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GM'S MISCELLANY:
VILLAGE BACKDROPS I





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GM'S MISCELLANY: VILLAGE BACKDROPS I

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 first twelve System Neutral Village Backdrops, along with bonus, material, designed to help you craft your own villages!

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SYSTEM NEUTRAL EDITION

Welcome to this Raging Swan Press System Neutral Edition Village Backdrop. Herein you'll find evocative, inspiring text designed to help you—the busy GM—run better, quicker and easier games.

This book is compatible with most fantasy roleplaying games. It's impossible to create a truly system neutral book, though, and some generic game terms—wizard, fighter, human, elf and so on—lurk within. These generic terms are easily modified to the GM's system of choice.

One special note about the NPCs in this supplement. While some are wizards, fighters, clerics and so on, others are simply normal folk. Because different game systems handle normal folk differently we've made no attempt to note their "class" leaving them simply as "female human" and so on.

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Blimey! You hold in your hands Raging Swan Press's first *GM's Miscellany: Village Backdrop* designed to be System Neutral! When I originally started Raging Swan Press, I envisioned the company would focus exclusively on Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Roleplaying Game compatible products. After all, that's what I played at the time (and still do) and it seemed a clever

way to get paid to write stuff for my own campaign.

Well, it worked! Even now, the litmus test for any product we release is, "Would I include this in my own campaign?" If the answer is "no" then I don't publish it.

That said, the industry has changed. I got my start with the original Basic boxed set and old-school play has always occupied a warm fuzzy feeling deep on my heart. Thus, it seemed inevitable I'd eventually convert some of our releases to work with the plethora of retro-clones available today. You hold in your hands, the result. I hope you enjoy it and find it makes your campaign more awesome.

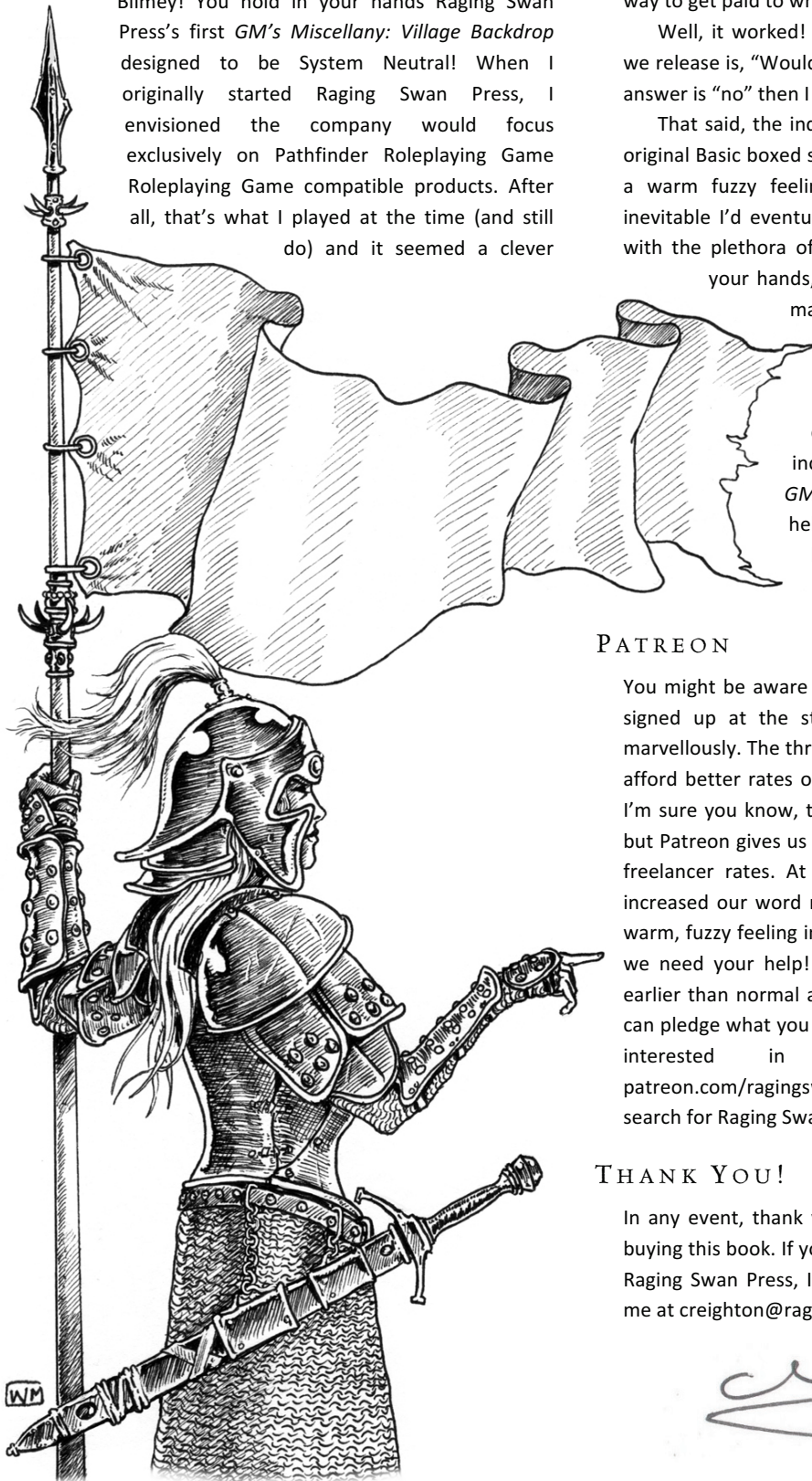
GM's Miscellany: Village Backdrop I (SNE) comprises the first 12 villages released for use with any of the retro-clones on the market today. I've also included some notes I wrote for the original *GM's Miscellany: Village Backdrop* designed to help GMs quickly design their own villages. I hope you find them useful and that they spark your own creativity.

PATREON

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. You can contact me at creighton@ragingswan.com.





DESIGNING VILLAGES

Villages are a vital component of almost any campaign – adventurers tend to congregate on the borderlands of kingdoms as that is where many of the adventures they crave so much take place. Such places are replete with many small villages clustered along rivers or around crossroads, fortifications or other natural resources.

Whether the PCs are planning to rest for a while or just passing through, a well-designed settlement gives them a believable place to gather information, craft magic items and so on. Providing a flavoursome locale adds depth and verisimilitude to the campaign. A well designed village can even host minor adventures of its own and is an excellent investment in a GM's time. Villages can also serve as a temporary home base for the PCs from which they can strike out into the wilderness.

The other great thing about villages is they are much more manageable than a town or city. Many GMs shy away from running urban adventures set in large settlements as the PCs can literally go anywhere and it is very difficult to be prepared enough to cope with every eventually. The same is not true of a village, as there are a small, finite number of shops, services and other places of interest available to the PCs.



VILLAGE DESIGN TIPS

When designing a settlement, a GM should consider the following basic factors:

- **Conflict:** A village should have both internal and external conflicts with which to deal. If it doesn't, it's going to be a boring place for the PCs to visit. This doesn't necessarily mean the populace is fighting in the streets; instead there might be tension or bad feeling between certain folk or segments of society. Some of these the PCs may come across and some they may not uncover, but their presence shapes both the village's physical and social landscapes. Without conflict of some sort, a settlement is a pretty boring (and unrealistic) place for adventurers.
- **Flavour:** Do the villagers have certain strange religious practises or do they wildly celebrate certain festivals? Have the buildings been constructed in a certain style or does everyone dress in a particular fashion? Including local flavour helps differentiate a place from its neighbours.
- **History:** A settlement should have a defined, vibrant and relevant history. This should be evident both in the layout and condition of the place. It's always cool if a village has one or more secrets in its past perceptible or diligent PCs can discover.
- **Industry:** Above all, the trades folk, industries and shops present should make sense in the overall context of the village. For example, unless there is a good reason for their existence, there are no magic shops or highly skilled weaponsmiths there "just in case" adventurers should visit.
- **Nearby Adventures:** Have a nearby site of adventure which the PCs can explore if they wish. A ruin, a haunted forest or old burial mound are all excellent locales to place nearby.
- **NPCs:** Describe key NPCs in evocative fashion, so they are memorable to the PCs. Just as importantly, many NPCs have their own goals, aspirations, foibles and relationships which further build on the feeling the village is a real place and that its folk are not just waiting for adventurers to turn up before springing into life.
- **Reason For Existence:** Every settlement has a reason to exist. Perhaps the village has sprung up around a small castle or it sprawls either side of the only ford for dozens of miles in either direction. The settlement's reason for existence often heavily influences its physical makeup and populace.

Final Note: When designing a village, remember its inhabitants need food and water to survive. Every village should be located near a source of fresh water and they should ideally be able to provide (at least in part) their own food.

VILLAGE FEATURES

The tables in this chapter provide the busy GM with the tools necessary to quickly and easily generate the basic details of a village the PCs are about to visit. (The tables herein can also – at a push – be used to design small towns, but the GM will probably have to tweak some of the results somewhat).

When using these tables, the GM should keep in mind the surrounding terrain (and parent kingdom, if applicable) as such factors will undoubtedly influence the village's social and physical composition.

A GM should move through the tables in the order presented noting the results of his work as he progresses. A GM should ignore or change any result rendered illogical or undesirable by other rolls. Alternatively, a GM can simply use these tables as inspiration.

GOVERNMENT

Every village has a government type. Most are ruled by an overlord – normally a hereditary local ruler who may or may not dwell in the village. If the ruler does not dwell in the village, one of his representatives will undoubtedly do so.

D20	GOVERNMENT
1-5	Autocracy
6-10	Council
11	Magical
12-19	Overlord
20 ¹	Secret syndicate

¹ If the settlement is ruled by a secret syndicate, roll again to determine the type of government that it controls. Ignore subsequent rolls of 20.

ALIGNMENT

Determining the alignment of a settlement enables the GM to get a feel for the overall ethos of the place. Of course, not everyone in the settlement is the same alignment, but most encountered NPCs should be of this alignment (as should the village's ruler).

D20	ALIGNMENT
1-7	As parent kingdom
8-9	Lawful good
10	Neutral good
11	Chaotic good
12-13	Lawful neutral
14-15	Neutral
16	Chaotic neutral
17-18	Lawful evil
19	Neutral evil
20	Chaotic evil



PROMINENT FEATURES

A village should always have a reason to exist. For example, a fishing village may spring up in a sheltered bay, while another might stand near the only ford crossing a mighty river for dozens of miles in any direction. Others can grow up around castles, monasteries or other sites of interest. Use the table below to determine what prominent feature lies in or nearby the village. A prominent feature may suggest an industry – if this is the case simply pick an appropriate one.

D%	FEATURE
1-3	Burial mound(s)
4-6	Ancient monument
7-9	Battlefield
10-14	Lake
15-19	Ponds
20-24	High hill/vantage point
21-22	Sinkhole
23-25	Caves/caverns
26-28	Well
29-31	Spring
32-36	Orchard/fruit trees
37-38	Mine
39-42	Major road
43-48	Crossroads
49-50	Natural harbour
51-53	River
54-56	Valley
57-59	Waterfall
60-62	Giant/old tree(s)
63-70	Fertile soil
71	Barren soil
72-73	Prone to flooding
74-77	Old/ancient ruins
78-81	Adventure site (roll again)
82-87	Dense forest
88-91	Marshland
92-93	Rift/chasm
94-95	Escarpment
96-97	Extensive graveyard
98	Strange weather
99	Planar gate
100	Site of reputed magical properties (roll again to determine feature)

INDUSTRY

The below table does not present an exhaustive list of fantasy medieval industries. Rather, it focuses on industries most likely to be found in a village.

Of course, depending on a village's location some industries (such as shipbuilding) may make no sense whatsoever. A GM should reroll such results.

D%	INDUSTRY
1-30	Farming (crops)
31-50	Farming (livestock)
51-60	Hunting or trapping
61-65	Fishing
66-70	Trading post
71-72	Lumber/charcoal makers
73-74	Hospitality
75-76	Weapon or armour crafting
77-78	Pottery
79-80	Leatherworking or tanning
81-82	Brewing
83-84	Clothes
85-86	Metalwork
87-88	Animal training
89-91	Supporting nearby nobles, castle, church etc.
92-93	Shipbuilding or cart building
94-95	Religion
96-97	Finished food stuffs (honey, salted meat etc.)
98-99	Mining
100	Supporting adventurers exploring nearby dungeon or wilderness area

Most villages have one main industry, but at the GM's discretion may have one or more secondary industries. Such activities will also leave their mark on the social and physical landscape of the village.

POPULATION

A village is so much more than a collection of houses and businesses. Some villages are little more than hamlet while others verge on the size of a small town.

- To determine the population of a village roll 2d8x10+40.

The population of a village determines how many notable buildings the place has:

POPULATION	NOTABLE BUILDINGS
60-80	1
81-120	2
121-140	3
141-170	4
180-200	5

Most villagers will be normal, unremarkable peasants (commoner 1 or expert 1). Roughly 10% of the total will differ from the norm. Individuals with levels in NPC classes should rarely be above 3rd-level, but villagers with levels in a core class are typically up to 5th-level! (Of course, NPCs can be more powerful than this, but such folk should be specifically placed by the GM).

SPELLCASTERS FOR HIRE

Wandering adventurers often need spellcasting services – perhaps while trying to recover from a disease or when discerning the properties of a magical item. Most villages can offer some sort of spellcasting service, although often its spellcasters are not particularly powerful.

NOTABLE BUILDINGS

Very few villages are nothing more than a collection of hovels. Even the most dreary settlement has some kind of notable building, whether it be a tavern, inn or church. A notable building isn't necessarily architecturally significant; instead it may offer travellers special services or a notable NPC may dwell within. In many cases, a village's prominent features and main industry provide a GM with guidance on which notable buildings to place in the village. If they do not, use the table below and discard any odd or nonsensical results.

D20	BUILDING
1	Church, shrine or monastery
2	Bridge or ford
3	Tavern or inn
4	Manor house
5	Wizard's tower
6	Castle/keep
7	Mill
8	Village hall
9	Trading post
10	Shop
11	Skilled craftsman
12	Prison or asylum
13	School/university
14	Fortified building
15	Noble's retreat
16	Adventurer's home
17	Retired adventurer's home
18	Hovels
19	Industrial site
20	Ruins (roll again)

A notable building is a perfect locale for interesting NPCs – be they retired adventurers, skilled craftsmen or the like. They are also excellent places for adventurers to access spellcasting services and buy and sell magic items (pages 18 – 21). Not all individuals dwelling within, however, will be pleased to deal with meddling, self-centred adventurers.

CONFLICTS

The potential for conflict exists in every settlement. While these factors may not be immediately obvious to visitors, their effect should become apparent to anyone spending any decent amount of time in the village.

D20	POTENTIAL CONFLICT
1	Nearby humanoids
2	Adventure site
3	Monstrous inhabitants(s)
4	Competing religions
5	Secret cult
6	Oppressive ruler
7	Nearby rival settlement
8	Family blood feud or vendetta
9	Land claims
10	Rival nobles
11	Segregated society
12	No ruler
13	Impoverished
14	Impending war or raid
15	Competing guilds or powerful merchants
16	Progressive political ideas
17	Endemic thievery
18	Recent natural disaster
19	Ineffective or uncaring ruler
20	Impending natural disaster

Most villages should only have one major source of conflict, although particularly dangerous places may have two or even three!

SECRETS

Secrets lurk within every village. Some may have no effect on the adventurers at all, while others could spawn whole adventures or side treks.

D20	SECRET
1	Evil cult
2	Hiding adventurer
3	Hiding/plotting villain
4	Secret treasure trove
5	Unknown burial ground
6	Thieves' or bandit lair
7	Smugglers' den
8	Monstrous inhabitant
9	Dungeon or caves
10	Curse
11	Illegitimate lord's child
12	Secret society
13	Slavers
14	Hidden lore
15	Undead inhabitant
16	Secret government
17	Guarding/protecting something
18	Allied with local humanoids
19	Disease
20	Wholesale tax evasion

Most villages should only have one secret of note, otherwise the place could get too confusing and unfocused. While certain individuals may have other, minor secrets these are unlikely to affect passing adventurers (but they could provide interesting role-playing opportunities).

SECRETS & CONFLICTS

At first glance, secrets and conflicts are two sides of the same coin, with one perhaps spawning the other. Of course, this is perfectly acceptable: a village allied with nearby humanoids may have an oppressive ruler or even be built over the dungeon in which the humanoids live! In other instances, the two may be wholly separate; rival nobles may both seek control of the village – while being completely unaware an evil cult lurks among the populace.

There is no magic formula to determine how, or if, a village's conflict and secret are related; a GM should use his creativity and reject any results from either table that do not seem to work. As always, the goal of a village's secrets and conflicts is to make the place an interesting place to visit.

SAMPLE VILLAGE NAMES

Villages can be named in any number of ways. Some of the most common include:

- **Named For the Founder:** A village founded by an important or famous personage often commemorates that fact in its name. For example, Denton's Rest was founded by the renowned adventurer turned sage, Denton Alger.
- **Named For a Local Feature:** The village of Ashford stands near a ford surrounded by ash trees while Longbridge is named for its most prominent building.
- **Named For An Event:** Some villages stand on the site of a famous event. The village of Slaughterford, for example, may stand near the site of a terrible battle between raiding orcs and the king's bodyguard.
- **Named For Another Settlement:** Sometimes a settlement springs up near an old one and has a name based on the other settlement. For example, "Little Orten" or "West Chiveley." Such names do not appear in the following table as they are relatively easy to develop.

The table presents 100 ready to go village names.



D%	
1	Abbotswell
2	Avbury
3	Barrowhill
4	Bilbrook
5	Black Tower
6	Blackhill
7	Bodwen
8	Bonehill
9	Bowbridge
10	Burn
11	Caldwell
12	Caverswell
13	Clash
14	Colepool
15	Cornhill
16	Cresswell
17	Duntish
18	Elmridge
19	Erak's Stand
20	Fallholt
21	Fenhill
22	Five Roads
23	Fogmarsh
24	Foleshill
25	Four Trees
26	Greytower
27	Hare Green
28	Horncliff
29	Jer's Rest
30	Kingsbridge
31	Kingsfell
32	Little Hampton
33	Livermere
34	Lofthouse
35	Longdrop
36	Longford
37	Middlemoor
38	Midford
39	Midlee
40	Milham
41	Miller's Hill
42	Minehead
43	Monkton
44	Newport
45	Ogwell
46	Orehill
47	Orton
48	Owlbrook
49	Pitoaks
50	Pool
51	Pyreford
52	Radyr

53	Ravenshead
54	Rayne
55	Redcastle
56	Rimswell
57	Riseley
58	Rockview
59	Ryall
60	Ryle's Wood
61	Salthill
62	Seabrook
63	Seaton
64	Shirebrook
65	Six Ashes
66	Skelton
67	Slaughterford
68	Smalley
69	Smerral
70	Smithsby
71	Somer's Hill
72	Stonehouse
73	Swallowfeld
74	Swinefleet
75	Talkin
76	Tercott
77	Thornwood
78	Tonwell
79	Tor Abbey
80	Tovil
81	Treetop
82	Tulloch
83	Two Bridges
84	Ubley
85	Ughill
86	Ulf's Dell
87	Vowchurch
88	Waterside
89	Wellswood
90	Westerdell
91	White Chapel
92	Wildmoor
93	Witchford
94	Wolfhill
95	Wolverton
96	Woodend
97	Wragby
98	Wyken
99	Yeoford
100	Zeal

EVENTS

A good way of breathing life into a village is to determine what notable event occurred just before the PCs arrived. When they arrive, the GM can describe the event's aftermath. Alternatively, knowing what is about to happen enables a GM to prepare a short interlude or side adventure to bring the locale to life.

D20	EVENTS
1	Marriage
2	Murder or sudden death
3	Festival or celebration
4	Raid by humanoids, bandits etc.
5	Fire
6	Strangers arrive
7	Noble visits
8	Animal attack
9	Disappearance
10	Natural event (flood, earth tremor etc.)
11	Odd weather
12	Disease or plague
13	Adventurers arrive
14	Theft
15	Omen (good or bad)
16	Trader or merchant arrives
17	Accident
18	Visiting preacher or pilgrims
19	Madness
20	Treasure found

TRADITIONS

Many villages have interesting, quaint or atypical traditions and festivals. Some may be annual events, while others take place much more frequently. Use this table to determine such events, adding such details as necessary to bring them to life.

D20	EVENTS
1	Running races.
2	Other races (involving horses, carts, boats or other means of travel).
3	Strange races (chasing large cheese wheels down a steep hill etc.)
4	Storytelling competitions in which competitors vie to tell the most fanciful tale.
5	Ritual dancing; the villagers dress in strange costumes and prance about for a whole day.
6	Themed chase (the villagers catch someone dressed up as prominent local villain such as a witch).
7	Feats of skill (archery, wrestling, boat racing and so on).
8	At the time of every new moon, the villagers process around the village in the dead of night. They carry torches and chant hymns to banish ghosts and other foul spirits from the village.

9	Outside each house grows a luscious rose bush. They are the villagers' pride and joy. Each year, a competition is held to judge the best bush; rivalry is fierce.
10	Whenever a storm batters the village, the villagers build a huge bonfire to ward off evil storm spirits.
11	Marriages, births and deaths are a community affair. A joint celebration is held each month to mark all such occasions; everyone in the village attends.
12	The villagers have an odd ritual to bless their children. Infants are laid down in a row and the local priest jumps over them while reciting a blessing.
13	The villagers believe in the deep, everlasting power of nature. Once a year, when the local river floods they coat themselves in the mud from its banks in the belief this imbues them with nature's strength. An all night revel ensues.
14	These villagers enjoy watching (and betting on) animal fighting. They could use foxes, weasels, chickens or other small beasts. More families participate, although a vocal minority deride the practise.
15	The villagers enjoy wood carving and hold regular competitions. Many of the trees, shrubs and wooden buildings are festooned with intricate carvings.
16	The villagers are renown for their skill in growing large fruit and vegetables. Every year, at harvest time the villagers display their best crop before enjoying a communal night-long revel.
17	Every year, the villagers enact a battle or skirmish crucial to the village's existence. Every year, the heroics of the villagers and the treachery of the attackers becomes more and more exaggerated.
18	The villagers believe a ghost haunts a certain part of the village. Every year, on the anniversary of the person's death, they leave offers to placate the unfortunate's restless spirit.
19	At the end of the summer, the villagers enter the nearby woods and gather as many nettles as possible. They then make all manner of nettle-related food and drink which they consume in thanks for nature's bounty.
20	On the longest night of the year, the villagers race burning barrels coated in tar through the village. Many of the participants are more than a little drunk and a plethora of minor burns and injuries results.

Such events, traditions and rituals are excellent role-playing opportunities and can offer a welcome break from the normal campaign fare.



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ASHFORD

Words Creighton Broadhurst **Cartography** Erik Frankhouse

Once a prosperous village, Ashford now stands as a decayed shadow of its former self. A year ago, it was a busy place; its streets and gardens echoing with the sounds of life, love and commerce. Then the stranger came and death followed upon his heels. Plague had come to Ashford. In his wake, he left the hacking coughs and pain-filled moans of the dying and the wails of the survivors mourning their dead. Over half the population died, and many of the survivors packed and fled.

A few folk yet dwell in Ashford among the abandoned, deserted homes of their friends and neighbours, but it is now a quiet, mournful place. Weeds choke its abandoned gardens and untilled fields. Wolves, foxes and other less natural predators gnaw at the weathered bones filling the village's open plague pit. The surviving villagers are distrustful of strangers, shunning them whenever possible, and few find welcome, cheer or solace in Ashford.

ASHFORD AT A GLANCE

Once a prosperous village, Ashford now stands as a decayed shadow of its former self. A year ago, it was a busy place; its streets and gardens echoing with the sounds of life, love and commerce. Then the stranger came and death followed upon his heels. The stranger—a well-travelled bard—stayed at the Jolly Farmer and regaled the assembled guests with many tales and songs as he walked among them. The next morning, he awoke with a high fever and coughed up blood over his bed-partner, one of the tavern wenches. Plague had come to Ashford.

Within a week the bard was dead and the serving wench lay dying. Within a month, the sound of hacking coughs, the pain-filled moans of the dying and the wails of the survivors mourning their dead echoed through the village. Before the winter snows began to fall, over half the population was dead, and many of the survivors had fled.

A few folk yet dwell in Ashford among the abandoned, deserted homes of their friends and neighbours, but it is now a quiet, mournful place. Weeds choke abandoned gardens and untilled fields while wolves, foxes and other less natural predators gnaw at the weathered bones filling the village's open plague pits. The surviving villagers are distrustful of strangers, shunning them whenever possible, and few find welcome, cheer or solace in Ashford.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler Baron Aelfgar Stannard

Government Overlord (anarchy)

Population 75 (68 humans, 4 half-elves, 3 half-orcs)

Alignments Neutral

Languages Common, Elven, Orc

Resources & Industry Farming, fishing

Lingering Plague Every day a traveller spends in Ashford, there is a 5% chance he is exposed to plague. This chance rises to 20% if the character explores any abandoned building containing the corpses of plague victims.

NOTABLE FOLK

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

Ailred Lewin (location 4; LN female human) Landlady of The Jolly Farmer, she is never seen without a vinegar-soaked mask about her face.

Baron Aelfgar Stannard (location 1; LN male human fighter 2) Ashford's liege lord, Aelfgar has not been seen in the village since the plague struck.

Dunn Frewin (location 6; CE male ghoulish cleric 2) Once one of Ashford's priests, Dunn has returned from the grave to revenge himself upon Waldere.

Janaela Fisfelond (location 5; N female half-elf wizard 5) Consumed with her magical research—and with no empathy for the villagers—Janaela rarely emerges from her tower.

Praen Alston (location 2; N male human) The village miller, Praen hates Waldere—blaming him for his family's painful death—and stymies him whenever possible

Waldere Elvery (location 3; LN male human cleric 3) Radicalised by Ashford's horrific fate, Waldere is a raging alcoholic.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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

1. **Ashford Manor:** Abandoned by its lord, Ashford Manor is thought unoccupied by the villagers. Unbeknownst to them, three plague survivors lurk within.
2. **Mill:** Although the mill's wheel still turns, Praen Alston spends most of his time protecting his young daughter.
3. **The Wailing Hall:** The village church is rarely visited now, except by a few fanatical worshippers who are led in their devotions by Waldere Elvery.
4. **The Jolly Farmer:** Little cheer is to be found here. Guests are served in their rooms and almost no villagers now drink here.
5. **The Burning Tower:** Home to the enchantress Janaela Fisfelond, the tower stands amid the shattered ruins of a castle thrown down after its lord rebelled against his liege.
6. **Plague Pits:** While the plague savaged Ashford, the villagers dug two plague pits and dumped the dead within. Feral dogs, woodland predators and Dunn Frewin have uncovered these grizzly reminders of Ashford's fate.

BUBONIC PLAGUE

The typical sign of infection with bubonic plague are a painful, swollen, and very tender lymph node, which occur 2-10 days after infection. The swollen gland is called a "bubo" and such swellings can appear in the groin, armpit, or on the neck. (Generally, most folk developed these swellings in their groin because this was the closest lymph node to the bite point of the fleas that carried the disease). High fever, chills, or extreme exhaustion can also manifest themselves at this time. Other symptoms include red spots that turn black as the disease progresses, heavy breathing, vomiting of blood, aching limbs, gangrenous extremities and (of course) unbearable pain. Often, victims slip into a coma (often) before death takes them.

The appearance of the plague is often accompanied by hysteria and panic or—sometimes—sullen resignation to one's fate or bizarre religious practices designed to protect the faithful from a gruesome death.

VILLAGE LORE

A PC may know something about Ashford, its history and surrounds. Determine how knowledgeable the PCs are and then impart some (or all) of the information below:

- Ashford was a prosperous village until last year when the plague struck. Now most travellers avoid the village.
- A handful of folk still live in the village. The few travellers to visit Ashford have spoken of quiet, distrustful folk and strange religious practises.
- At the height of the plague, terrible deeds were wrought. Some families were burnt alive in their homes in a desperate attempt to halt the contagion's progress.

VILLAGERS

Appearance Of sullen countenance, most villagers have long, dark brown or black hair and either brown or grey eyes.

Dress The villagers wear old, muddy clothes. Most wear thick fur cloaks, believing such garments ward off the plague.

Nomenclature *male* Ahlred, Ceol, Daela, Gyric, Praen; *female* Bebbe, Hild, Oshild, Saeith; *family* Burch, Eanith, Isgar, Sirett.

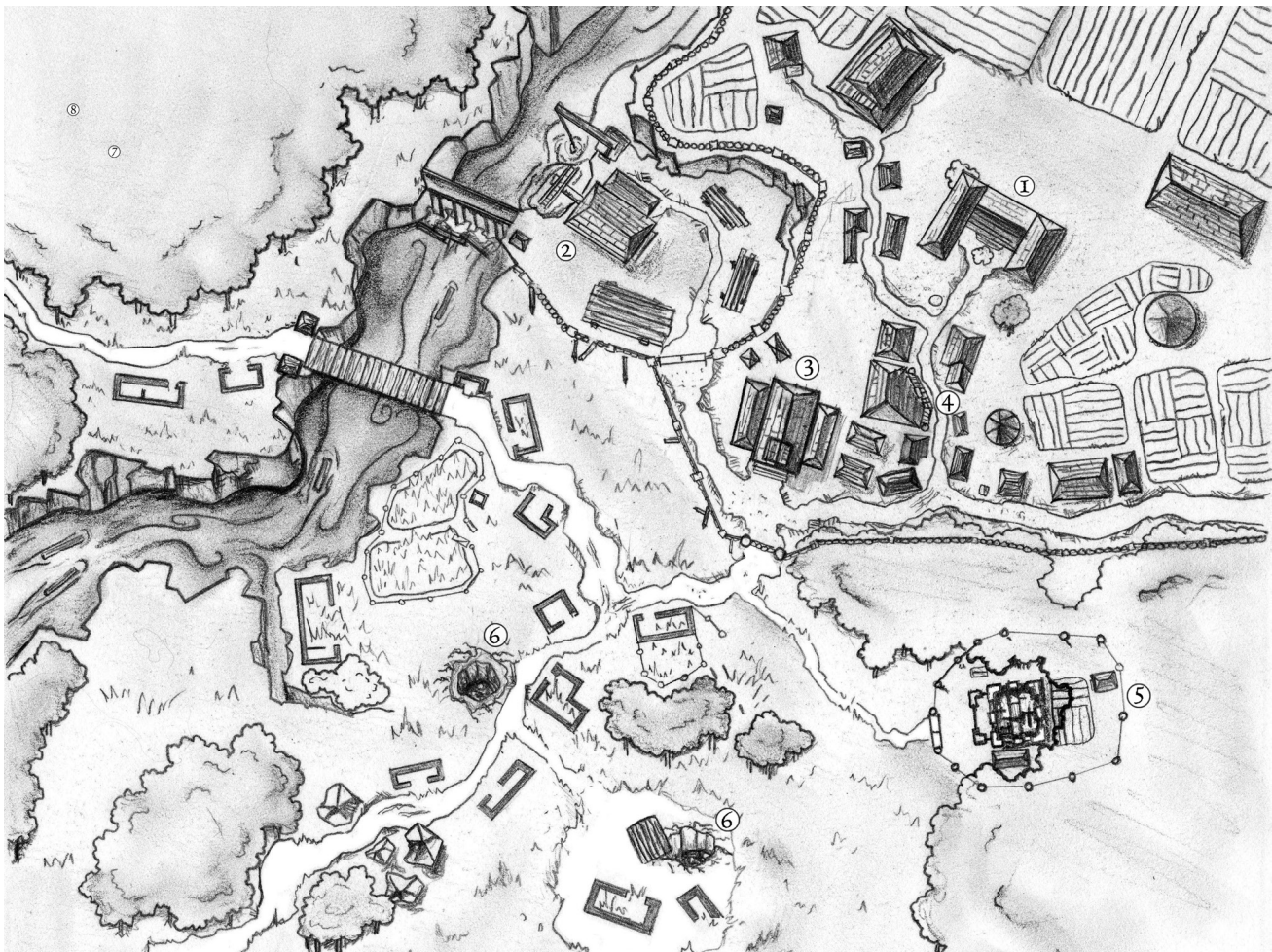
WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Ashford, a PC may hear one or more rumours pertaining to the village and its surroundings. The PC can learn this information in a number of ways: perhaps by overhearing two locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local tavern and so on. Use the table below, to determine which rumours the PC learns.

D6 RUMOUR

1	Janaela Fiselond (a local wizard) slew several villagers with her magic when they tried to break into her tower.
2*	The village was cursed by a witch!
3	The local priest, Waldere Elvery, survived the plague – although most of his congregation died. He is a drunk.
4	The old burnt-out Eanith home is haunted by the vengeful spirits of those that died within.
5	Something unnatural has been disturbing the plague pits.
6*	A necromancer lich desires some ancient treasure buried deep beneath the village. He sent the plague to kill everyone, so he could search for it undisturbed.

*False rumour



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: ASHFORD MANOR

When the plague came to Ashford, its lordling (Baron Aelfgar Stannard [LN male human fighter 2]) panicked. Having lived here for only a decade or so, he felt no compulsion to stay and help his people. Packing up his wealth and jewels he fled along with his family, men-at-arms and trusted family servants to a secluded hunting lodge. He has not returned, and none of the villagers have bothered to learn his fate.

Ashford Manor thus stands abandoned and has remained unlooted simply because the villagers assume Stannard will one day return. Unbeknownst to them, three villagers who escaped their burning homes (and subsequently survived the plague) skulk in the manor.

2: MILL

The mill wheel stills turns, but little grain is ground here anymore. The miller, Praen Alston (N female human), lost his wife and all but one of his children to the pestilence. He dwells here with his young daughter Saeith (N male human) because he has nowhere else to go. Saeith is only ten-years-old, but worries about the anger consuming her father. He blames Waldere Elvery (Area 3) for his loved ones' deaths, and doesn't understand why anyone would still believe that misguided charlatan. He stirs up trouble for the priest whenever he gets the chance. Praen is out of his depth bringing up a young daughter and worries about everything. He is overprotective of Saeith; she is not allowed to meet strangers and is rarely seen playing with other children. She loves swimming, though, and often plays in the river.

