

BROADSWORD

ADVENTURES FOR FIFTH EDITION **AUGUST 2019 ISSUE 1** Monthly



COVER: JD Russell brings to life the first chapter of *The Secret of Forsaken Peak*, BroadSword Magazine's first ongoing adventure path.



Oh shit, I just created a Fifth Edition magazine...

Okay, yeah. I'm crude AF. But I always told myself that one day if I ever created a magazine I'd put "oh shit" as the first words in the book. And here it is.

I don't know what possessed me to do this. Sometime around early 2018, I got back into roleplaying games after an eight year hiatus. Last I checked, 3.5 was the talk of the town. I totally skipped 4e (which, I'm told, I didn't miss much) and landed in the world of 5e.

Obviously, I feel in love immediately. Despite the criticisms of "over-simplistic", it truly is a clean, balanced design. And while it may have a few funky design flaws, overall it is the best version of the game that the folks in Portland have put out so far.

I want to thank everyone that helped in creating this monster. Thanks to JD Russell, the cover artist and cartographer, for riding the wave that got us here. And thanks to Scott Craig who jumped in after-the-fact to organize and format the first issue--and beyond, I hope!

Thanks to all the incredible backers on Kickstarter who brought this project to life, as well to all the awesome people that follow me on the various social media platforms.

Finally, thanks to my super supportive wife, Tracy, and the coolest kid I know, my son, Jack. Ya'll helped me through this and dealt with all my cranky shit.

Love ya!

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Kevin Hamrick	INTRODUCTION	2
Dave Hamrick	BEHIND THE SCREEN	4
<hr/>		
PART I: SWORD & SORCERY		5
<i>Low-magic/low-fantasy campaign settings.</i>		
Dave Hamrick JD Russell	THE EASTERN BORDERLANDS (5E campaign setting, levels x-x)	7
Dave Hamrick JD Russell	THE SECRET OF FORSAKEN PEAK PART 1 (5E adventure, level 5)	13
<hr/>		
PART II: MASS COMBAT		27
<i>New mass combat rules and adventures.</i>		
David Hamrick JD Russell	THE BATTLE OF DRAGARD MINE (5E adventure, level 11)	30
<hr/>		
PART III: THE TRIAL OF HEROES		43
<i>Character-level independent adventures.</i>		
Dave Hamrick	THE TRIAL OF HEROES (5E adventure, any levels)	44
<hr/>		
PART IV: 0 LEVEL ADVENTURES		69
<i>New rules and adventures for 0 level characters.</i>		
Dave Hamrick JD Russell	EVADIMUS' SCHOOL FOR GIFTED SPELLCASTERS (5E campaign setting, level 0)	70
<hr/>		
ARTICLE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES FOR BROADSWORD MAGAZINE & OPEN GAMING LICENSE		98

Perfection is achieved, not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing left to take away.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

INTRODUCTION

When my brother asked me to write the intro to the very first issue of his successfully Kickstarted magazine, *BroadSword*, I was a bit surprised to be honest. I also wasn't sure what to write at first, but then I figured why not simply start at the beginning.

Back in the 90s, my brother and I got a copy of *Dungeons & Dragons*, the big black box basic set that said something along the lines of the "The NEW Easy to Master Dungeons & Dragons". I honestly don't remember much about our time spent with it other than I remember we laid out the mat and I had a thief character who snuck into a dragon's lair, stole some gold, and left.

The memory stuck with me though because it would be the seed to a life long love of tabletop gaming and roleplaying in general. I would continue to play in my brother's campaigns and though he would tell you he was a terrible dungeon master back then it created in my mind what a roleplaying game should be like. A shared experience of storytelling. It was never about getting total party kills or the PCs vs the DM, instead, it was about telling the best story and all of us having fun. To this day I still don't look at roleplaying so much as a game but as a shared narrative experience where everyone wins.

Throughout the years I'd get into other gaming, much of it again introduced to me by my brother, from the *Choose Your Own Adventure* novels to my brother bringing over some new friends so they could introduce us to a game called *Warhammer 40k*. Years (and perhaps thousands of dollars) later I've got stacks of board games and hundreds of miniatures all fighting for space in my game room. Yet it still all goes back to those fond memories of playing *Dungeons & Dragons* with my brother.

So when my brother started doing his blog *DMDave*, I was happy to see him putting his considerable talents towards something he had a passion for. Don't tell him I said so but I've always thought of my brother as very talented and intelligent, but I've also felt that for a large part of his life he was wasting those talents. Be it on not doing anything at all or using them on something he wasn't truly passionate about. Now that passion and hard work have paid off not only in the form of a rather successful blog but this awesome magazine you have before you. To say I'm proud of his accomplishments is a bit of an understatement. I'm not only proud but I'm overwhelmed with joy for him. I know that you dear reader will get much enjoyment out of this magazine, so I leave you with this.

Remember at the end of the day *Dungeons & Dragons* is about sharing experiences with the people you love and care for and if you play it with that in mind the positive impact it can have on your life is measurable.

Best of luck to you in your adventures!

- Kevin Hamrick



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BEHIND THE SCREEN

HOW TO GET YOUR PLAYERS TO ENGAGE

By Dave Hamrick

Cell phones, laptops, and off-color jokes, oh my!

Anyone that's been a GM before—no matter how good you are—probably knows that getting players to engage is one of the toughest parts of being a game master. Even I sometimes fail to impress, watching my sessions devolve into total chaos.

So how do you get your players to actively participate and cling on to every word of your story? This article offers up a few tips for keeping your players engaged.

Ask them what they like!

This one probably seems like a no-brainer, but it's probably the biggest problem that GMs have—even experienced ones! The easiest way to get your players engaged in your game is to (duh) figure out what they like. And the easiest way to do that is simply asking them. Do they like combat? Do they like roleplaying? Do they like hex-crawling? Maybe a mix of all, especially if you have a big group. Once you know what grabs their attention, add that into the mix.

Cut the crap!

Sure, you're building an awesome world and you're totally in love with it. But there comes a point when you don't need to describe every single little detail. Buying a mundane dagger at the local smith doesn't need a play-by-play description. If your players aren't interested in travel (and you know this because you surveyed them), you don't need to describe the entire journey from Point A to Point B. In fact, think of your sessions like a movie. Just keep the scenes that matter and use a broad brush to paint everything else.

Use props and visual aids!

