

OVER THE NEXT HILL

SPRINGS OF HVERFELL

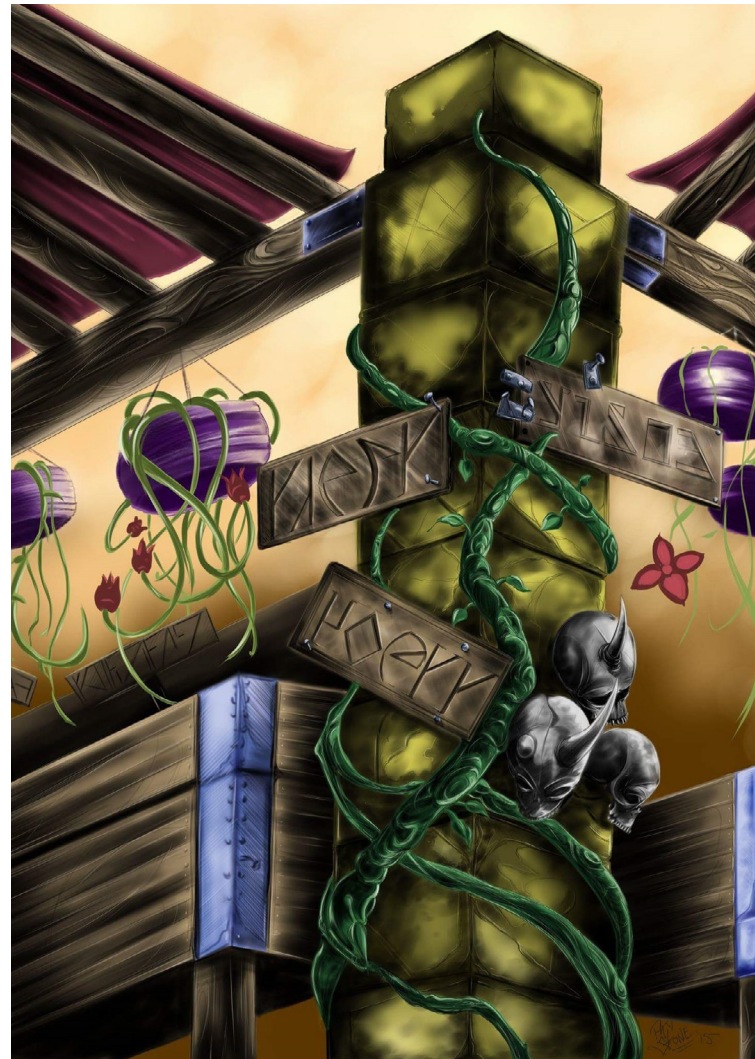
OVER THE NEXT HILL IS A MULTI-author series focusing on small settlements that can be dropped into a campaign with minimal preparation. Each article in the series presents several detailed NPCs, points of interest, and loose plot hooks that can be developed during play. This installment of the series details Hverfell, a small resort village cloaked in the wake of a hot spring-fed waterfall in the middle of the unforgiving tundra.

OVERVIEW

There is a hidden valley, shrouded from the world by a cloak of endless clouds and rolling mist where the rocks and water heal the sick, where plants and animals unlike those anywhere else in the world roam, and where the planes themselves meet and magic spews into the world. There, beside an orange-yellow waterfall of steaming blue waters is Hverfell.

GEOGRAPHY

Located in the wake of Ochre Falls, Hverfell is a hidden valley of verdant warmth in the unforgiving tundra. Constantly bathed in the warm mist of the hot-spring fed Hverflow, Hverfell enjoys a temperate climate throughout the year and boasts a vibrant ecosystem full of colorful birds, giant insects and rare reptiles. The valley's breathtaking colors—the deep blue waters of the Hverflow, the dark green of the surrounding conifers and the orange-yellow algae



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of the falls—has led some to speculate Hverfell rests on a weakened border with the elemental planes. Regardless, Hverfell enjoys its reputation as a place of wonder, and has survived mostly on the coin spent by travelers looking to enjoy the valley’s restorative springs.

The valley descends steeply and has little flat ground, pushing most of the town’s ten-score residents into multistory tenements. The valley’s steep sides and constant clouds make agriculture difficult despite its fair climate, forcing Hverfell to exclusively import food from outside the valley.

