5E COMPATIBLE

HEXBOX

EMERGENT STORYTELING
THROUGH SANDBOX HEXRAWLING

TAOSCORDIAN GAMES

Hexbox

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Taoscordian Games

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

What's a Hexbox?

"Hexbox" is a portmanteau of two well-established tabletop gaming terms: HexCrawl and Sandbox. A Sandbox game is one in which minimal restrictions are placed upon the players, enabling them to go forth and interact with the setting as they see fit. A HexCrawl is a type of RPG adventure in which players explore the wilderness through a map divided into hexes, that allows a systematic method to providing things for the players to discover.

Put them together and you get a Hexbox, a structured approach to exploratory tabletop gameplay.

This book describes a system to run and play these exploratory adventures as a campaign, simplifying the record keeping involved. While designed for use with Dungeons and Dragons, 5th edition, it is easily adaptable for play with nearly any system.

This Book

- **Chapter One, Introduction**, covered the basic elements of what a Hexbox campaign is.
- **Chapter Two, Running the Hexbox**, provides the DM with the systems and procedures to run a Hexbox campaign.
- **Chapter Three, Playing the Hexbox**, is designed for the players as a guide to this sort of gaming.
- **Chapter Four, Building the Hexbox**, gives instructions and advice for designing a Hexbox style campaign.
- **Appendix, Example Hexbox**, provides a mini-hexbox campaign, fully ready for play, that DMs can either run as is or use as a basis for their own games.

Taoscordian Games has planned a line of campaign products designed to be used with the Hexbox system, if you want something heftier than the examples to either use as inspiration or to play with directly.

CHAPTER TWO: RUNNING A HEXBOX

A Hexbox campaign has several components. We'll cover how to create them in Chapter Four, but for now here's a brief overview of how they're used in actual play.

The Regional Map: You will track the players' location on the map, which is keyed so you know which Location Keys and Event Lists to employ. Generally speaking you won't show the players the map or use it like a game-board, but instead describe to them what they see and what territory they're passing through. The players should, based on your descriptions, be creating their own map.

The Fact Sheet: Each regional map is accompanied by a fact-sheet summarizing details unique to that region, including the effects of terrain upon movement, Survival (Wisdom) DCs for navigation and foraging, the distance at which encounters will be spotted, weather conditions, and what food can be foraged.

The Expedition Log: This is a simple printable record-keeping form DMs can use to keep track of the party's status as they travel.

The Location Key: The Location Key has an entry for each hex containing information about anything that makes that hex different from the rest of the region. The survival DC might be higher or lower, the plant light might be different, or you might be able to see a given landmark from a distance.

In addition, each hex contains a Special Encounter that the party may run across while traveling - this encounter might be an interesting landmark, a structure, or even a whole community.

The Event Key: The Event Key is a list of all the transitional things that might happen while the players are moving through the area… monsters, NPCs, natural (or supernatural) phenomena. The main difference between the Locations and Events are that a Location is something that will always be in the same place, while an Event is something that might happen today but won't happen next week, or could happen in different areas of the game map.

Check out the Appendix for an example mini-campaign to see each of these elements in action.

The Nature of a Hexbox Story

Each Hexbox campaign's basic premise gives context to the player characters and what they're doing. While the particulars vary, the players will be exploring a vast wilderness area filled with things to investigate.

That's one of the biggest differences between a Hexbox campaign and a more conventional story-focused game. No one tells the players what to do or where to go. Any directives the players have been given will be vague enough that it remains the players' responsibility to decide how to go about it. That distinction is something the players must understand. They will not be spoon-fed plot hooks. They will not be following a DM's lead. The PCs must take it upon themselves to keep the game moving.

Emergent Storytelling

In a Hexbox game the DM is enabling the PCs to create stories out of their interactions with each other and the setting. It's the Hexbox's job to provide a fertile field for those stories to grow, and the DM's to facilitate them.

That's what emergent storytelling is: A story that emerges through the playing of the game, rather than one that was set up and planned start to finish.

Character Creation Considerations

It is of the utmost importance that a Hexbox game's PCs are properly motivated. Explain the nature of the game to your players before you begin, and make sure each has a reason to be doing what the scenario assumes they'll be doing. If their backgrounds provide character hooks, incorporate them, but ultimately the PCs continue to drive the action.

The Travel Cycle

The basic unit of action is the Travel Cycle, which begins when the players set off, and ends when they reach their destination or are otherwise interrupted. Using this cycle enables the DM to quickly and easily determine what happens during the PCs' journey without letting boring detail drag things down.

Step Zero: Planning the Expedition

This occurs before the cycle and asks the PCs the basic question, "what do you want to do?" In a purely exploratory game, this may be answered with a stated desire to head off in a direction for a certain length of time, towards a distant landmark, or along a terrain feature like a river or coast.

What matters to the DM is that the players clearly articulate what the plan is, even if that plan is the inadvisable "wander aimlessly until we run out of food." Give the PCs the PC Procedure sheet to fill out, and have them change it as they change their tactics.

Who is the navigator?

One party member will have to keep track of where the group is and where they're trying to go. This is a Wisdom (Survival) roll. Rangers in their favored terrain succeed automatically.

Who is the mapmaker?

If the party is drawing a map, one of the players will have to be the one handling this, providing they have both the Cartography Tools skill and a toolkit.

Is there a scout?

Using a scout gives the party the advantage of advance warning about what's ahead at the expense of slowing them down.

For our purposes, a scout will be traveling up to a mile ahead of the rest of the party; a character who remains within visual range of the rest of the group is not scouting, he or she is simply on point.

PC PROCEDURES

PARTY NAME: *Example Exemplars*

CHARACTER	AC	PASSIVE PERCEPTION	SURVIVAL	STEALTH
Voag	14	12	+5	+2
Cicero	12	11	+1	+1
Astrid	15	13	+3	+0
Red	14	13	+1	+5
Bomba	14	10	+0	+0

BASE SPEED: 3   X TERRAIN: .5   X EXPLORATION .5   = SPEED: .75 MPH
BASE TRAVEL TIME: 8   X SCOUT .5 = TRAVEL TIME: 4   HOURS
               SPEED X TRAVEL TIME = 3   MILES/DAY

NAVIGATOR: Voag   SURVIVAL (WIS) +5
MAPMAPER: Astrid
SCOUT: Red   PERCEPTION (WIS) +3 STEALTH (DEX) 5

WATCH ORDER	FROM	TO
Voag	10–12	
Red	12–2	
Bomba	2–4	
Cicero	4–6	
Astrid	6–8	

MARCHING ORDER

Voag

Cicero

Astrid

Bomba

DOWNTIME PLANS

Voag: 6 hours foraging, 2 hours rituals
Cicero: 4 hour forage, 2 craft, 2 ritual
Astrid: 6 hours foraging, 2 hours praying
Red: 4 hours foraging
Bomba: 8 hours foraging

What is the marching formation?

Find out where each party member will be walking. Draw a simple diagram of the party's marching order on the Expedition log. Refer to it whenever the group encounters anything.

What is the watch order at night?

Who watches the camp, and in what order? Record the watch order on the Expedition Log. You will refer to this if an encounter occurs while the party is encamped.

What pace do you want to set?

Pace will be determined by two factors: How fast the PCs are moving, and how many hours per day they wish to travel.

The basic travel rate is 3 miles per hour. Rough terrain will cut that in half, unless the PCs include a ranger whose favored terrain is involved. However, there are a few options players can use that will either speed themselves up or slow them down. Make sure the party is appraised of these:

If they're not in a particular hurry, players can opt to **explore as they go**, covering more ground than they would walking in a straight line. This cuts their travel speed in half, but doubles the chance of them finding something interesting or having an encounter.

Players with a decent map can use it to **plot a route**. This calls for a Wisdom (Survival) roll on the navigator's behalf. If the roll is a success, their effective speed per hour is boosted by 10% as long as they stick to the route.

If the players want to **use a scout**, that will give them the advantage of advance warning when an encounter does happen, at the expense of half of their effective travel time. The scout's job is to run or ride up ahead of the rest of the group and look around, then come back, and the rest of the party will have to slow down to compensate. While this does slow things down, the party does have the option to use that extra time to forage or focus on other tasks (see Downtime, below). So, a party traveling for eight hours will only make four hours worth of progress, but adds four hours to their Downtime.

Example:

Our party of brave adventurers have set out on their grand quest to find the mysterious keep in the middle of the swamp. Voag the Barbarian has a great Survival skill but mediocre Stealth, so is chosen to navigate. Astrid the Cleric is the only one with Cartography tools, and thus will serve as mapmaker, while Red the Rogue opts to scout up ahead of the rest of the group.

