

WINTERBLIGHT'S CHALLENGE™

Sabretoot PRESENTS

VALLEY OF THE LOST

INFINITE WORLDS

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WBCIW 02

VALLEY OF THE LOST – A NEXUS OF WORLDS



Seemingly created by mad gods, the Valley of the Lost has been reshaped as if all creation has been allowed to run amok. Will you succumb to the toxicity of the Path of Madness or meet your end in the darkness of the Path of Shadows? Perhaps the guardians of the Path of Light will be your undoing or will you wander endlessly on the Path of the Lost until you meet your demise? These are the dangers that must be endured to reach the Ascent of Kings and discover the Valley of the Lost.

Infinite Worlds are detailed locations that can be used in almost any fantasy setting. Valley of the Lost includes the following:

- Location Background
- Bizarre Places
- Unique Creatures
- Adventure Hooks
- Hex map of Valley of the Lost



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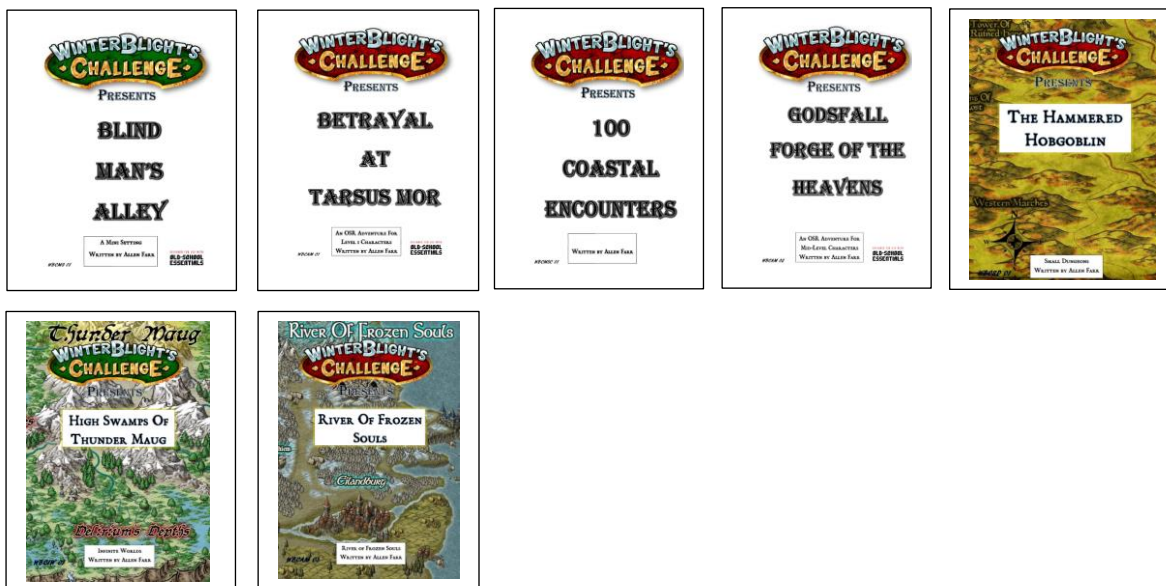
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VALLEY OF THE LOST

*Four ways in and no way
out - for years I wandered
in the Valley of the lost
before I uncovered its
secrets.*

*~ Herald Longstride –
Wizard's Apprentice ~*

A TALE OF TREACHERY...

In the depths of the Vanquished Hills, concealed by the Jungles of Histan is an accursed place known only as the Valley of the Lost. This valley, a meeting place, a sacred site, a pilgrim's destination and a crowning place of kings once marked the border between nations. Buried by jungle, entangled by leaf and vine, all that remains visible of this ancient landmark are time-weathered stone arches of the darkest rock marking paths to kingdoms that no longer exist. Occasionally, just occasionally, the gleam of these majestic structures can be seen from a distance as they catch the setting sun.

The Seduction Of Power...

The Archmage Heritor, advisor to kings, keeper of secrets was more powerful and wealthy than any of those he served. Wealth led to greed and greed to a lust for power, power Heritor planned to take from the kingdoms he supposedly served. Almost too late, with kingdoms teetering on the brink of war, Heritor's treachery was uncovered. Enraged, kings and queens sent their most

powerful champions to hunt Heritor down.

