



BELOW VULTURE POINT

BY JEFF FAIRBOURN

Bombers sighted, twelve o'clock high!

Artwork by Jeff Fairbourn

Jeff writes: "Because my life's responsibility has increased geometrically, I don't have much time to write for DUNGEON® Adventures anymore. I do find myself relying more and more on this magazine to provide well-written adventures for my own campaign, and I'm not disappointed."

"Below Vulture Point" is an AD&D® adventure designed for 6-9 player characters of zero to 1st level (about five total levels; zero-level PCs count as half a level). It takes place in the High Dale in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting, although it can easily be placed in any AD&D campaign as a beginning scenario. This adventure is designed to prepare zero-level PCs for the character classes that will most suit them when they reach 1st level. The plot centers on the urd, a monster detailed in the *Monstrous Compendium*, Volume Two.

If zero-level PCs participate, the players and Dungeon Master must decide which version of the guidelines for zero-level play they wish to use. This module can be played with the version in *GREYHAWK® Adventures* (pages 117-126), the version in modules N4 *Treasure Hunt* and N5 *Under Illefarn*, or any other compatible guidelines.

The version in modules N4 and N5 is simple. Zero-level PCs begin at -500 XP. While the PCs' attributes are determined normally, they have no special abilities or magical skills. Each has 1-6 hp and one weapon proficiency.

For this module, a PC should have at least 4 hp and should also choose two nonweapon proficiencies (both from the general category). While the zero-level PC adventures, the DM should note the PC's inclinations toward any class or alignment (which may dictate a particular class). When the PC reaches 0 XP, the player and the DM should decide on a particular character class based on the PC's zero-level pursuits.

The guidelines given in *GREYHAWK Adventures* are much more involved. All standard attributes for a zero-level character have a starting value of 3, and the PC has 3 hp. These point values can be raised through the acquisition and distribution of experience. If using this version, the DM should run this adventure after his PCs have played a few game weeks and have raised their ability scores, hit points, and other skills.

NPCs who can serve as mentors, tutors, and instructors for the fledgling PCs are provided in this adventure, if the DM needs them.

First-level PCs are committed to one character class and are rapidly progressing in that field. The DM should decide if the 1st-level and zero-level PCs have some prior relationship to each other in the campaign. First-level PCs may use the same means of instruction and employment as the zero-level PCs.

The High Dale's environment is reasonably safe for low-level PCs, consisting of terraced farmlands and a few villages. Many a veteran adventurer has retired to live out his final years peaceably in the High Dale. These veterans are often found running inns, taverns, and markets where they can tell their stories (with some exaggeration) and hear all the rumors and gossip that pass through. The people are friendly, and for the most part life in the High Dale is trouble free. It is a nice, quiet place to grow up, to learn the value of hard work, and to retire.

The High Dale's standing militia consists of only 50 men, each armed with a sword and spear. The area is also protected by the Pegasus Archery Company, a group of 75 mounted mercenaries. If the DM wishes, he could draft the PCs into the Dale's militia. If the PCs are only passersby, they would not be duty-bound to participate, although the folk of the High Dale do not trust wanderers and freebooters. Because the folk of the High Dale are mainly of good alignment, any neutral or evil PCs will be quietly and subtly ostracized.

For the DUNGEON MASTER™

When Dorug the urd was separated from the rest of his family, he feared he would perish. The powerful wind that blew the little creature away from his gen's territory in the Thunder Peaks was a fluke, but Dorug was disoriented and exhausted when he finally landed in the shelter of some rocky hills.

After sleeping a few hours, Dorug awoke to find the winds had subsided. He went to explore the lands around him. Although he didn't know it, the wind had blown Dorug south of the Thunder Peaks, into the hills near Hooknose Crag. Dorug was drawn to a large, oddly shaped rock surrounded by flying shapes—a place the folk of the High Dale call Vulture Point because of

the large population of vultures (both normal and giant varieties) that lived in its vicinity, and because of the shape of the rock itself. The great stone monument looked like a massive vulture's head with its beaked maw open and screeching at the sky. Many vultures built their nests in the shade of the "mouth."

Dorug's arrival at Vulture Point marked a turning point in the lives of the rock's denizens. A tribe of kobolds had taken up residence there many years ago, living in caves beneath the "head." Due to the proximity of their home to the lands of men, their numbers had constantly diminished. When Dorug arrived, the tribe was near extinction. The urd was accepted as the kobolds' superior, and he took control of the survivors. He ordered them to steal several giant-vulture hatchlings, but instead of eating them as the kobolds had done, he cared for them and trained them. Dorug's tribe had a way with vultures.

As time went on, some of the kobolds resented Dorug's attention to the giant birds. A few of them confronted Dorug about his attempts to train the vultures, calling it futile and misguided. Dorug took these few outside to prove the worth of his works.

Below Vulture Point, a rough road runs from the High Dale to the Wyvernwater in Cormyr. The rebellious kobolds were forced to walk on this road under the gaze of the young-adult vultures. Dorug whistled the large birds to the attack, and they took to the air. Each vulture carried a large, pointed stone in its claws, and the birds plummeted straight toward the kobolds on the trail. The kobolds tried to flee but were overtaken and pelted to death by the birds' stones.

Dorug watched with satisfaction as the rest of the birds of Vulture Point joined their trained fellows in devouring the corpses of the dissident kobolds. Needless to say, the remaining kobolds' faith in Dorug and his strategy grew after that. The group began waylaying lone travelers on the rough road, and soon the kobold tribe prospered.

Dorug's crew has not attracted the attention of any professional adventurers because none have been in the area for some time, and because the kobold-vulture gang has not done any real damage to society.

Adventure Background

A few years ago, an aging half-elf adventurer named Randamis Ambler retired to the High Dale to live off of his moderate acquisitions. He hired builders to construct a modest manor and moved in with his hired servants. He has been received fairly well among the folk of the High Dale, and he throws an annual feast for his neighbors on the anniversary of his arrival. He owns a large pasture where he keeps many fine horses as a hobby.

Randamis was actually forced to retire due to a chronic stomach ailment. The infirmity may be hereditary, or it may be the result of an adventuring mishap. When his neighbors and servants suggest he get clerical aid, he only smiles, shakes his head, and says he has tried that many times, but the ailment always comes back. The half elf says it is time to let the illness run its course. However, Randamis has been able to nullify the pain caused by the infirmity by drinking an exotic herbal tea. The tea's ingredients can be acquired in the markets of eastern Cormyr, and the half-elf regularly sends agents to buy a sufficient supply of it while gather up other supplies he requires.

