

OVER THE NEXT HILL

THE TOWN OF RIVEREAVE

THE FOLLOWING IS THE SECOND PART OF *Over the Next Hill*, a multi-author series focusing on small settlements that can be dropped into a campaign with minimal preparation. Each article in the series presents several detailed NPCs, points of interest, and loose plot hooks that can be developed during play. This installment of the series details the town of Rivereave, a safe haven for adventurers returning from the borderlands.

THE SETTLEMENT

Rivereave sits on the shore of an expansive lake, along a wilderness trade route that hugs the edge of civilization. Most buildings are made of plastered stone and timber, with shingled roofs. The entire village smells of fish, and the weather is often rainy and cold. Despite this, the people are warm and welcoming to travelers, as adventurers frequently use the town as a place to rest before and after trips into the lawless wilds.

SIGNIFICANT AREAS

- ▶ **Rivereave Keep.** This 60 foot tall stone tower sits atop a high mound surrounded by a ditch and a timber palisade. The keep has barracks for 50 stout **guards** and stables for 10 horses. The commander is Georges Valmont, a **veteran** and the baron's nephew.
- ▶ **Valmont Manor.** On a promontory overlooking the lake is the estate of Baron Etienne Valmont, the patriarch of a once-powerful,



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now-disgraced family. The baron is shrewd and rules with a stern hand, ruthlessly punishing dissidents in an attempt to regain the power and honor his father tarnished.

The baron has hired 10 **guards** from a mercenary company to protect his estate. His manor is opulent, but lonely. Valmont's wife is dead and his prodigal son lives abroad on a generous allowance.

Valmont supports the local Adventurer's Guild and magnanimously granted them a sizeable property near the wharf for their guildhall.

- ▶ **Wharf.** Trade vessels and fishing boats are moored to piers along the river. During the day, the wharf bustles with merchants, fishermen, and teamsters. The wharf boss is Gilbert Portman, a corrupt official who lives in the tavern.

At night, drunken laborers carouse and fight (using **thug** statistic). The town watch avoids the area, but deal harshly with drunkards who try to enter town.

- ▶ **Adventurer's Guildhall.** The Rivereave Adventurer's Guild is a loose organization with few stable members. Since the town is close to the lawless wilderness, dozens of adventurers and mercenaries pass through each week. The guildmaster, a battle-scarred dwarf named Brynhild Kinslayer, makes a keen profit as an "adventurer's agent." She receives bounties and rumors of danger from all over the countryside and passes them off to her guildmembers—for a 10% cut of the profits.
- ▶ **Fish Market.** This muddy cluster of fishmonger stalls is a good spot to hear rumors or secure transportation.

Walter "Fat Walt" Cuttle sells salted mealfish (5 sp), which last a month. They are identical to trail rations, but can also be eaten during a short rest to regain an extra 1 hit point per hit die expended.

- ▶ **Merchant Warehouses.** Behind a stockade stand rows of warehouses for storing goods

in transit. The compound is protected by 8 **guards** and staffed by 12 **commoners**. The warehouse master is a diligent bookkeeper named Adderly. His loyal bodyguard, Jorl, is a **veteran** of the goblin wars.

