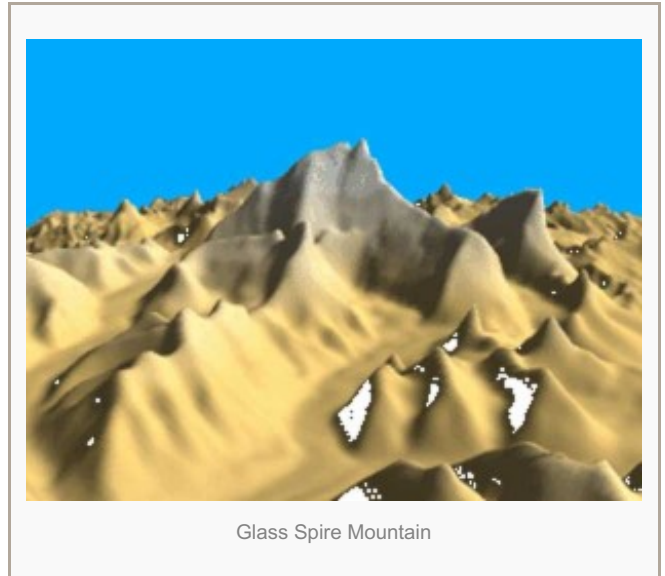


P is for Pathway to the Stars

 theskyfulofdust.co.uk/p-is-for-pathway-to-the-stars/

On the western edge of the Dragonridge Mountains, is a towering peak that ascends higher than any other mountain throughout the continent. This peak climbs above the clouds, reaching over 30,000 feet in height. At this altitude is is nigh impossible for normal beings to breath without magical aid, for the air is thin and freezing. Few have ventured so far, and fewer still have ever returned.

Those that have tell of a path of glass that spirals around the mountain, reaching a plateau at the peak, where a strange observatory of glass and metal sits, a telescope pointing at the bright stars that seem so close you could reach out and touch them. It is an eerie place, the ground covered in a layer of ice and snow, and weird creatures have seen through gusts of wind that carry flurries of snow.



Today, the Letter P and ...the sky full of dust, is proud to present yet another mini-adventure location, **The Pathway to the Stars**; once again using the LotFP Weird Fantasy rules as the basis.

The Pathway to the Stars

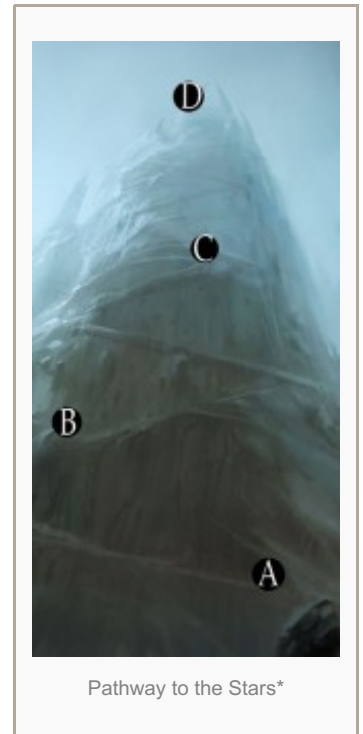
The mountain know as the *Glass Spire* requires some serious mountaineering to reach the glass pathway that the locals swear is up there. It begins at an elevation of 10,000 feet, at a wide flat ledge dusted with snow. The pathway is a uniform 30' wide, slopes gradually enough that ascent isn't difficult, and spirals around the mountain up a further 20,000 feet to a plateau at the peak. On this lies the glass and metal observatory, surrounded by ice and snow dunes.

Ascending the Pathway is only hazardous due to the cold, the strong winds, and the odd monster that comes this way. The actual path itself is an easy climb, the glass smooth and indestructible, as well as covered in a fine layer of snow and patches of ice; as such footing can be treacherous if care is not taken: during combat (or other mobile activity, such as fleeing from monsters) any to hit rolls of a natural 1 results in a possible fall; attackers must make a saving throw versus paralysis or slide backwards for 1d100 feet, taking no damage. A saving throw that is also a natural 1, means the unlucky soul slides off the path altogether, and plummets to their death. You can also judge a natural 20 to have the same affect on the person or creature hit.

