

OVER THE NEXT HILL

VILLAGE OF DREAMS



THE FOLLOWING IS THE THIRD 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 Natulog, the mysterious Village of Dreams.

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THE SETTLEMENT

Natulog is a sleepy hamlet that rests in the foothills of a larger mountain range. The low-hanging clouds and thick fogs that creep over Natulog support the forests and farmland with ample moisture, and the hills protect the village from autumn storms. For this reason the townsfolk are generally relaxed and hospitable, and they welcome peaceful travelers of any race or vocation—especially adventurers and merchants. Despite the residents' friendliness, outsiders who stay in the village experience a surreal sense of foreboding, especially as the evening fogs surround the village...

THE DREAMING

An ancient enchantment called the Dreaming causes people who rest in or nearby Natulog to experience vivid dreams while they sleep. The Dreaming visits visions upon all creatures that can dream—including children, visitors, and animals. The culture of Natulog respects the importance and privacy of dreams; to share a dream is to honor the listener. The clergy of Natulog's Stone-Hewn Temple interpret dreams and monitor them for omens of dangers to come.

SIGNIFICANT AREAS

A. Stone-Hewn Temple. The ruins of an ancient stone temple lie on top of the tallest hill overlooking the village (the same hill as the Hillside Sanctuary). The townsfolk regard this ancient site with superstitious reverence, only hazarding a visit to offer prayers to gods of mystery and intellect for guidance in ominous times. The Temple's clergy are grim, secretive, and few in number, but serve those brave enough to visit them by offering the interpretation of dreams (see "Dream Reading").

The priesthood is led by the surprisingly-affable half-elf **druid** Tymotheigh. He is slim and sports a goatee, and early gray speckles his short, dirty-blond hair. Friends often catch Tymotheigh staring

into the distance—but a decent joke or dose of irony sends him into deep and hearty laughter. He lives with his husband, Draemond, and the younger of their two adopted daughters, a tiefling named Sinead.

B. Hillside Sanctuary. True to its name, this modest wooden temple overlooks the village from the bank of a hillside creek (downhill from the Stone-Hewn Temple). This temple's clergy honors the gods of nature and agriculture by teaching how to live with the land. Each fortnight, the temple hosts a sacrifice of livestock to appease the gods of storms and darkness; the clergy then feeds the village poor with the meat of the sacrifices.

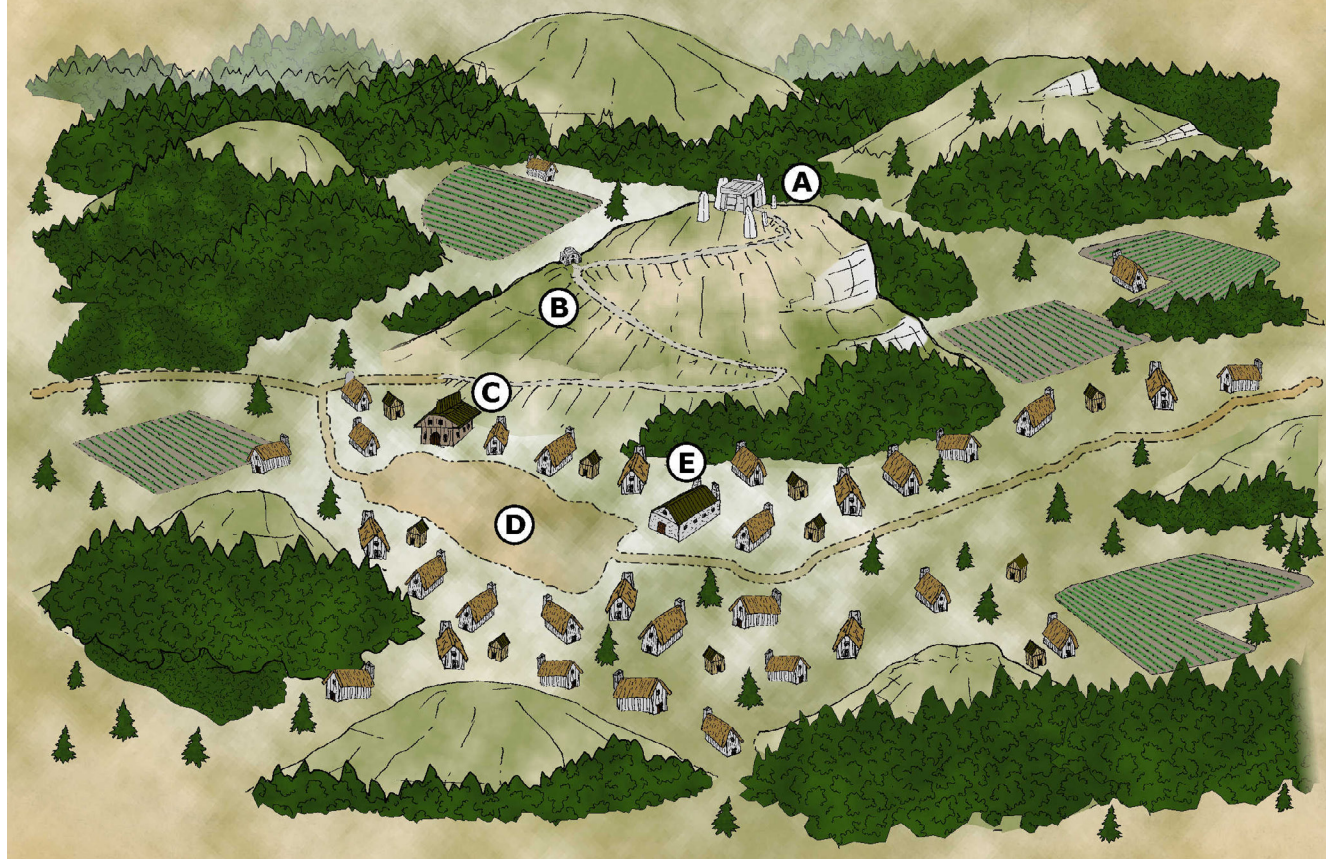
The Sanctuary's **priest** Draemond is a tall, barrel-chested human with thick, curly black hair. He bears a long black beard, and he always rolls up his sleeves (even those of his ceremonial garb) which reveals his strong, hairy arms. On his inner right arm is a tattoo of an Elvish word meaning "Silent Determination." He lives with his husband, Tymotheigh, and their adopted tiefling daughter, Sinead.

