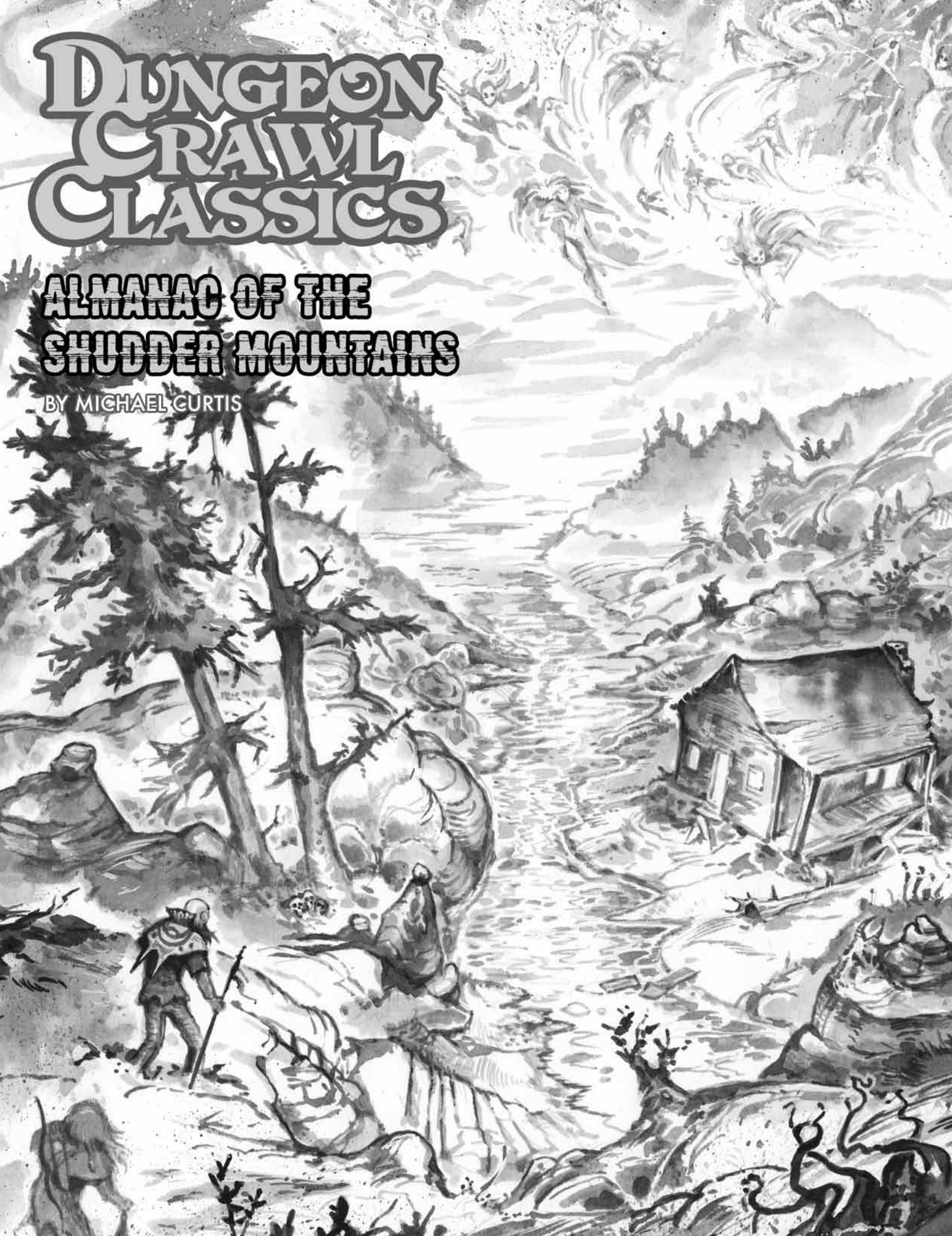


# DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

## ALMANAC OF THE SHUDDER MOUNTAINS

BY MICHAEL CURTIS



# ALMANAC OF THE SHUDDER MOUNTAINS

by Michael Curtis • Editor: Reverend Dak • Art: Doug Kovacs, Michael Wilson • Layout / Art Direction: Joseph Goodman  
Copyright 2014 © Goodman Games. Published under the OGL as defined in DCC #83: *The Chained Coffin*.

## INTRODUCTION

*"The mountains are calling and I must go." - John Muir*

**H**idy, traveler. You look tired. Why not pull up a bit of stump for a while before moving on? I've got a few words to say if you're willing to hark to 'em afore we get going.

You're about to take a journey to a place that possesses both heartbreaking beauty and bone-chilling horror. A land filled with some of the kindest, goodly-hearted people you'll ever have the pleasure of meeting as well as the blackest souls to ever wander the earth. A stretch of worn-down hills and pine-shadowed hollows known as the Shudder Mountains.

The Shudder Mountains were born from an eccentric idea I had to pay homage to the works of Appendix N author, Manly Wade Wellman. My goal was to transform the rich culture and folklore of the Appalachian Mountains, so evocatively portrayed by Wellman in his Silver John series of stories, into the sword & sorcery genre. It seemed a wild scheme but Joseph Goodman was both generous and equally crazy enough to grant his permission. The result was DCC #83 *The Chained Coffin*.

I only managed to scratch the surface of the Shudder Mountains in that adventure and I eagerly told Joseph that, if the adventure proved a popular one, I'd be willing to return to the Shudders as there was a lot left unsaid about the place. Luckily for me, I wouldn't have to wait that long. Thanks to the success of *The Chained Coffin* Kickstarter campaign, I was given the opportunity to go back to the mountains and reveal some more of its secrets.

I've spent a lot of time in the Shudder Mountains over the last few months, taking a figurative journey through its hollows and over its peaks. I've sat by the fires of the Shudfolk (after reassuring them I was no conjure-man, of course) and heard their stories. I've seen witches call up their fiendish masters under a horned moon and fled for my life from the strange

things birthed in the pools of tainted lunar magic known as spoils. And all the while I took notes, knowing you kind folks wanted to know more about the Shudders.

Now, in the safety of my home, I've recorded much of what I've learned about the mountains and the strange denizens that dwell there. In the following pages you'll learn all about the Shudfolk, the history of the Shudder Mountains, the odd creatures that prowl its depths, the unusual superstitions and magic that are still taught in the backwoods, and a pair of adventures to get your own Shudder Mountain campaign going. I hope you enjoy what you're about to read as much as I did writing it!

The strange thing is that, despite the additional room to document life in the Shudders, I'm still not done. There's a hundred score more tales to tell, critters to meet, spells to cast, and songs to be sung in the mountains and I simply ran out of room. Perhaps, if you all let Goodman Games kindly know how much you enjoyed the Shudder Mountains, I'll get another chance to return to the hills and hollows and spin a few more yarns.

In the meantime, I leave it up to you to tell your own stories in the Shudders. The following material is enough to get you started, but like the Shudfolk, themselves, you'll also need to have a strong streak of self-reliance to make it in the mountains. If you find yourself lacking a scrap of mountain lore, don't hesitate in weaving your own tale to fill that hole. The Shudder Mountains belong to all of us, Shudfolk and flatlander, designer and player alike. Enjoy its beauty, mystery, and terror during your stay there. I truly hope to meet you all soon up there in the hills and share a tale or two with you about the journey!

