

PLAGUE OF STORMS



A DUNGEON WORLD CAMPAIGN
BY CHRIS LONGHURST

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POWERED BY THE APOCALYPSE

CERTAIN DEATH

Plague of Storms
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INTRODUCTION

Grey-black storm clouds hang low over the Redwater Valley, rolling in from the mountains and heading north, following the course of the river, yet barely troubling the Silver Sea beyond the estuary city of Port Landing. No one has seen the stars in weeks, but what omens can be read portend a great and terrible doom following in the wake of the thunder and lightning. The Redwater collects the rain and swells up its banks, rising water drives subterranean monsters to the surface, the dwarven justicars have retreated to their hidden stronghold, and the mutated denizens of the Wildlands grow ever-bolder in their raids.

The player characters find themselves in the middle of this growing chaos, and they are the only ones who can quell the literal rising tide.

WHAT THIS IS

Plague of Storms presents two campaign fronts for a *Dungeon World* game, half a dozen adventures, a new god for clerics to worship, three compendium classes, and a host of NPCs for the player characters to ally with, betray, befriend, antagonise, or murder – or possibly all of the above, in that order or some other. It doesn't remove all of the work of GMing, but provides a solid framework for you to weave your own story within the general *Plague of Storms* arc while still remaining flexible enough to accommodate the swings in fortune of a typical *Dungeon World* game.

Bearing that in mind – as well as how player-driven a typical *Dungeon World* game is – you shouldn't consider anything here to be the definitive truth. Think of the things presented in this document as 'how things are if you and your players don't have any better ideas' and feel free to scribble all over the top of them with whatever you come up with.

OVERVIEW

In short: A demon lord's power is up for grabs in a six-way clash between powerful individuals in the Redwater valley. The presence of these 'stormlords' is also causing freakish weather patterns and constant rain, which brings problems of its own, and the demons currently holding their ex-lord's power in escrow have plans of their own.

It's going to be utter chaos, with no shortage of opportunities for adventure (or treasure, or glory, or the acquisition of power). Get in.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE: THE MAJOR PLAYERS

Arboreus was a living god who attempted to save his people from a magical ritual gone awry by absorbing the power into himself. The result created the mutagenic chaos of the Wildlands, transformed his people into animal-human hybrids, and warped himself into the creature now known as the Beast.

The Beast used to be Arboreus, but is now a near-mindless creature who lurks in the ruins of Cenisseren in the Wildlands. His divine nature and association with the wildstorms is enough for him to gain the title of stormlord.

Canithrax is a demon from the Benighted Sea; his role on the material plane is to oversee the contest for Sessinek's power and act as a symbolic conduit by which it is bestowed on the eventual inheritor.

Cobalt is a dragon who rules the city of Port Landing. Her natural power, magical nature, and connection to elemental lightning have gained her the title of stormlord.

Enkil Cloudgather is a planar merchant of a mongrel bloodline, with ties to djinn and storm giants alike. He is one of the stormlords, and wages war by hiring elite bands of mercenaries and adventurers to strike at his enemies.

Lord Harn is a strange creature from a distant land, whose quasi-demonic nature and affinity for thunder are enough to mark him as a stormlord. He prefers to sway his opponents through gifts, cursed items, and other indirect manipulation.

Master Lee is a reclusive orc who invented and mastered the Three Storms style of supernatural martial arts. He wants nothing to do with the plague of storms, but his powers have caused him to become a stormlord anyway.

Marie is a local necromancer, well known to the inhabitants of the valley. Although her primary magic draws from shadows and corpses for its power she is also distantly descended from a storm god, and this divine bloodline has made her one of the stormlords as well.

Sessinek was a mighty demon prince which ruled the Benighted Sea, a violent ocean under an eternal night lit only by the flash of lightning. Sessinek took precautions against its own end, sealing away its power with an order of demons within his realm, who would safeguard it until the turning of the age. Sessinek's power will now be bestowed on a new dark lord of storms: whichever one is the last survivor of the battles in the Redwater Valley.

Sheva is a blind witch and the only survivor of the Watchers For The End (see page 10) currently active in the valley. She may well be the one who dispatches the player characters on their quest in the first place, and even if she isn't she's still an excellent contact for them to cultivate.

Stormlords are contenders in the contest for Sessinek's power. When only one survives, the power will flow into them and elevate them to status of demon lord and ruler of the Benighted Sea.

Archdruid Zabulon was a powerful druid and the founder of the Brown Ring, an organisation intended to hold back and 'cure' the Wildlands. When he died the Ring collapsed into infighting, which is how it persists to the present day.



HISTORY

Long, Long Ago: The demon lord Sessinek met its end, more or less. As part of a deal it had struck long before, the locus of its power returned to a looming fortress on the Benighted Sea – a place of storm-wracked ocean under an eternal night – where an order of lesser demons took possession of it, there to keep it until the time for a new dark lord of storms was nigh.

Hundreds of Years Ago: A great empire rose on the continent that the Redwater Valley is a tiny part of. It stretched from sea to sea, made great advances in magic and technology, and built wonders unknown to later ages. Around this time the Watchers For The End (see page 10) were founded and Riverwatch Hold (see pages 23 and 81) constructed and inhabited.

Slightly More Than a Century Ago: A faction within the empire turned to the worship of dragons, and fell to greed and corruption. They rose up in revolt, plunging the empire into a civil war. Backed by the dragons they worshipped, the Draconic faction seemed poised to overthrow a sizeable portion of the empire and lay ruin to the rest – until another faction enlisted the aid of demons, signing away their souls for the power to fight back. The war raged between Draconic and Demonic, leaving the regular people of the empire to hide or flee from the forces unleashed around them.

It was during this time that a powerful magical ritual ran out of control in the city of Cenisseren (see page 26). The incarnate demigod Arboreus filtered the shattering power through himself in an attempt to stop it, but failed – instead of dying in the blast people *changed*, and the uncontrolled eruption of life in the area created what is now the heart of the Wildlands.

The war lasted only a few years, ended with both the Draconic and Demonic factions eradicated, and left the continent in ruins. The next hundred years would be a time of rebuilding and renewal.

About 70 Years Ago: The Archdruid Zabulon founded the Brown Ring (see page 28), an order consisting of those who lived in the wilderness, dedicated to holding back the spread of the Wildlands. It was always an anarchic and egalitarian order, with members aligned by a loose philosophy and personal bonds of brother- and sisterhood rather than an overarching organization, so when Zabulon disappeared several years later the Brown Ring continued.

This was also about the time that the dragon Cobalt (see page 37) came to Port Landing (see page 18) and instituted her own brand of law. Over the next several decades, guided and protected by her tyrannical claw, Port Landing would become something approximating a bastion of civilization once again.

About 50 Years Ago: The dwarves of Riverwatch Hold, who had barred their doors as the great empire fell and war swept across the continent, came out of their delve once again. Wracked with guilt at how her people hid from the fighting and abandoned the citizens of the valley in their time of need, Colonel Erdrie Stonecaller instituted the justicars: heavily-armed dwarves who walked the valley alone or in small groups, suppressing bandits and monsters.

Last Month: The time for the new dark lord of storms was nigh. The demon Canithrax arrived to oversee proceedings and act as a conduit for Sessinek's power. At the same time, the various candidates for the position felt a strange urge drawing them to the valley and their inevitable destiny. Over the following weeks as more of the candidates gathered so did the storms, until the sky was blanketed with grey and the land began to turn marshy beneath people's feet.

Now: The player characters catch hold of a loose thread in the tapestry of fate, and begin to pull.

GETTING STARTED

Getting started is as simple as lining the characters up in front of a dungeon entrance - the Hidden Library makes a good starting point - and telling them that whatever they seek is inside. At some point you'll need to ask them what they are *actually* seeking, but it doesn't have to be straight away. If they ask you what they're seeking, tell them Sheva the witch (see page 12) has dispatched them to recover a prophecy about the valley from the archives.

As soon as you can, throw them into conflict with one of the dark lords of storms. Lee, Marie and Cobalt are content to keep to themselves at the start of the campaign, but Enkil's soldiers and the Beast's raiders are active threats that could show up anywhere. Lord Harn is more subtle, preferring to turn people to his cause through manipulation or 'gifts' of cursed artefacts from his collection, but this still provides player characters with opportunities for adventure. When they have a definite enemy you can draw them into the greater conflict through the web of competing interests among the stormlords. Once they have an understanding of what's at stake they can chart their own course.

Remember to ask questions and use the answers: Have any of the characters met the local stormlords - Cobalt, Marie, and Lee - before? How did that go? Are they members of any organisations in the valley? Do they have family there? Duties? Tie them into the setting and give them things to fight for, as well as against.

PEOPLE TO BE

Stuck for a character idea? How about...

A servant of Lord Harn. What was his plan and how did it involve you? Were you bought? Coerced? Or have you escaped?

A mercenary employed by Enkil. What's he paying you to do? Are you in it for more than the money? Are you on Ana's good or bad side?

A Watcher For The End. Did Sheva summon you? Or were you sent to rebuild the order here?

A justicar. If you're not a dwarf, what's your story? If you are, why haven't you returned to Riverwatch? (See page 125 if you want to start with the compendium class.)

An ex-disciple of Master Lee. How did you start training with him? Did you leave, or were you thrown out? Why? (See page 130 if you want to start with the compendium class.)

A demon hunter. You've tangled with the denizens of the Benighted Sea before. What happened? Who won? What trophies or scars do you bear?

A hero of Port Landing. You're a thorn in Cobalt's side. What did you do to piss her off? Who hides you from her wrath?

A bounty hunter. Plenty of bandits and folk with prices on their heads here. Who's your quarry? What did they do?

A sibling of Marie. Do you get on? What do you think of her necromancy? Have you also inherited the family connection to the storms?

A beast person from Cenisseren. Why did you leave Cenisseren? How do you deal with the valley's suspicion and rejection of Wildlands beast people?

A monster from the Wildlands. Are you a mutant? Or a wholly new kind of thing? How do you feel about your origins? Are there more like you?

One of Sarlat's creations. Did you allow him to experiment on you or were you unwilling? What was he trying to achieve? Did he succeed? (See page 39 for more about Sarlat.)

A member of the Brown Ring. Are you a full member, or a would-be initiate? Which faction do you lean towards? (See page 128 if you want to start with this compendium class.)

A stormlord! What makes you a contender? Do you know what you're getting into? Which other stormlord are you least looking forward to meeting?

THE REDWATER VALLEY

The Redwater Valley is a fertile strip of land that runs either side of the Redwater river from its origin in the Hidden Mountains to the south-east all the way up to Port Landing and the Silver Sea to the north-west. The Redwater river itself – so named for its ruddy colour, the result of rich iron deposits in the Hidden Mountains – is wide and slow and full of a bewildering variety of fish. A few barges ply the waters, ferrying goods between towns, but always carrying a full complement of guards; despite the relative safety of the valley creatures like orcs and the deceptively clever Redwater crocodiles are still known to prey on under-defended shipping.

The valley struggled to rebuild in the wake of the Draconic-Demonic civil war, but between the efforts of the Brown Ring and the dwarven justicars the villagers managed to once again carve themselves places of safety in the wilderness. Even Cobalt's presence acts as a stabilising influence on her end of the valley: the dragon takes a laissez faire approach to rulership, but anyone causing significant disruption faces the unwelcome prospect of a visit from her enforcers – or worse, her offspring.

Of course, now the justicars have vanished and the Wildlands raids are stretching the Brown Ring to breaking point, the delicate peace the people of the valley have cultivated may come apart in a crash of thunder.

THE WATCHERS FOR THE END

At the height of the empire, a small group of seers took it upon themselves to ensure that this glorious age would last until the end of time. They did this by searching out cataclysmic prophecies and making sure that the events described therein never came to pass.

As history shows, their efforts failed. However, in the process of their work the Watchers uncovered a great many prophecies – many nothing to do with the empire – and over time their intent broadened to include all sorts of apocalyptic or disastrous prophecies. As the empire collapsed the Watchers kept to their vigil, and continue to do so today – although much reduced from their previous standing.



SHEVA THE WITCH

Devious, Intelligent, Magical, Solitary

Stout Cane (d4 damage, Close); 6 HP, 0 armour

Special Qualities: Blind, Spells, Knowledge of prophecies

Sheva lives alone in a small village in the valley, trading potions, hedge remedies and crop blessings for food and assistance in her home. She has some books from the Hidden Library – the ones she managed to flee with when the cannibal cult took over – but since she is blind she cannot read them or even confirm which ones she has. She keeps them hidden in a trunk in the attic of her cottage.

Sheva's magic is mostly hedge wizardry and the brewing of potions. She knows a few mild hexes and curses, but her first recourse if she's attacked is a flare of blinding light that – obviously – has no effect on her at all. She counts on her assailants having less experience without their sight than her, giving her an opportunity to escape.

Sheva accumulates stray cats, and at any given time her cottage is home to 2d4. They don't fight in combat but characters blinded by Sheva's magic will find them very easy to trip over.

Instinct: To thwart prophecy.

- Recite a prophecy from memory, with maybe a few mistakes or omissions.

If the characters recover the archive from the Hidden Library and give it to Sheva, replace this move with "Find a relevant prophecy in the archive."

- Brew a potion; the stranger the ingredients, the better.
- 'Predict' what you think will make people do what you want.
- Pet a nearby cat.

When attacked, scream for help and try to escape.

When cornered, use your spells to disable rather than kill.

When challenged on your false prophecies, claim it's all for the greater good.

SHEVA THE WITCH

To the best of her knowledge Sheva is the only Watcher still active in the valley, and the sole guardian of the prophecies the order accumulated concerning the plague of storms. Unfortunately, Sheva's eyesight began to fade shortly after her 20th birthday and was completely gone by the time she was 25, and the library where the prophecies were kept – the one she was supposed to protect – fell to an evil cult years ago. She got by for many years hoping the prophecy of the plague of storms was just a mistake, but now the signs are clear even to her and she knows she must do something.

So she recruits the player characters to help.

THE HIDDEN LIBRARY

Not far from the village where Sheva makes her home is the concealed library holding the remains of the Watchers' archive of prophecies. Several years ago the blind witch was driven away from the site by a gang of mad cultists seeking a spell to release their unthinkable god from its cosmic prison. They occupied the library while they hunted for the spell – which was never present – then left a single cultist to dwell in the structure while they returned to the cult's central temple in the ruins below Port Landing (see page 106).

The lone cultist was never particularly well-balanced, and over the intervening years has slid completely into paranoid delusions. She has called up several large tapeworm-like creatures as servants of her writhing god, and raised several skeletons from the remains of her victims which she originally trusted implicitly but is now convinced are planning to betray her.

The Hidden Library is described in more detail on page 50.

THE TWILIGHT STRONGHOLD

A larger location that the Watchers kept back in the days of empire, when the war came the Watchers stationed at the Twilight Stronghold decided to seal their keep inside a bubble of time, the better to keep their secrets safe through the destruction they knew was coming. Unfortunately, for all their foresight they were unable to enact the ritual properly and now – and then, and in centuries to come – the Twilight Stronghold is at the centre of a twisted patch of time and space where continuity is fractured and strange creatures feed on the fragmentary moments that bleed through the cracks.

However, there is treasure there for those bold enough to seize it, as well as further information on the nature of Sessinek and the demonic challenge that has drawn the stormlords to the valley.

The Twilight Stronghold and its time-slipped dangers are described in more detail on page 57.

YESHA THE PROPHET

In the woods near the Redwater river, with a clear view down-slope to the waters at the foot of the hill, a man named Yesha is building a boat. Yesha is well-known to the local villages as a cave-dwelling hermit, a priest of Drontok the Thunderous, and a fitness fanatic – and now as a mad slave-lord, as he rounds up anyone capable of working and sets them to building his gargantuan craft.

Yesha knows nothing of shipcraft. He claims the plans for his boxy ship were present upon his waking from a dream sent by Drontok – a violent, straightforward god who has never in recorded history bestowed a dream vision on anyone – and he spends more time keeping his bandit enforcers in line than checking the work of his slave labourers. It's anyone's guess as to whether the thing will float, let alone sail.



YESHA THE PROPHET

Divine, Forceful, Intelligent, Solitary

Vice-Like Wrestling Grip (d8+2 damage, Hand); 12 HP, 0 armour

Drontok is a god of noise and violence, and Yesha is an exemplar of the faith: his strength is superlative, his endurance nigh-legendary, and his voice a roar that can set bears to flight. He seizes people from local villages to supplement his labour force because he genuinely believes he's going to save them; he believes his god has shown him the way to survive the coming storms, and is uninterested in listening to alternatives – for what mortal could conceive a superior plan to a god?

Yesha himself is a wild-looking man in his early 60s, with the muscular body of a man half his age and the burning gaze of a true fanatic. He wears a ragged kilt and little else, no matter what the weather. When he speaks every word carries the emphatic weight of a true believer; what he says often doesn't make much *sense*, but it can stir the heart regardless.

If it comes to a fight Yesha is entirely straightforward: he squares off against the toughest-looking enemy with a hymn on his lips, and proceeds to mangle them with his bare hands. Even when he seems defeated, Yesha has an uncanny habit of surviving all but the most unambiguous slayings and reappearing later on to cause trouble.

Instinct: To build a huge boat, no matter what stands in your way.

- Preach the Word of Drontok at the top of your lungs.
- Perform a feat of strength.
- Return from certain death with deeper faith and a new scar.

When challenged, rise to it.

When unsure or out of your depth, forge ahead and trust in your faith.

YESHA'S MINIONS

Intelligent, Group, Stealthy

Assorted Hand Weapons/Bows (d8 damage, Close/Near/Far);

6 HP, 1 armour (leathers, scavenged bits and pieces)

Yesha's minions are a small gang of bandits who he has intimidated into service. Ex-villagers all, they are equipped with knives, hatchets and hunting bows. Only fear of Yesha keeps them in line – left to their own devices, they would rather return to a life of casual theft and occasional murder.

Instinct: To follow the path of least resistance.

- Say whatever you think is going to keep Yesha off your case.
- Attack someone with a concealed weapon.

When accused, blame whoever was in charge.

When cornered, surrender in a display of abject cowardice.

When unobserved, steal something.

DRONTOK THE THUNDEROUS

He is the lord of thunder and physical exertion, the berserker who wades into battle with a song on his lips, the involuntary shout of an athlete who pushes themselves to their limit, the storm that throws down trees and capsizes ships. Singing and wrestling are sacred to him, and his holy word is engraved on huge tablets of stone that the uninitiated struggle to lift.

Domain: Bloody Conquest

Precepts: Drontok favours those who prove themselves strong. (Add Petition: Personal Victory)

Boons Granted: Drontok will grant his priests visions of treasures which they will have to overcome physical challenges to claim, a brief burst of supernatural strength when they need it most, or will occasionally send gryphons to aid them in battle or travel.

When you travel on or by the Silver Ocean, you can always catch enough fish to eat – you don't need to consume any rations when you make camp or undertake a perilous journey.

THE SILVER OCEAN

The Silver Ocean takes its name from the abundant fish that swim in its waters, turning the water silver when they come to the surface to mate in great tangles of writhing bodies. It spreads far and deep to the north-west of the valley; no one knows what lies on the other side, although several islands and small archipelagos have been charted by the sailors and fishermen who ply their trades on its waters – and the pirates who ply their trade on the sailors and fishermen.

SOME ISLANDS OF THE SILVER OCEAN

This island is an elemental creature of earth and water, one of the great titans which built the world, floating in the ocean while it waits for the turning of the ages and the call to construct the world once more. Who knows what treasures and dangers might be found in its cavernous innards?

This volcanic island is the home of an extended family of elementalists, who squabble and feud with each other in the ways that only blood relatives can. Gaining a favour from one branch of the family could be useful – but is it worth angering the rest of them?

The Isle of Stolen Memories is a total mystery. Anyone who visits there remembers landing on its stony beaches, and the next thing they know they are departing – sometimes richer, sometimes poorer, but always changed.

Old maps and records indicate that the Island of Talking Beasts used to be the location of a grand temple to the gentle water goddess Heltha, but now it's an overgrown jungle hostile to all non-native life. Silver was sacred to Heltha, so it's a safe bet that her temple is full of riches for anyone who could find it – but what happened in the forgotten years to change the island so drastically?

SOME SHIPS OF THE SILVER OCEAN

Sorcerer-Captain Delphine Glimmershadow commands a ship towed by an octopus-like creature of unspeakable size. Her magic enchants the creatures of the deep, but her command of human hearts is less precise: her feuds with bitter ex-lovers are things of legend.

The ghost-ship Seadrake will come to claim the soul of any able-bodied seaman who is sacrificed according to the proper rites – this is how it finds new crew. More to the point, the spectral Captain Hart is happy to use the occasion to negotiate additional deals.

The notorious pirate Sairah Slimefinger keeps numerous oozes and slimes locked on her ship, finding them both an effective deterrent against boarders and a useful weapon when loaded into catapults and fired onto enemy vessels.

As a result of a long-standing pact with an unknown entity, anyone who crews the Shiftless Wanderer gains a natural buoyancy that will bear them up in any body of water for as long as their name remains in the captain's book.

PORT LANDING

Steading: Moderate Prosperity, Steady Population, Garrison Defences (about 200 of Cobalt's enforcers plus the dragon herself and her children), Market, Guild (pirates), History (tragedy), Personage (Cobalt the dragon), Power (political), Lawless, Blight (the Unspeakable Cult).



Port Landing is the closest thing to civilisation that the Redwater valley has – or so claims Cobalt, its ruler. It's certainly the largest settlement in the valley, permanent home to several thousand people and occasional home to perhaps a thousand more as ships arrive and leave along its extensive docks. It's an anarchic and lawless place; day-to-day order is kept by Cobalt's appointed enforcers and any of her offspring which happen to be present, but the dragon and her minions don't really concern themselves with anything less than large-scale riots or other threats to the stability of the entire city. On a smaller scale

the city is just an ever-shifting patchwork of warring gangs and pirate crews, with ordinary inhabitants paying protection to whoever's local and hoping the next turf war passes them by.

On the plus side, Port Landing's size and position as the only port in the valley makes it a centre of trade – the few merchants who brave the journey from elsewhere in the world must dock among the wolves if they want to sell their cargo, and the shed scales of the dragons living in the city have a multiplicity of uses both mundane and alchemical that make them excellent trade goods. For trade within the valley, the city's bounty supports a burgeoning middle class of artisans and merchants who produce and supply goods to the smaller settlements inland.

Port Landing is built on the ruins of the empire city that stood here before, and that city was built on the ruins of the city that was here before that – these extensive catacombs are mostly used for storage, sewage, or skulduggery by the existing inhabitants, but there are all sorts of remnants of the empire down there for people to find if they can brave the unstable architecture, dangerous monsters, and the cannibals of the Unspeakable Cult. On top of that, Cobalt lays claim to anything found down there, so simply possessing artefacts or coins from the old empire is enough to draw draconic scrutiny in Port Landing. Choose your smuggling partners with care.

COBALT'S PALACE

In the centre of Port Landing is a tower made of broken ships shored up with buttresses of stone and wood. Every ship that forms part of the structure used to be owned by a captain who crossed Cobalt. Their lives came to an end at the claws of the dragon, and she claimed their ships for her palace to remind others of the only real law of Port Landing: what Cobalt says, goes.

The inhabitants of the palace – Cobalt, her children, and her enforcers – make the best of their strange home but the interior is still a maze of corridors and rooms at strange angles, haphazard additions, and architecture-of-necessity. All spaces are large enough for Cobalt to traverse, by her own command. She doesn't systematically punish people who make small enclosures, however, preferring to tear through any obstructions as she finds them; the result is that bold adventurers on the run from the dragon in her own palace might be able to buy a few moments' respite while she destroys her way to their location.

COBALT'S ENFORCERS

Group, Intelligent, Organised

Batons, Knives, Hatchets (d8 damage, Close);

6 HP, 1 armour (draconic toughness)

Special Qualities: Enhanced with a little of Cobalt's power, Unable to resist Cobalt's commands

To most people Cobalt's enforcers are just the meanest gang in a city full of them, distinguished only by the plain blue tabards that mark their allegiance and the ability to call on dragons for backup – even Cobalt's youngest, smallest offspring is more than a match for a typical band of ruffians. This is true, more or less, but there is one more secret that most people don't know: through the works of Sarlat (see page 39) the enforcers are both physically enhanced and bound irrevocably to Cobalt's will.

When an enforcer is initiated, they drink a foul brew of grog, reagents from Sarlat's laboratory, and ground up scales from Cobalt's back. This combination forms a magic potion which grants them a measure of Cobalt's draconic might and her ability to command the storms, but also makes them unable to resist her orders – or even her merest suggestions.

Very few of the enforcers use their added might for anything other than charging their weapons with lightning before wading into battle, but the rare few who devote themselves to mastering it can demonstrate surprising abilities. Give them an added move like *shoot lightning from your hands* or *summon a thick bank of fog*, then make sure to use it.

Instinct: To seize valuables for Cobalt's hoard. (Or whatever Cobalt has specifically ordered them to do.)

- Batter an obstructive person into submission.
- Demand aid from other citizens of Port Landing.

When challenged, establish dominance through threats or violence.

When thwarted, lash out.

When commanded by Cobalt, do what she wants to the best of your ability, without hesitation.

When you wander Cobalt's palace without a guide, roll +Wis. On a 10+ you choose something from the list of things to find and find it. On a 7-9 the GM chooses something from the list of things for you to find, and you choose something from the list of troubles. On a miss, you end up at the GM's mercy – where you are and who else is there are up to them.

THINGS TO FIND

- A specific location you were looking for.
- A specific person you were looking for.
- Treasure – the GM will tell you what, and how much it's worth.
- A location you weren't aware existed, but is interesting – the GM will tell you what you've found.
- Cobalt, unaware of your presence (for now).

TROUBLES

- You've found it, but there's a group of Cobalt's enforcers between you and it.
- You've found it, but it wasn't what you thought it was – whoever chose this entry should tell everyone what the key problem is.
- You've found where it *was*, but someone's moved it – there are clues as to where it's gone, though.
- You've found it, but Cobalt is also here *and she knows you're there*.

Cobalt's chamber is right at the top of the structure, open to the sky on one side so she can look out to sea when she is in repose, and easily take wing when she's roused to action. The mass of her hoard, however, is in a sealed vault nearer the ground level – bold thieves often think to try their hand at Cobalt's treasure, but so far none have survived the attempt.

PORT LANDING RUMOURS

One of the ships in Cobalt's palace belonged to a notorious trickster – and the secret compartment in the hull where he hid his treasure maps should still be intact! All you have to do is get into the palace, steal the maps, and escape alive.

Someone's come to port with a jewel-studded skull he found on one of the islands in the Silver Ocean – it can answer any question, if you're willing to pay the price it names.

Cobalt's got a secret backup lair under the sea, not far from the port – and with these potions of water breathing we can slip in and loot it while she's busy on-shore!

THE UNSPEAKABLE CULT

When the empire fell, the complex system of economic dependencies that kept the old port functioning collapsed – and with it, so did the city. Most of the inhabitants fled, some died, and some remained to eke out a life among the ruins. Among this latter group were the ancestors of what would come to be called the Unspeakable Cult.

In the tunnels beneath the city they found an ancient worm, a creature left over from some prior age, which taught them black magic in exchange for their worship and tribute – tribute which took the form of living captives from the surface, sacrificed to feed the worm's endless hunger. In time the proto-cultists joined the worm in its unholy meals, beginning the traditions that would become the Unspeakable Cult of today.

The resurgence of Port Landing was a boon to the cult, providing the starving ghouls and their inhuman god with fresh meat for the first time in years. Unfortunately the presence of a powerful dragon directly over their heads has somewhat curtailed their efforts, forcing them to branch out into the surrounding countryside to find their meals.

THE HIDDEN MOUNTAINS

The Hidden Mountains are an old, high range that borders the valley to the south and east. The name comes from an old legend that someone once made the mountains invisible, although who did it and why vary with the teller – and they're certainly visible *now*.

Giants roam the further reaches of the mountains but they have their own concerns among the mountain peaks – mostly internecine squabbling – and seldom bother the valley. Of course, with the stormlords going to war the giants represent a potent source of mighty warriors for whoever can convince them to join up – Enkil and Lord Harn are the most likely candidates, but war can make for strange bedfellows.

Probably the strangest aspect of the Hidden Mountains are the faces in the stone. Over time some of the mountainsides have grown to resemble faces – not just in the shape of stone and boulders, but the way snow makes white eyebrows, fallen trees add texture to a craggy cheek, or a frozen waterfall becomes a beard. Is it sorcery? Divine intervention? Ancient elementals? Some infinitely patient sculptor-gardener? No one knows.

RIVERWATCH HOLD

Steading: Poor Prosperity, Exodus Population (only a handful of dwarves remain), Guard (the entire population of the keep is armed and ready to fight), Need (Supplies), Trade (nearby villages), Oath (to protect Redwater valley), Blight (fish-fiends from the depths), Blight (demon-possessed dwarves), Dwarven.

