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VILLAGE BACKDROP:
DON GALIR



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VILLAGE BACKDROP: DON GALIR

Last known hold of the dwarves in Ashlar, shadow-cloaked Don Galir lies hard against Lake Thraren dark, cold waters in a massive cavern buried directly beneath the human village of Wellswood. Dozens of wells, illuminating the lake's dark, unknowable deep waters with faint shafts of light and link the lake below with the village above. Strange fungi and mushrooms grow around the lake's shore and stranger fish dwell in its lightless watery depths. Humans and dwarves fish the lake and harvest these unique plants in an increasingly uneasy peace. Now the jealous attentions of the greedy lord of the village above fall on Don Galir and taxes slowly increase. The reclusive, secretive dwarves of the Erdikr clan work hard to fortify their hold and to attract more of their brethren to Don Galir while some secretly plot to regain their fallen dragon-infested holds lying far to the south.

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DON GALIR AT A GLANCE

Ruler: Thane Azthur Erdurk

Government: Autocracy

Population: 37 dwarves, 1 human

Alignments: LG, LN, NG

Languages: Common, Dwarven

Resources & Industry: Armoursmithing, metalwork, weaponsmithing, woodwork

Don Galir, ancient home of the Erdikr dwarves, lies under the human village of Wellswood in the Duchy of Ashlar. "Don Galir" literally translates as "Lakeside Fortress", and is an apt name. The hold stands hard against the cold, deep subterranean waters of Lake Thraren. Established centuries before humans settled the lands above, Don Galir is the final redoubt of the Erdikr clan who fled here after a terrible battle against a rampaging orc horde. Although the dwarves were victorious, the battle was won at great cost. The dwarves' thegn—Delthur Werlan—along with many of the clan's greatest warriors and heroes fell in that battle. The remnant, led by the hero Thraren, settled in the caves around Lake Thraren, which they named in her honour.

Other dwarven exiles have since settled in Don Galir, drawn to the hold by its security and seclusion. Chief among these exiles is Borin Firehammer (location 4) one of the few survivors of fallen Vongyth. Ostensibly a smith of almost unparalleled skill, behind the scenes the ancient dwarf carries on his secret work—leading a secret society—the Wardens of Vongyth—toward their goal of wresting back control of their home from whatever foul evil still lurks in its halls. Recruiting trusted dwarves he gathers information on Vongyth, recovers objects and artefacts brought forth from the ruin and builds up a store of treasure which one day he will use to recruit mercenaries to clear his beloved home.

To observers, Don Galir's dwarves are industriously—albeit secretly—working towards a single, unknown goal. Allied with the Issakainen family (Wellswood's noble rulers) the dwarves maintain Castle Issakainen's fortifications and the many wells dotting the village that reach downwards to Lake Thraren. Some of these wells are small affairs, while others are large enough for stairs cut within to circle down to the floating pontoons on which the human villagers moor their small fishing boats.

Although the dwarves are peaceful, discontent and trouble is brewing with the humans dwelling above. Wellswood's dour lord—Illamri Issakainen—grows increasingly avaricious and obsessed with the accumulation of wealth. Taxes have slowly increased in recent years and discontent is growing among the human villagers. Such taxes have also begun to affect the dwarves' trade with visiting merchants, and some of the stout folk, grumbling of Illamri's lust for wealth. The dwarves, not wishing to lose the mutually beneficial agreement they have abided by for so long have gone along with Lord Issakainen's demands so far but the time is drawing nearer when the Erdikr clan may withdraw from their alliance with family Issakainen.

VILLAGE LORE

A character may know something about Don Galir, its history and surrounds. Determine how knowledgeable the characters are and then impart some (or all) of the information below:

- The dwarven hold of Don Galir lies below the human village of Wellswood. The two settlements are allied, but separate.
- The High Grotto is just part of the extensive hold hidden behind Don Galir's gates. Non-dwarves are not allowed to pass through Don Galir's gates.
- The algae growing in Lake Thraren bestows strange properties to the fishes swimming in the lake's deep waters.

VILLAGERS

Appearance: The dwarves of Don Galir are busy, industrious folk. Dwarves engaging in conversation carry on with the task at hand even when pressed. They are a healthy folk who take great pride in their appearance and their beards, which they wear in a traditional triple plait.

Dress: Most dwarves wear sturdy work clothes of hide or leather jerkins. Hats are popular with guards and fishermen due to water dripping into the lake from above.

Nomenclature: *Male:* Johann, Orithur, Thangrimm, Vorn, Warg; *Female:* Beryl, Brenna, Grandar, Illar; *Family:* Dolhak, Erdurk.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Don Galir, a character may hear one or more rumours. The character can learn this information in several 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 character learns.

D6 RUMOUR

1	Non-dwarves are not allowed in Don Galir proper; the only recent exception was made for a strange elven women who has recently left the hold.
2	Some of Don Galir's dwarves feel trapped and hemmed in by the humans dwelling above.
3	Mauno the human wizard conducts experiments on the algae and weeds in Thraren Lake, for some unknowable and unguessable (and possibly sinister) purpose.
4*	The dwarves plot against Wellswood! Their incessant burrowing and mining will soon cause the ceiling over Lake Thraren to collapse!
5	Borin Firehammer works tirelessly at his forge. Old even for a dwarf, he seems driven by some secret imperative of which he will not speak.
6	Strange fish dwell in Lake Thraren, including an unnatural fish that glows with an eerie, flickering light.