Heritor, however, was no mere court magician. Besieged on all sides, Heritor fled to where his magic was the most powerful, a valley in the Vanquished Hills that was then known as the Ascent of Kings. It was here Heritor planned to flee, leaving this world behind for another. Whether it was the ill-fated timing of a conjunction of the heavens or the dogged efforts of those perusing him, history does not record the nature of Heritor's demise, only that his screams of agony deafened every living creature that heard them.

Forge Of Worlds...

The champions that survived spoke of the upheaval of the land, of molten rock and falling ash. They claimed to have watched seas boil dry, forests burn and desert green. Cities that had not been there moments before crumbled in front of their eyes, as if ruined by the passage of time. And all the while, and stranger yet, people of unknown origin and beasts never before seen merged as if all the forces of creation had been unleashed.

Few could lend credence to such tales and once again the kingdoms chose champions, sending them to investigate. Of the few, that returned, they confirmed the strange tales. Eventually, it was decreed that a dying curse had been laid on the valley, which came to be known as Heritor's Demise

Given time, the lands around Heritor's Demise were abandoned. Eventually, those lands returned to their natural state, mountain jungle all but hiding the valley from view, and the passage

of time erasing the events from the collective memory.

The Secrets Of Heritor's Demise...

Heritor's Demise was not forgotten by everyone. Heritor had apprentices, some of whom were long-lived. Herald Longstride, one of Heritor's most promising students heard tales of strange creatures inhabiting the jungles around the valley. Yet, on investigation, he found little evidence. Not discouraged, Herald instead found his curiosity awakened by the stone archways marking the mountain passes.

On entering the valley, Herald found himself trapped, unable to exit as he had arrived. For many years the apprentice wandered, and as he did he uncovered its secrets. On his escape, he renamed it the Valley of the Lost.

Convergence Of Worlds...

The Valley of the Lost has many secrets, the greatest of which is that Heritor, instead of traveling to his destination, somehow summoned it. He not only summoned his destination world, but others he had previously travelled to.

Five different worlds, a small section of each overlapping an isolated valley of a sixth, the results were nothing short of cataclysmic. This convergence reshaped the valley into a uniquely strange place. Unlike the surrounding lands, the Valley of the Lost is layered with geological formations that make little sense and have extensive ruins that appear impossible to the ignorant mind. Perhaps, strangest of all, are the creatures that now call the valley their home.

Over time, the five worlds have come to equilibrium, but at any one time,

only four of them form a part of the nexus. Each of these five worlds phases in and out of the nexus in conjunction with the lunar cycle, and the entrances that once marked the paths to ancient kingdoms, have become doorways to a strange and forgotten world – the Valley of the Lost.

THE ASCENT OF KINGS...

The final but brutally punishing stages of an ancient network of pilgrimage routes, the Ascent Of Kings is the destination of a series of steep switchback paths and uneven steps that form the high routes into the valley. Split by gnarled root and slick with moss and slime, these ancient paths have not been maintained for hundreds of years and are dangerous to travel. Short of scaling the treacherous peaks, they are, however, the only way to enter the valley.

Even when they were maintained, the paths were dangerous and each with their challenges. It was said that if an heir to the throne of any of the kingdoms could not ascend the paths unaided, they forfeited the crown.

Marking each of the valley's entrances is a stone archway. Created through natural processes, these archways are not only the access points from the jungle beneath, but they once marked the entrances to the Four Kingdoms whose territories surrounded the valley.

The destination of the four paths lies in the centre of the valley, a place called the Ascent of Kings that once gave the valley its name. Listing, and buried in the shadow of a standing stone is a throne of quartz all but consumed by the encroaching sands from the dunes surrounding the site.

The dunes are not of this world, for at their very centre a fine column of sand pours from thin air as if pouring through the neck of an hourglass. Where this sand comes from is unknown, though the likely source is from one of the other worlds. Just visible, peeking above the tops of the dunes, are the ruins of a large settlement that once surrounded the crowning place of kings.

Path Of Madness...

Even before the events of Heritor's demise, the northernmost path was known as the Path Of Madness. History records that at least two would-be monarchs and countless pilgrims as having hurled themselves from the path in bouts of madness during their ascent to the valley. The journals of explorers note geologically active vents along the northern cliffs and suggest noxious fumes or contaminated water sources are responsible for the phenomena.