Michael Curtis  
August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014



# PART ONE: THE LAND



he land of the Shudder Mountains region has as much character as the individuals who reside within it. From rolling hills, to pine-thick hollows, to stark peaks silhouetted against the sky, travel through the area brings a wayfarer face-to-face with an array of vistas both solemn and beautiful. This chapter discusses both the history of the Shudder Mountains and how the land came to be, and details the unique places of interest lying within its boundaries, awaiting visitors.

## A HISTORY OF THE SHUDDER MOUNTAINS



he Shudder Mountains are one of the oldest mountain ranges in the world. They were formed hundreds of millions of years ago when the earth buckled as tectonic plates collided. Geological forces pushed the earth up from a shallow seabed, creating towering, jagged peaks of naked stone. The rising land drained the sea away, leaving the newly-birthing mountain range in its place. The early Shudder Mountains once soared up to 15,000 feet in height, a chain of stony giants running roughly northeast to southwest for several hundred miles.

The world was warmer in those prehistoric days and the Shudder Mountains were nearly tropic in climate. The hot, humid mountain valleys were an ideal environment for cold-blooded species. Thus, it was the serpent-men who first slithered into the mountains, building their alien cities in the steep-walled valleys and gathering to conduct bizarre rituals in the caverns that honeycombed the earth below. The serpent-men's grip over the mountain chain was absolute, and they waged decimating warfare against all who invaded their territory. Primitive dwarven tribes lusting after the rich mineral resources of the mountains were massacred by the serpentine overlords, and elven nomads drawn to the beautiful forests that filled the valleys could not overcome the serpent-men wizards that opposed them. As a result of the serpent-men's dominance of the mountains, the long-lived demi-human races never established a foothold in the Shudders, leaving no legacy of dwarven holdfasts or elven glades. It would be humanity's task to eventually break the serpent-men's grasp and lay claim to the rugged land for themselves.

As undisputed masters of the mountains for eons, the serpent-men feared no other creature, but it would be the environment that ultimately brought about their downfall. The world began to grow cooler, heralding the first of several ice ages that arose in the ancient epochs. As glaciers pushed down from the north, many species fled the encroaching ice and sought sanctuary in the mountains. Herds of mammoths climbed into the valleys, followed by the Neolithic human tribes that hunted them. The serpent-men fought to defend their lands from these interlopers, but the cooling temperatures hindered the reptilian race, turning them sluggish and muddling their minds. Deprived of their strength and cunning, the serpent-men, once the apex of civilization in the mountains, found themselves falling beneath the stone spears of primitive humanity. The serpents withdrew from the valleys, abandoning their settlements to seek the protection of the mountain caves, leaving

the Neolithic tribes as the Shudders' new dominant species. For generations, the serpent-men continued to try and drive out the victorious human tribes, launching guerrilla strikes against mankind, but ultimately the snakes degenerated in their subterranean holds and abandoned the surface world to Man. The final fate of the serpent-men survivors is unknown, but it is said that the sound of strange drums still resound in the deepest caverns, hinting that the devolved ancestors of the snake-folk endure in the earth. And although the wondrously sinuous cities the serpent-men built in the mountains are long gone, faint traces of their mastery remain. Odd stones and the rare relic persist, awaiting discovery in forgotten corners of the Shudder Mountains.

The primitive tribes held the mountains for many generations, thriving in the bountiful, sheltered valleys. When the glaciers receded, Mankind remained, the haze of myriad campfires joined the morning mist to fill hollows of the Shudders. But like the serpent-men before them, they encountered a threat to their mountainous territory and fell to outside invaders. However, unlike the serpent-men, the enemies of these early human tribes came not from the northern lands, but descended from the sky overhead.

In those primeval days, a second moon rode the night sky. This other moon was a twisted reflection of its mate, a disk of tarnished silver compared to its luminous twin. In scraps of surviving lore left behind by vanished empires, the moon was called "Luhsaal" and it was home to a race of alien sorcerers. This race was the Hsaal, a species of towering humanoids who incorporated magic into their civilization the way other races utilize brick and stone. The Hsaal demonstrated a mastery of magic as yet unknown in the worlds beyond Luhsaal, but for all their sorcery, the lunar race required more mundane materials to maintain their prolonged civilization. Having mined their moon bare of these essential elements, the Hsaal descended to the young world beneath the moon's orbit, establishing colonies in regions where the sought-after resources were abundant. The Shudder Mountains were one such site and amongst the earliest to be colonized by the Hsaal.

When the first Hsaal arrived in the mountains, the human tribes were wonderstruck. Glimpsing the 7' tall race of lithe-some humanoids with flesh the color of silvery ash and crested heads, the primitive clans thought the Hsaal to be emissaries of their primordial gods. Wonder soon changed to anger, however, as the Hsaal sought to enslave the tribes as laborers. Mankind, roused to barbaric rage, fought back against the Hsaal, but were no match for the unearthly magic the lunar race commanded. Rather than accept defeat, the human tribes took a lesson from their serpent-men foes and retreated into the mountain caverns. The Hsaal weighed the cost of rooting the tribes out of the caves and concluded the loss of Hsaalian life would be high. Rather than pry the original human occupants of the mountains from their subterranean refuges, it was more efficient to import slaves from other Hsaalian colony sites, places where the local populace had already been subjugated. It was these imported laborers that the current residents of the mountain, the Shudfolk, would eventually descend from.

Meanwhile, the native human tribes found themselves imprisoned within the caverns they retreated to. Like the serpent-men, attempts were made to continue an insurgency against the Hsaal, but their simple weapons and rudimentary magic was no match for lunar sorcery. The first tribes were pushed to the brink of extinction, but some clans survived in their new troglodytic world, adapting to the darkness. Whether these survivors discovered the descendants of their ancient serpent-men enemies and joined in battle once again is unknown, but explorers of the Shudder Mountain caves have reported encounters with a pale, human-like species of cannibals ideally suited for underground existence. These creatures may be the ancestors of the Shudder's first human occupants, now long devolved.

As the imported slave laborers arrived in the mountains, the Hsaal made subtle alterations to their new workers' bodies and minds, employing magic to optimize the human slaves for their new home and tasks. The sorcery-altered slave bloodlines gave birth to a strain of rugged humanity, well-suited for the hard conditions of both their work and their mountainous home. To ensure the slaves wouldn't seek to escape, the Hsaal overlords implanted a geas in them, creating a desire in each servant to remain within the mountains and eschewing thoughts of what lay beyond the peaks. Once properly conditioned, the Hsaal put the slaves to work, carving out mines in the mountains to extract the minerals the lunar civilization required. These diggings remain to this day, pockmarking the slopes of the Shudders and mystifying both Shudfolk and flatlander visitors alike.