*False rumour

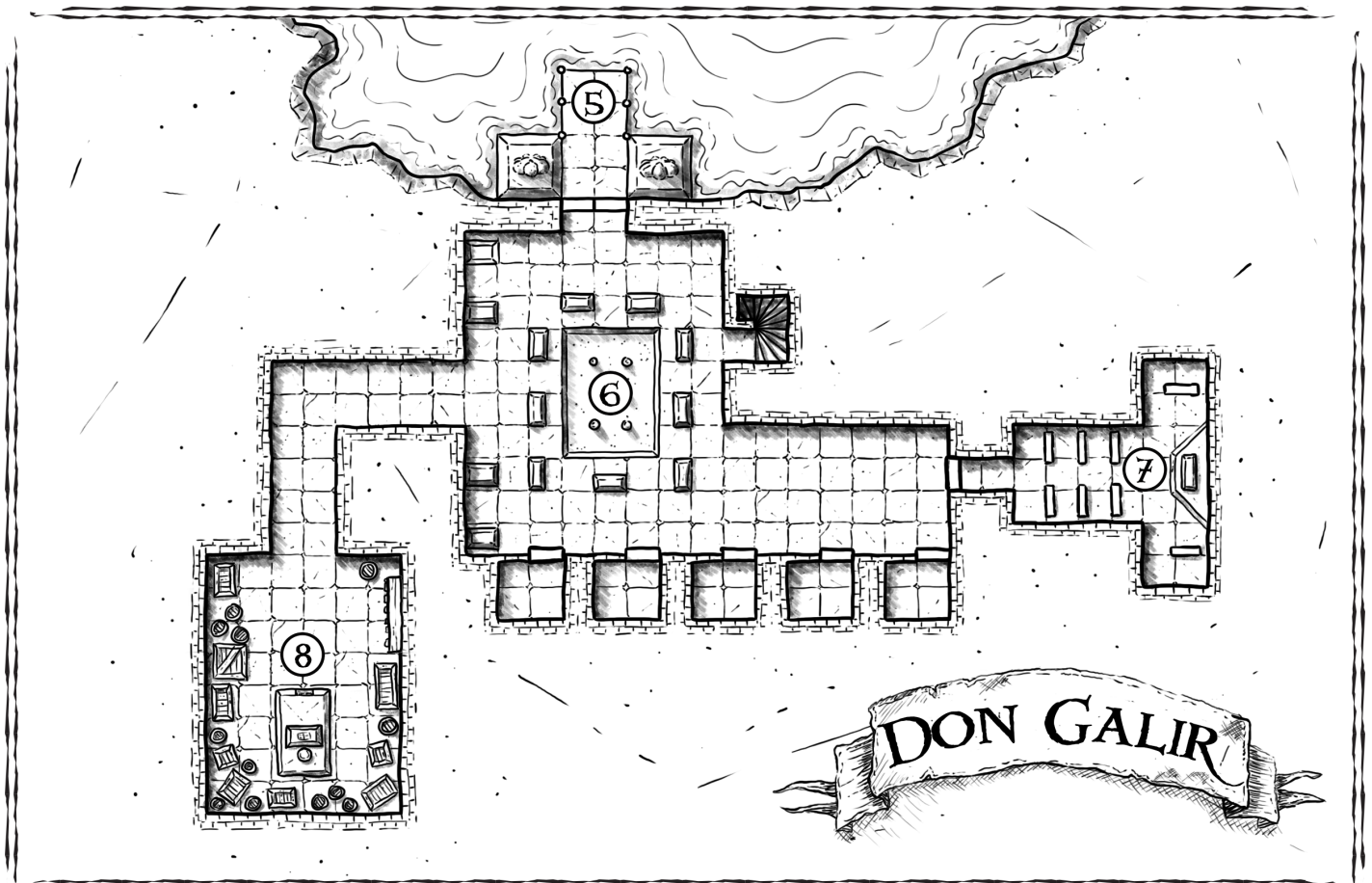
NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of Don Galir's upper level comprises the dwarves' work- and public spaces. A few locations are of interest to adventurers:

1. **The High Grottoes:** Stone walkways and small walled gardens filled with edible moss and fungi line the edges of the path leading to Lake Thraren. Docks and jetties jut out into the lake; here moor the dwarves' boats. Dwarves come here to fish, swap stories about the lake and its fish and to remember their clan's proud history.
2. **The Dark Tavern:** Once a lofty guard tower, this impressive building now serves as a tavern and guest house for the dwarves' infrequent non-dwarven guests. Its owner—Gadran Araral—is a keen fisherman and also sells bait, tackle and other fishing accoutrements to his guests.
3. **Mauno's Folly:** This rough stone tower of human design is where the strange human wizard Mauno lives and conducts his research on the lake and its denizens. A staircase, Mauno's Stair, ascends from the large pool behind the tower to Wellswood above.
4. **Borik's Forge:** Borin, oldest of the Don Galir dwarves, lives and works in this large forge slightly removed from Don Galir proper. Borin keeps many secrets in the hidden chambers behind his home and works tirelessly to advance the agenda of the Wardens of Vongyth.

5. **The Gates & Guardians:** Two huge statues yet under construction flank the gateway to Don Galir proper. The statues depict Duregal and Valra, the father of the dwarven race and his wife. Lake Thraren's dark waters glimmer below their ever-watchful gaze. A pair of Shieldwardens—heavily armed warriors specialised in fighting with heavy dwarven axes, thunderaxes and tower shields—are always on guard here.
6. **Hall of the Family:** Don Galir's industrious heart, the Halls of the Family is the busiest part of the hold. Here, work benches, furnaces and forges are busy with dwarves working for the betterment of the hold. The stair here leads down to Don Galir's deeper living level.
7. **Halls of the Gods:** The Hall of the Gods is Don Galir's religious heart. Here, prays High priest Vanatar Jarbek. The hall is typically dwarven in design; beautiful murals on the walls tell the story of clan Erdikr and their gods.
8. **Hall of the Great Store:** Here, the dwarves store their accumulated finished trade goods ready for trade.