Assuming normal walking (exploration) speed for the climb, it takes an unencumbered party roughly 28 hours, non-stop, to reach the summit. As they travel, make an encounter check every 4 hours, with a 1 in 6 chance of an occurence; roll on the table below:

1. **Slippery ice:** a random character must make a saving throw versus paralysis, or slide as though they just rolled a natural 1 to hit (as above);

2. **Strong gust of wind:** a strong wind blows, and all must make a saving throw versus breath weapon or risk being blown off the path; a failed save means the character is either blown into the mountain (25% chance, 1d4 damage), down the path (50% chance, slide 1d20 feet), or is blown off the path (25% chance, plummets to their death);
3. **Avalanche of icy snow:** a cascade of snow and ice falls from above, all must make a saving throw versus breath weapon to cling to the path/mountain as the snow falls past; failure results as number 2 above as well as 1d4 damage;
4. **Ghosts of Ice and Snow:** 1d4 of the ghostly undead come down the path (see **C** below);
5. **White Dragon:** a young white dragon is out hunting, if it sees the party it will investigate, possibly attacking (make a *Reaction* check):
Young White Dragon: Armour Class 18, Hit Dice 6, Movement 80' flying (240' flying), # Attacks 2 claws/1 bite, Damage/Attack 1d4/1d4/2d8, Morale 8; immune to cold; has a cone of cold breath weapon (80' by 30'), 3/day for damage equal to its current hit points, save for half-damage .
6. **The Hermit:** the hermit from the cave is out on a walk (see **B** below).



At 20,000 feet the climb gets extremely difficult, as the temperature drops well below freezing, air is so thin that it is hard to breath, and strenuous activity quickly leads to exhaustion. At the peak, the atmosphere is impossible for those without aid to breath or function properly; even with such aid the risk of frostbite and death by exposure is very high.

In game terms, after hitting the 20,000 feet mark any characters without adequate protection (spell, magic or otherwise) is exposed to cold, lack of oxygen, and dizziness, nausea and other symptoms of altitude sickness. Every hour make the following checks/saves to avoid the listed effects; at 25,000 feet any effects are doubled, and again at 30,000 feet (i.e. quadruple that of 20 to 25,000 feet):

- vs **Cold:** save versus poison or suffer 1d4 points of Constitution (CON) damage;
- vs **Dizziness:** CON (3d6) check or at -2 on to hit, saves and checks for a day;
- vs **Sickness:** save versus poison or suffer **dizziness** and lose 1 point of CON;
- vs **Suffocation:** CON check (4d6) or suffer **sickness** and lose 1 point of CON.

These effects are cumulative, so someone who suffers slow **suffocation** loses 2 points of CON, and has a -2 on most rolls. At higher altitudes this could be 4 points and -4, or 8 points and -8 on rolls at the peak.

A few areas along the way, as indicted on the picture above, are of special interest:

A) The Glass Landing

A wide expanse of glass covered with a fine layer of snow. Thirty feet wide, sixty long, with a curving wall of about three feet providing some small protection against the elements. Under the glass, if the snow is brushed away, are ancient runes carved into the rock beneath (the glass here is two feet thick): each rune is the size of a man, black as pitch, and seems to move when seen out of the corner of the eye. No attempt to read them works, spells included.