The Hsaal, like those who came before them, controlled the Shudder Mountain region for generations, gradually extracting the necessary resources from the earth and shipping it home to Luhsaal by mystical gates and undreamed of transports. The satraps that ruled the colonies grew rich and decadent. Their slaves were too well-conditioned to revolt and specially-bred overseers, creatures that would be known later as the Abandoned, attended to the day-to-day management of the mines. The Hsaal of the Shudders enjoyed an idyllic life—until their world literally shattered.

The sorcerer-kings of Luhsaal lived and breathed magic, but magic, like an animal, can turn on its master. The Hsaalian wizards pushed their magic too far, setting off a chain reaction that spread like wildfire across the moon. Massive rifts erupted in the lunar surface, cities died in conflagrations, and the magical catastrophe grew to apocalyptic proportions. As the Hsaal of the Shudder Mountains watched in horror, their home moon of Luhsaal tore itself apart in the sky and plummeted through a titanic rift in time and space. As it vanished from the sky, echoes of the magical disaster rippled down from space, following the mystical ties the Hsaal colonies had with their lunar home. The forces of the magical cataclysm blasted through the transport gates, reverberating across the landscape. Mountain peaks were reduced to rubble and the entire mountain chain rumbled under the power of the blasts. Killing waves of lambent black fire chased their way across the sorcerous ties connecting the Hsaal of the Shudder Mountains, destroying their bodies and spilling their once-restrained magical power across the land. In a matter of moments, the Hsaal colonists were destroyed, leaving their slaves without masters.

Once the aftershocks faded and the mountains grew silent again, the slaves looked out across the devastation, their

souls filled with a mixture of abject horror, uncertainty, and—strangely—elation. For the first time in generations, the slaves found themselves free. Their overseers, the Abandoned, lacking orders and bound to their mines by duty and sorcery, cowered in the diggings. Some slaves returned to the mines, uncertain of what else to do and never emerged. A far larger number of the now liberated workers gathered together, and fled from their former workplaces, seeking shelter in the myriad remote hollows of the mountains.

The former slaves, still under the influence of the ancient geas that lay upon their bloodline, remained tied to the mountains. Despite the horrors they endured during their servitude and in the wake of the lunar cataclysm, this strain of man felt a profound peace in the shadow of the mountains. Over time, the refugees fragmented into separate clans and families, building communities across the region. After the passing of untold generations, the former slaves grew from barbarism to learn agriculture and master metal-working, eventually become the Shudfolk who dwell in the mountains to this day.

The Shudfolk remained an isolated society for generations, but ultimately other cultures came into contact with the mountain people. As borders expanded and traders sought new markets, outsiders began climbing into the pine-covered mountains and encountered the reclusive Shudfolk. After a few violent conflicts with the mountain clans, negotiators convinced the outermost families of the benefit of trade between the hillfolk and the flatlanders, establishing trading partnerships and routes that exist even today. For the first time since their ancestors were brought to the mountains, the Shudfolk sampled from the world beyond the Shudder Mountains, gradually becoming familiar with the outside lands. Despite this acclimation, the Shudfolk fiercely maintain their culture's heritage and resist any large scale changes to their way of life. The Shudfolk have benefited from their contact with the outside world, but not so much that they're ready to sell their cultural identity for luxuries from beyond the mountains. This does not mean that life remains constant in the mountains, however.

Six centuries ago, an event occurred that changed the tone of life in the mountains. Three devils, minor princes in Hell's hierarchy, were drawn to the Shudders. Perhaps it was the Hsaalian taint in the Shudfolk's veins or the spoils that stain the landscape that caught the attention of the infernal entities, calling to them the way the mountains sing to the Shudfolk's souls. The three, Anector, Haade, and Modeca are by no means allies. Instead the devils, known as the Three, are rivals for the souls of all sentient creatures who dwell in the mountains. Each attempts to increase the number of mortal souls pledged to them in servitude, raising their status amongst Hell's hierarchy in the process. The Three constantly contest with one another, using the mortals who pledged their souls as pawns on their mountainous chessboard. In return for service, many witches and conjure-men have been granted—temporarily—great power by their infernal masters. The Three's interest in the Shudders has resulted in a rise in the number of witches who call the mountains home and the Sovereign Church finds itself assailed by dark sorcery from all sides. Given the superstitious nature of the Shudfolk, many of them believe a time of reckoning is coming when the forces of good and evil square off against one another. There is no doubt in their minds that it will be the Shudder Mountains that will serve as the final battleground.

## OVERVIEW OF THE SHUDDER MOUNTAINS TODAY



In many ways the Shudder Mountains have stood unchanged since the ancient days of prehistory, remaining a place where nature reigns supreme and its mysteries intact despite eons of occupation. In others, however, it has become nearly unrecognizable.

The largest change to the Shudders is in its topography. The soaring, jagged mountains of the ancient world are long gone, worn down by the unrelenting process of time, erosion, and grinding glaciers. The catastrophic forces unleashed on the land during the destruction of Luhsaal also altered the landscape, leveling mountain peaks and causing titanic earthquakes. It is the memory of these earth tremors, preserved in fragments by the Shudfolk's legends, which give the mountains their name. The once high, saw-toothed mountain peaks, have been replaced by gentle rolling mountains. In their youth, the peaks rose as high as 15,000 feet, but now age has worn the mountains down to half that height.

The geology of the mountains is comprised of limestone, granite, shale, schist, sandstone, and quartz. Running through the stone are veins of iron and zinc, as well as massive deposits of coal. Gold and silver veins remain undiscovered in the mountains, and gemstones such as emeralds, rubies, garnets, aquamarines, sapphires, topaz, amethyst, citrine, moonstone, and peridots can be pried from the ground with patient searching.

The Shudder Mountains are home to a vast river network. Rivulets and streams flow down from the mountain heights, growing into creeks and rivers that carved the numerous valleys throughout the Shudders. The Crowclack, Phophurd, and Drowning are the largest of these rivers, their banks home to uncounted farmsteads and trading posts.

The flowing waters and natural geological forces gave birth to countless valleys, dells, coves, and vales throughout the mountains, known collectively as "hollows" (or "hollers," depending on the local patois). These low-lying areas, separated from one another by steep mountain slopes or high ridges, form isolated pockets of woodlands where dense groves of trees grow, encouraged by the rich soil deposits that accumulate there.

A wide array of tree species cover the rolling hills and mountain slopes. Consisting of a mixture of deciduous and coniferous trees, one finds oak, hickory, chestnut, spruce, pine, beech, poplar, hemlock, fir, and balsam growing in the Shudders. In the autumn months, the Mountains transform into a vista of bright yellows, oranges, and reds, with stands of dark green and blue conifers breaking up the palette. Wildflowers fill mountain meadows, kudzu spreads its vines along river banks, and ferns and mosses sprout in dark woods and on rocky cliff faces.

Wildlife of the Shudders is even more varied than its plant life, providing both meat for Shudfolk stewpots and sources of terror for travelers. Deer, opossum, raccoon, wild boar, and squirrel are hunted for their meat, while gray wolves, grizzly and black bears, bobcats, and cougars prowl the slopes and woods making life dangerous for hunters that stray too far into the backwoods. Serpents are rife in the Shudders and the Shud-

folk have a healthy respect for the rattlesnakes, copperheads, and water moccasins that slither among the stones and nest in caves.

