



OVER THE NEXT HILL CITY OF HIDDEN WAYS

OVER THE NEXT HILL IS A multi-author

series focusing on small settlements that can be dropped into a campaign with minimal preparation. Each article in the series presents several detailed NPCs, points of interest, and loose plot hooks that can be developed during play. This installment of the series details Glavas Roh, the City of Hidden Ways.

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OVERVIEW

Near the edge of the sea, nestled below a forbidding mountain range, lies a settlement of archaic and unusual edifices. The village is called Glavas Roh, and its ancient buildings stumble upon each other as though scrambling to reach the massive, vaguely funnel-shaped

structure—known colloquially as the Tölcsér—that thrusts upwards from its center. The Tölcsér looms over the town, a three hundred-foot-tall monolith of smooth, dark obsidian. Its walls are warm to the touch and the air around is thick with acrid fumes.

Styled “The City of Hidden Ways” despite its modest size, Glavas Roh’s sheltered location, far from civilization, makes it an ideal retreat for any miscreants seeking to evade the law ... if they can find their way there. Its oddities are also a beacon for those interested in the occult, but few outside the village itself seem able to provide reliable instruction on how to reach it.

The village is far older than even the wisest sages realize, and the purpose of the bizarre building in its center is a mystery to all but a select few. Those who know the truth are happy to remain incognito among the commoners, visitors, and scholars.

GEOGRAPHY AND POPULACE

Glavas Roh is located on an island formed by the bifurcation of the massive Allapot River into two channels heading to the sea. Those rivers, the Idegen and the Furcsa, begin where the Allapot pours off the mountains and forms an enormous pool at the foot of a great limestone formation. The Idegen flows north and provides a short if tricky route from the sea, though the town’s remote location offsets the economic benefits of its proximity to the ocean; the Furcsa meanders westward into marshlands and jungles. Atop the limestone skulks the village, brooding beneath the black Tölcsér.

The Allapot cascades over menacing mountains that rise as sheer faces into the sky. Bereft even of crags and breaks, the Meredek cliffs rise vertically

from the ground for over 1,000 feet before leveling off. The mountain range has a great impact on the climate of Glavas Roh, protecting the village and its surroundings from the winter’s wrath. The area immediately outside the village is mostly level, allowing a steady breeze from the nearby ocean to dissipate any humidity that might otherwise develop, but the flatness of the land accentuates the unsettling thrust of the Tölcsér all the more.

Scholars occasionally find their way to the City of Hidden Ways, mostly drawn by fractured rumors of the mysterious monolith at its center, but most complain of nightmares and few stay longer than is necessary to complete their pressing studies. Why these scholars are allowed to find their way through the wilderness to Glavas Roh and not others remains a mystery. Alongside these academics is a population who largely want to be left alone, along with a small group of residents who seek to take benefit from the visitors—landlords, innkeepers, and providers of similar services.

SIGNIFICANT NPCs

Anatu Allatu

One of the earliest visiting researchers, Anatu Allatu has over the years become the de facto leader of the town. Glavas Roh’s self-styled Prefect, Allatu was initially drawn to the village by a desire to understand the Tölcsér. That structure remains the focus of her fascination, though she has also come to believe that the name Glavas Roh comes from a proto-language of Abyssal and Infernal. The implications of the name’s origin have prompted her to begin investigating histories of the lower planes.

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When her original research was not resolved as quickly as she'd planned, Allatu settled in for the long term. Noticing that the village lacked a governing body and an effective system of operations, she began to organize the residents into functioning guild-like groups called Circles; the Circles now operate as a federation of independent causes and elect representatives to speak for them in monthly council meetings. Of these groups, the Circle of Farmers and the Circle of Defense are particularly powerful.

Allatu has been said to dabble in black magic, and rumors persist that she trafficked with demons and other evil powers. Well respected but not particularly liked, Allatu lives in one of the houses that abuts the Tölcsér and spends most of her time cloistered within her study.

Ubar Sahu

The current representative of the Circle of Farmers, Sahu is a businessman. He comes from a long line of farmers, who have tilled and raised livestock upon the farmlands outside of Glavas Roh for centuries. Sahu presents himself as a straight shooter, and an honest worker of the land; he shows little respect for those who visit the village seeking to uncover its enigmas.

In truth, Sahu knows the island better than almost anyone else, and is aware of its ancient secrets. He is one of the few who understands the language from which the town, rivers, and the great cone draw their names, and he leads the cabal that ministers the Tölcsér (see below). When Allatu instigated the Circles, Sahu's own power and influence increased mightily, but he still sees her as a fly-by-night transient.

Gemekaa Kur

If the most valuable business in the city is providing sustenance for the visitors, a close second is providing their housing. Gemekaa Kur is the gatekeeper to almost half of the available living units in the village, and likely has a vested interest in the rest. Calling him the representative for the Circle of Grantors is accurate but misleading; no other landlord has anywhere near the wealth or power Kur commands.

Gemekaa Kur is interested primarily in profits. As the Steward of Glavas Roh, he literally holds the keys to the most desirable living and working spaces in the village, and is happy to charge exorbitant rates for their use. He is not unreasonable, however, and knows a good deal when he sees one. Those willing to sign long term leases with him or perform specific quests and tasks at his direction can expect substantial discounts. His position of formal authority puts him at odds with Anatu Allatu, who commands true social power within the town.

