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GM'S MONTHLY MISCELLANY:

JANUARY 2017





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GM'S MONTHLY MISCELLANY: JANUARY 2017

Featuring material from some of Raging Swan Press's newest products as well as classic releases of yesteryear, advice articles and material from Creighton's own Borderland of Adventure campaign, the GM's Monthly Miscellany series is a terrific free resource for the busy, time-crunched GM.

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SOURCES

As well as new, never seen before material from my own Borderland of Adventure campaign, this instalment of GM's Monthly Miscellany presents information from several Raging Swan Press products and advice articles including:

- **Places of Power: Dragonmarch Keep** Mike Welham.
- **Village Backdrop: Black Wyvern** Richard Green.

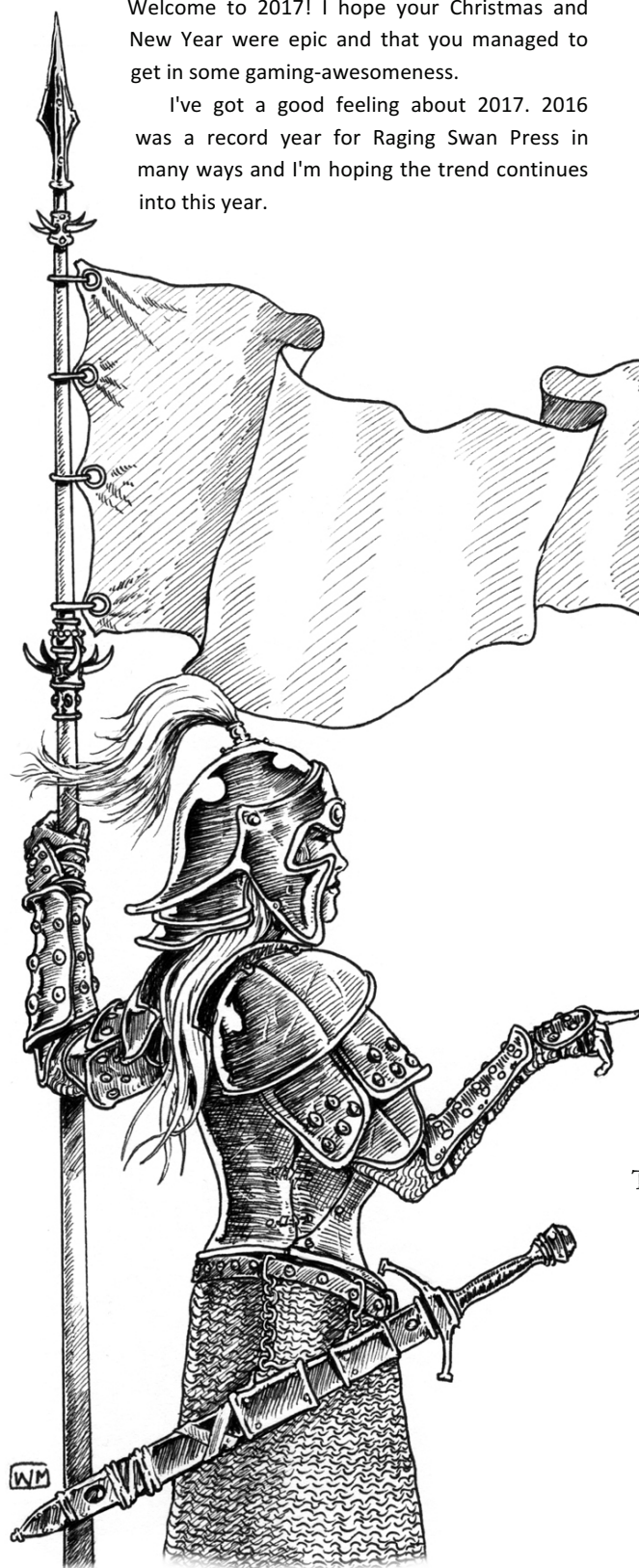
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FOREWORD



Welcome to 2017! I hope your Christmas and New Year were epic and that you managed to get in some gaming-awesomeness.

I've got a good feeling about 2017. 2016 was a record year for Raging Swan Press in many ways and I'm hoping the trend continues into this year.

