

SHL5–Intro4



SPELUNKING THE SCRAGHOLME CAVE

An Introductory One–Round D&D[®] LIVING GREYHAWK[®]
Shield Lands Regional Adventure

Version 3.5

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After brave adventurers cleansed Scragholme Cave of nearly all its monsters, a wandering farmer found a cave mouth near the back of his new fields. He spent some time exploring it, then realized it was far bigger than he could have possibly imagined. Word traveled to all sorts of interested parties, but even powerful magic users could divine but little about the cave. Now Lord Enerick, of Bright Sentry, has decided to host a competition, with a significant prize to be awarded to the first team to reach the bottom of Scragholme Cave! An Introductory module for 1st-level PCs, set in the Shield Lands.

Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS[®] rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison.

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For questions specific to this document please e-mail the Shield Lands Point of Contact at poc@shieldlands.net. For LIVING GREYHAWK campaign questions email rpgahq@wizards.com.

RPGA SANCTIONED PLAY

Most likely you ordered this adventure as part of an RPGA even from the RPGA website, or you received it from your senior gamemaster. To play this adventure as part of the LIVING GREYHAWK campaign—a worldwide, ongoing D&D campaign set in the GREYHAWK setting—you must sanction it as part of an RPGA event. This event could be as elaborate as a big convention, or as simple as a group of friends meeting at the DM's house.

To sanction an RPGA event, you must be at least a HERALD-LEVEL gamemaster. The person who sanctions the event is called the senior gamemaster, and is in charge of making sure the event is sanctioned before play, runs smoothly on the date sanctioned, and then reported back to the RPGA in a timely manner. The person who runs the game is called the table DM (or usually just DM). Sometimes (and almost all the time in the cases of home events) the senior gamemaster is also the table DM. You don't have to be a HERALD-LEVEL GM to run this adventure if you are not the senior GM.

By sanctioning and reporting this adventure you accomplish a couple of things. First it is an official game, and you can use the AR to advance your LIVING GREYHAWK character. Second player and DMs gain rewards for sanctioned RPGA play if they are members of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS REWARDS program. Playing this adventure is worth two (2) points.

To learn more about the LIVING GREYHAWK character creation and development, RPGA event sanctioning, and DUNGEONS & DRAGONS REWARDS, visit the RPGA website at www.rpga.com.

PLAYERS READ NO FARTHER

If you are planning on playing this adventure, stop reading now. The rest of the information in this adventure is for the DM only. If you read farther than this section, you'll know too much about its challenges, which kills the fun. Also, if you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, reading beyond this point makes you ineligible to do so.

PREPARING FOR PLAY

To get the most out of this adventure, you need copies of the following D&D books: Player's Handbook, Dungeon Master's Guide, and the Monster Manual.

Throughout this adventure, text in bold italics provides player information for you to paraphrase or read aloud when appropriate. Sidebars contain important information for you, including special instruction on running the adventure. Information on nonplayer characters (NPCs) and monsters appear in abbreviated form in the adventure text. Full information on NPCs and monsters are given in Appendix 1.

Along with this adventure you'll find a RPGA Table Tracking sheet. If you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, complete and turn in this sheet to your senior GM directly after play. You'll also find a LIVING GREYHAWK Adventure Record (AR).

LIVING GREYHAWK LEVELS OF PLAY

Because players bring their own characters to LIVING GREYHAWK games, this adventure's challenges are proportionate to the modified average character level of the

PCs participating in the adventure. To determine this modified Average Party Level (APL) follow the steps below:

- Determine the character level for each of the PCs participating in the adventure.
- If PCs bring animals that have been trained for combat (most likely dogs trained for war), other than those brought by virtue of a class ability (such as animal companions, familiars paladin's mounts) or the warhorse of a character with the Mounted Combat feat, use the sidebar chart to determine the number of levels you add to the sum of step one. Add each character's animals separately. A single PC may only bring four or fewer animals of this type, and animals with different CRs are added separately.
- Sum the results of step 1 and 2, and divide by the number of characters playing in the adventure. Round up to the nearest whole number.
- If you are running a table of six PCs, add one to that average.

Mundane Animals Effect on APL		# of Animals			
		1	2	3	4
CR of Animal	1/4 & 1/6	0	0	0	1
	1/3 & 1/2	0	0	1	1
	1	1	1	2	3
	2	2	3	4	5
	3	3	4	5	6
	4	4	6	7	8
	5	5	7	8	9
6	6	8	9	10	
7	7	9	10	11	

Throughout this adventure, APLs categorize the level of challenge the PCs face. APLs are given in even-numbered increments. If the APL of your group falls on an odd number, ask them before the adventure begins whether they would like to play a harder or easier adventure. Based on their choice, use either the higher or the lower adjacent APL.

APL also affects the amount of experience and gold a PC can gain at the end of the adventure. If a player character is three character levels or more either higher or lower than the APL at which this adventure is being played, that character receives only one-half of the experience points and gold for the adventure. This simulates the fact that either the PC was not challenged as much as normal or relied on help by higher-level characters to reach the objectives.

Further, a PC who is four or more levels higher than the highest APL supported by the adventure may not play the adventure.

LIVING GREYHAWK adventures are designed for APL 2 and higher. Four or five 1st-level characters may find the challenge of an APL 2 adventure difficult. Suggest the following to these groups to help increase their chances of success:

- 1 Enlist a sixth player.
- 2 Advise characters to buy riding dogs to help protect them, and fight for them.

NOTE: This LIVING GREYHAWK adventure is designed for mid and higher-level characters. Since characters below 6th level are unlikely to have the skills and resources necessary to complete this adventure, players using lower-level characters should be advised that they are participating at great risk. This is not an adventure for beginning characters!

TIME UNITS AND UPKEEP

This is a standard one-round Core adventure set in the Hold of the Sea Princes. All characters pay two Time Units. Adventurer's Standard Upkeep costs 12 gp per Time Unit. Rich Upkeep costs 50 gp per Time Unit. Luxury Upkeep costs 100gp per Time Unit.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Working together, an army of adventurers swarmed Scragholme Island and cleansed it of nearly all its monsters, discovering, in the process, an army of slaadi and other monsters around an obelisk shrine. The slaadi, monsters, and shrine were destroyed, and the island was made safe for residents of the Shield Lands who began to move out from Bright Sentry to settle new farm lands and hunt new forests.

One such farmer cut and burned the trees from his land only to discover a large hole at the edge of his property, leading deep into the earth. He fetched rope and torches to explore it, but after hours of climbing through tunnels, he stumbled into a massive chamber dropping deep into the earth, well beyond the light of his torch. He dropped a torch and rocks into the darkness but couldn't determine the depth of the chamber, only that it was massive.

Word reached various sages of the farmer's discovery, but something in the cave blocked magical exploration. Sensing an opportunity to rally citizens' morale and explore the cave at the same time, Lord Enerick, of Bright Sentry, has determined to hold a competition, offering rewards to the teams of spelunkers who traveled deepest into the Scragholme Cave.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The PCs arrive outside the mouth of the Scragholme cave for the spelunking competition to find the contest closed to new entries. However, four entrants hope to recruit some brave adventurers to work as a team. The PCs choose to work with one of the four recruiters.

As they prepare to head into the cave, the PCs hear some rather disturbing rumors about undead stirring deep in the cave. A couple teams lose their nerve and consider exiting the competition, but the PCs discover the origin of the rumors lies with a team of spelunking halflings. The halflings are officially cautioned, the judges explain the rules to all contestants, and the contest begins.

Pushing out of the light of day, the PCs begin the long, sheer descent through the part of the cave dubbed "Big Cascade." Several teams set up base camps at the bottom of Big Cascade and begin to explore tunnels to find ways deeper into the earth. One such tunnel near the bottom of Big Cascade leads into a long, narrow corridor, choked with rubble at the end. Along the walls of the tunnel are signs written in undercommon. As they turn to exit the tunnel, the PCs are swarmed by bats.

The PCs push deeper into the cave, winding their way for days through a maze of tunnels and face a series of natural traps. Along the way, they encounter another team forced to return to the surface to treat disease and broken limbs. At length, the PCs travel through a tunnel that ends in a pool of water—in a section of the cave where magic fails to function—and they are forced, as a team, to choose among a variety of ways to continue deeper into the cave.

Taking the lead in the race on the other side of the sump, the PCs continue to explore the seemingly endless tunnels before they reach the bottom of the cave where they discover an abundance of powerful magic emanating from tunnel walls of pure obsidian. Just as their depth

stick begins to glow, indicating that they're free to return to the surface and claim their prize, ghouls step out of the shadows and attack.

After defeating the ghouls, the PCs return toward the surface, are ambushed by the team of spelunking halflings, and must fight for their lives.

Finally, the PCs return to the surface without further incident to claim their prize. Their discovery of the deep cave's obsidian walls and an obsidian dagger arouses a significant amount of curiosity among Lord Enerick and his emissaries who thank the PCs for their efforts.

PREPARATION FOR PLAY

This adventure makes considerable use of an NPC team leader. DMs running this adventure should familiarize themselves with the four possible NPC team leaders before running the adventure: Dondor Mogrin, Chauncy Redwyn, Dalla Starbreeze, and Meratellius "Merry" Jendoquenderheite. This adventure works best if the DM is able to present each NPC with a distinctive personality when they first appear, during the Introduction, and throughout the adventure as they come to combat and other obstacles. The NPCs' personalities are summarized in their descriptions in Appendix 1, and some of their motivations are listed in their introductions in the Introduction to the adventure. (To save time, DMs may assume that NPC team leaders automatically succeed on their combat actions for an average result. E.g. An NPC team leader that hopes to fight defensively to aid a PC's attack may automatically succeed. Or an NPC team leader that hopes to cast *cure light wounds* to use as a touch spell against an undead may automatically succeed for average damage.)

INTRODUCTION

The DM should advise new players of the general status of the Shield Lands. It can be summarized as follows:

The Shield Lands is a nation at war with the evil nation of Iuz. Iuz is also the name of that vile nation's demonic ruler.