You might not be a great storyteller. And that's fine. Just be sure to lean on the skills that you do have. If you love painting minis, get some minis and make sure they're used. If you're an awesome cartographer, make sure your maps are seen. Or, if you and your players like puzzles and riddles, come up with nifty handouts. Slideshows, visual presentations, and even music all help grab player attention.



Play somewhere free of distractions!

I started my game at the back of my local gaming store. Unfortunately, the nights we played were contest nights for a certain “magical” card game. This was a huge distraction. Not to mention we'd sometimes get the oddball who'd wander into the room and stare at us (of course, some of those oddballs later joined my group, but I digress). If you're playing your game in a place that's loaded with distractions, you should probably consider moving it. These days, I run my game in an attorney's office. There's no toys, books, games, or TVs to distract my guys. Even if you don't have the luxury of having a massive boardroom table to play on, try playing in a room of your house that's low on distractions.

Boot toxic players!

Time for a little controversy. I get a lot of folks on social media asking me how to deal with troublesome players. A troublesome player is one that, no matter what you do, just won't get involved in the game and does

everything they can to disrupt the setting. They argue rules, split the party, and distract others. When you've got a player like this, the best thing to do is to pull them aside and ask what's up. If it's something you're doing, you can probably fix it. But if it's all on them, it's best just to ask to part ways. Toxic players derail games fast. Remember: being a GM is a hobby, not a job. Boot 'em!

Don't penalize for inattentiveness!

Beyond booting toxic players, I recommend that you don't penalize your players for failing to pay attention. First of all, it's a game. And if they're not invested in the game, then they're probably not having fun. It's your job to correct that. Docking experience, ending games early, and being meta are poor ways to address the issue, and can lead to problems. I believe that even banning cell phones can be seen as a negative move. Fix what you can, address the rest. Ω

PART I

SWORD & SORCERY

Preview

SWORD & SORCERY

LOW-MAGIC/LOW-FANTASY CAMPAIGN SETTINGS

By Dave Hamrick

Long before gleaming suits of armor, everyday magic, and the worlds where anything is possible, there was classic fantasy or Sword & Sorcery. Conan the Barbarian, Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser, and to an extent, Game of Thrones all exemplify these environments.

Steeped a little further into medieval history than high-fantasy counterparts, Sword & Sorcery saw a lot less magic. Those who wield magic usually symbolized decadence and corruption; more often than not, wizards, warlocks, and sorcerers were the villains in these settings. And heroes were closer to anti-heroes, often motivated by greed and self-interest than altruistic virtue.

The adventure path that takes place in *BroadSword Magazine*, *The Secret of Forsaken Peak*, is set in a Sword & Sorcery world. You're free to play *Forsaken Peak* any way that you like. However, if you'd like to stay "true" to the classic feel of Sword & Sorcery, I recommend making the following changes:

Races

Humans dominate Sword & Sorcery settings. There are other races—sometimes referred to as "demihumans"—but these races tend to be the classic races such as elf, dwarf, and halfling. Tieflings, gnomes, dragonborn are unlikely options; even if they were a part of the campaign, their appearance would certainly cause fear and prejudice. Regardless, non-human races are rare in Sword & Sorcery, and often, the cultures are quite divided with very little intermingling.

Classes

Rogues, fighters, and barbarians are the most common classes in Sword & Sorcery settings. Rangers and druids may be present but are mysterious

loners and uncommon. Clerics and paladins might exist, but the gods are strange, petty, and distant, and this is reflected in their cult-like practices. Bards share more in common with rogues than they do spellcasters and rarely have magic powers.

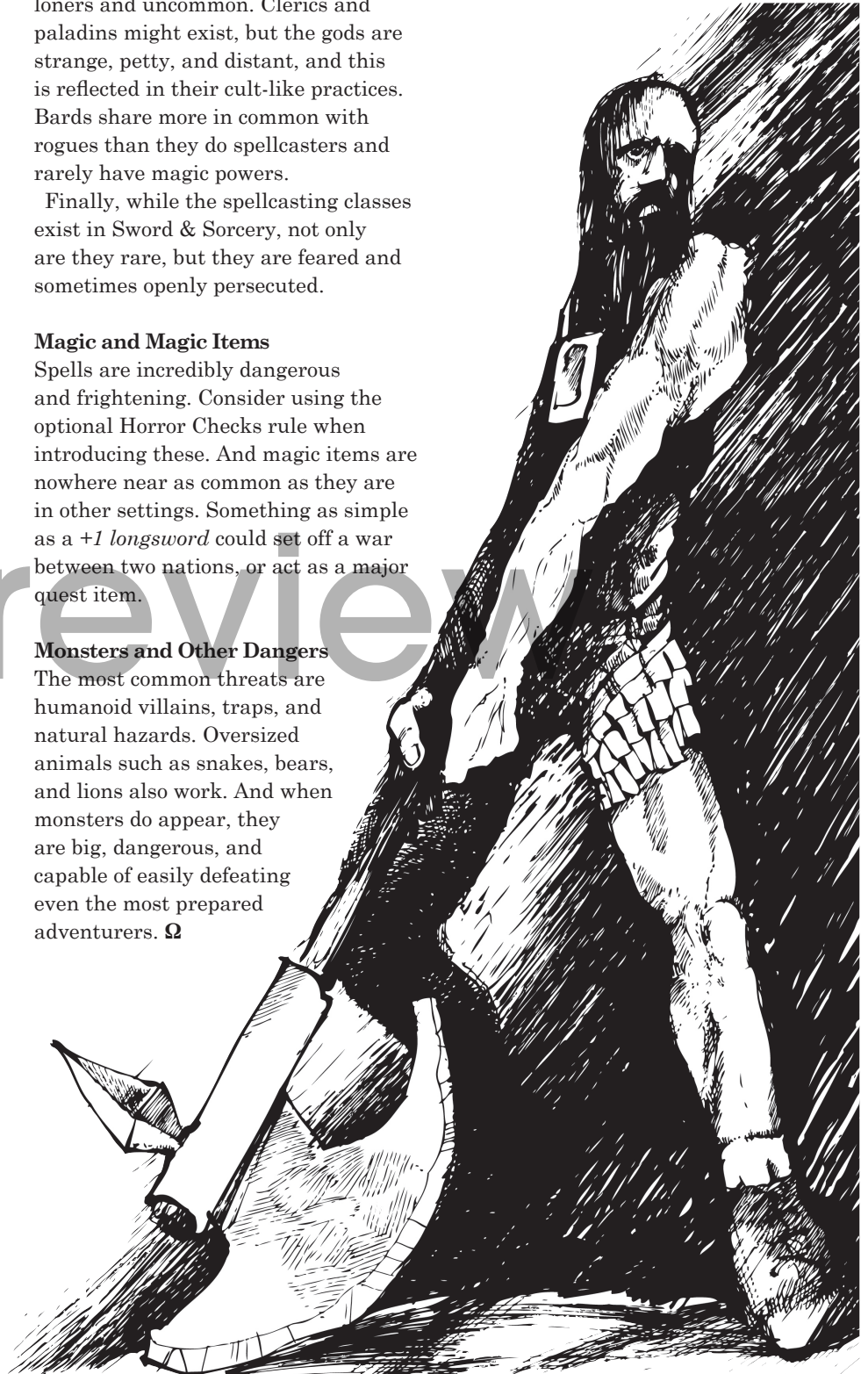
Finally, while the spellcasting classes exist in Sword & Sorcery, not only are they rare, but they are feared and sometimes openly persecuted.