Randamis had quite a "shopping list," and sent his latest group of agents on a longer course that took them through Archendale, Sembia, Suzail in Cormyr, and the Hullack Forest. He expects them back soon and is anxious for their return, for his supply of herbal tea is quite low.

Unfortunately, the agents ran into trouble. After passing the Wyvernwater, they traveled along the Old Road that led around Hooknose Crag and into the High Dale. There, they passed below Vulture Point and were ambushed by Dorug and his nest of dive-bombing vultures. All of the riders but one were killed.

The pack horses were scattered but were later rounded up by the kobolds, and soon no trace of the ambush remained. Marlbee, the sole rider to escape, was badly wounded by the vultures' stones before he could get out of range. Deranged from his fear, pain, and loss of blood, Marlbee clung to his mount and sped south into the High Dale toward Ambler Manor. Feeling his last strength ebbing, Marlbee turned to seek aid at the nearest building, the Dusty Road Inn.

For the Player Characters

The Dusty Road Inn is as popular a stopping place for travelers as any in the High Dale, and is the favorite establishment of members of the local militia. Often a few tale-telling folk stop in, those who have led colorful, adventurous lives and have lived to tell about it. The inn is a good place for people like the PCs, for there are interesting people to meet and fascinating things to learn.

The innkeeper is Sammson Silverload, a dwarf who quit adventuring after a bout with a giant netted him a nice amount of silver but almost did him in. He used the treasure to build the Dusty Road Inn and retire. He often tells the tale of the giant-killing, a popular request from his customers. He is friendly and open, especially to younger, daring folk like the PCs.

Sammson is a member of the militia of High Dale, and a close friend to Randamis. With his keen eye for mischief-makers, he serves as the neighborhood's watchdog against unwanted transients, subtly goading them into passing on if he thinks they are trouble.

Sammson Silverload: AL LG; AC 9 (6); MV 5 (4); F5/T5; hp 34; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 17, D 15, C 15, I 13, W 14, Ch 8; ML 14; studded leather armor (not worn at the Inn), short sword +3, potions of healing and levitation, light crossbow.

Sammson is short even for a dwarf, standing only 3'6" tall. His hair and beard are a dark, bristly gray, and he tucks them into his shirt while he takes care of business at the inn. He is very proud of the Dusty Road Inn and works hard to keep it a respectable establishment. He keeps his weapons hidden in a gunny sack in a small kitchen closet.

It is assumed that the PCs are either folk of the High Dale or are welcome travelers. To begin this adventure, the DM should read or paraphrase the following to the players:

The Dusty Road Inn is a nice place for friends to meet, talk, and relax after a day of hard work. You have taken a liking to the place and its friendly atmosphere. It seems to be a safe place to share your goals and dreams with each other. You think back on the glorious tales you have heard of riches, honor, fame, and brave deeds. The stories are inspiring, yet the actions they speak of all

seem hopelessly beyond you. Some of you wish to become more than just hired servants. Some of you wish to establish a name, learn magic, or take up the worship of one of the local gods. Yet you know the road that will take you there is long and arduous, and the first steps will be the hardest.

On this night, however, the road may be closer than it seems. You are almost alone in the common room of the inn. Sammson, the innkeeper, is wiping a tabletop to a clean finish and admiring his work, and Murthus the drunk is sitting sprawled over his table, empty mug in hand.

Through the open front door you hear a horse approaching. The gallop slows to a trot, then to a walk, and finally stops outside the inn. Your eyes are drawn to the entrance as you wait to see who will enter. After a moment, you hear scuffling footsteps and see a dark figure in the doorway. The man stumbles into the room, one hand on his forehead, the other clutching for the edge of the nearest tabletop. He starts to speak but grows faint and collapses, tipping the table and crashing to the floor. You can see blood on the man's head.

Sammson immediately goes to the man's aid, using his apron to stop the flow of blood from the man's head. If the PCs try to help, Sammson directs them to fetch some water and ale from the kitchen, and some rags from the pantry. As they care for the man's wounds, the man wakes up, grips the arm of a PC, and says, "Randamis . . . I must . . ." and then faints.

Sammson recognizes both the man and the name he coughs up. After he wraps the man's head in cloth, he pulls from his apron a silver piece for each PC and hands over the coins, saying:

"Take these—I know you can use 'em—and Murthus' pony from out front, and take this man to Ambler Manor. He is a servant of Randamis Ambler, and I think the ol' codger can help him. Quick, off with ye!"

He helps the PCs carry the man outside and seats him on Murthus' pony. He gives the PCs directions toward Randamis's home and tells them to hurry. If the PCs heal Maribee with a

cure light wounds or similar spell, he awakens long enough to thank the PCs and beseech them to take him to Randamis. Although the spell heals his cuts and bruises, Maribee is still exhausted from a long, taxing ride, and he sleeps in the saddle until they arrive at Ambler Manor.

If the PCs refuse to help, Sammson adopts a stern tone, ordering them to get off their backsides and give him a hand. If they still refuse, he orders them out of his inn and tells them never to return. Then he rouses Murthus from his stupor and presses him into taking the rider to Randamis.

Murthus: AL CG; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level human; hp 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1 (none while intoxicated); Dmg by weapon type; ML 10; dagger.

The PCs may be familiar with Randamis's reputation if they have been in the High Dale for very long (DM's discretion). Many of the old-timers know a local tale about Randamis, though Sammson tells it best:

Soon after Randamis arrived in the High Dale, before the Dalefolk accepted him, an ankheg attacked several farmers not far from the Dusty Road Inn. Ambler Manor was unfinished, and Randamis was staying at the inn until he could move into his home. When he heard about the ankheg, he gathered his adventuring gear and went to the site where the farmers were attacked. There, he descended into the creature's burrows alone, tracked it down, and killed it. Randamis has been well accepted since then. In fact, the tale grows with the telling, as often happens, and Randamis is almost the village hero.

The trip to Ambler Manor takes one-half hour from the inn by foot, and Sammson's directions are easy to follow. Evening is coming on, and the Dalefolk are settling down for the night, so the PCs do not encounter anyone on the road to the half-elf's home. The wounded rider's condition does not change during the journey.