One of the Shield Land's holdings is an island known as Scragholme Isle. It has a major city, Bright Sentry on it. Bright Sentry is ruled by Lord Natan Enerick.

Scragholme Isle used to be a horrible place to live. Its jungles and swamps were filled with sea-trolls (scrags) and worse, and its inland mountains were riddled with pockets of monsters. In a desire to open new lands not easily attacked by Iuz for production in the war efforts, the island was recently scoured of monsters by an army of adventurers.

However, where some evil may be destroyed, other evil may still lie hidden...

All around you, tents and banners flap and flutter in the breeze. The sun is shining, and the smell of manure carries on the air. Dozens of brave souls, much like yourself, have gathered at the edge of a once-modest farm outside of Bright Sentry in order to enter tomorrow's spelunking competition—a race to the bottom of Scragholme Cave! All among the tents, you see men and women clad in adventuring gear, burdened with massive coils of rope and jangling bags of pitons and climbing spikes. A raised stand near the center of the tents flies a banner that reads, "JUDGES."

Allow the PCs to introduce themselves at this point.

Somewhere amidst the tents and banners scattered across this recently burned field lies the Scragholme Cave, newly dubbed, and the cause for the hubbub surrounding this strange spelunking competition. Back in Bright Sentry, as throughout the Shield Lands, the taverns were all abuzz with news of the vast cave discovered by a modest farmer, a cave that defied the magical scrying of several archmages. According to rumors, a cleric of Bright Sentry had shut up in a room for three days before coming back out to announce that Pholtus had deemed it fit for his followers to know that the cave traveled two-thousand three-hundred fifty-seven feet beneath the surface of the island. However, the cleric knew nothing more of what might lie in such a massive chasm.

The word spread that Lord Natan Enerick, of Bright Sentry, unable to tolerate such a vast mystery virtually outside his backdoor, intended to stage a competition that would send several teams of brave adventurers into the cave to plumb its depths. He would offer a prize to the team that first reached the deep belly of the earth, and news of the competition quickly spilled out of the Shield Lands to surrounding areas. As you marched to the farm, you were passed by teams of spelunkers flying the banners of Highfolk, Furyondy, and even Greyhawk. But no matter how light and colorful their banners looked in the sunny light and the gusting breezes, every team had rope, and lots of it, big, heavy bundles, strapped all across their backs and spilling out of saddle bags. Now, at last, you've arrived at the competition, looking for your chance for fame and fortune.

Allow the PCs to explore the contest area (Appendix 2) for a while if they so desire. Eventually, though, the PCs should move toward the judges' stand where they'll find a number of people milling about, including the two

judges, councilman Jurivicious and Filna the Illuminated (a member of the flambis morti. *Note: the flambis morti is a branch of the Church of Pholtus, the sun god), emissaries from Lord Enerick, as well as four potential entrants. When the PCs approach, read the following:

Four travelers in adventurers' gear stand before the judges' booth, speaking with a man in a noble's outfit and an intense-looking woman clad in shining robes. The four travelers include a young human man, a female half-elf, a female gnome, and a loud male dwarf who is currently pleading his case to the judges.

"I traveled all the way from Greyhawk to enter this cave-crawling contest, and this is the first I heard of no team requirement. Then, to say that there's only one spot enough for one more team to enter, that's ridiculous! Isn't this supposed to be some huge goliath of a cave? There should be room enough for all of us, I'll wager."

The man in nobles' clothing speaks gently, but his voice carries the resolution of one accustomed to command. "Good sir, I'm afraid we had to limit the number of entries for practical reasons I but scarcely understand myself. Nonetheless, Lord Enerick received the same counsel from both the Arcanists' Society and the Church of Pholtus, and stated he would not go afoul of their advice. However," and, here, he raises his eyes and casts them over you, "since the four of you refuse to work together and share the glory, it seems that at least one of the four of you will still be able to enter the contest. You should be able to assemble a team from these adventurers," and with that, he waves his hand in your direction.

At this point, the four individuals hoping to enter the contest will introduce themselves, beginning with the dwarf. Also, this is an opportunity for the PCs to introduce themselves to the team leaders and to explain what skills and abilities they have to offer during a spelunking expedition. If the PCs wish to speak to councilman Jurivicious or Filna the Illuminated, they'll find that the two have moved to the far end of the judges' booth and seem to be consulting with each other in tones that don't welcome interruption.

☛ Dondor Mogrin, (Male dwarf ExpI/WarI; see Appendix I for stats)

The dwarf, Dondor Mogrin, tells the PCs that, as they might have heard, he's traveled all the way from Greyhawk for this contest and is not to be denied. He can't say much for the three other people, but Dondor is a

seasoned explorer of tunnels and caves and such stuff. If such obviously green spelunkers as the PCs hope to travel with him—and they should—he'll tolerate no funny business about splitting the fame or trying to have a democratic group. He knows more about dark places than the lot of them and though he'll split the prize money fair enough once he's won, he don't intend to let none of the PCs steal his thunder.

☛ Chauncy Redwyn (Male human AriI/ExpI; see Appendix I for stats)

Next, Chauncy Redwyn will introduce himself, either telling the PCs not to buy too heartily into the dwarf's story (if they seem so inclined) or apologizing for the dwarf's brusque demeanor (if they seem put off). He'll explain that each of the four potential entrants have traveled far to enter the contest, and that though good Dondor's hostility may not be warranted, it is certainly understandable. Chauncy acknowledges that if the PCs traveled all the way to this remote farmland to join the contest, they must have their own strengths, and he's certain he can figure out how to help everyone work together as a team and formulate a plan that will win the contest. He explains, also, that though he'd normally be happy to share the fame and glory that will surely accompany victory in this endeavor, he needs to reserve the victor's title for himself, to help ease his reconciliation with his parents, minor nobles in Furyundy, who disapproved of his decision to adventure. He will be positively delighted to split the prize money evenly.

☛ Dalla Starbreeze (Female half-elf AdpI/ExpI; see Appendix I for stats)

Third, Dalla Starbreeze, offers herself as an alternative. She speaks quietly and doesn't explain much unless asked. She only says that she has traveled from a small village just outside of Highfolk to enter the contest. If pressed, she can contribute more information. She feels called to do so by Corellon Larethian and doesn't know if she'll adventure again after the contest. She would have shared the fame and glory with the other delvers, but they didn't wish to split. She doesn't like the dark and intends to use her magic to keep light glowing all the time. She's secretly concerned by the rumors of the cave's ability to block the magical scrying of powerful mages, and she has spent the past month studying every book available to her that said anything about subterranean caverns.

🧝 Meratellius “Merry” Jendoquenderheite (Female gnome Exp2; see Appendix 1 for stats)

Finally, as Dalla Starbreeze nears the end of her introduction, Meratellius “Merry” Jendoquenderheite, cuts her off with a laugh and says the half-elf is “too much of a mouse to crawl about that cave. Something’ll come along and eat her up.” If the PCs want to travel with Merry, she’s confident she can get them in and to the bottom and back out before the other groups have figured out where to set up their first day’s privy. She hasn’t been in caves too much, but she’s a born climber and crawler and rope-user and knows plenty well how to stay out of the way of anything they don’t want to run into on their journeys downward. She’ll say she doesn’t care at all about the fame and glory (Bluff check; PCs can Sense Motive if they wish), but it’s an unfortunate result of the bureaucracy that the entry forms only allow one team leader—so, sorry, the others are out of luck. (It’s true that the entry forms only allow space to designate one team leader.)

After the NPCs introduce themselves, the PCs should choose which team leader they wish to follow. Allow the NPCs to continue to argue and interrupt as the PCs deliberate, but don’t push the PCs to choose any particular team leader. Also, DMs should note that the NPCs each bring certain skills, abilities and items to the contest, and the NPCs will be quick to state what they have that the PCs might want available during a trip beneath the earth. Additionally, each of the NPC team leaders has enough spare gold to buy a suit or two of studded leather to lend PC team members. The wiser of the NPC team leaders, Dalla and Chauncy, will recommend that no PC tries to go caving in cumbersome armor. A handful of opportunistic merchants have come to hawk their goods at the competition grounds, and PCs can buy any light armor, and also can find suits of masterwork leather or studded leather armor. PCs can also find any suitable equipment (relevant to spelunking) worth 99 gp or less from the *Players’ Handbook*.

Once the PCs have chosen a team leader, they report to councilman Jurivicious and Filna the Illuminated where the team leader (henceforth, “TL”) signs out the entry form before leading the PCs to his or her tent where they plan to rest for the evening before entering the cave at dawn when the contest begins.

ENCOUNTER ONE: THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE CAVE

Late that night, a group of contestants begin to raise their voices a short distance from the party’s camp. If they

don’t approach quickly, the PCs will shortly observe other contestants begin to pack their tents and start away from the contest grounds. Meanwhile, the voices grow louder and louder toward argument. (If none of this draws the PCs to the hubbub, consider having the judges demand that everyone get together to sort out whatever disturbance woke them from their sleep.) When the PCs approach the disturbance, read the following:

At the center of a ring of tents, most of the other contestants have gathered around a large fire. The flames cast flickering shadows, and the people appear as silhouettes from a distance. You begin to distinguish words as you approach: “vampire,” “lich,” “undead shadows.”

“We can’t explore the cave if such terrors lurk below!” calls one distraught voice.

Another responds, “Seal it up, or bring the churches in.”

“Is this some cruel joke the Lord of Bright Sentry means to play on neighboring nations? Sending us in to die?”

The PCs find most of their competitors ready to abandon the competition. Some already carry fully-packed backpacks over their shoulders and hold rolled-up tents under their arms. Some appear half-dressed, still waking from the commotion. Only a few other teams still appear calm and determined. A team composed entirely of elves sits several paces away from the crowd, eating and drinking wine while they listen to the noise. A team of humans, half-orcs, and a half-elf stand beside a banner (Knowledge [history] or Knowledge [nobility and royalty] DC 10 to identify it as a banner of Dyvers), listening with wry, smug grins across their faces. A team of dwarves stands unflappably in the middle of the furor, casting their glances over all the frightened competitors.

