitesparrow believed that military might was the key to the strength of a lord. In this hall, he trained his elite guards by pitting them against magic training dummies and animated foes fighting in a gladiatorial pit. The pile of armor and weapons in the pit forms into two sets of **animated armor** that attack anyone entering the chamber. Each training dummy releases two **flying swords** whenever anyone enters its circle, though the swords become inert again as soon as all creatures have left that circle.

**Treasure:** Above the gladiatorial pit floats a +1 *greatsword* known as *Sunder*. When all the animated armor and flying swords in this area have been defeated, it floats downward in the center of the pit. Only then can it be claimed. A wielder of *Sunder* tears through the armor of those they fight, so that



a creature wearing armor struck by the sword takes a cumulative –1 penalty to its Armor Class, up to a maximum penalty of –3. Armor can be repaired, and this penalty negated, during a short rest.

Marlin makes a token argument of claim for the sword if it is taken. If pressed—and reminded that he has no ability to use the blade—he reluctantly gives it over to the characters.

### CHAMBER OF THE ADVISOR

**Area Aspects:** Large circle of powdered chalk, scribe’s table and chair, six well-dressed corpses

*Torches burning with a violet flame are set into sconces on the walls, illuminating this dark, round chamber. A large circle drawn in dark-red powdered chalk covers the center of the floor, its edges formed into carefully scribed glyphs. Outside the circle, six skeletons are arrayed on the floor in rotted royal garb, their hands clasped on their chests. At the center of the circle sits a male figure with feathery wings. He raises his head and smiles when he sees you.*

The being within the magic circle is an **erinyes** named Rayze. Incalculably old, the devil has been trapped in this circle for over two hundred years. No part of Rayze or anything he holds can cross the circle, nor can he affect anything outside it with mundane or magical attacks. Likewise, no physical or magical attack can strike Rayze while the circle is intact. If the chalk circle is disturbed by anyone other than Rayze, he can escape this binding, and can choose either to stay in this world or return to his home on Pherethon, the fourth layer of the Nine Hells.

Rayze was the former advisor to Queen Rachell Whitesparrow, serving her for over seventy years. Over that time, Rachell would sit at the desk in this chamber, talking to Rayze and taking notes. The devil greatly enjoyed this partnership, but unfortunately for Rayze, only Rachell knew about his presence here, leaving him forgotten when she died.

The six skeletons are the remains of assassins sent to kill Rachell Whitesparrow. Each of them was brought to Rayze over the years, so that their souls could be devoured by him as payment for his services to the queen.

Rayze attempts to use all manner of truth and lies to convince the characters to free him from this chamber. He tells them that simply breaking the

magic circle will send him back to his home plane, when in reality, doing so sets him free in the mortal realm. If pressed, he offers to swear allegiance to Marlin if he is freed, promising to bind himself to the lord’s service for one hundred years. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals the nature and restrictions of the magic circle, and allows the characters to set up the required binding ritual if they wish to assist. The knowledge to do so is otherwise beyond Marlin.

If freed without conditions or bonds, Rayze shows no interest in the characters. If they attack him, he defends himself, but is so indifferent that he leaves them unconscious rather than killing them. He then uses spellcraft learned during his long incarceration to teleport from the chamber and make his way through the world as a freed fiend.

**Treasure:** Rayze possesses a *wand of enemy detection* that he is willing to part with in exchange for his release. Often borrowed by Rachell, the wand saved her life from spies and assassins on more than one occasion.

### THE FIRST LORD’S TOMB

**Area Aspects:** Cracked stone mausoleum, brooding statues, waterfall and flowing moat

*A stone mausoleum rises at the center of this large natural chamber. Glacial water flows from a waterfall high up on the chamber’s wall, forming a moat that surrounds the mausoleum. A stone door stands closed at the front of the structure, carved with the form of an elderly brooding man. Tall, cracked statues stand amid loose rubble around the mausoleum, each representing one of the knights who once protected the first lord of Whitesparrow.*

A **specter** possessing First Lord and King Levendus Whitesparrow lurks within the mausoleum, and rises up against any who dare intrude upon the king’s solitude. This specter has double normal hit points, and is further defended by six **skeletons** that erupt from the rubble around the statues. If the specter is defeated, the skeletons fall to piles of bone.

When the specter is destroyed, its dark form shreds away to nothing, leaving a pale, confused, and benign apparition behind. This is the true spirit of King Levendus, formerly driven to wrath by loneliness and the darkness of these crypts, and who now recognizes Marlin as his own blood. He asks Marlin many questions about his former domain, expecting



that a large kingdom must now spread for many miles around the keep. Though disappointed to hear of the reduced power of the Whitesparrow line, he offers to advise the young lord if Marlin ever wants to come down and visit.

**Treasure:** A wave of King Levendus’s ghostly hand opens the doors of the mausoleum. Inside, on top of his own sarcophagus, lies the Crown of the First Lord. The ghost of the king also bestows a *stone of good luck* to the adventurers for bringing Marlin down to the tomb safely, explaining that the magic item was a gift Levendus received from a secret lover when he was young. The crypt also contains a jeweled necklace worn by Levendus’s wife, Asara (worth 75 gp), and four silver busts of his children (Asha, Cabe, Gerald, and Cobb) worth 50 gp each.

Marlin is largely indifferent to the historical value of these pieces, and allows the characters to have them. The only piece he claims for himself is the crown, which is worth 500 gp if the characters somehow abscond with and sell it. However, if that act is ever discovered, the enraged Lord Whitesparrow hires assassins to deal with the characters.

## CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

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Upon their return to Whitesparrow Keep, Marlin declares the characters “heroes of Whitesparrow”—which, along with a silver piece, might get them an ale at the local tavern. Many chambers still lie unexplored beneath Whitesparrow Keep, along with many dark secrets. It is entirely possible that Marlin will ask for the adventurers’ aid to travel down into the depths once again.

## EXPANDING THE ADVENTURE

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You can expand this adventure indefinitely through the endless halls and caves that spread beneath Whitesparrow Keep. You might also make use of many of the locations and the dark stories they hold in the “Castle of the Mad King” from *Sly Flourish’s Fantastic Locations*. Doing so adds an even darker tinge to the history of the Whitesparrows, so you might want to offset the mad king’s chambers with chambers of goodness and light as well.





## THE CRASHED PALACE

Less than a week ago, a mysterious crystalline palace crashed into a deep cleft of the Ghostpeak Mountains west of Whitesparrow and was nearly destroyed. Two beings survived the crash—Sureen, a deva from the heavenly plane of Celestar; and Krehk, a bearded devil of the hellish iron plane of Dyn, who was one of many evil fiends imprisoned in the palace. The mortally wounded Sureen made his way from the crash site in search of aid, even as Krehk began a ritual near the crashed palace intended to open a portal to the Nine Hells and bring forth his master, the pit fiend Thuron. As he works, the devil uses a mixture of infernal power and celestial blood to twist the creatures of the mountains into horrible fiendish monstrosities that now guard the palace.

This adventure gives low-level characters a chance to glimpse the great powers of the upper and lower planes, and in a way that lets them play the central role in vanquishing a great evil.

### ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The characters intervene in an attack between a trio of magma mephits and a mortally wounded deva seeking aid in the village of Whitesparrow. The deva recruits the party to travel into the nearby Ghostpeak Mountains, where the celestial palace, Asura, has crashed through a rift torn through the Astral Plane. After traveling through the inhospitable mountain pass, the characters must fight their way to the celestial palace, enter it, and disrupt Krehk's ritual in the central audience hall or risk death at the hands of the devil's pit fiend master.

**Monsters:** Magma mephits (3), deva, giant goat, specter, solar, bearded devil, lemures (3), pit fiend

### NOTABLE NPCs

**Sureen:** Sureen is the last surviving guardian of Asura. Though a powerful deva, he was mortally wounded in the crash. After making a last effort to





reach Whitesparrow, he recruits the adventurers to stop Krehk's ritual.

**Krehk:** Krehk is a horrible bearded devil and an agent of the pit fiend Thuron. One of a host of devils imprisoned in the celestial palace, Krehk is the lone fiendish survivor of the crash. He now seeks to summon his master into this world as the ruler of all surrounding lands.

**Thuron:** A pit fiend of the hellish city-plane of Dyn, Thuron yearns to open a portal into the material world to bring forth his armies of conquest.

**Roana Grayspaw:** A shady antiquities dealer who spends her days soaking in the hot spring baths of the Summerspring Inn in Whitesparrow, Roana has made known her interest in purchasing relics of a fiendish nature. She knows some of the secrets and lore of angels and devils.

## SECRETS AND CLUES

- ◆ Five days ago, a great explosion was heard across the lands west of Whitesparrow.
- ◆ Many locals saw a blinding, teardrop-shaped pulse of light open up in the sky, followed by a burning crystalline shape smashing into the Ghostpeak Mountains.
- ◆ A cloud of black smoke and ash now hangs over the mountains.
- ◆ Four days ago, a cow on a farm near Whitesparrow gave birth to three calves, each of which had two heads.
- ◆ A strange blight formed in another farmer's field, killing plants to form the shape of a huge circular glyph. When viewed from close up, that glyph is said to give people nightmares.
- ◆ Some folk known to have dreams that predict the future have seen an iron citadel of enormous size being built in the heart of the mountains.
- ◆ Even normal folk have had dreams of a great red hand tearing out of the ground, followed by streams of blood flowing out of the cracks it leaves behind.
- ◆ Dyn is the second layer of the Nine Hells—an entire plane shaped as a city of burning iron. Touching the walls of this city means instant death for any creature.

- ◆ Celestar is the fourth of the planar realms known as the Seven Heavens, and is composed of numerous valleys covered in luminescent fog.

## CUSTOMIZING THE ADVENTURE

Sureen can meet the characters in any number of ways beyond the existing adventure setup, including having the adventurers run into the deva while traveling through the mountains instead of in the village. Alternatively, one of the characters might have premonitions of the plane of Dyn or of Thuron's potential invasion of the mortal world. To create a stronger connection to the characters, the crystalline palace might have come from the plane of one of the gods worshiped by the characters, rather than from Celestar.

## START

*A cry from a customer outside a nearby grocer's pierces the calm of a serene morning in Whitesparrow. A dark-skinned man with torn wings rising from his shoulders stumbles along the street, his hand pressed to a horrible wound at his chest. A number of snarling winged creatures circle through the air around him, their eyes burning a deep red and showing no fear of the local folk that fall back from them.*

After fleeing the crash site, the wounded **deva** Sureen has come to Whitesparrow on a desperate mission. Three **magma mephits** summoned by Krehk as part of his dark ritual pursued the wounded deva as he flew from the mountain to the village. Their burning red eyes are filled with fiendish rage, and a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Religion) check reveals that these mephits are not just elemental monsters, but are channeling the power of the Nine Hells. Fueled by this power, the mephits fight to the death.

The mephits quickly pull Sureen to the ground, leaving him unconscious for the balance of the fight. To complicate this encounter, consider having the mephits fly into nearby buildings, setting fires and attempting to slaughter innocents.

Once the mephits have been dispatched, any examination of the winged figure reveals that his wound isn't bleeding blood, but a liquid that looks like quicksilver. A successful DC 12 Intelligence



(Religion) or Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals that the figure is a creature of divine origin and not of the mortal world.

When he wakes, Sureen shakily thanks the characters for saving him, then speaks of how the celestial palace of Asura crashed into the mortal realm after being attacked by a devilish planar warship called *The Vaaska*. The assault allowed the devils imprisoned in the palace to break their bonds, and though the fiends' ship was destroyed, the devastating power it unleashed pushed Asura across the planes to drop into the mountains. The brutal battle that followed saw the attacking devils join with escaped prisoners to fight against the palace's celestial defenders. In the end, only Sureen and the bearded devil Krehk survived.

The deva explains that Krehk is plotting now to call his master to the mortal realm—a powerful general of Dyn known as Thuron. Because Sureen's wounds were sustained in a destructive surge of celestial power when the castle crashed, he cannot be healed even by magic. The deva begs the characters to go to the palace and face Krehk, who has set up his lair along the western cleft of the crater wall. If they cannot destroy the devil before he summons Thuron, Whitesparrow and all the lands around it will fall under fiendish domination. After his final plea, Sureen succumbs to his wounds, fading away as his essence returns to Celestar.

**Treasure:** The fangs of the mephits are worth a total of 100 gp if sold to Roana Grayspawm at the Summerspring Inn.

## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

### MOUNTAIN PATHS

**Area Aspects:** Icy path, falling snow, spots of angelic blood

*Fresh snow has fallen upon the ice-and-rock path that snakes its way up through the Ghostpeak Mountains. Razor-sharp icicles hang from a glacial overhang above the path, and wet snow blows heavily enough to make travel precarious. Here and there, drops of silvery blood streak the rock walls.*

*As you round a bend, a hulking beast steps out from the thick-falling snow. Though it might have*

*once been a ram, its skin is now split and torn, its horns are covered in gore, and its eyes blaze red. A single terrible glyph has been carved into the beast's forehead.*

A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check suggests that this mountain goat has been cursed and possessed by a bestial entity of the Nine Hells within the past few days. The **fiendish goat** has the statistics of a giant goat, except that it has resistance to fire, 38 hit points, and the following additional attack options:

**Stomp.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 2 (1d4) fire damage.

**Multiattack.** The giant ram makes two attacks: one with its ram and one with its stomp. If the goat misses with a ram attack, it smashes into the side of the mountain. All creatures within 10 feet of the goat must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 3 (1d6) piercing damage from falling ice.