3: THE WAILING HALL

Once known as the Chapel of Song, this church was at the centre of the villagers' attempts to save themselves from the plague. Here, at Waldere Elvery's (LN male human cleric [Darlen] 3) urging, the populace gathered daily to sing praises to Darlen so that he might cast out the plague. The effects of this were predictable and plague swept through the congregation, killing over half. The survivors of this insane practise renamed the church for the laments of those who mourned their dead within.

Before the plague, the church had two priests. One, Dunn Frewin, died of the plague. Ignoring his last request to be buried in the church, Waldere cast Dunn's body into one of the plague pits. This betrayal will cost Waldere dearly; Dunn Frewin has returned as a ghoul (Area 6).

Most no longer visit the church, but Waldere yet holds sway over a small, but fanatical, congregation. The dozen members, led by an inebriated Waldere, parade daily through the village singing hymns to ward away the plague.

ABANDONED HOUSES

Many of Ashford's buildings stand empty and abandoned, their owners having either died of plague or fled the village. Some homes yet contain the decomposing corpses of the plague's victims. The surviving villagers do not enter these buildings believing certain death lingers within. Common belief holds the spirits of many of the dead yet live in their homes and infect or drive mad any venturing into their "tomb."

An aura of neglect and decay hangs over these homes. Weeds choke the gardens and yards; no smoke issues from their chimneys. Feral dogs use some of the buildings as shelters, but the apathetic villagers have not bothered to root them out.

D10 FEATURE

1	A bloody blanket lies twisted on the floor. The bloody is dried and from the pattern of the stain looks like it was coughed up.
2	The remains of a meal—a plate holding some mouldy bread and hard cheese—stands next to a fallen pewter cup.
3	The door to this room has been crudely nailed shut from the outside. Within, lies the rotting corpse of a villager—abandoned in her final days by her family.
4	A terrible smell of rot pervades the house; clearly someone died here. The stench gets stronger as the PCs get closer to the body.
5	The building's windows are all boarded over...from the outside. Inside, gloom fills the house and dust sifts down through the thin cracks of sunlight piercing the interior.
6	Much of the furniture lies scattered about out of place. Either someone was enraged and took out his frustrations on the furniture or someone has searched everywhere for loot.
7	Dust and grime covers most surfaces in the house. Faint footsteps lead toward a back room. A PC skilled in tracking can tell the person making the tracks was shuffling slowly.
8	The rotting corpses of three rats lie on the ground near the body of one of the house's occupant. The body lies with one arm stretched; many small bite marks on the arm are evident.
9	A man hangs from a makeshift noose thrown over a rafter. Clearly dead, his neck is broken and insects swarm over his decomposing corpse. In a nearby room, the party find his family's rotting bodies laid out in state together, under a blanket.
10	A body—wrapped in sack cloth—lies in state on a long table. Burnt down candles surround the suppurating corpse and its bloody, grimy wrappings. A nearby chair has been pushed back from the table; a blanket lies at its feet.

BURNT OUT HOMES

At the height of the plague, as hysteria gripped the populace and the pestilence raged through the village, hotheads desperate to contain the contagion took to burning down the homes of the infected with their inhabitants within). Although this practise only lasted a week, it has left an indelible scar on the village. Although most of the perpetrators subsequently died of plague, several murders resulted from this practice as the relatives of those burnt alive exacted their bloody revenge.

D10 FEATURE

1	The building's blackened chimney rises from the surrounding piles of scorched and burnt wood. Debris chokes the fireplace.
2	Bizarrely one section of soot-stained wall survived the fire relatively undamaged. Someone has written graffiti—the names of the people who died here—in the soot.
3	Part of a bed's wooden headboard sticks out of a pile of burnt and scorched debris.
4	The fire that destroyed this building was clearly powerful. The building's stone foundation stones are scorched, and several cracked in the intense heat. Similarly, the branches of a tree nearest to the building are blackened and burnt.
5	Pieces of partially melted iron lie amid the ruins. One is reminiscent of a cauldron or pot, while others nearby might have once been utensils of some sort. All are worthless except as scrap metal.
6	Birds now nest amid the scorched rafters of this once fine home. The rafters rang over the ruin like blackened bones reaching up into the sky. If disturbed, the birds fly up out of the building into the air; perhaps their sudden appearance could alert nearby raiders to the PCs' presence.
7	Three crude grave markers of blackened wooden planks stick out of the muddy earth behind the house. Bunches of dying flowers lie upon each grave suggesting at least one person cares about the people who once lived here.
8	Rubble and the scorched remains of two wooden beams partially cover a hole in the ground. Investigation reveals, the hole leads down to a root cellar. The wooden stairs leading downward were badly damaged in the fire and collapse if any meaningful weight is put on them.
9	Attempts have been made to salvage useable materials from this ruin. Near what was once the front door, someone has dumped a pile of wood that survived the fire in relatively good condition; another pile of scorched and burnt offcuts lies nearby.
10	The soot-wreathed bones of one of the building's unfortunate residents lies pinned beneath an unstable pile of debris. Trying to reach the skeleton is dangerous; the pile could shift or collapse if disturbed.

4: THE JOLLY FARMER

Ashford's inn was once a happy place. Although the landlady, Ailred Lewin (LN female human) still accepts paying customers she has closed the common room and serves guests (meagre and bland) food and drink in their rooms. Whenever meeting newcomers, she wears a rudimentary mask over her face soaked in vinegar for protection.

5: THE BURNING TOWER

The so-called Burning Tower is the only intact portion of the castle that once protected Ashford. The demesne of a rebellious lord the castle was sacked two decades ago. The villagers carried off much of the stone to use in rebuilding their own homes and the castle's shattered ruin remained uninhabited until the wizardess Janaela Fiselond (N female half-elf wizard 5) claimed it as her own. A skilled but aloof practiser of magic, when the plague ravaged Ashford, Janaela simply locked herself in her tower and made no effort to aid her neighbours. As they died by the score, and their moans and hacking coughs echoed through the village, Janaela became wholly obsessed with her research and paid their suffering no mind.

At the plague's height, a few villagers tried to storm the tower – convinced her research had brought the pestilence to Ashford; she incinerated them with a *fireball* before returning to her work. Their blackened bones still lie nearby amid the tangled weeds choking the castle's ruined courtyard.

6: PLAGUE PITS

At first, the plague's victims were buried like normal in the church graveyard, but as death swept through the village, it became impossible to honour the dead in the proper way.

Two burial pits were dug and filled with plague-ridden corpses but were not properly filled in. Feral dogs and other predators promptly dug up the graves and no one as yet has the inclination, courage or strength to re-bury them. Thus, the long grass and incongruous wild flowers growing about the pits hide the plague's grizzly flotsam.

Dunn Frewin: One of Ashford's priests, Dunn Frewin (now CE male ghoulish cleric 2) died of the plague and was betrayed in death by his friend and colleague Waldere (see Area 3). He has risen as a ghoulish and now lurks in the southernmost pit, in a cramped burrow among the suppurating corpses of his dead congregation. As yet, he does not trouble the villagers or his former friend; plenty of meat yet remains to be had from the plague's decomposing victims before he dines on Waldere's succulent, warm flesh.

LIFE IN ASHFORD

Life in Ashford bears little resemblance to that of the more prosperous (and plague free) neighbouring villages. Ashford—with its mass graves and decaying buildings—has more in common with a ghost town than a vibrant country village.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Trade and industry have virtually ceased. Few people travel to Ashford and those that do rarely stay long. The villagers do enough to keep body and soul together, mainly by tending their gardens and scattered plots in the fields surrounding the village, but little else.

LAW & ORDER

With the (rapid) departure of Baron Stannard, law and order broke down in Ashford. Luckily, most of the villagers are too apathetic to commit any serious crime. Waldere Elvery sees himself as the moral guardian of the village and his congregation is the only organised group left in Ashford. Thus, issues of law and order now fall to him. However, even Waldere—backed up by his flock—will be no match for Dunn Frewin when the ghoul finally emerges from his plague pit-home to wreak his terrible revenge on his former friend.

EVENTS

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

D6	EVENT
1	A villager suddenly starts to cough and hacks up a great globule of phlegm. Other nearby villagers draw away, fear etched on their faces.
2	A sudden wailing from one of the houses shatters the quiet. (A villager has just discovered the signs of plague upon her body and realises the terrible fate awaiting her). Moments later, her husband and three children emerge from the house with looks of sheer terror on their faces.
3	Two feral dogs bark at the party from an overgrown field. One holds a human leg bone in its mouth. If approached, they run off to enjoy their grizzly feast in private.
4	Two villagers are loudly talking about “the hungry man.” Apparently, he was seen again last night gnawing on the bones of the dead.
5	With a wet thump, an abandoned building’s roof collapses. Few villagers pay any attention to the collapse.
6	Waldere Elvery and his deranged congregation parade through the village, singing. If they see the PCs, they march toward them as their singing grows ever louder and more frenzied.



BLACK WYVERN

Words Richard Green **Cartography** Tommi Salama

The village of Black Wyvern has prospered from the surrounding woodland, producing high quality lumber for shipbuilding and the finest sea chests for a hundred miles. Founded by a retired pirate captain and his crew, who drove the Bone Snapper orcs from the site, the new villagers soon found something much worse lurking among the trees. Now, nearly 20 years later, the captain and most of his crew are long dead and the surviving inhabitants must pay a dark price for their wealth, forced into a twisted pact that allows them to harvest the forest's bounty.

BLACK WYVERN AT A GLANCE

Rulers Tahan “Clever” Kellem, Pirro Degroff and Yala Nimblefingers

Government Council

Population 153 (121 humans, 13 half-orcs, 7 halflings, 6 dwarves, 4 half-elves, 2 elves)

Alignments LE, NE, N

Languages Common, Orc

Resources & Industry Carpentry, lumber, hunting and trapping

Nomenclature *male* Andros, Faisal, Kurt, Saric; *female* Alfrida, Erika, Gerd, Ingel; *family* Buckland, Craddock, Ragcloth, Zaryan.

Straddling the trail leading from the pirate town of Deksport into the encroaching woodlands, Black Wyvern is well positioned to take advantage of the plentiful local resources: the main industries here are lumber and hunting. A stout, well-repaired stockade surrounds the village and its folk are vigilant against raids from orcs and goblins lairing in the nearby forest.

Like the other villages—Red Talon, Sea Bitch and Revenge—on the so-called “Picaroon Peninsula” Black Wyvern was founded less than 20 years ago by a pirate captain, and named after his ship. That pirate was Gabor Spindrift, a swaggering buccaneer who decided to retire from the seas and live out his golden years on dry land after losing his leg in an ill-advised confrontation with a kraken. The woods to the north of Deksport were full of bronze cedars and moon oaks, ideal timber for shipbuilding, so Spindrift and his crew set off into the forest to find an appropriate site for their new home. When they arrived at a crude orc village at the base of a wooded hill, the pirate captain and his men killed or drove away the inhabitants, seizing the location for their settlement.

A gnarled and leafless ancient moon oak, once used by the orcs for executions, dominates the hill above the village. Goblins captured in raids were tied to the oak and spears thrown at them. In time, the tree became awakened. Whether this was because of the dark magic practiced by the mysterious inhabitants of the nearby Forest of Gray Spires or because the moon oak drew power from the executions is unknown, but the newly sentient tree took the name Bitterroot and demanded a steady supply of blood. When the pirates displaced the orcs, the oak insisted they continued to feed it in exchange for access to the woods for lumber and game. Spindrift wasn’t prepared to take orders from a talking tree and led a group of fearsome sea dogs armed with burning torches to deal with Bitterroot. Only one man, the ship’s carpenter, survived what followed. Ever since that night, the villagers have lived in fear of the oak, keeping it sated with fresh blood every new moon.

VILLAGE LORE

Through dint of their personal local knowledge or their efforts to gather information, the PCs likely know some generally accepted facts about Black Wyvern.

- Black Wyvern produces good quality lumber for shipbuilding and the finest sea chests for a hundred miles.
- The woods around the village are infested with orcs and goblins, and the locals take a tough line with these vermin to stay safe.
- The villagers have made a strange pact with the forest to allow them to harvest its bounty.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

The PCs might learn one or more rumours about the ruins of Black Wyvern. If they do, consult the table below to discover what they uncover.

D6	RUMOUR
1*	There’s a dangerous orc witch locked up in the jail. She’s threatened to curse the entire village if she’s not freed.
2	Ida Degroff has had enough of her boorish husband and is planning to run off to the village of Sea Bitch where women are treated with respect.
3	Sometimes a face is visible in the scarred trunk of the old hanging tree on Execution Hill.
4	Somewhere in the forest is a cave with an underground lake. It is held sacred by the goblins; they throw treasure into it as offerings to their gods.
5	A pair of fierce giant badgers lives in a set under Execution Hill.
6	Shelgar Galak came here from the village of Revenge, on the run from some kind of trouble.

*False rumour



NOTABLE FOLK

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

Bitterroot (location 6; NE treant) The evil tree demands blood sacrifices from the villagers in return for allowing them to take the forest's bounty.

Mairwyn Greenleaf (location 3; CG female half-elf ranger 3) Hearty proprietor of Wyvern Mercantile, and an experienced tracker who knows the forest like the back of her hand.

Murgush Crowfoot (location 5; N female orc druid 6) In jail awaiting execution, Murgush has a plan to defeat Bitterroot.

Pirro Degroff (location 4; LE male human fighter 3) Former ship's carpenter. Greedy and thuggish, he has made his fortune from lumber and sits on the village council.

Shelgar Galak (location 5; NE female half-orc fighter 2) Watch sergeant and village executioner. She leads regular raids into the forest in search of fresh captives.

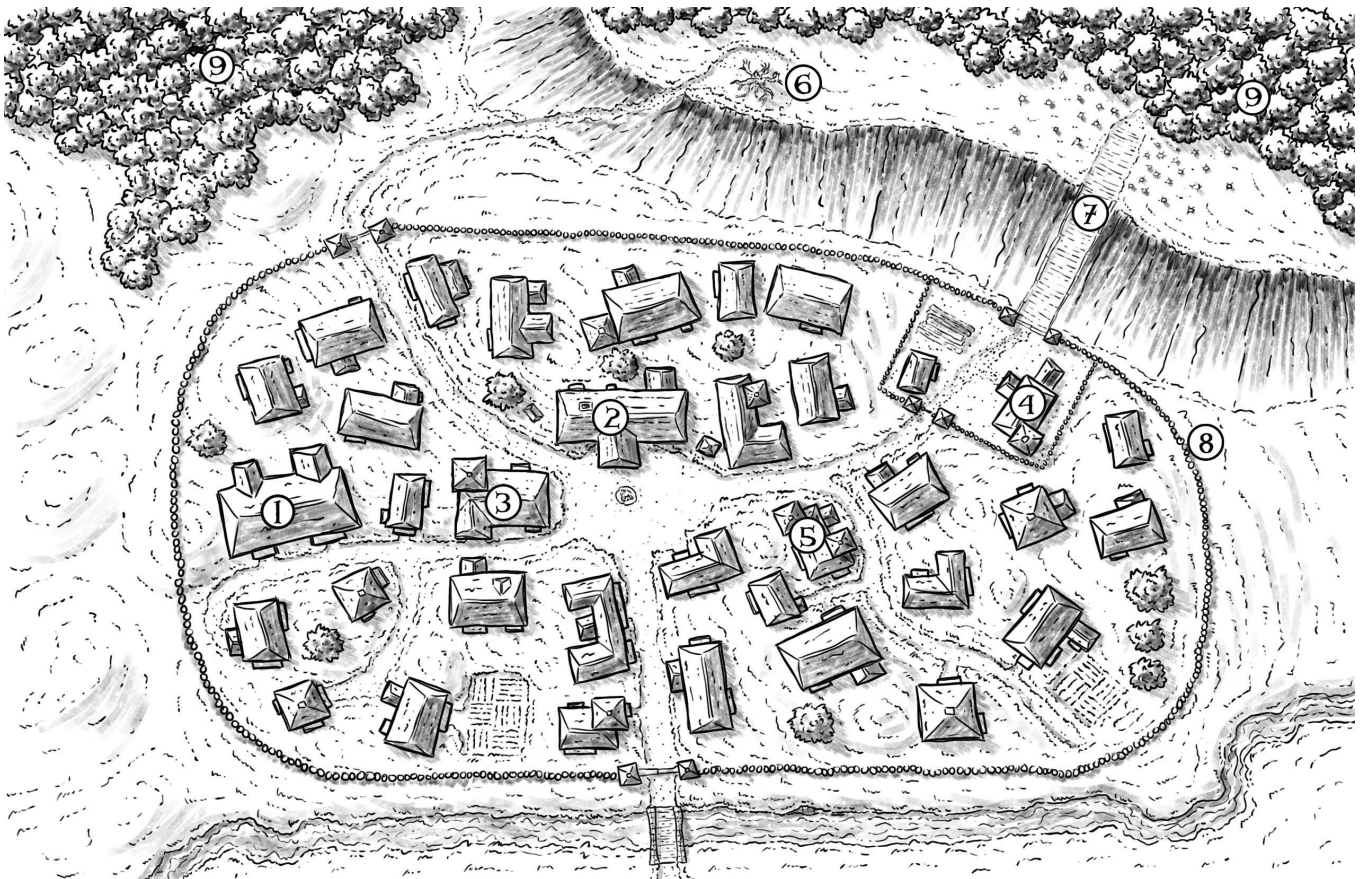
Tahan "Clever" Kellem (location 1; N[E] male halfling) Cowardly ex-pirate and navigator on the *Black Wyvern*; nervous leader of the village council.

Yala Nimblefingers (location 2; N male human thief 2) Landlord of the Sting in the Tale Tavern, master storyteller and the third council member.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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

1. **Spindrift House:** The home of Black Wyvern's founder and now the village council meeting place and "Clever" Kellem home.
2. **Sting in the Tale Tavern:** At this lively local hostelry, the villagers enjoy swapping far-fetched sea stories at the end of a hard day's work.
3. **Wyvern Mercantile:** This well-stocked trading post, sells axes, saws and other wilderness gear to lumberjacks and hunters
4. **Degroff Lumber:** A busy carpenter's workshop and lumber yard, owned and run by Pirro Degroff.
5. **Watchhouse:** The village jail where law-breakers and captured orcs and goblins are locked up, awaiting punishment.
6. **Execution Hill:** A gnarled and twisted moon oak tree used for hangings stands atop this steep hill. This is Bitterroot.
7. **Lumber Run:** Trees felled by the loggers are skidded down this track to the Degroff lumber yard.
8. **Palisade:** This palisade protects the village from the local orcs and goblins.
9. **Forest:** The villagers make their living from the woods, but must be on their guard against orc and goblin attacks.



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: SPINDRIFT HOUSE

Built by Gabor Spindrift, pirate captain of the *Black Wyvern*, this sturdy wooden manor house was his home until his untimely death at the claws of Bitterroot. Decorated with nautical memorabilia from Spindrift's days at sea, as well as hunting trophies from the nearby woods, the house is now the abode of Tahan "Clever" Kellem (N[E] male halfling), leader of the village council and former ship's navigator. Kellem is a nervy, portly little fellow with a balding pate, terrified of incurring the wrath of either Bitterroot or the domineering Pirro Degroff (location 4). He doesn't like the regular executions demanded by the tree, but is too scared to say so out loud in the council meetings that take place beneath a portrait of the village's founder in Spindrift House's great hall.

2: STING IN THE TALE TAVERN

Standing at the centre of the village, across the market square from the *Black Wyvern's* original weather-beaten wooden figurehead, is the popular Sting in the Tale tavern. The pub's sign depicts the deadly tail stinger of a wyvern, but the spelling of "tale" is a nod to its storytelling tradition. At least one evening a week, locals and visitors gather and take turns telling far-fetched sea stories and other tales, with each well-received yarn earning a free ale for its narrator. A stuffed owlbear's head hangs on the wall above the hearth.

The landlord is Yala Nimblefingers (N male human thief 2), an ebony-skinned, shaven-headed former pirate with a broad grin and over a dozen gold earrings. Yala was the shantyman on the *Black Wyvern*; a talented storyteller and fiddler, he now sits on the village council. Like Clever Kellem he would like to see the executions stop, and is hopeful that someone or something will put an end to Bitterroot's hold over the village.

3: WYVERN MERCANTILE

Catering to local lumberjacks and hunters, Wyvern Mercantile is a well-stocked trading post, selling axes, saws, traps, snares, knives and other useful wilderness gear. Its hearty, pipe-smoking owner is Mairwyn Greenleaf (CG female half-elf ranger 3), an experienced tracker and woodsman, with copper hair tumbling over her pointed ears. On one of her many trips into the forest, she found the location of a hidden cave which the local goblins, the Tree Creepers, hold sacred. Sneaking inside, she came to an underground lake where she spotted coins and jewels twinkling on the bottom—treasure thrown into the water by the goblins as offerings to their gods. Mairwyn is contemplating returning to the cave to loot it, but is wary of the number of goblins in the vicinity. Perhaps the PCs would consider a temporary alliance?

4: DEGROFF LUMBER

Black Wyvern's most lucrative business, Degroff Lumber, comprises a busy lumber yard, carpenter's workshop, saw pit and stables, surrounded by a wooden fence. Its owner is the thuggish Pirro Degroff (LE male human fighter 3), former carpenter on the *Black Wyvern* and sole survivor of Captain Spindrift's ill-fated attempt to destroy Bitterroot. After his captain's death, Degroff persuaded the other villagers they had to make peace with Bitterroot by promising the evil tree blood sacrifices in exchange for access to the forest. The sawyer has done extremely well for himself ever since—timber from Black Wyvern is in high demand in Deksport, and Degroff's sturdy sea chests are extremely popular amongst the town's pirates. Pirro's wealth has turned him into a fat, unpleasant bully who treats the men who fell trees for him and his fellow village councillors with a mixture of flattery and contempt. His long-suffering wife, Ida, is planning to leave him and is waiting for the right moment to make her escape to the coastal village of Sea Bitch.

The stream nearby is too slow-moving to power a mill so Degroff Lumber uses a saw pit to turn tree trunks into planks for shipbuilding. An ogre named Grunch (NE male ogre) does most of the sawing using a magical saw, plundered by the *Black Wyvern* on one of its pirating expeditions. This adamantine saw can slice through a thick tree trunk in 10 minutes, making it easy for Grunch to produce wagon loads of timber to be transported south to Deksport.

5: WATCHHOUSE

This small wooden building houses an office for the watch sergeant and the village jail. The watch sergeant is Shelgar Galak (NE female half-orc fighter 2), a brutish ex-pirate hired by Pirro Degroff to conduct raids into the forest in search of fresh captives to sacrifice, and to act as Black Wyvern's executioner. Shelgar fled here from the village of Revenge after finding a piece of parchment bearing the infamous Black Spot nailed to her door. Sadistic and hot-tempered, with lank black hair and greasy greenish skin, she enjoys taunting her prisoners through the bars of their cell.

The current occupant of the jail, awaiting execution, is Murgush Crowfoot (N female orc druid 6), who was captured close to the village while on a mission to destroy Bitterroot. Murgush is willing to reveal her plan to sympathetic PCs in exchange for being rescued. She has a foul-smelling herbal paste in her medicine bag—if smeared on the tree's roots, it will poison the moon oak, weakening it and nullifying its ability to animate trees and cast spells. To get to the roots, a would-be poisoner needs to crawl into the badger set underneath Execution Hill and somehow get past its occupants.

6: EXECUTION HILL

A path leads up the steep slope of Execution Hill to where Bitterroot (NE treant), the “Hanging Tree”, stands. The evil tree takes sustenance (and twisted pleasure) from the blood of intelligent humanoids. Bitterroot has terrified the villagers into submission by threatening to use an army of trees to destroy Black Wyvern if its demands for sacrifices are not met.

On the first night of each new moon, a deputation led by its three councillors escort the condemned to their fate. Shelgar Galak throws a rope over one of the tree’s large limbs and hauls the victim up to slowly die from strangulation. No one hangs around to watch what happens next. Once the villagers have left, Bitterroot opens its glowing red eyes and sinks its sharp wooden claws into the poor dying soul to sup on its blood.

The oak does not normally reveal itself to strangers, preferring to remain motionless unless it senses hostile intent. PCs examining the tree while it is quiescent can detect the vague outline of a sinister face in its trunk). A pair of irascibl giant badgers have dug their set beneath the tree—its roots protrude into the main chamber of their earthen home. The entrance isn’t hard to find but the creatures fight furiously to protect their three cubs.

7: LUMBER RUN

Loggers working in the forest on the hills above the village use this lumber run to get felled trees down to Degroff Lumber (location 4). The steep run is lined with tree trunks, well-greased with deer fat. Logs are skidded down to the bottom and then hauled through the northeast gate.

8: PALISADE

An earth berm topped with a 15-foot tall wooden palisade surrounds Black Wyvern. The village’s three sturdy gates are barred between dusk and dawn.

9: FOREST

Moon oaks and bronze cedars are plentiful and the woods teem with game, including spotted deer and greenwood grouse. Unfortunately, the forest is also home to orc and goblin tribes who despise the villagers for their frequent raids for victims to satisfy Bitterroot. The Bone Snapper have vowed to reclaim their ancestral home. To this end, they sent their druid Murgush Crowfoot (location 5) to get rid of Bitterroot, but she has not returned. The Tree Creeper goblin tribe also live nearby, making offerings to their gods by throwing coins and other shiny things into the underground lake in their sacred cave. The cave’s location is a tribal secret—any non-goblins who stumble across it must die a painful, drawn-out death.

LIFE IN BLACK WYVERN

Most villagers go about their lives trying not to think about the monthly executions, their compact with an evil talking tree or what Bitterroot will do if they fail to deliver its blood sacrifices. As long as no one rocks the boat, the only thing they need to worry about are occasional orc or goblin attacks.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

While the pact with Bitterroot is in place, the villagers are free to fell trees and hunt game in the forest. Moon oak and bronze cedar wood is transported south to Deksport for use in shipbuilding, along with finished wooden goods such as sea chests and furniture. Deer, rabbits and grouse are hunted for their meat; wolves are killed for their pelts.

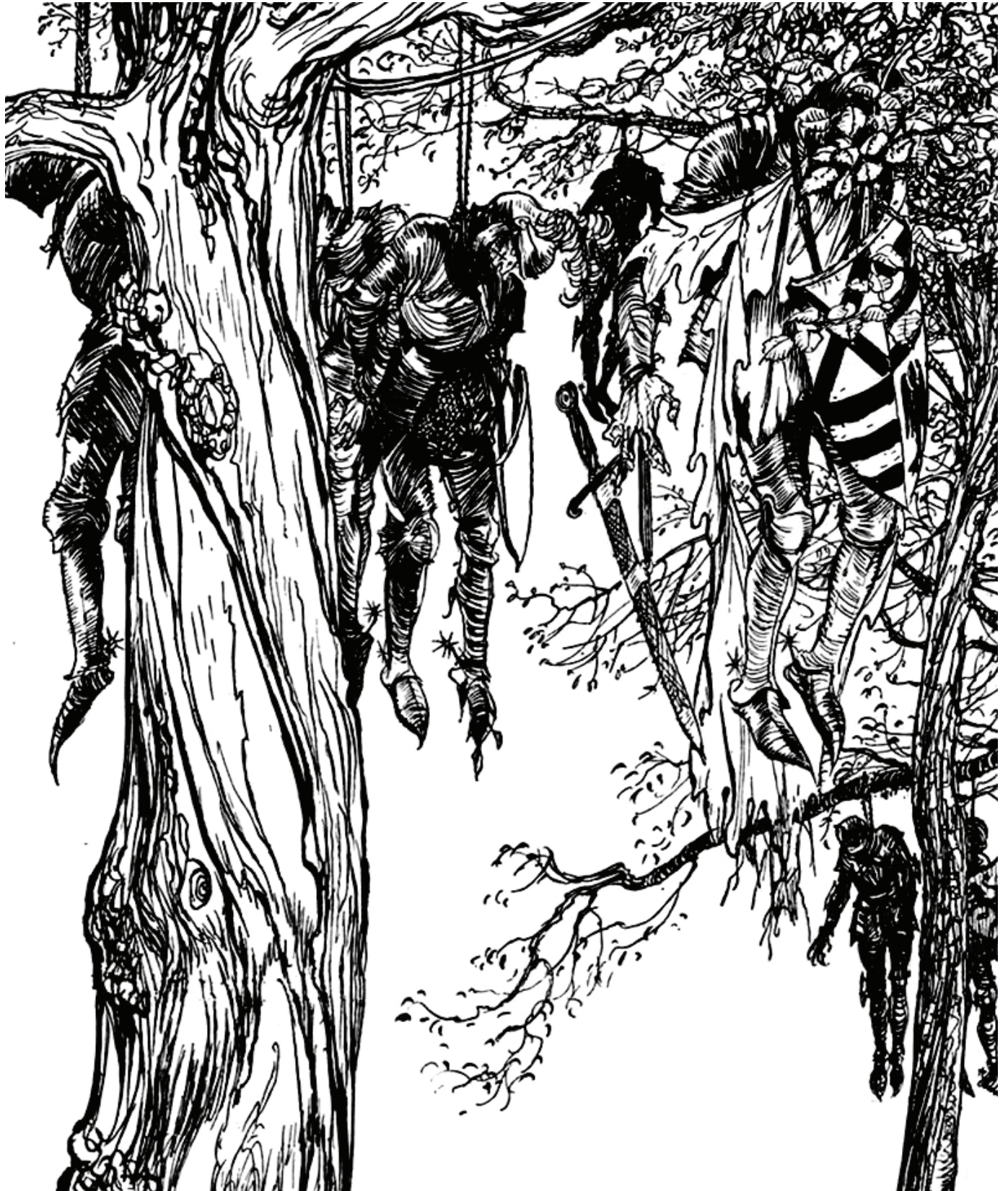
LAW & ORDER

Shelgar Galak and the ten watchmen (NE or N human or half-orc fighter 1) under her command keep order, stand watch and conduct raids into the forest to capture humanoids. Dissent is not tolerated—anyone questioning the will of the village council is likely to end up swinging from the “hanging tree” for treason.

EVENTS

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

D6	EVENT
1	The loggers are careless when skidding felled trees down the lumber run and two workers are seriously wounded (or even killed) by the out of control logs.
2	The PCs draw unwanted attention from Shelgar Galak and need to convince the watch sergeant they are not out to cause trouble in the village.
3	A group of Bone Snapper orcs climb over the gates at night, sneak through the village and attempt to rescue Murgush Crowfoot from the jail.
4	Six drunken villagers decide enough is enough and march to Execution Hill, carrying pitchforks and burning torches. Yala Nimblefingers tries to persuade them to go home before they end up dead. They end up dead.
5	Mairwyn Greenleaf has been missing in the forest for several days. Caught by the Tree Creeper goblins, they are planning to slowly torture her to death.
6	On the first night of the new moon the villagers take Murgush Crowfoot up Execution Hill to meet her fate.



BLEAKFLAT

Words Jeff Gomez **Cartography** Maciej Zagorski

Lost to the north of nowhere, far beyond the reach of trade routes and prying eyes, a rocky bluff rises from barren soil. Here, deep amidst the frozen tundra, a ruined castle has been refitted into a tiny village. Ten hovels, whose rural architecture suggests structures five centuries old, surround a refurbished tower, and in this tower lives the mayor of Bleakflat. Wise and capable, he tends to his villagers as a shepherd to his sheep.

The very presence of such a remote village is enough to arouse suspicion. There are no ore mines here, no nearby dungeons, no ley lines or trade routes. The people seem simple enough, but they are somehow able to fend off the wolf packs roaming the land, and are unperturbed by the massive bats which attack the rare unannounced visitor. How? The people of Bleakflat are under the protection of a vampire, the mayor of the village and the only citizen with rosy cheeks and warm smile. The villagers trade their blood for his protection and care, and in turn he tends his flock well.

BLEAKFLAT AT A GLANCE

Ruler Aldrich Hellbrooke

Government Overlord

Population 62 (61 humans, 1 vampire)

Alignments LE, LN

Languages Common

Lost to the north of nowhere, far beyond the reach of trade routes and prying eyes, a rocky bluff rises from barren soil. Here, deep amid the frozen tundra, a ruined castle has been refitted into a tiny village. Ten hovels, whose rural architecture suggests structures five centuries old, surround a refurbished tower, and in this tower lives the mayor of Bleakflat. Wise and capable, he tends to his villagers as a shepherd to his sheep.

The very presence of such a remote village is enough to arouse suspicion. There are no ore mines here, no nearby dungeons, no ley lines or trade routes. The people seem simple enough, if a little drained. They live off watery mutton soups, graze thin flocks of sheep on rocky fields, burn wood from the scattered groves and eat silent meals under poorly constructed rooves. But they are somehow able to fend off the wolf packs roaming the land, and are unperturbed by the massive bats which attack the rare unannounced visitor. How? The people of Bleakflat are under the protection of a vampire, the mayor of the village and the only citizen with rosy cheeks and warm smile. The villagers trade their blood for his protection and care, and in turn he tends his flock well.

Bleakflat is Aldrich Hellbrooke's human farm. He asserts total dominion over the people and leads with absolute authority. But he also treats his subjects well. He walks among them, jokes with them, cares for them and heals them. He invites his human cattle to dinner, tells stories to the children and teaches the adults how to read. By all accounts, he is a warm and just mayor, far more capable than the leaders of most normal villages.

However, this harmonious relationship is often strained. Aldrich hosts undead guests, who harass the villagers and admonish the mayor for his strange pastime. Aldrich's own daughter, the half-human Gaela, believes humans should be treated like the animals they are.

Insular and indoctrinated, the people of Bleakflat do not consider their precarious situation particularly unusual. They are wary of outsiders, whom they rightfully view as a challenge to their way of life. Very occasionally an adventurer happens upon the village and vows to "free" the people from their vampiric overlord. The villagers play along until the adventurer sleeps—then they end the threat with a knife to the throat.

VILLAGERS

Appearance The villagers are thin and pale, though fundamentally healthy.

Dress The villagers wear heavy wool and leather coats with thick trousers. Most outfits have high collars or scarves to obscure punctured necks from the exceedingly rare visitors.