Herein, you'll find excerpts from some of Raging Swan's newest products including *Village Backdrop: Black Wyvern*, *Places of Power: Dragonmarch Keep* and the collector's edition of *Fane of the Undying Sleeper*. I've also included more snippets from the *Gloomhold Campaign Guide*, which will release at the end of February. These include a first glimpse of the "Gloomhold Look" and some thoughts on what wandering monsters are actually doing. Thank you to Chris Nielsen for making me ponder this subject.

Gloomhold has been a long time coming—the pesky business of running Raging Swan Press has got in the way more than I'd like—but in the jolly near future you'll be able to get a grand overview of the place. I hope you enjoy it and decide to run a campaign therein. You can read the articles—and scores more as well as my campaign summaries—at creightonbroadhurst.com.

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 9 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, I hope you enjoy the material in this GM's Monthly Miscellany, but more importantly I hope you find it useful and that it enhances your campaign.

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.

THE GLOAMHOLD LOOK

A subtle and ancient curse of great potency and malignancy lurks within Gloamhold's gloomy, dust-shrouded halls. Curiously, it seems only those who dwell in the world of men—humans, elves, dwarves and the like—fall prey to its malign influence. Those accustomed to living underground in the permanent dark of the ancient fortress's ebon reaches appear immune to its effect.

Thus, few explorers escape Gloamhold unscathed for the dungeon itself infuses its malignity upon all who tarry too long within its doom-drenched halls. Many who delve its depths emerge...changed. In the surrounding area those bearing a certain haggard, prematurely aged appearance or who appear distracted by things no one else can see are often referred to as having the "Gloamhold Look".

Some explorers resist Gloamhold's insidious influence longer than others, keeping it at bay for years while the unlucky ones quickly succumb to its subtle influence. To begin with, the Gloamhold Look is a subtle thing—manifesting itself perhaps as slightly greying hair or deep bags under the afflicted individual's eyes. However, as the curse takes hold, these changes deepen and become more severe.

Most healers are powerless to slow, hinder or reverse the progression of their patient's Gloamhold Look. Only powerful magic beyond the reach of all but the richest or most powerful folk, or time spent away from Gloamhold's gloomy precincts, can loosen the curse's persistent grasp.



Generally, Gloamhold's curse may fall upon an unfortunate explorer, when one of the following occurs while the character is in Gloamhold:

- When the character is knocked unconscious.
- When the character is slain (but subsequently returned to life).
- When the character is charmed, dominated or otherwise magically compelled to carry out someone else's wishes.
- When the character fails to resist a magical effect that renders them frightened, scared, panicked or the like.

Additionally, certain places are so steeped in ancient evil, that the curse is particularly virulent in such locations. Simply entering such areas could be enough to trigger the onset—or the worsening—of the curse. Such locations—and their effects—are at the GM's discretion, but should include any place dedicated to Dagon's worship.

DESIGNER'S NOTE

Designing this facet of Gloamhold has proven particularly tricky. Given that Gloamhold is being written as a system neutral product, designing the mechanical aspect of how characters suffer the taint of the dungeon was difficult to achieve. I've realised that any talk of saving throws or the like would be impossible to deal with in all but the vaguest terms—thus rendering the process basically pointless. Instead, I think it makes more sense to have certain events trigger its onset. The GM shouldn't immediately describe the curse attacking the PC—it's a subtler effect than that which will take a day or two to manifest.

WHAT'S GLOAMHOLD?

For the last year or so, Creighton has been designing a megadungeon over at his blog. Gloamhold is that megadungeon. If you hanker after the good old days of deep, rambling dungeons, dangers seemingly without end lurking in the darkness and a sandbox style of play, Gloamhold is for you. (Particularly if you agree that Everything is Better with Tentacles).

Interested? The *Gloamhold Campaign Guide* is scheduled for a late February release. Even better than that, all of Creighton's preliminary drafts and maps are available to read—for free—over at creightonbroadhurst.com.

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

Corruption +0, **Crime** -5, **Economy** +0, **Law** +0, **Lore** -3, **Society** +5

Qualities Prosperous, superstitious

Danger +0; **Disadvantages** None

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.