Far more dangerous than these animal species are the monstrous creatures of the mountains. Species of giant serpents slither through the woods and gargantuan salamanders ambush prey from the river rocks. Tribes of hill giants maintain crude holdings in the hollows and mossback trolls prowl along the mountain slopes. Undead—especially ghost, phantoms, and "hants"—emerge from their resting places after the sun goes down to feed on the life-force of the living. Beneath the ground, earth hounds engage in ghoulish foraging and the twisted descendants of the Shudders' first human occupants wriggle. Isolated and barbaric enclaves of serpent-men may also continue a hellish existence in the deepest caverns of the mountains.

Despite this panoply of horrors, the worst monsters found in the Shudders are unique ones. When the Hsaal were destroyed eons ago, their magic spilled across the land, accumulating in far-flung places. There the magic energy festered, becoming hot spots of malignant sorcery known as spoils (see *The Chained Coffin Companion*, p. 2). The spoils sometimes give birth to hitherto unseen creatures that slink through the hollows in search of a meal or become slaves to the witches and conjure-men who dwell in the Shudders.

## PLACES OF INTEREST IN THE MOUNTAINS



With such a rich and ancient history, the Shudder Mountains contain a large number of interesting (and often dangerous) sites to explore. Some of these places of interest are natural phenomenon, the result of uncounted years of geological and environmental forces at work. Others were erected by the hands of man—or other sentient races—and run the gamut from everyday places of business to hoary ruins containing ancient mysteries forgotten by the modern world. In this section, we'll consider each in turn.

Note that there are a number of locations keyed on the Shudder Mountain regional map accompanying this book that are not described here. It is the author's intent to present the judge with several interesting-sounding locales but allow the judge to create his own content for these sites as required by the campaign. As always, the judge has complete freedom to remove or alter the information provided below to best suit the desires of himself and his players.



## Geographical Sites

The following locations are detailed on the Shudder Mountain regional map, but this is by no means a complete account of all the natural wonders and places of interest waiting to be found in the Shudders. Uncounted farmsteads dot the river valleys and hollows, for example, and an examination of the Deep Hollows map in *DCC #83 The Chained Coffin* demonstrates how many secrets a handful of hexes can contain. The judge is encouraged to create his own settlements and places of interest as his needs and desires dictate.

**Bald Hill:** This hill is half-covered with trees and scrub plants, with the foliage ending abruptly before it reaches the top of the hillock. Scorched and blasted rocks protrude from the earth, and shallow craters mar the hilltop. This devastation is the result of an abnormally high number of lightning strikes that pound the hill during the fierce thunderstorms that roll through the mountains. Many postulate the lightning strikes are caused by a rich iron deposit located beneath the hill, but others claim supernatural forces are at work. In the hidden lore of witches, it is said that the devil, Haade, the First of the Three, frequents this hilltop. Those wishing to make a compact with the First of the Three should venture up Bald Hill when the weather turns foreboding.

**Bog Hollow:** Several natural springs slowly burble up into this high mountain hollow transforming the vale's bottomland into a marshy bog. Despite a draining stream running down to the Phophurd River, the mountain cove remains marshy year round, even during the worst of the summer droughts. Bog Hollow is an ominous place. Dead swamp cedars stand in the midst of scum-covered pools like skeletal hands reaching towards the sky. The sound of croaking frogs fills the air and, at night, the ghostly glow of foxfire is omnipresent. Most fearsome are the large number of water moccasins and other water snakes that slither through the pools. A forgotten serpent-man temple attracts these snakes, who unknowingly help guard the strange artifacts and ancient treasures secreted within the temple's ruined walls.

**Carrion Peak:** Shudfolk legend has it that this mountain was once home to a great beast, the identity of which varies from tale to tale. Some stories maintain it was a tremendous wyrm or serpent, while others identify it as a creature that fell from the night sky. Legend holds that it rampaged along the mountain's slopes for centuries before perishing at the hands of a Shudfolk hero. As the monster's body rotted beneath the sun, gargantuan scavenger birds were drawn by the stink of putrefying flesh and they picked the carcass clean. The descendants of these giant buzzards still roost on Carrion Peak, soaring on the thermals in search of meals. No one has scaled the mountain since the monster's demise and returned alive and its bones—as well as treasure of old—are believed to still reside near the mountain's peak.

**Ten-Mile Lake:** The largest lake in the mountains, Ten-Mile Lake is a deep, clear body of water fed by creeks flowing down from the surrounding mountains. The lake sustains a bounty of fish and other aquatic animals, feeding the several small Shudfolk communities that stand along the lakeside. The fishing, however, is not always easy, for the lake is home to immense catfish that prowl the depths and sometimes drag anglers to their dooms. The giant mudcats lurk in the deepest part of the

lake, where the local Shudfolk claim strange stone structures can be seen half-buried in the lake bottom when the sun is at its zenith. Due to the depth of these ruins and the monstrous catfish that lair within them, no one has successfully plumbed the structures to uncover their secrets.

**Sour Spring Hollow:** Formerly known as "Sweet Spring Hollow" for the natural well located here, this vale acquired a nasty reputation when the Hobb family, a clan of witches and conjure-men, took up residence. Their presence was said to taint the spring, forever changing the dell's name to "Sour Spring Hollow." The Hobbs are long gone and only the overgrown ruins of their cabins remain. Nevertheless, Sour Spring Hollow is avoided by most Shudfolk, although it's believed witch liquor bootleggers may use the secluded and tainted hollow to brew their wares. Further details on this place are found in the "Sour Spring Hollow" adventure accompanying this supplement.

**Yander Mountain and the Woeful Caverns:** This mountain overlooks Ridge Road, a once-popular trade route leading from the Shudfolk communities of Hark and Whistler's Knob. A network of natural limestone caves meanders its way beneath the mountain, diving deep into the earth to connect with other subterranean spaces. Over the past several decades, Yander Mountain and the Woeful Caverns, as the caves are known, have acquired a fearsome reputation. Wayfarers traveling along Ridge Road go missing near the mountain and the occupants of several Shudfolk farmsteads close to the peak have been discovered massacred. As a result, few travelers journey on Ridge Road these days and the local Shudfolk fear the mountain. Despite the legends of an evil presence lurking in the caves, some fool-hardy souls have delved into the caverns, drawn by stories of glowing "fetch lights" sighted on the mountain. These lights are believed to appear near undiscovered riches. So far, no one who has entered the Woeful Caverns has emerged alive. For more details on the occupants of the Woeful Caverns and Yander Mountain's secrets, see the adventure "The Woeful Caverns under Yander Mountain" accompanying this book.

**The Deep Hollows:** Fashioned by three creeks flowing down out of the mountains, the Deep Hollows is the name given to a trio of river valleys located near the eastern edge of the Shudder Mountains. The three vales, known as Claw Hollow, Bad Lick Hollow, and Spook Hollow, are said to house a clan of hill giants, the home of the witch, Granny Huldah, and ancient ruins perhaps dating back to the Hsaalian occupation. Additional information on the Deep Hollows can be found in *DCC #83 The Chained Coffin*.

