

### Hamlet Heroes: Lore of the Abbey

It is unknown when the ancient Abbey was built. The original architects are long dead and what remains is but an effigy of their vision. Standing wounded within sharp crags, its stoic stone belfry lays bare a great cast iron titan. Embossed with black ivy and suspended by blood red oak timbers, it tolls in the late spring breeze. Nestled deep within furtive ravines and shielded from howling winds by snowy peaks the Abbot has kept a faithful presence over the years, tending the faithful with his brothers and sisters. By the dozens faithful monks have kept this ancient reliquary pristine as a symbol of both their eternal faith and as an honor to the saintly artifacts held within its walls. High arched cloisters and arcades echo with afternoon prayer and in the breeze the iron titan tolls for all the land to hear in its mighty grace. Linden trees line the humble footpath down from the mountains into the nearby wilds and seated below, among the ever encroaching nature, rests the Hamlet.

However all was not well within this sacred house. Monks began to speak of a voice deep within the bowels of the Abbey. Though initially dispelled as whispers of an unfaithful mind some believed it to be the voice of the Holy Creator itself, as though the very mountain beneath them was a conduit for divine Word and Providence. It spoke within the listeners soul, to their heart. But its words were tonal, drones of an unknown lexicon. Needles and pins to the mind. A small fly crawling across mental folds. A language unknown to any tongue but fluent to every soul. It was only a matter of time before madness spread among the order, like a festering wound seeping through a saturated bandage. Those of the most devout faith believed it a sign of the Maker and sought its genesis deep within the catacombs of the Abbey. Others resisted but its call proved too powerful and one by one they flocked to its siren like call. One sister managed to resist the madness long enough to escape to the nearby Hamlet and spread word of the lurking horror. She pleaded and begged for someone, anyone to come to the aid of her Brothers and Sisters for a great evil had awoken. Mocked for her claims and imprisoned for her heresy, the monk pleaded for their lives. Through the inane and indiscernible cries of the Sister's fading consciousness, a sole Hero took up the quest. Could such babbling be true? Never, the Hero surmised. The tongue of a heretic and a lunatic, nothing more. But at that moment, a strange gnawing sensation crept across the Hero's skull. A rumble within the mind. But could this be it? My chance? What riches dwell within that House of the Holy? Driven by the promise of divine relics, fame and riches the First Hero arrived at the Abbey only to find it abandoned. With the great oak doors ajar and the grounds left untended, the First Hero explored through the empty arcades and withered gardens of the Abbey and finally arrived at the archives deep underground. The Hero's search revealed a room lost to time and hidden by the Abbey's architects, like a divine spark from the Creator itself. The Hero felt that familiar crawl inside the skull, like 100 spiders. Seduced by such a lustful beckoning, the First Hero entered the darkened chamber.

An Untold horror inhabited the hidden grotto. Twisted and corrupted in body and mind by the dark celestial force resonating from the depths, the throngs of monks from the Abbey took

the form of every imaginable and unimaginable beast that could be conjured from hell and beyond. Before weapons could be drawn to vanquish the fiends, a voice bellowed within the Hero. A voice not of the ears, but of the mind. 100 spiders clicking inside his skull again. A call to power. A call to servitude. A driving madness, impregnating the mind with visions of reigning over this fallen domain. Of reigning over its denizens and spreading forth the power of this being from the depths of the Abbey. The Hero felt the madness manifest as body and mind began to morph. To corrupt. Unraveling of the mortal coil into something more than could be known.

A storm now grows on the horizon. Bellowing smoke and rumblings from the ancient Abbey loom over the Hamlet. The naked iron bell tolls from the tower above the Abbey, without a bell ringer, resonating within all who would listen. Villagers and scouts report glowing eyes in the shadows and the bubbling screams of beasts from within the wilds. Sightings of indescribable horrors draw closer to the Hamlet. Doom approaches, unless the source of this evil can be destroyed. In the wake of this horror, other heroes rise. A deep calling from within gifts them with courage and confidence. Be they self-righteous peasants, drunken workmen or greedy rakes, these brave few gifted heroes are all that stands between the Hamlet and the spreading destruction.