Those left behind opt for a simple cross-formation, with Voag up front keeping an eye out for trouble, and the Dwarven Fighter Bomba bringing up the rear.

At night they establish a simple two-hour watch schedule - Cicero, being an Elf, needs only four hours of rest, so he opts to take a shortened last watch. This gives each character the Long Rest they need to be at their best.

None of the characters are a ranger, and the swamp's terrain is pretty tricky, so the group will be traveling at 1.5 miles per hour. Since the group is looking for a hidden fort in the middle of the swamp, they opt to explore as they go, covering more ground at the expense of speed. This cuts their movement rate down to 0.75 miles per day.

This is unexplored territory, though, so despite Voag's Survival skill they will be unable to plot a route. At least, not on this trip - Astrid's map may prove sufficient in the future!

Because they're heading into Parts Unknown and do not wish to be ambushed, the group opts to use Astrid as a Scout, a mile or so ahead of the main group. Since she's not twice as fast as the rest of the party they'll have to take frequent stops to wait for her to get back to them.

So. The party's pace is set at 0.75 miles per hour, four hours a day, for three hours traveled per day. It's a good thing they're not in any hurry!

Note that a scout who is twice as fast as the rest of the party doesn't slow the rest of them down, and has no effect on Downtime or travel speed.

Typically a group will wish to avoid Exhaustion by traveling at most eight hours a day. Accounting for time required to sleep, eat, make and break camp, the PCs have the option to try and push this to up to twelve hours of marching per day, but this invokes the rules for Exhaustion: For every hour past eight, characters must make a Constitution check at 10 +1 (cumulative per hour) or take a level of exhaustion.

Note that if a scout has slowed them down, those hours they're not marching don't count against this eight hour limit... but they do for the scout himself. If a party wants to travel with a scout for twelve hours, most of the party is only actually on the move for six... but the scout is moving for those twelve hours, and must make Constitution saves at DCs 11, 12, 13, and 14. Multiple scouts can, of course, share this burden by splitting the day's scouting between them. Two scouts might split six hour scouting shifts, requiring only a single DC 11 check each, or three scouts might split four-hour shifts and end up making no saves whatsoever.

The use of these options will give the party an overall travel speed, and a number of hours traveled per day. Record both on the Expedition Log.

What do you want to do in your Downtime?

As mentioned above, players have 12 hours per day spent awake and active. Any of these hours spent not traveling can be devoted to other activities. While they can do almost anything - pray, spar, tell stories, socialize, cast ritual spells - one option merits special attention.

Players can gather food through the act of **foraging**. A competent forager can gather one meal per hour devoted this activity with a successful Wisdon (Survival) roll at the end of the travel cycle. A failure indicates only half as much food as expected was gathered, and a roll of 1 indicates that not only was no food gathered, but the forager ate a bad berry or poison mushroom and got sick.

Characters will generally be able to find water as they travel. If the party members lack waterskins or are traveling through the desert, daily Survival rolls to find water will be required.

Example:

Since the party is using a scout, they have eight hours of Downtime to fill each day.

Voag the Barbarian opts to spend most of that time looking for food. However, he does have a few rituals he knows how to perform, and he'll devote two hours a day to that, letting him talk to animals or whatever it is he's up to.

Cicero has his own rituals, but he's also crafting himself a magica staff. He devotes two hours to each of those pursuits, and another four to looking for food.

Astrid will spend six hours each day to finding food, and two to singing homilies to her Goddess.

Red does not actually have eight hours of downtime like the rest of the group, because she's off scouting. When she's not scouting, she'll be gathering food.

Finally Bomba... well. Bomba's not really good at finding food, so he'll spend all eight hours each day giving it his best. We believe in you, Bomba!

Step One: Daily checks

Most of the travel cycle occurs behind the DM's screen. After the players make their plan and set out, you'll roll some dice, check some charts, and then summarize things for the PCs once they reach their destination or if something interesting happens to interrupt their journey. You can use the Expedition Log to record this information. Use a fresh Log for each trip.

Check for the day's weather

The first thing we'll check each day is the weather. Regions may have their own tables, but as a generic option you can roll a d20 each day to see what the weather brings.

Roll	Result
1-5	Bad weather. Torrential rain, snowstorms, sandstorms. Reduce travel rates by 50%. Wisdom (Survival) rolls have Disadvantage.
6-15	Pretty standard for the terrain. No effect on travel speed or survival.
16-20	Great weather. Travel rates increased by 10%. Wisdom (Survival) rolls have advantage.

The indicated roll indicates the next day's overall weather situation. Make a note on the Expedition Log, apply advantage or disadvantage to Wisdom (Survival) rolls as required, and modify the day's speed. There's no need to interrupt the Travel Cycle at this point unless the party is endangered by the weather.

Check to see if the party gets lost (Skip if the navigator is a ranger in his favored terrain)

Roll against the navigator's Wisdom (Survival) skill against the map's Navigation DC. If they fail, they're lost, but don't tell them yet. Roll a d4 and use that to choose a hex-face for their new direction - anything but the direction they want to go, or the direction they're coming from.

PCs following a coast, road, river, or heading towards a visible landmark cannot get lost.

EXPEDITION LOG

CHARACTER   SURVIVAL   FOOD

VOAG   +5   6/10
CICERO   +1   4/10
ASTRID   +3   6/8
RED   +1   3/5
BOMBA   +0   5/10

DAILY SPEED:

	HEX	WEATHER	TRAVEL
DAY 1	B5	OK	1.5
DAY 2	B5	OK	1.5
DAY 3	B5	OK	1.5
DAY 4	B5	BAD	.75
DAY 5	B5	OK	1.5
DAY 6	B6	GOOD	1.6
DAY 7			

	HEX	WEATHER	TRAVEL
DAY 1			
DAY 2			
DAY 3			
DAY 4			
DAY 5			
DAY 6			
DAY 7			

	HEX	WEATHER	TRAVEL
DAY 1			
DAY 2			
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	HEX	WEATHER	TRAVEL
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DAY 7			

	HEX	WEATHER	TRAVEL
DAY 1			
DAY 2			
DAY 3			
DAY 4			
DAY 5			
DAY 6			
DAY 7			

NOTES

CURRENTLY LOST – SOUTHEAST HEADING

Check for a daytime encounter.
Roll a d12 and a d20.

The d12 tells you in which hour the encounter occurs, counting from sunup. The d20 tells you if anything happens:

Roll	Result
1-3	The players encounter the Hex's Special Encounter. Consult the Hex Location Key for details.
4-6	The players encounter something off of the region's Event List at the rolled hour. Consult the Region Event List.
7-20	No Encounter.

The chances of an encounter occuring are doubled while the party is exploring. The Special Encounter occurs on a roll of 1-6, and the Event List on a roll of 7-12.

If an encounter is rolled, jump ahead to Step Two, end the Travel Cycle, and start the encounter.

See if the party's daily travel brings them into a new hex.

Generally speaking, you don't need to announce this, and players shouldn't be aware of the hex structure. However, if the new hex indicates that some new terrain type is present, or that a new distant landmark comes into view, you'll want to give them the opportunity to react. Skip ahead to Step Two.

You may also wish to interrupt their travel if they cross a road or a river running through the hex. Skip ahead to Step Two, tell them, let them decide whether to follow it or to keep to the path they've been taking.

Note that if this happens before a daytime encounter is slated to happen the event should be considered based on the new hex's tables or location.

Example:

The GM is going to make a lot of checks and take some notes, waiting for something to happen that the players need to deal with. It won't take long, but we're not going to bother them with boring minutae.

Day one.
Our GM begins by rolling for the weather, and gets a 12. Normal boring coastal weather, no need to really make a note even. If the GM had rolled under 6, then we'd have consulted the hex map's Fact Sheet to see what our bad weather options are.

Next the GM rolls to see if the party gets lost. The Navigation DC is only 10 in this area - swamps are fairly flat. It's the moors you need to watch out for. Unfortunately Voag rolls poorly, getting a 7, and heads off southeast instead of east. Worst part is, he won't know it until they camp for the night!

We roll for an encounter and get an 8. Because we're exploring, that's good enough to check out the map's Event List. This might mean running into helpful locals, dangerous beasts, or something else entirely.

Our roll on the List gives us something from the third category: An empty swamp skiff, floating by, with no indication of where its owners might have gone. Since Red is the Scout, she's the one who will encounter it.