GM Note: At different stages of the clifftop journey the GM should randomly determine if one or more PCs or NPCs may have come into contact with some toxic substance. Those that have should Save vs Poison and those that fail should roll on the Table of Madness. The GM is encouraged to come up with their own brand of madness to inflict on the adventuring party.

Path Of Shadows...

Located on the cliffs on the east of the plateau, the Path Of Shadows was once the safest and most sheltered of the pilgrimage routes. Pockmarked with caves, the steep rocky trail passes through many of them. Once tended by various holy orders, the caves were places of sanctuary from weather and weariness. Some of the pilgrimage

trails delve deep into the mountains and it's possible to travel for many hours before re-emerging back into the daylight. Needless to say, the caves are now home to creatures that prefer to dwell in dark places and the Path Of Shadows is now among the most dangerous of the four routes.

Path Of Light...

Once the most travelled route offering a commanding view of the setting sun, the Path of Light is now a treacherous place to travel close to dusk. With small sections of the path having collapsed, a combination of long shadows and glare from the setting sun all but hides these treacherous gaps. The bones of those that have fallen can still be found littering the jungle floor below.

GM Note: Any time the player characters are traveling the Path of light during sunset, the GM should ask the character leading the group for a perception test. On a failure, the GM should roll on the Table of Light.

The Riddle Of Light

The Path of Light is unique in that it has been claimed by a tribe of humanoids as their territory and it is guarded by powerful but short-lived magic. Anyone traveling the path during the hours of sunset may find themselves dealing with creatures created by ancient magic and powered by the sun itself.

During its hay day as a pilgrimage route, the Path of Light was tended to by an order of mystics that worshiped the sun as their god. When the Ascent of Kings was abandoned, the mystics refused to abandon their calling and continued to maintain the path. Over time their number grew fewer and the path became home to dangerous

creatures. To protect themselves, they created a series of guardians to ward of any threats.

Like the other paths, the Path of Light is littered with rocks and boulders, however, many of those on the Path of light are enchanted, though it is all but impossible to tell. When these boulders are arranged in specified locations or formations in conjunction with the setting sun, the shadows they cast merge to create creatures, not unlike children's shadow puppets. These creatures are powerful and invulnerable to normal weapons though their manifestation is usually limited to a few minutes, their power fading as the sun drops slowly behind the horizon.

For years these constructs have been worshiped by a tribe of small humanoids. Eventually, one of them worked out that the rocks were enchanted and how to use them. The tribe now uses the enchantments at strategic locations to drive off those that trespass in their territory.

GM Note: Any time the PCs encounter a guardian of the pass, roll 1d6. The result is the number of minutes that the guardians remain manifested before breaking up into individual shadows and vanishing.

Path Of The Lost...

The longest of all the routes, the Path of the Lost was conceived as a vertical maze, many of the routes doubling back and down before traveling upwards again or arriving at dead ends and sheer drops. As if the Path of the Lost wasn't difficult enough to navigate, some of the paths that do lead to the top have sections missing, meaning they have to be bridged or

alternative routes taken. Indeed, there are several bridges constructed of jungle vines to be found on this path, many unsafe or overgrown and home to creatures best left undisturbed. Every so often, in sheltered overhangs and outcroppings, the remains of explorers that died of exposure and starvation can be found. Not only could they not find their way to the top, but they become so lost they were unable to find their way back to the bottom.

GM Note: Once per day the leading PC should make a navigation test. If the test is failed, roll on the Table of the Lost.

PLACES OF CREATION...

There are few places in the world more dangerous than the Places of Creation. These areas of Heritor's Demise are the focus of terrible manipulative energies that occur each time the Nexus Worlds shift. Anything caught within these areas during such a phase transition merges on Heritor's Demise. On the Nexus Worlds, these areas are considered cursed, yet they are still put to use. In some worlds terrible creatures are herded into these areas to be rid of them, in others, they are used as a place of execution. Any creature caught in one of these areas is likely to die as a consequence of a hideous transformation. Some, however, survive. It is these creatures that now call Heritor's Demise their home and occasionally escape the valley to wreak havoc in the lowlands far below.

