

## THE BLIND CAVERN

*Estimated Duration:* 3 hours

*Suggested Music:* "Icy Cave" by Michael Ghelfi

### THE WHITE DRAGON'S LAIR

While they're not the smartest of the dragons, white dragons are certainly some of the most dangerous. And the **adult white dragon** Skullcollector is no exception. Born with a proper name, Skullcollector gained its vile nickname from its dreadful hobby: collecting skulls. Currently, Skullcollector is holed up in the old Blind Cavern near the base of The Knife, one of the tallest and most dangerous mountains in the tail (northeastern bend) of the Basilisk's Spine. Temperamental and flakey, Skullcollector has trouble finding good help. However, a ragtag group of hobgoblins led by a one-eyed fire giant named Graam have teamed up with Skullcollector to help the dragon find new skulls to add to its hoard. In exchange, the crew keeps the treasure Skullcollector doesn't want—basically everything else.

### WHERE TO ADD THIS ENCOUNTER

This side trek is designed for **three to seven 8th to 10th level characters** and is optimized for **four characters with an average party level (APL) of 10**.

The Blind Cavern is an icy passage leading through part of the mountain. The terrain just outside the cavern is difficult to traverse, making the cavern ideal. Despicable creatures who know this often use it as an ambush point for passersby.

Recently, Skullcollector's squad captured an old hermit who lives just south of the cavern. The hermit may have information that the characters seek. Only through the hermit's liberation will the characters be able to move on to their next story objective.

### REGIONAL EFFECTS

The region containing Skullcollector's lair is warped by his magic, which creates the following effects.

- Chilly fog lightly obscures the land within 6 miles of The Knife.
- Ice and snow falling from heavy, dark clouds pound the area within 6 miles of The Knife. Blizzards are common, especially when Skullcollector is hibernating.

If Skullcollector dies, the fog and precipitation fade within 1 day.

### AREA DESCRIPTION

Unless otherwise stated in the description, The Blind Cavern has the following features.

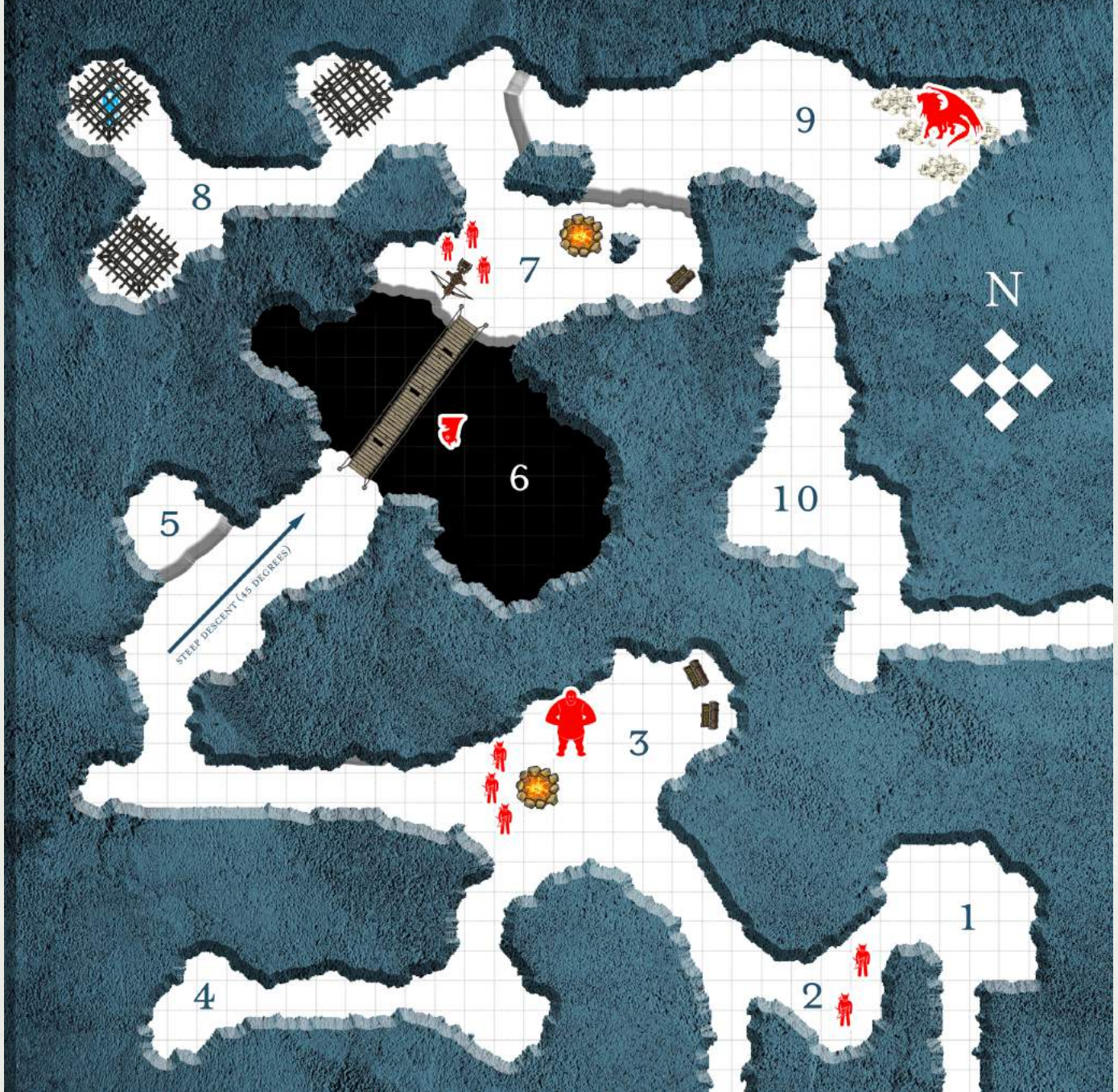
**Dimensions & Terrain.** The wall of the cavern are made of thick sedimentary layers of limestone, marble, shale, and pelite. In some areas, water has frozen over giving the interior walls a glossy sheen. The ceilings are low in most parts, often 12 feet. Standing 16 feet tall, Graam dislikes this feature.

