



CLOUDCRAG



Cloudcrag

Rumours & Hooks:

Legend has it that the tunnels beneath the peak known as *Cloudcrag* were excavated by ancient primitives, ruled over by a supreme being. The tyrant entity is said to have worn a silver mask that controlled all who gazed upon it. Some say the mask remains hidden within the mountain, waiting for the master to reclaim it.

There are reports of increasing numbers of skorn gathering at Cloudcrag, and not for the usual blood wars. A number of tribes appear to be working together, a scenario previously unknown and of grave concern to local authorities. The city wants someone to investigate, and is willing to pay handsomely for answers.

Cloudcrag, a tall and lonely peak often shrouded in morning mist, is located towards the centre of the *Sunstone Ranges*, within the fringes of multiple skorn territories.

The centre of the peak is riddled with catacombs, a subterranean lair excavated in past millennia by primitive beastmen, guided by an alien entity of advanced power. Over time the peaks have seen many keepers, changing layout through labour or natural shifting. Currently, the *Ruknog* skorn tribe control the caverns along with their master; the last surviving heir of *House Borbarzu*.

The Borbarzu family used to be a celebrated line of inventors dwelling in the mountain fortress of *Dol-Karok*, but were banished thirty five years earlier for crimes so serious their name was expunged from the history books.

The twelve Borbarzu survivors took up residence in Cloudcrag, but over the decades all have perished bar Bastine Borbarzu. Nine years ago, Bastine discovered the true purpose of the alien artefact in Area 7, and began siphoning knowledge from it.

The most important of his discoveries was the use of the subterranean mould *Xurrob* (a genetically engineered psychoactive mould from a distant world, transported here by the supreme master of the first skorn). Bastine distilled the mould (see Area 6) into a unique mixture, the effects of which transform the beastmen into compliant servitors.

The Ruknogs are heavily addicted to the xurrob drug, and conditioned to comply with their master's wishes. When Borbarzu walks by, the skorn prostrate themselves, pressing their foreheads to the earth in submission. Now in complete control of the halfmen, the exile has begun exposing other tribes to the effects of xurrob, intent on raising an army powerful enough to take Dol-Karok by force, and exact his long simmering revenge.



Journey Encounters

The journey to Cloudcrag is at least five days trek through the Sunstone Ranges, navigating increasingly steep and treacherous terrain. There is a 40% chance of a random encounter every 12 hours. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d8 (add 1 during the last day of travel):

1. *Whitespine*, an elderly, albino scaled wyvern (LFG p.130) with pitted spines is hunting at dawn or dusk, hungry for a meal. She is old enough to know that men that glint from the sun are hard on her teeth, and will target others if possible. Her plan is to snatch up a meal and fly away with them.
2. 4d6 *Skorn* sentries are guarding this narrow pass. Their cook fire can be seen burning at night. There is a 50% chance they are drunk and fighting amongst themselves.
3. At the base of a steep ravine is a crumbling stone archway. Ancient writing on the arch is all but worn away, but at the apex, a carving of a crested falcon with outstretched wings can still be made out.



4. *Boulder barrage!* 1d12 *Hill Giants* (LFG p.110) have been waiting in ambush higher upslope, and launch a barrage of head sized rocks at the party as they turn a corner ledge. A successful Perc (Detection) check hears the giants snickering and grinding their rocks together before entering the ambush.
5. 2d4 *Ogres* (LFG p.120) are camped here, snoring loudly as they roll over in stained furs, scratching themselves. There are empty barrels of stolen wine and ale scattered about. If it is night, their campfire is beginning to gutter as the party approaches.
6. A dark and narrow cave opening is set into the mountainside. As the party passes by, a chorus of soft and lilting songs can be heard (single *Luck* (Will) save or *charmed* and drawn into the cave, where 2d6 hungry *Harpies* (LFG p.113) are waiting).
7. During the night, the weather turns deathly cold, the wind howling and threatening to extinguish the fire. The moment before the fire goes out, a striking but ghostly female appears on the periphery of the camp light; a *Banshee* (LFG p.99). *Lucidia* has come to claim one of the PC's souls.
8. *Fog*. Thick fog or low lying cloud rolls in, reducing visibility to 60 ft. There is a 70% chance of 1d4 *Dire Bats* (LFG p.100) swooping in out of the fog with a hideous screech. The bats carry *Thorny Rot* disease, causing agony as calcified spurs push through the skin (*Luck* (Con) save if injured by a bat, or suffer 1d4 Dex loss every 1d4 days). An apothecary with the right herbs can cure the disease.
9. 6d6 Ruknog *Skorn* (marked with dark purple tattoos and facial scars) have subdued 3d6 *Nordu skorn* (shaved heads painted yellow, with chest scars). The Nordu are being brought to Cloudcrag to be exposed to the xurrob drug.