The PCs can Gather Information to learn about the various rumors in circulation.

- DC 10; (from a human) “I was trying to sleep when I heard all this arguin’ startin’ up. So’s I asked what’s goin’ on, y’know, and some guy tells me there’s supposed to be undead in the cave. Someone saw rats swarmin’ all out of the cave mouth not more’n a few hours back, and everyone knows them rat swarms is due to vampires or liches. I don’t mind climbin’, but I ain’t takin’ no fight to no vampire.”
- DC 15; (from one of the elves) “This doesn’t reflect well upon Lord Enerick, nor upon the various mages and clergy who said they couldn’t determine what lay in the cave. Nonetheless, it’s hard to wish to sacrifice my life to explore a cavern, even for the gold. I spoke with a halfling who swore to me he saw the rats swarm out of the cave himself, a sure sign that a vampire lurks within.”

- DC 20; (from a human) *“A couple of half-orcs laughed at me when I told them to stay away from the cave since it’s filled with undead.”*
- DC 25; (from one of the dwarves who stood in the center of the commotion) *“I wouldn’t be surprised if someone’s trying to chase everyone away by giving ‘em a fright. Still, I don’t mind delayin’ things a bit to make sure there ain’t any vampires below.”*

The PCs may pursue the truth in a number of ways:

- A Knowledge (religion) check DC 16 confirms that vampires have the ability to summon and direct rat swarms.
- A Survival (Track) check DC 10 at the cave mouth confirms that a large number of rats recently exited the cave. If the party follows the tracks, they lead 50 feet into the cave before they end, all at once, at a flat spot 5 ft. from the cave wall, well out of sight of the cave entrance. Additionally, a successful Knowledge (nature) check (DC 14) lends the PCs to believe that though there was a multitude of rats, there weren’t enough to constitute a true swarm. Another Search or Survival (Track) check DC 21 reveals small humanoid footprints, a recently discarded torch, and the imprints of a large crate.
- The PCs may wish to question the halfling who witnessed the rat swarm exiting the cave mouth. Allow them to make three consecutive successful Gather Information checks (DC 10) in order to track him down in the shifting throng of contestants.
- The PCs may wish to question the half-orcs who laughed when they were warned about the cave. Allow them to make three consecutive successful Gather Information checks (DC 10) in order to track them down in the shifting throng of contestants.
- The PCs may wish to consult with their TL. In this case, the DM must roleplay the encounter appropriate to the TL’s personality, but no TL proves eager to abandon the contest. Some may see the scare as a stroke of luck, thinning the crowd of contestants. Others may simply stress the additional planning involved if they have to confront undead. If the PCs haven’t already made some effort, the TL should suggest the PCs find out “exactly what we need to prepare for down there.” Chauncy and Dalla are particularly well-suited to aid in any investigation (Gather Information rolls) and will do so if the PCs request their aid or guidance.
- Some PCs may simply wish to calm as much of the crowd as possible. Allow them to make Diplomacy checks to do so. Consider the crowd initially

Unfriendly. A Diplomacy check (DC 15) brings around a handful of individuals, a Diplomacy check (DC 25) starts to pacify the majority of the crowd that they’ll wait for some truth before they rush away, and a Diplomacy check (DC 40) lowers the DC of all subsequent Gather Information checks for this encounter by 10.

PCs who speak to the half-orcs, Grog and Reklar, find them at another team’s tent, telling tales about how they once fought a mummy. The other team pauses in packing their tent to absorb the tale of horror, growing ever the more frightened. PCs may wish to make Sense Motive checks. If they do, allow them a Sense Motive (DC 10) to realize the half-orcs are laying it on a bit thick, obviously in order to relieve themselves of as much competition as they can. Otherwise, if the PCs ask the half-orcs what they know about the undead and the rat swarm, the duo can only reply that they heard some rumors, but they’re not worried because they’re tough, seasoned adventurers with magic weapons. In truth, the half-orcs don’t know how this all started, but they guess it’s all a trick and are happy to capitalize on the fright even though they didn’t set things in motion.

PCs who speak to the halfling, Endo Bigears, find him half-hysterical with fright. He and his teammates are discussing whether or not they should abandon the competition as the PCs arrive. (Allow the PCs a Spot check [DC 25] to see one of the halflings glance up briefly at the party’s approach just before Endo begins to relate his tale.) Endo’s group is run by Werther Hairfoot, who keeps trying to tell Endo to calm down and relate all that he saw. In truth, this is an act for the PCs’ benefit. Endo tells Werther that he was wandering away from the tent to relieve himself when he heard scuttling sounds seemingly coming from the cave mouth. He walked over to the entrance, holding forth his torch, and heard the scuttling sound louder and louder, echoing off the stone walls, until he saw his torch light reflecting on a thousand tiny eyes. He says he threw his torch into the writhing, shadowy mass of rats and fled, but as he did so, he was certain he felt something tugging at his soul for domination and heard a low, raspy laughter from the darkness. (If the PCs request it, allow them a Sense Motive check [DC 20] to feel that Endo’s story doesn’t quite hold up.)

PCs who check the mouth of the cave for an abandoned torch will not find it, nor any sign of it.

Parties can present what they learn to the judges. Any of three pieces of evidence convinces the judges of the halflings’ deceit:

- The signs indicating that a crate recently lay within the cavern at the origin of the rat swarm.

- Getting Endo Bigears to repeat his story before councilman Jurivicious and/or Filna the Illuminated. (They succeed on their Sense Motive checks and recognize the lie.)
- Gathering enough witnesses to testify to the origins of the story; either they all present conflicting stories, or their stories all trace back to Endo Bigears. Getting a spelunker to testify requires a Diplomacy check (DC 15), and PCs who wish to get use witnesses before the judges summon a number of spelunkers equal to the DC of a Gather Information check minus 10. A party needs at least 10 spelunker witnesses to convince the judges of the halflings' deceit by this method and, thus, succeeds on a minimum Gather Information check (DC 20; 20 – 10 = 10 witnesses).

Parties that successfully convince the judges of the halflings' deceit receive the experience for Encounter One: Revealing the Halflings' Deceit. If the party succeeds, continue to Encounter Two.

Otherwise, if the party fails to convince the judges of the halflings' deceit, read the following:

For hours, the camp continues to be a chaos of rumor and counter-rumor and fear. For every tale of vampires that pops up, two more start to form about zombies and werewolves and, perhaps, terrible, tentacled beasts that eat brains to survive.

Yet as dawn approaches, one figure starts to show everywhere, and calm and order follow in her wake. The woman in fine robes strides purposefully from group to group and listens to each in turn—the crowds whisper two words, “flambis morti”—until she consults with her male companion, councilman Jurivicious, and summons the crowds together.

“Friends, there is nothing to fear from the cave. These tales of undead are vicious lies meant to distract you from your goal. Councilman Jurivicious and I suspect the culprits, and they will be duly punished. Dawn approaches, and you will need your rest. Go, now, sleep, and all will be made clear in the morning.”

ENCOUNTER TWO: BIG CASCADE

In the morning, just as the eastern sky begins to brighten, the judges introduce themselves as councilman Jurivicious and Filna the Illuminated. They explain to all the remaining contestants that a team of halflings invented the stories of vampires to

frighten away their competition. Though such an act ran against the very spirit of the competition, it was not, however, strictly against the rules; therefore, councilman Jurivicious determined that the halflings would start five hours behind all the other competitors, one hour for each hour their lies stole from their competitors' sleep.

Filna the Illuminated raises her hands for silence, and then raises her voice: “Listen closely. These are the rules of the competition. Pholtus granted me, through my auguries, the knowledge that the Scragholme Cave descends to a depth of 2357 feet below the surface. Accordingly, the Lord Natan Enerick has arranged with the Arcanists' Society of Critwall to provide each team's leader with a magical device that will begin to glow as soon as it reaches a depth of 2357 feet. The depth stick does nothing other than glow, and it will not glow until it reaches that depth. The first team to return with a glowing depth stick wins and will receive 1000 gold. There is to be no violence between competitors, nor treachery of any sort. Should the Church of Pholtus hear of it, we will have all perpetrators jailed at once. You are free to use whatever means available to you to explore the cave, but the Arcanists' Society has determined that the Scragholme Cave seems to reject magic at a depth of nearly 1000 feet. Cavers should be warned not to rely upon magical travel or healing at that depth.

“The contest will begin in one hour. Good luck to all of you. May the Axe Grow Great. May the light brighten.”

The contest begins with a horn blast and a hurry as teams begin to descend into the cave. DMs should think of this as a sporting event as much as possible and should spontaneously narrate some of the jockeying back and forth for position that follows in any sort of race. DMs should allow the team to position themselves among the early leaders, perhaps somewhere from second to fourth (out of twelve teams), as they walk through the early part of the cave to the lip of a massive chasm that extends well out of torchlight (even for those with lowlight-vision or darkvision) in every direction. Here, the PCs' TL will confidently begin to set up ropes and climbing gear before the team starts their descent into Big Cascade.

DMs are encouraged to review the rules for the Climb skill in the *Players' Handbook*. Each TL starts equipped with 7 climbing kits, enough for each member of the team (+2 bonus to everyone's Climb check), and 500 ft. of knotted silk rope. Much of Big Cascade travels along the smooth surface of the wall (Climb check [DC 0] with the knotted rope), but after 100 ft. the wall bends

away from the rope, leaving the adventurers suspended on their knotted rope, dangling in a massive chamber with darkness in every direction (except toward the nearest cave wall) beyond their light. The Climb check to descend the knotted rope is DC 5. Note: during the time the PCs climb down the rope, other teams might overtake them to their left or right, scurrying down the ropes in a hurry. Voices should echo in the dark, etc.