Nomenclature *male* Aegar, Baern, Klyide, Maestin; *female* Gaela, Junip, Raella; *family* Burke, Girain, Goodabby, Laupren.

VILLAGE LORE

Through dint of their personal local knowledge or their efforts to gather information, the PCs likely know some generally accepted facts about Bleakflat.

- Aldrich Hellbrooke, the good-natured mayor of Bleakflat, has absolute control over the populace.
- The Girain household contains strange occult artefacts from across the centuries.
- Aldrich is a vampire who feeds upon the villagers, and tends to them as a shepherd to his flock.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

The PCs might learn one or more rumours about Bleakflat. If they do, consult the table below to discover what they uncover.

D6	RUMOUR
1	Mardread Burke is touched by the gods, and secretly wishes to destroy Aldrich.
2	Gaela looks for any excuse to murder a villager.
3*	The stone mask in the Girains' basement is haunted by a violent poltergeist.
4*	Aldrich dominates the villagers using his dark powers.
5	Aldrich is the weakest of his family.
6	Aegar Goodabby has more sway over Aldrich than the mayor realizes.

*False rumour

NOTABLE FOLK

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

Aegar Goodabby (location 4; LE male human) Aegar is an exemplary villager, eager to listen to his master's musings but wise enough to keep his advice to a minimum.

Aldrich Hellbrooke (location 1; LE male human vampire) Aldrich Hellbrooke is the mayor of Bleakflat, though he prefers the term shepherd. A vampire, Aldrich sees his flock as his responsibility. He warmly cares for them, ensures they are happy and well-fed, even jokes with them, but does not mistake them for his equals.

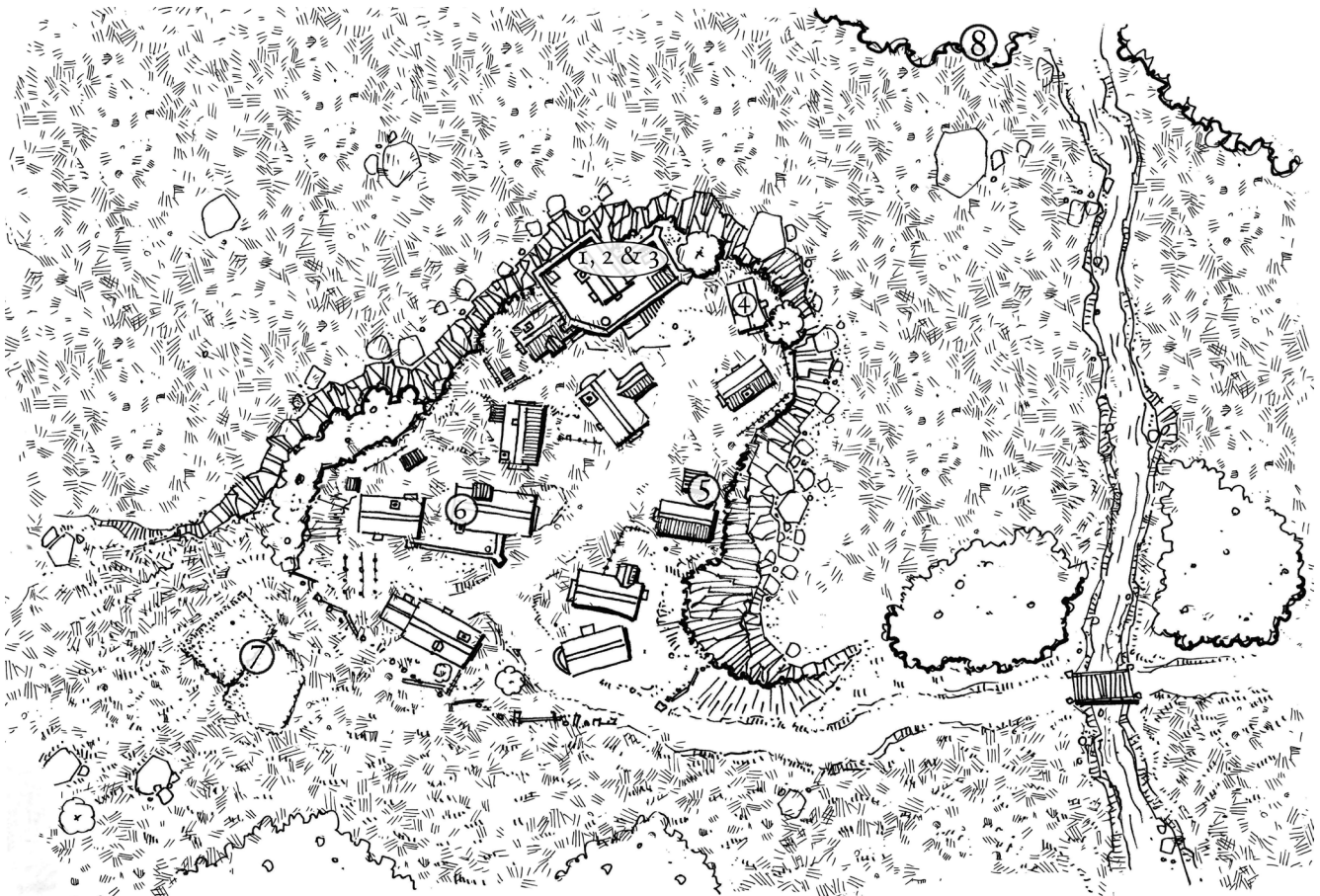
Gaela Hellbrooke (location 1; CE female half-human assassin 4) In a moment of weakness and loneliness, Aldrich took a human to bed. Gaela is the result, a half-human, half-vampire child of 14 with the temperament of a beast. Gaela shares none of her father's patience with humans, but must defer to his judgement. After Gaela has passed through puberty, Aldrich will turn her.

Mardread Burke (location 6; LG female human paladin 2) At 16 years old, Mardread is filled with ideals and righteous fury. The gods have granted her divine power, and she secretly wishes to overthrow her undead dictator. Aldrich hopes this is just a phase. If not, Mardread will find herself on the dinner table shortly.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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

1. **Kraegor's Keep:** This ancient ruin is the home of Aldrich and Gaela Hellbrooke. It has been refitted, but still looks ancient.
2. **The Blood Bath:** Fed by hot mineral springs, the blood bath lies beneath the keep; here Aldrich relaxes with his guests.
3. **The Dining Hall:** The keep's underground dining hall, decorated sparsely in crimson banners, seats up to 20 visitors.
4. **The Goodabby Home:** This hovel is the ancestral home of the Goodabby family, long seen as Aldrich's favourite humans.
5. **The Girain Home:** Unlike the rest of the village, the Girain family worships Aldrich as an occult vampire lord. Their basement contains dozens of unusual artefacts.
6. **Haegar's Stables:** Haegar keeps several dozen horses in the stables as feed for the giant bats roaming the countryside.
7. **Abandoned Farmland:** Once Bleakflat's lifeblood, the farmland has fallen into disarray since Aldrich became mayor.
8. **Bleakwood:** This silent, muted wood is home to the elk and boar which comprise the wolf pack's primary prey. Aldrich and his guests sometimes roam the wood, at night.



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: KRAEGOR'S KEEP

Little remains of Kraegor's keep. This once mighty fortress is fallen into ruin, the fallen stones used as building blocks for the surrounding hovels. The last remaining dungeons and passages are the home of the vampire Aldrich Hellbrooke (LE male vampire) and his daughter Gaela (CE female half-human assassin 4). Across four centuries, Aldrich has renovated the inner rooms and corridors, drawn curtains across the main windows and converted cells into a small library and painting room. Aldrich tries to avoid extravagance, and his living space is certainly not as grandiose as the vampire castles of his kinsmen. He sleeps in his room during the day, invites villagers over for supper at night and always tends to his flock.

Despite its dilapidated state, the keep is relatively welcoming. Villagers are invited to speak with Aldrich any time they choose, either for pleasant conversation or to bring his attention to any dangers. On the many cloudy days, Aldrich walks the streets, keeping up on events and tending to the sick or injured. It is because of Aldrich's diligent care that Bleakflat remains safe and secure.

In recent months, however, Gaela has disrupted the order which has endured across four centuries. Gaela, filled with ideas from Aldrich's more powerful guests, believes the villagers should be more thoroughly subjugated. Violent, unpredictable and eager to humiliate the villagers, Gaela none-the-less understands she must stay in her father's good graces (for now). Aldrich promises to turn her once she finishes puberty, and then she is free to live as she likes.

2: THE BLOOD BATH

Beneath the ruins of Kraegor's Keep, through twisted natural tunnels oozing sulfuric crimson sludge, boil the blood baths. Rank and acrid, these fuming pools of red liquid are used as relaxation spas by Aldrich and his guests. While polite conversation is made at the dining halls, the blood baths see the true wheeling and dealing of vampire politics. Most common are requests for aid against pesky adventurers, but the vampires also share arcane knowledge and prepare betrayals.

Though they are sometimes invited, the humans of Bleakflat cannot stomach the scent. This is a place for those with immortal stomachs, and human visitors find themselves sickened or worse.

3: THE DINING HALL

The Hellbrooke clan is a wide and powerful vampire cabal connected by a single common progenitor: the (permanently) deceased Barbaneth Hellbrooke. Though the sect is to be feared, Aldrich is perhaps the weakest and least respected of this

prestigious bloodline. He is constantly ridiculed for his human "farming," and takes no steps to build his strength. None-the-less, he is a Hellbrooke vampire, and far more powerful than mere mortals. Relatives often come calling for one reason or another, and they are hosted in the dining hall.

Within the dungeons of Kraegor's Keep, out of reach of stray sunbeams, a large armoury has been refitted as a dining hall. Dusty and grand, flanked by crimson tapestries and copper chandeliers, the dining hall is set with a magnificent oak table with seats enough for 20. When the room is full, it contains some of the most powerful undead in the realm.

When Aldrich expects guests, he lights a candle for each guest in the highest window of his tower. For each candle, a single human from below is "invited to dinner." The villagers are both waiter and meal, offering their necks until they can no longer stand. The feedings are not as gentle as Aldrich's, but Aldrich ensures no feeding gets out of hand. Guests must obey the rules of the castle, which means leaving meals with enough blood to stagger home.

4: THE GOODABBY HOME

If Aldrich had favourites (and he insists he does not), it would be the Goodabby family. Soft spoken, pliable and eager to please, the Goodabby family has served Aldrich for centuries. Luckily for Bleakflat, the Goodabbies also passed down marked intelligence and wisdom through the generations. They do well for the village at Aldrich's ear.

Aldrich speaks to Aegar Goodabby (LE male human) as a master speaks to his dog. The vampire works out problems aloud, and tousles Aegar's hair when the pet needs attention. Aegar answers rhetorical questions, nods understandingly and occasionally offers a humble piece of advice. When this advice is helpful (more frequently than Aldrich realizes), the vampire laughs in delight at the simple marvels of "human intuition."

5: THE GIRAIN HOME

The Girain family is an odd bunch, devoted to Aldrich but strangely obsessed with his darker nature. While the other villagers treat Aldrich as a mayor and protector, the Girains' adulation borders on worship. They collect strange items from Aldrich and his guests: discarded shoes, lost buttons and even fallen hair. They also comb the surrounding area looking for relics of the people who lived here centuries ago. The Girain basement is an occult repository, complete with ancient masks and carved totems.

While this bizarre idolatry bothers the other villagers, Aldrich finds it nothing more than amusing. He puts on small shows for the Girains and speaks to them in archaic tongues.

6: HAEGAR'S STABLES

Haegar Burke (LN male human fighter 1) looks every bit the stablemaster. Nearly seven-foot tall, with bulging muscles and wide shoulders, he easily overpowers his horses. Not that overpowering them is too difficult. The horses are weak and sickly, with bleary eyes and leaking nostrils. They are unable to stand still, and constantly tug at their restraints.

On closer inspect, the entire apparatus of the stable is unusual. The villagers have little need of horses with no distances to travel nor hard labour to be done. Why are there so many, nearly a horse for every man, woman and child in Bleakflat? Why are the horses confined to small grazing areas? And why do the horses whinny in fear at night?

Answers are available to any willing to brave the cold after the setting sun. The horses act as feed for the massive giant bats roaming the lands. One by one, bats the size of dogs land on the shackled horses, drink their fill and then return to scouting for Aldrich.

7: ABANDONED FARMLAND

Before Aldrich's arrival, the people of Bleakflat did their best to scrape a meagre living out of the barren soil. Only hardy root vegetables grew here (potatoes, radishes and carrots), which, when stewed with stringy mutton, provided the base of all Bleakflat meals. Two farmsteads provided enough food for the village, though convincing the rocky ground to yield anything was a daily struggle.

All that remains of the farms are ruins, barely distinguishable from the other mossy stones littering the countryside.

Now, Aldrich takes the care of his flock very seriously. His guests know to bring nutritious foods as gifts. Aldrich's wolves hunt the nearby Bleakwood, and bring excess boar and elk back to the villagers. After all, regular meaty meals are important for a healthy heart.

The primary ingredient in the villager's meal is, as it has always been, mutton. Sheep roam the old farmlands, seeking out stray blades of grass in the stony soil. The giant wolves which range the countryside do not hunt this prey, but instead act both as guard dogs and shepherds.

8: BLEAKWOOD

The Bleakwood is a thin but expansive forest which extends for nearly 100 miles to the east. Through all season, the trees and leaves take on a muted, grey colour offensive to the senses. This is the hunting ground of Aldrich's wolf packs. Food can be found here, if one has the wits and nose to find it. Massive elk chew grey leaves, and hairy boar sniff through the ground for edible roots. Both make for welcome meals for human and wolf alike.

The Bleakwood is a playground for Aldrich's guests. Something about the muted colours and twisted trees attracts the undead. Aldrich and his kin take long walks or flights through the wood, revelling in a living world which seems to mimic their dead one. Occasionally, the vampires transform into wolves and stalk prey. Though human blood is preferable, little compares to the savage thrill of the hunt. Though he does not admit it, Aldrich has a growing need for violent triumph after centuries of human farming.



LIFE IN BLEAKFLAT

Bleakflat is cold and barren, but safe. The villagers are warm with one another, and like to keep things simple.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Bleakflat is totally reliant on Aldrich and his guests. While some materials and sustenance come from the local sheep and wildlife, most arrives on bat wings. Guests always bring food for Aldrich's flock, or valuable goods to trade for more useful items.

LAW & ORDER

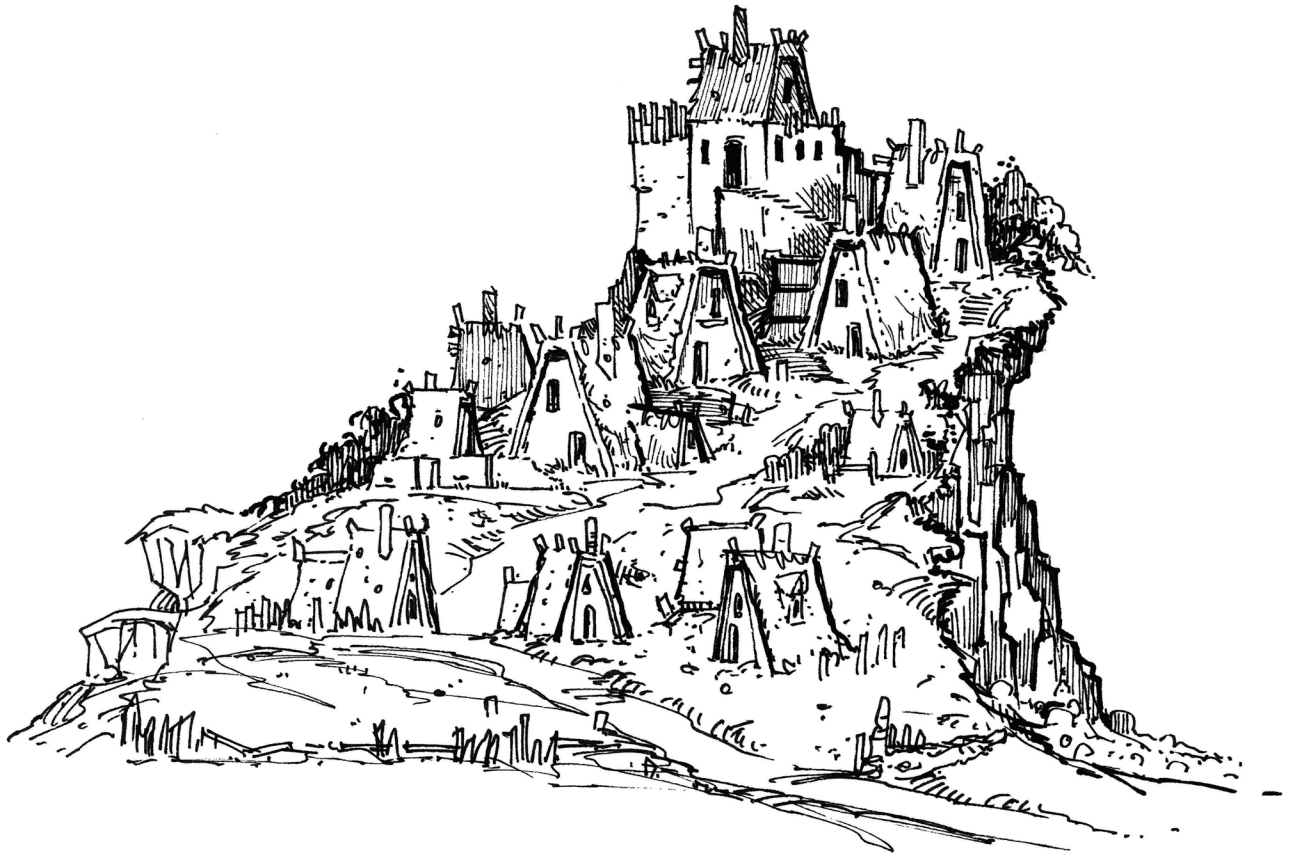
There is one law in Bleakflat, and there is one enforcer: Aldrich. The villagers are well aware Aldrich not only defends the village, but could easily destroy it. Villagers occasionally voice concerns or requests, but they do not push their luck.

Aldrich is a caring judge, but he does not tolerate disobedience or insubordination. Difficult villagers feel extreme social pressure to comply, and Aldrich may use his vampiric domination to nudge naysayers into line. Only rarely is a villager so incorrigible that he must be removed. These villagers are drained completely of blood, and their reanimated corpses are given as gifts to Aldrich's guests.

EVENTS

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

D6	EVENT
1	A pile of elk and boar carcasses appears in front of the butcher's house at night. Bite marks and paw prints indicate wolves have been in the village, but the villagers do not seem disturbed.
2	At sunset, 13 candles are lit in the tower of Kraegor's keep. A like number of villagers excuse themselves, enter the tower and do not emerge until sunrise.
3	On one overcast day, Aldrich comes down from his keep to heal a sickly child. He is warm and wise, using magic to remove the illness and soft song to comfort the mother.
4	Two of Aldrich's guests emerge in a huff from Kraegor's keep. They lash out at the villagers, then leave through the Bleakwood.
5	The howling of wolves keeps the PCs up all night. Hundreds of massive wolves circle Bleakflat, then disperse by daybreak.
6	Gaela and Mardread get into an argument which looks like it will come to blows (or worse), until Aldrich and Aegar separate the two.



COLDWATER

Words Creighton Broadhurst **Cartography** Tommi Salama

Widely thought of as a haven for smugglers and other miscreants, rumours swirl as thickly about Coldwater as the persistent sea fogs that sometimes blanket the place for days at a time. Set at the head of a muddy cliff top path, Coldwater is an isolated, dismal place. Its folk are sullen, ugly people and even the village's ruler hates the place. For all that, Coldwater can be a place of opportunity and adventure. Sometimes, pirates drop anchor off the coast to deal with the local smugglers while rumours of a sunken stair and a nearby cove of ill aspect bring a steady stream of adventurers to the village.

An isolated place, perched upon an inhospitable coast at the head of a muddy coastal path, Coldwater is not an easy, or pleasant, place to visit. The village huddles at the mouth of a steep-sided valley leading down to the sea. Here, the seabed quickly drops away and the waters are deep, dark and cold.

Widely thought of as a haven for smugglers and other miscreants, rumours swirl as thickly about the village as the persistent sea fogs that sometimes blanket the place for days at a time. Other rumours—whispered in taprooms up and down the coast—speak of darker things: of unwholesome practises carried out in worship of some ancient, depraved power, of travellers going missing near the village and of an ancient set of steps buried at the base of nearby cliffs and revealed only at particularly low tides.

Whatever the truth, Coldwater's folk are sullen, distrustful of outsiders and some are said to suffer from horrible deformities. Even the village's ruler—the aged Elina Vuolle—hates the place and leaves its folk to fend for themselves. Two families dominate day-to-day life: the Eerolas and the Purhos. Trapped in a low-grade, but vicious, family feud the two families subtly work against one another and use the other villagers as their pawns.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler Elina Vuolle
Government Overlord
Population 188 (109 humans, 59 deformed humans, 18 half-orcs, 1 gnome, 1 half-elf)
Alignments CN, N, NE
Languages Common, Orc
Resources & Industry Smuggling, fishing

NOTABLE FOLK

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

Armas Hujanen (location 5; LE male half-elf wizard 5) Armas has come to Coldwater to study the high incidence of deformity in the populace.

Atro Purho (location 8; N male deformed human rogue 4) Young and dynamic, Atro has an implacable hatred for the Eerolas blaming them for his own ill fortunes.

Elina Vuolle (location 1; LN female old human wizard 6) Elina hates Coldwater (and her lot).

Sauli Eerola (location 4; NE male middle-aged human fighter 2) Patriarch of the Eerola family, Sauli once served as a soldier but now runs the family “shipping” business.

Uzlen Itkonen (location 3; N female half-orc barbarian 1) Uzlen runs the local shipbuilding business and tries to stay out of the Eerola's and Purho's feuding as much as possible.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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

1. **Vuolle Manor:** Perched on the side of the valley, Vuolle Manor overlooks the village. Its battlemented walls give spectacular views of the surrounds.
2. **Waterside:** The harbour is the busiest—and smelliest—place in the village. Here, a gallimaufry of fishing vessels and small merchant craft jostle for berths.
3. **Itkonen's:** Here, Uzlen Itkonen builds and repairs fishing vessels and small merchant craft. The dockyard is always busy.
4. **Sauli's Home:** Here dwells the patriarch of the Eerola family.
5. **Crooked House:** This partially sunken building is the home of Armas Hujanen. Part of the cellar's foundations has collapsed, giving the house its name.
6. **Chapel of the Mistress:** Dedicated to Serat (the uncaring Mistress of Storms) this small chapel is one of the most substantial buildings in the village. On misty nights its bells toll endlessly to guide home those still out on the water.
7. **The Stopped Man:** Coldwater's only inn and tavern, the Stopped Man is a bastion of cheap alcohol, surly service and draughty, flea-infested accommodation.
8. **Atro's Home:** Atro Purho dwells in this large, ramshackle building. Extensive cellars intersect with a sea cave; here much of the Purho's clandestine business is conducted.
9. **Devil's Cove:** Strange goings on and several disappearances conspire to keep the populace away from this nearby cove.
10. **The Sunken Stair:** Only exposed at particularly low tides, these stairs lead to a chamber containing a seemingly unopenable pair of stone doors.

DEFORMED VILLAGERS

Deformed creatures have been horribly altered by their proximity to a place of power dedicated to the demon lord of deformity, Dagon. These blasphemous aberrations often worship that fell power, and become deformed as a result, but creatures can also unknowingly become deformed.

Deformed creatures gain deformities that can affect their physical or mental attributes. For example, a creature could become stronger, but more dim-witted, or could gain the ability to see in the dark (but be dazzled in bright sunlight and so on).

Affected individuals also suffer cosmetic deformities that mark them as different from their normal kin. These could include thick hair growth over much of its body, a swelling of the limbs, uncontrollable drool and so on.

VILLAGE LORE

A PC may know something about Coldwater, its history and surrounds. Determine how knowledgeable the PCs are and then impart some (or all) of the information below:

- Coldwater is a dump—the place is a dismal cesspit of the worst sort. The people are sullen and tremendously ugly; there is no reason to go there.
- The folk of Coldwater are of the worst moral fibre. Many are smugglers and rumours of an evil cult based in the village refuse to die.
- A nearby cove has a strange feature buried in its cliffs—a sunken staircase that only becomes visible at particularly low tides.

VILLAGERS

Appearance Dark of hair and pale of skin, many of the villagers appear to be unwell in a general, non-descript way. Some are horribly disfigured.

Dress Villagers wear loose, ill-fitting woollen or leather clothes suited to their trade.

Nomenclature *male* Arvo, Ilari, Kaarlo, Valto, Viljo; *female* Aila, Eeva, Helmi, Pia, Ulla; *family* Eerola, Itkonen, Purho, Varala.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Coldwater a PC may hear one or more rumours pertaining to the village and its surroundings. The PC can learn this information in a number of ways: perhaps by overhearing two locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local tavern and so on. Use the table below, to determine which rumours the PC learns.

D6 RUMOUR

1	Unguessable things lurk in the waters of Devil Cove. Strange figures have been seen moving in the mists and people have gone missing there.
2*	Armas Hujanen is digging in his cellar for something best left buried. He dug so deep, his house almost collapsed!
3	The Eerola and the Purho hate each other; the two families have been implacable foes for generations.
4	Elina Vuolle has nothing but disdain for Coldwater and its folk. She's tried to sell it—and her title—several times.
5	A mysterious set of stairs pierces the cliffs of Devil Cove; they are only accessible at particularly low tides.
6*	Many of the Purho are horribly disfigured; they take a perverse pleasure in their appearance and often drown healthy babies born into the family.

*False rumour



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: VUOLLE MANOR

Overlooking the village proper, this looming edifice is part home and part redoubt. Built long ago by Einar Vuolle—a black-hearted, vicious man—the so-called manor house is heavily fortified. Extensive cellars provide access to certain hidden sea caves and it was here Einar carried out his sinister trade—for as well as a sideline in piracy and smuggling, Einar dabbled in slavery and human trafficking.

Over the years, Einar's line has dwindled. Now, along with her servants and a handful of guards only the aged Elina Vuolle (LN female old human wizard 6) dwells here. The wife of Jaska Vuolle, who disappeared nine years ago and is now presumed dead, Elina married into the family at an early age. She hates life in Coldwater and has tried to sell her home and title several times. However, few people with the necessary funds actually want to live in Coldwater, and one trip around the village has put off all potential buyers thus far.

The Vuolle's fortunes have waned since Jaska disappeared. Elina yet possesses her husband's +1 *flaming longsword*—a family relic—and a *staff of fire* of unknown provenance recovered from the manor's deep cellars. She has no attachment to the sword, but would prefer to keep the staff unless selling it means she can escape Coldwater for good.

2: WATERSIDE

The mercantile heart of the village, the harbour is always busy. Here, fishing boats jostle for position on the docks alongside merchantmen hailing from distant ports and other small craft of less obvious purpose and intent.

A small line of shops stands hard upon the docks along the aptly named Smelly Alley. Here one can find fresh or salted fish, nautical supplies and so on. Several businesses also have rowboats and suchlike for hire (1 gp/day)—and can even provide a brawny rower for the right price (1 sp/day).

- **Holg's Locker (2A):** This small shop abuts a large warehouse. Holg (NE male old human rogue 3) is an old, foul-tempered man but he has a keen mind for business and has done well for himself—at least as well as anyone who has not yet left Coldwater—and his warehouse is bursting with goods (many of dubious origin). Holg keeps meticulous records of what he has in stock. No one is allowed to browse the teetering stacks of his warehouse, but he can often find what a customer seeks—given a day or two.
- **Addabar's (2B):** This small shop is home to the apothecary Addabar Erklen (NG male gnome bard 2) a gregarious, but slightly eccentric apothecary who settled in Coldwater after a serious misunderstanding involving an accidental poisoning in

nearby Languard. Addabar thinks there is something seriously wrong in the village, but is not brave enough to investigate; he suspects an evil cult is at work, and that they lair in Devil's Cove.

3: ITKONEN'S

The largest legitimate business in the village, this shipwright remains steadily busy. Repairing and maintaining the many watercraft the village relies on for both its legitimate and illegitimate trades forms a large part of Itkonen's trade. However, the shipyard is also often engaged in some larger project—perhaps for a merchant or privateer desirous of certain modifications to his vessel.

Owned by Uzlen Itkonen (N female middle-aged half-orc barbarian 1), a hardworking, hard drinking half-orc, the shipyard comprises its own private dockyard along with associated warehouses, offices and so on. The half-orc herself is somewhat of a local talking point. She has lived in the village for almost 20 years, and is widely assumed to have been a pirate before settling down. At any given time, she employs a small staff of between 4-8 skilled shipwrights (N human) depending on the amount of work she has on. Uzlen normally has several small rowboats for sale (35 gp) or hire (1 gp/day).

4: SAULI'S HOME

This two-storey home is of much finer quality than its nearby brethren for the Eerola are a wealthy family, at least in relation to their neighbours. This large family has thrived over recent generations as the strange deformities afflicting their rival smugglers—the Purho—have become more pronounced. Led by Sauli Eerola (NE male middle-aged human fighter 2), the family now also run operations in several nearby ports.

Sauli dreams of one day buying Coldwater and elevating himself to the nobility. His feud with the Purho, however, acts as a constant drain on his resources and this goal yet remains elusively beyond his reach.

5: CROOKED HOUSE

This house has a strange, slanted look to it, and the wing nearest the docks appears to have partially sunk into the ground. Two years ago, Armas Hujanen (LE male half-elf wizard 5) moved to Coldwater and purchased the house. Roughly six months later, the northern part of the building sunk several feet overnight causing great cracks in the masonry and hasty repairs to the shingled roof. The villagers now dub the place the "Crooked House" and rumours continue to swirl about the cause of the house's sudden partial collapse and the purpose of its mysterious resident.

6: CHAPEL OF THE MISTRESS

The only church in Coldwater, the Chapel of the Mistress is dedicated to Serat, Mistress of Storms (CN goddess of seas, storms and voyages). Staffed by but two clerics, Aune Laitnen (CN female human cleric [Serat] 4) and Irja Outila (CN female human cleric [Serat] 2), services here are well attended. The folk of Coldwater are superstitious and devout; unsurprisingly given that most of their livelihoods revolve around the sea. Burials take place at sea and so there is no graveyard at the chapel. However, it does have its own dock, where the clergy's sacred sloop is moored. A high bell tower—the tallest structure in the village—serves as an excellent lookout and storm watching post. When fog shrouds the village, the bells ring continuously until all the faithful out on the water have returned safely to port.

7: THE STOOPED MAN

Marked by a faded sign depicting a stooped cloaked figure carrying a heavy sack, the Stoopd Man is Coldwater's only tavern. The taproom is shadowy and smoky. All manner of nautical decorations—lobster pots, old harpoons, stuffed fish and so on—cover the walls. Old fishing nets hang from the ceiling's wooden beams. The whole place smells of smoke, cheap beer and sweat.

- **Food & Drink** meal (typically fish soup with bread, rolled seaweed stuffed with beans or spiced fish with parsnip and onion) 1 sp, ale 4 cp, wine (pitcher) 1 sp.
- **Accommodation** A standard room costs 2 sp a night. The room is draughty, probably has no lock on the door and is sparsely furnished.

Run by Arvo Eerola (N male middle-aged half-orc warrior 2) the Stoopd Man is always busy when the village's fishing vessels return to port. Many of his patrons pay their bills with the fruits of their labours, and thus he greatly values customers with actual coin.

SERAT

CN goddess of the sea, storms and voyages

Epithets: Mistress of Storms, the Uncaring

Symbol: A cresting wave

Favoured Weapon: Trident

Holy Text: Book of Tides

Additional Notes: As wild and unpredictable as the sea, sailors, merchants and pirates alike placate Serat with glittering gifts to guarantee a safe voyage. Some believe Serat to be the physical embodiment of the sea while others believe she dwells in a glittering, crystal city far beneath the waves. During services, offerings are cast into the sea. Her priests are often shipwrights, navigators or sea captains.

At night, the Stoopd Man is busy for the simple reason there is nothing else to do in Coldwater (excepts smuggling) once darkness falls except staying at home to stare at one's hearth.

8: ATRO'S HOME

Perched dangerously closely to Devils' Cove this large, ramshackle house is the centre of the Purho's power. Atro Purho (N male deformed human rogue 4) lives here with his wife Elena Purho (NE female deformed human fighter 2) and their three daughters (CN female deformed human).

Atro keeps a pack of five vicious dogs (N advanced deformed dog) to ensure his privacy and the dogs run wild throughout the home's fenced grounds. The house's cellars link Atro's home to a nearby sea cave in which the family store the goods they are either smuggling or storing for other unscrupulous individuals. At any one time, there are four or five of Atro's minions in the cellar guarding, cataloguing or packing his goods.

9: DEVIL'S COVE

Although relatively close to the village, Devil's Cove is shunned by the populace. Rumours of strange goings on and sinister figures in the mist serve to keep away all but the bravest (or maddest) explorers. Some who explore the cove do not return.

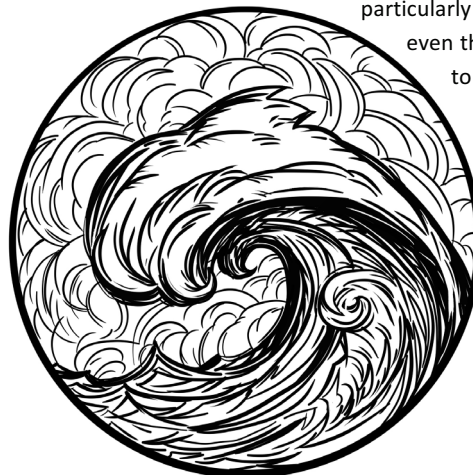
Devil's Cove is a barren place; a rocky, flotsam-strewn beach runs right up to lofty, precipitous and wind-blasted cliffs. No path runs down from the cliff tops to the beach far below. Most people who arrive in the cove do so by boat.

A pair of deformed giant spiders (N deformed giant spiders) dwell in a cave buried deep in the cliffs; a narrow fissure in the rock links the cave to the surface.

