

AREN TOR

The world changes, and once great towers of vast civilizations become the outposts of younger ones. Such is the legacy of Aren Tor, a watchpost atop a great pinnacle of rock a thousand years ago, all but forgotten to the world in these times, its stair lost amidst trees and drifts of snow. Yet during an adventure, one may stumble upon it, and be led to its heights, where greater adventure awaits...

PREPARING TO PLAY: When you are all gathered to play, and every one of the Players is prepared, begin the adventure by following the steps given below.

Background: The Adventure will begin with your reading the following narrative, thus setting the stage for the adventure that is to follow.

The river ahead is sundered by a small island, a great pinnacle of rock rising into the sky. It may be that the sharp top of this tor is what cut the clouds and is spilling all this snow down upon you now. Down the riverbank from where you are, old columns rise out of the shallows, the markers of old roads or ferry docks that led to the tor and whatever secrets it kept.

Sitting by your campfire, the snow silently assaulting you all around, building up thicker and thicker around your companions, it dawns on you what the island is. Aren Tor, it must be, the old 'Seat of Seeing' in this realm, its top the highest watchpost in all the land, able to silently and in all secrecy spot the approach of armies hundreds of miles away so their liege and Lord was never caught off his guard, by war or weather. The great tor is now really indistinguishable from the hills on either side of the river, covered in tall trees laden with snow.

With the onset of night, your gaze is drawn inevitably ever and again away up to the hidden heights of the Aren Tor, your thoughts held by the unseen eyes above, indeed wondering who, or what, may be looking down upon you. As the snow continues to fall, the colourless grey waters of the river begin slowing down, indeed freezing, and thus offering a daring invitation to seek both shelter and secrets upon Aren Tor, and perhaps even treasure.

Rumors: Little is known or remembered about this place, for it has indeed been forgotten by all but the wise and the daring. Still, the party may share tales and deduce one of the following legends of this ancient site. Each Ranger amongst them will increase their total value to determine dice by +2.

Rumors

| Value | Rumor about Aren Tor |
|-------|--|
| 11 | The Seat of Seeing atop the tor was the craft of a Magician, and while he is now gone from the world, his sight is alive as ever to all who sit in the throne (true) |
| 8 | The tor fell to the shadow of Dread, a Dragon of the Borderlands, one so terrible that merely seeing him makes one feel so hopeless it slays the soul (partially true) |
| 3 | The tor fell to Orc raiders that still roam these lands and hate mankind (true) |

CLIMBING THE TOR: The tor awaits all who would ascend it and learn its secrets. In doing this, use the following Encounters one and all and in the order they are presented.

1) Crossing the river

The river is half frozen. Logs are imprisoned in the ice but in other places the current flows too swift to be caught by the spell of Winter.

Crossing the broken ice requires a Challenging Dexterity Check, penalized by -1 for every 10 (as opposed to the normal 20) Encumbrance one has on them. Those who fail will either break through thin ice or simply fall in an already open hole. It is 180' from the narrowest point of land to the tor.

2) Trail head

The shoreline of the tor is strangely silent. The churning and cracking of the river, waging its war against the Winter, seems miles away. Here, twin statues of Priests flank the beginning of a stone stair hewn out of the cliffside.

A successful search of this area will find old Orc weapons scattered about, all rusted and useless.

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3) Battlement

Several steep flights of stone stairs ascend the cliff, zigzagging up into the maze of fir trees. The steps are cracked and split by their ancient roots, and the boughs above lean warily beneath the snow, just as old statues that stand at the turns and tiers lean slightly with the burden of time, like headstones rather than the guardians they must once have been. Finally, after a long and arduous climb, you come to a battlement, its crenellations crumbling and covered in snow, but must have once commanded a broad view of the river below, now obscured by the trees.

A successful search of this battlement will see a skull with half rotten frozen flesh clinging to it hanging in a tree 20' outside the crenellations, 40' above the hillside at that point. A 'monster lore' Skill Check can identify this as a trophy of Orc-kind, set during the Summer months, judging from its half decayed state.

If the party lingers here for any considerable length of time, the 28 Orcs that are not far behind them will catch them here! During a battle here, all implausible Critical Hits or Misses will result in the victim being knocked off the cliff to his death!

4) Broken stair

The tiers of stairs continue almost straight up, and the trees alongside them, keeping you bound in a realm with very limited sight. And now, the stairs end. For the next flight once bridged a gap as it ascended a good fifty feet, but the central portion of the steps has broken off, leaving ten feet or more of empty space.

The gap is indeed 10' across but also 8' high, requiring a Challenging Dexterity Check to jump. There is no other stair to ascend the tor. Climbing the cliff directly will require one to ascend 50' to find the stair again. Those who fall from any point will plunge 10-40' until they hit roots, and then can make a Challenging Strength Check to catch something or fall again in like manner, until they either stop themselves or go the full 220' to the very bottom of the tor and splash into the river.

5) The shadow of Dread

The stairs become ever steeper the higher you ascend the tor. Yet still do the trees cling to the cliff, concealing just how far up you are. Then you come to a rather wide, snowed-covered ledge cut into the cliffside. Several large, Dragon-like tracks are filling in beneath the falling snow, tracks no more than a day old.

Dread, the Dragon of the Borderlands nearby, is coming! His shadow will fall upon the party the next Round, calling for Fear Checks as he attacks! This fire-drake has no treasure on the tor—its lair is 24 miles away through the wild, which can be tracked with a Searching Check, looking up at the broken and burned treetops marking its path.

6) The Seat of Seeing

The stair ends at last upon the very top of the Aren Tor. Here, a crumbling ruin like a shrine serves now only as the chaotic foundation of a large throne carved of some stone that gleams as if it were Midsummer. The weathered statues of Ancient Gryffons can be seen in many places about the area. One of them has its head cut off, which lies half buried in the snow before it. The view from here is breathtaking, beholding sight of the lands fifty miles around, or more! One could easily imagine seeing as Gryffons did, or Dragons still do, or even seeing what the very Heavens see. Yet, for all the glory of the realm, there is a deep melancholy feeling to this place, a loneliness you cannot help but feel the guards must have felt, so long ago.

The Orcs that are following the party will at this point swarm the party, all 28 of them (unless they were destroyed in Encounter 3).

If anyone sits in the throne, he will behold a vision, that of a random Encounter from whatever Adventure lies ahead, of a numerical count equal to his Nobility Points in this realm.

FINISHING THE ADVENTURE: For destroying the Orcs here each Character will gain great honor, that of 1 Nobility Point in this land.