

RAGING SWAN PRESS

GM'S MISCELLANY:
VILLAGE BACKDROPS II



5E



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GM'S MISCELLANY: VILLAGE BACKDROP II (5E)

Village Backdrops are short, richly detailed supplements that each present a single village ready to insert into almost any home campaign. Perfect for use as a waystop on the road to adventure, as an adventure site themselves or a PC's home, Village Backdrops present the details so the busy GM can focus on crafting exciting, compelling adventures. This GM's Miscellany collects together the second twelve 5e compatible Village Backdrops, along with bonus, material, designed to help you craft your own villages!

Designed for use with the 5th edition of the world's most popular roleplaying game.

Design: John Bennett, Creighton Broadhurst, Jeff Gomez, Steve Hood, Greg Marks, Jacob Trier, Amber Underwood and Mike Welham

Development: Creighton Broadhurst and Thilo Graf

Art: Earl Geier, William McAusland, Matt Morrow, Tommi Salama, Dean Spencer, Jeff Ward and Maciej Zagorski (The Forge Studios). Some artwork copyright William McAusland, used with permission. Some artwork © 2016 Earl Geier, used with permission. All rights reserved.

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You hold in your hands Raging Swan Press's second (!) *GM's Miscellany: Village Backdrop* designed to be compatible with the 5th edition of the world's most popular roleplaying game!

Wow.

That means, we've published about 24 5e compatible villages over the last year or so! It's funny, but in the daily grind of design and development I didn't really think

about it. Now—faced with this reality—I'm jolly chuffed.

Of course, we've published more villages for the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game as we've been at it longer. I'm thinking about a *Village Backdrop* hardback for Pathfinder in 2018 and I'd love to follow it up with a 5e hardback. Just 12 villages left to go!

But enough about us. Do you have a favourite village? Which have you used in your campaign? I'd be fascinated to know which villages have particularly worked for you (and which haven't). You can drop me a line at the email address below or leave a comment at ragingswan.com under the relevant village(s). Your comments will help shape our upcoming release schedule so please do get in touch.

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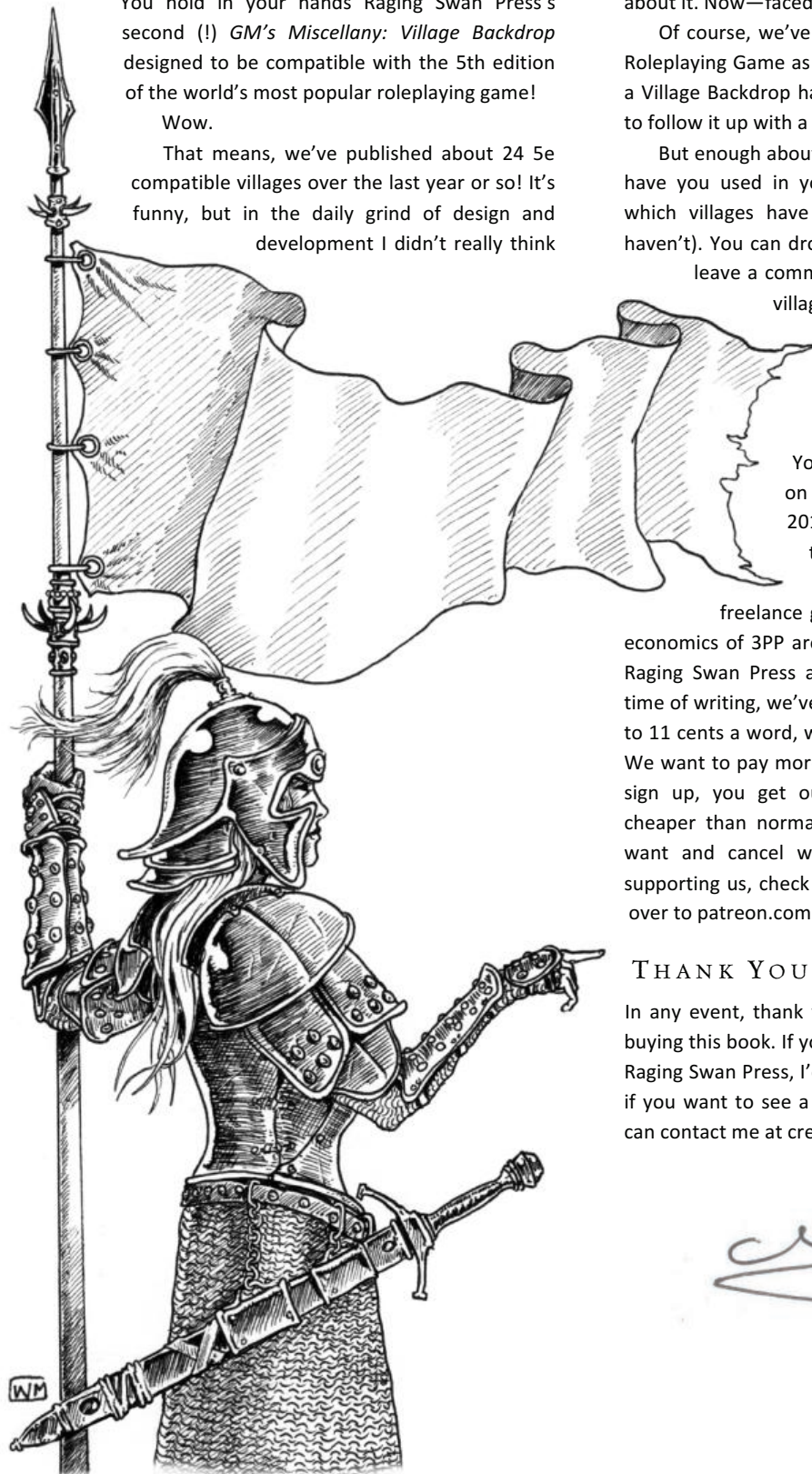
You might be aware Raging Swan Press is now on Patreon. We signed up at the start of April 2015, and it's going rather marvellously. The

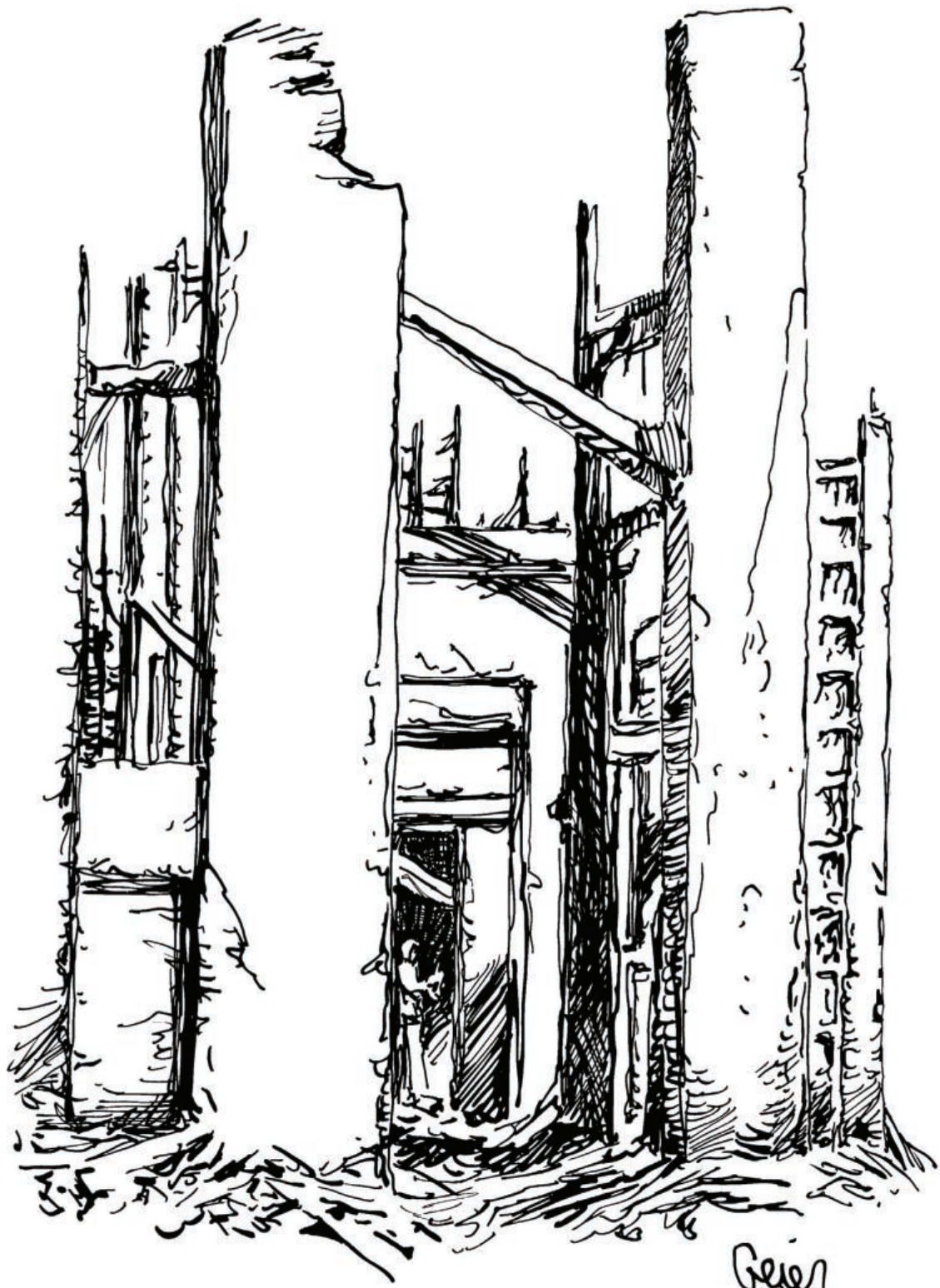
thrust of our Patreon campaign is to be able to afford better rates of pay for our

freelance game designers. As I'm sure you know, the economics of 3PP are notoriously tight, but Patreon gives us at Raging Swan Press a way to increase our freelancer rates. At time of writing, we've already massively increased our word rate to 11 cents a word, which gives me a warm, fuzzy feeling inside. We want to pay more, but to do that we need your help! If you sign up, you get our supplements earlier than normal and cheaper than normal. Even better, you can pledge what you want and cancel when you want. If you are interested in supporting us, check out patreon.com/ragingswanpress or head over to patreon.com and search for Raging Swan!

THANK YOU!

In any event, thank you for supporting Raging Swan Press and buying this book. If you've got any comments or questions about Raging Swan Press, I'd love to hear from you. (Also, let me know if you want to see a *Village Backdrop* hardback next year). You can contact me at creighton@ragingswan.com.





Geen
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BYRNFORT

Words Amber Underwood **Cartography** Maciej Zagorski

At the edge of the Barainwood lies the woodcutter's village of Byrnfort. Under threat from massive, vicious beasts and shadowy horrors emerging from the forest, the villagers put their faith in the Green Men, a druidic cult promising protection from the forest's dangers. Now valuable goods flow from Byrnfort and attacks have lessened, but the village's future remains uncertain. The cult and the local militia, the Brands, are increasingly at odds, and while prospects seem bright, there are costs to Byrnfort's prosperity. The villagers strive to protect their secrets and their way of life from prying eyes, but this grows ever more difficult as the village's prosperity increases.

BYRNFORT AT A GLANCE

Ruler Evryiel Gliede
Government Overlord
Population 85 (34 humans, 24 elves, 27 half-elves)
Alignments N, NE, NG
Languages Common, Elven
Resources & Industry Alchemy, logging

Bristling sharp stakes and thick timber walls encircle the village of Byrnfort. Compared to the ancient trees of the Barainwood looming over it, the village is hunched and small, its houses clustered close together like fearful animals seeking shelter. The stout village gates are normally kept shut; the local militia, the Brands, armed with brightly burning torches and spears, keep careful watch from its towers. Monstrous beasts lurk in the shadows of the forest, and it is whispered the dead themselves rise from their graves to protect the forest's heart.

Byrnfort is more of a fortification than a settlement, but the freshly cut tree stumps and growing farms indicate the village is beginning to prosper despite the ever-present dangers. Seasoned timbers fill storage sheds, and the trading post is stocked with goods derived from the forest's bounty. Tension is rising in the village, however. An increasingly popular cult, the Green Men, is at odds with the Brands, and Byrnfort's future hangs in the balance.

VILLAGERS

Appearance The people of Byrnfort are tall and well-muscled despite their typically slim builds. The elven and human population have intermingled for years, and most of the citizens show signs of that heritage, often possessing small features or differences more common to the other race.

Dress Sturdy, practical leather and fur clothing are common among the villagers. Most of the populace prominently display necklaces, bracelets or amulets made of twisted green vines. Members of the Brands, bear leather badges burned with the image of a torch.

Nomenclature *male* Mieken, Sanrial; *female* Evryiel, Lesi; *family* Gliede, Lieder, VyeneL.



VILLAGE LORE

A PC may know something about Byrnfort, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

DC 10: Byrnfort is a fortified village standing on the edge of the Barainwood. The forest is thick with monsters, and the citizens distrust outsiders. It exists only for the lumber it exports.

DC 15: Sapwood, a rare wood found around Byrnfort, is its most valued export. The town's woodcutters, the Green Men, are exceptionally good at retrieving it from the deadly forest.

DC 20: The Green Men are a cult and practically worship the Barainwood. They perform strange rituals and only harvest certain trees. Other woodcutters in the region are driven away with dire threats. Some disappear.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Byrnfort, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

D6	RUMOUR
1	Vicious animals and undead prowl in the shade of the Barainwood, preying on anyone foolish enough to enter the forest. Many people have gone missing in its depths, over the years.
2	Mieken Charrel, the village alchemist, frequently deals with dwarves. They seek him out for his alchemical charcoals, since there's no better forge fuel.
3	The rare wood harvested from the surrounding forest, sapwood, is said to have precious magical and alchemical properties.
4	The Green Men, a secretive druidic cult, dominates Byrnfort. Its members are all woodcutters living in the village.
5*	Evryiel uses her authority over the Brands to keep control of Byrnfort, preventing the people from electing their popular choice, Sanrial.
6*	The villagers practice necromantic rites, filling the woods with zombies and making pacts with the dead.

*False rumour

NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than hard working peasants. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

Evryiel Gliede (location 7; NG female elf ranger 6) Captain of the Brands, Evryiel does her best to keep the peace and defend the village. She has been in Byrnfort longer than most, and is fully aware of the forest's dangers.

Godre Wainwright (location 8; N male human **commoner**) Godre came to Byrnfort, searching for work as a woodcutter. After being shunned by the Green Men, he turned to farming (but plots his revenge).

Lesi Vyenei (location 1; NG female elf **druid**) Far friendlier than the other villagers, Lesi runs the Stout Draught and is a devoted member of the Green Men.

Mieken Charrel (location 3; N male human **mage**) Specialising in creating alchemical charcoals, Mieken settled in Byrnfort to secure supply of its special woods.

Sanrial Lieder (location 6; NE male half-elf ranger 5) Sanrial leads the Green Men, and is a former member of the Brands.

Serie (location 5; CN female human **spy**) A thief in trouble with the Brands, Serie has been given asylum by the Green Men in exchange for her assistance in certain rituals

Vigilant Bramble (location 5; NE ghost dryad druid 11) Vigilant Bramble died centuries ago, but continues to protect the Barainwoods with single-minded desperation. Her existence is known only to the Green Men.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of the village comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **The Stout Draught:** The welcoming Stout Draught is the local tavern. It serves a popular local drink—sapbrew.
2. **Mieken's:** The alchemist Mieken owns this trading post and sells to both visiting merchants and the other villagers. Here can be had all his unique alchemical wares.
3. **The Charhouse:** Mieken's home is luxurious compared to most of Byrnfort. The smell of smoke is strong here.
4. **Hearth Tree:** Here stands a newly planted sapling, surrounded by a circle of stones. The sapling is sacred to the Green Men.
5. **Sanrial's Home:** Sanrial is rarely at home, these days. However, Serie is taking refuge in the cellar.
6. **Old Fort:** Old Fort is the largest building in the village, one of its first buildings and the most defensible position. Most of the time it serves as a meeting hall.
7. **Evryiel's Home:** Evryiel's home is spacious and militant. It serves as the Brand's unofficial headquarters.
8. **Godre's Farmhouse:** Here lives (and plots) Godre Wainright.



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: THE STOUT DRAUGHT

The Stout Draught is Byrnfort's only inn, and it's here most villagers relax after a hard day's work. While rustic, it makes that characteristic charming and comfortable, putting care and effort into even its roughest aspects. The most popular drink drunk here is sapbrew, a sweet, thick mead-style drink fermented from local sap. Few of the villagers drink anything else.

Lesi Vyenel (NG female elf **druid**) runs the inn cheerfully and tirelessly, serving the Brands, Green Men and visiting merchants or adventurers with a smile and welcoming word. Despite her even hand and friendliness, Lesi is a member of the Green Men and politely discourages those prying into the cult. However, she always keeps an eye open for potential recruits and might sound out seemingly interested or suitable visitors. To those she deems a threat, she is a clever and dangerous enemy.

- **Food & Drink** meal (mushroom and rabbit stew) 2 sp, ale 4 cp, sapbrew 5 cp, wine (pitcher) 1 sp.
- **Accommodation** small, sparsely furnished single room 5 sp.

2: MIEKEN'S

This store is owned by the alchemist, Mieken (N male human **mage**), who built the post for his business dealings with visiting merchants. Over time, though, he has stocked it with goods of interest to the villagers, and now turns a tidy profit selling essentials and small luxuries.

Mieken sells his specialist alchemical wares here. (See the sidebar for information about his unique items). As word spreads of his inventions, demand is drastically increasing; many smiths, artists and apothecaries now seek out his products and his growing requirements for raw materials could soon spark conflict between the Green Men and Vigilant Bramble.

3: THE CHARHOUSE

Smoke perpetually rises from Mieken's (N male human **mage**) home and the circular hut behind it, which he uses as a laboratory. A fine building, constructed entirely of stone and possessing an enormous chimney, the house is much grander than any other in the village and is furnished appropriately. Mieken's home is an island of wealth and luxury, even if it reeks of his trade.

An alchemist whose speciality is charcoal, Mieken moved to Byrnfort in pursuit of rare woods once the Green Men began producing a reliable supply. While he is not a cult member, they profit from their dealings with him and they appreciate minds his own business. In pursuit of his craft, Mieken has realized sapwood has several qualities he has only seen in wood associated with magical, often animate plants; this makes him

wonder about the nature of the Green Men and the wood they cut, even if he is incredibly reluctant to say anything about it.

4: HEARTH TREE

At Byrnfort's centre stands a small mound encircled by a ring of stones. A sapling no more than a foot tall grows within the ring, its green leaves unusually bright and eye-catching. The Green Men planted this tree and gave it its name only a few years ago. They treat it with reverence and use it as a gathering place for meetings and sacred rites. It is guarded jealously; any stranger approaching it is firmly turned away.

5: SANRIAL'S HOME

Sanrial Lieder's (NE male half-elf ranger 5) home is not much different from the houses surrounding it, save for being slightly larger. It is a sturdy construction of wattle and daub, roofed with thatch and equipped with a small chimney. Inside it is partitioned into two rooms, one containing the hearth and kitchen, the other a living area suitable for guests and relaxation. These days though, Sanrial is rarely home.

The Green Men use Sanrial's large cellar as a covert meeting place. Serie (CN female human **spy**) hides here, taking refuge with the Green Men after being caught stealing repeatedly from the village. The Green Men agreed to overlook her crimes if she assist them in their rituals, and she does, but she can't remember how. She is beginning to have gaps in her memories even outside the rituals, and suspects the deal she struck was poor. The gaps in Serie's memories are caused by Vigilant

ALCHEMICAL ITEMS

Mieken has invented the following new alchemical:

Artisan Charcoal (Price: 5 sp; Weight: —): Available in a rainbow of colours, this soft stick of coal leaves bright marks on any surface, and is difficult to remove. It takes an hour of work to remove it by hand with normal methods. However, the *erase* spell removes it easily.

Byrncoal (Price: 1 gp; Weight: 20 lbs.): This charcoal burns bright and long, and is prized by smiths.

Voidcoal (Price: 50 gp; Weight: —): Dull grey and rock-hard, voidcoal can be used (as a move action) to neatly erase normal ink, chalk, artisan charcoal or similar substances.

In addition, it has drawing properties and can be used to combat poison. If a poisoned character ingests voidcoal immediately after being poisoned the character can make another saving throw to remove the poison condition. A failed save has no (additional) detrimental effect. A character ingesting voidcoal gains one level of exhaustion for one hour, no matter the result of the second saving throw.

Bramble, who possesses her when she needs a body to guide or assist the Green Men in their rituals. She is often hidden nearby, working to erode Serie's unconscious defences so she can eventually possess the thief in a more complete and enduring manner. Serie is waiting for a distraction or opportunity that would allow her to escape Byrnfort.

6: OLD FORT

The oldest building in Byrnfort, the Old Fort is a defensible structure built of hefty stone bricks and stout timbers. It is as much a barracks as a manor, and over the years has been repeatedly expanded and altered. Sanrial Lieder (NE male half-elf ranger 5) has taken up residence in Old Fort's living quarters and frequently dispenses advice to the villagers in the main hall. Other times he occupies himself with reading or the business of running Byrnfort.

7: EVRYIEL'S HOME

Built in the older part of the village, Evryiel Gliede's (NG female elf ranger 6) home is sparsely furnished, containing only the necessities she needs to live and lead the Brands. A long table takes up much of her space, and is used by the Brands when they gather to discuss the state of the militia and the village in general. While they once met in Old Fort, Evryiel's home has become their unofficial headquarters in recent years.

Evryiel has little desire to govern Byrnfort, but she does want to protect it from the monsters lurking in Barainwood. She distrusts the Green Men. She dislikes Sanrial and is distrustful of how the Green Men elude the dangers of Barainwood, but knows the village's opinion is against her. She struggles to maintain control of Byrnfort, and knows she is slipping despite her best efforts.

8: GODRE'S FARMHOUSE

This dingy, thatch-roofed building is home to Godre Wainwright (N male human **commoner**) a failed carpenter and bitter man. Godre came to Byrnfort to join the Green Men, but was deemed unsuitable for membership. He is a stubborn man and tried to work the woods anyway. However, after a poisoning and beating, he gave up. Now he works for as a farmhand for one of Byrnfort's farmers. He is too stubborn to leave, and plots to join the Brands and have his revenge on the Green Men.

BARAINWOOD

The Barainwood is a vast, old forest once abundant with magical plant life tended by a grove of dryads who were more than guardians, they were gardeners. Their greatest treasure was their own grove and their sapwood trees. All of this is now lost to time. Only Vigilant Bramble remembers now, and even she has begun to forget the elder days.

Vigilant Bramble haunts the forest and viciously protects the faded glory of her ancient home. With her druidic magic, she enscrolls the beasts prowling the forest to hunt down anyone entering her realm. She also dedicates herself to the remaining handful of magical plants, chief among them a massive elder yellow musk creeper she feeds living creatures. With the Green Men's help, she tends the sapwood trees and ensures their continued existence, even as she prunes away the weaker and older trees.



LIFE IN BYRNFORT

The surrounding forest dominates life in Byrnfort. With the exceptions of the depredations of forest predators, the village is generally a peaceful place. However, Mieken's growing commercial success is leading to growing tensions between those advocating increased logging and those counselling against such a rash act.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

The primary trade in Byrnfort is woodcutting, and one of its most prized exports is a kind of tree known as sapwood. The colouring of sapwood is a warm, deep ochre, and its sap is thick and sugary, but the wood itself is excellent for use in magical items and alchemical goods. In addition, Mieken brews potions and create alchemical substances that sell well outside Byrnfort. Mieken's alchemical charcoals are particularly sought out.

LAW & ORDER

Under Evryiel's direction, the Brands enforce the law in Byrnfort. However, the villagers weigh in and take matters into their own hands increasingly often, with Sanrial's guidance. In addition, Sanrial has proven more adept and interested in the administrative work that governing a village creates, and has consequently gained more influence over Byrnfort.

THE GREEN MEN

The Green Men have agreed a pact with Vigilant Bramble. Broached by Sanrial, in exchange for helping protect the forest and performing certain rites, he and his followers may harvest certain trees. Few trees are allowed to the Green Men, though, because the rare sapwood they seek is the lingering remnants of the groves that once birthed Vigilant Bramble's sisters. She parts with each tree only with great reluctance and only those trees dying, crowding out others or those not part of the mystic groves.

The Green Men's pact protects them from the forest's dangers. Vigilant Bramble holds back the beasts and the corpses animated by the elder yellow creeper from anyone bearing the green vine amulets that are the cult's symbol. She is wary and suspicious of any she doesn't recognise, often testing new members of the cult or ferreting out imposters. In exchange, the Green Men aid her in attempting to restore the Barainwood's magic. Thus, they practice strange rituals reflecting Vigilant Bramble's past and help her maintain her ghostly ties to the woods. Finally, they give up their bodies to the yellow musk creeper when they die so that they can protect the forest even after death.

EVENTS

While the PCs are in Byrnfort, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

D6	EVENT
1	Thick, braided grey and green smoke bursts from Mieken's laboratory. Shortly thereafter he emerges with a new batch of charcoal.
2	A horn sounds as a few of the Brands rush out of the forest, pursued by a monstrous dire boar.
3	Serie enters the Stout Draught with a blank look on her face, and demands the Green Men follow her into the forest. She remembers nothing of this later.
4	Lesi broaches a new cask of sapbrew and offers a free round to everyone nearby.
5	The Brands are practising archery outside the walls under Evryiel's supervision, while a few Green Men watch nearby, muttering darkly.
6	A meeting is held in Old Fort to deal with escalation of violation and bad-blood between two villagers, with Sanrial presiding.

RITES

While the PCs are in Byrnfort, they may encounter the Green Men performing one or more rites, though they may not be allowed to observe all the details, or understand them if they do. Choose or determine randomly:

D6	EVENT
1	One of the Green Men is dying, and he is led into the woods and given to the yellow musk creeper so his body can nourish and protect the forest.
2	The Green Men gather around the Hearth Tree and tend to it with expensive alchemical compounds, attempting to prompt the birth of a new dryad.
3	At the edge of the Barainwoods, the Green Men perform a series of violent pantomimes ending with the felling of a tree. This is a re-enactment of the Vigilant Bramble's death which helps her maintain her ghostly existence.
4	Serie sits beneath the Hearth Tree and speaks Druidic in a monotone while the Green Men respond. Serie is possessed by the ghost dryad, and remembers nothing after the ghost leaves her.
5	A sapwood log is brought back to Byrnfort, carried on the shoulders of six Green Men who sing a slow, sombre song.
6	A new member is inducted into the Green Men and given an amulet of green vines and a cloak of leaves, before being sent alone into the forest.

DAWNMARSH

Words David N. Ross **Cartography** Maciej Zagorski

Dawnmarsh is that rare breed of lizardfolk village that welcomes trade, offering secret regenerative elixirs, techniques to tame riding lizards, poisons of the marshes and fleet guides to navigate the hazardous terrain. Cultures clash among the stilted houses on the Dawnmarsh swampy islands—here, trade is useful but the very presence of foreign traders sparks tension with neighbouring tribes and cautious locals. Adventurers can find useful allies in innkeepers and lizardfolk youths who hear much as well as an elderly visionary. The sun-worshipping lizardfolk have begun to abandon traditions deemed vile by the visiting traders, but even partial betrayal of the old ways has given a foothold to lizardfolk warmongers interested in transforming Dawnmarsh from a place of healing to a place of war.

DAWNMARSH AT A GLANCE

Ruler: Lightkeeper Kassarin the Wise

Government: Magical

Alignments: NG, N

Population: 144 (126 lizardfolk, 8 humans, 4 elves, 3 half-orcs, 2 halflings, 1 half-elf)

Notable Folk: Huntmaster Esskavril the Silent (location 3), Inskaraz (location 2), Second Lightkeeper Vassessar (location 6), Storyteller Ssimneer (location 8)

Languages: Common, Draconic

Resources & Industry: Furs, guides, medicines, mounts

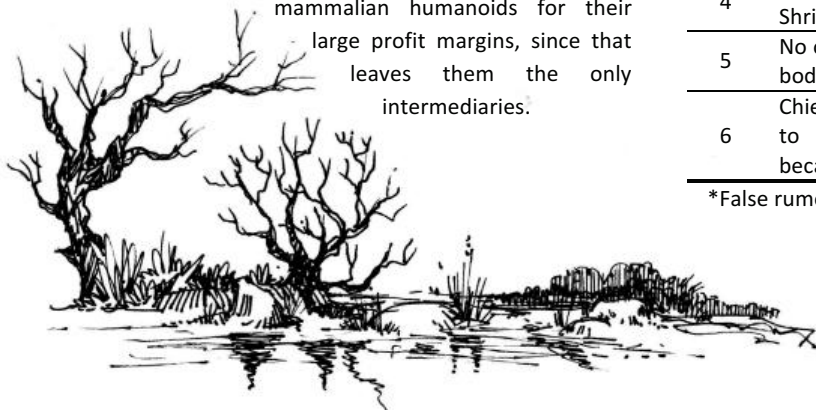
Built centuries ago where the Sunsilver River and Dragonhorn River meet, Dawnmarsh serves as a vital trade hub between lizardfolk of the Great Marsh and outsiders. Its famous Dawn Shrine was founded after a lizardfolk druid serving the sun deity freed the village by slaying the legendary spirit naga Lissendia. Since then, the shrine's Lightkeepers have gradually expanded Dawnmarsh's trade network. Ninety years ago, Lightkeeper Salkessk began seeking trade with non-lizardfolk outside the Great Marsh. Most lizardfolk distrust other humanoids, but Dawnmarshers mostly try to be welcoming. Some lizardfolk are only comfortable trading with outsiders in a glade just outside of Dawnmarsh. They see welcoming non-lizardfolk into Dawnmarsh as sacrilege against the Dawn Shrine. Trade has brought whispers of violent backlash from other lizardfolk, undead awoken by foreign burial rites and rising cultural tensions.

VILLAGE LORE

A PC may know something about Dawnmarsh, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check

DC 10: Dawnmarsh is an unusually open lizardfolk village at the edge of the Great Marsh. It's known for exclusive lizardfolk wares like regenerative tonics brewed at the sacred Dawn Shrine and trained riding lizards.

DC 15: Dawnmarshers depend on other lizardfolk's fear of mammalian humanoids for their large profit margins, since that leaves them the only intermediaries.



DC 20: Some lizardfolk believe Lightkeeper Kassarin the Wise has compromised religious tradition to satisfy traders. The traditionalists wish to violently expel foreigners.

VILLAGERS

Appearance: Dawnmarshers lizardfolk average of six to seven feet tall but are often wiry, weighing 190 to 225 pounds. The most common scale colours are deep green and dark brown.

Dress: Dawnmarsher males display culture and wealth with colourful scale-paint and bright fabrics. They wear light, airy fabrics in the day—normally a decorative scarf in summer—and heavily layered furs at night. Females wear similar clothing, but tend toward earthy colours. Dawnmarshers who deviate from tradition stand out, but don't cause fuss. Non-lizardfolk mostly wear voluminous clothing to ward off biting insects.

Nomenclature: Most lizardfolk names are not gender-specific. They do not use surnames but record lineage with recurring sounds within names. *examples* Amarress, Arrizkil, Kalriss, Makkil, Rizgar, Ssemkir, Ynnraz

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Dawnmarsh, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

D6 RUMOUR

D6	RUMOUR
1	Disaffected youth have been swayed by the speeches of Sesskar the Great, chief of the Dragon Fang tribe.
2	The Riverrunner Company has a campsite for the upcoming Solstice Festival despite lizardfolk who say it's unsafe outside the village at night. The Riverrunners say Dawnmarshers want to stop them trading with the other lizardfolk.
3*	The Dawnmarshers' sun goddess is secretly a black dragon demanding offerings of treasure stolen from visitors or sacrifices of "lost" humanoid traders.
4	A soggy humanoid has been seen watching the Dawn Shrine from a hiding-spot on the southern river bank.
5	No one wants to die in Dawnmarsh. Visitors fear their bodies will be eaten; lizardfolk fear theirs won't be.
6	Chief storyteller Simneer has been using technicalities to obstruct Inskaraz's and Aurelian's marriage because he's bitter at their happiness.

*False rumour

NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

Most of Dawnmarsh comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **Market Circle:** Here, people of all kinds trade at the encouragement of Askivirin, the apprentice Storyteller. It is the best place to find a deal on a wide variety of lizardfolk goods as well as whatever goods traders have brought in from beyond the Great Marsh.
2. **The Basking Butterfly:** Dawnmarsh's only tavern is a magnet for unconventional lizardfolk and traders. It is also the only inn with private rooms and beds in the human style. These amenities are arranged by its human proprietor Aurelian, who co-owns the inn with his lizardfolk husband-to-be Inskaraz.
3. **House of Hunters:** The House of Hunters is home to lizardfolk who hunt, trap or fish for a living. They offer their services as guides and sell trained lizard mounts to trusted clients (with Huntmaster Esskavril's approval).
4. **House of Snakes:** The home of Sakaril the Poisoner is popular with those interested in alchemy as well as hunters and warriors who understand the usefulness of poison. Many snakes also dwell therein.
5. **Greatmarsh Lodge:** Greatmarsh Lodge, is much older than the Basking Butterfly and offers traditional lizardfolk meals and lodgings. It is popular with visiting lizardfolk and with traders who can't afford the Basking Butterfly. Its matron is Ssarkisk.
6. **Sunrise House:** The Lightkeeper priests as well as the chief Storyteller and his apprentices share this house, along with their extended families. Second Lightkeeper Vassessar sell elixirs brewed using ancient recipes.
7. **Dawn Shrine:** The holiest place in Dawnmarsh, and for a great distance around, the Dawn Shrine is dedicated to the sun and to the lizardfolk sun deity. It is a place of rest, warmth and healing for the lizardfolk and for all respectful petitioners. It is also the effective seat of government and judgement for the small settlement. The priests sell divine scrolls, potions and blessings of the sun. The high priest is Lightkeeper Kassarin the Wise.
8. **Portage Glade:** The Portage Glade offers an isolated place for lizardfolk traders from the surrounding tribes who are uncomfortable trading directly with mammalian foreigners. Storyteller Ssimneer keeps an eye on Dawnmarsh youths who do much of the selling.



LIFE IN DAWNMARSH

Dawnmarsh's traditional structures are wooden buildings lifted on stilts above their islands to avoid periodic flooding. Most have cooking fires below and are home to multiple related families. Dawnmarshers bask in the sun on roofs and in small yards behind their houses for 20 minutes to an hour at a time in the mornings and evenings, then go about their daily tasks. Under the intense mid-afternoon sun, only mammals linger outdoors. Dawnmarshers congregate in close quarters or around fires for warmth after sunset, but aren't active for long. If they must do business at night, lizardfolk speak softly, punctuating statements with friendly pats on the arm or two-handed hand-shakes. Priests and storytellers discourage Dawnmarshers from commingling with non-lizardfolk beyond business. Only a few foreign merchants have proven respectful and helpful enough to be given permanent residence.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Dawnmarshers trade with humans, elves and other non-lizardfolk for good metalwork and other things not easily found in the marsh. In exchange, they offer furs, lizard mounts, potent traditional medicines and lizardfolk guides for those interested in exploring the marsh's mysteries. Trade with lizardfolk often takes place in quiet areas just outside the village like the Portage Glade. This is for the comfort of lizardfolk traders who fear or resent humans but recognize the value of human crafts.

LAW & ORDER

Dawnmarshers rely upon the Lightkeeper priests of the Dawn Shrine to settle formal disputes. When serious crimes are alleged or when someone openly threatens the local peace, Dawnmarsh's warriors disarm all involved. Most punishments are simple restitution, but those who are a danger to the community or who can't keep the peace are exiled.

CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS

Dawnmarsh is built around the Dawn Shrine, an important religious site for the lizardfolk sun deity. Lizardfolk can directly feel how the sun's warmth makes them feel stronger and more alive, drawing them easily to its worship. The shrine hosts minor ceremonies to greet the sun every morning as it creeps over the eastern horizon. In addition, there are major festivals at the summer and winter solstices. This is the only time non-Dawnmarsher lizardfolk enter the village in large numbers, and accommodations are reserved exclusively for lizardfolk celebrants. A few curious foreign traders try despite Dawnmarsher pressure to mingle at these festivities in hopes of expanding their network of lizardfolk contacts.

VILLAGE DRESSING

Use this table to generate the minor sights and sounds the PCs experience as they move about Dawnmarsh.

D12 DRESSING/EVENT

1	Three lizardfolk wearing dark leather astride giant lizards ford the river into Dawnmarsh. They carry cleaned deer carcasses. Once the hunters dismount, the lizards wander back across the river.
2	Several small lizardfolk children bask sleepily in the sun, on the back of a dozing horse-sized lizard. One motionless child curiously watches the PCs.
3	A young human woman gives a lizardfolk child bacon and asks the little one to show her where the "other" lizardfolk trade. An older lizardfolk sweeps up the child before the child can answer.
4	A lizardfolk drummer narrates a tense tale to rapt listeners. The expressive tone conveys high drama even for those who don't speak Draconic.
5	An old lizardfolk tells younger lizardfolk scary stories about how dead lizardfolk who aren't properly eaten become vengeful undead.
6	A half-orc complains loudly that insects and stirges never bite lizardfolk.
7	A baby shocker lizard rides on the shoulder of a painted lizardfolk warrior. It shocks her when it hears an excited shout elsewhere in the village, making her yelp and swear in Draconic before soothing it.
8	Dwarves berate lizardfolk for asking high fur prices; the lizardfolk protest the hunters have had few catches recently.
9	An elderly lizardfolk complains about demanding visitors who bury their dead like filth.
10	Two warriors wearing black and silver scale-paint and carrying bone-toothed morningstars menace a couple of gnomes, calling them unworthy of Dawnmarsh.
11	A half-orc woman rides a giant lizard unsteadily along the far riverbank, a mounted lizardfolk behind her shouting ways for her to correct her technique.
12	A lizardfolk warrior offers a wineskin to an elf, asking about her homeland, only to take it back and walk off when a yellow-sashed priest comes into sight.



THE SURROUNDING LOCALITY

Dawnmarsh sits on three connected islands in the Dawnmarsh Waters, at the confluence of two lazy, shallow rivers. The rivers are called the Sunsilver (running west and south) and the Dragonhorn (running north and east). The village is less than two days' travel from the western edge of the Great Marsh. The path is made easier by wooden causeways across the most treacherous of the bogs and quicksand. The path cuts through paddies where Dawnmarshers grow rice to make alcohol. More rice paddies extend north of the village, while to south lie low hills among deep bogs where Dawnmarsh's hunters breed tame giant lizards.