Refer to "The Surrounding Locality for a map depicting locations 1-4.



LIFE IN DON GALIR

Don Galir's halls hum with activity. During a clan meeting several years ago, Thane Azthur Erdukr declared a Strengthening—an ancient dwarven practise whereby the clan works beyond their normal capacity for at least five years. Now each dwarf crafts armour, shapes stone or carves wood for at least fifteen hours a day. Finished goods are sold to visiting merchants for the betterment of the clan and the hold. Azthur hopes the increase in prosperity will lure other dwarves to Don Galir so clan Erdikr may finally begin to rebuild its lost strength.

After two years of hard work Don Galir proper is well protected and defended. The coffers are full and the people are happy. Each dwarf knows their place and has their eyes firmly set on the clan's collective goal.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Hard at work in the Hall of the Family the dwarves represent most common trades including blacksmithing, armour crafting and weaponsmithing as well as more mundane crafts such as gemcutting, stonemasonry and carpentry.

Recently a good trade deal has been agreed with neighbouring Wellswood; the humans provide good beech and oak, and in return get sturdy dwarven kegs and barrels. Most dwarves have at least one or two kegs of beer brewing in their homes at any one time ready to share with their fellows.

Human fisherman from Wellswood sail Lake Thraren's waters in search of the many exotic fish dwelling therein; their catches can command a good price among Ashlar's great and good.

LAW & ORDER

The Shieldwardens of Don Galir—in which all adult dwarves serve—adhere to the word of their thane in all matters. Almost all non-dwarven visitor are turned away from the hold's gates much to the chagrin of visiting adventurers and merchants alike.

Anyone breaking the law is removed from the hold and banished. Lawbreakers resisting expulsion are dealt with harshly and permanently.

CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS

Once each full moon the dwarves get into their sturdy boats and fish in the soft starlight filtering down through the many wells intersecting with Lake Thraren. A great feast and a day of rest follow—something the dwarves look forward to immensely.

Each midsummer, the dwarves gather in the Hall of the Gods to tell tales of old. Newly arrived dwarves—or those from the hold who have travelled the lands above—are invited to tell stories of their travels and adventures. Several younger dwarves have recently left the hold to explore the surface world and bring back tales of the wider world. Most such dwarves are secretly members of the Wardens of Vongyth and travel at Borin Firehammer's direction.

VILLAGE DRESSING

Use this table, to generate the minor sights and sounds the characters experience as they explore Don Galir.

D20 DRESSING/EVENT

1	Rain from above drops down the wells forming a pillar of glittering light in the gloom.
2	A fisherman lands a massive fish from the lake which causes a fuss amongst his fellows.
3	A delegation from Wellswood is turned away from the gates by the Shieldwardens and High Priest Vanatar.
4	A few dwarflings armed with fishing rods emerge from the gates and settle noisily on the jetties.
5	A heavy object drops from one of the smaller wells into the lake with a loud splash.
6	A dwarf admires his latest completed project.
7	A dwarf pushing a barrow brings beer to the Shieldwardens at the gate.
8	High Priest Vanatar wanders the halls inspecting work and offering blessings.
9	A dwarfling loudly breaks a pot with an enthusiastically, but poorly, thrown hammer.
10	A human fisherman lands on the Guardian's jetty and tries to barter his catch with the Shieldwardens there.
11	A disturbance on the lake attracts the attention of Shieldwardens and fishermen alike.
12	Mauno casts some spells from his jetty before going back into his tower while hastily scribbling notes.
13	Vanatar goes to the gates and talks to the guards before heading back into the hold.
14	Drunk fishermen are ejected roughly from the Dark Tavern, after angry words are exchanged.
15	A large shipment of wood arrives at the cargo lift where it is unloaded onto skiffs and moved to the hold's entrance.
16	A boat crewed by dwarves crosses the lake to farm the moss from High Grotto.
17	A shipment of meat is delivered to the High Grotto.
18	A lone dwarf returns with news from nearby settlements.
19	Two fishermen bicker over a catch on one of the many pontoons dotting the lake. During the argument, the catch falls into the lake and a real fight breaks out.
20	Strange lights glimmer on the far side of Lake Thraren, disturbing the Shieldwardens at the gate. Azthur Erdukr is summoned, and the guard is doubled for the night.

THE SURROUNDING LOCALITY

Lake Thraren is deep, dark and cold. Many small pontoons litter the lake's eastern reaches; there, human fisherman from the village above moor their boats and unload their catches of the strange fish dwelling in Lake Thraren's depths. Some fishermen are too poor to rent their own boat from Lord Issakainen—or too cautious to sail the lake's dark waters—and fish from the pontoons. The dwarves of Don Galir are surprisingly good swimmers (for dwarves) and often hold impromptu races between the various pontoons. Many dwarves have attempted to dive to the bottom of the lake; the cloying darkness, clouds of silt and the freezing cold have thus far stymied all such attempts.

FAUNA & FLORA

Black-finned trout, semi-blind fish of the lake, are just over two feet long and have long trailing tendrils under their mouths. They live in vast numbers in the deeper portions of the lake and surface only to feed. Recently Mauno has discovered the fish somehow negate all divination magic targeting them and is starting research into this potentially important discovery.