Our GM notes that and skips ahead to the end of the Travel Cycle.

First, though, we're going to see if the party made it to a new hex before finding the skiff. If the group had encountered the hex's Special Event we would have checked that first, but here it doesn't really matter. Since we're puttering around at 3 miles per day and our hexmap's hexes are nine miles across, no. We're going to be here in this hex for a few days.

But if we did move into a new hex, our GM would consult the Hex Key and see if there was anything our PCs needed to know - like a big keep visible in the distance.

Calculate their food situation:

Deduct 1 day's ration from everybody's food stores, and make a Survival (Wisdom) roll against the region's foraging DC for everybody who is foraging.

Roll Result	Effect
Natural 20	Gain two meals per hour spent foraging
Success	Gain one meal per hour spent foraging
Failure	Gain one meal per two hours spent foraging
Natural 1	Gain no meals. Make a Constitution save (DC 15) or suffer food poisoning

These aren't rations - they're fruit, berries, grubs, roots, small game, and they weigh on average 2 lbs per meal. If the PCs containers aren't sufficient to store the food, they'll have to leave it behind - ignore the excess. Further, the food will spoil after 3 days… after that, eating it will risk food poisoning.

If the DM and players enjoy logistical bookkeeping, they can figure out how many meals' worth of extra food their backpacks have room for, and track that on the Expedition Log. If that sort of thing sounds tedious, however, don't do it.

If the PCs get sick from bad food, or are running low on supplies, interrupt the cycle to tell them this. Skip to Step Two.

Check to see if they realize they're lost.

If the party is lost, roll another Survival check for the navigator to realize this. If they do, skip ahead to Step Two and break out of the normal cycle. This understanding occurs as they stop to make camp for the evening.

Check for a nighttime encounter.

Works as the daytime event above, but the d12 counts off from sunset. This will generally occur after camp has been made and most of the party is asleep. Read the result of encountering the hex's Special Location as a normal Encounter.

Example:

We ran into a mystery boat so we're not going to check on the results of our foraging just yet, but when we do, this is how it'll go.

We make a Survival roll for everyone who is foraging... which is everybody. Voag, Astrid, and Red succed. Bomba, sadly, fails. Cicero, unfortunately, rolls a 1.

Voag spent six hours foraging, and his success netted him 6 meals, or two days' worth of food. Astrid and Red's four hours gained each of them four meals. Bomba spent twice as long, but his failure indicates he only four four meals' worth as well.

And Cicero? Well, he didn't find anything, but he did eat a bad mushroom. He'll need to make a Constitution Save to avoid terrible gastrointestinal distress.

Also, before the group makes camp for the night, we give Voag another survival check to figure out that he's gotten lost. He passes this one, and a second check to figure out which way is north.

Since the group is exploring and not trying to get to a particular destination they decide against tracking themselves back to the point they got lost at, and Astrid simply adjusts her maps.

Step Two: Interrupting or Ending the Cycle

The travel cycle ends once the PCs have reached their destination. It can also be interrupted prematurely by encounters, changes of plan, running out of food, or other situations that require player attention.

Begin by summarizing for the players what's happened since the Travel Cycle began. Tell them approximately how many days have passed, how the weather's been, how far they've gone. Give them some details about the scenery, riff on what kinds of food they've been foraging. Do your best to really paint the picture for them, leading up to the reason why travel has been stopped.

If they reach their destination tell them about the place. Describe it, and ask them what they want to do now. If they're heading for a previously unvisted location, unless it's visible from a distance or is along a road or river that they're following, they'll have arrived in its general location. The PCs will have to explore the hex until they find it through an encounter.

For encounters that occur while the party is active, end the summary by introducing the encounter. If they've reached a location's special feature, describe it. If it's an event from the Event list, decide how it presents itself. This depends entirely on the nature of the event.

Encounters with creatures will usually happen to the scout, if one is employed. Let the scout make a stealth roll, and make one for the encountered creatures if required. This will tell you who notices who first, and at what distance. If no scout is employed, then the encounter happens to the bulk of the party.

The same rules apply if the players find the hex's Special Location. The scout reaches it first, and can decide what to do about it, or the party reaches it as a group. Use your best judgment and the guidance offered by the Event or Encounter itself.

For an encounter that happens while they're encamped, take it from the direction of something or someone stumbling on their camp, or something that happens to them while they're in camp.

Let the players resolve the encounter in whatever manner they see fit.

Example:

As we rolled an encounter earlier, that's the point at which we interrupt our travel cycle. In this case we were only traveling for a single day, so the summary will be brief.

"You set off into the swamp seeking the mysterious fort you've inherited, Voag on point, Red off a mile ahead to keep an eye out for trouble. The air is hot and humid, and the slightly acidic swamp water comes up to your knees, making travel slow. Worse, however, are the everpresent insects, buzzing in your ears and desperately seekign your blood.

"While Red is off scouting the rest of you are collecting what bounties the swamp has to offer — frogs and crayfish and squriming things with more legs than eyes. Most tasty, though, are the berries of the Tupelo tree... they are good, if sour.

"After a few hours travel Red comes across a solitary swamp skiff, floating in the muck. There doesn't seem to be anyone in or around it, as near as you can tell."

If a landmark has become visible in the distance describe it to them and ask them briefly if they intend to continue on their current track, or follow up on whatever it is they see in the distance.

If they contract food poisoning or are running low on supplies tell them about the party-member getting ill, or the dwindling supplies, and ask them what they'd like to do about it. They may wish to camp for a few days to let the ill individual recover, or to focus on foraging.

If they're lost end the summary with the party making camp when the navigator realizes they've gotten off track. Allow a new Wisdom (Survival) roll to determine which way is north, and allow them to track themselves back to the point where they got lost if they so choose.

Whatever happened, whatever happens, once they've resolved whatever it is, it's time to start the Travel Cycle anew.

Example:

After the excitement of the boat, we return to the rest of the day's cycle, continuing on through the muck with Red scouting ahead in the skiff. The skiff makes her twice as fast as the other PCs, so they no longer need to lose half the day's travel to waiting for her. The group re-evaluates how they wish to spend their now four hours of downtime.

Otherwise, the group decides to continue as before, only to stop again at nightfall when Voag discovers that the group is lost. If this had not interrupted them, the Cycle would have simply continued until the next interesting thing happened.

Town

Most of the action is going to occur in the wilderness, with "civilization" existing as a place to resupply and rest up between adventures. What exactly is available will vary from settlement to settlement, but in general PCs should be able to find many of the services they need.

Expenses:
PCs can spend as much time in town as they like. What sort of options will depend on the settlement, but the prices given in the Player's Handbook are standard. During this downtime, the players can accomplish a few other things.

Crafting:
PCs can spend time crafting, provided they have the skill and equipment. Each day's work progresses 5gp towards the effort needed to construct an object and uses 2gp 5sp worth of materials.

Recuperating:
Spending three days recovering allows players suffering from a malady to make a DC 15 Constitution check. Success indicates that they can end an effect that prevents them from recovering hit points, or take Advantage on rolls against disease or poison for the day. If maladies persist, they can make another check after 3 more days of rest.

Research and Rumors:
Different settlements may have different options as far as gathering rumors go - buying drinks at the tavern, spending time at the library. Each means costs 1gp per day, and allows an Attribute check to try and learn something. Rumors come from a list tied to the settlement, and are not guaranteed to be true or accurate. They are, after all, rumors.

Training:
Some DMs will require PCs to spend time and money training before leveling up. Even if they don't, training in a new language or tool may be available. This is especially useful in Hexboxes that include sentient beings who do not speak Common. Generally speaking, picking up a new language or tool will take 50 days at a cost of 1gp per day.