Ambler Manor

The yardlamps of Ambler Manor are kept alight throughout the night and are easy to see from a distance. Randamis keeps them lit so that the manor stands out in the Dale, making it easier for his agents to find his home. The manor has a low stone wall and a small

green lawn broken by paths of stepping stones. A human guard watches the front gate of the wall. During the day, the guard will allow any unarmed person into the manor grounds. During the night, his instructions are to turn all away unless they are expected, their situation is desperate, or they are close associates of the half-elf. The guard is well paid by Randamis and is loyal—he cannot be bought. (See the end of this section for guard statistics.)

When the PCs arrive at the manor wall, the guard hails them and asks their business. If the PCs explain, he cautiously looks at the rider and gasps as he recognizes Marlbee. The guard quickly leads the horse into the manor grounds without removing the rider, and shouts toward the manor for help. Four more guards quickly emerge from the stable behind the house and help carry the rider into Ambler Manor. The original guard returns a moment later to question the PCs' involvement in Marlbee's condition. After he hears their story, he brings the PCs into the manor.

Ambler Manor has two floors and a cellar. Rough stone steps lead up to the double front door and into a small entryway. The entryway connects through an arch to a central corridor running east and west. To the left is a staircase to the second floor. Beyond the stairs, a door opens into the feast hall, complete with oak table, several types of chairs, a stone fireplace, and trophies from Randamis's adventuring life (including a large ankheg shell made into a candle chandelier, suspended over the table). To the right, the corridor leads to the kitchen, the servants' quarters, a small lounge, and a latrine containing a bath. The cellar is reached down a staircase in the kitchen.

Up the stairs to the second floor, another corridor lies directly above the hallway below, with several doors on either side. On the left, doors lead to Randamis's laboratory, his bedroom, and a library (complete with a small shrine to Tymora). On the right, doors lead to two guest chambers and to a storage room containing Randamis's adventuring gear and other equipment.

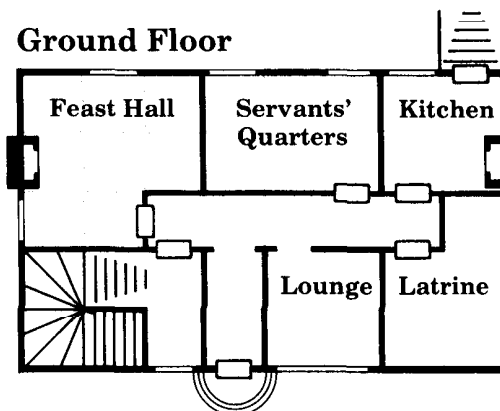
The PCs are led through the entryway to the left into the feast hall. The previously encountered guards are there, propping the rider up in one of the chairs. The PCs are sternly invited to sit down and wait. After just a few minutes, Randamis enters.

AMBLEER MANOR

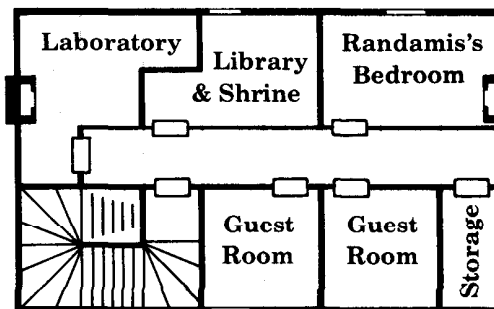
1 square = 10'



Ground Floor



Second Floor



The door to the hall opens, and a servant enters bearing a candle. He turns and holds the door open, permitting another person to enter. The bent figure wears a night robe of green silk. His facial features, though withered, are plainly of part-elven descent. He shuffles slowly into the room, utters a word of command, and all the candles in the chandelier blaze at once. He glances at the guards, then at you, then goes to tend to the rider.

You watch him remove Sammsion's

bandages and inspect the wound. He reaches into his robe, withdraws a silver disk hanging from a chain, and closes his eyes in prayer or meditation. Moments later, the rider's wound closes, and his face loses some of its pallor. The half-elf leans back, nods at a guard, and says simply, "Ale." As the guard leaves the room, Randamis walks over to you and seats himself at the table.

"Well met," he says in a quiet, almost timid voice, "I am Randamis Ambler. And you are . . . ?"

If the PCs do not freely give their names to Randamis, he frowns at them and asks the gate guard for information. The guard recounts everything he knows, and Randamis again questions the PCs. If they still don't respond, or are disrespectful, Randamis stands and rebukes them, telling them they are not welcome on his grounds and are to leave. He also warns them that if he finds they are responsible for Marlbee's bad condition, he will make them pay for it.

If the PCs give Randamis their names and are helpful, his manner becomes friendly and he tells them to be at ease. The guard returns with a mug of ale that Randamis gingerly pours into the rider's mouth.

Marlbee swallows, sputters, and coughs. He sits up with panic and urgency in his eyes, but the half-elf restrains him, telling him to relax. Marlbee sits back, closes his eyes, and breathes deeply. A moment later, Randamis speaks, "Now, Marlbee, tell me what has happened. Where are the others?"

The rider looks at him and shakes his head. "They are gone, Randamis, along with all our supplies. We had just come from the Wyvernwater, and we took the Old Road around Hooknose Crag. Rynstan thought we would get home sooner, and we were anxious. As we passed below Vulture Point, great birds flew at us, carrying rocks and stones in their claws. They dropped the stones onto us without warning, and they aimed well. Rynstan, Darble, and Cormric were knocked cold or killed, and I was wounded. We tried to fight and help the others, but the birds came again, and spears were thrown at us from the side of the cliff.

"We ran, hoping to get the pack-horses clear of the pass, then go back and rescue the others. The birds followed, and we were hit again and again. When I found I was alone, I rode as hard as I could to get to you before I passed out. But I knew I wouldn't make it. I stopped at a large building near here and don't remember anything else. I think the pack-horses strayed around Vulture Point. I'm sorry, Randamis," he sobs.

Randamis thinks for a minute, then converses with his guards. After

reassuring Marlbee, he turns to you. "Thank you for bringing Marlbee back to me. Though his tidings are bad, I need to know what has happened. Some of the lost supplies are important, to say the least. The quiet life I lead is not without risks, and this was one of them; I knew that.