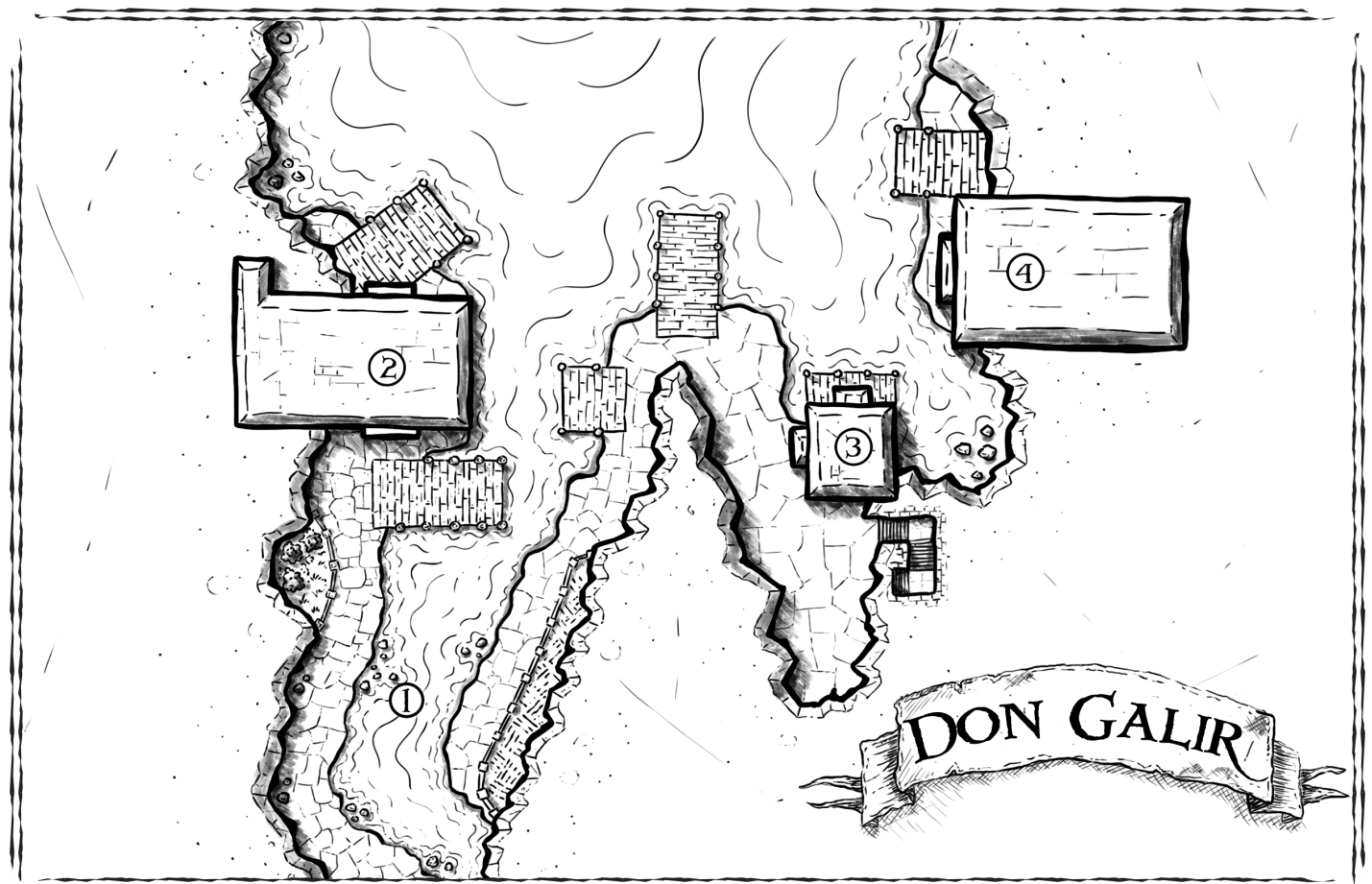
Along the edges of the lake, in areas lit by the dim glow filtering down through the wells above, edible moss and the immensely popular Leaftop Fungus grow in small walled gardens. Leaftop Fungus, a brown thick shelf fungus, tastes strongly of beef

and is a favourite among the dwarves who nurture and harvest it; they use Leaftop to brew the overly strong-tasting beer famed for its tangy aftertaste of the same name.

LAKE THRAREN'S WESTERN REACHES

Lake Thraren's far western reaches remain unsettled by the dwarves and are avoided by the human fishermen due to strange happenings on that side of the cavern. There, strange lights sometimes surface from the lake's depths before sinking again and a strange bubbling laughter occasionally fills the tunnels honeycombing the lake's western bounds.

Heavily armed groups of Shieldwardens regularly explore these tunnels seeking out any dangers to their home. Recent patrols have returned with tales of not only desperate battles against the usual aberrations and uncivilised denizens of the deep places beneath the earth but also of strange, misshapen beasts and animate undead wandering aimlessly in the tunnels. The source of these profane creations yet remains a mystery. Mindful of the dwarves' small numbers, High Priest Vanatar has begun searching for suitable adventurers to continue the search for the cause of these most recent incursions.



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

The entries below describe only Don Galir's upper level and the outer areas most likely to be visited by wandering adventurers, merchants and the like. Most of the dwarves live on a lower, heavily warded level to which no visitor has ever been admitted.

1: THE HIGH GROTTOS

Shafts of light pierce the gloom spilling onto the lake. High wooden jetties sunk firmly into the cavern walls and floor lead to a collection of sturdy stone buildings and a variety of fishing boats and coracles.

Bathed in faint light filtering down through the many wells above Lake Thraren, small walled gardens filled with flourishing edible mosses and Leaftop Fungus line the lake and its many jetties. Dwarves tend these gardens daily, which flourish under their expert and patient care.

Many of the wells linking the lake to the human village of Wellswood above have stairs cut into their walls; all such stairs either spiral all the way down to the Dark Grottoes or become swaying stairs of wood and rope ending on pontoons floating in Lake Thraren. A cargo lift, a ten-foot square platform suspended on heavy rattling chains, fills the largest of the wells. A high stone wharf connects the High Grottoes with the Dark Tavern (location 2) and Mauno's Folly and Mauno's Stair (location 3). Most dealings with merchants and the like take place in or near the Dark Tavern.

