

RAGING SWAN PRESS
VILLAGES OF ASHLAR





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VILLAGES OF ASHLAR

Come visit dismal Coldwater, plague-riddled Ashford or any of Ashlar's other villages—Hard Bay, Kingsfell, Longbridge, Underdell, Thornhill, Wellswood, White Moon Cove and Woodridge—with Villages of Ashlar. Villages of Ashlar brings together for the first time every Ashlarian village published by Raging Swan Press. Featuring new cartography by mapping supremo Tommi Salama the book is an essential reference for any GM setting a campaign in the Duchy of Ashlar.

Dismissively called "Fenland" by outsiders for the broad swath of fetid, tidal saltmarsh almost cutting the duchy in twain, Ashlar sprawls along the appropriately named Hard Bay. Effectively isolated from the rest of the continent by a high plateau crowned by dark, silent woods clustering hard against a legion of fantastically shaped stone spires, Ashlar is an isolated realm of hard, resilient folk. To the north lurks the Mottled Spire's brooding bulk. Within, lies Gloamhold's doom-drenched halls.

Villages of Ashlar is designed for use with virtually any fantasy role-playing game.

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SYSTEM NEUTRAL EDITION

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

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

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

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Welcome to *Villages of Ashlar*. This is the first in a wave of new print releases for the Gloamhold campaign setting. I hope you enjoy this book and that you use it to bring to life Ashlar and Gloamhold. Alternatively, of course, you can just take the villages you like and plonk them down in your own campaign!

As you might know, I started a pick-up campaign in Gloamhold a few

months ago (at the time of writing) and this really fired me up to start compiling and detailing the rest of the campaign area. I dearly want to run a sandbox campaign—that's part of the joy of a megadungeon focused setting—and this book is vital step in my scheme. (If you know me at all, you'll know I like—or perhaps more accurately need—to be prepared for the session.

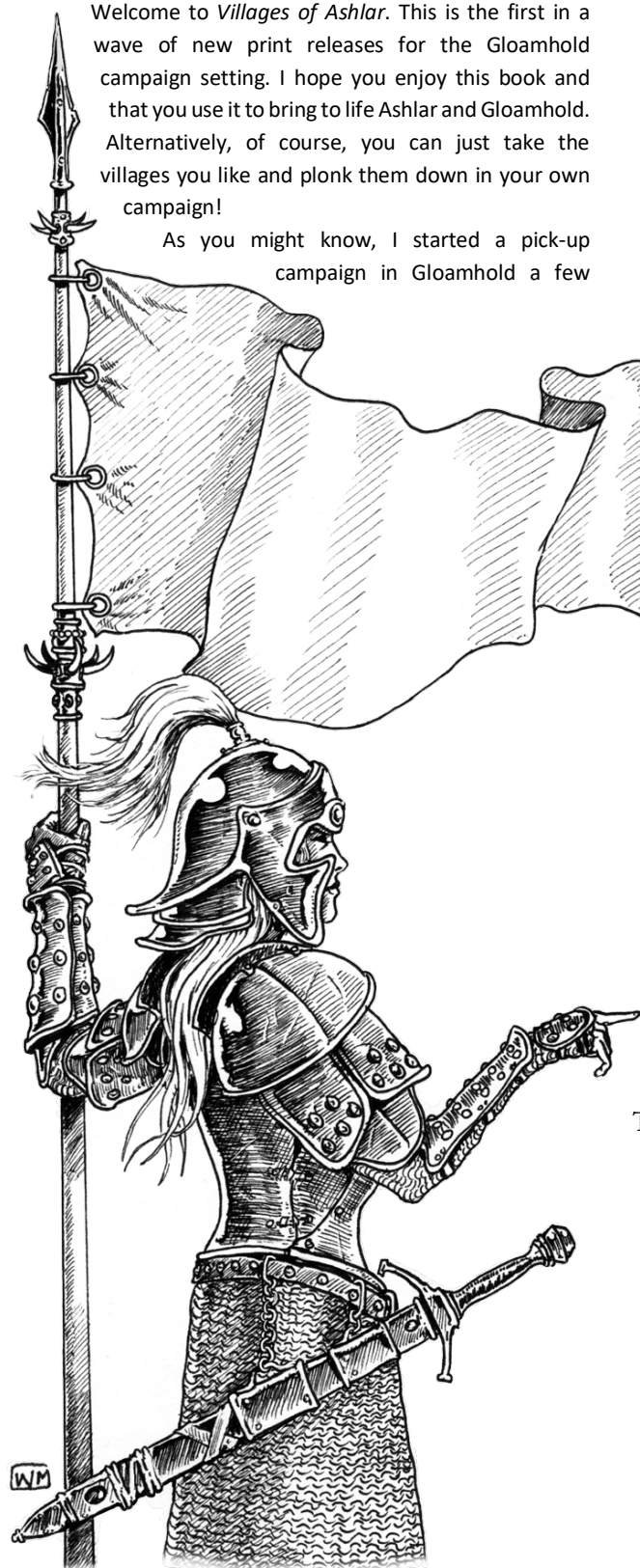
A close reading of the village texts will reveal something I wanted to address. The residents of some villages—notably Ashford, Hard Bay and Thornhill have a different style of names to the people dwelling elsewhere in Ashlar. That's by design—such folk are a remnant of the area's first people, and they have not yet assimilated completely with mainstream society. I'll be discussing this more in an upcoming book but wanted to mention it here, in case it seemed odd.