"I have a rare stomach ailment that can be very painful if I don't drink a tea made with special herbs. My supply is running low, and Marlbee's group had gone to purchase more in eastern Cormyr. I was anxiously awaiting their arrival. While I can send more agents to Cormyr, I fear they won't return soon enough to save me from many nights of horrid pain. But if someone were able to retrieve the herbs that Marlbee lost, I would be very grateful."

If the PCs don't volunteer, Randamis does not press the issue any further but thanks the PCs before having them escorted outside his grounds. In any case, he plans to request aid from the Dale militia to root out the ambushers, as soon as the militiamen can be rounded up (two days). If the PCs volunteer for the job, or at least show interest, Randamis continues.

"From what Marlbee has said, I don't think the ambushers are numerous. It wasn't long ago that the militia was called to clean out a group of bandits from that area, and I don't think they have had time to become a threat again. There were only five others in Marlbee's group—good servants who will be greatly missed—and a well-planned ambush executed by a skilled few could deal with them quite easily. If you wish to go, rest assured I will repay you. The risks will be great, and I consider it my duty to make the reward worth your while. You may ride my horses to Vulture Point if you leave as soon as possible."

If the adventurers agree, Randamis and three guards accompany the PCs to the stable behind the manor. They choose one horse for each PC, plus two packhorses to carry the lost supplies. If asked, they also provide weaponless PCs with a spear or short sword. They expect the party to return the horses

and weapons if the mission is successful. If the PCs don't plan on leaving immediately, Randamis tells them the horses will be waiting, and they can take them when they are ready. The guards have quarters above the stable. There are 18 horses (riding, pack, and light war horses) in the barn.

The PCs must leave within two days or Randamis's offer will be terminated. The half-elf gives them directions to Vulture Point and admonishes them to be careful. However, Randamis recognizes the makings of a team of adventurers in the PCs and knows that risks and chances are their bread and water, so he encourages them. In particular, he tells them to search for a back way up to the stone monolith, as the road is probably watched by the bandits or their flying minions.

Randamis Ambleer, half-elf: AL NG; AC 9; MV 6; M7/C4; hp 26; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 12, D 15, C 10, I 16, W 14, Ch 13; ML 13; leather armor, sling, *quarterstaff* +2, *wand of wonder*, *potions of treasure finding* and *plant control*.

Mage spells: *burning hands*, *friends*, *read magic*, *sleep*; *ESP*, *locate object*, *strength*; *dispel magic*, *Melf's minute meteors*; *magic mirror*.

Priest spells: *cure light wounds* (×2), *light* (×2), *purify food and drink*; *aid*, *charm person* or *mammal*.

Guards (12): AL LG; AC 7; MV 12; 0-level humans; hp 5 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 12; leather armor, shield, short sword, spear, light crossbow.

Servants (8): AL LN; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level humans; hp 3 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (unarmed); ML 9.

To Vulture Point

From Ambleer Manor, it takes the PCs five hours to ride to Vulture Point. The journey takes them through the heartland of the High Dale, full of gentle slopes and farmhouses. As they journey, farmers in their fields occasionally wave and hail them. They meet no other travelers on the road.

If the DM wishes, he may stage an easy encounter on the way to get the PCs in the mood for what lies ahead. The would-be heroes could meet 1-3 stray orcs, 1-2 stirges, or a low-level human thief.

Orcs (1-3): INT average; AL LE; AC 6;

MV 9; HD 1; hp 6 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8 (battle axe); SZ M; ML 11; XP 15; MC1.

These orcs are the remnants of a larger band that was slaughtered near the trade road in Sembia. They have wandered this far north, traveling only at night, hiding and sleeping during the day. They attack the PCs out of fear, hoping to eliminate any witnesses to their presence. If one of their number is slain, the rest flee.

Stirges (1-2): INT animal; AL N; AC 8; MV 3, fly 18 (C); HD 1 + 1; hp 7 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; SA blood drain; SZ S; ML 8; XP 175; MC2.

These foul creatures have taken up residence in an abandoned barn not far from the road. Although they dine mainly on the blood of cattle and farm horses, they will occasionally attack passersby on the road.

Wilas Mooder: AL CN; AC 8; MV 12; T4; hp 15; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 15, D 16, C 10, I 14, W 8, Ch 7; ML 9; XP 175 (if caught thieving and brought to justice); knife, sling, 15 bullets.

Wilas Mooder is often called "Stoop" because he appears as a grubby, hunched beggar. He is known throughout the High Dale, although no one suspects his thieving abilities. Wilas begs for money while trying to determine how he can best relieve the adventurers of their purses. Then he follows them along the road, trying to move silently (45%) and hide in shadows (40%), until he can pick their pockets (45%). If the attempt fails, he will flee, avoiding combat as best he can.

As the PCs near Vulture Point, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

The hills have drawn nearer, and the farmhouses of the Dale have become fewer and farther between as you traveled. Now you have entered the outskirts of the hills and found the Old Road. Ahead, you can see the looming figure of Vulture Point.

Rising above the trees and rock formations around it, the great monolith looks alive. Two gigantic spurs of shale form the beak and head of a great bird. The head is balanced precariously on a thinner portion that forms the bird's neck. Below the neck, the rock widens into the face of the cliff that overlooks the Old Road. It is an ugly trick of nature, and you

think it no wonder the Old Road was never well traveled. You can see several winged shapes circling the great vulture's head, and a few caves in the cliff above the road.

If the PCs wish to approach on foot from here, they must find a place to tie up the horses. About 100 yards off the trail to the west is a dry riverbed sheltered by trees. The horses will be safe if the PCs leave them here. If they leave them on the road, there is a 30% chance that a passing Dalesman will take them, thinking they are strays. If the PCs search the countryside, they will find the horses in the pasture of a local farmer who will grudgingly give them up if the PCs can convince him the horses belong to Randamis (the half-elf's mark is on the flank of each horse).

The success of the PCs' venture may well depend on how they approach Vulture Point. Dorug's vulture-minions are trained to attack any nonkobold climbing the cliff face up to the tribe's caves (see area 13). If the PCs observe the Point for at least two turns, they will notice a large crack (see area 1 below) in the east side of the monolith (the Old Road is on the south). The giant vultures circling overhead do not pass over the cracked region, being more attracted to the area around the Old Road. If the PCs observe for fewer than two turns, their chance of noticing the crack decreases to 40%.