Other settlements may have other options. This will be noted in their location keys.
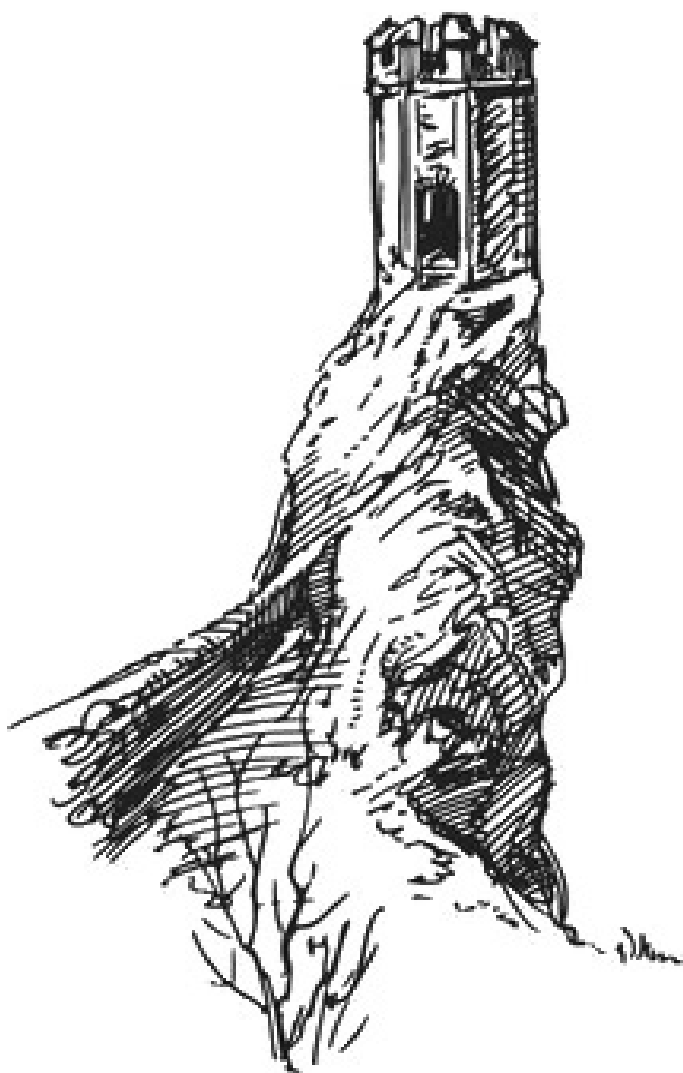
CHAPTER 3: PLAYING IN THE HEXBOX

Playing in a Hexbox campaign has a few vital differences from other forms of RPGs, and it's vital to understand these to get the most out of the game. This chapter is for players who don't really care so much about the nuts and bolts of the system, and are more interested in practical hints and advice.

What You Need to Know

Most importantly a Hexbox is player-driven, rather than story-driven or plot-driven. The players create the story and plots as they play. The DM will not tell you what to do next. There is no NPC supervisor ordering you around. Ultimately, your characters are responsible for setting goals for yourselves, and for deciding how to achieve them.

A good DM will be able to incorporate your characters' goals into the campaign, but you don't have to rely upon them if you are creating a character motivated to do the sorts of thing one does in a Hexcrawl:

- Explore new places
- Meet interesting creatures
- Kill them
- Take their stuff

We jest, but exploration itself is key, a constant element of the Hexbox no matter the setting or scenario, so create a character interested and invested in the act of exploration. Ask yourself, why is your character exploring? What does he want? And what do you, the player, want out of the campaign?

Character Creation

Characters built for a Hexbox game are much like those designed for other campaigns, with the understanding that wilderness characters (Druids, Barbarians, Rangers) will be in their element. Rangers in particular have huge advantages. Still, don't let this dissuade you from playing a more urban character… as long as the party has at least one guide, the group will be fine.

While individual Hexbox campaigns will have their own restrictions or modifications, any class or background that modifies a character's ability to forage will have to be adapted for use with the Hexbox foraging rules. In general doubling the amount of food gathered should suffice.

How to Crawl a Hex

In a Hexbox, play takes the form of wilderness expeditions from a relatively static base of operations. These expeditions may be directed towards a particular goal, like another town or a dungeon of some sort, or they may be more exploratory in nature. While the scenario's context may provide you with some larger goal you will be on your own regarding how you go about accomplishing it.

There are a few best practices that might help you in your adventures.

Have a Goal
Before you head out, you should have a general goal, if only so you know what to bring along in terms of supplies. It might be something as vague as exploring a given direction for a given period of time, or you might head towards a visible distant landmark or along a river or road. You might also follow up on a rumor you've discovered,.

The important thing is that a goal enables you to make a plan, even if setting out into unexplored territory.

Pack a lunch
While you can forage as you go, it might be prudent to bring enough food for the trip. Foraging takes time that might be better spent marching, and isn't by any means a sure thing. Experienced woodsmen might get away with packing only half as much food they need, but accidents happen. It is assumed that, as long as you carry a waterskin, most of the time you'll be able to find water to refill it as you travel. If you have no waterskin or are traveling through a desert, you will need to make a daily Survival roll to find enough water for yourself.

Know Your Limits
Accounting for sleep, time to eat, and time to set and break camp, a party on the move will have a good twelve hours of activity during the day. However, after eight hours of marching a party will face the possibility of Exhaustion, making you vulnerable in combat or if other dangerous situations arise. If you're not in a desperate hurry, those extra four hours of daylight can be spent foraging, fishing, casting rituals, or engaged in other activities.

Know Your Role

An expedition goes well when members have specific jobs to do. Some possibilities:

Navigator: One person reads the map, watches the stars, or just keeps track of which way is north. Uses the Wisdom (Survival) skill. Their job is primarily to keep the group from getting lost; parties that contain a Ranger in his favored terrain don't need one of these.

Mapmaker: If you can't find a map, you'll need to make one. Requires cartography tools and proficiency in using them.

Scout: A scout protects the main group from getting caught off guard when encountering something by traveling about a mile ahead of the main group.

Scouting 101

The primary benefit of the scout is early warning of encounters and enemy encampments at a distance where the rest of the party can decide whether or not they want to deal with the problem. Scouts are also better at remaining undetected; a party's ability to move undetected is determined by the worst Dexterity (Stealth) skill in the party, and at Disadvantage for their numbers. The downside is that, first of all, a Ranger scout's ability to ignore favored terrain modifiers does not aid the main party. Secondly, as the Scout is running off ahead and coming back frequently, this effectively cuts the group's travel time in half: In eight hours of marching, the party can make four hours worth of progress.

Those other four hours can, of course, be spent foraging or engaging in other activities while they wait. The party can march all day with only the scout risking exhaustion (he's traveled 12 hours, the rest of the party has traveled six), or the party can use multiple scouts to share that burden between them. Two scouts can share a 12 hour trek and march for 9 hours each — 6 hours scouting, and 6 hours with the rest of the party (counting as 3) — or three scouts can share that 12 hour trip without anyone risking exhaustion.

Finding Stuff

As you travel through the wilderness you will encounter events and discover things. Movement is somewhat abstract, in that exact positioning within a given hex is not tracked. A 9 mile wide hex covers 70 square miles of territory. Accordingly, unless a feature is visible from a distance, it's very easy to miss something even if you've passed through multiple times.

Accordingly, a party will only "randomly stumble" across anything interesting present by chance, unless you're following a road or river that the interesting feature happens to lie upon.

So if you suspect a cave or hut or something is located in a given hex, you can stay there and "search the area" until you find it. It may take several days. Secondly, if you're exploring, you can opt to travel at a half-pace "travel rate" to more thoroughly search an area, doubling your chances of finding something interesting… or having something interesting find you.

That said, keep in mind that finding nothing, even while exploring, might indicate that nothing is there… or that you just haven't found it yet.

Town

In a Hexbox, towns are mostly places to resupply, rest, and recuperate. What options are available depend upon the town in question, but in general the activities presented in the *Players' Handbook* and *Dungeon Master's Guide* may be possible.

Possible Activities:

- Crafting
- Rest and recover
- Seek out rumors of things to discover in the wilderness
- Spend coin
- Sell treasures or maps you've made
- Train to learn a new language or equipment proficiency.

Learning New Languages

According to the Player's Handbook it takes 250 days of training to learn a new language. This is true, but you don't go from completely incapable to absolute fluency in a single step.