Lord Issakainen owns all the boats on the lake, except those belonging to the dwarves, moored on the lake, and the human fishermen must rent them from him to ply their trade. However this doesn't stop fishermen acting as ferrymen for wealthy visitors. Several of the elder fishermen are more than happy to be paid in gold by adventurers to ferry them across the lake.

GADRAN ARARAL

LG old male dwarven fighter 2

Leaning heavily on an oaken club pressed into service as a walking stick this grey-haired, scarred old dwarf has sharp eyes that miss little.

Mannerisms. Fastidious in his work he remembers the name and face of everyone he meets. Surprisingly dexterous, he expertly guts and bones fish and prepares the cavern's ubiquitous fungus for all manner of dishes.

Personality. Cheerful most of the time he concentrates on his work first and foremost but is quite happy to chat in quiet moments. He has a deep love of cooking and enjoys learning new recipes or trying out new spices and herbs.

Background. Serving full-time as a Shieldwarden for decades he eventually retired to run the Dark Tavern after a serious injury nearly crippled him. He deeply loves the tavern and his tiny dwarven wife, Elren, who helps him. The couple are expecting their first child in a few months.

2: THE DARK TAVERN

Dangling nets, huge fish skeletons and glowing lanterns hang from the front of a timber building attached to a squat dwarven tower. By the building's main entrance bait and tackle for sale cover several small tables.

The Dark Tavern is a smoky place smelling of beer, cooked fish and heavy spices. Gadran Araral runs the Dark Tavern along with his pregnant wife, Elren. Most dwarves drinking here smoke pipe weed with their meals, chosen from the many tobaccos Gadran stocks. Non-dwarf visitors to Don Galir spend their nights here (or above in Wellswood). Several of the tower's old guard rooms have been converted to accommodate somewhat taller guests and Gadran provides taller tables and benches on one side of the tavern floor for his human patrons.

- **Food and Drink:** Meal (grilled fish or chunky stew served with mixed leaf and moss salad and fried Leaftop mushrooms) 3 sp or (thin fish soup with cobs of bread) 2 sp; beer, ale or wine 1 sp; various tobaccos from 2 sp to 15 sp a pouch.
- **Accommodation:** Two-bed chamber 3 sp.
- **Bait and Tackle:** Fishing rod 1 gp, fishing net 4 gp, bait 1 cp, superior bait 1 sp

BORIN FIREHAMMER

LG old male dwarf fighter 7

Sturdier than most dwarves this gruff old man hobbles around leaning heavily on a mechanical leg. Dust and grime from the forge covers his clothes.

Mannerisms. Gruff and businesslike Borin drives a hard bargain for his excellent quality metalwork.

Personality. Having little time for small talk or squabbles Borin is honest and straight to the point. He cares deeply for his adopted nephew Johann and is always eager to hear news of any dwarves exploring Ashlar.

Background. After fleeing from Vongyth when he was only 25-years-old Borin is the only survivor of that cursed hold dwelling in Don Galir. In his early years, he explored many hidden tunnels and caverns for a way back into Vongyth. He was eventually caught by a terrible creature of living shadow and lost his friend Thorik and his left leg in the fight. Now he is the secret leader of the Wardens of Vongyth, a group of dwarves seeking to free Vongyth from the sinister evil lurking within.

Borin is one of the only people skilled enough to forge the rare and precious star metal, Tordel, and is skilled in crafting thunderaxes—heavy dwarven axes with a hammer head on the back. The wardens treat the star metal as sacred and follow any rumours they hear of it.

The paved area next to the tavern is used to gut and clean the fish caught on the lake before they are boxed and sent to the surface; Gadran claims the guts and bones to use as bait, needles or to boil up as stock for soup.

After the day's work is done the Dark Tavern gets slightly busier as a few of the fishermen come here to drink and sell their catch to Gadran before heading back to their homes above.

3: MAUNO'S FOLLY

This tall tower juts from the cavern's wall. Flickering green light, casting strange shadows onto the lake's waters, spills from its windows and the scent of exotic incense fills the air.

Mauno Neuvo has dwelt here for ten years, after paying the dwarves handsomely to build him this tower. He works within on his experiments on the moss and algae growing in the caverns and the fish swimming in the lake. Mauno pays the dwarves a monthly rent to remain here.

- **Mauno Neuvo** (NG male human wizard 5) distracts himself from his experiments with all manner of minutia. A pale, studious man Mauno uses his considerable inheritance to fund his life here. He is loyal to the dwarves and aids them if enemies beset Don Galir. Mauno enjoys long conversations and is welcoming to newcomers—particularly learned folk. Mauno's Folly stands next to the largest set of stairs linking Wellswood to Don Galir, which has become known as Mauno's Stair. All the fishermen know Mauno as he often chats with them about the lake while buying choice fish from their catch. Inside, Mauno's Folly is a clutter of books, maps, notes and scraps of paper with confusing half finished notes guarded over by his tiny toad familiar, Marek.

4: BORIN FIREHAMMER'S FORGE

A wide dock stands next to a stone platform replete with a forge and crenelated tower built into the cavern wall. A circular sign above the tower's door decorated with the symbol of a thunderaxe crossed with a shield proclaims, "Borin's Blades and Armour".

Here lives and works Borin Firehammer, the oldest dwarf and the only survivor of fallen Vongyth dwelling in Don Galir. The main floor where Borin works also doubles as a shop. Behind his tower, buried into the rock, lie several secret meeting chambers and lodging for visiting wardens.

THE WARDENS OF VONGYTH

This secret society is dedicated to the recovery and cleansing of the ancient dwarven hold of Vongyth. Led by Borin Firehammer the society is yet small, but has begun to send neophyte adventurers and the like out into the world to gain experience, fame and wealth—all of which will be useful in the final campaign to retake Vongyth.