RUMORS

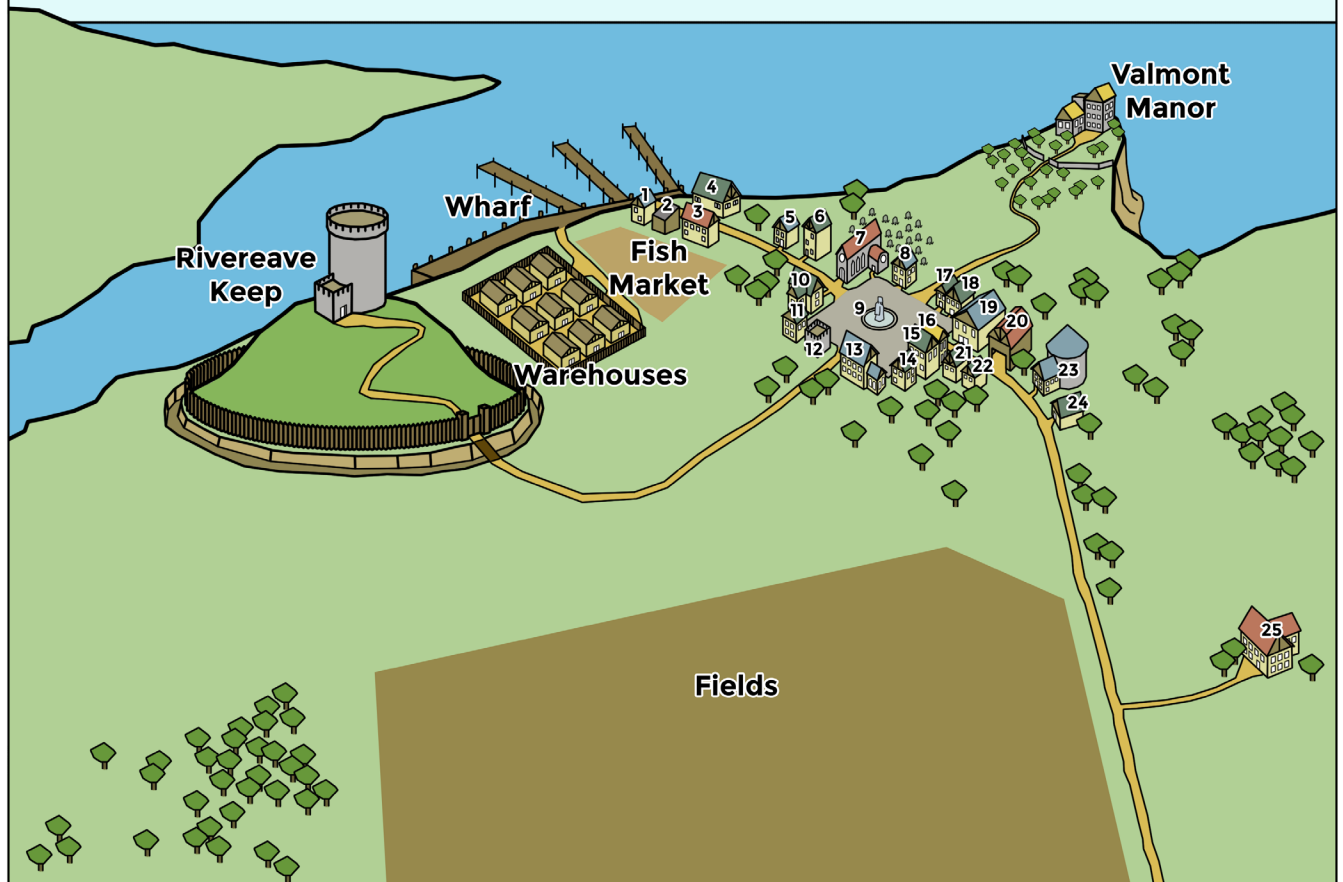
Bits of information can be discovered by talking to townsfolk:

1. Lizardfolk raiders attack the outlying farms, yet the baron does nothing. (True, the lizardfolk living in the lake have made a secret truce with the baron—he turns a blind eye to their raiders in exchange for safe shipping across the lake.)
2. The Valmonts were disgraced when the baron's father lost a duel while drunk. (True.)
3. Everyone loves the priest's beer—it's delicious! (True, see Area 6.)
4. The apothecary sells magical seeds that make crops grow like mad. (False, see Area 17.)
5. All sorts of things are smuggled through the port. (True, see "Wharf," below.)
6. The butcher was attacked by tiny demons earlier this week! (Partially true, see Area 21. The creatures were goblins, not demons.)
7. The baker got her new shop by bribing the mayor with baked treats. (True, see Area 18.)
8. At night, the ghost of an ancient king wanders the cemetery. (Partially true, see Area 6. A ghost haunts the cemetery, but he is a poet, not a king.)
9. The innkeeper once murdered a guest and hid the body in her cellar. (False, but her undead husband is there. See Area 10.)
10. The miller's magic chicken lays amazing eggs. (True, see Area 23.)

TOWN KEY

1. **Fortune Teller.** Inside this dimly-lit home is an eccentric collection of artifacts and trinkets. Madame Barovsky—a withered crone—is actually a crafty **mage**. Despite

The Town of Rivereave



her great arcane power, she only seeks peace and amusement in her old age. Hiding in the back room is her brutish son, Boris (a **thug**).

For 1 gp, she will read someone's fortune, but no one else may be present. She subtly casts *suggestion* to convince the subject of the reading's accuracy and compel them to leave a generous tip.

- 2. Smithy.** This is the workshop of Robert Kettle, a broad-shouldered smithy. He is a decent fellow, but only capable of repairs and basic ironwork. He resents the tool-seller (Area 22) for dealing with "that bastard dwarf," a rival smith from a bigger city, and treats dwarves with mild contempt.
- 3. Ship's Supply.** Wyatt Coxson—a legendary fisherman in these parts—sells boat materials and stores: bait, fishing tackle, etc. His high-quality rope costs 15 gp, but withstands

heavy loads (advantage on saving throws to resist breaking).