After the PCs venture 300 ft. downward, allow them to make a Listen check (DC 10) to hear a short cry of fear far below them in the distance; then read the following:

The massive cavern called Big Cascade continues down into a never-ending black that swallows the light from your torches. All around you, the darkness seems to carry weight. The nearest wall is 5 feet away, glistening with trickling water and strange, sedimentary formations. Your arms ache from the climb when your party spies the black mouth of a tunnel leading into the near wall, standing roughly 5 feet wide by 8 feet tall, just 10 feet below your lead climber.

If the PCs wish to explore the tunnel (area 3 on Appendix 2), they have to figure out how to reach the tunnel mouth. The easiest way would be to swing back and forth on their rope until momentum carries them to the entrance, but players may try other routes. The walls around the cave mouth are slick and sheer (Climb check [DC 20]).

Give players a moment to respond to their discovery of the tunnel before making them roll Listen checks (DC 10) to hear a turbulent flapping of wings. Allow players who succeed on their Listen checks 2 rounds before reading the following:

Suddenly a turbulent flapping of leathery wings disturbs the ominous quiet of Scragholme Cave. Then a terrifying sight meets your light: hundreds of glowing red eyes and tiny, glowing fangs appear. The bats shriek and set upon you.

APL2 (EL 3)

🦇 **Bat Swarm** (2): hp 13 each; see *Monster Manual* page 237.

Tactics: This encounter has had its EL modified to reflect the TL's presence, so DMs should use the TL as appropriate to aid the party. The bats have just been displaced from their territory by one of the teams ahead of the PCs. They are attacking out of animal fear and anger. If they clearly start losing the fight, they'll split apart and flee. Meanwhile, PCs need two hands free to

Climb, though they can free one hand to fight while holding to the rope with the other. Many PCs will try to find better footing in the tunnel. The tunnel is roughly straight, running back 10 feet before widening into a 15 by 15 foot room choked with rubble at the far end. Additionally, each TL fights according to his or her style. Dondor fights defensively to do damage. Chauncy fights defensively to add to another's AC or attack. Dalla casts *bless*, then thinks to give another PC a flask of alchemist's fire. Merry moves to a safe position, to protect her own hide, then uses alchemist's fire if she has a clear shot.

Treasure: None.

Development: PCs who Search the tunnel find roughly hewn walls covered with faded, painted signs in a foreign language (Undercommon). Players who can read Undercommon can determine that the signs indicate the tunnel led to a door that someone meant to defend against the illithid. The tunnel leads back to a well-hewn chamber 15 by 15 ft. and 8 ft. tall. The chamber is completely choked with rubble, boulders, and sedimentary build-up at its far end. A Search check (DC 15) discovers bones and broken arrows. A Knowledge (nature) check (DC 11) identifies that the bones came from an elf. The decay of the arrowheads and shafts suggest they were abandoned here many hundreds of years ago.

After the PCs defeat the bat swarm, they have another 200 ft. to descend before they reach the bottom of Big Cascade. At its bottom the cavern starts to narrow like a funnel and approaches a sloped floor filled with stalagmites. Discarded gear lies all across the cavern floor at this point, and a number of ropes indicate where previous teams found entry into the deeper tunnels, small passageways squeezed into the rock, that wind and twist their way beneath the earth. Anyone medium size needs to squeeze through these tunnels, and they stretch out for several hours before spilling into another large chamber over 100 feet tall. Strange crystalline formations line a slow, thin underground stream, and a number of teams (depending on how many the DM wishes to place ahead of the PCs) have set up camp and are resting when the PCs enter the chamber.

After long, painful hours of contorting your body to pass through the tight, dark tunnels leading out of Big Cascade, you come at last to a large chamber that stretches beyond the range of your torch light. Your light catches on a number of strange, crystalline formations that line a small underground stream, and you see, also, a number of blankets where the lead teams have set camp at the end of their first

day's expedition. A faint moaning comes from off in the dark.

The faint moaning comes from one of the half-orc cavers who broke his leg and caught a strange disease that's dissolving his skin upward from the break. He is tended by the rest of his team. If the PCs use magical healing, they can fix the half-orc's broken leg, but they can't stop the disease from spreading unless they also succeed on a Heal check (DC 30). This is the half-orc that gets escorted out of the cave at the beginning of Encounter Three.

There's nothing terribly special about the crystalline formations. They're just mineral deposits different than anything found on the surface of Oerth.

The PCs, at this time, have been exploring the cave for a little over 8 hours, and the TL recommends they set up base camp in the large chamber. If any of the PCs differ, DMs should handle the situation according to the personality of the TL.

ENCOUNTER THREE: BOULDER CHOKE

Though the air is dank and stale, your exhaustion grants you a deep sleep. In the morning, if it is truly morning in the dark, one of the other teams splits up as (team leader) starts preparing ropes and considering the day's expedition. Two members of the other team carry a half-orc between them. His leg is splinted and bandaged; his face writhes in silent agony. (Team leader) looks up for a moment and gives a silent nod. No one said the Scragholme Cave would welcome those who explored it.

The TL explains that he/she has wandered the chamber for a bit and found three passageways leading out. One team has already taken the most obvious passage downward, through a wide tunnel near the stream, but the TL notes the walls were slicked with moisture—not a good sign (toward Area 6 on Appendix 2). One passageway was a tight squeeze, descending sharply downward past stalagmites and stalactites (toward Area 7 on Appendix 2). The final passageway was another squeeze, though seemingly unobstructed, but it led slightly upward (toward Area 5 on Appendix 2).

DMs should refer to the map of Scragholme Cave (Appendix 2) for the rest of this encounter. The PCs' travels through the next series of tunnels will take them several days, during which time other teams might suffer injuries or disease or simply fall behind. DMs should continue to emphasize the competitive nature of the race (as, perhaps, another team catches up to the PCs while they camp for the night in one of the larger chambers) as

well as develop the imagery of a tremendous series of networked tunnels deep beneath Scragholme Island (and at this point, well below the level of the Nyr Dyv). The PCs journey will take them to numerous dead ends, through squeezing tunnels, past giant caverns filled with stalactites and stalagmites, upward past rushing waterfalls that remain invisible in the dark apart from the thunder of their passing, and ever deeper and into more dangerous passages, filled with treacherous traps.

DMs need to refer to Appendix 2 as the PCs travel in order to track the amount of time it takes them to navigate the depths of Scragholme Cave. DMs should also familiarize themselves with the rules for forced marches as many PCs will opt to explore the caverns for more than 8 hours a day.

Area 5:

After crawling upward for a couple hours, you start once again to descend. Though at times you can walk at a crouch, you have to make most of your journey on your belly and elbows. The nature of the rock changes from a lighter, layered sedimentary rock to a darker, smoother rock, slick with moisture, as you approach a turn in the tunnel that ends at a 10 foot drop along pitted walls to where the tunnel continues at a slant beneath you.

The PCs approach from tunnels that force them to crawl in single-file. There is enough room just before the drop for a PC to shift his/her body to try to climb down feet-first, rather than continue crawling head-first. The Climb check (DC 10) should prove simple enough, but the real danger is the pit that lurks below a thin layer of sediment that can't bear a PC's weight.

Camouflaged Pit Trap: CR 1; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; 10 ft. deep (1d6, fall); Search DC 24; Disable Device DC 20; Market value 1800 gp

PCs who successfully locate the pit trap with a Search check notice water dripping down the walls of the drop, but not pooling across the floor.

Area 6:

You follow after the other teams, taking advantage of the ropes they had already set in place to speed your movement. You twist and wind through tunnels choked by rubble as the air starts to take a pungent flavor. At length, you come upon a light before you and hear voices speaking common. Keen to take back as much of the lead as possible, (team leader) urges you forward through a painfully tight

squeeze. On the other side, in a small chamber, four men huddle around a fifth, shivering teammate.

Each TL, except Dalla Starbreeze, will try to hurry the PCs past the other spelunkers in order to take the lead, chalking up the shivering man's condition to bad luck. If the PCs stop to ask the other team why the man seems ill, they'll learn he's started losing movement in his limbs since he had an accident several hundred yards deeper into the caverns.

Your travel slows a few hundred yards deeper into the tunnels when you have to contort your bodies to squeeze alongside an underground stream that chills your bones even through your clothing. At length, you hear the sounds of water falling, and crashing onto rock below. The floor descends steeply ahead of you, and the cavern ceiling rises high enough to let you stand. The air is foul with ancient decay.

The PCs approach this location from a tunnel that forces single-file movement. It opens to a 5 ft. by 5 ft. square where a PC can stand before running 15 ft. forward at a nearly-sheer incline (5 ft. wide by 5 ft. tall). A number of stalactites cling from the ceiling above the descent, so a PC might be able to use them to help climb down the incline (consider them handholds). Water runs along the walls up to the lip of the steep descent. Thus, PCs hoping to walk down the tunnel must make a Balance check (DC 14) at the edge of the 5 ft. square or slip down the water-slicked incline. The true danger, however, isn't from the fall (which does only subdual damage) but from the contact poison lining the walls of the incline.

Cavern Walls Smearred with Contact Poison: CR 1; mechanical; touch trigger (attached); manual reset; poison (carrion crawler brain juice, DC 13 Fortitude save resists, paralysis/o); Search DC 19; Disable Device DC 19; Market value 900 gp

PCs who successfully Search for the poison notice a faint yellow smear along the walls and a rotted lump at the bottom of the incline (which, if they get closer, they recognize as a pair of old mandibles). PCs can avoid the poison either by successfully Climbing down the incline (DC 10) or by succeeding at a Reflex save (DC 15) to twist away from the walls as he/she slams the 15 ft. down the incline.

Area 7:

Your path twists ever downward through unfathomable tons of rock. Stalactites scrape at your

back as you crawl through some of the tighter squeezes, and the air flows thick into your lungs. After hours of crawling, you notice some slight change in the air—a breeze. Though at first your light merely casts shadows from stalagmites back onto the red-black walls of the cavern, you round a bend, and, past a shelf of rock that forms the final thrust of the tunnel floor, the light falls away into nothing, pure darkness. From the far side of the dark comes the sound of flowing water.