East of the village sprawl a low, flat heath where Dawnmarshers grow flax for fabric. The edge of the heath has recently been converted to a makeshift graveyard as the villagers have ceased to cannibalize their dead; this cannibalism has always been considered natural and respectful among the lizardfolk, but now only the most prestigious dead are given this honour. Not all the buried lizardfolk dead rest well in the face of such sacrilege. Lizardfolk ghouls and ghosts have begun to attack those who linger near the field at night.

Beyond the ordered rows of rice paddies, strangely aggressive shambling mounds lurk amidst stone ruins and dense hedgerows. These are rumoured to be signs of a spirit naga or young black dragon working dark magic. In truth, it is the lair of crocodile-headed Garsuthramon (LE male rakshasa), who uses his shape changing ability to appear as a visiting diplomat reformer. He works to convinced the lizardfolk not to eat their dead (as was their ancient custom) and now visits in the guise of various lizardfolk advocating abandoning other traditions (like

those against necromancy and unprovoked raids) to promote rootless selfishness he can manipulate to his own advantage.

Farther to the south, deeper water and quicksand hold oozes and stirges that do little to bother lizardfolk. More dangerous harpies, hags and will-o'-wisps also lurk there, taking advantage of the uneven terrain to hide their lairs. Here also grow magical sunflowers used in Dawnmarsh's famous regenerative remedies.

Deeper in the Great Marsh are more isolationist lizardfolk tribes who largely think Dawnmarshers are odd but good hosts. However, a new tribe is rising to prominence. Called the Lizardfolk of the Dragon Fang, they follow the aggressive Sesskarr the Great as he calls for lizardfolk unity and a rejection of all peaceful contact with foreigners. The Great Marsh lizardfolk also compete with aggressive boggards for resources.

LIZARDFOLK OF THE DRAGON FANG

Deep in the heart of a forbidding swamp, the lizardfolk of the Dragon Fang tribe beat the drums of war. Led by Sesskarr the Great, a mighty and charismatic lizard king with a tyrant's heart and a black dragon's blood, the Dragon Fang tribe is aggressively expanding beyond their traditional tribal boundaries. Groups of kobolds and troglodytes are all said to have fallen before Sesskarr's great trident and now—even more ominously—his reptilian gaze has shifted to the surrounding towns and villages.

Lizardfolk of the Dragon Fang is a TRIBES supplement by Marc Radle. You don't need *Lizardfolk of the Dragon Fang* to use *Village Backdrop: Dawnmarsh*. Simply assume the Dragon Fang tribes is a nearby militant, expansionist tribe led by a particularly charismatic warrior.



NOTABLE LOCATIONS IN DAWNMARSH

1: THE MARKET CIRCLE

Wooden houses on stilts surround a well-worn hard-earth path around a small, roundish patch of grass and stone. Wooden bridges connect to the mainland to the west and another island to the east.

The Market Circle is where most trade occurs with visiting non-lizardfolk. Usually over a dozen foreign traders mill about while lizardfolk children charm customers into the nearby shops.

Dawnmarsh's apprentice Storyteller, Askavirin (CG male lizardfolk bard 2) keeps the mood bright here with pipe music. Tall for a lizardfolk, he wears orange scale-paint and a sky-blue cape. He is curious of visitors to the detriment of his duties learning the ancestral stories.

Ellizara Amberly (N female halfling **spy**) who could be encountered here is just one of the merchants secretly spying for nearby kingdoms. Curious about other visitors, she is chatty and inquisitive.

- **Services:** guide (2 sp per day), runner (3 cp per mile), translator (3 sp per day).

WHAT'S GOING ON?

While the PCs are here, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

D6	EVENT
1	An older human woman stops in the path and shouts that she's been pickpocketed, glaring at the lizardfolk around her. Askavirin finds her dropped purse.
2	An elderly halfling man convinced a lizardfolk hunter to trade her bacon for his candies, only for the lizardfolk to gag and demand a refund.
3	A dark-skinned human woman and a lizardfolk man shout fiercely over the fair price for her metal shields and his linen. Askavirin suggests a compromise but both shout him down.
4	A dark-skinned dwarf man and a lizardfolk youth compare gemstones and dye, increasingly excited about colour coordination.
5	A young gnome man displays a walking metal automaton to a group of curious lizardfolk who laugh and wander off when it quickly sticks in the mud.
6	A halfling knocks over a torch while smoking and ignites a house's stilt. A lizardfolk grabs a handful of mud and snuffs out the flame. An argument ensues.

2: THE BASKING BUTTERFLY

This wooden building stands on tall legs over an eating area of tightly-packed tables and stools around a bar and fire pit.

The Basking Butterfly is Dawnmarsh's only conventional inn and tavern. Here dwell most of the non-lizardfolk visitors visiting Dawnmarsh.

Aurelian (CG male human **commoner**) and Inskaraz (CG male **lizardfolk**) run the place together. Aurelian, a big, loud and helpful man, dresses like a lizardfolk, with blue and gold paint around his eyes and on his shaved, dark-skinned head. Their tavern hosts mostly visitors and locals who are happy disregarding lizardfolk traditions.

- **Food & Drink:** Meal ([burnt] crocodile sausages and [hard] bread) 3 sp, weak cider 6 cp, sake (jug) 3 sp.
- **Accommodation:** Two-bed chamber 10 sp; four-bed chamber 20 sp; common room 2 sp.

Ghosts in the Field: Inskaraz asks adventurers, especially those who mention fighting undead, to investigate the apparitions in the north that scare off lizardfolk harvesting rice for his wine.

Wedding Swimmer: Aurelian seeks to formally join the Dawnmarsh tribe and be recognized as Insakraz's husband, but the trials require swimming around the island at a speed trivial for lizardfolk but very difficult for humans. He offers the 3,000 gp he saved for a wedding as a reward for anyone who can help him pass this test by magic or convince Ssimneer (location 8) to provide an alternative.

INSKARAZ

CG male **lizardfolk**

This slim, six-foot-tall lizardfolk has vivid amber and gold paint from his eyes down the side of his head. He wears a stained violet kerchief and blue apron.

Mannerisms: Inskaraz is sarcastic with those he likes (including anyone complimenting his drinks) and quiet when annoyed. Like most partnered lizardfolk, Inskaraz is very physically affectionate with his partner Aurelian.

Personality: Inskaraz is curious about the world, but too often disappointed by its conflicts. He hears much and wants to increase Dawnmarsh's openness, pointing out Vassessar's (location 6) politely hidden hostility to foreigners.

Background: Inskaraz was a translator and runner before becoming more than business partners with Aurelian (who was a merchant) and opening the Basking Butterfly.

3: HOUSE OF HUNTERS

Meat and skins from many animals hang drying on hooks outside this large, stilted wooden house.

Many of Dawnmarsh's three-dozen warriors uninterested in family-building live in this house between hunts and patrols. Normally, at least half are off in the swamp hunting, trapping and tracking enemies. Huntmaster Esskavril the Silent (LN female lizardfolk ranger 7) spends her time breeding mounts and taming the giant lizards living in the southern hills. She sells lizards to foreigners if convinced with a DC 15 Charisma (Deception) or Persuasion) check the owner will treat the lizard properly.

- **For Sale:** tame giant lizard (600 gp), combat trained giant lizard (900 gp), pack saddle (5 gp), riding saddle (10 gp), saddlebags (4 gp), leather barding (40 gp).
- **Services:** Skilled guide (5 sp per day), skilled runner (4 cp per mile).

4: HOUSE OF SNAKES

This stilted house reeks thickly of many acrid smells.

Here dwells Sakaril (N male **lizardfolk shaman**), who dabbles in alchemy and snake-keeping. He lives with his wives, Aslirkar and Kessesk (N female **lizardfolk**), and their two children. Aslirkar brews rice wine; Kessesk farms flax (a task she dreads after hearing about the restless ghosts in the fields).

- **For Sale:** Sakaril sells a variety of poisons.

Poison Collection: Sakaril offers 250 gp to anyone bringing him a live venomous snake, or 800 gp for a rare and deadly king cobra.

ELIXIR OF REGENERATION

Wondrous item, rare

This orange elixir sheds light as a candle. It tastes like honey and sunflower. The drinker benefits from *regenerate*, but while damage is healed immediately, regrowing body parts takes two days, or one day with full bed rest and one hour of sun. The drinker gains a permanent lizard-like quality, such as patches of fine scales on the regrown limb.

ELIXIR OF SOLAR VIGOUR

Wondrous item, rare

This yellow elixir sheds light as a torch. It tastes like roses and sunflower. It increases all the drinker's movement modes by 10-foot for 3 hours.

5: GREATMARSH LODGE

This stilted house is packed with lizardfolk. It smells strongly of cooking meat.

The Greatmarsh Lodge has been dedicated to hosting visitors since before Dawnmarsh invited trade from beyond the Great Marsh. Ssarkisk (N female lizardfolk) and her family host guests in traditional style, sharing beds and body heat with their guests. Mammalian traders who are down on their luck or stingy stay here alongside visiting lizardfolk who prefer traditional arrangements. Mammals are a curiosity to lizardfolk sharing their beds, so Ssarkisk explains warm-blooded visitors aren't always comfortable sharing body heat and anyone violating another guest's boundaries can sleep outside.

- **Food & Drink:** Meal (lizard jerky and undercooked fish) 2 sp, watered-down sake (cup) 3 cp.
- **Accommodation:** Common room 1 sp.

Rabble-Rouser: **Alniskagar** (N lizardfolk **veteran**) works as a guard for a far-travelling trader and conspicuously blackens his scales with soot. He loudly proclaims humans should not be trusted or even allowed into the Great Marsh—especially not at such a holy place as Dawnmarsh. He aggressively questions Dawnmarshers and mammalian visitors alike for any words or actions conceivably offensive to the lizardfolk people.

6: SUNRISE HOUSE

This broad, stilted house is cleaner and tidier than its neighbours.

Sunrise House is home to the Lightkeeper priests, culture-recording Storytellers and their extended families. Most spend their time learning traditional tales and drum songs or tending to the Dawn Shrine. Others gather food, singing traditional work songs. A few build drums and reed pipes.

Second Lightkeeper Vassessar (N female **lizardfolk shaman**) apprenticed under Ssimneer (location 8) as a Storyteller before hearing the call to serve the sun deity. Although she respects Kassarin, she believes trade has already cost too much when the sun and all of nature provides so much. She brews traditional elixirs for insight and health, which she sells only at Kassarin's insistence.

- **For Sale:** tribal drums (50 gp), tribal pipes (50 gp), *elixir of solar vigour* (500 gp), *elixir of regeneration* (5,000 gp), *pipes of the sewers* (500 gp).

Exclusive Deal: Vassessar discreetly offers a 25% discount on one item to anyone who convinces any mammalian trader to leave Dawnmarsh permanently. She suggests claiming they are being sized up for ritual sacrifice (DC 15 Charisma [Deception] check succeeds).

7: DAWN SHRINE

This flat-topped island has a black stone fire-pit with a seven-foot-tall stone roof at its centre ringed by seven low pillars around the island's fringes.

The Dawn Shrine is a holy site for the lizardfolk sun deity. A fire burns here all night every night as a sun symbol for lizardfolk to warm themselves by until the sun rises. The sick and infirm bask here to gather strength to heal. At times of extreme cold or danger, the elderly Kassarin (NG female lizardfolk cleric 13) conjures Flyrref, a friendly **fire elemental**, from the sacred fire that enjoys seeing lizardfolk energized by its warmth.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

While the PCs are here, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

D4	EVENT
1	A lizardfolk priest brews a sweet-smelling liquid on a small pot above the central fire. A moth lands within, doubles in size, and flies away.
2	A young lizardfolk with ash-blackened scales rants about the priests' disrespecting the dead to satisfy humans before storming away.
3	An older human woman accuses a lizardfolk youth of stealing coins from her. A priest hears out both sides and casts a spell before sternly ordering the youth to pay back twice as much in recompense.
4	A priest garbed in bright yellow silk carries a crystal chime to the central fire and hangs it from a stone where it catches the light.

- **For Sale:** *potion of healing* (50 gp), *potion of greater healing* (300 gp), (300 gp), *leather scroll of daylight* (450 gp), *leather scroll of flame blade* (280 gp), *leather scroll of greater restoration* (2,500 gp), wooden holy symbol of the sun deity (1 gp). (Leather scrolls are waterproof, with text burned in rather than inked.)



Gesture of Peace: Kassarin fears Sesskar the Great's message of fear toward foreigners, but thinks foreigners putting themselves on the line for lizardfolk can counter it. She asks adventurers to escort Vassessar (location 6) to recover magical sunflowers from a heath beyond the treacherous southern swamps (a task complicated by Vassessar's secret desire for the mission to fail). As a reward, Kassarin offers an *elixir of regeneration*.

Fire Thieves: Three **green hags**, the Coven of the Silent Blade, plan to steal the sacred fire. With such a sacred symbol, Sesskar the Great could attract enough troops to conquer Dawnmarsh, putting a powerful leader in the coven's debt.

8: PORTAGE GLADE

Tall, drooping marsh trees surround a sunny glade, shading colourful tents and canoes full of wares.

A clearing in the swamp north-east of Dawnmarsh hosts isolationist lizardfolk traders from the deep marshes who trade for foreign goods through Dawnmarsher intermediaries. Judgemental and cautious Chief Storyteller Ssimneer (N male lizardfolk bard 6) settles disputes and shares stories of mammalian aggression and disrespect; he knows Dawnmarshers can demand better prices while other lizardfolk feel unsafe trading with humans directly. He pines after Huntmaster Esskavril (location 3), admiring her lizard-taming skills and hopes to record her techniques in song; she would consider something casual, but hasn't noticed his interest. Non-lizardfolk find palpable tension; Ssimneer demands they leave while skittish traders pack up and depart.

LIGHTKEEPER KASSARIN THE WISE

NG venerable female lizardfolk cleric 13

This tall, but hunched, lizardfolk woman wears a tall, pointed hat and billowing bright white robes fringed with charred orange.

Mannerisms: Kassarin moves and speaks slowly and with careful poise. She tires easily and insists all interaction with foreigners be kept to business.

Personality: Kassarin prefers to convince others rather than simply order them around through her divine authority. She won't abide further concessions on lizardfolk tradition.

Background: Kassarin has lead spiritually and politically for over 60 years, expanding trade with foreigners and mediating conflict between lizardfolk tribes. She views trade as vital to the growth of the village, but regrets cutting back on traditional lizardfolk funerals to reduce foreigners' anxiety about the cannibalism involved. Yet, renegeing seems worse.

FARRAV'N

Words Mike Welham **Cartography** Tommi Salama

Farrav'n and its oasis of crystal-clear water provides a haven of rest and relaxation in the cruel Luminous Desert. To the surprise of visitors, a tribe of gnolls, usually known as savage raiders and slavers, hospitably oversees the oasis. Acting under the auspices of the little-known nature goddess Rrav through her head priestess, the gnolls have given up their cruel heritage. They accommodate their guests without extorting money or enslaving them, unlike the gnolls controlling the only other nearby waystation, the Shadescar Oasis. The gnoll leader of the Shadescar tribe is displeased business has dried up, and rumours of a kinder, gentler location has begun to reach him. It is only a matter of time before the two tribes come into conflict.

FARRAV'N AT A GLANCE

Rulers: Janndra Rrav and Balt Rrav

Government: Overlord

Alignments: NG, CG, N, CN

Population: 89 (72 gnolls, 6 humans, 8 half-orcs, 3 halflings)

Notable Folk: Garritt Rrav (Scorpion Circus), Gerda Fulp (The Date Frond), Quent Sorren (Open Air Market)

Languages: Common, Gnoll

Resources & Industry: Water, desert guides, trade goods

A group of ruthless gnolls control Shadescar Oasis, at one time the only place to get water and shelter in the Luminous Desert. The raiders extorted money from travellers and captured those appearing hapless or weak to be used as slaves (or food).

Nearly a decade ago, Jenndra Shadescar, one of the gnoll slavers, received a vision from the goddess Rrav. The goddess promised Jenndra a place the gnolls could live in peace. However, the goddess required Jenndra and her followers to renounce their evil ways and accept Rrav as their only deity. The gnoll, chafing at the harsh conditions at the oasis, was happy to comply. She awoke the next morning to find a set of golden armbands and a map etched on a silver scroll. Taking her closest compatriots ostensibly as a raiding party, she disappeared into a sandstorm summoned by Rrav. When they did not return, the Shadescar tribe counted them as dead.

A dune field confronted the gnolls when they arrived at the promised location. Rrav, through Janndra, commanded them to dig. After days of digging out tons of sand, water bubbled up from the great pit they had dug and pooled into a clean source of water. The gnolls planted dormant seeds they found nearby the water, and the seeds rapidly grew into full-sized date trees.

The gnolls now living in Farrav'n ("home of the Rrav tribe") provide respite for travellers on the edge of desperation. Other than the occasional worm attacks, life is serene. However, the Shadescar raiders have grown suspicious about the lack of victims coming their way and reports of friendly gnoll guiding

travellers. It is only a matter of time before they locate and attack Farrav'n.



VILLAGE LORE

A PC may know something about Farrav'n, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 15 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

DC 15: The oasis village Farrav'n was founded by a gnoll priestess of the nature goddess Rrav.

DC 20: A few non-gnolls live in the village and receive fair treatment from the gnoll residents. Anyone planning to live in Farrav'n must pledge loyalty to Rrav.

DC 25: The gnolls are outcasts from a larger tribe which controls the nearby Shadescar oasis.

VILLAGERS

Appearance: Gnoll villagers are serene and stand almost fully upright, allowing them to tower over most visitors. All gnolls bear a prominent brand displaying the palm tree representative of their goddess. Non-gnoll residents have weathered skin due to their time spent in the sun.

Dress: Clothing is loose for all inhabitants of Farrav'n. Most gnolls go shirtless, but wear loincloths out of courtesy to visitors. During ceremonies, hunting trips or in preparation for war, gnolls wear lightweight metal rings on their arms and legs for protection and to denote rank within the tribe.

Nomenclature: *male* Garth, Rolf, Vark; *female* Eeva, Parrdu, Zassa; *family* Fulp, Rrav, Sorren.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Farrav'n, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

D6 RUMOUR

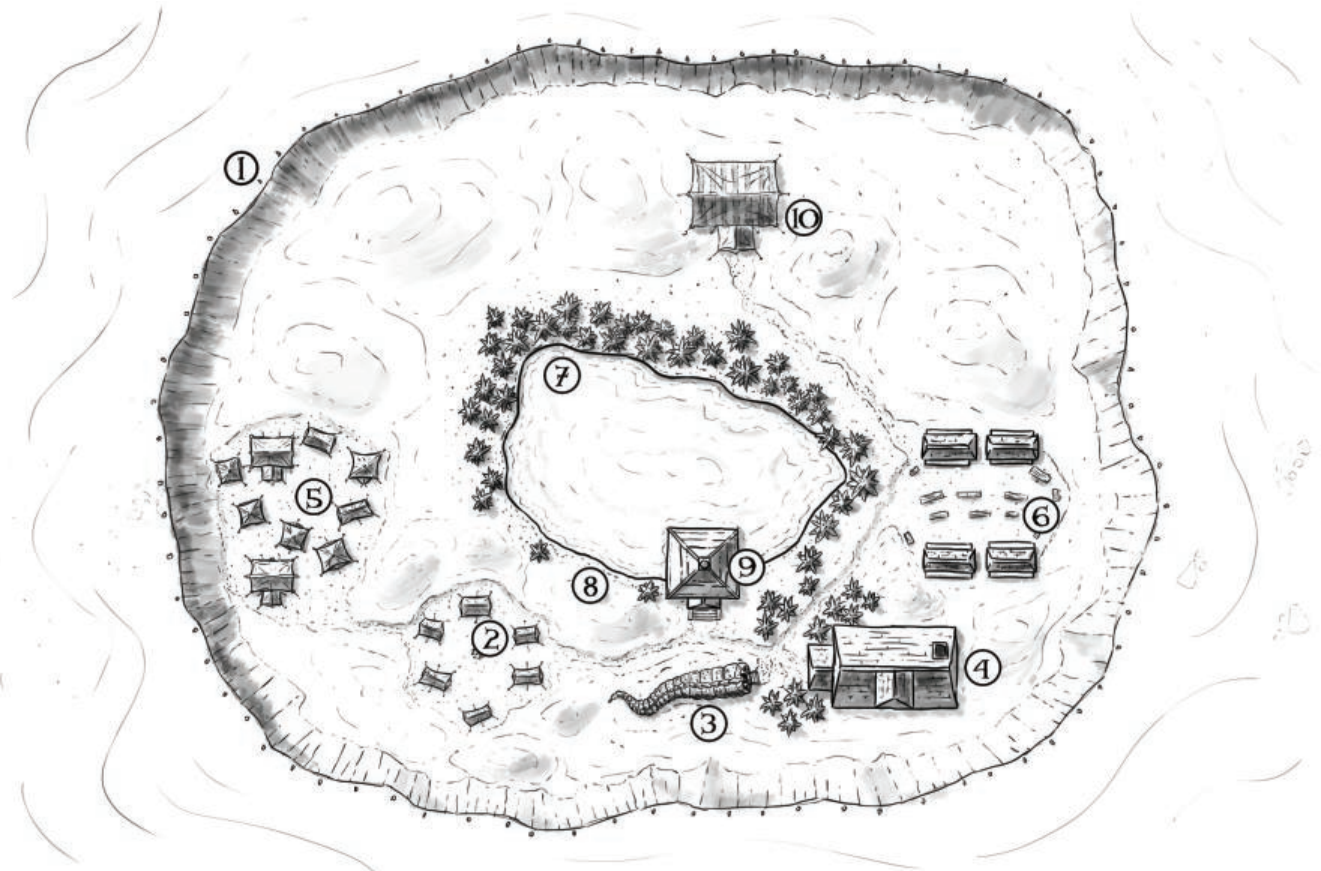
1*	Make sure you travel in groups. These gnolls may seem friendly, but they devour wayward travellers.
2	Kreegan, the gnoll chieftain at Shadescar Oasis, is amassing an army to take Farrav'n by force.
3	The Desert Wanderers have recently lost two humans they were guiding through the desert, ruining their otherwise spotless record.
4	The gnolls' goddess, Rrav, expects a non-gnoll sacrifice every summer solstice. Supposedly, the sacrifice is a volunteer or a criminal.
5*	Garritt is a spy for Kreegan and plans to unleash his scorpions on the village as a prelude to a larger attack.
6	Noticeable tension has developed between Janndra and Balt over the tribe's new path.

*False rumour

NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

Most of the village comprises the gnolls' tent-homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **Sand's Edge:** A patrol watches the edge of the depression leading down into the village proper. The gnolls standing guard aren't here entirely for protection, because the sand itself acts as a trap for the unwary. Just inside the border, violet light shines from Rrav's Blessings—staves preventing sandstorms from harming the village.
2. **Desert Wanderers:** Led by Balt Rrav, the Desert Wanderers act as guides and trackers for those who can afford their services. The highly trained gnolls guard the village when they aren't otherwise engaged.
3. **The Tan Worm:** The Rrav tribe killed this variant purple worm shortly after arriving. The worm's hollowed out, and reinforced, outer shell serves as barracks for the villagers and lodging for those who don't like sleeping in a tent.
4. **The Date Frond:** Contained within the only other permanent building besides the Wellspring Temple, this tavern offers a spiced date wine. Gerda Fulp, an affable halfling, and her sister manage the Date Frond.
5. **Visitors' Tents:** Within view of the Desert Wanderers, these accommodations of varying quality house travellers.
6. **Open Air Market:** As Farrav'n has grown, the village has become a trade hub where visitors can buy goods and supplies or trade desert artefacts. Quent Sorren, the first non-gnoll to settle in the village, oversees the market and appraises esoteric trade items.
7. **Oasis Public Access:** The gnolls opened a generous portion of the oasis for public use, but they regulate the amount of water individuals can take each day.
8. **Beasts of Burden:** Camels and other desert dwelling animals shelter between the public access and the temple.
9. **Wellspring Temple:** This temple to Rrav welcomes all visitors and provides healing to those suffering from the effects of their desert travels. The tribe's spiritual leader, Jandra, spends most of her time here. The temple's inner sanctum is only accessible to gnolls who worship Rrav.
10. **Scorpion Circus:** Garritt Rrav discovered an affinity for scorpions and trains them to protect the tribe and act as entertainment for visitors to the village.



LIFE IN FARRAV'N

For visitors who have heard terrifying stories about gnoll hunters and slavers, Farrav'n may come as a shock. The village has a predominant gnoll population, but the inhabitants are generally friendly to visitors. Heavily armed groups draw interest, and perhaps a watcher or two, but no more than that. The village bustles with activity during the day, especially around the market and near Wellspring Temple. At night, when the temperatures cool, the village grows quiet

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Foremost for the village is the provision of water. While the gnolls ask for a nominal tithe (2 gp) to their goddess per gallon of water, they also accept items or services in trade, especially if they benefit the overall community. Throwing more money around does not allow someone to disregard the rationing limit (one gallon per day per person), however.

Guides from the Desert Wanderers are the village's second most important offering. Most of their earnings go to the individual guides in recognition of the danger they face, while a small portion goes to the village.

Finally, as the market has grown in size and popularity, visitors trade goods as well as items they discover in the desert.

LAW & ORDER

Jenndra and Balt divide matters of law into spiritual and martial concerns, respectively. Jenndra and her followers handle all affronts to Rrav, including openly wearing holy symbols of deities with extreme alignments (LG, CG, LE, CE), while Balt and the Desert Wanderers deal with thefts and assaults. Regardless of the type of transgression, the punishment is swift and depends on the severity of the crime: from a warning, up to stripping the violator of all food, water and gear, and then turning them out into the desert. Gnolls who commit severe crimes, either against other gnolls or visitors, face death rather than exile, since the village leaders do not want transgressors to bolster Shadescar ranks.

CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS

As the one who freed the gnolls from a cycle of violence and hate, the goddess Rrav receives devotion from all the gnoll residents. Anyone wishing to reside in the village, regardless of species, must worship Rrav. Daily services occur at dawn and dusk; while clergy are required to attend both, many villagers attend at least one. During Founder's Day, celebrated on the summer solstice, the village has a feast and splurges on the oasis's water before sunset, at which time Jenndra sacrifices a sentient creature to Rrav. All services except for the sacrifice are open to everyone; even non-gnoll villagers cannot attend the sacrificial ritual.

VILLAGE DRESSING

Use this table to generate the minor sights and sounds the PCs experience as they move about Farrav'n.

D20 DRESSING/EVENT

1	A surprise rainstorm strikes and lasts for an hour. The villagers murmur thanks to Rrav for her gift.
2	A group of frolicking gnoll children runs through the party, threatening to trip one of the PCs.
3	At sunrise, characters awaken to the sound of chanting emanating from the Wellspring Temple.
4	A cloud of flies crosses the village inflicting irritating bites on everyone in its path.
5	A human struggles to guide a team of bucking, snorting horses to the oasis.
6	A strong wind flings scores of dates to the ground. The villagers hurriedly retrieve the fruit.
7	The ground rumbles for several seconds. Gnolls grab weapons and seek out the source, but the rumbling abruptly ceases.
8	A funeral procession of gnolls carrying a linen-wrapped body passes by on its way out into the desert.
9	The sky grows dark to the east as a sandstorm approaches. Staves spark and hum to life, glowing purple and the storm parts around the village.
10	Dozens of green lizards with bright violet stripes about the size of a human index finger dart across the sand. The gnolls see this as a good omen.
11	Spears clatter loudly against one another as two gnolls spar. They hurl good-natured epithets at each other.
12	Vultures roost near the party and croak at each other while seeming to glance at the PCs meaningfully.
13	A cooling breeze drifts from the direction of the oasis, gently spraying those in its path with a fine, refreshing mist.
14	A trio of hyenas, broken tethers trailing behind them, chase a frantic jackrabbit.
15	A gnoll pup in its father's arms cries for food. Its father cuffs the young gnoll and admonishes it for making a loud noise. The youngster immediately ceases crying.
16	Screams erupt from the Scorpion Circus and then die down before turning into relieved laughter.
17	Two large gnoll children pelt younger children with balls of sand. The younger children squeal and scatter.
18	The smell of unfamiliar cooked meat reaches the characters. The tough, stringy meat is camel.
19	The ground erupts with worms the size of vipers. Villagers attack the worms (children beating them with sticks) and invite others to do the same.
20	A flock of birds lands in the date tree branches. Villagers attempt to shoo them away.

THE SURROUNDING LOCALITY

Farrav'n lies two days' ride from the eastern edge of the Luminous Desert, so named because the sand absorbs light from the sun and reflects the light at night. This makes it easy to traverse the desert during all hours, since the sand's eerie white glow is equivalent to the light of a full moon. This feature, along with the village's location in a depression, has kept the village a secret from the Shadescar raiders, long enough for Farrav'n to establish itself.

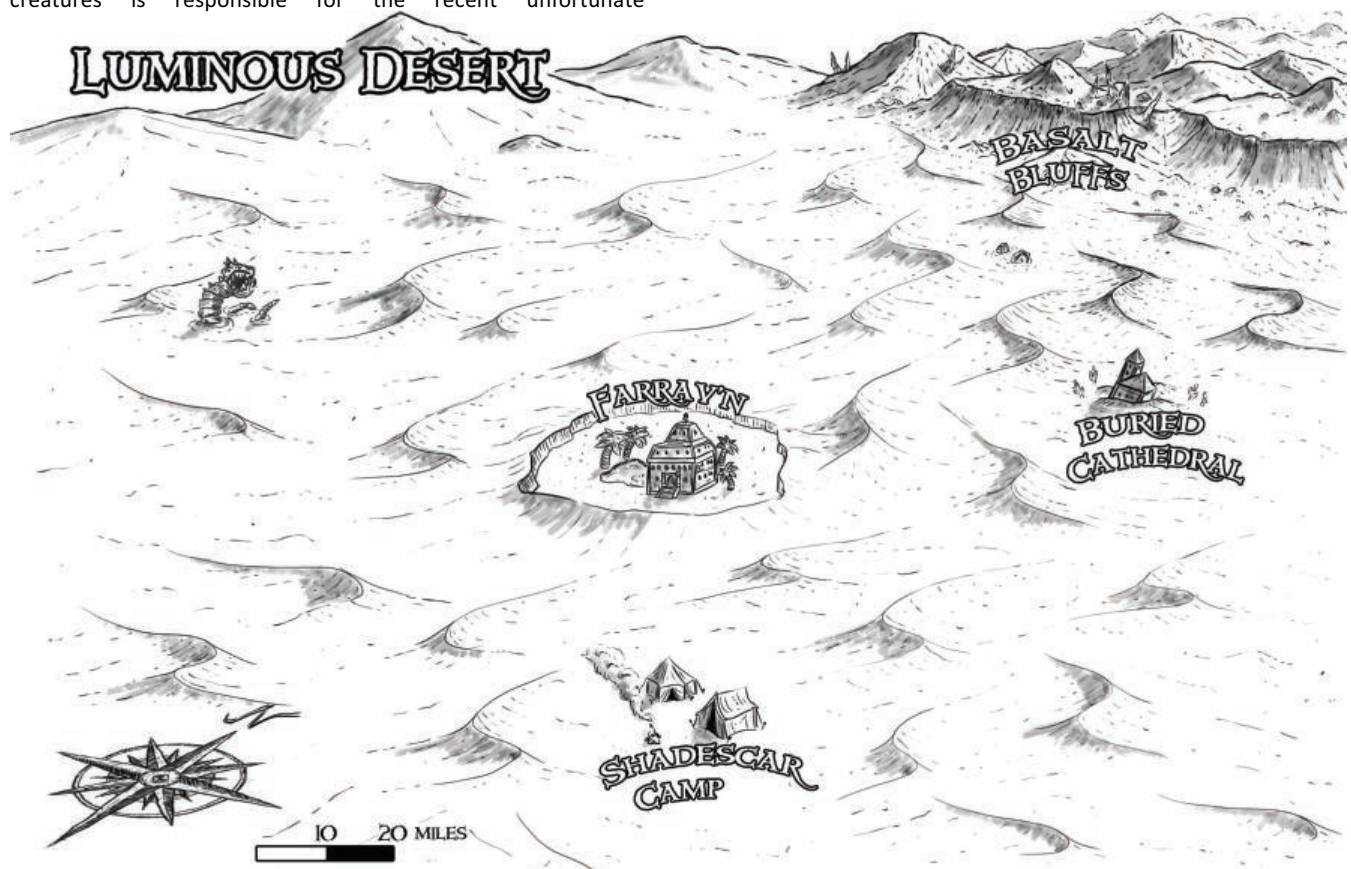
Temperatures climb to 110 degrees during the day and drop to 50 degrees at night. Natural hazards include frequent sandstorms and quicksand-like pits created by the many worms infesting the surrounding sands. Strange qualities of the sand make casting water creation spells difficult (requiring a DC 10 Constitution saving throw), which adds to the desert's peril.

Desert tan worms, like purple worms but appearing in a variety of sizes, pose the greatest indigenous creature threat. The Desert Wanderers know the tell-tale signs of an imminent worm attack, but unwary travellers must make a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check or DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check (or possess tremorsense or the like) to avoid being surprised by a worm attack. Gnoll scouts have discovered evidence of a pair of gigantic birds of prey and a blue dragon living in basalt bluffs three days' travel to the north. They suspect one of these creatures is responsible for the recent unfortunate

disappearances of travellers they were charged with guiding.

The main threat to the village comes from the Shadescar gnolls, from whom the Rrav tribe broke off. Their base of operations is a day's hard ride to the southeast of Farrav'n. Kreegan, the gnoll tribe leader, was convinced Janndra and her raiding party were dead. However, he has recently heard of gnolls protecting people in the desert from two captured humans lamenting about "the other dog people being much friendlier." He has since turned some of his attention to locating these "friendly" gnolls and bringing them to heel.

With Farrav'n opening up the desert to more exploration, as opposed to mere survival, explorers have made startling discoveries in the desert. Two days' travel to the northeast, a party discovered a sandstone cathedral. The lone edifice is partially buried but still towers over the nearby desert. A tribe of cactus people guard the cathedral yet refuse to enter the building. They reportedly menace trespassers but do not give chase. They also refuse to speak about the cathedral. Additionally, unused worm tunnels have led explorers to an ancient underground settlement. The explorers surmise the desert buried the settlement centuries (or millennia) ago, but vengeful desiccated undead have made further investigation impossible.



NOTABLE LOCATIONS IN FARRAV'N

1: SAND'S EDGE

The featureless desert ends at a depression at least 30 feet deep. Within lies an oasis surrounded by palm trees and tents.

This roughly circular depression measures a quarter mile in diameter. The drop into the depression is the village's first defence. Shifting sand makes climbing down difficult (DC 20 Strength [Athletics] check), but the sand reduces any falling damage by 1d6. However, hidden worm holes riddle the ground, and falling victims must make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw or fall an additional 20 feet and become buried as if by a landslide.

Two **gnoll** guards patrol Sand's Edge, checking travellers and aiding peaceful visitors to safely climb down to the village. Another four guards patrol the base of the wall and attack any obvious threats. The gnolls insist newcomers peace bond their weapons, but do not confiscate them.

Staves topped with purple gemstones thrust into the ground at regular intervals encircle Sand's Edge. These "Blessings of Rrav" protect the village from the frequent sandstorms plaguing the desert. The gnolls found a cache of these gems when they dug out the depression, and Rrav instructed Jenndra in their use. Gemstone replacement is only required once every five years. The remaining gemstones are in the Wellspring Temple's inner sanctum, but Jenndra is always interested in obtaining more.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

While the PCs are here, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

D6	EVENT
1	As one of the PCs makes his way down the wall, the sand gives way, much to the guides' surprise.
2	One of the purple crystals sputters and dies just as a sandstorm threatens the village.
3	An enormous desert worm bursts from the sand.
4	A cloaked figure decries Rrav as a false goddess. The figure departs and disappears into a sandstorm when the gnoll guards try to apprehend it.
5	A group of well-armed gnolls arrives at the same time as the PCs. The gnolls patrolling the upper level obviously need help turning them away.
6	Lightning strikes the sand, creating a chunk of glowing crystal which glows with light equivalent to torchlight for a week.

Quest for Stones: Jenndra's supply of gemstones powering the "Blessings of Rrav" has dwindled to a dangerously low level. Since she currently cannot afford to send any gnolls to find new stones, she asks the party to use an existing stone to guide them to another cache. She offers the PCs a favour (for example spellcasting or extra water rations) as payment.

2: DESERT WANDERERS

A cluster of tents surrounds an open patch of sand where several gnolls spar and wrestle with each other.

The village's guards and guides train and live here. Their foremost responsibility is keeping the peace in the village and enforcing laws everywhere except at Wellspring Temple. When the gnolls can spare the time, they offer their services as guides, which also serves the purpose of discovering imminent threats to the village. They charge 5 gp per guide per day and double their rate in known dangerous regions. The Wanderers refuse to guide anyone to Shadescar Oasis and warn off anyone planning to go there. However, lone scouts do carry out regular reconnaissance of their brethren's activities.

3: THE TAN WORM

This hollowed-out worm husk is about 20 feet in diameter. A door has been carved into the shell.

When a massive desert worm attacked Farrav'n shortly after the gnolls arrived, the villagers, along with newcomer Quent Sorren, slew the beast. Rather than drag the massive carcass out of the village, the inhabitants agreed to Quent's suggestion of transforming it into homes. After they dug out the inside, the wizard used alchemical treatments to preserve and bolster the shell. Most villagers reside in this semi-permanent structure, with room left over for those who don't want to sleep in a tent.

- **Accommodation** Bed 5 sp; partitioned one-bed chamber 20 sp; partitioned two-bed chamber 30 sp.

BALT RRAV

CN male **gnoll packlord**

This glowering gnoll stands well over seven-foot tall and bears deep scars from numerous battles.

Mannerisms: Balt converses in as few words as possible to convey his intent. He always carries a halberd and spends his "down time" sharpening the weapon's blade.

Personality: Balt is straightforward and brooks no haggling when it comes to naming his price for the Desert Wanderers' service. He rarely engages in social niceties.

Background: The large gnoll was a force to be reckoned with among the Shadescar raiders, but did not like their cruelty. He readily followed Jenndra to Farrav'n and is her most ardent protector. However, as the residents turn to her more and more for guidance, he is becoming increasingly envious of her power and position.

4: THE DATE FROND

Surrounded by dozens of dates, a palm frond waves of its own accord over the entrance to this sandstone building.