Most of those that survive the Places of Creation are unique oddities unable to reproduce, their lifespans unpredictable. Some, however, have not only been able to reproduce and

survive, but their numbers have steadily increased and unique societies have developed. The most successful of these are the Sabretooth.

GM Note: The GM should use the Places of Creation to come up with unique creatures, or even have the player characters undergo some kind of transition, perhaps gaining a new power or some deformity that hinders them.

Sabretooth hills ...

Overgrown with trees that are more root than bough, from a distance, these hills appear no different than any other. It's only on close inspection that the truth reveals these are not hills in the normal sense, but conglomerates of rubble and warped structures barely recognisable from the slag they have become. All but hidden by trees, every so often an almost complete structure juts from the rocky morass. These structures appear stable, though the architectural styles are mostly unfamiliar. On occasion, intact buildings, their walls fused by some unknown force, form passageways that enter the hills at random angles. As if created by madness itself, the interior of these buildings don't match the exterior structures and it's not uncommon for a limestone building to have basalt floors with redbrick walls emanating from them at odd angles. Doorways often go nowhere, blocked by solid rock or a cobbled path running vertically. Often doorways partially jut from the ground or hang from above creating crawl spaces, while overlapping rooms merge, twist and turn to create a maze of rooms and tunnels so complex that even the most accomplished explorer can become lost.

Home to the sabretooth people, themselves a creation of many worlds, these hills may yet hold unknown treasures, for the sabretooth prefer to live on the surface, shunning the twisted passages as places of darkness for no other reasons than it's what their superstitions dictate.

The Sabretooth People...

The sabretooth are without exception taller and heavier set than the average human. Taking their name from the large sabre-like teeth that sprout from their oddly proportioned jaws, these ferocious-looking humanoids are exceptionally timid but when they are cornered or have to fight they do so with explosive brutality.

The sabretooth are dangerous individually, but they are rarely encountered alone or without the large saurian beasts they use for mounts. Described as teeth on legs, these beasts also have large sabre-like teeth with unusual properties. Indeed, one of the reasons the sabretooth prefers to remain hidden in the jungles is because the teeth of their mounts are highly sought after and can be ground down to create beautiful blades that have the strength and flexibility of steel. There are also rumours of sabretooth with flying mounts that prey on the four paths that make up the Ascent of Kings. While only a few sabretooth have encountered humans, they do know of them, for the sabretooth are long-lived and many of the elders remember Heritor's apprentice, Herald.

GM Note: The sabretooth should be considered unique monsters and should have unique attacks that have unique effects rather than just trading slashing blows with claw and sword. The average saurian weighs more than

a horse and is swift and nimble even on broken ground.

Example: One of the sabretooths' preferred attacks is the 'thrown rider'.

Just before the charging saurian reaches its target it appears to throw its rider. In effect, it is launching its rider into the air. When perfectly timed, the opponent realises too late that they are under simultaneous attack. It is suggested that with such an attack the opponent must make a test to avoid dithering as they must choose between two targets, one of which they are unlikely to be able to do anything about. If they fail their test, they are unable to attack either target and are struck by both the rider and the mount.

Patchwork Forest...

From above, the Patchwork Forest appears as just that, a patchwork of dense trees surrounded by areas denuded of any plant life. However, the forest gets its name not from its outward appearance but from what lies inside. The trees are very much alive, but from crown to root they are embedded with all manner of objects, the wood gnarled and twisted as if in protest at their unnatural presence. From chunks of dressed stone to pieces of armour, bone, shell and even unusual coins, each tree is unique. Many of the upper branches are overburdened, not unlike orchard trees laden with apples but instead of fruit, objects, many of which are unfamiliar.

The Galloping Plains ...

Of all the strange places the player characters are likely to encounter, it is the Galloping Plains that are perhaps the most bizarre. This area of grassland at first appears no different than any other, except for the small

creatures that call it home and which are all but unrecognisable outside of the valley. However, it's the strange perpetual sound of galloping that gives this part of the valley its name.

What little is known of the Galloping Plains comes from the journals of recent explorers. Snippets of text can be found recounting a distant and ghostly galloping sound that gradually grows louder before fading again. However, it is an entry from the journal of Elden of Kargel, a well-known prospector that describes the plains as a harrowing and much more disturbing place.