At 50 hours or so, you will be able to pick up the important words and phrases in a new language. You might not be able to hold a conversation, but you can order a drink or ask for directions to the library. Much of the time, you'll even be able to understand the response!
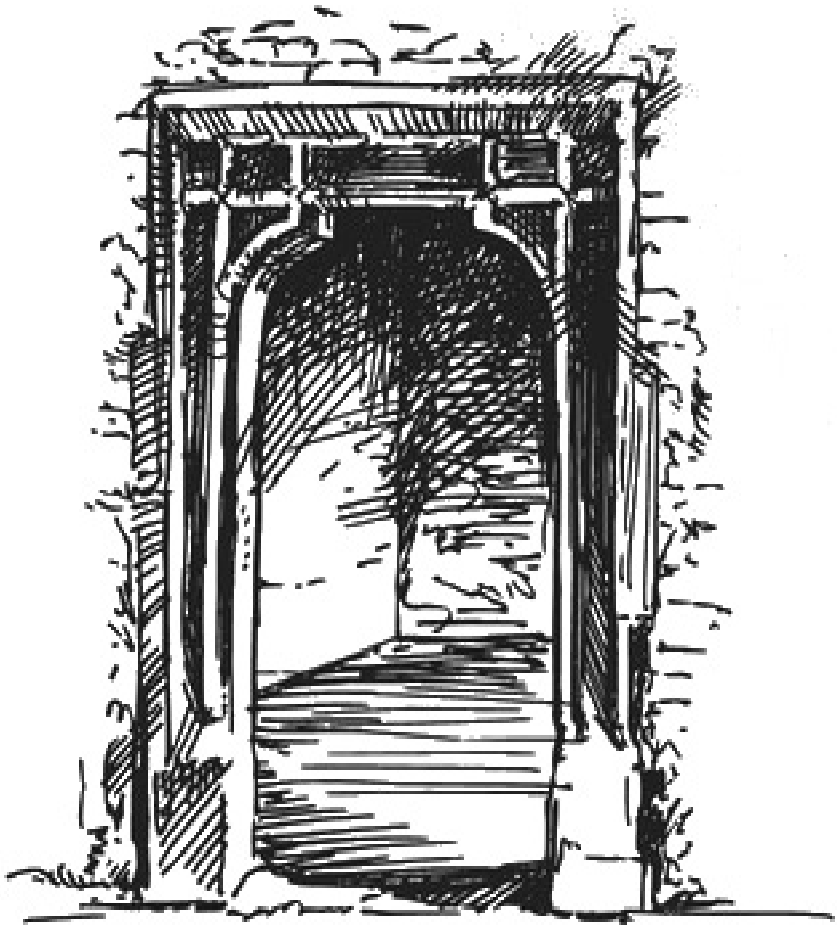
CHAPTER FOUR: BUILDING A HEXBOX

The Hexbox is a ruleset, a system of tools used to run exploratory wilderness campaigns. To actually implement it, you need a setting to play it with. There is a small mini-campaign presented in the Appendix, and Taoscordian Games sells a few Hexbox campaigns, but enterprising DMs may wish to either create their own worlds or adapt another published campaign setting for use with the Hexbox system.

This chapter covers both options. A Hexbox campaign includes a map, a fact sheet, an expedition log, a regional event key, and a hex location key.

The Map

A Hexbox campaign starts with the map. An actual mapmaking tutorial is beyond the scope of this book, so we'll focus on the features that make a good Hexbox map.

Scope: Keep it manageable. Filling out an entire continent's worth of content is a lot of work that your players will never even see, so designing it is wasted effort. A 9-mile wide hex covers 70 square miles, so a 10x10 hexmap gives your players 700 square miles to a side.

It is suggested that you focus your maps on particular geographic regions — this swamp or that mountain range — as that makes it easier to create the map's event key consistent with a single geographic terrain type. This isn't to say that "the Dark Forest" cannot contain hexes of swamp or hills or plains, of course.

Settlements: Sparsely populated wilderness regions work well for a Hexbox campaign, simply because it's unlikely that a settlement within a day's travel of something seriously dangerous will continue to be populated for long. As a general guideline smaller towns and villages will exist at a distance of about a day apart and be connected by trails or dirt roads. Larger towns and cities will be less common and further apart, connected by a network of villages.

Rather than spreading out your towns and villages throughout the region, consider shoving them all off to one side or the edge of your map, with the implication that boring civilized land lies in that direction. A map can get by well enough with only one settlement, but a complete lack of civilization creates a new challenge for the players - they will have no access to friendly NPCs, merchants, or new supplies. Of course, that makes a perfectly entertaining game, if that's what you're into.

Rivers and Roads:

Roads exist to ease travel between settlements, so design them that way on your map, stretching them from where people are to where they want to go. Rivers run from areas of high elevation to lower, but their function on the map is to provide a natural path adventurers can follow to get somewhere that nobody would bother building a road to. Use them for this purpose as you see fit.

Tools:

At its most basic, find a hex grid online, print it out, and draw your map on top of it. If you want to get fancy, there are a few free tools you can grab online for this purpose:

• Hexographer: Easy to use, available in free or premium version. The free version exports maps to PNG.
• Hexmapper: Fractal in design, allowing mappers to expand a given hex into a smaller scale. Exports to XML, or you can print to PDF.

Players will not have access to this map. Allow them to create their own maps as they travel, but they may also find or purchase maps on their own. If so, you'll have to make the maps up for them… if you do, don't create them with the same precision as the map you're working from, and don't use a hex grid.

Create them to look like whatever the map's cartographer would work with.

The Fact Sheet

Once you've made your map, you'll need to work up a fact sheet. This is no more than a quick reference for notes you'll need to keep yourself aware of as the players' travel, all located in one place, and used with the map. Include on your fact-sheet anything you think you'll need to reference for the area, including but not limited to:

• Terrain movement penalty
• Survival (Wisdom) DCs for Navigation and Foraging
• Encounter distance due to terrain and visual conditions
• A list of food that might be foraged here
• A list of small animals that might be hunted here
• A random daily weather chart customized to the local client
• A list of other conditions that apply while traveling in the region, like disease vectors, light levels, heat or cold, humidity, hazards, etc.

Location Key

Creating a location key is one of the most time-consuming parts of Hexbox creation. You need to put something interesting into each hex. These will be more or less "permanent" features that will stick around if the PCs come back later, rather than something like a random encounter, though you can include notes describing how a location might evolve over time.

Some options include:

Settlements: A village, town, city, or just an isolated homestead. It's primary purpose is to provide players with a base from which to explore. It's a safe place where players can resupply and perform other tasks while not adventuring. When placing a settlement, you'll want to decide what resources are available to the PCs, as well as what rumors can be learned there.

Landmarks: Interesting but otherwise insignificant sites, like a rock that looks like a gnome's face, or a field that contains a mysterious (but nonmagical) obelisk. They add flavor to a game and provide way-points when navigating, but don't offer the PCs a challenge or give them any specific benefit. Their primary value is that they make the world look complex and "full" without adding too much time to the development process.

Lairs: Any relatively static monster lair, like a bear's cave or a hobgoblin burrow. These aren't, generally, large enough to need their own sub-maps, but will contain monsters and treasure.

Dungeon: This might be an ancient ruin, haunted castle, cavern system, or a more elaborate lair of some kind. These will have their own separate maps and keys that are more like a traditional dungeon.

Weird Stuff: Magical pools, talking statues, bottomless pits, half-buried dragon skulls, and the like. The fantastic. Perform much the same function as landmarks, but are more exciting, and may help or harm the PCs more directly.

In addition to these features, a hex might also include other special notes, like richer or poorer hunting than is normal, a different weather pattern, or really anything else that makes an area unique. You should also note which landmarks or features are visible in neighboring hexes, just to remind the DM to point them out.

The Fourth Dimension

Any of these keyed locations can certainly change over time, either in relation to the PCs actions, or independently. For example, say the PCs run across a necromancer's tower. They fight their way in, kill the necromancer, and take his stuff. When the PCs pass by again, it might be empty yet… or the local hobgoblins might have moved in. You can note these possibilities in your keyed entries, but a lot of it is the sort of things that the DM will have to improvise based on player action.

Alternatively, you might note chances that occur independent of PC action. Say that your necromancer is either ignored by the PCs or just never encountered. You might note on the hex key that, a month after the campaign begins, the necromancer accidentally blows his tower up. PCs that visit the hex after day 31 instead find a scorched spot of earth and scattered Necromancer bits… or maybe a magical gateway to the land of the dead.

Event List

Not all encounters are set-pieces tied to one particular location. Transient weather effects, wandering monsters, inexplicable disasters… anything not permanently tied to one location fall under the category of Event. These events aren't just lists of monsters, but possible scenarios for you to choose from.

The basic form of an Event list is a number of entries tied to a random die roll. Each entry has a number of sub-headings that describe possible ways that particular event can manifest - that way, the DM has a degree of latitude to decide what happens without ignoring the roll.

See the Examples appendix to help you visualize it.

Entries on the Event List might include:

- Straight up monsters. Sub-entries may include monster tracks, temporary lairs, a dead specimine, a lone creature, a pair, a sleeping beast, etc.
- The locals. Sub-entries include highwaymen, lost children, patrolling law-folk, simple farmers, or wandering merchants. Maybe a campsite.
- Weather. Regardless of the day's rolled weather, an event might be a sudden fierce storm that lasts a few minutes, a solar eclipse, a sudden windstorm, or really anything that's interesting but not overly persistent.
- Natural Disaster. Mudslide. Rockfall. Earthquake. Tornado.
- Animals. Could be spoor, tracks, or a sighting. Might be a game animal, a flock of birds, etc. Just make sure it's notable in some way.
- Weird things. A cold shiver up the spine. Dead bodies. A weird natural sculpture. A sudden inexplicable sonic boom.