Cloudcrag

The peak itself is a lofty and rugged mountain of sandstone and granite, riddled with natural and worked catacombs. The passages are crudely hewn or formed, often marked with primitive yellow, orange or blue paint, depicting scenes of tribal war and the subjugation of humans. Curiously, the most ancient drawings repeat an icon of a ringed planet with dual moons.

Some natural light manages to filter into Area 2, but beyond this the interior is dark or lit by skorn torches. The halfmen see well in moon light and have very rudimentary dark vision, able to make out shapes and outlines in complete darkness (disadvantage on vision checks, instead of blind). Unless infiltrating however they employ fire for light, warmth and occasional cooking.

Lair Encounters

While the party is exploring the complex, there is a 20% chance of a random encounter every 15 minutes. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d6 (add 1 if the party has left any obvious signs of their passage).

1. 1d6 *Skorn* from Area 4 wander up the corridor, having just eaten, carrying bowls of potent fermented grapes, which they sip or guzzle from as they approach.
2. A *Giant Spider* from Area 3 appears, crawling along the ceiling. It is a relatively new spider recruit, and is exploring the complex. It is quite hungry, and can tell a human from a skorn. It's not immediately sure whether it's supposed to eat the party, or not, and studies them curiously, chittering to itself.
3. 5d10 *Skorn* spill into the area, yelling and pushing each other. There is every chance major violence is about the break out between two different factions (the Ruknogs have purple war paint, the *Tugat* tribe have green).
4. 1d6 *Vampire Bats* (LFG p.100) have taken up residence in the shadows of the ceiling. They generally prey on sleeping skorn, but are not adverse to taking a bite

out an adventurer, if the opportunity presents itself.

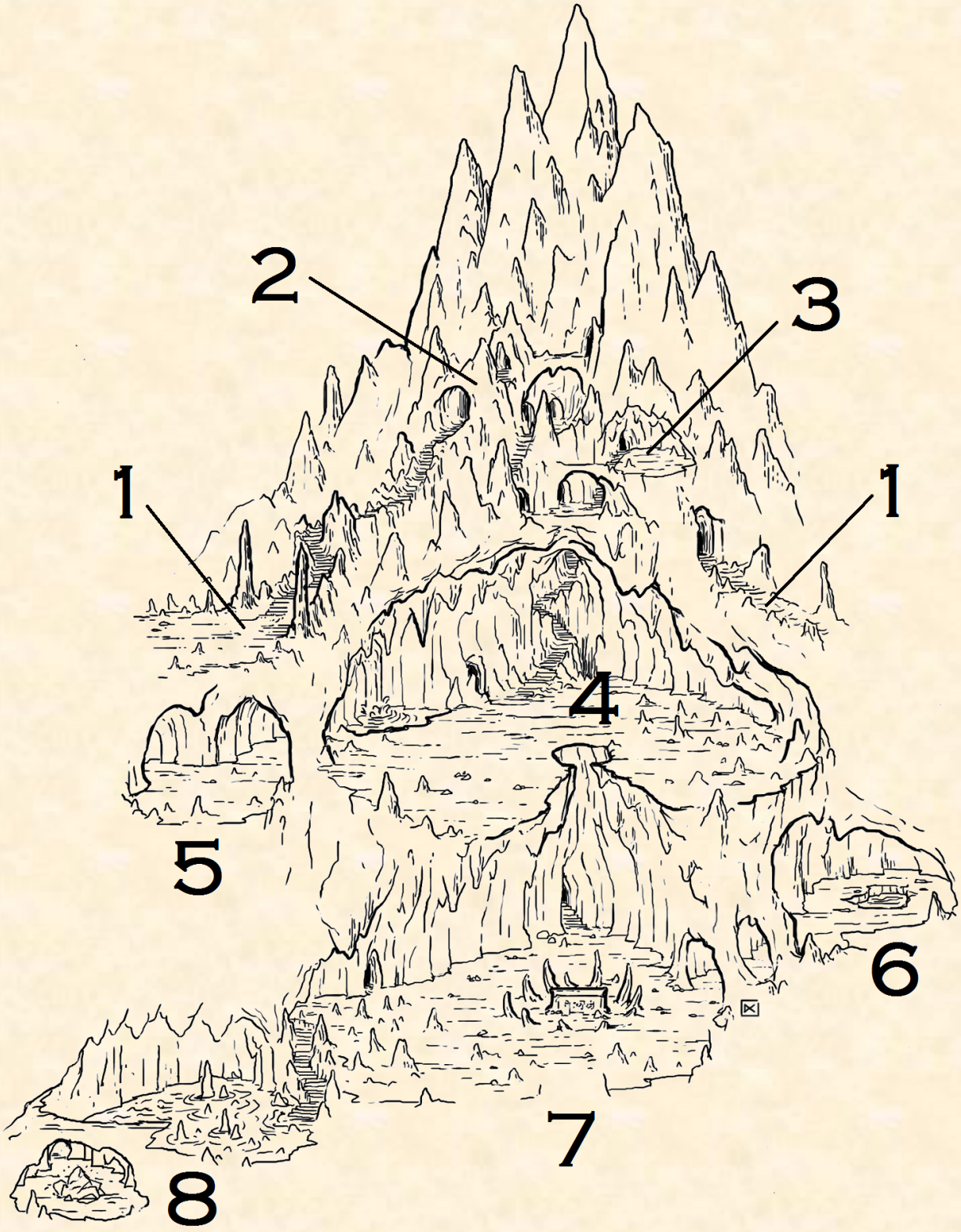
5. A small *Skorn* child with red war paint appears from around a corner, looking scared, as if she's running from something. She freezes in place at the sight of the party, taken completely by surprise. A loud guttural yelling can be heard following up behind her.



