

HAIL, ADVENTURER!

DRAKKENHEIM IS NO MORE. AN ELDRITCH STORM OF falling stars devastated the city on that woeful eve, leaving behind a meteorite that would have lasting effects. Fifteen years later, Drakkenheim is a dismal urban wasteland contaminated by otherworldly magic and haunted by hideous monsters. Fantastic wealth, lost knowledge, and powerful artifacts lie ready for the taking by adventurers brave or foolish enough to venture into the ruins. However, even those who survive the dangers of Drakkenheim may not return unmarked by its terrors!

DELERIUM

Iridescent crystals of vast magical potential are found throughout Drakkenheim. Known as delerium, these lambent stones emanate unnatural energies that induce madness and monstrous transformations. Despite these dangers, delerium is ideally suited to crafting magic items and fuelling mighty new spells. Sorcerers, warlocks, wizards, and all manner of occult magicians crave its supernatural power, thus delerium commands a high price within arcane circles and underground markets alike. Many prospectors risk everything to collect a few fragments, but the true origins of the strange mineral remain unknown.

CONTAMINATION

Characters may also encounter deadly **eldritch contamination** caused by creatures, delerium, and other magical phenomena in Drakkenheim. Abilities, equipment, and spells that protect against diseases, magic, or poisons do not work against contamination. It cannot be healed naturally, nor readily removed with low-level spells.

CHARACTER OPTIONS

Adventurers of any race or class in the 5e Core + Expanded Rules can be found in Drakkenheim. Although humans, elves, dwarves and halflings are the majority of the population, many other peoples inhabit the world of Drakkenheim, including catfolk, dragonborn, gnomes, goblins, orcs, and tieflings. No matter their origin, there is no reason any type of character would be out of place arriving in Drakkenheim.

Magic suffuses the world of Drakkenheim, but mortal spellcasters are rare. Only about one in every thousand people can cast spells, and roughly two-thirds of these only ever master cantrips and first-level spells in their entire lifetimes. There was a time when arcane magic users faced extreme persecution, and echoes of those prejudices remain. Few even understand the difference between sorcerers, warlocks, and wizards — they are

collectively referred to as ‘mages’. However, commoners can recognize spellcasters who are clerics or paladins of the Sacred Flame (dominant religion in Drakkenheim) or mages of the Amethyst Academy (dominant magical institution and guild for wizards and sorcerers) by their symbols and attire. Spellcasters who are not (or do not claim to be) members of these recognized organizations are often mistrusted and feared by commoners.

FOUR QUICK FACTS ABOUT THE WORLD OF DRAKKENHEIM

The setting of Drakkenheim diverges from the default assumptions of Fifth Edition in four key ways:

- **The gods are silent and distant.** They don’t manifest physically nor speak with worshippers, and do not interfere in earthly matters. Planar cosmology is mysterious and unknowable, but sages have still developed many conflicting (and wildly incorrect) theories.
- **Divine spellcasting powers aren’t granted by gods.** Instead, clerics, druids, and paladins tap into sacred energies through devotion, meditation, and resolve. Violating one’s religious tenets won’t result in a loss of this ability, but a crisis of faith might.
- **Individuals can’t become wizards through study alone.** The arcane magic of both sorcerers and wizards alike is borne in the blood, which may be harnessed via practice and study. The laws of the land bar arcane spellcasters from holding noble titles.
- **High-level NPCs and spellcasters are exceptionally rare in the wider world.** Despite their few numbers, such people still have a profound impact on society. However, Drakkenheim has attracted an uncommonly high concentration of such individuals.

The arcane magic of sorcerers and wizards draws upon otherworldly energies, and is reliant on a recessive genetic trait in mortals - such individuals are called *mageborn*. Signs that a person is mageborn typically emerge in late childhood or early puberty, usually as random displays of wild magic. In some rare cases it does not develop until adulthood. By law, the Amethyst Academy takes guardianship over all mageborn children, whether they are a royal heir or commoner. A child who bristles against Academy training — or who was not taken in by them — most often becomes a sorcerer.

Bards and warlocks also work arcane magic, but do not necessarily depend on mageborn lineage to do so. Instead, warlocks gain arcane power through pacts with eldritch entities, and bards find supernatural inspiration to harness the Words of Creation. Regardless, many keep their powers secret. Finally, characters who are rangers or have subclasses or feats that grant minor spellcasting features are viewed as merely dabblers, not mageborn.