

## The Clearing of The Keep

The mission had sounded straightforward enough. The Town-Master of Phandalin, Harbin Wester, needed a secure fortification for the town's population because of the increasing threat of attacks from the enemy's army. The Town had already been attacked once in force and that had only just been repulsed thanks to a gift of magical weapons. As a result, the party had been contracted to find and clear out a Keep built by the miners many centuries ago. It was a fastness that could be defended in times of danger. Now it was abandoned and was rumoured to be 'haunted' by a monstrous presence that has been locked away within. Indeed, as the party members paused to look at the structure it seemed to have been sealed to prevent anything getting out rather than anybody getting in, though getting in still presented them with a big problem. Clawing its way up the cliff face the Keep loomed out at them, its jagged silhouette a stark contrast against the sky. Unlike the noble castles of legend, this edifice exuded an aura of cold, calculated menace. Narrow, arrow-slit windows pierced the walls at intervals, offering only glimpses of the dark, watchful interior. A single, heavily fortified portcullis, studded with iron spikes and bound with thick chains, served as the only point of entry. The wind that whistled through the cracks and crevices of the keep carried suggestions of forgotten screams and tortured souls, adding to the oppressive atmosphere. Even the vines and ivies that grew up the cliff face seemed reluctant to climb its walls.

"Not very inviting is it," said Dolan.

Nanoc, agreed, "You're not wrong there. I'm not sure how we're supposed to get through that portcullis and I don't want to risk those murder holes above the gateway." The two fighters seemed the most cautious of the adventuring party.

Sildari, felt no such caution. She strode up to the wall and stroked the stones with her hand, considering them as though they were a lock that needed to be picked. After a few moments of thought, she turned to face Orbertasmas.

"Bert, if you cast Spider Climb onto me, I'm sure I can get to the top of the keep. I'll take some ropes up with me in case I find a way in for us up there." Bert nodded and began casting the spell. The final party member was Olivia, though she was usually referred to as Ollie by the party. The party relied on her for any healing they required.

"Make sure you have your sending stone with you so that we can communicate," Ollie said. Sildari simply nodded and began climbing. She did indeed seem to have a spider's ability to climb a sheer wall, something that was unnerving for the others to watch. On reaching the flat roof of the Keep, Sildari counted eight chimneys, six of which were too small to descend, but the ones on the east and west sides were large enough to climb down. She made her way down to the bottom of each in turn breaking through countless spider webs that filled them. The fireplace of each opened out into a room the East room being slightly larger than the room at the bottom of West Chimney. The doors out of the rooms were ajar and glancing out of the East room she could see an open space that was draped in dense spider webs. She reported her findings using the sending stones before heading back to the roof.