PCs will most likely secure a rope to climb down into the cavernous chamber. Otherwise, a PC must succeed on a Climb check (DC 25) to navigate the overhang. The true difficulty, however, lies at the point where the PCs' rope will drop down into contact with loose shale. A PC who places his/her weight upon the shale sets off a small avalanche, displacing a large chunk of rock further up the cave.

The water on the far side of the cavern has no game significance. The chamber is roughly 50 ft. wide at its top, 50 ft. deep from the end of the tunnel, and narrows to a 10-ft. base where the PCs can find a new tunnel that winds deeper into the earth alongside freezing water.

Rolling Rock Trap: CR 1; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Atk +10 melee (2d6, rock); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 22; Market value 1400 gp

Area 8:

After crawling upward for a couple hours, you start once again to descend. Though at times you can walk at a crouch, you have to make most of your journey on your belly and elbows. The nature of the rock changes from a lighter, layered sedimentary rock to a darker, smoother rock, slick with moisture, as you approach a turn in the tunnel that ends at a 10 foot drop along pitted walls to where the tunnel continues at a slant beneath you.

The PCs approach from tunnels that force them to crawl in single-file. There is enough room just before the drop for a PC to shift his/her body to try to climb down feet-first, rather than continue crawling head-first. The Climb check (DC 10) should prove simple enough, but the real danger is the pit that lurks below a thin layer of sediment that can't bear a PC's weight.

Camouflaged Pit Trap: CR 1; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; 10 ft. deep (1d6, fall); Search DC 24; Disable Device DC 20; Market value 1800 gp

PCs who successfully locate the pit trap with a Search check notice water dripping down the walls of the drop, but not pooling across the floor.

Area 9:

For days, you've burrowed your way forward beneath unfathomable tons of stone and mineral deposits. Deeper and deeper into the belly of the Oerth, you've traveled, but for every 10 feet downward, it seems you travel 5 feet sideways and 2 feet up, snaking your way through cracks in the walls of massive cavernous chambers, edging your way forward along ridges above chasms that drop beyond hearing, and passing through tunnels where freezing waters hiss down and disappear. Now, the tunnel that's forced your team to crawl single-file for the last several hours widens to 10 feet across, and the tunnel ceiling permits a low, stooped walk. It starts to turn upward, along what must have once been a pathway for water, now dry, but covered in slick fungus. The air reeks with the smell of decay.

The tunnel leads upward at a sharp incline along slick rock and fungus with no true handholds or footholds (Climb check [DC 10]). Anyone who slips and falls risks slamming into the tunnel wall and coming into contact with a poisonous natural trap. DMs should allow PCs who fail their Climb checks by enough of a margin to fall a Reflex save (DC 15) to avoid bumping into the walls and coming into contact with the poison.

Cavern Walls Smearred with Contact Poison: CR 1; mechanical; touch trigger (attached); manual reset; poison (carrion crawler brain juice, DC 13 Fortitude save resists, paralysis/o); Search DC 19; Disable Device DC 19; Market value 900 gp

Area 10:

Deeper and deeper you've burrowed into the labyrinthine tunnels of Scragholme Cave, and still the tunnels continue forward. A number of tunnels converge over the span of the day's crawling and climbing, so that it appears, from here, there is one main course deeper into the rock. For all the time you've had to spend on your belly and elbows, perhaps you wouldn't feel much loss if someone were to strike your arms and legs and leave you to writhe through the dark like a snake, but all at once, the tunnel bends to the right before opening into a small chamber 15 feet long by 10 feet wide with a domed ceiling rising to 15 feet at its apex. At the far end, your light catches on a dark rectangle, a crack in

the stone wall that surely indicates your pathway forward.

This chamber makes a natural resting place, so if the DM wishes to have the PCs trailing a team or two at this point in the competition, there may be ropes, bags, burned-out torches, and other signs of human activity in the corner of the floor. Otherwise, the floor is relatively bowl-shaped, with no stalactites or stalagmites, nor water. The walls, here, are igneous rock, with smooth curves and ripples indicating the ancient flow of magma.

The exit is small enough for a Small character to squeeze through, but a Medium-sized character must succeed either on an Escape Artist check (DC 20) or receive assistance with a Strength check (DC 15) in order to push deeper into the tunnels on the other side of the chamber wall.

Yet thousands of years have stressed the walls of this chamber and created small fissures in the rock near the exit of the chamber. A sizable stone perches just above the fissure that forms the exit, as a Medium-size character squeezes through the entrance, the rock topples downward.

Rolling Rock Trap: CR 1; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Atk +10 melee (2d6, rock); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 22; Market value 1400 gp

ENCOUNTER FOUR: SCRAGHOLME SUMP

After the PCs navigate the Boulder Choke tunnels from Encounter Three, they follow a tunnel downward until they find it ends in freezing water (at point 12, Appendix 2).

Several days of spelunking have earned your team the lead—for now. The day's journey follows the grueling monotony of the caver's life for several hours. You squeeze and burrow, climb and strain, and twist your way through dark tunnels, forever listening to the slow drip-drip of water somewhere in the pitch dark distance. (Team leader) guides you through a twenty-foot tall chamber where you rest for lunch and then directs you through a tunnel leading from the far side. You crawl past stalactites and stalagmites, over cold, smooth stone, headfirst down a gentle incline, until (team leader) discovers a chute leading straight downward. Convinced it's the right way, (team leader) brooks no argument, and you begin descending on ropes past tunnels filled with old rubble until you come to a squeezed passageway sloping downward, which you follow for

another half-hour until you run into a large pool of water, filling the whole tunnel.

This sump is 40 feet across and 25 feet deep at its deepest (see Appendix 2). The water is close to freezing, and any PC who enters the water needs to make a Fort save (DC 15) or become immediately exhausted. Additionally, if anyone tries to cast an endure elements or similar spell, he/she discovers that the spell fails. Indeed, all magic fails (including Chauncy Redwyn's everburning torches) in this area. In the sump, and for an additional 3 hours downward, magic simply fails to function. Near the tunnel the water moves with a light current (Swim check [DC 10]), but as the PCs swim further across the sump, the current increases, and the final 20 feet of movement require a Swim check (DC 15). Without light, the PCs must succeed on a Search check (DC 10) in order to find the exit out of the sump. See Appendix 2 for more details.

There are two other ways to continue deeper into the cave. PCs can attempt to clear rubble out of one of the passageways above the sump (see Appendix 2), or they can Climb back to the tunnel filled with stalactites and stalagmites (Climb check [DC 5]) and follow it until it ends in a cavernous room (see Appendix 2) where a Search check (DC 15) locates a downward-sloping tunnel behind an underground waterfall. PCs who wish to clear rubble out of one of the obstructed passageways must succeed on a Strength check (DC 22), but must do so one-handed while holding onto TL's knotted rope (all Strength bonuses are modified by one-half, so a +4 Strength becomes a +2 for this check). Once PCs clear enough space to stand in the tunnel, they must continue to make three additional Strength checks (DC 22), though with full bonuses, to open the tunnel to move through it. Before each Strength check, have a PC make a Wisdom check (DC 10). If the PC succeeds he/she finds a way to move the boulders without collapsing them; otherwise, they topple forward, and the PC must make a Reflex save (DC 15) or take 2d6 points of bludgeoning damage from falling rock. Rocks cleared out of the tunnel smack off the walls of the chute before splashing into the sump below.

The tunnels continue another 3 hours beyond the sump before they open into a 20 foot by 15 foot cavern, 5 feet tall, where the TL recommends the party rests (area 13 on Appendix 2). PCs who passed through the sump will have journeyed 6 hours on the day, whereas PCs who cleared passage through an obstructed tunnel or searched out the tunnel behind the waterfall will have journeyed for 7 hours on the day. PCs can convince the TL to press further if they wish, though no other place in the tunnels widens enough for the PCs to rest before they reach the bottom of the Scragholme Cave. Thus, they must either turn back or continue 4 hours through tunnels to

Encounter Five, and DMs should have PCs make rolls for forced marches.

The air below the sump is exceedingly acrid and harsh. PCs who try to sleep need to make successful Concentration checks (DC 12); otherwise, they will suffer a poor rest and wake fatigued.

ENCOUNTER FIVE: WELCOME TO THE ZENITH OF SCRAGHOLME CAVE

The caverns wind 4 hours beyond the Area 13 before they lead to a final chute that drops 30 feet straight down into a 10 ft. tall room carved out of pure obsidian. PCs can determine the depth of the drop by lowering a light source into the room. PCs with darkvision can see the 40 ft. to the floor of the room from the top of the chute, as can PCs with lowlight vision. A Listen check (DC 22) detects the faint sounds of bare feet padding on stone, and a *detect evil* spell, or the ability, determines that there are two sources of evil below.

The tunnels squeeze four hours past the sump, though the journey proceeds relatively straightforward. At length, the tunnel drops into a chute, 5 feet around. The chute travels downward into the darkness.

PCs can test the depth of the chute or use detection magic or listen at this point. When they descend the chute (Climb check [DC 5] with knotted ropes), read the following:

Halfway down the chute the walls change. Suddenly, the torch light gleams brightly off a polished, perfect stone.

"Obsidian!" calls (team leader). "This is most strange."

The climb is easy enough, and you find yourselves in the center of a room, most unmistakably a crafted room, thirty feet in diameter. The floor, walls, and ceiling are all of smooth obsidian covered in strange runes. The chute leads upward directly from the center of the room. Ten feet before you stands a small altar, covered by the remains of something long abandoned, and just as (team leader's) depth stick begins to glow a pale red, out of the corners of your eyes, you see shadows moving. Or are they shadows?

APL2 (EL3)

☛ **Ghoul (3):** hp 13 each; see *Monster Manual* page 119.