5: THE GATES & GUARDIANS

Two half-built 20-foot high statues holding twin axes forming an archway flank Don Galir's great stone gate. Two heavily armoured dwarves, leaning on tower shields, guard the gate.

Made of pinned stone blocks and steel hinges the gates of Don Galir stand open most days until the final work bell is rung. The statues are part of Don Galir's defences; hidden within are mechanisms designed to drop the heavy axes onto the wharf area to crush any enemies in the vicinity. Two guards are always on duty before the gates.

On rest days, the clan's dwarflings are allowed lakeside to fish and play in the shallows by the gates. (Although most dwarves dislike or fear deep water nearly all the Erdikr are good swimmers and boatmen.)

6: HALL OF THE FAMILY

This massive hall is a flurry of activity as a dozen dwarves industriously get on with their work. Thick pipes pump water around the chamber while chimneys extract the smoke.

Fifteen workstations pierce the hall's walls; the dwarves working here are capable of producing beautiful things. A large area of sandy ground in the middle of the room hosts a few young dwarves playing at war, practicing forging or stone masonry or hurling light hammers at targets. Until recently a mysterious elven woman watched over the dwarflings playing here. A close friend of Borin she recently departed Don Galir for reasons known only to herself (and, perhaps, Borin).

The staircase here leads to Don Galir's deeper living level.

7: HALL OF THE GODS

A set of double bronze doors ward a candle-lit chamber decorated with tapestries. A raised platform opposite the doors hosts a stone altar standing before a beautiful bronze mural depicting the dwarven gods.

HIGH PRIEST VANATAR JARBK

LG male dwarf cleric 5

This short, black-haired dwarf wears grey robes and has a cheerful look on his face.

Mannerisms. An attentive listener Vanatar fixes people with his steel-grey eyes and pauses intentionally before replying.

Personality. Vanatar is extremely devout. Perpetually cheerful he likes to sit with "his" people and hear their stories offering support and advice when needed. Slow to anger he is very protective over the hold, flying into a rage during battle.

Background. Born and raised in Don Galir, Vanatar was a junior cleric patrolling the tunnels on the far side of Lake Tharen before he became high priest.

The Hall of the Gods is Don Galir's spiritual heart. The hall pays homage to the entire dwarven pantheon, but most worshippers make offerings to individual deities based on their needs.

Most dwarves have a small shrine in their homes or by their forges but once a week the Hall's bronze bell calls all to worship. During the service, quotas are read, targets beaten and acknowledgements given for hard work. In this way, Vanatar Jarbek, brings the hold's folk closer together and forges unbreakable bonds between worshippers. Finally, the congregation pray for those of their number abroad in the world; chief amongst these are Thangrimm (NG male dwarf fighter 2/ cleric 1) and Johann Firehammer (NG male dwarf fighter 3) who both secretly work with Borin Firehammer and the Wardens of Vongyth.

Recently a lesser deity, Grondinn the Wanderer, has become popular with the few youngsters in the hold. Grondinn is known to be a friend of elf, human and gnomes alike and finds favour among the more progressive elements of Don Galir's society.

8: HALL OF THE GREAT STORE

Piled high with boxes, barrels and crates this cavernous storeroom has a lofty ceiling, and is clearly highly organised.

The Hall of the Great Store is just that; here, the dwarves store the balance of the vast amounts of finished goods they have crafted, forged and otherwise created over the last few years.

Stone chests surround a raised dais topped by a stone desk and high-backed chair. Heavy leather-bound books stored in the chests record a careful listing of everything the dwarves have stored here along with details of who purchased what and for him much. Both Thane Azthur Erdukr and High Priest Vanatar Jarbek carry keys to the various great chests found here.

THANE AZTHUR ERDUKR

LG female dwarf fighter 5

This stocky dwarven woman bustles around with unquenchable vitality. She wears worn, but clean, studded leather armour and carries a small hammer at her hip.

Mannerisms. Quietly spoken yet direct Azthur is always thinking of her followers. She has a piercing, unwavering gaze.

Personality. Resolute and obsessed with order and the rule of law, Azthur knows that only together will the dwarves of Don Galir survive. She sees talk of recovering ancient homelands as sheer folly; Don Galir's protection—and the protection of those dwelling in Don Galir—is of the utmost importance to her. The matter of succession—who will protect Don Galir after she is gone—rests heavily upon her troubled brow.

Background. Azthur is the granddaughter and last in the line of those descended from the hero Tharen who guided the dwarves to Don Galir after their disastrous victory. She is steeped in the history and duty of her race.

APPENDIX 1: NEW STUFF

Village Backdrop: Don Galir makes use of some atypical items, materials, locales and personas. Here find notes on all such things mentioned in the text.

DWARVEN PANTHEON

As sturdy as the hills and mountains in which dwell their followers, the gods of the dwarves are mighty defenders of the folk. Opposed to the orcs' small, bestial pantheon and wary of the flighty elves, they keep their own counsel and rarely manifest themselves to their followers. They only appear in times of great need, and then their wrath is great.

Duregal the Highlord, Father of the Dwarves: LG greater god of dwarves (*Symbol:* hammer over an anvil; *Favoured Weapon:* warhammer).

Dalrak Grimtooth, Lord of War: LN greater god of war and battle (*Symbol:* battleaxe; *Favoured Weapon:* battleaxe).

Grondinn the Seeker: NG lesser god of explorers, lore, wanderers and travel (*Symbol:* a pair of boots; *Favoured Weapon:* longsword).

Khanoss the Miser: NE greater god of wealth and greed (*Symbol:* a jewelled dagger; *Favoured Weapon:* dagger).