10: THE SUNKEN STAIR

Although the stair's general location is well known among Coldwater's populace, few have ever seen them. Set in the wind-blasted headland of Devil's Cove they are only accessible during

particularly low tides—and even then, the tide returns to flood the stairs within an hour; thus, explorers must be quick.



LIFE IN COLDWATER

Life in Coldwater is dismal. The village's remote location and the physical deformities of many of its residents do not make it a happy place. Laughter or song is rarely heard within its bounds. Surprisingly, despite persistent rumours to the contrary, no cult of sinister intent operates in the village.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Both Coldwater's legitimate and illegitimate businesses are focused on the water. Fishing accounts for much of its mercantile business; merchantmen call weekly to exchange barrels of salted fish for meat, flour and other staples. Coldwater's remote location also makes it a perfect smuggler's haven. Here, unscrupulous merchants (and the occasional pirate) unload their goods on moonless or fog-shrouded nights for sale on Ashlar's black market.

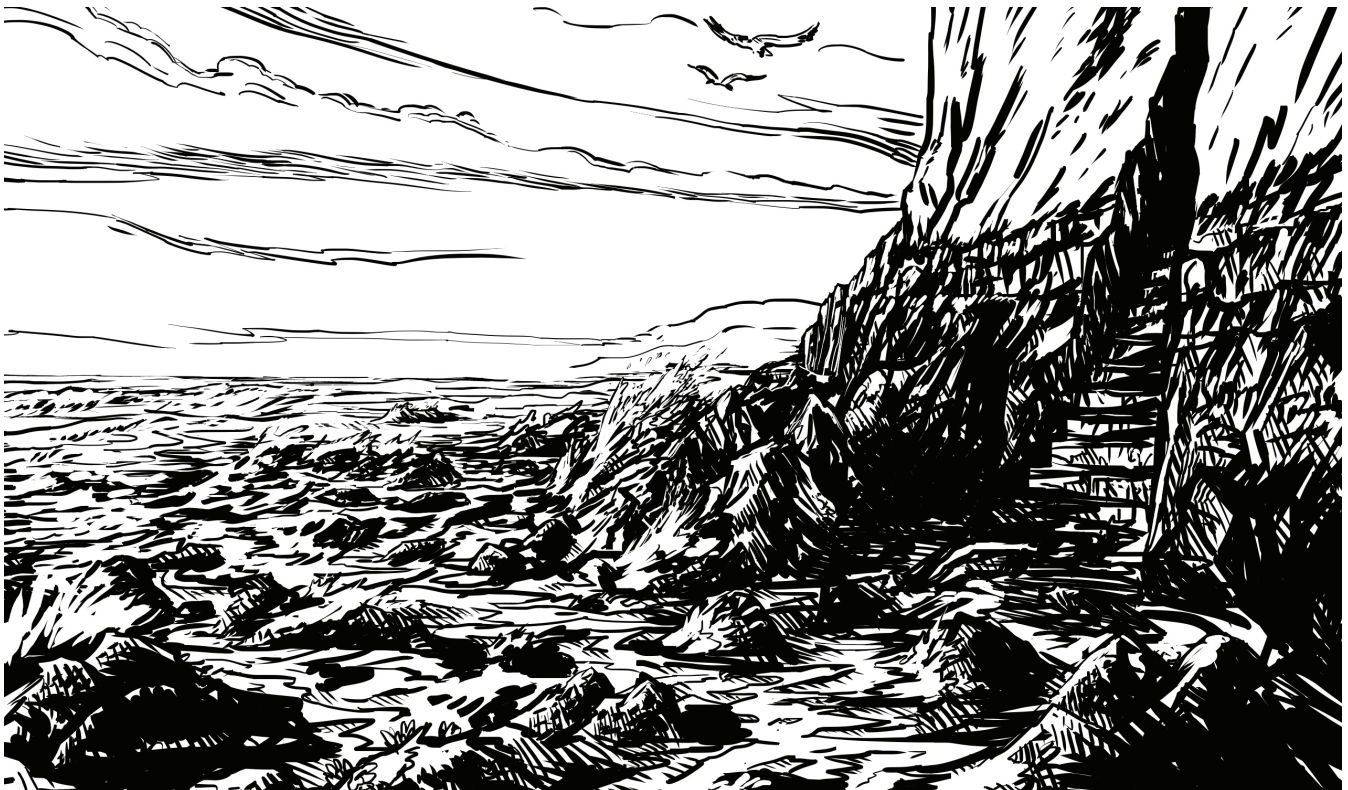
LAW & ORDER

Technically, Elina Vuolle rules Coldwater, but in practise as long as her interests are not interfered with she leaves the villagers much to themselves. Thus, the burden of law and order nominally falls upon the shoulders of Sauli Eerola and Atro Purho. Their competing interests make for some lively arguments between the two when agreeing suitable punishments for wrongdoers.

EVENTS

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

D6	EVENT
1	A fistfight between members of the Eerola and Purho families breaks out in the street; bystanders stay well out of it; nothing more than a few broken bones results.
2	A thick mist rolls in from the sea. It could burn off by midday (50% chance), last all day (30% chance) or linger for 1d3 days (20% chance).
3	Armas Hujanen tries to hire a deformed villager to come to his home so he can examine him more closely. The villager refuses—violently and loudly.
4	A drunken villager loudly proclaims his plans to explore Devil's Cove. Several of his friends try to talk him out of it, but he is adamant. He subsequently goes missing.
5	A merchantman drops anchor. She carries several sealed crates marked for delivery to Armas Hujanen.
6	An adventuring group comes to explore the Sunken Stairs. The tides are not right and they soon leave.



KINGSFELL

Words Creighton Broadhurst **Cartography** Tommi Salama

Standing hard against the River Ost, Kingsfell is seemingly a tranquil and prosperous village on a well-travelled trade route. However, the village stands on the site of a long-forgotten battlefield and not all the dead rest easily in their graves. Strangely, while the paladin—and lady of the village—Mira Lankinen, the scion of an ancient line, keeps watch over her lands, a subtle unease shrouds the village. Strangers sometimes arrive in Kingsfell armed with spades and picks intending to dig beneath the Kingstones, for rumours and old stories vaguely place buried treasures beneath their feet. Local laws and traditions prohibit such treasure hunting, however, and few dare to face down Mira Lankinen and her skilled, vigilant men-at-arms. Thus, so far the stones and whatever lies beneath remains undisturbed.

KINGSFELL AT A GLANCE

Kingsfell stands in a strategic location upstream from the extensive saltmarsh sprawling outwards from the River Ost's muddy banks. The village straddles the road looping around the marsh's sodden bounds and consequently many travellers stop to rest and recuperate after their harrowing journey.

The paladin Mira Lankinen rules Kingsfell with a firm, fair hand, as her family has done for generations. However, an elder shade of fell aspect lies upon the village. Centuries ago, a great battle was fought on the site. After the slaughter was done, the dead were interred in burial mounds about which the village eventually grew. Some of the dead rest uneasily and wait for the return of their ancient enemies and a resumption of the slaughter. This malice and hate are beginning to leach into the villagers' psyche creating an aura of unease over Kingsfell.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler Mira Lankinen

Government Overlord

Population 174 (148 humans, 12 half-orcs, 11 halflings, 3 dwarves)

Alignments NG, LN, LG

Languages Common, Orc, Halfling

Resources & Industry Farming, fishing

NOTABLE FOLK

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

Elen Araral (location 6; LN female dwarf cleric 3) Elen has traced the legend of Thegn Delthur Werlan's final battle to Kingsfell and is preparing to begin digging into the village's various burial mounds.

Heimo Eskola (location 5 & 8; N male human wizard 1) A failed wizard, but successful merchant, Heimo is the richest commoner in the village.

Issodair Highhill (location 2; NG male halfling thief 3) The young and dynamic owner of the Rat and Cup is popular throughout the village.

Merla Shortstep (location 5; CN female halfling thief 2) Merla runs Eskola's, but is less than honest; she has been skimming a small take off the top for years.

Mira Lankinen (location 4; LG female middle-aged human paladin 5) The lady of the village is beloved by her subjects. She wears the ancient tri-sword device of her family with pride.

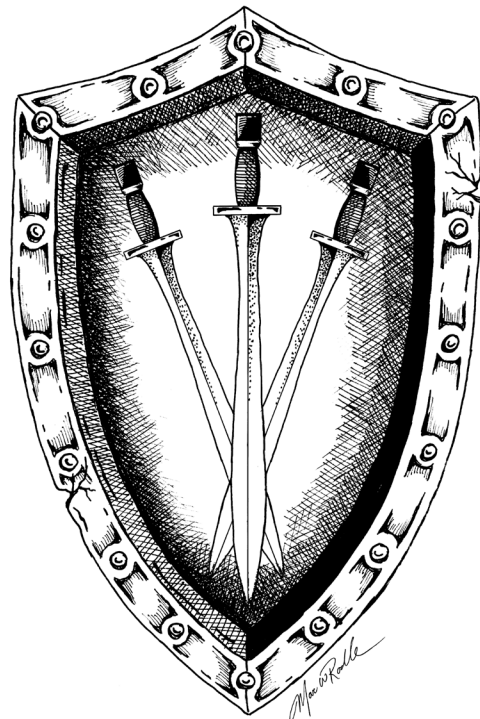
Riku Markku (location 1; N male middle-aged human) The taciturn miller is often seen poking about in the exposed mud of the Ost's banks, when the tide is out.

Teuvo Eerola (location 7; LN male human cleric [Conn] 3) This pompous, but well-meaning, priest leads Conn's congregation.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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

1. **Redshank Mill:** Here dwells the taciturn miller Riku Markku and his family. Because the Ost is a tidal river, the family keeps odd hours.
2. **The Rat and Cup:** This inn offers a homely, basic welcome to travellers. Those on a budget stay here, while the well-to-do end up at the Weary Traveller.
3. **The Kingstones:** Five carven stones of stout dwarven warriors surround a sixth regal-looking dwarf atop this burial mound.
4. **Vigil:** This towering fortress stands atop the highest of the burial mounds. Deep below its foundations lie the mouldering, jumbled bones of hundreds of orcs.
5. **Eskola's:** This large shop has an eclectic range of goods.
6. **The Weary Traveller:** Kingsfell's best inn, The Weary Traveller provides welcome rest to those visiting the village.
7. **Hall of the Lawgiver:** Dedicated to Conn, the hall is the spiritual heart of the village.
8. **Heimo's House:** This large, well-appointed house overlooks much of the village. Here dwells the failed wizard and wealthy merchant Heimo Eskola and his family.
9. **Shrine of the Shining Light:** This temple of Darlen also serves as a watchtower. Few worship here beyond the Lankinens and their retainers.



VILLAGE LORE

Through dint of their personal local knowledge or their efforts to gather information, the PCs likely know some generally accepted facts about Kingsfell.

- Standing on the banks of the River Ost, Kingsfell is a busy place. Many travellers and merchants stop in the village, which is quite prosperous as a result.
- The village sprawls about several ancient burial mounds. Farmers often turn up splinters of bones and rusting metal in their fields. A battle was once fought on the site.
- Fanciful ancient legends place a long-dead king's crypt somewhere under the village.

VILLAGERS

Appearance Predominantly dark of hair and pale of skin, the villagers of Kingsfell typically have dark or light brown eyes. Light-coloured eyes are rare among them.

Dress Villagers working in the fields wear drab, sensible clothes; those with businesses in the village dress in more colourful, fashionable clothes.

Nomenclature *male* Aaro, Ilari, Ossi, Uljas, Vesa; *female* Alma, Elena, Irina, Pia, Ulla; *family* Alanen, Hirvonen, Leino, Varala.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

The PCs might learn one or more rumours about the ruins of Kingsfell. If they do, consult the table below to discover what they uncover.

D6 RUMOUR

1	An ancient king slumbers beneath the earth waiting for the return of an elder evil. When the time is right, he will return to smite it down.
2	Every now and then, farmers tending their fields plough up bones or rusted, broken weapons and armour.
3	The treasure of the slain lie interred with their owners within the village's burial mounds.
4	Riku Markku is odd. At low tide, he is often seen poking about in the Ost's muddy banks. For what is he looking?
5*	Fell things dwell in the depths of the Ost. Odd ripples have been seen and strange tracks have been found on its banks.
6*	Teuvo Eerola shares a very close, personal relationship with both his acolytes.

*False rumour



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: REDSHANK MILL

Visitors often suspect Redshank Mill of having a sinister past, because of its past. In truth, however, the building is named for the redshanks nesting among its eaves. The birds hunt the Ost's muddy banks for worms and molluscs and bring welcome colour to the drab surrounds.

Riku Markku (N male middle-aged human) has been Kingsfell's miller for almost 20 years. He inherited the mill from his father and now works it with his family: Aila (his wife; NG female middle-aged human) and their sons (Elmo and Panu) and two daughters (Irja and Satu). A taciturn man, he is obsessed with treasure hunting and is widely thought of as odd. As a boy he found a trove of old coins in the river mud and he dreams of finding yet more treasure. Unbeknownst to all but his wife, he still has the coins—worn golden coins of ancient, unknown artifice. Sometimes he sits alone fondling them in the dead of night and dreaming dark dreams of what might be.

2: THE RAT AND CUP

The Rat and Cup caters to travellers on a tight budget. Here, the fare is wholesome, but basic. It has a large common room and offers five private rooms for rent.

	COST
Accommodation (private room/night)	5 sp
Accommodation (common room/night)	2 sp
Meal (per day)	3 sp
Ale (mug)	4 cp
Wine (pitcher)	2 sp

The young, dynamic owner, Issodair Highhill (NG male halfling thief 3) hurls himself into each day with unrestrained enthusiasm. He is popular with locals and travellers alike, but his business skills are not as developed as his flute-playing. Recently, the inn has been the scene of several nasty brawls.

3: THE KINGSTONES

Atop this burial mound, among the wild flowers and long grass, stand five intricately carved statues of dwarven warriors. The five are depicted arrayed for battle—facing outwards—about a dwarf warrior of kingly mien. All are heavily armed and armoured. These statues depict Thegn Delthur Werlann and his slain bodyguards and were raised by his surviving warriors in tribute to their fallen lord's final victory. Many fanciful stories swirl about the statues. The most prominent tells how a travelling band of dwarves was waylaid by a wandering medusa.

Unbeknownst to all, though, Thegn Delthur Werlann (LE male skeleton dwarf fighter 4) and his bodyguard (LE male

skeleton dwarf fighter 3) do not rest easily. In life, Deltur was a kind and just ruler, but death has warped his heart and he has fallen into darkness. Consumed with lust to slay orcs and other evil humanoids he has returned to unlife as a skeletal champion. Lurking in his crypt, Delthur awaits his enemies. When he sense their return, he will march forth to crush them once again.

4: VIGIL

This four-towered fortress commands sweeping views over Kingsfell, the Ost and wide swaths of surrounding territory. Here the paladin Mira Lankinen (LG female middle-aged human paladin 5) watches over the village and its folk. Her family has long ruled the surrounding territory and their governance has been mostly harmonious and benign. Consequently, Mira is beloved by the populace.

Vigil is a powerful fortification. Within, Mira maintains a well trained force of 86 men-at-arms (LN male or female human fighter 2) and a score of elite cavalry (LN male or female human fighter 3) who patrol the surrounding countryside.

5: ESKOLA'S

This large, rambling building holds an eclectic array of stock. Run by Merla Shortstep (CN female halfling thief 2) on behalf of Heimo Eskola (N male human wizard 1) the place caters to travellers and locals alike. While Merla likes Heimo she has grown resentful of his wealth; for the last few years she has been skimming a small percentage of the take for herself. She has hidden this in her chambers on the second floor halfway up a disused chimney. Eskola's does not stock any weapons, armour or alchemical items, but virtually every other common item is available within.

KINGSFELL'S HIDDEN HISTORY

Centuries ago, a bloody battle between marauding orcs and dwarven warriors raged upon the Ost's muddy banks. The dwarves were victorious—barely—and the orcs driven away or slain. Victory came at a great price, however, and most of the dwarves along with their leader, Thegn Delthur Werlan, were killed in the battle. To commemorate their victory—and to honour their dead—the surviving dwarves raised up four burial mounds. Now wreathed with wild flowers and worn by time's remorseless passage few clues remain as to their grim contents.

Where orcs and dwarves once fought and died now stands the human village of Kingsfell. Unknowingly, the villagers—largely ignorant of the area's bloody history—have built their homes over a mass grave.

6: THE WEARY TRAVELLER

Kingsfell's best inn, the Weary Traveller caters to the wealthier travellers. Owned and operated by the pasty-skinned but welcoming Uljas Rantanen (NG male human) and his family, the Weary Traveller offers both fine accommodation and food.

	COST
Accommodation (private room/night)	2 gp
Accommodation (dormitory/night)	5 sp
Meal (per day)	5 sp
Ale (mug)	1 sp
Wine (bottle)	10 gp
Wine (pitcher)	2 sp

The Weary Traveller is often busy at night. During the day few villagers visit the inn and so it is normally quiet. The common room is comfortably appointed and Uljas stocks an impressive array of wines and beers.

Elen Araral (LN female dwarf cleric 3) has lived in the inn for almost three months. She is obsessed with the legend of Thegn Delthur Werlan and his final battle. Following a trail of half-clues and fragmentary first-hand accounts of the battle, she has come to Kingsfell to learn more. The locals are beginning to wonder about the purpose of her slow, daily rambles around the mounds and whispers follow in her wake.

7: HALL OF THE LAWGIVER

Dedicated to Conn (LN god of community, family and rulership) the Hall of the Lawgiver is Kingsfell's spiritual heart. A steep path, cut by worn stone steps leads up to the church from the village proper.

Here dwells the pompous, but well-meaning Teuvo Eerola (LN male middle-aged human cleric [Conn] 3) and his two acolytes Irmeli Purho (LN female human cleric [Conn] 2) and

THE FOUR BROTHERS

Colloquially known as "the Four Brothers," four burial mounds stud the Ost's bank.

The largest of the mounds holds the skeletal remains of hundreds of slain orcs. Dwarven warriors lie in the two smallest mounds while the highest mound is the resting place of Thegn Delthur Werlan and his fallen bodyguards. All are ancient and timeworn. Wild flowers and long grass cover the mounds, giving little hint of their macabre contents.

Although the four mounds are widely acknowledged as burial mounds attempts to dig into them in search of grave goods are strong discouraged. Mira Lankinen's family long ago prohibited such desecration and among the populace is a general feeling that what is buried should remain buried.

Cora Wildthorn (LN female halfling cleric [Conn] 1). The three oversee the villager's spiritual needs and tend to any injured or diseased among the populace. All have led relatively sheltered lives and none would be able to effectively deal with a real crisis.

An extensive, well-tended graveyard stands near the church surrounded by a moss-wreathed, tumbled stone wall. Some of the wealthier families maintain mausoleums in the graveyard.

8: HEIMO'S HOUSE

The grandest personal residence in the village, this house is home to Heimo Eskola (N male human wizard 1) and his family. Although he failed in his studies as a wizard, Heimo has a keen business mind and has made much of his natural talents. Now easily the richest commoner in Kingsfell, he dreams of marrying one of his children into the Lankinen family. He has recently noticed takings at his shop are slightly down. This vaguely bothers him, but a vague sense of encroaching dread has him distracted.

9: SHRINE OF THE SHINING LIGHT

Isolated from the village proper this stout, fortified church dedicated to Darlen (LG god of law, order, justice and the sun) boasts a small watchtower sometimes used by the garrison of Vigil to watch for approaching intruders.

Ratuz Korpela (LG male half-orc cleric [Darlen] 4) tends the shrine and leads weekly services. A close confidant of Mira Lankinen, Ratuz is secretly in love with the paladin, and does not tolerate ill words about her or her actions. A particularly perceptive fellow, he senses something is not right with the village but as yet does not know the source of the problem.

A small, but surprisingly deep crypt lies beneath the shrine. Here lie the long-dead Lankinens and the remains of those who have tended the shrine.

THE SURROUNDING AREA

Kingsfell occupies a swath of fertile land replete with fields and farmsteads. Standing on the bank Ost upstream from a sprawling saltmarsh the village stands at a strategic crossroads.

To the north lie the towns of Dulwich and Languard and the small halfling community of Underdell. Other villages—among them Coldwater and Wellswood—stud the surrounding territory.

To the south lies a towering, steep-sided plateau upon which sprawls the forbidding and legend-shrouded Forest of Gray Spires. Dwarves are rumoured to have once dwelled in the mesa's cliffs, but their holds have not felt the tread of dwarven feet for centuries.

LIFE IN KINGSFELL

Life is generally peaceful in Kingsfell, but an indefinable feeling of unease is beginning to settle over the villagers. Arguments are becoming more common, and some even result in brawls.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Kingsfell survives on a mixture of fishing and farming. A few villagers hunt the outer reaches of the nearby Salt Mire. A fair amount of coin flows into the village, brought here by travellers, and is mostly spent at the Weary Traveller and the Rat and Cup. Consequently, the owners of both establishments are among the wealthiest in the village.

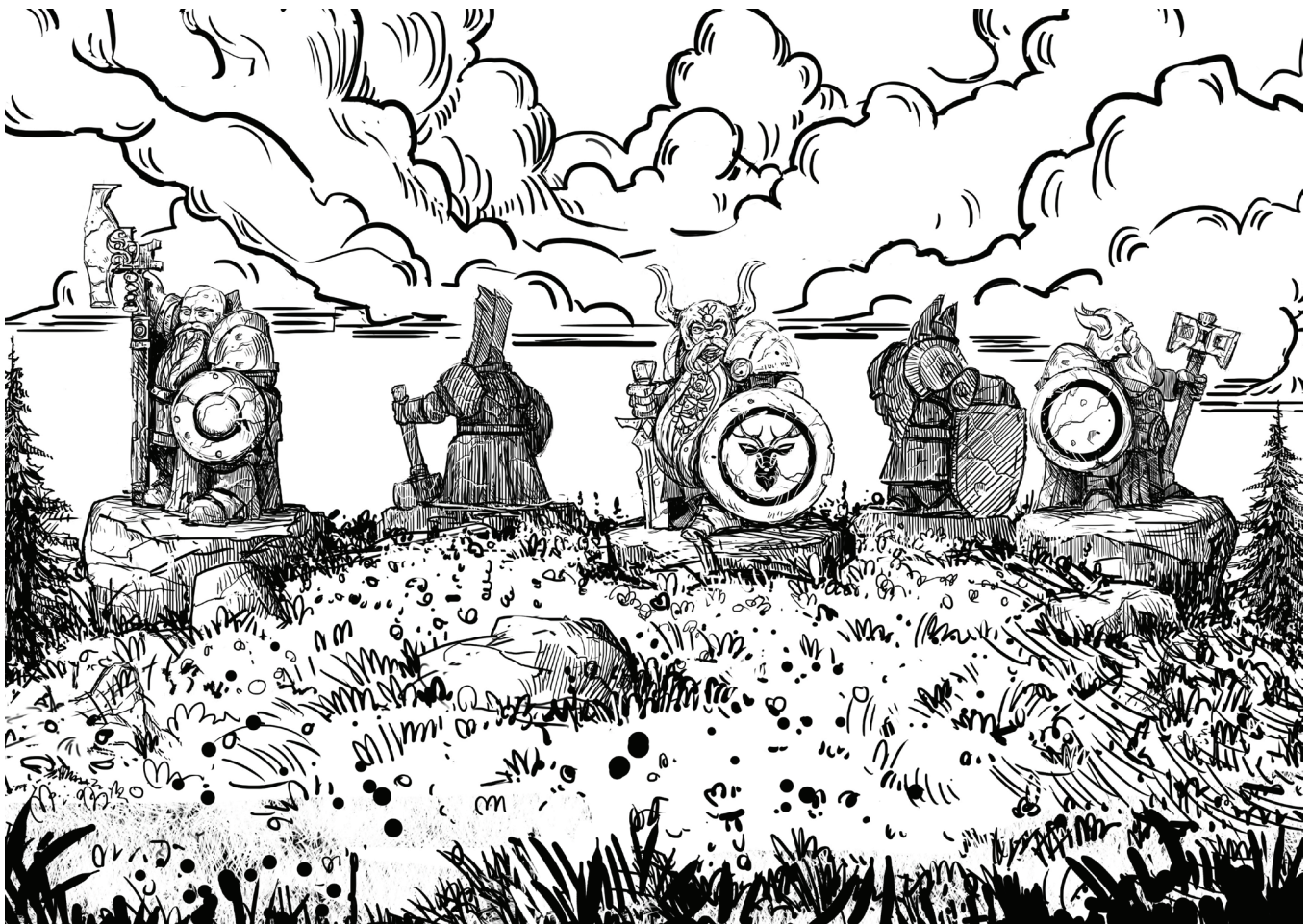
LAW & ORDER

The Lankinens have ruled Kingsfell for generations, and are well loved by the bulk of the populace. Laws are generally fair and crime is surprisingly low given the number of travellers and itinerants passing through the village. The only real area of contention comes when travellers arrive in the village with the intention of digging at the Kingstones.

EVENTS

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

D4	EVENT
1	Mira Lankinen rides out with a small patrol to safeguard the surrounding area. Several hours later, the patrol returns without incident.
2	Elren Araral wanders among the Kingstones. At sight of her, villagers begin muttering among themselves, but none approach her.
3	A travelling merchant enters the village. He has goods for sale and tales to tell. He lodges at the Rat and Cup and sets up shop in the common room. Issodair Highhill demands a cut of this profits and turns a blind eye when the merchant approaches other customers.
4	Riku Markku searches the Ost's river banks at low tide for lost treasures. He wields a spade with almost manic energy and is soon covered in mud. He finds nothing.



LANTHORN

Words Creighton Broadhurst **Cartography** Maciej Zagorski

High up in the mountains, and often besieged by packs of murderous trolls, the village of Lanthorn stands as civilisation's last glimmering light in an otherwise bleak and barren mountain range. A strange alliance of wizards—the Grand Conclave of Sublime Artificers—and a gaggle of (almost) civilised goblins—the Flaming Skull tribe—dwells in a bizarre atmosphere that is both scholarly and anarchic. Protected by high walls and gigantic magical lanterns imbued with portent fire magic, the wizards craft the mundane and wondrous items for which they are famed. Without the walls brave—or foolhardy—goblin “miners” search the nearby troll-haunted mines for lead and silver—some of which is reputed to have magical properties.

LANTHORN AT A GLANCE

Ruler Ishme-Dagan

Government Council

Population 183 (38 humans, 139 goblins, 6 half-orcs)

Alignments LN, N, NE

Languages Common, Giant, Goblin

Nomenclature (Human) *male*: Adad, Enmul, Nergal; *female*: Irkalla, Ninki, Sabit; *family*: Isin, Larsa, Uruk, Zimbar.

Nomenclature (Goblin) *male*: Bak, Cri, Sij; *female*: Bel, Kark, Wid

Named for the great magical lanterns set atop its gates, and perpetually shadow-wreathed, Lanthorn clings to a cliff under a ponderous granitic overhang high up in Kuldor Pass. Here the winters are harsh and the summers brief. Sometimes cut off for weeks by driving snow or avalanche, it is an isolated place.

The heavily defended, fortified village controls traffic through Kuldor Pass and its lights mark civilisation's last glimmer before the untamed wilderness of the deep, troll-haunted mountains. Established a century ago by the Grand Conclave of Sublime Artificers—a cabal of wizards obsessed with crafting items of portent power—the village is renown as a place for the wealthy to commission magic item creation.

Within its walls, an odd alliance of wizards and an atypically (almost) civilised goblin tribe work together to keep the ever-present trolls at bay. The goblins—inveterate scavengers all—also explore the many nearby abandoned mines dotted through the mountains. Such work is too taxing, dangerous and dirty for the wizards or their trusted servants, but the goblins are at home in the mines' unending darkness. Although most such workings are played out, some treasure yet lie within. Chief amongst these is lead—much in demand among the low-land folk for its magic dampening qualities. Occasionally, silver is also brought forth from the mines; some such deposits have strange properties much coveted by Lanthorn's artificers.

MARKETPLACE

Resources & Industry Mining, magic item crafting, hospitality

Lanthorn is renown as somewhere to go to commission a skilled wizard to craft specific magical items. As such, some of the following items may be available for sale:

- **Consumables** *potion of levitation* (400 gp), *scroll of fireball* (900 gp)
- **Mundane** explosive oil (inflicts double fire damage; 2 gp/vial)
- **Wand** *wand of fire* (25,000 gp)
- **Weapons & Armour** *sword +1* (2,000 gp), *shield +1* (2,500 gp)

LORE

A PC may know something about Lanthorn, its history and surrounds. Determine how knowledgeable the PCs are and then impart some (or all) of the information below:

- Lanthorn bars the troll-haunted Kuldor Pass; all those who would venture into the mountains must pass through its heavily defended gates. The village is named for the huge—reputedly magical—lanterns set atop both gates.
- The Grand Conclave of Sublime Artificers—and their goblin allies—control Lanthorn. The goblins are surprisingly civilised and scavenge through the many played-out mines dotting the nearby mountains.
- Strange metals are sometimes brought forth from the mines. In particular, some of the silver found has certain properties making it much in demand by artificers.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Lanthorn, a PC may hear one or more rumours pertaining to the village and its surroundings. The PC can learn this information in a number of ways: perhaps by overhearing two locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local tavern and so on. Use the table below, to determine which rumours the PC learns.

D6 RUMOUR

1	The goblins of Lanthorn belong to the Flaming Skull tribe. The tribe is a matriarchy and they (mainly) live in peace with their human neighbours.
2	Deep tunnels run into the mountains from Lanthorn. In their depths, the goblins collect a special kind of oil that burns so hot water cannot extinguish its flames.
3*	The Grand Conclave are searching for a lost item of power in the mountains. What they intend to do with it is anyone's guess.
4	Travellers should be especially careful if they bring dogs or horses into Lanthorn; the goblins have not lost all their depraved hereditary habits...
5*	The Flaming Skull goblins resent the Grand Conclave's control of Lanthorn. They plot to overthrow the wizards.
6*	The trolls are too organised for normal trolls. Some powerful, fell force compels them to lurk in the deep darkness of the ancient mines to ambush those exploring their depths.

*False rumour

NOTABLE FOLK

The folk of Lanthorn fall into two categories: wizards belonging to the Grand Conclave of Sublime Artificers and goblins of the Flaming Skull tribe. A few individuals are of particular interest to adventurers:

Ishme-Dagan (location 5; LN old male human wizard 13) A brilliant artificer, Ishme-Dagan is obsessed with creation. He ruthlessly destroys any threat (real or perceived) to Lanthorn.

Marpa (location 9; NE male goblin wizard 4) Tired of the Flaming Skull's matriarchy, Marpa joined the Grand Conclave to make something of himself. He is its only goblin member to date. He struggles to keep his base nature hidden and hates trolls. He wants to make lots of *wands of fireball*.

Nank (location 3; NE female goblin thief 2) This conniving "merchant" deals in anything as long as she gets paid. Her favourite sales involve fake treasure maps...leading directly to troll lairs.

Oggor "the Thumper" (location 8; NG male half-orc druid 3) Oggor loves the mountains' stark beauty. He stays in Lanthorn to tend the animals coming through its gates; he knows no one else will.

Tuko (location 4; LN female goblin wizard 8) Tuko dreams of one day leading the Flaming Skull tribe. She's got big plans—mostly involving exploding trolls.

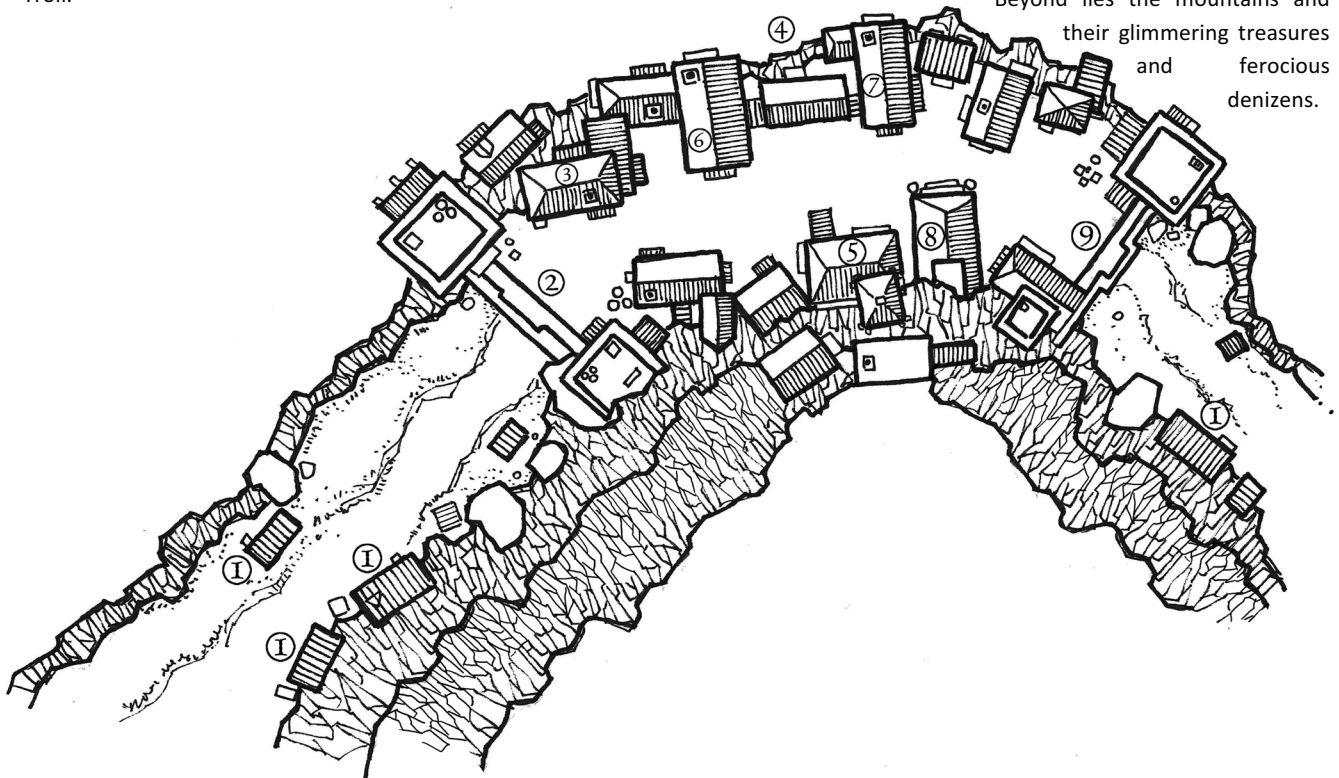
Urki (location 6; N female goblin ranger 4/rogue 1) An accomplished scout, she knows the nearby mines better than most. She's hard-talking and hard drinking (and phenomenally brave). She drinks (a lot) at the Smouldering Troll.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of Lanthorn comprises homes. A few locations, however, are of particular interest to adventurers:

1. **Refuge:** Lanthorn's gates close at dusk and do not open until dawn. Those caught outside can seek shelter in several buildings standing without the village's walls.
2. **High Gate:** High Gate is impressively fortified. Its southern tower is the highest building in the village.
3. **The Shadow Market:** Many goblins scrape a living running small stalls in the market. Here they sell whatever they've scavenged from the mines or stolen from unwary travellers.
4. **Caves of the Flaming Skull:** The bulk of the tribe dwells in a complex warren of cramped tunnels cut into the mountain.
5. **Hall of the Grand Conclave:** This rambling collection of buildings provides the Conclave with the space to carry out its works. Visitors can only enter if accompanied by a member.
6. **The Smouldering Troll:** An obviously magical sign depicting a smouldering troll corpse marks this place as Lanthorn's best inn. Here travellers find a warm welcome, good food and strong drinks all served by the exuberant, if occasionally larcenous, goblin staff.
7. **The Broken Blade:** This downmarket inn hosts a popular, and raucous, weekly fight night.
8. **Stables:** Lanthorn's only non-goblin run business, all dogs and horses must be kept here until their owners leave Lanthorn.
9. **Low Gate:** Low Gate is even more fortified than High Gate.