Tactics: The altar is *unhallowed*, giving the ghouls the benefits of a *magic circle against good* (vs. good: +2 to saves and +2 deflection bonus to AC), and all attempts to turn undead have their rolls modified by -4. The altar is constructed of one-foot thick superior masonry (Break [DC 35]; Hardness 8; HP 90). The ghouls are the ancient defenders of this once-sacred temple. How or why it was put here is a mystery that won't be solved in the scope of this adventure, but the ghouls appear somewhat elven in their features and wear robes so moldy and tattered that they are completely unrecognizable (and fall apart at the slightest touch). They maneuver to guard the altar, positioning themselves—if possible—between the PCs and the altar. For what it's worth, the depth stick sheds light as a torch. This encounter has had its EL modified to reflect the TL's presence, so DMs should use the TL as appropriate to aid the party. Each TL fights according to his or her style. Dondor fights normally to do damage. Chauncy fights defensively to add to another's AC or attack. Dalla casts *bleed*, then uses *cure* spells to do damage. Merry moves to flank with a PC, then fights defensively to aid that PC's AC or attack.

Treasure:

Loot – 0 gp, Coin – 50 gp in gems in the altar, Magic – 0 gp.

Development: Atop the altar lie a number of humanoid bones covered in fungal colonies that might once have been clothes. A series of runes have been etched into the obsidian surface of the altar in a rectangle around the skeleton. PCs who Search the altar (DC 20) find a secret panel which slides back to reveal a chest holding a number of gems (see above) as well as an ornate obsidian dagger covered in runes. A Decipher Script (DC 20) recognizes them as an archaic form of Undercommon. If a PC casts *detect magic* and targets the dagger, it detects as strong magic. A Spellcraft (DC 23) recognizes transmutation, necromancy, and conjuration magic. The dagger is evil and intelligent. If a PC decides to wield it in combat, have the PC make a Will save (DC 20). Failure means that the PC begins to hear vague, cruel whisperings toward violence, both in combat and toward helpless victims. However, the dagger isn't interested in being possessed by anyone as green and weak as one of the PCs and will not reveal the full extent of its powers. Treat it as a +2 *cold iron dagger* that casts *chill touch* (an extra 1d6 damage and a 1 Strength damage (Fort negates [DC 12]) with each successful hit. If a PC willingly continues

to wield the dagger after it encourages him or her to commit evil acts, the DM should adjust the PC's alignment one step toward evil, but should not change a PC from neutral to evil unless that PC commits a blatantly evil act (e.g. attacks another PC).

ENCOUNTER SIX: THANKS FOR THE HAND, CHAPS

There is little for the PCs to do but head upward. How this encounter plays out, otherwise, depends largely upon how long it took the PCs to navigate the cave. If the PCs took 6 days or more to reach the bottom of Scragholme Cave, the band of halfling spelunkers waits for the PCs in the chamber of area 13 on Appendix 2. If the PCs took 5 days to reach the bottom of Scragholme Cave, the band of halfling spelunkers tries to ambush the PCs while they sleep, using nonlethal coup-de-graces if all the PCs and TL sleep without setting watches, then binding the PCs in rope (Use Rope [DC 13], forcing the PCs to use Escape Artist [DC 13] to escape). If the PCs took 4 days or fewer to reach the bottom of Scragholme Cave, they encounter the halfling spelunkers at area 11 on Appendix 2, a larger cavern than area 13—a 20 ft. diameter room, 25 ft. tall, with a slightly-sloped floor covered in stalagmites (considered rough terrain). As the halflings are trying to “ambush” the PCs, they will use Hide and Move Silently if possible (carrying no light source); allow the PCs to use opposed Spot and Listen checks. Consider distance.

Modify the following text as appropriate to the encounter:

As you crawl slowly upward, retracing your path through the Scragholme Cave, you return to an open chamber where you can, for a moment, stretch your arms and legs. But as (team leader) begins to gather up the rope (he/she) left behind, a voice calls out of the darkness, “That’s far enough, blokes. Put your hands up where we can see them. And then you can just stand where you are. We’ll be taking that glowing depth stick of yours, thank you very much.”

The speaker is Werther Hairfoot. His companions, Endo Bigears, Bidy, and Sal remain hidden (depending on the encounter), waiting to ambush the PCs with their sneak attack. If the PCs seem willing to oblige him, Werther will demand first that the PCs toss the depth stick forward (which will illuminate Werther, but no other halfling) and then that they toss forward their weapons and, finally, their ropes. The TLs response will vary here. Dondor will absolutely refuse and will draw his weapon. Chauncy and Dalla will speak with Werther if time

allows and may negotiate. Merry will toss the depth stick to the side and move to Hide (potentially to sneak toward Werther's voice).

APL2 (EL 4)

➤ **Endo Bigears:** Male halfling RogI/FtrI; hp 14; see Appendix 1.

➤ **Werther Hairfoot:** Male halfling War2/FtrI; hp 25; see Appendix 1.

➤ **Biddy and Sal:** Male halfling RogI; hp 8 each; see Appendix 1.

Tactics: This encounter has had its EL modified to reflect the TL's presence, so DMs should use the TL as appropriate to aid the party. Each TL fights according to his or her style. Dondor fights normally to do damage. Chauncy fights defensively to add to another's AC or attack. Dalla casts *bleed*, then uses *cure* spells to do damage. Merry moves to flank with a PC, then fights defensively to aid that PC's AC or attack. Note that the layout of this encounter drastically affects tactics, as area 13 is too short for most medium PCs to stand and fight normally. Characters 5 ft. tall or taller are squeezed (-4 to AC, -4 to hit) in area 13, but not in area 11. DMs should also familiarize themselves with the rules for sniping, as Endo will attempt to attack and hide in order to snipe after the first round if it proves successful.

Treasure:

Loot – 165 gp, Coin – 10 gp, Magic – +1 small longsword (192 gp each), 3 everburning torches (9 gp each per torch).

ENCOUNTER SEVEN: THE RETURN

The PCs face no other combat on their way up, but they must once again traverse the natural hazards of the cave (ignore the sump). As they go back across the rubble, chasms, pits from Encounter Three, ignore the Search checks, but automatically allow the PCs to find the traps they've already faced. This encounter serves primarily to emphasize the days of travel necessary to crawl back toward light, and as the PCs ascend the Scragholme Cave, good DMs will find ways to reinforce the color of the sporting competition. The PCs may encounter other teams on their way up. These other teams may be battered, frustrated, or optimistic. However, when they see the PCs' glowing depth stick, they'll sigh and concede the victory. Many of them might state they're happy the contest has a winner so they can abandon the merciless depths and darkness. The PCs may wander past abandoned climbing gear and litter from cleared-out encampments.

Again, refer to Appendix 2 as the PCs retrace their steps upward, and quickly move them through physical obstacles.

Eventually, they'll reach the bottom of Big Cascade where numerous evidence remains of abandoned base camps. A long climb takes them up and out of Big Cascade to the short series of tunnels leading to the cave's mouth.

The entire return journey should take 3/4s the amount of time, per stretch, of the downward journey. This most likely won't matter unless a PC contracted ghoulish fever from Encounter Five.

CONCLUSION: WE'RE ALL HALF-DROW BY NOW

Who could have predicted all that happened during your long days in the belly of the Oerth? Now as you walk toward the mouth of Scragholme Cave, a strange sight greets you—the sun. The light at the end of the tunnel is startling. It blinds you, and someone sneezes off to your side. Is this what it's like to be an orc and dazzled by the light?

For the first time you realize how fully grimy you are and how awful you smell. A slight breeze carries toward you. The smell of manure hangs on the breeze, but it's positively sweet compared to the stench of your clothes.

The tents have been carted away and the judges' booth, too. A farmer plowing the fields waves to you, and a couple of old men sit on two log stumps, chatting and watching the cave. (Team leader) calls to them. "You there, tell councilman Jurivicious and Filna the Illuminated that their contest has a winner."

One of the men nods and starts walking slowly toward the farmstead. The other waves to your group and calls, "You'll eat and sleep while you wait. Lord Enerick's emissaries are off to Bright Sentry in the meantime."

The food is fresh and refreshing. The night's feather bed is a luxury. In the morning, the farm owner, Hans, wakes you to meet with the judges, and with Lord Enerick himself. They congratulate your team and wish to hear all that you have learned.

If there is enough time, allow the PCs to tell their stories. If none of the PCs remember, the TL will mention the strange chamber at the bottom of the cave and the runed, obsidian dagger, presenting it to the Lord.

Lord Enerick marvels at the sight of the obsidian dagger. Filna the Illuminated says, "Long have the

Arcanists spoken of ancient magics beneath the Shield Lands. Perhaps this is some portent of old power.”

Lord Enerick adds, “You have our thanks friends for its discovery, and I will have the Arcanists and the Bardic college explore all their tomes of lore for any mention of such a blade or such runes as you described.”

With that, councilman Jurivicious flashes a thin smile and says, “We better not forget the gold, my Lord.” He hands a bag to (team leader).

“You’ve proven yourselves today,” says Lord Enerick, “and I’ll keep my eyes on you in case I need you in the future.”

The End

EXPERIENCE POINT SUMMARY

To award experience for this adventure, add up the values for the objectives accomplished. Then assign the experience award. Award the total value (objectives plus roleplaying) to each character.

Encounter One

Revealing the halflings’ deceit
APL2 30 XP

Encounter Two

Defeating the bat swarms
APL2 90 XP

Encounter Three: Area 5

Facing the camouflaged pit trap
APL2 30 XP

Encounter Three: Area 6

Facing the contact poison trap
APL2 30 XP

Encounter Three: Area 7

Facing the rolling rock trap
APL2 30 XP

Encounter Three: Area 8

Facing the camouflaged pit trap
APL2 30 XP

Encounter Three: Area 9

Facing the contact poison trap
APL2 30 XP

Encounter Three: Area 10

Facing the rolling rock trap
APL2 30 XP

Encounter Four

Navigating the Scragholme Sump
APL2 30 XP

Encounter Five

Defeating the ghouls
APL2 90 XP

Encounter Six

Defeating the halflings
APL2 120 XP

Story Award

Winning the spelunking competition
APL2 30 XP

Total possible eXP

erience:
APL2 450 XP

TREASURE SUMMARY

During an adventure, characters encounter treasure, usually finding it in the possession of their foes. Every encounter that features treasure has a “treasure” section within the encounter description, giving information about the loot, coins, and magic items that make up the encounter’s treasure.