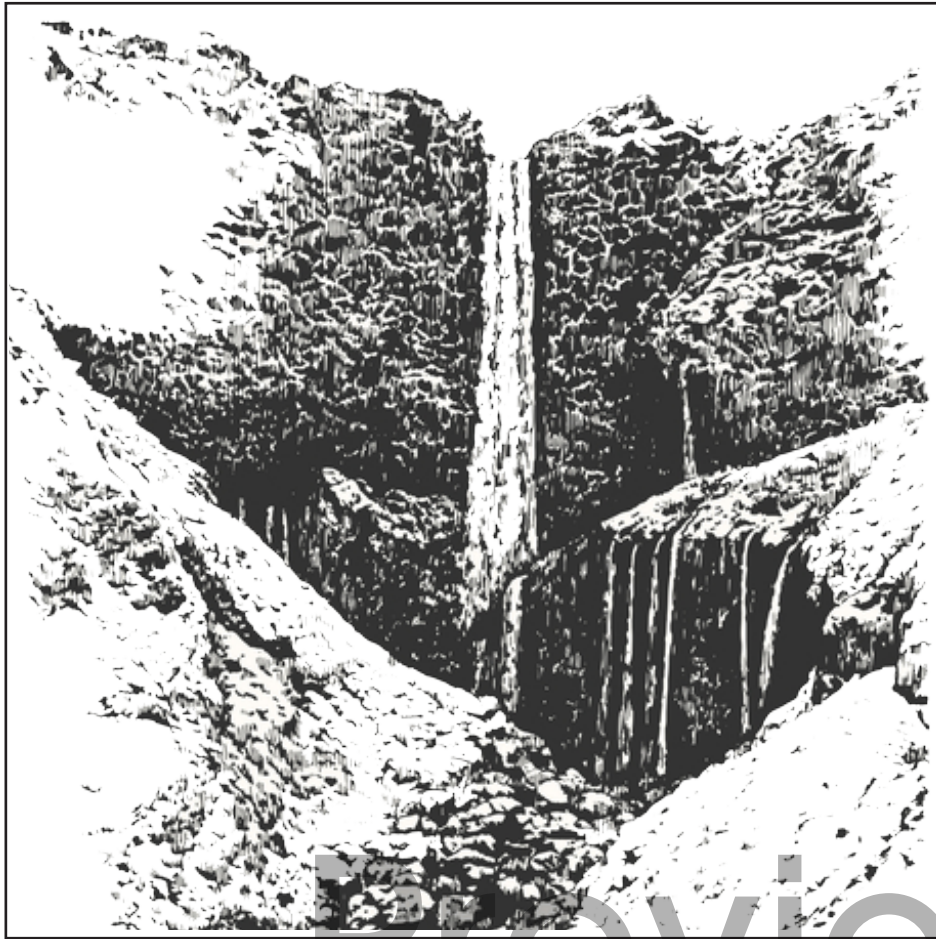
Magic and Magic Items

Spells are incredibly dangerous and frightening. Consider using the optional Horror Checks rule when introducing these. And magic items are nowhere near as common as they are in other settings. Something as simple as a +1 longsword could set off a war between two nations, or act as a major quest item.

Monsters and Other Dangers

The most common threats are humanoid villains, traps, and natural hazards. Oversized animals such as snakes, bears, and lions also work. And when monsters do appear, they are big, dangerous, and capable of easily defeating even the most prepared adventurers. Ω





*This article introduces a Sword & Sorcery campaign sandbox for you to set your adventures in. The ongoing adventure series, *The Secret Forsaken Peak* is set here.*

Locations in the Eastern Borderlands

This section describes the key locations in the Eastern Borderlands, which are presented in alphabetical order for ease of reference. The Eastern Borderlands can easily exist in the Sword and Sorcery world presented in this issue, or it can fit into any existing Fifth Edition campaign world or even a world of your own design. Feel free to modify any of the locations as you see fit.

Abandoned Stronghold

This stronghold was once an operation center for the Chaosmen. Since the founding of the Castle of Chaos on the Forsaken Peak, it has been abandoned and left to ruin. Numerous bandit groups, adventuring parties, and even the odd cult have used this stronghold as a base of operations over the last few decades.

Ancient Hills

It's said that everything west of the Greenstone River is best left to the druids and rangers. The ancient hills are no exception. Filled with all manner of strange and deadly beasts, these hills are home to ancient ruins, abandoned mines, and monstrous lairs. The mysterious Wizard's Tomb is carved into the heart of the hills.

Bonemist Geyser

Powered by ancient magma tubes far beneath the surface of the western portion of the Eastern Borderlands, the Bonemist Geyser erupts scalding hot water 75 to 200 feet in the air once every 30 minutes to an hour. The