**Treasure:** The glyph-marked horn of the ram is worth 150 gp if sold to Roana Grayspawm at the Summerspring Inn.

### CRATER

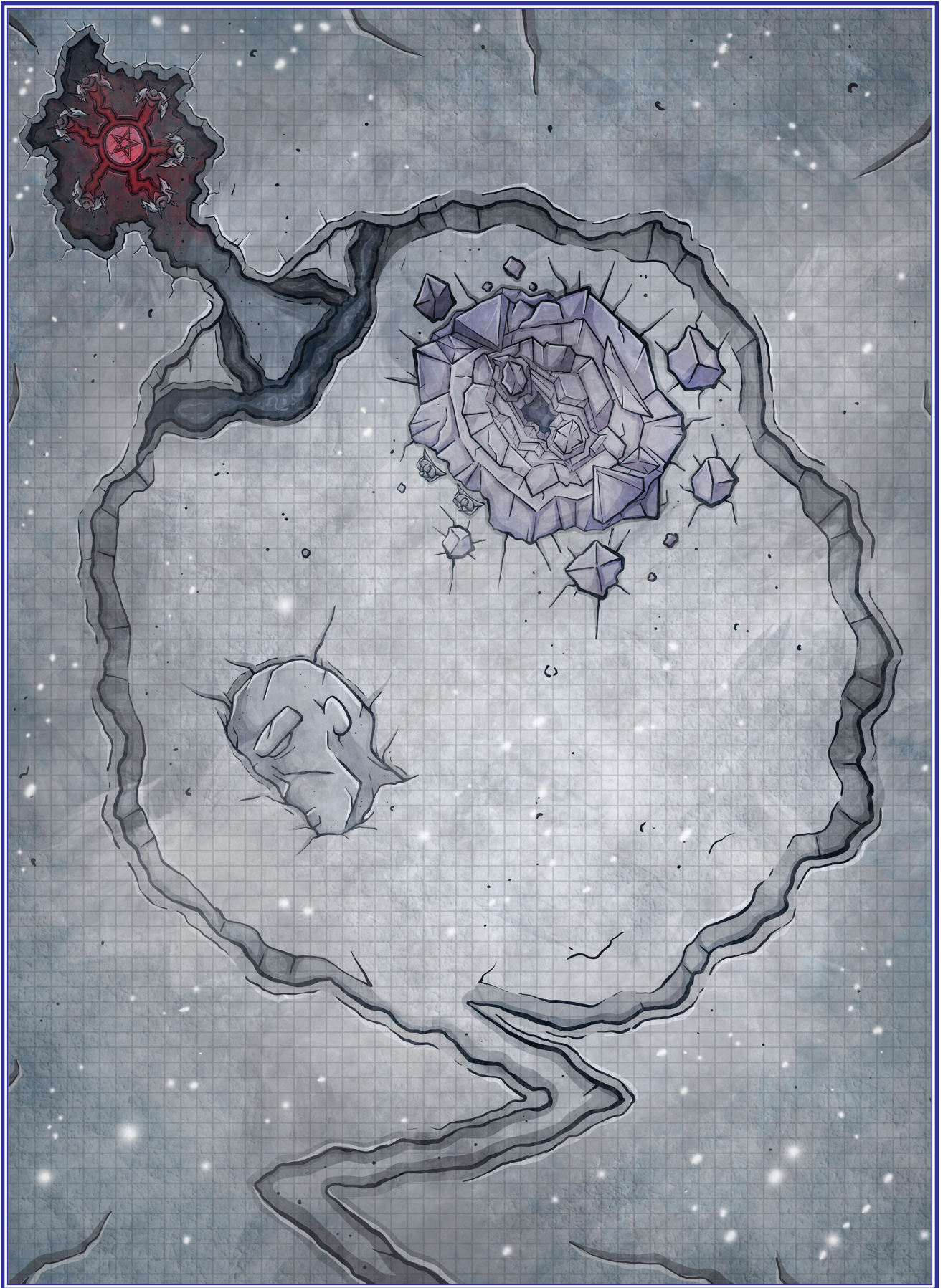
**Area Aspects:** Steep icy crater, shattered crystal, ashy haze, immortal corpses, trail of blood

*A swirling haze of ash rises from a deep crater at the apex of the mountains. Within it rests the remains of a fallen palace of crystal. Deep cracks shoot through the crystalline structure, and the corpses of angels and devils alike litter the snowy slopes around it.*

Climbing down the inner wall of the crater requires a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check. Characters who use a rope have advantage on this check. Failure results in a nasty fall that deals 11 (2d10) bludgeoning damage.

At the bottom of the crater, the characters spot a trail of angelic and demonic blood leading toward the west. As they travel across the crater, the characters might run into a friendly or hostile specter—the last fading essence of either a fallen angel or devil. Choose whichever best fits the pacing of the game and the temperament of your players. If it is an angel, the specter might have further information on Krehk's summoning ritual, as found in the "Secrets and Clues" section.







## FALLEN SENTINEL

**Area Aspects:** Massive shattered crystalline statue, bed of shattered glass, impaled solar

*A huge, half-buried crystalline statue of a god lies on its side within the floor of the crater. All around it is a bed of shattered glass, featuring spikes as large and as sharp as swords. The body of a large winged humanoid is impaled upon the decorative spear of the statue, its quicksilver blood flowing down and across the shattered glass below. As you approach, the figure's head turns your way to behold you with dying eyes.*

The field of glass is treacherous to any creatures that attempt to cross it. On each turn of movement, a creature must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or take 5 (2d4) piercing damage. Any creature that falls prone in the field takes 10 (3d6) piercing damage. Players might come up with creative ways to cross the field in order to eliminate the threat of the glass.

The creature upon the spear is a dying solar named Overon, one of the mightiest of the angels in service to the gods. The solar was mortally wounded in the crash, and endures now in a perpetual state of dying. The characters might find a creative way to free it from this state, an act for which the solar is—literally—eternally grateful. Once separated from the spear, the solar can die, freeing it from this world and sending it back to its own realm in Celestar. If freed, its last act is to bestow a drop of its own blood on each of the characters' weapons. Until the next dawn, each affected weapon is a magic weapon with a +1 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls.

**Treasure:** In addition to the boon for magic weapons, Overon leaves behind an *Ioun stone of protection*. The bearer of this stone can speak Celestial.

## MOLTEN CREVASSE

**Area Aspects:** Black runoff river falling into deep crevasse, icy outcropping, dark glyph above cracked entrance

*A black glyph has been etched above a large crack in the icy crater wall, from which a river of black water and streaming clouds of gray smoke both flow. The river splits as it flows out from underneath an icy outcropping and into a crevasse separating the cracked wall from the floor of the crater by twenty feet.*

The outcropping on the opposite side of the gap is brittle and slippery, making any sort of jump and landing difficult. Characters who take proper precautions (using climbing gear, roping themselves together, and so forth) can cross the gap slowly but safely. Any character who forgoes these precautions and attempts to leap over the gap must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check when landing on the opposite side. Failure results in the character slipping and falling off, unless assisted by another character close enough to lend a hand or throw a rope—a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check—or the character's own successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check. A character who falls tumbles 100 feet into the crevasse, taking 35 (10d6) bludgeoning damage.

The black water flowing from the cave is toxic and polluted by necrotic energy. The crevasse drops one hundred feet below into a narrow glacial crack. The glyph is a powerful *glyph of warding* (explosive runes option, DC 14, necrotic damage) that affects any creature attempting to enter the cave without Krehk's permission.

## SUMMONING CHAMBER

**Area Aspects:** Summoning circle, impaled angels, razor-sharp stalactites

*Arcing columns of shimmering ice along the walls give this large chamber an almost organic feel, like ribs supporting the petrified chest cavity of some huge beast. A red glow shines off razor-sharp stalactites hanging from the ceiling, revealing six angelic creatures that have been impaled on ice spikes or nailed to the walls with shards of the shattered palace. Their quicksilver blood flows down into the intricate pattern of a summoning circle scribed into the ice of the floor, the liquid flaring blood red as it meets the circle's fiendish magic.*

*A horrible purple-skinned figure with a beard of thick, black tentacles kneels before the circle. It leers at you as you enter the chamber, but the terrible chanting that issues from its fiendish lips does not cease. Between you and this bearded devil, other twisted fiends rise up from the pools of angelic blood.*

Krehk the **bearded devil** continues to perform his ritual while three **lemures** attack the characters. Only when the last lemur falls does Krehk break off the ritual and attack.



Throughout the fight, Krehk's master Thuron struggles to emerge from the summoning circle as the circle's portal opens up. Each round, one of the impaled angels screams out and turns into red energy as its life force is channeled into the summoning circle. At the beginning of the second round of combat, huge cracks form in the ground within and around the circle. On the third round, a giant red-clawed hand is thrust forth from the circle. On the fourth round, another clawed hand tears free. On the fifth round, the devil's horns pierce through the circle and into the material realm. If the characters have not defeated Krehk by the beginning of round 6, the pit fiend Thuron rises from the depths of Dyn into the world. In such an event, it is likely that the characters will be destroyed if they do not flee.

**Treasure:** Krehk wields a +1 *glaive* called *Soul Hearer*, whose blade is continually shrouded in cold shadows. On a hit, a creature wielding this weapon can cause it to deal an extra 2d6 necrotic damage. Once this feature is used, it can't be used again until the next dawn.

## CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

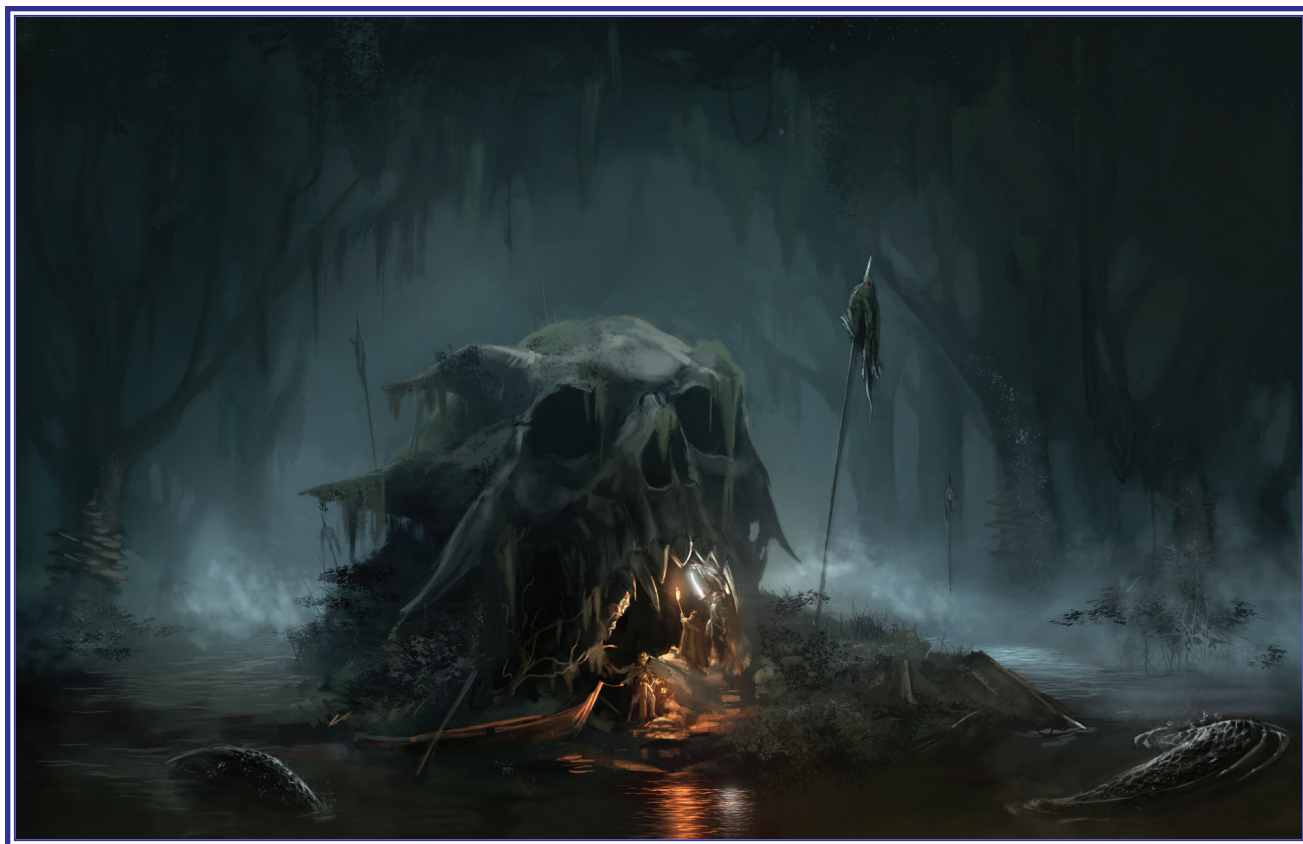
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With Krehk defeated, his ritual is stopped. However, the mountain and the surrounding lands remain cursed if the tainted summoning circle endures. The characters can attempt to permanently close and destroy the circle with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check. Once this is done, they can also lay the souls of the sacrificed angels to rest with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Religion) check. Doing so causes the bodies of the angels to vanish as their souls return to Celestar, where the heroes will be remembered by the great powers who rule that realm.

## EXPANDING THE ADVENTURE

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This adventure can be expanded to include the exploration of the fallen palace. Much celestial lore and many lost artifacts might be found in its damaged chambers, along with terrible dangers. You can use "The Fallen Palace of the Celestials" from *Sly Flourish's Fantastic Locations* as a starting point for fleshing out the details of the crashed palace.



## THE FLESH EATERS

The Greengazer lizardfolk tribes of the swamplands near Whitesparrow are considered uncivilized by the people of the villages and surrounding farmlands, even though the lizardfolk have a rich and deep history going back many centuries. They preserve this history through oral tradition and the ingestion of strange plants found in the swamp. However, the folk of the Greengazer tribes rarely speak of the Flesh Eaters, preferring to leave that dark cult forgotten.

The Flesh Eaters are said to have found power not from ingesting the flora of the deep swamp, but by devouring the flesh of the living. Dark gods delivered dark magic to those that engaged in the sect's terrible rituals. In an unprecedented alliance among the numerous Greengazer tribes, the Flesh Eaters were hunted and killed to the last, and their enclave of lost ziggurats was abandoned and forgotten.

Recently, a small tribe of Greengazers, starving and lost, found the ruins of the Flesh Eaters' temple,

whose dark magic whispered of great power and showed them how to achieve it. Now, these new Flesh Eaters are on the offensive against other Greengazer tribes—and against the folk of the villages beyond the swamps.

### ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The party engages in battle with four Flesh Eaters that have slaughtered a worker at a farm stable a few miles outside Whitesparrow. Vilik Halfscale, a local human trader friendly with the Greengazers, offers to bring the characters to a lizardfolk tribe he deals with to learn more.

Heading into the swamp, the characters meet one of the elders of this Greengazer tribe, who tells them the legend of the Flesh Eaters, and who shares the location of the forgotten enclave where the sect was once based. When the characters have faced the threat of Flesh Eater patrols and the giant lizards that guard access to the site, they can enter



the ancient chamber where the leader of the Flesh Eaters conducts his dark rites—and where they must defeat him to end the cult’s threat.

