

THE DWARVEN VAULT

Miners digging on Goldpeak Mountain recently broke into an ancient dwarven vault lost for centuries. A strange dark-elven artifact within the vault once again calls out to terrible monsters in and around the mountain—and has begun to unleash those monsters against the village of Whitesparrow. The adventurers must make their way to the mountain and into the vault to discover what is causing monsters to rise, and to end the call of the artifact.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Crazed dire wolves attack the villagers of Whitesparrow, and the sheriff asks the characters to investigate the strange assault. The investigation leads them to the Evensong farmhouse, where Feria Evensong is the lone survivor of an attack that claimed the rest of her family. A trail from the house can lead the characters to Goldpeak Mountain.

Word around the village suggests that explorers at Goldpeak Mountain recently uncovered fantastic

treasure from a long-lost mine. When the characters investigate, a recently abandoned excavation site shows where those explorers had been digging into old dwarven ruins now occupied by horrid creatures. Deeper in, the characters find the dwarven vault where the unlucky explorers unveiled a dark-elven statue whose magical song drives monsters mad. The characters are free to destroy the statue, recover it, bury it, or leave it be.

Monsters: Dire wolves (2), death dogs (2), ankhegs (2), chuul

NOTABLE NPCs

Feria Evensong: Feria is a local farmer and head of the Evensong household. Dire wolves driven to madness by the magic in the dwarven ruins killed her family, and she barely escaped with her life.

Barnak Rumblestone: A retired dwarf explorer and sage, Barnak knows the lore of the centuries-lost Deepriver dwarven clan.



Grenwald Windcastle: The leader of the expedition that uncovered the lost dwarven ruins, Grenwald is now lost along with the rest of his crew in the mines of Goldpeak Mountain.

Thomas Windcastle: The black sheep of the family, Thomas shares none of his brother Grenwald's adventurous nature, and spends much of his time drinking at the Evershady Tavern. He started working with the Goldpeak explorers a few weeks ago, but quit after something about the site began to unnerve him. Thomas hasn't heard from the expedition in a few days, and is just starting to get worried—but he doesn't want to go back up there. He can sketch out a rough map showing the route toward the explorers' last known location, allowing the characters to get close enough to pick up the trail on their own.

SECRETS AND CLUES

- ◆ Goldpeak Mountain got its name from the rich veins of gold once found within it. Those veins have long since dried up, but hopeful prospectors continue to dig into the mountain in search of new riches.
- ◆ The dwarves were the first to mine Goldpeak, raising structures outside the mountain and digging their mine tunnels deep within it centuries ago.
- ◆ The dwarves are rumored to have also dug secret chambers deeper within the mountain. In those caverns, they fought dark elves and recovered magic artifacts that they hid away in concealed vaults.
- ◆ Centuries later, the dwarven vaults are long buried and forgotten, though the tapped-out dwarven mines remain. Recently, Grenwald Windcastle and his crew dug deeper in search of veins of gold ore as yet untouched.
- ◆ A week ago, Windcastle and his crew came back to the village of Whitesparrow boasting of great riches. They paid for drinks with strange gold coins emblazoned with a dwarf helm and a battleaxe.
- ◆ The coins once belonged to the Deepriver clan of dwarven explorers, who sought treasure and riches beyond the dwarven mines under the mountain.
- ◆ The Deepriver clan once raided a dark elf outpost, finding and claiming great treasures there.

CUSTOMIZING THE ADVENTURE

This adventure can fit into many different stories. The characters might run into dwarves or other travelers being stalked by the dire wolves from the start of the scenario. You might also consider tying the Evensong family to one of the backgrounds of the characters, perhaps making them childhood friends or old acquaintances. At the same time, the exploration of the mountain doesn't require a connection to a village unless you want it to. The hook of helpless folk running from strange monsters that escaped from an old dwarven mine should be enough to draw heroic and curious characters into the adventure.

START

A scream cuts through the day-to-day activity of the village of Whitesparrow, followed soon after by the howling of wolves. A villager runs across the street but is no match for the speed of a huge wolf with boney ridges rising from its back that chases him down, then tears him in half. Another dire wolf stalks between nearby buildings, seeking the blood of the villagers fleeing in terror.