While Hverfell can be reached by traversing the winding eastern road and descending into the valley, the going is difficult for horses and oxen, and almost impossible for carts and wagons, relegating most east-west traffic to foot or donkey. As a result, most travelers and merchants take the southern road following the Hverflow out of the valley. Several miles south of town, the clouds

and mist that protect and insulate the valley settle, leaving a swath of moist, swampy forest in the summer and a frozen, hostile band of giant icicles—the Frostwall—in the winter.

SIGNIFICANT NPCs

Brita Kitore (mountain dwarf mage)

A surprisingly energetic dwarf, Brita is a renowned transmuter and one of the town’s two rival wizards. An older woman with a lot on her mind, she is known to absentmindedly change language or dialect mid-sentence. An avid naturalist, Brita researches the valley’s unique birds and insects. Her familiar is an indigenous bird: a vibrantly-plumed ochre cloud raven. She considers Leogard Brix undisciplined and impulsive, but still plays chess with him by daily correspondence left at the Misty Fir.



The Waters of Ochre Falls

Raw elemental power infuses the waters of the Hverflow, making them a powerful healing agent and potent addition to many spells. Healing potions made from the enchanted waters heal 2d6 + 4 hit points instead of the usual 2d4 + 2. A 4-oz. vial of water from the Hverflow can be used as a material component for any evocation spell and any *conjure minor elementals*, *conjure elementals*, or *planar binding* spell used to bind an elemental creature. A spell cast with this material component is treated as though it was cast in a spell slot one level higher.

Furthermore, anyone who bathes and drinks the waters during a short rest regains one spent Hit Die. Bathing in the elemental waters as part of a long rest allows a new saving throw against negative persistent conditions such as poison, disease, or blindness using the DC of the original saving throw.

Leogard Brix (human mage)

A middle-aged human male with the paunch and thinning hair-line to prove it, the conjurer Leogard spends most of his time studying the elemental forces present in the Hverflow. Each morning, he can be seen taking water, mineral and algae samples from the steaming falls. Leogard considers himself the smartest person in Hverfell and believes that he should be allowed on the town council instead of Brita. He wins most of their chess games.

Jeri Lestrade (stout halfling knight)

A stout halfling woman with a short, cropped hairstyle and a prominent scar that runs from her left ear to the back of her head, Jeri Lestrade serves as the town sheriff and head of the town militia. She is warm and boisterous by nature and makes a point of personally introducing herself to all newcomers and visitors. An experienced war veteran, Jeri is confident in her abilities to end most conflicts before they start and is not easily cowed by shows of force. She is fond of tall human women and vegetable pies.

Reginald Spitz (human noble)

A dour human man in his late 20s, Reginald inherited the Spitz Bathhouse from his late mother Dorathea over the claims of his older brother Harold and his sister Willow, a headstrong woman who hasn't been seen since stealing away with a trade caravan as a teenager. Reginald is overly cordial with guests to conceal his melancholic nature, and feels saddled by the sudden unwanted responsibility of running the bathhouse and sitting on the town council. Despite his feelings, he works hard to protect his family's interests.

Mistress Ashley Leon (human commoner)

A cunning human woman in her late 50s, Mistress Leon manages and owns the Ochre Springs Bathworks, the smaller, younger and less prestigious of the town's two resorts. Since the death of Dorathea Spitz several years ago, Mistress Leon has been angling for more land, rights and property from the Spitz family, though Reginald's commitment to familial duty makes this unlikely. She is fair, but cutthroat in her business dealings, a trait which has earned her the name "Mistress Ash" among her detractors. Ashley dresses sternly and often bears an open but cunning smile.

Andras Shetole (half-elf commoner)

A confident and personable half-elf of ambiguous gender, Andras is the master liaison of the regional commerce guild. Andras wears their hair in small interwoven braids and is fond of long tunics and gowns. As the oldest and most senior member of the town council, Andras commands considerable respect throughout town. Andras has two adoptive human children, and leaves them during the day in the care of their many assistants and tutors.



SIGNIFICANT AREAS

1. Spitz Bathhouse

A lavish manor of gilded marble and fine wood, the Spitz Bathhouse is a medicinal resort featuring mineral baths, restorative massages and perfumed ointments. As the preeminent attraction in Hverfell, the bathhouse features four private suites for long term guests seeking long-term restorative care as well as several smaller rooms for more temporary guests. It is reluctantly owned by Reginald Spitz.

2. Ochre Springs Bathworks

A large structure of gaudy pink stucco, the Ochre Springs Bathworks caters to those who may not be able to afford the luxuries of the Spitz Bathhouse. The Bathworks has two private suites, public baths, saunas and a river-fed mineral pool.