B) The Hermit in the Cave

At the curve that roughly marks the 15,000 foot elevation, there is a cave. It has a set of steps crudely carved into the slope, winding fifty feet up and across to the small cave. Inside it is not much larger than a twenty-foot room, with

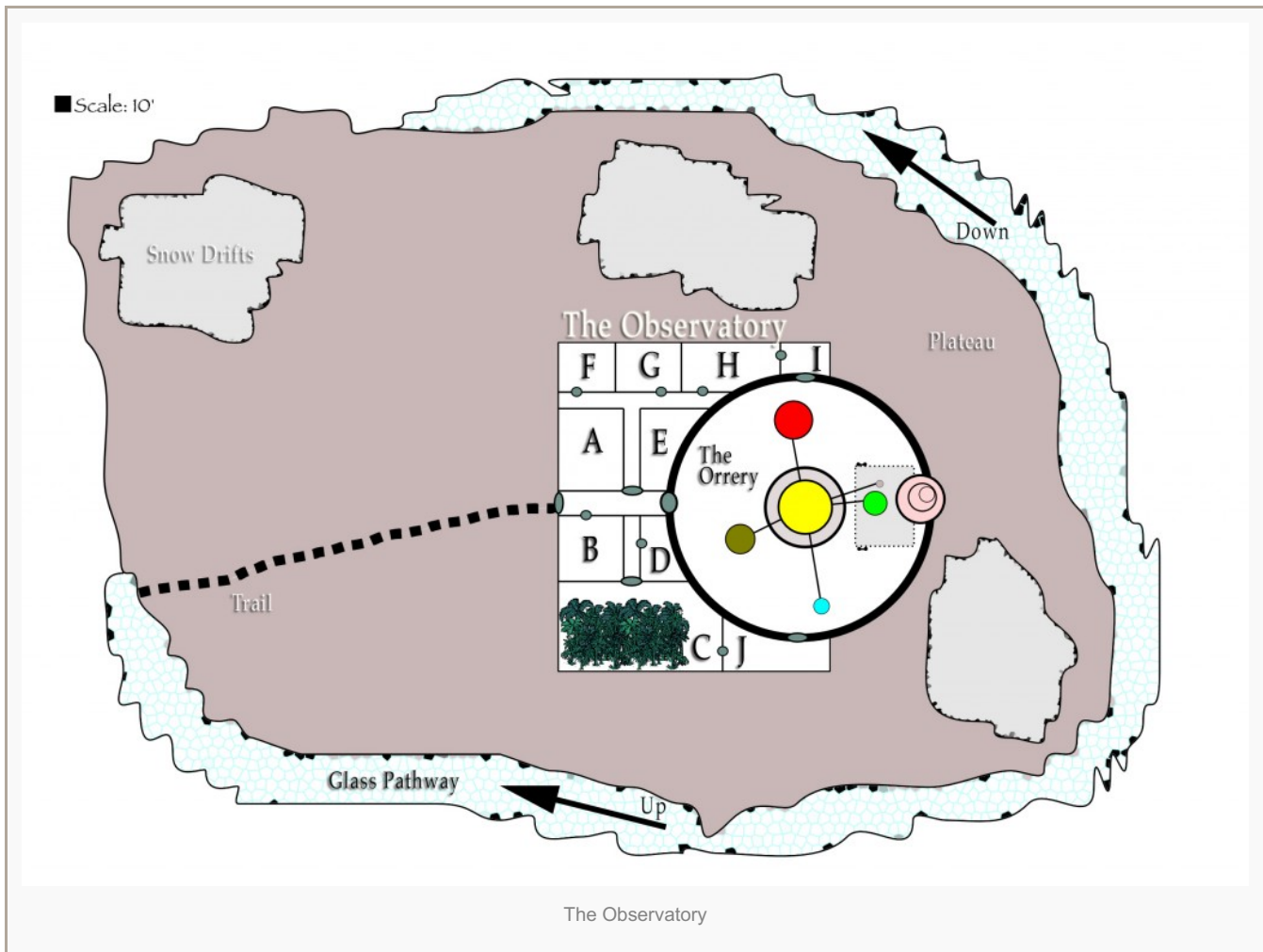
a natural alcove in which a bed of furs rests. This cave is home to a hermit, a dwarf called **Brouik** (Dwarf Level 8) who has lived here for most of his life. He has acclimatised to the mountain, even able to ascend to the peak for short periods of time. He knows little of the observatory, but does know a lot about the ghosts that roam the upper path. As he seldom gets visitors, he finds it hard to talk to strangers until he has 'warmed up' to them; then he can be quite chatty.