Note: If the player characters solve the dwarves' demons-and-fishfolk problems (see page 81) the Hold loses its Blights and gains the Safe keyword.

The Redwater river bursts from a mountainside not two day's full travel from the flatter lands of the valley, cascading down a series of waterfalls before arriving in a small lake where it calms and stills before starting the long, sedate journey to the sea. Behind these waterfalls, blended with the stone of the mountainside, is the concealed dwarven outpost of Riverwatch Hold.

At its height the Hold was a powerful military bastion erected to keep watch of the Redwater valley and protect dwarven interests in the area. When the great empire collapsed in on itself, however, the dwarves turned inward – they barred their doors and ignored the plight of the valley, keeping their supplies to themselves and letting the short-sighted humans suffer the consequences of their actions. And so it was for fifty years – time enough for the generations to turn and new voices to become heard.

The young Major Erdrie Stonecaller became the figurehead for the new generation, a voice of compassion for the ruined world outside – and a voice which pointed out the dragon taking power at the opposite end of the valley. Would the dwarves stand idle while such an evil creature secured its position?

The answer, it turned out, was no. The aging Colonel running the hold retired in response to popular opposition and promoted Erdrie as his successor. She quickly instituted the justicar program in an attempt to repay what she felt the dwarves owed for their decades of inaction; she sent the finest dwarf warriors into the valley in groups of 2–5, there to fight evil and help the humans rebuild wherever possible. If such assistance created a culture of gratitude to the dwarves and mistrust of the dragon... well, so much the better.

For five decades this plan worked. Erdrie grew older, wiser and more cunning, and her idealism became tarnished by acts of necessity – but the great debt records held in the monastery-library of the keep recorded her debt of guilt in

words graven into stone, and would not let her forget her obligations. In the end, as with so many other situations in the valley, it was the arrival of the stormlords that changed everything.

The rains came first, relentless as they poured down across the mountains, a problem the dwarves could not defeat by force of arms. The rain drained into the caverns beneath the earth, raising the water level and slowly flooding the lower tunnels – and with the water came the fishfolk of the lightless depths. They poured into the low levels of the Hold, slaying all in their path with their knives of sharpened stone, quickly seizing the pump rooms that could seal off the flooded tunnels and keep them out. And as the rain continued, the waters rose, and the fishfolk followed behind.

Colonel Stonecaller immediately recalled the justicars, demanding they return and defend the Hold – but that would take time, and the dwarves needed aid immediately. So, in a decision that will go down in history as one of the poorest ever made, Erdrie’s husband turned to demons. He and a significant number of his soldiers allowed planar entities to possess their bodies, turning them into lurking creatures of quills and poison. They fought the fishfolk to a standstill, yes, but the remaining population of the Hold find themselves sealed into a handful of chambers in the mid levels with savage fishfolk below and their demon-possessed brethren above.

The dwarves need help, of the sort that only player characters can provide.

THE WILDLANDS

Lurking to the south-west of the valley, the Wildlands are an ever-expanding expanse of life gone terribly wrong formed when a magical ritual meant to lay waste to the city of Cenisseren – which still exists in a twisted, ruined form at the heart of the Wildlands – was filtered through the divine power of Arboreus, a demigod of growth and vivacity. It resembles a lush jungle, filled with the hooting cries of animals unknown anywhere else in the world – and at its edges that is exactly what it is. But further in, the growth becomes strange and twisted: gnarled thorn-trees revolve moist eyes to watch you as you pass; animals undergo catastrophic spurts of evolution in response to new threats; living mounds of vines and fungus rise up to create their own compost from intruders; and twisted things neither alive nor dead slip between the trees and drag careless wanderers into their twilit half-life.



On top of all that, the Wildlands are plagued by so-called wildstorms – boiling black clouds shot through with flashes of strange, otherworldly colours that race out of the jungle to deposit their storms on the lands of the valley, warping whatever they rain on into unfamiliar shapes and patterns. The Brown Ring knows rituals to disperse wildstorms, but the Brown Ring cannot be everywhere, and as the plague of storms gathers momentum, more and more wildstorms manifest over the Wildlands to drift in the valley and bring their unwanted, unpredictable mutation of life and landscape with them.

As if its natural hostility wasn't bad enough, the Wildlands are home to a hostile civilisation of bestial humanoids, mixtures of animal and human. They raid deep into the Redwater valley, hunting people to drag back to the ruins of Cenisseren and sacrifice to their monstrous ruler – for Arboreus survived his experience at the hands of magical destruction, after a fashion, and has become the warped and fallen stormlord now known as the Beast.

When you are caught in a wildstorm, it's a *defy danger* roll to avoid being changed. Effects of a 7-9 roll might include minor mutations, the loss of equipment which has become something else, or the choice to save either yourself or a hireling or other NPC.

A Note for the GM: When a character fails to avoid the dangers of a wildstorm, you have fictional justification to do a number of terrible things to their character – but you should probably hold off on turning them into a gelatinous cube or something equally radical unless you think the player is up for it. Perhaps they were so busy fleeing to shelter they missed the bunny caught in the rain as it transforms into an n-dimensional flesh-eating monstrosity, so it gets the drop on them (put someone in a spot); or perhaps the landscape morphs and cuts off the character(s) who failed from the rest of the party (separate them). You don't have to transform them beyond recognition just because you can.

CENISSEREN

Once Cenisseren was a bright city of tree-lined streets and colourful buildings, of blooming flowers and tame animals working in unison with the humans and elves who lived there. It was the personal domain of Arboreus, a man half-divine, with limitless strength, a boundless heart, and compassion for everything that lived. That all ended when the empire collapsed.

For reasons unknown, someone in Cenisseren attempted a magical ritual that would have slain every living thing in the city and left it a desolate ruin of flaking paint and withered husks. In the moment of the spell's release, Arboreus felt the magic wash forth, divined its nature, and attempted to seize the magic and channel it into himself, sacrificing his own life to save the lives of everyone in the city.

His attempt miscarried. The magic coursed through him, and touched by the might of the divine it changed – the wave of death originally released became a wave of *life*, although it retained the destructive intent of the original ritual. Across the city, the plants erupted into life, growing and mutating at a vastly accelerated rate. The people were not spared either, their bodies twisting into animalistic forms and their minds dissolving under the strain of the transformation. In minutes the bright city of Cenisseren had become an overgrown ruin choked by plants never before seen and populated by animal-asked savages. Their god-king had become the Beast: a twisted mockery of himself, a monstrous amalgamation of human and animal parts, possessed of his old brute strength but no longer capable of thought beyond a vague loyalty to his new followers.

Cenisseren is now a haunted place, home to the Beast and a quantity of his bestial followers. The few captives who have managed to escape their fates as sacrifices to the twisted god and flee the Wildlands with body and soul mostly intact mutter of visions that come and go, vivid waking dreams of Cenisseren-as-it-was that always end with a brilliant emerald radiance and the feeling of fracturing senses. If a bold group were able to reach the blighted city, these visions might reveal the truth of what happened on the day the city was brought low – or maybe they're just a distraction from the very real threat of the Beast and his minions.

When you experience a vision of Cenisseren-as-it-was, take +1 forward to *spout lore* about Cenisseren or its history when you incorporate what you saw in the vision.

CROW-HEADED WILDLANDER

Intelligent, Magical, Organised, Solitary

Hand Weapons, Beak, Spells (d8 damage, Hand, Close, Near);

12 HP, 0 armour

Special Quality: Keen eyesight

The avian mutants of the Wildlands have retained the most of their human intelligence and so risen to the top of the new hierarchy; they are the leaders of the new tribes, the priests of their new god, and the keepers of the scattered relics and forgotten magic of Cenisseren-as-it-was. A very few of the avian wildlanders can fly; they are regarded as specially blessed, and it falls to them to attempt to communicate with the Beast and relay what they believe are his instructions to the tribes as a whole. As the plague of storms builds, they respond to their god's growing agitation by whipping the tribes into a righteous frenzy – a crusade is coming, and the avians will herd their mindless demigod to its spearhead.

Instinct: To accumulate the secrets of history.

- Use the forgotten sorcery of Cenisseren-as-it-was.
- Command plants or animals with magic spells.
- Shriek for aid.

When something catches your eye, investigate.

When you find intruders, capture them for sacrifice.

When in the presence of your god, ask for guidance and interpret the response.

For a flying avian, add the following:

Divine, +2 damage and +2 HP.

Special Quality: Wings

Instinct: To lead the crusade.

And replace the move *Shriek for aid* with *Incite the wildlanders to religious fury*.

DOG-HEADED WILDLANDER

Group, Intelligent, Organised

Hand Weapons, Teeth (d8 damage, Hand, Close); 6 HP, 1 armour (hide)

Special Quality: Keen sense of smell

The dog-headed wildlanders make up both the bulk of the wildlands tribes' actual population and the bulk of their armed forces as well. They possess a variety of canine features depending on the individual. Some boast a full canine head, others look halfway human. Some have claws, others don't. Some have fur or tails, others don't. Individuals have little in common.

The dog-headed are not violent by nature, but when roused to action by the cries of the avians they become loyal, stubborn, and savage soldiers.

Instinct: To protect the wildlanders from the hated outsiders.

- Attack with blades and teeth.
- Dogpile a vulnerable enemy.

When you're calm, treat newcomers or unfamiliar faces just like you'd treat anyone else.

When someone tries to dominate you, don't let them do it without a fight.

When an enemy runs from you, howl and give chase.

WILDLANDS CIVILISATION

The area now covered by the Wildlands used to be a thriving civilisation, and although it collapsed in the wake of the disaster at Cenisseren the various beast-folk of the Wildlands have rebuilt it after a fashion. The new society has little in common with the previous one except for the fact of a demigod at its head. Cenisseren culture was feudal, with Arboreus doling out packages of land to those who impressed him in a more or less even-handed manner, but following the collapse it has reformed into a caste-based theocracy.

Caste in the Wildlands is based on physical features: the highest castes have an animal head on top of a human body, with the avians at the top and the dog-headed just below them as their soldiers. Other animal-headed Wildlanders form a third caste and effective middle class, leaving the bottom rung of society for the 'broken ones': Wildlanders with no clear pattern of animal features, or who have human faces.

Despite the elitism built right into their society there might be hope for the Wildlanders if not for their slavish adherence to the whims of the Beast. The bird-headed priests seem unable or unwilling to accept that their living god is barely sapient, let alone sane, and as they indulge his whims his animal ferocity permeates their society.

THE BROWN RING

When the Archdruid Zabulon formed his order of wilderness dwellers to hold back the ever-spreading threat of the wildlands, he deliberately gave it a ribald name to remind his followers that although their mission was deadly serious, it was important to take time to laugh. It was just one of many schemes the old druid had that didn't work out quite as he'd hoped.

The order itself consisted of an eclectic band of individuals welded together by Zabulon's easy charisma. As the members brought their own recruits and proteges into the fold, the web of personal ties holding the order together became more complex – multiple cults of personality pulling in all directions, bound into a whole only by the common aim of halting the spread of the Wildlands and, if possible, driving it back.

When Zabulon disappeared, the order disintegrated. Always anarchic, its overriding goal was not enough to keep all its members in line without the druid actively managing the order. Harsh words were spoken, blows were exchanged, and the order splintered into a dozen factions under a dozen different 'inheritors' who each styled themselves Zabulon's successor. While the Brown Ring continues to struggle against the spread of the Wildlands, its divided nature makes it weak in the face of its declared foe – when the wildlanders invade the valley en masse, they will be swept away like leaves in the wind.

Broadly speaking, the factions of the Brown Ring can be separated into three viewpoints:

- **The Scourge** believe that the Wildlands and everything touched by it must be destroyed – burn the ground, salt the earth, and Hell take those who stand in their way.
- **The Gardeners** take the opposite view – they fight life with life, planting and tending normal plants to block the encroachment of the Wildlands and drive it back. They mostly take a long-term view, reasoning that so long as the Wildlands are shrinking it doesn't matter how slowly they shrink.
- **The Alchemists** (also known as the Meddlers) adopt the extreme view that the Wildlands are not to be fought but cultivated – who knows what new and exciting plants could be discovered in a realm of such potent growth? Naturally, the alchemists and the scourge often clash over methodology and resources.

THE SAWBACK MOUNTAINS

The Sawbacks border the northern edge of the Redwater valley. A younger range than the Hidden Mountains, they are less severe both in terrain and climate. The Sawbacks have proved popular with the sort of settlers who like harsh landscapes to keep people away but not so harsh that the local dangers will kill them dead, so the mountains have a decent number of insular settlements scattered among them. Stories of gold, silver, iron and other valuable substances beneath the earth also draw prospectors; while there has been no big strike to start a gold rush, a constant stream of smaller finds keeps the treasure-hunters coming.

The mountains are also home to a wide variety of monsters - gryphons and wyverns the most numerous, although cave-dwelling ogres are also common - and rumours persist of elf-like humanoids who are only seen when it snows and vanish into solid rock faces when confronted.



THUNDER PEAK

One of the landmarks of the Sawbacks, Thunder Peak is a tall, jagged mountain that looks so out of place among the smaller peaks that surround it that a popular legend states it was dropped there by a forgetful god. Its top is always hidden from view behind heavy clouds, and two or three times a month a terrible storm lashes the flanks of the mountain with hail and lightning.

Yet people climb up and down this mountain, making their treks in the days between storms, to meet and trade with the 'Master of the Mountain' - a solitary orc by the name of Lee who operates a school of sorts near the summit, teaching the arts of war to anyone who can survive the journey to his home. Lee is cantankerous and distrustful of strangers, so he leaves his students to handle most visitors - a practice which suits everyone except those who need to speak to Lee and have to navigate the gauntlet of his disciples of Snow, Ice and Thunder before they are permitted.

The bizarre weather around Thunder Peak is nothing to do with Lee. He has no idea what causes it, but he likes the barrier it puts between him and the rest of the world. However, Lee is one of the stormlords (see page 36), so soon 'the world' is going to arrive on his doorstep, storm or no storm - and if there's one thing the grumpy warrior likes less than company, it's change.

THE WANDERING COTTAGE

One story that circulates among the mountain folk concerns the so-called 'wandering cottage'. People lost in the mountains at night sometimes spot a tiny cottage through the snow, with lights in the windows and smoke coming from the chimney. The door is answered by an elvish-looking man, richly dressed, wearing a cloak of moonlight. He offers a simple deal: food, shelter and safety for the night, in exchange for the visitor's promise that when he commands, they will obey.

The cottage's owner is always as good as his word, opening his door in the morning to reveal familiar vistas from where they can easily find their way home - but no one knows to what end he might be collecting future favours from rescued mountain travellers.

CAMPAIGN FRONTS

FRONT ONE: THE FLOOD

As the storms intensify, the Redwater river bursts its banks and starts to drown the valley. The flood is a campaign front that reflects the dangers caused by the rising water level and the metaphysical resonance between the stormlords and Sessinek's gathering power. The various dangers raised by the flood are mobile: they may create adventure fronts, move to existing adventure fronts, or move to the war campaign front (see page 36) depending on how the player characters handle them.

STAKES

Can the storms be stopped by means other than killing all the stormlords?

Which stormlord will recruit the homeless monsters?

Is it wise for the player characters to ally with the demons?

CUSTOM MOVE

When returning to a steading that's been flooded since your last visit, choose one:

- Flood damage; the steading has lost one positive tag of your choice.
- Some people have been washed away; the steading takes -population.
- A notable person has been washed away; the steading loses a named NPC.
- The steading has been isolated by the rising waters; all trade is blocked, triggering the *trade* condition on p217 of the Dungeon World rulebook.
- The steading remains unchanged, but has entered into a deal with dubious characters in order to do so; the GM will decide what sort of trouble they're in instead.

Note to the GM: 'Been flooded since your last visit' is a reference to the spread to an adjacent place and grow in intensity or depth moves that cursed places – such as the Dark Waters danger of this front – have.

DANGERS

HOMELESS MONSTERS

Horde: Wandering Barbarians

Impulse: To grow strong, to drive their enemies before them.

As the floodwaters rise, living space starts to become hard to come by – especially for those creatures making their homes in underground caverns, which are the first to flood. Deeper creatures drive lesser ones out of shallow caves as they try to stay above the water table, and the lesser creatures like goblins are ejected into the valley itself to roam and cause trouble.

GRIM PORTENTS

- Goblins and other humanoids maraud.
- Nastier creatures emerge.
- The humanoids band together for survival.
- The savage humanoids and/or monsters join one of the stormlords' armies.

Impending Doom: Tyranny – United behind a strong leader, the humanoid tribes will become a savage hammer crushing anyone in their path.

DARK WATERS

Use the moves for a Cursed Place: Elemental Vortex

Impulse: To grow, to tear apart reality.

The floodwaters themselves are a danger – they drown crops, wash away villages, and turn low hills into isolated islands. Worse still, because they are charged with the essence of Sessinek and his demonic nature, where the flood takes strongest hold the world begins to resemble the Benighted Sea and it becomes possible to sail from one to the other.

GRIM PORTENTS

- Refugees wander the valley looking for high ground.
- Refugees and existing settlements clash over the high ground.
- Famine spreads as crops are drowned.
- The valley floods completely.

Impending Doom: Destruction – If the valley floods completely, everyone will die.

THE DEMONS

Ambitious Organisation: Thieves' Guild
Impulse: To take by subterfuge.

The lesser demons that 'oversee' the contest for Sessinek's power have an agenda of their own. Sessinek was not foolish enough to allow them to gain control of its power when it agreed to the deal with them - but in the time between attempts at rebirth they become *de facto* rulers of the dark sea where their fortress stands, and they are unwilling to give that power up without a fight. To that end, they are attempting to engineer a situation where there is no clear victor of the contest: the stormlords must *all* die before the final one can claim their rightful power, allowing the demons to retain control of the plane until the cosmic age turns and a new set of stormlords can vie for Sessinek's legacy.



At the start of the game only Canithrax (see opposite) is present in the valley, but once the flood has progressed to the point where it makes planar connections with the Benighted Sea, reinforcements can cross over.

GRIM PORTENTS

- The demons of the Benighted Sea sail into the valley.
- The demons ally with the strongest stormlord to crush all competition.
- The demons betray and murder their champion at the moment of victory.

Impending Doom: Usurpation - The demons will take Sessinek's power back to the Benighted Sea and rule there with it until the ages turn again.

CANITHRAX

Devious, Intelligent, Large, Magical, Planar, Solitary

Rending Claws (d8+1 damage, Close); 16 HP, 2 armour (demonic vitality)

Special Quality: Demon

Canithrax is a lumbering demon with a barrel chest, long ape-like arms, and a canine head. He stands about seven feet tall, but only because he slouches. Contrary to his appearance, though, Canithrax far prefers to use negotiation and demon-magic to solve his problems.

When the game begins, Canithrax is the sole emissary from the demons of the Benighted Sea to the material plane. He was allowed to bring himself across as part of Sessinek's deal, to oversee the contest and bestow the demon lord's power upon the victor. He has no choice in the matter – should the stormlords be reduced to a sole candidate, he is compelled to seek them out and conduct the transfer ritual – but he is also the demons' primary agent in their own plans. Above all else, he wants to get close to the likely final winner so he can stab them in the back at their moment of triumph and ensure his kind continue to rule the Benighted Sea until the next age.

Canithrax's demon-magic is of a contractual nature, revolving around exchanges and deals. He can bestow demonic power on others in exchange for direct service or future favours and can visit terrible dooms on those who break the terms of the bargain, but he has little use for mortal souls. (He's encountered Death in the past, and has no desire to withhold anything from that dread personage.) As an added bonus, while the contest continues Canithrax is functionally immortal: his body can be destroyed but will always re-form within three days.

Instinct: To ensure none of the stormlords survive, by any means necessary.

- Enforce the terms of a deal.
- Make a voluntary agreement supernaturally binding.
- Offer something they want, at a price.
- Send a spectral image of yourself to observe or converse.

When someone offers to make a deal, hear them out.

When someone makes their opposition to you clear, make sure they end up working for you anyway.

When a stormlord tries to recruit you, say yes.

FRONT TWO: THE WAR

The stormlords only grasp the terms of the contest in a vague, intuitive way, but they understand in their hearts that only one of them can survive – the ancient magic of Sessinek draws them towards an inevitable collision, and all make plans for war even if they don't consciously apprehend why. This campaign front deals with the primary clashes in this conflict and how they affect the valley.

THE BEAST, THE FALLEN SON

Divine, Forceful, Large, Planar, Solitary

Thrashing Appendages (d10+5 damage, 3 piercing, Close, Reach);

22 HP, 3 armour (divine resilience)

Special Quality: Demigod

Arboreus, twisted and ruined, known as the Fallen Son in prophecy. He is a towering figure even in this low state, horned and hairy and dressed in rags but still possessed of a divine presence that commands respect. The wildstorms of the Wildlands rise and fall in line with his mood swings, and that command over the elements in combination with his divine nature is enough to make him a metaphysical contender for the power of Sessinek. He retains only a fraction of his previous intelligence and mostly responds to the guidance of his priests – most of them fool themselves that they are doing as he wills, but a few are well aware of the real power dynamic and use the Beast to advance their own agendas as often as they think they can get away with it.

Instinct: To give in to every urge, no matter how fleeting.

- Tear down a building, monument, or other man-made structure.
- Speak for a moment with divine insight and lucidity.

When shown evidence of who you used to be, pause for a moment in confusion.

When shown evidence of who you used to be again, lash out like a pained animal.

When your priests ask for guidance, act at random.

COBALT, THE DRAGON

Cautious, Hoarder, Intelligent, Large, Magical, Solitary, Terrifying
Claws and Teeth (b[2d10]+3 damage, 3 piercing, Close, Reach);
Lightning Breath (Near); 16 HP, 3 armour (draconic scales)

Special Qualities: Storm-blooded, Wings

Young by draconic standards – merely the size of a small cottage, plus wings and tail – Cobalt is still a force to be reckoned with. She is a royal blue in shade, lightning dances at her command, and her affinity with the element of air makes her a swift and manoeuvrable flier. As if her simple physical power wasn't enough, she is also possessed of a keen intellect and the ability to scry across the valley by sending her senses riding on the winds. Of all the stormlords, she is the single most powerful, but she is by no means rash enough to throw herself into battle with unknown forces when she can recruit minions to endanger themselves on her behalf.

Instinct: To rule.

- Bend the storm to your will.
- Observe events at a distance, if they are visible to the open sky.
- Enact a contingency plan.

When you have enemies, find their weaknesses and attack them without mercy.

When someone approaches you with the proper respect and ceremony, give them a moment of your time.

When someone tries to take something that belongs to you, destroy them in every particular.



COBALT'S OFFSPRING

Cautious, Hoarder, Intelligent, Solitary

(Some are also *Small*)

Claws and Teeth (d10 damage, messy, 1 piercing, Close);

12 HP, 3 armour (draconic scales)

Special Qualities: Storm-blooded, Wings

Cobalt has a handful of children who are her chief enforcers. They range in size from a large dog up to a large horse, and have inherited a measure of their mother's incisive mind and command of the storms. Even young as they are, their rending claws and lightning breath make them more than a match for most enemies.

Cobalt watches her children with exceeding care, as she believes that even with the plague of storms ongoing they are the biggest threats to her dominion.

Instinct: To grow in power.

- Enact the will of Cobalt.
- Create a secret power base of your own.
- Betray someone for personal gain.

When travelling away from Port Landing, always have a band of enforcers or other allies nearby.

When mother might be watching, do exactly as she instructs.

When mother cannot be watching, look out for number one.

SARLAT THE ALCHEMIST

Devious, Intelligent, Magical, Solitary

Staff (w[2d8] damage, Close); 12 HP, 1 armour (scales)

Special Quality: Slightly draconic

Chief among Cobalt's servants is Sarlat, the alchemist who developed the potion which transforms regular bruisers into her enforcers. He learned the basics of dragon synthesis – incorporating draconic traits into non-draconic creatures – long ago and has been experimenting on himself and others ever since. Cobalt and her children offer an extensive supply of cast-off dragon pieces for his work, and livewood from the Wildlands (see page 114) offers even more opportunity for him to further his studies – but Sarlat is as self-interested as they come, and would abandon his current patron in a heartbeat if continuing to follow her looked likely to get him killed.

Sarlat wears heavy carmine robes at all times, countless internal pockets holding the potions and reagents with which he conducts his experiments, the hood pulled up to cast his face into shadow. He supplements this with soft leather boots and long gloves, hiding every inch of his body from view – as well he might, because decades of experimenting on himself has left him with a freakish, semi-reptilian face and fine golden scales covering his hairless body.

Instinct: To become something new.

- Transform something with a magical potion or unguent.
- Gather reagents from a magical creature or place.
- Poison someone.

When threatened, cave in... but never forget.

When asked about your research, play it very coy unless you know they're okay with human experimentation.

Whenever you're in public or have company, take care not to let your transformed state show.

ENKIL, THE MERCHANT

Cautious, Devious, Hoarder, Intelligent, Large, Planar, Solitary

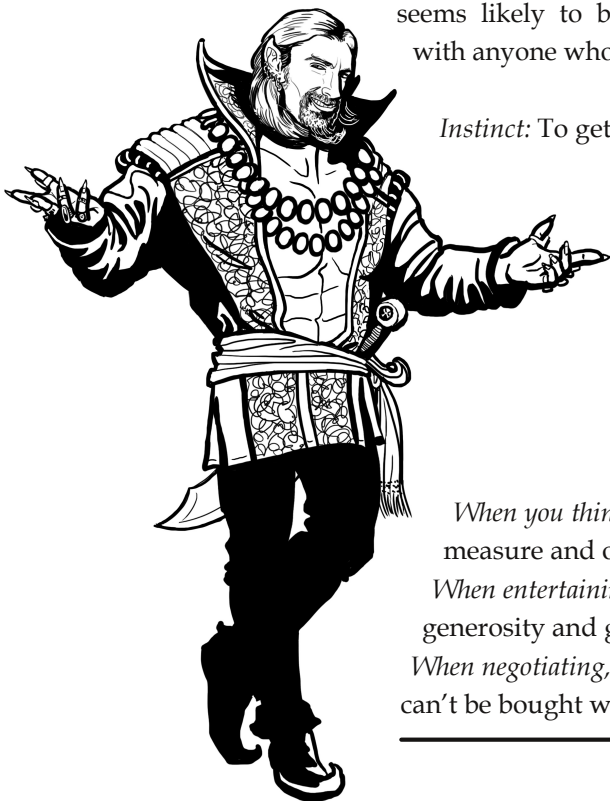
Glimmerdance (d10+1 damage, Close, Reach); 16 HP, 1 armour (shield)

Special Quality: Air-walking

Although he is known in prophecy as 'the Merchant', Enkil Cloudgather is far more than a simple coin-counter. He is of some mongrel planar race, standing nine feet tall with pale blue skin and stark white hair. He sports a slender beard and immaculate hair, wearing loose tunics and trousers over his capacious form with plentiful gold jewellery around his wrists, fingers, and neck. He can walk on the air and clap like thunder, and his jewelled scimitar can leave his hand to fight on its own. He is also spectacularly wealthy, and has come to the clash of stormlords backed by a rag-tag army of adventurers and other mercenaries – short on discipline and co-operation but individually potent.

Of all the stormlords, Enkil is the only one with a decent understanding of what is going on at the campaign's start thanks to his contacts on other planes. He knows the other stormlords must die in order for him to become ascendant so he opens proceedings with sudden attacks on anyone who seems likely to be a stormlord, and negotiations with anyone who might ally with him.

Instinct: To get what he wants, however he can.



- Casually swat aside a challenge which is beneath you.
- Corrupt someone through greed.
- Display the dazzling wealth of the planes.

When you think they're a stormlord, take their measure and order the attack.

When entertaining guests, be the soul of generosity and genial good humour.