MARKETPLACE

Resources & Industry Carpentry, lumber, hunting and trapping

Base Value 650 gp; **Purchase Limit** 3,750 gp; **Spellcasting** 1st; **Minor Items** 2d4; **Medium Items** 1d4; **Major Items** –

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

- **Potions & Oils** *hide from animals* (50 gp), *pass without trace* (50 gp), *bull’s strength* (300 gp)
- **Wondrous Items** *swan boat feather token* (450 gp), *whip feather token* (500 gp)

VILLAGE LORE

A PC making a Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (local) check may know something about Black Wyvern. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser result.

DC 10: Black Wyvern produces good quality lumber for shipbuilding and the finest sea chests for a hundred miles.

DC 15: The woods around the village are infested with orcs and goblins, and the locals take a tough line with these vermin to stay safe.

DC 25: The villagers have made a strange pact with the forest to allow them to harvest its bounty.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A PC can use Diplomacy to gather information about Black Wyvern and its surroundings. This takes 1d4 hours and requires a DC 10 check. A PC exceeding this check gains one additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10. Use the table below to determine which rumour(s) the PC learns.

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 dire 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 sentient moon oak) 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 expert 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.

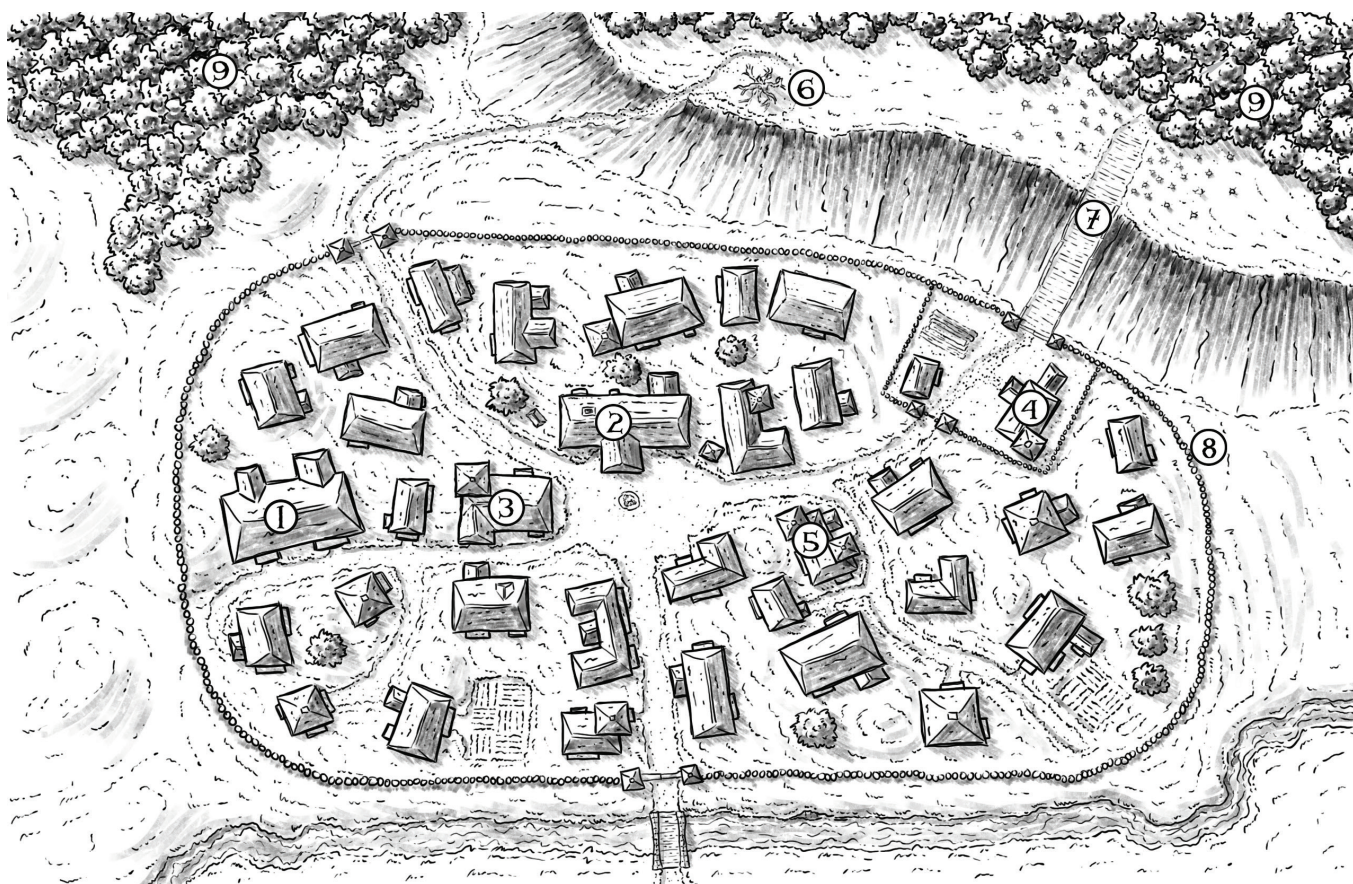
Tahan "Clever" Kellem (location 1; N[E] male halfling expert 3) Cowardly ex-pirate and navigator on the *Black Wyvern*; nervous leader of the village council.