**Monsters:** Lizardfolk (4), giant lizards (4), ghouls (2), cult fanatic, swarm of insects

## NOTABLE NPCS

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**Vilik Halfscale:** Vilik is a human trader who has spent much of his life among the lizardfolk, admiring the simplicity of their lives and wearing garb similar to theirs. He comes to Whitesparrow every few weeks, bringing goods from the tribes of the nearby swamp. These goods often include rare roots, beautiful jewelry, and a strong cloth made from spun spiderwebs. Vilik has heard the ancient folklore of the Flesh Eaters from the time he spends among the Greengazer tribes. But recently, his travels through the swamps have revealed what seem to be new signs of the sect, including a strange marking of a three-fingered claw that hasn’t been seen since the Flesh Eaters were destroyed.

**Elder Oraithe:** Elder Oraithe is the leader of the Gray Trees, the largest and most civilized clan among the Greengazers. He knows the location of the lost temple of the Flesh Eaters, as it was passed down to him by his father.

**Tarkanon:** The leader of the warlike Swimming Snake clan of Greengazers, Tarkanon and a group of his followers were forced into the deep swamps by starvation and many lost battles with an alliance of neighboring tribes. Tarkanon found the old Flesh Eaters temple and was seduced by the dark power there. Though his followers are small in number, they have grown strong off the flesh of those they capture, sacrifice, and devour in the swamp.

**Gambus Longfellow:** Gambus is the owner of the Longfellow stable, where he breeds, rents, and sells stout ponies and mules. He has a single stable hand, a man named Abercrombe Gnash. The stable comes under attack at the beginning of the adventure.

## SECRETS AND CLUES

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- ◆ The lizardfolk tribes known around Whitesparrow as the Greengazers once warred with humanoid settlers in the area. A loose truce has kept the peace for some time.

- ◆ The lizardfolk mostly keep to themselves in the swamplands they call home, though they do trade with folk on the outside.
- ◆ On occasion, a lizardfolk raiding party might stray out of the swamp to rob a merchant wagon. This leads to tension between the lizardfolk and the villagers, some of whom believe that a larger conflict is inevitable.
- ◆ Dozens of tribes and hundreds of independent lizardfolk hunters dwell in the swamps. Few outside the Greengazers themselves can keep track of them.
- ◆ The Swimming Snake clan is a troublesome group, known for rejecting peace with other tribes. Those tribes allied against the Swimming Snake lizardfolk, driving them into the deep swamps.
- ◆ It is said that the Swimming Snake clan began to worship a long-dead deity known as the Hungerer, or Our Lord of One Hundred Mouths.
- ◆ Tribal hunters have reported finding skinned lizardfolk hanging from the trees of the swamp, their flesh stripped and their organs removed.
- ◆ A new tribal mark has been found on the trees—a three-fingered claw. However, some lizardfolk know that this mark is the sign of the Flesh Eaters, not seen in hundreds of years.

## CUSTOMIZING THE ADVENTURE

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Numerous circumstances could cause the characters to cross paths with the Swimming Snake lizardfolk. Swimming Snake raiders might attack friends of the characters rather than the Longfellow stable. One of the characters might have friends in the Greengazers, or Elder Oraithe might demand that the party undertake a side quest before he divulges the location of the lost temple. Alternatively, the setup of the Greengazer lizardfolk could be reworked as primal cultists or tribesfolk of other races or cultures.

## START

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*Gambus Longfellow runs into Whitesparrow as fast as his short legs can carry him. The halfling is as pale as a ghost, and the front of his tunic is covered in blood.*

*“Murderers!” he yells. “Someone help!”*



Longfellow runs a stable a few miles from the village, which serves the many farms outside Whitesparrow. Returning to the stable after a trip to the village earlier that morning, he came upon a wounded pony slashed by heavy claws. Racing to the stable, he saw four lizardfolk hanging his stable hand, Abercrombe Gnash, to the wall and cutting the poor man open. He fled back to the village to get help.

When the characters arrive at the stables, they find the four lizardfolk who slaughtered the stable hand, still in the process of ritually removing his organs and devouring them. These Flesh Eater lizardfolk fight to the death against any attack.

The lizardfolk all bear the same symbol on their foreheads—a three-pronged claw. One of the lizardfolk also carries a gruesome totem crafted of flesh and bone, painted in blood and set with carvings of screaming faces. This totem celebrates the bestial god known as the Hungerer, or Our Lord of One Hundred Mouths, but none of the party members recognize either the totem or the claw symbol.

Any character who succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check can connect the scant signs of the lizardfolk's approach to the stable to determine that they traveled from a swamp a few miles away through deep forest. The trail through the forest can be easily followed, but it vanishes once the swamp is reached.

When the characters return to the village, or if any villagers follow the party to the stable, Vilik Halfscale is there. The trader is subject to harsh words from the villagers for his friendliness with the lizardfolk, and a few people claim he might be in league with the attackers. Thankfully, Sheriff Ruth Willowmane is there to prevent any physical violence. Halfscale recognizes the three-claw symbol but not the totem. Knowing that these lizardfolk came from the swamp, he is willing to lead the characters there to find out more.

Sheriff Willowmane can pay the characters 200 gp to determine where the lizardfolk came from, and to stop any further threats to Whitesparrow and the surrounding farms.

**Treasure:** If the characters search the stable, a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a loose floorboard concealing Longfellow's cash on hand—4 gp, 32 sp, and 64 cp.

## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

### THE TWINS

**Area Aspects:** Two gnarled trees, hanging lizardfolk, carved bloody symbols

*A few miles into the swamp, you come to a pair of giant trees, their upper branches twisted together to form an arch of sorts. Four lizardfolk corpses hang from those gnarled branches, their skins flayed down to the muscle below. The bodies have been ripped open, their vital organs removed and their entrails hanging down. Bloody symbols have been carved into each side of the tree, depicting a three-fingered claw.*

A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals that the bodies are roughly four days old, and that their wounds were inflicted with care and precision. Vilik recognizes the lizardfolk as hunters from the Gray Trees tribe, slaughtered by their own kind. A trail of blood and gore leads to a campsite of sorts, where it appears the flesh of the slain lizardfolk was devoured.

### VILLAGE OF THE SWALLOWS

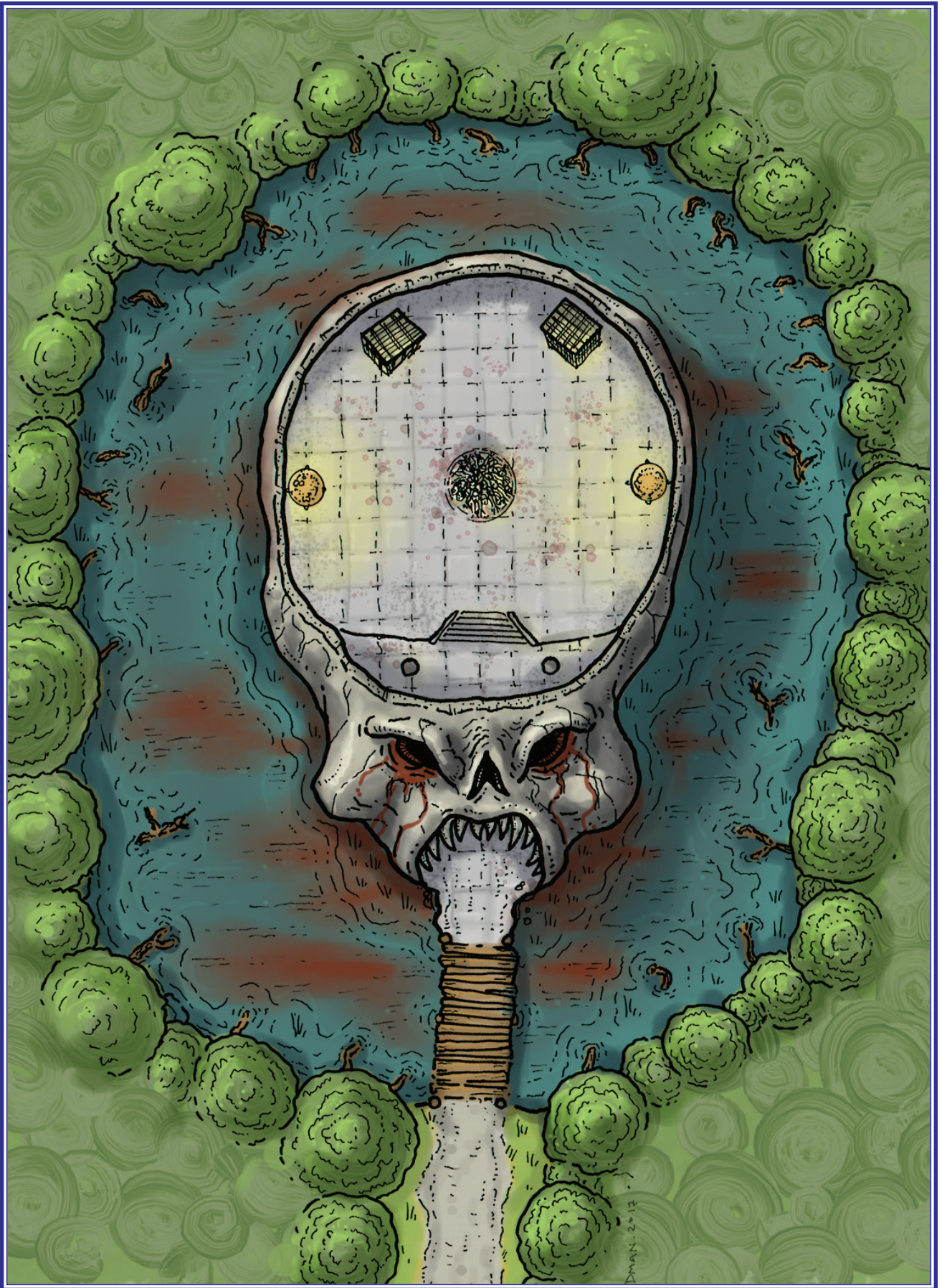
**Area Aspects:** Tree huts, vine-woven walkways, sunken swamp dwellings

*Thick vines hang down from woven-grass dwellings assembled high up in a stand of huge, gray-barked trees. At the base of the trees, round mud huts rise up out of the swamp. A loose grid of vine-woven walkways leads through a series of submerged patches of tall grass. A large mud building sits at the center of the small village, its walls shaped over centuries in hardened packed earth.*

Roughly fifty **lizardfolk** of the Gray Trees clan dwell in the swamps that spread out around the village. Despite the humble appearance of the settlement, the Gray Trees clan has a rich history of community and loyalty. Their **druid** leader, Elder Oraithe, welcomes the characters and any companions. He will share the route into the deep swamps that leads to the Flesh Eaters' temple with the characters, either with a simple pledge of peace or in exchange for favors of your determination.

Other members of the tribe are curious regarding the strangers but are not hostile unless threats are made against them. A band of fifteen lizardfolk warriors







will fight to guard the tribe against threats. Eight of those warriors are always in proximity to the elder.

**Treasure:** A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check to methodically search the village reveals the buried treasure of the Gray Trees tribe. This includes 42 gp, 82 sp, and 73 cp, and a leather bag containing gems worth a total of 142 gp.

## THE CLEFT

**Area Aspects:** High cliffs, narrow passage, ancient wall paintings, towering guardian statues

*The route through the swamp leads into a deep cleft between two high rock walls, only ten feet apart but over a hundred feet high. Ancient paintings adorn much of the walls, depicting hunts, ceremonies, and rituals of the lizardfolk dating back centuries. Near the end of the canyon, two towering lizardfolk statues have been carved out of the rock. Each holds a long glaive in its hands.*

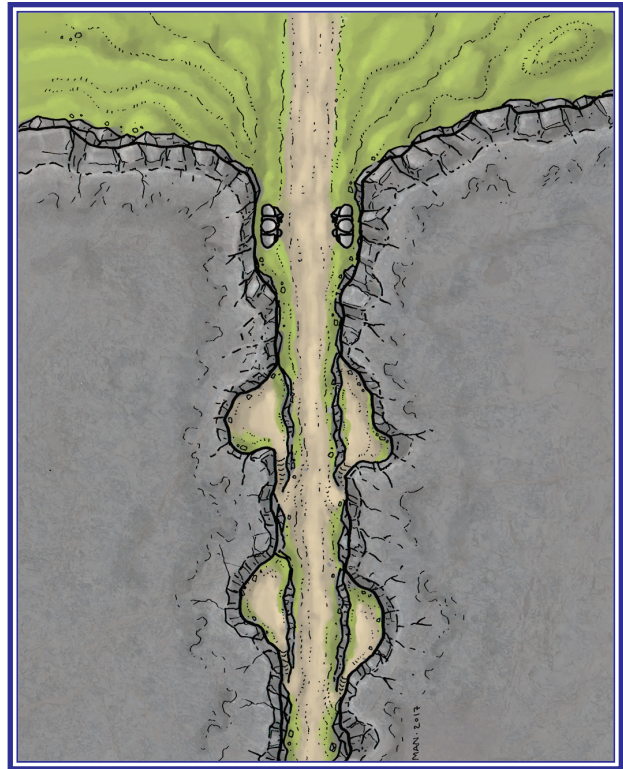
Narrow crevasses in the walls of the cleft allow four Flesh Eater lizardfolk to ambush travelers. After an initial volley of javelin throws, they drop down quickly from vine ropes and attack. Each of the lizardfolk has the three-fingered claw carved into its forehead as deep ceremonial scars. They fight to the death and refuse to speak if captured and interrogated.

## CHAMBER OF THE DEVOURER

**Area Aspects:** Stone ruins, forest of impaled corpses, blood-filled bog, huge carved skull

*Dozens of ruined stone buildings rise up out of an overgrown swamp where the cleft opens up onto a large walled valley. The age of the ruins suggests that they likely predate the lizardfolk presence in the swamp. Twin waterfalls flow down alongside a large ziggurat in the center of the valley. Closer to you stands a huge monstrous skull carved of stone, half buried in red-tinted swamp water, and with its upper jaw revealing an open cavern beyond. Impaled corpses in various states of decay surround the skull like a grisly forest. From the nostrils of the skull, smoke rises into the sky above.*

Four **giant lizards** lurk in the bloody swamp around the cavern entrance. Each holds its breath where it hides below the water, waiting to detect intruders approaching.



Either as the characters move closer or after the lizard fight is done, they catch sight of a badly wounded victim of the cultists. A lizardfolk of the White Stone tribe escaped the cult's sanctum and is now attempting to crawl to dry land through the muck, one severed leg bleeding badly. "Their god will devour us all!" is all he can say in his pain-maddened state. "They are all around us, and they are hungry!"