Before Gerda Fulp (CE female halfling illusionist 3) and her sister's arrival at Farrav'n, visitors were left to their own devices for food and drink. Sometimes the residents would share cooked meat from desert lizards or from the beasts of burden which had outlived their usefulness, but travellers often had to resort to their own stores or kills. The halfling sisters earned their residence by broadening the culinary options available to villagers and visitors alike. Gerda insisted on a permanent building for the tavern and did not stand idly by while others complete the building. Her work ethic impressed the gnolls, and they now accept her and her sister as equals.

- **Food & Drink:** meal (roasted camel or lamb, prickly pear salad, and cornmeal biscuits) 4 sp, date wine (pitcher) 5 sp.

The date wine served here is the creation of Gerda's sister, Yaren (CG female halfling **commoner**) and has gained some renown among repeat visitors, although it remains in short supply due to the scarcity of its ingredients.

5: VISITORS' TENTS

Tents of varying sizes and quality cluster around a campfire. Interspaced among the tents stand areas of open, packed sand ready for visitor's tents to be pitched.

GERDA FULP

CG female halfling illusionist 3

This stout halfling moves among tables in a blink of the eye, making sure everyone is well fed and their tankards are full.

Mannerisms: Gerda is constantly on the move and cannot stand to remain motionless for more than a second. If there are no customers to attend to in the dining area, she makes her way to the kitchen to help with preparations there.

Personality: Gerda is friendly and accommodating to her guests and supportive of her staff. If someone tells her she can't or shouldn't do something, especially in relation to running the tavern, she becomes cold and redoubles her efforts.

Background: Gerda and her sisters were novice adventurers who attached themselves to a caravan traversing the Luminous Desert. After a disastrous attack on their caravan, which the halflings survived due to Gerda's skill with illusions, they found their way to the village and have remained here since.

The primary accommodations for travellers, these tents are quickly accessible to the Desert Wanderers should the need arise. The tents can sleep a total of 30 guests comfortably and room is available for those who wish to use their own tents.

- **Accommodation:** Single-occupant tent 3 sp; double-occupant tent 5 sp; quadruple-occupant tent 8 sp. Reduces prices to 1 sp, 2 sp and 4 sp, respectively, for those providing their own tents.

6: OPEN AIR MARKET

Offers of bargains and shouts of haggling come from this market filled with stalls and tables containing an array of goods.

As Farrav'n grew in reputation, traders began to call at the village to unload some of the objects found in the desert for food, water and other luxuries. Because of the reliance on found objects, items for sale vary on a weekly basis.

- **For Sale:** *potion of flying* (10,000 gp), *scroll of move earth* (5,000 gp), *goggles of night* (500 gp)

Treasure Hunt: Quent has come into possession of part of a greater magic item and wants to assemble the entire thing. The item comes from deep in the desert, so she cannot employ the gnolls to track it down. She asks capable parties to recover the remaining pieces and offers a generous reward for their service. Especially shrewd and charming PCs may convince her to part with some of her more powerful magic items to aid them in their search.

QUENT SORREN

NG female human **mage**

This tall, willowy human woman is greying at the temples.

Mannerisms: Quent conducts business with bombast and celebrates especially hard-won negotiations with a minor, yet showy display of magic. Even when things turn sour, she never loses her broad smile.

Personality: Quent is a gregarious person and enjoys the sounds of the market. She often inserts herself into trade negotiations where magic items are involved.

Background: Quent arrived at Farrav'n one year after its founding. Interested in following up rumours about powerful artefacts in the desert, she became intrigued when she spied the purple light emanating from within the bowl containing the village. Her timing was fortuitous when she helped kill a rampaging desert worm. Since then, she has decided to retire and use other travellers to find artefacts for her.

7: OASIS PUBLIC ACCESS

Mostly shaded by date trees, the water is perfectly clear down to a depth of at least 10 feet.

Roughly half the oasis is given over to use by visitors to Farrav'n. A patrol of villagers ensures people take no more than their quota of one gallon of water per day. While the water replenishes itself rapidly, Janndra does not wish to take advantage of her goddess's bounty. Those who refuse to honour the rationing are immediately escorted out of the village.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

While the PCs are here, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

D6	EVENT
1	An emaciated female lion leaps over the edge of the depression and trots toward the water, heedless of and unthreatening to everyone.
2	One of the PCs spies someone pouring the contents of a vial into the water.
3	Two bright blue fish leap from just below the water's surface and dive in with the barest of a splash.
4	A horse crashes through the trees, chased by a gnoll.
5	A gnome splashes about in the water but loses his footing and goes under, prompting a frantic rescue.
6	A loud crack precedes a date tree tottering and falling away from the oasis.

8: BEASTS OF BURDEN

Camels, horses, oxen, yaks and other more exotic animals rest along the edge of the water set aside for them.

The villagers encourage visitors to leave their draft animals here where they can rest and drink. There is no limit to the amount of

JANNDRA RRAV

N female gnoll cleric (Rrav) 10

Rings of violet metal adorn this female gnoll with bright violet eyes and a serene look on her face.

Mannerisms: Janndra is easy going and walks with a slow gait, bestowing blessings of Rrav upon all those she meets.

Personality: While the relaxed mannerism Janndra presents to the public is no act, she switches to a pragmatic attitude when required. She believes worship of Rrav is open to all but views gnolls as her goddess's chosen people. Thus, she puts the spiritual needs of her gnolls first and has no qualms about turning out non-gnolls from the village (or killing them) to protect her charges.

Background: See Farrav'n at a Glance.

water allowed for the animals, since villagers believe the creatures will drink no more than they require. A couple of gnolls (male or female **druid**) attend to the animals and keep them calm. Astute observers may note mere animals are allowed closer access to the temple than they are.

9: WELLSPRING TEMPLE

This building juts just over the oasis's water. An eye with a violet iris containing a symbolic representation of a wave over a symbol of wind in its pupil covers a banner over an open doorway.

The front part of this temple is open to all visitors and frequented by many villagers, especially during Rrav's holy times of sunrise and sunset. A pair of gnoll clerics (N **gnoll druid**) gently proselytize about their goddess, promising further safety during their travels in the desert if the visitor converts to Rrav's worship. The inner sanctum rests over the site where Rrav's blessed water first pooled up after the gnolls dug out the village site. This area is restricted to gnoll worshippers of Rrav and a trio of guards (N **gnoll packlord**) prevent unauthorized access.

10: SCORPION CIRCUS

This brightly coloured tent stands in contrast to the drab tents dotting the village. Several scorpions skitter about, avoiding foot traffic, but explaining the tent's solitary location.

Garritt Rrav used this secluded location to train his scorpions. However, a visitor spotted him working with the scorpions and, impressed by his command of the arachnids, spread word about it, making this a popular destination for visitors. The gnoll now puts on regular shows, costing 1 sp per attendee. He has also concocted an alchemical formula rendering the scorpions' poison inert for 24 hours. He sells vials of the liquid for 10 gp.

GARRITT RRAV

CN male gnoll druid 9

This gnoll wears a bright red jacket. Scorpions crawl over his fur, and he bears several scars showing the many stings he has suffered.

Mannerisms: Garritt enjoys putting on a terrifying show for his audiences and often employs a plant in the audience who agrees to be "attacked" by the gnoll's performers.

Personality: Even when he is not performing, he embraces the creepy reputation he has cultivated to the point where he repels his fellow gnolls.

Background: Garritt discovered an affinity for scorpions at a young age and used this to aid the Shadescar tribe in their attacks. With a newfound outlook following Rrav, he has become much more peaceful.

FULHURST MOORS

Words Jacob Trier **Cartography** Tommi Salama

In the dreary village of Fulhurst Moors, most residents spend their days cutting peat from the nearby bogs or tending flocks of rugged sheep on the moor. When night falls, they huddle in their homes or gather inside the solid stone walls of the Bell and Whistles, trading stories of the latest gruesome misfortunes to befall those foolish enough to venture out onto the moor after sunset or unfortunate enough to be caught by sudden fog or rain while working in the bogs.

The local priest has been driven close to madness by his inability to provide solace to his congregation, and the mayor and constable become increasingly concerned as a growing number of villagers drown their fears in moonshine whiskey. The fearful atmosphere is well deserved, for ancient beings of malice and cruelty haunt the mists beyond the village. And they have struck a terrible bargain with someone inside Fulhurst Moors.

FULHURST MOORS AT A GLANCE

Ruler: Minerva Meriweather

Government: Autocracy

Population: 140 (127 humans, 6 dwarves, 2 half-elves, 3 half-orcs, 2 halflings)

Alignments: LN, LG, NG, N, CN, NE

Languages: Common

Resources & Industry Sheep farming, peat cutting

The windswept moorland around Fulhurst Moors was once a lush forest. Savage clans lived here and sacrificed captives and slaves in the bogs below the hills, where the waters of the Blackraven Creek cut through the acidic valley soil.

The sacrifices attracted strings of will-o'-wisps, who fed eagerly on their dying victims' fears. As the clansmen cut down trees for timber and firewood, the rain washed the nutrients out of the exposed soil. Desolate moor replaced the forest, the clans migrated elsewhere, and the wisps starved.

Centuries passed, and other humans settled beside Blackraven Creek. They built solid stone houses, raised flocks of rugged sheep on the moor and dug peat from the bog's brown waterlogged soil.

A few years ago, the wizard Kelurn Tinddar settled in Fulhurst Moors. Seeking ancient artefacts buried in the sacrificial sites, he struck a terrible pact with the will-o'-wisps yet haunting the bog: in return for the locations of ancient sacrificial sites, he began arranging deadly accidents and ambushes to both foster an atmosphere of fear in the village and provide the will-o'-wisps with fresh victims.

The effects of this terrible, secret compact are easily apparent to anyone visiting Fulhurst Moors. The anxiety is almost palpable, and only a handful of villagers are bold enough to move about as they please. The rest huddle behind their stone walls and speculate who will be the next to meet their doom upon the moor.

NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than hardworking peasants. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

Aisha Brackenridge (location 1; NG female half-elf **commoner**)

The feisty and independent proprietor of the village's general store, Aisha is irked by her neighbours' anxious prattling.

Bulgrim Graycain (location 6; N male dwarf **commoner**) Solid as the walls of his inn, Bulgrim is the proud owner of the Bell and Whistles.

Devyn Matson (location 7; LN male human **veteran**) Stern, Devyn takes his duties as constable seriously.

Eliza Reede (location 2; N female human **priest**) Practical and pragmatic, Eliza brews potions, delivers babies and cures minor ailments.

Esmond Wynne (location 5; LG male human cleric 5) Chaplain Esmond tends to the spiritual needs of Fulhurst Moors, and is plagued by his inability to console his congregation.

Grefford Hinks (location 3; CN male old human **spy**) Never a fan of authority, old man Hinks is the resident manufacturer of moonshine whiskey.

Kelurn Tinddar (location 8; NE male human wizard [necromancer] 6) Beneath his chubby stature and well respected position in the village, Kelurn hides a dark secret.

Minerva Meriweather (location 4; LN female middle-aged human expert 2) A prosperous wool merchant, Minerva has been mayor of Fulhurst Moors for over a decade.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of the village comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **Brackenridge Mercantile:** Aisha Brackenridge and her wife Heather run this well-stocked general store.
2. **Eliza Reede's Hut:** From her modest hut, Eliza Reede offers a selection of potions and remedies.
3. **Grefford Hinks's House:** Thirsty villagers know to call on Grefford for a jug of moonshine.
4. **Mayor Meriweather's Home:** This large stone house is home to Mayor Minerva Meriweather and her husband Darinn.
5. **Temple:** The local temple is often half-empty at services these days, much to the chagrin of chaplain Esmond.
6. **The Bell and Whistles:** Despite the mayor having banned strong alcohol, the tavern is full almost every night.
7. **Village Hall:** The village hall functions as a meeting hall, courthouse and jail. The constable, Devyn Matson, lives here.
8. **Wizard's Tower:** Home of the wizard Kelurn.

MARKETPLACE

When the PCs arrive in Fulhurst Moors, the following items are for sale:

- **Potions** *resistance (lightning)* (500 gp)
- **Scrolls (Wizard)** *silent image* (50 gp), *ice storm* (1,200 gp)
- **Scroll (Cleric)** *death ward* (1,300 gp)
- **Wand** *magic missiles* (500 gp)

VILLAGE LORE

A PC may know something about Fulhurst Moors. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

DC 10: The land around Fulhurst Moors is useless for raising crops, but the locals graze flocks of sheep in the hills and cut peat from the bog.

DC 15: Something sinister lurks near the village. Both locals and travellers have disappeared or turned up dead.

DC 20: The bog where the villagers cut peat is rumoured to hold the remains of ancient sacrificial sites.

VILLAGERS

Appearance Mainly of short and stocky build, most villagers have thick auburn hair and grey eyes. The peat cutters usually emit a persistent waterlogged odour.

Dress The shepherds of Fulhurst Moors favour sheepskin vests and grey woollen cloaks, while the peat cutters wear long oilskin trousers, rugged shirts, wide brimmed hats and solid boots.

Nomenclature *male* Eruc, Garel, Huine, Kalet, Woric; *female* Ashina, Dedra, Kalen, Lyeisse, Therdra; *family* Beynet, Drackir, Kalsard, Thaelm, Wyerran.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Fulhurst Moors, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

D6	RUMOUR
1	Old man Grefford hides a whiskey still somewhere on the moor.
2	A local youngster was found dead in the bog, covered with burns as if he had been struck by lightning.
3	The parents of the halfling twins Aisha and Heather Brackenridge adopted suffered a horrible fate while travelling to the village.
4*	The misfortunes plaguing the village are caused by the spirits of the ancient dead, who are angry the peat cutting has disturbed their burial sites.
5	If you know what to look for, you can see signs of long abandoned settlements on the moor.
6*	When Eliza Reede goes off to gather ingredients for her potions, she sometimes turns into a crow or fox.

*False rumour



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: BRACKENRIDGE MERCANTILE

The bottom floor of this spacious stone two-storey building contains a well-stocked store. From here, the slender, red-haired Aisha Brackenridge (NG female half-elf **commoner**) and her wife, the plump, apple-cheeked Heather Brackenridge (NG female human **commoner**) keep the village supplied with tools, as well as foodstuffs and a varied assortment of sundries. The couple's adopted halfling twins, Kira and Merrick (NG young halfling **commoner**), usually help or run errands. The family lives above the store.

Not originally a native of Fulhurst Moors, the temperamental Aisha sometimes gets irritated by the insular, rumormongering and frightful disposition of the other villagers, but her good-natured wife usually has a calming effect on her. The pair adopted Kira and Merrick three years ago, after their parents were slain by one of Kellurn's traps.

2: ELIZA REEDE'S HUT

This modest hut of stone and turf is not much to look at, but the interior is surprisingly tidy and clean. Fragrant bundles of dried herbs and plants hang from the rafters, and a neatly organised work area is set up next to the central fireplace, while a small sleeping area is hidden in the back behind a woven curtain. Most villagers seek out Eliza (N female human **priest**) when they suffer minor ailments, and she aids women of the village with childbirth and other fertility matters.

It is well known Eliza frequently wanders the moor alone, both by day and by night. While this is merely to seek out ingredients for her many potions and remedies, it is enough to make her neighbours' imagination run rampant.

3: GREFFORD HINKS' HOUSE

In a simple stone house by the Blackraven Creek lives Old Man Grefford Hinks (CN male old human **spy**). Still remarkably spry for his advanced years, he can often be found working on his small skiff tethered to the wooden mooring behind his house or seated in the shade in front of his house, whittling a piece of wood.

Grefford has been distilling his own whiskey for decades, and has nothing but scorn for Mayor Meriweather's recent ban on hard liquor. Not a fan of authority at the best of times, Grefford feels it's a crime to deny a scared man a drink to calm his nerves. As such, he keeps selling his moonshine to the other villagers. Experienced at moving about unseen, he easily keeps the location of his still hidden from the constable, Devyn Matson.

4: MAYOR MERIWEATHER'S HOME

Inside this impressive two-storey manor house lives Minerva Meriweather (LN female middle-aged human **commoner**) and her husband Darinn (N male human **commoner**) along with a cook and a servant. The house also serves as office and storage facility for the Meriweather's wool business.

Minerva Meriweather is a tall and striking woman, her hair still jet black despite her being in her mid-fifties. She is both shrewd and practical, and her obvious organizational skills have made her the natural choice for mayor for over a decade. Darinn Meriweather, a notorious womanizer with a meticulously groomed beard, is a full partner in the business, but it is well known Minerva is mainly responsible for the Meriweather's prosperity.

She is sincerely troubled by the problems Fulhurst Moors faces, but has been unable to do anything about it except impose a prohibition designed to keep the frightened villagers from sinking into a drunken stupor.

5: TEMPLE

The interior of the circular main area of the village temple is decorated with colourful paintings depicting scenes of prosperous trade and strong warriors and priests protecting the weak. Coloured panes of glass in the domed ceiling filter the sunlight, bathing the room in a golden glow. An alcove in the north wall holds an altar dedicated to Conn (LN god of community, family and rulership), while the altar in the south alcove is dedicated to Darlen (LG god of law, order, justice and the sun). A small cemetery stands behind the temple, surrounded by a low stone wall.

The village chaplain Esmond Wynne (LG male human cleric 5) has a modest cell in the eastern section of the temple. Here he spends most of the time between the poorly-attended sermons praying for guidance. Esmond feels he has failed to protect and console the villagers, and is growing ever more desperate and depressed.

OLD MAN HINKS' MOONSHINE

This golden malt whiskey has a sharp and peaty flavour. It is most often stored in dark brown clay jugs. Every cup drunk beyond the first gives a -1 penalty to Wisdom-based skill checks and a +1 bonus to Wisdom saving throws made to resist *fear* and similar spells for 10 minutes. Anyone drinking more than four cups within the span of an hour must make a DC 12 Fortitude save for each additional cup drunk or be poisoned for an hour per consumed cup.

6 WILL-O'-WISPS WITH PERSONALITY

While most normal will-o'-wisps glow white or pale blue, six wisps of unusual colouring have gained particularly notoriety among the villagers of Fulhurst Moors. None know the wisps' true names; the villagers have taken to identifying them via their colouration.

1. The villagers call Yellow "The Pale Death." The wisp takes the form of a shrivelled man, gliding silently across the bog. As Yellow approaches, the victim loses all sense of hearing, then taste, then eventually sight and even touch. All that is left is a horrid stench of age and death: brittle skin, soft eyes and teeth. The villagers believe Yellow's touch means death. In reality, its victims die of fear before the wisp even gets close.
2. Green is surrounded by an immense cloud of luminescent, buzzing flies. Vines twist and reeds dance as the wisp moves, animated by its unquestionably malevolent presence. Green draws upon the hostility of nature, upon cold eyes and gleaming teeth in still water. The wisp's victims are driven to paranoia by the sounds of insects and beasts, and flee through the bogs until they die of exposure.
3. A disfigured face is visible within Blue's glow. Bloated and grey, the drowned head chatters with cold. Blue chases creatures into bogs and ponds, any place where mud grasps with eager hands. The wisp slowly approaches as its prey slowly drowns. A creature may become so disoriented with fear it cannot find air in waist deep water.
4. Purple revels in insanity. It infects the dreams of sleeping or drunk villagers, slowly driving them to terrified madness. Purple usually chooses one villager at a time, breaking his or her mind over the course of many months. This is a long-term strategy, far more nourishing than a quick death. When the victim inevitably takes her or her own life, the wisp is waiting to feed on the anguish.
5. Red leaves a splattering of blood wherever it goes. It revels in the fear and confusion of dripping blood without any apparent source. Sometimes Red generates blood within a villager's stomach or ears, feeding off the terrified frenzy that follows. Other times Red spreads confusion and sows distrust with a well-placed spot of blood on a kitchen knife.
6. Wreathed in ghostly flames, Orange generates intense cold. It lures lost villagers with illusory campfires, then watches silently as they freeze to death. Nothing is more delicious than the panic of a victim unable to get warm.

To depict these atypical will-o'-wisps, use the statistics for a normal individual, but modify them to account for each wisp's flavour text. For example, Orange inflicts cold damage, not lightning damage.

6: THE BELL AND WHISTLES

The cosy common room of the Bell and Whistles Tavern is the favourite gathering place for many of the villagers at day's end.

Bulgrim Graycairn (N male dwarf **commoner**), a stocky dwarf with a thick black beard arranged in seven distinctive braids, runs the tavern with the aid of his wife Grellun and their four daughters (all N female dwarf **commoner**). While Grellun prepares her famous mutton and potato stew in the kitchen, Bulgrim serves tankards of dark draft ale from behind the bar.

Travellers usually have their pick of the comfortable rooms on the first floor.

Bulgrim is conflicted about the mayor's decision to ban strong alcohol. On the one hand, he is losing an increasing number of customers who prefer to sip moonshine whiskey elsewhere. On the other hand, the drinking brought a belligerent atmosphere to the tavern, and there are still plenty of folk who drop by to fill up on ale and gossip.

7: VILLAGE HALL

Built in dark grey stone, the village hall functions as the courthouse, jail and gathering place for village meetings.

Devyn Matson (LN male human **veteran**), the burly village constable, has a small apartment in one section of the hall, while another section holds three simple cells. Not overly bright, but dedicated and honest, Devyn frequently fills the cells with local drunkards and troublemakers in his futile attempt to keep the precarious situation in check.

8: WIZARD'S TOWER

The compact stone tower atop the hill on the eastern edge of Fulhurst Moors was originally a watchtower. It is now the home of the wizard Kelurn Tinddar (NE male human wizard [necromancer] 6) and his ambitious, unprincipled apprentice Rilad (NE male human wizard [necromancer] 2).

Kelurn, a stout and balding man, is a respected member of the community, and occasionally entertains guests in the dining hall located on the ground floor. The first floor contains the wizard's private library and Rilad's room, while Kelurn's own quarters and laboratory are located on the top floor.

In the cellar, a secret door leads down to a ritual chamber and several cells where Kelurn keeps some of his undead creations. From here, a hidden passage leads under the hill and out onto the moor, allowing Kelurn and Rilad to move unseen when they go to meet the will-o'-wisps or to set ambushes for the villagers and other unfortunate travellers.

Kelurn's bargain with the will-o'-wisps of the peat bog has allowed him and Rilad to uncover both dark knowledge and lost objects of power from the ritual sacrificial sites in the bog. The pair has no qualms about sacrificing innocent lives to further their gain.

LIFE IN FULHURST MOORS

While life in Fulhurst Moors has always been rough, the recent events have turned the mood dangerously sour. Most villagers have little to fill their evenings except drinking and retelling the latest horror stories. In response to several incidents of public drunkenness, Mayor Meriweather has outlawed the consumption of strong alcohol in the village.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Most villagers either raise sheep on the moors or cut peat in the bogs. While most of the peat is used locally for fuel, some is exported to other nearby settlements along with the wool that Mayor Meriweather buys from the sheep farmers.

LAW & ORDER

Devyn Matson has been very diligent about upholding the peace, ever since he was appointed as constable five years ago. He dutifully investigates any deaths or suspicious incidents, but when it comes to the trouble caused by Kelurn Tinddar and the will-o'-wisp, he is woefully out of his depth. Subsequently, he spends more time dealing with the symptoms of the fear gripping the village than getting to the root of the problem.

EVENTS

While the PCs are in the village, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

D6	EVENT
1	One of the villagers is passed out drunk in the middle of the market square. After a couple of minutes, Constable Devyn Matson arrives to haul the drunkard away to sleep it off in a jail cell.
2	A violent thunderstorm rolls over the village, followed by severe rain. Blackraven Creek is in danger of overflowing, threatening to flood large parts of the village.
3	Some of the peat cutters swear they spotted a man shambling through the bogs, moving like a sleepwalker and not responding to their calls.
4	Several sheep are found slain, savaged in the night by an unknown predator.
5	Peat cutters return from the bog with a large rune-covered bronze disc. Mayor Meriweather insists they hand it over to Kelurn Tinddar for further examination.
6	Mayor Meriweather discreetly approaches the PCs, promising a substantial award if they can uncover the location of Grefford Hinks' moonshine still.



HARD BAY

Words Greg Marks **Cartography** Thomas Fayen

Hard Bay's fate has ever been tied to the sea. Although blessed with a natural, protected harbour and plentiful fishing, foul weather and a dangerous, unwholesome reputation have conspired to keep the village nothing more than a dreary, isolated place. A vein of smuggling and thievery ran deep through the village until the Sharkrazor pirates were crushed four decades ago. Now administered by three minor noble families, a darker horror than mere piracy lurks within the place. Rumours speak of strange fires set amid a circle of ancient, weathered stones atop a nearby shunned hill when the moon is new and of strange, abhorrent fishmen lurking in the abandoned, half-drowned smuggler tunnels beneath the ramshackle village.

HARD BAY AT A GLANCE

Hard Bay's fate has ever been tied to the sea. The village boasts a protected harbour, plentiful fishing and a natural place for offloading exotic goods while avoid the taxes of larger cities. Such advantages suggest Hard Bay should be larger than the village it has become, but the foul coastal weather and a dangerous reputation have conspired to prevent it from becoming more populous and affluent.

Nearly a century ago, Hard Bay was founded by the Sharkrazors, a group of pirates and thieves who sought to use the protected harbour to smuggle goods. At its height, the village boasted nearly a dozen taverns and half as many brothels, along with dockside warehouses crammed full of plundered goods.

It all came to an end four decades ago when the authorities came in force with an army and a flotilla of armed ships. Their vessels sunk and their crews rounded up and executed, the Sharkrazors' hold was broken. Hard Bay, damaged and burned, was given over to a consortium of three minor noble families, each with a storied and impressive name but with nearly no fortune to speak of. Little did anyone know, the coming of the families would bring darker horrors to the village than piracy.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler High Councillor Afric Blufont

Government Aristocratic council (council made up of one representative from each of the three families)

Population 138 (80 humans, 5 dwarves, 12 half-elves, 41 other)

Alignments NE

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven

Resources & Industry Fishing, pearls, smuggling.

NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than hardworking peasants. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

Aldal Stronghammer (location 4; NG male dwarf **gladiator**)
Forgemaster of Stronghammer Metalworks, Aldal goes out of his way to gruffly encourage visitors to town not to stay past sunset. He is rarely seen without his overly large flask.

Councillor Ellagana Moisan (location 2; NE female tainted one human **spy**)
Ellagana is the beautiful and hedonistic leader of the wealthy Moisan family. Through her family, she controls the docks and most of the trade.

Councillor Reynard Gerou (location 3; N male human **noble**)
Reynard smoothly plays a dangerous game, paying lip service to the Cult of the Deep. He has wandered from the cult and now seeks only to further his family's position.

Fancy Tomnal Stagers (location 9; CN male human **spy**)
Sent by the Sharkrazor pirates who once held Hard Bay, Fancy

Tomnal is spying on the village to see how the buccaneers might regain control. He isn't sure what, but he has noticed that something is not quite right in Hard Bay. Unfortunately for him, the cult has already marked him as the sacrifice for the new moon.

High Councillor Afric Blufont (location 1; NE male tainted one human **mage**)
Patriarch of the Blufont family, Afric is the senior member of the ruling council and the most powerful, ruthless member in the Cult of the Deep.

Old Moreg (location 7; CN male human **mage**)
The crazed Moreg tends the lighthouse with his summoned "friends."

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of the village comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **Blufont Manor:** Family home of the Blufonts, much of the business of the Cult of the Deep is conducted within. Tunnels have been dug in its basement that lead into the Depths.
2. **Moisan Manor:** Formerly a large brothel, Moisan Manor is the most renovated building in the village and drips with excess. Most nights, it hosts raucous ball.
3. **Gerou Manor:** Small home of the Gerou family, it is notable for its roof mounted telescope.
4. **Stronghammer Metalworks:** The smithy is run by a family of dwarves that try to protect visitors to Hard Bay.
5. **The Driftwood:** The curio shop is owned by the Blufont family. Trading in unusual items and lore is always possible here.
6. **Docks:** The docks are the focus of trade in Hard Bay. The warehouses are in varying states of disrepair.
7. **Lookout Point Lighthouse:** Lookout Point is capped by a lighthouse that guards the bay and is reachable by a dangerous causeway.
8. **The Evening Mist:** The public house has rooms for let.
9. **Maritime Hill:** Topped by an altar and standing stones, the hill is clearly used for some fell purpose.
10. **The Depths:** In these secret tunnels the Cult of the Deep meet to worship their piscine gods.



VILLAGE LORE

A PC may know something about Hard Bay, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

DC 10: Once a smuggler's port that grew to a village, when the local Sharkrazor pirates were crushed, Hard Bay was given to three noble families to administer.

DC 15: The village has ample fishing and is still used as a trading port by some. Most notable are the unusual pearls recovered and worked into coral jewellery by the locals.

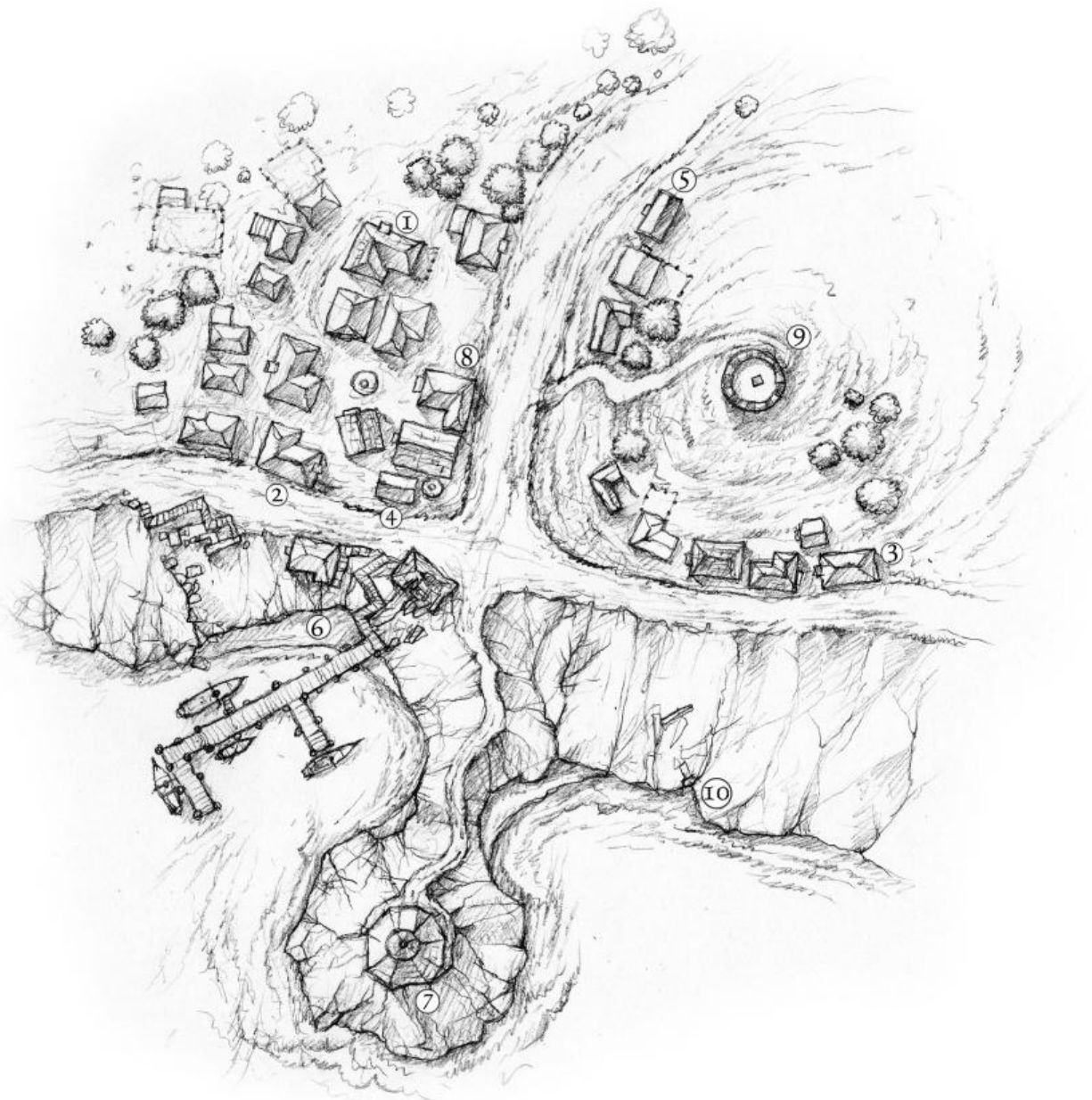
DC 20: Rumours persist, that the pirates still have an interest in Hard Bay, and indeed, its locals remain an independent and unfriendly lot with their own customs and religious practices.

VILLAGERS

Appearance Shaggy and wild dark hair is typical for both men and women, though the three families often tame theirs with a length of ribbon. Large eyes and thin lips are common among the tainted one populace.

Dress Utilitarian fishing gear such as thick gloves, aprons and boots are common. Due to the frequent inclement weather and thick mists, the villagers often wear layers.

Nomenclature *male* Aribert, Deverell, Varriel; *female* Anasielle, Coulette, Flouressa; *family* Bayne, Bellrose, Sanquon.



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: BLUFONT MANOR

This manor shows signs of age and decay, despite the Blufont's wealth. Affric (NE male tainted one human **mage**), his wife Alisonda (NE female tainted one human **priest**) and brother Clarne (NE male tainted one human **cult fanatic**) are the only occupants. Many of the manor's rooms are closed off and given over to dust and rats. Only the library, kitchen, dining hall and the residents' bedrooms are in use. In a dusty second floor gallery, hang portraits of the family through the generations. Several depict family members who, though long since dead, are disturbing similar in appearance to Affric, Alisonda and Clarne.

The manor is the focus of the Cult of the Deep. The Blufonts always delved into the unspeakable, but coming to Hard Bay, Affric located secret smuggling passages leading into the Depths (Area 10). In these water-filled caves, he encountered the Yaknath who worship the unspeakable horrors he had only read about in certain blasphemous tomes. His entire family has now undergone rituals to become tainted ones. Now Affric controls the cult and provides sacrifices to the Yaknath in return for the bounty of sea. The concealed passage to the Depths is behind a secret door (DC 20 Wisdom [Perception] locates) in the cellar.

2: MOISAN MANOR

The smooth and graceful Ellagana Moisan (NE female tainted one human **spy**) and her large brood dwell in the largest home in Hard Bay. Ellagana has had more than a dozen husbands, all who sadly disappeared, died or otherwise met a foul end (all were sacrificed to the Yaknath). However, these poor souls have blessed Ellagana with many capable tainted one children that run the docks and warehouses and generate significant amounts of coin she uses to fund her extravagant lifestyle.

As dusk falls, except the three nights of the new moon, the manor is filled with light and music as the family throw debauchery-filled parties for the aristocracy, upcoming gentry or those the family wishes to intoxicate before sacrificing the poor insensate fool to their unholy masters.

3: GEROU MANOR

Reynard Gerou (N male human **noble**) and the rest of his family have never fully committed to the Cult of the Deep. Paying lip service, and participating in the rituals to maintain their position, they stay as aloof as possible from the works of the blasphemous religion, instead focusing on their jewellery business. Of the three families, the Gerou boast the fewest number who have undergone the tainted one rituals.

Their home is notable for its second storey, where the family works pearls and coral into jewellery, under a skylight that lets them watch the stars. On clear nights, Reynard is often on the

walk surrounding the manor roof, gazing at the stars through a great telescope mounted atop the manor.

4: STRONGHAMMER METALWORKS

This stout, box-like stone building boasts a grand sign declaring it as the Stronghammer Metalworks and the sounds of hammering amid belching smoke emanate from within during daylight hours. Aldal Stronghammer (NG male dwarf **gladiator**), his wife Agleif, sons Sigbert and Hilbert and daughter Hethena (all NG dwarf **guards**) work the forge.

Aldal adventured for a short time before settling down, and the dangers he witnessed scarred him enough that he rarely moves beyond arm's reach of strong drink. Aldal is afraid the nightmares have followed him to Hard Bay, having noticed the odd behaviour of his neighbours, new moon lights on Maritime Hill and the many unexplained disappearances. The dwarves have become very insular and cautious as a result; afraid to venture from their walls except in the bright of day. However, still good at heart, Aldal might offer travellers a slurred, gruff warning to leave Hard Bay before it's too late.

5: THE DRIFTWOOD

The Driftwood seems wildly out of place for a small fishing village. A small, dark shop filled with books and strange curios, one never knows what oddities might be found within. Owned by Clarne Blufont (NE male tainted one human **cult fanatic**), it is the only place in the village where one might buy or sell magic items or tomes of lore.

6: DOCKS

The docks and the surrounding warehouses are Hard Bay's heart and see the most activity. Small ships offload their cargo here, hoping to get a better price by avoiding the heavier taxes of the cities. While fisherfolk cast their nets and salt their catch, divers, many of whom are tainted ones able to breathe water, gather pearls and coral for sale to the jewellers.

At the top of the bluffs stand two large warehouses and a collection of smaller buildings where the goods are stored and assessed. Illian Moisan (NE male tainted one human **cult fanatic**), eldest son of Ellagana, is the dockmaster and works from one of the smaller building. He is a deeply handsome man with dark eyes and a wry sense of humour, though rumours persist he and his mother have an unnaturally close relationship.

The eastern warehouse has suffered over the years and has not been repaired. It leaks badly in storms and is easy to sneak into, should someone be so inclined. On more than one occasion Fancy Tomnal has met privately here with visiting members of the Sharkrazors to plot ways to take over Hard Bay.

7: LOOKOUT POINT LIGHTHOUSE

The Lookout Point Lighthouse is avoided by all Hard Bay's residents. Not only is the causeway difficult to negotiate in the best of weather (DC 12 Dexterity [Acrobatics]) to avoid falling to the wave-lashed sharp rocks below), but it is home to Old Moreg (CN male human **mage**), who's sanity has long since fled. Moreg tends the light and it has never failed, but villagers have often noted shadows against the light that are not entirely natural.

Their fears are well founded. Moreg has a significant personal library of things best left unremembered, and he spends his time summoning creatures he finds described in those books. The things he has witnessed have driven the old man beyond the bounds of sanity and left him shattered and thoroughly unpleasant. He attempts to drive anyone that bothers him into the sea or back across the slick causeway.

Moreg is aware of the Yaknath and the tainted ones and he does not trust anyone that seeks his knowledge. Should he be won over, he is a powerful ally against the three families and their unspeakable creatures.