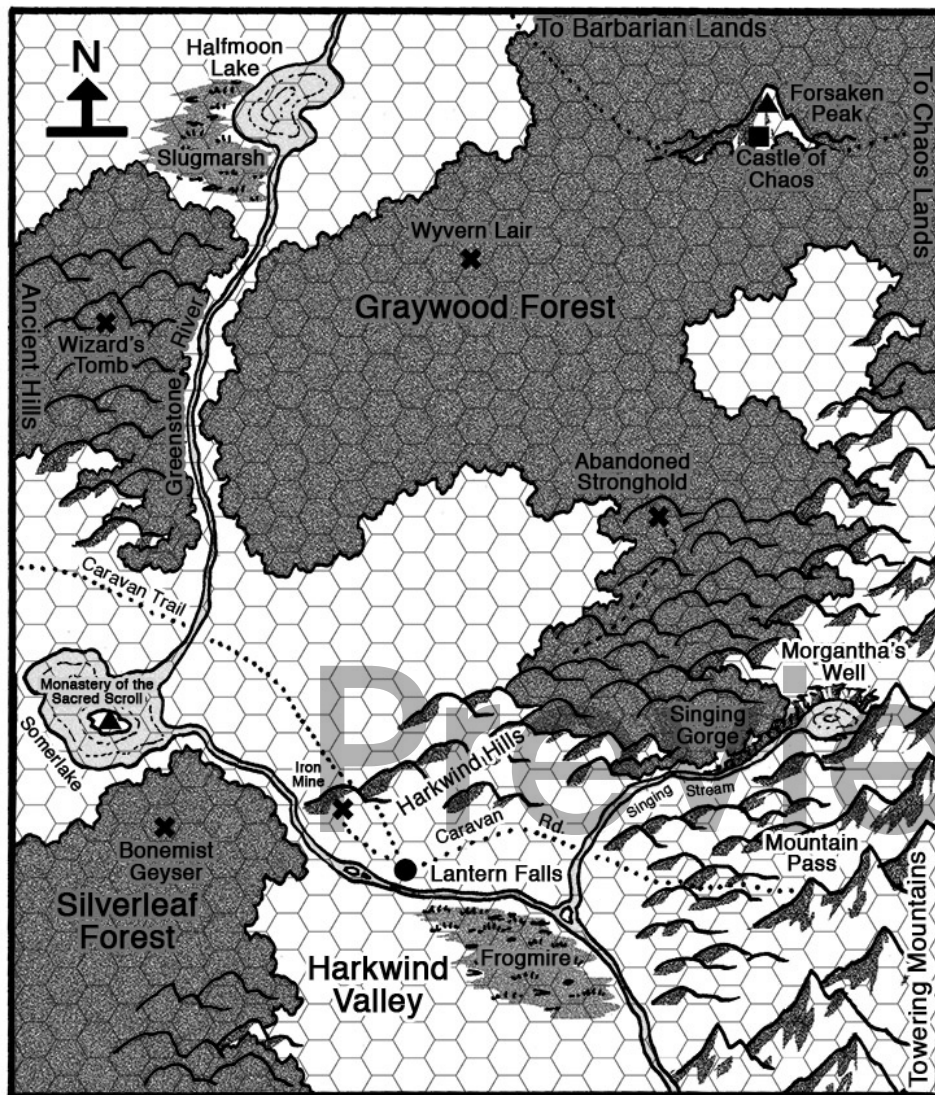
THE EASTERN BORDERLANDS

BY DAVE HAMRICK & JD RUSSELL

A New Campaign Setting for Fifth Edition

Cartography by Justin David Russel

Eastern Borderlands
1 Square = 1 Mile



© JUSTIN DAVID RUSSELL / EPIC WERKES STUDIO

elves of the Silverwood once called the Bonemist a place of worship. Now, it is the domain of foul undead and wicked forest spirits. The strange Geyser Glass may be found by determined searchers.

Caravan Trail/Road

Once, this route was a poorly maintained road that wound through the mountain pass east of Lantern Falls. Then, it was little more than a cart path that lead into the Central Borderlands. A few years ago, the merchant lords operating in the

Harkwind Hills took control of the road. Now, these wealthy traders hire mercenaries to patrol the area, collect Tolls (qv.) and clear it of troublemakers.

Castle of Chaos

The Castle of Chaos is the base of operations for Chaosmen in The Forsaken Peak. A future issue of BroadSword Magazine will detail this important location.

Forsaken Peak

The Forsaken Peak is described in the Forsaken Peak article in this issue.

Frogmire

Named for its nearly deafening chorus of frogs, the Frogmire grasps the bend in the Greenstone and Singing Stream. Rumors of massive frogs and lizardmen living in the swamps persist, but so far no proof has been seen. Of course, that could be because all who have witnessed such monstrosities are dead.

Thankfully, with the Knights of Lantern Falls making regular patrols along the Caravan routes, demihumans dare not push north beyond the river.

Graywood Forest

The ancient, coniferous Graywood Forest swallows the majority of the Eastern Borderlands. The forest provides ample resources for neighboring villages and farms. Naturally, lumber is its biggest offering. But the prickberries that dot the ground cover are necessary for antitoxins and other potent alchemical concoctions, too. Deer are common, as are rabbits and plenty of game fowl. And the ponds and lakes spread throughout the Graywood are fat with fish.

Unfortunately, bandits call the Graywood home, too, terrorizing, pillaging, and robbing the homesteaders living and working among the trees. Sadly, the Chaosmen aren't much better in their attitude towards those who reside in the forest, either. Bored from their endless missions along the Forsaken Peak in their Castle of Chaos, these grimy warriors descend into the forest to raise hell on all they come across.

Some believe that the Forsaken Peak's curse bleeds into the forestry; the closer one gets to the Peak, the darker the forest grows. Ghosts and other horrors stalk the woodlands, vanishing those unlucky enough to be lost after dark. Now, rumors persist

of slugmen pouring from lost tunnels, emerging from the bowels of that horrible mountain.

Greenstone River

As the longest river in the Eastern Borderlands, the Greenstone descends from the Mountains of Rime to the North and bleeds south towards the Ruined Sea. Along the way, it slinks past Lantern Falls, granting the city its moniker.

Travel by river is difficult, but not impossible. Guides are recommended, as the river is known for its chaotic bent. Many unprepared adventurers have met their fates at the hands of steep waterfalls, jagged rocks, and other dangers of the swift and angry Greenstone and its rapids (qv.).

Halfmoon Lake

Then Greenstone’s second major stop is the murky Halfmoon Lake at the edge of the Chaosmen’s Lands. Half-sunk by the black waters rests an old, nameless village. Anyone who sets about on raft via the Greenstone can see the old village peaking up from the mud, swarmed by mosquitos, biting flies, and disease-carrying rats.

Harkwind Hills

Once, the Harkwind Hills north of Lantern Falls were abundant with iron. Of course, the wealthy merchants operating the caravan trails grew keen on this. Thousands of hard hands were put to work in the hills, stripping the land of its bounty. In time, the iron dried up. Only a few mines still operate in the Harkwind Hills, but most are long abandoned.