**The Wildwood:** Travelers venturing deep into the depths of the Shudders report that a large forest grows in a long, wide valley surrounded by high peaks. Explorers descending into the woods tend to either not remain long inside its shadowy interior or never emerge again. Unknown to outsiders, the Wildwood is home to a menagerie of bizarre monstrosities warring with one another and devouring anyone who stumbles across their paths. The origin of these beasts is believed to be a titanic spoil festering in the heart of the forest since the Hsaal's destruction. If this is true, it stands to reason that other legacies—in the form of ruins, artifacts, and forgotten lore—may also exist within the Wildwood.

## Towns, Hamlets, and Scraps of Civilization Back Yonder

**Bent Pine:** This community is more trade outpost than true village. Consisting of a mere dozen buildings, Bent Pine serves as a common meeting place for flatlander merchants coming to the Shudder Mountains in search of local commodities like timber, handcrafted woodwork, and – increasingly – witch liquor. Bent Pine is likely the last civilized place travelers heading into the Deep Hollows pass through before entering the mountains proper. More information on Bent Pine is found in DCC #83 *The Chained Coffin*.

**Chimbley Rock:** This hamlet is simply a dozen log buildings erected at the base of the high stone outcropping. A narrow cleft rises from the base of the rock to its apex, giving both the outcrop and the adjacent community their names. The residents of Chimbley Rock eke out their living by farming, weaving, and hunting the backwoods, selling their infrequent surplus to traveling merchants that stop at the village three times a year. More frequent visitors to the Rock (as the locals call it) are explorers curious about the odd stone menhir situated atop the outcropping. Anyone enduring the arduous climb up the rock's cleft discovers both a weathered finger of stone erected by unknown hands and a gorgeous view of the surrounding landscape. The purpose of the menhir is unknown, but rumors suggest it may be a landmark and rangefinder leading to a hidden ruin or treasure secreted on a nearby mountain.

**Dead Wolf:** This settlement serves as a common meeting ground for Shudfolk farmers living further up the Crowclack River Valley. Commodities from Husk downriver make their way up to Dead Wolf by boat or horse trail, brought by enterprising traders looking to trade directly with the mountain folk (and thereby increase their profit margin). It is also the location where Shudfolk bring the wolves they kill in the surrounding mountains. Due to deprivations on Shudfolk livestock, a standing bounty of one piece of silver for male wolves and two silver for females is common in the Shudders. This blood price is paid by a pair of flatlander fur merchants who cater to discriminating markets. In recent months, a particularly large and violent wolf has been preying on livestock and has avoided all attempts to trap and kill it. Stories are beginning to circulate that the wolf is a supernatural creature, but the tales don't agree if it's a lycanthrope, a spoil-spawned monstrosity, or a witch in animal form. The bounty on this particular predator has grown quite large.

**Devil's Hole:** This tiny hamlet is occupied by a small population of miners eking out their existence by digging coal from underneath the surrounding mountains. Although coal is not an overly valuable commodity, blacksmiths, armorers, and other metal-workers require it to run their forges and the majority of the nearby flatlander metalsmiths rely on Shudder Mountains coal for their work. The miners extract the substance from a number of rich deposits accessed by the natural sinkhole that gives the community its name. Unfortunately for the miners, the main coal seam they are working leads to a particularly large subterranean spoil. In the all too soon future, the unwitting miners will find themselves exposed to the spoil's power with unpredictable effects to follow.

**Husk:** Much like Bent Pine, Husk is more a trading outpost where flatlanders and Shudfolk meet to conduct business than



a true Shudfolk village. Husk, as its name suggests, is primarily an agricultural marketplace where Shudfolk farmers sell their surplus corn crop and craftsmen trade their wares for goods unavailable in the mountains. A trio of immense corn cribs dominate the settlement, surrounded by a Sovereign church, stables, trading post, tavern, and a bawdy house staffed by flatlanders. There is a brisk witch liquor market operating out of the bawdy house, one that has survived numerous attempts by the community's constables to stamp out.

**Prosperity:** A collection of poorly-built log cabins and tents, the small hamlet of Prosperity belies its name. The community is home to a few dozen rugged individuals determined to make their fortune mining a meager gold vein that winds through the mountain above. A rough-and-tumble place even by Shudder Mountain standards, death seems to stalk the muddy streets of Prosperity. Miners murder one another over claim ownership, rockslides and flash floods decimate lives and property, and intermittent monster and animal attacks kill solitary prospectors on the mountain slopes. Only the occasional rich strike keeps the desperate miners of Prosperity from abandoning their diggings.

**Thundercrack:** Built in the fork of two rivers, Thundercrack is named for the fierce storms that rage high up in the mountains. These storms inevitably cause flash flooding down the Phosphurd River Valley and the first residents of Thundercrack planned accordingly. The entire town is built atop pilings interconnected by wooden walkways and rope bridges. Despite these precautions, the town has lost buildings and lives to flooding in the past, but the resilient spirit of the Shudfolk ensures they rebuild and resume their lives here. Thundercrack's economic base is the mining that occurs in the surrounding mountains, especially the coal coming down from

Devil's Hole and the scant products of Prosperity's workings. Poled barges move the ore downriver to flatlander markets, and young Shudfolk looking to experience life beyond the mountains often travel to Thundercrack to seek passage on the barges bound for the outside world.

**Timber Drop:** The town of Timber Drop is the most civilized Shudfolk community by flatlander standards. Perched on the edge of a tumbling cascade that feeds a broad pool below, Timber Drop is the final destination for logs cut further up the Crowclack River Valley. Shudfolk lumberjacks pole the fallen trees downstream, abandoning their charges just before they plummet over the waterfall into the pool beneath. The steady supply of timber and the town's large number of sawyers has resulted in a community comprised of plank buildings rather than the log structures so common in the mountains. There is an ongoing competition amongst the lumberjacks to see who dares ride the logs closest to the waterfall's drop before leaping to safety. More than a few tree cutters have delayed their jump too long and fallen to their deaths. Local legend maintains the timber pool is haunted by the ghosts of these unfortunates, but, if this is true, they don't hinder business in Timber Drop.

**Toad Fork:** Named for the trail that splits near an odd-looking rocky outcrop that resembles a grinning toad, this village serves as a way station for travelers on their way deeper into the mountains. A large stone and timber inn (unusual for the region) named the Hoppytoad House shelters travelers. Impromptu concerts performed by the musically-inclined residents of the village are often held in the clearing behind the general store, and it's said that Old Man Roane knows nearly every song in the Shudders, sawing them out on his battered fiddle. He may be willing to teach an Old Song to a student if the learner can get past his crotchety personality.

**Ugly Bottom:** The first Shudfolk to farm this hollow discovered that, although the soil was rich, the sheer amount of rocks, dead-fall trees, and other natural obstacles that needed clearing before the hollow could be worked was a massive undertaking. In other words, it was ugly work. The name stuck and after generations of toil, Ugly Bottom is now quite picturesque. In high summer, the fields surrounding the log buildings are verdant with corn and the sound of chuckling brooks flowing through the hollow resounds in the mountain air. The residents of Ugly Bottom remain secretive for fear outsiders will come to the hollow and ruin their hard-earned paradise in the mountains. Some old timers in Ugly Bottom say that an elemental spirit dwells within the village and it is this entity that helps ensure the hollow's bounty.