8: THE EVENING MIST

A weathered sign depicting a mist-shrouded lighthouse over the Evening Mist's front door creaks in the wind. The inn's clientele almost exclusively comprises superstitious humans. The tainted ones are more likely to spend their evenings at Moisan Manor or

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Hard Bay, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

D6 RUMOUR

1	More than one voice is often heard coming from the Lookout Point lighthouse, but only one sounds human.
2	There are caves in the cliffs below the tide line once used by pirates to hide their contraband.
3*	The Moisans have a fascination with elves. Visitors with elven blood can get invited to the parties at Moisan Manor and have a night they will never forget.
4	Many visitors to Hard Bay disappear leaving behind no clues as to where they have gone. Sometimes their loved ones come looking for them, and it is not uncommon for them to disappear as well.
5*	The lights seen during the new moon on Maritime Hill are caused by the spirits of the fey slain there by pirates in days long gone.
6	Something is wrong in Hard Bay and the three families have something to do with it. Many family members look especially odd, with large eyes or thin lips.

*False rumour

in the Depths and the dwarves are too afraid to venture from their home. While technically owned by Afric Blufont, the inn is rented by a large half-elven family, the Starweathers.

The inn's most notorious resident is Fancy Tomnal Staggers (CN male human **spy**), a hard-drinking gambler who always seems to have enough coin, despite a lack of an obvious source. Unknown to the villagers, he is in Hard Bay at the behest of the Sharkrazor pirates, looking for an opening for the pirates to gain less overt control over the village than they held in the past. So far Fancy Tomnal has concentrated on gathering information and eventually plans to buy one or two houses and to set up some criminal enterprise under the cover of a gambling parlour. He is unlikely to get the chance, however, as his questions have aroused the attention of the three families and they have marked him for the next sacrifice atop Maritime Hill when the new moon comes.

9: MARITIME HILL

The stones atop the lightly forested Maritime Hill are avoided by all sane folk. Popular myth says it is a ruined faerie hold which explains the lights and fires seen there during the new moon. Most members of the three families claim it is an ancient monument to lost mariners, with no features of interest.

Those climbing the hill find a circle of standing stones around an altar of strange black stone whose sides are carved with tentacles, fins, eyes and fangs. The top is scarred with hundreds of blade marks and is deeply stained by old blood.

On the night of every new moon, the Cult of the Deep climbs the hill to pay homage to the Yaknath, often with a representative of that fell race in attendance. They dance, chant and sacrifice in the name of the giant fishmen and their dark gods. In turn, the most faithful are rewarded with the chance to couple with the fish folk and become one of the tainted ones.

10: THE DEPTHS

Caverns, some inundated, run through the bluffs under the village. The main entrance is just below the water line to the east of the causeway leading to Lookout Point (DC 15 Wisdom [Perception] spots from the water). They can also be accessed via a secret entrance in Blufont Manor's cellar (Area 1). Here the cult meet to celebrate their twisted beliefs or converse with the Yaknath.

Near the secret entrance is a large cavern where the cult stores robes, torches and cages for sacrificial victims. Yaknath are often in this chamber, as the creatures frequently visit to drop off pearls or other things recovered from the sea.

LIFE IN HARD BAY

Life seems normal on the surface, but it is clear to perceptive observers Hard Bay suffers from some deeper rot. Most of the architecture remains a ramshackle mesh of whatever the smugglers built, with only the aristocracy having made any efforts to repair or improve their homes.

TAINED ONE

The spiritual taint that accompanies worship of the Deep Ones can result in several strange physical deformities and odd abilities. Tainted ones are known to exhibit strange powers, which include, but are not restricted to the following. Adding one of these abilities increases the CR of the tainted one by +1/2.

PASSIVE ABILITIES

Deep Adaptation. The tainted one has a fused climb speed of 20 feet, and a swim speed of 20 feet. It has advantage on all Strength (Athletics) checks to climb and to gain distance in the water. However, the tainted one also has disadvantage on all Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks made to jump and halves the distance for its long and high jump.

Swarming Assault. The tainted one takes on a slightly piranha-like countenance. The tainted one inflicts an additional 3 (1d6) damage of the weapon type per 3 Hit Dice it possesses when it hits a creature with the grappled or restrained condition. This extra damage is doubled on a critical hit. They are cowardly, tough; Charisma (Intimidation) checks performed against such tainted ones are made at advantage.

ACTIVE ABILITIES

Insane Sermon. The tainted one is overcome with horrible knowledge. As an Action, it may force an intelligent creature that can understand it to make a Charisma saving throw with a DC equal to 8 + the tainted one's proficiency bonus + the tainted one's Charisma modifier, or suffer from disadvantage on its next Wisdom saving throw. Tainted ones with this feature are slightly insane and suffer from disadvantage on all Wisdom (Insight) checks.

Voice of the Deep. The tainted one speaks with a burbling, unearthly voice that motivates other members of the dread cult. As a bonus action once per turn, the tainted one can command a servant of the cult within sight to strike down an infidel. When using an Action to attack the specified target, the servant inflicts an extra 3 (1d6) damage of the weapon type for every 3 Hit Dice the tainted one with this feature possesses.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

The village survives almost entirely on the trade centred on the docks, supplemented by revenue brought in by the Stronghammer smith and Gerou family jewellers. Fishing is everything to almost everyone in the village.

LAW & ORDER

Hard Bay largely polices itself. The oldest sons of the three families enforce their parents' will with a few stout clubs. Since the three families own nearly all the land and employ all the citizens, the threat of eviction keeps most folk in line. Goodly folk from the other nearby villages give Hard Bay a wide berth; few cares what really goes on here.

YAKNATH

This giant-sized fish man has a single large eye above its fanged maw. A pair of tentacles sprout from its sides, below long, scaled arms that end in huge claws.

Large aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armour)

Hit Points 105 (11d10 + 44)

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19	14	18	16	14	12
(+4)	(+2)	(+4)	(+3)	(+2)	(+1)

Saving Throws Str +7, Con +7, Int +6, Cha +4

Skills Deception +4, Intimidation +4, Perception +5, Stealth +5

Damage Resistances acid, fire, psychic

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Deep Speech, telepathy 60 ft.

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Amphibious. The yaknath can breathe air and water.

Actions

Multiattack. The yaknath makes two claw melee attacks or may use its Horrid Lure once instead of one claw attack.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 +4) slashing damage.

Horrid Lure. One humanoid the yaknath can see within range of the yaknath's telepathy must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed for 1 day. The charmed target obeys the yaknath's telepathic commands. If the target suffers any bodily harm or suicidal command from the yaknath, the target can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful, or if the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the yaknath's Horrid Lure for the next 24 hours.

NEEDLEBRIAR

Words John Bennett **Cartography** Maciej Zagorski

Needlebriar lies in a remote corner of a large duchy. Years ago, war devastated the small halfling community, leading the villagers to commit heinous acts of cannibalism and murder to survive. The violence awoke an ancient spirit who granted the desperate halflings the power to hunt those who dared to harm them. Generations have passed and the halflings continue to hunt the nearby lands, transforming into beasts to sate their hunger. Dancing around raging bonfires, they hold bloody feasts, devouring their captive victims, in worship of the fell spirit of the land, becoming more like wild animals every day as they slink further into depravity. Many of the halfling have the tell-tale shake of cannibalism about them and shuffle about the village in heavy leather cloaks. Meanwhile, the rest of the duchy becomes more and more suspicious.

NEEDLEBRIAR AT A GLANCE

Ruler: Boram Thornnuggle (but really Rillka Thorngaggle)

Government: Secret syndicate

Alignments: N, CN, NE, CE

Population: 156 (156 halflings)

Notable Folk: Fosco Mooncaller (Thorn Island), Maara Thornhill (Maara's Apothecary)

Languages: Common, Druidic

Resources & Industry: Brewing, farming, fishing, leather working, pigs

Needlebriar takes its name from the thorny hedgerows snaking along its streets and coiling about the earthen halfling homes whose windows stare outward like cold, dead eyes. The village air feels hot and moist, like the open jaws of a predator while its citizens shuffle about in thick leather cloaks pulled tight about them to hide the tell-tale shaking resulting from cannibalism.

Generations ago, a duke forced Needlebriar's able-bodied halflings to fight in his war. While the men-folk were off dying as fodder, the young, weak and old fell prey to bandits and monsters. When the few survivors returned close to winter, they found their loved ones on the verge of starvation. To survive, the remaining villagers began to consume the flesh of their dead. As they feasted, a feral howl ripped through the village, emanating from an ancient, worn stone altar on an island in the middle of Needlebriar Lake. The villagers had inadvertently awoken an ancient, corrupted animal spirit imprisoned in the altar. The spirit, Hunger Devours Moon, granted the villagers the power to transform into animals and hunt their prey as long as they continued to practise cannibalism and ritualistic sacrifice.

The halflings continue to serve the fell spirit, conducting raids on the nearby human lands to bring back prisoners to feast upon, all the while making the attacks seem like the predations of animals or monsters. The halflings try to hide behind a veneer of civility and decorum to waylay suspicion, yet fall further into depravity. Needlebriar's ruler Rillka Thorngaggle, the Moon Matron, pushes Needlebriar's citizens into increasingly violent raids, supported by the druid, Fosco Mooncaller. Rumours are beginning to crowd thickly about the village as an increasing number of visitors and tax collectors are reported missing.



VILLAGE LORE

A PC may know something about Needlebriar, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

DC 10: Needlebriar is renowned for its thorny hedgerows festooned with bright red flowers.

DC 15: The village fell into decline years ago during a war and has not recovered well.

DC 20: Several prominent merchants have disappeared near the village lately.

VILLAGERS

Appearance: Needlebriar's citizens are often thin for halflings, with hard, wiry bodies. Both men and women wear their hair long. Fingernails and toenails are untrimmed and filthy.

Dress: To hide the effects of cannibalism, many of the citizens wear heavy, leather cloaks. Jewellery consists of bits of bone and any gems or golds stolen from their victims.

Nomenclature: *male* Cade, Miro, Osborn, Surnak; *female* Anafa, Reenee, Verna, Yoneedall; *family* Bristlebrow, Huskwallow, Needlesticks, Thornhumper

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Needlebriar, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

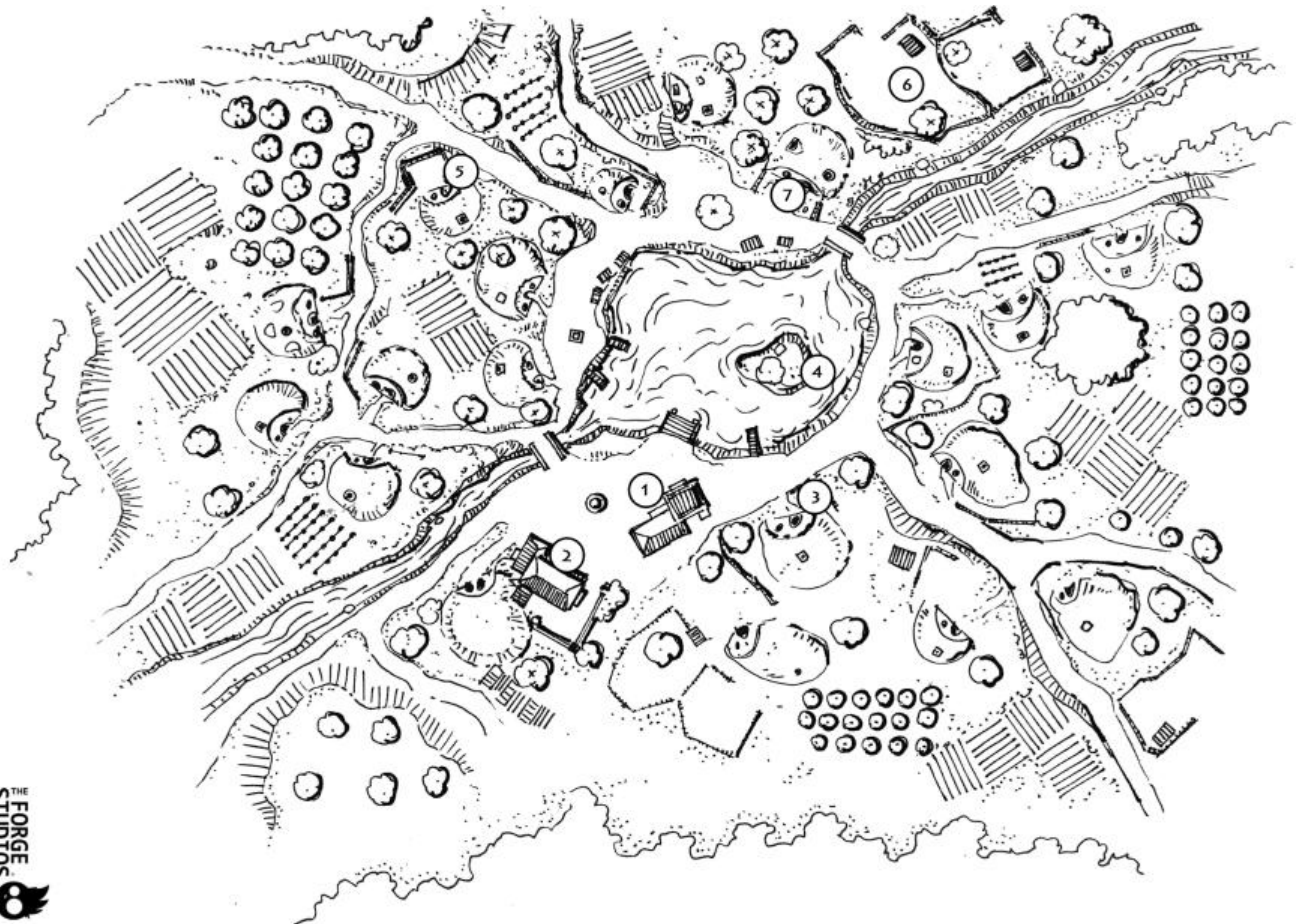
D6	RUMOUR
1*	The bodies of Needlebriar's citizens are buried under the hedgerows which is why the flowers bloom red.
2*	The halflings of Needlebriar wear heavy cloaks because they are ugly and deformed by disease, possibly a plague or leprosy.
3*	Needlebriar never recovered from the war many years ago in which most of its citizens perished. To survive, they practiced evil sorcery. They wear the skin of those they defeat in spell duels.
4	Though remote, Needlebriar is known for its apothecary shop and its marrow bone brewed beer.
5	Needlebriar's citizens are not known for their hospitality and seem to dislike humans. Most think this stems from how they were treated during the war many years ago.
6	Needlebriar is in a wild, remote country so it's not uncommon for people to go missing in that area. Bandits and monsters abound in the region.

*False rumour

NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

Most of Needlebriar comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **Prickly Pixie:** Kaleb Greenbottle runs Needlebriar's one inn and tavern. The quaint faux inviting attire masks its sinister nature. Many a visitor has been poisoned and captured here only to end up in a halfling stew pot. Tunnels beneath the inn connect to Needlebriar Wares and Needlebriar Jail, allowing the halflings to move prisoners in secret.
2. **Needlebriar Wares:** This general store carries common items, farming and fishing equipment, as well as some adventuring gear, but not armour or weapons. The owner and operator is Etune Goodbarrel, a mean, violent halfling woman. Underneath the store is a storehouse with weapons and disguises used in the halflings' raids. Tunnels connect to the Prickly Pixie and jail.
3. **Needlebriar Jail:** This mostly empty jail serves as a front. The real jail is below where prisoners are kept before they are sacrificed and eaten. Needlebriar's leader, Rillka Thorngaggle, spends most of her time here.
4. **Needlebriar Island:** The island rests in a small lake at the village's heart. Surrounded by thorny hedgerows stands a decrepit stone statue. The statue serves as a prison for the ancient animal spirit Hunger Devours Moon. The spirit can warp a few worshippers into animals if it's appeased with blood. Fosco Mooncaller, serves as the spirit's emissary.
5. **Maara's Apothecary:** Needlebriar's renowned apothecary sits at the edge of the village. Maara Thornhill, an expert herbalist but impatient wizard, runs the place. She keeps out of Rillka's and the village's machinations, instead focusing on how to bind Hunger Devours Moon for her own ends.
6. **Bone Pit:** Whatever the halflings cannot eat of their victims, and the pigs do not want, gets buried in this field. Usually, a few halflings are posted here to keep an eye out. Strange sights and sounds occur in the Bone Pit regularly and occasionally some foul creature emerges from the pit to terrorize the surrounding countryside.
7. **Mayoral Residence:** Needlebriar's puppet mayor, Boram Thornnuggle, operates from this modest home. He acts as the face of Needlebriar, ensuring outsiders do not get too suspicious of what occurs in the village. Boram knows his survival depends on doing his job well. If he does not, he will be Rillka's main course for dinner.



LIFE IN NEEDLEBRIAR

At first glance, there seems to be nothing wrong with Needlebriar's halflings and it appears like any other halfling community. It is when one looks closer, you notice there are no songs sung to daily tasks, no cheer in meeting neighbours and no halfling children running amuck along the needle-sharp hedgerows. The whole village begins to feel like its hiding, waiting to ambush its prey.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Many halflings farm, growing wheat in the fields and hearty root vegetables in well-tended gardens. Others raise pigs and much of the meat is sold to merchants or taken to nearby markets. The halflings consider pork a decent substitute if human or other demi-human flesh is not available. A few halflings engage in brewing beer and have developed several popular beer styles using bone marrow (usually from cows or pigs but they brew a special beer for celebrations using human bone marrow). Needlebriar is also known for its excellent leather-working skills, though the halflings are careful not to sell leather fashioned from human skin lest it give them away.

LAW & ORDER

Though Boram Thornnuggle there is the mayor, Rillka Thorngaggle secretly rules Needlebriar as the Moon Matron, enforcing order and leading raids. Not every halfling participates in the raids but nearly all offer support in some way. Justice is swift and harsh, and those who break taboos or endanger the village end up in a cooking pot. There is no place for the sick or weak in Needlebriar; they are the dredges of society who threaten the safety of the others.

CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS

Needlebriar's halflings first became cannibals out of necessity after the war but continued their foul practises due to Hunger Devours Moon's evil influence. The humans of the duchy are still blamed for the halflings' plight and are enemies to be destroyed and eaten. It's customary for halfling raiders to take a piece of each victim and keep it on their person. They believe each kill makes them stronger.

At the full moon, the halflings pray to Hunger Devours Moon, transforming their leaders into animals. Afterwards, the halfling raiders conduct their hunt, disguised as beasts, scouring the countryside for prey. They make their attacks look like the depredations of animals or other monster attacks. Then on a moonless night, they hold a feast on the island, venerating their foul spirit protector around raging bonfires and devour their captives. The remains are then buried in the Bone Pit or fed to the pigs while skin is taken for leather working.

VILLAGE DRESSING

Use this table to generate the minor sights and sounds the PCs experience as they move about Needlebriar.

D20 DRESSING/EVENT

1	A brief rainstorm sweeps in; however, the rain smells strongly of blood. After it passes, the red flowers on the thorny hedgerows take on a vibrant hue.
2	A small halfling boy, his stomach gurgling hungrily, drools while staring at a random PC.
3	No matter the place or time, every hour a random PC hears a wolf howling close by, getting nearer each time. No one else but the PC hears the howling.
4	A group of halflings walk by, wearing heavy cloaks. A random PC notices the halflings' arms trembling.
5	An out of town merchant queries passers-by if anyone has seen his friend who went missing the night before.
6	A halfling girl drags a large bloodstained sack behind her as she appears to be heading home.
7	A random PC notices a group of halflings gambling nearby, tossing handfuls of teeth on the ground. If they are asked, they identify the game as "teethsies."
8	A lone, emaciated wolf runs through the village but no one pays it any heed.
9	Halflings ply boats on the lake, their poles listlessly dipping into the water.
10	A group of halfling women pass around a tray of fragrant meat pies. They nod appreciatively to one another as they each take a bite.
11	A naked man, covered in blood, runs screaming through the village with five halflings in pursuit.
12	A dog meanders by, gleefully holding what looks like a severed human arm in its mouth.
13	A herd of pigs trundles down the lane, led by a dog and group of halfling children who try to avoid the PCs.
14	A cloaked halfling suddenly falls in front of the PCs and begins shuddering violently, making animal sounds.
15	A half-blind old halfling woman attempts to bite a random PC. Her teeth are filed to points.
16	As the PCs travel about, cloaked halflings going about their business eye them warily.
17	A halfling child attempts to ride a giant pig which threatens to crash into a random PC.
18	A halfling child sits on the ground playing with a doll before taking a knife out and hacking of its head and limbs.
19	A group of halflings, men and women, suddenly start howling in unison, stop, and then move on as if nothing happened.
20	The air feels unnaturally humid and wet. The PCs hear the faint sound of an animal panting, carried on the wind.

THE SURROUNDING LOCALITY

Needlebriar lies in a remote corner of a large duchy, watered by the tributary of a wide river flowing from the mountains looming to the east. The section of mountains near Needlebriar lack any crossable passes, rising steeply from the ground, so few venture out to them. Those who have report tales of tall but thin giants with obsidian skin and blazing red eyes. The giants are said to worship a massive egg of scintillating colours resting on one of the mountaintops.

A thick forest lies just a few miles to the west and north. Though the forest is rich in game, a depraved faerie court makes its home at the forest's heart, enslaving many of the forest's more monstrous denizens and those foolish enough to wander too far in. The Needlebriar halflings occasionally raid the forest's fringes where woodcutters live, allowing them to lay the blame of the disappearances on the forest dwellers. The halflings have an instinctive hatred of the fey but are not numerous enough to directly oppose them.

Southwards, the land rises into rocky hills and jutting cliffs. A nomadic people live here, under constant pressure of being absorbed by the duchy. Many tunnels in the hills lead deep into the lightless depths of the earth. It's believed the hill people can summon foul creatures out from the tunnels to do their bidding

and aid in their defence. Observations of the hill people say some of them are not quite human, pointing to their strangely-coloured eyes and nostrils or scaly skin as evidence.

Access to the village comes from a meandering, single lane path winding through the numerous farms, hamlets and other small villages in the surrounding landscape. The ruins of castles and border forts lurk on lonely hilltops between the settlements, wreckage from the war that devastated the region many generations ago. Over the years, scavengers stole anything of valuable and much of the stone has been used to construct nearby homes. Still, the ruins attract bandits and other monstrous humanoids who utilize them as bases to launch raids. The Needlebriar halflings are very familiar with most of the established bandits, sometimes aiding them and other times preying upon them (especially any groups comprised of mostly humans; no Needlebriar halfling would eat a goblin or similar creatures). Merchants make use of the roads to ply their trade at the various settlements and tax collectors arrive once or twice a year. After the last few disappearances, the tax collectors now travel with small band of guards, if they even go at all.



NOTABLE LOCATIONS IN NEEDLEBRIAR

1: PRICKLY PIXIE

A sign depicting a woman with butterfly wings wrapped in a thorny vine swings lazily over the rounded wooden door of a squat inn sagging under a turf roof and its own age.

The Prickly Pixie is Needlebriar's tavern and inn. It features a homely bar room replete with a smoky hearth. Upstairs, sparse rooms can accommodate both halflings and humans. Overall, the inn is spartan in appearance. An attempt has been made to make the place look comfortable and inviting on the surface but perceptive visitors feel this is just a deception. Many guests have been poisoned here over the years by innkeeper, Kaleb Greenbottle (NE male halfling **spy**) to be eaten at the monthly celebration. An earthen tunnel in the basement connects to the Needlebriar Wares and the jail.

- **Food & Drink** meal (potato and bacon tureen, pork head cheese and [hard] bread) 3 sp, marrow brewed ale 1 sp, wine (pitcher) 3 sp.
- **Accommodation** One-bed human-sized chamber 5 sp; two-bed halfling chamber 10 sp; common room 2 sp.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

While the PCs are here, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

D6	EVENT
1	A fellow patron, a gaudily dressed merchant, suddenly passes out face down in his soup.
2	A loud banging comes from under the floorboards followed by a muffled scream. No one else seems to notice.
3	One of the PCs finds a human eyeball in his soup.
4	Three cloaked halflings stare at the PCs the entire time, slowly sipping their beer and grinning.
5	An emaciated woman, followed by Kaleb, bursts from the kitchen door screaming for help.
6	Any PC eating a meal must make a DC 12 Fortitude saving throw to avoid been poisoned and knocked unconscious for 1d8+1 hours.

2: NEEDLEBRIAR WARES

Moss hangs down from the turf roof and over shop sign of this stout, rectangular stone building.

Needlebriar's general store is a large, rambling affair, selling everything from everyday items, to simple farming and fishing

implements, to basic adventuring gear. By law, no weapons or armour are sold here. Secretly, weapons and armour are kept in the basement which acts as both a storehouse and base for the raiding parties. Tunnels connect the store to both the Prickly Pixie and the jail. One of Needlebriar's captains, Etune Goodbarrel (CE female halfling **berserker**), oversees the store and the hidden storehouse.

- **For Sale:** *potion of animal friendship* (150 gp), *scroll of charm person* (150 gp)

WHAT'S GOING ON?

While the PCs are here, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

D6	EVENT
1	A merchant attempts to haggle with a large halfling woman but then is punched hard in the face.
2	A halfling child outside the store places a necklace of flowers around a PC. This marks the PC as a target to be kidnapped that night.
3	Two halflings carry a crate through the store. Two swords clatter out of the crate loudly onto the floor.
4	A small nervous halfling tries to mop up what appears to be a large bloodstain on the floor.
5	Human teeth fall out of an item a PC is inspecting.
6	In the corner of the store, a PC finds the remains of a half-eaten human foot.

3: NEEDLEBRIAR JAIL

Iron bars fill the windows of what appears at first glance to be a residential home. Two guards posted outside suggest otherwise.

Visitors might wonder why a small village like Needlebriar needs a jail but it has one none the less, mostly for appearances as the cells above ground are almost always empty. The real jail is below ground where the halflings keep their prisoners in narrow, lightless cells before they are eaten in the monthly celebration. Tunnels connect to the Prickly Pixie and Needlebriar Wares. Rillka Thorngaggle (NE female halfling fighter 6) keeps an office under the jail where she plans the halflings' upcoming raids.

A Missing Son: The son of a minor provincial noble went missing during a debauch; rumours suggest he was arrested at Needlebriar after drinking too much of their famous marrow bone beer. To avoid further embarrassment, the noble wishes to hire the PCs to fetch his son from the Needlebriar jail. Of course, the son is there, in the cells below, awaiting a grisly fate.

4: THORN ISLAND

Thorny hedgerows covered in red flowers crawl along the edges of an island in the middle of the small lake. A rough stone statue is just visible through the thorny hedges.

A small, thorny island lies in the middle of Needlebriar Lake surrounded by the village's namesake hedgerows. At its centre rests a strange stone statue. Worn with age, it appears to have once depicted a four-legged creature. It serves as the prison of an ancient, corrupted animal spirit calling itself Hunger Devours Moon. Awoken by the halflings' horrific acts, it retains its powers through acts of veneration involving human sacrifice and

KALEB GREENBOTTLE

NE male halfling **spy**

This halfling man sports a severe widow's peak, small black eyes and sharp, beak-like nose.

Mannerisms: Kaleb darts his head back and forth, often peering at people from the corner of his eye.

Personality: Kaleb appears overly unctuous and ingratiating towards guests but is ruthless. He has an observant and discerning eye.

Background: Kaleb has liked poisons since he was a child, having found some during his first raid. His skills at developing poisons to drug prey serve the village well and he became one of the village's captains, allowing himself to be blessed with Hunger Devours Moon's divine blessings. He keeps a collection of eye balls in jars, taken from his victims over the years. When hunting, he assumes the form of a large bird of prey.

ETUNE GOODBARREL

CE female halfling **berserker**

Etune is a barrel-chested halfling with corded arms and short, bristling hair.

Mannerisms: Loud and boisterous, Etune snorts when she laughs and when she's angry. The difference is hard to tell.

Personality: Etune relishes fighting and violence; running the store is boring, for her. Because of this, she often picks on her underlings, occasionally inflicting severe injuries.

Background: Etune grew up with Rillka (location 3) who seemed to be the only one who could keep the wild halfling calm as Etune likes to charge headfirst into battles. When Rillka became Needlebriar's leader, Etune was her first choice for a captain so she is deeply loyal. She often relies on Rillka's protection when she takes things too far with the others. On hunts, she transforms into a raging boar.

consumption. If the statue absorbs the blood of at least 8 Hit Dice worth of creatures once a month, on the night of the next full moon, it can bestow upon four creatures of evil alignment the druid's ability to wild shape as if the creature were an 8th-level druid. The effect only lasts that night. The island and statue are attended to by Fosco Mooncaller (NE male halfling druid 5), who serves as the spirit's servant and mouthpiece.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

While the PCs are here, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

D4 EVENT

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | A random PC feels hot wet breath on the back of his neck and hears panting. |
| 2 | A sudden wind carries the smell of blood and gore to the PCs, but just as swiftly it is gone. |
| 3 | An accidental kick of a loose rock reveals a severed human hand poking out of the ground. |
| 4 | One of the PCs accidentally pricks himself on the thorny hedgerow. The red flowers on it become noticeably more vibrant in their colouring. |

Druidic Lore: The PCs possess a book with bark pages covered in ancient Druidic writing. It is important the book's contents are deciphered and the only known druid in the area is Fosco. Whatever is written in the book puts the PCs in conflict with Fosco and the Needlebriar halflings.

RILLKA THORNGAGGLE

NE female halfling fighter 6

The beauty of this striking halfling is marred by the severe look in her eyes and the permanent scowl on her face.

Mannerisms: Rillka's gaze is piercing and cold. She talks quickly and sharply.

Personality: Rillka is imperious, barking orders and expecting them to be obeyed. She has little patience and her heart is black and cold after having suffered tragedy.

Background: Rillka was destined to be nothing more than the wife of a leader of Needlebriar and a mother. However, when both her husband and son fell during a raid, Rillka took control of the village during the chaos, slaying and consuming a rival. Rillka has quickly become Needlebriar's most canny but ruthless leader. She fights not just for the village's way of life but also revenge for husband and son. Titled the "Moon Matron," Rillka takes the form of a wolf during raids.

5: MAARA'S APOTHECARY

The pungent smell of herbs and unfamiliar spices wafts out from this large halfling home.

Maara Thornhill (CN female halfling wizard 5) runs an apothecary from her home, specializing in herbs to ease pain and assist in child birth. She has a few magic items found in her travels or traded from merchants for sale. Her basement contains her research into Hunger Devours Moon.

- **For Sale:** *scroll of identify* (150 gp), *scroll of shatter* (250 gp)

Monstrous Ingredients: Someone close to the PCs is deathly sick and Maara might have the cure. She doesn't mind parting with the herbs but asks the PCs to hunt down a monster and to harvest certain of its organs for a spell she is researching.

6: BONE PIT

The stench of death emanates from a stretch of churned earth. Thick clumps of weeds claw up through the ground.

Needlebriar's citizens toss anything they don't consume into a field they loosely refer to as the Bone Pit. Occasionally these remains arise as horrid undead creatures. The creatures never attack the halflings, instead roaming the nearby countryside.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

While the PCs are here, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

D4	EVENT
1	A PC spies something moving beneath the ground.
2	The wind carries the sound of wailing and agony as it scours the weed-choked earth before it dissipates.
3	A PC spies a halfling dumping a bag of ghastly viscera into an open hole in the field.
4	A clawed, gnawed skeletal hand reaches out and grabs a PC's ankle.

Tracking the Beast: The PCs are hired by a nearby settlement to deal with a creature attacking livestock and travellers. The creature is an undead monster risen from the Bone Pit. The monster's tracks lead from its lair back to Needlebriar.

7: MAYORAL RESIDENCE

This quaint halfling home has a well-tended garden. A fresh coat of paint adorns its shuttered windows and front door.

Boram Thornnuggle, Needlebriar's "mayor" lives and works from his well-to-do home. Boram holds little real power in Needlebriar. He mainly operates as a face for visitors, especially those asking too many questions about Needlebriar's citizens.

Missing Tax Collector: The PCs are hired by a local noble. A tax collector with ties to his family has gone missing while visiting Needlebriar and they are desperate to find him.

BORAM THORNUGLE

NE male halfling spy

This man wears a foppish hat and large pendant.

Mannerisms: Boram is always smiling.

Personality: Serving as Needlebriar's mayor has taken its toll. He harbours deep anxiety and paranoia about his position, greatly fearing Rikka's wrath if he fails at his duties.

Background: Boram was always a smooth talker with a beguiling boyish charm which made him the perfect mayor. Even as a child, he was squeamish of blood and gore.

FOSCO MOONCALLER

NE male halfling druid 5

Fosco wears a long beard festooned with animal bones. Tattoos cover his face, his hair spiked with faeces.

Mannerisms: Fosco often behaves as a wild animal would. Like an animal, he has no shame in doing in public certain activities that tend to be done privately.

Personality: Fosco is a bit insane, having served in his position a long time and his mind thinks like that of a preying beast. He recognizes Rikka as the alpha beast of their pack.

Background: Fosco was taken from his family as a child and raised by his predecessor. Many years ago, his animal instincts noticed the steel resolve hidden in Rikka. He secretly caused the deaths of her husband and son and assisted her in becoming the new leader of Needlebriar.

MAARA THORNHILL

CN female halfling wizard 5

This halfling woman wears a pair of ornate spectacles and a heavy robe emblazoned with arcane runes.

Mannerisms: Maara claps and wrings her hands when excited often darting about as she does so.

Personality: Maara would be a better wizard if she could focus on her studies, but instead she is always looking for the next shortcut or scheme to increase her power. She seems to relate better to plants than people.

Background: Maara is Rikka's younger cousin. She is one of the few halflings who is not a cannibal. Instead, she works on a ritual to bind Hunger Devours Moon to her will.

QUEY'S GLADE

Words Mike Welham **Cartography** Maciej Zagorski

Quey's Glade is rarely ever the in same place on the map twice, but it is always nestled in deep woods. Whenever a child is lost, alone and scared in the woods, she often finds her way to this village. Just as a terrifying monster bears down on its victim, the victim stumbles into Quey's Glade with nary a sign of the pursuing beast. The way to this village is through intense negative emotion, but the inhabitants cheerily greet new arrivals to instantly dispel their fears and other troubles. As the world becomes more interconnected and the forests fall to woodcutters' axes, Quey's Glade slowly runs out of secluded locations to position itself. Also, the more intelligent monsters losing their meals to the village have begun to learn its secret and lurk in the forest beyond, decreasing the halo of safety around the village.

QUEY'S GLADE AT A GLANCE

Ruler Nevirl Thimblewrought

Government Autocracy

Population 112 (39 humans, 1 dryad, 17 elves, 9 gnomes, 23 half-elves, 3 half-orcs, 12 halflings, 3 nymphs, 4 pixies, 1 treant)

Alignments NG, CG, N, CN

Languages Common, Druidic

Quey's Glade is an ancient place, and its original purpose has almost been lost to time. Originally a fey outpost when fey first crossed over from their primal realms to the physical world, the village and its surrounding woods enjoyed protection thanks to portals created by the eponymous satyr noble Quey. The portals shunted non-fey to the opposite side of the forest, giving the illusion of travelling uninterrupted through the woods, albeit more quickly than expected. Quey's Glade eventually became a haven for fey as Quey seeded the world with portals, keyed to negative (but not destructive) emotions. Therefore, a resident who felt fear or sadness could simply approach a portal and be whisked back to the village.

Quey, along with other faerie arcanists, added another layer of protection by having the village and its surrounds translocate on a random basis to prevent discovery. The village changes its appearance to mesh with its new environment, allowing it to blend in with tropical jungles, temperate deciduous forests, alpine forests and frozen taigas.

As fey integrated more fully into the world, Quey's Glade fell into relative disuse, but still the portals remained active. While their ability to detect fey waned, they maintained their reaction to strong negative emotions. Thereafter, the portals swept up people who ran through them in terror or passed by them with a feeling of profound sorrow, as well as those who otherwise felt out of place in the world. Due to the strange flow of time carried over from the fey's primal world, visitors can age as they wish, so siblings aged only a couple years apart when they arrived can have wildly diverging ages after a lifetime spent here.

Most of those who stumbled into the portals and activated them were children who more openly expressed their fears, sadness and anxieties. These negative emotions have drawn terrible creatures to the woods surrounding Quey's Glade. Most of the protections have held, but incursions have destroyed the trees in the northeast part of the village and all villagers are aware of the dangers beyond the Warped Wood. Every now and then, the villagers need outsiders to deal with the threats, so scouts leave the village to seek out heroes to drive back or destroy the lurking terrors.

VILLAGERS

Appearance Residents are cheerful and friendly to visitors.

Dress Garb is in hues of green, brown or brighter colours to blend in with the surrounding forest.

Nomenclature *male* Gar, Nevirl, Zan; *female* Danae, Pella, Thistle; *family* Kastiv, Martinsong, Volk, Weatherford.

MARKETPLACE

Resources & Industry Plant-derived alchemicals and sanctuary

When the PCs arrive, the following items are for sale:

- **Scrolls** *barkskin* (200 gp), *call woodland beings* (700 gp), *control weather* (1,200 gp), *druidcraft* (50 gp), *plant growth* (400 gp)

VILLAGE LORE

A PC may know something about Quey's Glade, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 15 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

DC 15: Quey's Glade is accessible through negative emotions, but a resident can lead newcomers to the village.

DC 20: The village is a sanctuary for the lost and frightened.

DC 25: Terrible creatures, some borne of the fears driving people to the village, lurk in the woods surrounding it.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Quey's Glade, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

D6	RUMOUR
1	A flash of lightning struck one of the trees and split it in half. The hunters must have penetrated the defences.
2*	Bastionbark is unhappy with Nevirl's leadership and plans to take control of the village.
3	Molly's brother, Vallyn, wants to return to the world, but Molly has made a show of being upset by his decision.
4	Some of the fey were talking about returning the village to its original home in the primal world.
5*	Karja is acting strange. I'm worried one of the evil spirits from the woods possessed her.
6	Ced has begun training a replacement watchman.

*False rumour

NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than hardworking peasants. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

Bastionbark (location 10; NG **treant druid**) Bastionbark is the oldest living inhabitant of Quey's Glade.

Ced Queywarden (location 4; CG male half-orc **scout**) Abandoned by his tribe, Ced found his way to Quey's Glade, where he takes his job as lookout very seriously.

Karja Weatherford (location 7; N female half-elf **druid**) Karja tends the gardens and plans the rotation of plants to ensure continued good yields.

Molly Kastiv (location 2; NG female young human **acolyte**) Molly has lived in the village for 12 years but apparently hasn't aged beyond ten. She has learned some healing skills and uses that to help visitors and animals alike.

Nevirl Thimblewrought (location 5; CN male gnome **knight**) Descended from the Quey line, Nevirl became village leader after his predecessor was killed.