PATREON

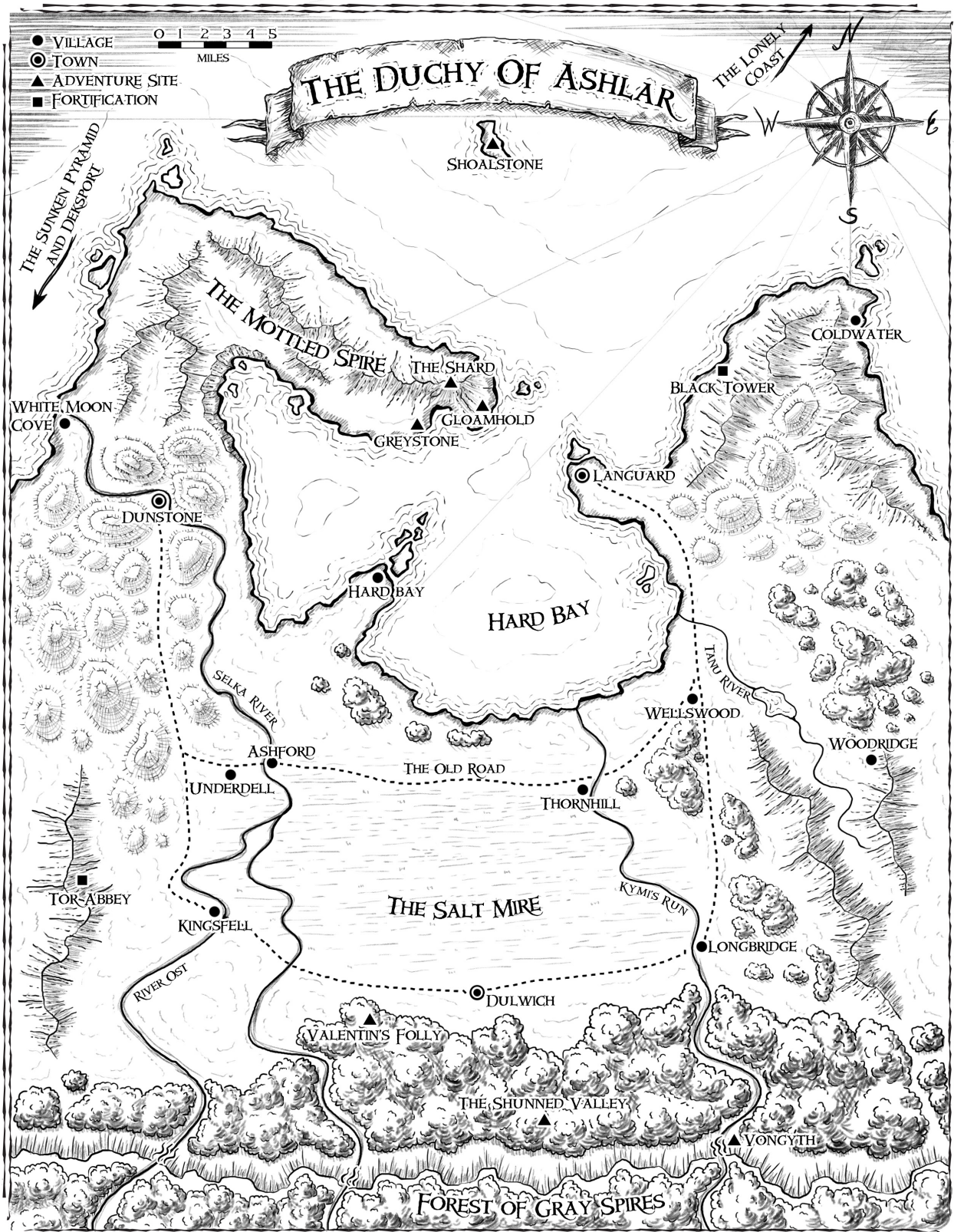
You might be aware Raging Swan Press is on Patreon. We signed up at the start of April 2015, and it's going rather marvellously. The thrust of our Patreon campaign is to be able to afford better rates of pay for our freelance game designers. As I'm sure you know, the economics of 3PP are notoriously tight, but Patreon gives us at Raging Swan Press a way to increase our freelancer rates. At time of writing, we've already massively increased our word rate to 11 cents a word, which gives me a warm, fuzzy feeling. 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 *Villages of Ashlar*. More importantly I hope you find it useful and that the locales herein enhance your Ashlarian/Gloamhold campaign (and make your job easier). 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 DUCHY OF ASHLAR



ASHFORD

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

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

ASHFORD AT A GLANCE

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

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

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

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler Baron Aelfgar Stannard

Government Overlord (anarchy)

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

Alignments Neutral

Languages Common, Elven, Orc

Resources & Industry Farming, fishing

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

NOTABLE FOLK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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

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

BUBONIC PLAGUE

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

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

VILLAGE LORE

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

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

VILLAGERS

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

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

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

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

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

D6 RUMOUR

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

*False rumour



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: ASHFORD MANOR

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

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

2: MILL

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

3: THE WAILING HALL

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

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

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

ABANDONED HOUSES

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

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

D10	FEATURE
1	A bloody blanket lies twisted on the floor. The bloody is dried and from the pattern of the stain looks like it was coughed up.
2	The remains of a meal—a plate holding some mouldy bread and hard cheese—stands next to a fallen pewter cup.
3	The door to this room has been crudely nailed shut from the outside. Within, lies the rotting corpse of a villager—abandoned in her final days by her family.
4	A terrible smell of rot pervades the house; clearly someone died here. The stench gets stronger as the PCs get closer to the body.
5	The building’s windows are all boarded over...from the outside. Inside, gloom fills the house and dust sifts down through the thin cracks of sunlight piercing the interior.
6	Much of the furniture lies scattered about out of place. Either someone was enraged and took out his frustrations on the furniture or someone has searched everywhere for loot.
7	Dust and grime covers most surfaces in the house. Faint footsteps lead toward a back room. A PC skilled in tracking can tell the person making the tracks was shuffling slowly.
8	The rotting corpses of three rats lie on the ground near the body of one of the house’s occupant. The body lies with one arm stretched; many small bite marks on the arm are evident.
9	A man hangs from a makeshift noose thrown over a rafter. Clearly dead, his neck is broken and insects swarm over his decomposing corpse. In a nearby room, the party find his family’s rotting bodies laid out in state together, under a blanket.
10	A body—wrapped in sack cloth—lies in state on a long table. Burnt down candles surround the suppurating corpse and its bloody, grimy wrappings. A nearby chair has been pushed back from the table; a blanket lies at its feet.