Yala Nimblefingers (location 2; N male human bard 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.



DRAGONMARCH KEEP AT A GLANCE

Ruler Countess Liana Van de Vore

Population 42 (25 humans, 5 dwarves, 7 half-elves, 2 half-orcs, 3 halflings)

Alignments LN, N

Languages Common, Orc

Resources & Industry Defence, farming

Dragonmarch Keep stand at the point where the border of three kingdoms intersect. Overlooking blasted, monster-infested land, the fortress serves as a monument to the hard-won treaty brokered by the kingdoms' 37 years ago. This compact derived not from a mutual desire for peace, but rather from the pragmatic need to counter marauding monsters raiding the kingdoms' easy-to-plunder lands weakened by years of fighting. The keep stands as a bastion against the waste's denizens. Its garrison—largely comprised of nobles from the three realms—frequently patrols the surround territory. Their actions act as a check to the many raiding parties creeping forth to pillage the civilised lands beyond.

LORE

A PC making a Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (local) check may know something of Dragonmarch Keep. A successful check reveals all the information revealed by a lesser check.

DC 15: Dragonmarch Keep is the destination for low-ranking nobles who must prove capable of cooperating with their peers from other kingdoms to battle against wasteland creatures.

DC 20: Niles Van de Vore founded the keep over 100 years ago after he slew the powerful red dragon, Glitterfang.

DC 25: The strategically vital keep switched owner frequently until the three kingdoms reached a lasting accord.

NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than ordinary folk.

- **Appearance** Many of the nobles are young, but a few veterans call the keep home. The working folk supporting the keep are all middle-aged or older. Dragonmarch's dangerous nature keeps couples from having children.
- **Dress** Most residents carry weapons and wear chainmail and heavier armour; during downtime, they wear simple tailored clothing. Workers wear functional, sturdy clothing.
- **Nomenclature** *male* Algar, Denys, Fandral; *female* Calexia, Hilde, Terese; *family* Garyan, Nemmic, Van de Vore.

Some of the inhabitants, however, are notable:

Countess Liana Van de Vore (location 6; LN female human fighter 11/aristocrat 3) Liana chose to stay at the keep after

her five-year stint rather than deal with political machinations at home.

Kameda Garyan (location 4; N female dwarf fighter 1) Kameda is the newest arrival to Dragonmarch Keep.

Kelban Nemmic (location 5; N male human barbarian 7) In lieu of exile, Kelban volunteered to serve as training sergeant.