- 4. The Watery Pig.** This raucous tavern features strong drink, brawls, gambling, and harlots. The place is nothing but trouble. Stanley the barkeep is a good source of rumors. The tavern owner is Darvyd Huck, a professional bawd and career criminal. He is usually found in the back room, from which his gang secretly operates. Trusted associates can purchase contraband and fence stolen goods.
- 5. Barber.** Inside the tidy office is an examination table and shelves filled with vials and instruments. Fyvus Fulbin provides shaves, bloodlettings, and other medical services:
 - ▶ Shave and haircut (5 sp) gives advantage on Performance and Persuasion checks for 48 hours.

- ▶ A leeching (1 gp) gives advantage to any saving throw made to resist a disease currently affecting the character for the next 24 hours, but reduces the affected character's hit point maximum by 10 percent for 24 hours.
- ▶ Treat injuries (10 gp) restores 1d4 + 3 hp (once per 24 hours).
- ▶ Surgery (50 gp) restores a subject to life if performed within one hour of death and if the surgeon rolls a critical success on his Wisdom (Medicine) check.

6. **Brewery.** This pungent operation is overseen by the head priest and six craftsmen. They produce and sell amber-colored barley beer from local grain. No one knows the priest's technique, but his beer is acclaimed throughout the region.

7. **Holy Chapel.** Built over a century ago by the Valmont family, this modest temple boasts beautiful stained-glass windows abstractly depicting famous scenes from scripture. The chapel is tended by a **priest**, Janos Bennett, and a pair of young **acolytes**: Digby and Raymond. Bennett is a scholarly man who wears simple vestments and always has a book under one arm.

A cleric or paladin who spends time contemplating the windows receives a sudden divine insight and gains Inspiration. (Only happens once).

In the cemetery behind the chapel is a marble stone carved with the bust of a young man wearing a laurel wreath. It is known as The Poet's Grave. An inscription reads:

*"William Bennett – taken too young
 "A mystery, life; but nonesuch as death.
 "I composed a clue, and inscribed it well and true.
 "My secret, seek; page forty and two."*

The poet's ghost is said to wander the cemetery during the full moon (see Area 8).

8. **Priests' Residence.** This humble cottage is the chapel priest's home. The acolytes live in

a simple room off the kitchen. His study contains an impressive library, which includes a book of the cemetery poet's work.

On page 42 is a poem called: "*Song for the Dead.*" Musical notes are scribbled in the margin. If the melody is played for the poet's ghost, it guides characters to a mysterious spot in the forest outside of town. The treasure within the poet's cache is up to the GM. It could simply be gold and magic items, or another clue sending them on a greater treasure hunt.

9. **Town Square.** In the middle of the cobblestone-paved square is a large stone cistern with a weathered statue of a god of travelers. Townsfolk toss coins into the cistern as offerings, which the acolytes collect.



10. **Rivereave Inn.** This wayfarer's inn offers accommodations at reasonable prices. The innkeeper, Lucia Underton, is a jittery woman. She runs the inn with her son Reg and her teenage daughter, Hannah.

Six months ago, Underton's husband fell sick and died. After his burial, he rose as a **zombie** and returned to the inn. Underton corralled him into the cellar, where the family keeps him chained until they can figure out a solution.

11. **Appraiser's Office.** Virgil Lannon is the royal exciseman responsible for taxing the cargo that passes through town. During the day, he is typically found on the wharf. He can assess any item for 5 percent of its value. Lannon suspects the wharf boss of taking bribes from smugglers, but needs proof before he can act.

12. **Merchant Bank.** This fortified building features a crenellated battlement manned by 2 **guards** with heavy crossbows and wearing plate armor (AC 18). Inside, 4 **guards** protect the vault. The bank is owned by a merchant guild in a distant city. Characters can deposit money, but collect no interest. They can also borrow money from the bank at 10% monthly interest.

13. **Banker's Residence.** The merchant banker, a minor nobleman named Dulain Chevois, lives here with his ailing wife. The house is opulent, but protected by (4) hired **guards**. Chevois is an arrogant **noble** who was assigned to this town and resents it. He hates Baron Valmont, and plots against him constantly.