Two **dire wolves** attack indiscriminately within the village. The only guard nearby is quickly dispatched by the wolves.

During the fight, the dire wolves are unnaturally ferocious, not caring about the wounds they take and showing no fear of the characters. A character who succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check gets the sense that some magical force drives the wolves' fury.

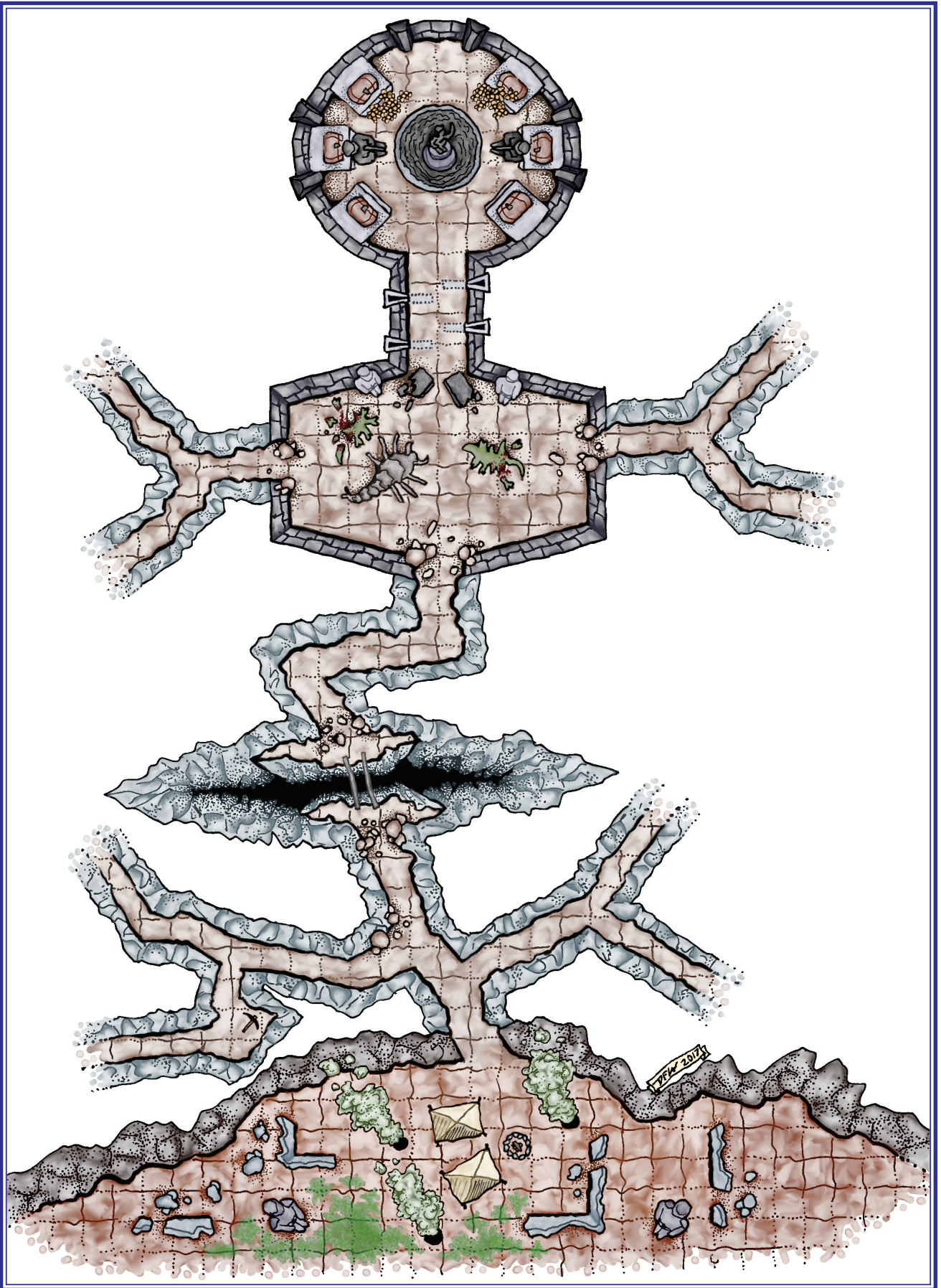
A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Medicine) check or Intelligence (Investigation) check allows a character to assess the dried blood that streaks the wolves, suggesting that they've fought many battles over many days. Sheriff Ruth Willowmane asks the characters to investigate the attack and discover what would cause dire wolves to so brazenly enter the village. At this point, the characters might choose to ask around Whitesparrow about recent unusual happenings or follow the wolves' trail out of the village.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