The loot total is the number of gold pieces each character gains if the foes are plundered of all their earthly possessions. Looting the bodies takes at least 10 minutes per every 5 enemies, and if the characters cannot take the time to loot the bodies, they do not gain this gold. If you feel it is reasonable that characters can go back to loot the bodies, and those bodies are there (i.e., not carted off by dungeon scavengers, removed from the scene by the local watch, and so on), characters may return to retrieve loot. If the characters do not loot the body, the gold piece value for the loot is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

The coin total is the number of gold pieces each character gains if they take the coin available. A normal adventuring party can usually gather this wealth in a round or so. If for some reason, they pass up this treasure, the coin total is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

Next, the magic items are listed. Magic item treasure is the hardest to adjudicate, because they are varied and

because characters may want to use them during the adventure. Many times characters must cast *identify*, *analyze dweomer* or similar spell to determine what the item does and how to activate it. Other times they may attempt to use the item blindly. If the magic item is consumable (a potion, scroll, magic bolts, etc.) and the item is used before the end of the adventure, its total is subtracted from the adventure totals below.

Once you have subtracted the value for unclaimed treasure from each encounter add it up and that is the number of gold pieces a characters total and coin value increase at the end of the adventure. Write the total in the GP Gained field of the adventure certificate. Because this is a Regional scenario, characters may spend additional Time Units to practice professions or create items immediately after the adventure so this total may be modified by other circumstances.

L = Looted gear from enemy; C = Coin, Gems, Jewelry, and other valuables; M = Magic Items.

Encounter Five: Welcome to the Zenith of Scragholme Cave, Mr. Bond

APL2: L: 0 gp; C: 50 gp; M: 0 gp

Encounter Six: Thanks for the Hand, Chaps

APL2: Loot – 165 gp, Coin – 10 gp, Magic – +1 *small longsword* (192 gp each), 3 *everburning torches* (9 gp each per torch)

Conclusion

APL2: L: 0 gp; C: 125 gp; M: 0 gp

Total Possible Treasure

APL2: L: 165 gp; C: 185 gp; M: 219 gp - Total: 569 gp

APPENDIX 1: MONSTER AND NPC STATISTICS

APL2

Introduction

🧔 **Dondor Mogrin: Male dwarf Exp1/War1**; CR 1; medium humanoid (dwarf); HD 1d6+1d10+9; hp 21; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14; touch 10; flat-footed 14; Base Atk +1; Grp +2; Atks +3 melee (1d4+1 [19-20x2] masterwork dagger) or +2 ranged (1d6 [20x3] masterwork shortbow); SQ darkvision 60 ft., stonecunning, stability, +2 saves vs. poison, +2 saves vs. spells and spell-like abilities, +1 attack vs. orcs and goblinoids, +4 dodge vs. giants; AL LN; SV Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +1; ABL Str 13, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 15, Wis 8, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Climb +6, Jump +6, Intimidate +1, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +6, Knowledge (architecture) +6, Spot +3, Swim +6, Tumble +6, Use Rope +4; Toughness

Possessions: masterwork studded leather, masterwork buckler, masterwork dagger, masterwork shortbow, *potion of cure light wounds*, alchemist's fire (2), acid flask (2), caltrops, sunrod (12), torch (24), climber's kit (7)

Description: Dondor Mogrin is a bit tall and thin for a dwarf, and balding, too, though he keeps a fine, braided, red beard which he scents with oils and perfumes. His skin is a touch pale, and Dondor claims it's because he's spent so many years out of the sight of the sun. He is your typically gruff and straight-forward dwarf who, due to his studies and former expeditions, feels confident that he can overcome whatever challenges await him beneath Scragholme Island. If he hasn't already faced the same challenges elsewhere, he's certain he will have faced other equivalent challenges. A no-nonsense disciplinarian, Dondor never gives the illusion that his team will form any sort of democracy; it's his way or the highway. That said, he doesn't feel any need to butt in other people's business. As long as the team makes steady headway toward its goal, Dondor leaves others to their own smaller decisions.

🧔 **Chauncy Redwyn: Male human Ari1/Exp1**; CR 1; medium humanoid (human); HD 1d8+1d6+2; hp 14; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12; touch 9; flat-footed 12; Base Atk +0; Grp +0; Atks +0 melee (1d4 [19-20x2] dagger) or +0 ranged (1d6 [20x3] shortbow); AL CG; SV Fort +1, Ref -1, Will +5; ABL Str 10, Dex 8, Con 13, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +7, Climb +1, Diplomacy +15, Gather Information +6, Knowledge (dungeoneering)

+3, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +7, Listen +8, Sense Motive +8, Spot +8; Alertness, Negotiator

Possessions: masterwork leather armor, masterwork buckler, *everburning torch* (6), *potion of cure light wounds* (2), *potion of mage armor*, *potion of shield of faith* +2, *potion of spider climb*, climber's kit (7)

Description: A tall, strapping youth of nineteen years, Chauncy Redwyn is a natural leader, blessed with good looks, confidence, and an easy way around others. He remains humble by reminding himself that he needs to earn back the inheritance he forfeited when he chose to adventure throughout the Oerth. A touch of the rebel, Chauncy doesn't intend to bully his team into any one direction or another, but to play the wise mediator. He believes that so much beneath the cave mouth will catch teams by surprise that the most successful team will be that which stays focused, together, as a team, on its common goal and never stoops to bickering. Naturally a capable adventurer, Chauncy will admit he hasn't as much experience in the depths of caves that some others might have, but he's certain he can bring out the best in everyone and lead them to victory.

🧔 **Dalla Starbreeze: Female half-elf Adp1/Exp1**; CR 1; medium humanoid (half-elf); HD 2d6+2; hp 12; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11; touch 11; flat-footed 10; Base Atk +0; Grp -1; Atks -1 melee (1d4-1 [19-20x2] dagger) or +2 ranged (1d8 [19-20x2] masterwork light crossbow); SQ immune to *sleep*, +2 to saves vs. enchantment, low-light vision, elven blood; AL NG; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +6; ABL Str 8, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Climb +1, Concentration +3, Gather Information +10, Heal +3, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +1, Knowledge (history) +5, Listen +7, Spot +4, Survival +6, Use Rope +3; Track

Adept Spells Prepared: (3/2; save DC 12 + spell level; 0—*create water*, *cure minor wounds*, *light*; 1—*bless*, *cure light wounds*)

Possessions: masterwork light crossbow, *wand of light*, *potion of cure light wounds* (2), alchemist's fire (2), acid flask (2), sunrod (24), climber's kit (7)

Description: The quietest and least imposing of half-elves, Dalla Starbreeze is a thin, wispy woman with piercing green eyes and a thin layer of dust over her skin from her recent travels along many roads. Far more comfortable above the ground than below it, Dalla nonetheless knows that in any adventure one can not rely on preparations alone; inevitably, it seems,

adventurers have need of healing and regrouping and determining new plans. Dalla's a well-spoken, if quiet, woman and "urges" her team more than she "leads" them. However, if her team refuses to follow her, with a shrug, Dalla might turn and follow her team. In the realms of the unknown, she believes it best to be adaptable like wind or water.

Meratellius "Merry" Jendoquenderheite: Female gnome Exp2; CR 1; small humanoid (gnome); HD 2d6+6; hp 16; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 17; touch 13; flat-footed 15; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atks +3 melee (1d4, masterwork light mace) or +4 ranged (1d6 [19-20x2] light crossbow); SQ low-light vision, +2 racial bonus to saves against illusions, +1 attack bonus against kobolds and goblinoids, +4 dodge bonus against giants; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +2; ABL Str 10, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +3, Climb +5, Hide +13, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +2, Listen +6, Move Silently +9, Spot +4, Use Rope +4; Stealthy

Spell-like abilities: 1/day—*dancing lights, ghost sound, prestidigitation, speak with animals*

Possessions: masterwork light mace, masterwork studded leather armor, masterwork buckler, *potion of cure light wounds* (2), *potion of cure moderate wounds*, alchemist's fire, acid flask, caltrops, torches (24), climber's kit (7)

Description: Loud, brash, and funny, purple-haired Meratellius "Merry" Jendoquenderheite ("Jendo"), has only recently thought to turn her natural physical talents toward spelunking, which isn't to say that she hasn't already spent a good deal of time climbing up and down various surfaces in pitch dark nights while avoiding any watching eyes. Merry is secretive, having more of a past than she cares to share, and she deflects unwanted questions with jokes and laughter. A bit of a prankster, Merry's not above keeping team spirits high by dumping a spider on a sleeping teammate's face or rubbing stinkweed over someone's clothing. Nonetheless, when it comes time to push forward, Merry's true competitive spirit comes to the fore, and she tolerates no dissent from her team. If anyone steps out of line, she will chastise that person first with a good-hearted, light joke before, if the team member doesn't immediately step back into line, running that person up and down with a list of every single fault that team member has displayed since Merry first set eyes on him or her.

Encounter 6: Thanks for the Hand, Chaps

Endo Bigears: Male halfling Rog1/Ftr1; CR 2; small humanoid (halfling); HD 1d6+1d10+2; hp 14; Init +3; Spd 20 ft.; AC 18; touch 14; flat-footed 15; Base Atk +1; Grp -2; Atks +4 melee (1d4+1 [19-20x2] masterwork shortsword) or +6 ranged (1d3+1 [19-20x2] throwing dagger); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ; AL CN; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +0; ABL Str 12, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +5, Climb +5, Hide +11, Jump +6, Listen +5, Move Silently +9, Spot +3, Swim +2, Tumble +9; Point-blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot

Sneak attack (Ex): If Endo strikes an opponent who is flanked or otherwise denied her Dexterity bonus to AC, he deals an extra 1d6 damage.