3. Elemental Observatory

The home and office of Leogard Brix, this squat, octagonal two-story building is marked by large painted arcane symbols corresponding to the four elemental planes on the north, south, east and west faces. Inside, four summoning circles have been carved into the stone, and various arcane instruments hang from the ceiling on chains for easy access. The northern entrance contains a small shop for magical goods and parlor for visitors.

4. Aviary

This large stone and masonry tower rises to a height of 60 feet and is crowned by a panned glass dome. Various colorful native birds flock to the tower's dome, and in the grasses at the tower's base, rich wild flowers and native insects flourish. This tower is the home of Brita Kiltore, though she can be found daily in the surrounding woods and nightly across the road at the Misty Fir.

5. Misty Fir Tavern

The public inn in Hverfell, the Misty Fir is famous for its bar and benches which are made from

the twisted roots of an enormous fir tree that once stood there. The inn boasts three wings of rooms and accommodations ranging from stained bedrolls and cots in a large common room, to elegant private suites.

6. Hverfell Keep

Actually a barracks and not an actual keep capable of withstanding siege, Hverfell Keep is the home of Jeri Lestrade and her two deputies. The keep also contains a small armory, a forge, and training grounds for militia.

7. Marketplace

Not much more than a series of canvas tents, the marketplace is an essential part of village life and the center of most daily activity. Located in the shadow of the Commerce Guildhall, guild enforcers ensure that would-be traders obtain the required guild seals and permissions before they conduct business.

8. Commerce Guildhall

This large red granite structure contains meeting chambers, underground storage vaults, a large guild hall and adjoining mess as well as private rooms for guild members. A large inner courtyard and outer garden provide relaxation and respite for traders and guild members.

9. Agricultural Fields and Aquaculture Pond

Hverfell's fields are owned by the town council. Its workers are sharecroppers who work the land in exchange for a portion of the proceeds and a place to live. Though native fish tend to avoid the warm waters near Ochre Falls, the sharecroppers maintain an aquaculture pond of imported tropical sunfish and perch.

10. Sharecroppers' Cabin

This dirty, thatch-roofed communal living space serves as the home for the dozen or so sharecroppers who work the nearby fields and ponds as well as seasonal lumber workers and their families.

PLOT HOOKS AND RUMORS

Level 1–4 (1d8)

1. A humanoid body, boiled beyond recognition, rolls over the falls. It rises as a **revenant** and stalks the town at night, muttering “Brix... Brix...”
2. A loud bang and plume of smoke comes from the Elemental Observatory, brought on by a pair of **steam mephits**.
3. According to Brita Kiltore, the venom from the valley’s **giant wasps** can be distilled and mixed into a base of Hverflow water to create powerful magic potions.
4. A recent caravan came upon a perfect ice carving of a beautiful youth in the depths of the Frostwall south of town.
5. Supposedly, the original dwarven expedition found a cave under Ochre Falls, full of **lizardfolk** and ruled by a **lizardfolk queen**.
6. A teenage prince visiting the Spitz Bathhouse on vacation has emerged as a girl. She’s pleased, but her advisors are distraught.
7. One of Andras Shetole’s children has gone missing and there’s a huge reward for his return. Meanwhile, a guard atop the eastern watchtower has been killed by a mated pair of **perytors** who have taken the eastern watch tower as their roost.
8. An old comrade of Jeri Lestrade has come to town, followed by a **hobgoblin warlord**’s army which threatens to take the valley by force.

Level 11–16 (1d6)

1. An **archmage** creates a gate across the Hverflow and orders a pair of **stone golems** to guard it, leaving Ochre Falls suddenly dry.
2. A whirlpool forms at the base of the falls, creating a portal to a noble **marid**’s domain on the Elemental Plane of Water.
3. An **adult red dragon** takes up residence in the caves under Hverfell, causing earthquakes that collapse several buildings in town. A **lizardfolk** emissary comes to town, begging for aid.
4. All of the waters in the Ochre Springs Bathworks suddenly turn to blood. That same day, a visiting alchemist stumbles out of the Spitz Bathhouse claiming to have discovered the secret to eternal life. Not long after, an **assassin** threatens her life.
5. Willow Spitz, actually a **death slaad** in disguise, returns home.
6. New mineral calculations suggest that the source of the Hverflow may be lined in precious jewels, sparking a “gem rush” in the region.