



that knowledge to be as effective as possible in combat. It uses the appropriate stat block found in appendix A, but is neutral evil.

The Far Realm friends cannot be attacked while they wait before the rift—only when they manifest in combat. A Far Realm friend that is killed does not reappear in front of the rift. If that character is subsequently rolled on initiative count 10, no Far Realm friend enters the fight that round.

#### REACHING THE MESA

As the characters fight, their primary goal will be to reach the top of the sandstone mesa, from which the orrery components and the ritual can be controlled. Characters can use the steps to reach the top, but those steps are warded against intruders (see below). Moreover, the Far Realm friends and the goblins fighting for Splugoth attempt to stop the characters from reaching the top at any cost.

Characters can climb to the top of the promontory, but the weathered sandstone crumbles easily. It takes a successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check to reach the top, with climbing gear or a rope providing advantage on the check.

**Twisting Steps and Rune Traps.** The steps leading up the mesa shift underfoot as a result of Far Realm energy flooding through them, making them difficult terrain. Additionally, each flight of steps is trapped at its midpoint with a magical rune that can be detected only

with a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check.

Once detected, a rune can be disabled with a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check or Dexterity check using thieves' tools. A character aware of the rune can also attempt a DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check to jump safely over it. Moving past the rune otherwise deals 5 (1d10) necrotic damage to a creature and teleports it back to the cavern entrance. The runes remain active until disabled.

**Planar Rift.** The rift tearing reality apart hovers a few feet above the mesa and pulses with eldritch power. A character who reaches the top can see more details behind the Far Realm friends and the army of goblins visible within the rift, including enormous nightmare creatures with far too many eyes, tentacles, and teeth.

#### SPLUGOTH'S FORCES

Splugoth spends most of the fight mocking the characters, as long as he and his forces have the upper hand. While he controls the orrery components (see below), he uses a bonus action to mutate his goblins or send an eldritch bolt toward a particularly troublesome character. This leaves him free to attack a character who reaches the mesa top. If he does not currently control the orrery, he attempts to regain control.

**Mutating Goblins.** During the fight, Splugoth's goblin minions start out as a force of ten **goblins**, with their numbers and combat features augmented by the ritual