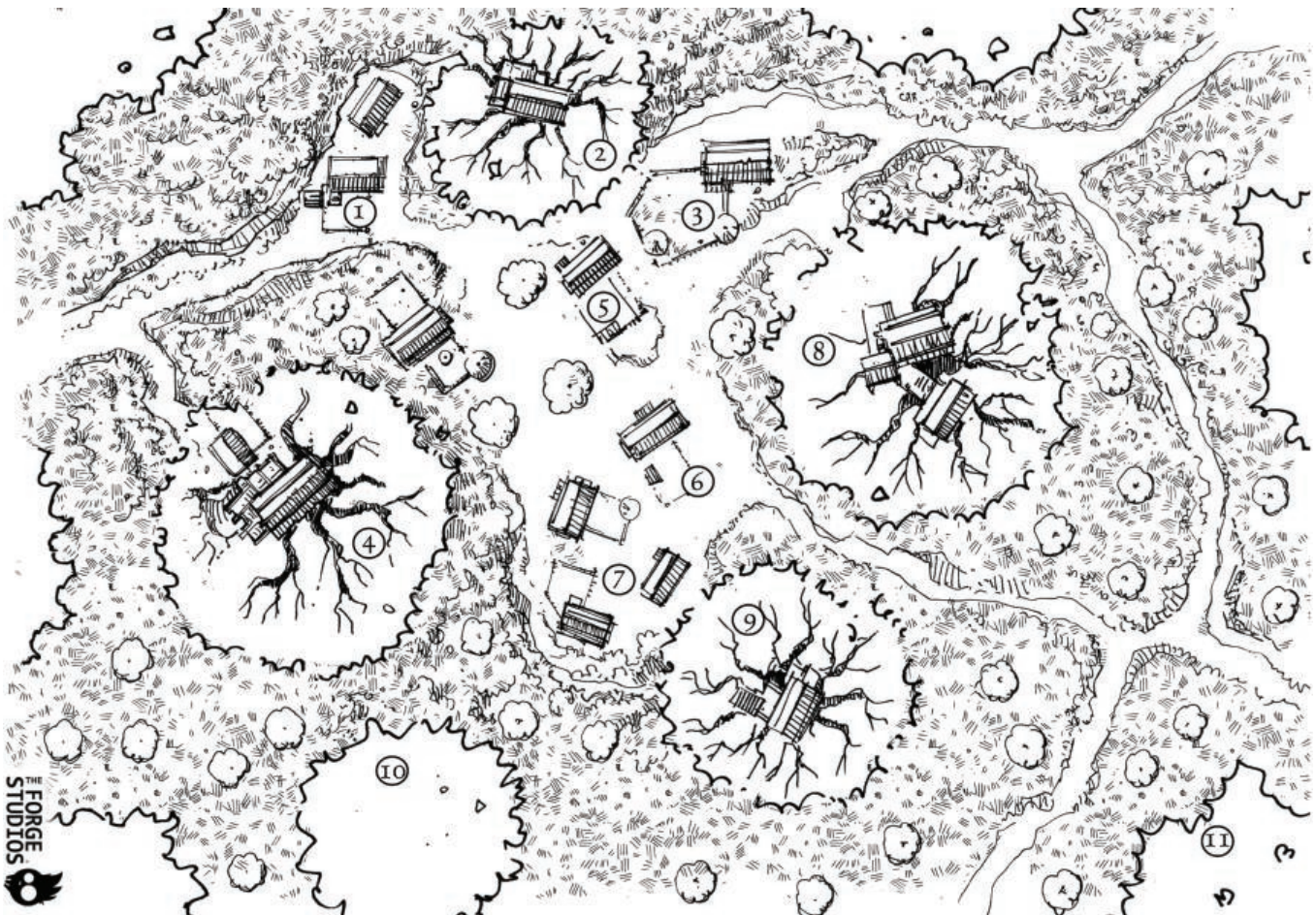
Pipperil (location 8; NG male **pixie spy**) Pipperil spends very little time in Feyhome as he typically joins representatives from the village to the outside world.

Valathrax (location 6; N female awakened porcupine fighter 4) Val Indra died valiantly protecting children from raiding orcs; moments thereafter her spirit awoke a nearby porcupine.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of the village comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **Pasture:** Cows and sheep graze in the village's remotest farm, so the stench does not bother most villagers.
2. **Sanctuary:** This arboreal building houses the village healer and small shrines for a variety of nature deities.
3. **Respite:** This building and fenced-in area acts as an inn and a place where new arrivals can rest.
4. **Lookout:** The tallest tree in Quey's Glade allows panoramic views of the surrounding forest.
5. **Village Hall:** The village's seat of government.
6. **Garrison:** Valathrax drills residents who have agreed to fight the terrors surrounding Quey's Glade.
7. **Gardens:** Here, villagers grow staple vegetables and tubers.
8. **Feyhome:** This tree shelters resident and visiting fey.
9. **Thicket of Rare Plants:** Druids in this location tend plants harvested to endangerment or extinction in the larger world.
10. **The Old Oak:** Here stands the ancient treant Bastionbark.
11. **Warped Wood:** The northeast border marks the burgeoning intrusion from the fell creatures inhabiting the woods outside.



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: PASTURE

Since Quey's Glade needs a certain amount of self-sufficiency and not all its residents are vegetarian, this plot of land was bequeathed to the Martinsong family several decades ago. The family remained in the village and their descendants (along with subsequent visitors who married into the family) have taken on the task of raising sheep and cows to feed the omnivorous and carnivorous inhabitants. To keep the stock from falling into inbreeding, the ranchers and herders occasionally take leave to exchange their animals for new stock.

The pasture serves an alternate purpose as the first location new arrivals visit when they stumble on the village (the path to the lookout (location 4) is cleverly hidden. As a mundane location with gentle animals, it puts frightened or despondent newcomers at ease. Additionally, it provides an opportunity to turn away unexpected guests before they can learn the truth about the village.

2: SANCTUARY

Nestled in the upper boughs of an elm tree, this large building is home to the village's healer, Clyven Gwyn (NG male human **priest**). Clyven maintains several shrines to various deities revered by the villagers. He prohibits worship of destructive deities in his sanctuary out of concern such prayers will allow the hunters in the woods free reign in Quey's Glade.

The elm tree bearing the structure in its boughs is difficult to climb, making this a last redoubt in case the village is overrun. Normally, a wooden ladder rests against the tree trunk, and a series of pulleys allows Clyven and his helpers (mainly Molly Kastiv [NG female young human **acolyte**], who enjoys operating them) to lift those requiring aid.

3: RESPITE

Most new arrivals stay in this humble abode kept by the halflings Gar Maplesden (CG male halfling **commoner**) and Zan Featherwood (CN male halfling **commoner**), who arrived nearly ten years ago, after a marauding hill giant destroyed their village. The friendly pair make their guests comfortable and are often the first to explain the village to new arrivals. They are shrewd judges of character and determine the fitness of a new arrival for an extended stay in Quey's Glade.

A fenced-in field adjacent to the inn contains a calico rabbit, a seemingly ageless fawn and a toothless hound, all of which help put disoriented newcomers at ease.

This area serves as an inn for visiting dignitaries invited by the village's leadership. The halfling duo chafe at putting on an ostentatious display for some of the more high-minded visitors, but swallow their distaste for the good of the community.

4: LOOKOUT

This redwood reaches 200 feet tall and features several homes among its sturdy branches. A small cabin is nestled in the tree's upper reaches. Lower down Ced Queywarden (CG male half-orc **scout**) maintains a constant nightly vigil from a lower lookout post. When he first arrived in Quey's Glade, he caused quite a stir, since many residents assumed he was among the hunters from the forest. The villagers softened their views when they heard Ced's horrific ordeals at the hands of his tribespeople, ending with them leaving him for dead. The half-orc took no offense to the villagers' initial reaction to him, but it took him a while to grow accustomed to people caring for him. Eventually Ced decided this was his home and decided to give back by acting as lookout at night, a natural fit considering his ability to see in the dark.

5: VILLAGE HALL

This central building serves as the seat of government for the village, but rarely sees any visitors. This is partially because most villagers' interpersonal conflicts are resolved without the need to involve the village leader. However, it is mostly because Nevirl Thimblewrought (CN male gnome **knight**) has no desire to sit at a desk all day, so he wanders about the village to check up on all its residents. It is this ease with everyone which gained him the villagers' approval to lead Quey's Glade after his predecessor perished eight years ago, during a surprise raid by monsters from the forest. While conflict among villagers is rare, Nevirl's gentle demeanour, capable of calming even the most belligerent of people, makes him an ideal face for the village when it comes to outsiders. Nevirl also proved his battle prowess on that fateful night when he slew his predecessor's killer, a terrible fungoid demon, and drove the other marauders away.

6: GARRISON

Valathrax (N female awakened porcupine fighter 4), imbued with the spirit of one of the village's most martially-minded residents, trains other residents who wish to take a proactive approach to protecting the village. With the rise in threats from beyond the Warped Wood, Valathrax has stepped up her training regimen from two hours a day to a full eight hours. While very few of the villagers can keep up with her, she takes satisfaction in imparting at least some lessons in self-defence.

The ground is even here, making sparring and training more favourable, but the garrison stands next to the gardens. When mock fights become too rough and tumble and threaten the neighbouring gardens, Karja brandishes a trowel or some other garden implement at the troublemakers, causing Valathrax to remark on more than one occasion about recruiting her.

7: GARDENS

Another mundane yet vital location for the village, the gardens take up most of the open ground in Quey's Glade. Karja Weatherford (N female half-elf **druid**) oversees the vegetable plots. Most of the vegetables grown here are staples, such as carrots and potatoes, but Karja likes to mix in a variety of beans, tomatoes and peppers, which she rotates in with the main plants. She is protective of her gardens after taking over a chaotic mess from her predecessor, and only allows people she has personally trained to help tend the gardens.

8: FEYHOME

While not the tallest tree in the locality, this hemlock is the broadest and supposedly the oldest. The village no longer serves as the exclusive home to fey, but many fey feel a sense of comfort visiting here, so the hemlock serves as home for such visitors. The village's leaders created a variety of pacts to keep fey from harming the more "mundane" residents, either purposefully or incidentally, so the more dangerous creatures spend their time in the accommodations provided in Feyhome. Of those who can keep from blinding or enchanting non-fey residents, many enjoy strolling among the hoi polloi and expressing amusement at their activities or lecturing them on the proper care of the glade. Mischievous fey pull pranks on unsuspecting newcomers, just skirting the intent of the pacts. While residency in Feyhome is transient compared to the rest of the village, a family of pixies and a trio of nymphs have decided to stay "permanently," and have not left the village for close to a year. The pixie Pipperil (NG male pixie **spy**) breaks up the monotony of remaining in Feyhome by joining missions to the outside world.

An illusion prevents visitors staying at the nearby Respite (location 3) from seeing the fey here.

9: THICKET OF RARE PLANTS

The source of much of the village's trading goods, this area contains plants that are lost to extinction or extremely difficult to find. Nearly all the plants growing here have a strange and powerful quality, ranging from a stone rose capable of turning flesh to stone and vice versa to a reed inducing sleep in those within earshot when wind blows through it.

Karja tends the plants but is not too proud to admit she needs specialized help to manage them. Many visiting fey help Karja grow and preserve the plants. The willow tree supporting the many greenhouses and planters also provides shade for plants that are destroyed by sunlight (but which require Karja to move them to receive the moonlight they need to grow).

10: OLD OAK

Bastionbark (NG **treant druid**) sprouted in Quey's Glade and has lived here for nearly a millennium. He was present when the village transitioned from a fey-only habitation to one accepting of all creatures finding their way through the scattered portals. The treant was an active participant in driving back the creatures encroaching on the village, but age has finally caught up to Bastionbark, making it difficult for him to move, let alone fight. As it is, he remains in his grove and imparts wisdom obtained over centuries of life. A nearby oak serves as the home to Danae (CG **dryad**) who watches over Bastionbark and makes sure requests for advice do not overly tax him.

Danae has been cultivating another oak sapling in the hope it will become a treant, to which Bastionbark can impart all his knowledge before he dies of old age. Bastionbark prefers to go down fighting and may press the charge against the monsters outside the village as a final moment of glory.

11: WARPED WOOD

Gnarled and knotted trees mark the border with a nightmarish part of the forest where creatures created and called by the energies cast off by strong negative emotion thrive. Numerous demons and evil fey lurk in the area and their presence seems to grow stronger daily. Ancient wards have withstood numerous attempts to break them, with the one exception when the previous leader of Quey's Glade died. Fortunately, Nevirl Thimblewrought led a counterattack to repel the successful incursion, and the creatures have not returned since. The trees and plants bear the mark of the invasion, and leak poisonous sap and spray diseased spores. They also spawn dangerous plant creatures such as shambling mounds and other sentient plants. To ensure the village's safety, envoys travel to lands beyond the forest surrounding Quey's Glade to seek out heroic champions to destroy or drive out the monsters.

New arrivals who have the misfortune of finding one of the portals leading to this section of the forest stand almost no chance of making it to the village. To prevent these disasters, the more travel-ready residents shut down remaining active portals, using advice from fey who remember how the portals operate. With the monstrous forces growing stronger, though, any approach to Quey's Glade presents danger to newcomers, driving Nevirl's urgency to destroy or at least beat back the growing horde.

LIFE IN QUEY'S GLADE

Life is harmonious in Quey's Glade, and villagers are welcoming of newcomers, especially those who have a demonstrable skill at arms. While sadness sometimes overtakes long-term residents as they miss their loved ones, the village's frequent travels provides hope for a return home should someone desire it.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Most of the goods produced in the village go toward the care and feeding of the villagers. However, Quey's Glade is known as a place of sanctuary and the village makes use of any skill a newcomer brings. The curative plants grown in the Thicket provide villagers with means to trade for supplies they cannot readily produce and protection from the creatures surrounding Quey's Glade. Curing a ruler's child of a malady goes a long way toward receiving a supply of weapons or suchlike.

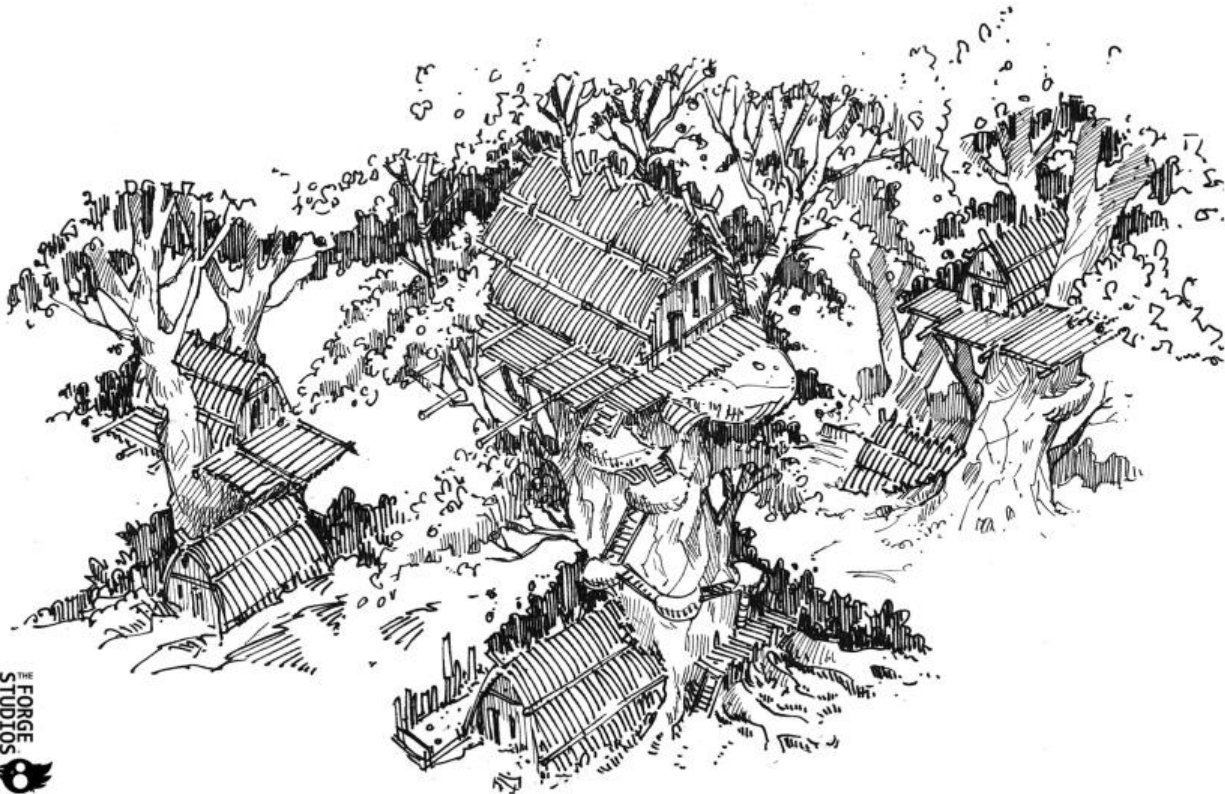
LAW & ORDER

Most arrivals are grateful for the sanctuary provided by Quey's Glade and work to ensure the village thrives. There is very little need for law and order in the village, especially with the external threat. However, in rare cases a persistent troublemaker faces exile, along with memory altering magic or drugs.

EVENTS

While the PCs are in Quey's Glade, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

D6	EVENT
1	Bastionbark suffers an affliction causing the treant's leaves to wither and die. Danae figures the treant has a week before the damage becomes irreversible.
2	A frightened, stampeding herd of giraffes crashes through the trees, threatening to trample villagers. A child pursued by a living carpet of spiders bursts from the woods near the Warped Wood. His arrival is unusual since it has been years since a newcomer arrived from that direction.
3	A will-o'-wisp bobs just at the village's border near the lookout tree. It claims to have had its fill of fear and expresses a desire to help protect the Quey's Glade.
4	An envoy arrives from a kingdom currently neighbouring Quey's Glade and demands the village's annexation into the kingdom. Threats of violence back up the demand.
5	Quey's Glade indicates an imminent translocation. After those who wish to remain behind leave the village's confines, it fades away, only to reappear somewhere completely different.
6	



RONAK

Words Jeff Gomez **Cartography** Maciej Zagorski

Nobody knows Ronak exists. Or, more precisely, nobody remembers. Ronak was the last hope of a dying trade company, a desperate attempt to settle and explore a distant swamp. When the colony found nothing but lizardfolk (exterminated in short order), the trade company did not have enough gold to retrieve their employees. Ronak never heard from civilization again.

Centuries later, the dwarves of Ronak believe civilization to be but a myth. Over the generations, they have become more savage, reverting bit by bit to a primitive state. They are haunted and guided by the ghosts of the exterminated lizardfolk who seek the continuation of their culture. The dwarves speak a hybrid of Dwarven and Draconic, build thatch huts amid the colony's ruins and worship a mixture of half-forgotten dwarven deities and heathen serpent gods. Most disturbingly, some dwarven children now bear scales and jagged teeth. Perhaps one day soon the lizardfolk will be born again, this time from dwarven mothers.

RONAK AT A GLANCE

Government Council

Population 68 (68 scaled dwarves)

Alignments N

Languages Ronakee (Hybrid Draconic and Dwarven, understood partially by speakers of either language, or perfectly by speakers of either language with a DC 10 Intelligence check).

Nobody knows Ronak exists. Or, more precisely, nobody remembers. Ronak was the last hope of a dying trade company, a desperate attempt to settle and explore a distant swamp. When the colony found nothing but lizardfolk, the company did not have enough gold to retrieve their employees. Ronak never heard from civilization again.

The native lizardfolk, despite their peaceful culture, were seen as nothing but savage natives by the dwarves. As the dwarves struggled to survive, the scaled tribesmen taught them how to hunt and fish in these dangerous lands. But cultural misunderstandings and rising tensions quickly led to violence. In a night of blind fear, the dwarves massacred the lizardfolk.

Centuries later and the dwarves have reverted to a more savage state, transforming bit by bit from organized colonists to hunter-gatherers. They are haunted and guided by the ghosts of the exterminated lizardfolk who seek the continuation of their culture. The dwarves speak a hybrid of Dwarven and Draconic, build thatch huts amid the colony's ruins and worship a mixture of altered dwarven deities and heathen serpent gods.

Most disturbingly, the Ronakee now bear scales and jagged teeth, and grow to proportions unnatural for a dwarf. Perhaps one day soon the lizardfolk will be born again, this time from dwarven mothers.

The dwarves of Ronak believe civilization to be but a myth, but they cannot stay hidden forever. While some Ronakee may cautiously seek to learn more from trespassing outsiders, others view interlopers as evil spirits who must be destroyed.

VILLAGERS

Appearance: The Ronakee resemble a mixture between dwarves and lizardfolk, but vary greatly in their degree of transformation. Some grow shaggy beards over pink flesh, while others have rows of pointed teeth and scratch at malformed scales.

Dress: The Ronakee dress in furs and hides, as well as clothing woven from swamp plants. Children paint their faces with mud and adults sport intimidating tattoos.

Nomenclature: *male* Balgrik, Barik, Durnak, Garuk, Rorgek, Throrvak; *female* Frimaz, Gimdatz, Talez, Uslatz, Yadaz; *family* Bronzewall, Blackspine, Stonespear, Thundertooth.

MARKETPLACE

Resources & Industry Fish, peat

When the PCs arrive, the following items are for sale:

- **Potions** *potion of animal friendship* (250 gp), *potion of poison* (300 gp), *potion of water breathing* (400 gp)

VILLAGE LORE

A PC may know something about Ronak, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

DC 15: The Ronakee are dwarves who have forgotten all ties with civilization.

DC 20: The Ronakee are decedents of a dwarven colony that disappeared almost 500 years ago.

DC 25: The dwarves of Ronak massacred the lizardfolk who used to live in these lands.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Ronak, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

D6	RUMOUR
1	The gravepits to the north are filled with bones of the ancestors.
2	Urraz Scaleborn thinks those without scales should be expelled from the council.
3*	The Ronakee are descended from lizardfolk.
4	Smoking sawleaf allows communication with the spirits of the ancestors.
5	In funeral rites, the Ronakee consume the corpse raw, then add the bones to the gravepits.
6*	Long ago, a group of dwarves invaded the bog and tried to murder the Ronakee. They failed.

*False rumour



NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than hardworking peasants. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

Dunaz the Fisherman (location 1; NG male scaled dwarf **scout**) Dunaz is far progressed in her transformation. Her large eyes pierce muddy water and she swims like a lightning snake with the help of a malformed tail.

Elder Karhok (location 3; CN female scaled dwarf cleric 8) Blind Elder Karhaz is the oldest of the Ronakee. After instruction from his god, he split his tongue in twain with an axe. Now he spits prophecies of rebirth, while raising his claws in reverence to Sskalaz. He reviles outsiders as evil spirits.

Hildaz Scaleborn (location 4; CN female scaled dwarf **berserker**) Feared and respected, Hildaz is the tribe's best. Past rows of jagged teeth, she dribbles froth at any who displease her. Hildaz often fights with her brethren, but she is a valuable tribeswoman. She hates outsiders.

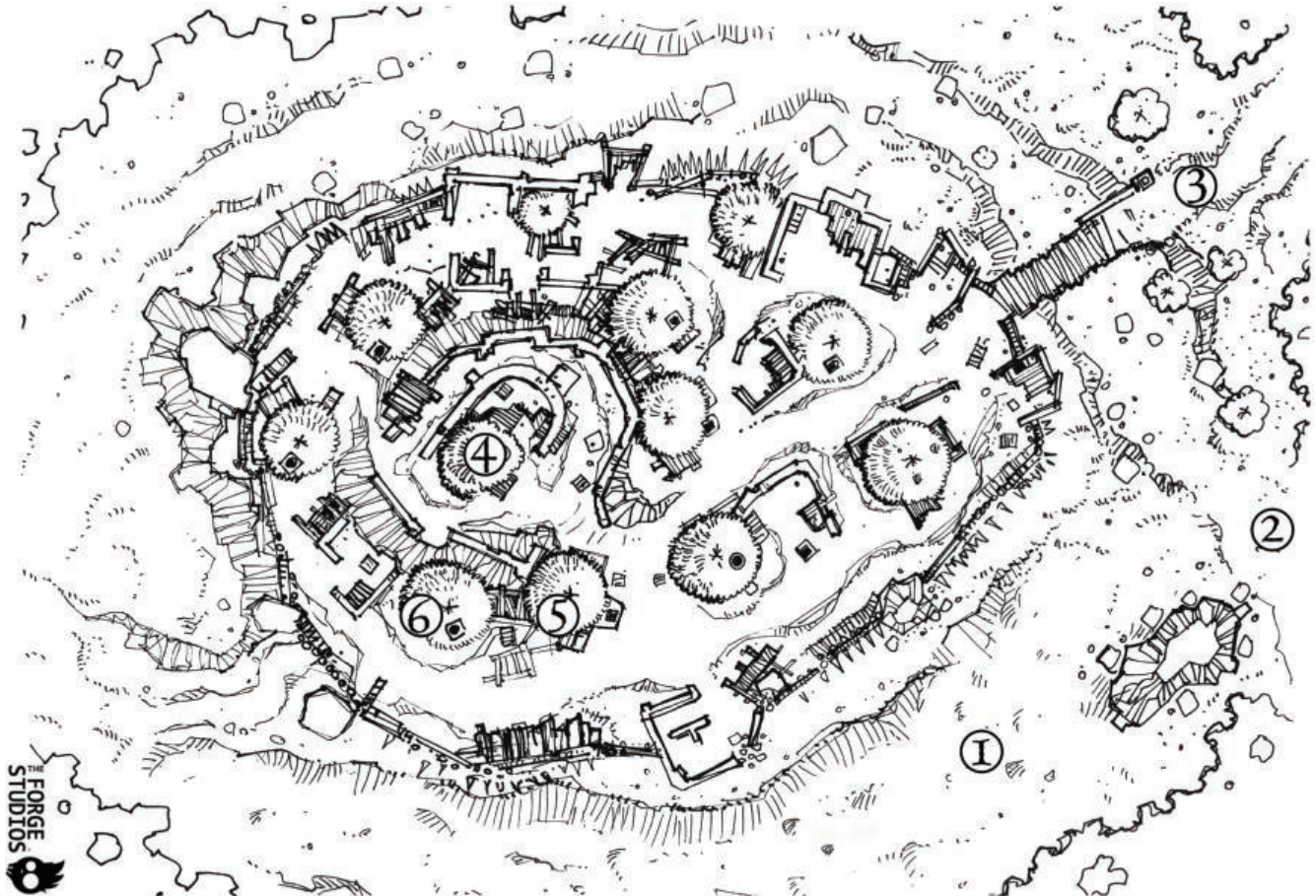
Hinrok Throatsinger (location 5; CN male scaled dwarf **spy**) Hinrok Throatsinger comes from a line of skalds. While his forbears played the lute, Hinrok intones modified dwarven epics in rough chants. He is fascinated by outsiders.

Tordaz Mudrunner (location 5; LN female scaled dwarf **veteran**) Though decisions are made in collective by all parents, Tordaz holds the most sway. She is respected among her peers for her patient and fair judgement. Tordaz is open to outsiders, but is highly defensive of her people.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of the village comprises crude huts. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **Bitter Bog:** Bitter Bog surrounds Ronak for 50 miles in all directions, isolating it from the rest of the world.
2. **Fangwaters:** The Fangwaters, a saltwater spring where alligators do not tread, is an excellent fishing ground.
3. **Gravepits:** When the dwarves of Ronak massacred the lizardfolk, they threw the charred corpses into mass graves. Centuries later, the Ronakee view the Gravepits as sacred, a place for meditation and reflection where the ancestors' whispers can be heard.
4. **Scaleborn House:** The Scaleborn family are closest to lizardfolk, and they wear their mutations with unusual pride.
5. **Spirithouse:** Hallucinogenic sawleaf smoke fills the spirithouse at all times. Hunters pray here, and the villagers seek counsel among the vapours.
6. **Temple of Sskalaz:** The Temple of Sskalaz was once a temple to the dwarven god of protection. However, the elements have reshaped the statue into the shape of a stone serpent, and religious customs have followed suit.



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: BITTER BOG

The Bitter Bog surrounds Ronak for 50 miles in every direction. It is a cold, damp place of frequent rain and unending mist. Foul gasses pour from the muck, mixing with the fog and burning the eyes.

To visitors, the Bitter Bog is a terrible, noisome mire of fever and disease. To natives, however, it's filled with life. Pale fish swim murky pools, and alligators paddle through edible grasses. Thousands of birds visit the swamp, and honey can be found in hundreds of beehives. The flat stalks of a dozen plants make for excellent weaving material, and peat burns hot and long. There is much to hunt and plenty of natural resources. While Roank's original dwarves struggled to survive, the Ronakee, much like their lizardfolk spirit guides, flourish in these rich, but challenging, conditions.

Here, the Ronakee harvest the sawleaf that enables them to communicate with their ancestors' spirits.

SAWLEAF

The leaves of this spikey fern produce mild hallucinogenic effects and assist in communing with spirits.

The smoke from this mildly addictive drug helps the scale dwarves seek their ancestors' wisdom.

Effects: 1 hour; ask local spirits a question as the *augury* spell, the spirits determine the answer as per their own motives; -4 penalty on saves against curses, as well as abilities and effects delivered by incorporeal creatures and haunts; **Damage:** 1 poison damage; **Price:** 20 gp.

2: FANGWATERS

The Ronakee mostly eat fish, caught in the bog's murky waters. While most ponds throughout the swamp are stagnant and stinking, in one place the water runs clearer. These are the Fangwaters, a collection of saline springs which gurgle warm water up from the depths of the earth. Among the salt pillars, which bear an uncanny resemblance to sharpened teeth, fish, frogs and birds eat a myriad of juicy insects. The Fangwaters are a sacred place, and an excellent fishing ground. Briny water keeps most of the more dangerous animals at bay, so dwarven children can safely swim the waters and consume their quarry raw. As a result, thousands of fish bones, rough from decades of mineral deposits, cover the bottom of this brackish pond.

3: GRAVEPITS

The dwarves came in the night. Terrified and on the brink of starvation, they massacred the lizardfolk and set the village ablaze. But the lizardfolks' tough flesh does not burn easily, so the dwarves dug deep pits and buried the stinking corpses.

These are the Gravepits, six mounds of damp earth with nearly 50 lizardfolk interred in each. Even though lizardfolk bones and tools are sometimes revealed by heavy rain, the Ronakee remember a different story. To the scaled dwarves, these Gravepits contain the remains of the Ronakees' ancestors. Here is a place of prayer and reflection, and here the ancestors' spirits are strongest. Many Ronakee visit at night, when the trees whisper with forked tongues, to seek guidance from their supposed forebears.

And the Gravepits are growing. When a villager dies, its flesh is ritually consumed but the bones are buried with their fellows. Dwarf and lizardfolk skeletons lie side by side, and with each passing decade the differences recede.

4: SCALEBORN HOUSE

The Scaleborn family is always first to acquire new lizardfolk traits. While most Ronakee think little of their evolution, the Scaleborn believe this advantage is a gift from the spirits. The Scaleborn are covered in translucent scales, which they shed in droves under the rough itching of hardened fingernails. Few dangling hairs adorn their jaws, and within their mouths gnash rows of tiny triangular teeth. Unlike all other villagers, Scaleborn pupils are vertical slits instead of circles.

The first Scaleborn in Ronak was Durnon Aleborn, leader of the colony and instigator of the lizardfolk massacre. Every day thereafter he visited the Gravepits, and was most affected by the spirits lingering within. When his child was born with grey scales around her eyes, Durnon felt his guilt made manifest. The colony mockingly called the child "Scaleborn," until Durnon killed himself from grief.



Ignorant of their tarnished past, the Scaleborn wear their mutations with a uniquely dwarven pride which aggravates the rest of the Ronakee. Urraz, the Scaleborn matriarch, even believes that those without scales should not have a vote on the council. Thus far, this view has not been popular.

The Scaleborn house is uniformly repulsed by outsiders.

5: SPIRITHOUSE

In a pit at the centre of the Spirithouse, a smouldering conflagration of embers, peat and sawleaf spits acrid smoke into the thick air. The Ronakee come here for guidance and meditation. Through the stinging vapour, humanoid shapes dance and intone ancient stories. Flickering shadows recount tales of the forgotten past, and whispered memories bear prophecies of events to come.

These are the spirits of the murdered lizardfolk. They are generally too weak to manifest directly, but through the assistance of sawleaf and ritual they can provide guidance and council to the dwarves.

The lizardfolk spirits want the dwarves to succeed, and so their council is just and wise. They understand that one day soon the Ronakee will transform entirely into lizardfolk, and on that day the tribe will be born again.

NEW SUBRACE: SCALED DWARF

Scaled dwarves hail from the forgotten colony of Ronak, deep in the Bitter Bog. Isolated from civilization, the Ronakee path has been guided by the spirits of the lizardfolk they massacred centuries ago. With every generation, the scaled dwarves drift further from their kin and closer to the lizardfolk whom they now revere as ancestor spirits. Scaled dwarves resemble large dwarves with thin hair and patches of translucent scales. Scaled dwarves possess other lizardfolk traits as well (see "Mutation" for more information).

As a scaled dwarf, you hail from an isolationist and increasingly savage and tribal people in the process of evolution or devolution, depending on whom you ask.

Ability Score Increase. Your Strength score increases by 1.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 20 feet. Your speed is not reduced by wearing armour or by walking through swampy terrain as long as you can still stand.

Lizard Mutation. You choose one of the mutations to the right to represent your reptilian side.

Brusque Savagery. You have disadvantage on Charisma (Persuasion) and Charisma (Deception) checks. If you gain proficiency in one of these skills, you may choose to forego gaining the usual benefits of proficiency and lose disadvantage on the skill instead. If you do, you are not

The spirits see outsiders as threats, and try to convince the Ronakee to drive them out. Any Ronakee who visit the Spirithouse quickly agree.

6: TEMPLE OF SSKALAZ

The Ronakee worship a pantheon of natural spirits, but the most important is Sskalaz. This serpent god embodies and corrupts many aspects of the dwarven god of protection who once presided over this colony. The original settlers raised a temple to this forgotten god. They carved his statue from a solid block of dolomite, clad in armour and raising a hammer to the heavens.

The Bitter Bog, however, has not been kind to the dwarven creation. Acidic lichen tore off the arms, which now languish in the mud. Centuries of rain wore enamelled breastplate into blurry scales. A lightning strike melted the god's helmet, splitting it into a shattered maw of teeth. The swamp took this dwarven god, proud and grimacing, and turned him into a snake.

And not just any snake. The lizardfolk here once viewed Sskalaz as their protector spirit, and communed with her spirit for assistance. Now, with the guidance of lizardfolk ghosts, Sskalaz is worshiped once again.

Sskalaz represents family, cunning and community, as well as a painful death from poison or animal attack. Not all seek her favour, but those who do view outsiders as a threat.

treated as proficient in the skill unless you gain proficiency in it a second time.

Languages. You can only speak, read and write your own racial language, Ronakee, a dialect of Draconic understood by speakers of both Dwarven and Draconic. You can communicate with speakers of these two languages, but misunderstandings can happen. Ronakee is full of hard consonants, guttural sounds and sibilant hisses and sounds rather threatening.

MUTATION

Every scaled dwarf exhibits the influence of his lizardfolk protectors in a different way. A scaled dwarf gains two of the following mutations.

Hold Breath. You can hold your breath for 15 minutes.

Swamp Camouflage. You have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in swampy terrain.

Natural Armour. When unarmoured, you have a base Armour Class of 11 + your Dexterity modifier.

Bite. You may use your action to make a melee attack with your bite. Your bite deals 1d6 piercing damage plus your Strength modifier. You have proficiency with your bite. Your bite's damage increases to 2d6 at 11th level.

Strong Swimmer. You have advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks made to swim or stay afloat.

LIFE IN RONAK

Ronak is completely isolated from the rest of the world, and must fend entirely for itself. Without a written language, oral customs and rituals guide daily life. Ceremonies mark birth, growth and death, and dozens of seasonal holidays mark time's passing.

Women traditionally hold more power than men, but oracles and sages are typically male. Major decisions are made by democratic vote within a ruling counsel of all Ronakee parents. Strength is respected, but wisdom carries more weight.

The Ronakee eat primarily fish and alligator collected by designated hunters. Other villagers are builders, weavers and storytellers. Without currency, goods are distributed evenly.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Beyond subsistence hunting and gathering, Ronak has no industry of note. Visitors reaching Ronak, however, may purchase (or steal) sawleaf from the Ronakee.

Additionally, if the PCs spend much time poking about the colony's festering ruins, they may discover odds and ends that have yet survived the ever-present muck. What the PCs find—and what the Ronakee want for it—is up to the GM.

LAW & ORDER

Life in the Bitter Bog is tough; here the strong live and the weak waste away and die. Among themselves, the Ronak are generally peaceful; disagreements are normally settled quickly and with impromptu fights or brawls.

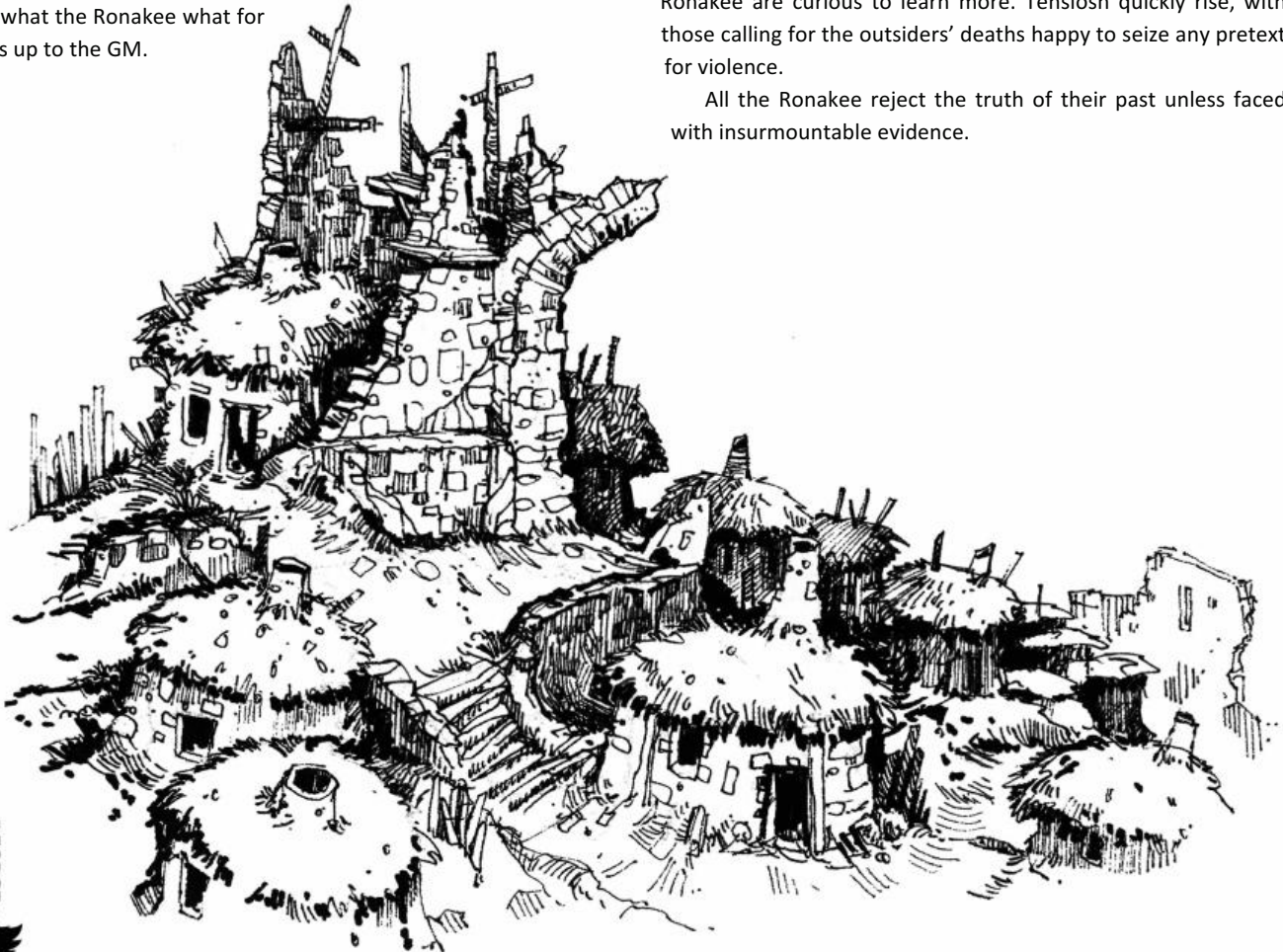
THE ARRIVAL OF OUTSIDERS

The arrival of outsiders (such as the PCs) is a cataclysmic event for the Ronakee, equivalent to a demon appearing in a backwater village. Outsider dwarves and lizardfolk are viewed with particular confusion. None of the Ronakee have seen a human, halfling, elf or gnome before.