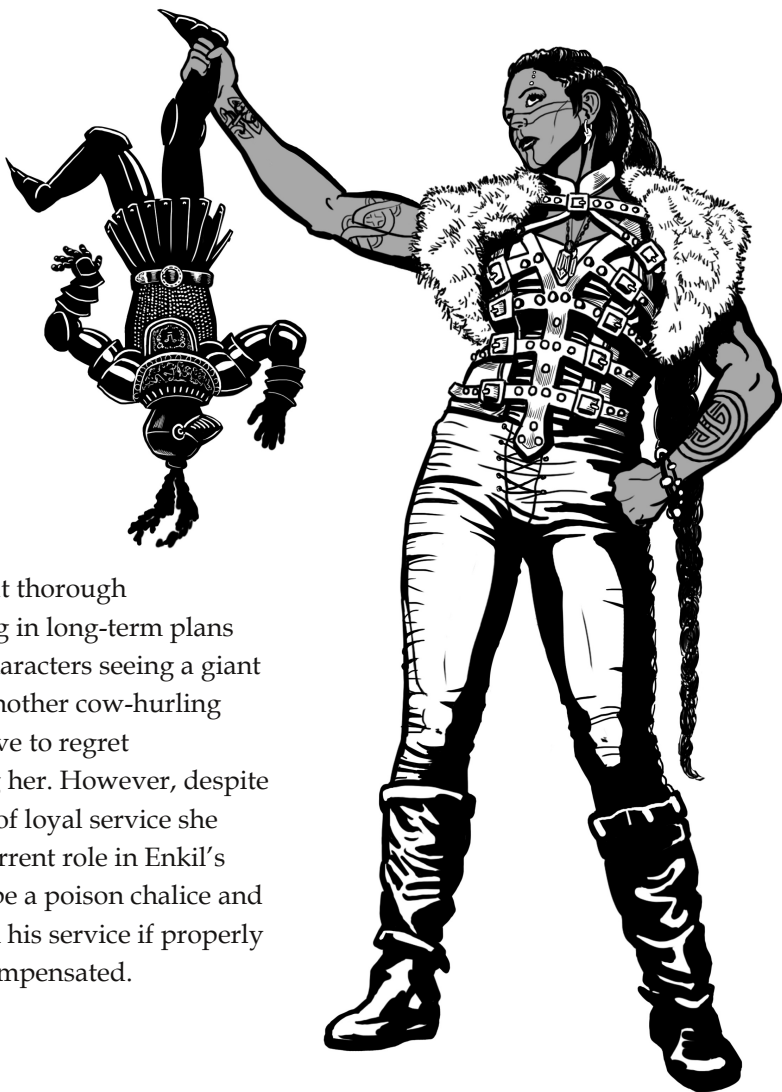
When negotiating, be bemused by anyone who can't be bought with your vast wealth.

ANA

Forceful, Huge, Intelligent, Magical, Organised, Solitary

Massive Strength (d10+2 damage, Close); 12 HP, 1 armour (leather and furs)

Taller than her boss by a considerable margin, the giantess Ana is the one tasked with trying to organise Enkil's motley collection of wandering murderers for hire into something resembling an army. Like Enkil, she is not native to this plane, but the spirits of earth and stone move at her command here just as they did in her home.



Ana is a slow but thorough thinker, excelling in long-term plans and strategy. Characters seeing a giant and expecting another cow-hurling brute may not live to regret underestimating her. However, despite her many years of loyal service she considers her current role in Enkil's organisation to be a poison chalice and may resign from his service if properly persuaded or compensated.

Instinct: To look after her own prosperity.

- Display her giantish strength.
- Command earth and stone to shape itself as she wills.
- Command the troops.

When dealing with your subordinates, tolerate no disrespect or rebellion.

When offered a new job, consider the offer seriously.

When life gives you lemons, roll your eyes and deal with it.

GLIMMERDANCE, ENKIL'S SCIMITAR

Close, 3 weight

Massive, heavy, and not intended for wielding by human-sized creatures, Glimmerdance is a huge scimitar with a gleaming, reflective blade and a jewel-encrusted hilt. Although it requires two hands for a human-sized person to lift - and even then gains the *awkward* tag - Glimmerdance can be released to fight on its own for a time with minimal guidance from its owner.

When you release Glimmerdance to fight on its own, roll +Str. On a 10+ hold three, on a 7-9 hold two, and on a miss hold 1 - although the GM can still make a move against you if you miss. Spend hold one-for-one during the present scene for the following benefits:

- Glimmerdance attacks. Deal your damage to a target enemy.
- Glimmerdance defends. Halve the effects or damage of an attack if it is in position to interpose itself.
- Glimmerdance distracts. You or another ally takes +1 forward against the sword's target.

When the hold is exhausted, Glimmerdance returns to your hand if you are close to it or falls to the floor otherwise. It must recharge for five minutes before it can fight by itself once again.

LEE, THE MASTER

Cautious, Forceful, Intelligent, Organised, Solitary

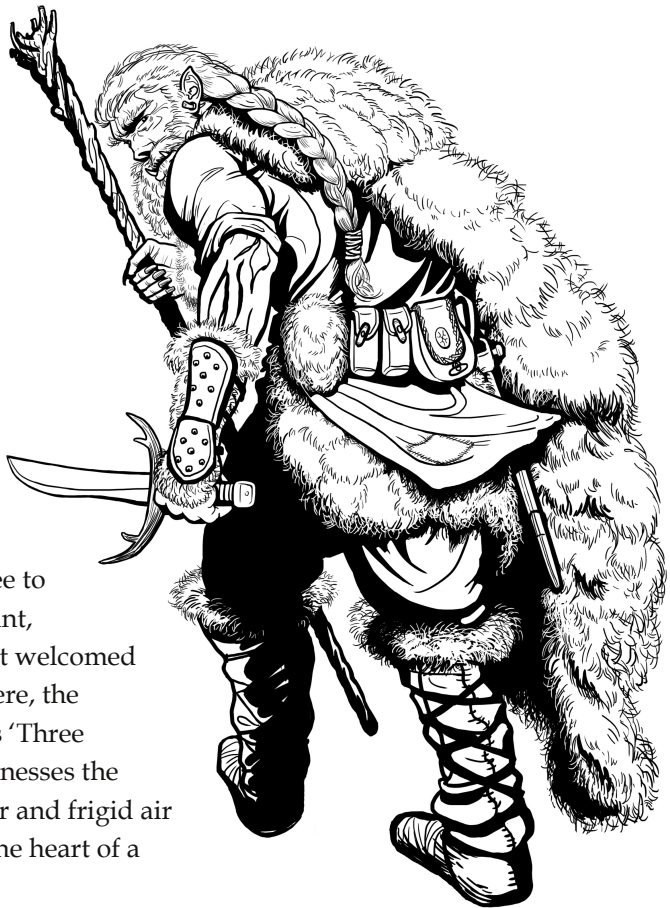
Martial Arts (b[2d10]+2 damage, 1 piercing, Hand);

16 HP, 2 armour (hard as nails)

Special Quality: Cold-hardened

Lee – known to almost everyone as *Master Lee* despite his rejection of society and the titles that go along with it – is an aging orc who long ago exhausted his tolerance for people and retired to the top of Thunder Peak to hone his expertise in the arts of war. And yet, to his disgust, people brave the mountain, the storms, and his well-known foul temper in order to challenge him or, more and more often, to learn at his feet. He hates company, but over the years he has found he hates being lonely more – and besides, he wants disciples to continue his teachings after he has gone.

Prospective students of Lee's are tested in combat, both unarmed and with a variety of weapons, must endure his caustic personality long enough for him to warm to them, and will find themselves doing menial tasks for months before he deigns to begin teaching them martial arts. Every student is free to leave whenever they want, although quitters are not welcomed back. If they can persevere, the students will learn Lee's 'Three Storms' style, which harnesses the power of rolling thunder and frigid air to turn the fighter into the heart of a deadly snowstorm.



Of the six stormlords Lee is the least prepared for what is about to happen. He has no army, only a handful of disciples, and his isolation from the valley both keeps him unaware of developing events and makes him an easy target for the first other stormlord who decides to move against him.

Master Lee can grant access to the Three Storms Disciple compendium class (see page 130).

Instinct: To reject civilisation and live alone.

- Perform an amazing wuxia martial arts feat.
- Allow the disciples to handle something, while you watch and assess.

When people ask for help, tell them you've rejected the world and turn them away.

When challenged, let your disciples handle it.

When finally roused to action, be a near-elemental force of destruction.

LEE'S DISCIPLES

Group, Intelligent

Martila Arts (d8 damage, 1 piercing, Hand); 6 HP, 0 armour

Special Quality: Cold-hardened

Master Lee takes disciples from any race or creed, caring only that they are willing to learn from him and that they possess the raw talent and determination that will allow them to survive the learning process. Their martial skills and approaches vary, but any the player characters are likely to fight will be able to use one or more mystic techniques.

Instinct: To achieve mastery.

- Perform a martial arts feat.
- Unleash the power of one of the Three Storms.
 - Snow:* Leave someone burdened and soaking wet.
 - Ice:* Freeze something.
 - Thunder:* Make a deafening noise.

When Master Lee commands, obey.

When you think you can get away with it, slack off.

When challenged, answer the call!

LORD HARN, THE DRUMMER

Devious, Hoarder, Intelligent, Large, Magical, Solitary

Dancing Chains (d8+1 damage, Close, Reach); 16 HP, 0 armour

A strange creature from a distant land, Lord Harn resembles an ogre in general size and shape although he stands straighter and his features are somewhat more refined. His skin is a deep midnight blue – a sign of prestige and power among his kind – and he festoons himself with fine clothes and jewellery. The capacious sleeves of his robes hide long chains, which lash out at his mental command, and he practises a strange magic of percussion and dancing that ripples out to change the world around him.

Harn is wealthy – he is a conquering warlord in his homeland – but unlike Enkil he prefers to spend his money on creature comforts and flashy, exotic magic. His strange-looking castle stalks the valley on eleven stone legs splayed out from its base like a spider, and is a world of scintillating wonders within. Its inhabitants' needs are seen to by halfling-sized storm spirits which zip back and forth filling the role of servants and, if necessary, defenders.

Harn has not brought much of his military might to the valley, but his magical wealth is great – he plans to turn foes into allies through a mixture of bribery and beguilement.

Instinct: To turn enemies against themselves.

- Present a gift with a hidden drawback.
- Cast a spell through a symbolic performance.
- Entangle someone with living chains.

When meeting new people, grin like a shark and wonder what they taste like.

When you see a weakness, exploit it.

When thwarted, congratulate your opponent on a cunning stratagem and make their life a living hell from now on.

LESSER ORIN

Group, Intelligent, Large

Massive Iron Clubs (d8+1 damage, Close, Reach);

10 HP, 1 armour (ceremonial leather)

The lesser creatures of Harn's kind that loiter around his walking castle all have skin the colour of ripe tomatoes, shading towards purple on the senior legbreakers who keep the others in line. They resemble ogres more than Harn does, as their status is too low to begin the transformation into something more civil, but their clubs are made of iron, intricately engraved with scenes from myth and legend, and they possess a strange ability to go overlooked despite their crimson skin and hulking size.

Instinct: To ascend the ranks of orin.

- Blend improbably with the scenery.
- Finish off a wounded comrade and devour their strength.

When challenged to a contest of strength, accept!

When it looks like you might not win, cheat!

When not otherwise occupied, wrestle!



MARIE, THE MAGE

Divine, Intelligent, Magical, Organised, Solitary

Shadow Bolt (d10 damage, ignores armour, Near); 14 HP, 0 armour

Special Quality: Divine blood

Somewhere several generations back, one of Marie's ancestors bore the child of a sky god. Ever since, the bloodline has been blessed with command over the weather, diminishing slightly with each generation but still potent enough in Marie for her to call lightning from thunderheads and commune with the elementals of cloud and storm if she puts her mind to it.

However, Marie never really focused on developing her innate powers. She prefers necromancy – a field in which she shows remarkable promise. She's a Redwater valley local, and lives in a bleak, windowless tower on a rise above a small town. She takes the town's dead for her experiments, and in return keeps them safe from banditry and other raiding with her magical powers and shambling undead servants.

Marie has also developed the art of creating shadows of people – copying some aspect of their nature and creating a quasi-clone focused around that particular facet of their personality – which she has used several times on herself to create assistants around the tower. These clones are not flesh and blood – although they often appear to be – and are instead made up of shadow-stuff given life and form by Marie's magic. Although under the control of the original, shadow clones often display a nasty streak when left to their own devices, suggesting unpleasant things about their true nature.

Marie's existing shadow clones are The Jailer, The Lady, and The Alchemist.

Instinct: To learn that which should never be learned.

- Cast a necromantic spell.
- With effort, control the weather.
- Suddenly, zombies!

When someone shows an interest in necromancy, wax lyrical about the ways in which you're pushing the boundaries of the art.

When someone brings up your divine heritage, change the subject.

When the stakes are raised, get deadly serious.

STAKES

Pick three based on the players' favourite stormlords.

- (The Beast) Can anything stop the spread of the Wildlands? How do you fight an entire jungle?
- (Cobalt) Will Cobalt conquer the entire valley?
- (Enkil) Can Ana be trusted?
- (Lee) What is Lee hiding from, up on that mountain?
- (Harn) What doom has followed the orin from their distant homeland to the Redwater valley?
- (Marie) What will happen to a shadow clone of someone when the original dies?

DANGERS

THE WILDLANDS

Use the moves for a Cursed Place: Shadowland

Impulse: To corrupt or consume the living.

The armies of the Wildlands come boiling into the valley, a mixture of animal-human hybrid wildlanders and whatever strange monsters and blasphemous unliving things they can drive before them, spearheaded by their warped god. With the Brown Ring scattered and divided against itself there is nothing to hold them back - except perhaps the player characters.

GRIM PORTENTS

- Wildland raids increase in frequency.
- Villagers near the border turn to dark patrons and forbidden magic.
- Nowhere in the valley is safe.
- The valley is completely overrun.

Impending Doom: Rampant Chaos - The Wildlands is change given life, and antithetical to order.

LOCAL GIRL

Arcane Enemy: Power-Mad Wizard

Impulse: To seek magical power.

Marie is honestly not very interested in the whole 'stormlord' thing, but she's going to need something to defend herself from the coming chaos. That something might be an army of the undead, a powerful ritual, transformation into a lich, the embracing of her divine nature, or whatever you and your group come up with – but whatever it is, it's going to make ripples all across the valley.

GRIM PORTENTS

- Marie sends a shadow clone to a location of secret knowledge.
- Marie's magical meddling unleashes a great evil.
- Marie achieves some kind of transcendence, at a great price – that may or may not be paid by her.

Impending Doom: Pestilence The default cost of Marie's final transformation is a plague of living dead or some sort of terrible curse on the valley, although it really could be anything.

COBALT'S EMPIRE

Use the moves for an Ambitious Organisation: Religious Organisation

Impulse: To establish and follow doctrine.

Even if she wasn't a contender in a battle for a concentrated dose of demonic might, Cobalt would remain an ambitious and cunning leader with dreams of an empire serving her every whim. With chaos descending on the valley, the relative safety of Cobalt's tender mercies and the anarchy of Port Landing are seeming more and more attractive.

GRIM PORTENTS

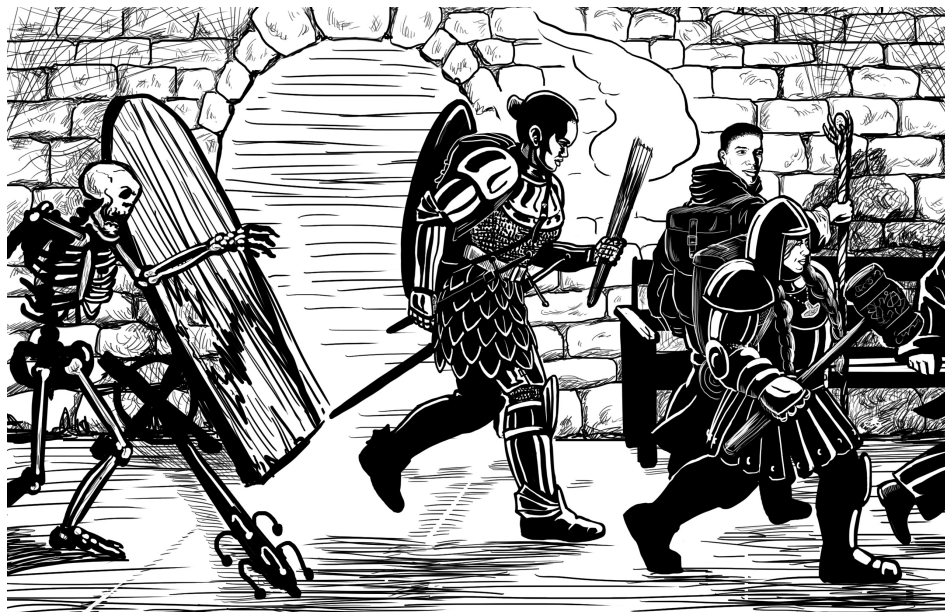
- Port Landing swells with refugees.
- Cobalt's armies start seizing territory.
- Cobalt and/or her children destroy something significant.
- Cobalt dominates the valley.

Impending Doom: Tyranny – Total control is all Cobalt wants, really. Is that so much to ask?

DUNGEONS

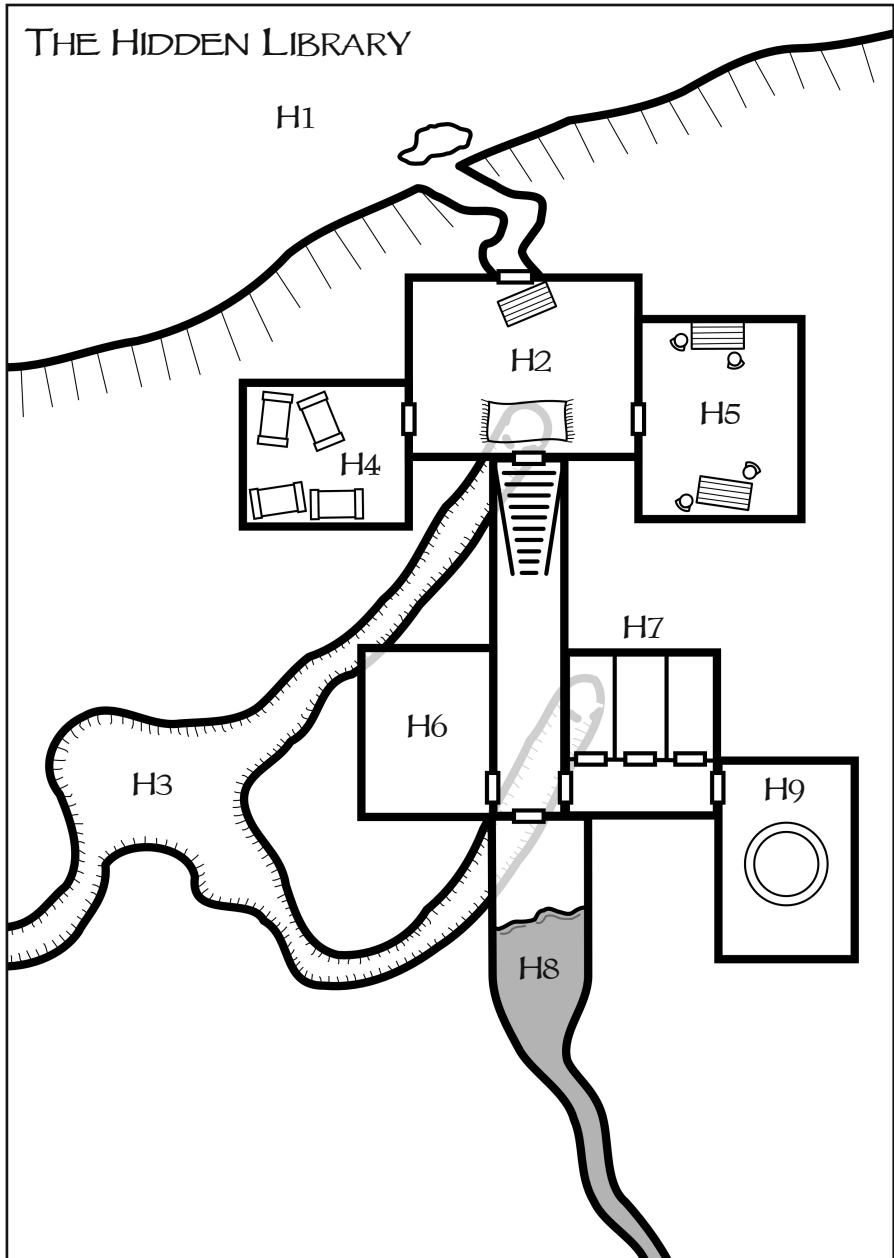
There follow half a dozen small dungeons for Plague of Storms, although they're easily transferable to other settings with minimal effort.

THE HIDDEN LIBRARY



The Hidden Library of the Watchers was kept in good repair by Sheva (see page 12) until a couple of decades ago when she was ejected from it by members of the Unspeakable Cult (see page 106) seeking occult knowledge regarding their worm-god. Now only a single cannibal priest remains in the library, together with the animated skeletons of her former victims and some worm-like servitors of her god. There still remains a little bit of treasure in this old library, but the real prize is the archive of prophecy – or at least, what parts of it that the Unspeakable Cult haven't carried off.

The library is carved out of the earth of the hillside, with the tunnels and rooms framed in timber then plastered over to give the impression of a normal – if windowless – room while underground. It was a pleasant fiction when it was first constructed but Sheva's blindness meant she was unable to maintain it properly, and 20-odd years of total neglect at the hands of the Unspeakable Cult have left the plaster cracked and weeping where moisture from the ground has soaked through. The timber is splitting in places, damage from burrowing worms and insects is everywhere, and the whole place stinks of rot and mildew.



The library is almost entirely unlit: neither Sralca, the worms, nor the skeletons need light to see. However, Sralca needs light to *read* so she keeps an oil lantern and a large stock of candles in her nest (see H7).

OPTIONAL COMPLICATIONS

- Marie (see page 47) could be interested in the contents of the library herself. She could easily be an ally or an enemy depending on the circumstances.
- A party of dwarven justicars might try to claim the contents of the library "for the good of the entire valley" on their way back to Riverwatch Hold.
- What if the Unspeakable Cult decide that now is the time to re-occupy the library? The characters may have to win their way free past unspeakable reinforcements.

H1. OUTSIDE

The entrance to the Hidden Library is concealed in the side of a hillock, behind an overgrown bush and a large boulder. The terrain is wooded, home to many kinds of animal, and littered with traps and snares set by Sralca intended to catch her fresh meat on a regular basis.

H2. ENTRANCE CHAMBER

A short but twisting tunnel leads to a wooden door showing obvious signs of having been broken in at some point in the past. Whenever Sralca is inside the library she shoves a table behind the door to act as a crude barricade – it won't keep anyone out, but the scraping of its legs across the flagstone floor serves as a warning to the skeletons in H4.

Beyond the door is a plain entrance chamber: there is a rack for hanging cloaks, some shelves for shoes, wooden chairs and benches for waiting on, all choked with 20 years of cobwebs and dust. The walls were once painted white, but are now stained by damp and worms. Over the middle door can just about be seen the eye-and-lantern motif of the Watchers For The End.

In front of the middle door a heavy rug covers a worm tunnel, forming a crude pit trap. Anyone walking on the rug is going to end up as a rug-wrapped parcel delivered down a steep and bumpy slope to the worms in H3.

H3. WORM TUNNELS

When the Unspeakable Cult first came here they brought with them a tunnelling worm that dug out these three large tunnels. The tunnelling worm departed with the other cultists, but its smaller offspring are still maturing in this chamber. Their tunnelling has left the ground uneven and unstable, and turned the original three-way junction into a nest of much smaller tunnels.

Apart from the worms, the only thing of interest down here is the body of a local man who discovered the entrance, decided he would make the transition

from 'woodcutter' to 'adventurer', and fell victim to the covered pit in H2, all in the space of about fifteen minutes. The worms have nibbled his body a little but not consumed him entirely yet.

H4. GUEST QUARTERS

This dormitory is where the Watchers would put up any visitors they had. Now Sralca uses it as a storehouse for the skeletons she animates after picking the meat off them – examination of any of them clearly shows the marks of gnawing on their bones. The skeletons are under orders from Sralca to slay any intruders and otherwise lie still, so that is what they do: lie in repose, some on the beds and some on the floor, until roused by the sounds of intrusion.

In the corner some old, discarded food has become a colony of black mould – if disturbed, such as by the bouncing bones of a shattered skeleton, it ejects a great gout of blinding, choking spores. Naturally, the skeletons aren't affected by this in the slightest.

H5. READING ROOM

When visitors wished to peruse the books of the archive they were brought to this room and a member of the Watchers would fetch the book or scroll they desired to see. Now it is dark and empty, the desks and chairs riddled with woodworm and spiders.

TUNNEL-WORM YOUNG

Horde, Small, Stealthy

Hungry Maws (d6 damage, Hand); 3 HP, 0 armour

Special Qualities: Blind, Tremorsense

Oversized tapeworms living in the guts of the earth. Ew.

Instinct: To undermine.

- Get inside a backpack or clothing.
- Appear from a tunnel or hiding place.

When on the ground, dig.

When food presents itself, eat.

When attacked with fire, flee – for now.

H6. ARCHIVE

The door to this room used to be locked at all times with a puzzle that only members of the Watchers should be able to answer – but the Unspeakable Cult smashed it down decades ago. The shelves within used to be laden with books and scrolls of prophecy, and commentary thereon by members of the order, organised to a scheme that, once again, only members of the Watchers would be able to understand. Now, the papers are scattered across the room, many incorporated into the spherical nests of fist-sized spiders. The tomes lie wherever they fell as the cultists finished leafing through them, some intact, some with pages removed, some defaced or burned.

The contents of this room, suitably rescued, constitute half of the archive that the player characters might be looking for (if Sheva sent them). The other half can be assembled from the pieces in H7.

H7. WATCHER QUARTERS

When this was a functional library and base of operations for the Watchers, this was where the librarian and any permanent staff would stay. The walls were painted with elaborate scenes of the world above to help the humans who stayed here adjust to living underground, but now the paint is discoloured and cracked, stained with blood and other less identifiable substances. The old bedding and furniture has been shattered and reconstructed into a haphazard nest, in which Sralca lurks between meals, reading books of prophecy by candlelight and scratching annotations in the margins in a language she doesn't understand.

THE ARCHIVE COMPLETE

If Sheva sent the characters – or if they meet her later and hand over the archive – then she becomes their 'interface' with the prophecies, able to tell them where to find what they need to know, or offer suggestions about what to do next.

If the characters are working independently, on the other hand, consulting the archive becomes a matter for the following move:

The first time you search the archive of the Hidden Library for a prophecy relevant to your current aims, roll +Int. (Take -1 if you only have half the archive available.) On a 10+ you will learn a course of action that might work out well for you. The GM will tell you what. On a 7-9 you learn of a person or document who can give you the guidance you seek.

Note to the GM: The course of action the characters find is not required to be easy, simple, or risk-free – but if they successfully overcome its challenges it should take them a concrete step towards their objective. Of course, if you're feeling generous or at a loose end you always have the option of just throwing them a bone.

SRALCA

Intelligent, Stealthy, Solitary, Terrifying

Savage Bite (d10 damage, Hand); 16 HP, 0 armour

Special Quality: Monstrous ghoul

A bent, emaciated woman with talon-like fingernails and a mouth full of razor sharp teeth meant for slicing flesh from bone. Her eyes glow a dull red from behind a curtain of lank, black hair. There is no way she could be mistaken for human. When not actively engaged in conversation she murmurs arcane fragments in the wordless language of the worms, although she is unaware of this habit.

Instinct: To feed.

- Bite down, and don't let go.
- Scuttle across walls and ceilings like a spider.

When not engaged in conversation, ceaselessly mutter in a disturbing non-language.

When enemies invade your home, lay traps for them.

When outnumbered and undetected, wait for an opportunity to pick off one or two on their own.

Sralca also uses these quarters as a larder when she captures live prey – one of the rooms has a working lock, and Sralca wears the key around her neck. When the player characters arrive the larder houses Griff Kenton, a farmer who came to investigate the lights his son saw in the forest and wandered straight into one of Sralca's bear traps. The wound in his leg is infected, leaving him feverish and unable to walk, but he will beg to be rescued if anyone finds him.

If this room is properly searched the player characters will be able to assemble half the archive that they might be looking for. The other half is in H6.

H6. CISTERN

This cavern contains a natural pool of water, shallow at the near edge but falling rapidly away into a subterranean abyss of unknown depth. The walls are damp to the touch and dotted with mould, and the shore is host to a variety of fungi, but the water itself is clean and drinkable.

H9. THEATRE

This was where the Watchers would gather to discuss prophecy and brief members before sending them to avert disaster. Now, like the rest of the library, it lies in a state of decay. The once-great tapestries are riddled with mould, the chairs weakened by woodworm, and the displays of important artefacts long since looted by the Unspeakable Cult. The only worthwhile thing which remains here is the large bronze disc – far too large to fit through the door – which forms the top of the round table in the centre of the room. Charging it with magic or blood (1 HP worth) causes its surface to light up with arcane runes, and it projects an illusory view of the valley with potential disasters picked out by floating red pinpoints of light. By tracing different runes on the disc while it is active, the view can be changed, enhanced, and filtered – but the secrets of exactly which runes do what are lost. If the players are interested in learning more, the records of the Twilight Stronghold or the stone library of Riverwatch Hold could contain more information or instructions for the table's use.