Area 1 can be reached by hiking up the moderate slope on the north side of the monolith. The slope consists of loose rocks (shale and quartz) and juniper trees. It takes the PCs 4d6 rounds to make it to the crack. If the PCs hurry, they can reach the crack in 3d4 rounds, but they may fall (see below). Each round they spend climbing, there is a 5% chance that 1-2 of the circling giant vultures attack.

If the PCs are lucky (they climb the slope carefully and the vultures ignore them), they have no problems. If they climb hurriedly or must fight while on the slope, each PC should make a Dexterity check to avoid losing his balance (check each round of melee, only once if climbing hurriedly). Anyone losing his balance tumbles 1d2 × 10' down the slope, taking 1 hp damage per 10' fallen. Horses cannot climb the slope.

If the giant vultures attack, they fly to their roost in area 6, grab one stone

in each of their claws, and reach the PCs in three rounds. They attack the PCs farthest up the slope by swooping down to 10' above the PCs' heads and dropping the rocks. Dorug the urd has trained them well, and their dive-bombing attacks have a THAC0 of 18. PCs wearing helmets or holding shields overhead can increase their armor class by one against the dive-bombing attack. The giant vultures pass over their victims twice, dropping one stone each time. Each stone causes 1-3 hp damage. After dropping two stones each, the vultures fly back, rear themselves, and return. If a vulture is struck or injured, it ceases its attacks and flies back to its lair (area 6). The vultures squawk while making their bombing runs, and there is a 15% chance per round that the noise alerts the creatures inside the monolith.

Vultures, giant (2): INT animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 3, fly 24 (D); HD 2 + 2; hp 10, 7; THAC0 19 (18 with rocks); #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (1-3 with rocks); SA dive-bomb; SZ M; ML 10; XP 175; MC3.

Vulture Point Encounter Areas

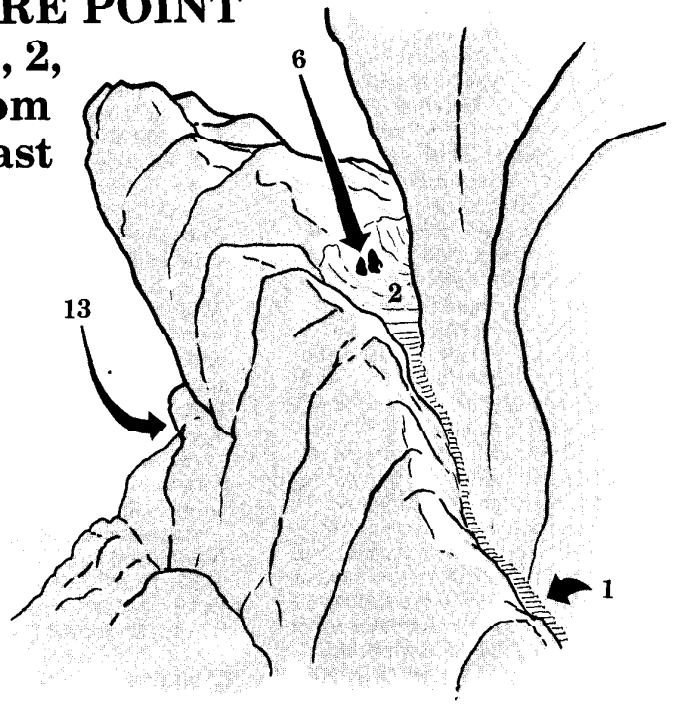
The tunnels inside Vulture Point are drafty and dry. When it rains, they become musty and wet as the water seeps through the rock and washes through the passages. The constant wind in the tunnels makes a low whine, like that of a dog far away. The howling is not loud and will not affect surprise in any way, although it may put the PCs on edge. The tunnels slope downward steeply from area 2 to area 13, varying from a 20°-30° angle. The rough stone and frequent footholds on the floor make it possible for the PCs to use their normal movement rate without danger of slipping. The ceiling in the tunnels varies from 5'-8' (1d4 + 4) in height, except where noted in the text. The tunnels are carved through shale, and the stone walls are solid and rough.

1. Crack. When the PCs reach this area, any vultures that were attacking them withdraw and circle the Point. Injured vultures return to their lair. The DM should read or paraphrase the following to the players:

Concealed between the spurs of shale that form Vulture Point's "beak" is a steep, 5'-wide crack. It slants upward and inward into the monolith's

VULTURE POINT

Areas 1, 2, 6, 13 from Northeast



"mouth," and is open to the sky. The floor of the crack is filled with sand, packed dirt, and small rocks.

If a PC with the tracking proficiency searches the ground in the crack, he will find the footprints of several small, dog-like creatures traveling up and down through the rift. Although the PCs may feel vulnerable traveling through the crevice, they will not be attacked here unless they are being pursued by the kobolds (see area 7). Unlike the slopes of the monolith, the crevice can be traversed without risk of falling. See the diagram that shows a view of Vulture Point from the northeast.

2. Gullet. This large, bowl-shaped area is located in the back of Vulture Point's "mouth," where the bottom spur joins the base of the "beak." Centuries of wind and rainwater have created a small depression where the carrion birds have made their nests. On the south end of the depression, where the floor rises sharply, several caves descend into the monolith. These tunnels (see areas 3, 6, and 8) eventually lead to

the kobolds' home and Dorug's lair. The northern wall of this depression is sheer rock that overshadows the area from mid-morning to late afternoon. The shade keeps the young vultures cool during the heat of the day. The ground around the 15 vulture nests is covered with twigs, dried leaves, stones, and bird dung. Each nest is 1' high and 2' wide. Ten of the nests hold either 1d4 + 4 eggs (40%), 1d3 + 3 young (30%), or the skeleton of some small mammal (30%). No nest contains any treasure.

At any time during the day, 4-16 adult vultures guard the young while the others hunt the hills of Hooknose Crag and the High Dale. If the PCs climb here from the crack during the day, the vultures will be disturbed but will not cause a ruckus, and the kobolds have only a 20% chance of being alerted. At night, 3d6 + 6 vultures rest here. If the PCs enter the gullet at night, they may (40% chance) cause the vultures to squawk and 1-4 of the birds to attack. If the vultures are roused, the kobolds will be alert and prepared for the PCs.