The villagers are split on what to do, and the PCs' actions determine whether they are accepted or attacked. Visitors accepted among the Ronakee may be taken in by a curious family while others may be forced to camp in the muck.

However, the whispering spirits of the lizardfolk scream for the outsiders' death, fearful of yet another massacre, and those more in tune with these spirits quickly agree. The level headed Ronakee are curious to learn more. Tension quickly rises, with those calling for the outsiders' deaths happy to seize any pretext for violence.

All the Ronakee reject the truth of their past unless faced with insurmountable evidence.



SILVER BLUFF

Words Mike Welham **Cartography** Tommi Salama

Silver Bluff provides respite from the nearby harsh mountains. Chief among these is Mount Argent, which the villagers mine for its namesake silver on behalf of the Hargrave's Resources mining company. However, the respite is anything but welcome, as the miners distrust each other as much as they do strangers. The rich silver seams the miners have worked for over fifty years have dried up. While the recent discovery of powdered adamantine temporarily buoyed hopes among the villagers, a grisly murder has put everyone on edge.

SILVER BLUFF AT A GLANCE

Ruler None

Government Anarchy

Population 99 (11 humans, 47 dwarves, 8 half-elves, 18 half-orcs, 15 halflings)

Alignments LN, LE, N, NE

Languages Common, Dwarven, Orc

Silver Bluff sprung up among inhospitable mountains after the discovery of a rich source of difficult-to-mine silver that gave the village its name. The climate and treacherous land require hard people to live and work here, and few of the locals are friendly to outsiders. As the silver lode played out, the villagers planned to abandon the village, but an amazing find of powdered adamantine renewed the inhabitants' desire to remain in Silver Bluff. Tensions had run high when the silver petered out, so it was no surprise that someone or something murdered one of Silver Bluff's residents just after the adamantine discovery. The gruesomeness of the deed caused the most jaded villagers to blanch. Thus, the villagers are even more wary of one another and on edge when strangers arrive.

Howling winds drive through the valley in which stands Silver Bluff, and they intensify near Mount Argent, seemingly originating from the massive seam in the earth separating the main village from the mountain. Despite terrible and frightening conditions, villagers spend most of their time in the mines and in huts arrayed at the mountain's base.

NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than hardworking peasants. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

Anja Varda (location 1; LN female half-orc fighter 6/druid 1) Anja runs the guesthouse, and watches over the pack mules vital for trade between Silver Bluff and points beyond.

Colm Indra (location 3; N male halfling **commoner**) This halfling crafts and repairs mining equipment.

Csilla Kreeg (location 9; NE female dwarf **berserker**) Taskmaster at the mining base camp, Csilla breaks up fights between ill-tempered miners.

Philbert Minje (location 2; LE male half-elf rogue 9) The assayer guards Silver Bluff's funds and pays miners for ore extracted from Mount Argent.

Vitor Kreeg (location 5; LN male dwarf cleric 5) Csilla Kreeg's brother ministers to the villagers, often travelling to the mines to mend broken bones.

Zaran Shattersword (location 10; N female human ranger 8) The current hero of Silver Bluff, Zaran found the powdered adamantine that revived the village's fortunes.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of the village comprises barely sturdy huts. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

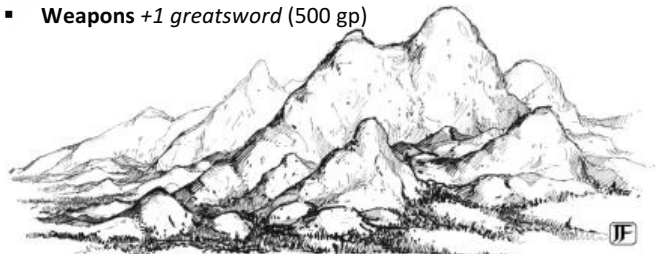
1. **Varda's:** The most accessible location in Silver Bluff features one of the village's friendlier faces. Anja Varda's modest inn houses the village's infrequent visitors and adjoins the stable where pack mules rest between trips through the mountains.
2. **Assayers:** If anything remotely approaches the "law" in Silver Bluff, it is Philbert Minje's office. From here, he pays miners for their hauls when they return from Mount Argent.
3. **Colm's:** To the chagrin of dwarves living here, Colm Indra has proven to be the best smith in the region. When not crafting picks and mining equipment, he produces quality metal items.
4. **Barracks and Tavern:** Miners spend their time here between their days-long shifts in Mount Argent.
5. **Mountain God's Respite:** Here, Vitor Kreeg proselytizes about his god while healing the sick and injured.
6. **Screaming Chasm:** Before Silver Bluff's founding, a bridge crossed the chasm warding Mount Argent. Ten years ago, something destroyed the bridge. Screaming sounds from the chasm during the dead of night.
7. **New Bridge:** A month after the old bridge's destruction, the new bridge was completed. The ramshackle bridge threatens to collapse and fall into the chasm at any moment.
8. **The Stone Giant:** This massive stone humanoid figure predates regional civilizations by centuries.
9. **Mining Camp:** Huts arrayed at Mount Argent's foot provide some small protection from the wind.
10. **Mount Argent:** The mountain's rich seam of silver made Silver Bluff prosperous, but its depletion nearly spelled the village's end, until powdered adamantine was discovered.

MARKETPLACE

Resources & Industry Mining, smithing

When the PCs arrive in Silver Bluff, the following items are for sale:

- **Potions & Oils** *healing* (50 gp), *greater healing* (200 gp)
- **Scroll (Divine)** *daylight* (350 gp), *locate object* (200 gp), *move earth* (10,650 gp)
- **Weapons** +1 *greatsword* (500 gp)



VILLAGE LORE

A PC may know something about Silver Bluff, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

DC 10: Silver Bluff is a mining colony, whose folk mine a seam in Mount Argent in difficult and dangerous conditions. Its inhabitants barely get along with each other, let alone with strangers.

DC 15: Mount Argent's namesake silver is running out. The miners were about to abandon the area, but one of them discovered large deposits of powdered adamantine.

DC 20: Howling windstorms, emanating from the chasm near Mount Argent, periodically batter Silver Bluff.

VILLAGERS

Appearance Dirty and haggard from long hours in the mine and the land's hostile conditions, the villagers look like they are spoiling for a fight (with anyone).

Dress Villagers dress in simple, functional clothes, usually made of leather to protect them while in the mines or dealing with windstorms. Most people wear cloths around their necks for quick protection against flying debris.

Nomenclature *male* Bogdan, Colm, Kanar, Philbert, Vitor; *female* Anja, Csilla, Marzi, Yasmina, Zaran; *family* Kreeg, Minje, Varda.

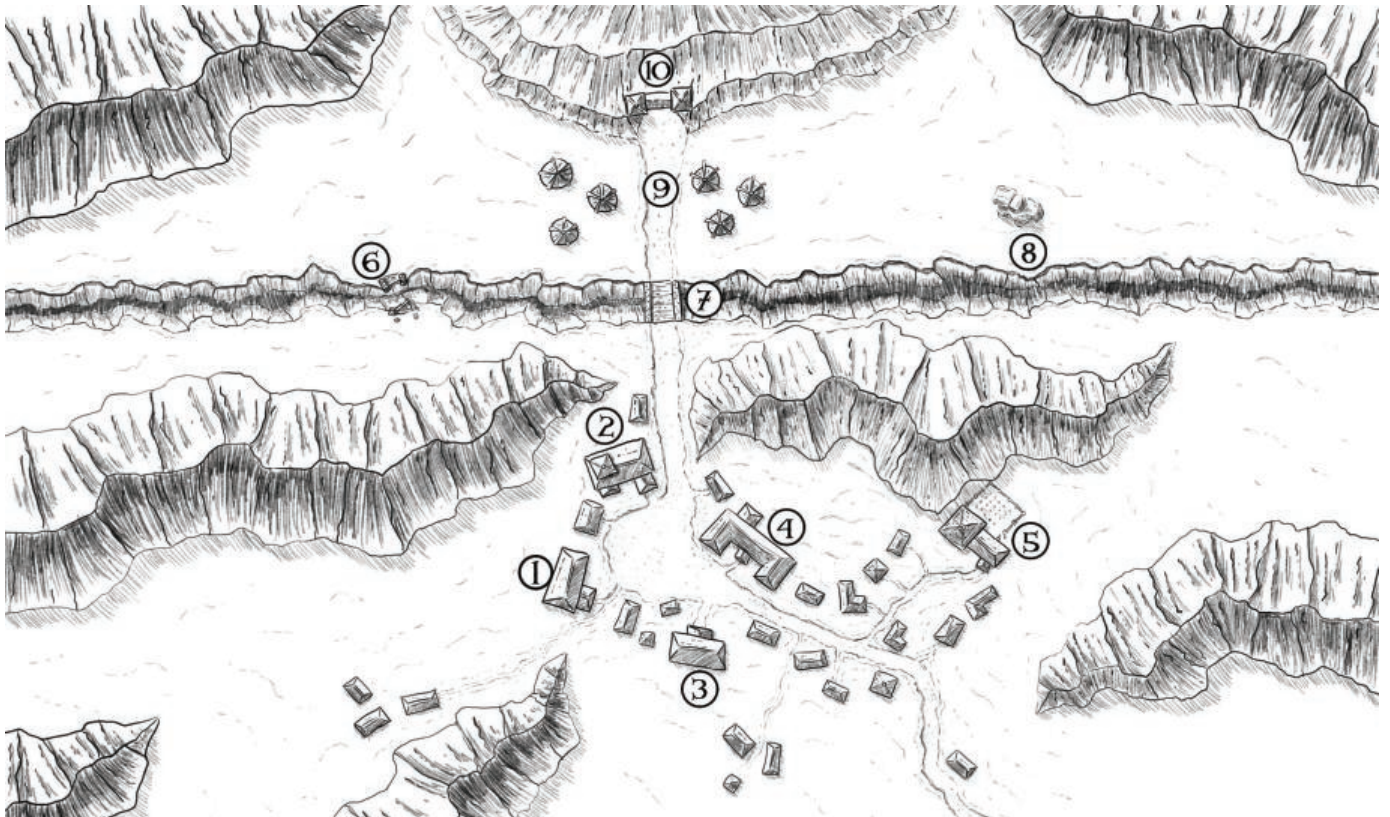
WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Silver Bluff, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

D6 RUMOUR

1	Minje accidentally mentioned the mine's sale to an investor fell through just before the adamantine dust was discovered. He was upset he was going to have to stay here.
2*	The last group passing through here was squirrely. I bet the one with the weird purple eyes stayed behind and hides in the mountains. He must have done in Kanar.
3	The Stone Giant turned south and moved ten feet closer to the chasm last week.
4*	Someone saw a tentacle at least ten feet long shoot up out of the crevasse near the old bridge.
5	The elf with the lute seemed to know about the area. He claimed it was an ancient battleground where godlike beings used massive machines as proxies.
6	The windstorms in the valley between Mount Argent and Silver Bluff have been growing stronger, of late.

*False rumour



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: VARDA'S

For conventional approaches to Silver Bluff, Anja Varda's inn and stables are the first buildings travellers see. Anja (LN female half-orc fighter 6/druid 1) and a former adventuring companion, Mina (female halfling **druid**), staff the eponymous lodging, meant primarily for mining company officials and the rare adventurers passing through.

The stables are completely enclosed and situated to protect against the windstorms plaguing the village. After the mined metal, mules to transport the metal and return with goods are the villagers' most valuable assets. Mina tends to the mules and ensures they are travel-worthy. Many miners begrudge the fact she does no "real work" and refer to her with crude epithets. Anyone inspecting the mules—over Mina's protestations—sees she takes excellent care of them.

Anja rarely allows locals in the building, since they tend to fight and break furniture. As visits are infrequent, she delivers food to the barracks, which solidifies her view of the ruffians working the mines. On special occasions, she prepares an elegant meal for the miners. Due to the remote location and lack of ready resources, prices here are higher than normal.

- **Food & Drink** meal (mutton or venison) 1 gp, wine 1 gp. Varda also manages to grow a few carrots, potatoes and turnips in the unaccommodating soil, and sells those at a premium of 1 gp each, but she uses remarkable spices ("family secret," she says) to enhance their flavour.
- **Accommodations** A room costs 1 gp per night. Varda only has two rooms available, and each room can sleep up to four people. The rooms have comfortable beds with goose down mattresses, at Philbert Minje's insistence. An average lock (DC 15 Dexterity check opens) protects each room.

Anja is a reliable source of information about the village but shies away from idle gossip. While business-like in her dealings with travellers, she spares time to talk to them when not busy.

2: ASSAYERS

Philbert Minje (LE male half-elf rogue 9), representative in Silver Bluff for Hargrave's Resources for over fifteen years, resents his current position, thanks to an error at a previous camp pointing back to him, something he is still convinced was not his fault. However, he realizes this is a rare second chance from his employers, who oftentimes handle problems by making them disappear. His goal is to make Silver Bluff profitable, and he intends to do that on the backs of the miners. He was quick to take credit with his bosses for the adamantine discovery. When weighing silver from the mines, Minje's scales favour him. He uses spies among the miners to rat out disgruntled employees

and arrange for "accidents" to befall the most outspoken workers.

Minje is paranoid, so he employs a pair of guards (each LE male half-orc fighter 6), who remain at his side in his office and travel with him on his rare forays into the village. During special occasions, he gives a half-hearted speech, prior to Anja's meal, thanking the miners for their dedication to making Hargrave's the premier mineral wealth company. Minje's enforcers ensure workers do not disrupt the speech.

Minje's paranoia causes him to treat visitors obsequiously. He figures they may be representatives of Hargrave's, and he cannot discern the difference between adventurers poking around the place and hired agents checking up on him. Assurances that visitors know nothing about the mining company only cement his view they are company spies. He usually spares one of his bodyguards to shadow guests.

Minje's orderly office hides a trapped safe in the floor beneath his desk (DC 20 Wisdom [Perception] check finds the safe and trap, DC 20 Dexterity check disarms the arrow fusillade trap which deals 4d10 damage to all creatures within 20 feet [DC 15 Dexterity saving throw halves]). Here he keeps most of Silver Bluff's wealth. The safe holds payroll, and Minje offers it, for a modest fee, to miners who wish to avoid their fellows robbing them.

3: COLM'S

Colm Indra (N male halfling **commoner**) is Silver Bluff's smith whose primary job is refining silver ore to craft weapons sold elsewhere by Hargrave's. Becoming bored from the lack of work caused by the silver vein's petering out, he was delighted when the first load of adamantine dust arrived at his shop. He took to the challenge of creating items from the dust, discovering a way to lace molten iron with the dust to produce a sword, which, to his surprise, had magical properties.

As a young halfling, Colm immediately took to smithing when he saw a human smith's quality swords. Seeking the opportunity to travel to far-off lands and practice his trade, he leapt at the opportunity to set up in Silver Bluff. Acceptance by the village's dwarves has been difficult despite the fact he has proven himself a gifted smith. Many of the dwarves have convinced themselves Colm uses sorcery to achieve excellence with his creations and refuse to use anything the halfling produces.

Colm's shop, kept in order by an injured miner (N male halfling **commoner**), also carries mountaineering and mining supplies (pickaxes, shovels, rope and so on), some of which he creates. His prices are 10 percent higher than normal.

4: BARRACKS AND TAVERN

Miners work the mines for six days and then get two days off. This building is their home away from home during their down time. Half the building houses two dozen bunk beds, shared by the workers as they rotate through their work shifts, and enough lockboxes for each miner to store personal effects. The other half acts as a mess hall and tavern and is a raucous place at all hours. Most evenings end with a brawl between at least two of the miners as cheap ale shorten already frayed tempers. The miners treat visitors with disdain.

5: MOUNTAIN GOD'S RESPITE

Vitor Kreeg (LN male dwarf cleric 5), a devotee of Dekkaris, dwarven god of mountains and stonework, oversees the only church in Silver Bluff. His main objective is to ensure the miners carefully preserve the mountain while seeking its treasures, putting him repeatedly in direct opposition to Philbert Minje. Despite Minje's tendency for retribution when someone challenges him, Vitor gets a free pass. Since he is the only source of healing in the village, Minje often requires his services after the many brawls and accidents plaguing the village and mine.

Vitor provides healing for visitors at a 20 percent discount, provided they listen to his recounting of Dekkaris swinging his mighty stone hammer to create the world's mountains. If the dwarf knows his guests represent a problem for Minje, he halves his prices.

6: SCREAMING CHASM

The best path from Silver Bluff to Mount Argent crossed a narrow part of the chasm. The original miners discovered the ancient wooden bridge crossing the gap, and it served them well. Other than unnerving screams emanating from deep within the chasm, the bridge provided safe passage. Ten years ago, on the anniversary of Silver Bluff's founding, the miners encamped at Mount Argent and residents in Silver Bluff awoke to intensified screams. When the workers attempted to return to the village, they discovered the obliterated bridge, debris spread as if something had burst forth from the chasm knocked it into the air. Most of the villagers wisely decided to keep away from this area after the event. The few curious people who left with intentions to explore the chasm never returned. PCs who delve into this part of the chasm encounter a pair of purple worms patrolling an area ranging from the edge to 400 feet down. Even fouler things lair at the bottom of the crack in the earth, about one mile down.

7: NEW BRIDGE

After the original bridge's destruction, Hargrave's commissioned a new bridge further east. The stone bridge cost the company a considerable sum, so it docked the miners' pay for three months under the pretence they were responsible for the former bridge's ruin. Incensed miners talked about destroying the new bridge, but cooler heads prevailed. This does not prevent some of them from chipping away at the bridge with their pickaxes when they cross it as an act of defiance.

8: THE STONE GIANT

The villagers know the fifteen-foot-tall monolith east of Mount Argent as The Stone Giant, due to its vaguely human shape. The odd figure stands vigil over the valley and greeted the first prospectors. For as long as the villagers can remember, the stone has imperceptibly moved west day-by-day. Only week-to-week is its progress noticeable. Vitor Kreeg, who considers himself a stonework expert, believes the giant is at least five centuries old. He reasons subtle shifts in the earth cause the giant's movement. However, the monolith has thus far proven impossible to move or even tip by any means.

9: MINING CAMP

When the miners are not working, they spend their time in the cramped quarters of these hide tents, which barely protect them from the murderous winds driving through the mountain range. At the end of a 12-hour day of backbreaking labour, workers hardly notice the conditions.

Csilla Kreeg (NE female dwarf **berserker**) is the camp taskmaster, ensuring the miners awake in time to start their shifts. She also breaks up fights between the exhausted and cranky workers. She enjoys her job, mainly because she is allowed to bust heads and Minje pays her well to act as enforcer.

10: MOUNT ARGENT

The source of Silver Bluff's wealth, Mount Argent produced ore for five decades before giving out. Survey parties, under Vitor Kreeg's direction, spent weeks searching for a new source of silver to no avail. The cleric cautioned against exploring the heart of the mountain, claiming something lurked within. Zaran Shattersword (N female human ranger 8) ignored Vitor's warnings and dug into the forbidden area. There she found a natural chamber filled with grey, metallic dust, quickly identified as adamantine. Despite grumbling about having to continue working Mount Argent, her fellow workers feel indebted to her for saving their jobs, at least until they deplete the adamantine.

Five days after the discovery, and seemingly backing up Vitor's warnings, Kanar Tresk's—a skilled, daring miner—flayed body was discovered, unnerving even the jaded villagers.

LIFE IN SILVER BLUFF

The remote mining village has little to offer visitors other than relief from the surrounding mountains' harsh conditions, and the residents are generally unfriendly to newcomers. It seems as if the bleakness of the land has made them just as miserable.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Silver Bluff's primary trade is mined silver ore, most of which goes to Hargrave's Resources. With the adamantine discovery, Hargrave's stands to improve its economic standing immensely. However, with the material in dust form, they rely on Colm Indra to discover the knack of producing goods from it. Colm's finished goods also supplement the mining company's coffers.

Due to the harsh conditions, travelling to and from the mountain on a daily basis rarely occurs, so the miners sleep at the mining camp (location 9). When they return to Silver Bluff, they typically unwind by drinking and carousing, but a few hunt deer and the plentiful bighorn sheep to supplement their diet. Anja is elated when she gets to prepare something other than stews using the less-than-fresh supplies from Hargrave's.

LAW & ORDER

Silver Bluff is lawless. Minje oversees the mining operation and acts as the only real authority in the village, but he cares little how the workers conduct themselves away from the mines. He lets them sort out issues between themselves and ignores accusations of bullying or stealing, the most common crimes in the village. He only intervenes when someone suffers an injury sufficient to keep him or her from working or if anyone damages

ADAMANTINE CLOUD

The adamantine dust discovered by Zaran is the disintegrated remains of a semi-sentient engine of destruction, created by an ancient empire of undead creatures (the descendants of which reside in the fog-shrouded valley miles south of Silver Bluff). The dwarves survived its onslaught by disintegrating it and enclosing the remains in the heart of Mount Argent. With the opening of the protective chamber, the engine is slowly regaining its memory and seeks to restore itself so it can continue its mission of destroying living creatures. It can create a violent dust storm that lasts for 2d6 rounds. This swirling dust cloud has the same effect as a windstorm, but deals 10d10 points of slashing damage each round to creatures caught in it (DC 15 Dexterity halves) and follows the largest concentration of living creatures (fly 50 ft.). Because its creators programmed it to leave nonliving material untouched, it will not pursue a victim into an enclosed area. Only another windstorm can disperse an adamantine cloud.

company property. He levies fines on or fires the guilty parties depending on the severity of the offence. A firing is a potential death sentence, since the former employee must find his or her own way back to civilization. Minje enforces his authority through his bodyguards and informants, who receive under-the-table bonuses when they bring troublemakers to his attention.

EVENTS

While the PCs are in Silver Bluff, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

D6 EVENT

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | A fight erupts between miners near Varda's. Anja implores the PCs to intervene. She provides free room and board if they manage to defuse the situation peacefully and without egregious property damage. |
| 2 | When the PCs step outside, a dust storm whips up. It has the same effects as a windstorm, and deals 1d6 piercing damage per round (reduce to nonlethal damage for those with armour or natural armour). |
| 3 | Minje accuses two of the miners of knocking out his guards and stealing the payroll, and he has an eyewitness who saw them commit the crime. |
| 4 | An adamantine blade Colm Indra was working on disintegrated and the dust blew away in the wind. He hopes PCs knowledgeable in arcane matters can help him figure out the cause, while dwarves knowingly point out that Colm's sorcery has failed him. |
| 5 | On the day of the PCs' arrival, Zaran returns from the mining camp with grim news of the murder of another miner, in the same manner as Kanar Tresk's murder. |
| 6 | A mule bursts out of its stall and through the stable wall. It runs 200 feet before it falls over, dead. |

DEKKARIS

N god of mountains, mining and stonework

Epithets: The Unyielding, Stonemason

Symbol: A stylised peak over a pair of crossed pick axes

Domains: Nature, Tempest

Favoured Weapon: War pick

Holy Text: The Basalt Tablets

Travellers in mountainous regions invoke Dekkaris to protect them from rockslides and guide them through treacherous mountain paths. The god shares the wealth of his mountains with people who responsibly mine for it. His worshippers believe he causes tunnel collapses and other calamities for those who do not show proper respect for the mountains.

SKAALHAFT

Words Jeff Gomez **Cartography** Maciej Zagorski

Skaalhaft is a whaling village, where the quarry are drakes, kraken and other magical aquatic beasts as well as more mundane prey. Each kill provides food and alchemical supplies for weeks, both for use in the village and profitable export. Whaling crews, marked with glowing tattoos, carved scrimshaw necklaces or strange arcane gifts, return with a prize or sometimes not at all. Back in Skaalhaft, women and children work in a miasmic processing mill. Stone faced and silent, they collect the valuable scales, blood and bone from rare beasts. The bay is thick with mutated sharks from the runoff of such arcane waste.

Despite the insular atmosphere, strangers roam the streets. A traveling wizard and alchemist, rich with gold from past misdeeds, make special requests of the whalers and pay their hires well. An orphaned daughter bent on revenge seeks her father's killer among the villagers. And now the PCs have arrived...

SKAALHAFT AT A GLANCE

Ruler: Svaad Ruun

Government: Dynasty

Alignments: LN, N

Population: 187 (187 humans)

Notable Folk: Gremheks (Vaydmar's Light), The Alchemist (Wayhouse), The Poacher (Wayhouse), The Wizard (Wayhouse)

Languages: Common

Resources & Industry: Alchemical good, rare creature parts

Skaalhaft is a whaling village, where the quarry are drakes, kraken and other magical aquatic beasts as well as more mundane prey. Each kill provides food and alchemical supplies for weeks, both for use in the viillage and for profitable export. Whaling crews leave for days at a time, returning with a kill or empty handed (or sometimes not at all). These warriors use specialized tools and techniques to take on creatures that would slay far greater warriors.

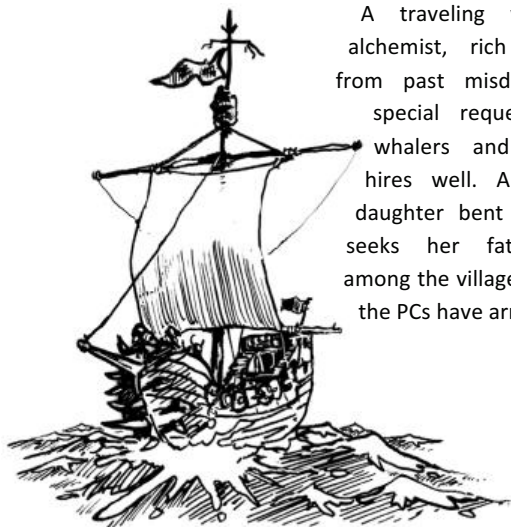
Back in Skaalhaft, women and children work in a miasmic processing mill. Stone faced and silent, they separate valuable scales, blood and bone from worthless refuse. The bay is thick with mutated sharks from the runoff of such arcane waste.

The citizens of Skaalhaft are strong, sombre and scarred, some marked with glowing tattoos, carved scrimshaw necklaces or strange magic gifts from the alchemically charged meals they consume. While the village's mood usually matches the stormy grey skies, a valuable kill is marked by raucous celebrations which can last many days.

Sadly, mourning can be as frequent as celebration. Two months ago, one of the village's four ships went missing at sea. Svaad Ruun proclaimed the souls aboard lost, and a mass funeral is planned. The village digs deep into their treasury to purchase a new ship even as the local witch insists the crew still lives.

Despite the insular atmosphere, strangers roam the streets.

A traveling wizard and alchemist, rich with gold from past misdeeds, make special requests of the whalers and pay their hires well. An orphaned daughter bent on revenge seeks her father's killer among the villagers. And now the PCs have arrived...



VILLAGE LORE

A PC may know something about Skaalhaft, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

DC 10: The founder of Skaalhaft was the legendary dragon-slaying hero Vaydmar.

DC 15: The blue light in the lighthouse is kept aflame by Gremheks the widowed witch.

DC 20: At any given time, the stores beneath the mill hold several thousand gold pieces worth of valuable ingredients used in various magical and alchemical processes and rituals.

VILLAGERS

Appearance: The villagers are large, muscular, heavily tattooed and acid scarred. Their skin is pale, almost blue, but thick without any sign of veins. Both men and women either tie their dark hair in braids, or cut it off completely.

Dress: Here in the cold, there is little difference between the dress of men and women. Villagers wear leather and furs crafted from both land and sea creatures alike. Many wear white and black scrimshaw necklaces from familial kills.

Nomenclature: *male* Gunvor, Hakron, Magnor, Olvar, Ranghide, Torhyld; *female* Fridys, Hyllys, Sigryd, Trygvinn, Yngryd; *family* Baas, Frys, Gurs, Mys, Ruun, Lyne, Ulf, Vyn.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Skaalhaft, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

D6 RUMOUR

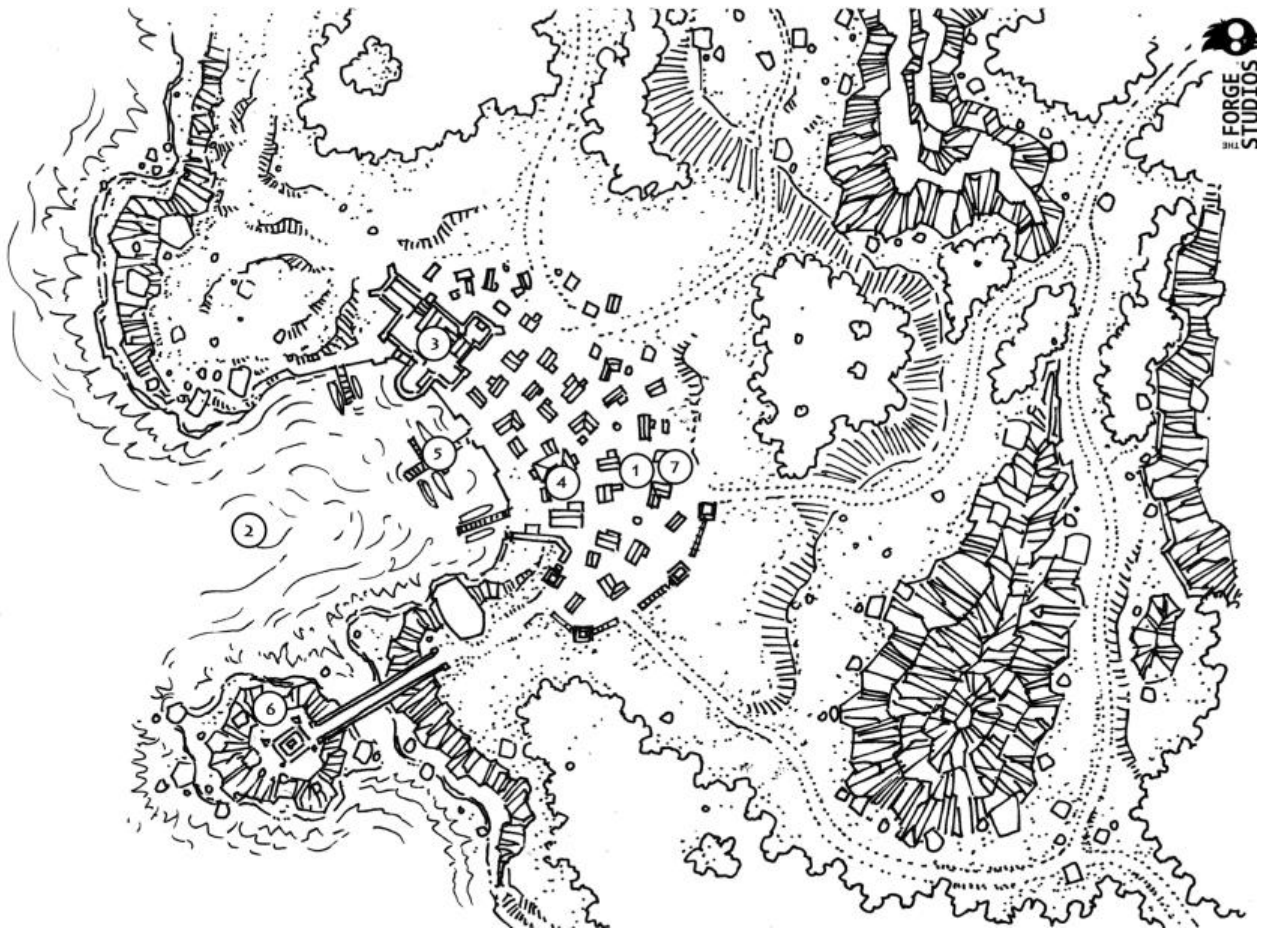
1*	Svaad Ruun, the burly chief, lost his arm fighting the black kraken. (He was born without his right arm).
2	Two of Skaalhaft's wealthiest customers, the Alchemist and the Wizard, live in the wayhouse.
3	Late at night, the Poacher skulks around the village spying on families in their homes. Patience with this intruder wears thin.
4	Gremheks of the lighthouse believes she deserves to be chief. After all, she is a descendant of Vaydmar.
5	The Alchemist and Wizard disappear one night and are not seen at the Wayhouse or anywhere in Skaalhaft.
6	Gremheks thinks the sailors aboard the lost ship Breakhelm are still alive, but none believe her.

*False rumour

NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

Most of Skaalhaft comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **Black Room:** Within the Wayhouse, the Wizard has constructed a tiny pocket dimension for her dark work. Inside, she and the Alchemist store alchemical goods, piles of gold and their secret project. The pair use materials purchased from Skaalhaft to slowly reconstruct and revivify their fallen leader: the antipaladin Greigard.
2. **Blood Bay:** All runoff from the mill flows into Blood Bay, chumming the water with foul arcane waste. The overwhelming smell attracts gigantic sharks that, over the centuries, have grown misshapen with magical power. Even the black sands and rocks are stained with acid and the entire area smells of rotting fish.
3. **Grey Mill:** Within this massive warehouse, women and children process their kills. Drakes and other creatures are divided into exportable products, which are stored in the basement until traders arrive.
4. **House of Ruun:** The house of Ruun is the ancestral home of the line of Skaalhaft chiefs. Here, the chief negotiates and proclaims, usually to small groups or individuals. Village-wide meetings are exceedingly rare. The current chief, a one-armed giant of a man named Svaad Ruun, decrees with absolute authority and listens stone faced to any concerns.
5. **Hunter's Dock:** Only ships which have killed a drake are allowed the honour of docking at this wooden pier. Until recently, this meant four vessels docked here. However, the *Breakhelm* was recently lost at sea, so only the *Serpent*, *Ygdris* and *Moonborn* remain.
6. **Vaydmar's Light:** This craggy and misshapen lighthouse was raised out of the rock by the hero Vaydmar in ancient times. His decedents have manned it ever since, keeping the arcane blue flame alight through storm and disaster. The witch Gremheks lives here now, all alone and somewhat senile.
7. **Wayhouse:** The Alchemist, Wizard and Poacher all stay within the Wayhouse's crumbling walls. The Alchemist and Wizard live together and in relative comfort, while the Poacher restlessly prowls the village. Their true motives remain unclear to the villagers, but their gold is good.



LIFE IN SKAALHAFT

Skaalhaft is sombre and its folk hard-working, without time or desire for the frivolities of play or art. Large men and women walk in silence, work in silence and largely socialize in silence. At night, the sounds of warm laughter sometimes emanate from the closed shutters of houses, but these displays of affection are deeply personal and not for outsiders or even other villagers.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Villagers hunt and process rare aquatic creatures, then sells the results to alchemically minded patrons around the realm. The entire village pursues this industry with single-minded enthusiasm. Almost half of all men are hunters, while the other half trawl the waters for fish or perform various odd jobs. Hunting is deeply engrained in Skaalhaft's culture and closely tied to success and virility.

LAW & ORDER

Skaalhaft's chief, Svaad Ruun, has total governance over the village. He issues all decrees, adjudicates all major decisions and passes down judgement when necessary.

In reality, Svaad makes very few real choices. The traditions of Skaalhaft are deep-seated and clear to all villagers. Respect for one another is paramount. Physical affection outside the home is discouraged. Remain quiet unless you have something important to say. Split proceeds from the hunt evenly between all villagers. While there are the occasional rule-breakers, a strong work ethic combined with harsh punishments ensure there are few major problems.

CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS

Skaalhaft's citizens seem neither a religious nor celebratory lot. However, their lives burst with small rituals and customs nearly robbed of purpose by time. Scrimshaw takes on traditional significance, embodying the spirits of great kills of the past. Many villagers carry a lucky piece of scrimshaw, or make sure to touch the various whale bones embedded in the village's buildings as they pass by.

Seasonal monster migrations are marked by short ceremonies, usually at sunrise and only involving the chief and the captains. Births and deaths are marked by small rituals confined to the immediate family, chief and lighthouse keeper alone. If there is disaster at sea, the entire village mourns for as many days as the number of sailors lost. By sharing the load, the mourning period is minimized and those affected may quickly return to work. Public weeping is always discouraged, even in the case of close loss.

VILLAGE DRESSING

Use this table, to generate the minor sights and sounds the PCs experience as they move about Skaalhaft.