BURNT OUT HOMES

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

D10 FEATURE

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

4: THE JOLLY FARMER

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

5: THE BURNING TOWER

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

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

6: PLAGUE PITS

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

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

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

LIFE IN ASHFORD

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

TRADE & INDUSTRY

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

LAW & ORDER

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

EVENTS

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

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



COLDWATER

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

COLDWATER AT A GLANCE

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

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

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

DEMOGRAPHICS

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

NOTABLE FOLK

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

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

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

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

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

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

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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

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

DEFORMED VILLAGERS

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

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

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

VILLAGE LORE

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

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

VILLAGERS

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

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

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

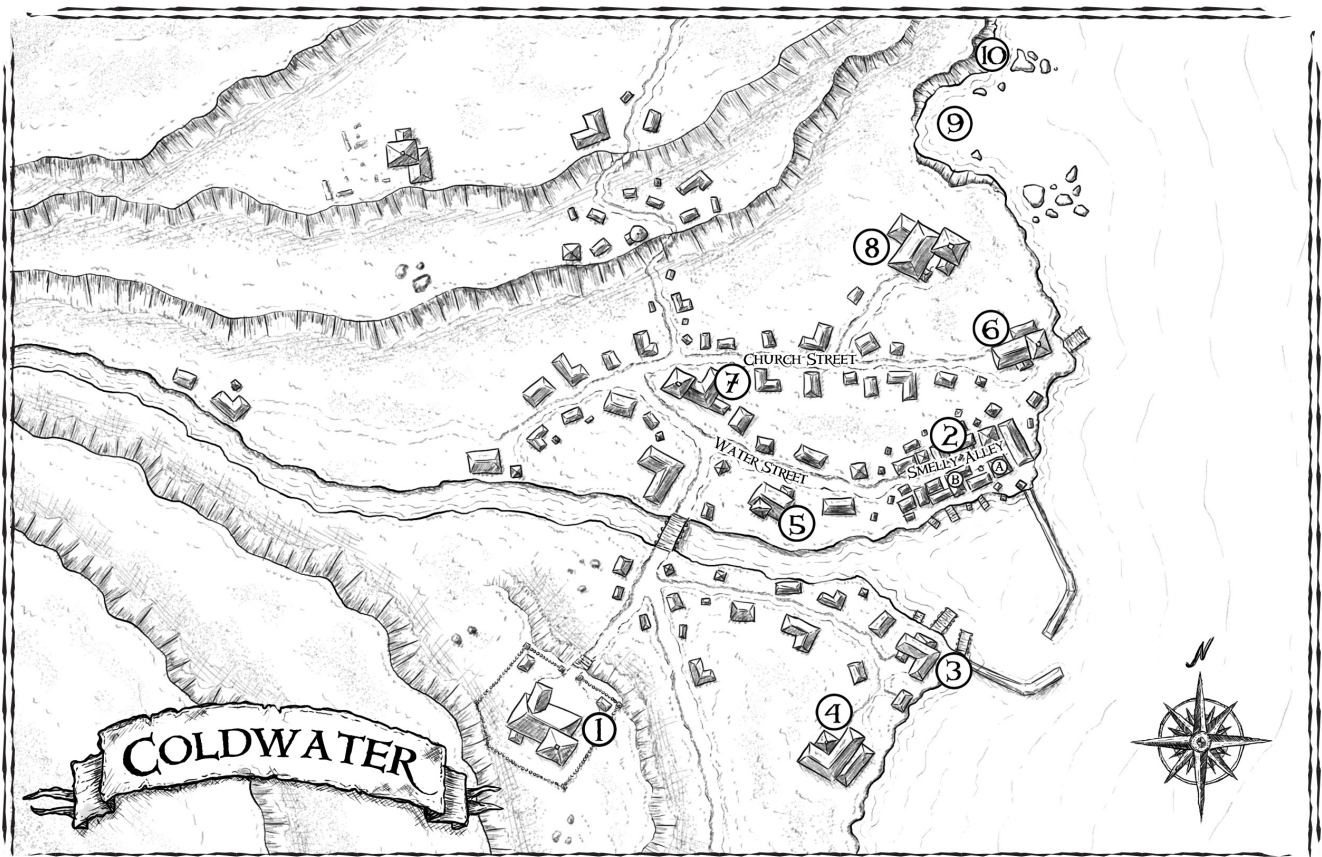
WHISPERS & RUMOURS

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

D6 RUMOUR

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

*False rumour



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: VUOLLE MANOR

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

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

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

2: WATERSIDE

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

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

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

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

3: ITKONEN'S

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

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

4: SAULI'S HOME

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

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

5: CROOKED HOUSE

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

6: CHAPEL OF THE MISTRESS

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

7: THE STOOPED MAN

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

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

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

SERAT

CN goddess of the sea, storms and voyages

Epithets: Mistress of Storms, the Uncaring

Symbol: A cresting wave

Favoured Weapon: Trident

Holy Text: Book of Tides

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

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

8: ATRO'S HOME

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

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

9: DEVIL'S COVE

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

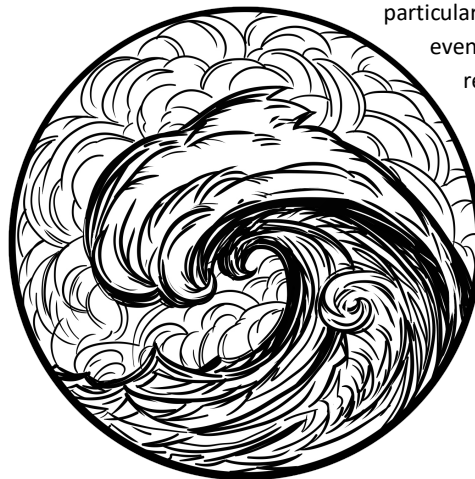
Devil's Cove is a barren place; a rocky, flotsam-strewn beach runs right up to lofty, precipitous and wind-blasted cliffs. No path runs down from the cliff tops to the beach far below. Most people who arrive in the cove do so by boat.