C) Ghosts of Ice and Snow

Those that die on the mountain find themselves trapped between worlds, and go insane after a while. These spirits eventually become one with the elementals, creating what the hermit calls the **Ghosts of Ice and Snow**. These undead creatures are shadowy figures wrapped in a shell of ice, accompanied by a flurry of snow that whirls around them like a miniature tornado. They are hostile, mindless, and seek nothing more than the death of those who still live, so that they can be joined with companions to suffer eternity with. The upper paths are where the majority of the ghosts roam, and at the noted spot on the mountain, a gang of these murderous ghosts will attack the climbers:

2d4 Ghosts of Ice and Snow: Armour Class 16, Hit Dice 3, Move 90' (120') flight, # Attacks 1 icy touch and 1 flurry of snow, Damage/Attack 1d6/1d2 and save versus paralysis or frozen in place for 1 round, Morale 12, Chaotic; immune to non-magical weapons, cold, sleep, and poison; vulnerable to fire (double damage), turned as 6 HD.

D) The Observatory



At the end of the pathway a trail cuts through the ice-hardened ground, ploughing through a thick blanket of frozen snow (3' deep), giving the impression of recent passage (which is false, as no one has been this way for years). Around the edge of the plateau are drifts of snow roughly 15' deep. The observatory itself is a metal building with a glass hemisphere sticking out; a silver telescope juts out of this dome, pointing to the stars.

The doors are all oval-shaped, metal irises that open when a round button is pressed (one is on each side of the door, at about head-height for a human). The doors remain open for a round before closing again; they slide open without a sound, and some unseen force keeps the immense cold out. Inside it is cold, but not intolerable. The air here is also breathable and while inside there are no hazardous elements to deal with. Light seems to come from the ceiling, a soft twilight affect with no visible sign of the source. It is constant and never wavers.

The metal of the building is of an unknown type, but looks very much like steel, only a pale blue in colour. It is impervious to non-magical attacks, as is the glass dome. There are no windows. The height of the corridors and rooms are 30', the roof is flat and layered with 10' of snow, and the glass dome is 3' thick. Around the telescope is a seal of metal, preventing any snow, wind, or adventurers from gaining access.

A) The walls of this room are glass and have no way in. Inside are crystals in random patterns, hanging from the ceiling and growing from the floor like stalactites and stalagmites, softly glowing red and green and orange. They radiate magic, powerful but alien. Touching the glass feels warm, and there is a faint vibration. The room is the power-source of the building, keeping everything functioning. If it is somehow destroyed, the cold seeps in fairly quick, the light dies, and the jungle (area C) withers in a couple of days.

B) The iris opens onto a large chamber with a ring of metal benches, more fit for giants than men, surrounding a fountain that seems to be made of white marble. Water, refreshing and pure, if a little cold and metallic tasting, flows from a crystal sculpture of some sort of reptile-man. The room makes an ideal place to camp down, and doing so is restless and oddly pleasant.

C) This room is humid and hot, although this is not readily apparent until it is entered, as the same force as the entrance to the building keeps the heat at bay. The transition from cold to hot requires a save versus poison, or suffer 1d4 damage from the shock.

Inside is a miniature jungle, devoid of animals, but with an abundance of plants from the world. There are fruits on trees, root vegetables in the ground, enough to feed a dozen people for a couple of days. Mist projects from metal nozzles in the ceiling, and the light here is regulated to match the night-day cycle of the mountain range.

Amongst the plant-life is a **Strangle Vine**, which may attack if stumbled upon (2 in 6 chance, make a normal *Reaction* check):

Strangle Vine: *Armour Class 14, Hit Dice 3, Move Nil, #Attacks 1 vine, Damage 1d4 plus strangulation, Morale 12; immune to poison; strangulation deals 1d2 points of damage automatically to the target, who can escape by making a save versus paralysis.*

D) A smaller room with shelves along the wall, all above head-height. They each hold large jars of some sort of ceramic, each with a screw-on lid. These jars contain seed and samples of the planets from the jungle, and could sell for a decent profit to the right merchant, collector or alchemist.