D20 DRESSING/EVENT

1	A dire shark at least 30 feet long washes ashore. The villagers immediately drag it inside the mill and get to work.
2	The mist turns to freezing rain; ice forms on the sand and cliffs.
3	An icy fog bank moves in. It is bitter cold despite the lack of wind.
4	A caravan with six ox carts rolls into Skaalhaft. Many of the workers set up camp outside the walls, while the merchants meet privately with Svaad.
5	A flamboyant wizard <i>teleports</i> into Skaalhaft, then makes his way to the mill to purchase valuable goods. When he is done, he <i>teleports</i> away.
6	The light in the lighthouse flickers, turns momentarily purple and then returns to its normal blue. Gremheks is reportedly somewhat ill, but recovering.
7	A bloodstained carving of Vaydmar washes ashore. It is the masthead of the lost <i>Breakhelm</i> hunting ship.
8	A dire shark briefly savages one of the smaller fishing ships, forcing it to return and make repairs.
9	A giant squid attacks a shark in the bay. Between the blood and froth, it is impossible to determine a winner.
10	Svaad calls a private meeting between three seemingly random young men. They emerge as stoic as ever.
11	A piece of cliff gives way, eroded by the ceaseless acidic surf.
12	It is an unusually clear day, bringing unseasonable heat. The processing mill becomes a foul-smelling sauna.
13	The <i>Serpent</i> returns with a magnificent catch: a dragon. The ship was damaged in the fight, but no sailors were lost.
14	After a week at sea, <i>Ygdris</i> returns with nothing. The sailors disembark silently fuming, none angrier than Captain Ranveig.
15	The <i>Moonborn</i> returns to port with four rare kraken tentacles, and several injured sailors. One sailor was dragged off the ship and killed.
16	Acid explodes over a young child in the mill. Her mother rushes to take her to Gremheks, but some suggest she visits the Alchemist instead.
17	A terrible ice storm rolls in, preventing any ships from leaving port.
18	A child sits on the black sand, carving a magnificent piece of scrimshaw.
19	A baby receives its first tattoo on its first birthday. It does not cry during the process.
20	The Wizard and Alchemist wander the streets, drinking heavily and celebrating something.

THE SURROUNDING LOCALITY

Skaalhaft rests on a blustery spit of northern land. It is a week's ride to the nearest major town, far enough to feel secluded but close enough that traders may reach it without extensive travel. The trails are not well-maintained, but the caravans make do. For the unique products that Skaalhaft offers, the trip is worth it.

If the village had an inn, however, the trek might be far more enjoyable. Instead, visitors must set up their own camps among the black boulders littering the landscape. The reception visitors receive is as frosty as the trail they have travelled.

It is cold, up here in the north. Most of the year, freezing sea mist, fog and rain cover the land. For a few weeks every summer, the land becomes stifling hot and still, without even a breeze to provide respite. For a few weeks every winter, the village endures a blizzard (though the snow does not survive long on the salted earth). Regardless of the season, however, the sea is always bitterly cold, hovering just a few degrees above freezing. It is not uncommon to see detached icebergs floating by in the distance.

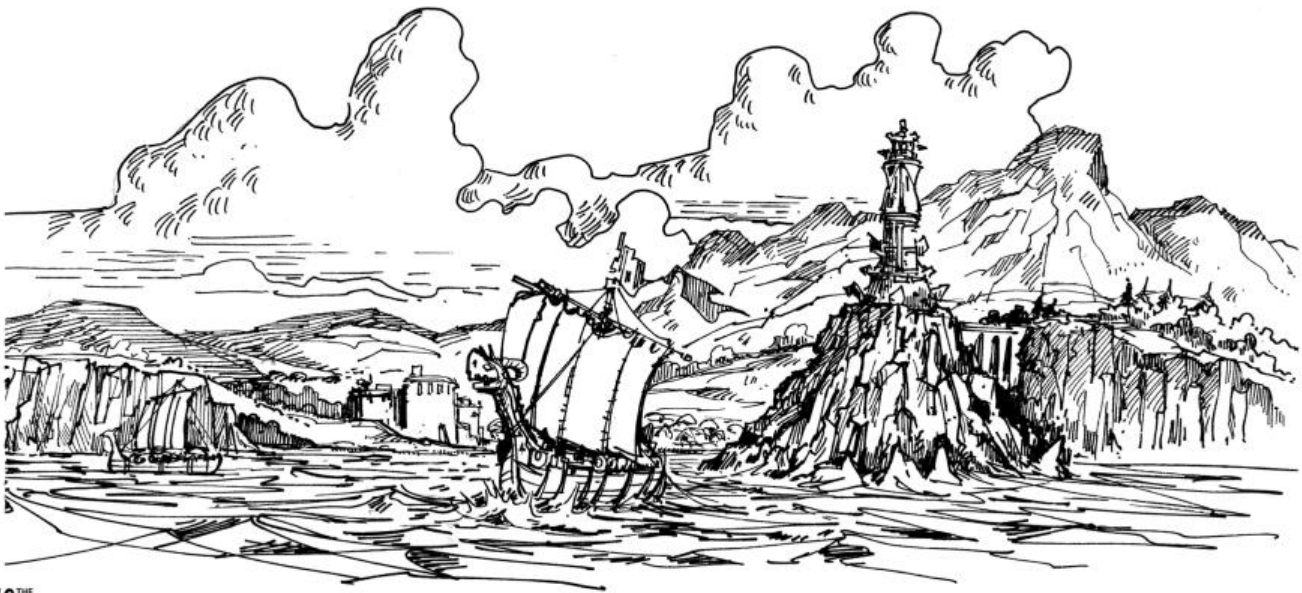
The terrain around Skaalhaft is volcanic in origin, though no volcano has erupted here in millennia. Rocks are black and jagged, whipped into unnatural sharp shapes by wind, salt and

time. Instead of earth, the ground comprises black gravel for several days travel in any direction. The few plants growing here are highly sought after by the herds of elk migrating through this bleak land.

Up and down the coast, cliffs and razor-sharp boulders make sailing difficult. A crew seeking respite from a gale must find one of the few black sand beaches piercing the cliffs, then pull their boat high out of the water to avoid the rough surf. Skaalhaft sailors are specially trained to navigate such harsh waters without smashing their boats to bits.

Many sea creatures revel in these conditions. Drakes, kraken, whales and dire sharks all travel and feed in abundance along the coast and in deeper waters. The rich seawater draws a range of prey and predator alike, including great colonies of seals and orcas along with the fiercer beasts. While most sailors avoid the region at all costs, those in Skaalhaft use secret techniques to bring down such valuable quarry.

In short, the area around Skaalhaft is not unlike the villagers themselves. In the cold and quiet, the land might seem lifeless and inhospitable to foreigners. However, great energy and strength lie hidden just beneath the surface.



NOTABLE LOCATIONS IN SKAALHAFT

1: THE BLACK ROOM

Dark magic pulses throughout this black void, though the invisible ground seems solid enough. A corpse in full plate mail lies stretched on a rack in front of an alchemy lab piled high with arcane ingredients.

The Black Room is a pocket dimension created by the Wizard and only accessible by speaking a passcode while touching the Wizard's staff. In it, the Wizard and Alchemist store piles of gold and perform their dark magic.

The Alchemist and Wizard once served the powerful half-orc antipaladin Greigard. Together, they plundered the realm, amassing riches and murdering as they pleased. Finally, the trio were overcome by a paladin and her adventuring party. Greigard was killed, but the Alchemist and Wizard escaped with his corpse. The pair now work to revive the antipaladin using the arcane materials procured by Skaalhaft's sailors. Soon Greigard will rise again, and the trio will seek revenge on the paladin who wronged them. If the PCs learn the Alchemist's or Wizard's actual name, or overhear their private conversation, they may make a DC 15 Intelligence check to recognize the dastardly crew. Alternatively, PCs making a DC 25 Intelligence (Arcana) check realise the requested ingredients' possible application.

2: BLOOD BAY

The bay's black sands are stained with blood and thick with discarded bones. The waters themselves churn opaque and rough, perpetually chummed with runoff from the mill.

Blood Bay deserves its name. The arcane refuse of Skaalhaft runs into the waters, attracting sharks and other, more fearsome creatures. After centuries of feasting on magical runoff, the beasts lurking in the waters have grown mutated and gigantic. A villager who falls into the water is likely to be eaten before hypothermia claims him. For that reason, ships sunk in the bay remain unlooted. It's simply too dangerous to attempt any sort of salvage.

The bay's black sands are more like tiny river rocks than the powdery sand of the tropics. Smooth and flat, they make for passable skipping stones on calmer days. These pebbles, and even the nearby cliffs, are stained into complex patterns by the blood and acid of a thousand kills.

3: GREY MILL

This large grey warehouse stinks of fish guts and acid. Dozens of women and children work at weathered tables, separating the corpses of drakes and other creatures into valuable ingredients.

Within the cavernous Grey Mill, women and children process the monsters taken from the sea. The area is busy, but orderly and strangely quiet. Corpses are taken to a storage basement on the dock side of the mill. From there, they are brought up piece by piece and separated into valuable products and refuse. Working with incredible proficiency, the women and children wield bone tools, peeling scales, extracting blood and drying viscera as needed. Long metal gutters drain the acidic bile into Blood Bay.

Filled boxes and ceramic jugs of product are carefully stored in a second basement. Meat is dried, washed and prepared for eating (a process involving fermentation in charcoal for the more acidic creatures). Here the valuables are stored until a trading caravan or patron comes to purchase them.

THE ALCHEMIST (JORY GUILLE)

CE male human wizard (necromancer) 6

Not an inch of the alchemist's skin shows under thick black robes, a wide brimmed hat and an ebony plague doctor's mask. The saccharine scent that wafts from beneath his garments is unbearable.

Mannerisms: Jory introduces himself as "the Alchemist," and gives no other name. He finds everything funny and giggles in a high, disquieting tone in response to any comment. He mumbles to himself in a nearly incomprehensible chatter as he works.

Personality: Jory is deranged, but not overtly dangerous. He appreciates a good joke, though his sense of humour is an acquired taste.

Background: The Alchemist and Wizard once worked for a powerful antipaladin and now seek revenge on those that wronged them (see location 1 for more details).

THE WIZARD (MAIAG BENTH)

The wizard is all smiles, and her white teeth gleam in any light. Well dressed, attractive and full of swagger, this is a spellcaster with real confidence.

NE female human sorcerer (wild magic) 7

Mannerisms: The Wizard, who refuses to give her true name, is loud, charming and clever. She seems completely unperturbed by the villagers' flat responses.

Personality: Maia is extroverted, gregarious and without scruples. However, she has grown enamoured of this funny little village and will be sad to leave it.

Background: See above, for more.

Freyga Ruun (LN female human **commoner**): As is tradition, the chief's wife oversees the Grey Mill. Freyga is almost as large as her gigantic husband, and commands authority with equal proficiency. She always carries her tools (a dozen knives, de-boners and hammers) in her jacket pockets. She is not above smacking a lazy worker or distracted child.

- **For Sale:** All alchemical substances and ingredients worth 1,300 gp or less, various scales, bones, eyes and so on of dragons, sea serpents and other aquatic beasts.

4: HOUSE OF RUUN

Except for its size, this house looks identical to the nearby structures. Its weathered, blue-grey wooden walls hold up a ceiling tall enough for even the largest villager to stand comfortably.

The house of Ruun is the ancestral home of Skaalhaft chiefs. The walls, made of rough blue-grey wood, separate the area into two bedrooms, a dining area and a large receiving area. Amenities are scarce, furniture is unpadded and decorations take the shape of monster scrimshaw.

At the receiving room's whalebone table, Svaad Ruun occasionally holds small meetings. As is customary, these meetings are private between the relevant parties. Like other

CHIEF SVAAD RUUN

LN male human ranger (beast master) 5 (and Sif his arctic fox beast companion)

This massive man seems the pinnacle of all Skaalhaft hunters: thick runic tattoos covering acid scars, immense muscles over a huge frame and piercing blue eyes in a stony face. It is almost easy to miss his shrunken and malformed arm, or the nearby arctic fox that mirrors his scowling gaze.

Mannerisms: Svaad Ruun seems almost a statue. He listens in unmoving silence, hands clasped at his chin, and refuses to fill long pauses or gaps in conversation. When he finally speaks, his deep voice carries the weight and power of the hundred chiefs that came before him.

Personality: Svaad is as cold and severe as the land he rules. Skaalhaft's chief, his decisions are made with absolute authority. He does not mince words and has little sympathy for outsiders.

Background: When Svaad was born, his mother nearly threw him into the sea. A chief with one arm is no chief at all. But Svaad's father convinced his wife to stay her hand. Even without his arm, Svaad became the village's strongest hunter. His mother relied on him for advice and passed easy knowing Skaalhaft was in his care.

Skaalhaft houses, the receiving area is open to guests but the bedrooms and dining area are only used by the occupants. Trespassing therein is an unthinkable breach of protocol.

5: HUNTER'S DOCK

The dock's blue-grey wood is stained with blood and acid, but intricately decorated with scrimshaw ornaments.

While fishing boats dock at the two smaller piers, only the mighty hunting vessels may anchor at Hunter's Dock. The three remaining ships (*The Serpent*, *Ygdris* and *Moonborn*) are sturdy, lean and fast. They are each mounted with two ballista harpoons and their hulls can withstand acid and crushing blows. The port side of each ship is stained with green and red blood from a hundred kills, and evidence of countless repairs are clear to any competent sailor. Each ship has a crew of fifteen to twenty, so when all three ships are at sea the village is noticeably emptier.

The Serpent is the oldest of the three ships and the most respected. To be accepted aboard the *Serpent* is a great honour. The captain, a wizened old man named Brynhyld, knows more about hunting drakes than any other man alive. The *Serpent* has the masthead of a dragon.

The Ygdris hunts smaller game and its captain Ranveig is an opportunist. His crew is trained with axe and bow and they often explore windswept islands and caves for unusual creatures. More often than not, however, the *Ygdris* returns with nothing more than a dire shark. Svaad is beginning to doubt Ranveig's ability as a captain. *Ygdris* has the masthead of a griffon.

The Moonborn runs errands for special customers and its crew is well equipped for any challenge. Occasionally, captain Vynhert takes the *Moonborn* farther afield, seeking bounties for

RANDOM EVENTS: HUNTER'S DOCK

D6	EVENT
1	The Alchemist makes his way to the dock, parchment in hand. He confers with captain Vynhert of the <i>Moonborn</i> , listing a range of unusual ingredients but neglect to mention their purpose.
2	Sailors board the <i>Ygdris</i> , prepare for another voyage. Each gives a small piece of scrimshaw to a loved one as they go, which they will collect upon their return.
3	Captain Ranveig of the <i>Ygdris</i> begins a heated argument with elderly Brynhyld of the <i>Serpent</i> , over an apparent slight.
4	A gigantic spiked shark presses up against the dock, then recedes into the opaque green water.
5	A child stumbles and falls into the freezing water. If the PCs act quickly enough, they can save him from the beasts swimming within.
6	The <i>Serpent</i> returns early from a trip. Captain Brynhyld has come down with a terrible sickness which racks him with bloody coughs.

monsters terrorising merchants. For the past few months, *Moonborn* has been at the almost exclusive service of the Alchemist and Wizard. *Moonborn's* masthead is a likeness of the captain's deceased wife, Lyselis.

The Breakhelm hunted whales and kraken, but went missing two months ago. At this point it is presumed destroyed and a mass funeral for the sailors is scheduled to take place shortly. In reality, the ship was destroyed by a kraken, but about half of the crew still survive on a barren island far to the west. The *Breakhelm's* masthead was Vaydmar, founder of Skaalhaft.

Rescue of the Breakhelm: Gremheks has a vision of the surviving Breakhelm crew, but cannot convince the villagers the crewmembers are still alive. Reluctantly, she asks the PCs to bring the stranded sailors home.

6: WAYHOUSE

This awkwardly constructed house looks somewhat more dilapidated than the others, its blue-grey walls nearly rotten from the salty air.

Skaalhaft is not accustomed to visitors, yet at the moment they have three: the Wizard, the Alchemist and the Poacher. These travellers have taken up residence in an abandoned home. However, the Wizard and Alchemist have little to do with the Poacher who has claimed another room as her own.

The Wizard and the Alchemist have taken on the role of eccentric patrons. They make special requests of the whalers, and purchase rare products with an unending stream of gold.

THE POACHER (ALAINA KRAYLOCK)

The poacher is dangerously thin, pale and sweaty. Dressed in heavy cloth armour, she seems animated by a nervous paranoia.

CN female elf **scout**

Mannerisms: The Poacher tries but absolutely fails to remain in the shadows. She eats very little, fidgets incessantly and skulks around the village.

Personality: The Poacher is a dull and unsuccessful person, but is utterly consumed by a desire to avenge her father. She has little else in life.

Background: The Poacher sometimes worked with her father aboard a ship which hunted the same waters as Skaalhaft's vessels. They were constantly harassed by the villagers, so the Poacher could blame no one else when her father's ship went missing. She now seeks revenge on whomever is at fault (though she doesn't know who this is). In reality, Gremheks sent a storm to destroy the ship without the knowledge of the rest of the village.

The Poacher is even more mysterious. She refuses to give her name, and wanders the village brooding and without apparent purpose. She only arrived recently, but the villagers will drive her off if her attitude does not improve.

7: VAYDMAR'S LIGHT

This jagged lighthouse looks like it was summoned out of the black rock. The skill required to construct such a monolith seems beyond the ability of any mortal mason.

According to legend, the hero Vaydmar raised the lighthouse using powerful magic after his lover's ship was dashed on the rocks below. He took up residence inside, keeping the torch lit and guiding the hunters home every night. The black spikes and glowing runes crawling over the sides of the lighthouse certainly bear the mark of a powerful mage...or an otherworldly demon.

Vaydmar's Light has been in a single family's care for at least four centuries (as far back as records date). This lineage claims Vaydmar as their heroic ancestor, and they have the arcane prowess to substantiate such a tale. The family has always lived within the lighthouse and maintained the torch, but only a single member now remains: Gremheks.

- **For Sale:** *potion of healing* (50 gp), *potion of invulnerability* (2,000 gp), *scroll of lesser restoration* (250 gp)

GREMHEKS

This ancient woman wears tattered grey robes and moves with a debilitating hunch. Blue tattoos pulse like blood across her wrinkled body.

CN female human cleric 6

Mannerisms: Gremheks sneers and rolls her bulbous eyes at the slightest mistake, and openly complains about guests to her pet crab. However, she is unendingly kind and patient with children, who love her immensely.

Personality: Gremheks is crotchety, nasty and suspicious of outsiders, but provides her services to any who can stand her stream of acerbic complaints and insults. She will do anything to protect Skaalhaft, including murder. In fact, she is responsible for the storm that killed the Poacher's father.

Background: Unable to bear children despite decades of happy marriage, Gremheks is the last of the Vaydmar line. Now she lives alone, tending to the light at the top of the lighthouse and assisting the villagers with healing magic. In recent years, Gremheks has gotten it into her head she deserves to be chief. Luckily, few take her seriously.

TIGLEY

Words Steve Hood **Cartography** Tommi Salama

Wracked by disaster, Tigley is a village reborn. Standing on the fringes of a noisome marshland, its folk make their living from the swamp, and harvesting the guano excavated from the caves honeycombing the spire of rock upon which stands much of the village. But all is not peaceful in Tigley. The villagers' unique burial rituals have attracted undead to certain nearby sunken ruins and goblins have been seen in the locality. In the village itself, influential figures vie for control of the local industries, a bully uses his influence to spread lies and cause trouble and the village priest hides a terrible secret. Once again, Tigley is a village teetering on the edge of disaster, but this time it is a disaster of the village's own making.

TIGLEY AT A GLANCE

Ruler Silas Hinge

Government Autocracy

Population 89 (78 humans, 3 dwarves, 3 elves, 2 half-elves, 1 half-orcs, 2 halflings)

Alignments LN, N, NG

Languages Common, Goblin

Corruption +0; **Crime** -1; **Economy** +1; **Law** +2; **Lore** +1; **Society** +0

Qualities Insular, prosperous

Danger 0; **Disadvantages** None

Wracked by disaster, Tigley is a village literally risen again. Decades ago, a powerful earthquake devastated the village. Many of its buildings collapsed and much of Tigley was destroyed or fell into the swamp. Even the land itself was rent. A great gorge opened up, and Tigley's remains were left marooned on a spire of splintered rock jutting from the marshland.

But Tigley endured and although it hasn't exactly prospered, it has grown once again, becoming a site of commerce. Now the villagers work the surrounding swamplands and sometimes adventurers use the village as a base from which to explore the surrounding swamp. Goblins live in the nearby woods and occasionally raid the village—although (at least recently) this is a rare event.

NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than hardworking peasants. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

Emmon (location 3; LN male venerable human **guard**) This crotchety white-haired old timer has guarded The Belt for nearly 60 years. Despite his frail look he is a commendable fighter and an expert with his halberd.

Father Isaak (location 7; NG male werebat human **priest**) This tall, well fed clergyman runs the Foundation. As a collector of taxes and an overseer of all weddings, births and funerals he knows everyone in the village and is well liked.

Gerold (location 9; NG human male **commoner**) This bright eyed, ruddy faced man usually wears an apron covered with sickly sweet sauces and ale.

Hilduin Caldwell (location 8; NE male old human **commoner**) This creepy-looking, hook-nosed, grey haired miser runs the Paper Press.

Matron Ella Hinge (location 2; LG female old human **commoner**) This kindly old lady is usually stood at the gates of the orphanage or overlooking the bustling Cliffside below. Married to Silas, she is well loved and respected by all.

Rogar Weaverson (location 10; N male human **commoner**) A large, burly man usually accompanied by his cronies. The local bully he is not liked by most of the populace. He is only tolerated for his considerable stone-working skills.

Silas Hinge (location 6; LG male old human **commoner**) This stocky overweight bearded man is the mayor. He is always

down by his forge or stood on the ledge beside it overlooking the Wash below.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of Tigley comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **The Stack:** A solid granite promontory upon which the village clings.
2. **Stone's Throw Orphanage:** This large half-timber building houses orphans from the nearby city.
3. **The Belt:** This rough and rickety rope and wood bridge spans the chasm dividing the village.
4. **The Square:** This cobbled open area is used for village celebrations and festivals.
5. **The Well:** Bats use this disused old stone well to exit their cavern-home.
6. **Cliffside:** A large forge and its warehouses cover the far side of the cliffs. Several lifts and pathways connecting them.
7. **The Foundation:** This large stone tower and several wooden buildings is the village's centre of worship. Dead villagers are lowered from a platform into the lake below, during funerals.
8. **The Paper Press:** A well-maintained wooden building with a watermill running beside it. Looking slightly out of place, the wood of this building is obviously imported.
9. **The Crack in the Wall:** Several shacks and huts now serve as Tigley's tavern and inn.
10. **The Wash:** This open cobbled area has wooden jetties and a sturdy stone bridge. Used as a communal gathering area it is busy most times of the day.
11. **The Sink:** The villagers use this large, muddy lake to bury their dead.

MARKETPLACE

Resources & Industry Bat guano, hemp products (rope, wax, resins, lantern oil, canvas, paper), sugar.

When the PCs arrive in Tigley, the following items are for sale:

- **Armour & Weapons** +1 dagger (400 gp), +1 leather (600 gp)
- **Potions & Oils** growth (250 gp)

WEREBAT

The character gains a Strength of 15 if his or her score isn't already higher, and a +1 bonus to AC while in bat or hybrid form (from natural armour). Attack and damage rolls for the bite are based on Strength. The character also gains a fly speed of 60 ft.

VILLAGE LORE

A PC may know something about Tigley, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

DC 10: Tigley stands at the edge of a swamp. Decades ago, an earthquake devastated the village, but it has since recovered.

DC 15: Much of Tigley stands on a spire of rock jutting out of the marsh. Vast swarms of bats live in the caves honeycombing the rock.

DC 20: The villagers bury their dead in the nearby lake. This practise attracts undead and other scavengers to the area.

VILLAGERS

Appearance Most of the villagers are lithe and lean.

Dress Most villagers wear hemp canvas shirts, smocks and dresses treated with various natural dyes usually worn with high leather boots. Most leathers are treated skins from the reptiles and snakes living in the swamp. Polished stones and shells are worn as jewellery.

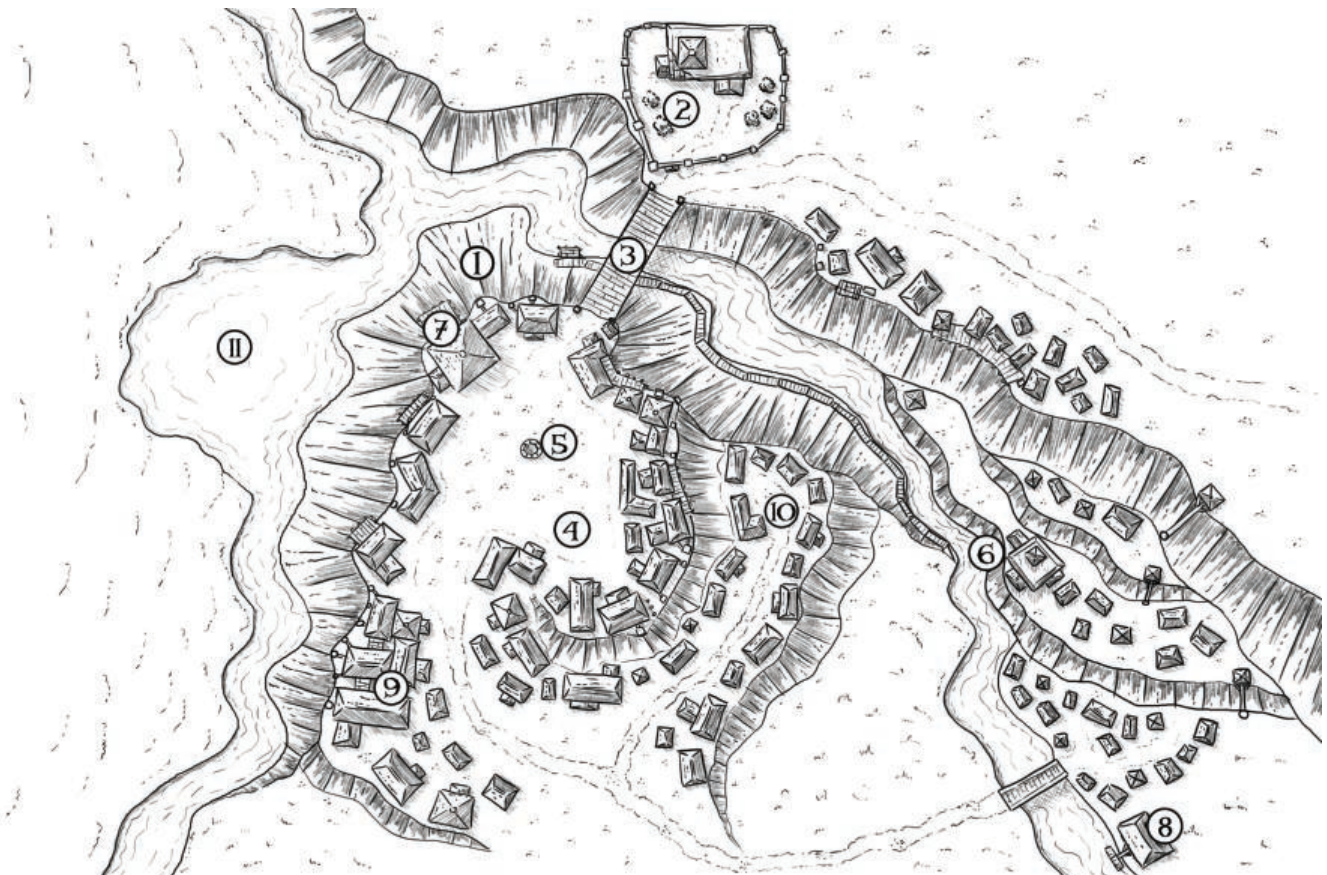
Nomenclature *male* Adalbert, Egfried, Otgar, Waron, Worad; *female* Ada, Berta, Gisela, Rilla; *family* Blois, Gall, Lorsch, Trond

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Tigley, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

D6	RUMOUR
1	Goblins have always been a problem in Tigley; they live in the nearby chasms and woods.
2	Some guards on a nearby road destroyed a walking corpse recently.
3*	Morgan, the red-haired bouncer at the Crack in the Wall, is in love with the owner.
4*	Silas' son was taken one night during a goblin raid. The resultant stress caused him and Ella to separate.
5	Things have been seen swimming in the Wash in the dead of night. No one knows what they are, but they are fast, quiet and secretive...
6*	Rogar and Hilduin work for a merchant in the city who wants to control of the guano trade.

*False rumour



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: THE STACK

The stack is a solid granite rock surrounded by marshy flatlands. It is deeply cracked and the constant noise of bats accentuated by the ammonia stink of the guano hangs in the surrounding air. Wooden walkways and ledges link the various shacks clinging to the rock face and a partially completed winding cobblestone path links the Wash (location 10) to the Square (location 4).

The stack is riddled with caves and crevices home to large bats swarms. Each night the bats leave their roosts and swarm down to hunt over the stinking marshes. It is against the law for outsiders to enter the caves and disturb the bats; anyone abusing this law is expelled from the village.

2: STONE'S THROW ORPHANAGE

The orphanage perches on the hills opposite the Stack (location 1). This large stone building was ruined in the earthquake and over half of it collapsed. Most of one side has been rebuilt in stone and re-insulated with hemp and lime blocks. The entire upper floor is of timber. The gardens contain several over-climbed apple trees and a wide bramble patch as well as a large kitchen garden. From here, children throw stones at a large broken tree trunk clinging to the cliff near the Belt (location 3)—hence the orphanage's name. The orphanage's high stone wall is also a favourite perch for the children; here they tell tall tales and spy on visitors.

Housing only six children, the orphanage is surprisingly empty. The beloved, but crippled, Matron Ella Hinge (LG female old human **commoner**) has run the orphanage for 15 years. She is married to Silas the Ironmonger (location 6) but spends all her time here only seeing him when he makes the trip to the loading station opposite the gates.

3: THE BELT

This sturdy plank and hemp rope bridge traverses the chasm. Squat stone pillars hold the myriad of ropes and guide lines forming the three-foot wide and 50-foot long bridge. It is only strong enough to carry foot passage; anything heavier causes it to creak threateningly and alerts Emmon (LN venerable male human **guard**) the resident guard who lives in a small shack on the village side. He doesn't tolerate heavy packs or "walking tin cans" as he calls them on his bridge. A toll of 1 cp—nicknamed the "Lazy Toll"—is payable by visitors using the bridge. Villagers can cross for free.

Emmon is pushing 80 but still wears his battered and much repaired leather jerkin every day. His halberd is more of a walking stick than a weapon now but he is still quick on his feet enough to give cheeky kids from the orphanage or a self-important adventurer a clip on the behind when necessary.

4: THE SQUARE

A painted wooden sign proudly denotes this flat cobbled space between the ramshackle stone and wooden buildings as the village square. Several of the village's better off families live in the surrounding buildings. Each weekend, stalls are set up surrounding the well. The villagers hold festivals here as well (as tattered streamers dangling from some of the buildings attest).

The cobbled street leading to Tigley Bottom and the rest of the village is under repair. Several stonemasons work here, but are doing little actual work. Rogar Weaverson (N male human **commoner**; also, location 10) is the boss of these workers.

5: THE WELL

Six-foot across and surrounded by a three-foot high wall this waterless well is somewhat of an oddity. Several times a year bats swarm from its depths instead of using their usual exits scattered all over Cliffside and Tigley Bottom. Once their swarming interrupted a village meeting and filled the square with irate bats and villagers alike. Shortly thereafter a decision was made to remove the covering and winch and let the creatures use the shaft as they wish. It is still counted as lucky for people to throw small offerings into the well.

6: CLIFFSIDE

What was once a simple smithy has become a small district. The main building still holds a forge but several storage buildings and ramshackle huts built to house workers now also stand here. Run by Silas Hinge (LG male old human **commoner**) here goods are unloaded at the winch station above before being lowered and carried by hand to the village. Outside the large open fronted forge is a hive of activity. During the earthquake, the house didn't sustain much damage but was left by itself on a wide ledge without easy access. Steps were cut into the cliff and plank walkways—bounded by chains and posts to protect against falls—added to enable access to the Wash. Recently Silas employed Rogar to build some walls along the walkways but the two have fallen out over Rogar's bullying ways.

Silas is nearly ready to retire from smithing but happy to carry on running the village. As a wealthy, successful smith, he is one of Tigley's most influential citizens (as he employs most of the villagers). Married to Ella the matron at the Stone's Throw Orphanage (location 2) he has no children to pass the business onto due to their only child being taken by the legendary goblin Ruff about twenty years ago. This horrible event caused a massive strain on his marriage and he only sees his crippled wife when he rides the winch to great visitors to the village.

7: THE FOUNDATION

This stone tower is all that remains of the village's original temple. After the earthquake, the only parts of the temple to survive were the lower floors of the bell tower. In honour of its survival, the temple is now called "The Foundation." The buildings were eventually capped with wood and thatched and a small chapel added as a proper place of worship.

During the earthquake, the entire graveyard collapsed into the large lake that formed below. (This lake eventually earned the nickname "The Sink"—see location 11 for more information). Due to the lack of land available for burials, it became common for the dead to be wrapped in hemp cloth and lowered into the lake during funerals. This practice is still in use today.

The current priest, Father Isaak (NG male werebat human **priest**), is well respected by the community and has lived here for 20 years. Unknown to his parishioners, however, Isaak is a lycanthrope hiding from his bloodthirsty brethren who dwell in a far-off forsaken village of the damned. He spends most evenings in his rooms at the top of the tower but sometimes feels the need to bond with his own kind—hence the intermittent bat swarms erupting from the nearby well.

Father Isaak is a happy, well-built and well-fed man with slightly elven features (pointed ears and high cheekbones) and short black hair. He is currently embroiled in a great argument with Papermaker Caldwell over tithes and taxes owed to the village, but refuses to acknowledge this publicly.

8: THE PAPER PRESS

Owned by Hilduin Caldwell (NE male old human **commoner**), this building is the only completely wooden building in the village. Hilduin was once a wealthy merchant in a nearby city but moved here about ten years ago. Whilst being a slightly creepy looking man with balding hair and a perpetual scowl he isn't anything more sinister—although he may appear so on occasion.

The press makes good quality paper sold to the same mages buying the guano from the rest of the village. He also sells oils and other by-products from the hemp to the villagers to make into whatever they can. Due to the flammable nature of the building and his general miserable attitude he does most business on the doorstep and reacts very defensively to anyone entering his little world.

A long conveyor belt is attached to a wheel in the river via a wooden framework. The current turns this providing power to the various machines used the Paper Press. Living alone in a small room above the machinery he rarely leaves the building in case people steal anything from him. Several villagers do odd jobs for him. He also acts as a notary for the village, writing up cargo manifests and legal documents as required.

Hilduin is embroiled in a vociferous dispute with Father Isaak over the tithe he pays to the village. He makes no effort to hide his dislike for the meddling clergyman. Due to the success of his

work he pays a greater amount to the village, something he doesn't think is fair. While he can do very little about this he has convinced Rogar Weaverson to take his time finishing the work. Whilst this has no overall effect on the village it makes him sleep better at night and provides Rogar with enough money for him and his cronies to spend most nights in the Crack in the Wall where they spread malicious rumours about Father Isaak.

9: THE CRACK IN THE WALL

This wattle and daub building is actually several larger shacks linked together by bridges. Originally a guano farmer's house it—and the surrounding properties—have been transformed into a tavern. Gerold (NG male human **commoner**) has spent much gold restoring the buildings and transforming them into a unique tavern. Spanning four floors it has two taprooms—a public one and a smaller one to the rear used as a gambling room—a large kitchen, two large cellars and three double guest rooms. Whilst the guest rooms are little more than glorified huts built onto the roof above the main taproom they are popular among those who succumb to the strong rum served here.

Overlooking Cliffside lie the main taproom, the guest rooms above and a cellar used to store beers and ales. Across the bridge lies the kitchen and the second spirits cellar. Above this are Gerolds' and the waitress' rooms and the gaming room.

The pub serves standard fare with a predominance of fish and small birds from the marshes below. Sticky sweet puddings and meats are also available and most things are served with a thin caramel sauce. The smell of burnt toffee fills the common room. Whilst the food is good and honest it is not very imaginative, something Gerold is interested in changing.

Gerold mans the bar every night and is a good source of information about Tigley and the surrounding area. Unnaturally grey-haired for someone in his forties he has obviously sampled way too many of his own pastries and quickly gets out of breath. Under the main bar, he has a barrel full of weapons and equipment from adventurers that couldn't pay their bills and never returned to collect. Chief among these is a *+1 mace* he uses to "sort out" bar fights. He stands for no nonsense in his tavern and knows Rogar and his cronies are trouble.

Stairs next to the bridge leading to the kitchens access the gaming room. An ex-waitress—Morgan (LN female human **veteran**)—stands guard here most nights. There is very little trouble in the tavern but just in case she has a thunderstone to alert any other staff. Whilst pretty and easy to get on with Morgan is butch and slightly intimidating. She keeps her long red hair tied back in a plait and has no problem using her cudgel on troublemakers. False rumours persist of her and Gerold being a couple. One way to make her angry (and potentially violent) is to pry into her personal business.

10: THE WASH

This large communal area at the bottom of the Stack is the busiest place in Tigley. Here wives wash clothes while swampers sort and wash the hemp and sugar canes harvested from the surrounding marsh. They then take it to Cliffside to be processed and sold.

The river from Dudney Chasm tumbles down through the ravine before widening out and dispersing into the marsh. As there is no way to access this area with ponies and the like, porters move all goods. Most of the village's Swampers, porters and other tradesmen (including Rogar and his cronies) live here.

The Cliffside of the river is in better repair than the Tigley side because Hinge the Ironmonger spent money on cobbles and small walls around the walkways. Most of the shacks on Cliffside are half-timber and a lot sturdier. Of the fifty-odd people living in Tigley Bottom and the Wash, half are in Hinge's employ and the other half wish they were.

At the end of the Wash muddy pools and rushes become more common until the area blends into the marshland beyond.

11: THE SINK

The Sink is a large, muddy lake lapping gently against the cliffs some 80 feet below the Foundation (location 7). Several dire bats nestle on the overhang just below the building and have so far avoided the villager's attention. Most people stay away from the lake as it now a sacred burial site.

On the far side of the lake, the ruins of several submerged buildings can be seen during hot summer months. These are the remains of an old farmstead destroyed during the earthquake and resultant floods. Two lacedons—ghouls with a 30 ft. swim speed—lurk in the buildings' flooded cellars and feed off whatever waste they find—and occasionally a (tasty) dead villager buried in the lake.

LIFE IN TIGLEY

Daily life in Tigley is busy and hard. Few of the villagers are well off and many struggle daily to make ends meet. A few villagers—Silas and Rogar in particular—have an inordinate effect on day-to-day life.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Most of the villagers fish, gather hemp and sugar cane or labour as porters. Most of their pay is in the form of food or free rent of their homes. Most of those living in Cliffside work for Silas (location 6). This has caused a few problems for Rogar (location 10) as his bullying ways do not go well with them.

The gathered hemp is turned into ropes and cloth or pulped into paper at the Paper Press (location 8). The cloth is then made into clothes or sacking.