THE EVENSONG FARM

Area Aspects: Large waterwheel, slaughtered animals, bloody tracks







The characters can easily follow the trail of the dire wolves, which leads back toward the Evensong farm outside the village.

The smell of blood hangs in the air, and streaks of red stain the brook where it runs alongside the road. Ahead, a large waterwheel turns in the bloodstained water, trailing small crimson waterfalls as it rises. In addition to at least a dozen slain farm animals, two mutilated humanoid bodies float in the water nearby, caught on rocks. Past the wheelhouse stands the Evensong farmhouse, its door smashed in.

As they draw closer, the characters see the terrified figure of Feria Evensong, owner of the farm, outside the farmhouse. In shock and covered in blood, she cradles the mutilated body of one of her children. When questioned, Feria reveals that she was in the fields when the attack came. She hid from the dire wolves until they left the farm and headed for Whitesparrow. The mutilated remains of one other child are in the house, while the bodies of Deren Evensong, Feria's husband, and their eldest son float in the brook.

With a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check, the characters can follow the wolves' bloody tracks to a game trail twisting through the woods. That track eventually winds back to the lower reaches of Goldpeak Mountain. More slaughtered animals can be found along the trail and the mountain's slopes, allowing the characters to follow the wolves' course back to a section of old dwarven ruins where the Windcastle expedition camped.

Treasure: Searching the bodies reveals twelve silver coins embossed with a dwarf helm and a battleaxe. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (History) check reveals that this was the symbol of the Deepriver dwarves, who resided in the nearby mountains two centuries past. If she is asked, Feria says that the coins came from members of the Windcastle crew, who purchased flour from the Evensongs on their most recent trip back to the village.

The house also contains a small box with 42 sp and 92 cp, the meager long-term savings of the Evensongs.

EXPEDITION CAMP

Area Aspects: Ancient dwarven ruins, ventilation shafts, signs of terrible slaughter

A mining camp sits within dwarven ruins that must be thousands of years old. The head of a huge dwarven statue, split in half and lying on its side, serves as a

wall and shade for a set of tents and makeshift wooden buildings. Steam rises from a series of narrow shafts cut into the rock, each of which appears to pierce deep into the earth. The bloody remains of a number of humanoids are spread in a wide swath at the center of the camp. Within the carnage, you can make out the head and arm of a dwarf still attached to part of a mutilated torso.

This campsite is where Grenwald Windcastle and his crew staged their expedition into the deep dwarven mines. The ventilation shafts are too steep and narrow to be descended, but the main entrance to the mines is a short distance from the camp (see below).

The signs of slaughter here are a few days old. A pair of **death dogs** lurk around the campsite, gnawing on the remains of the dwarven corpses and attacking any living creature that happens by. During any fight, a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check reveals that, like the dire wolves, the death dogs are acting even more violent than their monstrous nature would suggest. An investigation of the site reveals that the carnage was likely caused by both the dire wolves and the death dogs, with signs showing that all those creatures entered and left the mines more than once.

Treasure: Among the miners' supplies is a lockbox armed with a dart trap. The trap can be discovered with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check and disarmed with a successful DC 12 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. Failure on either check results in the dart firing: +4 to hit; 2 (1d4) piercing damage and 7 (2d6) poison damage. The lock on the lockbox can be picked with a successful DC 12 Dexterity check using thieves' tools.

The box contains twenty-two gold bars worth 10 gp each. Each bar is marked with the same helm-and-battleaxe insignia as the coins found at the Evensong farm and recalled by any villagers who had recent business with the Windcastle crew. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (History) check reveals that the mark belonged to the Deepriver dwarves, who mined gold here two hundred years ago.