Harkwind Valley

Named for the white eagles (large hawks) that live in the nearby hills and hunt in the valley. On one side of the Valley stands the Towering Mountains and on the other the Ancient Hills.

Centuries ago, the Church of Law took to the valley, attracted by the assets provided by the might Greenstone and

Hazards of The Eastern Borderlands

Aug the Croc, Terror of Halfmoon Lake
A giant crocodile named Aug calls the village ruins home. Aug’s grown fat over the years thanks to countless, careless treasure seekers who dive into the ruins searching for lost loot and baubles. In addition to Aug, swarms of quippers hunt the ruins, eating anything the old croc misses.

Bonemist Geyser Glass
A rare material known as geyser glass collects around the bonemist geyser. Geyser glass looks like a cross between obsidian and quartz. When used to make weapons, it can punch through the defenses of creatures with resistance to fire damage. However, it is weak and hard to work with; attack and damage rolls made with geyser glass weapons are made with a -1 penalty.
Of course, getting a hold of the glass isn’t easy. Skeletons and scalded zombies rise from the acidic mud, dragging unsuspecting creatures to their deaths in the mud and boiling water.

Caravan Tolls
Reasonable tolls (typically 2 sp) at 10-mile intervals pay for the operation. Some grumble about the cost but know that it’s a small price to pay for the safety of cargo transportation through the Borderlands. The merchant tolls are manned by 2d6 guards lead by a veteran at all hours. Most of the tolls’ guards are lawful neutral, although a corrupt official isn’t totally unheard of.

Greenstone River Rapids
When traveling by the Greenstone River or through the Singing Gorge by raft or canoe (larger boats can’t move through the waterways due to the rapids), have the characters make DC 12 Strength checks using their proficiency in vehicles (water). The greenstone requires checks once every 5 miles and the Singing Gorge requires checks once every 1 mile. A failed check results in the vessel capsizing in the water.
Capsizing Boats - At the start of his or her turn, a character is pushed 30 feet downstream and must make a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check. On a failed check, the character is restrained, pulled underwater (and starts to drown), and takes 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage as they are dashed against the rocks. On a successful check, a character only takes half damage but isn’t restrained or drowning. A restrained character can use their action to make another DC 17 Strength (Athletics) check to surface the water, ending the restrained condition on a success.

Singing Gorge Harpies
The voices are actually those of harpies. The harpies specifically target raft passengers attempting to navigate the falls. Using their song, they lure travelers from their boats and into the water. From there, the crushing rocks and swirling waters do the rest of the work for them (see Greenstone River Rapids above).

the Harkwind Hills to the north. Soon, Lantern Falls sprung up and formed a major trade center.

These days, the natural geography of the valley is one of Lantern’s Falls greatest blessings, especially with the incursion of the Chaosmen to the north. With the assistance of the

Merchant Lords’ mercenary companies, Lantern Falls knights keep the valley safe. Hundreds of farms and a handful of villages stay safe under their watched. Of course, the looming shadows and chill air sweeping off the Forsaken Peak have started to worry the Harkwinders.

Lantern Falls

Lantern Falls is an independent mining town sandwiched between the Central Borderlands to the west, the very northwestern edge of the Towering Mountains to the east, the elven woods to the south, and the barbarians and Kingdom of Chaos to the north. It's a sleepy town comprised of hard-working farmers, craftsmen, miners, and fishermen, though there are some merchants and traders that operate within the town walls. A large waterfall thunders down several cataracts to the north of the settlement.

Those few caravans that end up in Lantern Falls arrive in the summer months when the passes and Borderlands are free of harsh weather. The most common traders include merchants from the Valley of Haven in the mountains to the east, or free farmers from the Ancient Hills and lands surrounding the town.

Historically, the town was a simple village comprised only of miners. But as harsh northern weather began taking its toll, marauding barbarians and monsters harried the miners, and passing caravans of merchants and guardsmen wintering with the laborers eventually became farmers, it became clear that more protection was necessary. Walls were slowly built. Mercenaries were paid to watch the town and protect its inhabitants. These soldiers became the town's first men-at-arms. Eventually, one of these men, Durwin, took power, focusing construction and military efforts for the first time for the beleaguered inhabitants.

A traveling cleric of Law settled in the town 100 years afterward, bringing with him spiritual guidance and offering his god's protection to travelers heading east or west.

Soon, Lantern Falls, or Iron Falls, as it was called until 70 years ago, became known as the 'Merchant's Lantern.' It offered those few travelers that made the harrowing journey through the Borderlands or the Towering Mountains

a safe haven from the hazardous northern realms. Though not bustling, commerce is greater now than it has previously been.

Lantern Falls's denizens are mostly lawful. Laws and punishments are strict but fair, and rarely resulting in execution.

A Base of Operations

Lantern Falls makes an excellent place for the party to rest and relax in between adventures, especially as part of the ongoing Forsaken Peak adventure series. All of the equipment listed in the Fifth Edition PHB are available for purchase in Lantern Falls. Being a Sword and Sorcery setting, magic items are much more difficult to locate. In addition, Lantern Falls makes a good place to introduce side quests and other plot developments.

Below are details of some of the more important places found in the town, as well as its notable denizens.

The Lonely Delver Inn

The Lonely Delver Inn is one of the oldest establishments in Lantern Falls. Its current innkeeper is Forthwind (LN male human **commoner**), an argumentative and somewhat harsh man. Miners visiting from the camp to the north are treated exceptionally well by Forthwind, often given discounts on their meals, if not given them for free. The miners fill the common room's tables where they carouse away the aches and pains brought on by backbreaking labor. Many only visit when delivering shipments of ore, though some visit family and friends they have in town. The cost to stay the night at the Lonely Delver is 1 gp per day and includes three modest meals.

Slinker's Tavern

If there is information to be had in Lantern Falls, it can be found in Slinker's Tavern. The halfling, Slinker (N male halfling **commoner**) makes it his business to know the gossip and rumors in town. He often likes to bother new arrivals with incessant, but kindly, conversation. Often, he is amiable enough that people end up

opening up to him and saying more than they intended, which is just what Slinker wants.

