

## Glowing Crater

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**A glowing meteorite has crashed near a local farm. An ominous color bleeds from it and the farm's owner hasn't been seen since he went to investigate.**

It was several days ago that a bright light fell from the sky. The colorful star shot straight down and planted into the earth with a crash, on the outer edge of the Gardners' farmland. Scared for both him and his wife, the elderly Hatham Gardner brandished his pitchfork, called his falcon, Zenas, and left to investigate.

That was the last time Maria saw her husband. She rattles with nerves as she speaks to the adventurers. Her eyes cannot help but glance at the faint aurora spreading through the sky like cracks where it breached the heavens; the same direction Hatham was headed. She just wants this all to stop, and to know what has happened to him.

"Call out to Zenas and follow his squawks. He wouldn't leave Hatham's side."

### Describing the crater...

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The crater is visible from a distance as you approach. Open fields of subdued green are suddenly disrupted and rise in a circle where the impact has rended the ground. Rocks, grass, and other plants have been thrown back, cluttering the surroundings. And in the center, its source deep out of view, smoke still rises. You can smell the ash despite your distance and the lack of wind. A light shines from whatever is within, visible in the smoke. But the light is unlike anything you are used to.

The luminous color is a magenta at its core, with an aura that changes with snaking tones and hues. They do not dance, but rather seem to fight and strain against one another. Far above, where the smoke dissipates in the sky, the colors continue to spread out like ethereal veins. A painting of this might be beautiful. But the more you watch how these colors move and reach, the more dread you feel grow in the back of your mind.

As you call and whistle for Zenas, you hear a squawked reply from near the crater, though you cannot see the bird.

They continue without further prompting and you can hear faltering in its cries. You are unsure if it is injured or simply panicked. But then, as you reach the crater's perimeter, it stops. The air is quiet and still, filled with a thin haze of the scintillating rainbow.

You step to the edge of the crater and peer in. The view of the area and shining smoke is clearer, though the source cannot be made out amidst the dirt and light.

But then you hear something; scratching in the dirt nearby. Zenas squawks again, though the sickly sound blends into a beleaguered, human moan. A hand grips the rim of the crater, closer than you expected, and a form rises to meet you.

### Hatham Gardner, Child of the Crater

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Hatham has been reformed by the mysterious powers of the crater. His shape is swollen and discolored, distorting his features. The lights of the crater suffuse his body. They are visible beneath his skin and drip and leak from this mouth, eyes, and several wounds on his body. But the worst of it is Zenas, whose head can be seen where he was absorbed into Hatham's shoulder. The falcon's wings have mutated and grown large enough to support the combined mass of him and his master. Hatham still grips his pitchfork in his hand.

The light in his body flashes to a different color every few seconds. Each one is distinct from the last and seems to infuse his being with an associated element.

Hatham was built from the statblock of a vrock, with abilities added and changed to reflect the unknowable chaos of the crater and the stories that inspired it.

His Chromatic Mutation replaced the vrock's ordinary resistances as a way to make the fight more special. I opted to make it his choice every turn. Alternatively, you can roll for it randomly or even let him change it as a reaction to being hit by damage (or a legendary action?). Perhaps he gains resistance to the attack, then immunity until his next turn.

This encounter, description, and monster were written by me, Troy McConnell. If you enjoyed them, you can support my work and gain exclusive bonuses on my [Patreon](#). Until next time!