DEEP MINES

Area Aspects: Bestial remains, cracked supports, network of shafts, large fissure

A short distance away from the expedition camp, a network of deep mineshafts leads into the mountain, carved out over centuries. Ancient cracked supports keep the ceilings of these shafts from collapsing. Pools of



fresh blood and piles of entrails mark spots where large numbers of predatory creatures have recently fought and fed on each other here.

A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Survival) check reveals that many of the creatures that fought here came to this area through crumbling side passages. The survivors of those battles then left the cave.

Far down one shaft, a pair of iron rods spans a deep fissure whose bottom disappears into darkness below.

The fissure is twenty feet wide and can be crossed in any number of ways. A character who tries to walk across the beam must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. On a failure, the character falls and strikes the iron bar, taking 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage before grabbing on. Any other reasonably safe approach requires no ability check to succeed.

Once the characters cross the fissure, they enter an area of numerous mineshafts leading off into different areas of the mountain. Some have been blocked off with ancient timbers in response to collapses. The signs of centuries of mining can be seen in the depths of the mountain, and the trail of bestial remains can be followed down deep to the recently uncovered entrance of a long-lost dwarven vault.

VAULT ENTRYWAY

Area Aspects: Huge dwarven statues, concealed halls, monstrous corpses, collapsed tunnels

Recent mining activity has collapsed the natural rock wall to reveal a vault once hidden behind it. The smooth stone walls of this hidden chamber were clearly worked by skilled dwarf hands. The ceiling arches upward, reinforced by crisscrossing beams of stone. Another well-carved hall flanked by huge statues of armored dwarf warriors continues on at the far end of the chamber, while tunnels to both sides of the chamber show signs of having crumbled where they once led deeper into the mountain. A few still-standing side chambers appear to have once held dwarven treasure, but a number of empty chests suggest that these areas were recently looted.

In the main chamber, huge insectoid creatures are digging their mandibles into the thick green flesh of a dead six-legged lizard. Another insectoid horror stands as still as a statue, its carapace turned to gray stone. One of the living creatures lurches up,

its mandibles spraying blood across the stone of the vault as it beholds you. With a high-pitched shriek, it rushes over to attack.

There were no monsters here when the Windcastle explorers first passed through. But since the dwarves exposed the cursed singing statue and rekindled its dark magic, this chamber has become a pit of murder for the numerous monsters that have been drawn to the vault seeking the statue's song. Upon reaching the vault, those monsters immediately battle one another in a continuing game of king of the hill. Two **ankhegs** are currently at the top of that hill, devouring the body of a basilisk they recently defeated. The ankhegs attack any creatures that enter the chamber.

When the fighting has subsided, any character who succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check hears a strange song echoing from the chamber to the north. Chaotic characters might feel the song calling to them, filling their minds with the hint of a desire for bloodshed.

The northern hall is trapped by a clever dwarven mechanism of whirling scythes, empowered by glyphs of lightning triggered by hidden metal plates on the hall's floor. The corpse of a bugbear and two dwarves lie in the hall, their bodies cleanly hacked up and marked with electrical burns. Any creature that steps into the hall triggers the trap, taking 7 (2d6) slashing damage and 14 (4d6) lightning damage. A creature that succeeds on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw takes no slashing damage and half the lightning damage.

A creature can detect the trap with a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools disables the trap. If this check fails, the creature disarming the trap triggers it instead.

Treasure: The two dwarves within the mess of corpses in the hall were Windcastle explorers. The dwarves' initial exploration of the formerly hidden vault saw them lay claim to the easily accessed treasure in the outer chambers, some of which they brought with them when they returned to Whitesparrow. But the monsters drawn to the site and the deadly traps of the main chamber did them in when they returned to expand their exploration.

Two dwarven magic items—a +1 shield called *Bladecatcher* and a +1 battleaxe called *Ironhewer*—can be found within the mass of corpses. The wielder of *Ironhewer* gains advantage on ability checks made



to break down doors or smash inanimate objects. Feel free to change this battleaxe to a weapon type more suitable to the characters.