6. The party finds a discarded metal cog, half buried under a grubby pelt. The cog has a number of large cracks in it, and is about the size of a person's outstretched hand. It is stained with what looks like soot.
7. *Borbarzu* (from Area 7) appears, his mechanical steps making a strange whirring and clicking noise as he approaches. He is making his daily patrol of the complex, on the lookout for vermin or rowdy skorn who need curbing. Needless to say, he is very surprised to see the party. He will attempt parlay first, seeking information about the outside world, and particularly Dol-Karok, before deciding whether to imprison them or feed them to the Ruknogs.



Map

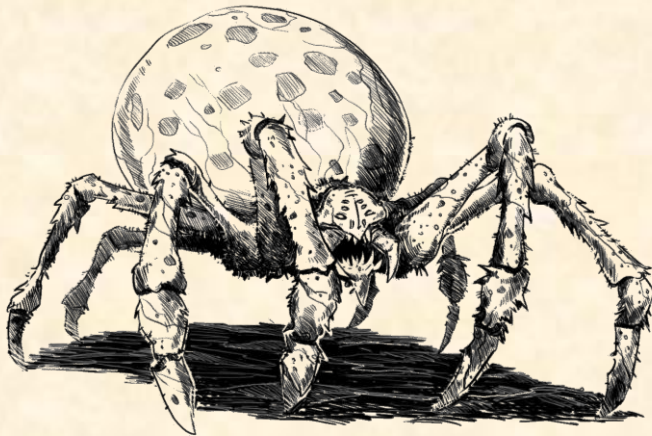


Area 1 - Entry

These stone steps are hand carved from the stony mountain, 10 ft wide and 150 ft long. Skull poles and stone pillars line the path, marked with primitive art depicting game hunting and the change of seasons.

Two skorn armed with clubs and javelins guard the twin entries (one east, one west) at all times. If they spot humans, they whoop and holler, calling for aid from Area 2 or 3.

Skorn, AC 11, HD 1, Club 1d6+1, 19: the target is clubbed in the head, losing its next action (*Luck* (Will) save resists), S15 D10 C13 I7 P12 W8 Ch8, LA, Mv 30 ft. Rudimentary dark vision, advantage to sense danger or detect scents.



Area 2 - Western Barracks

Carved into the mountain side here is a 30 ft cave, housing 3d10 skorn with clubs, slings and javelins.