Any PC who approaches one of the nests containing eggs or young is attacked by 1-4 vultures, with the same

chance of alerting the kobolds as above (depending upon the time of day). Dorug has not trained these birds to drop stones, and they serve mainly as a warning system and food source for the kobolds.

Vultures, common (24): INT animal; AL N; AC 6; MV 3, fly 27 (E); HD 1 + 1; hp 5 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-2; SZ S; ML 6; XP 65; MC3.

3. Water Entrance. This 6'-tall opening is easily found. The shale floor of the gullet simply opens up into a smooth corridor. When it rains, runoff water from the spur of the "mouth" collects in area 2. From there, it drains down through area 1, or runs into this large tunnel. The floor of the cave is covered with small rocks and stones, some of which are very sharp. Dorug and the kobolds collect rocks here for the giant vultures' dive-bombing attacks. Anyone prodding the floor of the cave, or walking hurriedly may (15% chance) make enough noise to alarm the kobolds in area 12. The cave slopes downward at a constant angle to area 4.

4. Pool. The water that washes down the gullet and through area 3 collects here into a 2'-deep pool. The kobolds have plugged the tiny sinkhole at the pool's bottom with a rock, and use the water for drinking and other purposes. The water is not clean enough for human consumption, however. The ceiling in this chamber is 8' high. The floor is filled with small pebbles and loose dirt. If the kobolds have been alerted to the PCs' intrusion, two of them (from area 7) are stationed here with darts. They try to get the PCs to chase them across the pit at area 5.

5. Spider Pit. The ceiling slopes down from area 4 until it is only 5' high, made of smooth, solid stone. The chamber's floor is covered with debris: rocks, bits of clothing, worthless and ruined trinkets, bones, and other junk.

The kobolds toss their garbage here to get it out of the way and to conceal a 5'-wide, 10'-deep pit in the floor. Branches and cloth have been stretched across the opening to support layer of trash. To the casual observer, the pit is detectable as a secret door. Anyone searching the floor carefully or prodding with a staff will almost certainly (95% chance) notice the pit. The kobolds know exactly where the pit is, and don't go near it.

The pit walls and floor are made of loose dirt and crumbling stone that are easily dislodged. Anyone falling into the pit takes 1-6 hp falling damage plus one additional hit point of damage from the cascade of stones and dirt that follows.

The pit is also the lair of a large spider. The beast has woven its webs across the bottom 3' of the pit, and anyone falling into it becomes stuck as detailed in the MC. The spider lurks in a small niche in the wall next to its webbing, and rushes out to attack anyone who falls into the web. The kobolds are aware of the spider and often feed it wounded or dying vultures. At the bottom of the pit, beneath the spider's webbing, are 3 gp and 16 sp.

Spider, large: INT non; AL N; AC 8; MV 6, web 15; HD 1+1; hp 4; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA poison (type A); SZ S; ML 7; XP 175; MC1.

6. Giant Vulture Nests. The floor of this cave is level with the base of the depression in area 2, and remains relatively dry even during a rainstorm. The walls are solid shale, while the floor and ceiling are uneven and covered with sharp stones. Anyone falling in this room takes 1-2 hp damage.

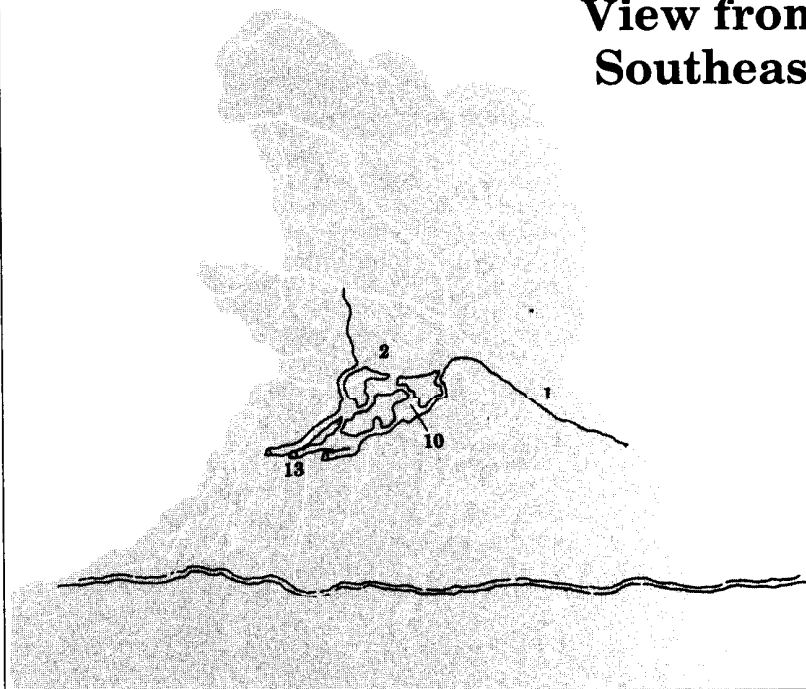
The ceiling is 15' high throughout the cavern and through the wide entrances from the gullet (area 2). The larger of the two entrances is big enough for Dorug's giant vultures to fly through. On the ground at the mouth of the cave is a pile of stones (taken from area 4) that the giant vultures use in their dive-bombing attacks. The urd always uses the smaller entrance to avoid a collision with the vultures.

Inside this cave are the nests of Dorug's air raiders. There are four nests, each 4'-5' in diameter and 3' high. The nests are made of twigs, leaves, stones, and guano, although a few larger bones can also be found. Two of the nests contain eggs (a total of five).

If the kobolds have been alerted to the PCs' intrusion in the caves, Dorug will have called all remaining giant vultures to their roost. There are five of the huge birds, including the two that circle Vulture Point and may have attacked the PCs (see areas 1 and 13). If the PCs are able to sneak into this area without alarming the vultures in area 2 or disturbing the pit in area 5, there are 0-3 (1d4-1) **giant vultures** present (hp 11, 9, 6; see "To Vulture Point"). Roll for surprise normally. The vultures squawk

VULTURE POINT

View from Southeast



and thrash about, attacking the PCs if they come near the nests. The noise alerts everything in the tunnels. Grounded and in close quarters, the giant vultures have an armor class of 9. If injured, however, they try to escape through the opening to area 2. An escaping vulture makes one attack against any PC in its way (with a +1 modifier), then takes to the air.

During the night, all vultures return to their nests here and react as detailed above. The vultures are not disturbed by the urd or kobolds, and have no treasure.