C. Town Hall. The town hall overlooks the square, and is a modest building renovated from the old mead hall. The informally-elected mayor, Gertrudis Nakatira, lives and conducts her business here, which includes overseeing town expansion, collecting taxes, and representing farmers' interests to the nearby nobility.

Gertrudis Nakatira is an elderly human who walks with spry determination. Villagers are quick to recall her kind smile and heavy sigh. Gertrudis dreams of the day when Natulog will be an independent city-state that does not have to rely on others for protection. As she enters her twilight years, she recognizes that she must pass this ambition to the next generation.

D. Town Square. The town's bistro, bakery, tavern ("Sweet Dreams"), and similar establishments can be found in Natulog's town square. The square itself hosts vendor stalls where farmers trade with

Natulog: Village of Dreams



traveling merchants and each other. A handful of stalls are open daily, but the weekly market day attracts over a dozen stalls and mobile vendors. Here, adventurers can fetch decent prices for trade goods and well-maintained martial weapons.

Those who venture to town square may encounter Giggles, a halfling swindler. Giggles is not as great a con artist as he thinks, since he can't help but chuckle when he lies. Between this and the far-fetched nature of his stories, catching Giggles at his game requires a mere DC 5 Wisdom (Insight) check.

E. Fortune Shrine. This cart-carried portable shrine pops up all around Natulog, offering services in worship to the gods of trade, industry, and luck. Donations collected by the **priestess**—a teenage half-orc named Trimeria—go to support local businesses and travelers in need.

Trimeria is open-minded, frank, and straightforward—so she has a good way with those normally too-proud-to-speak-with clergy. She keeps contact with most local businesses, and connects those in want of work to those in want of labor. Trimeria is grateful to her adopted fathers, Draemon and Tymotheigh, but left their home to start a ministry she hopes will help modernize the village.

Farmland and Forest. Various farmer families live within the open or forested land for miles around the village. Forests of various density grow scattered throughout the hills, and shelter **will-o-wisps**, **centaurs**, savage humanoids, and various other beasts. Rumor has it that hillside boulders throughout this region hide passageways to damp caves and ancient tombs of the civilization that founded the Stone-Hewn Temple.

DREAM READING

Most villagers have practical ideas about dreams—they are visions that embody one’s hopes, fears, desires, or stray thoughts. However, even in Natulog there are dreams that strike the dreamer to their core. The clergy of the Stone-Hewn Temple believe that such dreams are cryptic messages delivered by supernatural entities, both good and evil.

For 5 gp, Tymotheigh or an **acolyte** will perform a dream interpretation. The player explains which dream the character wants interpreted, such as one detailed by the GM or invented by the player. The GM can determine the dream’s origin and effect by rolling on the table below or by selecting an option.

Dream Magic?

Some worlds have a Plane of Dreams, through which the minds of dreamers travel to witness other planes of existence. The village of Natulog is written in a way that imagines its placement in such a world; the Dreaming enchantment magically connects the Stone-Hewn Temple to the Plane of Dreams. Through the Plane of Dreams, Natulog and its dreamers connect with the entire cosmos.

The significance of dreams and their magical properties vary from world to world. If the Plane of Dreams has no place in your campaign, use an explanation that fits your campaign’s cosmology. Perhaps dreams are only prophetic in nature, and the Stone-Hewn Temple somehow magnifies divination magic. Maybe the Dreaming and the faith of the Stone-Hewn Temple are age-old hoaxes, mere illusions crafted by some fey trickster? Or might the Dreaming in fact only bestow nightmares, the evil origin of which is sealed beneath the Stone-Hewn Temple? Any option that inspires you as a GM is sure to keep Natulog relevant at a variety of character levels.