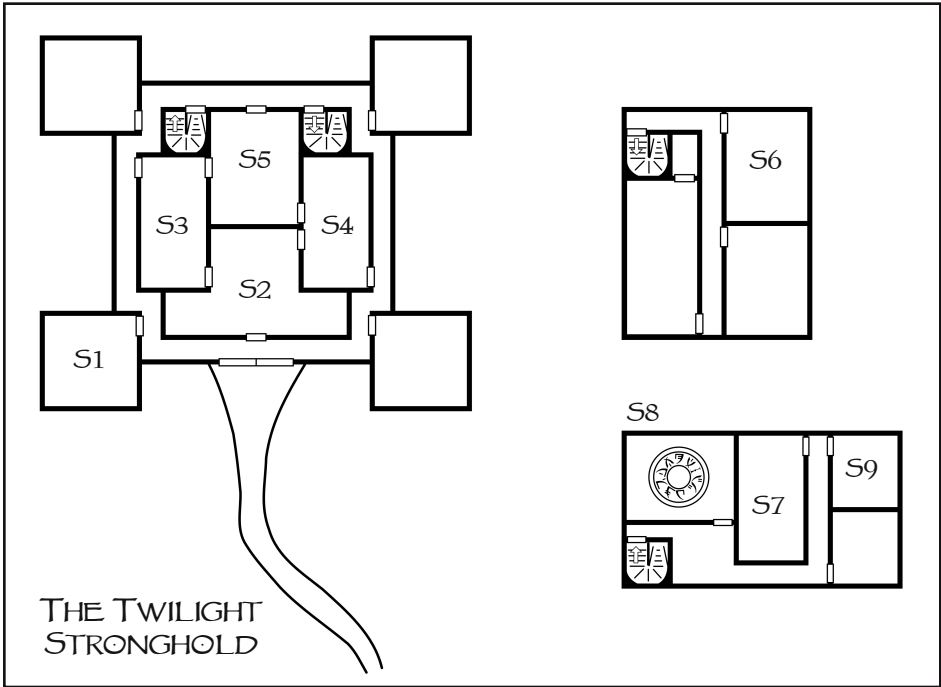
THE TWILIGHT STRONGHOLD

When the ancient empire fell, the Watchers in this keep chose to weave a powerful spell over themselves that would leave them sealed in a protective bubble of null time until the fighting was over. Unfortunately the spell went wrong. Time and space shattered, leaving the keep and its immediate surroundings a strange and haunted place plagued by ghostly images from past and future. The fracturing of time also attracted strange creatures which call themselves arachrons; made of and feeding on unstable time, the arachrons are drawn to this kind of temporal mess and see hunting interlopers as a welcome diversion.

There are five time periods attempting to overlap in and around the stronghold, taking the form of mobile spatial distortions – ‘bubbles’ containing visions of the time period they hold – and when within the area of a distortion the stronghold appears as it would in that time period:

- The present, in which the stronghold is nothing but ruins.
- The time of the great ritual, just before it went wrong. If the characters are looking for the secrets of the Watchers, this is the time they want.
- A potential future where the valley has flooded and the stronghold is under about fifty feet of water – this is shallow enough for light and warmth, but characters need to hold their breath. If you find yourself tempted to worry about water pressure, don't.
- A different potential future in which the demons from the Benighted Sea have invaded en masse and made the valley their home. They have turned the stronghold into a demon-keep from where they practice their time-magic in an attempt to return to the present and ensure their own triumph.
- A ruined city of yellow stone, lit by a sourceless light, whose distant sky is an endless whirl of sand. This strange place has few inhabitants, and the player characters will meet only one in the scope of this adventure: a nearly-naked goblin named Ubar and his pet snake. The goblin claims in the most ostentatious, egotistical manner possible to be a dead god looking for his ticket back to life – but (naturally) his divine powers don't work in this place so he can't prove it.

As well as showing visions, the bubbles can be travelled through with an act of will: while standing within one you effectively exist in both times at once, and can choose which one to exit the bubble into as you pass through the bubble's 'surface'.



In its original state the stronghold was lit by magic lanterns hanging from the ceiling, shedding a constant soft light. In the present and the flooded future, those lanterns have long since broken or been stolen, leaving the ruins dark except where sunlight can penetrate. In the demonic future they have been replaced by skull-torches that burn with infernal flames.

When you pass through a bubble to a new time period, the first person to enter rolls +nothing. On a miss the GM chooses one: either the bubble closes behind you and no one can follow, or you run into something nasty on the other side. On a hit you come through at a time when nothing threatening or dangerous is nearby. On a 10+ you find something interesting on the other side - the GM will tell you what.

Bubbles large enough to pass through are one-way trips - characters must find another in order to get to a new time.

PREVENTING INCONVENIENT TIME TRAVEL

By default, I assume that the broken time surrounding the keep only extends to a radius of about a mile - beyond that, people 'snap' back to their correct time if they happen to be venturing forth in the wrong era. Of course, their possessions remain with them rather than snapping back because... something something 'inherent pattern' something something 'destiny' something 'magic'.

However, if your players want to become pirates on the seas of a flooded valley (or freedom fighters in a demonic future, or legendary heroes in a war a century past, or...) that's cool too! It's just not the sort of cool that's supported by the rest of this product.

ARACHRONS

Cautious, Group, Intelligent, Organised, Planar

Swords and Spears, sometimes Beaks (d8 damage, 1 piercing, Hand, Close);
6 HP, 2 armour (unusual metabolism, shield)

Special Qualities: Spider-limbs for spider-climbing

Physically, arachrons are an unholy collision of recognisable parts: their lower parts resemble a giant spider with eight segmented legs. Instead of a head the thorax melds into a human-like torso with two arms, but atop the shoulders is a crow's feathered head with a serrated beak, sized up to match the torso. They are intelligent, and gifted linguists able to pick up a working knowledge of any language just by listening to others speak for a while, but their thought processes are alien and their behaviour often seems inexplicable to creatures constrained to the usual array of dimensions. Their fourth-dimensional thinking makes them dangerous in a fight, as they display the uncanny ability to predict where their opponent will be both while attacking and defending themselves. It's not infallible, but it gives them an edge.

Arachrons feed on time and, to a lesser degree, entropy. This collection mostly draw their sustenance from the slaves in the demonic future, slipping through to consume the youth of their defenceless victims before returning to a safer time period. However, they also enjoy chaos in the local vicinity as the entropy provides a welcome change of flavour.

Instinct: To promote chaos.

- Steal a year with a bite.
- Summon a future or past version of yourself for assistance.
- Know something about their past that you shouldn't.

When intruders arrive, hunt them.

When hurt, retreat into another time.

When one of them is isolated in time or space, that's the time to strike.

51. GUARD TOWERS

The four solid towers at the corners of the keep once housed guards on the upper storeys – two to a tower – and military stores on the lower floors.

In the present two of the towers have collapsed in on themselves but the other two remain standing, their upper storeys thick with cobwebs but largely intact.

At the time of the ritual the towers are all standing and occupied. The guards are watchful, but with a potent ritual being enacted in the chambers below and bubbles of time floating around they're jumpy and easily distracted.

In the flooded future the towers are two collapsed, two standing like in the present, but the standing ones are home to shoals of glowing fish that feed on the long-decaying enchantments of the stronghold.

In the demonic future the towers have been rebuilt and populated with broken ones, tireless soldiers created from the twisted bodies of those the demons have tortured to death.

In the city the towers don't exist. Characters will fall to the street below, where Ubar will point at them and laugh.

BROKEN ONES

Horde, Terrifying

Hand Weapons (d6 damage); 7 HP, 0 armour

Special Qualities: Feels no pain – well, no further pain, Twisted corpse

Some demons know the trick of binding a spirit to its body with pain, forcing the tortured soul to animate the broken corpse instead of passing on to its proper ending beyond Death's gates. The resulting creatures are equipped with rudimentary weapons and thrown at the demon's enemies *en masse*, screaming in piteous agony.

Instinct: To keep intruders out of the stronghold.

- Emit an agonised scream.

When someone talks to you, beg for death.

When a demon commands you, obey.

S2. DINING ROOM

The dining room was once an impressive, vaulted space, hung with tapestries and richly appointed to impress guests. **In the present** the tapestries are heavy with dust and a colony of bats has replaced the magic lanterns among the roof beams. The fine silverware and other valuable decor has been spirited away by braver-than-average robbers over the years but the huge dining table remains.

In the past the dining room is empty. The guards are on duty, the Watchers are conducting their ritual, and the servants are cowering in S3. Characters with an eye out for valuables can help themselves to the silverware (2 weight, worth 500 coins if sold as silverware or 300 if melted down). Of course, characters

UBAR

Devious, Intelligent, Magical, Small, Solitary, Stealthy
Knife (w[2d6] damage, Hand, Close); 12 HP, 0 armour

Ubar is thin to the point of emaciation, although he isn't starving - he's just thin. Physically he is utterly puny, although surprisingly quick. He wears a ragged thong, an enchanted crocodile-skin cloak which protects him from fire, and nothing else. He has a spectacular knack for being present just as a character does something stupid or embarrassing, and *never letting them forget it*.

He is a potent illusionist and capable summoner, although he doesn't use his magic often; when he does he always uses it in oblique or unpredictable ways. No fireballs for Ubar when he can call an angry rhino into his enemies' midst instead.

Ubar has a large pet viper he calls Mr Hissy. Mr Hissy travels wrapped around Ubar's upper arms or shoulders, and shows a surprising level of loyalty to his egotistical master.

Instinct: To escape the city.

- Witness something they'd prefer you hadn't.
- Shroud something dangerous in an innocent illusion.
- Throw Mr Hissy at someone.

When they threaten you, laugh at them - from a safe distance.

When using your magic, do something they would never expect.

When you've got dirt on someone, use it mercilessly.

carrying bags of jangling cutlery are setting themselves up perfectly for the GM to *show a downside to their equipment*.

In the flooded future this room is pitch dark, the magic lanterns having long since failed. The tapestries float in the slow currents, threatening to entangle anyone who comes too close in their heavy folds.

In the demonic future the dining room has been redecorated to better suit the whims of Oorlgat, the demonic ruler of the stronghold. The tapestries have been replaced by metal spikes where fresh meat might be impaled, and the dining table is now a sacrificial altar of onyx and iron. Oorlgat himself is often here, consuming some unfortunate slave or making an offering to his terrible gods.

In the city this room is still a dining room, much smaller, lit by the same sourceless glow as the rest of the city. In one corner is a lifelike statue of a woman – actually the petrified victim of some monster – dressed as an adventurer, one arm in a sling and the other outstretched to point in shock at whatever just petrified her. Ubar uses her as a place to hang his spare thongs.

OORLGAT

Divine, Intelligent, Large, Planar, Solitary, Terrifying

Rending Maw (d10+3 damage, 1 piercing, Close, Reach, Messy);

18 HP, 2 armour (demonic vitality, fat rolls)

Special Quality: Demon, Mouths everywhere

A lumbering glutton and devout disciple of gods even more terrible than himself, Oorlgat is a demon who delights in grease and consumption. He wears a leather apron and little else, displaying his corpulent body for all to see. He has no visible mouth but can spontaneously open a fanged maw on any part of his body should he need to speak or devour.

Instinct: To consume.

- Swallow something whole.
- Consume a spell or magical effect.

When something piques your interest, take it.

When someone steals from you, never forget and never forgive.

When you're not doing anything else, eat.

53. SERVANT QUARTERS

Several bunk beds arranged in tight rows, with small lockboxes for the few valuables the servants were allowed to themselves. **In the present** the beds are mouldy and strung with cobwebs, the lockboxes cracked open like nuts and their contents spirited away. One remains unopened, however, a wisp of brightly coloured silk visible where it is trapped in the hinges. This is bait left by the arachrons, meant to lure treasure-seekers into the room where they can be assaulted and their years stolen away. Astute characters might notice (via *discern realities* or other moves) the way the box is free of cobwebs and dust – it contains only the scrap of silk used as bait for the ambush.

In the past half a dozen servants cower here, hiding from the bubbles of time that float through the stronghold and trying to summon up the courage to run for freedom.

In the flooded future the ceiling of this room has partially collapsed, allowing sunlight to lance in from above. A riot of colourful undersea growth crowds around the light, making a home for hundreds of tiny fish and one huge, foul-tempered moray eel.

In the demonic future this is the slave quarters, where humans, dwarves and Wildlanders are kept chained in their own filth awaiting their consumption by Oorlgat or their transformation into broken ones. There are no beds, no lights, and the doors are kept securely locked and barred from the outside.

In the city this room is where Ubar sleeps, in a nest made of cast-off rags. He's cast illusions across the room to give it the appearance of a goblin cave and create a constant background sound of chatter in the goblin language. A fungus fire smoulders in the middle of the 'cave', which Ubar sometimes replaces with a real fire if he thinks people are getting a bit too confident about seeing through his tricks.

54. KITCHEN

The oven in this kitchen is kept fired by a captive elemental, a tiny thing of fire and smoke that calls itself 'Incineron' and dreams of inferno and devastation from its foot-wide binding circle below the oven. **In the past** Incineron rests in its circle, its flame dim from a day of cooking, and contents itself with mumbling vague threats and igniting anything it can reach without moving. As an immortal creature, it still remains stuck beneath the oven **in the present**,

from where it demands in its screeching voice that any visitors free it, alternating between overblown threats and high-pitched wheedling more or less at random.

In the flooded future Incineron has been extinguished by the weight of water. But **in the demonic future** he has been elevated to a position of power and infused with hellfire to supplement his natural flame – and he remembers how the characters treated him in the past.

In the city there is no Incineron. Instead this area resembles a long-abandoned storefront. Standing behind the carved stone counter is a humanoid skeleton, some seven feet tall and burning with a blue-green flame. Apart from the fire the skeleton isn't really dangerous and can be easily smashed; it can communicate in a throbbing baritone and offers to answer the characters' questions if they cross its palm with silver.

S5. STORES

Just a storeroom, plentifully equipped with boxes of dry goods, cloth, brooms and other equipment useful for the day-to-day running of a small keep. In all time periods it is infested by a strange breed of semi-aquatic rat – the creatures evolved in the distant future and have learned to use the time bubbles to insinuate themselves into all time periods.

S6. NOBLE QUARTERS

The top floor of the stronghold was once devoted to well-appointed rooms for the long-term members of the Watchers who stayed there to oversee the place. **In the present** the rooms are crumbling, the grand furniture long since stolen, shattered, or ruined by wildlife. Climbing plants have pulled apart the stonework and decorated the interior in a different way.

When you pay the burning skeleton of the time-lost city, ask it a question and roll +coins spent (minimum 1 coin, maximum 3). On a 10+ the answer is accurate and complete. On a 7-9 the answer is accurate but missing key details. On a miss the answer is accurate but reveals an unwelcome truth or betrayal.

Example: Arn the paladin asks the skeleton "Where can I find my long-lost sister?" and rolls. On a 10+ the skeleton intones "She rooms at the Three Sails Inn, in Port Landing." On a 7-9 the skeleton might say "She is in Port Landing," and encourage Arn to pay it again for a follow-up question. On a 6- the skeleton might say "She lies in the arms of her lover – and yours – the notorious pirate-sorcerer Delphine Glimmershadow."

INCINERON (DEMONIC FUTURE VERSION)

Intelligent, Large, Planar, Solitary

Flame Whip (d10+1 damage, ignores armour, Close, Reach); 20 HP, 0 armour

Special Quality: Made of fire

A towering creature of smoke and flame, Incineron maintains a roughly humanoid form out of long habit but can freely adjust its shape into almost anything of roughly the same volume – so long as it's made of fire. As an immortal elemental creature trapped and used as a cooking implement for a hundred years, Incineron is both slightly unhinged and a fantastic chef. The infusion of hellfire that is responsible for its power level in the demonic future has done nothing for its mental stability.

Instinct: To burn.

- Ignite something flammable with a touch.
- Brand someone as 'despised of flame'.

When you meet another cook, get passionate about flame-grilling.

When bound, seek your freedom by any means.

When freed, obey promises only as much as you feel like.

In the past the rooms are in their prime, filled with fine furniture and the personal effects of the Watchers who are enacting the ritual in S8. 1d4 x 100 coins can be looted in easily portable jewellery, fine clothing, and arcane trinkets.

In the flooded future these rooms have crumbled and washed away, leaving this section of the keep open to the wider ocean. What structure remains is encrusted with barnacles and undersea plants, home to more colourful fish but nothing of value.

In the demonic future the noble quarters have been knocked together into a single grand chamber where Oorlgat (see page 62) occupies his time when he is not tormenting his food in S2 or researching temporal magic with Aria in S7. Oorlgat keeps little finery here – his aesthetic runs more to 'brutal and practical' – but a thorough search will turn up demonic trinkets and symbols worth 100 coins to someone with a pronounced interest in the fiendish, and a small vial of oil created from Oorlgat's own oozings.

OIL OF OORLGAT

0 weight

This brown oil, refined from the secretions that cover the demon Oorlgat, smells rather unpleasant. But when tipped over something plausibly food-like it awakens an unspeakable hunger in anyone who views the food in question. Victims know that this terrible hunger cannot be sated by eating anything other than the object of their obsession, although they may resort to other food in desperation if unable to consume their main desire.

The hunger may also be banished by exhibiting enough willpower to abstain from all food for 24 hours, at which point it diminishes to the normal hunger of someone who hasn't eaten for a day.

When you are exposed to the effects of Oil of Oorlgat, roll +Wis. On a 10+ hold three. On a 7-9 hold two. On a miss, hold one. Spend hold any time you see or smell food – or the food-like substance anointed with the oil – in order to not immediately gorge yourself on everything you can reach.

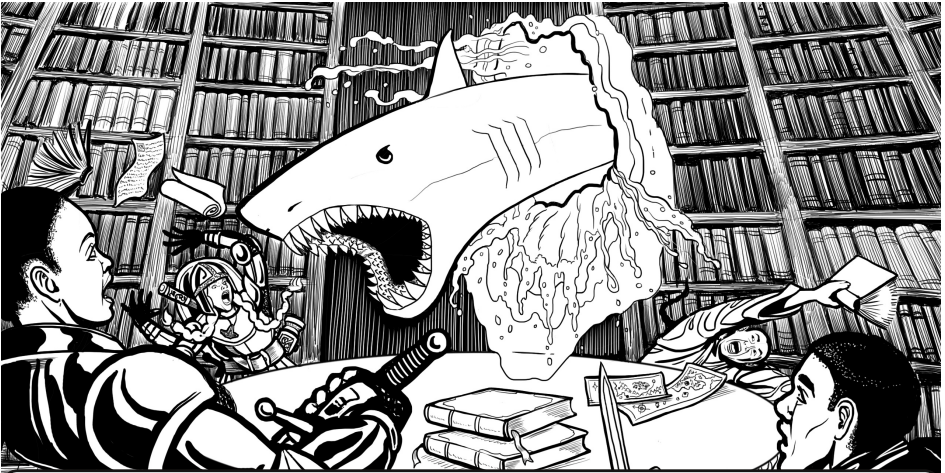
Unfortunately for thieves Oorlgat's greed gives him a sympathetic link to his belongings, and he will come for them if they are stolen. He will even pursue them into other time periods if he must. (Although remember the default assumption that he returns to his own time if he has to travel more than a mile from the keep.)

In the city this is a small but well-appointed apartment which Ubar claims as his home. He doesn't sleep here, preferring instead to nap wherever he happens to get tired, and he has no belongings to keep here or decorate the place with, so it's lacking everything that would make it an actual *home* – but Ubar claims it nonetheless.

57. ARCANE LIBRARY

Shelves run floor to ceiling on all four walls of this room, and several armchairs once offered comfortable places to sit while you peruse your tome of choice. This is where the Watchers stored their library of prophecy and a great many arcane texts describing various spells to do with prophesying and influencing the future. **In the present** it's almost all gone, spirited away by looters from the present or demons from the future; one chair remains, thick with dust and home to a single aggressive beetle the size of a man's hand.

In the past this room is a well-appointed mess – the Watchers have been searching with ever more haste for a potential solution to the war that is coming, and have left books and scrolls piled everywhere with no apparent order or meaning to their arrangement. If characters search this room for prophecy, see the boxed move opposite.



When you rummage quickly through the arcane library of the Twilight Stronghold, roll +Wis. On a 10+ choose two questions that the GM will tell you the answer to. On a 7-9 choose one. On a miss, you still get to choose one but just as you discover the answer you are interrupted by someone or something else. The GM will tell you who or what.

- Who or what is behind the storms?
- Who are the stormlords?
- Where can I learn more?
- What does this prophecy say about me?

With enough time to study all the material present, characters can get the answers to all of the above questions – but attempting to study (or loot) the entire library takes a lot of time, and the GM should consider this a golden opportunity to make a move of their own.

Note to the GM: The answers to the questions are, in order:

- *Sessinek, a demon lord of storm-wracked seas, has laid plans to re-embodiy his power in a worthy successor. While that contest is going on, the storms rage unchecked.*
- *The prophecies call them the merchant, the master, the mage, the dragon, the drummer, and the fallen son - although missing elements allow for one or two more stormlords if you feel like creating your own or later revealing that one of the player characters is a stormlord after all. From context the dragon is obviously Cobalt and the fallen son something to do with the Wildlands. Characters local to the valley will be able to identify Marie as the mage and know stories of 'the master of Thunder Peak'. The drummer and the merchant are visitors from distant lands, and so the characters are unlikely to know any further details without spout lore or further investigation.*
- *The archive of the Hidden Library and the old records of the Riverwatch dwarves – this result also contains maps which indicate the location of both places.*
- *This is an open-ended question for you to insert pointers that you want the characters to pick up on. Alternatively, you can ask the players what the prophecies say about their characters and use that as an indicator of what they want to see (and a potential road map for the campaign).*

Possible interrupters on a miss could be arachrons, demons from the future, a Watcher from the past come to fetch a tome vital to the ritual (which the PCs have just lost or destroyed, naturally), or a sudden time-shift. If you're feeling gloriously stupid, a shark or other sea predator could swim through from the flooded future and cause havoc before suffocating.

ARIA

Hoarder, Intelligent, Magical, Planar, Solitary, Terrifying

Red-Hot Wires (d10 damage, messy, 2 piercing, Close, Reach, Near);

12 HP, 1 armour (demonic toughness)

Special Quality: Unsleeping, Warped-looking

Aria is a humanoid demon, almost nine feet tall but spindle-thin so that she resembles a person distorted in curved glass. Her hair and skin are blank white, and she has eight yellow eyes that rise up her tall forehead in two columns of four each. Her delicate fingers are tipped with steel nails that carry razor edges and her lower jaw can split vertically to reveal a gaping maw lined with jagged teeth.

Yet despite her physical weapons, Aria prefers to assault interlopers in her domain with magic: she commands fire and metal, and has some limited ability to bend time thanks to her studies of the temporal effects in the keep.

Aria is rabidly territorial, permitting entry to 'her' library only with the proper rituals – even from Oorlgat, who is her ostensible superior – or she greets any newcomers with a slicing tangle of red-hot wires conjured by her magic. If she is appeased, she can be a fine and cultured hostess provided one appreciates the demonic equivalent of tea and cucumber sandwiches.

Aria does not sleep.

Instinct: To lash out at the unknown.

- Dispense disturbing knowledge.
- Stutter time.
- Bind fire or metal to her will.

When questioned about your research, make time to discuss the finer points of theory.

When challenged in your domain, brook no insult or disrespect.

When forced to leave your domain, do it only reluctantly and scurry back as soon as possible.

In the flooded future the library is pitch dark and filled with floating fragments of shattered shelving – it's easy to get lost and disoriented amid the pieces.

In the demonic future the library is in use as a library once again: many of the shelves are empty, and others are filled with strange demonic artefacts and various organs in jars of preservative chemicals. There is enough of the original library here – pillaged through occasional temporal jaunts – for characters to use the boxed move if they wish, but they will have to deal with Aria first.

In the city this is a featureless room carved from raw stone. At the centre of it is an orrery of staggering intricacy, showing the relative movement of the planes, the planets within the planes, the moons around the planets... the thing is fractal in its complexity, revealing more detail the closer one studies it. Ubar doesn't know what it is or what it's for, but he knows it's possible to become lost in contemplating it so he tries to avoid looking at it.

SS. RITUAL CHAMBER

Located on a natural convergence of ley lines, the ritual circle in this chamber is a focal point for arcane power. **In the present** the room is dusty and cobwebbed, lit by a soft purple glow from the amethyst-inlaid ritual circle in the floor. The semi-precious stones are held in place by the same magic they channel, making them difficult and dangerous to remove.

In the past the room is much better-appointed, well-lit, and the walls hung with tapestries illustrating great triumphs of the Watchers over the forces of doom. It is also where the current Watchers of the keep are in the middle of their great ritual meant to seal the keep away from time until the brewing war has passed it by. There is one Watcher present for each player character, to a minimum of three, of a mixture of classes and races.

When you prise the amethysts out of the ritual circle, roll +Dex. You will always gain a number of coins' worth of amethysts equal to your die roll x 50. On a miss, you also take d10 damage and an item of your equipment is ruined by the magical backlash (the GM will tell you what). On a 7-9 you can choose between the destruction of one of your items (GM's choice) or the d10 damage. On a 10+ you leap clear before the energy blasts you.

Once the magic has discharged, the remaining amethysts are ruined – and so is the ritual circle.

A Note for the GM: I'm leaving it deliberately uncertain as to whether the player characters' interference here ruins the ritual and causes the fractured time effect, or whether the ritual was never going to work but the player characters have the potential to save the day and resolve the problem. Choose whichever outcome makes the most sense for your table.

In the case of the ritual 'never going to work', possible culprits include: the arachrons or the future demons, both of whom have a vested interest in creating the fractured time effect; some sort of war-related complication local to that era, like an agent of one of the powers; or perhaps it was just a badly-designed ritual. Your group may well come up with other, better ideas.

In the flooded future the ritual circle has eroded over time and the arcane energies which power it percolate slowly in the water, creating a strange purple fog lit from within by its own radiance. The fish which live here have mutated after exposure to the leaking magic: they are large and placid, brightly coloured like poison toads, and while there is no pattern or order to their colouration all exhibit bioluminescence to some degree. Most notably the school exhibits a collective mind of moderate intelligence. Should the PCs find some way of communicating with the fish they might find the school a useful ally: It has a good understanding of how the time bubbles work and through the sacrifice of a handful of members it knows a little about the other time periods as well.

In the demonic future the ritual circle has been repaired (even if the player characters broke it in the present) using woven soul-stuff as magical conduits. The demons have used their arcane knowledge to amplify the power here even further – anyone can use the Wizard's *ritual* move here – but the results of any ritual enacted are tainted with demonic essence, and even if it solves a short-term problem the eventual outcome will always incline the world towards evil.

In the city the circle is a plain engraving in a flagstone floor. It does absolutely nothing, although Ubar will try to convince the player characters that if they perform some sort of embarrassing or humiliating act in the circle it will generate some sort of magical effect. He'll use his illusions to spin this entertainment out as long as he can.

WATCHERS

The Watchers tend to train their members to be omniscient – saving the world might at any moment be a matter of picking a lock, casting a spell, or chopping heads. Of course, every Watcher has their own personal preferences.

Instinct: To prevent the fulfilment of dangerous prophecies.

WARRIOR-TYPE

Cautious, Group, Intelligent, Organised

Assorted Weapons (d8 damage, Close); 6 HP, 2 armour (light armour and shield)

- Get in one... last... thrust...
- Take a hit meant for someone else.

MAGE-TYPE

Group, Intelligent, Magical

Deadly Spells (d8 damage, Close, Near); 6 HP, 0 armour

- Manipulate arcane 'force'.
- Launch a barrage of magic missiles.

THIEF-TYPE

Devious, Group, Intelligent, Stealthy

Knives (d6 damage, Close); 6 HP, 0 armour

- Attack someone who thought they were safe.
- Vanish in the confusion.
- ...and later, it turns out you stole something important.

CLERIC-TYPE

Divine, Group, Intelligent, Magical

Hefty Blunt Object (d8+2 damage, Close); 8 HP, 1 armour (light armour)

- Call down holy fire.
 - Cast a spell which enhances an ally.
-

59. DISCUSSION ROOMS

These rooms are where the Watchers would gather to consult their books of prophecy and plan courses of action meant to prevent them from ever coming true. **In the present** the heavy tables have rotted, the chairs become infested with woodworm, and the decorations on the walls long-since faded or ruined by water damage. Anything of value has been spirited away well before the player characters arrive, although a mouldering corpse on the floor is all that's left of a broken one (see page 60) that sought to escape the demonic future by travelling through a time bubble.

Of course, **in the past** the rooms are in a much better state. There is still no monetary treasure here, but the paintings on the walls form both a record of the Watchers' past successes and their plans for the immediate future – it is here that the player characters can learn what the Watchers are/were up to, if they kill or otherwise make enemies of the Watchers in S8.

Note to the GM: If you want to introduce other Watcher plans that the player characters can chase down and enact or ruin according to their wont, here's the place to do that.