7. Kobold Cavern. The surviving members of the kobold tribe live here: 10 adult males, five adult females, and four young. Although the females and young are noncombatants (1 hp each), they stand in the background during a fight, throwing rocks and growling. These actions are distracting to the PCs and give them a -1 modifier to their attack rolls. The kobold females and young will not leave this chamber if the kobolds are alerted to intruders. If six or more males are killed, the females take the young and flee into the hills.

During the day, four male kobolds remain in this chamber to help the females prepare food and care for the young. At night, the four males go hunting in the hills and are replaced by the two kobolds that guard Dorug's cave (area 10).

If the kobolds know there are intruders in the tunnels, two of these males will seek them out. While guards are stationed throughout the tunnels, they will not engage the PCs in open melee but will try to draw them past the traps that are prepared in the caves before joining together in this room for a big fight. For instance, the two males may go to area 4 and try to lure the intruders into the pit at area 5. The kobolds pursue intruders only as far as area 1, although if Dorug is still alive he may send his vulture-minions much farther.

The 7'-high ceiling and walls of this chamber are rough shale, but the floor is smooth and covered with brightly colored rags, dung, and the bones of the kobolds' victims. Several human skeletons are present, though the bones are scattered because the young kobolds play with them. Shoved into a crack in



the wall are the treasures that Dorug has not taken from the kobolds: 8 gp and a gem worth 35 gp.

Kobold males: INT average; AL LE; AC 7; MV 6; HD $\frac{1}{2}$; hp 2 each; THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SZ S; ML 9; XP 7; MC1. The males are armed with very short swords (treat as daggers) and shields.

Kobold females: AC 10; #AT 0; Dmg nil; ML 8; other statistics as for kobold males.

Kobold young: HD $\frac{1}{4}$; hp 1 each; ML 8; other statistics as for kobold females.

8. Guard Post. This 5'-diameter tunnel was carved out of solid shale by the kobolds. The floor has a light covering of sand and dirt. The opening is concealed by dead branches made to look like an empty vulture nest, and is detectable as a concealed door. If someone inspects the nest, the opening will be found. The tunnel's size reduces movement by one-third for anyone more than 5' tall, and attacks with large or slashing weapons are made at a -2 penalty.

The kobolds use this entrance most, and two guards generally stay in the area unless alerted to intruders in other

parts of the tunnels. The guards (statistics as in area 7) are all armed with small spears (Dmg 1-4) and four bone darts (Dmg 1-2). They throw their darts at anyone moving down the tunnel from area 2 and then retreat to area 9. They have no treasure.

9. Bone Darts. In this stretch of the tunnel, the kobolds have fashioned six leather slingshots in small holes in the walls of the cave. The holes are at eye level for a kobold, and at waist level for a normal human. The slingshots are triggered by tripwires concealed in the dirt on the floor. Anyone passing over a tripwire has a 1-in-4 chance of triggering a pair of slingshots (one on either side of the tunnel). Each slingshot fires a bone dart (Dmg 1-2) at the person who triggers it. The kobolds know exactly where the tripwires are, and they are always careful to avoid them. Once triggered, the slingshots must be reloaded manually. They cannot be removed.

10. Urd Cave. Dorug occupies this cave and keeps the kobold tribe's treasure inside. The 20'-high ceiling allows the urd to fly if he must, and he can stay aloft for 4-8 rounds before he tires or runs into a wall. The rock walls of the cave and the floor of loose gravel and dirt have both been worked smooth.

Scattered throughout the chamber are items that the tribe has gained through Dorug's plundering. There are four sets of saddlebags. The first two hold traveling gear and many worthless trinkets (iron rings, feather quills, empty vials, etc). If the PCs search the third set of saddlebags, they will find three small cloth pouches with the words "Hold for Randamis" written on the outside. This is the mixture of crushed herbs that the half-elf needs to alleviate his pain. A fourth, blood-stained set of saddlebags contains a cockatrice feather, a jar of green dragon's blood, and a potion of healing.

Most of the metal items and gear from the latest raid were buried in the tribe's secret treasure cache in the hills of Hooknose Crag. The weapons were distributed to the warriors in the tribe. The leather armor worn by two of Randamis's agents has been shredded and used for clothing and armor for the kobolds.

Dorug sleeps on his personal treasure, in a small niche about 15' up the east wall of the cave. He stores his spare

weapons, 25 gp, and two jewels here, out of reach of thieving kobolds. The gems are an amethyst and an onyx (worth 100 gp and 50 gp respectively).

The urd spends hours each day training vultures, and each night he scouts the Old Road, so there is a 25% chance he will not be at Vulture Point when the PCs arrive. If Dorug is not present, there is a 10% chance each turn that he will return. If the vultures in areas 2 or 6 are disturbed, Dorug will return within five rounds. If Dorug is here during the day, he is asleep in his niche in the wall. He wakes up whenever the kobolds are alerted to intruders.

The urd has a whistle he uses to direct his giant-vulture minions to attack or go to roost. The bone whistle hangs from a leather thong around his neck, and will does not function for the PCs (it requires the urd's tongue). In melee, Dorug fights with a *spear* +1, wielding it with two hands. He acquired the magical spear from the body of Rynstan, the leader of Randamis's agents.

During the day, two kobolds (statistics as in area 7) are stationed in this room to guard the treasure and protect the urd while he sleeps. These kobolds are armed with daggers, normal darts (Dmg 1-3), and shields.

Dorug has directed the kobolds in planning a formidable defense of their tunnels, involving all of the traps and alarm systems. He has stashed five large stones in his sleeping niche that he can use as rock bombs when he fights in this chamber. The rock bombs do 1-4 hp damage each. If the kobolds have gathered in area 7 to fight the PCs, Dorug goes to their aid by trying to surprise any PCs from the rear. He also tries to draw a few adventurers into this room, giving the kobolds in area 7 better odds, and allowing him to use his rock bombs. If the kobolds are losing and Dorug is wounded, he tries to escape through area 13 and fly into the hills. If cornered and unable to flee, Dorug fights with his spear.

Dorug (urd): INT low; AL NE; AC 8; MV 6, fly 15 (C); HD 3; hp 11; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA rock bomb; SZ S; ML 7; XP 65; MC2.