The dwarf corpses also carry small leather bags containing a total of 24 pp, 92 gp, and 162 sp (much of it in the same style as the dwarven gold seen earlier), along with a bag of ten black jaspers worth 10 gp each.

CHAMBER OF THE SINGING STATUE

Area Aspects: Obsidian singing statue, ornate fountain, rippling and hypnotic black liquid, iron-bound chests

An alluring song echoes from this circular vaulted chamber. An obsidian statue depicting a beautiful elf woman stands in the center of a huge pool of opaque black liquid. The magical song is emanating from the statue, sending rippling waves along the liquid in hypnotic patterns. Two towering bronze statues depicting armored dwarves stand on opposite sides of the chamber, while six large ironbound chests sit on daises along the wall. Two of those chests have been broken open, the coins they hold spilling out like gleaming rivers. The remains of a mutilated dwarf are spread between the two chests, his dried black blood staining the stone floor and the broken axe close at hand.

The black pool is deep enough to conceal a **chuul** that was drawn to this chamber by the statue's song. With its ability to detect magic, it enjoys the wonderful feeling of the magical energy flowing off the statue. The chuul senses when creatures enter the room and rises to attack.

The dwarf remains are those of Grenwald Windcastle, who was killed by the chuul.

The singing of the statue and the rippling of the water can hypnotize those who move too close. Any creature that ends its turn within 5 feet of the pool must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or become enthralled for 1 minute, as though under the effect of a *confusion* spell. Once a creature succeeds on a saving throw against this effect, it can no longer be affected by the pool.

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (History or Investigation) check reveals that the statue is of dark-elven make. Whether its original purpose was as a siege weapon of some sort or a cursed gift to give to one's enemies remains unclear. With a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check, a character determines

that the statue draws monsters of low Intelligence to it, drives them insane, and sends them off into the world filled with bloody rage. The longer the statue sings, the more powerful the monsters that come to its call.

Three of the chests in the room (one of the two already opened plus two more of your choice) are sitting on delicate pressure plates that trigger in response to any attempt to open them. These traps cause the two dwarven statues to exhale a cloud of poison that fills the room, equivalent to a *cloudkill* spell (DC 15). The traps can be detected with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check and disarmed with a successful DC 16 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. Failure triggers the trap.

Treasure: The three untrapped chests contain 2,342 cp, 452 sp, 243 gp, 23 pp, an assortment of gemstones worth a total of 100 gp, and a golden dwarven +1 warhammer called *Sunrise*. A character who makes a successful attack with the warhammer can choose to have the attack deal an extra 2d6 radiant damage. Once this feature is used, it can't be used again until the next dawn. Feel free to change this warhammer to another weapon type more applicable to the characters.

The three trapped chests contain an additional mix of coins, bars, and gems worth a total of 1,425 gp.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Within the final chamber, the characters find a large black drapery imbued with magic that masks the sound of anything it covers. Originally placed over the statue for safety by the dwarves who built the vault, the drapery was removed by the Windcastle explorers, who didn't understand its purpose.

Before they depart the ruins, the characters can cover the statue to stop its magic calling monsters to it, then unleashing them against the folk of the surrounding countryside. They can also destroy the statue, or simply leave it as it is. Preventing others from discovering the statue and reactivating it might be accomplished by collapsing the closest tunnels to bury the vault once again. But the characters might first journey even deeper into the caves, discovering areas newly exposed by the monsters drawn to the statue. They might also decide whether to take the treasure, leave it, or give it to Feria Evensong and other locals who can be revealed to have suffered similar attacks.

If the characters attempt to take the statue as plunder and don't cover it with the magic drapery, monsters of ever-greater power are drawn to them in a rage. These creatures appear from the surrounding wilderness or burrow up from the earth—ending, perhaps, with a **purple worm** attack.

EXPANDING THE ADVENTURE

The dwarven ruins and the mineshafts can lead the characters on to many further adventures. You can add chambers from the “Red Keep” location in *Sly Flourish's Fantastic Locations* to reveal that the dwarves originally established their mines in an area used as a prison for an immortal being.