In the flooded future there is only one item of interest in these rooms: a woman's corpse, armed and equipped as an adventurer, relatively fresh, floating in the darkness. She used to be part of the resistance in the demonic future – she hoped to use the broken time effect to get close enough to Oorlgat to stab him with a specially-crafted bane weapon, but slipped through into the flooded future by mistake and drowned. The dagger is still sheathed at her waist, the water around it noticeably colder than elsewhere in the room.

DEMON-BANE DAGGER

Hand, 1 weight

At great cost, the priests of the resistance brought down an ice-shrouded angel and bound a small portion of its essence into this blade. It glows with a soft blue light and is always cold to the touch – but chilling drinks is the least of its powers. Any time a character uses the dagger to deal damage to a demon, they do the maximum amount of damage as determined by their damage die. (Armour protects against this damage normally.) Anyone handling the knife learns of its purpose and power.

Unfortunately the knife bears some of the unbending nature of the angel it was split from: its bearer must *defy danger* in order to retreat from a chance to fight a demon (or many demons). After all, the knife doesn't care who wields it – only that it must be wielded. Whoever happens to be holding it right now is just the latest disposable bearer.

In the demonic future these rooms have been turned into a prison and torture chamber. Oorlgat tries not to keep prisoners here for too long, since most choose to risk escape through a time bubble over the promise of of demonic interrogation, but it still sees semi-regular use.

Note to the GM: A character who encounters something nasty while travelling through a time-bubble to the demonic future here should totally end up locked in a cage here.

In the city these rooms are empty except for stone shelves covering the walls, the shelves lined with books and scrolls – but all the books and scrolls are part of the same stone-carving that made the shelves, painted with cunning skill to resemble the real thing. Ubar never bothers with these rooms any more, but if he catches word that the characters have been here he tells them that the books are full of arcane secrets and only open for the worthy.

LORD HARN'S GIFT



Despite his physical power and small army of orins, Lord Harn is not one to make a direct attack when he can strike from an unexpected angle. Going through his collection of esoteric artefacts he found a drum with a powerful spirit bound to it – he struck a bargain with the spirit, promising it freedom if it served him, then left the drum poorly concealed near the village of Langton. Sure enough it was found and made its way into the hands of a lazy would-be bard called Castor, who quickly became enamoured of the drum's ability to influence the minds of those who could hear it play and used his new powers to obtain the best the village could offer.

It didn't take long for Castor to be found out by the village elders, who were no fools, and they sent several strong men – ears blocked – to divest him of the drum. Castor avoided them and fled into the nearby woods, where he continued to play the drum at all hours of the day and night. Finally, weakened by continuous exposure to the drum's sound, almost every youth in the village between the ages of 13 and 21 simultaneously left home to join Castor in the woods.

The village elders naturally sent a posse to get the children back, only to find that Castor had tamed more than just their offspring: wild animals harried

them from all sides, and an impenetrable wall of thorns now blocked passage into the heart of the forest. They retreated in confusion, and thus the situation stands when the player characters arrive.

The area within the wall of thorns is mostly dense woodland, with clearings as marked on the map. Because of the heavy canopy light is often dim during the day, but still easily bright enough to see by. Night is another matter altogether: what little light the stars manage to infiltrate past the storm clouds is totally blocked by the trees, plunging the whole place into darkness. The main bonfire at H3 is easily visible at this time, as are the smaller campfires in the various locations marked H2.

GETTING IN

There are several ways characters can bypass the wall of thorns. Flight is the simplest option, but not one all parties will have access to. Alternatively there is the fallen tree at H1, the risky leap at H4, the diplomatic approach, or the old adventurers' standbys of violence and fire.

DIPLOMACY

Characters who approach under a flag of truce may be able to persuade Castor to open the wall of thorns and let them in with the usual *parley* move. Castor is especially vulnerable to seduction attempts (from men *and* women) so if the characters use something like that as leverage give them a +1 bonus. One of the dryads will act as Castor's go-between, since he's not stupid enough to come and meet the characters outside the wall. Any meeting will take place at the heart of his power - he has the dryads open a path through the thorn-wall to H5.

VIOLENCE

A character with a suitable weapon or tool can do their damage to the wall of thorns without needing to roll any sort of move, but the wall fights back: it does 1d4 damage for every attack as it lashes assailants with brambles. It takes 30 HP of damage to hack a hole big enough for a human-sized character to squeeze through (taking another 1 damage from the grasping thorns) and by the time they get through to the other side one of the dryads and half a dozen dominated teenagers will be waiting for them with some pointed questions.

WHAT EXACTLY IS HARN'S PLAN?

Suxaibit, the spirit of the drum, has been tasked by Lord Harn to begin raising an army among the people of the valley. When the clash between the stormlords begins in earnest, Harn will use them as a secret weapon to assault and harass his foes.

To this end, Suxaibit has been concentrating its conditioning on healthy young people who might make good warriors. The younger children can be raised in a warrior tradition or used as decoys, hostages, or assassins. Plus, their minds are weaker and so they are more easily controlled.

SUXAIBIT

Devious, Intelligent, Magical, Organised, Solitary

Psychic Assault (d8 damage, ignores armour, Close, Near); 16 HP, 0 armour

Special Qualities: Intangible, Bound to the drum

Suxaibit is a potent spirit that was long ago bound to an enchanted drum in order to limit and direct its power. At heart it is a thing of conformity and coordination, of groups acting as cohesive units and the submission of identity to the community as a whole. It can only exert its powers while the drum is being played, and as a further limit to its potency the drum must be played by someone free of magical compulsion. Suxaibit cannot just overwhelm someone's mind and force them to play. Luckily, Castor is a callow youth and easily manipulated into drumming often enough to satisfy the spirit.

Although bound to the drum Suxaibit can project its senses anywhere within about 100 yards whether or not the drum is playing. As a result it may be well-prepared for the player characters once Castor begins playing.

Instinct: To unify.

- Put an alien idea in their heads.
- Take total control of an NPC.
- Reveal that someone has been your tool all along.
- Summon reinforcements from the local wildlife.

When someone plays the drum, manifest as a subtle presence.

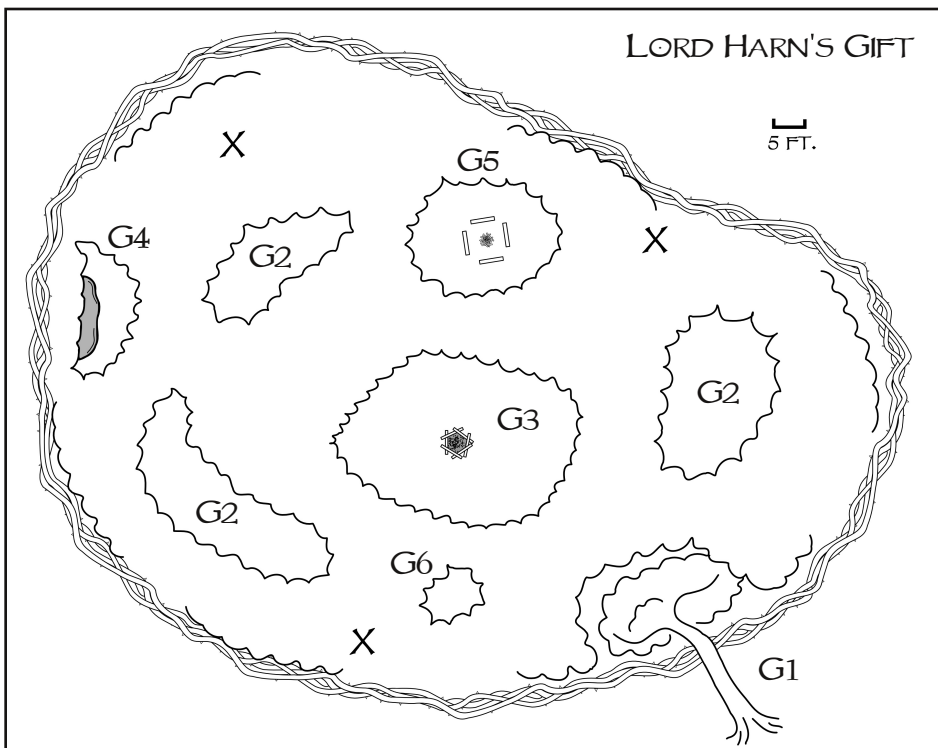
When one of your tools tries to resist you, redouble your control.

When freed from the drum, become something much greater.

FIRE

If the player characters set fire to the wall of thorns you've got two broad options: a) point out that living plants don't burn well at all, especially with the constant rain, and they'll need to think of something else; or b) tell them that the wall burns merrily - and so does that bush over there, and that grass, oh and look how the sparks are spreading to the nearby trees...

It all depends on whether you want a more traditional adventure, or if you want the characters to be saving mind-controlled teenagers from a raging forest fire while a trio of dryads get *really* angry with them. Remember: *show a downside to their class, race, or equipment* is one of your moves, and I don't think anyone's going to complain if you handwave 'that fire they started' into their equipment list just this once.



THE DRYADS

There are three dryads (*Dungeon World*, page 269) under Suxaibit's spell. Their plant nature resists the spirit's mental control, so it's only capable of influencing them rather than controlling them outright, but it has conditioned them to believe that Castor and the teenagers are their allies. The dryads spend most of their time merged with their trees at the locations marked on the map.

DOMINATED TEENAGER

Horde, Intelligent, Organised

Fists (d4 damage, Hand); 3 HP, 0 armour

The teenagers of Langton are between the ages of 13 and 21, and most are physically fit from a healthy outdoor lifestyle. While serving Suxaibit all carry knives but most lack the will to use them against living victims, even with the spirit's powerful control. Should a fight break out Suxaibit uses the younger children to distract and confuse the characters while the older ones try to do them actual harm. There are 23 kids in total, and they could be encountered anywhere within the wall of thorns.

Instinct: To obey Suxaibit. (Normally: To rebel.)

- Reject perfectly good advice or instruction.
- Keep them busy until reinforcements show up.

G1. FALLEN TREE

A recent storm has knocked down a tree outside the wall of thorns, which has fallen against the wall, partially crushed it, and now makes a useful bridge for those outside to get in. Unfortunately the end of the tree on the inside of the wall is some 20 feet off the ground – the drop onto soft grass isn't so bad, but it's not a route suitable for a quick escape.

In a couple of days the dryads and teenagers will co-operate to lower the tree to the ground and bring it entirely inside the wall of thorns, so the characters must act fast to take advantage of this entrance.

G2. CAMPSITE CLEARINGS

These large clearings are where the teenagers of Langton sleep, when they choose to sleep. Teenagers being what they are, there are always a few of the kids around and awake in these clearings no matter the time of day or night. If they spot the player characters they're likely to be wary but not outright hostile, unless the characters have already attracted the attention of Suxaibit – at which point it will inspire the children to frothing frenzy and throw them at the characters in an effort to bury them under the weight of people they don't want to fight.

CASTOR

Devious, Group, Intelligent, Organised

Flailing (w[2d4] damage, Hand); 6 HP, 0 armour

Since this drum came into his life, Castor's been riding high! Sure, the woods are less comfortable than his parents' cottage, but the drum fixes all that: his playing can call up prey animals to be slaughtered, bring all his friends (and their little brothers and sisters, but whatever) to hear him play, tame predators, and he's even drummed up some *dryads*! And if anyone screws with him, a few beats of the drumstick and they're his to control!

Castor's not a bad guy; he's just shallow and looking for an easy life. He only directs the drum to take control of people when they're opposing him directly, and even then doesn't want to hurt anybody, just get them out of his way. Unfortunately Suxaibit shares none of his inhibitions or good nature.

Instinct: To take the course of least resistance.

- Play the drum.
- Knock them flying with a burst of sound.
- Draw their attention away from your friends.

When approached by an attractive man or woman, ask them to join you.

When offered an easy way to get what you want, convince yourself it's okay to say yes.

When threatened, start playing the drum.

G3. CENTRAL CLEARING

This huge central bonfire is where Castor 'holds court' and plays his drum. He tends to sleep until noon and start playing the drum around sundown, when the children of Langton come to play other instruments, dance around the fire, and become unknowingly subject to Suxaibit's psychic conditioning. Once Castor starts playing the spirit encourages the children to shout for more until Castor is physically exhausted, all to extend the time it has available for conditioning.

G4. MIDDEN

Characters looking for a subtle way past the wall of thorns can find one here: a tree outside the wall grows tall enough that a single branch reaches over it, coming within a few feet of a similar branch on a similar tree on the inside of the wall. It'll take a *defy danger* move to jump across, with failure leading to a fall (d6 damage) and/or a dip in the midden (ew).

The reason no one's noticed this potential security breach is because a) this is the camp midden, so people here have other things on their mind and no desire to hang around, and b) a bunch of teenagers controlled by a drum-bound spirit don't run the tightest ship in the world.

G5. 'MEETING ROOM'

This small clearing has several cut logs laid on the ground to make an approximate square of benches where people can sit and face each other. In the centre is a small fire pit. This is where Castor comes to meet anyone he allows in through the wall of thorns, accompanied by one of the dryads hidden in a nearby tree and the lurking presence of Suxaibit.

G6. OWLBEAR NEST

This oversized ground nest is the home of an owlbear (*Dungeon World*, page 294) that came to investigate the sound of Suxaibit's drumming and was quickly dominated by the powerful spirit. After some adjustments to its simple mind it sees the other followers of Castor as its own children and protects them with a parent's fury. Occasionally it carries one or two of them into the woods in an attempt to teach them how to hunt or fish, but they always return safely – and sometimes with food! – so the kids consider it a small price to pay for such a powerful guardian.

RIVERWATCH HOLD

The lower levels of Riverwatch Hold were never the easiest place to gain entrance to. Now they're flooded and infested by savage fish-folk (see page 85) who are more than happy to take advantage of the solid dwarven construction to ambush newcomers and whisk them away to be sacrificed to their dead demonic patron – or, with increasing frequency, eaten on the spot. However, if the valley is to be saved the player characters might need the aid of the Riverwatch dwarves – and if the *dwarves* are to be saved then someone must brave the savages, reach the pump chambers, and re-start the ancient machinery that will deprive the fish-folk of their favoured environment.

Plus, if the characters are of a mind to loot themselves some quality dwarf-forged equipment there's plenty to be had. They'll just have to be careful about dealing with the dwarves afterward, since any inhabitant of the hold is going to recognise their distinctive craftsmanship.

Apart from the tunnels (R7, page 103) the walls, floors and ceilings of the hold are all dwarf-hewn stonework of the highest quality. Decorative carvings of dwarven heroes and famous moments from dwarven mythology are common on walls and doors, and an old tradition states that the keystone of any arch must feature a dwarf supporting the ceiling or, deprived of the strength of history, the arch will crumble and fall. Although dwarves are short they received enough 'tall' visitors that their rooms are sized to be comfortable for outsiders – only in private homes are regular-height people likely to have trouble.

The lower levels of the hold are lit by glowing stones set into the walls and ceilings. Like many of the enchantments in the hold, these lights were tied to the collective will of the dwarven people, so – following the corruption of the king and the battles with demon-possessed kin – the enchantment is failing and the light the stones shed is dim, creating more shadows than illumination.

Except where mentioned, everywhere in the lower levels is under 2-4 feet of water. Thanks to ancient dwarven drainage constructions even tunnels below the water table remain only partially flooded, but the sound of moving water is constant and anyone losing their footing may find the current surprisingly strong. The fish-folk take advantage of the flooding to move swiftly and stealthily around their territory, using ambushes and hit-and-run tactics against any intruders.

THIS PLACE IS HUGE

While there's probably a market for a Dungeon World product that's nothing but an old dwarf hold (flooded or otherwise), this is not that product. So instead of exhaustively detailing every room and encounter in Riverwatch I'm just going to hit some highlights and leave the rest for you to fill in. What's described here should be sufficient so long as the characters go in with a purpose - but if they're just wandering and looting you might need to think fast.

R1. THE ENTRANCE

The main entrance to Riverwatch Hold is concealed behind the great waterfalls at the source of the Redwater river, the way marked by cunning signs known only to the dwarves and those who school themselves in dwarven architecture. The great doors are closed but entrance can be gained by climbing in through a nearby watchtower - the warriors stationed here to prevent just such an occurrence have long since fallen to the fishfolk, but several of their traps remain.

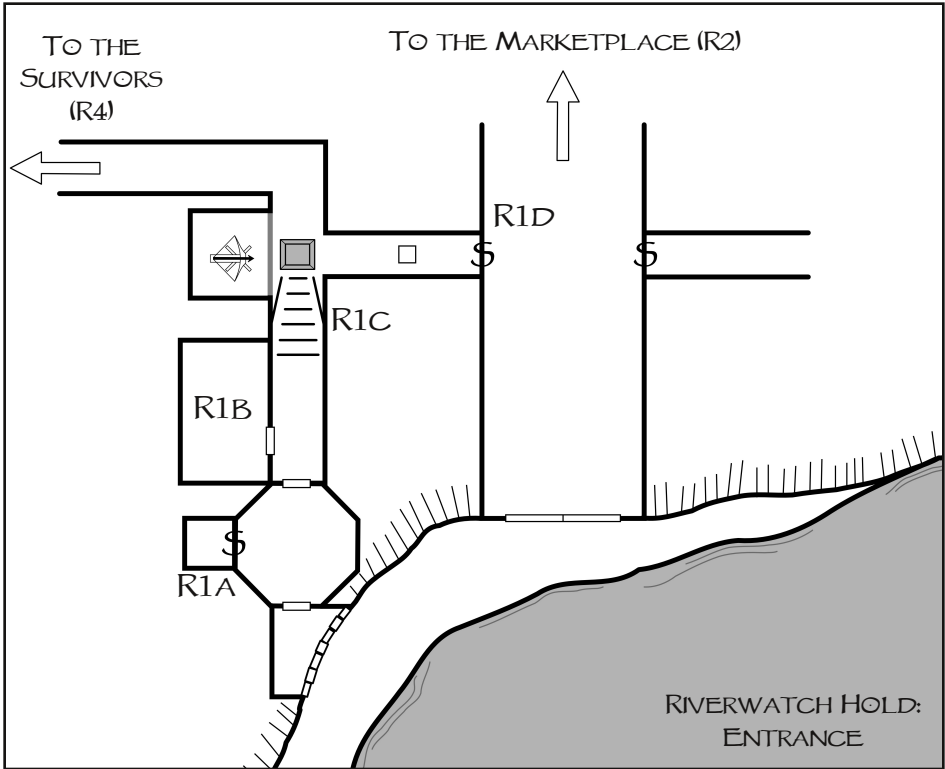
Most of the entrance area is above water level and thus dry. It's only once they get down the stairs to the lower levels that characters will find themselves wading. Dry bloodstains are common here, since the fishfolk didn't bother cleaning up after overrunning the defenders.

R1a. Characters with their eyes open (and who get good rolls on *spout lore* or *discern realities*) might notice that this wall-engraving of a dwarven explorer is out of place among all the martial-themed decoration you would expect in a dwarven guard post. The knife at the explorer's belt can be depressed, opening the secret door. In the room beyond is a desiccated dwarf corpse - a guard who managed to make it into this bolt hole before succumbing to her wounds - and the severed forearm of a fishfolk, cut off where it tried to reach under the door after its fleeing victim.

HOW DO WE GET IN?

As written, you could be forgiven for wondering how player characters are meant to find a way into the hold. The simplest method is to have a dwarf (or dwarf-friend) take them, but other options exist: a successful *spout lore* move, contact with one of the merchants who used to trade here, blind luck, or clues found in one of the caches of hidden knowledge scattered around the valley. In short, if the player characters have found clues which make them want to visit the hold, they have almost certainly also discovered clues enough to find the front door.

Or for an alternative entrance, now the pumps have been stilled the pipes that connect them to the river are navigable. They're still completely filled with water, but with no outflow to create a current a dedicated swimmer could infiltrate the hold that way. I recommend a quick *defy danger* with Constitution, with one possible consequence for failure being bursting out of a maintenance hatch in a really bad place. (Because "you drown" sucks.)



The dwarf still carries her standard equipment: leather armour, short sword, crossbow, all of which count as dwarf-crafted (see page 89) for characters who want to sell or use them – although the armour will only fit someone with similar proportions. The bolt hole also contains a keg of dwarven stout (see *Dungeon World*, page 328) and six rations in the form of hard dwarven bread, dried sausage, and a powerful cheese.

R1b. This is where the guards would sleep and relax while on-duty but off-shift. Since all were roused when the fishfolk attacked this room was spared the destruction of the fighting, but was then thoroughly looted by the victors. The bedding is torn and scattered, the tables overturned, everything breakable is broken, and nothing of obvious value remains.

The important element here, overlooked by the fishfolk, is the panel on the wall with two switches labelled in dwarfish runes: one ‘locked’ and ‘unlocked’, currently set to ‘unlocked’; and one ‘active’ and ‘disarmed’, currently set to ‘active’. The former lever controls the trap at R1c, and the latter the trap at R1d – both are currently active, and throwing the switches disarms them.

COLONEL ERDRIE STONECALLER

Cautious, Devious, Intelligent, Organised, Solitary

Hammer (d8 damage, Close); 12 HP, 3 armour (dwarf mail and shield)

Special Quality: Dwarf

Erdrie is in a bind. She feels the pressure of the debts run up by the previous generation, but she has her own problems to deal with: monsters above and below, one of which used to be her husband. She's willing to entertain – or make – any reasonable offer for the player characters' aid, but she still has her pride and the future of Riverwatch Hold to consider: she would literally rather die at the hands of the demon that lives in the body of her husband than sign a deal that would leave the Hold enslaved or ruined.

If suitably impressed by someone – with preference for dwarves, naturally – Erdrie can offer them access to the Justicar compendium class (see page 125).

Instinct: To make good on old debts.

- Speak the truth, unvarnished and unsweetened.
- Call in a debt.
- Send soldiers on a mission.

When attacked, give as good as you get.

When someone fails to show you proper respect, dig in your heels and reject all their demands.

When you grant a boon, make a corresponding entry in the debt records.



SAVAGE FISHFOLK

Cautious, Horde, Intelligent, Organised, Stealthy

Knives and Claws (d4 damage, Hand, Close);

3 HP, 2 armour (scales and shields)

Special Quality: Water-adapted

The fishfolk are roughly humanoid in appearance, with long bodies and short limbs, but they would never be mistaken for human. Their hands and feet are webbed and taloned, their scales a sickly white, their eyes huge and black. They are not well-adapted for life on land – they can survive indefinitely, but it is uncomfortable for them as their skin dries and they yearn to return to the water. Their movements in the air often seem clumsy and halting but in the water they are paragons of grace, flashing from foe to foe and raking with their knives or claws.

This particular clutch of fishfolk worshipped Sessinek back when it was an entity of power, and have constructed an impromptu shrine to it in the flooded chambers of Riverwatch Hold. Of course, Sessinek is dead so it cannot answer their gurgling prayers, but they can sense its power returning to the world and are eager to serve their demonic patron once again.

Instinct: To follow the siren call of Sessinek's power.

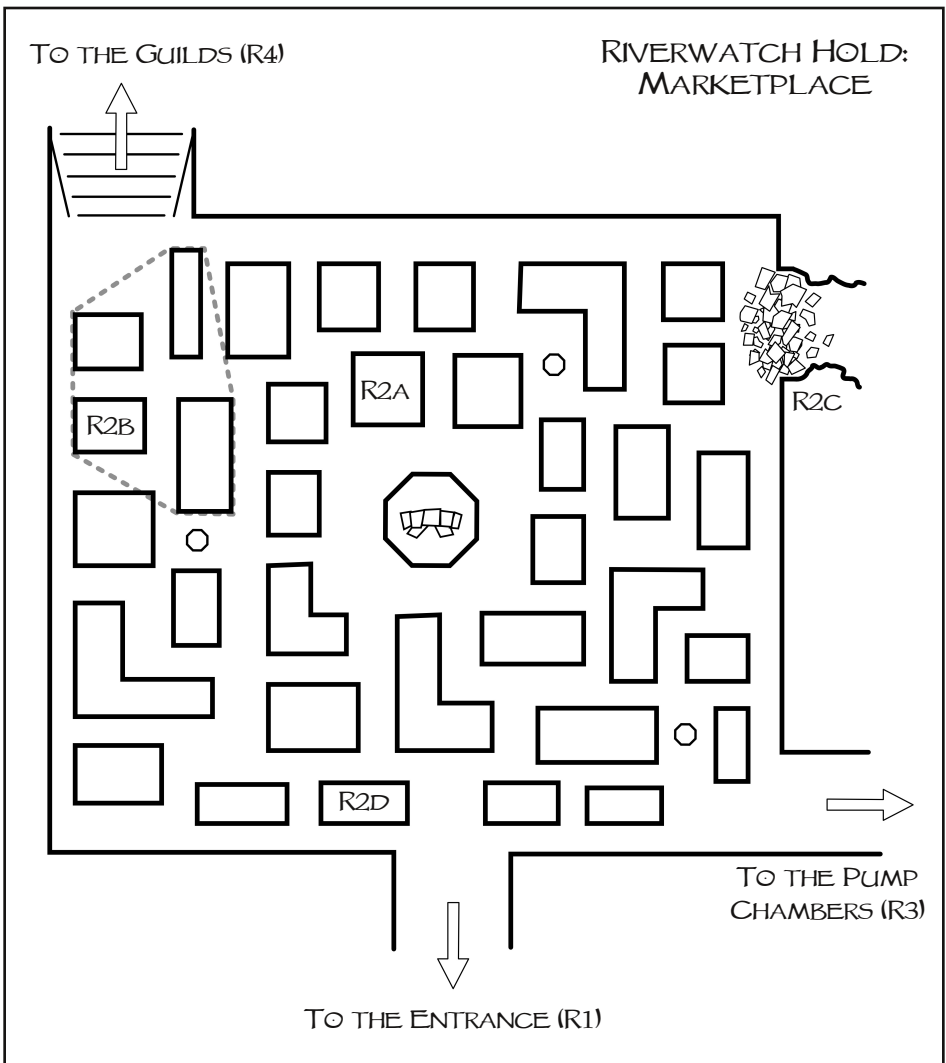
- Burst from the water.
- Emerge slowly and silently from somewhere they thought was safe.
- Instinctively converge on trouble.

When communicated with, gurgle and click in your own language.

When out of the water, look for any opportunity to get back in.

When confronted with the power of Sessinek, bow down and worship.

R1c. The trap on these stairs has been activated, although it did almost nothing to keep the fishfolk away from the guard post. Although the stairs look like the same solid stone construction as everything else in the hold, each stair is actually poised on springs - when any significant weight is applied to them they flatten into a 45 degree slope, pitching the unwary traveller down the stairs and into the pit at the stairs' base. Since the pit is now completely flooded this is unlikely to cause any serious harm, but it may deprive a character of their equipment in the sudden drop. More seriously, a character dumped into the pit may be in danger of drowning - especially if they carry (or wear) a heavy load that might drag them under.



In the shadowy lighting and under a foot of water, the pit is difficult to see from the top of the stairs despite being open. It is fifty feet deep and spiked at the bottom, although anyone who *reaches* the bottom is unlikely to be worrying about the spikes. If the switch in R1b is thrown back to 'locked' then the stairs lock into a rigid staircase again and the lid of the pit closes to become solid floor.

R1d. This secret door – obvious from the watchtower side – allowed the dwarves on guard to flank enemies who might be trying to assault the main gate. The door can only be opened from the inside (cunning thieves and mighty-thewed warriors notwithstanding) although as further defence against intruders there is a pressure plate half way down it which fires the ballista pointing down this corridor.

The wall in front of the ballista is thin plasterwork and will do nothing to halt the flight of the bolt, which flies down the corridor at a height of three feet and does d10 damage to anyone who can't get out of the way or otherwise protect themselves. It was always intended as a one-shot trap, so it can't be reset without manually reloading the ballista and re-plastering the fake wall. However, the ballista can be detached from the trap mechanism and used as a normal siege weapon if necessary – the dwarves certainly anticipated that possibility, and the player characters may like the idea as well.

R2. THE MARKETPLACE

The great marketplace of Riverwatch Hold consists of concentric circles of near-identical stone kiosks around a huge statue of a stern-looking dwarf, all now projecting from a shallow lake. The statue's eyes shine with a white light and the head can rotate all the way around – indeed, it constantly swivels to monitor the marketplace for crimes. When it detects one – theft and assault are the ones most likely to be triggered by player characters – the eyes flare with sudden brilliance, casting the perpetrator in a spotlight, and a sepulchral voice booms its accusation. Naturally, the fishfolk descend on anyone so picked out like piranhas on meat, and with much the same end result.

Note to the GM: Defy danger – probably with Dexterity – is the move players will need to avoid attracting the attention of the justice statue. I did toy with some custom moves for it, but ultimately they just ended up being defy danger with slightly different wording.