**Light.** Most of the cavern is dark. Because of the grim conditions outside, natural light doesn't get in either. The area descriptions assume that the characters have darkvision or other sources of light.

**Slippery Floors.** In many places throughout the cavern, condensation has frozen over and made for slippery walks. Whenever a creature uses the Dash action, it must make a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check first. If the check fails, the creature falls prone in its space before it moves.

# THE BLIND CAVERN

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET



**Sounds.** All sounds bounce off the walls in the cavern, making it difficult to pinpoint where certain sounds are coming from. Therefore, Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing are made with disadvantage.

## 1 - FIRST PASSAGE

There are two entrances into the cavern. This is the first one. The two **hobgoblins** hiding in area 2 watch and listen for

anyone that approaches from this passageway. If they spot someone coming in, the two carefully retreat to area 3 to alert the others.

## 2 - HOBGOBLIN WATCH

Two **hobgoblins** keep watch here. If intruders come from the entrance at area 1, they retreat back to area 3 to warn the others. If intruders come from the left passage, they Stealthily follow the intruders until they are within range of

their allies at area 2, then shout to warn the others.

### 3 - GRAAM'S CAMP

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Graam, the one-eyed **fire giant**, and three **hobgoblins** make camp here.

#### AREA DESCRIPTION

This area has the following features:

**Dimensions & Terrain.** Graam chose this cavern for the camp as it has the highest ceilings in the entire complex: 25 feet.

**Horse Meat.** Graam and the hobgoblins are roasting a horse carcass over the fire. The hobgoblins captured the horse after killing its devilkin rider.

**Light.** The light from the fire pit casts the area in bright light and keeps ice from forming on the floors. Creatures can take the Dash action with no penalty in this area.

#### CREATURE INFORMATION

Graam and the hobgoblins are mostly lawful creatures, but they also don't care much for their job.

**What Do They Want?** Graam and the hobgoblins enjoy easy targets. Once it becomes clear that the characters aren't a pushover, the one-eyed fire giant looks to cut a deal. The hobgoblins, loyal to Graam, go with the plan.

However, if Graam sees an opportunity to turn against the characters and pay Skullcollector in fresh character skulls, he'll gladly take it.

**What Do They Know?** Graam knows where Skullcollector rests. Although he'll share the location of the other hobgoblins near area 6, he will purposely fail to mention the roper over the bridge.

#### TREASURE

Graam and his minions keep two loaded treasure chests here, the spoils from their ambushes. Between the two chests, the characters will find 10,650 cp, 6,000 sp, 1,100 GP, and 205 pp. In addition, there are 10 gems worth 100 gp each (GM's discretion), an *elixir of health*, and *horseshoes of speed*. Also, there is a brightly colored suit of splint mail here.

### 4 - DEAD-END CAVE

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Nothing here but a bunch of gnawed-on animal bones.

### 5 - STEEP SLOPE

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At the south end of the cavern, a creature can notice the danger inherent in the descent with a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. They can make the check with advantage if they have proficiency in Survival. A character moving at half their normal speed can descend the pathway without any issue. However, a creature who moves their normal speed must make a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or fall prone. At the start of a prone creature's turn, the creature must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or slide 30 feet toward area 6. While sliding, a creature is incapacitated and its movement speed (other than sliding) is 0.