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

10: THE SUNKEN STAIR

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

even then, the tide returns to flood the stairs within an hour; thus, explorers must be quick.



LIFE IN COLDWATER

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

TRADE & INDUSTRY

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

LAW & ORDER

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

EVENTS

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

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



HARD BAY

Hard Bay's fate has ever been tied to the sea. Although blessed with a natural, protected harbour and plentiful fishing, foul weather and a dangerous, unwholesome reputation have conspired to keep the village nothing more than a dreary, isolated place. A vein of smuggling and thievery ran deep through the village until the Sharkrazor pirates were crushed four decades ago. Now administered by three minor noble families, a darker horror than mere piracy lurks within the place. Rumours speak of strange fires set amid a circle of ancient, weathered stones atop a nearby shunned hill when the moon is new and of strange, abhorrent fishmen lurking in the abandoned, half-drowned smuggler tunnels beneath the ramshackle village.

HARD BAY AT A GLANCE

Hard Bay's fate has ever been tied to the sea. The village boasts a protected harbour, plentiful fishing and a natural place for offloading exotic goods while avoid the taxes of larger cities. Such advantages suggest Hard Bay should be larger than the village it has become, but the foul coastal weather and a dangerous reputation have conspired to prevent it from becoming more populous and affluent.

Nearly a century ago, Hard Bay was founded by the Sharkrazors, a group of pirates and thieves who sought to use the protected harbour to smuggle goods. At its height, the village boasted nearly a dozen taverns and half as many brothels, along with dockside warehouses crammed full of plundered goods.

It all came to an end four decades ago when the authorities came in force with an army and a flotilla of armed ships. Their vessels sunk and their crews rounded up and executed, the Sharkrazors' hold was broken. Hard Bay, damaged and burned, was given over to a consortium of three minor noble families, each with a storied and impressive name but with nearly no fortune to speak of. Little did anyone know, the coming of the families would bring darker horrors to the village than piracy.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler High Councillor Afric Blufont

Government Aristocratic council (council made up of one representative from each of the three families)

Population 138 (80 humans, 5 dwarves, 12 half-elves, 41 other)

Alignments NE

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven

Resources & Industry Fishing, pearls, smuggling.

NOTABLE FOLK

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

Aldal Stronghammer (location 4; NG male dwarf fighter 3) Forgemaster of Stronghammer Metalworks, Aldal goes out of his way to gruffly encourage visitors to town not to stay past sunset. He is rarely seen without his overly large flask.

Councillor Ellagana Moisan (location 2; NE female tainted one human magic-user/thief 3/3) Ellagana is the beautiful and hedonistic leader of the wealthy Moisan family. Through her family, she controls the docks and most of the trade.

Councillor Reynard Gerou (location 3; TN male human) Reynard smoothly plays a dangerous game, paying lip service to the Cult of the Deep. He has wandered from the cult and now seeks only to further his family's position.

Fancy Tomnal Staggers (location 9; CN male human thief 5) Sent by the Sharkrazor pirates who once held Hard Bay, Fancy Tomnal is spying on the village to see how the buccaneers might regain control. He isn't sure what, but he has noticed that something is not quite right in Hard Bay. Unfortunately

for him, the cult has already marked him as the sacrifice for the new moon.

High Councillor Afric Blufont (location 1; NE male tainted one human magic-user 8) Patriarch of the Blufont family, Afric is the senior member of the ruling council and the most powerful, ruthless member in the Cult of the Deep.

Old Moreg (location 7; CN male human magic-user 4) The crazed Moreg tends the lighthouse with his summoned "friends."

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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

1. **Blufont Manor:** Family home of the Blufonts, much of the business of the Cult of the Deep is conducted within. Tunnels have been dug in its basement that lead into the Depths.
2. **Moisan Manor:** Formerly a large brothel, Moisan Manor is the most renovated building in the village and drips with excess. Most nights, it hosts raucous ball.
3. **Gerou Manor:** Small home of the Gerou family, it is notable for its roof mounted telescope.
4. **Stronghammer Metalworks:** The smithy is run by a family of dwarves that try to protect visitors to Hard Bay.
5. **The Driftwood:** The curio shop is owned by the Blufont family. Trading in unusual items and lore is always possible here.
6. **Docks:** The docks are the focus of trade in Hard Bay. The warehouses are in varying states of disrepair.
7. **Lookout Point Lighthouse:** Lookout Point is capped by a lighthouse that guards the bay and is reachable by a dangerous causeway.
8. **The Evening Mist:** The public house has rooms for let.
9. **Maritime Hill:** Topped by an altar and standing stones, the hill is clearly used for some fell purpose.
10. **The Depths:** In these secret tunnels the Cult of the Deep meet to worship their piscine gods.



VILLAGE LORE

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

- Once a smuggler's port that grew to a village, when the local Sharkrazor pirates were crushed, Hard Bay was given to three noble families to administer.
- The village has ample fishing and is still used as a trading port by some. Most notable are the unusual pearls recovered and worked into coral jewellery by the locals.
- Rumours persist, that the pirates still have an interest in Hard Bay, and indeed, its locals remain an independent and unfriendly lot with their own customs and religious practices.

VILLAGERS

Appearance Shaggy and wild dark hair is typical for both men and women, though the three families often tame theirs with a length of ribbon. Large eyes and thin lips are common among the tainted one populace.