14. **Clothier.** This quaint cottage is the workshop of Agnes Taylor, an elderly widow and talented seamstress. The clothes she makes cost twice the usual amount, but the quality of her clothing gives the wearer advantage on Charisma (Performance or Persuasion) checks when interacting with nobility.

15. **Woodworker.** This workshop is covered in ornate, elven-influenced carvings. Yiohan,

a half-elf artisan, is usually here working away. He carves secret messages in Elvish into the items he makes.

16. **Mayor's Residence.** Walther Valmont, the town mayor, lives in this fine home with his wife and daughter. He conducts official business in his study. The mayor is a timid toady who makes no decision without first consulting his cousin, the baron.

17. **Apothecary.** Bodwyr Branham sells various medical compounds made from herbs, spices, roots, dried mushrooms, and bits of horn and hoof. He has an ongoing dispute with the proprietor of the farm supply, but denies selling "magic seeds."

Bodwyr wears a talisman which a druid or elf might recognize. He is secretly a **druid** who came here a year ago to investigate a growing evil in the countryside. He sells specialty items to customers he trusts:

- ▶ Dragon manure (5 gp): Bought from a returning adventuring party, crops spread with this fertilizer grow 1d3 + 1 times their usual size.
- ▶ Herbal poultice (1 gp): Heals 1d3 hit points if applied as an action.
- ▶ Antitoxin (50 gp): Gives advantage to any poison saving throw for one hour.
- ▶ Preserved bulb of a **shambling mound** (200 gp): Sprouts if planted, reaching full size in one week.

18. **Bakery.** The smell of baking bread wafts from this shop. Common loaves and biscuits are stacked around the room, while special treats rest on a table. Behind the shop is a small orchard of fruit trees and berry bushes.

Penelope Worthy, the miller's wife, is a crafty woman who runs the bakery and bakes special treats for prominent locals. If given as a bribe to the correct individual, the briber gains advantage on the next Charisma check he or she makes to influence their opinion.

- ▶ Pear Tarts (1 gp): "Ooh, the baron could eat these all day!"

- ▶ Sesame Seed Bread with Blackberry Jam (3 sp): *"The mayor loves this for breakfast."*
 - ▶ Cherry Rum Cake (5 sp): *"Even the good priest would leave church for one of my rum cakes."*
 - ▶ Sunflower Seed and Honey Biscuits (5 cp): *"The tax appraiser says they're the finest he's ever tasted."*
 - ▶ Blueberry Pie (3 sp): *"The wharf boss sends one of his goons every day to pick up a blueberry pie."*
19. **Farm Supply.** Hawthorne Bumkus operates this store for hay, grain, seed, and construction materials, along with several huge laborers who live in a crowded shack out back. Bumkus dislikes the apothecary is spreading a rumor of cursed "magic seeds" that destroy the planter's garden.
20. **Livestock.** A trading agent for local farmers auctions off livestock here. Milthan Ferrier is an experienced veterinarian and animal breeder. He has a riding horse for sale of exceptional quality (speed 65 ft., 150 gp).
21. **Butcher.** Carcasses hang on hooks and the floor is slick with viscera. A bloodstained table sits in the center of the room. Cutter Marrow is a skilled butcher and expert with a knife.
- While traveling recently, he was attacked by a group of humanoids. He managed to kill two of them, and still has their skulls (goblins).

22. **Tool Shop.** Fenwick Sawler's store is well-stocked with tools and hardware, many of which are of dwarven make. He purchases his goods from a dwarf in another town. He regrets any animosity with the local smith, but the dwarf's goods are superior.
23. **Millhouse.** Woodrow Worthy grinds grain in his horse-drawn grist mill. He also raises chickens and cows, and sells flour, eggs, milk, butter and cheese. Attached to the mill is a cottage where he and his family live.
- One of Worthy's chickens was touched by fey magic. It has silver feathers and occasionally lays an opalescent egg with a brilliant red yolk that has remarkable flavor—and secret power.
24. **Tack and Harness.** Gilbert Hyde, a trapper and tanner, sells leather goods, including leather armor, and high-quality belt pouches and backpacks that give advantage to saving throws for items stowed within. He pays 1 cp to anyone who urinates in a bucket outside, marked: *"Penny for your relief?"*
25. **Farmhouse Inn.** Renowned for its comfort, this working farmhouse is run by Henri Fermier, his wife Henrietta, and their six children. A one-night stay (including meals) costs 2 gp. Anyone taking a long rest here recovers all hit dice instead of the usual half. Tiny stone cairns rest on the side of the road near the inn as small shrines to the god of travelers.