R2a. The wealthiest merchants were able to rent kiosks closer to the watchful statue, the better to ensure the protection of their wares from thieves. Naturally, this means that the best of the remaining treasure is in these kiosks. This particular stall sold musical instruments, which the fishfolk ignored as worthless – but enterprising adventurers know different. Every 1 weight of instruments the characters loot from here is worth 10 coins, and one of the compact horns is an enchanted horn of sounding.

R2b. The fishfolk have used a mucosal excretion to construct a shape around these four kiosks, stringing heavy ropes of the stuff from the higher portions and separating the lower waters from the greater lake of floodwater to make a protective pool. Within this pool they have used fallen masonry from R2c and an idol fetched from their home in flooded caverns beneath the earth to erect an altar to Sessinek – and then filled the pool with their immature spawn.

The fishfolk fingerlings are aggressive predators which mostly feed on each other and the clutches of eggs that the fishfolk females periodically add to the pool, but they're more than happy to supplement their diet with anyone who pokes an appendage into their home waters (d6 damage).

Note to the GM: This hatching pool isn't dangerous over here on its own, but if events should conspire to break the pool wall the hungry young could make everyone's lives miserable.

R2c. In a last-ditch attempt to prevent the fishfolk from rampaging through the lower living quarters of the hold a Riverwatch engineer-elementalist collapsed the ceiling here to seal the tunnel. She was buried under several tons of stone but the earth elemental (*Dungeon World*, page 237) she summoned still lingers here, freed of its binding but content to watch the unfolding of events under the earth with eternal patience. It has no particular interest in the conflicts of fleshy things, but is opposed in a general way to the rise in prominence of elemental water that accompanies the storms outside.

HORN OF SOUNDING

1 weight

This brass horn is chased with gold and intricately engraved with dwarven runes. When sounded, it can produce any noise the horn-player desires, ranging in volume from a whisper to the shouting of 30-40 people. The sound can be modulated while playing, allowing for activities such as speech, but it can't last longer than the horn-player can continue breathing out.

R2d. ‘Derkad the Pot’ they called him, like it was some sort of joke. Like making the finest copper pots in Redwater valley was a laughing matter. Like there were more important things. More important things than pots! I ask you!

A strangely monomaniacal dwarf is still a dwarf, however, so when the fishfolk poured into the market Derkad jammed a copper cooking pot on his head and stood firm against them with a frying pan in each hand. He was dead in moments.

But when his spirit stood on the threshold of the gates of Death, Derkad knew in the depths of his heart that there were no copper pots in that bleak land – and driven by a combination of obsession and the terrible knowledge that all the pots in the world mean nothing to the dead, he summoned the strength to turn away.

DWARF-CRAFTED ITEMS

The dwarves of Riverwatch Hold practised their crafts to the high standards that you might expect from long-lived perfectionists with a love of making permanent records. Anything ‘dwarf-crafted’ – weapons, armour, cookware, furniture, children’s toys – could fetch a good price in the valley if the player characters are happy with stealing it away: 1d4 x 10 coins, on top of whatever value the item would normally have (if any).

This is also an excellent opportunity to push your agenda to portray a fantastic world: if the characters are going to find wondrous items anywhere, it’s here. For example:

- This cunning contraption of intricate gears and levers is the size of a clenched fist. A dead mouse is entangled in its workings – for this is the prototype *better mousetrap*, an arcane arrangement of machinery that through some unknown influence compels rodents and vermin to suicide in its tiny steel jaws.
- This rocking horse, sized for a small child, is a masterpiece of the wood-carver’s art – except the head is unfinished, made of simple blocks of wood in more or less the correct shape. It could be worth a small fortune if the characters can find a craftsman of enough skill to finish it.
- This cherry-wood box is lined with velvet, and has several padded insets where fine craftsman’s tools have been placed. It would be worth a fortune except it’s clearly intended as a gift: the recipient’s name is engraved in the box lid. It was meant for one of the established NPCs in the game: Who? And why were the dwarves giving them gifts?
- This masterpiece of taxidermy is a full-grown adult owlbear, rearing to attack and mounted on a heavy decorative base. It’s worth ten times the normal amount (that is, 1d4 x 100 coins) if sold to a collector of such curiosities – but it’s hard to carry and easy to damage.

Weapons and armour work slightly differently. Although fine, they aren’t fine enough to justify any numerical bonuses to rolls – but if you’re using a dwarf-crafted item and it looks like it’s going to be broken or damaged, you can say “but it’s *dwarf-made...*” and it turns out the damage is merely cosmetic and/or easily repaired.

Any given item can only exercise this option once, and afterward it is no longer worth the extra coins because it’s all banged up and glued back together – effectively losing the ‘dwarf-crafted’ quality instead of being broken.

Now Derkad's spirit haunts his old kiosk – notable for being the only one with its wares laid out in good order, since Derkad now has telekinetic control over copper cookware. Treat him as a ghost (*Dungeon World*, page 259) with the additional move *whip up a poltergeist storm of cookware*. He manifests much as he did in life, although translucent and copper-hued, and attempts to sell passers-by some of his fine wares. He retains an unreasoning hatred for the fishfolk but little interest in anything beyond his pots, so they simply avoid this part of the marketplace. Unfortunately for the player characters Derkad's monomania is now backed up by his supernatural might and suggesting that perhaps copper pots aren't the alpha and omega of existence might invite violent retribution.

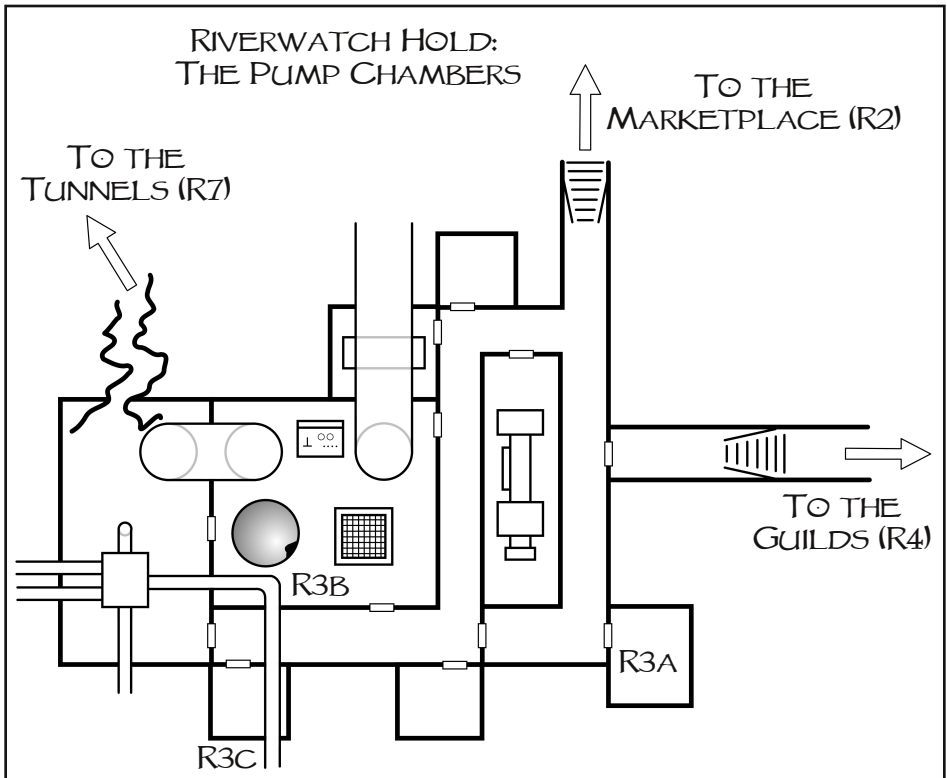
The pots *are* excellent, mind you, and Derkad's offers of sale are genuine. Any money used to pay for his wares becomes part of Derkad's spectral form.

R3. THE PUMP CHAMBERS

When they built their fortress underneath a waterfall and next to a river, the dwarves were no fools: to guard against the possibility of flooding they designed and built an ingenious arrangement of pumps and pipes to carry water out of their lower chambers and divert it into the river where no-one would notice the extra flow. However, when they overran the lower levels of the hold the fishfolk were also no fools: as they fare better where there is water the pump chambers were one of their first targets. They were unable to destroy or jam the resilient dwarven machinery, but did manage to turn the pumps off, and that was good enough.

Currently the pump chambers are the dominion of Greyscale, a brute of a fishwoman whose real name is an unwriteable string of clicking and consonant sounds. She was given the task of ruining the pumps, and now brute force and blood sacrifice have both failed she's down to her last idea: kidnap dwarves (and others more cunning with machinery) and force them to break the pumps. It would be a great idea if only she could keep herself from eating any captives at the first sign of disappointment.

The fishfolk recognise the importance of the pump chambers, so they are always heavily guarded. Failed rolls and GM moves should emphasise the constant fishfolk patrols and overwhelming numbers; make sloshing about down here an exercise in tension and close calls, or a bloody running battle against an enemy with vastly superior numbers and terrain advantage.



R3a. This cramped office used to belong to the pump overseer – his name and role are engraved in dwarven above the door. Inside everything is a mess of floating fragments of furniture and uneven footing where what didn't float, has sunk. However, with some searching characters will be able to turn up the overseer's notes on the construction and operation of the pumps. These are badly water-damaged but could still prove vital if the characters feel like meddling with the pumps' operation.

R3b. The main pump room has been turned into Greyscale's throne room, where she has constructed a private dome between two of the pump structures, built out of the fishfolk's construction mucus and the bones of her victims. Within the dome are her treasures – more bones, and a string of stones, shells, and 5 coins which makes a pleasant noise when shaken underwater – and a few clusters of fishfolk eggs. Characters who think to threaten her eggs may find out the hard way that the fishfolk care almost nothing for their young. Greyscale is never alone around the main pumps, and even when she's sleeping there are several wakeful fishfolk guards present.

R3c. When the pumps worked, this room was a storage closet for the tools and materials needed to keep them operational. The fishfolk saw its small size and heavy door and decided that it would make an excellent place to keep Greyscale's prisoners before she inevitably decided they would be better held in her stomach. Fishfolk mucus has jammed the latch, preventing the door from being opened from the inside, but it can still be opened from without.

The prison's current occupant is a gnome named Erky Timbers, an engineer whose spectacularly bad luck has plagued him throughout his career. He was visiting the dwarves to learn more of their machinery when the fishfolk attacked – he managed to survive for a while by stealth and cunning, but he was finally captured and given to Greyscale so that she might make use of his expertise.

What the fishfolk have yet to realise is that locking an engineer in a room full of tools is a terrible idea. Despite the water here being deep enough that Erky has to perch on a high shelf, he has armed himself with a heavy wrench and a slow-loading crossbow that fires 9-inch nails, and left a spring-loaded trap in the water just inside the door. Now he waits for the guards to come for him, when he intends to fight for his freedom or die trying. If the first thing through the door happens to be a player character instead... whoops.

GREYSCALE

Group, Intelligent, Organised

Dwarven Spear (b[2d8] damage, Close, Reach); 10 HP, 2 armour (hide and plates)

Special Quality: Aquatic

Greyscale stands a full head above the other fishfolk, and her scarred grey hide ripples with muscles. She has scavenged some pieces of dwarven armour to supplement her naturally tough hide, and a long dwarven spear to supplement her stone knife and natural weapons. Greyscale isn't stupid, exactly, but has little to no capacity for long-term thinking. She has little attention for anything which isn't of immediate use or concern to her.

Instinct: To feed. (Occasionally 'to break the pumps' but never for long.)

- Track someone by their blood.
- Incite your minions to greater effort with an act of sudden brutality.

When something is immediately relevant, focus on it to the exclusion of all else.

When the payoff for a course of action is more than a week in the future, don't bother.

When a fight breaks out, get them in the water.

ERKY TIMBERS

Hoarder, Intelligent, Small, Solitary

Wrench and Nailbow (w[2d8] damage, piercing 1, Close, Near); 12 HP, 0 armour

Erky is perhaps the unluckiest gnome ever to grace the surface of the earth – or in this case, the halls beneath it. He tries to cultivate a positive attitude in the face of misfortune but occasionally his frustration gets the better of him and he shows off his encyclopaedic knowledge of profanity.

Instinct: To follow a course of action, no matter how bad an idea it is.

- Suffer a bout of terrible luck.
- Build something from spare parts.

When life gives you lemons, roll your eyes, sigh, make lemonade.

When something good happens to you, become increasingly cautious and paranoid until your normal luck reasserts itself.

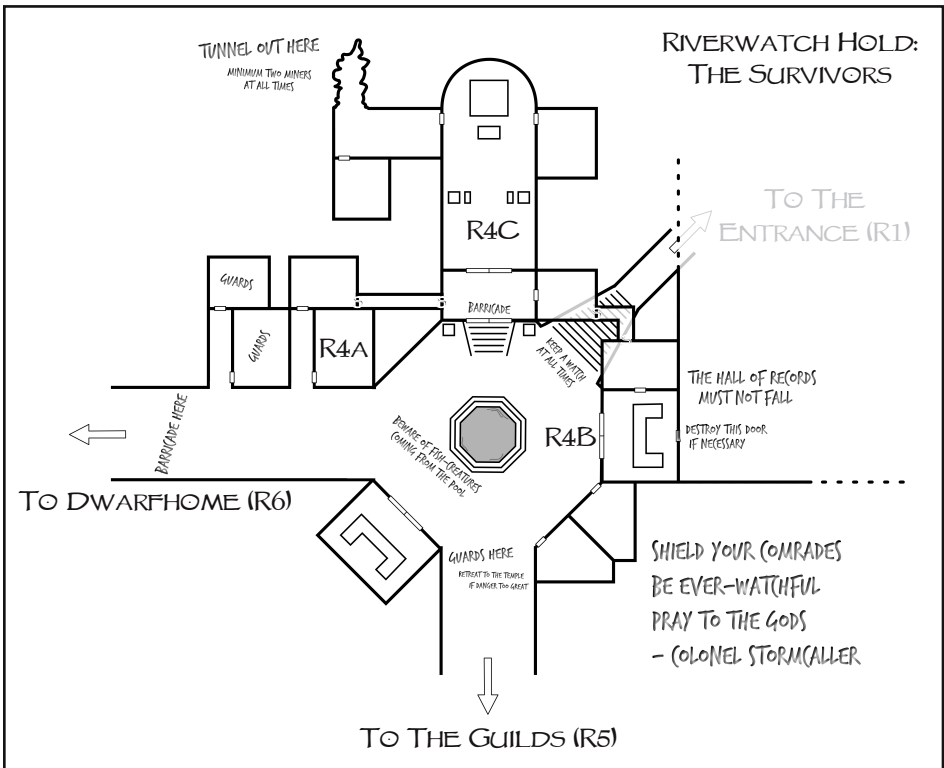
When you're surprised, open fire.

R4. SURVIVORS

The surviving dwarves – about 500 of them – have barricaded themselves into this part of the hold, where they are close to the temple to their gods and the vast monastery-library where they keep a permanent record of every debt they owe or are owed. They managed to scavenge a reasonable quantity of supplies before sealing the doors, but they're now trapped here with no way out short of digging a new tunnel to the outside – which a small team is attempting.

R4a. This room is the current residence of Erdrie Stonecaller. Assuming the characters arrive among the dwarves as allies, she will receive them here. It's hardly the regal surroundings she could command when she was in charge, but Erdrie was a soldier before she was a ruler and is well accustomed to doing the best she can with whatever's to hand.

R4b. This is the entrance chamber to the great monastery-library of Riverwatch Hold. The rest of it stretches beyond the bounds of the map – all the records within are carved on heavy stone tablets, which are not an efficient use of space. Visitors are not allowed to browse the stacks without permission from



Colonel Stonecaller and even if they have permission, the organisation of the library is not easy to decipher for outsiders. The monks are always available to help researchers but as part of their devotion they are forbidden from performing a task for another without compensation.

When you *spout lore* any time after consulting the monastery-library of Riverwatch Hold, you can choose to add +1 to your roll (after rolling) at the cost of one of the following: you owe the dwarves a debt, or the lore you recover concerns only debts and repayments.

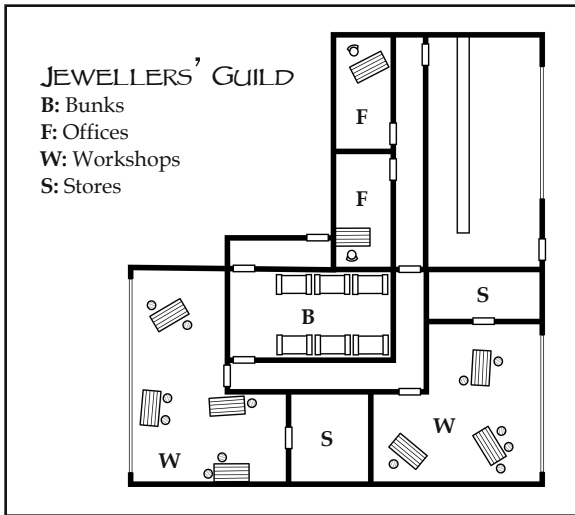
R4c. The grand temple of the dwarven pantheon is where the majority of the survivors have holed up. As a stoic lot, they accept their position with a minimum of grumbling; the able-bodied have all either been assigned to the mining team or armed and equipped as guards. Unfortunately, an infiltrator lurks within their ranks: Gretta hides her demonic possession beneath the robes of a priestess, waiting for an opportune moment to open the doors and let the other possessed dwarves in.

R5. THE GUILDS

Situated within easy reach of the market where their members would hawk their wares, the various craft guilds of the hold kept their offices in this area. As a primarily military outpost Riverwatch Hold didn't have the bustling trade guilds of a full-fledged undercity, but it had enough that competition between them was ferocious.

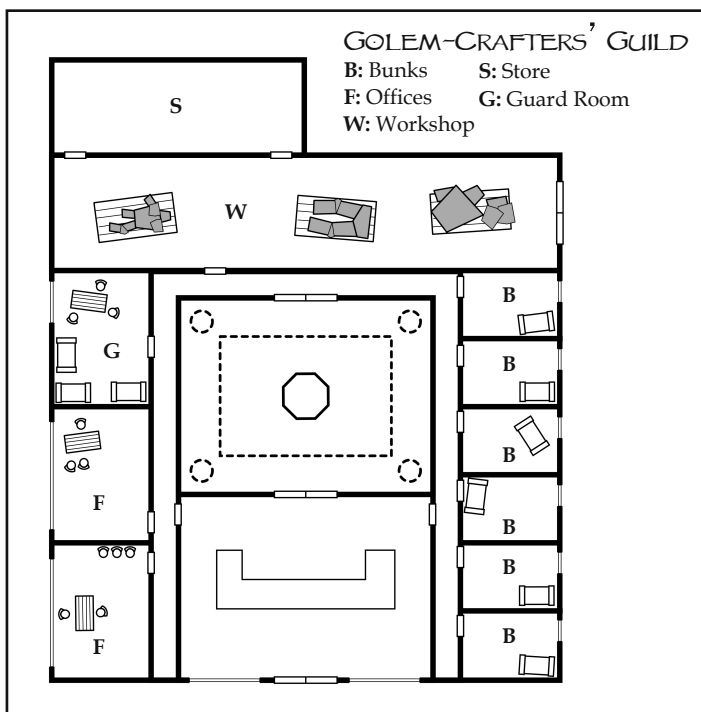
Most of the people in the guild offices managed to retreat to the temple (R4c) while the fishfolk and demon-ridden dwarves occupied themselves with more important targets – if the player characters are at a loose end, one of the guilders may send them here to recover documents or items of importance. The odds are about fifty-fifty whether the documents or items really belong to the guild in question, but surely this sort of thing is what heavily armed groups of ethically flexible mercenaries and treasure hunters are *for, right?*

R5a. The jewellers' guild is a likely destination for groups with an eye on the looting. Unfortunately a quasit (*Dungeon World*, page 312) named Qxbuk had a similar idea and arrived here first. Qxbuk has helped himself to the fine jewellery – he now jingles with every movement, gold chains hanging loose off his spindly form – but his primary purpose is replacing the guild's store of gold bars with tainted demonic gold. He figures that *someone* will help themselves to the gold eventually, and whatever is made with it will inherit the demonic taint and spread evil throughout the world.



Qxbuk is preoccupied with his task and easy to sneak up on. Despite his poison sting his first instinct is to flee any physical confrontation then return later in the shape of a fat scorpion to observe the results of people stealing the cursed gold (and perhaps deliver a quick sting by way of revenge if they managed to hurt him).

R5b. In the centre courtyard of the illustrious guild of golem-crafters stands a menacing figure of stone, fixed in position despite its cleverly constructed joints, carved with a stern expression on its face and staring eternally into the middle distance. Despite appearances, this statue is not a stone golem – it served as a safe place for the golem-crafters to hide sensitive or valuable items, as they assumed no thieves would do anything that might activate a dormant golem.

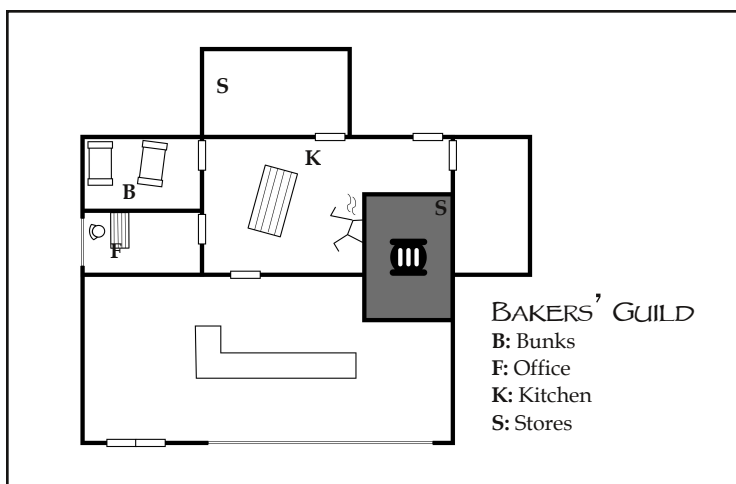


The contents of the golem, accessible through a secret panel in its back, are detailed accounts regarding debts the guild owed to others, and notes regarding who might be extorted into 'forgetting' the debts by subtle (or obvious) threats from the guild's magical machines. (And/or whatever other treasure you think the players might appreciate.) The compartment is trapped with a metal clamp that latches around the wrist of anyone who disturbs the contents and holds them in place, followed by a loud gong from somewhere below to alert the guilders that someone was trying to steal from the 'golem'.

When the guild was operational the gong would be answered by several heavily-armed security dwarves. Now the hold has flooded the gong only alerts whatever fishfolk and/or demon-ridden dwarves are in the vicinity; whether that's better or worse depends on the perspective of the trapped character.

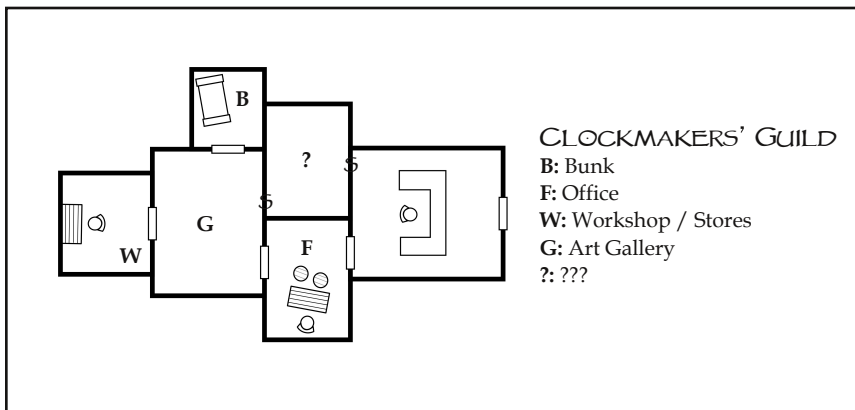
R5c. There is a horrible smell of incineration wafting from *the bakers' guild*. One of the bakers managed to defeat a fishfolk marauder by shoving it into an oven, and although the oven fires have long since died out the stench of burning fish has permeated the entire building. It's even worse for the fishfolk: they find the powerful odour repulsive on a deep and instinctive level, and avoid the guild with a superstitious dread. This makes the baker's guild a haven from fishfolk, if you can tolerate the appalling stench.

There are also several stale-but-still-edible rolls and loaves here. Characters looting the place can gain an extra ration each, although the rations - like everything else - are permeated with the terrible burned fish smell.



R5d. Gwenneth Clockspring was technically an entire guild by herself. She had completed all the requisite forms and certificates, but no one wanted to join her *guild of clockmakers* because she was popularly considered to be howling mad. This tiny building houses several clocks of diverse designs (all telling different times, their springs having wound down) as well as a selection of paintings – abstract blurs of colour with no clear meaning – and (bad) apocalyptic poetry in dwarven, written directly onto the walls using a variety of media.

However, the pinnacle of Gwenneth’s art has pride of place in her workshop at the back of the ‘guildhouse’. The mystery clock still ticks, although its multiple hands only ever seem to move when no one is watching, skipping around the clock face to no discernible pattern. It currently says the time is simultaneously twenty minutes to *and* ten minutes past ‘Doom’.



THE MYSTERY CLOCK

1 weight

A lopsided carriage clock in bronze and ivory with three identical hands and a dial marked with various non-time concepts: death, hope, fire, a dark and terrible pit, and other things are spelled out in words and symbols. While no one is looking, the markings on the dial change. The hands can be easily pushed around the dial, but they jump back to the positions they prefer the moment the clock is unobserved.

When you consult the face of the mystery clock, roll +Wis. On a hit the reading is unambiguous: the GM will tell you which concept the hands are pointing toward, and on a 10+ they will elaborate on what this means for your current situation. On a miss you have misinterpreted the clock: the GM will tell you what the hands are pointing towards and then make a move related to that concept.

Note to the GM: If this move seems similar to spout lore, that's because it follows the same 'interesting info on a success, interesting and useful info on a great success' model.

R6. DWARFHOME

This area of the hold is where the more well-to-do citizens lived before disaster struck. Although far enough away from the lower levels that it was never under serious threat from below, the demon-ridden dwarves that were supposed to be the solution to the problem of the fishfolk overran the place instead. A handful of imps and quasits have also leaked through into the material world, although the demon-dwarves consider them to be vermin.

There are a couple of hundred demon-possessed dwarves currently in Dwarfhome, spending their time in three primary ways: guarding against and testing the defences of the dwarven survivors (R4), attempting to summon more powerful demons into the world (R6a), and digging a tunnel towards the outside world (R6b).

DEMON-RIDDEN DWARF

Cautious, Group, Intelligent, Organised

Dwarf-Forged Weapons/Poison Quills (d8 damage, Hand, Close, Near);

6 HP, 4 armour (dwarf mail and shield)

Special Qualities: Dwarf, Demon, Poison quills

Their pact with the demons has changed the dwarves both physically and mentally – their skin is a sallow grey struck through with veins of deep green, hairless except for their bedraggled beards that writhe with a life of their own. Rows of barbed, venomous quills sprout from their forearms, which they can fire at enemies with a flick of their wrists – if the dwarf-forged weapons and armour they bear is somehow not enough. If the original nature of the dwarf they were survives in there anywhere, it's sealed behind a wall of hatred and the fierce exultation of a demon given flesh.

Instinct: To inflict pain and suffering.

- Make someone *suffer*.
- Lure them into an ambush.

When a fight breaks out, go straight to the dirty tricks and low blows.

When captured, pretend to be scared and vulnerable.

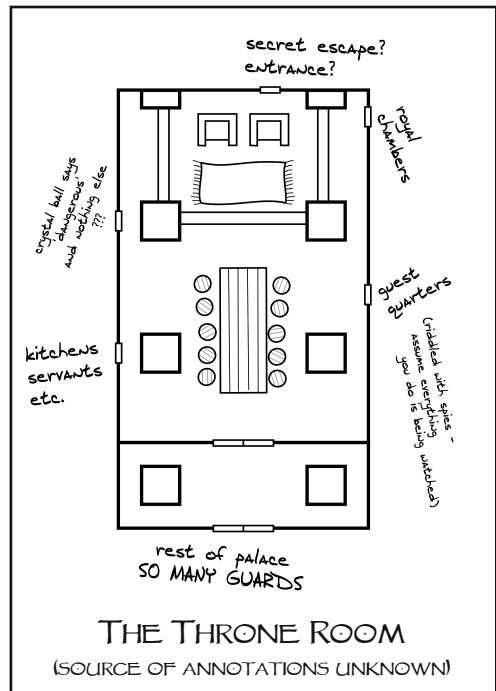
When exorcised, owe your saviour a life-debt.