While these random events might be whatever comes off the top of your head, let yourself be inspired by the map key you've created. Added a goblin tower? Maybe goblins on patrol are an event, or the occasional distant goblin hunting horn blast.

Note too that this event list does not directly take player level into account. A given entry might result in a challenge entirely beyond the party's capabilities to handle. It is strongly recommended that when this occurs, the DM chooses a permutation that includes the option to retreat, hide, or surrender.

Appendix: Example Hexbox

The following example Hexbox has been provided to give you an idea of how the system works. While the scope is limited due to it being just an example, it is perfectly playable as a mini-campaign, or as a story arc in a larger campaign.

The Premise:

Good King Weston has graciously granted your party a parcel of land - the Dismal Swamp! Don't let the name fool you, it's really more of a marsh. And a valuable one for the rich peat that can be mined from the muck.

The important thing though is that the swamp is haunted, as is, presumably, the ancient keep sitting in its heart.

Your job, accordingly, is to wade through the swamp and eliminate any threats, so you can start restoring the Dismal Keep and set yourself up as captains of the Peat Bog industry!

Okay, so innovative it ain't, but it provides us with all of the elements needed to show off what a Hexbox looks like.
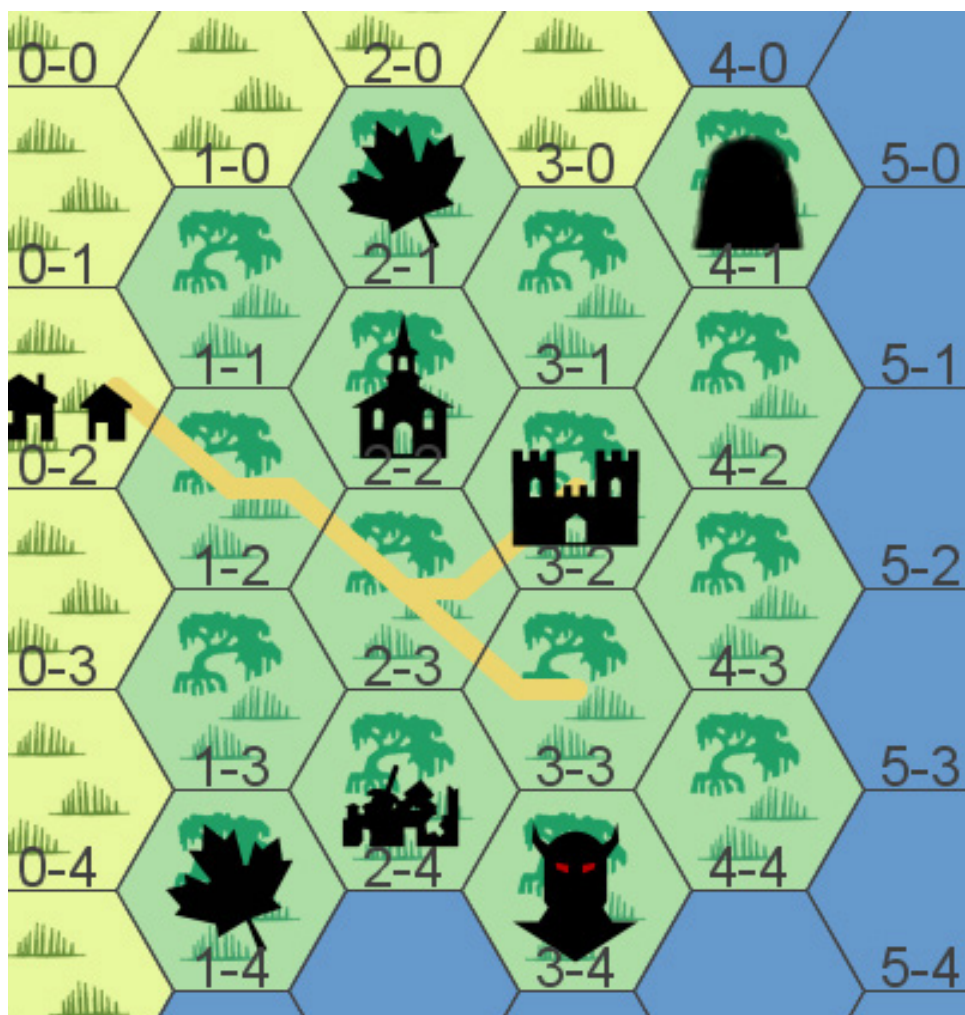
Players begin in Hex 0-2, the village of Swampburg.

The Dismal Swamp is a vast 750 square-mile brakish peat swamp with slightly acidic water. Summers are hot and humid, while the temperature dips to almost 50 degrees farenheit in the dryer winter months. The land is, generally, flat.

Marching Speed: Unless led by a Ranger whose favored terrain is Swamp, the party's travel rate is halved due to the muck of the swamp, unless traveling on the causeway.
Navigation DC: 10
Foraging DC: 15
Encounter Distance: 2d8x10 feet.

Foraging results:

The two most common trees in the swamp are cypress (standing around 100 feet tall) and swamp tupelo, standing 70-80 feet tall. The latter tree produces small blue-black fruit with large seeds that litter the ground around their bases when ripe in the summer; these will, when in season, form a large part of foragers' diets. They are tasty, if a little sour.

Edible mushrooms
Grubs
Tupelo fruit
Frogs
Lizards
Crayfish
Cattail
Blackberries
Blueberries
Various insects

On a poor roll, a character ate something toxic or an insect with parasites.

The Causeway
The causeway rises 3 feet above the water, and traveling along it avoids the problem of the swamp's terrain. It's not in the greatest of shape, however, and there are gaps of two to a dozen feet in sections, and in other sections it sags to the point of being submerged by several inches.

The Hex Key

0-2: Swampburg

This small town sits on the very edge of the swamp, and is the only community near it. The locals are simple country folk, friendly enough if you've got coin to spend. They don't much like the idea of a local lord living so close, but would appreciate being spared the horrors of the swamp.

Leading away from Swampburg, into the swamp, is a raised causeway that can be followed all the way to the keep.

Lifestyle Expenses:
- **0gp - Wretched** You camp on the edge of town and eat what others throw away. This is no way to live.
- **1sp - Squalid** There's a squatter camp over on the edge of town. Sometimes alligators thin their numbers in the middle of the night.
- **2sp - Poor** You live in the tavern's common room. Comes with a free breakfast of stale bread and thin gruel.
- **2gp - Modest** You share a room at the inn with two other people.
- **4gp - Comfortable** You're renting one of the village cottages for some reason. This is only available at a monthly rate of 120gp/month.

Provisions: Nothing over 50gp value is available immediately, but there are merchants who can special order it and get it delivered in about a week.

Research: Swampburg holds no libraries or anything of the sort, but hanging out at the tavern can induce the normally uncongenial locals to share their stories about the swamp. For a few drinks, anyway. Spend a day in the tavern and 1 gp on drinks for your new friends, and you can make a Charisma (Persuasion) check. Succeed, and get a rumor:

D10 Roll	Rumor
1	"You're not the first group the King gave this land title to. Leastways, not the first group come through claiming that."
2	"This here is a peat swamp. What that means is that the muck is very flameable. You be careful runnin' around with them torches."
3	"You watch out for them Dundee Boys runnin' around in that swamp. Mean sons of bitches, gut you soon as look at you."
4	"Go into the swamp, stay on the causeway. Or the swamp witch'll get you, turn you into stew!"
5	"You might hear about the swamp witch. She ain't so bad. Sells herbal remedies, hardly ever turn nobody into frogs."
6	"One day, the lord of that keep done insulted the swamp witch. She turned half of 'em into frogs, other half inna gaters, and they been feuding ever since. So you find the frogmen or the lizard folk, you remember they used to be men like you or me."
7	"Swampburg got a real problem. Swamp Ice. Ruin your life. Some say it's a curse from the swamp witch, but it's just some drug the Dundee Boys whipped up."
8	"Granddaddy told me a story once that his granddaddy said that there was a dragon in the swamp. I never seen it, though."
9	"Worst thing in the swamp? Well. You got your Lizardmen an' your Frogfolk, but there's a few trolls, too. Watch out for them. Swamp Witch is just some old lady, don't pay her no mind."
10	"Some of the townsfolk belong to a cult, see. Take vagrants like yourself out to the swamp, murder 'em to their swamp god." (False)

1-1: Collapsed Watchtower

This was a simple wooden structure the Dundee Boys used to look out for the authorities. It wasn't built very well, though, and not at all maintained. Digging through the muck will reveal an adult human skeleton dressed in the tattered remains of commoners' clothing, with a dagger in a rotting sheath at its hip and a broken crossbow nearby.