Dress Utilitarian fishing gear such as thick gloves, aprons and boots are common. Due to the frequent inclement weather and thick mists, the villagers often wear layers.

Nomenclature *male* Aribert, Deverell, Varriel; *female* Anasielle, Coulette, Flouressa; *family* Bayne, Bellrose, Sanquon.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

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

D6 RUMOUR

1	More than one voice is often heard at Lookout Point lighthouse, but only one sounds human.
2	There are caves in the cliffs below the tide line once used by pirates to hide their contraband.
3*	The Moisans have a fascination with elves. Visitors with elven blood are invited to the parties at Moisan Manor and have a night they will never forget.
4	Many visitors to Hard Bay disappear. Sometimes their loved ones come looking for them, and it is not uncommon for them to disappear as well.
5*	The lights seen during the new moon on Maritime Hill are caused by the spirits of the fey slain there by pirates in days long gone.
6	Something is wrong in Hard Bay and the three families have something to do with it. Many family members look especially odd, with large eyes or thin lips.

*False rumour



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: BLUFONT MANOR

This manor shows signs of age and decay, despite the Blufont's wealth. Affric (NE male tainted one magic-user 8), his wife Alisonda (NE female tainted one human magic-user 6) and brother Clarne (NE male tainted one human magic-user 4) are currently the only family in residence. Many of the manor's rooms have been closed off and given over to dust and rats. Only the library, kitchen, dining hall and the residents' bedrooms see any use. In a dusty second floor gallery, hang portraits of the family through the generations. Several depict "family members" who, though long since dead, are disturbing similar in appearance to Affric, Alisonda and Clarne.

The manor is the focus of the Cult of the Deep. The Blufonts always delved into the unspeakable, but coming to Hard Bay, Affric located secret smuggling passages leading into the Depths (Area 10). In these water-filled caves, he encountered the Yaknath who worship the unspeakable horrors he had only read about in blasphemous tomes. Joining with them, his entire family has undergone rituals to become tainted ones. Now Affric controls the cult and provides sacrifices to the Yaknath in return for the bounty of sea. The concealed passage to the Depths hides behind a secret door in the cellar.

2: MOISAN MANOR

The smooth and graceful Ellagana Moisan (NE female tainted one human magic-user/thief 3/3) and her large brood dwell in the largest home in Hard Bay. Ellagana has had more than a dozen husbands, all who sadly disappeared, died or otherwise met a foul end (all were sacrificed to the Yaknath). However, these



poor souls have blessed Ellagana with many capable tainted one children that run the docks and warehouses and generate significant amounts of coin she uses to fund her extravagant lifestyle.

As dusk falls each night, except the three nights of the new moon, the manor is filled with light and music as the family throw debauchery-filled parties for the aristocracy, upcoming gentry or those the family wishes to intoxicate before sacrificing the poor insensate fool to their unholy masters.

3: GEROU MANOR

Reynard Gerou (TN male human) and the rest of his family have never fully committed to the Cult of the Deep. Paying lip service, and participating in the rituals to maintain their position, they stay as aloof as possible from the works of the blasphemous religion, instead focusing on their jewellery business. Of the three families, the Gerou boast the fewest number who have undergone the tainted one rituals.

Their home is notable for its second storey, where the family works pearls and coral into jewellery, under a skylight that lets them watch the stars. On clear nights, Reynard is often on the walk surrounding the manor roof, gazing at the stars through a great telescope mounted atop the manor.

4: STRONGHAMMER METALWORKS

This stout, box-like stone building boasts a grand sign declaring it as the Stronghammer Metalworks and the sounds of hammering amid belching smoke emanate from within during daylight hours. Aldal Stronghammer (NG male dwarf fighter 3), his wife Agleif, sons Sigbert and Hilbert and daughter Hethena (all NG dwarf fighter 1) work the forge.

Aldal adventured for a short time before settling down, and the dangers he witnessed scarred him enough that he rarely moves beyond arm's reach of strong drink. Aldal is afraid the nightmares have followed him to Hard Bay, having noticed the odd behaviour of his neighbours, new moon lights on Maritime Hill and the many unexplained disappearances. The dwarves have become very insular and cautious as a result; afraid to venture from their walls except in the bright of day. However, still good at heart, Aldal might offer travellers a slurred, gruff warning to leave Hard Bay before it's too late.

5: THE DRIFTWOOD

The Driftwood seems wildly out of place for a small fishing village. A small, dark shop filled with books and strange curios, one never knows what oddities might be found within. Staffed by Clarne Blufont (NE male tainted one human magic-user 4), the shop is the only place in the village where one might buy or sell magic items or tomes of lore.

6: DOCKS

The docks and the surrounding warehouses are Hard Bay's heart and see the most activity. Small ships offload their cargo here, hoping to get a better price by avoiding the heavier taxes of the cities. While fisherfolk cast their nets and salt their catch, divers, many of whom are tainted ones able to breathe water, gather pearls and coral for sale to the jewellers.

At the top of the bluffs stand two large warehouses and a collection of smaller buildings where the goods are stored and assessed. Illian Moisan (NE male tainted one human thief 6), eldest son of Ellagana, is the dockmaster and works from one of the smaller building. He is a deeply handsome man with dark eyes and a wry sense of humour, though rumours persist he and his mother have an unnaturally close relationship.

The eastern warehouse has suffered over the years and has not been repaired. It leaks badly in storms and is easy to sneak into, should someone be so inclined. On more than one occasion Fancy Tomnal has met privately here with visiting members of the Sharkrazors to plot ways to take over Hard Bay.

7: LOOKOUT POINT LIGHTHOUSE

The Lookout Point Lighthouse is avoided by all Hard Bay's residents. Not only is the causeway difficult to negotiate in the best of weather, with waves and sharp rocks beckoning below, but it is home to Old Moreg (CN male human magic-user 4), who's sense of sanity has long since fled. Moreg tends the light and it has never failed, but villagers have often noted shadows playing against the light that are not entirely natural.