11. Trapped Entryway. Where this tunnel widens slightly, a shaft rises 15' through the 10'-high ceiling. Several small boulders are suspended at the top of the shaft, precisely positioned and held in place by a wooden plank. At-

tached to the plank is a rope that hangs down into the center of the tunnel to coil on the floor. When the rope is pulled, the beam will shift and fall, dumping the stones onto the section just below the shaft.

Anyone in the section who is not surprised by the falling boulders can make a saving throw vs. paralyzation to get out of the way. Anyone caught underneath the boulders takes 2-12 hp damage and must make a saving throw vs. breath weapon or be stunned for 2-8 rounds. Setting off this trap alerts all kobolds and vultures in the tunnels.

If the kobolds from the chambers to the north know the PCs are coming here from area 12, they will be prepared to spring the trap. If the PCs are hot on the kobold guards' trail through this area, the guards may try to grab and tug the rope as they are running through, hoping to dump the boulders on their pursuers. If this happens, the PCs should receive a +2 to their saving throw vs. paralyzation. It takes at least one week for the kobolds to reload this trap, which they can do only with Dorug's help.

12. Guard Post. The kobolds carved this 6'-high cave and the corridors around it out of solid rock, and the walls, ceiling, and floor are smooth. The howling of the wind in this area is loud, increasing the PCs' chances of being surprised to 4 in 10 (3 in 10 for elves). The kobolds are trained to listen beyond the howling, so they have normal chances for hearing noises and being surprised.

Two kobold guards (as in area 7) are stationed here night and day. They are armed with short swords (Dmg 1-4), four darts (Dmg 1-3), and shields. These guards are charged with watching the cliffside entrances (area 13) and surveying the Old Road for any sign of approaching travelers. During the day, the kobolds have a hard time looking outside of the caves because of the bright light, and spend most of their time in this chamber, mending weapons and eating.

When the guards are alerted to intruders in the tunnels, they hurry to area 7 to fight alongside the other kobolds. If intruders approach by climbing up the cliffside to area 13, or down the corridor from area 4, the kobolds try to lure them into the boulder trap at area 11. They use their darts as much as

possible, and they try to set off the boulder trap as they go past.

The spears and rocks the kobolds use in their ambushes on the Old Road are kept here in a jumbled pile. There are 18 small spears, 16 darts, and 30 sharp-edged stones (Dmg 1-2) that can be thrown from the ledges at area 13.

13. Ledges. These areas can be reached either by climbing the face of the slope, or through the tunnels from areas 4, 11, and 12. The tunnels that lead here from the kobolds' caves descend at a steady angle, then level out just before they emerge on the side of the slope.

The kobolds have formed these ledges into protective balconies from which they can attack passersby with spears and rocks from area 12. When Dorug instructs them to prepare the ambush, 10 kobold warriors crouch on these ledges (two per ledge) until the giant vultures dive-bomb the travelers. The cave openings on the ledges are only 4' tall, overlooking the southern face of the monolith. They are barely visible from the road below.

Anyone climbing to the ledges from the Old Road has chosen a very difficult route into Vulture Point. Thieves have a -20% modifier to their climb-walls ability. In addition, all climbers must make Dexterity checks each round they are involved in combat. If a check fails, the climber loses his balance and tumbles 10' down the slope, suffering 1-4 hp damage. During the day, 1-2 giant vultures watch this area (the place where they get most of their meals) and attack climbing PCs (see "To Vulture Point"). The noise of combat on the slope has a 70% chance of alerting the kobolds in area 12, who will react accordingly.

Concluding the Adventure

Dorug and his minions will never become a serious threat to the people of the High Dale. The Old Road is rarely traveled, and then usually by wanderers and transients the Dalefolk find undesirable. However, when an occasional farmer or messenger, such as Randamis's agents, is missing, it can mean a lot. If the PCs are successful in rooting out the urd and his minions, the Dalefolk take no immediate notice, but the tale creeps into conversations in the inns and taverns.

If the PCs return Randamis's mer-

chandise to him (specifically his herbal mixture), he will be very grateful. He talks about the event, and the PCs' courage and abilities, among his associates. In fact, he seems to be in better health than he has been in for a long time. Randamis offers to pay the PCs 100 gp each for their services, and tells them they are welcome at Ambleer Manor anytime. If asked, he will provide clerical or magical training to a PC (but not both training and 100 gp). The details of such an arrangement are left to the DM but should include a lot of manual labor around Ambleer Manor, as well as journeying into other lands in search of exotic items.

The half-elf also has connections with the local constable, a 6th-level lawful-good fighter named Zhaddule Feathertooth. Feathertooth is a skilled and rugged man, but he is also impulsive, judgmental, and intolerant of foolishness. He commands the local militia and can train people in the use of the weapons he carries plus the scimitar,

short bow, and spear. He is not friendly, and would not bat an eye at the PCs' success at Vulture Point if not for Randamis's persuasion.

Constable Zhaddule Feathertooth: AL LG; AC 6; MV 9; F6; hp 35; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 14, D 14, C 15, I 11, W 10, Ch 14; ML 15; studded leather armor, shield, broad sword, dagger, light crossbow.

In addition, innkeeper Sammson Silverload may consider training a PC in fighting or thievery. He would require a lot of help around the Dusty Road Inn in exchange for the training, but would also provide the PCs with room and board. The travelers who frequent the Dusty Road Inn might also get the PCs started on their long road of adventure.

If the PCs are defeated by Dorug and his minions, Randamis will fall very ill. He asks Constable Feathertooth to round up the militia and clean out Vulture Point. Ten militiamen are available, all fighters of levels 0-1. Until

Randamis recovers a supply of the herbs, he lives in constant pain, and he is unable to function as a scholar or a landowner.

If the PCs are unable to retrieve Randamis's herbs but escape Vulture Point alive, Randamis will heal them and commiserate with them. When they have recovered, he asks them to either try again or travel to Immersea (in eastern Cormyr) to buy more of the herb. If the PCs decide to try again, Randamis convinces Zhaddule to send the 10 members of the militia to aid the PCs. They may be more successful the second time.

The PCs could work for Randamis again in the future. The missions the priest/mage would send them on are left up to the DM. However, it is possible that the PCs have had their fill of adventuring life during their mission to Vulture Point, and want to return to the "good old days" when they sat around in the Dusty Road Inn, listening to tales of other's quests and adventures. Ω

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