Dream Interpretation Results

d8 Dream Origin Effect

1	Distant Land	Advantage on one CHA check*
2	Past	Advantage on one INT check*
3	Future	Advantage on one WIS check*
4	Ghost	Lose 1 Hit Die (does not affect hit points)**
5	Fey	Gain a bonus Hit Die (does not affect hit points)**
6	Fiend	Bonus to next damage roll equal to CHA modifier (min. 1)*
7	Celestial	Advantage on one saving throw*
8	Aberration	Disadvantage on next saving throw*

* This effect expires when used or when the character completes a long rest.

** This effect expires when the character completes a long rest.

RUMORS AND PLOT HOOKS

Though described as being near a mountain range, Natulog could also be near a dark, roiling sea or an undead-infested swamp. With a little imagination, a GM can easily connect Natulog to a pre-written adventure or use the following prompts as inspiration for his or her own adventure.

d8 Level 1–4

- 1 The **ghost** of a woman gives all children born after her death nightmares of her murder. They can see her during the day too, glaring from the shadows.
- 2 A group of **bandits** attack the Fortune Shrine at night, taking over a week’s donations. After a few days, dismembered hands appear scattered across town. A day later, the hands become **crawling claws**.
- 3 Never sleep on the streets. On misty nights, when the witches (**green hag** or **night hag**) come out to feed, they enter the dreams of vulnerable sleepers.
- 4 The faerie dragons lure children into the woods at night to play, which makes easy pickings for the witches (**green hag** or **night hag**).

d8 Level 1–4

- 5 Giggles has a “client” seeking couriers to acquire and transport supplies from a nearby town. If the PCs accept, they receive surprisingly small cargo—a putrid-smelling box. Inside is a (Tiny) death dog pup that grows to maturity as it kills.
- 6 Cultists kidnap Sinead, the priests’ youngest daughter. They plan enact a dark ritual to “unlock the dreams of her blood.”
- 7 A noble with a grudge sends a sadistic **spy** to harass Gertrudis and her supporters. Villagers can see the spy torturing his victims in their dreams.
- 8 A benefactor invites the party and the entire town to a feast—but somebody spikes the guests’ drinks with a sleeping toxin. The effect locks victims in a shared dream until someone—waking or dreaming—breaks the enchantment by confronting the culprit.

d6 Level 5–10

- 1 Nightmares reveal a **nothic horde** has escaped from underground into a nearby tomb. They uncover a cursed magic item condemned by the Stone-Hewn Temple.
- 2 Nightmares state that a “wonderland of decadence” can be found deep in a cave, behind a “barrier” of putrid slime and tentacles. In actuality, an enclave of aberrations await to feed on victims they trap.
- 3 The mayor receives an outstanding grant from the nearby nobility, and redoubles expansion efforts. A **half-red dragon orc war chief** takes notice and organizes a war band to plunder the riches.
- 4 A guild representative appears in town and “invites” a local business to join. The representative levies unfair dues and ensures compliance with a guild **assassin**.
- 5 An organization wary of magic sends a group of **magicians** and **knights** to investigate the Stone-Hewn Temple. What they find spurs them to raze the village.
- 6 Dreams reveal the location of the living long-lost royal heir: in the clutches of a **half-red dragon orc war chief**.

d6 Level 11–16

- 1 A famous priest (a fallen **planetar** or **solar** in disguise) makes a pilgrimage to the Stone-Hewn Temple, bringing relics from around the world to enact a powerful and mysterious ritual.
- 2 The mayor beseeches her famous friends to help secure Natulog’s independence.
- 3 An arrogant **archmage** visiting the Stone-Hewn Temple believes she can open a portal to the “Plane of Dreams.”
- 4 A beast that symbolizes a major deity appears in dreams and heralds the birth of a demigod.
- 5 Tymotheigh casts a ritual in the Stone-Hewn Temple that kicks up an extra-dimensional storm that threatens the region.
- 6 Natulog’s Dreaming enchantment spreads across the region. Pilgrims from across the land flood to the Stone-Hewn Temple to have their dreams interpreted.

d6 Level 17+

- 1 Cultists led by a **death knight** invade Natulog to use the Stone-Hewn temple as a catalyst for history’s most powerful demon-summoning.
- 2 A disease sweeps the land, where dreamers do not awaken. An aberration, **lich**, or similar creature feeds off their minds’ dream energy.
- 3 Nightmares become much more intense, and monsters that appear in dreams conjure themselves before their dreamers in the waking world.
- 4 In a nightmare that appears to all of Natulog, one of the cosmos’s most mighty beings—a fey, fiend, or similar creature—declares its desire to enter the waking world.
- 5 Records in a nearby ruin indicate that in ancient times mages who used dreams to time-travel threatened the fabric reality. Now a similar group appears once again.
- 6 A powerful creature or incident destroys the Stone-Hewn Temple, and with it the Dreaming enchantment. This awakens an ancient and powerful entity from its thousand-year slumber.