"For days the haunting sound of galloping horses continues to be heard across the plains, yet of horses or dust, there is no sign. I say galloping horses only because that is the image the sound conjures in my mind. However, our scout assures me the sound is closer to that of stampeding cattle than horses."

"Today the thundering of hooves grows ominously closer, and for the first time, we were able to detect a faint vibration in the ground. Yet, just as we felt some invisible host was bearing down on us, the sound slowly faded as it always has."

"The expedition has been decimated! The thundering of hooves returned, but the edge previously lent to us by fear had been dulled due to our growing familiarity with the phenomena. Only when the ground truly began to tremble

did we sit up and take note and by then it was too late.

A great disturbance in the grass could be seen moving toward us at speed as if it were water infested by thrashing fish. Seconds later, thousands of pounding hooves burst from the grass.

Our scout was correct! These were the hooves of some stampeding creatures with bovine hooves. Unfortunately, the scout was as transfixed as the rest of us and became the first fatality. It was as if creatures from another place, a parallel world partially overlaid on our own, and upside down at that, stampeded in a vast herd, only their hooves and part of their legs protruding into our realm.

"I could only watch as one by one the entire expedition was trampled, not from above, but from below, their bodies breaking as they danced and jolted across the flame-red tips of the plain's grass, like marionettes as they were pummelled from beneath."

GM Note: Parts of the Valley of the Lost become permeable to individual or multiple Nexus Worlds in line with the lunar cycle. The closer to the full moon, the more permeable the veil between worlds becomes. Initially, only sounds can cross the veil, but eventually partial or full permeability occurs allowing incursion from the other side. In the case of the Galloping Plains, it is twinned with a great savanna on a single world where huge herds of grazers are constantly

stampeding back and forth as they are stalked by predatory beasts.

Four Ways In – No Way Out...

The Gamesmaster can use the Valley of the Lost as a one-off encounter to drop into an ongoing campaign or adventure or they can get additional mileage out of it by adding their own brand of madness to what already exists.

For more long-term play, the Gamesmaster should consider having the player characters trapped in the valley for a length of time. Heritor's apprentice, Herald became trapped in the valley for years before discovering how to get out of it.

The Nexus Worlds shift every lunar cycle and anyone present in the valley when this happens is trapped, unable to exit via the four paths. Only when the worlds cycle back to the same positions four lunar cycles later can the paths be travelled again.

It could be that the paths simply cease to exist and the only way to leave is to scale the peaks that surround the valley, a dangerous prospect to be sure. Perhaps the paths don't cease to exist but instead lead to one of the other Nexus worlds. The paths may be hidden by a simple illusion which must be disbelieved by each PC and is only lifted when the Nexus worlds realign. However you implement a longer than intended stay in the Valley of the Lost, have fun.

ADVENTURE HOOKS...

Every setting needs some adventure hooks.

Adventure hook – Pulling Teeth

Although the existence of the sabretooth is considered a myth by most, in the so-called civilised parts of the world rumour mongers and slovenly merchants can be found in

taverns and lending houses giving sight of impressive-looking blades ground from the teeth of the saurian mounts. These opportunists offer what appears to be a handsome bounty for these precious teeth, but not only does the reward not compensate for the danger, it's a tiny fraction of what such a blade created for a king or emperor is likely to fetch.

Maybe, the player characters can be convinced to undertake such an endeavour when they catch sight of such a magnificent blade and enquire of its origin, the owner knowing they have taken the bait, or perhaps they are hired to track down some foolhardy son or daughter that has been convinced by these unscrupulous individuals to carry out their bloody work.

Adventure hook – Deadheads

A group of explorers has become trapped in the Valley of the Lost. In an attempt to get the word out to would-be rescuers they have turned to unorthodox methods. The explorers have discovered a strange seed that when buried with a corpse causes it to rise from the ground with limited function and retention of some abilities.

Under constant attack from strange creatures, the explorers have taken some of them prisoner and made them memorise a message. The prisoners have then been beheaded and one of the seeds placed in each of their skulls. The explorers hope if they float enough skulls downriver some will germinate and someone will hear the talking heads relay their message.