Beyond lies the mountains and their glimmering treasures and ferocious denizens.



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: REFUGES

These sturdy, battle-scarred buildings are basic in the extreme. Designed for travellers who reach Lanthorn after the gates shut they offer shelter from the weather and protection from marauding trolls. Each building features a stout, barred door and a few narrow windows.

2: HIGH GATE

This overly stout gatehouse watches over Lanthorn's western approaches. The gate's supernaturally hardened wood bears scorch marks and its battlemented towers loom high over the approaching trail. The Grand Conclave have set here a large—reputedly sentient—magical silvery lantern to protect the gate. It has the power to call forth magical fire to scorch attackers.

3: THE SHADOW MARKET

Lanthorn has no typical assortment of shops; instead many goblins operate small stalls from the cramped rooms of these buildings. Prices are wildly inflated and haggling is rife. While the goblins—in the main—have managed to shrug off the worst of their racial heritage they are still devious and greedy. Notable stallholders include:

- **Bal** (CN male goblin cleric 1) Bal offers basic healing services. He prefers to use traditional goblin methods—experimental surgery and cauterisation—wherever possible.
- **Nank** (NE female goblin thief 2) A vicious piece of work, Nank always has treasure maps for sale. Unfortunately, they all lead to troll lairs. She also seems to always have a good supply of “exploding oil” for sale.
- **Perg** (N male goblin fighter 1) Perg buys and sells weapons and armour. Everything is guaranteed, but only until it's used.

THE FLAMING SKULL GOBLINS

A few years after Lanthorn was founded, the Flaming Skull tribe was almost wiped out by their hated troll enemies. The few desperate survivors begged for shelter within Lanthorn's walls. The wizards, in need of servants brave or stupid enough to explore the nearby abandoned mines, took them in and thus an unlikely—and at the start uneasy—alliance was born.

Nine decades later, and atypically for goblins, the tribe has adopted some of civilisation's trappings. However, even now, they hate horses, loath dogs and love fire. Most remain stubbornly illiterate, but a few hoping to join the Grand Conclave—much to their fellows' disgust and derision—have taken their first faltering steps toward literacy.

4: CAVES OF THE FLAMING SKULL

This convoluted cave network is cramped and torturously maze-like. With deliberately designed narrow entrances, few wizards ever visit the goblins in their homes. Here dwell the bulk of the Flaming Skull tribe, in small family groups. Although the goblins have evolved a more refined, civilised way of life than their normal brethren the caves are still a glorious riot of disorganisation, mess and nauseating smells.

In the deepest section of caves, the goblins discovered a bubbling pool of particularly viscous, unstable oil. Devastatingly effective when used as a weapon, the goblins delight in using the oil to burn their trollish enemies.

- **Tuko** (LN female goblin wizard 8) Tuko dreams of one day leading the Flaming Skull tribe. She's got big plans—mostly involving exploding trolls. She needs money to fund her dreams and is available—at the princely sum of 20 gp a day—to guide travellers through the pass. Somewhat of a liability, she refuses to hide from any trolls encountered and—depending on her mood—sometimes leads travellers into ambushes (so she can burn and explode trolls).

THE GRAND CONCLAVE

The Grand Conclave of Sublime Artificers, a small guild of crafters and alchemists, founded Lanthorn a century ago. Its then master knew the history of the mountains and of the many ancient dwarf lead and silver mines therein. She was also in possession of fragments of certain elder texts that told of the mines' wealth and of strange silver deposits that could yet be found if one looked hard enough.

Of course, the perils of mine exploration were not lost on early guild members and the Grand Conclave constantly struggled to find enough freeswords, freebooters and adventurers brave enough to dare the troll-infested mountains. Thus, the arrival of the Flaming Skull goblins was met with cautious excitement among the forward-thinking Conclave members.

Now 30-strong, the Conclave is sought after for its skill at crafting items both magical and alchemical. Ironically, its members are best known for crafting lead-lined strongboxes (5 gp) and chests (10 gp) designed specifically for those with magical items to hide. Some particularly cunning artificers have even learnt the secrets of crafting excellent hollow locks (300 gp) coated in lead that can be imbued with virtually undetectable magical traps.

5: HALL OF THE GRAND CONCLAVE

Whereas the bulk of Lanthorn is turned over for travellers and goblins, the Grand Conclave dwell here in semi-isolated splendour. Most goblins never pass through the Hall's doors. Here the wizards, led by Ishme-Dagan (LN old male human wizard 13), eat, sleep and work. Their workshops and laboratories are crammed with items both magical and mundane.

The Conclave has many items for sale (see "Marketplace") and members often undertake commissions. However, payment for such services often involve an expedition deep into the troll-infested mines to retrieve the lead and silver languishing therein.

6: THE SMOULDERING TROLL

A sign enscribed to show wisps of smoke rising from a troll's scorched body marks this establishment as the Smouldering Troll. Widely accepted as the finest inn for 100 miles—competition for this honour isn't fierce—the Smouldering Troll offers a warm welcome to all. Here, the rooms are (relatively) clean, the drink is plentiful and the food (probably) won't give you food poisoning.

- **Food & Drink** meal ([burnt] mutton sausages, cheese [on the turn] and [hard] bread) 3 sp, weak ale 6 cp, wine (pitcher) 3 sp.
- **Accommodation** Two-bed chamber 10 sp; four-bed chamber 20 sp; common room 2 sp.

Gak (NG female goblin thief 4), along with her extended family, runs the Smouldering Troll. Gregarious in the extreme—and a little over-excitable with new guests—she loves telling stories of her family's troll-baiting and troll-burning prowess. Sadly, she is not as good at running the Smouldering Troll as she is storytelling. Still at least she tries—who cares if the rooms are dirty, the food's often burnt and the home-brewed beer isn't as strong as it could be? It could be much, much worse.

TROLLS & MINES

Hunting through the mines is doubly dangerous. For along with the dangers possessed by the harsh conditions and all too frequent cave-ins a surprisingly numerous, and unsurprisingly violent, troll tribe claims the largest mine as their own. Drawn to the mines by some nameless compulsion, they prey on any they discover invading their domain. Among the folk of Lanthorn, mine trolls—as they are locally known—are universally considered even madder and more unpredictable than normal trolls. Consequently, "mining" expeditions into the mines are now either numerous and well-guarded or small, stealthy affairs.

7: THE BROKEN BLADE

The Broken Blade's offering is basic, but solid. Run by an old mercenary—Henk (NG male half-orc fighter 4)—the place is an homage to war and martial pursuits. Henk retired over a decade ago and has been here ever-since. He misses the excitement of battle, but not the blood, pain and mortal danger. He is popular with the goblins for organising weekly sparring matches held in the Broken Blade's common room. Such events are always well attended. Henk employs two obese bouncers—Torgan and Vrung (both N male half-orc fighter 4)—and a small staff of goblins. Food here is basic—being little better than trail rations—but the drink is plentiful. The Broken Blade has no private rooms, but does boast several small dormitories suitable for groups of up to ten people.

- **Food & Drink** meal (hard biscuits soaked in mutton stew) 1 sp, ale 4 cp, sour wine (pitcher) 1 sp.
- **Accommodation** Dormitory 10 gp

8: STABLES

The only non-goblin run business in Lanthorn, all horses and dogs must be kept here while their owners are in Lanthorn. Animals escaping are often set upon by the goblins in an orgy of violence and slain. The goblins eat well that night.

- **Oggor "the Thumper"** (NG male half-orc druid 3) dwells here. A lover of nature in all its forms and a skilled healer, Oggor operates the stables on his own. He'd love to take on some help—he daren't leave the stables unattended for too long in case the goblins notice his absence and get hungry. However, he trusts no goblin to serve as a stable hand and few others seem interested in settling in Lanthorn. He's called "the Thumper" because that's what he does to goblins he finds in the stables.

9: LOW GATE

Even more heavily defended than High Gate, Low Gate bears the brunt of the trolls' attacks. Its thick iron-bound gates are secured with three wooden bars at dusk. They do not open again until dawn and woe-betide any caught outside after nightfall. Another particularly large silvery lantern—twin of the one atop High Gate—imbued with fire magic stands atop the north tower.

- **Marpa** (NE male goblin wizard 4), the Conclave's only full goblin member, is often here. He loves exploding trolls and is never happier when he gets to blast them with the *Low Lantern's* fiery powers.

LIFE IN LANTHORN

Life in Lanthorn is surprisingly ordered and peaceful. Visitors are reminded the goblin inhabitants have the same rights and privileges as its more “civilised” folk. The goblins are more exuberant and care-free than their wizardly co-inhabitants. In particular, the monthly festivals the goblins insist on celebrating are raucous affairs; serious injuries and (hilarious) accidents are common at these drunken, all-night affairs.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

The folk of Lanthorn engage in several different industries.

Beyond the walls, the goblins provide guides for travellers and hunt through the abandoned mines for lead and silver. In Lanthorn the goblins run all the menial, mundane businesses (with the notable exception of the stables) servicing visitors’ needs in the village.

Meanwhile, the members of the Grand Conclave pursue their esoteric trades crafting not only magic items but also fine lead-lined chests, boxes, barrels and even vials for wealthy clients who wish to hide their magic from thieves’ divinations.

LAW & ORDER

Violent arguments and assaults are rare in Lanthorn, although the goblin inhabitants sometimes revert to type and brawl among themselves or engage in petty theft from travellers.

All adult, able-bodied villagers are required to join the militia and take their turn walking Lanthorn’s ramparts. In practise, many wizards pay trusted goblin cohorts to take their places—something the goblins are only too happy to do as they relish the opportunity to burn trolls coming too close to Lanthorn’s defences.

EVENTS

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

D6	EVENT
1	Just after dusk, a small merchant caravan approaches Lanthorn. The gates are already shut; the travellers must shelter in one of the refuges overnight.
2	As #2, but this merchant caravan is followed by a troll hunting party. In the depths of night, the trolls fall on the merchants, who are all slain if no one intervenes.
3	Two goblins argue in the street. Before long, they come to blows and a small crowd gathers to watch the fun. When the goblins’ friends join in, a high-spirited brawl ensues.
4	A goblin “miner” returns to Lanthorn literally bent double under a straining sack of lead ore. As he staggers toward the Hall of the Grand Conclave to sell his haul, the sack splits open and scatters ore on the ground. Within seconds, the unfortunate miner is at the centre of a writhing mass of goblins intent on stealing as much ore as possible.
5	The cloudless night is particularly cold. The goblins build a huge, oil-soaked bonfire and cavorting about it while drinking heavily. A carnival-like atmosphere develops and an impromptu series of races and wrestling matches provides entertainment.
6	Uurki enters the Smouldering Troll, carrying a bloody sack. She upends it on the bar to reveal a severed, scorched troll head. Gak wants it as a “nice decoration” for the bar and the two fall to haggling. Perceptive PCs may notice the troll’s eyes are still moving...



LONGBRIDGE

Words Creighton Broadhurst **Cartography** Tom Fayen

A hotbed of intrigue and deception, Longbridge is claimed by not one but two noble lords. Sprawled across both banks of a wide, swiftly flowing river forming the boundary between the rivals' lands, the village grew up at either end of a fortified stone bridge of ancient dwarven artifice. A no man's land of sorts, the bridge itself is huge; scores of travellers cross it every day and several businesses have established themselves upon its span to service their needs. Informally led by Einhard Kochel these free traders do not pay tax or offer fealty to either lord and fiercely resist both nobles' overtures.

Longbridge is in turmoil. Rumourmongers whisper bloody war will soon swirl across the span as one noble or the other seeks to settle the matter of its ownership once and for all. Others whisper of hidden stairs in the bridge's pilings plunging deep below the riverbed to secret, noisome catacombs of great antiquity and of the foul, ageless creatures lurking within.

LONGBRIDGE AT A GLANCE

A hotbed of intrigue and deception, Longbridge is claimed by two rival nobles, Wido Gall and Hilduin Lorsch. Sprawled across the banks of the wide, swiftly flowing Kymi's Run forming the boundary between the lords' lands, the village grew up at either end of a fortified stone bridge of ancient dwarven artifice.

Longbridge is a volatile place. Two noblemen means two bailiffs and two sets of taxes, laws and so on. Many travellers grow angry at paying tolls and taxes twice; heated arguments are commonplace. A no man's land of sorts, the bridge itself is huge; scores of travellers cross it every day and several businesses have established themselves upon its span to service their needs. Informally led by Einhard Kochel, these free traders do not pay tax or offer fealty to either lord. Einhard plots to one day wrest control of the village and set himself up as its new lord.

The village is in turmoil. Rumourmongers whisper that bloody war will soon swirl across the span as either Hilduin Lorsch or Wido Gall settle the matter of ownership once and for all. Other folk whisper of secret stairs concealed in the bridge's pilings plunging deep below the riverbed to hidden, noisome caverns of great antiquity and of the foul, ageless creatures lurking within.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler Baron Wido Gall and/or Hilduin Lorsch and/or Einhard Kochel

Government Contested

Population 193 (173 humans, 12 dwarves, 4 half-elves, 3 half-orcs, 1 halfling)

Alignments N

Languages Common

Resources & Industry Farming

NOTABLE FOLK

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

Rideth Sehiatyn (location 3; N female half-elf wizard 5/rogue 3) Rideth dwells on the bridge and is widely regarded as an expert on the structure.

Donatus Trond (location 6; LE male human rogue 3/cleric 2) Serving baron Hilduin Lorsch, Donatus is unpopular throughout Longbridge.

Einhard Kochel (location 2; NG male human fighter 4/cleric 2): Rumoured to be fabulously wealthy the owner of the Welcoming Hearth plots to claim Longbridge as his own.

Fruen Deadeye (LE female half-orc fighter 4) Owner of the Iron Fist, Fruen is secretly in league with Hilduin Lorsch.

Hilduin Lorsch (LE male human fighter 5) Lord of Woodridge, Hilduin favours force of arms in his bid to control Longbridge.

Rilla Omer (location 7; LN female bard 4) The bailiff overseeing Wido Gall's interests, Rilla controls the south tower.

Wido Gall (LN male human wizard 4) From his seat in Dulwich, Wido looks east with covetous eyes.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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

1. **The Longbridge:** This massive structure dominates the village's landscape and economy. Of ancient dwarven artifice is a vital component of the region's trade network.
2. **The Welcoming Hearth:** Set upon the bridge, this fortified inn offers comfort, security and welcome. Einhard Kochel (its owner) is a charming, well-mannered host.
3. **Rideth's House:** This three-storey building leans precariously out over the river. From her ground floor shop, Rideth offers advice, knowledge and spellcasting services.
4. **Thread & Ball:** Here the fugitive tailor Dricolen Thornhill (LN male halfling) mends travellers' clothes while dreaming of again tailoring fine clothes for persons of note.
5. **Maldrec's:** This general shop has suspiciously low prices.
6. **North Tower:** From the north tower, Donatus Trond watches over his lord's domain.
7. **South Tower:** Warding the bridge's southern approaches, it is here Rilla Omer has her seat.
8. **The Merry Traveller:** This raucous tavern is popular with travellers and common folk. It is open very late.
9. **The Iron Fist:** Owned by a retired mercenary, the Iron First is popular with off-duty men-at-arms.

LORDS COMPETING

Ownership and control of Longbridge is contested (openly) by two individuals: Hilduin Lorsch, Lord of Woodbridge, and Wido Gall, ruler of the nearby town of Dulwich. Both desire the bridge for its ability to generate income from the taxes and tolls paid by those crossing the swiftly flowing Kymi's Run.

Each controls one of the bridge's towers, but neither is strong enough to oust the other; of the two, Hilduin Lorsch is the most aggressive and favours resolving the problem through strength of arms.

A third figure, Einhard Kochel the leader of the so-called Free Traders, also desires control of the bridge. For him, it is a religious matter as he worships Behron, god of travellers. Einhard dreams of transforming the whole structure into a temple dedicated to his lord, and is a patient man.

VILLAGE LORE

A PC may know something about Longbridge, its history and surrounds. Determine how knowledgeable the PCs are and then impart some (or all) of the information below:

- Longbridge is a divided community; two lords claim the village; soon the matter will be decided—probably by force.
- Named for its largest structure, the village is clustered about a bridge of ancient dwarven artifice. Apparently, hidden stairways lead to caverns below the river itself.
- Although two nobles argue over Longbridge, a third person—Einhard Kochel—secretly plots to turn Longbridge into his personal demesne.

VILLAGERS

Appearance Dark-haired and dark-eyed, the folk of Longbridge are a stocky people. Many of the men are hirsute; some whisper dwarven blood flows in their veins.

Dress Normally clad in serviceable work clothes, the folk of Longbridge are cleaner than most peasants.

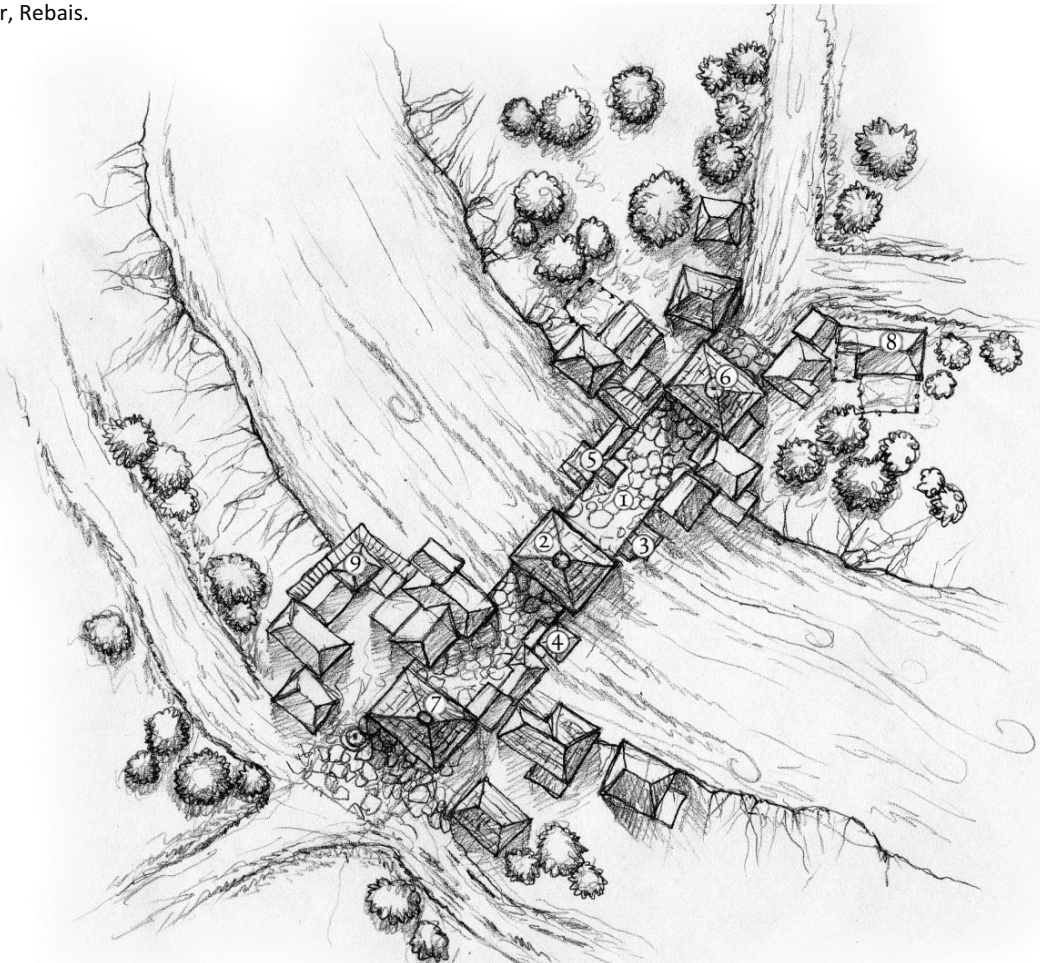
Nomenclature *male*: Arnulf, Drogo, Emmon, Grifo, Lothair, Unroch; *female*: Ada, Della, Idelle, Rica, Velda; *family*: Barisis, Dol, Gall, Omer, Rebais.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Longbridge, a PC may hear one or more rumours. The PC can learn this information in a number of ways: perhaps by overhearing two locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local taverns and so on. Use the table below, to determine which rumours the PC learns.

D6	RUMOUR
1*	Rideth Sehiatyn is Einhard's lover and a powerful enchantress. She often robs travellers after befuddling them with her magic.
2*	Something lurks in the river and occasionally creeps forth to feast on swimmers.
3	Hidden staircases set in the bridge's pilings lead to sunken caverns deep under the river.
4	Bloody war will soon come to Longbridge; one or other of the nobles claiming the place is bound to press his claim through force of arms.
5	The folk dwelling on the bridge plot the independence of the village from both local lords. Einhard Kochel leads them.
6	Many of the men working at the Iron First tavern have the air of warriors about them; all are tight-lipped.

*False rumour



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: THE LONGBRIDGE

This vast dwarven stone bridge stands at the heart of the village. A great stone tower guards either end of the bridge and another rises from its central span. Several shops and businesses stand upon the Longbridge.

The bridge is ancient, but the dwarf-craft stonework has endured and is in excellent condition. The dwarves hid several stairways in the bridge's structure that lead down to a network of mostly forgotten passages and chambers radiating through the surrounding area. Some are partially flooded—the river finally having broken through, but others are dry. The dwarves used them for storage, covert travel and even linked some to yet deeper passages. Ancient dwarven stories hold it was possible to walk to the nearest dwarven hold (the now ruined, kobold-infested Vongyth) through those passages without ever seeing the sun. None living can confidently confirm or refute these stories.

2: THE WELCOMING HEARTH

Comprising Span Gate tower, the Welcoming Hearth is said to always have a fire burning in the common room. Local legend has it the current fire has been burning for over twenty years. The inn (fittingly) contains a small shrine to Behron god of travellers. The tavern's owner—Einhard Kochel (NG male human fighter 4/cleric [Behron] 2)—worships that worthy power and plots of wresting control from the neighbouring, rival lords and transforming the whole bridge into a temple dedicated to his patron.

3: RIDETH'S HOUSE

This three-storey building leans precariously out over the river. Standing next to the Welcoming Hearth, it appears as if it is about to tumble into the waters below. Rideth Sehiatyn (N female half-elf wizard 5/rogue 3) uses the ground floor as her consulting chambers wherein she dispenses advice and information on many subjects to her clients.

Rideth has a great interest in the bridge itself. She knows the rumours of hidden stairs in the Longbridge to be true and has even dared to explore small portions of the network below.

4: THREAD & BALL

A sign depicting a needle and thread hangs above this small building's front door. The owner, Dricolen Thornhill (LN male halfling), is a fine craftsman, but normally ends up repairing

traveller's clothes (much to his chagrin). He remembers fondly the days of crafting fine clothing in nearby Languard and bemoans his fate—forced to flee here when his brother got into too much debt and the moneylender decided his family should honour his obligation.

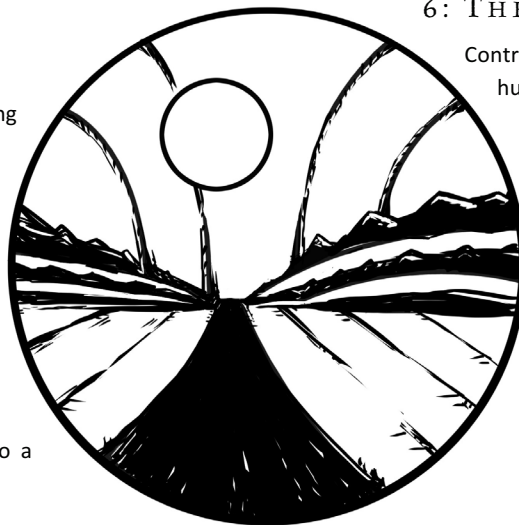
5: MALDREC'S

Tarl Maldrec (N male half-elf rogue 3) owns this large building. At first glance the shop seems gloriously unorganised, but Tarl knows exactly where everything is stored. He has an impressive collection of traveller's gear for sale: tents, bedrolls, iron rations—everything a traveller needs to journey in comfort.

On moonless nights he "imports" goods through a large trapdoor in the floor, thus avoiding paying tax on his wares. His prices are suspiciously low.

6: THE NORTH TOWER

Controlled by Domatus Trond (LE male human rogue 3/cleric 2) the north tower wards the approach to Hilduin Lorsch's lands. It is heavily fortified—he has installed several ballista atop its battlements—and strongly garrisoned. It is a grim place and although Domatus is outwardly charming his heart is as cold as the gold he covets so much.



KYMI'S RUN

Kymi's Run has its headwaters somewhere in the storied Forest of Gray Spires many miles to the south. From these shadowed depths it flows passed the ruined, kobold-infested dwarven ruins of Vongyth before passing under Longbridge's impressive span. Downstream, it slows somewhat and widens out as it flows through the sluggish, noisome depths of the Salt Mire before it reaches Hard Bay's briny waters.

The bridge at Longbridge is a vital link for the local trade routes linking Dulwich to the network of surrounding villages and the only safe place to cross the upper stretches of the river (which are steep-banked and swift flowing).

Sometimes, the remains of fell things are washed out of the Forest of Gray Spires and these have given rise of many rumours about that strange, fantastical place.

7: THE SOUTH TOWER

The twin of the North Tower, the South Tower is under the control of Wido Gall's bailiff, Rilla Omer (LN female bard 4). Rilla is very aware of how vital the bridge is for trade (and her lord's finances) and wrings every last coin she can legally extract from travellers. She is scrupulously honest, if a little lacking in imagination, and does not see Domatus' true nature.

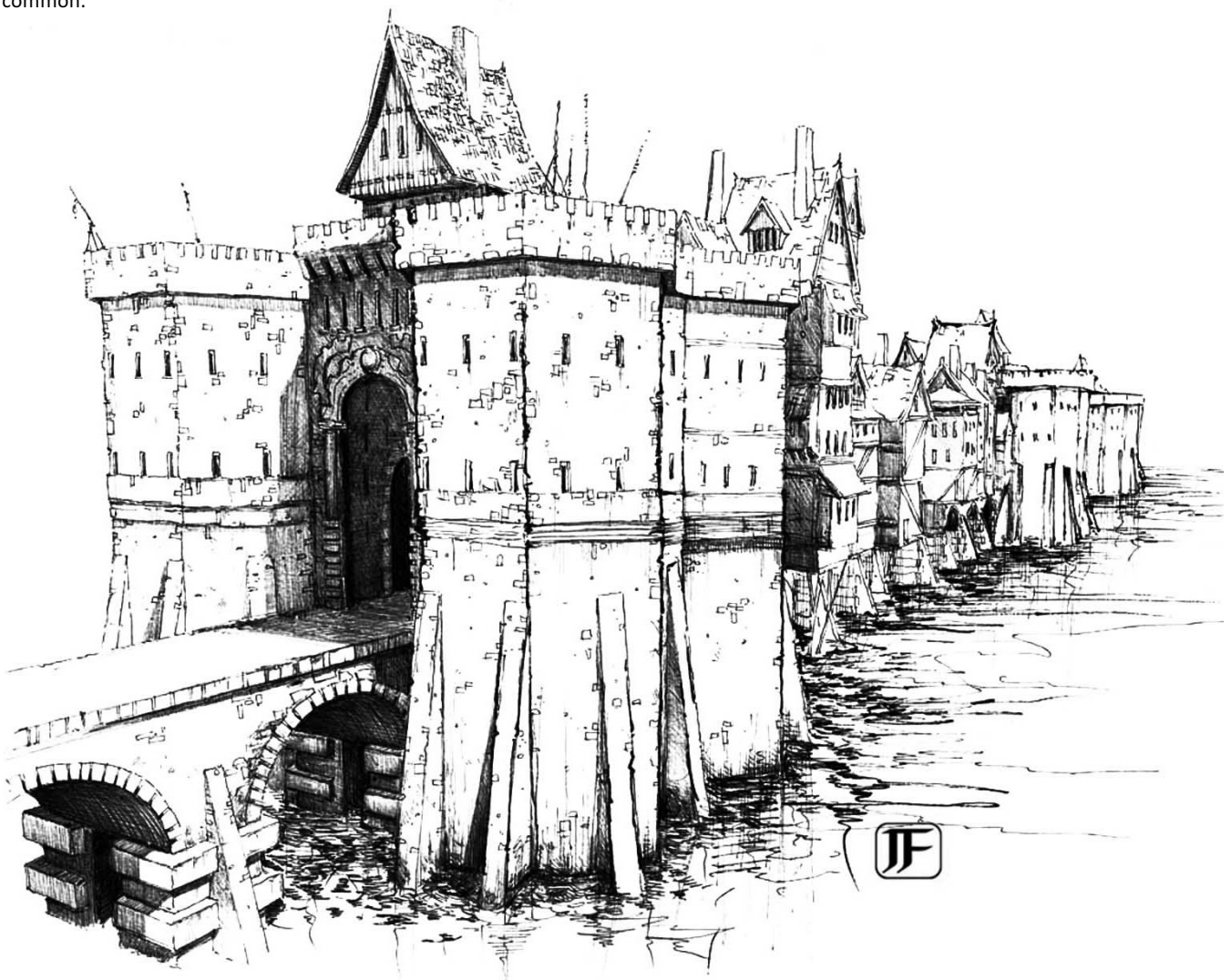
8: THE MERRY TRAVELLER

This raucous tavern is popular with travellers and common folk. It is open very late and often travellers staying here end up lingering longer than planned as they recover from the last night's epic drunk. The landlord, Kuno Segnii (CN male human fighter 2), is a heavy drinker who loves his job. He loves sharing a drink (or four) with his customers and never closes until the last have left (or collapsed into dribbling unconsciousness). His wife—the long suffering Gunda (N female human)—despairs of her husband's drinking; arguments between the two are common.

9: THE IRON FIST

Owned by Fruen Deadeye (LE female half-orc fighter 4), an ostensibly retired mercenary captain, the Iron Fist is popular with off-duty men-at-arms, travelling warriors and others who enjoy a rough and ready atmosphere. Brawls here are relatively common, but rarely result in anything more than a broken nose and spilt drinks. Fruen is strict, however, and charges anyone involved a "breakages tax" after such incidents.

Fruen is secretly in league with Hilduin Lorsch. The nobleman has paid her handsomely to spy on the southern part of the village and she has hired some of her old company to act as tavern guards and enforcers. Hilduin has promised her more gold if she uses her warriors to cause chaos and confusion when his men storm across the bridge to claim the whole village for their lord.



LIFE IN LONGBRIDGE

Excepting the tension between lords Gall and Lorsch (and their followers) life in Longbridge is relatively peaceful.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Farmland surrounds the village. Many villagers make their living servicing the needs of travellers passing through Longbridge. Some villagers fish Kymi's Run, using coracles or other small craft to ply its waters. A few of these individuals—for the right price—transport goods and travellers across the river at night; thus avoiding the tolls and taxes levied on such movement.

LAW & ORDER

Each nobleman has appointed a bailiff to control his portion of the village, overseeing law and order, levying taxes and so on. Travellers are less than delighted to pay such tariffs more than once and arguments often flare.

EVENTS

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

D10 EVENT

1	An outraged traveller refuses to pay a toll at both towers. An argument quickly develops.
2	Einhard Kochel stands at the Welcoming Hearth's threshold loudly (and charmingly) inviting travellers to rest within.
3	A muttering dwarf wanders the bridge, closely examining its stonework, as if searching for something.
4	A fisherman sits in his craft in the shadow of the bridge. He suddenly shouts that "something big" is in the water below his boat.
5	As one of the bailiffs inspects the bridge, a bucket of excrement is "accidentally" dropped from the rival's tower and narrowly misses its target.
6	Freun Deadeye wanders the bridge ostensibly for fresh air, but in reality she is checking on the guards at the South Tower.
7	Loud voices emanating from the Weary Traveller mark the beginning of another argument between Kuno and Gunda.
8	Three figures—all wearing voluminous cloaks, but obviously by their stature dwarves—stand outside Rideth Sehiatyn patiently waiting for her to answer the door.
9	Dark clouds hover low over the bridge and a heavy rain begins to fall. Within minutes, the bridge is seemingly deserted as everyone—guards and travellers alike—seek cover.
10	A brawl erupts at the Iron Fist as rival, off-duty men-at-arms from the two towers come to blows.