Their fears are well founded. Moreg has a significant personal library of things best left unremembered, and he spends his time summoning creatures he finds described in those books. The things he has witnessed have driven the old man beyond the bounds of sanity and left him shattered and thoroughly unpleasant. He attempts to drive anyone that bothers him into the sea or back across the slick causeway.

Moreg is aware of the Yaknath and the tainted ones and he does not trust anyone that seeks his knowledge. Should he be won over, he is a powerful ally against the three families and their unspeakable creatures.

8: THE EVENING MIST

A weathered sign depicting a mist-shrouded lighthouse over the Evening Mist's front door creaks in the wind. The inn's clientele almost exclusively comprises superstitious humans. The tainted ones are more likely to spend their evenings at Moisan Manor or in the Depths and the dwarves are too afraid to venture from their home. While technically owned by Afric Blufont, the inn is rented by a large half-elven family, the Starweathers.

The inn's most notorious resident is Fancy Tomnal Staggers (CN male human thief 5), a hard-drinking gambler who always seems to have enough coin, despite a lack of an obvious source. Unknown to the villagers, he is in Hard Bay at the behest of the Sharkrazor pirates, looking for an opening for the pirates to gain less overt control over the village than they held in the past. So far Fancy Tomnal has concentrated on gathering information and eventually plans to buy one or two houses and to set up some criminal enterprise under the cover of a gambling parlour. He is unlikely to get the chance, however, as his questions have aroused the attention of the three families and they have marked him for the next sacrifice atop Maritime Hill when the new moon comes.

9: MARITIME HILL

The stones atop the lightly forested Maritime Hill are avoided by all sane folk. Popular myth says it is a ruined faerie hold which explains the lights and fires seen there during the new moon. Most members of the three families claim it is an ancient monument to lost mariners, with no features of interest.

Those climbing the hill find a circle of standing stones around an altar of strange black stone whose sides are carved with tentacles, fins, eyes and fangs. The top is scarred with hundreds of blade marks and is deeply stained by old blood.

On the night of every new moon, the Cult of the Deep climbs the hill to pay homage to the Yaknath, often with a representative of that fell race in attendance. They dance, chant and sacrifice in the name of the giant fishmen and their dark gods. In turn, the most faithful are rewarded with the chance to couple with the fish folk and become one of the tainted ones.

10: THE DEPTHS

Caverns, some inundated, run through the bluffs under the village. The main entrance is just below the water line to the east of the causeway leading to Lookout Point and may be spotted from the water. They can also be accessed via a secret entrance in Blufont Manor's cellar (Area 1). Here the cult meet to celebrate their twisted beliefs or converse with the Yaknath.

Near the secret entrance is a large cavern where the cult stores robes, torches and cages for sacrificial victims. Yaknath are often in this chamber, as the creatures frequently visit to drop off pearls or other things recovered from the sea.

LIFE IN HARD BAY

Life seems normal on the surface, but it is clear to perceptive observers Hard Bay suffers from some deeper rot. Most of the architecture remains a ramshackle mesh of whatever the smugglers built, with only the aristocracy having made any efforts to repair or improve their homes.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

The village survives almost entirely on the trade centred on the docks, supplemented by revenue brought in by the Stronghammer smith and Gerou family jewellers. Fishing is everything to almost everyone in the village.

TAINTED ONE

The spiritual taint that accompanies worship of the Deep Ones can result in several strange physical deformities and odd abilities. Tainted ones exhibit strange powers. Choose or determine randomly deformities for each tainted one:

D10 TAIN

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1 | The tainted one develops a gurgling, phlegm-choked voice that makes communication hard, but allows the tainted one to talk to fish. |
| 2 | The tainted one develops bulging, fish-like eyes, but can see perfectly clearly even in the muddiest water. |
| 3 | The tainted one's shadow is blurry, as if seen through water. |
| 4 | The skull of the tainted one changes into a more angular, moray-like shape. Arms and legs also shorten slightly. The tainted one moves slower and more sluggishly, but can once per 10 minutes exhibit a burst of surprising speed. |
| 5 | The palms of the hands of the tainted one conceal octopus-like suckers that make climbing easy, but get in the way of wielding weapons with a round shaft that require a firm grip. |
| 6 | The skin of the tainted one begins secreting a sticky, oily residue when agitated. The residue adheres to everything and leaves a slimy trail. |
| 7 | Gills sprout on the throat of the tainted one when the clock strikes midnight on every new moon and remain until dawn. During this time, the tainted one can only breathe water. |
| 8 | Avian creatures consider the fishy smell of the tainted one delicious and are more prone to being caught. However, some avian predators may attack as soon as they smell the tainted one. |
| 9 | The tainted one grows a red pearl on some part of his body on every New Year's Eve. The pearl must be surgically extracted. |
| 10 | The tainted one grows a second set of retractable shark teeth, but can only eat meat and fish. |

LAW & ORDER

Hard Bay largely polices itself. The oldest sons of the three families enforce their parents' will with a few stout clubs. Since the three families own nearly all the land and employ all the citizens, the threat of eviction keeps most folk in line.

EVENTS

While the PCs are in Hard Bay, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly what happens:

D4 EVENT

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | On the night of the new moon, a bonfire illuminates robed figures and very large humanoid figures atop Maritime Hill. A guttural, blubbery chant can be heard intermingled with screams of pain and fear. |
| 2 | Aldal Stronghammer tries to entice the PCs into his family's shop. Any who enter are promptly encouraged to flee before nightfall, lest they disappear. |
| 3 | The Driftwood has a strange, symbol-covered coral decorated goblet for sale (300 gp). It radiates magic. Anyone carrying it for more than an hour feels an overwhelming urge to walk into the sea. |
| 4 | A strong storm comes in off the sea, lashing the village with high winds and pouring rain. Oddly, a thick mist fills those streets and yards protected from the wind. |

YAKNATH

This giant-sized fish man has a single large eye above its fanged maw. A pair of tentacles sprout from its sides, below long, scaled arms that end in huge claws.