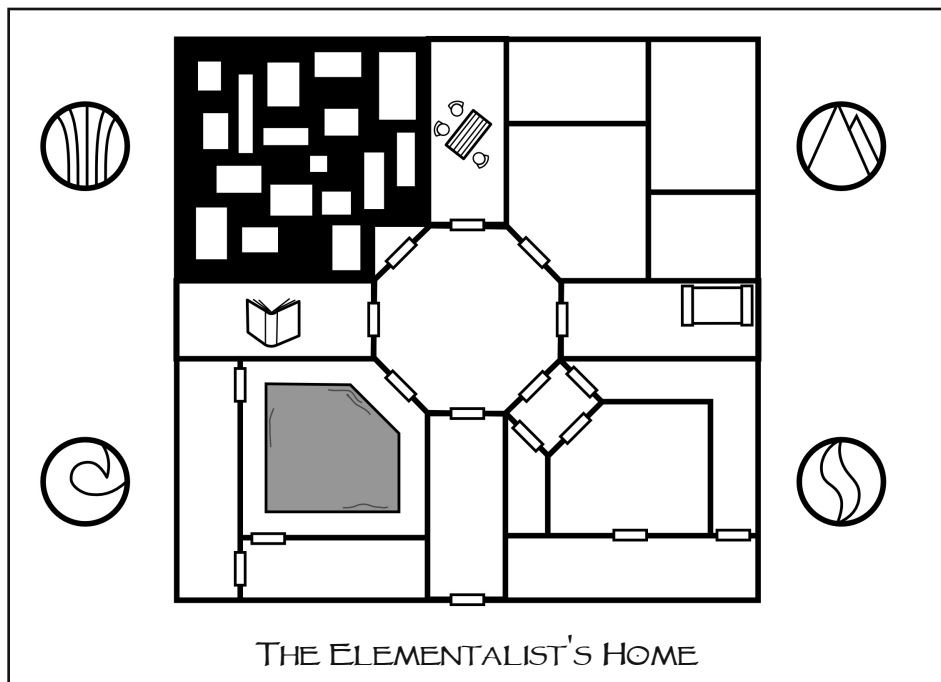
R6a. Before everything went downhill, the hold's pre-eminent elementalist made his home here. He traded his magical might for fine furnishings and the best food and drink the hold could provide, but the secret to his success was a magic mirror that allowed him to turn its surface into a gateway to the elemental planes - with this powerful artefact he was able to call up stronger elementals with less work than his competitors, and thus rise to the top of his guild.

Unfortunately, when the demon-ridden dwarves arrived his magic mirror proved too slow to help him. His meagre personal power was no match for the possessed sorceress who confronted him in magical combat: the elementalist was slain and his elementals sealed up in the elementally-attuned wings of his home, and the sorceress moved in to study the mirror and attempt to twist its magic to allow the summoning of more demons. So far she's managed to break it so that it shows only a night-black void with an occasional sense of vast shapes moving in the distance, but who's to say the bloody sacrifice of a player character won't do the trick?

Meanwhile the trapped elementals, now free-willed following the death of their controller, seek to escape from their limited prisons and continue the cycle of elemental destruction. They could prove useful for player characters looking for a little more destructive power, or the unique abilities that elemental creatures can offer, or they could drag the characters into the eternal war between the elements.

R6b. The creature that used to be Bartok Stonecaller still rules from the throne room he used to share with his wife Erdrie (R4a). When confronted with the reality of what he had done Bartok's 'self' retreated instead of resisting the demonic possession, and the possessing entity took advantage of that to reinforce its control over his body. As a result he is further gone than the other demon-ridden dwarves - he stands almost twice their height and perhaps eight





DEMON-RIDDEN SORCERESS

Intelligent, Magical, Organised, Solitary

Knife/Poison Quills (d8 damage, Hand); 12 HP, 0 armour

Special Qualities: Dwarf, Demon, Poison quills

This sorceress has all the usual physical hallmarks of possession – grey skin, poisonous quills, a perpetual snarl – but also sports a large red gemstone set into the palm of her left hand. Through this stone she channels the power of her demonic patron, granting her magic of fire and befuddlement.

Instinct: To call forth her demonic patrons.

- Twist existing magic to her own purposes.
- Plunder someone's identity with the magic of her gemstone.
- Summon imps or other weak demonic footsoldiers.

When presented with arcane secrets, offer a deal.

When you can get out of a deal, do it and laugh at the fool who entered into a deal with you.

When all your efforts have failed and you don't know what to do next, try blood sacrifice.

times their bulk, a lumbering mountain of corpulent grey flesh studded with rattling quills. His chin has grown into his neck and his mouth has expanded to a grotesque size, the better to allow the huge bites that feed his eternal hunger. Within this maw his tongue is a many-branched writhing thing that inspires revulsion on sight. His clothes long-since destroyed by his transformation, his nudity is only covered by his sagging belly.

BARTOK STONECALLER, POSSESSED

Intelligent, Planar, Solitary, Terrifying

Savage Bite/Wrestling (d10+2 damage, forceful, Hand); 16 HP, 1 armour (fat rolls)

Special Qualities: Dwarf, Demon, Poison quills, Grotesque appearance

Bartok is a shadow of his former self, but he makes up for his lost skill and discipline with sheer physical power. Characters attempting to appeal to the dwarf within will find him almost lost – Erdrie might be able to get through to him, but the characters would have to persuade her to come on what is almost certainly a suicide mission first.

Instinct: To devour.

- Eat something harmful or inedible without ill effect.
- Vomit forth something previously eaten, foully transformed.
- Vomit forth *someone* previously eaten; they are harmed in body, mind, or soul.

When your plans are thwarted, erupt in murderous rage. Eat someone if you can.

When attacked by someone agile, focus on swatting the infuriating fly.

When confronted with your wife, pause in shock and shame.

DOESN'T THIS GUY SEEM FAMILIAR?

As a creature of greed notable for biting and swallowing his enemies, Bartok has a similar theme to Oorlgat (page 62). Is the demon possessing him of the same type? Is it Oorlgat in his past incarnation? Or is it just a coincidence?

The answer is going to depend on a lot of things specific to your personal game. I personally favour it being Oorlgat, since when the characters visit him in the Twilight Stronghold later he can reveal his knowledge of them from a previous encounter – but this is only a straightforward option if they haven't met and/or fought Oorlgat in the demonic future yet.

R6c. Here demon-ridden dwarves work in shifts to dig a tunnel outwards towards the surface. The possessing demons don't have the mining skills of their hosts, but they have pickaxes and vast reserves of endurance – their plan is to just dig horizontally until they hit the side of the mountain, and work out how to get down from there once they get to fresh air.

R7. THE TUNNELS

The increased pressure of water below the earth has led to a few minor tremors in the Hidden Mountains, one of which opened access to these tunnels that connect different parts of Riverwatch Hold in ways the original builders never intended. Ordinarily the dwarves would never be so lax as to allow the cracks in the walls to go unrepaired, but right now they have other things on their minds.

With only a few exceptions, these cracks are narrow, rough-sided, and uneven underfoot – they are hardly highways through the depths of the earth. However, they offer a route between various parts of the hold for player characters who don't want to brave any more of the fishfolk-infested areas and, if one of the larger caves is cleared of hostile occupants, a potentially secret place to rest up.

R7a. The lowest accessible cavern, this foul morass is a result of floodwater breaching a dwarven sewage tank. The rock all around the central pool is deceptively slick, making it easy to fall in and hard to climb out – which suits the otyugh (*Dungeon World*, page 240) which lives here just fine. A recent arrival, the creature has just enough low cunning to 'seed' the sewage pool with weapons and armour from dwarven victims, fire beetle flame glands, severed fishfolk heads that resemble lurking enemies, and other items that might pique the interest of anyone who stumbles into this cavern. Eating garbage is all well and good, but every otyugh likes to get some meat in its diet now and again.

R7b. This narrow crack is home to a swarm of fire beetles (*Dungeon World*, page 238). The creatures aren't aggressive but they are territorial, and intruders will be greeted with warning flames and angry nips – the longer you loiter, the more the response escalates.

If you really don't want to antagonise the fire beetles, the alternative path leads up along a craggy rock face over a steep plunge that will, after a bruising fall,

plant you square in the otyugh's pool at R7a. With time and climbing equipment it's a difficult but possible path. Lacking one of the two makes it dangerous. Lacking both... well, hope you like falling and sewage.

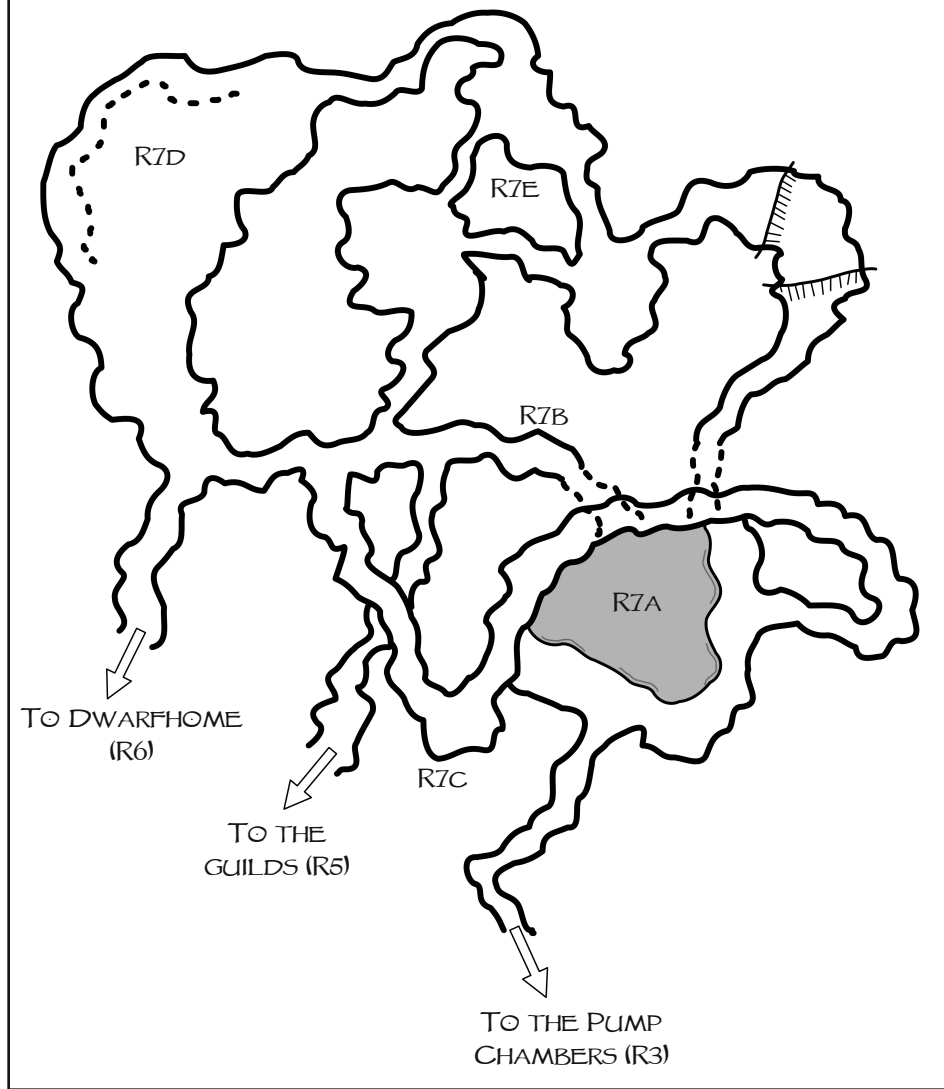
R7c. This corner passes extremely close to the mining tunnel at R6b. Characters here can hear the *chink-chink* of pickaxes in stone from the other side of the wall.

R7d. Daylight! The crack in the ceiling is a hundred feet up and climbing to it involves navigating a shallow overhang – which is covered in nesting bats. On the plus side, if a climber can secure a rope to the top of the crevasse above this makes an excellent escape from the hold (or a decent exit for demonic dwarves or whatever other horror the characters have unleashed).

R7e. For years a tiny tribe of cave goblins (*Dungeon World*, page 239) eked out a living in this trio of caverns while desperately trying to avoid the attention of the nearby dwarves. When the quake first opened a passage between them they cowered for a while, but their sneakiest scouts have now discovered that the hold is near-abandoned and beset by enemies. So obviously it's time to *loot!*

As a rule the goblins are massive cowards with a nasty streak they indulge whenever they think they can get away with it. Their chief, Brukkle, is old for a goblin but clings to power with a combination of ruthless cunning and subtle poisons brewed from cave fungi. He's been careful not to cultivate any successors (lest they get *ideas*) and his homosexuality means there are no blood heirs, so when he dies the tribe will descend into anarchy.

RIVERWATCH HOLD: THE TUNNELS



SUNKEN TEMPLE OF THE UNSPEAKABLE CULT



A traveller can see many strange things in the streets of Port Landing, among the rowdies and the gangs and the hawkers of dubious wares. Some of the more common bits of street weirdness are the mystery plays put on by gangs of masked mimes. Silent and extravagantly costumed, they act out incomprehensible scenes to tell stories no one can understand. Passers-by often fling casual abuse at the mimes, which they ignore, but physical threats are met with swift and merciless violence – you don't get far in Port Landing if you won't fight, after all.

Every so often someone shows a strange interest in the plays of the mimes, seeking them out to see more of their baffling performances. These few inevitably disappear soon after – but what's one more vanishing in a city where the only law is the whim of a dragon?

In truth, these mimes are members of the Unspeakable Cult. Their plays are translations of the worm-dreams that haunt them and speak to those who might listen. Regular viewers are abducted and brought to meet the Ancient Worm: some embrace the corruption it offers, some turn away at the final moment and become the cult's next meal. The mimes also abduct others to serve as food – in Port Landing such things are common so their activities go unnoticed.

REASONS TO GET INVOLVED

Why do the player characters care about a cult of cannibal mimes?

- **They're Evil.** Characters with an interest in throwing down Evil should certainly see the Ancient Worm and its cult as worthy targets.
- **They're a Ready-Made Army.** Characters pitting themselves against Cobalt may want all the allies they can get – and the cult has no love for the dragon sitting on top of them.
- **They've Got Something We Want.** Whether it's *something* or *someone* the player characters care about, the cult has popped up and grabbed it. Get it back!
- **The Cult Attacks First.** The player characters were just minding their own business, carousing and brawling as is their wont, when some impolite folk tried to mug them and drag them off to an uncertain fate! This sort of behaviour cannot be tolerated.

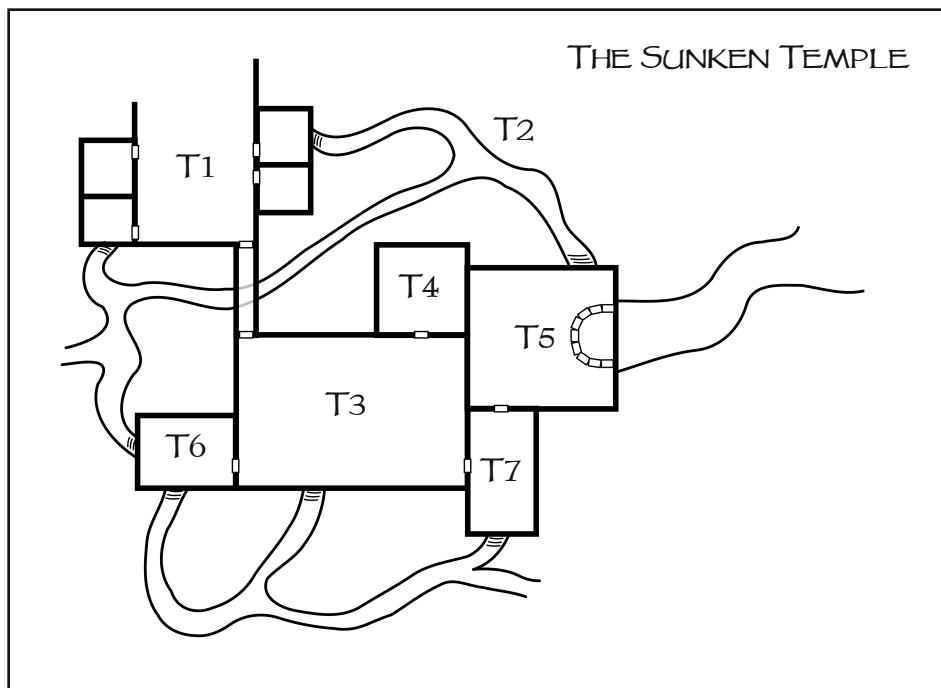
The cult makes their temple in the buried ruins beneath Port Landing. The corridors used to be city streets, and are paved with dust-caked flagstones. The walls are crumbling brickwork: the interior walls of ancient houses, easy to climb, easy to break. Fortunately the walls that hold the weight of Port Landing overhead are mostly the stronger, exterior stone walls, so the chances of bringing everything down on top of yourself are slim. Strange fungi grow everywhere – the soft purple glow that suffuses the temple comes from the breed of violet fungus the cult have cultivated within their lair, and even weirder examples can be found with only a little searching.

T1. CRUMBLING ANCIENT BUILDINGS

The tunnel that leads to the Sunken Temple is a tight, claustrophobic experience; a squeeze through a narrow crack between ancient buildings that crashed together in some forgotten upheaval of the earth. Rubble lies underfoot and the ceiling is low enough to force tall characters to stoop. However, once the initial crack has twisted through the earth for some quarter-mile it opens out into a wide street, the hollow houses on each side not exactly intact, but still sturdy enough to hold up the weight of rock above.

It is here that the cult's violet fungi can first be seen, glowing lavender in the darkness and waving their fronds gently back and forth. There is no wind – the fronds bear stingers which inject a paralysing venom, the better to capture interlopers for the cult's feasting.

The houses themselves seem perilously unstable but the heavy exterior walls are as solid as rock. Inside is a different manner: the interior walls are crumbling and flimsy, and the old floors might give way at any moment to drop someone into a collapsed cellar or the worm tunnels (T2).



TUNNELLING WORM

Group, Large

Savage Bite/Constriction (d8+1 damage, Hand); 14 HP, 0 armour

Special Qualities: Giant worm, Tremorsense

A creeping monster that resembles a huge tapeworm with its segmented body and lamprey-like jaws. Its mouth is fringed with deft tentacles that sort food into its maw or squeeze more active prey into submission. Soft and cowardly by nature, it prefers to wait until it detects the vibrations of fighting through the walls then emerge afterwards to devour the dead and fallen – or kill whoever's left, and then eat *them*.

Instinct: To undermine established construction.

- Tunnel through the earth.
- Seize someone or something in your tentacles.

When commanded by the Unspeakable Cult, obey.

When you detect an intruder in the tunnels, stalk them.

When injured, retreat with food clutched in your tentacles.

As well as the larger tunnels shown on the map, there are many unmarked smaller tunnels which offer interesting possibilities for exploration, escape, or ambush.

When you explore the worm tunnels with no destination in mind, you emerge in a random area of the temple. Roll 1d6 and skip over the place where you entered.

When you plunge heedlessly into the tunnels to escape an enemy or situation, you will lose your pursuer for now but again you emerge in a random location. Roll 1d8 to determine the area; on an 8 you emerge somewhere else entirely (GM's choice).

When you try to use the worm tunnels to get somewhere in particular, roll +Wis. On a miss you emerge from the tunnels somewhere you'd rather not be (GM's decision as to where) and anyone else present notices your arrival. On a 10+ you come out more or less where you wanted, and remain undetected for now. On a 7-9 choose one:

- You do not get lost and arrive somewhere else. (GM's decision as to where.)
- No one notices your arrival.

T2. WORM TUNNELS

Beneath and surrounding this area is a maze of worm tunnels. These tight tubes, perhaps four feet across, are lined with packed earth and stone – they are the principle method the tunnelling worm uses to move around the area, although desperate adventurers might also find themselves squirming through them in an attempt to get away from whatever's chasing them.

UNSPEAKABLE CULTISTS

Devious, Group, Intelligent

Knives (d6 damage, Hand, Close); 6 HP, 0 armour

A typical unspeakable cultist is one who has only dined on human flesh once or twice – most of them are new recruits who throw themselves into battle with the cult's enemies in the hopes that sufficient valour will get them inducted into the inner circle. However, they are already susceptible to the black hunger that filters down from their awful patron.

Instinct: To serve the ancient worm and its high priests.

- Throw themselves into battle without a thought for their own safety.
- Pass unnoticed in regular society.

When a corpse is present, struggle to resist taking a bite.

When commanded by the priests, obey.

T3. ANTECHAMBER

This large chamber has been constructed by knocking together several smaller rooms within the buried ruins, leaving it strangely-shaped and criss-crossed with the remains of walls that serve mostly to trip people up. Daubed on the walls is the symbol of the Unspeakable Cult in various sizes and colours, and scattered across the uneven floor are the remains of cooking fires and the flea-riddled bedding of the cultists. Growing everywhere are more of the glowing violet fungi with their venomous fronds (see T1) and there will always be cultists present here when the player characters arrive – one per PC – unless they've done something to draw them away.

T4. MUSHROOM DIPLOMACY

This room is choked with fungi of various kinds. Every step sends small puffs of spores into the air and any greater impact could produce a choking cloud of them. Concealed within this mycologist's paradise is a fungoid, a lumbering mushroom creature which helped the Unspeakable Cult breed their violet fungi and is investigating the possibility of a longer-term alliance between it and them. Negotiations are necessarily slow, since common ground is hard to find between an ancient worm-creature older than humanity and a walking fungus.

T5. MAIN CHAMBER

Like the antechamber, this room has been constructed out of several smaller rooms knocked together. The remains of ancient beams project from the walls, supporting the remains of crumbling floors overhead. In the centre of the chamber is a huge dining table, the wood scarred by many knives and stained by the blood of the cannibal feasts the cultists enjoy here. At the far end a crude dais has been assembled out of rubble and bonemeal mortar, and beyond that a yawning tunnel disappears into the darkness. This is where the ancient worm dwells, and from where it emerges to receive sacrifices and bestow blessings upon its cult.

T6. LARDER

The cult has driven anchor rings for shackles into the crumbling masonry of this room at various heights, no two at the same level. Several sets of rusty manacles hang from the rings, and when the cult kidnaps food from Port Landing the unfortunates are locked in here. Some possible meals-in-waiting are described opposite, but this is an excellent place to put any custom NPCs you want the characters to meet and/or anyone they've come down here in search of.

FUNGOID

Intelligent, Solitary

Fist (d10+2 damage, forceful, Hand, Close); 15 HP, 1 armour (spongy body)

Special Quality: Giant mushroom body

The fungoid is big and slow, moving with ponderous deliberation, but its spongy body is possessed of an implacable strength and its heavy grip can easily crack bones. More or less humanoid, it lacks a mouth and communicates by spraying other creatures with hallucinogenic spores – its latent psychic powers allow it to control the resulting visions in order to get its point across.

Instinct: To grow new and interesting mushrooms.

- Pass for a really big mushroom.
- Destroy an item, if you have time to bring your strength to bear.

When confronted by intruders, spray them with hallucinogenic spores.

When fighting, one good hit is worth ten glancing blows.

When not doing anything in particular, compose psychic poetry in your alien thought-language.

CULT VICTIMS

The teenage **Danielle** has recently had a singularly bad day: the stereotypical country girl in the big city, she wandered away from her family at market, got bitten by a mad homeless guy, and in her shock ran right into the cannibal mimes. She is totally out of her depth and just wants to go home to her tiny farming village and forget any of this ever happened. Unfortunately the man who bit her was a werewolf; Dani doesn't know it yet, but on the next full moon – which is naturally going to be at an inconvenient time for the player characters who rescued her – she's going to turn into a lupine engine of destruction.

Garret is the epitome of a salty sea dog. He's been a sailor and pirate his entire life, and hasn't reached his fifties without being willing to do whatever it takes to survive without the slightest hesitation. He'll betray the characters as soon as it looks like it might be a good idea.

Kira is a fit young woman with a burning sense of injustice and a knack for bodily harm – she'd be the Paladin if the Paladin wasn't reserved for player characters, and she'll find it difficult to leave the sunken temple without first either extinguishing the cult or extracting a promise from the player characters that they'll return to finish the job. Give her an axe and she'll give it a go by herself, which is unlikely to end well for her.

Turkid is a dwarf with an incurable but non-contagious disease; he hides his frailty with bluster and dwarven willpower. He deliberately poked into rumours of cannibals in Port Landing in the hopes that they'd eat him, catch his sickness, and die off – in this way he hopes to make his impending death mean something.

T7. PRIEST CHAMBER

When the priests of the Unspeakable Cult aren't presiding over ceremonies, communing with the ancient worm in T5, or conducting the business of the cult, they retire here. They stand motionless, each in their own place, arms at their sides and eyes wide open. They dream strange worm-dreams and distil wisdom from the subterranean writhing visible to their minds' eyes, and are only dimly aware of their surroundings.

Disturbances in the temple don't wake the priests unless they are in the main chamber, or unless a lesser cultist runs to fetch them.

UNSPEAKABLE CULT LEADERS

Intelligent, Magical, Solitary, Terrifying

Horrid Tongue (d10 damage, Close); 16 HP, 1 armour (withered flesh)

Special Quality: Withered corpse sustained by black magic and blacker hunger

The high priests of the Unspeakable Cult are withered and gaunt, unable to pass for human with their pronounced teeth and red-glowing eyes. Their most inhuman quality, however, is the long feeding tendril that bursts from their mouth with a sound like wet meat in search of the flesh of their victims. They typically only make use of the necromantic gifts the ancient worm has bestowed upon them when confronted with more active opposition – such as player characters.

Instinct: To seize the helpless and add them to the larder.

- Devour flesh with a wormlike tongue.
- Summon a necromantic horror.

When exposed to sunlight, shrink within your robes and flee into the shadows.

When cut open, eject a mass of fanged worms from the wound.

When confronted with a helpless victim, carry them off for later sacrifice.

THE ANCIENT WORM

Forceful, Hoarder, Huge, Intelligent, Magical, Reach, Solitary, Terrifying
Biting Maw/Tail Spike (d10+5 damage, 1 piercing, messy, Hand, Close);
20 HP, 1 armour (rubbery hide)

Special Qualities: Oversized tapeworm, Necromantically charged

The vast and loathsome patron of the Unspeakable Cult, the ancient worm is a pale, segmented horror with a lamprey-like maw at one end and a chitinous spear of a stinger on the other. It slithers through the tunnels below Port Landing with deceptive speed, guided by an intelligence as old and alien as anything from the void between the stars. It hungers for the flesh of the living, but more than that it feeds on the corruption of the world around it – the twisting of things away from their true forms and the turning of good folk towards evil.

It speaks directly into the minds of people in its presence, and can send undulating nightmares to plague those it has encountered but failed to devour. It hates Cobalt's presence but cannot fight her directly – she is more powerful than the worm in every way – so it lays plans to remove her and stew in its own bitterness. It's only a matter of time before one of the stormlords discovers its presence and allies with it against the dragon.

Instinct: To corrupt.

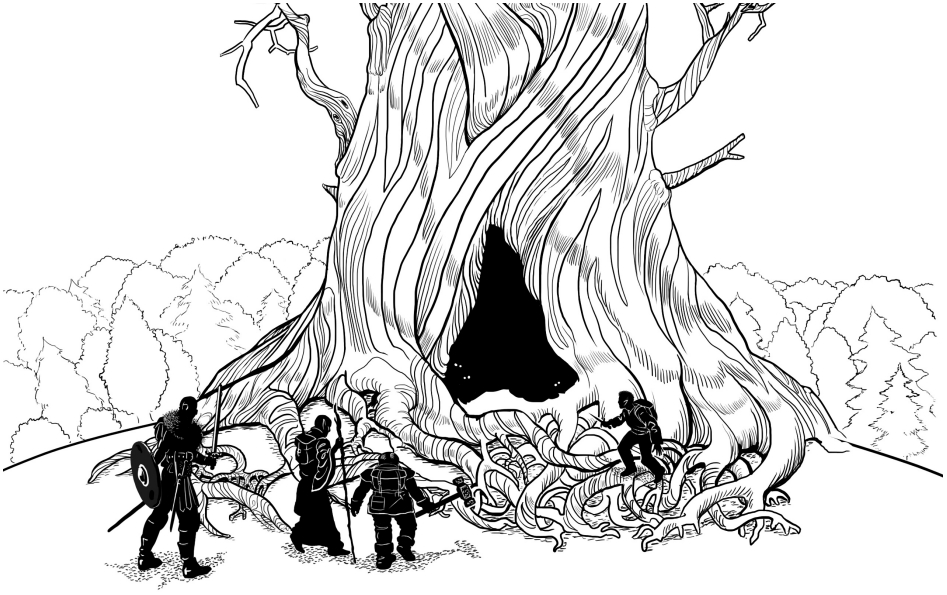
- Impale someone with its tail-spike.
- Spray venom which poisons the living and animates the dead.

When exposed, vomit forth a ghost-filled fog.

When cut open, the wound bleeds forth a corpse, a secret, or something best left forgotten.

When feeling threatened, retreat for now and plague your tormentors with nightmares later.