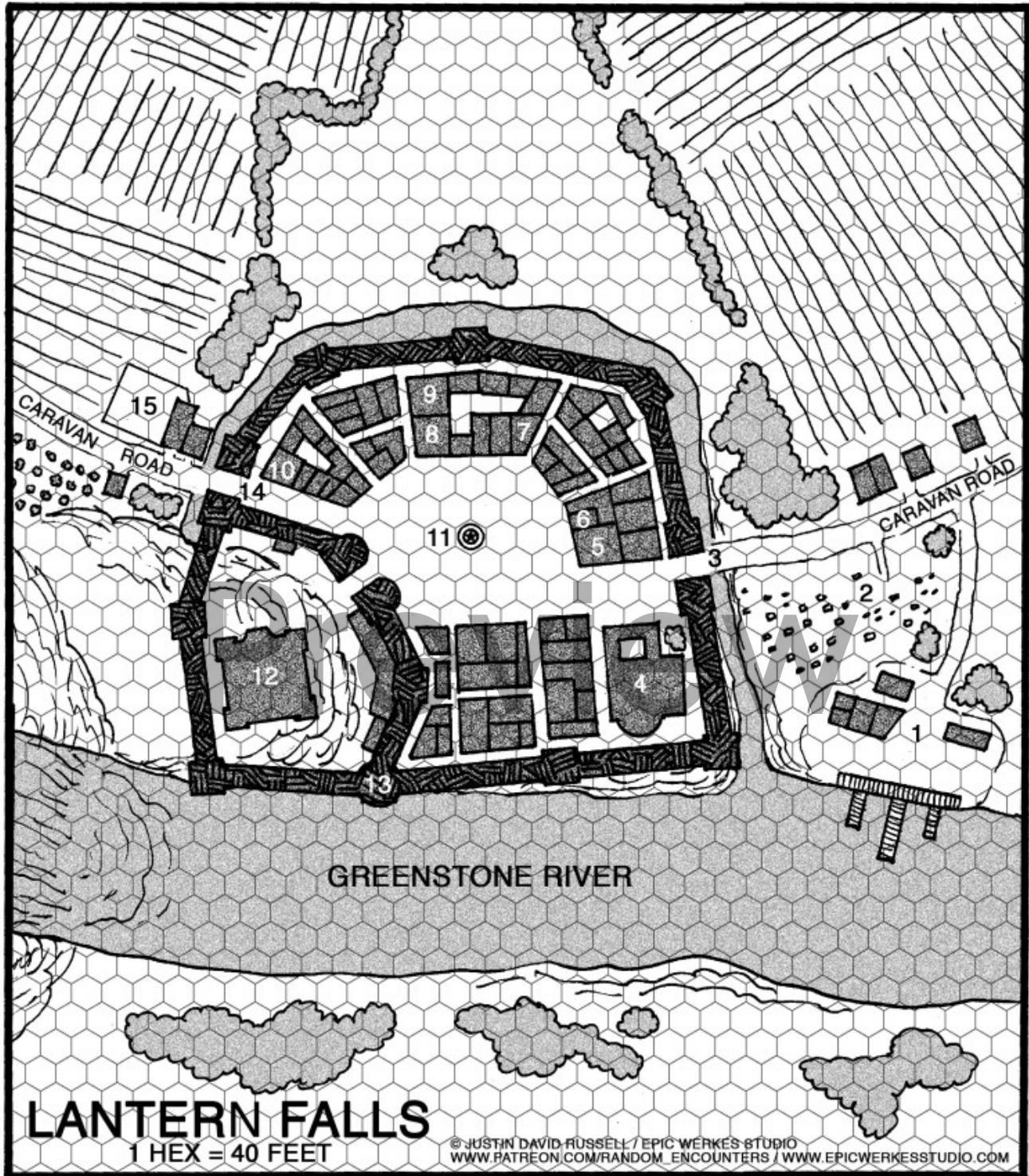
Lorden's Keep

Lorden, the Steward of Lantern Falls, is descended from the mercenaries that were hired to protect the developing town. Lord (LN male human **veteran**) is short, stout, and red-faced. He is a combative fellow that loves being involved in forays into the surrounding hills to deal with any threats that might arise. Lately, though, his wife, the Stewardess Gwendolina (LG female human noble), and Lorden's advancing age, have kept the man upon his carved throne much more often than he would like. Lorden is prone to exploding into fits of rage, though such bouts are mostly bluster, as his wife will be quick to point out. Lorden's son, Uthric (LN male human veteran), is his pride and joy. He is tall like his grandfather, fierce like his father, and acting constable for the town.

The Lorden family lives in the large keep on the western part of the town. There are old passages beneath the Keep, and many mysteries surrounding them.

The Temple of Law

The Temple of Law is the spiritual center of the town and a resource for those looking for divine protection along the caravan routes east and west. Fenric the Pure (LG male human **priest**) is the town's priest; he is a stick of a man, with a head that bobs around on his bony shoulders, like a scarecrow with no support, when he gets excited or angered. Many say the priest is a boring, fussy, and fastidious fellow, and they are right. Most of the temple's acolytes and the less pious townsfolk make fun of him for his no-nonsense personality. Despite his conservatism, the man is good of heart, aids the traveling and local poor, and is quick to lend a hand when the moment calls for it, though he might try and control the whole affair. Lorden and Fenric are constantly at odds, though they hold a grudging respect for one another.



KEY:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. FISHMONGERS/DOCKS | 6. DELGAR THE TRADER | 11. MARKET SQUARE |
| 2. GRAVEYARD | 7. THOM THE LEATHERWORKER | 12. LORDEN'S KEEP |
| 3. EAST GATE | 8. BELDOR THE BLACKSMITH | 13. BEZZWIC'S TOWER |
| 4. TEMPLE OF LAW | 9. STORN THE ARMOURER | 14. WEST GATE |
| 5. THE LONELY DELVER INN | 10. SLINKER'S TAVERN | 15. TEG THE HORSE TRADER |

Iron Mine

One last iron mine dots the Harkwind Hills and its rights are fiercely contested. No less than three Merchant Lords have died laying claim to the operation, poisoned, stabbed, and drowned by “bandits.”

Currently, Marlowe the Rusted (LE male human **noble**) manages the mine and keeps a small mercenary company on hand to see that it stays that way. The mercenary company consists of 20 guards and 2 veterans.

Monastery of the Sacred Scroll

The old monastery is locally known, but seldom interacted with. This sect of the Church of Law is dedicated to Saint Merek of the Sacred Scroll. The monks continue the work Merek started, studying an obscure text from the ‘Book of Law and Light.’

Morgantha’s Well

Wrapped by 50-foot cliffs on all sides, Morgantha’s Well is a clear lake hidden among the foothills of the Towering Mountains. **Water weirds** live here. They are prone to drowning adventurers that ignore the warnings of local hunters.

