



KELVIN'S CAIRN

Rising out of the desolate tundra of Icewind Dale is a mountain of giant boulders, piled one atop the other until they narrow to a snow-capped peak. Beasts hunt upon the craggy slopes, giants tread across the broken rills, and dwarves mine its hidden depths. This is Kelvin's Cairn, the highest point in Icewind Dale and also its heart; all else is fixed by its position relative to the mountain.

Although the boulder-strewn slopes look about as stable as a pile of sand, the unusual mountain has stood for as long as anyone can remember. According to the barbarians, the cairn was formed when Tempus, the god of battle, fought Kelvin, a great hero of the frost giants, and slew him on the plain of Icewind Dale. Tempus rent the ground with his axe and took the stones from the earth to heap upon his foe's corpse, serving as a reminder to others of the consequences of incurring the war god's wrath.

Although the dwarves of Clan Battlehammer live in the valley at the foot of Kelvin's Cairn, few humans or dwarves make their way onto the mountain's rocky slopes, and no settlement has ever taken root there. The mountain's face is largely home to wild beasts, the most dangerous being the crag cat. Many boastful adventurers have set out from Ten-Towns with the intent of bringing back a crag cat's pelt. Those who return often have harrowing tales to tell of being hunted across the mountain's slopes by the creature they had imagined to be their prey.

LOCATIONS OF NOTE

Although most of the slopes of Kelvin's Cairn are rough, uncharted terrain, a few locations on and around the mountain are well known by the dwarves and the handful of human explorers who venture there.

The Only Ways In: Icewind Pass and Bremen's Run are the two passes running along the mountain's eastern and western slopes, respectively. Orcs or barbarians looking to raid Ten-Towns must come down through one of these two passes, and which one they choose determines whether it is the people of Maer Dualdon or Lac Dinneshere who seek refuge behind Bryn Shander's walls while their homes are pillaged and burned.

Daledrop: A natural switchback sits just below the mountain's southern face, descending from the tundra into the valley at the mountain's base. This route, known as Daledrop, is the only accessible entry point to the valley from Lac Dinneshere or Icewind Pass, and the dwarves use this natural chokepoint to defend their valley against intrusion from the north.

Bruenor's Climb: Amid the jumble of boulders that forms Kelvin's Cairn is a protrusion, a sort of spire that offers a commanding view of the Dwarven Valley below and the towns and tundra to all sides. As its name suggests, it was a favorite haunt of the renowned dwarf Bruenor Battlehammer, but it toppled during the battles against Akar Kessel and his armies, when the dwarves sealed their tunnels against the invaders. Years later, the dwarves painstakingly recreated it in honor of the great king of Mithral Hall.

Bruenor's "Temple": At the base of the mountain stands a small grotto, accessible by way of a narrow crevice from the northern end of the dwarven valley. Light shines down through natural holes in the cavern's ceiling, and the chamber thrums with the low whistle of the wind blowing across the mountain's face. Carved into the stone here is a small forge with a freestanding anvil, created and used a century ago by Bruenor Battlehammer to craft his masterwork, the hammer Aegis-fang. Bruenor was the

The Verbeeg Lair



first to discover the grotto and sense its deep connection to the powers of the earth, and since then many dwarves have come to Bruenor's "temple" to craft their own masterworks. Outsiders are seldom allowed to visit the grotto, since the dwarves of the valley regard it as a sacred space.

Verbeeg Lair: Travelers who range farther up the south face might happen upon what appears to be a cave running into the mountainside, its entrance obscured by a boulder or a brace of frostbramble. Beyond the tunnel's entrance lies a dwarven outpost that was abandoned by its creators long ago but has never lain empty for long. Orcs, brigands, and giants have all made their homes here at times. Most memorably, a band of verbeegs in the service of Akar Kessell lived here once, striking out at the dwarves in the valley below before they were exterminated by the Companions of Icewind Dale. Ever since, the outpost has been known in the collective imagination of Ten-Towns as the Verbeeg Lair, though the bands of fortune-seekers that periodically venture there never know who, or what, they will find in residence.

From this vantage point, the mountain was the only silhouette that broke the featureless line of the northern horizon. The cairn had been so named because it resembled a mound of purposely piled boulders; barbarian legend claimed that it truly served as a grave. Certainly the valley where the dwarves now made their home did not resemble any natural landmark. In every direction the tundra rolled on, flat and earthen. But the valley had only sparse patches of dirt sprinkled in among broken boulders and walls of solid stone. It, and the mountain on its northern border, were the only features in all of Icewind Dale with any mentionable quantities of rock, as if they had been misplaced by some god in the earliest days of creation.

—The Crystal Shard