1-2: Mind the Gap

There's a gap of about half a mile in the causeway, with little to indicate where it once was. As long as the party continues on in a straight line they'll catch up with it again, but if they don't, they won't. It is impossible to miss the gap if walking along the causeway.

1-3: Troll Den

A stinking stagnant hole half-filled with scummy water, the perfect place for a troll to lair, unless the PCs have already killed it. At any time there will be a 30% chance the troll is home, squatting in the water. Remember that it has Advantage on Perception rolls to smell the PCs approach.

If it's not home or if they kill it, PCs can dredge its hole for treasure. In addition to the skeletal remains of twelve victims, an Investigation roll and an hour's effort will come up with: 6d6 x 100 cp (out of a total maximum 3000), 3d6x 100 sp (out of a total maximum 1500), 2d6 x 10 gp (out of a total 100), and 2d6 quartz gems worth 50gp each (out of a total 10). There is also a 10% chance per hour spent of finding a stoppered Elixir of Health. Only one will be recovered.

If the troll has not been slain, there is a 30% chance per hour of it returning to find the PCs in its lair.

1-4: Grandmother Willow

This is a big old Willow tree with patterns in the bark that vaguely look like a face. The swamp witch has left little offerings around its base - woven willow branches, flowers, small pots that once held wine or food but now just contain a little dirty water. Characters who show Mother Willow respect will get Inspiration. Those who disrespect her will feel unlucky and have Disadvantage on their next roll within the next 24 hours. She is otherwise a normal tree in all respects; her divine nature is entirely a function of the Swamp Witch's devotion.

2-1: Skunk Weed Field

This is a field of strange swamp herbs surrounded by a wire fence. These herbs were collected by the Swamp Witch in 5-3 until the Dundee Boys set up shop here. Now the Boys have been harvesting the herbs in order to brew Swamp Ice, a debilitating drug they sell to distributors. By itself the herb can be chewed on or brewed to provide a mild stimulating effect similar to coffee, but when combined with other unwholesome ingredients it gets quite the kick.

During the day there will be d4+1 Dundee Boys harvesting skunkweed, and d4 more in a nearby shack brewing up a fresh batch of Swamp Ice. The fumes from the process are quite volatile; any flames in or near the shack will cause a massive explosion. Use the stats for Bandits to represent them.

The shack contains a lockbox with 2000 cp, 1000 sp, and 50 gp, and 4 doses of Swamp Ice.

Swamp Ice: A powder applied to the gums, providing a numbing sensation from which it gets its name. Users will feel agitated and hyper, generally "up" for two hours. There are no mechanical benefits, but the user will feel more capable. They will then feel "down" for two hours, being lethargic and depressed. Swamp Ice is illegal, but can be sold for 10sp per dose.

2-2: The Old Church

This is an old single-room Church, now abandoned to the elements. The roof has collapsed, but the walls are still standing. Anything of value was taken long ago, but it's a dry place to make camp.

The Keep in 3-2 is visible to the southeast.

2-3: Tipped Carriage

There is a carriage submerged in the swamp, here. During the winter months the back corner and wheel will be visible above the muck. It'll take some effort to pull out and right the carriage, but someone could always open the passenger-side door and dive in.

Searching the muck within the carriage will reveal two skeletons in the remains of what was fine clothing several decades ago. One of them wears a simple gold bracelet worth 25gp.

The Keep in 3-2 is visible to the southeast.

2-4: Abandoned Homestead/Lodge + stirge roost

This is a large rectangular hut raised up six feet above the water (four in the summer). Twenty years ago it was a lodge for hunters in the swamp, but it was abandoned and now serves as the roost for a large group of stirges. At any given time there will be 2d6 present out of the dozens that roost here.

Rotten steps lead up to the walkway surrounding the 10' x 40' hut, and the wood will whine and protest mightily when someone ascends. This will alert the stirges, who will emerge in two rounds to feast upon the blood of intruders.

There's not much to be found inside other than pinkish-red stirge guano and a clutch of 24 stirge eggs, but a thorough investigation will turn up an old chest containing an alligator hide worth 10gp.

3-1: Abandoned Hut

This hut is elevated on poles eight feet off the ground, making it difficult to reach - climbing the swamp-slime coated poles is a DC 15 Climb (Dexterity) check. It is home only to six giant wolf spiders. They have no treasure, but if killed and their webs cleared, the hut makes an excellent camping spot.

The Keep in 3-2 is visible to the southeast.

3-2: The Keep

The Keep is currently overrun by a tribe of Frogfolk, who defeated a tribe of Lizardmen to take it over. There are a dozen Frogfolk present at all times, armed with spears, holding eight Lizardmen hostage in a holding cell.

Frogmen Treasure:
1000 cp, 800 sp, 50gp

If the Frogmen are defeated the Lizardmen will agree to disperse into the swamp, only to return later under the command of their king. If the PCs set up shop, they'll attempt a raid at night. If the PCs leave, they'll just move on in. When the PCs free them, each lizardman is at half max hp, but they will have healed if encountered later.
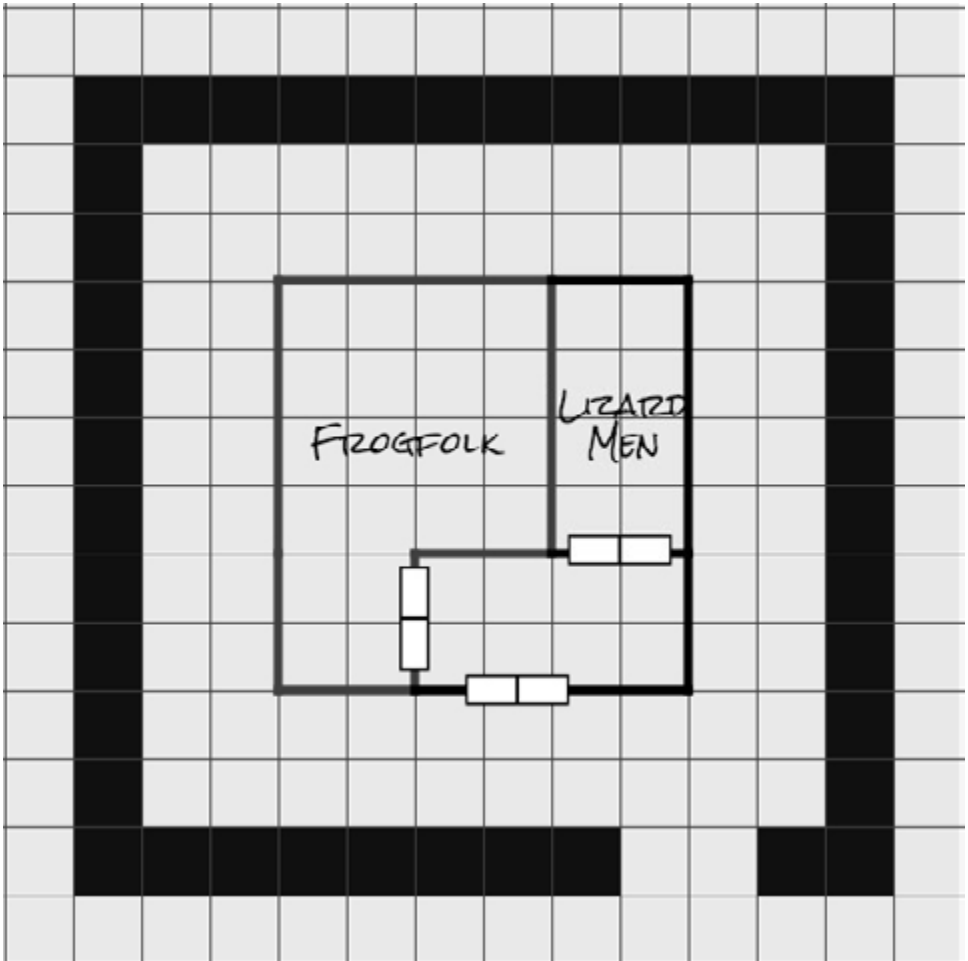
3-3: Skeleton of a Giant Aligator

This is the skeleton of a massive alligator that must have been twenty feet long in life, half-submerged in the swamp.