Silverleaf Forest

Once, the elves of the Eastern Borderlands ruled the entire expanse. It is believed that the Silverleaf and the Graywood were also part of the same forest. Then, the curse of the Forsaken Peak swept over the land. The elves retreated from the Graywood and across the Greenstone, reestablishing their domain in the western woodlands. Now, the elves rarely emerge from their homes in the trees. And outsiders are quite unwelcome.

Singing Gorge

Those that brave this winding, cataract-filled gorge swear they hear the faint, alluring song of female voices over the tumbling of the stream that runs through it.

Singing Stream

An extension of the Greenstone River, the singing stream takes its name from the famous Gorge it runs through.

Somerlake

Somerlake is a lake northeast of Lantern Falls. Somer Isle is an island at the heart of the lake on which the Monastery of the Sacred Scroll is built.

Slugmarsh

The dismal, black swamp that consumes the Halfmoon Lake is home to Zargol, the slug demon. There, he lives here with a collection of zealous cultists. Not even the Chaosmen dare set foot in the marsh, for fear of capture, torture, or possession (or all three) by the slug demon and its insane minions.

Towering Mountains

This snow-capped range juts from the landscape like a wolf’s teeth, separating the Eastern Borderlands from the remainder of the continent. Were it not for the Caravan Road that cuts through the mountains, travel would be nigh impossible.

The greatest danger of the mountains are the drakes whose eyries pock its peaks. The drakes are known to fly north towards the Harkwind Valley during the Cold Months, lifting livestock – and the odd farmer – to return to their young. For this reason, Drakehunt is a popular festival, arriving the second week of autumn. Each year, young knights and thrillseekers arrive to the mountains ready to test their new swords on the mighty lizards’ scales. Those who survive consider it a rite of passage.

Wizard’s Tomb

The trap-laden tomb of a lich known as the Stargazer, who once terrorized the Southern Kingdoms, lies hidden within the crags of the Ancient Hills. Word ’round the Harkwind is that the lich’s second phylactery is kept within the hills.

Wyvern’s Lair

Worse than all the bandits, Chaosmen, and wolves of the Graywood Forest are the malicious wyverns. These thorny, flying reptiles live in a sinkhole at the center of the wood. Thousands of skulls and bones—an equal mix of humanoid and animal—litter the surrounding area.

The wyverns of the Graywood forest are vicious and much more cunning than normal. They rarely hunt alone, preferring to travel in packs of three or four. Often, one will pretend to be feasting on a fresh kill in an open area, attracting hunters and would-be adventurers. Meanwhile, 2-3 more hide among the trees. The wyverns then cut off all exits, attacking hard and fast.

Five **wyverns** live in the burrows pocking the 60-foot deep sinkhole.

Shock, Wyvern Matriarch

The matriarch of the wyverns is a heavily-scarred beast known as Shock, the smartest and deadliest of the group. She uses the normal **wyvern** stat block except with the following changes:

- Shock’s alignment is neutral evil.
- Shock has 247 hit points and her AC is 15 (natural armor).
- Her Dexterity score is 14 (+2) and her Intelligence score is 8 (-1)
- Shock has proficiency in Stealth checks (+6).
- Using her Multiattack, Shock can attack once with her bite and once with her claws. While flying, she can use her claws in place of one other attack.
- Shock’s CR is 10, increasing her proficiency bonus to +4 (this gives her a +1 bonus to her Perception skill and attack rolls).Ω



This first installment of the ongoing Secret of Forsaken Peak series is intended for a party of 4-6 5th-level characters who should reach 6th-level by the adventure's end. The adventure is set in the Eastern Borderlands described earlier in this issue, but can be easily inserted into an existing campaign setting. Certain sections of the dungeon map may lead to areas not yet published. You are free to change the dynamics of these locations to better suit your campaign, or remove them entirely.

Adventure Hook

This adventure assumes that the players have already arrived in Lantern Falls. However, any small-to-medium settlement near a major mountain range will do.

The characters are called to the town of Lantern Falls by Bezzwic Greencloak (LG male human **mage**). Recently, a group of Greencloak's students disappeared while performing research north of the Greenstone River, in the Graywood Forest. Rangers combing the area discovered goblin tracks leading back to the Forsaken Peak. Greencloak fears that none of his disciples survived, but remains optimistic. He hopes that the characters can either a) find proof that his students were all killed in the raid or b) rescue any survivors captured by the Peak's goblins.

Greencloak knows that the goblins operate out of a mine located on the northern face of the mountain and offers detailed directions for the characters.

Roleplaying Bezzwic Greencloak

Greencloak is the town's most extraordinary feature. He is the Steward's counselor and a wizard of middling power. He lives in a tower near the Keep. Bezzwic is proud, forgetful, and quick to please the Steward with simple cantrips and stories. The wizard is venerable, but not ancient. He is tall, with meaty hands and a wide girth. His greying black hair and beard are

THE SECRET OF FORSAKEN PEAK PART 1

BY DAVE HAMRICK & JD RUSSELL

Goblin Enemy Mine

Cartography by Justin David Russell

wild about his face and protrude from his voluminous green cloak. Bezzwic thoroughly enjoys scaring the town youth with threats of true and awesome power. He does not brook fools but will bend over backward for the Steward of Lantern Falls.

If the characters ask more questions to Greencloak, he shares what he knows about The Forsaken Peak and the goblins:

“The Forsaken Peak is a cursed area. Only the Chaosmen are foolish enough to build a permanent base of operations there, and from what my resources tell me, even they’ve had a hard time there.”

“The goblins are known slavers and cannibals. If any of my students are still alive, it won’t be for much longer, I’m afraid.”

“Careful in the Graywood Forest. It is full of wolves, bandits, and other unspeakable horrors.”

“The Chaosmen of the Peak aren’t aggressive, but they also don’t like others sniffing around their Castle on the Peak. If you absolutely must approach the Castle of Chaos, I recommend doing so under the disguise of merchants whom they accept without too many questions.”

The characters should be somewhat experienced by this point and their deeds may be known even to those living on the edge of civilization, such as those of Lantern Falls. Greencloak is confident in the party’s ability to rescue his students. Greencloak explains that he would offer his support, but the town’s defenses are limited, especially where magic is concerned.

General Features of the Goblin Mine

Ceilings

Goblins average 3 to 4 feet in height. As such, many of the chamber ceilings are shorter than normal. Ceilings in chambers and constructed tunnels are 8 feet high unless otherwise noted.