- Consuming a draught of the residue of a Yaknath coupling with a humanoid can restore the imbiber's fertility. Children born as a result have a 50% chance of being a tainted one.
- Removing the ominous eye of a yaknath and washing it in brine generates a strange, bubbling red foam that ostensibly allows a glimpse through the eddies of time.
- After drinking a distilled version of the yaknath's mildly hallucinogenic, poisonous blood, one experiences crippling cramps, but nearby sea gulls begin whispering strange secrets to the imbiber.
- Yaknaths are said to be able to steal the breath of sleeping or drugged mortals, chocking victims at will.
- Inserting the eye of a willing, living yaknath into a killer clam and leaving it there for a year and a day makes it turn into a red pearl that acts as a powerful divination tool for the magic user. Using such a yaknath pearl does open mental doors to their dread whispers, though.

KINGSFELL

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

KINGSFELL AT A GLANCE

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

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

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler Mira Lankinen

Government Overlord

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

Alignments NG, LN, LG

Languages Common, Orc, Halfling

Resources & Industry Farming, fishing

NOTABLE FOLK

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

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

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

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

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

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

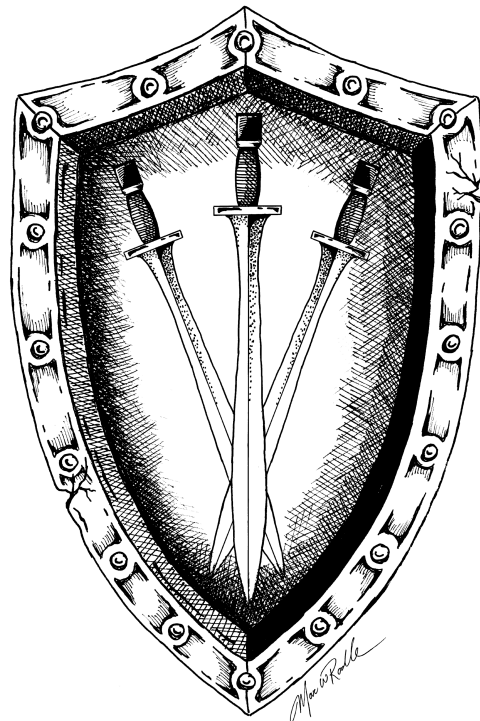
Riku Markku (location 1; N male middle-aged human) The taciturn miller is often seen poking about in the exposed mud of the Ost's banks, when the tide is out.

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

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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