For the most part they are sleeping, socialising, wrestling or fighting. They take turns being on sentry duty in Area 1, and are relieved every couple of hours by another shift from Area 4 or 5. If Area 1 calls for help, they respond (50% chance they are asleep at night, in which case they require a Perc (Detection) test to hear the alert and rouse themselves in 1d4 rounds).

Area 3 - Eastern Barracks

This 30 ft cavern contains 1d4+1 skorn spider handlers, and their 2d4 giant spiders (domesticated with the xurrob plant). The ceiling

is lined with webs, spider eggs and baby spiders. Ceiling holes provide natural light into this chamber, which is particularly susceptible to fire due to all the webbing.

The spiders are generally feeding or training. The arachnids and their handlers are extremely loyal to each other and gain advantage on morale checks.

Giant Spider, AC 13, HD 2+2, Bite 1d6+1 + poison, 19: special, S14 D16 C12 I2 P12 W10 Ch4, L5, Mv 40 ft inc walls, ceiling etc. On a natural 19+ attack roll, target is webbed and helpless (*Luck* (Str) save resists). On its turn, a trapped victim may spend its action to break free (opposed Str check vs Str 17). A giant spider's poisonous bite causes 1d6 damage and 1 Dex loss (*Luck* (Con) save resists). 25% chance of harvesting 1d3 doses of poison from a dead spider.

Area 4 - Central Cavern

The 200 ft diameter central cavern is lit by sconced torches, the perimeter ringed with skull poles and walls painted with simplistic artworks.

Most of the paintings suggest hunting, fighting and natural disasters, but a recent marking depicts a squat, golem like humanoid with no head, being worshipped by skorn beneath the earth.

The floor is covered with furs, pelts and straw, scattered with bowls and crude bone carved eating utensils. A fast running underground stream and small pool are set against the western wall. One or more small cooking fires are spread about, roasting flesh of various denominations, including human, the smoke wafting back up the tunnels or cracks in the ceiling.

The chamber is typically occupied by 10d10 skorn, including 20% children, engaging in all sorts of activities. The tunnel to the west leads to Area 5.

Needless to say, any obvious humans entering this chamber are in for a bad time. Ruknog savour the sumptuous juices of human flesh above all others, and are likely to kill and cook the party at the first opportunity. Some form of deception, distraction, or infiltration is probably going to be required to pass through this room unmolested.

The skorn present automatically gain a Perc (Detection) test to notice the smell of humans unless the party has taken precautions to guard against such (for example, wearing beastmen rags or furs).

Area 5 - Living Quarters

This western passage branches out into a myriad of living quarters for the remainder of the 5d100 beastmen (70% Ruknog), snaking deep into the underbelly of the mountain range.

The entry tunnel provides a useful bottleneck to keep the bulk of the skorn force at bay, if the adventurers find a way to block or hold it (temporarily or otherwise).

Area 6 - Xurrob Cavern

This 40 ft chamber is kept dark. In the centre of the room is a small 15 ft wide x 2 ft deep depression, inside which the crimson xurrob mould grows. Exposure to more than a few minutes of torch or sun light turns the mould grey, rendering it inert. Ingesting the mould in its purest form requires a Con check to resist a brief euphoria, followed by an emerging serious madness over 1d4 days.

Area 7 - Workshop Laboratory

This 150 ft cavern is furnished with chairs, tables, books and bubbling glassware, a veritable laboratory of renaissance times. A number of anvils and smithy tools clutter one side, with various metals and ores stacked up beside the wall. The floor is bare, dusty stone, blackened and discoloured with heat and chemical stains.

In the centre of the room, encircled by a number of human size stalagmites, is a strange object indeed: an 8 ft tall, 5 ft wide and 20 ft long rectangular artefact, fashioned of jet black, polished metal (an interstellar alloy).

Both ends of the artefact have a dozen nodules protruding from it, which pulsate with a warm, golden glow. The whole object radiates with a barely perceivable hum if one or more nodules are touched. After years of dedicated study, the alien relic has imparted to Borbarzu knowledge of strange and advanced technologies, the likes of which are otherwise unknown across the Midlands.

Threatened by debilitating disease four years ago, Borbarzu entombed himself in a mechanical shell, using technology gleaned from the alien artefact. He now exists only as a man-machine hybrid, a living golem of steam, clockwork and canned lightning.