Possessions: masterwork shortsword, masterwork studded leather, masterwork buckler, climber's kit, 50 ft. silk rope, *everburning torch* (concealed)

Werther Hairfoot: Male halfling War2/Ftr1; CR 2; small humanoid (halfling); HD 2d8+1d10+6; hp 25; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 17; touch 13; flat-footed 14; Base Atk +3; Grp +0; Atks +7 melee (1d6+2 [19-20x2] +1 longsword) or +5 (1d6+2 [19-20x2] +1 longsword) and +3 (1d3 [19-20x2] masterwork dagger) or +7 ranged (1d3+1 [19-20x2] throwing dagger); SQ; AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +2; ABL Str 13, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +6, Hide +5, Jump +3, Move Silently +3, Swim +3; Two-weapon Defense, Two-weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Possessions: +1 longsword, masterwork dagger, climber's kit, 50 ft. silk rope

Biddy/Sal: Male halfling Rog1; CR 1; small humanoid (halfling); HD 1d6+2; hp 8; Init +3; Spd 20 ft.; AC 18; touch 14; flat-footed 15; Base Atk +0; Grp -4; Atks +1 melee (1d3 [19-20x2] dagger) or +5 ranged (1d3 [19-20x2] dagger); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +3; ABL Str 10, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8.

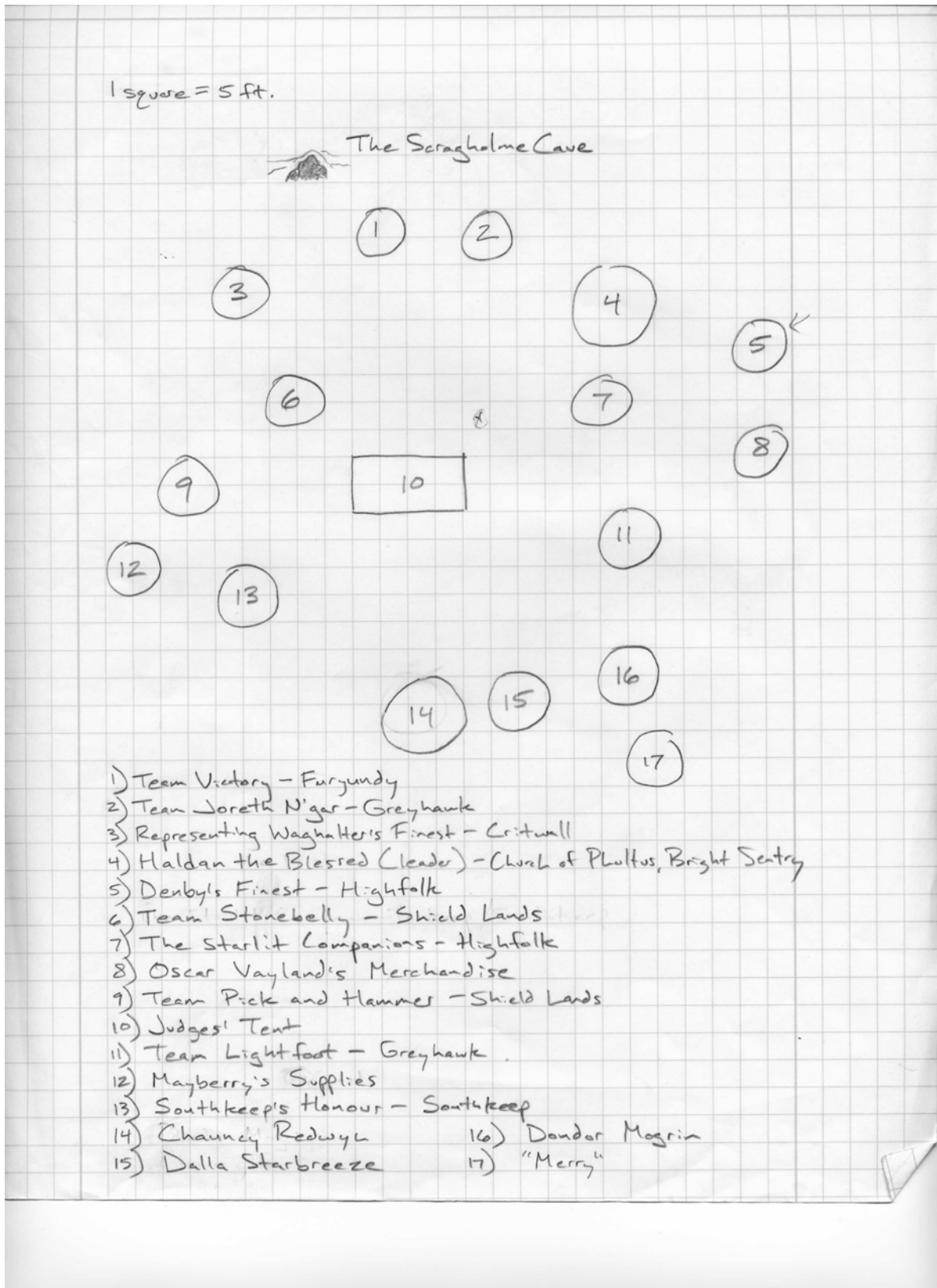
Skills and Feats: Climb +6, Hide +11, Listen +7, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +2, Move Silently +9, Sense Motive +4, Spot +4, Swim +4; Iron Will

Sneak attack (Ex): If Biddy/Sal strikes an opponent who is flanked or otherwise denied her Dexterity bonus to AC, he deals an extra 1d6 damage.

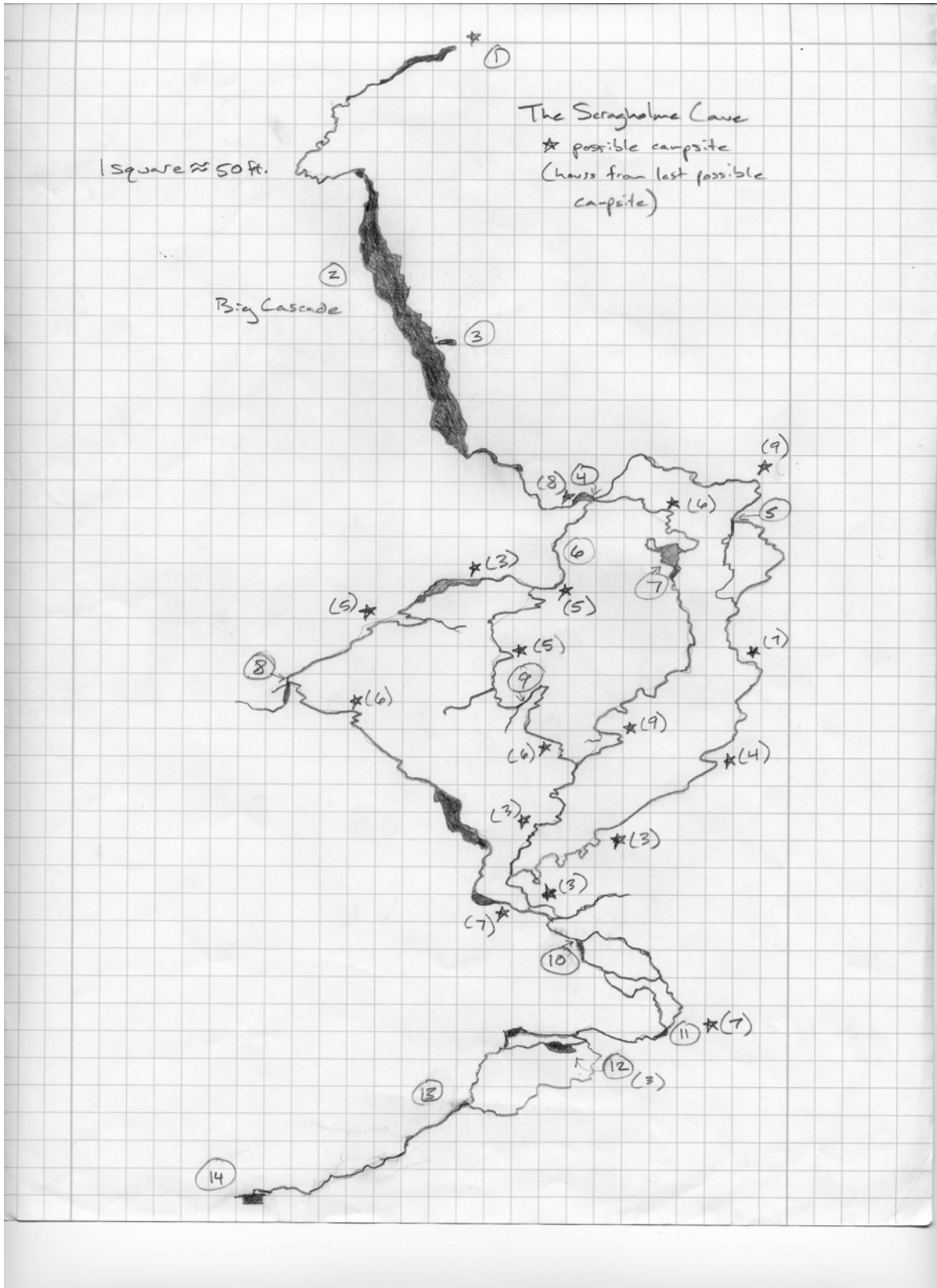
Possessions: masterwork studded leather, masterwork buckler, climber's kit, 50 ft. silk rope, *everburning torch* (concealed)

APPENDIX 2: DM'S MAPS

Introduction: Map of Contest Area



Encounter 2: Map of Scragholme Cave



Encounter 4: Map of Scragholme Sump