BENEATH THE LIVewood TREE



LIVewood TOWN

Steading: *Moderate Prosperity, Steady Population, Watch, Trade (two nearby steadings), Exotic (livewood), Enmity (Port Landing)*

On the southern edge of the valley, right on the border with the Wildlands, stands Livewood Town. It's a logging town of large wood-storage barns and small log-cabin homes, right on the cusp of a major prosperity boom thanks to the unique resource it's named after: livewood.

Livewood grows only in the Wildlands, not far from the town. It appears as gnarled sticks of plain, pale wood, always leafless, but it retains an unpleasant life of its own even when severed from the tree. On contact with living flesh the wood writhes and burrows in, attempting to change the victim into... something else. Some victims are mutated, some die messy deaths, others transform into new livewood trees - there doesn't seem to be any pattern to it.

However, livewood is a potent alchemical reagent and ingredient for magic rituals. The Brown Ring gardener Gustav has discovered that livewood repels the tainted growth of the Wildlands, and his partner Almodovar has found a way of refining livewood into a mutagenic potion that offers immunity from the wood's hungry touch, albeit with... side effects.

These discoveries have not gone unnoticed. Cobalt, following the advice of Sarlat, has sent one of her children to Livewood Town to secure the supply of livewood for herself. Sarlat believes that the wood's mutagenic properties will allow him to unlock the next stage of his experiments, and Cobalt is eager to see how he might strengthen her armies further with access to better resources. Unfortunately for them, Mabinoge – the young dragon sent to secure the supply – came into contact with the wood shortly after his arrival and has become something new and blisteringly insane. The few enforcers who came with him still obey him out of fear, but it's only a matter of time before Mabinoge decides to leave the warehouse where he is concealed and go in search of the source of the wood.

And as if *that* wasn't enough, a scourge-aligned member of the Brown Ring named Hela has come to Livewood Town with the express intention of murdering the traitor Almodovar and burning the whole place to the ground to cleanse its taint. Meanwhile, the livewood grove itself seeks a worthy champion upon whom to bestow its secret treasure.

Enter the player characters.

When you come into physical contact with livewood, it burrows into your flesh and tries to merge with you. Lose 1 HP as you tear it away. If the contact is prolonged you (or someone else) will have to cut it away.

When someone tries to cut invading livewood out of your body, roll +Con. On a 10+ your body rejects what little livewood manages to invade your flesh. On a 7-9 you survive the invasion at the price of significant scarring on the affected areas. On a miss what livewood remains takes root in your body and reaches an uneasy accord with your system; you gain scars or a freakish appearance, your Constitution is permanently reduced by 1, and you are considered a plant for magical effects which consider such things.

When you try to cut invading livewood from someone's body, roll +Dex. On a 10+ you're fast and accurate: the victim is fine (as if they rolled 10+ on the roll above). On a 7-9 you can be fast (the victim is treated as if they rolled 10+, but takes d8 damage from your cutting) *or* accurate (the victim's roll stands but they take no damage). On a 6- the victim's roll stands.

When you consume Almodovar's livewood potion, you are no longer negatively affected by physical contact with livewood – but there are side effects. Roll +Con. On a miss your body or mind is warped by the mutagenic effects of the potion: choose a debility you don't already have and gain it. On a 7-9 choose one. On a 10+ choose zero, one, or two as you like.

- You can exchange one debility you have for any other which you don't already have.
- You don't grow tentacles, thorns, eye-stalks, or some other obvious sign of mutation.
- You regain all your hit points.
- Gain a new debility you don't already have (your choice) and a useful physical mutation; tell everybody what it is.

ALMODOVAR

Intelligent, Magical, Solitary

Tentacles (d10 damage, Close);

12 HP, 2 armour (inhuman resilience, extra organs)

Special Quality: Livewood immunity

As a moral sort of man, Almodovar tests his experiments on himself before he deems them safe for other people. Beneath his green robes his body is a mass of scars, strange growths, and weird lumps – most freakish of all is his most recent transformation: his back can now unfold like the petals of a flower to reveal four extensible muscle-tendrils. These tendrils are surprisingly strong, should Almodovar need to fight off attackers, but he mostly just uses them as extra hands when he is working on more alchemy.

However, Almodovar's newfound reluctance to disrobe in front of Gustav is putting a strain on their relationship.

Instinct: To push the boundaries of physical form.

- Undergo a surprising and horrifying transformation.
- Command animals and plants with nature's voice.

When you've developed something new, test it on yourself first.

When you encounter a new reagent, immediately commence testing.

When you get emotional, get really emotional. Instability is your new normal.

HELA

Intelligent, Solitary, Stealthy

Axe/Bow (d10 damage, 1 piercing, Close, Near, Far);

12 HP, 1 armour (leathers)

Abandoned at birth and raised by a woodland hermit, Hela is almost as much animal as woman. She hates the Wildlands for its obvious perversion of the natural order and relentless advance, and considers the idea that it can be turned to people's advantage a dangerous foolishness that is not to be tolerated. As far as she's concerned, Livewood Town and the people in it are irredeemably tainted and must be destroyed before they become just another vector of infection.

Instinct: To burn the tainted.

- Listen to reason, then kill someone anyway.
- Disappear into the undergrowth.

When you can't just kill the tainted, hunt them later.

When you set out to kill, try not to expose yourself to counterattack.

When confronted with violence, flee, then circle around to strike back.

LIVEWOOD LUMBERJACKS

Group, Intelligent, Organised

Axes (d8 damage, Close); 6 HP, 0 armour

Special Qualities: Livewood immunity, Assorted mutations

Almost all the lumberjacks in Livewood Town have sampled Almodovar's potion, even if they don't cut livewood themselves. They display a variety of physical mutations, but nothing spectacularly grotesque - Almodovar has refined his potion enough to avoid really nasty stuff.

Instinct: To defend their way of life.

- Fell a tree faster than you thought possible.
- Work effectively in pairs.

When outsiders threaten someone in town, close ranks.

When confused, defer to the leadership of Almodovar or Gustav.

MABINOGE

Large, Magical, Solitary, Terrifying

Bite (d10+3 damage, 1 piercing, Close, Messy);

16 HP, 2 armour (dragonhide)

Special Qualities: Three-headed, Elemental blood

Once a dragon the size of a horse, strong and regal, Mabinoge has been poorly affected by his encounter with livewood. Now he drags his misshapen bulk along the ground with his powerful front legs, his rear legs atrophied to uselessness and his wings tattered remnants of what they once were. Most dramatically two additional heads have grown from his shoulders, resembling his central head but eyeless and half-formed.

Mabinoge's personality has warped along with his body; he seeks to hoard the livewood like a normal dragon hoards gold, and to use it to further his transformation into something new. His normal cunning and foresight has given way to a childish greed backed by the power of his new form.

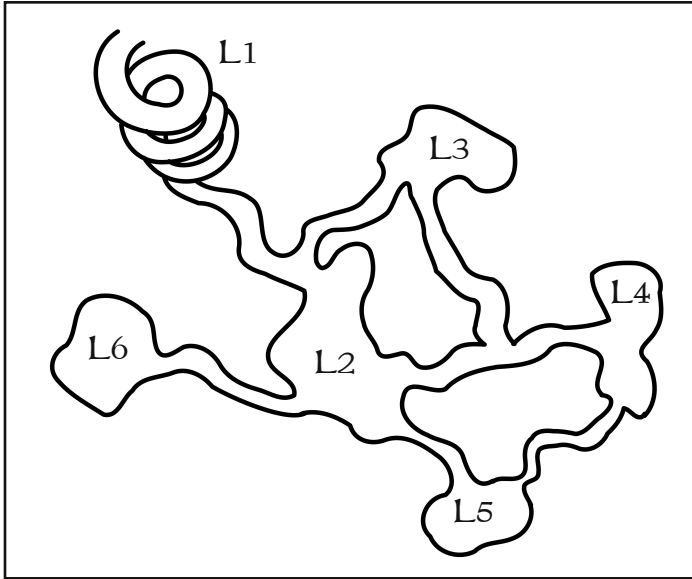
Instinct: To hoard livewood.

- Lash out in three directions at once.
- Summon a localised thunderstorm.

When you're not sure how to react, go with anger.

When flattered, let them keep talking. Hate them for lying and hate yourself for wanting to believe it.

When someone in your presence has livewood, demand it. If they refuse, take it from them.



The livewood grove – Livewood Town’s source of livewood – is a rough circle of pale, leafless trees about a hundred yards across, found slightly more than a mile into the twisted woods of the Wildlands. At the centre of the circle is the largest tree, a giant that by its size must be older than the Wildlands themselves, and beneath its tangle of roots a cavern can be seen twisting into the ground.

A few of the lumberjacks and Almodovar have tried exploring the cavern but the thorn guardians drove them off before they saw much. They don’t know what’s going on down there but suspect it’s more Wildlands trouble – but the guardians don’t leave the shadows of the cave, so the harvesting of livewood continues with no more than the occasional wary glance towards the cave entrance and some idle talk of blocking it up.

REASONS TO ENTER THE CAVERN

- **Curiosity.** What’s not to love about a mysterious hole in the ground below a tree that can kill you with a touch?
- **Rescue.** Someone important and/or vulnerable has gone in there, and the player characters need to get them out.
- **Danger.** Whatever lurks down there is *less* dangerous than whatever’s chased the characters in. The livewood will keep whatever-it-is out, and there might be another exit further in and down...
- **Quest.** Zabulon’s staff is a handy item, especially if you want to recruit the support of the Brown Ring, and there are plenty of ways for player characters to find out where it is. Now they just have to get their hands on it.

What no one has discovered yet is that the spirit of the great livewood tree is the guardian of a treasure: a staff which used to belong to Zabulon, founder of the Brown Ring. How did it come to possess such a thing? Why is it keeping it protected? Play to find out.

None of the tunnels beneath the livewood grove are lit. The thorn guardians respond poorly to the use of fire in the tunnels, but the spirit of the great tree restrains them enough to allow for flaming torches. After all, the spirit *wants* its treasures to be found – it just wants to ensure that they are only found by the worthy.

L1. TWISTING DESCENT

The cave descends in a tight spiral through the earth, a tube lined with the twitching rootlets of the great tree above. The entrance is the most dangerous part, requiring extreme care to avoid contacting the livewood, but as the tunnel descends the roots become fewer, larger, and less mobile, presenting less danger to wandering adventurers.

L2. CHAMBER AMONG THE ROOTS

This approximately round chamber descends towards the centre, where a twisted spire of thorny vines juts from the floor, leafy and alive in defiance of the total darkness. These vines are not livewood but the needle-like thorns make them almost as unpleasant to brush up against – and this plant is the origin of the thorn guardians, which squeeze themselves through gaps in the vines or up through the soil when no one is looking.

The spire is also the protective coating for Zabulon's staff – the vines will unwind when the spirit of the tree decides a worthy bearer has arrived to reveal the staff entangled in its roots. The spirit judges worthiness by how people perform in the tests in the four other chambers: it's looking for someone who embodies Zabulon's particular combination of power, dedication, altruism, and purity – and a sense of humour doesn't hurt either.

L3. THE BLOW

As the first character enters this chamber a dim light grows from nowhere to show a spectral scene: a vague and unfocused image of a village street, where an intimidating figure in heavy plate armour is frozen in place, his sword poised to cut down a small boy in front of him who is likewise frozen in the act of cowering. This scene is shown in full three dimensions for the characters to

THORN GUARDIANS

Construct, Horde

Thorny Grasp (d6 damage, Hand); 3 HP, 0 armour

Special Qualities: Made of thorny vines

The thorn guardians that live beneath the great livewood tree are small humanoid figures made of thorny vines that serve as protectors of the tree's spirit and limited agents of its will. They mob enemies and try to bring them down by weight of numbers, climbing over each other and hooking their thorns into clothing, skin, hair – anything loose. They cannot leave the tunnels beneath the tree or their animating force will dissipate and they'll collapse into their component parts.

Instinct: To keep intruders out of the tunnels.

- Get entangled in hair or clothing.

When the spirit of the tree commands, obey.

When set on fire, attempt to ignite your enemies before you are destroyed.

ZABULON'S STAFF

Close, 2 weight

Once wielded by Zabulon, founder of the Brown Ring, his staff has absorbed some of his nature and a small measure of his power. It resembles a six foot length of pale wood, more or less straight, carved from end to end with sigils that describe in some obscure language the formation of the Brown Ring and (broadly) Zabulon's outlook on life. While holding it, a character gains access to the druid move *elemental mastery* (see *Dungeon World* page 110) regardless of their class. If held by a druid who already knows that move, take +1 when using it.

Moreover, the staff is a powerful symbol of the Brown Ring. When using parley to persuade a member of the Brown Ring to do what you want, the staff counts as leverage – but only once per person.

The staff has a guttering flame of intelligence and communicates through empathic urging – it insists its wielder fight against the spread of the Wildlands and try to restore the Brown Ring to a functional organisation. It can also sense the presence of Wildlands-taint and will push its wielder to destroy anyone or anything so tainted.

explore (within the confines of the chamber) and it responds to deliberate interaction: if the characters attempt to intervene in the scene or interact with the boy or armoured figure, it becomes solid and animates – the armoured figure’s sword sweeps across and, if not blocked, strikes down the boy.

If the boy is struck down then both figures fade and vanish with no further action. If someone steps between the two and takes the blow in the boy’s place, they take the armoured figure’s damage and then the scene fades. Anything else awakens the ire of the armoured figure – it becomes fully real and assaults the PCs with tireless, single-minded aggression until slain, whereupon it vanishes.

L4. THE TOWER

Just like L3, the first character walking into this chamber causes it to illuminate with a sourceless light. In the centre of the floor is a pile of wooden building blocks, although these are just phantasms which vanish if removed from the chamber. On the far wall is a crude painting of a tower (which is real).

This chamber is symbolic of the work Zabulon put in when creating the Brown Ring. Likewise symbolic of Zabulon’s efforts, the blocks are uncooperative: some twitch and shake when built on, bringing the whole edifice down around them; some slip away while no one is paying attention; some are impossible shapes that fit no kind of gap. The task is to build the blocks into a tower, by

THE ARMoured FIGURE

Cautious, Construct, Solitary

Sword (b[2d10] damage, Close); 20 HP, 4 armour (plate and shield)

Special Quality: Not quite real, Unsleeping

A single-minded slayer, silent and murderous.

Instinct: To kill anyone in its path.

- Pursue relentlessly.
- Appear just when they thought they were safe.

When spoken to, say nothing.

When challenged by a worthy opponent, focus on them.

When your prey escapes, follow them unerringly.

whatever method the characters come up with – even simple dedication to the task will eventually see results, but the player characters will probably be able to think of faster methods.

L5. THE HAND

Like the other chambers, entering this one illuminates a phantasmal scene – this one of an aged man seated at a desk. His right hand is corrupted by some curse: twisted, discoloured and showing talon-like nails. His left hand hovers over a selection of items: a sharp knife, a glove, and a metal shackle. The man responds to certain phrases if they are voiced in his presence, whether or not people are talking to him, to convey the following information:

- He has been cursed, and the curse is transforming his body into something terrible. He does not know what it might do – or have already done – to his mind.
- He is considering three options, represented by the objects he is choosing between.
- He could use the knife to cut off his own hand – but it would leave him crippled and his cursed hand will crawl away to blight someone else.
- He could conceal the curse beneath the glove – he would be transformed, but he could continue to live behind his veneer of normalcy.
- He could chain himself in a secluded place with the shackle – but that would not halt the transformation, and it would not allow him to remain part of society.

The man will do whatever the characters tell him to do, and the spirit of the tree will judge them based on their choices.

L6. THE ARGUMENT

The phantasmal scene in this chamber consists of three stone masks floating near the centre of the room. One is twisted into a caricature scowl, and from it emanates a gruff male voice. The second mask shows the fine bone structure and pointed ears of an elf, and its female voice rings like a bell. The third mask is relatively plain, and its expression seems concerned or arrogant depending on where you look at it from. It sounds like a local woman.

When someone enters the chamber the masks appear and begin to speak, arguing in endless circles about the “Wildlands threat” and what they should do about it.

- The angry face advocates burning and other destruction as a suitable response to any problem. No amount of collateral damage is too much to ensure the eradication of its troubles, and no level of compromise is acceptable.
- The elf face believes in passive resistance. No amount of collateral damage is acceptable, but neither is coming to an accord – the slow progress of time will solve all problems without her needing to offer her opponents any concessions.
- The local face wants to take the best parts of the Wildlands and incorporate them into everyday life – she is an adamant futurist and refuses to believe that rampant progress could possibly be a bad idea. If challenged with evidence, she points out that *she* wasn’t in charge of that one, and things will be different this time...

The three faces are broadly representative of the three factions of the Brown Ring (see page 28). All are totally unreasonable, up to and beyond the point of stupidity. The task in this chamber is to find a unanimously acceptable resolution to their endless dispute. The tree-spirit will be extremely impressed with anyone who manages it via diplomatic means, since the purpose of the test is to recognise that sometimes you just have to shout at people until they do what you want. That’s the kind of bold use of power that it’s looking for.

WHAT IF NO-ONE’S WORTHY?

It’s entirely possible that after displaying themselves to be amoral, greed-driven maniacs the spirit of the tree decides that *none* of the player characters are worthy of the staff. Here are some suggestions of how to handle that:

- **Sucks To Be You.** The characters tried and they failed, and that means they leave empty-handed. It’s simple, if a little anti-climactic, but sometimes we don’t get what we want.
- **Better A Mediocre Bearer Than No-One.** The spirit might choose to bestow the staff on them anyway, especially if it feels that one of them might be nudged onto a better path by the staff’s mental urging.
- **The NPC Option.** The spirit might bestow the staff on an NPC – maybe one who is present with the player characters when they explore the tree, or maybe one who explores it later, following in the characters’ footsteps. Gustav, Almodovar, and Hela offer the potential to hand the staff to whichever Brown Ring faction you think will make the game most interesting.

COMPENDIUM CLASSES

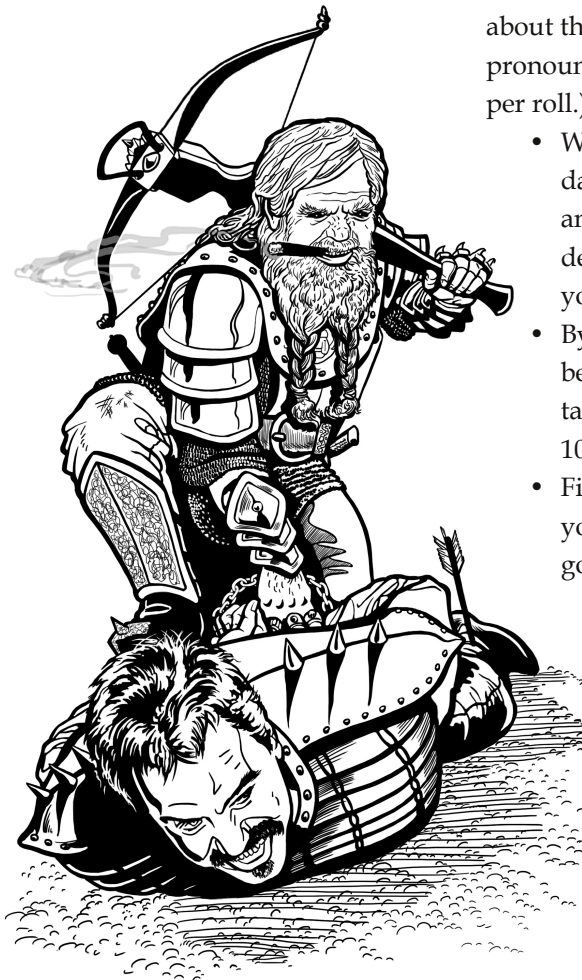
JUSTICAR

When you've been inducted into the dwarven order of justicars, the next time you level up you can choose to take this move:

JUSTICE!

When you confront a wrongdoer, list their crimes, and tell them what you're going to do about it, roll +Wis. On a 10+ hold 3, on a 7-9 hold 2. On a 6- you can still hold 1 but your target might retaliate sooner or harder than you were expecting. Spend hold 1-for-1 to achieve the following effects:

- Take +1 on a roll made to bring about the justice you have pronounced. (Maximum spend 1 per roll.)
 - When your target deals damage to you, negate it and give voice to your defiance. "Is that all you've got?"
 - Bypass an obstacle between you and your target as if you had rolled 10+ on *defy danger*.
 - Find a lead that will tell you where your target has gone, if they have fled.



When you have *justice!*, the following moves count as level 2-5 class moves and you can choose to take them when you level up:

NOSE FOR TROUBLE

When you go looking for trouble in a peaceful steading, you find it. Tell the GM what you find and what you do about it, then choose one boon and the GM will choose one drawback.

Boons:

- In trouble with the authorities? Not any more. It's all square between you now.
- The story's out, people know your name, and *they love you*. You can count on the support of the people here.
- Treasure! Gain 1d4 x 100 coins.
- You learn something interesting – you choose the general topic and the GM will tell you what you learn.

Drawbacks:

- You had to cross a few lines; next time you come back here, you're subject to the *outstanding warrants* move (*Dungeon World*, page 80)
- You took a nasty wound. Gain a debility of your choice.
- No victory without cost. A friendly NPC in this steading died so you could triumph.
- It never ends. You think you wrapped things up clean, but the consequences are going to bite you on the ass later.

I'LL LET IT SLIDE... THIS TIME

When you parley with criminals or evildoers and use the promise of your future leniency or mercy as leverage, you can choose to treat the result of the dice as 6 without needing to roll. (Add your Charisma modifier and any other bonuses as normal.)

THE EVIL ARE GUILTY, AND CREATE MERCY

When you subdue someone you would prefer to kill, an NPC who sees or hears of the deed will grant you a boon, change their ways, or hold off from menacing you for a while. If you choose the NPC the GM chooses the effect, and if you let the GM choose the NPC you can choose the effect.

THE TRUTH HURTS

When you confront someone with an ugly truth they'd rather not acknowledge, the GM chooses at least one:

- They don't retaliate, even if they want to. This protection lasts until you have definitively left their presence, or until you anger them further.
- They break down and beg for your forgiveness. If you grant it, they repent and change their ways.
- The shock causes them to pause, stutter, hesitate, or miss something important.

When you have *justice!*, the following moves count as level 6-10 class moves for you:

BRING ME HER HEAD!

Requires: Nose For Trouble

When you disrupt the plans or operations of a powerful enemy, they react with assassins or kidnappers targeting you, your allies, or your loved ones. You will be in a position to thwart the assault, and the attackers will be carrying useful information.

THE GOOD ARE INNOCENT, AND CREATE JUSTICE

Requires: The Evil Are Guilty, And Create Mercy

This extends the effect of *the evil are guilty* to times when you **kill someone who really had it coming**, and make a big show of what you've done.

SPECIALTY OPTION

If you want to start as a justicar at level 1 and you are a dwarf, you can replace one of your starting moves with *justice!* if you tell everyone why you haven't answered Erdrie Stonecaller's recall of all justicars.

BROWN RING INITIATE

When you've been inducted into the Brown Ring by an existing member, or when you're the bearer of Zabulon's Staff (see page 121), the next time you level up you can choose to take this move:

SENSE TAINT

When you pause and examine your surroundings for unnatural taint, the GM will tell you honestly what here is tainted by the wildlands and by how much: slightly, moderately, heavily, or completely. 'Tainted' is a vague status which also covers abominations against nature such as the undead, freakish monstrosities from impossible dimensions, but not demons. Although steeped in evil and often freakish in form, demons are very much a natural part of the way the multiverse functions.

When you have sense taint, the following moves count as level 2-5 class moves and you can choose to take them when you level up:

ALCHEMIST

When you harvest natural or wildlands ingredients to create a potion, tell the GM what you intend the potion to achieve and the GM will tell you one, some, or all of the following:

- An exotic ingredient, process, or piece of equipment you will need to complete the potion.
- One or more drawbacks the drinker will suffer.
- That the brewing will take some time.

GARDENER

Your knowledge of plants (including plant-based monsters) is unsurpassed. You can always tell if a plant is healthy or, if it is not, what is causing it to suffer. If you have time to move carefully, you can always bypass dangerous plant hazards by picking your way carefully through them or applying a herbal counteragent to their stings and thorns. You can extend this benefit to your companions as well if they follow your instructions.

SCOURGE

When you deal damage to someone or something you have previously identified as tainted, you deal +1d4 damage.

MEMBER IN GOOD STANDING

When you arrive at a new steading, you can tell the GM of a member of the Brown Ring who lives in the steading or nearby. Give this person a name and choose one of the following:

- They have something you need, but they hate you. Why?
- They like you, but you owe them a debt. What did they do for you in the past?
- They owe you a favour – and they'll do what you ask, fair and square – but they're not particularly capable. What did you do for them?
- You've heard of them, but the two of you have never met. The GM has a free hand in inventing your contact.

WISDOM OF THE ELDEST

When you miss on a *spout lore* roll, you can pause and consult the spirit of Zabulon. If you do, reroll the *spout lore* move – but any knowledge gained on a success is filtered through the perspective of a long-dead druid with a bizarre sense of humour.

When you have *sense taint*, the following moves count as level 6–10 class moves for you:

COMMAND THE RING

Requires: Member in Good Standing

When you call for a gathering of the Brown Ring, 1d6 members per day answer the call, for a number of days equal to your level. If you try to command the gathered members to do something roll +Cha: On a 10+ pick three, on a 7–9 pick one, and on a miss infighting at the gathering is going to cause you a serious problem.

- The gathered members will follow your commands over a wide area.
- The gathered members will follow your commands for a long time.
- The gathered members will follow your commands exactly as you want them to.
- The gathered members won't start fighting among themselves.

ALL NATURAL

Choose one move from the druid class list.

THREE STORMS DISCIPLE

When you've been taught the rudiments of Three Storms style by Master Lee (or maybe one of his advanced students) the next time you level up you can choose to take this move:

THREE STORMS BASICS

Your bare hands now have one of the following weapon tags:

- If you lean towards the way of the snowstorm, stun.
- If you prefer the way of sleet and ice, piercing 1.
- If you favour the way of the thunderstorm, forceful.

When you have *Three Storms basics*, the following moves count as level 2–5 class moves and you can choose to take them when you level up:

ADVANCED STUDENT

You can add a second tag from *Three Storms basics* to your unarmed attacks.

ICE-TREADER

When you stand or climb on slippery, loose, or otherwise uncertain terrain, you are in no danger of losing your footing or grip.

AVALANCHE GRIP

When you grab hold of someone, you can choose to bear them to the ground and pin them there. Whether you do or not, if they escape your grip you can choose to deal your damage to them.

ON LEVELLING UP AND LEARNING KUNG FU

Learning kung fu takes ages. Yet a *Dungeon World* player character, blessed with many failures, can attain a new level – and a new Three Storms stance – in a few days. If you're having trouble reconciling these points, I'd like to direct you to the Jet Li movie *The Evil Cult* (known by a whole bunch of other names as well). Not only is it well worth watching if you like kung fu movies, it features a scene in which the main character is trapped in a sealed tomb with a new kung fu style written on the inside of the seals. His translator explains that it would take years to master this new style! ...unless you've already mastered one of the great styles, in which case you can do it in hours.

Same principle. The characters are already unique in the world – the fighter, the cleric, etc. – and it turns out that uniqueness extends to their ability to learn supernatural kung fu as well. Master Lee will shake his head and say things like "If you dedicated yourself to the martial arts, there is no limit to what you could learn!" and you can get on with your game of crane-kicking demons in the face.

THUNDERCLAP

When you hit someone with an open-palm strike, they are blasted off their feet and deafened for a few minutes by the thunderclap sound of your strike. The noise is audible up to a mile away. You can also generate these thunderclap noises by clapping your hands (with no risk of knocking yourself over).

When you have *Three Storms basics*, the following moves count as level 6–10 class moves for you:

DISCIPLE

Requires: Advanced Student

Your unarmed attacks gain the third and final tag from *Three Storms basics*.

WUXIA

When you are facing a powerful enemy or enemies, the chips are down, and the outlook is bad, you can break out a unique instance of blatant and over-the-top supernatural martial arts power – summoning a storm, throwing lightning, freezing people solid, tearing the building down, and so on – that achieves one of the following things:

- You and any friends you want to take with you escape to a place of safety, evading any pursuit.
- A single enemy of your choice suffers a painful wound that causes them to flee the scene in such a way that you cannot pursue. (Yes, it will scar, and yes, they will seek revenge.)
- A nameless minion of the enemy (or group of minions) is so inspired by your display that they immediately turn on their previous allies. Give them a name and say what they do.

Wuxia only works once per opponent or group of opponents. You've bought yourself some time before the final confrontation, but next time they'll be ready for you!

SPECIALTY OPTION

If you want to start as a *Three Storms* disciple at level 1, you can replace one of your starting moves with *Three Storms basics*. Tell everyone why you abandoned your training, and know that if you ever return to Thunder Mountain you will be unwelcome among Lee and his students.

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