As might be expected, the toll on Borbarzu's mind has been extreme. He is mad, completely

obsessed with his triumphant return to Dol-Karok on the back of his growing horde of xurrob addled skorn. If the party does not immediately attack, he will parlay with them for a time, keen to learn of the outside world. But ultimately, their knowledge of him threatens his plans; they cannot be permitted to leave alive.

Clockwork Borbarzu, Boss Monster, AC 15, HD 7 (63 hp), 2 Fists 2d6, 19: everyone within 10 ft is scalded with steam, losing their next action (Luck (Con) save resists), S19 D10 C23 I17 P15 W18 Ch4, L9, Mv 30 ft. Borbarzu is a Boss Monster with all the usual benefits (LFG p.95). When Borbarzu reaches zero hp, he explodes, causing 2d6 damage to targets within 10 ft and destroying his mechanical body beyond repair.

The archway to the west leads to Borbarzu's store of valuables. He and his skorn have gathered a sizeable hoard worth 1 x 4 HD Lair Treasure (LFG p.140), as well as 2d4 doses of xurrob drug. Reverse engineering the drug to its constituent formulae is possible, but would take years of research by a skilled apothecary. Meaningful activation of the alien artefact, and siphoning of its advanced knowledge, is a similarly long term endeavour. A *Speak with Dead* spell, or *charming* Borbarzu instead of killing him, etc, might shorten this period at the GM's discretion.

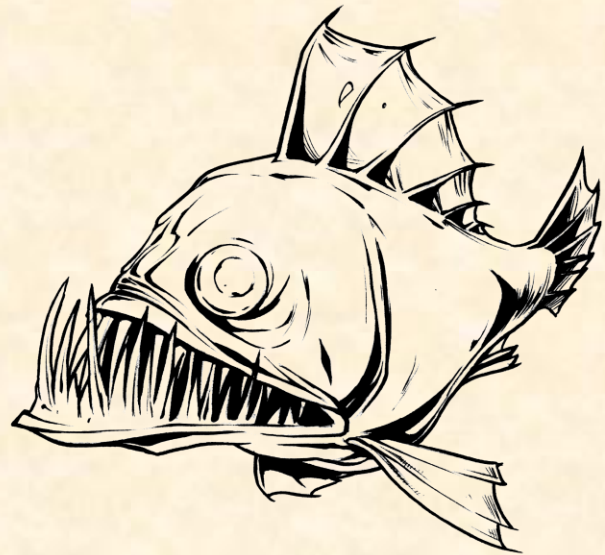
Area 8 - Water Cavern

At the bottom of the stone steps is a 40 ft cavern filled with dark water and stalagmites rising up from the depths. The middle of the chamber is divided by a narrow, east-west land bridge, beyond which is more water. A rocky protrusion of dark stone laced with green veins protrudes 15 ft out of the furthest pool.

The water connects to a large underground lake, which contains 2d6 five foot long *Ripper Fish*. Food in the underground is scant, the fish are ravenous and head towards anything moving in the water. Borbarzu sometimes feeds them with impudent skorn.

Ripper Fish, AC 12, HD 3, Bite 1d10, 19: special, S14 D13 C13 I2 P8 W10 Ch4, L6, Mv 30 ft swimming. On a 19-20 attack roll, the fish bites off a finger or toe (Luck (Con) save resists).

The murky water holds nothing but danger, but across the land bridge and in the pool beyond, is an outcropping of the rare mineral *Greendrake*, used in crafting the poison of the same name (applied by injury or ingestion, causes *Slow* (as the spell effect) for 1d4+1 rounds. *Luck (Con)* save resists). Adventurers might extract enough raw material for 2d4 doses of poison.



Aftermath

If Borbarzu is defeated, the remaining skorn are likely to remain at the peak, reverting to inter-tribal war. The halfmen do not understand the workings of xurrob mould and soon destroy it by accident. If the skorn are also removed, the party might take up residence in Cloudcrag, and/or seek to divine the secrets of the alien artefact (which cannot be removed from the mountain without breaking it). If Borbarzu repels the PCs, he grows his army of skorn until the time is right to invade Dol-Karok. The silver mask referred to in the original rumour either does not exist, has been lost, or might be part of Borbarzu's clockwork body (details left to GM discretion).

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