## TOTEM OF THE FLESH EATERS

**Area Aspects:** Totem of corpses, cauldrons of green fire, hanging cells

*At the center of this large domed chamber, a horrifying totem of corpses is built of dismembered bodies stripped of their skin, and bound with strips of leather hide. Dozens of tortured faces hang from the totem, tongues hanging loose and empty eye sockets dark. Two cauldrons of green fire burn on the opposite sides of the chamber. A dozen wooden cells, bound together with leather, hang from the ceiling. Some hold half-dissected corpses, while others cage lizardfolk prisoners moaning in pain.*

Tarkanon, a **cult fanatic** with 66 hit points, leads the Flesh Eaters. Despite his small number of followers having met their ends at the hands of the characters, he is still guarded by two lizardfolk **ghouls**.





“We will devour you and everything you love,” Tarkanon shouts as the fight begins. “Our lord is ever hungry!”

Tarkanon holds a bone *staff of withering* with a head shaped like a deformed skull. The staff is a relic of the ancient cults that once ruled the ziggurats now slowly being reclaimed by the swamp.

**Treasure:** Tarkanon keeps his treasure in a bone-covered and glyph-marked chest. Though the glyphs are not a threat, a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a buzzing sound coming from the chest. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that the chest is filled with a **swarm of insects** (poisonous flies; treat as a swarm of wasps). Inside the chest, the characters find 42 gp, 34 sp, and 192 cp of mixed coins, and a bag of gemstones and jewelry worth 200 gp.



## CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

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After the characters lend what assistance they can to the lizardfolk prisoners, the fall of Tarkanon and the Flesh Eaters mean that both the lizardfolk of the swamp and the villagers of Whitesparrow are safe from the predation of the cultists. What the characters decide to do with the *staff of withering* is up to them. Though the item is not inherently evil, the lizardfolk treat it as a cursed and terrible relic, and will shun any party with a character who wields it. It can be destroyed in a ceremony led by the elders of the lizardfolk tribes—an event the elders believe will remove the curse of the Flesh Eaters from the swamplands.

## EXPANDING THE ADVENTURE

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The ancient site that the Flesh Eaters discovered can be further developed and explored. You can use the “Ziggurats of the Doom Priests” from *Sly Flourish’s Fantastic Locations* to expand these ruins, giving the characters additional areas to discover and greater evil to overthrow.



## THE QUEEN OF RED WATER

A bugbear chieftain named Grumella has crowned herself the Queen of Red Water, after her minions figured out how to stop an ancient dwarven dam from feeding the river used for irrigation by the many farms around Whitesparrow. Those farms are now drying up, and livestock are dying. Grumella has sent an envoy to discuss negotiations, and the adventurers are tasked with meeting them and finding a way to open the dams once more.

### ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure begins when Sheriff Ruth Willowmane approaches the characters regarding the drought plaguing the village of Whitesparrow. A strange message found outside the village demands parley to discuss terms of Whitesparrow paying fealty to the Queen of Red Water, lest the drought continue.

The characters meet with the queen's envoy—a group of goblins and bugbears led by a goblin named Grin.

The goblin demands that the village pay a hefty tax of 1,000 gp per month to restore the water. Whether the meeting turns to violence or not, the characters can track the envoy back to the high mountains, where an ancient dwarven dam holds back a glacial lake that normally feeds the river flowing past Whitesparrow. The characters enter the dam, defeat the bugbear chief Grumella, and turn on the flow of water once again.

**Monsters:** Goblins (9), bugbears (3), shadows (4), swarms of quippers (4), giant constrictor snake

### NOTABLE NPCs

**Grumella, Queen of Red Water:** A haughty and intelligent bugbear chieftain, Grumella captured the dwarf explorer Darwol Mountainborn as the first step to discovering how to operate the dam. On her orders, the goblinoids have shut off the outlet that feeds water to the valley below.



**Grin:** The goblin envoy of Grumella, Grin believes himself untouchable given the power of the chieftain he serves.

**Darwol Mountainborn:** Darwol is a dwarf explorer and archaeologist who recently went missing while exploring the great dwarven dam.

### MAKING GOBLINS UNIQUE

There are a great number of goblins in this adventure, so think about ways to put a unique spin on them when you can. You can change up their weapons and fighting styles, or even ask your players to define interesting characteristics to help differentiate one goblin from another.

Additionally, you can select names from the following list for goblins the characters interact with: Sird, Iakt, Clyct, Galk, Groirx, Praazmalx, Green-Nails, Storzib, Three-Ears, Preah, Tromtog, Hung, Theh, Puxee, Jyl, Croilda, Muddle, Preassa, Bliblee, Glob, Thob, Vreegan, Slaggis.

### SECRETS AND CLUES

- ◆ A drought around Whitesparrow has been killing crops and livestock for the past month. The nearby river, which brings water to many of the local farms, has gone dry.
- ◆ Hundreds of years ago, a great coalition of dwarves built a dam that blocked off Red Water Lake and allowed a carefully controlled flow of water down into the valley below.
- ◆ For many years, one of the mouths of the dam has carried just the right amount of water to optimize irrigation and prevent the flooding of farmland around Whitesparrow.
- ◆ Messing with the old dwarven technology of the dam is considered dangerous. Many folk think of the dam as cursed or trapped, and most leave it alone.
- ◆ Those who have explored the dam over the years either found nothing of value or never came back.
- ◆ Goblin and bugbear tribes are numerous in the mountains surrounding the glacial Red Water Lake.
- ◆ Recent hostility among the goblinoid tribes has brought a new chieftain into power—a bugbear named Grumella.

- ◆ The dwarves who built the dam were master engineers, harnessing the power of water for great machines said to lie deep within the dam.
- ◆ The roadway along the top of the dam is the only way around the lake or the valley below it for nearly fifty miles in either direction.
- ◆ Supplies and trade wagons have recently stopped coming to the valley.
- ◆ Hunters and travelers have recently heard great thundering noises coming from the dam.
- ◆ A dwarf explorer and archaeologist recently traveled to the dam. He hasn't come back.

### CUSTOMIZING THE ADVENTURE

The bugbear chieftain in this adventure can be replaced with another villain of interest or importance to the characters. You can also replace Darwol Mountainborn with another NPC the characters know or have a connection to, and who would be driven to explore old ruins and would know how to operate the dwarven dam. The location of the dam can also be placed anywhere in your campaign world where a large lake feeds into a river.

### START

*In the center of the road on the outskirts of Whitesparrow, three bloody animal skulls are impaled on a wooden spike, forming a sinister totem. A simple note, written in blood in broken Common, marks a slate stone at the totem's base.*

**YOU WANT WATER YOU COME TO HEADLESS ANGEL SUNDOWN TOMORROW**

Characters who have spent time around Whitesparrow know (or the sheriff can explain) that the headless angel is a large statue set within hilltop ruins roughly ten miles out of the village. Sheriff Willowmane seeks characters who can handle themselves to act as the village's representatives at this meeting. When the characters take on the job, they are told not to negotiate anything on the village's behalf, but to simply hear out whoever left the message.

When the characters arrive at the headless angel, they see the following:



*Atop a rocky hill where the ruins of an old fortress have been reclaimed by thick briars, the headless angel is a large stone statue of a kneeling angel, hands outstretched and palms up. Someone has placed the remains of a dead goat in one of the statue's hands, its entrails spilling to the ground. In the other hand is a pyramid of skulls. A goblin sits atop the left shoulder of the angel, smiling at you as his feet kick back and forth.*

*"You want water? You join kingdom of the Red Water Queen. You give 1,000 gold piece each new moon. First bring 2,000 gold tomorrow same time, and we give you water."*

**Area Aspects:** Large kneeling headless angel statue, overgrown briars, broken ruins

Grin the **goblin** isn't entirely defenseless. Tough and scrappy, he has twice the normal hit points of a standard goblin, wears a suit of studded leather armor, and carries a light shield. His armor is of fine dwarven make, though a bit dated. Additionally, eight **goblins** and two **bugbears** hide among the rubble and briars. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the hiding goblinoids. If anyone threatens Grin, the goblins and bugbears attack while he hides behind the statue, firing his shortbow at the nearest characters.

A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation or Nature) check reveals the trail used by these goblinoids, which leads to a goat pass winding up a cliff. This pass eventually connects to the roadway atop the cliff that leads to the dwarven dam.

Alternatively, if the characters allow the goblinoids to leave, they can follow them with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check. However, they must also succeed on a group DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth) check or be spotted, whereupon one bugbear and six goblins move into attack positions and make ranged attacks at the party while Grin and the rest of the goblinoids rush back to the dam.

If the characters agree to bring the money the following day, the goblins return to seize the gold. True to their word, they subsequently arrange to open up the dam and the water is soon flowing once again. However, the initial payment and the 1,000 gold a month will eventually become a financial catastrophe for the village, and neither Lord Whitesparrow nor the locals can afford the extortion in the long term. The villagers implore the characters to find a way to rid the village of the goblins and restore the water without the payment.

**Treasure:** If the characters kill Grin and his fellow goblinoids, they collect a total of 12 gp, 62 sp, and 126 cp in small leather sacks. Grin wears a gold earring worth 20 gp.

## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

### WINDING GOAT TRAIL

**Area Aspects:** Narrow rocky trail, natural caverns, ancient cave paintings, howling winds

*Chunks of slate fracture and fall from the precarious edge of a narrow trail winding up the cliffs. A howling wind continually blows past, seeming to sing of the easy choice to let the cliff's edge take one away. Deep cracks in the rocky wall reveal caverns beyond, whose shadowy walls are adorned with ancient cave paintings.*

The followers of the Queen of Red Water used this path to stay off the open road when they approached the village. Some say the old cave paintings along this precarious stretch have a way of moving when looked at. If any painting is disturbed or desecrated, four **shadows** peel off the wall and attack, filling the minds of their victims with a strange, primitive language they have never heard before and cannot understand.

Patrols of six **goblins** also watch over the path, hurling rocks down on those who do not properly announce themselves. Goblins who have higher ground have advantage on attacks against creatures below, and have three-quarters cover against ranged attacks due to their advantageous position.

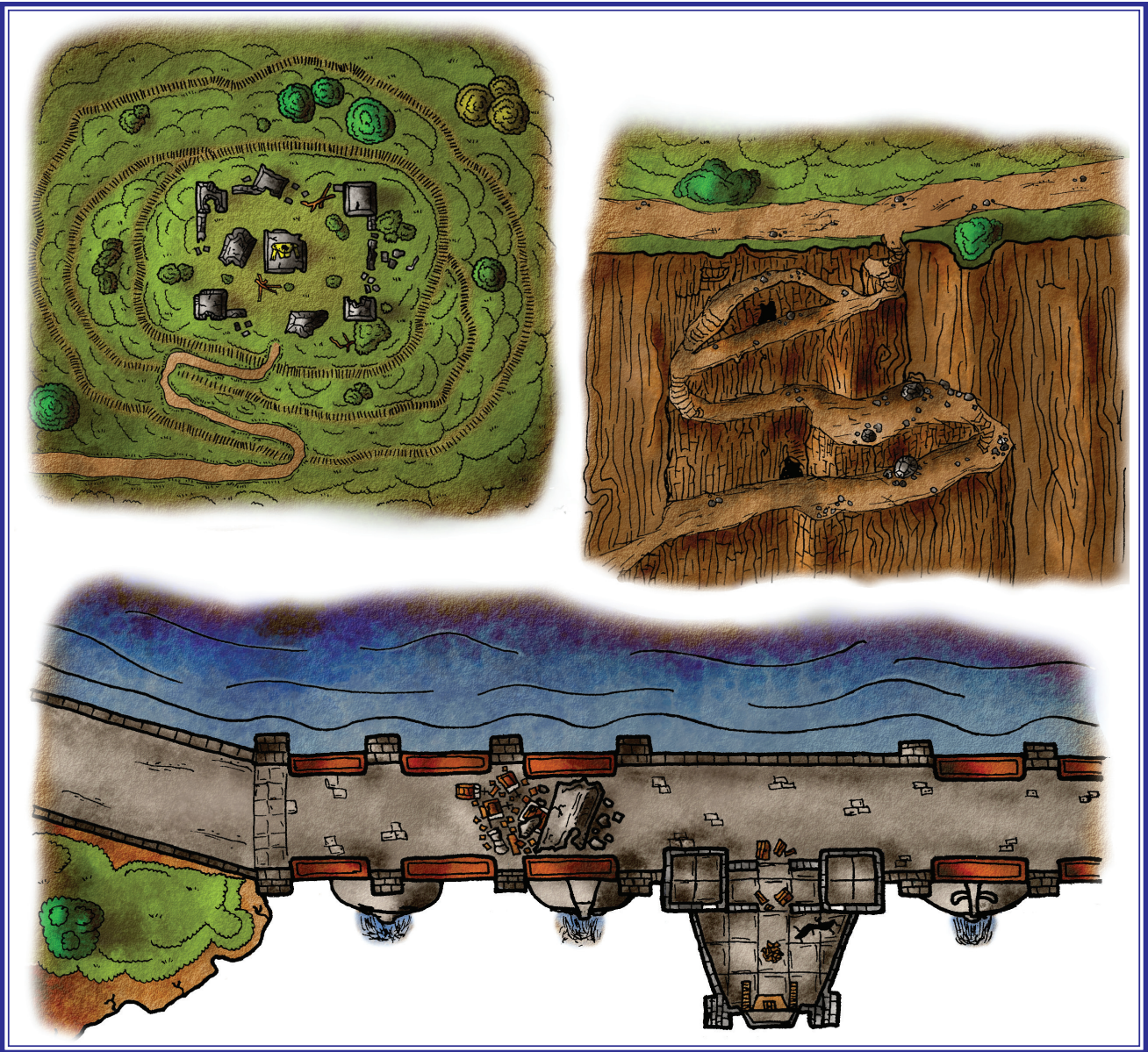
**Treasure:** If the characters investigate the cave paintings, a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check turns up an idol of a faceless, four-armed humanoid set into the rock wall. The idol is worth 130 gp to the right collector.