The Keep in 3-2 is visible to the southeast.

3-4: A freaking dragon

Fetidbone, an old Black Dragon, lairs in this region of the swamp. Unlike most of its kind, it is a lazy beast, it doesn't really want to deal with heroes coming to slay it or noisy neighbors in the form of the keep. It lives a simple life here, with the swamp providing it enough food for very little effort.

The dragon will slink through the swamp water hiding from the PCs and observing them (Stealth +7, Perception +11). If it's spotted or if they have the temerity to camp in this area, it will engage them in conversation to sus out their motives. It's Insight is +6, and it will warn them once about lying to it.

If they reveal their purpose it tells them that they will permit it, providing they are "good neighbors." This entails two things. First, they must kill the Swamp Witch. It really doesn't care about her, but is curious to see if they'll do it. Secondly, they must swear an oath of fealty to the Dragon, agreeing to serve as its agents within the swamp and larger world, while revealing its existence to no one. Do this, and it will permit them to restore their keep.

If they successfully lie to it, it will instead ask them only to swear an oath never to reveal its existence to anyone.

To enforce these promises (fealty or secrecy) it will present them with a magical pearl to swear upon. Their promise acts as a geas as per the spell, with an indefinite duration until removed by a Remove Curse, Wish, or Limited Wish spell.

If they refuse to offer these oaths, the dragon will likely eat them.

4-1: The Swamp Cave

This has become the lair of the deposed Lizardman King. If he hears the PCs approaching, he'll hide in the pool in the back of the cave and watch them. (Perception +4, Stealth +5). If they spot him or otherwise seem open to conversation, he'll tell them his story.

He and his tribe have lived in the swamp for generations alongside the treacherous Frogmen. The Tribe moved into the humans' keep after they abandoned it, and the Frogmen lived in the swamp beyond, which is only fitting for such a primitive and lowly people. For years, the Frogmen have sought to steal the keep from its rightful Lizard heirs, and recently, they succeeded.

He realizes that the humans have come to take their keep back, and he is of course willing to help them, if they are willing to help free his brothers and sisters from captivity. Together they can defeat the trechearous Frogfolk and usher in a new era of mammal-lizard cooperation!

This is a lie. He intends to use the PCs to free his people and then turn on them. He is a pretty good liar, though (Deception +2).

If the PCs agree to his plan, he will accompany them on an assault on the keep, betraying them after his people have been freed. If not, and he survives, he will sulk and skulk just out of site, following the PCs until they attack the keep, and try to free his people in the confusion.

In addition to his trident, the Lizard King wears a silver torc worth 80gp.

4-2: The Hill

This is a hill that rises clearly and cleanly out of the swamp.

The Keep in 3-2 is visible to the southeast.

4-3: Frogmen Spawning Pool

This is a gross fetid pool ringed by a carefully constructed earthwork where the Frogmen come to do their business.

The Keep in 3-2 is visible above the trees.

4-4: Hut of the Swamp Witch

Nestled here just a few hundred yards from the shore is a simple hut on stilts rising eight feet above the water. This is the home of Caro the Swamp Witch, a moderately powerful druid. She'll be out in the swamp during the day, and at night will usually be here, with a lantern burning in the window.

She won't be friendly with visitors, unless they're willing to spend some money. She sells dubious looking potions - effectively Potions of Healing - for 50gp each. If the PCs buy any, she'll mention that she can make more powerful medicine, but the herbs that she needs grow in the north of the swamp. Collect a bushel, and she'll make you some. If they agree, she gives them a basket.

If in the future they return with the Skunk Weeds from 2-2, she'll provide them with three Potions of Greater Healing, and tell them to come back in a few days and she'll sell them more for 500gp each.

Event List

When an encounter is called for, roll a d20 to determine general category, then select from the options presented. Subtract 1 if the encounter occurs within 2 hexes of town; add 1 if the encounter occurs 4 or more hexes from town.

1. Locals
- The PCs encounter a group of locals.
- A group of trappers in a flat-bottomed skiff, out huntin' gators.
- Townsfolk hunting frogs, lizards, and the like. They have a bucket.
- Traps set by trappers. Snares, probably. Might have some swamp animal caught in them.
- An empty skiff, floating on its own, no owners in sight.

2. Dundee Boys
Those no good Dundee boys is at it again. And what they're at is ambushing passers-by to steal their things. Use the stats for Bandits. 3d4 Dundees will be encountered at a time.

3. A sinkhole
The land under the PCs suddenly collapses, creating a sort of sucking muck that threatens to draw them under unless they get out of there. Fortunately they have time — it takes a full minute before they're in danger of being drowned.

4. Swamp Gas! For real, this time!
You can tell by the stench of decaying vegetable matter. The area in a 2d6x10 foot radius becomes suffused with it, calling for a DC 10 Constitution save every round to avoid taking d3 damage from the toxic fumes. A fire spell will clear it up, but do d6 damage to everyone in the area.

5. Lizard King
The Lizardman King has come out of hiding to hunt for food and shake a scaled fist at the Frogfolk. If he sees the PCs he'll try to follow them in secret, otherwise behave as he does in Hex 4-1.

6. Stirges
- A small flock of d6 Stirges from Hex 2-4 looking for blood. Hey! The PCs have blood, don't they?
- Instead of a stirge, you find a recent meal... another creature on this list, drained of blood, and full of puncture marks. Roll or choose.

7. Frogs on Patrol
- 2d4 Frogmen hunting the Lizard King. They found the PCs instead.
- The PCs come across a crude sign the Frogfolk have put up to mark their territory. It's a wooden post with a Lizardman skull spiked through it. Subtle.

8. The Troll
It's the troll from 1-3 out looking for food. He's not one for tactics or subtlety, more the sort prone to rush at the group howling and gibbering.

9. Swamp Witch
The PCs run into the Swamp Witch from 4-4 while she's out gathering herbs. She won't be very social, as she doesn't have anything to sell, and instead may invite them back to her hut.

10. Alligators
Alligators can be social, in that they will tolerate the presence of other nearby alligators. Sometimes.
- A single Alligator.
- A mess of 2d4 Alligators.

Hexes to Crawl, Monsters to Kill

For more from Taoscordian Games, including downloadable PC Procedure and Expedition Log sheets as well as professionally produced and presented Hexcrawl campaign settings, visit the Taoscordian Games website at http://www.taoscordian.com.

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PC PROCEDURES

PARTY NAME:

CHARACTER   AC   PASSIVE PERCEPTION   SURVIVAL   STEALTH

BASE SPEED: X TERRAIN: X EXPLORATION   = SPEED: MPH
BASE TRAVEL TIME: X SCOUT   = TRAVEL TIME: HOURS
SPEED X TRAVEL TIME =   MILES/DAY

NAVIGATOR: SURVIVAL (WIS)
MAPMAPER:
SCOUT: PERCEPTION (WIS)   STEALTH (DEX)

WATCH ORDER   FROM TO

MARCHING ORDER

DOWNTIME PLANS

EXPEDITION LOG

CHARACTER   SURVIVAL   FOOD

DAILY SPEED:

	HEX	WEATHER	TRAVEL
DAY 1			
DAY 2			
DAY 3			
DAY 4			
DAY 5			
DAY 6			
DAY 7			

	HEX	WEATHER	TRAVEL
DAY 1			
DAY 2			
DAY 3			
DAY 4			
DAY 5			
DAY 6			
DAY 7			

	HEX	WEATHER	TRAVEL
DAY 1			
DAY 2			
DAY 3			
DAY 4			
DAY 5			
DAY 6			
DAY 7			

	HEX	WEATHER	TRAVEL
DAY 1			
DAY 2			
DAY 3			
DAY 4			
DAY 5			
DAY 6			
DAY 7			

	HEX	WEATHER	TRAVEL
DAY 1			
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DAY 4			
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DAY 6			
DAY 7			

	HEX	WEATHER	TRAVEL
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	HEX	WEATHER	TRAVEL
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	HEX	WEATHER	TRAVEL
DAY 1			
DAY 2			
DAY 3			
DAY 4			
DAY 5			
DAY 6			
DAY 7			

	HEX	WEATHER	TRAVEL
DAY 1			
DAY 2			
DAY 3			
DAY 4			
DAY 5			
DAY 6			
DAY 7			

NOTES

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