TRAVELLERS

While the PCs are in Longbridge, many folk use the bridge. Choose or determine randomly who the PCs encounter:

D10 TRAVELLER

1	Boram Bigbelly (CN male halfling), a peddler by trade, tries to sneak through one of the gates while the guards are occupied with other travellers. They spot him, and give chase across the bridge.
2	Kanbrar Natityrr (NG male half-elf cleric 2) is a devout follower of the god of travelling. He has come here to visit Einhard Kochel and loudly protests the need to pay a toll to do so. He is otherwise pleasant and happy to share stories with fellow travellers.
3	Baggi the Rash (N female half-orc barbarian 2) is a wandering adventurer. She is drunk, impetuous and in a silly mood. She is trying to talk the guards into letting her cross the bridge for free. When she sees the PCs, she mistakes one for an old friend and greets them warmly.
4	A wandering sellsword of some small repute—Krorz the Destroyer (N male half-orc fighter 4/rogue 2/cleric 1)—rests on the bridge's parapet and stares moodily into the waters below. He is in a foul mood.
5	Drunn Kraviz (LG male dwarf fighter 3) has come to the bridge because ancient family stories say one of his ancestors worked on its construction. He is searching every inch of the bridge for any sign—perhaps graffiti or a maker's mark—to prove the stories.
6	Ossi Leino (CG male human) didn't know he had to pay a toll at both ends of the bridge. He doesn't have enough money to get off the bridge and has been trapped here for much of the day. The man—a travelling down-on-his-luck scribe in search of employment—is thirsty, hungry and getting desperate.
7	Aune Alanen (CG female human wizard 6) has come to visit Rideth Sehiatyn in hopes of swapping some spells. Aune is well-dressed and doesn't have much time for commoners and the like. She is haughty and cold.
8	Addabar Andig (N male gnome bard 2) is playing a merry tune on a pipe. He stands on a small box and a rug on the ground holds several copper and silver coins. He makes a special effort to elicit a few coins from the party and is not above making up fantastic rumours to earn gold from gullible or impressionable adventurers.
9	Merla Faststep (NG female halfling thief 9) is fleeing an irate merchant who she has just fleeced. The man is loudly calling for the watch, but as the bridge is a no man's land of sorts no one is rushing to his aid.
10	Adalbern Njars (LG male human)—a carter—is trying to cross the bridge with a load of hay. His horse is in a foul mood and the cart has become wedged in one of the gates. Guards and other travellers are shouting at him to get out of the way.

SHROUDHAVEN

Words Mike Welham **Cartography** Maciej Zagorski

Nestled in a deep valley, Shroudhaven has never seen sunlight in the centuries since its founding. A long-forgotten war drove refugees to the valley where a persistent thick fog had permanently settled, a side-effect of magical might employed during the war. The fog shields its residents both from the elements and from those who might seek to destroy them merely for who they are. For most of those dwelling in Shroudhaven are undead. A dark reputation—like the pervasive fog—hangs over the village, but those spending time with the villagers tell a different story, one in which the battle against the base urges.

SHROUDHAVEN AT A GLANCE

Finding Shroudhaven presents certain difficulties, as no road leads to the village; wagon ruts serve as the only path. Thick fog makes navigation. Wolf howls and mad gibbering from all directions provide travellers constant companionship. The first indicator of civilization, signs spaced around the village proclaiming “No Necromancers, on Penalty of Death” and “Lawbreakers Will Be Eaten,” greet visitors.

Shroudhaven’s architecture, style of dress and dialects harken back to its centuries-old genesis. Incredible, innovative artwork and artisanship contrasts oddly with the village’s quaint nature. The sky only manages to brighten to a gloomy grey at noon. Brass lamps lining the streets cast yellow glows barely penetrating the fog. When the fog thickens, one can only perceive the vague shapes of buildings and other beings.

While Shroudhaven’s undead inhabitants make no outward displays of their state, in order to make guests feel more comfortable, astute observers easily discern the truth. For such guests, the undead don’t bother to hide their state, and instead put their effort into convincing visitors of their civility.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler The Gloomhand (five-member council)

Government Council

Population 79 (22 humans, 11 dwarves, 27 elves, 6 halflings, 13 ghosts)

Alignments N, LE, NE, CE

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Undercommon

Resources & Industry Alchemical supplies, clockwork devices, entertainment, exotic mushrooms

NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are undead. A few, however, are of particular interest to adventurers:

Bertram Jinkin (location 1; N male dwarf rogue 3) One of Shroudhaven’s few living residents, Bertram acts as the village’s “face” to newcomers.

Damiella Nightingale (location 8; CE female human vampire) Damiella is one of Zuzu’s prize pupils, with a voice capable of both shattering glass and soothing souls.

Keren Zaris (location 9; LE female vampire halfling) Keren spends her relative immortality perfecting various clockworks devices.

Quentin Roarg (location 3; NE male elf vampire wizard 11) Quentin has spent decades formulating a blood substitute.

Sestra Vol (location 5; CE female ghost ranger 9) Sestra runs her shop when she is not patrolling outside Shroudhaven.

Yvaine Grau (location 10; N female elf cleric 7) Yvaine oversees her farm and Respite Lodge, where she provides aid to the living and undead alike, along with her wisdom.

Zuzu Mellavious (location 8; NE female halfling vampire) Proprietor of Theatre Mellavious, Zuzu develops new talent.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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

1. **Jinkin’s Bar and Grill:** The first stop for many visitors, Bertram Jinkin serves an array of food procured from the farm and the village’s mushroom fields.
2. **Manor House Inn:** Several residents have suites in this massive mansion, which also houses newcomers to the village.
3. **Roarg’s Alchemy:** An acrid stench permeates the air around this building, where Quentin Roarg creates alchemical supplies as a break from working on his passion project.
4. **The Cathedral:** Meeting place of the ruling Gloomhand council, the Cathedral also serves as a prison.
5. **Hunting Shoppe:** Sestra Vol’s shop contains a wide variety of hunting supplies, from simple weapons and snare traps to items suited to repel or destroy the undead.
6. **Yvaine’s Farm:** Yvaine Grau raises sheep and cattle near one of the mushroom fields, which provides surprisingly healthy fare for the animals.
7. **Mushroom Fields:** Since normal plants cannot grow without sunlight, Shroudhaven has turned to harvesting mushrooms.
8. **Theatre Mellavious:** Varied performances grace the stages of this magnificent theatre on a nightly basis. Zuzu Mellavious invites visitors who catch her eye to perform on stage.
9. **Gear and Gears:** Keren Zaris runs this general store, which has given over much of its space to the intricate clockwork objects Keren creates.
10. **Respite Lodge:** Due to the dangerous creatures outside Shroudhaven, visitors might stop here for healing on arrival.



VILLAGE LORE

A PC may know something about Shroudhaven, its history and surrounds. Determine how knowledgeable the PCs are and then impart some (or all) of the information below:

- Shroudhaven's remote location and the pervasive fog make it a mysterious place. The population is made up of relatives of refugees from an ancient war.
- Led by the Gloomhand, Shroudhaven is a destination for undead creatures. However, these creatures claim to be civilized and present no threat to living creatures. They scour the land of what they call the "feral undead".
- Residents of Shroudhaven can never leave the village for long periods. After a week's absence, a villager begins to suffer from a wasting disease. Despite this, representatives from Shroudhaven invite innovative artisans and artists to live there.

VILLAGERS

Appearance Thanks to the lack of sunlight, and the undead nature of most of the residents, everyone has a pallid complexion; hair colour ranges from white/blonde to brunette.

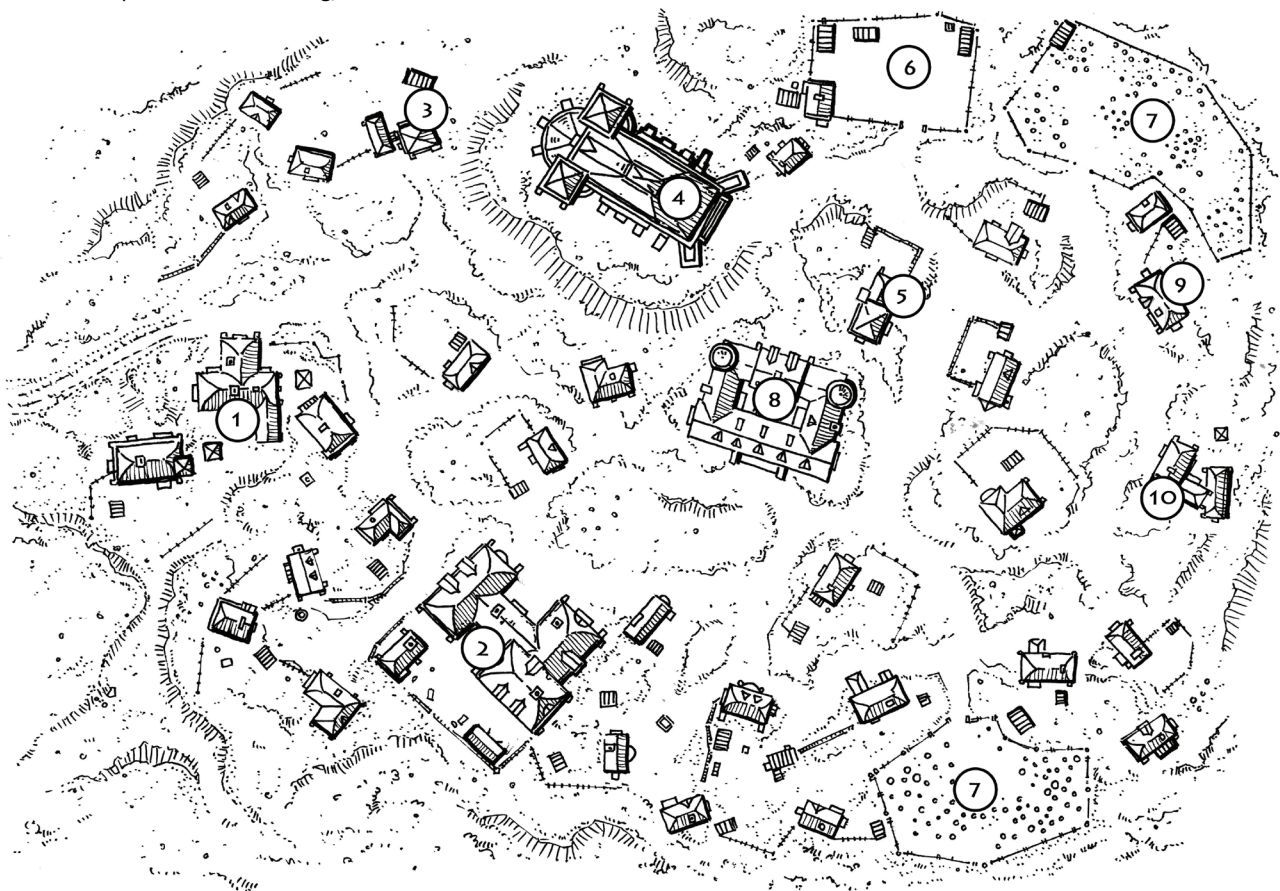
Dress The people of Shroudhaven wear stylish clothing for the historical period of its founding, but the fashion is outdated.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Shroudhaven, a PC may hear one or more rumours pertaining to the village and its surroundings. The PC can learn this information in a number of ways: perhaps by overhearing two locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local tavern and so on. Use the table below, to determine which rumours the PC learns.

D6	RUMOUR
1*	A thin ray of sunlight penetrated the fog recently and followed Valdrienne around.
2	The Cathedral has a secret cellar where the Gloomhand inters feral undead they plan to recondition.
3	The fog became acidic and destroys crops and forces the villagers inside for a time.
4	One of the Gloomhand has spoken about stepping down from the council, the first such departure in sixty years.
5	Madame Mellavious has enticed an acting troupe to stage an original play on the main stage; devastating events occur after each performance.
6	The mining village of Silver Bluff has discovered the remnants of an engine of war; the Gloomhand has expressed concerns about the engine's reactivation.

*False rumour



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: JINKIN'S BAR AND GRILL

Standing at Shroudhaven's most accessible border, Jinkin's Bar and Grill has warm lights shining in all its windows as a welcome to visitors to the village. Bertram Jinkin (N male dwarf rogue 3) greets newcomers from outside his restaurant and ensures he is the first local to meet people. Formerly a miner in Silver Bluff, Jinkin chafed at the conditions the mining company imposed on its workers. He travelled from Silver Bluff fifty years ago and stumbled upon Shroudhaven after a narrow escape from a pack of ghouls. In contrast to that harrowing experience, the residents seemed quite friendly, but it took him little time to realize they were also undead. Valdriane Cort from the Gloomhand met with Jinkin and made his case for the village's burgeoning notion of ceasing to prey on intelligent beings. Jinkin, intrigued by what he heard and saw, accepted a job wherein he would introduce visitors to Shroudhaven and inform them of its residents' unusual natures. Jinkin has a shrewd eye for whether people will be accepting or not.

The tavern serves new arrivals and Shroudhaven denizens alike. It features meat from the livestock raised at Yvaine's ranch, as well as an array of mushrooms cultivated in the village. Jinkin has turned his alchemical skills toward fermentation of mushrooms into earthy, yet potent alcohol. For those who Jinkin believes would react poorly to Shroudhaven's secret, he cheerily puts them up in a couple of well-appointed rooms upstairs from the dining hall. Otherwise, he directs them to the Manor House Inn for lodging.

2: MANOR HOUSE INN

This three-storey stone building accommodates Shroudhaven's residents, invited guests and visitors who wish to stay longer than one night (and Jinkin has vetted). Hondra Van Veldt (CE male ghost), who has mastered suppressing the stench of decay, leads a staff of twenty workers who keep the manor house spotless and ensure they meet all guests' and residents' needs. Each room has a private bath, heated gradually by an alchemical process designed by Quentin Roarg. All guests and residents can receive meals in their rooms or join the others for formal meals, during which much of the village's gossip is shared. The manor house also serves afternoon tea, to which everyone in the village has a standing invitation. The two-acre grounds surrounding the manor house have space for horse riding, leisure activities and a number of outdoor games, some of which have fallen out of common practice.

3: ROARG'S ALCHEMY

Roarg's shop is not difficult to find thanks to the eye-watering stench pervading the air around the building. The stone comprising the building is blackened in spots, and, in others, the stone has partially melted. Smoke belches from a chimney and colours the fog above a sickly green hue. Quentin Roarg (NE male vampire elf wizard 11) enthusiastically greets those who brave the noxious atmosphere and enter the building. He then quickly warns them to stay where they are while he sets down a bubbling beaker, which sometimes explodes. In this case, he cackles while picking out glass shards from his flesh. Roarg's skin is discoloured from the many experiments he carries out, making it hard to determine whether he is undead. He happily confirms he is undead with anyone who asks, and then immediately launches into an excited discussion about the artificial blood he has been attempting to synthesize. This typically leads him to ask for blood samples from living visitors ("purely for research purposes"). Anyone capable of diverting his attention can commission alchemical items which he sells at ten percent below the base cost, or twenty percent below for those who provide blood samples.

4: THE CATHEDRAL

The Cathedral is a daunting stone edifice standing four-storeys high replete with gargoyles along ledges at all heights. The building, also featuring a steeple disappearing into the fog, is one of two places inaccessible to visitors (the other being the hidden farm below the livestock farm [location 6]). The Cathedral is home to the Gloomhand, Shroudhaven's governing council, who make appearances in the village, especially when a promising visitor arrives. Often, Valdriane Cort (NE female vampire halfling), Zuzu Mellavius's sister-in-law, acts as the Gloomhand's ambassador.

The Cathedral also holds Shroudhaven's prison, beneath the building itself. The prison is largely empty, but occasionally the Gloomhand uses the space to interrogate people they believe threaten the village. The Gloomhold also quietly ushers feral undead into the prison and attempts to break them of their atavistic urges and return them to what the council considers polite society. Many outsiders witnessing these attempts would liken the techniques used to torture. A guillotine stands behind the Cathedral; those found guilty of necromancy meet their fates here.

The steeple holds a staircase and reaches above the fog bank, nearly one mile high. Climbing the staircase is not as easy as gaining access to it. Ghostly creatures, pale remnants of former residents who perished here and abroad, are trapped in the fog and attack any who dares climb aloft.

5: HUNTING SHOPPE

This simple building is a two-room affair, containing a chaotically arranged shop and Sestra Vol's (CE female ghastranger 9) room. The shop contains a jumble of gear and provisions for hunting trips in the surrounding wilderness. Sestra crafts her own traps for mundane animals, such as wolves and bears, and she willingly sells them along with normal gear to visitors who need an advantage when they leave the village. She also has an array of mundane and magic items hunting gear she uses to capture or kill feral undead. She will not part with these items, unless the buyers agree to go with her on a hunt or otherwise prove themselves to her satisfaction. Her stringy, grey hair and the hint of decaying flesh mark her out as unnatural. She laughs when someone brings it up and makes veiled threats when someone expresses disgust about her undead state.

6: YVAINE'S FARM

Sheep and cattle placidly graze on clumps of sickly grass in this large field. A group of five workers watches over the livestock. Thanks to Yvaine Grau's training, all five are adept at animal husbandry, and have taken druidic training to encourage plant growth. Recently, the Gloomhand permitted them the judicious use of powerful illumination magics to strengthen the plants and make the livestock healthier. As more of Shroudhaven's residents turn to blood and meat to sustain them while they await a breakthrough from Quentin Roarg, Yvaine's crew makes greater effort in ensuring the food sources are hearty.

Provisions are also available for those who haven't given up their taste for humanoid flesh. Due to the distasteful nature of the source, and to prevent visitors from becoming outraged, a group of humans lives in a subterranean area underneath a barn at the centre of the ranch. Yvaine and Quentin devised a way to alchemically lobotomize children born to the humans, and the two workers tending the humans treat them as well as the livestock above get treated.

7: MUSHROOM FIELDS

The damp atmosphere and lack of light make perfect conditions for the mushrooms grown outside Shroudhaven. A riot of mushrooms thrives in the damp ground, and farmers (N various races druid 2) working the fields have cultivated different varieties. The majority of the fields host staple mushrooms, which are meaty and nutritious, but somewhat bland. Specialty mushrooms include those with spiciness comparable to eye-watering peppers, fermentable species used to create alcoholic beverages that even affect undead physiology and popular psychedelic sorts. Varieties unique to Shroudhaven have gained popularity outside the village and command royal sums.

8: THEATRE MELLAVIOUS

The centrepiece of Shroudhaven—at least according to its proprietor, Zuzu Mellavious (NE female halfling vampire)—Theatre Mellavious hosts amazing performances. Mellavious, a flamboyant halfling who wears a variety of ostentatious wigs and clothes, constantly watches for new talent. She follows local gossip, so she knows when newcomers arrive. She often turns up at Jinkin's place (disguising her vampiric nature, of course) and turns conversation with newcomers toward the arts. With luck, someone who performs exceptionally piques her interest. She is not above using her abilities to compel a favoured artist to remain in Shroudhaven and take the stage. Mellavious is also the most widely-travelled of the villagers, as she searches the world for talent she can poach (or cajole to move to Shroudhaven).

9: GEAR AND GEARS

In contrast to the village's other supplier, Keren Zaris's (LE female vampire halfling) home and shop are models of orderliness. Very little of the gear she sells overlaps with Sestra Vol's offerings. She prides herself on practical gear for adventurers, such as five-foot-long poles that can extend to ten feet (or longer) with the push of a button. Like many of the vampires in Shroudhaven, Zaris obsesses over a particular activity; in her case, she creates intricate clocks and clockwork devices. Many of her accurate clocks grace homes and businesses throughout the village. She nears completion on her largest project yet: a troupe of clockwork dancers. She hopes to feature the dancers on Madame Mellavious's main stage, but the impresario has not moved on her stance regarding the unnaturalness of what she considers mere machines.

10: RESPITE LODGE

Yvaine Grau (N female elf cleric 7), a golden-haired woman with sparkling emerald eyes, used to divide her time between her farm and this place of healing, but she has trained other residents to handle farming duties, allowing her to focus on being another ambassador to Shroudhaven. Respite Lodge stands at the opposite side of the village from Jinkin's Bar and Grill, a good location since the approach from the Lodge's side is fraught with danger. She serves a similar role to Jinkin for newcomers, but she often sends visitors to him after she has tended to their wounds. More importantly, she serves as an advisor for the undead living in the village. She relies on her connection to nature to provide guidance for those struggling to maintain their civility. Her 200 years of life also give her perspective on the near-immortality of the vampires she guides.

LIFE IN SHROUDHAVEN

The people of Shroudhaven enjoy their relative isolation from the world. They spend their days pursuing their passions or obsessions and resisting their desire to consume the flesh of intelligent creatures. They welcome visitors as a distraction from their day-to-day lives. Visitors who accept the truth of Shroudhaven face many questions from the villagers. Given their inability to leave the village for longer than a week, many of these questions concern the outside world.

As Shroudhaven's renown spreads, either regarding the nature of its inhabitants or the wealth of goods and entertainment growing out of their obsessions, the villagers must deal with an influx of newcomers. They are aware this potential increase in visitors comes with the downside of an increase in feral undead, as the creatures attack and "convert" those making the trek to Shroudhaven.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Shroudhaven's trade is emergent and depends solely on word of mouth from visitors who sample the village's wares. Mushrooms are the most common item mentioned by those who pass through the village. Shroudhaven commands a high price for particularly intoxicating mushrooms unique to the village. Second to the mushrooms, Theatre Mellavious has grown in reputation for its fine performances. Wealthy patrons take an expendable retinue with them to survive the trip. Finally, word about Quentin Zaris's alchemical concoctions and Keren Zaris's clockworks have reached interested adventurers and collectors.

LAW & ORDER

Shroudhaven has very few laws: no one attacks another villager, no one consumes the flesh of an intelligent being, and no one practices necromancy. The Gloomhand offers protection, extending to one mile outside the Shroudhaven's confines, to living creatures visiting the village. Depending on the severity of the first two crimes, the person committing the crime faces jail time or exile (virtually amounting to a death sentence, as ferals and hunters alike target the exiled villager). The sentence for necromancy is death by beheading, and the body receives cleansing to keep it from animating.

Inhabitants who find it impossible to keep their blood- or flesh-lust in check depart Shroudhaven and find settlements where they can prey on humanoids, at least until the time limit imposed by the village's curse allows them. The villagers somehow know when someone returns from a wild hunt and take pity on the one who succumbed. As long as the killing takes place outside a one-mile radius of the village, the killer receives no punishment.

EVENTS

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

D6	EVENT
1	One of the vampire residents attacks a visitor; a necromancer used powerful magic to control the undead. Everyone witnessing the attack is arrested.
2	A hunter returns, breathless, with news of a troop of paladins led by a mighty cleric of a sun deity who are a two-day march from Shroudhaven.
3	A human from the farm manages to escape from his pen. He stumbles into the PCs and babbles incoherently before a farm hand grab him.
4	An ancient elf arrives with a band of bow- and sword-wielding followers; he demands Yvaine's return to her homeland.
5	One PC hears occasional whispers from the fog. At night, freezing hands formed from the fog reach out to the PC, but no one else can see them.
6	Hurricane-force winds strike the fog bank, clearing it for a moment and exposing the village to direct sunlight.

THE SHROUDHAVEN CURSE

After undead creatures fled an ancient war to the supposed safety of the fog-shrouded valley where they founded Shroudhaven, a group of good divine spellcasters enacted a ritual, cursing the creatures to remain in the village or perish. The ritualists planned to attack the undead at their leisure or, at the very least, keep the undead from preying on their compatriots and innocent people. The curse carries a stipulation: should all the village's residents cease hunting and eating intelligent creatures, the curse ends. None of the cabal's members believed the residents of Shroudhaven would meet this condition, so they assumed the curse was unbreakable. Unfortunately for them, they never saw the fruits of their labours, since they were massacred a week after performing the ritual. The curse is still potent, though, and causes a resident to suffer from a terrible wasting disease after one week away from the village, from which the unfortunate dies shortly thereafter. With the village's remote location, this prevents ordinary travel, so powerful residents use teleportation magic to travel the world. Through trial and error, they have discovered the allotted time away resets after a decade, allowing infrequent excursions. The curse also affects new villagers, a fact none of the current inhabitants share with someone they court to join them in Shroudhaven.

SUURIN

Words Jeff Gomez **Cartography** Maciej Zagorski

Suurin was supposed to be a halfling utopia, a return to the times before strife and prejudice; halfling burrows furnished in rich mahogany, cool streams and cobblestone bridges, green fields alive with laughing children. Unfortunately, these same green fields grow prodigious quantities of blue daffodil, a flower easily synthesized into the mind-numbing drug skez. Now, Suurin languishes under the control of drug racketeers who have transformed this haven into the skez capital of the realm. The roads are kept safe, not by city guards or peaceful inclinations, but by the iron fist of a crime lord who knows chaos is bad for business.

SUURIN AT A GLANCE

Ruler Devia Brookshire

Government Overlord

Population 67 (51 halflings, 11 hobgoblins, 3 humans, 1 dwarf, 1 half orc)

Alignments LE

Languages Common, Goblin, Halfling

Resources & Industry Drugs (skez)

Suurin was supposed to be a halfling utopia, a return to the imaginary times before strife and prejudice; halfling burrows furnished in rich mahogany, cool streams and cobblestone bridges, green fields alive with laughing children. Unfortunately, these same fields grow prodigious quantities of blue daffodil, a flower easily synthesized into the mind-numbing drug skez. Now, Devia Brookshire—a drug racketeer—has transformed this haven into the skez capital of the realm. The roads are kept safe, not by city guards or peaceful inclinations, but by the iron fist of a crime lord who knows chaos is bad for business.

VILLAGERS

Appearance The halflings of Suurin are gaunt, weak, dirty and distracted. The hobgoblins are squat and musclebound, foul smelling but well groomed. All suffer from visible black veins in the eyes and face—a hallmark of skez consumption.

Dress The halflings wear dirty, torn clothing and pay little attention to their general appearance. The hobgoblins are always armed with swords and clad in hard leather armour.

Nomenclature *male* Corrin, Haldon, Rinad, Janvryn, Wilmin; *female* Anyra, Leris, Odivra, Uvilda; *family* Brookshire, Greenleaf, Housefur, Meadowood, Soulder.

MARKETPLACE

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

- **Drugs** blue skez (50 gp), crimson skez (75 gp), green skez (30 gp)

VILLAGE LORE

A PC may know something about Suurin, its history and surrounds. Determine how knowledgeable the PCs are and then impart some (or all) of the information below:

- Suurin produces copious amounts of the drug skez, which is distributed across the region.
- Devia, the crime lord of Suurin, was born and raised in the village. She left for the city at a young age and returned when her gang kicked her out.
- Devia employs hobgoblin mercenaries to protect her assets. She pays her employees well, but some of the hobgoblins have higher ambitions.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Suurin, a PC may hear one or more rumours pertaining to the village and its surroundings. The PC can learn this information in a number of ways: perhaps by overhearing two locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local tavern and so on. Use the table below, to determine which rumours the PC learns.

D6 RUMOUR

1	Though Devia pays them well, Akarak and Bekarak may soon kill her and take her place.
2	Doric the barkeep spikes his drinks with skez to keep his patrons interested.
3*	Devia murdered her own father when she returned to Suurin.
4	Murgle the hobgoblin is in love with the baker's daughter and wants to save her from Suurin.
5*	Skez is highly explosive in large quantities. The factory could burn down at any minute.
6*	Devia's old gang is interested in acquiring Suurin. If Devia isn't amenable, they will take it by force.

*False rumour

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

Suurin was founded in the good old glory days that everybody remembers but nobody can quite pin down. It was passed along as something of a halfling secret, a rural village of warm autumn days and cool summer nights. Halfling men smoked pipes at the Willowbreeze inn and halfling women squabbled over the details of old ma Notley's peach pie. Suurin's problems were rustic and supremely halfling: nothing serious, but just enough to keep the villagers occupied.

When young Devia Brookshire ran away from home, it was quite the scandal. She was gone for a few years, got in good with some big gang in the big city, got kicked out and returned to Suurin with her tail between her legs. That should have been that, but she came back from the city with skez. One by one, Devia convinced the young folk to try the drug and one by one they became indentured to her. She cleared out her late father's burrow, hired a few alchemists and started mass producing the stuff from the nearby flowers. Out flowed the drugs and to Devia flowed the coin. Then came the hobgoblin mercenaries. Then came the overdoses, the murders and the fights in the streets.

Now, Suurin is a drug-addled mess. Gone are the carefree days of pie recipes and summer dances. In their place is a run-down village where drug addicts lie in the gutters and virtually all hope and laughter has died.

NOTABLE FOLK

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

Akarak and Bekarak (location 3; LE male hobgoblin sergeant) Akarak and Bekarak are Devia's two gruff, taciturn and violent bodyguards. They lead a dozen other hobgoblin.

Albrich Greenleaf (location 5; N old male halfling) Albrich Greenleaf is one of the few not addicted to skez. He watched the addiction and death of all three of his sons and now does what little he can to subvert the drug trade.

Devia Brookshire (location 3; LE female halfling thief 2) Devia Brookshire is the source of Suurin's wealth and woes. She rules Suurin; a crime lord prodigy hopped up on skez and without a shred of moral conscience.

Leylan Brookshire (location 7; N male halfling) A close friend of Devia he was the first to become addicted to skez. For some time, he acted as her second in command. Now, he's just another skez-head starving on the street.

Ragran (location 2; LN female half-orc) Ragran is a hard working alchemist. She cares little for politics, and keeps her head down. After she accidentally blew up her last employer's laboratory, she's just happy to have a job.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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

1. **Blue Daffodil Fields:** Fields of dark blue flowers provide both natural beauty and the raw ingredients for skez production.
2. **The Factory:** Within the cramped factory, eight alchemists work in shifts to ensure skez production never stops.
3. **Brookshire Residence:** Devia runs all operations from her ancestral burrow (where she also stores her skez).
4. **The Barracks:** The hobgoblins' barracks is an orderly, foul-smelling enlarged burrow.
5. **Main Street:** Skez-heads stumble across the main street or sleep face-down in the mud beside the cobblestones.
6. **Greenleaf Residence:** Albrich Greenleaf considers himself the last bastion of decency in a corrupted village, and imagines his residence to be the last vestige of Suurin's glory days.
7. **Willowbreeze Bar:** A dark silence pervades this outdoor beer garden where skez is washed down with bitter beer.



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: BLUE DAFFODIL FIELDS

Atop the halfling burrows and in the surrounding countryside, blue daffodils grow in prodigious masses. They cover the land like an azure carpet, swaying gently to and fro in warm breezes.

Once upon a time, children flew kites in these fields and strapping halfling men offered rich bouquets to blushing halfling maids. Now, swarms of workers take to the hills every morning, brandishing sickles and carrying baskets. They rush to harvest as many of the flowers as they can, then return to the factory where they are paid in either gold or skez (most choose skez). Fights over prime growing areas are common.

Blue daffodils have an incredibly fast growth rate. If severed cleanly from their root system, blue daffodils regrow their flowers in a matter of weeks. Harvest continues year-round, both in blistering summer heat and frigid winter winds.

2: THE FACTORY

The factory is a warehouse of a burrow, once used for grain storage in the good old days. Now, it has been stripped of even the bare decorations it once possessed. The floor and walls, treated with rubber to prevent fire, are marred with scorch marks but relatively clean. Hot, humid air escapes from poorly constructed vents in the ceiling. Well-used alchemical equipment sits on four rows of long desks, and at these desks work the alchemists.

Of the residents of Suurin, eight are skilled alchemists. Five outsiders (three humans, one dwarf and one half-orc) were attracted by the offer of good pay and discounted drugs. The other three are native halflings.

Day in and day out these alchemists work in shifts of four, fuelling Suurin's only industry. Skez production is labour-intensive, but not very difficult. Once the blue daffodils are harvested, they are hand-separated into stamen, petals and anther. These distinct sections are processed through a litany of pipes and beakers, boiled or powdered and eventually distilled into the three different types of skez: blue, crimson and green. One the skez is produced, it is carefully packed, categorized and then funnelled through a passageway to the back of the Brookshire Residence, where it is distributed by Devia herself.

3: BROOKSHIRE RESIDENCE

Devia's (LE female halfling thief 2) ancestral home is her base of her operations. Despite her status, the burrow is more austere than visitors might expect, stripped bare of ornaments and trinkets. During the day, Devia sits at her desk in the entrance hall, flanked by the hobgoblins, Akarak and Bekarak (LE male hobgoblin sergeant). Here, she keeps diligent books on the sales and production of skez, and personally makes all sales and

organizes all trade caravans. A pouch of blue skez is always ready for a quick pick-me-up, and she dextrously snorts the powder without ever taking her eyes off her work.

In the evenings, Devia retires to her bedchambers, where she consumes green skez. Compared to the order of the entry hall and filing cabinets, Devia's personal chambers are a mess. Stained blankets and overturned stools litter the floor, and half-completed drawings hang from the walls. The blinds are always closed, so a sputtering ever-burning magical torch lights the dismal scene.

In a secret compartment beneath her bed, a safe contains her most prized possessions: half a dozen *potions of cure disease*. She consumes one of these at the start of each week lest the strains of addiction interfere too much with her work. In addition to hobgoblin and alchemist wages, much of her profits go to purchasing these expensive potions from a city merchant.

4: THE BARRACKS

The barracks is perhaps the most orderly and worst smelling place in Suurin. This reconverted burrow is the home to the hobgoblin mercenaries (nine LE male or female hobgoblin) led by Akarak and Bekarak (LE male hobgoblin sergeant). They patrol Suurin and ensure Devia's safety. (However disciplined they appear, Akarak and Bekarak are of middling loyalty, and may, one day soon, murder Devia and take her place.)

The underground mansion was once the family estate of the Meadowood family, a halfling dynasty known for rowdy parties and scandalous debauchery (at least, relative to most of Suurin). The Meadowoods were some of the first to fall prey to Devia's skez, and, before long, eagerly agreed to a life-long supply in exchange for their home.

Now, all pleasant halfling amenities have been stripped. There are no portraits of plump patriarchs, nor pantries filled with aged cheese. As befits a true hobgoblin barracks, every inch of the space is organized and infused with a foul smell. The small entry hall is fitted with three tables for taking meals and playing games of cards (always for gold or crimson skez). The east wing is lined with hard bunk beds. The west wing contains stores of bread and rotten meat, as well as locked chests with personal belongings, pay and skez stashes.