### COLLAPSED ROADBLOCK

**Area Aspects:** Huge stone roadblock, massive stone pillars, wagon wreckage

*The old trade road leads up to the stone top of the massive dwarven dam, marking the transition between Red Water Lake on one side and the thousand-foot drop to the valley floor on the other. The wreckage of multiple trade wagons has been piled up into a barrier at the edge of the dam. Beyond that, a stone block forty feet on a side barricades the road,*





*the massive pillars that once held it aloft having been shattered to bring it crashing down.*

Numerous stone blocks like this one line the top of the dwarven dam, originally intended to isolate each section of the dam from the road in case of war. The goblinoid followers of the bugbear chieftain Grumella have collapsed one such stone on each side of the dam, blocking the road in both directions. Six **goblins** guard each end of the dam, lurking atop the blocks and in the rubble alongside them.

### RED WATER LAKE

**Area Aspects:** Broad lake, high waves, heavy current

*Water flowing down from the distant mountains fills this deep glacial lake, which churns with large waves when the wind blows. Minerals leached from its stone shores give the lake a dark-red tint suggestive of blood. A heavy current near the dam creates swirling red vortexes along the stone wall.*

Any creature that swims in the lake has a 50 percent chance per round of being attacked by 1d4 **swarms of quippers**. That commotion awakens a **giant constrictor snake** that lairs along the edge of the lake, and which attacks 1d4 rounds later. The snake has double the hit points of a typical giant constrictor snake, and has the Multiattack feature to allow it to make a bite attack and a constrict attack as an action.





Any creature in the lake that does not have a swimming speed must also succeed on a DC 16 Strength (Athletics) check or be drawn into the considerable current created by the dam. The creature is sucked underwater for 3d6 rounds and ends up in the great gearworks (see below).

### THE DWARVEN KING'S RETREAT

**Area Aspects:** Overhanging keep, guard towers, shattered stone doorway

*A two-story stone keep overhangs the outer edge of the dam's wall, facing the great drop to the river and valley below. Two square guard towers flank each side of the keep's entrance. A pair of large stone doors have been broken through, and are now spread as rubble around the open entrance.*

Four **goblin** guards are always on watch in each of the two towers, peering out over the great drop and looking back toward the entrance. Large iron braziers atop the towers are lit at night, dimly illuminating the stone path leading to the keep's entrance.

### HALL OF THE RED WATER QUEEN

**Area Aspects:** Dwarven throne, stairs and walkways, hanging braziers

*A great throne sits on a raised dais against the back wall of this two-story chamber. Beside the throne, twin staircases lead up to a balcony that overlooks the valley for miles around. The throne is draped in bloodstained tapestries, with two skulls hammered onto stone spikes at its top corners. Walkways above look down onto the main floor. A deep firepit opens up before the throne, sending a column of smoke up to an opening in the ceiling. Four large iron braziers hang from the ceiling, each burning with red flame that illuminates the huge bugbear sitting atop the throne and the two guards at her side.*

Grumella, the Queen of Red Water, is a **bugbear** with 18 Strength and 60 hit points. Her weapon is *Gleamskull*, a +1 *morningstar* whose head is the chromed skull of a conquered dwarf king. *Gleamskull* makes its wielder feel a lust for power, and in Grumella's hands, it is +7 to hit and deals 14 (2d8 + 5) piercing damage.

Grumella's two **bugbear** bodyguards are supported by eight **goblins** who patrol this area. Four of those

goblins are on the walkways above, while the others emerge from alcoves to fight on the main floor.

Chained up in the shadows at the edge of the chamber is Darwol Mountainborn, the archaeologist captured by Grumella for his knowledge of ancient dwarven machinery. The Queen of Red Water has used that knowledge to close off the dam. Ropes attached to hammered metal spikes drop down into a large crack in the floor near Darwol's position, leading to the inner workings of the dam.

**Treasure:** In addition to Grumella's +1 *morningstar*, the room contains a locked chest. Grumella wears a key around her neck that opens the chest, or its lock can be picked with a successful DC 11 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. The chest contains 92 gp, 134 sp, and 26 cp, along with a bag of mixed gemstones worth 40 gp.

### GREAT GEARWORKS

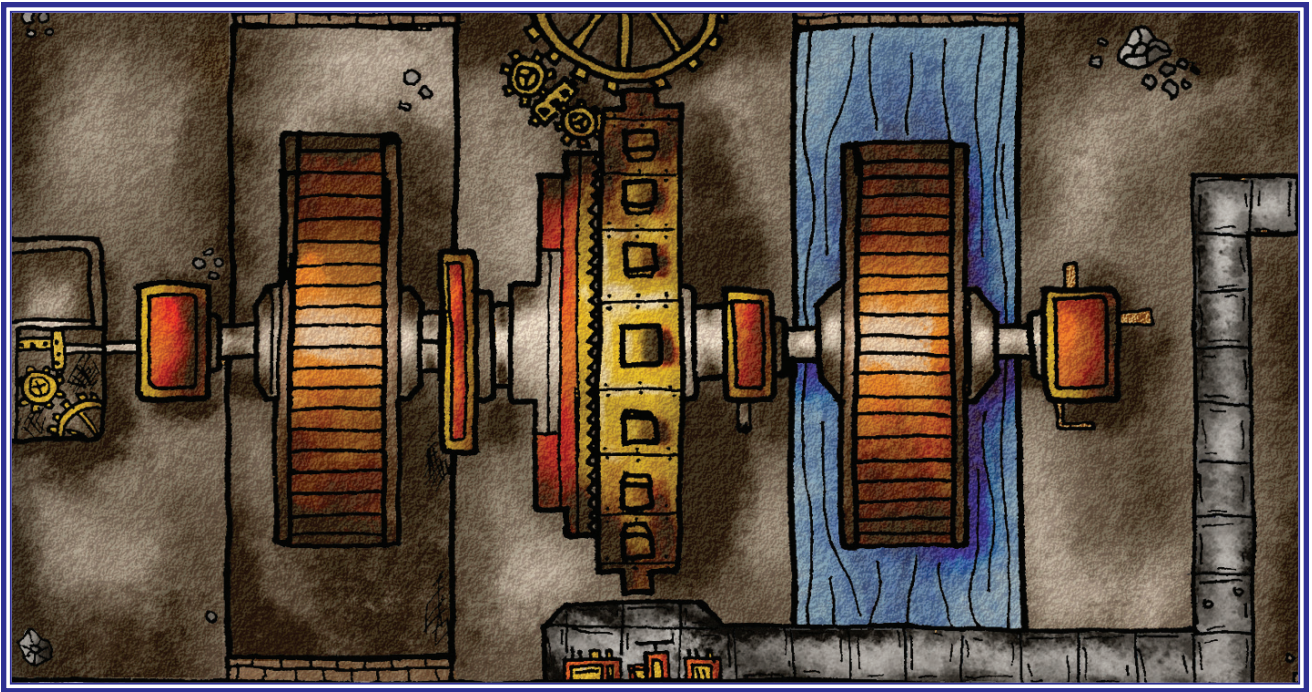
**Area Aspects:** Massive stone gearworks, huge water wheels, massive counterweights, complicated and intricate machinery

*Massive stone gears hang suspended between thirty-foot-high stone-and-iron brackets. Huge waterwheels with metal fins sit in two thirty-foot-wide channels cut into the floor of the chamber, and through which water flows from the lake to be released to the valley below. One channel is partly open at present, but the other stands dry. A narrow walkway hangs fifty feet above the floor of this huge chamber, leading to a set of complicated machinery against one wall. Iron counterweights are connected to this machinery, as large as giants where they hang from enormous chains.*

Water flowing through either channel drives the waterwheels before flowing out an opening on the far side of the chamber, from which it falls a thousand feet to the river below. A character who succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence check made to operate the dwarven machinery can open or close either of the room's two channels. Darwol can operate the machinery automatically, or he can provide advantage to any other character who attempts to do so. Fully opening one channel restores the flow of water around Whitesparrow in a few days' time.

A creature that falls into a flowing water channel in the gearworks (including any creature drawn into the dam from the lake) must succeed on a DC 14





Dexterity saving throw to escape the water, or be ejected as part of the waterfall making the thousand-foot drop to the river below.

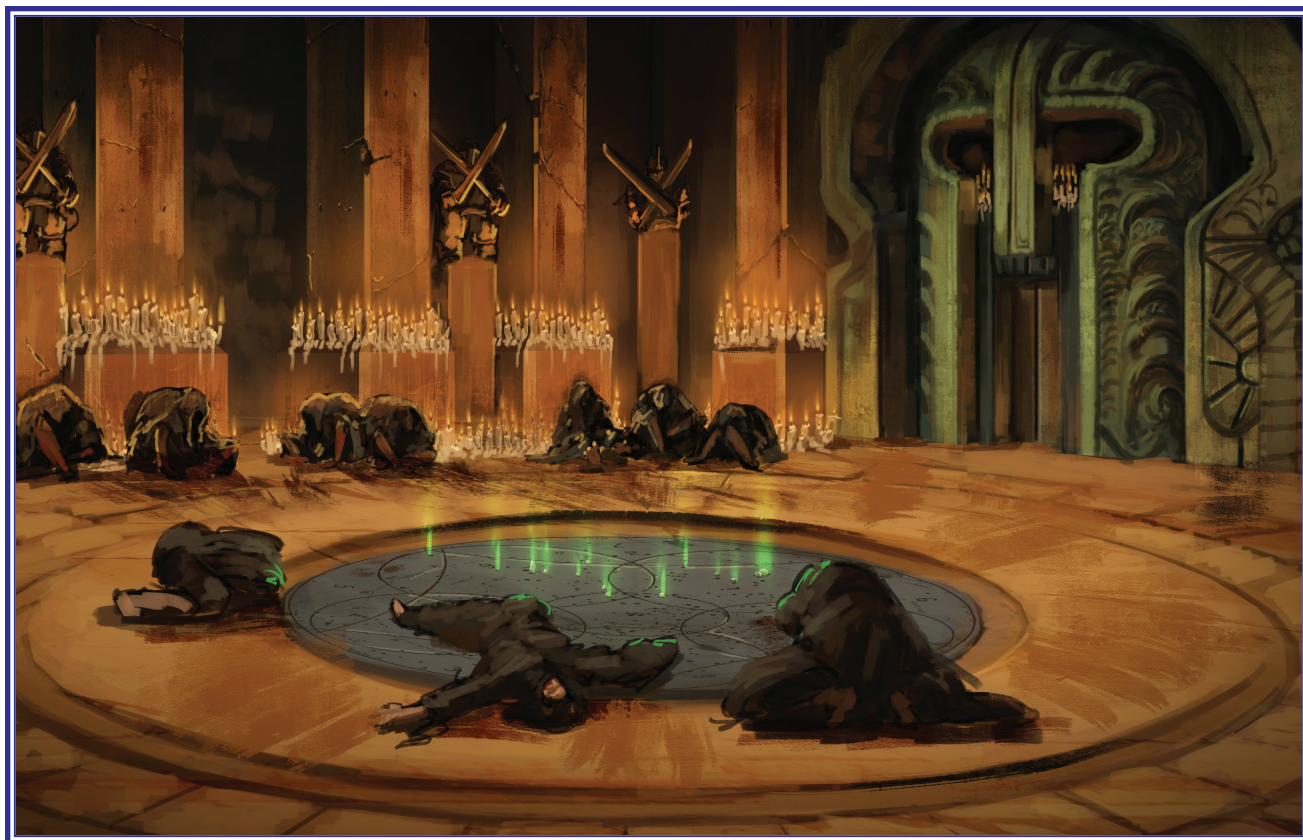
### CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

With the Queen of Red Water defeated and the flow of the local river restored, the villagers and farmers of Whitesparrow once again have the water they need to live their lives.

### EXPANDING THE ADVENTURE

You can expand this adventure by enlarging the scope of the chambers and caverns inside the dwarven dam. As one option, you can make use of the “Dam of Kings” location in *Sly Flourish’s Fantastic Locations*. Darwol is happy to stay with the adventurers if they wish to explore those deep passages and forgotten chambers, and to uncover the secrets that might be hidden within the dam.





## THE CULT OF DUSK

For decades, the cult leader known as Oravin of Dusk has sought the mysteries of a site known as the forgotten library. After narrowing his search to the area around Whitesparrow some years before, Oravin recently found the library, hidden underneath a ruined observatory. He and the followers of the Cult of Dusk have descended into the library's chambers and begun to uncover some of the secrets contained within. But if he isn't stopped, Oravin might make good on his dream of discovering magic that will let him pierce through the fabric of reality itself—and pull the world into eternal night.

### ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure begins when members of the Cult of Dusk enter Whitesparrow and unleash a terrible and powerful spell that sends the village into chaos. When the characters help to defeat these cultists, they discover a crude map showing a location some twenty miles away—an abandoned observatory, known to

be empty and long cleared out of anything valuable. Sheriff Ruth Willowmane asks the characters to travel to the observatory and investigate the cultists' interest in the site.

When they do so, the characters discover that the cultists have found hidden vaults beneath the observatory that hold a vast wealth of history and old magic. Though deadly traps have killed many of the cultists, their leader Oravin still lives, and is attempting to open an ancient vault filled with forbidden magic. When Oravin's threat is ended, the characters must decide what to do with the library and its dangerous lore.

**Monsters:** Cult fanatic, cultists (5), shadows (3), bandits (2), animated armor (4), roper, berserker

### NOTABLE NPCs

**Oravin of Dusk:** A thin, elderly figure, the cult leader Oravin is thoroughly mad. He seeks to tear open a



rift between the world and the world of shadow, so as to bring eternal night to all lands. He believes the magic that will allow him to do so can be found in the hidden library.

**Shasara of Dusk:** Oravin’s long-time disciple, Shasara is as brutal as she is fanatical. She wishes to inflict pain upon the world, in the same way that pain was brought to her world when she was a young child.

**Therin of Dusk:** A young, eager, and naive sort, Therin was once a poor stable hand, often picked on, who left Whitesparrow two years past to join Oravin’s cult of night worshippers. He returns to the village to unleash the magic of the forgotten library, seeking revenge on those who once ignored and humiliated him.

## SECRETS AND CLUES

- ◆ Some weeks past, a group of monks or priests came through Whitesparrow, dressed in black and purple robes.
- ◆ Outside the village, the priests summoned a being of shadow right out of the ground. Witnesses described the priests as praying to the shadow, which subsequently slipped back into the rocky ground and disappeared.
- ◆ Some saw these robed figures heading toward the old observatory in the nearby mountains to the northeast.
- ◆ In recent days, the sound of thunder has been heard from the direction of the mountains, though the skies above it are clear.
- ◆ The old observatory was once connected to a library said to contain outlawed and forbidden texts, but the library was burned decades ago.
- ◆ The Cult of Dusk is a peaceful religious order whose members worship the night.
- ◆ Lately, certain members of the Cult of Dusk have talked about bringing night to the world for all eternity.
- ◆ Therin Blockfoot was once a stable hand in Whitesparrow, but he left to join the cult two years past.
- ◆ A kind old man named Oravin once passed through Whitesparrow. No one really got to know him except Therin, for whom Oravin was one of the few folk who ever listened to him.