Far beyond the Valley of the Lost, the river folk of the fishing village of

Merryburble have been catching the skulls in their fishing nets. Terrified to bring the situation to the attention of the authorities for fear the village may be declared cursed, the elders have ordered the skulls to be buried in the forest.

Unfortunately, the skulls have been buried all over the forest, many of them in the same hole. Now the villagers have discovered their hunting grounds overrun by large aggressive multi-headed plants that endlessly spout parts of some strange message intermingled with their own strange language.

Can the Player Characters survive the deadheads long enough to decipher the message and learn of the plight of their fellow explorers and the location of the Valley of the Lost?



RANDOM TABLES

D6	Madness	Table Of Madness
1	Fangs & Fury	A random number of the PCs have a waking dream that they are attacked by some fanged beast and must defend themselves. The PCs have no recollection of being on a narrow cliff-top path and believe themselves to be on an area of flat ground.
2	Flat Earth	Loss of depth of vision causes the PCs to be unable to tell the difference between the ground under their feet and the fall to the valley floor.
3	Intoxication	Suffering the effects of intoxication after coming into contact with some substance, the PCs suffer penalties to all tests.
4	Mist	Mist fills the valley below, and covers the path - the PCs see shapes in the mist beckoning them forward. Are they being helpful or trying to lure them to their doom?
5	Righteous Anger	Infused with anger, the PCs become the equivalent of old men yelling at clouds - the commotion, however, does attract a random hostile creature.
6	Memory Loss	During the night the PCs become confused in which direction they should be traveling. Roll a D6 on a 1-3 they turn around and 4-6 they keep going.

D6	Light	Table Of Shadows
1	Sunset	Dazzled by the setting sun, the PCs can't see the large winged creature bearing down on them.
2	High Sun	The glare of the sun is not only blinding, but the shadows it casts conceal trip hazards such as a root or vine. The PC must make a successful Dexterity test or trip on the narrow path.
3	Blood Red Sky	Painted dusk-red by the dying of the light everything looks the same, including a missing section of the path. The PC must make a successful perception or dexterity test or plunge to their fate below
4	Sunbathing	Going down in a blaze of glory, the setting sun makes it impossible to discern fine details. What appear to be vines crisscrossing the path turn out to be snakes or some tentacled creatures soaking up the last rays of the sun. Make a Dexterity test for each PC. A failed test indicates someone has stood on one of the creatures, which strikes back believing they have been attacked.
5	Blinded By The Light	The blinding light makes the PCs see double. When they are attacked by flying creatures there is a 50% chance they attack one that is a mirage. If the PCs attack a mirage and roll a critical hit, the momentum of their mighty blow threatens to carry them off the narrow path. A successful Dexterity or Strength check is required to avoid that fate.
6	Riddle Of Light	The PCs encounter the Guardian of the Pass - See the Riddle of Light

D6	Endless Wandering	Table Of The Lost
1	Endless Circling	You have passed this way before and with another day wasted you are no further toward your destination - Make another Navigation test.
2	Carrion For Crows	Carrion birds gather overhead, following your every step. Their cries of anticipation attract creatures that hunt the path. Roll a D6 and if the result is 1 roll for a random monster encounter.
3	Sheer Drop	After days of travel, the trail ends in a sheer drop. Below another path can be seen. Handholds carved into the cliff face appear to lead to the path. If the PCs successfully climb down, roll a D6. On a 1 the path is the same path they travelled 2 days ago to get to this very spot. On a 2 the handholds stop 20 feet short of the path. On a 3 the path is also a dead end. On a 4-6 the path is an alternative route to the top.
4	Stairs	The twisting cliff face stairway ends where the path has collapsed. A sheer drop gives the PCs the option of dropping or climbing 20' to another stairway leading downwards or 30' to a stairway leading upwards. One travels several miles before ending in a dead-end, the other leads to the top. Randomly determine which after the PCs have chosen their route.
5	Shortcut	The PCs can see a shortcut to the top. However, to reach it requires a series of feats that spell certain death if failed. The GM should come up with appropriate tests to challenge the PCs
6	Slide	A rockslide takes out the path taking the PCs to the very bottom of the route as they slide down a huge slope of accumulated scree.

Valley Of The Lost