If a creature fails to stop itself before it reaches the abyss in area 6, it falls into the abyss. Just before the creature falls into the abyss, it has one last chance to catch itself on the suspension bridge. The creature must make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw. On a successful saving throw, the

creature grabs onto one of the bridge's ropes and is dangling above the abyss. Otherwise, the creature falls into the abyss (see area 6).

### 6 - THE ABYSS

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A massive abyss divides areas 5 and 7.

#### AREA DESCRIPTION

This area has the following features.

**Dimensions & Terrain.** The ceilings above the abyss are 30 feet high and covered in icy stalactites.

**Abyss.** The abyss itself is 200 feet deep. A creature that falls into the abyss takes 20d6 falling damage. The only way out of the abyss is by climbing. Thanks to the icy walls, climbing without a rope or magical assistance requires a successful DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check at the start of each turn a creature climbs.

**Suspension Bridge.** The ice has worn down the bridge over the years. If there are 500 pounds of weight or more on the bridge, there is a chance that the bridge's suspensions shape. On initiative count 10, roll a d20 and refer to the breaking bridge table below. Any creatures who fall into the abyss take damage from the fall as described above.

#### CREATURE INFORMATION

Three **hobgoblins** manning a **ballista** are at the far side of the abyss. And to make matters worse, a **roper** is hidden among the stalactites on the ceiling. The hobgoblins are aware of the roper. They use the ballista as cover until the roper reveals itself and grabs one or more of the characters.

Each round, the hobgoblins can load, aim, and fire the ballista so long as all three are standing. The ballista has AC 15, 50 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. It fires a bolt.

**Bolt. Ranged Weapon Attack:** +6 to hit, range 120/480 ft., one target. **Hit:** 16 (3d10) piercing damage.

If one or more of the goblins is taken out, the remaining hobgoblins take cover and switch to their longbows.

### 7 - HOBGOBLIN POST

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Three **hobgoblins** keep watch for intruders crossing the suspension bridge. Their tactics are described in area 5.

#### AREA DESCRIPTION

The area has the following features:

**Dimensions & Terrain.** Similar to area 6, the ceilings here are 30-feet high and covered in stalactites. The cliffside leading up to area 8 is 6 feet high. There's no ladder in place (the hobgoblins avoid messing with Skullcollector as much as they can).

**Light.** The light from the fire pit casts the area in bright light and keeps ice from forming on the floors. Creatures can take the Dash action with no penalty in this area.

#### TREASURE

The hobgoblins keep their share of the treasure in a heavy iron chest. The chest contains 12,100 cp, 950 sp, and 70 gp. There are also 30 gems worth 50 gp each and *four potions of healing*.

## 8 - CAGES

Three cages fashioned from wood, bone, and rope are jammed into the pockets of this cavern.

### CREATURE INFORMATION

The hermit is here, cold, hungry, and dying. Regardless of the hermit's stat block (recommended **commoner** or **druid**), the old man is down to only 2 hit points and has suffered two levels of exhaustion. If you need quick details for the hermit, refer to Chapter 4 of the *DMG*.

The cage's door is kept shut with a knotted rope which can be easily cut.

## 9 - SKULLCOLLECTOR

This is where the **adult white dragon** Skullcollector rests. A huge mountain of humanoid skulls fills most of the eastern half of the room. There are enough skulls here for Skullcollector to dive into and hide.

### CREATURE INFORMATION

If Skullcollector suspects that he's under attack, the dragon burrows under his massive pile of humanoid skulls and hides (+5 on his Stealth check). Skullcollector is no more intelligent than any other white dragon and relies primarily on brute strength to defeat intruders.

The dragon opens with his cold breath then uses his tail legendary action when it's able. He'll use his *lair* action to create an ice wall with the intent to split the party, trying to get as many ranged attackers as he's able on the other side of the ice wall. From there, he goes for the easiest targets, first attacking with his claws and bite and tail, then moving on to the next. Skullcollector is too proud to flee or beg and will fight until the death.

## 10 - REAR ENTRANCE

The rear of the cave exits back out onto the side of the mountain. What lies beyond The Blind Cavern? That's an adventure for another day.

## WRAP-UP: I WANT YOUR SKULLS (I NEED YOUR SKULLS)

With Skullcollector defeated, the trip up the mountain should be a little easier. Furthermore, if rescuing the hermit was a story objective, the characters likely have a clue to their next story objective.

As far as Graam and his gang go, it's up to you what happens next to the downtrodden, one-eyed fire giant and his crew of hobgoblins. They could become allies of the party or they could take over the pass, continuing its purpose as a popular ambush point to collect treasures from those who wish to climb The Knife. ♪



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