SIGNIFICANT AREAS

Allapot Falls

Cascading down in a 1,000 foot waterfall out of the Meredek Mountains, the Allapot drops into an abyssal basin, then splits into the Idegen and Furcsa rivers. The actual depth of the pool is unknown, though its surface lies some 20 feet below the island's grade. Local legends tell that the basin was formed eons ago when a colossal fishlike beast called an *afanc* swam over the Allapot Falls, plummeted to the rock below, and was knocked senseless when the limestone sundered. Some swear the creature now sleeps deep below the surface, and its nightmares are to blame for maelstroms in the lagoon.

Idegen River

The Idegen, shorter and slightly wider than the Furcsa, would be the preferred route to Glavas Roh if not for two factors: the river is both shallow

and swift, its current pushing hard toward the ocean. These elements make it challenging both for both deepwater craft and barges to navigate.

Furcsa River

Deeper, narrower, and slower-flowing than the Idegen, the Furcsa provides a leisurely passage through the wetlands to the west. Traders along this route bring rice, fruits, hardwoods, and other necessities to help sustain the island, but also attract the attention of savage marsh and jungle elves.

The Tölcsér

Centerpiece and focal point of Glavas Roh, the funnel-like structure known as the Tölcsér rises from a base 60 feet in diameter, narrowing to a 10 foot wide domed cylinder at the top. The only opening in the exterior is at the ground level—an archway fifteen feet tall and ten feet wide, which opens into a hallway of the same dimensions and thrusts 20 feet toward the center of the structure before coming to a large chamber. This central chamber is circular, roughly 30 feet in diameter, and has a ceiling that rises to a dome 20 feet high at its peak.

A well-disguised secret door located about halfway down the tunnel, requiring a DC 25 Wisdom (Perception) check to locate, opens to a stairway which allows access to the prison above. The secret door is hidden on the other side as well, and opening it from the stairway requires a check of the same DC.

Ubar Sahu and his followers use the central chamber to perform foul rituals which summon and bind fiends in the upper portion of the structure. Once bound and imprisoned, the group can force the captured being to grant them boons such as a bountiful harvest, luck, or to bring harm to undesirables. Once it has fulfilled these demands, the fiend is released.

One of the imprisoned creatures has claimed to be a demon lord; consequently, Sahu understands the structure's potential summoning power to be considerable.

The strange blocks that form the Tölcsér keep the interior at a comfortable temperature, if a little on the warm side. The acrid smell, faint on the outside, is much more prominent in the interior.

Common Buildings

The vast majority of Glavas Roh's structures are made of mud brick and clustered together, sharing walls and roofs. The village has no proper streets, and all of the common buildings are accessed by ladders poking through openings in their roofs. The interiors of the buildings are coated in plaster and generally kept meticulously clean by the residents. While most consist of only a chamber or two, some have as many as three or four rooms—though the only doors inside are created by hung blankets and textiles. The buildings have no windows, and the top hatchway is their sole source of ventilation and exterior light.

Port Glavas

The harbor at the edge of the Idegen River is Glavas Roh's main point of contact with the outside world. It consists of a warehouse and two outbuildings. Stairs and slopes carved into the limestone along with a complex of pulleys and ramps to allow for the easy transport of goods up and down the cliff face.

Farmland

The farming areas outside Glavas Roh consist of arable land covered in fields and ranches.

RUMORS AND PLOT HOOKS

1. Behind the Falls

The mighty Allapot drops a crushing 1,000 feet from the top of the Meredek cliffs. The mountain's vertical face is almost unscalable, requiring a DC 30 Strength (Athletics) check to climb. Rumors

hold that roughly halfway up the cliff, a cave opens behind the waterfall and leads to an abandoned complex of perfectly-formed caverns and rooms, and anyone with the patience to navigate the labyrinth will master time itself.

2. The Lizard-Person

The areas around the village have always been surprisingly free of hostile monsters. However, recently a body surfaced in the basin below the Allapot falls—a body unlike any known to the residents. It is humanoid, roughly six feet tall, and is covered with leathery gray scales. The body emits a faint yet sickening stench.

3. The Ancient Buildings

The style of Glavas Roh's common structures—jumbled upon one another and with entrances only through the roofs—are subject to rampant speculation. The answer may lie in the village's distant past, when primitive humans first felt the call of the Tölcsér.

4. The Thing in the Funnel

The origin and purpose of the Tölcsér has been debated in Glavas Roh for as long as its modern habitation. Anatu Allatu is keen for any information that could potentially solve the mystery, though others would prefer she stop investigating.

Meanwhile, Sahu's latest capture in the Tölcsér has him concerned. It does not communicate but is always hungry, and the food it seems to prefer is sentient creatures. Sahu forces as many transients, savage humanoids, and wayward sailors as he can up the stairway in the hall, and all have vanished. He doesn't know what to do, and for some reason he cannot release or banish whatever it is he has snared. He is coming to fear that he accidentally captured some kind of imbecile god. 🐸