Floors

The floors in tunnels and chambers are made from smooth, hewn stone. In natural caverns (areas #A15 and #A20) the floors are stone, but vary in smoothness and may have loose gravel and rocks.

Walls

Lacking the engineering sensibilities of dwarves, most of the walls in the tunnels and chambers are crudely hewn stone and rough cut blocks, sometimes with support beams to carry the load of the peak above it.

Light

A majority of the mine is without a light source since goblins do not require light to see in the dark. The area description text blocks assume that the characters are able to see in the dark or have light sources of their own.

Non-Cell Doors

Most of the doors are sturdy wooden doors measuring 3 feet by 6 feet high (causing most non-goblins to have to bend down) that are 3 inches thick. The hinges and locking mechanisms are made of cast iron. Most of the doors remain unlocked unless the alarms have been raised. Locked doors require DC 15 checks with lockpicking tools to open, or DC 17 Strength checks to break down. Each door has an Armor Class of 15 and 15 hit points.

Cell Bars and Doors

The cell bars are made of thick, wrought iron, each spaced 5 inches apart. It re-

quires a DC 21 Strength check to pry the bars apart. Cell doors also require DC 15 checks with lockpicking tools to open, or DC 19 Strength checks to break down.

Keys

There are a handful of goblins and servants in the mine that carry keys on them.

Rolfin (area #A9) and Tuuk (area #A26) have keys to every door in the complex.

Lamarr (area #A10), Linandra (area #A13), one of the hobgoblins in area #A21, and one of the bugbears in area #A23 have keys to every door in the complex except for the strong room (area #A5).

Alarms

The goblins are very conscious of their proximity to the other factions in the mountain. As such, they’ve created an alarm system using bells that can reverberate through the tunnels. The goblins are trained to raise the alarm immediately upon the site of unwelcome guests. In any area that is designated as having an alarm and an encounter occurs, at least one goblin or hobgoblin will attempt to use its action to sound the alarm. If the alarm is sounded, 2d6 + 2 **goblins** with 1d4 + 1 **wolves** will arrive in 1d4 turns and the entire mine will go on full alert (see below).

Full Alert

When the mine is on full alert, the following occurs unless it is impossible for the goblins to do so (GM’s judgment):

1. All slaves are returned to their holding cells in area **A23**.
2. All doors are locked.
3. The chance of a random encounter increases to 16-20 on a roll of a d20.
4. Rolfin is ushered back to his chambers in area **A9** and guarded by two **ogres** and four **goblins**.

The Reward

Greencloak promises the characters 300 gp apiece if they return with irrefutable evidence that his students were killed by the goblins. He will pay an additional 200 gp each if they find survivors and bring them back alive.

If the character press for coin upfront, Greencloak gives each character 100 gp upfront, with the remainder distributed upon completion of the mission.



Adventure Background

Below the first level of the Forsaken Peak is a large, central, water-filled cavern around which are several smaller caves and tunnels inhabited by a myriad of denizens. In the northern caves are goblins. They serve the aging dragon, Orithranx, who lives on one of the isolated islands in the underground lake. The goblins have hewn their home, crudely, from the very mountain.

Slaves work the mines and serve the goblins as food. The Chaosmen are eager to ally themselves with the goblins, but the chaotic creatures have not yet committed. The dragon believes it can harness the power of Gorgolog, the sleeping slug god imprisoned in the roots of the Forsaken Peak.

Goblin Mine Encounters

A1 – Main Entry

After the long, arduous hike following the directions Gleencoak gave you, the tree cover breaks just enough for you to make out the entrance to the goblin mine. Two large wooden doors bar entry and exit into the mine. Guarding these doors are a pair of ogres. To the right side of the lumbering giants, you can make out a pair of crude arrow slits.

Getting in won't be easy.

This is the only exterior entrance into the mine and it's guarded by two **ogres**. In addition, two **goblins** keep a keen watch from the arrow slits (see area #A2). If the characters learned from Greencoak that the goblins use an alarm system to warn the others of intruders, they may try to draw the ogres away to deal with them. Or, at the very least, deal with the goblin archers before they can pull the alarm.

Mine Entry Doors

Large object

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 44 (8d10)

Damage Vulnerabilities

fire, lightning

Damage Immunities

poison, psychic

Entry Methods. The door is barred from the inside. Beyond destroying the door (which would draw attention and raise the alarm), here are some ways the players could get inside:

Persuasion. The characters could convince the ogres and goblins that they need entry. A successful Charisma (Persuasion or Deception) check contested by the goblins' Wisdom (Insight) could work. The goblins are well-trained, however, and make all their Insight checks with advantage. If the goblins pass their check, they give the characters 2 rounds to leave before they open fire and raise the alarm. Intimidation causes the goblins to immediately attack and raise the alarm, even with a success.

Break Down the Door. A successful DC 23 Strength check might open the door, but it's very difficult. In addition, the noise draws the attention of the goblins and ogres inside, who will raise the alarm.

Use Leverage on the Bar. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that the door is locked from within by a huge, wooden bar. Using a narrow enough item such as a greatsword or spear and a fulcrum such as a rock (or, you know, a dead ogre), the bar can be shifted out of place with a successful DC 15 Strength check.

Once through the mine entry doors, a set of crude steps leads up to another set of double doors with the same statistics, except the entry methods change as follows:

Persuasion. There is a small window in the left door for the ogres to communicate with the worg-riders in area #A3. The characters could convince the worg-riders that they need entry into the mine. A successful Charisma (Persuasion or Deception) check contested by the goblins' Wisdom (Insight) would work. The goblins are well-trained, however, and make all their Insight checks with advantage. If the goblins pass their check, they raise the alarm and ready an attack action for any intruder that comes through the door. An attempt at Intimidation causes the worg-riders to immediately raise the alarm and ready an attack, even with a success.

Break Down the Door. A successful DC 23 Strength check might open the door, but it's very difficult. In addition, the noise draws the attention of the worg-riders inside, who raise the alarm.

Use Leverage on the Bar. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that the door is locked from within by a huge, wooden bar. Using a narrow enough item such as a greatsword or spear and a fulcrum such as a rock (or, you know, a dead ogre), the bar can be shifted out of place with a successful DC 15 Strength check. If the characters fail or pass the check by more than 5, it draws the attention of the worg-riders who raise the alarm and ready an attack action.

This second set of doors is guarded by a third **ogre**.

Treasure. Other than the items listed on their stat block, the ogres carry nothing of value.