

who has an engineering or mining background has advantage on this check. With three days of digging and careful reinforcement, the tunnel can be cleared again. Where it runs 100 feet to the south, the tunnel opens up to a small cave hidden in the forest outside Phandalin.

## 9. BETWEEN A ROCK AND A COCKATRICE

When the characters attempt to open the door into this area, they find it locked from the inside. If they pick or smash the lock and then try to open the door, read:

The door strikes a large piece of stone on the floor, making it difficult to push open.

**Opening the Door.** The stone blocking the door is a small statue—a kobold petrified by a pair of undead cockatrices that dwell here. The door can be forced open with a successful DC 10 Strength check. However, if the check succeeds by 5 or more, the door breaks, causing the character attempting the check to spill into the room and fall prone.

When the characters enter, continue with the following:

Apart from a fallen kobold statue that blocked the door, this room contains only four beds. Each is covered in torn sheets, its straw mattress crawling with bugs.

**Creatures.** Two undead cockatrices lurk beneath the south beds. Each uses the **cockatrice** stat block with these changes:

- The creature is undead.
- It has immunity to the poisoned condition and to poison damage.

After the fight, a thorough examination of the undead cockatrices reveals a tiny sigil etched into each of their beaks—the draconic skull with an upthrust sword that is the symbol of Hoobur Gran'Shoop.

**Development.** Any character who succeeds on a DC 11 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check knows that any creature petrified by the cockatrices, including the kobold, should return to normal in 24 hours. Sure enough, half a day later, the kobold—named Patsky—revives. Patsky is hungry, thirsty, scared, and used to being bullied. No matter how the characters treat him, he tells them that he was a servant to the attackers who assaulted the manor. Those attackers brought the living (at the time) cockatrices with them, but chose to leave them behind when they moved on. A spellcaster put a mark on them (the dragon-skull symbol), then ordered Patsky to lock the creatures in this room. They pecked him before he could escape, and have been repeating the process every time the kobold recovers. At some point, the cockatrices died and reanimated, but the kobold doesn't know how.

Patsky can also tell the characters the general story of the attack. He didn't fight much, since most of the other attackers were stronger, nor does he know who

hired the attackers. Hoping to learn some magic, Patsky stuck close to the spellcaster, whose name he knows as Hoobur Gran'Shoop.

**Treasure.** In gratitude for his rescue, Patsky offers up his only valuables—a gold necklace worth 25 gp, a *portion of resistance* (acid), and the key to this room.

**Patsky's Future.** Patsky is another wild-card NPC that you can use in your campaign as desired. If the characters take a liking to him, they might hire him to work for their franchise. If not, assuming anyone in the group was kind to him, Patsky might show up to help the characters with useful information at a later date. Ignored or abused, then left to his own devices, the kobold joins up with some other evil gang led by a spellcaster.

## 10. FAR REALM RIFT

When the characters enter this area, read:

A five-foot-diameter circle of dark energy crackles in the northwest corner of this room. The walls are etched with complex runes, as well as drawings in charcoal and some reddish substance. These runes pulse with the same dark energy of the portal, surging and ebbing in a steady rhythm.

The portal crackling in the corner is a growing gate to the Far Realm, activated by operatives of the Six before they vacated this area. Characters entering the room provide the spark of energy the portal needs to bring across its first creature.

**Creature.** After the first character enters the room, roll initiative. A **gibbering moulder** wriggles through the portal on its initiative count, but can take no other actions on its first turn. Thereafter, the aberration tears into any other creatures in the room. Any character fighting in close notices the gibbering moulder's eyes blinking in rhythm with the runes and the portal.

**Runes.** The runes covering the walls keep the portal active. During combat, the characters notice these sigils continuing to pulse in sync with the portal and the gibbering moulder's blinking.

As an action, a character can attempt a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check to deactivate the runes or a DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to sabotage them. Any number of characters can attempt these checks, which can be made each round. All characters have advantage on these checks if someone succeeded on the check in area 7 or the characters examined the failed ritual there.

In each round that one or more characters succeed on the check, the gibbering moulder and the portal weaken, as follows:

- **First Success:** The gibbering moulder deals half as much damage with its attacks.
- **Second Success:** The gibbering moulder loses its Gibbering feature.
- **Third Success:** The portal closes and the gibbering moulder dies.