**Yellow Skull:** Located deep in the mountains, Yellow Skull gets its name from a gargantuan and ancient skull unearthed there by Shudfolk farmers long ago. The massive cranium was so large that two grown men could stand within it. Despite a thorough plowing of the land around the skull, no other bones have been found, further increasing the mystery of where it came from. The skull is no longer present in the small village, having been stolen by a conjure-man's fiendish henchmen a century ago. The current whereabouts of the skull and what devious plans the sorcerer had in mind for the bony artifact remain unknown.

## Secret Places and Mysterious Ruins

**Luhhaal Wheel:** A relic from the bygone days of Hsaalian occupancy, the Luhhaal Wheel was an observatory and star clock constructed by that lunar race and keyed to the movement of their home world. The sorcerer-kings employed the site in their magical rituals and as one of the gateways to travel back and forth from the demon-haunted moon. When the Hsaal were destroyed, the Wheel was forgotten, sealed behind powerful wards. Although hidden, a series of events currently unfolding makes it likely the Wheel will soon be rediscovered and play an important role in the future (or lack thereof) of the Shudder Mountains. For more information on the Luhhaal Wheel, see *DCC #83 The Chained Coffin*.

**Makepeace Hill:** A century ago, a violent feud raged in the hollows between the Strikeleather and Weaver families. Nearly thirty people from both families perished in the fighting before the surviving members, sick of the bloodshed, made peace with one another. As a symbol of their truce, both families reinterred their deceased loved ones on a low hill near the head of Moon Hollow. The shared burying ground would be a reminder of the senseless violence and a pledge to never feud again. Although the living Strikeleathers and Weavers have maintained the peace, legend has it that the dead are not so quick to forget. Local folklore speaks of angry ghosts rising from their graves each night to continue their battle with one another and woe be unto anyone caught in the graveyard after sundown. Even the Strikeleathers and Weavers avoid Makepeace Hill after dark. The local tales also say that one of casualties of the feud was a witch man and he was unwittingly interred with a potent magical object he owned in life.

**Phantom Hollow:** Travelers in the mountains have sighted this mysterious hollow for centuries. It appears as a narrow vale containing a meandering creek and thick stands of trees. The ruin of a small city, one of odd stone architecture, rises from the valley floor along the banks of the creek. Few have ventured into the hollow and the dell seems to appear and disappear at random, manifesting in different places at different times. Legends suggest the entire hollow and the strange city may be an echo of the earliest days of the Shudder Mountains, a place caught in a repeating loop of time and space. If this is true, the city may be of Hsaalian construction or even an artifact from the serpent-men's prehistoric dominion over the mountains.

**The Burn:** The site known as "The Burn" is a small meadow filled with scraggly grass and dark, dry soil. The rotten and scorched stubs of six poles protrude from the black earth, relics from a witch burning that occurred here three decades ago. A small clan of witches and conjure-men were rooted out of their remote farm by a Sovereign priest and set alight in this clearing. Despite the passing of thirty years, the clearing hasn't recovered. Some maintain this is a result of the witches' evil essence escaping into the ground as their bodies burned. Although little remains to intrigue visitors, cloaked and hooded figures are sometime glimpsed skulking around The Burn after dark, engaged in unknown purposes. Shudfolk "study witches" believe The Burn has magical properties. Sorcery worked here is amplified by the lingering witches' power. Spells that call upon forces beyond the ken of mankind or summon the attention of devils, demons, and potential patrons are more effective on The Burn.





**The Old Standamish Place:** Nearly eighty years ago, an enterprising flatlander named Halden Standamish built an opulent home in one of the Shudder's many hollows. Unlike the crude log cabins of the Shudfolk, Standamish constructed a fine home of stone, planed planks, and fine glass, all imported from outside the Shudders at great expense. He employed flatlander workers rather than hire local craftsmen, a move that did little to ingratiate himself with the Shudfolk. It was Standamish's hope to build a profitable mining concern in the nearby mountains, and the snooty outsider was not shy in bragging about his knowledge of a hidden mine that would soon make his already sizable fortune even greater. Standamish's dream ended one stormy night when screams and blood filled his mountain palace, and the boastful mogul's body was found turned inside-out on his front porch. The Standamish place has been avoided ever since that fearsome night and even rumors of Halden's fortune hidden within its bloodstained walls isn't enough to lure the superstitious Shudfolk across the sagging ruin's threshold.

**The White Hell:** A large adit emerges from the mountainside, its mouth hastily sealed with fallen timber and rubble. Beyond this crude barricade are the tunnels known as the White Hell. The mine is of Hsaalian origin and bears all the signs of being the product of hard labor rather than a natural cave system. Curious prospectors discovered the mine a decade ago and ventured deep into its reaches, despite warnings of the strange creatures that defend the ancient diggings. When the explorers spotted no signs of the usual Abandoned guardians, and instead found gleaming deposits of gemstone ripe for mining, they thanked their good fortunes — up until the moment a vast horde of wrigglers crawled from the darkness and attacked. Most of the prospectors perished in the attack, but a handful of survivors escaped to the sunlit mountainside and sealed the mine as best they could. It is said that the mine gets its name from the pale mass of wrigglers dwelling within, but other contend it was the survivors' stark white hair, abruptly turned snowy with fright, that is responsible for its moniker.

## PART TWO: THE PEOPLE

**I**f the landscape of the Shudder Mountains is the region's body, it is the folks who live there that comprise its soul. The primary and longest-enduring residents of the Shudders are the Shudfolk. These independent people could trace their ancestry back to the dim days of prehistory — if they only knew the truth of their origins. The Shudfolk are like all humanity, comprised of both the good and the evil, and provide no shortage of interesting tales to both swap around the hearth and to explore as judge and players. This section takes a deeper look at the Shudfolk, their daily lives, beliefs, and the superstitions that make them unique. It also examines the few demi-humans who dwell in the Shudders, why they are a rarity in this human land, and how to set up an "all human" Shudder Mountain campaign.

### THE SHUDFOLK

**T**he Shudfolk are the predominant human occupants of the Shudder Mountains and every aspect of their lives was influenced by their long and reclusive occupancy in its hills and hollows. This section explores the various facets of Shudfolk life to assist the judge when running a Shudder Mountains campaign and to give players creating a Shudfolk character as a sense of place in the campaign world.

### Origins and Characteristics of the Shudfolk

As chronicled in *A History of the Shudder Mountains*, the Shudfolk are the far-removed descendants of various human tribes imported to the mountains by the Hsaal to serve as slaves in their mining operations. This original slave stock came from across the world, gathered from wherever the Hsaal had established mining colonies and subjugated the local populace. As a result, the Shudfolk arose from a diverse population, one that included nearly every genetic strain of humanity. Their varied ancestral heritage means there is no typical Shudfolk physical appearance. Although the Shudfolk gene pool has homogenized somewhat down the eons through intermarriage, the mountain folk nevertheless display a beautiful mix of skin tones, eye and hair color, and distinctive facial features. The only common traits they share are a hearty stamina and a deep and abiding love for their mountainous homeland. Both of these characteristics are the legacy of sorcerous manipulations by the Hsaal to create the ideal worker race.