## CUSTOMIZING THE ADVENTURE

You can customize this adventure by replacing the Cult of Dusk with any other villainous cult of your choice. Likewise, Oravin might be a villain already well known to the characters. NPCs the characters know might have either joined the cult or escaped from it—including a family member or close friend who now belongs to the cult. Alternatively, an NPC close to the characters could reveal the secret of the library that lies beneath the old observatory. Only when the characters investigate do they encounter the cult.

## START

*Though the sky was clear only moments before, a sudden wind rips through the village, smashing shutters against walls and sending clouds of dust roiling through the streets. A number of robed and hooded figures step forth from the darkness, walking into the center of the village. The figure in the lead draws a large scroll from a leather bag at his side and unfurls it. His voice seems to carry magically on the wind as he whispers dark words, and suddenly, bolts of violet lightning crash down from the sky. Eldeth, the butcher’s assistant, is the first to be struck. Screaming, he falls to the ground, smoke rising from his body. More bolts course downward as the hooded figure continues his chanting.*

Therin of Dusk, a **cult fanatic**, and two **cultists** (Arad and Whelma) attack Whitesparrow. Three times per round, at the end of another creature’s turn, Therin can call down the wrath of a shadow storm summoned by the magic of the forgotten library. This attack is equivalent to his *sacred flame* spell, but it deals necrotic damage instead of radiant damage. Therin must use his action each round to maintain the magic and call forth new bolts. All the cultists fight to the death.

After the cultists’ threat is ended, the characters can attempt to determine who they are and what was behind the attack. Anyone in the village recognizes Therin, and can describe the circumstances that led him to join the cult. As the characters ask further questions, they learn more of what the villagers know. Any character who examines the scroll Therin was using and succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check determines that it is not a typical *spell scroll*. In fact, the type of magic unleashed by the scroll—





an older form of spellcraft that tapped into the plane of shadow—hasn't been seen in centuries.

Additionally, any search of Therin turns up a rough map drawn on bleached parchment. This marks a route from the village to a campsite a few miles away, and then a path leading on to the old observatory. Sheriff Ruth Willowmane asks the characters to investigate that ruined site to ensure that the dastardly cultists won't come back with more dark magic.

At this point, the characters can follow the map either to the cultists' campsite or to the forgotten library itself.

**Treasure:** Each cultist carries a jeweled dagger worth 20 gp. Therin's dagger has a large black opal embedded in its haft and is worth 50 gp.

## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

### DUSK CULT CAMPSITE

**Area Aspects:** Old firepits, burned parchment, large rune-scribed circle

*A campsite opens up along the wall of a small canyon carved out by a nearby stream. A half-dozen firepits have been dug in the sandy ground, all of them surrounding a large circle of black ash. Using the same black ash, someone has drawn a number of glyphs within the circle. In one firepit, scraps of burned parchment are tugged at by the wind.*

If any part of the camp is disturbed, each of the firepits blazes to life, filled with shimmering violet flames. At the same time, three **shadows** rise up from the rune-scribed circle and attack.

The pieces of burned parchment are the remnants of a journal kept by Therin, in which he wrote obsessively about the works of Oravin of Dusk. Therin describes Oravin's decades-long hunt for an ancient library, and the journey that brought him to the old observatory. The library is said to be huge in scope and exceedingly dangerous. Legends that Therin had clearly committed to memory talk of how one of the library's vaults holds the *Book of Shadow*—a tome containing ancient and terrible rituals that Oravin hopes to use to bind this world and the world of shadow together.

In one of the last entries in the journal, Therin talks of "the master being near to finding what he seeks. When he does, I will destroy these trivial works and seek vengeance on those in Whitesparrow who wronged me."

**Treasure:** A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check can find a piece of shaped obsidian buried in each of the firepits, carved with a strange glyph. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check reveals that the stones were magically carved to allow the cultists to contain and command the shadows. Though their magic is spent, each obsidian shard is still worth 20 gp.

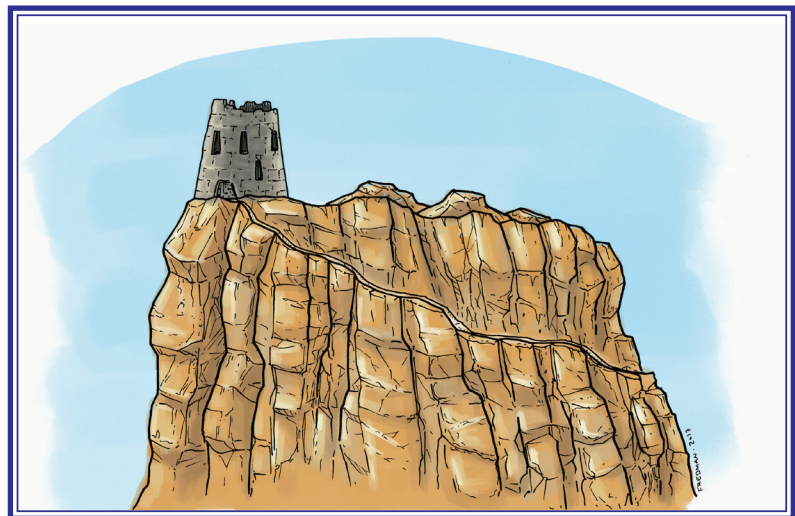
### TOWER RUINS

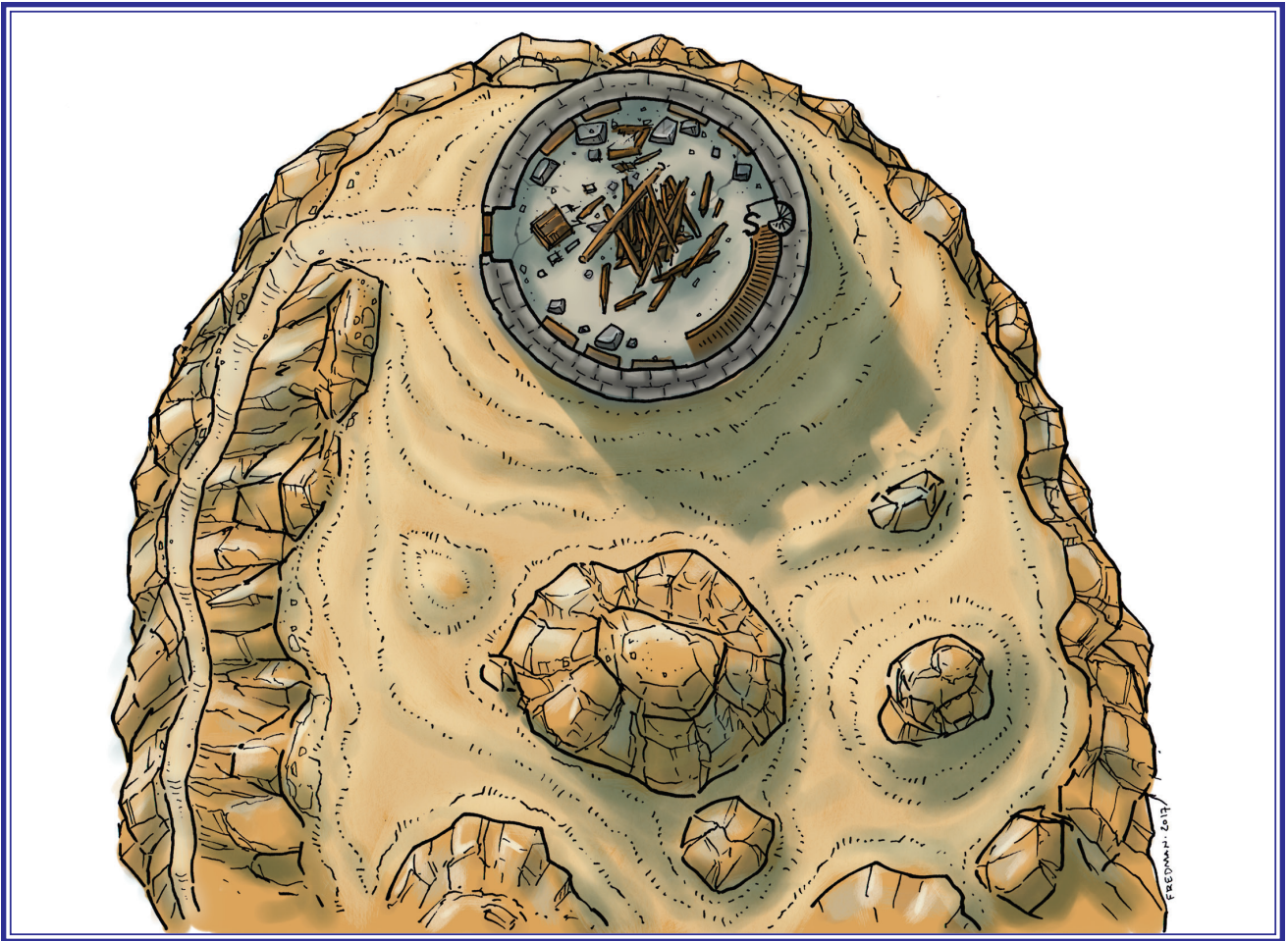
**Area Aspects:** Crumbling stairs, ruined observatory

*A set of crumbling stone stairs leads up the side of a sheer rocky cliff. At the top, the ruins of an old three-story observatory stand precariously along the edge of a two-hundred-foot drop. Fittings of glass and brass show where a dome once covered the top of the tower, offering a fantastic view of the night sky.*

Two **bandits** (Raska and Trish) who have recently joined the cult guard the staircase from the top of the observatory. By day, they can be spotted by characters on the stairs with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check. At night, characters can see firelight glowing from the open observatory roof.

The bandits watch the stairs constantly for intruders, but have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks when watching by night if the characters climb the stairs with no light source. If they are alerted





to intruders, the bandits have three-quarters cover from the tower and advantage on ranged attacks. However, their area of attack is limited to the top 100 feet of the stairs by day, and the top 50 feet at night.

Characters who want to avoid fighting their way toward the bandits can attempt to climb the cliffs away from the stairs, then approach the tower ruins from the top. Scaling the cliffs requires a successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check. A character using climbing gear has advantage on the check.

**Treasure:** Each bandit carries a small bag containing 12 gp. Raska also possesses a silver locket worth 20 gp that contains a sketch of a handsome man within.

### RUINED ENTRANCE HALL

**Area Aspects:** Rubble pile, collapsed floors, stone staircase, charred books on stone shelves

*A pile of broken glass and stone rubble spreads across the central chamber of the old observatory. The floors*

*above have collapsed, leaving the interior exposed. A stone staircase leads up to the remains of the second and third floors. Thousands of moldering, burned books are spread across the stone bookshelves that line the walls of each floor of the observatory.*

This observatory once served as a ruse meant to protect the library that lies beneath it. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check made to carefully study the burned books reveals that all were common and unimportant tomes of no real worth. The rare and valuable works of the library were held in a series of vaults buried deep within the mountain beneath the observatory tower. Characters who spend some time investigating can find a secret stone door set into the side of the staircase, which opens onto an alcove and a steep spiral staircase winding down into the chambers below.

In the stairwell, the cultists have set up a crude trap. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a thin tripwire that activates a crossbow hidden in the supports above the stairwell. If triggered, the crossbow





trap makes a +4 ranged weapon attack, dealing 4 (1d8) piercing damage and 7 (2d6) poison damage. The trap can be disarmed with a successful DC 12 Dexterity check using thieves' tools.

## DEATH ROOM

**Area Aspects:** Shredded corpses, bladed armor, celestial map on floor, heavy stone vault doors

*A half-dozen badly hacked-up corpses wearing the black and purple robes of dusk cultists are spread across a giant celestial map engraved into the floor. Tiny crystals serve as the stars on the map, which is surrounded by a circle of ancient script. Heavy suits of armor crafted in long-forgotten style stand in alcoves along the walls. Each suit of armor has long, curved blades where its hands should be. Two more suits are in pieces on the floor among the corpses, their metal charred and dented. Heavy stone double doors stand closed on the far side of the chamber.*

Oravin and his cultists fought a battle here against the animated armor, losing many of the group before Oravin figured out how to safely pass through the area. When a creature casts a spell dealing radiant damage upon the star map, the map lights up and the heavy vault doors can be opened.

With a successful DC 14 Intelligence (History) check, a character recognizes the glyphs on the floor as an ancient script spelling out the following phrase: "Only with the light of the gods will the path be clear."