Thaun the Forgemaster: N greater god of metal, mountains and mining (*Symbol:* a golden ingot; *Favoured Weapon:* footman's pick).

Valra the Hearth-Mother: LG greater goddess of safety, truth and home (*Symbol:* two interlinked silver or gold rings; *Favoured Weapon:* footman's mace).

Vorngrimm the Trickster: N (CN) greater god of wealth and luck (*Symbol:* a multi-faceted gem inside a mountain; *Favoured Weapon:* footman's pick).

THUNDERAXE (EXOTIC DWARVEN WEAPON)

Cost 50 gp; **Weight** 15 lbs.; **Type** Slashing or Bludgeoning; **Dmg vs. Opponent (S or M)** 1d8; **Dmg (L)** 1d8.

A thunderaxe has a large, ornate axe head mounted on a thick haft; a hammer head is welded to the back of the axe head. The weapon is too large and unwieldy to use one-handed without special training. Normally, a character proficient with the thunderaxe uses it two-handed. A character who spends two weapon proficiencies on thunderaxe, or a dwarf from Don Galir, can wield the weapon one-handed.

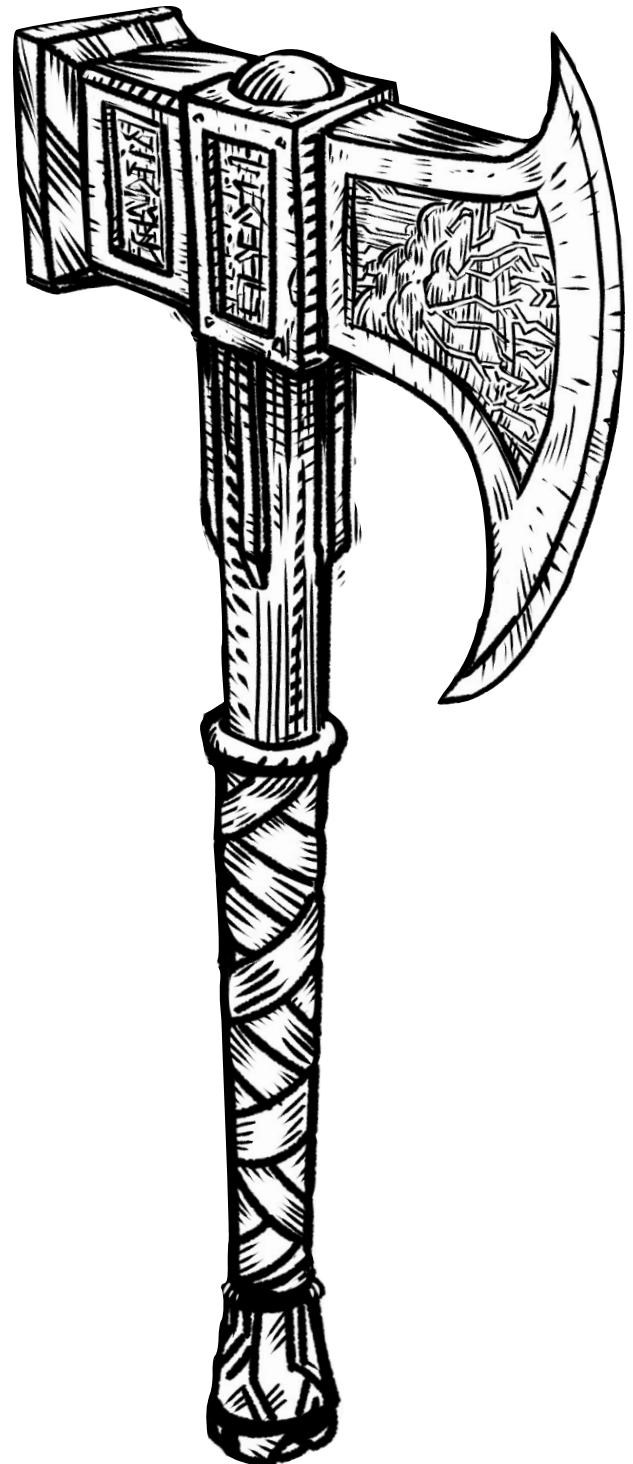
TORDEL

Tordel—literally “soul steel” in Dwarven—is a so-called star metal; deposits fall from the sky as part of meteorites and the like. It is much sought after for a variety of uses—normally by weaponsmiths. Tordel is as expensive as mithral or adamantine and only skilled crafters can work with the metal.

When used in the crafting of a weapon, Tordel is said to be able to trap the soul of those slain by the weapon; thus—slowly—

the weapon gains power as its wielder becomes more skilled and renown. These new powers often assume characteristics of the creatures slain by the weapon.

The elves know Tordel as Azangthal, which loosely translates as “glimmering soul metal”.



VONGYTH

Two centuries ago, the dwarves of clan Nurthen were typical of their kind. Dwelling in the fortified mine-hold of Vongyth they toiled deep beneath the earth to bring forth precious metals and fought to defend their home from the foul humanoids dwelling in the bizarre, grotesque depths of the Forest of Grey Spires.

Cut into the northern flank of the nameless plateau upon which stands the Forest of Grey Spires in the wilderlands beyond the Duchy of Ashlar's southern border, Vongyth is a small, isolated place. To the west, on Vongyth's very doorstep, Kymi's Run tumbles down Thangar's Steps before flowing sluggishly northwards through the human village of Longbridge and under its bridge of olden dwarven artifice into the Salt Mire and from thence into Hard Bay's turbulent, storm-wracked waters. To the south lies nothing but the oppressive gloom of the Forest of Grey Spires—a vast stretch of gnarled trees clustering thickly about

strange and fantastical twisted columns of jagged grey stone thrusting grotesquely, almost blasphemously, skyward.