The Shudfolk's ancestors underwent magical conditioning by their overlords, with the Hsaal employing their literally unearthly magic to increase the endurance of their laborers to better toil in the mines, as well as a mental compulsion to re-

## Life in the Shudder Mountains

Like most rural areas, the backbone of life in the Shudder Mountains are the farmsteads that dot the hollows and river valleys. The Shudfolk farms largely produce corn and wheat, the staple crops of mountain life. The growing season allows for two crops a year, the product of which farmers subsist on and sell to feed the small "middle class" of craftsmen that exists among the Shudfolk and to outsiders (called flatlanders by the Shudfolk) for profit. Agriculture is supplemented by animal rearing (cows, sheep, goats, and the omnipresent pig) and hunting, and its unheard of to meet a Shudfolk without at least some hunting skill or proficiency with bow or boar spear.

The Shudfolk are extraordinarily self-sufficient. They make their own clothes from locally produced wool and leather, and these garments are designed to survive the hardscrabble life in the mountains. Shoes and boot, farm implements, pottery, rugs, blankets, weapons, sledges, and all the other objects needed by the Shudfolk are made either on the farm or by the small number of craftsmen dedicated to producing these required items of mountain existence. Trade and barter is the main force behind the Shudfolk economy, and a farmer needing new shoes for his horse is far more likely to swap one of his hogs with the blacksmith than pay in hard coin. Those Shudfolk who live deep in the mountains may have never seen actual minted coins, let alone possess them. Shudfolk living closer to the trade towns on the mountains' borders use a mixture of coin and barter when conducting business.

Shudfolk communities are largely self-reliant ones. Settlements govern by consensus, with the patriarchs (and sometimes matriarchs) of each family speaking in open forum to decide important issues. Large Shudfolk towns, especially those that are trading posts where mountain folk and flatlanders meet, maintain a constabulary force to maintain law and preserve the peace, but this is exception rather than the rule. Most Shudfolk communities are simply not large enough to require permanent law enforcement officials. When a crime is discovered, a general "hue and cry" goes out with all able-bodied Shudfolk assisting in the apprehending of a suspect. Justice is overseen by either the community elders or the local Sovereign priest. Minor crimes usually impart fines on the guilty party, while more severe breaches of the law can result in banishment, mutilation, or death by hanging (or burning or drowning in the case of convicted sorcerers).

### Customs, Faith, and Superstition

Both their unique origins and hard living have resulted in a number of cultural customs and mores arising amongst the Shudfolk. "Life is different in the mountains," is a common refrain (and oftentimes warning) heard by newcomers to the area from their Shudfolk hosts.

For such a money-poor people, the Shudfolk are first and foremost a generous culture. There are few inns serving travelers in Shudfolk communities as there's little need for them. A traveler passing through a Shudfolk settlement will almost always be offered a hot meal and a place to sleep if the visitor demonstrates good manners. Even a boorishly-behaving traveler might be given a gourdful of well water and directed to a relatively safe patch of land to camp on. A Shudfolk in need can almost always rely on his neighbors for assistance – provided



main within the confines of the Shudders to mitigate the desire to escape. The changes to the slave race's bloodline continue to manifest in their descendants. The Shudfolk are a resilient people, able to work long hours and withstand minor illnesses. And though the mental conditioning has faded somewhat done the ages, it remains rare for a Shudfolk to leave the mountains for long. Youths, driven by the normal urges of their age, do depart to see the sights of the flatlands on occasion, but eventually the call of the mountains stirs their blood to return to the region of their birth.

There is a third effect of the Hsaal's magical manipulation of the Shudfolk's bloodline. With traces of Luhsalian magic in their veins, the Shudfolk possess an odd affinity for magic and, with proper training, can produce minor preternatural effects via the use of charms known as folk magic or *gramaree*, and by playing certain old songs first composed by their Hsaalian manipulators. More information on *gramaree* and the Old Songs is presented in the *Magic of the Mountains* section.

Despite the Shudfolk's long occupancy of the mountains, their own origin remains a mystery to them. The Shudfolk rely on oral history and folktales to remember their past and, despite the amazing ability of their storytellers to recount the tales of long ago, after numerous millennia, some of the details have been forgotten, lost in the haze of history. As far as the Shudfolk are concerned, they've always dwelled in the mountains and will continue to do so until the end of time. The Hsaalian diggings, serpent-men ruins, and other relics from the days of prehistory remain as much of a mystery to the Shudfolk as they do to outsiders. The Shudfolk do, however, seem to possess a subconscious ancestral memory. Shudfolk purposely avoid Hsaalian mines and ruins as if some distant part of their psyches still recalls their ancestors' years of servitude under the sorcerer-kings.

he is willing to swallow his pride and ask for it. As generous as the mountain people are, they are also intensely proud, determined to demonstrate they have the gumption and where-withal to endure and overcome the worst the Shudders can throw at them. Only when dangers are obviously supernatural in origin will a typical Shudfolk unhesitatingly seek help.

This generosity and common courtesy of the Shudfolk is a result of extended family ties throughout the region. As a remote culture, the Shudfolk's bloodlines are intricately intertwined, and most every Shudfolk family shares common ancestors if you go far enough up the family tree. They are a people of a single blood and treat one another as long lost cousins—at least upon first meeting. Like any family, quarrels, disagreements, and hurt feelings occur amongst the Shudfolk and when things turn sour, relations between clans can turn violent. Even flatlanders have heard the tales of mountain feuds where two families nearly decimated themselves, battling for years to regain face after a slight or insult. Most feuds cool down once casualties on both sides begin to mount, but some stubborn mountain clans have fought themselves to extinction over a minor misunderstanding.

The Shudfolk, unlike most cultures outside the mountains, are a monotheistic people, venerating a single deity known as "The Sovereign" (see p. The Chained Coffin Companion, page 4). Although the depth and sincerity of their faith differs from Shudfolk to Shudfolk, the Sovereign Church and its teachings play a vital role in mountain life. The local priest attends to not only the spiritual welfare of the community, but serves as teacher, healer, and magistrate. It is rare to encounter a Shudfolk that does not wear the Sovereign Circle around his or her neck or displays it in a place of prominence at home. One of the prime reasons that the majority of Shudfolk possess such strong faith lies in the fact that the Sovereign Church is the Shudfolk's sole opposition against a multitude of supernatural menaces that lurk in the Shudders. Many a Sovereign cleric or lay priest has driven out vengeful spirits, black-hearted conjure-men, and curse-sowing witches, and these displays of divine power reinforce the faith of the Shudfolk.

Given the fact that the Shudfolk arose from ancestors who'd been magically manipulated on a genetic level, it's unsurprising that the mountain people are suspicious (and perhaps harbor a subconsciously-induced ancestral hatred) of magical practitioners. With the exception of the Sovereign clergy and the occasional "study witch" (a person who knows much about magic but does not practice it), anyone dabbling in sor-

cery is considered a "witch" or "conjure-man" (or on rare occasions, a "witch man"). Witches and conjure-men are unwelcome in Shudfolk communities unless a respected individual vouches for them and assumes responsibility for their behavior. Even in these cases, the typical Shudfolk generosity isn't quite as warm to the magician, but not so rude as to cause offense. Shudfolk, especially those in the most remote part of the mountains, will deal with witches and conjure-men to acquire healing, protections against evil spirits, and the rare curse on an enemy, but this is a relationship founded more on need than desire.