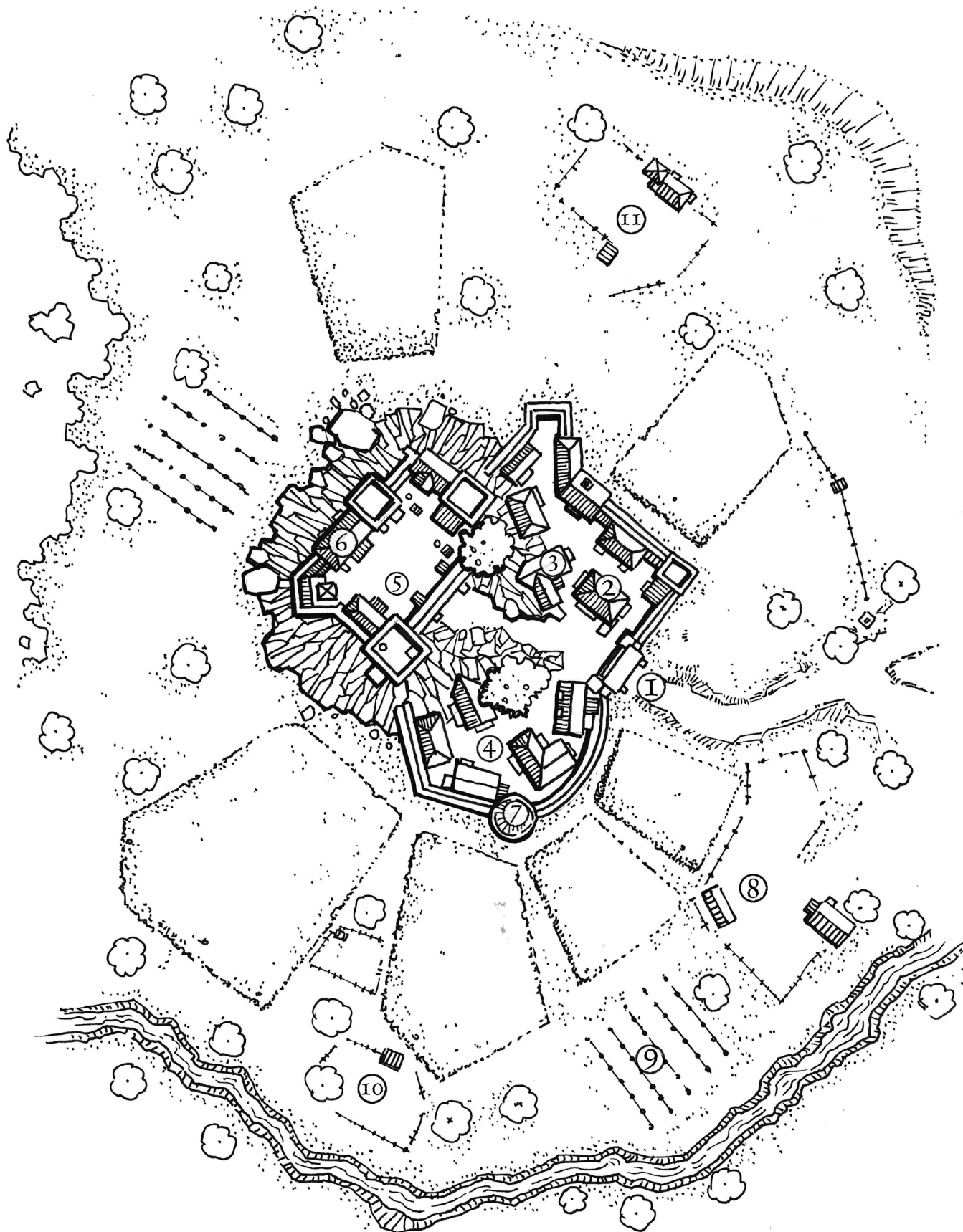
Phedra Klauft (location 2; LN female half-orc expert 3) Arguably the most important non-noble in the keep, Phedra fashions weapons and armour for the garrison.

Ralson Indra (location 8; N old male halfling expert 3) The oldest resident of the keep, Ralson along with his assistants grow barley and craft regionally renowned ales.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of Dragonmarch Keep comprises locations of little interest to adventurers. A few locations, however, are notable:

1. **Main Entrance:** A portcullis and two guards protect the keep's weak point.
2. **Smithy:** Constant battle readiness requires new armour and weapons, as well as repairs, on a regular basis.
3. **Eagle, Hart and Wolf:** The sign on this tavern displays the animals from the three kingdoms' standards.
4. **Residences:** Each of the buildings hold cramped, semi-private rooms to house the nobles stationed at the keep. Visiting adventurers without credentials quarter here after the guards have questioned them.
5. **Practice Yard:** When not out in the wasteland or celebrating a victory, the keep's residents train on archery targets and training dummies. A hidden trapdoor to the north leads to a large cellar where the residents retreat if creatures overrun the keep.
6. **Manor House:** Currently the home of Countess Van de Vore, the manor house is the residence of the keep's leader. Largely unused wings stand ready to receive visiting dignitaries.
7. **Watchtower:** The highest point of the keep affords a view of the neighbouring land, allowing guards to sound the alarm in case of imminent attack or raid.
8. **Ralson's Farm and Brewery:** This stretch of farmland has given over to growing the barley used by Ralson for his ales.
9. **Staple Crops:** Several farmers grow a variety of grains and beans used to feed the keep's residents.
10. **Abandoned Farm:** This weed-choked farm is rumoured to be haunted; five years ago, the crops growing here suddenly became blighted and the farmer and his family died from a wasting disease shortly thereafter.
11. **Stables and Kennel:** Horses and hunting dogs rest here when they are not out with their owners on patrol. The non-nobles grumble the animals are better treated than themselves.



WHAT ARE WANDERING MONSTERS ACTUALLY DOING?

Wandering monsters are an essential component of any dungeon larger than a couple of rooms. Their presence adds verisimilitude, depth and an interesting element of randomness and unpredictability to proceedings.

However, to avoid boring and bland wandering monster encounters that make no real sense you need to think about a couple of things. Principally, beyond determining what kind of monsters the party encounters, you should consider:

Beyond wandering, what are the wandering monsters actually doing?

That's a pretty important question. The answer has a huge influence on the encounter set-up. For example—obviously—a gelatinous cube is unlikely to be setting up camp for the night. Other wanderers, however, have more complex motivations and reasons for their actions.

There are three basic types of wandering monster. Each type gets up to different things in the dungeon. Use the lists below, to determine what a randomly encountered monster is doing. Remember, some results may make no sense when paired with the wanderers in question; modify the results as appropriate.

ORGANISED DUNGEON DENIZENS

These wanderers belong to the group controlling the dungeon (or this part of the dungeon). When encountered, the dungeon denizens are:

1. Patrolling their lair
2. Shirking their duties (drinking, gambling, sleeping etc.)
3. Carrying water
4. Disposing of rubbish
5. Escorting a prisoner
6. Watching for intruders
7. Chasing an escaped slave or prisoner
8. Repairing something such as a door, piece of furniture etc.
9. Moving foodstuffs or other heavy items about the lair
10. Loitering
11. Decorating something with graffiti
12. Arguing
13. Baiting a prisoner or small animal
14. Eating
15. Plying to watch for intruders (they could be asleep, drunk etc.)
16. Preparing to go on a scouting mission
17. Brawling with each other
18. Plotting against their chieftain or leader
19. Nefariously sneaking about

20. Making a lot of noise—perhaps shouting or singing

Instead of the dungeon's denizens, the party might encounter their slaves or an escaped prisoner. Such encounters will likely result in role-playing rather than combat and could even serve as a useful source of intelligence.

OTHER EXPLORERS

The PCs encounter another adventuring group or a group working against the dungeon's denizens. They could be friendly (or not). When encountered, the explorers or interlopers are:

1. Sneaking towards their enemies
2. Returning from a raid with a prisoner
3. Resting
4. Setting up camp
5. Breaking camp
6. Setting a trap
7. Waiting to spring an ambush
8. Wandering about lost
9. Spying on their enemies
10. Searching for something hidden (a secret door, trap or treasure niche)

SCAVENGERS

Some monsters are nothing more than mindless or near-mindless scavengers, driven by their base, atavistic influences. Rats, giant spiders and gelatinous cubes all fall into this category. The other dungeon denizens may tolerate, fear or hunt these scavengers. Scavengers rarely deliberately carry treasure with them. When encountered, the scavengers are:

1. Sleeping
2. Resting
3. Eating
4. Hiding
5. Waiting to pounce
6. Creating a new nest or lair
7. Dragging or carrying something (probably prey)
8. Chasing prey

THE FINAL WORD

The above lists are by no means all-encompassing. However, they should serve as a useful starting point to spark your imagination.

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