There are no lights in the hobgoblins' barracks. Given their ability to see perfectly in the dark, the mercenaries use this minor inconveniences as protection against snooping halflings. (In the past, a few addicts unsuccessfully tried to steal skez from the hobgoblins, but the resultant savage beatings ensured that virtually no halflings come anywhere near this place now.

5: MAIN STREET

The main street is a grey, dismal affair. It runs straight through Suurin along Breaker's Brook and down to the main road. Once, visitors could find halflings villagers about their daily tasks, children at play and donkey carts rolling over the cobblestones. Now, one must take care not to step on the drug addicts wallowing in the gutters.

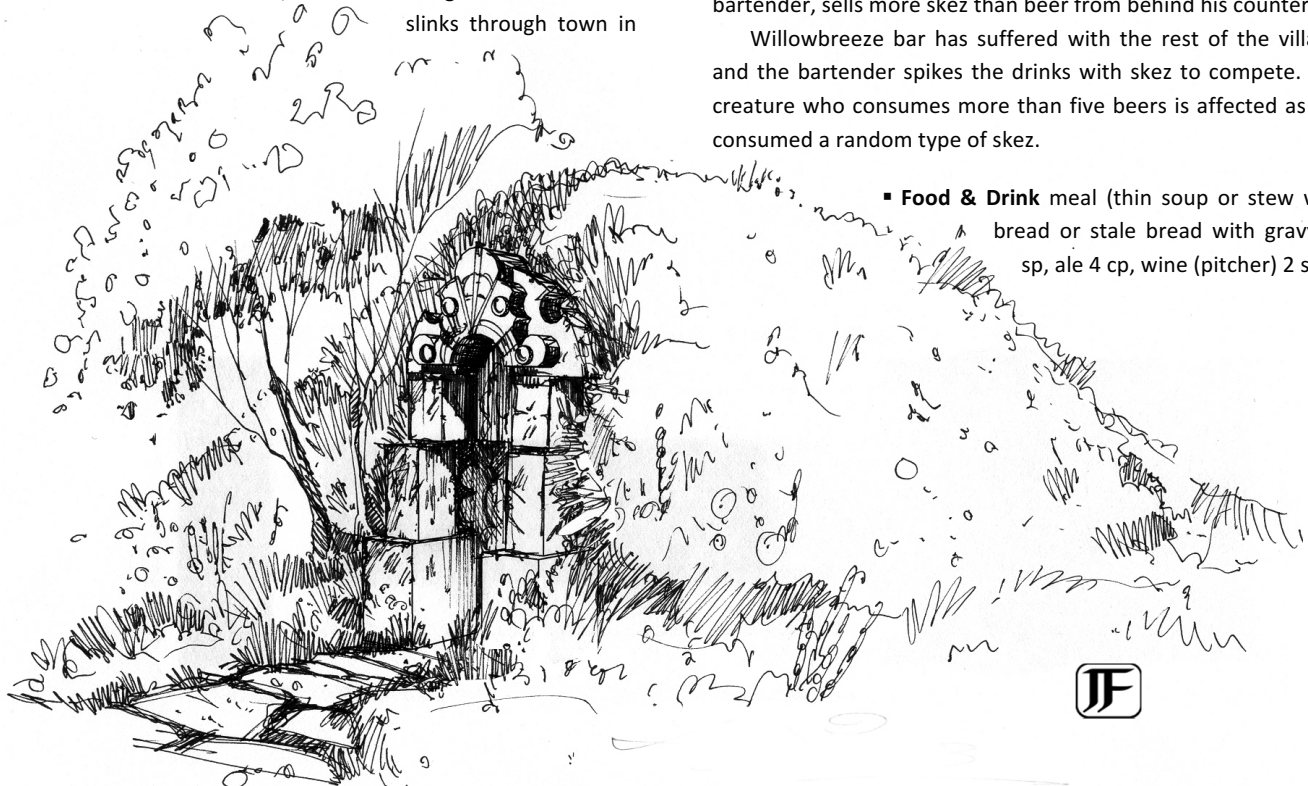
Main street presents the strongest argument against the dangers of drug addiction. It is littered with trash and vomit, and often inhabited by unconscious skez-heads. The green grass and manicured flowers that once lined the road are trampled into the mud, and the only wagons are the drug-caravans which Devia sends out to major trade routes. From a visitor's first steps along main street to his last, everything is corrupted by the addictive pull of skez.

6: GREENLEAF RESIDENCE

The Greenleaf Residence is a small, shabby burrow which hosts a small, shabby halfling. Albrich Greenleaf (N old male halfling) is one of the oldest people in Suurin. At the ripe age of 70, he keenly remembers the good old days before Devia infested the town with her drugs. He also remembers the faces of his three sons as they grew up, started families, became addicted to skez and then died, one by one, in the streets.

Albrich considers himself the last bastion of decency in Suurin, but he has few friends and even fewer allies. When he needs food or new candles, he dons a rough black cloak and

slinks through town in



an attempt to protect himself. Everybody recognizes him. Nobody cares.

Albrich has never tried skez and does what he can to disrupt its use. However, he can't do much. He's a paranoid old man who spends his days pacing about his cramped quarters, muttering to himself and lambasting other citizens. His energy is expended by hurling racial epithets at hobgoblins as they pass or spitting patronizing insults at skez-heads. Occasionally he'll stand in front of a drug wagon as it rolls onto the trade road, but he's roughly pushed aside every time.

Devia is aware of the nuisance, but cares little. If Albrich ever becomes a problem for business, she'll put an end to him. Until then, she's content to ignore the troubled halfling.

7: WILLOWBREEZE BAR

The Willowbreeze Bar is the oldest structure in Suurin, composed of the very first timber the settlers ever laid. It is more of a beer garden than an actual tavern: a large outdoor courtyard surrounded by dilapidated fences and serviced by a rustic bar. Paper firefly lanterns cast purple light on the rough chairs and tables. Over the whole establishment, a weeping willow drapes its long and swaying branches and a sense of merry contentment lives in the eyes of the inebriated patrons.

At least, that's the way things used to be. Now, it's more of a skez-den than anything else. Stoned halflings sprawl on benches and against wooden posts. Silent hobgoblins play tense hands of cards on sticky tables. And Doric (NE male halfling thief 2), the bartender, sells more skez than beer from behind his counter.

Willowbreeze bar has suffered with the rest of the village, and the bartender spikes the drinks with skez to compete. Any creature who consumes more than five beers is affected as if it consumed a random type of skez.

- **Food & Drink** meal (thin soup or stew with bread or stale bread with gravy) 3 sp, ale 4 cp, wine (pitcher) 2 sp.



LIFE IN SUURIN

Life in Suurin is dreary and hopeless. Once a pleasant halfling utopia, the village has been completely ruined by skez.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Everything in Suurin revolves around skez. Most villagers are paid meagre wages to collect blue daffodils, wages which are then promptly spent on the drug. The few shops still in business, namely the Willowbreeze bar and a handful of general stores, operate only with Devia's permission.

Even though Suurin is utterly consumed by the skez trade, it sees virtually none of the revenue. Skez is a time consuming, low profit drug, and all of the coin goes directly to Devia. Unfortunately for Devia, running a drug operation is expensive work. The hobgoblins and alchemists demand pay, and Devia must sometimes bribe do-gooders and roving bandits to look the other way. The rest of her profits go into her personal stash of addiction curing *potions of cure disease*. Far from growing fat off the proceeds, Devia struggles to stay afloat on the back of a dying village. When the system collapses altogether, she'll have angry hobgoblins and mobs of addicted citizens to face.

LAW & ORDER

Devia tolerates no lawlessness and punishes wrongdoers with brutal swiftness. The streets are patrolled by pairs of hobgoblin mercenaries. Equipped with short swords and leather armour, these guards stand at twice the height of their halfling subjects. With brawn and training impossible to match, there is no defying these enforcers. However, Devia's "laws" extend only to her own business protections. She cares little for theft or even murder, as long as it does not interrupt production.

EVENTS

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

D6	EVENT
1	The PCs spot a halfling corpse floating in a river eddy. Closer investigation reveals a knife wound to the back.
2	A halfling villager, drugged out of his mind, attacks the PCs with a sharpened rock. He is weak but bloodthirsty.
3	A piece of alchemical equipment explodes in the factory, and the alchemists emerge coughing and stoned.
4	Two daffodil harvesters draw blood over an unpicked flower patch.
5	At the Willowbreeze Bar, a stoned halfling warbles a haunting ballad of lost innocence.
6	Hobgoblins publicly whip a skez thief. The punishment gets out of hand and the halfling is killed.

SKEZ

Three variants of skez are synthesized in the factory, all in prodigious quantities.

BLUE SKEZ

This highly refined skez is sold in small pouches of blue, crystalline dust. The user gains a muddled sense of focus, but finds himself worn thin when the effects end.

Users inhale this severely addictive drug.

Price 50 gp; **Effect** For 1d4 hours, the user gains a +2 bonus to Intelligence, but is fatigued and extremely sensitive to bright lights.

Aftermath: The user is exhausted and loses 1d2 points of Wisdom and 1d4 points of Constitution. For each night's rest, the user regains 1 point of Wisdom and 1 point of Constitution (or 2 points of each with a day of complete rest).

CRIMSON SKEZ

Crimson skez is sold as hard red nuggets reminiscent of dried blood clots. When chewed, the drug tightens the nerves and imbues a feeling of heightened awareness.

Users ingest this moderately addictive drug.

Price 75 gp; **Effect** For 1d4 hours, the user cannot become fatigued and gains a +2 bonus to saving throws made to resist magical mental control. If the subject fails a saving throw against such a spell effect he instead flies into an insane rage and attacks the spellcaster (gaining a +2 bonus to hit and damage) for a number of rounds equal to the level of the spell cast.

Aftermath: The user is exhausted and loses 1d4 points of Wisdom and 1d4 points of Constitution. For each night's rest, the user regains 1 point of Wisdom and 1 point of Constitution (or 2 points of each with a day of complete rest).

GREEN SKEZ

Green is the least processed of all skez, and produces a lethargy and addictive depression not dissimilar to alcohol. It takes the form of thin green sheets which can either be smoked or dissolved on the tongue.

User inhale or ingest this moderately addictive drug.

Price 30 gp; **Effect** For 1d4 hours, the user is fatigued but gains a +4 bonus to Charisma, but is particularly susceptible to illusions (suffering a -4 on saving throws against such effects).

Aftermath: The user is exhausted and loses 1d4 points of Wisdom and 1d4 points of Dexterity. For each night's rest, the user regains 1 point of Wisdom and 1 point of Constitution (or 2 points of each with a day of complete rest).

THORNHILL

Words Creighton Broadhurst **Cartography** Tom Fayen

Standing on the fringes of a vast and noisome swamp, Thornhill is a miserable, hard place of cloying mud, grasping thorns and insular, superstitious folk. There is a little cheer to be had in Thornhill; the few visitors describing it as dull and dreary as the surrounding swamps. For all that, though, a steady trickle of adventurers visit Thornhill for the half-buried and drowned ruins of several tombs said to lie forgotten in the surrounding marshland and the villagers have friends among the nearby degenerate lizard man who make excellent guides in the trackless, far reaches of the swamp.

THORNHILL AT A GLANCE

Standing on the fringes of a vast and noisome fen, Thornhill is a miserable, hard place. The folk are insular and superstitious, keeping to the old ways and worshipping the spirits of the marsh. Surviving on a mixture of hunting, fishing and desultory trade with nearby tribes of lizard men, the folk here care little for the world beyond their dismal domain.

Thornhill stands atop a large island in the centre of the deep, but sluggish waters of the Fenwater. A once formidable stockade of aged, sodden timbers surrounds the place. Stands of sickly, dense thorn bushes grow over much of the island; the villagers have deliberately let the bushes grow wild to form an almost impenetrable barrier around the island's periphery.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler Aelfgar Wymer

Government Autocracy

Population 157 (127 humans, 15 half-orcs, 12 half-elves, 2 halflings, 1 elf)

Alignments N, LN, CN, NE

Languages Common, Draconic

Resources & Industry Fishing, hunting

NOTABLE FOLK

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

Aedwen Sirett (location 5; NG female human cleric 2) Kind hearted, Aedwen is well-liked by the villagers. She often preaches to villagers and travellers alike.

Aelfgar Wymer (location 4; LN male human fighter 2) This sullen, boring man is the village reeve.

Gyric Walwin (location 6; N male half-elf wizard 2) The longest lived of Thornhill's residence, Gyric cares little for his neighbours, most of whom he labels as inbred idiots.

Odda Kerrich (location 2; NE male half-orc cleric 1/rogue 2) Beset by a perpetual hacking cough, Odda is overly friendly to travellers staying at the Drunken Lizard.

Ricola Wymer (location 5; LN female human) Spiteful and deliberately rude to her fellows, Ricola is universally seen as ill-mannered and stuck up.

Sithric Siggers (location 2; NE male human fighter 1) A boorish, oft-drunk fisherman normally found at the Drunken Lizard. He has a reputation as a troublemaker and brawler.

Wulfric Isgar (location 8; N male human) This sour faced poet chants dirges and elegies while at his forge.

Zissren (location 10; NG female lizard man cleric 3) A tall, cunning lizard man of exceptional intellect, Zissren works to mollify her fellows' more savage instincts.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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

1. **Mud Bridge:** This often muddy, stout wooden bridge is the only way to easily reach Thornhill.
2. **The Drunken Lizard:** Thornhill's only tavern is a dank, shadowed place. The food and drink are adequate at best.
3. **Wennell's:** Thornhill's trading station is run by the family of the same name. Densely packed with all manner of mundane things, there is little of obvious interest here for adventurers.
4. **Aelfgar Wymer's House:** Here dwells the reeve and his spiteful, shrewish wife, Ricola Wymer. The house is well maintained.
5. **Hall of the Sun:** Dedicated to Darlen, elaborate carvings of the rising sun decorate this otherwise humble hall.
6. **Gyric Walwin's Home:** An elderly sage, Gyric Walwin, dwells in this ramshackle old building. Vines and ivy grow over much of his home, crowding out most of the light from the building's narrow windows.
7. **Osred's House:** Home to Ymma Winbow, this stone building is the oldest and largest in the village. The windows on the third floor command sweeping views over the locality.
8. **Blacksmith:** This large building features a workshop at the front containing not only the normal accoutrements of the blacksmith's trade but also a small pool.
9. **Yonwin's:** The stench of this place permeates the whole village. Here the villagers sell their excess catch to Yonwin, a crippled halfling merchant.
10. **Isle of the Lizards:** A single hut stands upon this island, which the lizard men claim as a holy place. Most nights, Zissren leads her fellows in worship to their primitive gods.

GENERAL VILLAGE FEATURES

With the exception of Osred's House (location 7) and the Drunken Lizard (location 2) all the village's buildings are single storey and of wooden construction. They are low, rambling affairs and often in poor repair. As well as their human occupants, most buildings also house livestock—mainly pigs and chickens—which during the day roam about the village.

Worn wooden causeways snake their way through the village. In places, planks are missing or rotten and unwary travellers can find themselves unceremoniously dropped into the mud beneath.

A wooden palisade surrounds the village; between 6 ft. and 10 ft. high it would not stop a serious assault but the thick masses of bramble bushes growing up against it give even the hardiest of interlopers pause.

VILLAGE LORE

A PC may know something about Thornhill, its history and surrounds. Determine how knowledgeable the PCs are and then impart some (or all) of the information below:

- Thornhill is a muddy, cheerless place. Its folk survive by fishing and hunting in the surrounding marshes. Occasionally, lizard men trade with the villagers.
- The villagers are insular, superstitious folk. They keep to the old ways. They are poor and have little of value. Most of their houses are ramshackle wooden affairs.
- An ancient stone house stands at the highest part of the village. It is said to predate the village and to once have been the home of a powerful, exiled (and blackhearted) adventurer.

VILLAGERS

Appearance Dark of hair with grey or brown eyes, the folk of Thornhill are often dirty; their clothes normally streaked with mud.

Dress Villagers' clothes are sturdy, of boring earthy colours and invariably muddy. Most wear well-worn knee-high boots.

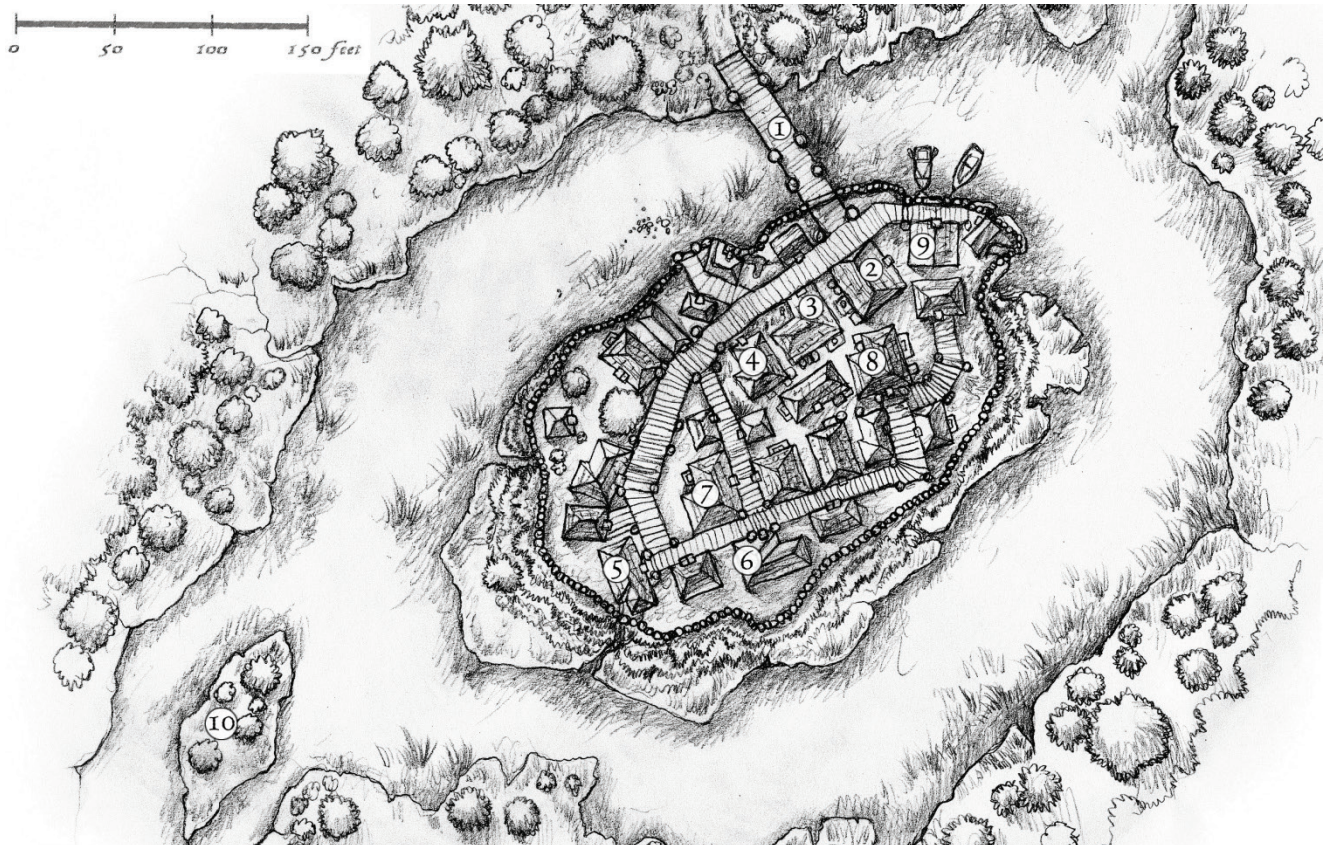
Nomenclature *male*: Aelfgar, Brid, Eadgar, Gyric, Liofa, Osgar, Sithric, Ulf, Wulfric; *female*: Aebbe, Bebbe, Ealhild, Heiu, Inga, Ricola, Saeith, Ymma; *family*: Almer, Elvery, Isgar, Kerrich, Osmer, Siggers, Walwin, Woolgar, Wymer.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Thornhill, a PC may hear one or more rumours pertaining to the village and its surroundings. The PC can learn this information in a number of ways: perhaps by overhearing two locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local tavern and so on. Use the table below, to determine which rumours the PC learns.

D6	RUMOUR
1*	Sithric Siggers has friends among the lizard men of the marsh. They lead him to many of the sunken tombs hidden in the swamp
2	A huge snake has recently been seen swimming in the lake. Recently, several chickens have gone missing.
3	The lizard men living nearby are angry about something and shun travellers.
4	Lights have been seen burning late at Gyric Walwin's house; the sage has started taking a much more serious interest in travellers visiting the village.
5	Osred's House has a hidden, deep cellar said to lead to a partially flooded cavern.
6	Ricola Wymer is the third daughter of a minor noble house. Caught in a youthful indiscretion she was married off to Aelfgar against her wishes.

*False rumour



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: MUD BRIDGE

So named because it is often covered in mud, this stout, aged wooden bridge is the only dry way to reach Thornhill. The bridge stands 10 ft. above the Fenwater and has no parapets; travellers must be careful not to slip and fall into the waters below during bad weather (or at night).

2: THE DRUNKEN LIZARD

The only inn in the village, the Drunken Lizard is a dank, shadowed place. The second storey features a half-dozen little-used, basic bedchambers available for travellers. The landlord, Odda Kerrich (NE male half-orc cleric 1/rogue 2) an overly friendly kleptomaniac dwells beneath the tavern in a small network of low cellars cut into the hill. Excavated by successive landlords, many of the tunnels are crammed full of little more than rubbish—discarded things of little value, but hoarded nonetheless.

The food, drink and accommodation at the Drunken Lizard are all of poor quality. Entertainment is sparse to non-existent.

- **Ale:** 4 cp per mug
- **Stay:** 2 sp per night
- **Meal:** 1 sp
- **Wine:** 2 sp per pitcher

3: WENNELL'S

This stout building is one of the best maintained in the village. Its affable, red-haired owner, Brid Wennell (LN male human), is a skilled woodworker and is often tinkering about the property or adding to the carvings at the Hall of the Sun.

His gossip-wife, Ealhild (NG female human), runs the shop and prepares all the foodstuffs sold within. Her comparative wealth puts her at the centre of Thornhill's social scene (such as it is) and she tries to ingratiate herself with visiting adventurers to enhance her status with her friends. She dislikes Aedwen Sirett (location 5) and suspects there is more to the priestess than meets the eye. In Thornhill's social scene, she is Ricola Wymer's (location 4) rival.

4: AELFGAR WYMER'S HOUSE

This large building houses Aelfgar's (LN male human fighter 2) extended family, which includes his wife, Ricola (LN female human), four children and his half-blind mother. The Wymers have held the position of village reeve for over a century and are an arrogant, prideful family. They are not well liked by their fellows. Aelfgar is particularly skilled at levying ancient, forgotten taxes on wandering adventurers and other travellers.

5: HALL OF THE SUN

Elaborate carvings decorate this simple place of worship. Here dwells the kind-hearted Aedwen Sirett (NG female human cleric 2) although few worshippers join her services—most of the village keeps to the old ways. Aedwen is not a native of Thornhill, rather moving to the village several years ago. Tight-lipped about her past, she is the third daughter of a minor noble who fled to this dismal place to escape the drudgery and misery of an arranged marriage with a man three decades her elder. She knows little of the surrounding fens, but gladly helps adventurers in return for small donations toward the upkeep of her church. She dwells in a small, snug attic above the main hall and actively dislikes Odda Kerrich (location 2).

THE SURROUNDING AREA

Thornhill stands amid a small lake, the Fenwater. The lake's murky waters are placid but deep. Several fishing boats ply its waters and those of the nearby major waterways. Dense fens surround the lake, making reaching Thornhill difficult. Few tracks wend their way through the murk, but several wide, sluggish rivers flow into the Fenwater.

Tribes of lizard men lair in the fens. Most are indifferent to the humans of Thornhill, but a few of the more primitive tribes—whipped into a religious frenzy by their shaman—are violently opposed to the encroach of humanity. Occasionally, fishermen and hunters go missing—their disappearances are blamed on such lizard men, but their guilt remains impossible to prove as no remains are ever recovered.

Two notable rivers, the Blackwash and the sluggish Tanglebriar, wend their way through the mire. With a surprisingly strong current, the Blackwash often brings forth strange things from the deep marsh. After heavy rains, the river water turns black for an unknown reason and coats the nearby reeds and trees in a thick, ebon slime.

A narrow track also pierces the marsh, following an ancient dilapidated causeway. The causeway once served as a shortcut through the swamp but, with the development of a more profitable trade route, it has fallen into disuse.

Hundreds of creatures, from huge bull crocodiles living in the deeper pools to water-fowl, goblins, snakes and, of course, millions of flies, mosquitoes and other insects dwell in the marsh. Tiny blood red worms lurk in the swamp's many stagnant pools waiting for a source of warm, tasty blood to blunder into their home. Most of the swamp's denizens such as lizard men have tough skin and are generally immune to their attacks, although none are immune to the leech swarms endemic to the swamp.

6: GYRIC WALWIN'S HOUSE

Vines, creepers and a riot of ivy cling to this ramshackle, old building giving it a ruined, shadowed appearance. The elderly, curmudgeonly sage Gyric Walwin (N male half-elf wizard 2) dwells here alone among a large, dusty (and in some cases) rotting library of old books.

Fiercely intelligent, Gyric is dismissive of those of lesser intellect (which is basically everyone else in the village) and starved of intelligent conversation. If he hears of learned folk visiting Thornhill he seeks them out for stimulating conversation. He knows much about the surrounding marshland, but has no desire to actually go exploring therein. Although he hates the swamp, Gyric has no intention of leaving; he is hiding from a rich, powerful enemy and Thornhill gives him the safety and anonymity he so desperately craves.

Gyric has learnt the secret or making Red Fern Paste and sells it to adventurers at 1 sp a vial.

- **Red Fern Paste:** Local hunters have discovered a paste made from the prolific red ferns growing throughout the marsh repels the leeches and other insects lurking therein. The fern is readily available and a competent alchemist can make the paste. While the paste has no effect on giant leeches and other marsh denizens, travellers coating their exposed skin in it are not swarmed by normal insects while traversing the mire.

7: OSRED'S HOUSE

The horribly scarred Ymma Winbrow (N female human cleric 2) dwells in this old and stout three-storey stone building that has begun to subside into the hill. Friendly, but quiet, Ymma dwells on the upper floors and allows well behaved travellers to sleep on the ground floor (3 sp per night).

RED FERN BARROWS

These partially submerged barrow mounds are remnants of the fallen kingdom that once held the lands around Thornhill. Once on dry land, extensive flooding when the Blackwash and Tanglebriar rivers burst their banks centuries ago inundated the mounds. Occasionally explorers based in Thornhill dig here in search of ancient, glittering treasure. Most find nothing, but some disappear without trace. These excavations have created many deep pools in the surrounding locality and explorers must watch their step or suffer an ignoble, and muddy, bath.

The lizard men do not go here and it is rumoured undead kings of the fallen kingdom yet sit upon their sunken thrones in the depths of the barrows and jealously guard the last remnant of their fallen kingdom.

An iron-bound, triple-locked door provides access to the house's extensive, cellars; Ymma never opens the door and perceptive PCs may realise she is terrified of whatever lies beyond. The cellar's lower-levels are partially flooded. Once the home to a paranoid adventurer, a long, water-logged tunnel passes under the Fenwater but its far exit has long since collapsed.

8: BLACKSMITH

Here works Wulfric Isgar (N male human) a sour-faced, deep of voice poet whose chanted dirges and elegies echo through his forge. He owes Aelfgar Wymer a large sum of money and is desperate to pay off the debt. Consequently, he is happy to work on commissions for travellers, but charges over the odds to do so. Dour Wulfric is single—a condition which baffles him.

9: YONWIN'S

The stench of fish emanates from this large building and smoke constantly rises from several battered chimneys; here Yonwin (CN male halfling) prepares his renowned smoked fish for sale. The lizard men of the fens love the taste of them (which they view as a delicacy) and Yonwin (a half-crippled drunk) cannot keep up with their demand.

10: ISLE OF THE LIZARDS

This small, muddy island lies to the south of Thornhill. Here dwells the lizard man shaman Zissren (NG female lizard man cleric 3). Lizard men often visit Zissren to pray alongside the respected and well-loved shaman. Misunderstood by the villagers who see her as a crackpot, drug-addled figure, Zissren works tirelessly to keep the fragile peace between the humans and lizard men intact. Few of Thornhill's human inhabitants willingly visit Zissren's isle during the day and none come here at night; strange things are said to happen here under night's ebon veil. Use the table below, to determine what strange events occur at night on Zissren's isle:

D6	EVENT
1	Loud voices—indistinct but nevertheless full of anger—argue back and forth for an hour or so.
2	Strange bobbing, multi-coloured lights are observed on the island. In their lurid, flickering shadows, strange shapes dance and cavort.
3	A sullen drum beats for half the night and a chorus of croaking voices are raised in some kind of primitive song.
4	Aedwen Sirett reports seeing a half-dozen lizard men slink onto the island at dusk. By dawn, they have disappeared.
5	A single spluttering torch is seen moving about on the north end of the island, as if someone is searching for something in the Fenwater's shallows.
6	A scream—obviously from the island—pierces the night.

LIFE IN THORNHILL

Life in Thornhill is hard. Isolated from other villages, its folk have become insular, inbred and fearful of their lizard men neighbours. Tensions over the looting of ancient tombs hidden deep within the fens with the degenerate Red Jaws and Jagged Claw tribes have been steadily rising over the last few decades. The lizard men are suspected (correctly) of several unsolved murders.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Thornhill's main (and indeed only) industry is fishing. Most of the fishermen in the village sell their excess catch to Yonwin, who exports his smoked fish to nearby villages and several lizard man tribes who view them as a delicacy. Occasionally, adventurers use the village as a base from which to explore the fens—such folk are a source of great wealth to the impoverished villagers.

LAW & ORDER

Thornhill is a rough and ready place and there is no watch to speak of. Theoretically, Aelfgar Wymer is in charge of law and order, but in practise the villagers sort out their own problems and do not view meddling outsiders kindly.

EVENTS

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

D6	EVENT
1	A small group of lizard men are seen swimming to the Isle of the Lizards. That night, their weird chanting echoes through the night.
2	A travelling pedlar or impoverished merchant arrives at Thornhill. Likely, he is selling rather than buying but he may bring interesting rumours from the outside world.
3	Thornhill's fishermen return with a bumper (50%) or terrible (50%) catch.
4	Heavy rain lashes the settlement for much of the day. Mud covers much of the island and the Fenwater rises noticeably.
5	An argument quickly escalates into violence. At the GM's discretion, this could lead to a wider brawl, grievous bodily harm or murder. Petty crime or an old rivalry could be to blame for the incidence.
6	Screams echo across the lake as a giant constrictor snake attacks a fisherman. Unless the PCs intervene, the snake kills the man and carries him deep into the lake to consume his body in peace.



WELLSWOOD

Words Creighton Broadhurst **Cartography** Tommi Salama

A busy, prosperous village, Wellswood is justly famed for the warm welcome travellers find in the village's taverns and inns and for its most striking feature: Lake Thraren—a subterranean lake lying deep below the village's foundations. The villagers catch the exotic fish swarming in its deep, cold waters and on its shore stand the fortress home of the dwarf clan of Erdikr. Here long before humans colonised the land above, these secretive dwarves serve Lord Issakainen, maintaining the village's many wells, but let none enter their lightless home.

All is not peaceful in Wellswood, however. Merchants and villagers alike grumble at the slowly increasing burden of taxes levied by the greedy Lord Issakainen while others have begun to wonder exactly what clan Erdikr are up to deep below the earth.

WELLSWOOD AT A GLANCE

A busy, bustling place Wellswood stands near the juncture of two trade routes. Here, travellers and traders shake the mud of the road from their feet and Lord Issakainen grows fat on the taxes and tolls he levies on both traveller and villager alike. And although Wellswood is famed for the warm welcome travellers find in its taprooms and businesses the village is well known for another reason entirely.

For Wellswood is aptly named, indeed. Many wells—both natural and dwarf-made—dot the village. Far below lies Lake Thraren, a large subterranean lake navigable in parts and fished for the many exotic fish swimming therein. A small clan of dwarves—the Erdikr—dwells upon the lake's ebon shores. Nominal servants, or at least allies, of Lord Issakainen they permit few outsiders to visit their lightless home.

Wellswood is not the peaceful place it first appears. Lord Issakainen grows greedy and taxes have been rising steadily of late. Merchants grumble at the increased costs while recently some villagers have begun to wonder exactly what the Erdikr are up to in their ebon hold.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler Ilmari Issakainen

Government Overlord

Population 192 (139 humans, 37 dwarves, 15 halflings, 1 half-elf)

Alignments LN, NG

Languages Common, Dwarven, Halfling

Resources & Industry Fishing, hospitality/lodgings, travellers' services

NOTABLE FOLK

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

Aelliah Issakainen (location 1; NG female middle-aged half-elf bard 5) Beloved by the villagers, Aelliah does much to temper her husband's dour, greedy demeanour.

Antal Silverleaf (location 8; N male old halfling cleric 4 [Behron]) Named for his silver hair, Antal maintains the Traveller's Rest. Too old to travel far now, he is a popular fellow.

Azthur Erdukr (location 10; LG female dwarf fighter 5) Often seen about the village, checking well walls and the like, Azthur is suspicious of strangers and their questions.

Elimia Takala (location 6; NG female human) Owner of the Boot and Wheel, Elimia is a congenial host; she has a strong regular trade, which infuriates Jani Lieno.

Ilmari Issakainen (location 1; LN male old human fighter 2/wizard 3) Lord of the village, and a powerful (but dour) man, Ilmari has grown wealthy through clever management of Wellswood's location and unique resource.