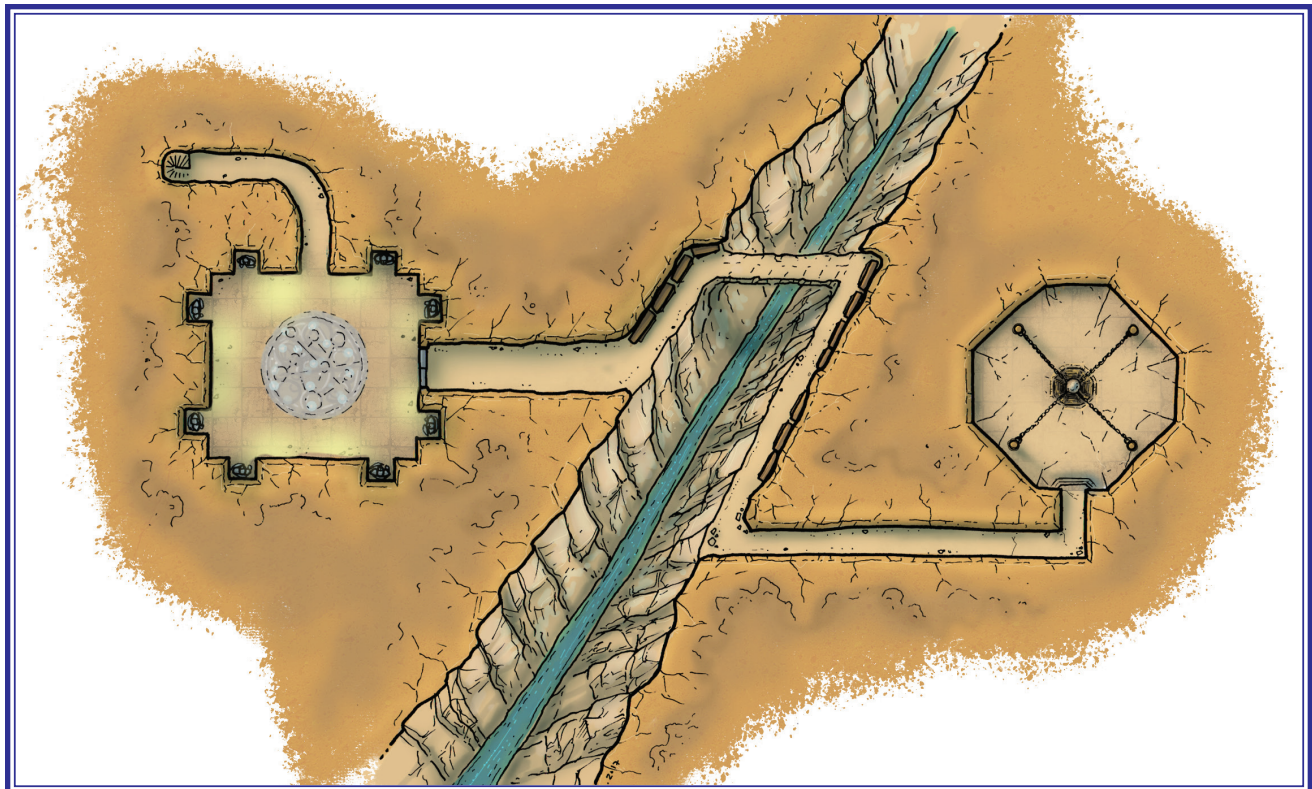
If anyone attempts to open the doors without lighting up the map, the remaining four suits of **animated armor** attack. The door can be forced open with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check, or four or more characters can automatically break through the door by working on it for 10 minutes.

**Treasure:** Among the dead, the characters can find six jeweled daggers worth 20 gp each.

## CLEFT OF WISDOM

**Area Aspects:** Deep cleft in the mountain, treacherous stone bridge, old books and scrolls in alcoves

*Cold wind howls through this massive natural cleft cutting through the stone of the mountain. Narrow walkways follow the walls, their outermost edges marking a thousand-foot drop-off into the darkness below. Alcoves standing three stories high have been carved into the stone walls, each stacked with thousands of books and scrolls anchored to*





*the wall by iron chains that prevent them from being removed. A natural stone bridge crosses over the cleft to another walkway on the opposite side, where a finely carved doorway leads farther into the library. A pool of blood and a leather sandal sit in the middle of the bridge.*

A **roper** lurks above the stone bridge, and attempts to grab any living creature that tries to cross. The sandal is all that remains of the unfortunate cultist who went first across the bridge. The others scuttled past as the monster devoured their fellow.

**Treasure:** A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check made to assess the shelves reveals that Oravin's cultists have rummaged through some of the books in this area of the library—and have tapped into the secrets and knowledge held within them. One of those tomes—*The Book of Flames*—sits on the walkway. Examining it reveals that it contains the wizard spells *burning hands*, *scorching ray*, and *fireball*.

A full examination of the books in this area would take weeks of time, requiring digging through old histories and restoring faded text. For every week spent in this part of the library, a character can discover 1d4 random spells of your determination.

## FORBIDDEN VAULT

**Area Aspects:** Vast pit, central vault hanging by chains, rune-scribed support pillars

*The floor of this large octagonal chamber tilts slightly toward a wide pit in the center of the room. Four huge chains mounted on rune-scribed pillars suspend an eight-sided metal vault over the center of the pit, each of its faces scribed with glyphs. A number of figures stand facing the pit, and another figure on the ground before it.*

Oravin of Dusk, a **cult fanatic** with 66 hit points, is here with his **berserker** bodyguard Shasara of Dusk, as well as five **cultists** (Dante, Krys, Linnethan, Yeshta, and Bryan). Oravin is in the process of studying the runes on one of the pillars, working on hands and knees as he checks his scrawled notes and a number of books pilfered from the cleft of wisdom. A glowing glyph on Shasara's forehead marks her as magically bound to Oravin. Whenever Oravin takes damage, he takes only half the damage and Shasara takes the remaining damage.

Each pillar can be destroyed by disrupting its magic with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check, or by attacking it (AC 10, 20 hit points). If two pillars are destroyed, the remaining two pillars break and the vault is dropped into the bottomless pit, never to be seen again.

Characters who examine the vault and the pillars can tell that it is both dangerous and well protected. With 8 hours of study, a character can attempt to release the contents of the vault by disrupting its magic with a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check. Doing so opens the vault to reveal an ancient tome bound in demon skin, surrounded by swirling shadow. The details of what might be contained within the book are left to your determination. A failure on the check causes the creature attempting to open the vault to be struck by a *finger of death* spell (save DC 16).

**Treasure:** Oravin wears a pair of *bracers of defense* and carries a *wand of magic detection*. He also carries a small sack of gemstones worth a total of 200 gp. Shasara wears a suit of *+1 studded leather armor* and carries a jeweled greatsword worth 50 gp.

## CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure concludes when the characters defeat Oravin and his cultists, then either destroy the vault, open it and take what is inside, or leave it be. In any event, the cult does not return and Whitesparrow is safe once more. However, the potential dangers of the library and its magic are now known to the characters, who might try to better conceal the site, or convince others to guard it against further intrusion.

## EXPANDING THE ADVENTURE

You can expand the chambers of the library by using "The Forgotten Library" from *Sly Flourish's Fantastic Locations*. The book held within the vault can also be used as a seed for further adventures.





## GLOOM

Lord Marlin Whitesparrow's nephew has done something foolish and brought a master assassin out of retirement. Now the assassin toys with the lord's servants before his nephew's inevitable murder, and Whitesparrow presses the adventurers to end the threat before it's too late.

### ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Lord Marlin Whitesparrow calls in the adventurers to protect his nephew and heir, Pennin. An unknown figure has threatened Pennin's life, and though the boy is in hiding, thugs and killers now threaten and assault the lord's servants. The characters investigate to find out that an elf priest of light in the village was once a master assassin, seeking revenge against Pennin for his desecration of the local temple. But even as they investigate, the assassin—known as Gloom—kidnaps the boy and takes him to a lost temple of blood, where she intends to sacrifice him to a dark god of assassins.

**Monsters:** Assassin, thugs (3), scouts (2), berserkers (2), skeletons (10), mummy

### NOTABLE NPCs

**Meira Goneniel:** Meira is an elf priest with a dark secret. Decades ago, she was a master assassin named Gloom. Dozens of kings, queens, and nobles died at her hands before she gave up the way of the blade, retiring to a life in service to the goddess of light in the village of Whitesparrow. With Pennin Whitesparrow's desecration of the temple, Meira has returned to her dark ways and now seeks bloody revenge.

**Lord Marlin Whitesparrow:** Lord Marlin Whitesparrow is the young lord of the small territory surrounding the village of Whitesparrow. Because his nephew Perrin is his heir, he takes any threat against the boy most seriously.





**Brinley Ottershot:** The chamberlain of Whitesparrow Keep, Brinley has served Lord Whitesparrow's line for three generations.

**Pennin Whitesparrow:** The young nephew of Lord Marlin Whitesparrow, Pennin has lived his thirteen years as the ward of his uncle. Pennin is a spoiled child, and he and his friends often cause mischief around the village—and almost always get out of it due to his uncle's position.

**Ian Vanderwent:** A friend of Pennin who also desecrated the local temple, Ian keeps his mouth shut but doesn't have the strength to resist an interrogation. He is fearful of the threats made against Pennin, and the assaults committed against Whitesparrow's servants.

## SECRETS AND CLUES

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- ◆ Pennin Whitesparrow is a bit of a spoiled brat, but he's young and of noble blood, so people don't put much into it.
  - ◆ Pennin and his friends were once arrested for painting old farmer Gablek's cow purple. The paint never wore off, and the cow remains purple to this day. As with much of Pennin's troublemaking, Marlin Whitesparrow paid Gablek to keep quiet about it.
  - ◆ The Temple of Light was recently defiled, with a large statue broken and someone urinating in the holy pool of light. Witnesses saw two youths fleeing the scene.
  - ◆ Meira, a priest of light, is a quiet, introspective person. She came to the Temple of Light two decades ago, not speaking of her past but seeking to serve the light for the rest of her days.
  - ◆ For over a century, a master assassin named Gloom upset the power base of numerous lands by assassinating nobles and rulers on all sides.
  - ◆ Gloom went missing decades ago, and most presume her dead.
  - ◆ Meira confessed her true identity to one of the other priests at the Temple of Light, as well as her vow to atone for the murders she committed.
  - ◆ Tough-looking strangers have been coming into the village in the past few days, asking about the lord's nephew and his friends.
- ◆ Some of those strangers have drops of blood tattooed under their eyes, marking them as former murderous prisoners.
  - ◆ Other strangers bear the tattoo of a blade cutting across a grimacing man's throat, marking them as members of the bloodthirsty gang known as the Smiling Knives mercenaries.
  - ◆ An old shrine to a dead god is said to be hidden in a bog outside Whitesparrow.
  - ◆ Assassins and thieves once worshiped a god known as the Blood King, but the faith dedicated to that mysterious figure died out decades ago.
  - ◆ After the defilement of the Temple of Light, Meira was seen cutting off all her hair and painting a black stripe across her eyes with oily mud.
  - ◆ More than one person has seen Meira wandering in the vicinity of a huge outcrop known as the magnetic rock in a bog near Whitesparrow. Those who saw her know the area as one of treacherous terrain, making it an odd location for a casual walk.

## CUSTOMIZING THE ADVENTURE

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Instead of Lord Whitesparrow's nephew having crossed paths with Gloom, the intended victim could be the teenage child of an NPC known to the characters, or someone they've interacted with in previous adventures. If the characters happen to have a background that crosses over with an assassins' guild or thieves' guild, you can replace Gloom's backstory with one tied to such a group. You can also replace the mercenaries that Gloom has hired with any notable group of cultists or mercenaries already known to the characters.

Characters who previously played through "The Gleam in the King's Eye" might already know Pennin if he played a part in that scenario as an annoying would-be adventurer. If so, you can think about ways to adjust this adventure to take that relationship into account. If Pennin was killed in that adventure, he can be replaced with another young relative of Marlin who is visiting on holiday.



## START

*A cold wind blows as four of Lord Whitesparrow's guards escort the lord's chamberlain, Brinley Ottershot, back to Whitesparrow Keep from the village. A cloaked traveler passes close by the group, but as he crosses the path of one of the guards, he moves quickly to sink a weapon into the guard's throat. The guard stumbles back as blood gushes from a deep wound. The hooded man smiles as he holds up a red-stained punching dagger. More cloaked figures step out from the nearby crowd of suddenly frightened villagers, attacking the other guards with hideous efficiency as they try to protect the chamberlain.*

*"For you, chamberlain," the hooded leader calls out. "A gift from Gloom."*

This battle happens along a street winding its way up to Whitesparrow Keep. Three **thugs** (Kardon the Razor, Boken, and Savana) attack with murderous abandon. They show no interest in surrender, snarling if given quarter: "I will never go back!" All the thugs have red teardrops tattooed under their left eyes. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (History) check reveals that this symbol is used to mark murderous prisoners incarcerated in a nearby city.

If the characters don't intervene, the thugs attack Chamberlain Ottershot (a **noble**), having been hired to murder him in the street in as grisly a fashion as possible. A parchment written in a neat hand is found on the leader if he is killed, revealing that the group was hired by someone known as Gloom to murder the chamberlain in broad daylight, along with any of Lord Whitesparrow's guards. The contract pays 50 gp to each thug, plus 20 additional gp for each guard the thugs kill.

(Chamberlain Brinley Ottershot also appears in the adventure "The Gleam in the King's Eye." If you are planning on playing that adventure after this one, the chamberlain can be badly wounded, but he should survive this encounter.)

**Treasure:** Each of the thugs carries a small pouch of gold amounting to 45 gp in total. Each also carries a 50 gp ruby, scribed with an Elvish glyph meaning "blood." A successful DC 14 Intelligence (History) check reveals that such rubies were once used by the elves of a fallen nation to pay for murder, and are now forbidden. The same check reveals that the gold coins

on the thugs are likewise of elven make, and that they haven't circulated in more than a century.

## AFTER THE BATTLE

When the fighting is done, the characters might choose to escort the chamberlain back to Whitesparrow Keep, or Lord Whitesparrow can hear of their exploits and summon them later that day. Either way, they meet with Marlin and he shakily informs them that this attack is not the first recent threat made against his household. Whitesparrow received a note four days earlier that read:

*"Leave your nephew alone at the white gnarled tree, or we will kill five of your servants each week."*

The tree is a known location near a bog outside the village. Needless to say, Whitesparrow has no intention of turning over his nephew, who is now secretly locked up in the keep's east tower and under guard night and day.

Based on their defense of the chamberlain or their previous exploits, Lord Whitesparrow offers the characters 100 gp each to find this Gloom and put an end to the threat against his nephew.

To run a shorter version of this adventure, the captured thugs might know that Gloom resides at the magnetic rock, at an altar to a god long dead. Otherwise, the characters can learn this fact as part of their investigations around the village, or by tracking Gloom's movements after the death of Ian Vanderwent or Pennin's kidnapping.

## INVESTIGATION: ALL ROADS LEAD TO THE MAGNETIC ROCK

While many aspects of this investigation aren't necessary to succeed at the adventure, learning that Gloom is in hiding at the magnetic rock is critical for the party's success.

The characters can hear word of Gloom's location at any point that fits with the length of time you want to run the adventure. They might learn it from her original hired thugs if you want a short adventure, or one of her fellow priests might have seen her slipping off into the woods and toward the rock. Further, a wandering hunter might mention having seen an elf priest traveling through the swamp to the magnetic rock. Drop the hint about that location at whatever point fits within the story and the adventure time frame.





Beyond her location, the characters can learn more about Gloom and the reasons for her attacks. Though Pennin can answer many of their questions, Lord Whitesparrow fears so much for the safety of his nephew and heir that he refuses to let even the characters see him. Instead, he suggests talking to Pennin's friend, Ian Vanderwent, to see if he knows about any recent altercations with this Gloom. The answers they get from Ian should lead the characters to the desecrated Temple of Light, and the first hints of strange behavior from Meira. From there, making inquiries in the village can add to what they know of the elf priest.