One of Silas's workers has also been experimenting with making blocks from the hemp fibres mixed with clay and lime from the lake edges. If he is successful, Rogar may lose his monopoly on stoneworking in the village.

Sugar cane is used as food and sold by the sack to visiting merchants. Some villagers smoke hemp but as this makes them unproductive Silas discourage this practice.

LAW & ORDER

Tigley is relatively peaceful. Few problems beyond drunken fisticuffs present themselves on a daily basis. In the village, Rogar is perhaps the person most seen as a troublemaker. However, Father Isaak is a stern fellow and does not tolerate troublemakers.

EVENTS

While the PCs are in Tigley, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

D6	EVENT
1	Several goblins are seen spying on Tigley from the other side of the lake. Goblin and boar tracks lead off towards Dudney Chasm.
2	A villager goes missing while fishing on the far side of the lake. Maybe a light snack for the ghouls there?
3	Villagers discover a shroud-wrapped body on the underside of the Sink. It looks like it has been gnawed upon. They come to the party for help as this discovery cannot bode well for the village.
4	Rogar gets drunk and causes a bar fight which spills out onto the streets. Morgan does her best to deal with this but is outnumbered.
5	A large pack of goblins set fire to a local farmer's barn and make off with several of his sheep. A goblin mounted on a large boar was seen leading them.
6	Two female orcs are seen hurrying through the woods towards Dudney chasm to the north.

WOODRIDGE

Words Creighton Broadhurst **Cartography** Tommi Salama

Ruled over for centuries by the scheming, ambitious Lorsch family, Woodridge is little more than a backwater village standing on the eastern bounds of the Duchy of Ashlar. Standing astride an ancient, now little-used trade route the village is a poor, but seemingly peaceful place. Its folk tend their small fields, pay their lord his due and are content to be left in peace. But all is not as it seems. Spies lurk among the populace, and dark forces gather which would see Woodridge's lord, Hilduin Lorsch, converted to their faith or dead.

WOODRIDGE AT A GLANCE

Ruler Hilduin Lorsch

Government Overlord

Population 185 (172 humans, 7 half-elves, 4 half-orcs, 2 halflings)

Alignments LN

Languages Common

Resources & Industry Agriculture, hunting

Ruled over for centuries by the scheming, ambitious Lorsch family, Woodridge is little more than a backwater village standing on the eastern bounds of the Duchy of Ashlar. Standing astride an ancient, now little-used trade route the village is a poor, but seemingly peaceful place. Its folk tend their small fields, pay their lord his due and are content to be left in peace. But all is not as it seems. Spies lurk among the populace, and dark forces gather which would see Woodridge's lord, Hilduin Lorsch, converted to their faith or dead.

A settlement has stood on the site for centuries. First a robber baron claimed the area. After he was slain and his followers scattered, the victors raised a church to Conn, The Father, and started farming the surrounding land and hunting the nearby Briarwood. The people prospered and trade flowed through the village along the Ridgeway. But the opening of an alternate trade route bypassing Woodridge brought hard times to the village and its lord. This new route, sponsored by the ruler of the nearby town of Dulwich, sparked a rivalry between the two families—the Galls and the Lorsch—which endures to this very day. Even now, the two families struggle for control of the village of Longbridge, its strategically important bridge and its plentiful tax revenues.

Thus, while Woodridge is a peaceful place, an undefinable but palpable tension seems to hang in the air. Its people know war is likely soon for their lord is not a patient man and they dread its approach. Many of the villagers serve in the local militia and many will likely fall in the coming battles.

VILLAGERS

Appearance Weather-beaten and poor, the villagers can seem dour to outsiders. In truth, they are often simply exhausted.

Dress The villagers wear stout peasant garb well suited for days of hard labour in the fields. Many peasants own short hunting bows and are often found in huntsman's garb in Briarwood's fringes.

Nomenclature *male* Aaro, Elmo, Reima, Sauli, Usko; *female* Aune, Eeva, Irja, Oirjo; *family* Eronen, Leino, Ojanen, Takala.

VILLAGE LORE

A PC may know something about Woodridge, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check:

DC 10: Woodridge is an isolated village in Ashlar's eastern reaches. Hilduin Lorsch—a brooding, ambitious man—rules.

DC 15: Woodridge is a poor place. It straddles the Ridgeway—an old trading route now superseded by an easier trail. Lorsch dreams of adding the nearby village of Longbridge to his holdings, but his rival continues to thwart his desires.

DC 20: Strange things are said to live in the woods to the north of the village. Sometimes, thick fog boils forth from the forest and travellers go missing.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Woodridge, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

D6	RUMOUR
1	Ancient ruins lie hidden deep in the Briarwood.
2	Hilduin Lorsch is consumed with ambition and wants to better his father who did much to improve his family's fortune.
3*	Caves below the Lorsch manor hold great stores of ancient gold coins.
4	Something strange is going on at the Travelling Man. Vesa Ahokas has occasional furtive meetings with travellers who never stay long and who seem to have no real reason to visit Woodridge.
5*	Weird things live in the Briarwood. When the fog rises, they steal forth to fall upon and eat any travellers they find on the Ridgeway.
6	Father Turkka is an ingrate who cares more for his own comfort and pleasure than his flock's well-being.

*False rumour



NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than hardworking peasants. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

Eeva Keto (location 5; NE female human **priest** [Braul]) A new resident, Eeva plots to seduce Hilduin and lure him into her dark lord's embrace (or kill him).

Father Turkka (location 3; LN middle-aged male human **priest** [Conn]) Priest at the Father's Sanctum, Turkka frets over the state of his lord's hall and seeks funds for its repair (while jealously guarding his own comfortable lifestyle).

Hilduin Lorsch (location 1; LE male human **knight**) Lord of Woodridge, Hilduin constantly schemes to add the village of Longbridge to his possessions.

Kanbrar Aralivar (location 7; LG male half-elf wizard 2) Varma's apprentice, Kanbrar is a kindly soul who now performs most of her duties.

Reima Lankinen (location 2; LN male middle-aged human **commoner**) Courteous and clever, Reima is a consummate merchant; he is always looking for a way to enrich himself.

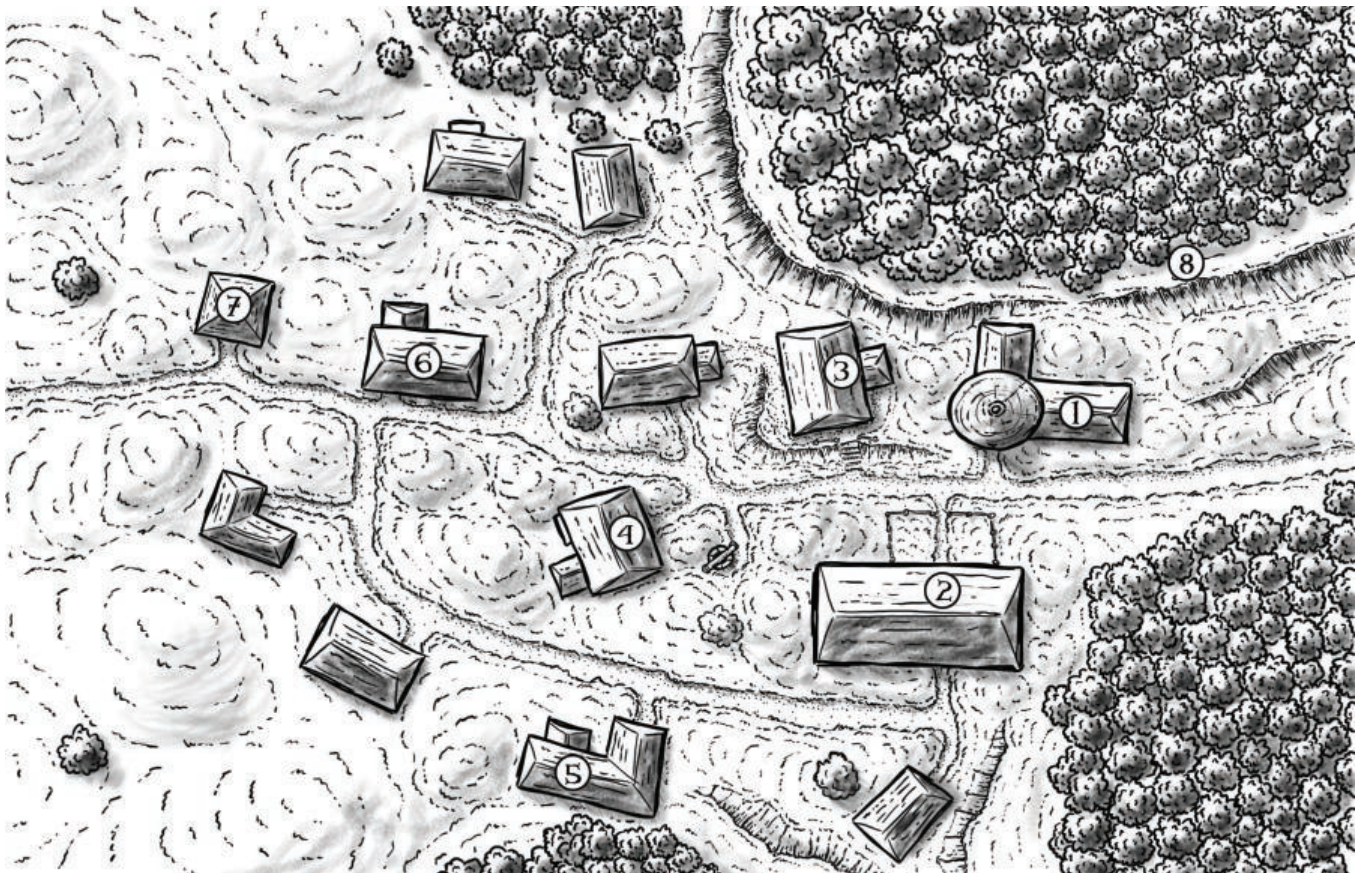
Varma Timonen (location 7; N old female human wizard 3) Now growing forgetful, Varma serves as Hilduin's court wizard. She rarely leaves the Smoking Tower.

Vesa Ahokas (location 6; N middle-aged male human **commoner**) Vesa runs the Travelling Man. He secretly (and reluctantly) spies on Hilduin Lorsch and his doings.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of Woodridge comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **Lorsch Manor:** This brooding fortified manor is the Lorsch ancestral home. Here dwells Hilduin Lorsch and his family.
2. **Lankinen's:** This large building is a general provisioners, stables and moneylenders. Reima Lankinen is the second richest man in the village.
3. **Father's Sanctum:** Dedicated to Conn, this is the oldest building in Woodridge except for parts of the Lorsch Manor. Dilapidated, it has seen better days.
4. **Priesthome:** Home to Father Turkka, this is a substantial building.
5. **Eeva's Home:** Here dwells (and plots) Eeva Keto.
6. **The Travelling Man:** Woodridge's only inn is welcoming and comfortable, but rarely busy.
7. **The Smoking Tower:** Varma Timonen dwells here, as she has for decades. She feels the cold terribly; consequently, smoke always belches from the tower's chimney.
8. **Briarwood:** These tangled, ancient woodlands are said to hold ancient ruins and to be the home of certain horrible creatures. Thick fog often blankets the area.



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Woodridge is a far-flung community. Homesteads and forester's huts are scattered throughout the surrounding area, while the village's mercantile businesses and other places of import cluster about an old well that has never run dry. The Ridgeway—an old trade route—runs through the village, but is little used now. As well as being far-flung the village is a poor place; only a few individuals have real wealth; the rest of the populace live hand to mouth.

1: LORSCH MANOR

Here dwells Hilduin Lorsch (LE male human **knight**), his family and two score or so family retainers and soldiers. The Lorsch family manor is heavily fortified. It comprises a squat and weathered ancient keep-tower and two newer fortified wings built by Hilduin's father.

The Lorsch family has ruled Woodridge for hundreds of years, but have ever chafed at their relatively minor standing among Ashlar's noble families. Lorsch means to increase his power and wealth by extending his rule over the nearby village of Longbridge. Unfortunately, Wido Gall (LN male human **mage**), the ruler of the nearby town of Dulwich, also covets Longbridge. Thus far, the two rulers' struggle has not spilled over into violence, but such a confrontation cannot be far off.

Hilduin is married to Aila (CN female human **scout**), daughter of a wealthy woodsman, who brought with her a substantial dowry. While the two are relatively happy, they are not in love and Aila spends an increasing amount of time in Briarwood. Not particularly religious, Hilduin pays lip-service to Conn the Father. In search of an advantage over his rival, he is in danger of falling for Eeva Keto's (location 5; NE female human cleric [Braal] 5) charms and into Braal's ebon clutches.

2: LANKINEN'S

This large building rivals the Lorsch Manor in size, but not grandeur. Obviously a business, it rambles over two floors. At the front, a fenced yard often holds cattle and horses for sale.

Lankinen's is the only commercial operation in Woodridge except the Travelling Man (location 6). Reima Lankinen (LN male middle-aged human **commoner**) owns the establishment. For a finder's fee, he can get almost anything a villager needs through his extensive contacts in the near towns of Dulwich and Languard. Whispers also endow him with links to the smugglers of dismal Coldwater to the north. He laughs at such conjecture—perhaps a little too heartily—and no one has thus far proved the truth of the matter.

Lankinen's features a large shop space, filled with gear of interest to travellers and farmers, and a stable on the ground floor. The family dwell in a series of well-appointed rooms on

the second floor. Above it all, a surprisingly spacious attic is a riot of disorganisation filled with dusty and unwanted goods. Reima Lankinen fills many roles in the village: trader, moneychanger and pawnbroker. A necessary evil, he is not popular; many in the surrounding countryside owe him money. He hides a substantial store of coin, and the most valuable items pawned at his establishment, in the attic behind a false wall.

3: FATHER'S SANCTUM

This once-fine chapel has seen better days. Dedicated to Conn (LN god of community, family and rulership), it was built over 200 years ago and is Woodridge's oldest structure except for the central tower-keep of the Lorsch manor. Father Turkka (LN middle-aged male human **priest** [Conn]) preaches here weekly, officiates at funerals and generally tends to his flock's spiritual needs. He dwells in his home (location 4) across the road.

An extensive ossuary fills several natural caverns found when the chapel's foundations were sunk. Here lie the bones of the deceased watched over by equally dead village priests.

4: PRIESTHOME

This substantial building overlooks both the Father's Sanctum (location 3) and the Ridgeway. Father Turkka (LN middle-aged male human **priest** [Conn]) dwells here. Two young acolytes, Raisa Leino and Alma Eerola (both LN female human **acolyte** [Conn] 1), live in a small, cramped room at the rear of the house. Father Turkka likes the good things in life, but he rarely shares his bounty with his acolytes. Thus, they resent him. At the weekly service, Eeva Keto (location 5) has noticed their animosity toward the priest and has begun quietly working on the two.

5: EEVA'S HOME

This large house on the village's southern bounds houses the beautiful and cunning Eeva Keto (NE female human **priest** [Braal]). Masquerading as an apothecary and seer, Eeva has lived in the village for two years. Eeva came here after her malevolent lord sent her a dream. In it, he revealed it was her destiny to come to Woodridge and seduce Hilduin to Braal's dark embrace. Faithful to her lord, she has toiled at her task, but has been stymied by Aila Lorsch (location 1) who has divined the apothecary's (apparent romantic) interest in her husband. Still, she has other irons in the fire—Father Turkka's acolytes are in danger of falling under her spell and soon she intends to arrange an accident for Aila. With her out of the way, Eeva can seduce and marry Hilduin. If he converts to Braal's worship, all well and good. If not, accidents happen with surprising regularity in the woods and Eeva has always wanted to be a Lady of the Realm.

6: THE TRAVELLING MAN

A sign depicting a heavily laden traveller complete with stout walking staff and comically bulging backpack marks this place as an inn and rest stop. The Travelling Man is a welcoming, cosy inn. The beds are soft, the rooms are warm and the food hearty.

Food & Drink meal (mutton in a creamy mushroom sauce or lamb chops with parsnips and leeks) 5 sp, ale 4 cp, wine (pitcher) 1 sp.

Accommodation A standard room costs 2 gp a night. A bed in the small communal dormitory can be had for 2 sp.

The guest rooms on the second-floor command far-reaching views over the village's western approaches. Here Vesa Ahokas (N middle-aged male human **commoner**) sets a watch for travellers toiling up the Ridgeway. He does this partially for practical, commercial reasons and partially because he is a (reluctant) spy for Wido Gall. Vesa's eldest son, Oskari (NG male human **guard**), is in Wido's service as a man-at-arms. The wily noble has suggested a terrible accident would befall Oskari if Vesa refuses to cooperate. Thus, Vesa reluctantly spies for Wido, while trying to come up with a plan to safeguard his son's safety.

Vesa runs the inn with help from his wife, Irja (NG female human **commoner**), and a half-dozen or so servants drawn from the folk dwelling in the locality. Often the inn is empty, or near empty, and the arrival of rich adventurers is a cause for celebration. Such folk often spend gold like water and have much news to share.

HIDDEN STRUGGLES

While Woodridge may seem peaceful on the surface, tension and conflict seethe beneath society's veneer. Hilduin Lorsch lusts after the village of Longbridge and ceaselessly plots to bring it into his dominion. Hilduin will use any tool to achieve his goals, and is in danger of falling into the dark god Braal's ebon embrace.

To counteract Hilduin's plots, his rival Wido Gall has placed several spies in Woodridge. Chief amongst those is Vesa Ahokas, owner of the Travelling Man. Thus while Hilduin seeks to control Longbridge, Wido seeks to undermine his authority in Woodridge. At the same time, Braal's agent in the village, Eeva Keto, plots against Woodridge's priest Father Turkka and schemes to remove Hilduin's wife, Aila. Thus tensions are slowly rising in the village, but few of its folk really understand why or how this happening (and thus can do little to calm matters).

7: THE SMOKING TOWER

Enticed to Woodridge by Hilduin's father, Varma Timonen (N old female human wizard 3) serves as the Lorsch's court wizard and magical advisor. Given Hilduin's struggles against Wido Gall this is an important position. Sadly, Varma is old and getting more than a little forgetful. She rarely emerges from the Smoking Tower these days, and leaves her apprentice Kanbrar Aralivar (LG male half-elf wizard 2) to deal with visitors and Hilduin's occasional enquiries.

Now she is old, Varma feels the cold terribly, and the tower's chimney near constantly belches forth smoke as she tries to warm her old bones. This results in a steady stream of villagers bringing wood to the tower in exchange for Varma's burnished copper coins. Several villagers are convinced she is up to no good and is engaged in some (no doubt) sinister experiment. Some also believe Varma is dead—she rarely appears in public now—and that Kanbrar is the tower's true master.



8: BRIARWOOD

A great swath of tangled woodland lies north of Woodridge, straddling a line of rugged, high hills. Fog often swallows the woodland giving them an otherworldly, ill-aspect. Local legend places any number of bogeymen and the like in the woods.

Persistent rumours place more than one overgrown, ancient ruin within the woods. Gossips speak of the old gold coins Hilduin Lorsch's father found therein and which Hilduin occasionally uses to settle his debts. They also mutter about the occasional disappearance of travellers and hunters when the fog rises about the wood's ancient boles.

In truth, in the olden days a small clan of elves dwelled in the Briarwood. They struggled against terrible, evil creatures dwelling along the coast until their numbers dwindled and the survivors fled to the south. Time's inexorable progress has not yet destroyed all their settlements. The ruins of a few such places, now briar-choked and lost, still stands among the Briarwood's ancient trees. The few druids and their fey allies dwelling in the Briarwood jealously defend such places.

THE RIDGEWAY

This broad, but little-used track meanders through the duchy's eastern hills connecting Woodridge to Longbridge and Dulwich to the west and Coldwater to the north. To the north of Woodridge, it wends its way beneath the Briarwood's tangled canopy. Just north of the woods, a spur leads to Languard, Ashlar's capital.

LIFE IN WOODRIDGE

Despite its lord's plots, schemes and ambitions, Woodridge is a quiet place. Here the rhythm of life—slow, boring and unhurried—is only broken by the occasional traveller using the Ridgeway. Hilduin fancies himself a great warrior and general. He drills the militia and his men-at-arms once a week.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Woodridge is a poor place; most of its habitants subsist on a mix of small-scale farming and hunting. Villagers live throughout the surrounding area in small wooded plots surrounded by gardens or small fields. All must pay a tithe to the Lorschs, and most do so with produce rather than coin.

Woodridge's few businesses survive by servicing the trickle of travellers using the Ridgeway. Such folk often stay only a single night before moving on.

LAW & ORDER

Hilduin Lorsch is the law in Woodridge. Those threatening the peace are dealt with ruthlessly. He is a hard, inflexible man. His dreams far exceed what his resources can achieve and he jealously guards his power base.

EVENTS

While the PCs are in Woodridge, one or more of the events below may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

D4 EVENT

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | At dawn, thick and cloying fog cloaks the Briarwood. The locals mutter darkly at this and advise the PCs to delay their travels until the fog lifts. |
| 2 | A wandering tinker enters the village. Actually a spy for Wido Gall, he spends hours in deep conversation with Vesa Ahokas before leaving. Perceptive PCs notice the so-called tinker didn't complete any jobs or do any trading while in the village. |
| 3 | A traveller—Jani Varala—staggers into the village. Battered and bleeding he raves about the "living trees" before collapsing. His clothes are ripped and torn and he has lost his pack. |
| 4 | Hilduin Lorsch rides through the village. If he sees the PCs—and any of them are obviously warriors—he demands to know their names. If the warrior PC(s) are deferent, he offers them employment in his guard. |
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Y'TARIS

Words Jeff Gomez **Cartography** Tommi Salama

A stone circle marks the confluence of ley lines in this bleak and broken place. Among the ancient runes and onyx pillars burn secret powers hidden by gods and men alike. But to the people of Y'taris, the stone circle is just a tourist destination for the rich. Every year, hundreds of spellcasters make the long pilgrimage to the stone circle high in the Broken Mountains. The citizens provide food, shelter, baubles and entertainment, and all for exorbitant prices. Merchants bleed visitors of their gold, while pickpockets and scam artists take the rest. Y'taris is a nest of thieves. Anyone is welcome, as long as they have the coin.

Y'TARIS AT A GLANCE

A stone circle marks the confluence of ley lines in this bleak and broken place. Across its storied past, Y'taris has hosted spellbinding wizards and apocalyptic cultists, angelic battles and fey outcasts, abyssal legions and eldritch incursions. Among the ancient runes and onyx pillars lie secret messages, spells and powers hidden by gods and men alike.

But to the people of Y'taris, the stone circle is just a tourist destination for the rich. Every year, hundreds of mages and necromancers make the long pilgrimage to the stone circle high in the Broken Mountains. Between meditation and study, these spellcasters need a place to eat, relax and play. Y'taris provides it all for exorbitant prices. Those who are unwilling to pay may find their wallets missing all the same. And for the dark powers gathered here, the people of Y'taris offer some unusual services. Anyone is welcome, as long as they have the coin.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Rulers Ayred Guilespire, Girmark Flaskgut and Mulgin Kulon

Government Plutocracy

Population 189 (57 humans, 16 dwarves, 24 elves, 39 gnomes, 14 half-elves, 7 half-orcs, 32 halflings)

Alignments LE, NE

Languages Common, Elven, Halfling

NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than hardworking peasants. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

Ayred Guilespire (location 1; LE male elf **acolyte**) Gaunt and impossibly pale, Ayred owns nearly all the stalls in the Grey Market. He speaks for all shops and panhandlers, ensures their prices and methods are in line, and represents their interests in council meetings.

Davyn Highhall (location 5; N male human wizard 1) Davyn is like a hundred other spellcasters who travel to Y'taris each year. Born from a noble family, he seeks to enhance his pitiful magical ability by studying the Confluence. Instead, he is being cheated out of his entire inheritance.

Girmark Flaskgut (location 1; NE female dwarf **spy**) Girmark's years of thievery are mostly behind her. Now, she teaches and organizes the pickpockets and burglars, and represents their interests in council meetings.

Mulgin Kulon (location 5; LE male gnome **commoner**) Mulgin is a disgusting, boil covered gnome who spits when he talks. He oversees operations at all taverns, inns and gambling halls, and represents their interests in council meetings.

Stockmaster (location 9; LE male gnome **priest**) Stockmaster runs Onyx Hall, the premier provider of necromantic goods and services in Y'taris. He is taciturn and precise and expects his customers to be the same.

Xthelis (location 3; NE female human **lich**) Xthelis is one of the few individuals actually worthy of the arcane power available. She spends her time solely at the Pit, studying runes and practicing her necromancy. She showers the citizens with gold and they give her whatever she needs.

Yosrin Nimblefingers (location 1; CN male halfling **spy**) Yosrin is an expert pickpocket and something of a legend among his peers. He covers his good looks with dirty brown clothes, and sometimes clashes with Girmark Flaskgut over the appropriate distribution of stolen goods.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of the village comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **The Grey Market:** Filled with vendors, beggars, panhandlers and pickpockets, all magical goods can be found here (at exorbitant prices).
2. **The Confluence:** The reason mages flock to Y'taris, this stone circle intensifies magical ability and enhances arcane study.
3. **The Pit:** A conduit of necromantic power, the Pit draws powerful liches and other unsavoury spellcasters from across the world.
4. **The Gibbering Stone Inn:** This inn and tavern epitomizes everything about a cheap tavern except for its prices.
5. **Raven's Reach:** Raven's Reach inn provides wealthy visitors with opulence and a reason to spend far too much gold on frivolities.
6. **Griffon's Call:** This gambling hall is the third best place to lose money in Y'taris.
7. **Mage Society:** Within the Mage Society, novices pay hefty dues in hopes of arcane revelations that never come.
8. **Trading Post:** At the trading post, the merchants of Y'taris buy alchemical ingredients from travelling salesmen.
9. **Onyx Hall:** Onyx Hall, which sells necromantic goods, is perhaps the only store in Y'taris worth the price.



VILLAGE LORE

A PC may know something about Y'taris, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

DC 10: Y'taris is ruled by a council of three merchants: one for the inns, one for the shops and one for the thieves.

DC 15: Beneath the Confluence festers a pit of dark magic and great power. Only the citizens of Y'taris know the way.

DC 20: The powerful lich Xthelis has taken up near permanent residence at the Pit, and the villagers provide her with a steady stream of corpses.

VILLAGERS

Appearance The inhabitants of Y'taris are as stark as the surrounding mountains. They wax between cold annoyance and obsequious flattery, depending on if they have something to sell.

Dress Y'tarians dress in blacks and greys, and often wear cloaks or hoods. Many do not wish to be identified when performing their daily tasks, while others simply mimic the muted landscape.

Nomenclature *male* Belzor, Garhace, Hortran, Jodak, Kaswan, Panbul; *female* Arfin, Breni, Faybyn, Idalile, Yezlyn; *family* Calziver, Greyhand, Magespire, Totix, Uriwor.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Y'taris, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

D6	RUMOUR
1*	The Confluence has no true power, and is simply a means to draw visitors to the village.
2	The Onyx Hall sells corpses and human sacrifices in addition to other necromantic materials.
3	In ancient times, a powerful necromancer created the Pit to summon forth an undead army.
4	When visitors outstay their welcome, they are sometimes delivered to the necromancers.
5*	In the sky above the Confluence, an invisible celestial structure bestows divine power.
6	Raven's Reach has secret passages so the staff can more easily rid the guests of their possessions.

*False rumour



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: THE GREY MARKET

The Grey Market is unusually bleak for a bustling centre of commerce. Magi and sorcerers move between the shops and stalls, comparing goods, prices and the integrity of the vendor. Everything can be found here, and everything is overpriced. Dragon blood, fairy wings, troll fingers and other ingredients all sell for ten times their actual worth. Basic necessities like food, boots and weapons are equally expensive. Their increased cost is justified by woven runes, magic crystals or whatever else the merchants can say to scam gullible marks out of their money.

Anything can be purchased in the Grey Market, as long as a customer knows where to look. In the back alleys, taciturn halflings offer human eyeballs, elf ears and living pixies in jars. Merchants hide less savoury stock below trapdoors or chained up in basements. Such dark items are rare, difficult to get and perhaps the only thing worth the price in this foul place.

Pickpockets and panhandlers in addition to crooked vendors infest the market. They roam the plaza, looking for easy prey. Merchants often get in on the deal, expounding verbosely as a dagger opens the customer's purse. The vendors and thieves work in tandem—distracting and filching—and split their profits at the end of the day.

2: THE CONFLUENCE

Without the Confluence, Y'taris would not exist. Nobody knows who built this stone circle, or if it was built at all. The structure itself is impressive: thirteen jagged obsidian pillars, some up to 20 feet tall, each covered in runes from a thousand different forgotten scripts. Glowing green symbols trace ley lines running from the columns to the sacrificial slab in the ring's centre. At certain sunsets throughout the year, including the solstice and equinoxes, the runes burn and smoke with green flame.

While the Confluence was once a meditative and awe-inspiring place, it is now overrun with magical tourists seeking to enhance their skill. They come from across the realm to study the powers at work here, often boorishly and with little respect. At any given hour at least a dozen spellcasters loudly hypothesize, practice garish cantrips or carve their own arcane signets into the ancient rock. Meditation or true magical insight is impossible with these distractions.

Spells cast within the stone circle operate as if they were cast using a spell slot two levels higher than normal and have a 5% chance of not expending a spell slot.

3: THE PIT

The Confluence is a well-known arcane wonder, but fewer individuals are aware of the Pit. Situated deep within the caverns below the famous circle, the Pit plunges through the bleak stone

into oppressive darkness. Here, the runes adorning the onyx walls smoke black and red. Partially fossilized skulls of ancient primordial beings litter the cyclopean spiralling steps. Whispers of madness echo from the darkness, and the screams of trapped spirits erode the listener's sanity.

This place writhes with arcane evil, and it attracts a certain unseemly breed of visitor; necromancers and liches, blood sorcerers and death speakers, only the foulest make their way to study in the Pit. Unlike the tourists above, the denizens of the Pit are often powerful and sometimes even equal to the darkness they seek. They mingle with the rest of the visitors during the day, then hire citizens to lead them, torch in hand, through the underground labyrinth to the Pit. The villagers are all too-willing to oblige these masters of evil for a handful of gold and a blessing of arcane favour.

Spells cast within the pit operate as if they were cast using a spell slot four levels higher than normal and have a 5% chance of not expending a spell slot.

4: THE GIBBERING STONE INN

The Gibbering Stone Inn is Y'taris' cheapest inn, and it shows. A thick layer of grey dust coats every surface, black tar leaks from the walls and the thin smell of sour beer permeates the rooms. Yet the inn costs more than even the most luxurious inn in a major city. After all, the guests are paying for proximity to the Confluence, not comfortable beds or clean living quarters.

In the taproom, a rough stone about the size of a hound emits sounds not unlike the babble of a broken mind. This is the eponymous gibbering stone, an ancient relic from an experiment gone wrong. Angard (LE male half-orc **spy**), the inn's proprietor, endures its ceaseless babbling while taking orders and serving drinks. He's a busy man, but still has the time to mark the wealthy, notice hidden purses and direct his staff to where guests hide their possessions.

- **Food & Drink** meal (typically soup or stew with bread) 5 sp, ale 1 sp, wine (pitcher) 5 sp.
- **Accommodation** A room costs 2 gp a night and is sparsely furnished, smells of sour beer and dust covers every surface.

5: RAVEN'S REACH

Raven's Reach is an opulent inn designed for the wealthiest of travellers. Black satin curtains cover walls and windows, and the building itself is made of rich mahogany. The effect would be far more grand if the trappings were not stained and dusty.

Mulgin Kulon (LE male gnome **commoner**) owns the Reach, but leaves most of the day-to-day work to his employees. This disgusting gnome spends his time at the bar, drinking fine liqueurs and smoking cigars. The bar is the manifestation of

luxury, complete with serving girls, magic lanterns and crystal cups. Through smiling women and well-dressed competition, wealthy patrons are pressured into throwing their money away on frivolities. Once a guest runs out of money (always quicker than they expect), they are ejected from the inn. Whatever they leave behind becomes property of Raven's Reach.

- **Food & Drink** meal (typically meat pie and vegetables) 1 gp, ale 2 sp, wine (pitcher) 1 gp.
- **Accommodation** A room costs 4 gp a night and comes with a large bed, dresser and table on which to perform experiments. Alchemical equipment and arcane books are available for a price. Each room also comes complete with a secret passageway for the staff to sneak in and out, stealing away possessions one item at a time.

6: GRIFFON'S CALL

After crooked merchants and clever thieves, Griffon's call is the third best place to bleed gold in Y'taris. Apprentices and hedge mages toss dice to relieve stress after a wasted day at the Confluence. Within these stone rooms, dealers and croupiers distribute rigged cards and collect the winnings. Magic of any form is forbidden, a rule which is frequently broken and more frequently punished.

Griffon's Call stinks of sweat and beer. Weak torches discharge oily smoke into the air. Those who work the tables expertly harass their customers, provoking them into irrational spending and frustration. Brawls are a nightly occurrence, an encouraged disobedience punishable by hefty fine.

- **Drink** ale 1 sp, wine (pitcher) 3 sp.
- **Brawl Fine** 2 gp

7: MAGE SOCIETY

The Mage Society is an immense waste of time. Peel away the empty rituals, obtuse rulebook and eye-watering membership fee, and all that is left is an overpriced bar and social club. The Society entices novices with promises of arcane secrets and hallowed halls. Instead of power, they find an entrance fee, the rank of "Initiate," and a secret handshake. Increase the donation, perform an absurd pseudo-ritual, and the Initiate can increase his rank to "Probationer." Probationers are taught the first word in a "fantastical" rite that will, they are promised, grant incredible power. They then ascend to "Conjuror," where they are allowed a simple puzzle (and increased entrance fee) to proceed. Then "Scion." Then "Clairvoyant." Then "Runewatcher." Then "Arcanum."

There is no end to the intermediary ranks within the Mage Society, though with each step and increase in price the member feels closer to greatness. They are allowed to spend additional

time mingling with the higher ups at the Silver Staff bar. They are allowed additional words of an arcane phrase that, when completed (they are told), grants secret power. They are given an ever widening view into the complexities of the order.

It's all a ruse. There is no way to progress to any meaningful level in the organization because there exists no meaningful level. Most Mage Society members are not spellcasters at all—merely practiced con artists who embrace this as the most effective method to separate marks from their gold.

8: TRADING POST

Nearly two miles from Y'taris proper, the small wooden structure of the trading post overlooks the road. This is the only place in the village where trading is done fair and square. Large wagons rumble in from across the land, bringing spider venom, phoenix feathers and hundreds of alchemical goods. Corpses and other unsavoury items are not uncommon. Here, the Y'tarins pay honest rates for the high quality material, either trading in gold or magically crafted items. They triple these prices at the Grey Market.

Once the cargo is unloaded, it is covered in tarps or placed in mundane wooden crates. Then vendors use horses or donkeys to cart the merchandise up to Y'taris. It is crucial to keep the traders and the tourists far apart, out of sight and out of mind. If the spellcasters were allowed to purchase directly from the traders, the economy of Y'taris would be irreparably damaged.

9: ONYX HALL

Onyx Hall is situated far from the Grey Market, down a dismal alleyway and behind an unmarked door. Interested customers are met with gruff responses, but if they can show enough gold they are invited in. The shop floor is small and almost completely barren—all merchandise is kept in a locked room in the back. A one-eyed gnome who goes by the name "Stockmaster" (LE male gnome **priest**) stands behind the counter. He expects his patrons to have specific needs, order specific products, pay with precise coinage and leave before they cause trouble.

Onyx Hall provides goods and services for necromancers and the undead. Its primary resource is onyx, but shadow-laden ingredients and corpses are also popular items. Stockmaster asks no questions as to the use of such items. Why bother? He knows the answer, and as long as it doesn't disrupt trade in Y'taris there's no need for concern.

If Onyx Hall values its secrecy, it is not for any fear of legal retribution (the councilmember Ayred Guilespire owns Onyx Hall, along with most of the shops in Y'taris). No, Onyx Hall does not advertise because it does not want to attract weak spellcasters and mere dabblers in the dark arts. It seeks only the most powerful and wealthy necromancers—the types of individuals who would be annoyed to wait for service.

LIFE IN Y'TARIS

Y'taris is a stark, grey place. To call it corrupted would imply there is a still some good left. No, Y'taris is built on evil and consumed by greed and violence. In the end, the village's only purpose is the exploitation of the rich and foolish, and the villagers work single-mindedly towards that goal.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

There is only one industry in Y'taris—tourism. Luckily, the Confluence draws wealthy tourists. They come in droves, pay handsomely for every expense and extend their stays when arcane power does not fall upon them.

Often these magi run out of money and must resort to crafting arcane items as payment. As a result, Y'taris has an unusually high number of magical items to keep the citizens happy. A *decanter of endless water* provides drink and bathing. *Continual flame* spells illuminate the streets. *Potions of healing* and *scrolls of lesser restoration* keep the inhabitants healthy. Some vendors even store their goods in *bags of holding*.

Such a preponderance of magical tools might make a better settlement into something of a utopia. But in Y'taris, these items only drive greed and a desire for more.

LAW & ORDER

There is no organized law or guard within the village. Conflicts between citizens are resolved through council meetings or simple violence. However, the villagers are united in pursuit of gold. They work together to rob visitors of their riches, then divide the rewards unevenly. The powerful, such as the council and other successful merchants, take the lion's share. The weak are intimidated into subservience.

There are, however, a host of archaic laws which apply to outsider, almost all of which result in a hefty fine. Brawling is a

fine. Mixing potions outdoors is a fine. Visiting the Confluence at sunrise is a fine, though special permits are available for a price. For the curious or sceptical, there is no rulebook available for perusal, and no government building at all. Instead, citizens impose these rules as they see fit to drain the tourists' wallets. The powerful and generous are, of course, immune to such tactics. Y'tarians know better than to provoke liches or suffer the wrath of true wizards.

EVENTS

While the PCs are in Y'taris, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

D6	EVENT
1	For a split second the Confluence erupts into searing green flame. Any creatures within the ring suffer 2d6 fire damage (DC 15 Dexterity saving throw halves).
2	A low moan shudders from the earth beneath the Confluence, rising in pitch and then dying away entirely.
3	A tourist goes to pay for a bottle of troll dust, but realizes his wallet is missing.
4	A spellcaster goes missing from his room at night. No official investigation takes place, and the market sees a slight influx of human body parts over the next few days.
5	A man carrying a large bag of onyx emerges from an alleyway. His vendor is nowhere to be seen (he has just emerged from the clandestine Onyx Hall).
6	Griffon's Call is closed to outsiders for a few hours in the evening for the weekly council meeting between Kulon, Flaskgut and Guilespire.



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