Jani Leino (location 2; N male human) Landlord of the Footsore Wanderer, Jani greatly desires to buy the Boot & Wheel; his advances have been rebuffed repeatedly.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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

1. **Castle Issakainen:** Castle Issakainen's lofty battlements overlook the trading routes that meet just north of the village.
2. **The Footsore Wanderer:** Occupying a walled compound, the Footsore Wanderer has ample accommodations for all but the largest caravans.
3. **Toll Booth:** From these watchtowers Lord Issakainen levies tolls on all travellers entering Wellswood.
4. **Wheels & Wagons:** Run by two brothers, this large business can repair almost any mode of transport.
5. **Tuomi's Outfitters:** This meticulously organised shop has everything a traveller should need to reach his destination.
6. **The Boot & Wheel:** This small inn does a roaring trade; its guests are welcome to pitch their tents within the inn's grounds or to hire one of its many small lodges.
7. **The Angry Badger:** A local's watering hole, the Angry Badger serves cheap, plentiful drinks and basic, but filling, food. Additional entertainments are always available upstairs (and occasionally downstairs).
8. **Travellers' Rest:** This rambling shrine dedicated to Behron, the god of travellers, is open to all. Travellers low on funds can sleep in the shrine for free.
9. **Lake Thraren:** Lord Issakainen tightly controls access to Lake Thraren and tithes those fishing its ebon waters. Therein swim several rare and exotic types of fish found nowhere else.
10. **Don Galir:** Home of the Erdikr clan, this small dwarven hold lies under Wellswood; non-dwarves are rarely admitted and what goes on therein is a matter of speculation among Wellswood's populace.

DON GALIR'S HIDDEN HISTORY

Don Galir is much older than Wellswood. Founded by survivors fleeing a great battle fought against rampaging orcs long ago, the dwarves settling here did so by accident. They discovered Lake Thraren—named for the ancient dwarven heroine who led them here and who disappeared exploring its furthest reaches—and built Don Galir as an ultimate redoubt against renewed orcish aggression. Although the battle took place centuries ago, the dwarves' work continues unabated. When the humans founded Wellswood, the dwarves knew they could not remain hidden and so forged an agreement with the first lord Issakainen. They agreed to maintain the various wells and the lord's burgeoning fortress in return for being left alone to live as they please.

VILLAGE LORE

A PC may know something about Wellswood, its history and surrounds. Determine how knowledgeable the PCs are and then impart some (or all) of the information below:

- Named for its many wells, Wellswood stands above a huge subterranean lake rich in exotic fish.
- The local lord—Ilmari Issakainen—controls access to the lake by selling fishing licenses to his serfs; he levies half their catch in payment.
- A small clan of dwarves—the Erdikr—dwell in the village; they have served the Issakainens for centuries and maintain the various wells and important buildings in the village.

VILLAGERS

Appearance Fishermen are pale of skin, but otherwise appear like other villagers—dark haired and generally fit and healthy. Gray and light brown eyes predominate. Dwarves are heavily bearded and normally wear leather clothes of dark hues.

Dress Villagers wear loose, ill-fitting woollen or leather clothes suited to their trade.

Nomenclature *male* Armas, Hannu, Kaarlo, Veli, Vesa; *female* Aila, Asta, Irina, Pia, Satu; *family* Rantanen, Siano, Tuomi, Varala.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Wellswood a PC may hear one or more rumours. The PC can learn this information in a number of ways: perhaps by overhearing two locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local tavern and so on. Use the table below, to determine which rumours the PC learns.

D6	RUMOUR
1*	Something terrible dwells in Lake Thraren; occasionally it takes one of the fishermen.
2*	Cracks have appeared around some of the wells—a collapse is imminent! The whole village is doomed! Those dwarves are up to something. Their digging is going to cause a collapse—half the village will probably fall into Lake Thraren.
3	Lord Issakainen has grown wealthy from his control of Lake Thraren, and he grows increasingly paranoid someone is planning to steal his riches.
4	Jani Leino wants to buy the Boot and Wheel; he dreams of controlling all the village's various inns so he can increase prices and get very rich.
5	The Angry Badger has a secret cellar which hosts monthly animal fights—hence the name. The fights are to the death, and attract a hard-core following.

*False rumour



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: CASTLE ISSAKAINEN

Castle Issakainen's lofty battlements loom over the village as a constant reminder of her lord's power. Somewhat of a work in progress, the castle has seen several major phases of building and expansion and is thus a hodgepodge of architectural styles.

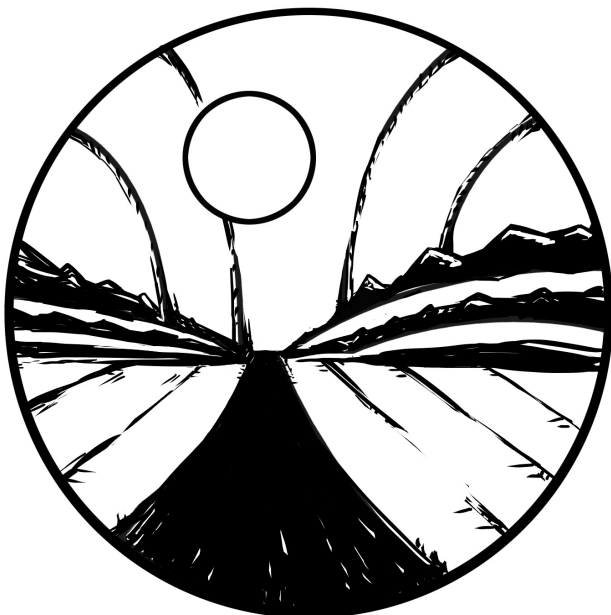
Here dwells Ilmari Issakainen (LN male old human fighter 2/wizard 3) and his half-elven wife Aelliah Issakainen (NG female middle-aged half-elf bard 5). Ilmari is dour, somewhat joyless and becoming obsessed with the collection of wealth whereas Aelliah is joyful and much beloved by the populace. Consequently, she does much to try and mollify the growing discontent against her husband's increasing greed.

Ilmari maintains a force of 67 men-at-arms (LN human fighter 1) to secure the village and a squadron of 18 elite cavalry (LN human fighter 2) to patrol the surrounding roads in groups of six for a half-day in both directions.

2: THE FOOTSORE WANDERER

This extensive walled compound offers excellent security for visiting merchants and its grounds can accommodate all but the largest caravans. Jani Leino (N male human) is the landlord here. He greatly desires to buy the Boot & Wheel (location 6) to dominate Wellswood's economy. Thus far, Elimia Takala, owner of the Boot & Wheel, has rebuffed his advances.

- **Food & Drink** meal (rabbit in mushroom sauce, chicken with buttered parsnip or similar) 3 sp, ale 4 cp, wine (pitcher) 2 sp.
- **Accommodation** A standard room costs 5 sp a night.



3: TOLL BOOTH

A toll booth stands at both ends of the village; all travellers (but not villagers) using the main road must pay a toll. Four men-at-arms (LN human fighter 1) garrison the booths day and night, but the night watch is far less vigilant than their daytime brethren. Collected tolls are transported to the castle at dusk. The tolls are:

- **Per Traveller:** 1 cp
- **Per Wagon:** 1 gp
- **Per Horse:** 1 sp
- The tolls are cumulative. So, for example, a traveller riding a horse would pay 1 sp and 1 cp, while two men on a wagon pulled by one horse would pay 1 gp, 2 sp and 2 cp.

It's a relatively trivial matter for travellers on foot to avoid paying these tolls (if they know about them) by cutting through the surrounding woods. However, those caught doing so must pay a fine of double the normal toll.

4: WHEELS & WAGONS

Run by two brothers, this large business can repair almost any mode of transport. Comprising a large workshop—a converted barn big enough to accommodate a wagon—and a stables with attached smithy this is a busy place.

Ylermi (NG male human fighter 1) is a talented smith while his brother, Jaska (NG male human), is a skilled carpenter. This is a family business, and both men's wives (Elina and Pia [both N female human]) and their children help out around the place. Pia is a skilled healer and tends any sick or lame animals for 1 sp a day.

BEHRON

N god of Travel

Epithets: The Farwanderer

Symbol: The open road running to the horizon.

Favoured Weapon: Light mace

Raiment: Plain brown robes

Teachings: Only by wandering do we find ourselves. Those that settle down deny the boundless beauty and wonder of the world.

Holy Texts: The faithful obsessively make and gather maps and write journals of their journals. These are stored in the sect's various roadside shrines and often contain amazing tales of far-off lands and places. Some contain details of legendary places and are sought out by adventurers keen to learn more about such locales.

5: TUOMI'S OUTFITTERS

This meticulously organised shop has everything a traveller should need to reach his destination.

Run by Fruen Tuomi (N female old half-orc sorcerer 2), a retired adventurer, the shop is well stocked and tended. Fruen is manic about order and cleanliness and her business reflects her twin passions. Beyond that held in her shop, she has yet more stock in a cavernous cellar that has a forgotten well allowing direct access to Lake Thraren. Sometimes at night, she fishes and drinks here for hours while reflecting on her adventures and slain companions. The following day she emerges tired, hung-over and dishevelled which has led to rumours of her conducting strange rituals away from prying eyes swirling among the populace.

6: THE BOOT & WHEEL

This small inn does a roaring trade; its guests are welcome to pitch their tents within the inn's grounds or to hire one of its many small lodges.

- **Food & Drink** meal (mixed greens stew, baked parsnips and onions or chicken soup with bread) 1 sp, ale 4 cp, wine (pitcher) 1 sp.
- **Accommodation** Travellers can pitch their tent in the inn's grounds for 1 sp a night. Additionally, a dozen lodges are available for 2 sp a night.

The Boot & Wheel offers no accommodation in the main building. Rather, many small lodges dot the surrounding area. All owned by Elimia Takala (NG female human) they are available for nightly hire and sleep a maximum of six individuals (comfortably). Thick hedges surround the whole affair, and keep travellers' animals from wandering away. Elimia is a gregarious host, but she does not like her rival, Jani Leino (location 2). The slow increase in taxes of late also concerns her; she worries they'll adversely affect trade, and therefore her own business.

7: THE ANGRY BADGER

A local's watering hole, the Angry Badger serves cheap, plentiful drinks and basic, but filling, food. Additional entertainments are always available upstairs (and occasionally downstairs).

- **Food & Drink** meal (typically fish soup with bread, spiced fish with parsnip and onion or parsnip broth with thick chunks of bread) 1 sp, ale 4 cp, wine (pitcher) 1 sp.
- **Accommodation** The Angry Badger has no accommodation available, and travellers are not allowed to stay overnight in the common room.

A large common room dominates the ground floor, and several ladies await the pleasure of visiting guests, who they entertain on the upper floor.

Several cellars lie beneath the tavern; one comprises a series of storerooms and contains nothing out of the ordinary. The other, accessed by a hidden stair, is the venue for month animal fights. Raucous and well attended by locals and specially invited travellers these affairs are loud and bloody.

8: TRAVELLER'S REST

This rambling shrine dedicated to the god of travellers is open to all. Travellers low on funds can sleep in the shrine for free. Antal Silverleaf (N male old halfling cleric 4 [Behron]) watches over the shrine and its visitors. Old age and arthritis have ended his wandering days, but he yet serves his lord by tending to the needs of those visiting this place. Antal is happy in Wellswood, but yet dreams of one last grand journey.

- **Accommodation** Travellers can sleep at the shrine for free, although the accommodation is nothing more than a hard stone floor in a draughty hall. While sleeping here is free, Antal often suggests those doing so might want to help with the shrine's maintenance and upkeep.

9: LAKE THRAREN

Lake Thraren's waters are deep and dark and are home to several exotic fish species found nowhere else in Ashlar. Consequently, Lord Issakainen tightly controls access to Lake Thraren and tithes those fishing its waters. Fish caught here are quickly sold to visiting merchants who in turn sell them to the great and the good of the realm.

The only known access to Lake Thraren from the surface is via the many wells throughout the village. Some are no bigger than a normal well, while others are large enough to have steps leading down to floating pontoons at which the villagers' fishing boats are moored. As part of the agreement between Lord Issakainen and the villagers he provides several magical everlasting torches for the fishermen to use; however, these must be returned every night to the castle.

10: DON GALIR

Home of the Erdikr clan, this small dwarven hold lies under Wellswood; non-dwarves are rarely admitted. Don Galir overlooks Lake Thraren's dark waters. Occasionally, the dwarves are seen sculling about on the lake in one of several boats they keep moored behind their fortress's great stone doors. What they search for, or where they go, on these expeditions is a matter of much speculation among the villagers. The dwarves, however, are a taciturn lot at the best of times and keep their own council.

LIFE IN WELLSWOOD

On the surface, Wellswood is a peaceful village, but building tensions lurk beneath the surface—anger at the rising tax burden placed on its visitors and locals being the primary cause. While the populace are not close to rebellion or protest, before long local business will be forced to raise their prices (again). Some also wonder exactly what the secretive dwarves of clan Erdikr are up to in their subterranean home.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Life in Wellswood mainly revolves around servicing the needs of the many travellers passing through the village. Other villagers fish Lake Thraen in search of the many exotic and rare fish swimming gliding through its lightless depths.

LAW & ORDER

Lord Issakainen maintains a sizable force of men-at-arms at his castle backed up by an elite force of cavalry. The cavalry rove up and down the road for a half-day's ride in both directions to keep travellers safe; consequently, bandits rarely lurk in Wellswood's environs.

Lord Issakainen tolerates no disturbance to anything that generates his revenue and troublemakers are dealt with harshly.

EVENTS

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

D6	EVENT
1	A large caravan arrives in the village and heads toward the Boot & Wheel; as it does so several locals (employees of the Footsore Traveller) try to dissuade them—instead offering discounted rates to the caravan master.
2	Several near-penniless drifters are sleeping at the Traveller's Rest. The next morning, an argument develops when one traveller accuses another of robbing him. They come to blows and are both arrested.
3	Fruen Toumi (location 5) is widely assumed to be up to something. She is often tired and haggard in the mornings, and some think she's a witch trafficking with dark powers. The PCs are advised to never enter her cellar.
4	The wheel of a wagon passing through the village breaks; the main road is blocked for an hour while the wagon is dragged up to Wheels & Wagons.
5	A villager runs through street calling frantically for help—it seems someone has fallen into one of the wells!
6	Azthur Erdukr is seen examining several of the wells and shaking his head. Rumours sweep through the village that some of the wells are unstable and could collapse at any time.



WHITE MOON COVE

Words Marc Radle **Cartography** Marc Radle

White Moon Cove is a respectable fishing village set in a sheltered cove which acts as an excellent, natural harbour. The inhabitants of this tightly-knit community are sober, hardworking and amiable fishermen, traders and other sturdy folk making their living from the sea. Despite being a fairly peaceful and law-abiding place, White Moon Cove still hold many opportunities for adventure, from rumours of secret smuggler activity to an ancient and possibly haunted lighthouse. Yet, perhaps the most famous reason for White Moon Cove's notoriety is the mysterious underwater edifice known as the Sunken Pyramid which lies hidden far beneath the waves a few miles out to sea.

WHITE MOON COVE AT A GLANCE

White Moon Cove is a small, respectable fishing village located in a sheltered cove which acts as an excellent, natural harbour. The inhabitants of this tightly-knit community are relatively sober, hardworking and amiable fishermen, traders and other sturdy folk who make their living primarily from the sea. While fishing is the main industry, a few small farms dot the neighbouring countryside.

During the day, fishing and other activities connected to the sea's many bounties occupy the villagers' time. White Moon Cove is a busy hub for trade. Because of this, the people of White Moon Cove live relatively well, despite their simple and generally rugged way of life. After a long work day, most people retire to their homes. Before heading home, many stop by the Sleeping Triton, for fellowship, laughter and a hearty meal.

The dock area is small and well ordered, with a single, long pier which extends out into the water. A hodgepodge of rowboats and various other small vessels are typically tied to the pier, along with the occasional larger ocean-going vessel. Businesses and shops cluster around White Moon's marketplace. The village holds a weekly market which attracts folk from other nearby smaller settlements.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler Barro Godwyn

Government Council

Population 328 (including surrounding area; 287 humans, 26 halflings, 6 gnomes, 4 elves, 2 dwarves, 2 half-orcs, 1 half-elf)

Alignments NG

Languages Common

Resources & Industry Fishing

NOTABLE FOLK

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

Barro Godwyn (location 5; NG male human) Head of the village council, Barro is a stern fellow.

Corwyn Redcrow (location 3; N male human wizard 7) This reclusive wizard is often found at the Sleeping Triton.

Dorna (location 6; N female half orc rogue 4) Operates White Moon Cove's fishmonger shop (and brothel).

THE SUNKEN PYRAMID

Only a few miles out to sea, this mysterious underwater edifice lies hidden beneath the waves. The handful of sages and scholars with any knowledge of this massive stone structure debate whether it is a natural rock formation, a natural site intentionally modified or something built long ago by human, or most likely inhuman, hands.

Edric (location 1; N male human bard 2/rogue 2) This charming, charismatic man owns Seafoam Trade Goods.

Galen Nrek (location 5; LN male human fighter 4) White Moon Cove's gruff, but capable, constable.

Kandra (location 4; NG female human cleric 5) This quiet and kind priestess officiating at the White Chapel.

Old Grif Serann (location 3; LG male old human ex-paladin 4) The one-armed, sahuagin-hating village drunkard.

Orin Gwyn (location 2; LG male human fighter 1) This bald, brawny man operates Gwyn's Smithy.

Perrin (location 3; CG female middle-aged halfling) Perrin is the proprietor of the Sleeping Triton.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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

1. **Seafoam Trade Goods:** Edric's Trading Shop is almost always busy with sailors, merchants and local residents alike.
2. **Gwyn's Smithy:** This large building is owned and operated by Orin Gwyn. Items available include sword blades, farming implements, eating utensils and ship's tools.
3. **Sleeping Triton:** The Sleeping Triton comprises a spacious tavern with two dozen cosy rooms. It is easily one of the most popular places in White Moon Cove.
4. **White Chapel:** White Moon Cove's temple is one of the village's most impressive buildings. Recently constructed, the temple's high-domed roof gleams in the sunlight.
5. **Village Hall:** This building comprises a large central meeting room and a number of smaller chambers and offices. It is well-guarded during the day and securely locked at night.
6. **Dorna's Fishmonger's Shop:** This large building, located near both the marketplace and the docks, is a popular destination of sailors and fisherman alike.
7. **The Cyclops:** Known to locals as "The Cyclops," this old stone lighthouse sits at the mouth of the cove. It is by far the oldest structure in the village.
8. **Marketplace:** Numerous stalls and animal pens fill the area in a semi-organized jumble. A large weekly market day draws people from all over the local area.

MARKESSA & MERMAID'S MISTRESS

A small, sleek merchant ship, *The Mermaid's Mistress*, puts into port about once a week. The ship's captain, Markessa (NG female human fighter 6), is a beautiful woman with long, flowing red hair and a fiery temper to match. Her highly skilled, rowdy crew is fiercely loyal to their captain and her first mate, swashbuckling Allyseth (NG female human rogue 5). Markessa has sailed the surrounding waters for many years and knows a great deal about the region.

VILLAGE LORE

A PC may know something about White Moon Cove, its history and surrounds. Determine how knowledgeable the PCs are and then impart some (or all) of the information below:

- White Moon Cove is a large, prosperous and fairly law-abiding fishing village.
- The village drunkard, an elderly ex-paladin, is said to be quite knowledgeable about sahuagin.
- The only fishmonger shop in the village is a front of sorts for a brothel (and possibly more sinister practises).

VILLAGERS

Appearance The residents of White Moon Cove tend to have tanned, weather beaten skin.

Dress The villagers typically dress in comfortable, layered clothing—fewer layers for the warm work days; more layers in the evening to ward off the cool, salt air breeze.

Nomenclature *male*: Atheric, Bosa, Eohric, Liofa, Ulf; *female*: Aebbe, Bebbe, Inga, Saeith; *family*: Alston, Elvey, Isgar, Sirett.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in White Moon Cove, a PC may hear one or more rumours pertaining to the village and its surroundings. The PC can learn this information in a number of ways: perhaps by overhearing two locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local tavern and so on. Use the table below, to determine which rumours the PC learns.

D4 RUMOUR

1	A member of the village council is secretly involved with one of "Dorna's Girls" and has gotten her pregnant. He is very keen to keep this from his wife and four children.
2	Something, or someone, ancient and terrible lurks deep beneath the Sunken Pyramid
3	The increased sahuagin activity in the waters around the Sunken Pyramid is connected to recent disappearances plaguing nearby villages.
4	In addition to being a front for her brothel business, there's something more sinister going on at Dorna's Fishmonger Shop.



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: SEAFOAM TRADE GOODS

Located by the docks near the marketplace, Edric's Trading Shop is almost always busy. Here sailors and merchants come to sell or trade goods brought in from other coastal settlements. If one is looking for something out of the ordinary, Edric's shop has the highest likelihood of having it (or being able to get it).

Edric (N male human bard 2/rogue 2) is a friendly, easy-going young man. He spent many years travelling as a minstrel with a large merchant caravan before eventually settling in White Moon Cove. He is charming, good looking and rarely lacks for female companionship.

In fact, one of the few women to routinely rebuff his amorous advances is Markessa, the beautiful captain of the *Mermaid's Mistress*. Although not a resident of White Moon Cove, Markessa arrives at the village every week with a ship's hold full of goods to sell or trade at Edric's shop. Despite Edric's most honeyed words, Markessa simply shakes her head, chuckles and tells the bard "Sorry, not interested—you're just not my type." Of course, this only makes Edric desire the fiery Markessa more, and so the delicate dance continues.

Edric is rumoured to have something of a shady past—there are a few who even whisper he spent time in the dungeons of some distant city years ago. Edric always deftly laughs these rumours off with a quick smile and a few charming words. Truth be told, Edric has worked extremely hard to gain the trust of White Moon Cove's residents and is very fond of his life here.

2: GWYN'S SMITHY

This large building is owned by Orin Gwyn (LG male human fighter 1). The main work area is dirty but reasonably well organized—everything from sword blades to farm tools and eating utensils to ship building implements can be found here, hanging from hooks or sitting on the numerous shelves that line the walls.

Orin is a skilled smith and metal worker, capable of creating and repairing everything from eating utensils to armour to anchors and other metal objects for ships. He is a short, burly man with immense forearms, a bulbous nose and a balding head. When not working long hours in his smithy, he can usually be found at the *Sleeping Triton* having a few pints of ale—or, as is more often the case, many pints of ale.

Along with the different mundane items he is working on at any given moment, Orin also steals a few moments here and there to work on a beautiful bastard sword and shield of exquisite craftsmanship and quality. When asked who he is crafting these items for, Orin only grins and mutters "that ain't any o' your business."

3: SLEEPING TRITON

The Sleeping Triton is easily one of the most popular places in all of White Moon Cove. Almost everyone in the village can be found here at some point during the day. The tavern is only a short walk from the marketplace. It has been expanded and added onto many times over the years and is now one of the largest buildings in the village.

A clean, spacious tavern room with well-worn tables and comfortable chairs takes up much of the main building. One wing of the building serves as a wayfarer's inn with more than two dozen cosy rooms.

The smaller wing is the private residence of Perrin (CG female middle-aged halfling). A plump, jovial woman with an infectious smile, Perrin is easily one of the most beloved people in all of White Moon Cove. She is also something of a gossip—very little happens in or around the village occurs without Perrin hearing about it. The kindly halfling has been the landlady of the *Sleeping Triton* for many decades and takes great pride in the food offering. In fact, Perrin is renowned for her wonderful cooking and still makes much of the food herself. Her fish stews and spiced crabs are particularly delicious. The Sleeping Triton charges common prices for board and lodgings, but the food is of good quality due to Perrin's skill and love of cooking.

4: THE WHITE CHAPEL

White Moon Cove's temple is one of the village's most impressive buildings. Only recently constructed, the temple's high-domed roof gleams in the sunlight. No single deity is favoured here. Instead, all non-evil gods are honoured equally and the temple's doors are open to all wishing to worship within. A shoulder-high stone wall encloses the temple, along with a tranquil courtyard and smaller building where Kandra (NG female human cleric 5) lives.

CORWYN REDCROW

Corwyn (N male human wizard 7) is a quiet, reserved man of indeterminate age. He can occasionally be found drinking herbal tea alone at the Sleeping Triton. Although Corwyn was born and raised in White Moon Cove, he left when he was a young man to find fortune and adventure. He returned recently, after many years, saying only that a life of adventure no longer suited him. If pressed for details, Corwyn becomes sullen and refuses to elaborate. He spends much of his time carving small seagulls from driftwood or scribing magical scrolls which he then sells or trades. Corwyn is very reclusive and extremely reluctant to get involved in any situation involving even the slightest hint of danger.

Kandra is a quiet, kind and extremely beautiful young woman. Trained as a cleric in a large city hundreds of miles inland she was sent to White Moon Cove to administer to the people's religious needs. At first, Kandra resented leaving the city and its more sophisticated, cosmopolitan lifestyle. Over time, however, she has come to love White Moon Cove and its people. Ironically, the one thing Kandra has not been able to embrace is the sea itself—she cannot swim and is terrified of the water.

5: VILLAGE HALL

White Moon Cove's village hall comprises a large open meeting room and several smaller chambers and offices dedicated to the running of the village. It is well-guarded during the day and securely locked at night.

Barro Godwyn (NG male human) is the council's leader and has served as such for nine years. He is a skilled negotiator and a stern, no-nonsense decision maker. Friendly and out-going, Barro holds the deep and abiding respect of almost everyone living in or near White Moon Cove.

Galen Nrek (LN male human fighter 4) is the village constable. He is a large, intimidating man with a gruff, abrupt

OLD GRIF SERANN

Grif (LG male old human ex-paladin 4) is an old one-armed man who has lived in White Moon Cove longer than most people can remember. He is well-liked by everyone, although most folks also pity him.

He can usually be found sitting alone near the water, staring out at the waves or in the *Sleeping Triton*, downing large amounts of ale and regaling fellow drinkers with tales from his long and exciting adventuring days. Grif greatly exaggerates (or in most cases entirely fabricates) these tales of his derring-do, however. The sad truth is that long ago, Grif was a member of an adventuring group intent on clearing out a nest of sahuagin. Soon after entering their lair, they were ambushed and most of the party was slaughtered. A massive shark ripped off Grif's arm and left him for dead. This horrific encounter, the sudden and violent death of his friends and the loss of his arm deeply affected the young paladin. His courage and faith profoundly shaken, Grif began to spend more time in taverns and less time in temples. Although he spent many years learning everything he could about the sahuagin in hopes of someday exacting his revenge on the cruel creatures, he never went on another adventure and eventually became a sad, drunken shell of the man he might have been. Grif prefers not to speak of those terrible, long-ago events. He still hates sahuagin, however, and could be of immense value to anyone seeking information about the shark men.

personality. He is honest to a fault and takes his responsibilities as constable very seriously. Galen is a capable warrior, particularly when wielding any type of spear or pole arm. Gossip says he has taken a fancy to Kandra (location 4). Although Galen only glowers when he hears such talk, he does seem to spend a large amount of time with Kandra, even though few would consider him to be a particularly religious man.

6: DORNA'S FISHMONGER'S SHOP

This large building, located near both the marketplace and the docks, is a popular destination for sailors and fisherman alike. Dorna (N female half-orc rogue 4), the rotund half-orc proprietor, runs her busy shop with confidence and a strong helping of boisterous bravado.

To those in the know, the shop is also an unofficial brothel of sorts. Various women, known sometimes as "Dorna's girls," circulate among the sailors and fisherman in the main room, serving up flirtatious smiles and complimentary ale. For the right amount of coin pressed into Dorna's grimy palms, the girls take the willing into one of the many back rooms for additional "services." Curiously, both the council and the watch appear to turn a blind eye to such activities.

Boisterous, off-colour jokes and bawdy stories are rarely in short supply here. Although Dorna closes up shop each day shortly after sun-down, people can still occasionally be spotted stealthily entering or leaving the shop late into the night.

7: THE CYCLOPS

Known to locals as "The Cyclops," this old stone lighthouse sits at the mouth of the cove. The lighthouse is by far the oldest structure in the village—in fact, it is believed to have been built centuries before White Moon Cove even existed. Many say the stone tower was originally constructed for a wizard who used the structure as a laboratory and base of operations.

Winfrid (LN male human), the lighthouse keeper, lives in the cottage attached to the lighthouse. Lately he has been telling folks of strange moans and other unnatural sounds coming from somewhere below the old stone tower. To the best of anyone's knowledge, Winfrid included, the lighthouse has no basement or underground rooms—a fact which has lead more than a few villagers to wonder if the Cyclops might be haunted.

8: MARKETPLACE

This large area of packed dirt and sand lies at the heart of White Moon Cove. Numerous stalls and animal pens litter the area in a semi-organized jumble. A small but ever-changing array of goods and bounty from land and sea are sold here daily. Once a week, the market swells to almost three times its normal size and becomes packed with people from all over the surrounds.

LIFE IN WHITE MOON COVE

The village is a peaceful and law abiding place, despite its somewhat isolated location. If anything, this isolation has made its citizens self-reliant and fiercely loyal to one another.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Fishing is the most important industry in White Moon Cove. Virtually everyone earns their livelihood in one way or another from the sea. The village boasts a large weekly market which attracts numerous people from the surrounding area.

LAW & ORDER

The village has adequate facilities for justice and law-enforcement—debtors and disruptors of the peace are dealt with particularly harshly. Galen Nrek, the village constable, is a capable warrior who leads a well-organized watch.

The council is responsible for the creation and implementation of laws in White Moon Cove, a duty which Barro Godwyn, as village council's leader, takes very seriously.

Bells located in the village hall's tall bell tower are used to signal important events throughout the day. In times of crisis, they can also be used to sound an alarm.

EVENTS

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

D4	EVENT
1	Galen Nrek, the large and intimidating village constable, tosses old Grif out of the Sleeping Triton after the drunkard makes a scene. Patrons inside the tavern say Old Grif became highly agitated when someone insinuated his flamboyant story of a past adventure sounded like pure hogwash.
2	A ruckus is caused when someone (perhaps even one of the PCs) is accused of stealing from a vendor during the busy, weekly market.
3	A sudden and nasty brawl between sailors and fishermen at Dorna's Fishmonger Shop threatens to get out of hand. Dorna herself erupts from a back room and breaks up the fight with her bare hands. One of the fishermen is badly hurt in the commotion. Thankfully Kandra quickly arrives to administer healing.
4	A group of villagers are gathered together, speaking in loud, animated voices. One of those gathered just received a letter from a friend in a nearby village saying the village was raided in the middle of the night by a band of sahuagin. Three people were killed in the attack and at least seven were dragged, still alive, into the sea!



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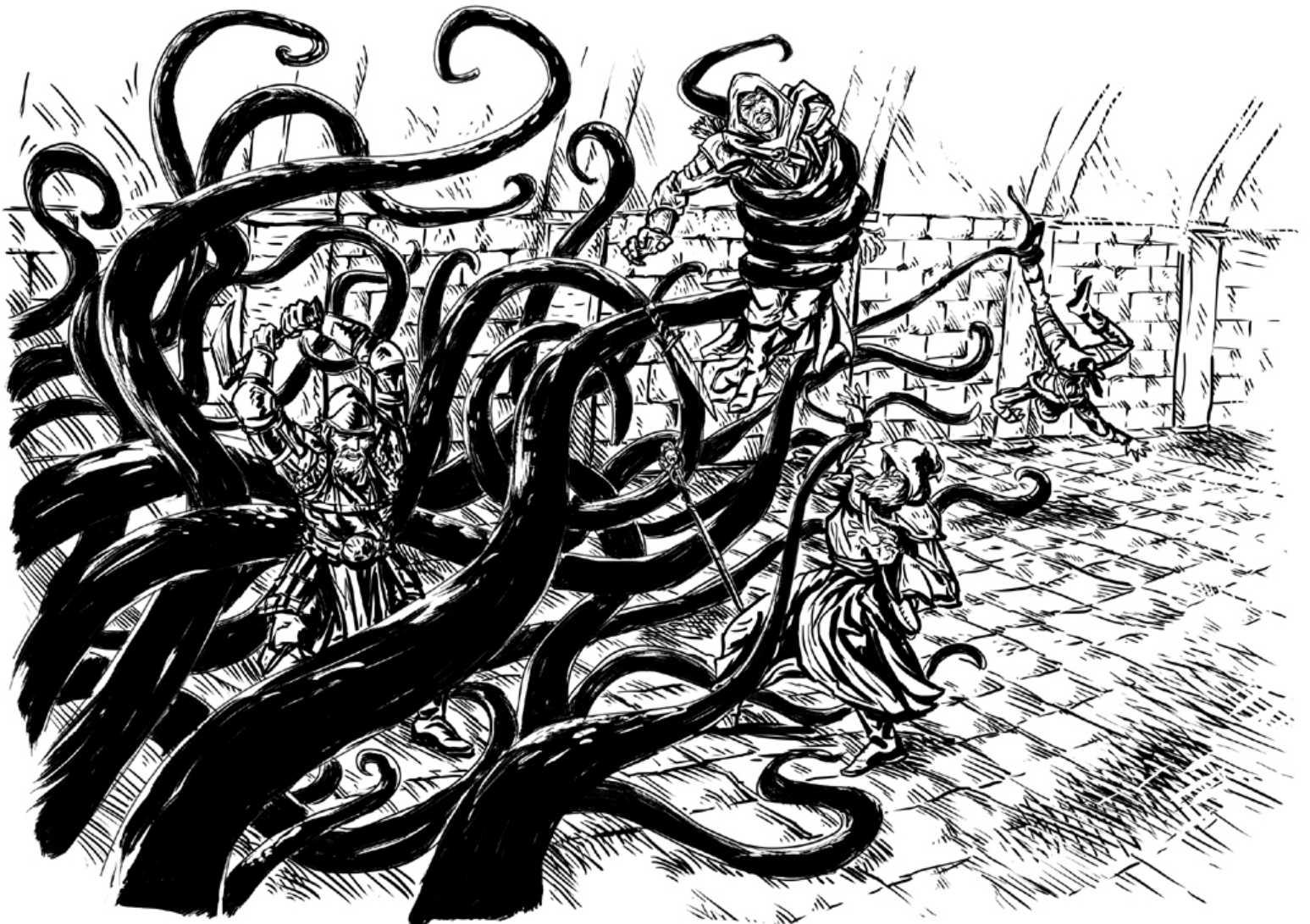
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