Once the characters have heard hints that Meira has been seen near the magnetic rock in the bog outside Whitesparrow, Brinley Ottershot informs them that Pennin has disappeared and his two guards are dead. No one saw anyone come in or out of the keep or tower. News of Pennin's abduction pushes the characters to discover the hidden temple and triggers the climax of the adventure.

## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

### VANDERWENT HOUSE

**Area Aspects:** Well-built house, fine statues, excellent decor, rich tastes

*This large, two-story house shows off excellent crafting, quiet decorum, and abundant money. Tiles of blue-stained shale cover the well-made roof, and statues of nobility flank a large oaken front door. The entry hall you're ushered into by servants is just as opulent as the exterior of this fine noble house.*

The Vanderwent house has been a landmark in the village of Whitesparrow for over a century, built on the profits of lucrative trade deals importing and exporting goods from exotic lands. The Vanderwents' middle son, Ian, is a good friend of Pennin Whitesparrow. His parents, Celestia and Guiles Vanderwent, have no knowledge of any trouble their son or Pennin might have gotten up to, and know nothing of anyone named Gloom.

Ian doesn't hold up well to interrogation, and gives up bits of information in response to any successful DC 10 Charisma (Deception, Intimidation, or Persuasion) check. He first alludes to trouble at the temple when he says that he and Pennin were out

enjoying the night and saw some vandals—likely the children of farmers—desecrating the site. Any cursory search of Ian's bedroom turns up a golden plate marked with the symbol of light. If presented with this evidence or pressed further, the haughty Ian admits that he and Pennin had some fun showing those priests of light who the real power is in Whitesparrow, but is unconvincing when he says it was all in good fun.

One night later, Ian is found dead, a small puncture wound at his throat and all the veins in his face turned black. An investigation of the boy's room reveals that both the door and the window were locked from the inside. A successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals faint scratches on the door latch, suggesting that the lock was picked by a skilled hand. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals that Ian was killed with wyvern poison—the exotic and expensive tool of a master assassin.

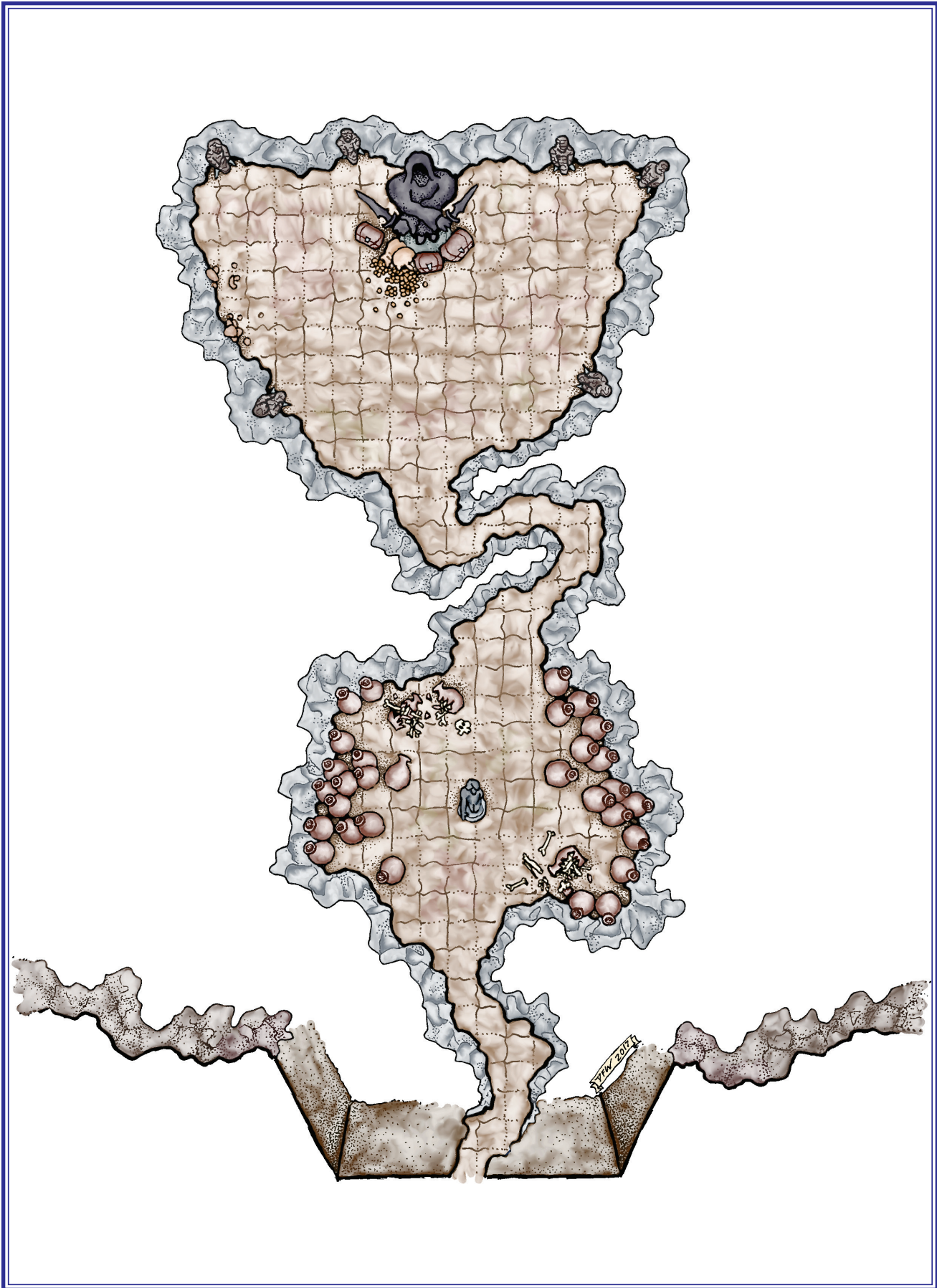
**Treasure:** If anyone ransacks the house for loot, they find a small lockbox containing 200 gp in mixed coin, gems, and jewelry. The box is locked, but can be opened with a successful DC 13 Dexterity check using thieves' tools.

### DESECRATED TEMPLE

**Area Aspects:** Acrid smell, floating orb, weirdly glowing pool, shattered statue, excavated unmarked grave

*Though the open-air nave of the temple is beautifully decorated with ivy-strewn pillars of white marble, an ugly, acrid smell fills the air around it. Four statues of elf men and women stand on pillars between marble arches, illuminated by the scintillating colors of a glowing orb that hangs in the air. A fifth statue has been recently tipped over, its shattered remnants on the ground. A strange green-yellow light flickers in the water of a carved marble pool at the center of the temple.*

The high priest of the temple, Elovyn Sorrowsong, welcomes the characters. She apologizes for the smell, which is a side effect of the recent desecration of the pool. It seems that someone urinated into it, and the clerics of the temple are having a difficult time removing the contamination. The vandals also tipped over a statue of the goddess of light, shattering it and placing the head of the statue in the pool. The priest shows no worries about the vandalism, saying that it





can be repaired in time. She is more concerned for the souls of those who would commit such an act—and about one of her priests, who has seemingly disappeared in response to the vandalism.

If pushed to guess who might have desecrated the temple, Elovyn talks of how young folk of nobility often feel they can get away with such things. If asked about the missing priest, Elovyn describes Meira as noted in the “Secrets and Clues” section. Another priest, Lusha Oaksmile, saw Meira after the vandalism, digging behind the temple and wiping mud across her eyes. The elf priest hasn’t been seen since. It is possible that Lusha followed Meira as she traveled to the strange location known as the magnetic rock outside the village—a site known to have once been a shrine to a long-dead evil god.

If they examine the site of the dig, the characters find what appears to be an unmarked grave a few hundred yards behind the temple. No signs of a body can be found there, but the dirt still hides a set of rotted leather armor, a set of once-fine rusted throwing daggers, and a small empty vial. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals that the vial once contained wyvern poison, though it is decades old.

### THE MAGNETIC ROCK

**Area Aspects:** Iron rock that interferes with the function of compasses, ancient symbolic carvings, large slate slabs, crack leading in

*A huge outcrop of iron-laced rock juts high up out of the ground, the remnants of a meteor that fell millions of years in the past. The front surface of the rock has been set with slabs of slate to create the appearance of a building entranceway. Someone has carefully etched strange symbols into the rock around a large crack, which opens up to darkness beyond.*

Gloom has hired two **scouts** (Arnorn and Krys) and two **berserkers** (Heavy Wallace and Stonehammer) to guard the front entrance of the rock. Having been given explicit instructions not to set foot beyond the entrance, they know only that an ancient temple lies somewhere within. The rock is an iron-laced meteorite that draws metal to it. Any creature within 10 feet of the rock that fights with a metal weapon or wears metal armor has disadvantage on attack rolls as the rock draws them toward it. Gloom’s warriors all fight with stone-spiked clubs and bone-bladed axes, and none of them wear metal armor. The berserkers

each have a chest tattoo depicting a pair of bloody axes—the sign of the Smiling Knives mercenaries.

Gloom’s mercenaries have seen her slip inside the rock with Pennin in tow. They believe she means to sacrifice the child to the Blood King, an old god of thieves and assassins.

**Treasure:** Each of the thugs and berserkers carries a small leather pouch, all of which contain a total of 180 gp. The coins, like those found on previous thugs, are of elven make and were minted almost a century before.

### HALL OF QUICK DEATH

**Area Aspects:** Jars full of bones, beckoning statue, names scrawled on the walls

*A large statue stands in the center of this cavernous chamber, depicting a robed woman bending forward. Her left hand is open and extended, while her right is behind her back holding a long, curved knife. The walls of the chamber are scrawled with hundreds of names painted in dark red, and a large number of pots stand around the outer edge of the room. Some of those pots have shattered, spilling piles of humanoid bones out onto the floor.*

A successful DC 12 Intelligence (History) check reveals that the statue depicts a minor goddess known as the Maiden of Merciful Death. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that her palm is stained with recently dried blood. A ring of glyphs surrounds the opposite tunnel entrance that leads deeper into the rock.

Each living creature that passes through the chamber must apply its own blood to the statue’s palm. If any creature fails to do so and steps over the glyphs surrounding the tunnel entrance, ten **skeletons** explode out from the pots to attack, and the statue begins to whisper words of madness. On initiative count 10, each living creature in the room must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or take 3 (1d6) psychic damage from the statue’s cutting words. When the skeletons are slain, the statue ceases to whisper. Destroying the statue requires two consecutive successful DC 16 Strength (Athletics) checks, or it can be attacked (40 hit points; AC 10).

### SHRINE OF THE BLOOD KING

**Area Aspects:** Large iron statue, valuable offerings, blade-handed leather-wrapped mummies



A large iron statue depicting a cloaked figure dominates the far side of this large chamber. In the long-fingered hands of its crossed arms, it holds two long, curved blades. The statue's hooded head is tipped downward, making it impossible to see its face. Rotted sacks and chests are strewn around the chamber, many of them showing coins spilling out. Tarnished goblets and plates of gold and silver stand on tables of rotted wood. Within alcoves along the sides of the chamber, mummified humanoids stand at attention, their bodies wrapped in strips of leather and their arms ending in gleaming blades. A figure kneels before the statue, wrapped in a black cloak and seemingly paying no attention to your approach.

This chamber serves as a shrine to the Lord of Murder, a deity worshiped by assassins. Where the **assassin** Gloom kneels before the statue, she blocks the characters' view of Pennin Whitesparrow bound on the floor before her. Gloom's murder of Ian has driven her to near madness. She remains torn between her attempt to discard her murderous ways and her desire to sacrifice Pennin for his heresy—and in so doing, to take up service once more to her old god.

If the characters do nothing, the drive to kill the boy overtakes Gloom, and she murders Pennin as she murdered Ian. If threatened or attacked, Gloom fights back. Though her only dose of wyvern poison was expended on Ian Vanderwent, she wields a *dagger of venom* called Blackfang that she uses in place of one of her shortsword attacks.

If things go poorly for Gloom, the fallen Lord of Murder responds by animating a **mummy** with bladed hands, which deals slashing damage instead of bludgeoning damage with its rotting fist attack. If you think Gloom is getting hurt too badly before being able to respond, insert the mummy into the initiative count at that point.

The statue in the room protects worshippers of the Blood King, including Gloom. While she can see the statue, Gloom has advantage on saving throws.

It is possible that the characters can negotiate with or bluff Gloom, who is torn by her desire for peace and her anger at the defilement of the temple. Depending on how the conversation goes, she might leave Whitesparrow and disappear, she might take her own life, she might turn herself over to the authorities, or she might attack in a murderous rage.

A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that the statue and the treasures are trapped with an incredibly intricate mix of magic and mechanics. If any of the treasure in the chamber is moved, the room fills with poison gas equivalent to a *cloudkill* spell (save DC 16). The gas endures for 1 hour, then dissipates. The trap then resets, fed by a chamber of naturally forming poisonous gas deep beneath the magnetic rock. Gloom is aware of this trap, and warns the characters of it if they treat her with any kindness, even feigned.

**Treasure:** If the characters manage to acquire the treasure, they find 19,270 cp, 1,368 sp, 82 gp, and a collection of gold and silver goblets, plates, and cutlery worth a total of 200 gp. The hoard also holds a jeweled cursed *berserker battleaxe* called *Bloodletter*, which leans against the back of the statue. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check confirms that the axe hasn't been touched in centuries.

This treasure was left here long ago by the thieves and assassins who came to worship at the shrine. Even such disreputable figures refrained from stealing from the Lord of Murder.

## CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

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The adventure is concluded when the characters inform Marlin Whitesparrow of their dealings with Gloom and bring Pennin back to the keep. If he learns that they let Gloom go, Whitesparrow is angered and continues to worry about her vengeance for some time. If they describe her death, he is satisfied. If they bring her to him, he promises the assassin a long and torturous death for the many murders she has committed. In any scenario other than letting her go, he rewards the characters the promised 100 gp each.

## EXPANDING THE ADVENTURE

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You can expand this adventure by creating additional chambers within the magnetic rock. The “Primeval Rock” location in *Sly Flourish's Fantastic Locations* provides many such areas, and you can enhance that connection further by turning Gloom's thugs and berserkers into **werewolves** that worship the same Lord of Murder she once served. If these werewolves lair in the primeval rock, they might have been a menace to the people of Whitesparrow for some time.





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*This book would not have been possible were it not for the following backers. Thank you all.*

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