Despite this distrust of magic, the sorcery-manipulated blood of the Shudfolk continues the flow in their veins, resulting in an unusual aptitude for magical work. This accounts for the abnormally high number of witches and conjure-men who live in the Shudder Mountains. These are almost all individuals who chafed under the hard life of the mountains and sought an easy route to improve their lives and obtain power. When one of the Three offered to teach them sorcery in return for servitude, they willingly accepted, trading their souls for temporal power and the ability to cow their fellow Shudfolk.

Another form of magic is commonplace in the Shudfolk community, but the mountain people do not view it as witchcraft. Instead, they perceive the numerous small charms and protective gestures that are common to mountain life as a form of anti-witchcraft, a means to use mundane measures to protect against the supernatural. These rites, known as *gramaree*, are covered in more detail in the magic chapter.

There is one final aspect of Shudfolk superstition that merits mentioning: the importance of silver. As any Shudfolk can tell you, silver is an effective weapon against all manner of supernatural menaces and the hillfolk place great stock in the substance. Unfortunately, silver isn't easily acquired in the Shudder Mountains, especially in the backwoods where bartering is the method of business transaction. Most Shudfolk families possess an object or two wrought from silver, anything from a candlestick to a dagger, to protect themselves from the unseen forces at work around them. These precious items are almost always heirlooms passed down from generation to generation, and held in great respect by their owners. Flatlander adventurers will almost never find silver weapons for sale in the mountains. Should they perform a great service to the Shudfolk, they may be rewarded with a single piece of heirloom silver, and the adventurers should accept the gift with the profound honor in which it is intended.

## REMOVING DEMI-HUMANS FROM THE SHUDDER MOUNTAINS

The Shudder Mountains were strongly influenced by the "Silver John" stories of Manly Wade Wellman. These tales, set in the Appalachians of North Carolina during the 1950s and 1960s, are obviously lacking in representatives from European mythology and Professor Tolkien's imagination. The author has purposely downplayed the demi-human presence in the Shudder Mountains as a nod to Wellman's stories.

If the judge wishes to run a Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG campaign where the players are strictly human (and thereby continue the tradition of many Appendix N stories), the Shudder Mountains are the ideal place for such a campaign. The Starting Occupations Table accompanying the adventure "Sour Spring Hollow" includes an option for removing racial occupations to ensure all the zero-level PCs are human, and therefor easily conform to a "humans only" Shudder Mountains campaign.

## DEMI-HUMANS IN THE SHUDDER MOUNTAINS



ince the days when the serpent-men were driven out by the first primitive tribes of humanity, the Shudder Mountains has always been a land where mankind was the dominant race. Even during the Hsaalian occupancy of the hills, the number of human slaves far outnumbered both their sorcerous masters and the magically-created overseers that managed the mines. It is only recently demi-humans have ventured into the Shudders and, despite these adventurous souls, it is likely that the Shudder Mountains will remain a bastion of humanity.

With their rich mineral resources and beautiful sylvan vistas, the Shudder Mountains would seem an ideal home for both dwarves and elves. The reality, however, is that there is something about the Mountains that unsettles both those races, a shiver down the spine that instills a sense they are not wanted there.

Dwarven visitors to the Shudder Mountains are at first delighted by the old stone outcroppings, ancient mountains, and the faint aroma of precious metals their keen noses detect. Prospectors venture into the hills, pick and hammer in hand, intent on delving into the ancient stone. Their excitement is short-lived. As they begin to explore the mountains, they discover the prehistoric diggings of the Hsaal and a sense of wrongness grows in their hearts. Whatever the Hsaal extracted from the Shudders forever changed the stone. A dwarf in a Hsaalian delve finds his beard standing on end and gooseflesh breaking out on his brawny arms. He experiences an overwhelming desire to leave for other, cleaner stone far away from the former mine. After experiencing this feeling of unnaturalness in the tainted delves several times, most dwarves move on to other uncorrupted mountains.

Elves suffer a similar experience when traveling the forests and hollows of the Shudder Mountains. They too feel the sense that the land has turned sour. Although the trees in the Shudders stand ancient and tall, an aura of unpleasantness resides in some shadowy thickets and in moss-filled glens. One elven forester described the experience as “a greasy sensation, as if my skin and tongue sweated a slick, foul ooze.” A handful of elves have managed to overcome their odd revulsion and work to discover its origins and correct the cause, but most move on to other forests to conduct their magical workings.

The exact cause of this mysterious unnerving of dwarven and elven psyches is as yet unknown, but it is possibly the result of the spoils found throughout the Shudders. Demi-human PCs experience a similar sensation when venturing into the Shudders, but, as adventurers, can function in the mountains normally. The judge may wish to utilize this sensation to impart hints whenever the PC approaches a spoil or other area of lingering Hsaalian magic.

Of all the demi-human races, halflings comprise the largest percentage, but even they are a small minority in comparison to the human population. Unlike dwarves and elves, halflings don’t experience a sense of unnaturalness in the Shudder. Instead, it is the rough living and the hard work required to eke out a livelihood in the mountains that keeps their number low. While there is good farming to be had in the hollows of the Shudders, the clearing of the land, unearthing and moving rocks, and cutting planting tiers in the hillside is usually far more labor than a halfling wants to undertake to till the land. A single halfling community known as Greendowns exists in the Shudders, and a few halfling traders visit the hills to purchase Shudfolk crafts. Aside from these groups, it takes an adventurous halfling to ramble through the Shudder Mountains for long.

## INSPIRATIONAL RESOURCES



he Shudder Mountains campaign setting is the product of various outside influences being filtered through the author’s own eccentric mind and further influenced by his time in the Catskill Mountains region of the Appalachian Plateau. To give credit where credit is due and to help stimulate the creativity of other judges about to embark on a campaign set in the Shudders, the following resources are provided.

### Primary Influences

These works were predominant influences on the Shudder Mountains and are required reading/viewing for judges.

- *Who Fears the Devil?, The Old Gods Waken, After Dark, The Lost and the Lurking, The Hanging Stones, and The Voice of the Mountain* by Manly Wade Wellman
- *The Foxfire Book* edited by Eliot Wigginton
- *Rage Across Appalachia* by Jackie Cassada
- *Pumpkin Head* (1988)

### Secondary Influences

- “Pigeons from Hell,” “Fangs of Gold,” and “The Shadow of the Beast” by Robert E. Howard
- “The Lurking Fear,” “The Man of Stone,” and “The Whisperer in Darkness” by H.P. Lovecraft
- *The Descent* (2005)
- *Emmett Otter’s Jug-Band Christmas* (1977)
- *The Long Lost Friend* by John George Hohman
- “Wildwyck County” series of articles by the author, appearing in *Fight On!* magazine