Proficient miners, the dwarves were wealthy, and it was their wealth that spelt their doom. A mated pair of green dragons, Klauthosk and Yeiarxin, fell upon several merchants carrying gold bars and other precious metals northwards into the duchy for trade. After torturing (and then eating) the few survivors, the pair learnt Vongyth's location and shortly thereafter—exhibiting typical, draconic greed—led their kobold minions in a devastating attack on the unsuspecting dwarves.

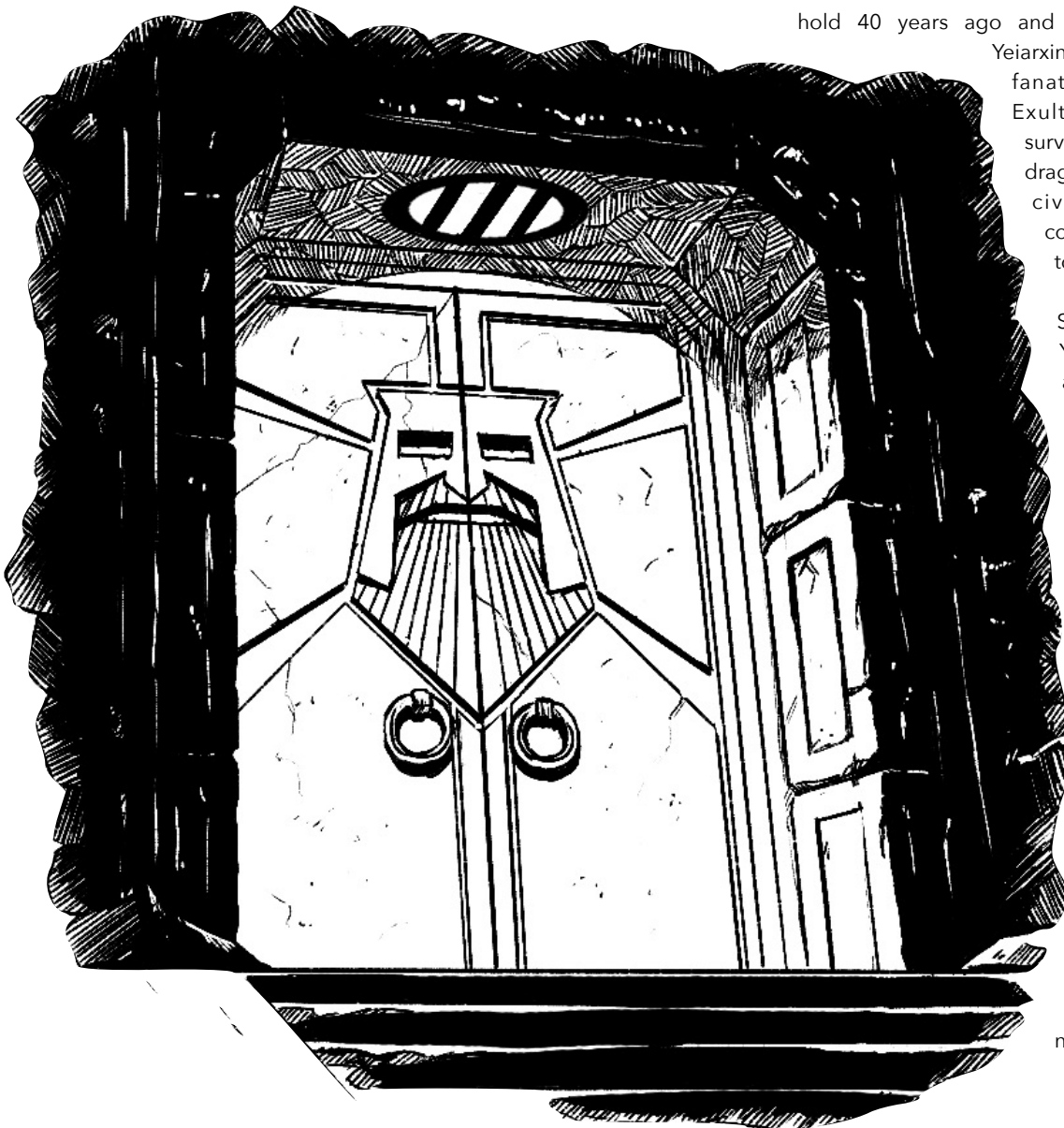
With acid and fang, the dragons drove the dwarves from their fortress, slaughtering all who dared resist them. (A few of the survivors sought sanctuary in Don Galir the others dispersed further afield—many leaving Ashlar for good.) After the orgy of slaughter and looting, Klauthosk and Yeiarxin settled in the hold. Sated by the carnage and the dwarves' hoard-wealth, Yeiarxin laid several eggs, and the dragons began to terrorise and loot the surrounding area.

Thus did matters stand until the Crimson Swords invaded the hold 40 years ago and slaughtered Klauthosk and

Yeiarxin along with scores of their fanatical, diminutive servants. Exulting in their victory, the surviving adventurers looted the dragons' hoard and returned to civilisation to bask in the common-folks' adulation (and to enjoy their new wealth).

The years after the Crimson Swords slew Klauthosk and Yeiarxin saw a slow trickle of adventurers and dwarves seeking Vongyth—the adventurers in hopes of finding glimmering treasures missed by the Crimson Swords and the dwarves in the hopes of reestablishing their ancient home. None who have passed Vongyth's graven valves of bronze banded stone have returned to tell of what now lurks among the ruin of this shattered, fallen hold.

Some folk whisper of a curse lingering over the place while others mutter that perhaps the Crimson Swords did not slay all the dragons. Whatever the truth of the matter, few people now willingly seek out Vongyth



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