E) The walls of this sealed chamber are also glass, allowing the interior to be seen: inside are dozens of tear-drop shaped objects, all the size of a man, all a deep blue metal. They are laid out on the floor and atop each other, in three layers.

These objects are holders of knowledge (like a computer's hard drive) that were used by the observatory's creators

to store their vast knowledge of the stars. If they could be accessed, the knowledge contained is immense, and quite possibly madness inducing.

F) A featureless room, except for another button on the far wall. Pressing this causes a table to rise from the floor, the top of which flows like liquid to conjure up an accurate map of the Empire (as it is today), but without names of places. Pressing the button again makes the table return to the floor, where it is absorbed seamlessly.

G) Two rows of metal tables and adjoining benches, all too large for mere humans, occupy most of this room. At the back is an ovoid object of deep green metal, with a button on one side, and a slot in the front. Pressing the button makes the ovoid emit a buzzing like birds angrily chirping, then a ceramic-like tray slides out of the slot. On it is a ceramic-like bowl of some sort of pinkish gruel. It is quite edible and filling, although the taste is bitter and salty. Eating it is the equivalent of a decent meal. The device can be operated five times a day, recharging at midnight.

H) This long chamber has what looks to be a series of bunk-beds, twice the size of human ones, each made of deep blue metal, with ladders leading to the top bunk. There are no sheets or bedding, but they are surprisingly comfortable. Another door at the rear leads out. There are a dozen bunks in all.

I) This room is empty, except for the skeleton of an explorer who got this far before dying of his wounds. The skeleton wears leather armour (worn, but still good), has a short sword at his side, and a dagger in one boot (leather, good quality, climbing spikes on the soles, +1 to *Climb* checks). A pack, ripped, holds a hooded lantern, tinder & flint, and a frayed coil of hemp rope (1 in 6 chance of snapping when used). A belt pouch has 15 silver pieces, and five coppers. It is a human skeleton, a decade old.

J) Glass display cabinets line the south wall of this chamber. Each rests on a metal pedestal, and has a clasp keeping a glass door shut. There are five in all, holding the following:

1. A stuffed goblin dressed in tribal furs and animal skins, carrying a flint spear;
2. A stuffed dwarf, wearing splendid chain mail (treat as AC 17) and with a long beard of auburn that reaches down to his booted feet;
3. An owlbear, stuffed and posed as if attacking;
4. A crystal rod, 1' long and an inch in diameter. It is capped at both ends, one in silver, one in gold. Tiny runes are scratched into its pale green surface (arcane sigils; if read, they spell the words "By your command"; it is a magical *Wand of Charm Person* that holds 12 charges and casts the spell as per a 5th-level magic-user);
5. An ornate winged helm of bronze, the wings gilded with gold (worth 150 silver); it is also magical: a *Helm of Flight* that functions 3/day and grants the wearer the ability to fly at their normal unencumbered speed for 1d6 turns.

The Orrery

The dome is 70' high, and is dominated by a giant Orrery that depicts the celestial bodies of the solar system; the one with the moon is the world of the Eternal Empire. It moves in perpetual motion, powered by the energy source in area (A). When the observatory is first entered, roll on the table below to determine anything of significance regarding the Orrery:

1. There will be an eclipse in 1d6 weeks;
2. There will be a solar eclipse in 1d6 months;
3. There will be a planetary alignment in 1d6 years;

4. There is a planetary alignment going on right at this moment, and lasting 1d4 weeks.

At the back of the dome, reached by a pair of ladders to the glass platform 30' up, is an immense telescope of metal and glass. It peers out at the stars, fixed in place. It can be used by magic-users and clerics in their spell research, improving their chances/lowering the costs, by 50%.

**mountain map picture is taken from [here](#).*