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



VILLAGE LORE

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

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

VILLAGERS

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

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

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

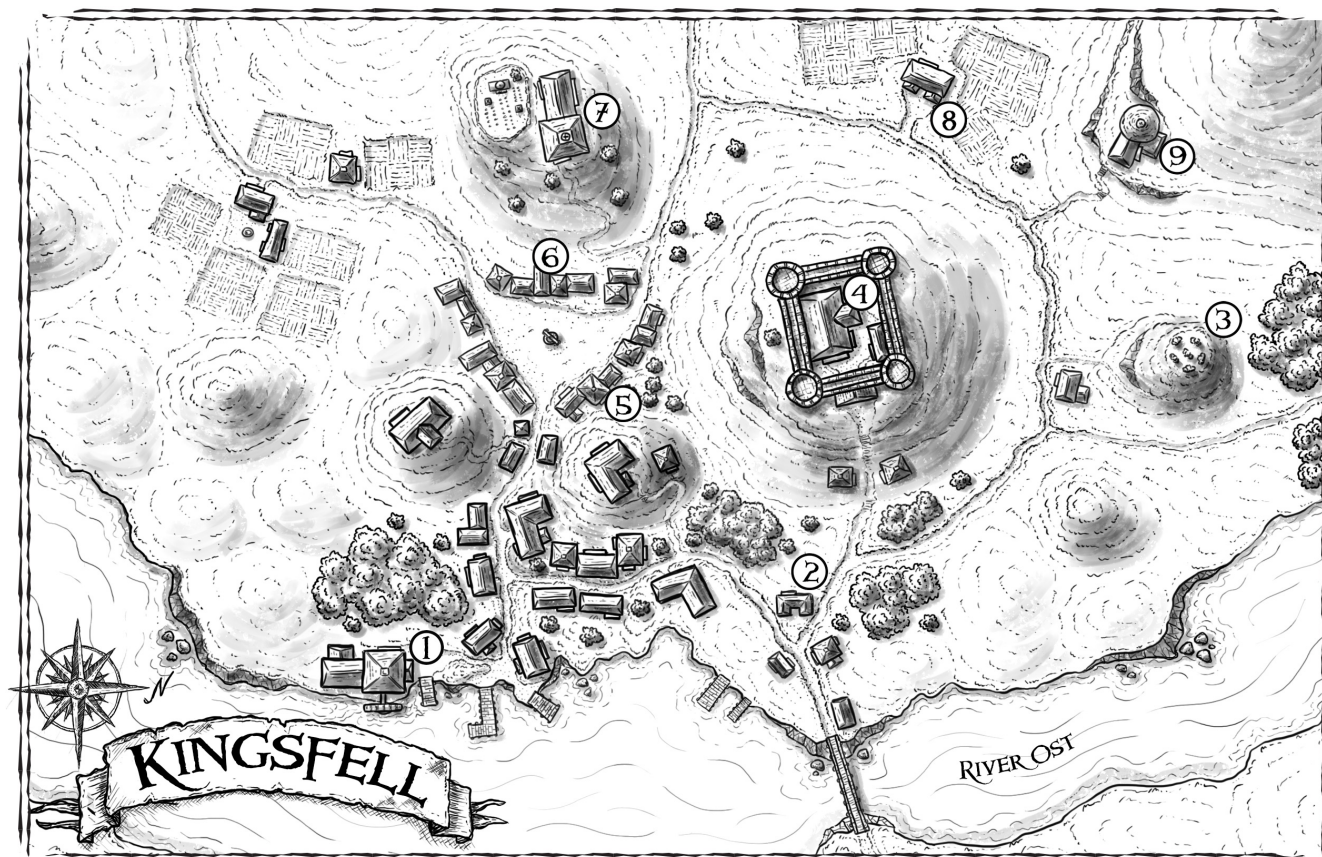
WHISPERS & RUMOURS

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

D6 RUMOUR

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

*False rumour



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: REDSHANK MILL

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

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

2: THE RAT AND CUP

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

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

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

3: THE KINGSTONES

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

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

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

4: VIGIL

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

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

5: ESKOLA'S

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

KINGSFELL'S HIDDEN HISTORY

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

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

6: THE WEARY TRAVELLER

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

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

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

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

7: HALL OF THE LAWGIVER

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

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

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

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

8: HEIMO'S HOUSE

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

9: SHRINE OF THE SHINING LIGHT

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

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

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

THE FOUR BROTHERS

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

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

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

THE SURROUNDING AREA

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

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

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

LIFE IN KINGSFELL

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

TRADE & INDUSTRY

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

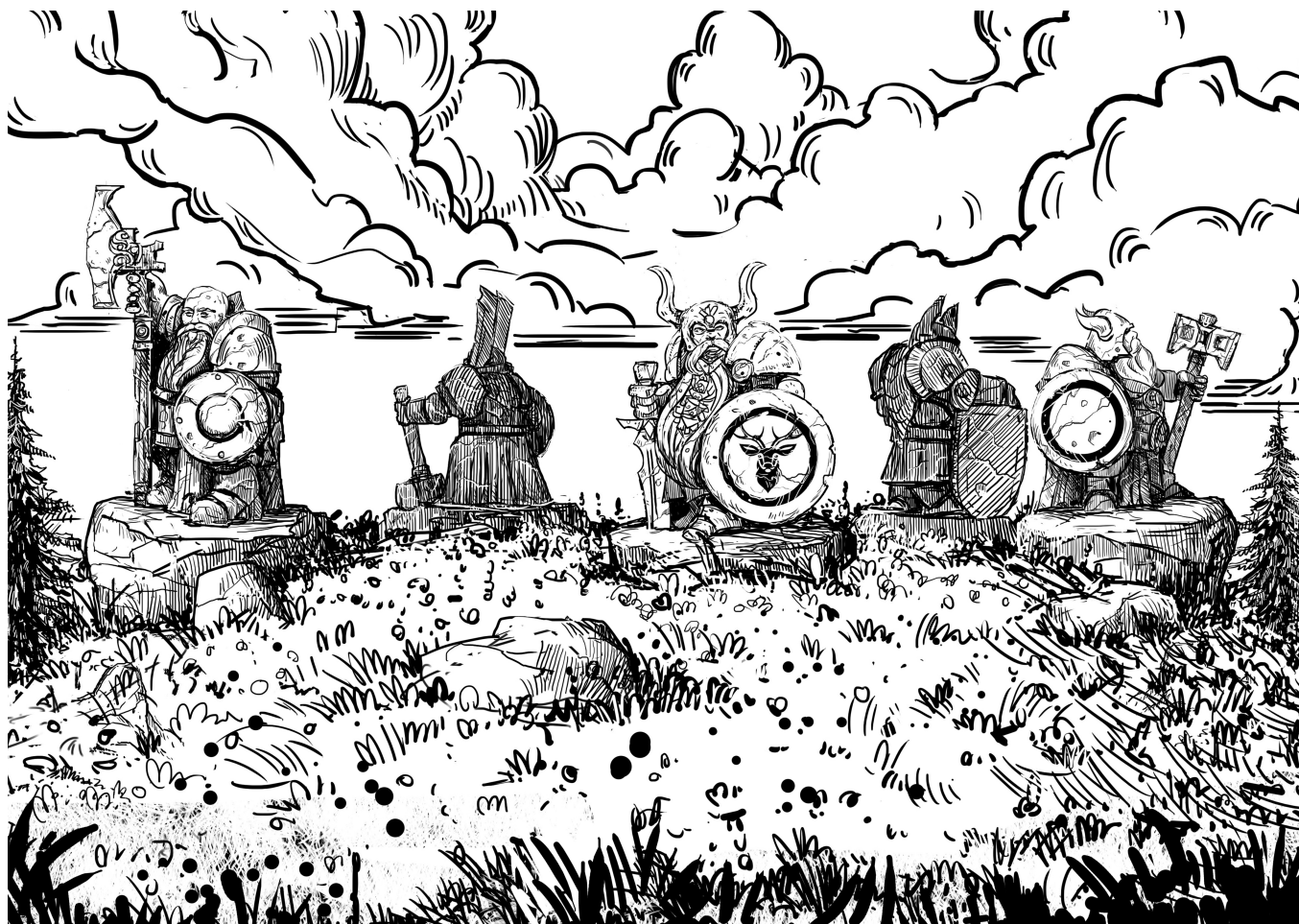
LAW & ORDER

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

EVENTS

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

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



LONGBRIDGE

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

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

Longbridge at a Glance

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

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

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

Demographics

Ruler Baron Wido Gall and/or Hilduin Lorsch and/or Einhard Kochel
Government Contested
Population 193 (173 humans, 12 dwarves, 4 half-elves, 3 half-orcs, 1 halfling)
Alignments N
Languages Common
Resources & Industry Farming

Notable Folk

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Notable Locations

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

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

Lords Competing

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

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

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

VILLAGE LORE

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

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

VILLAGERS

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

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

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

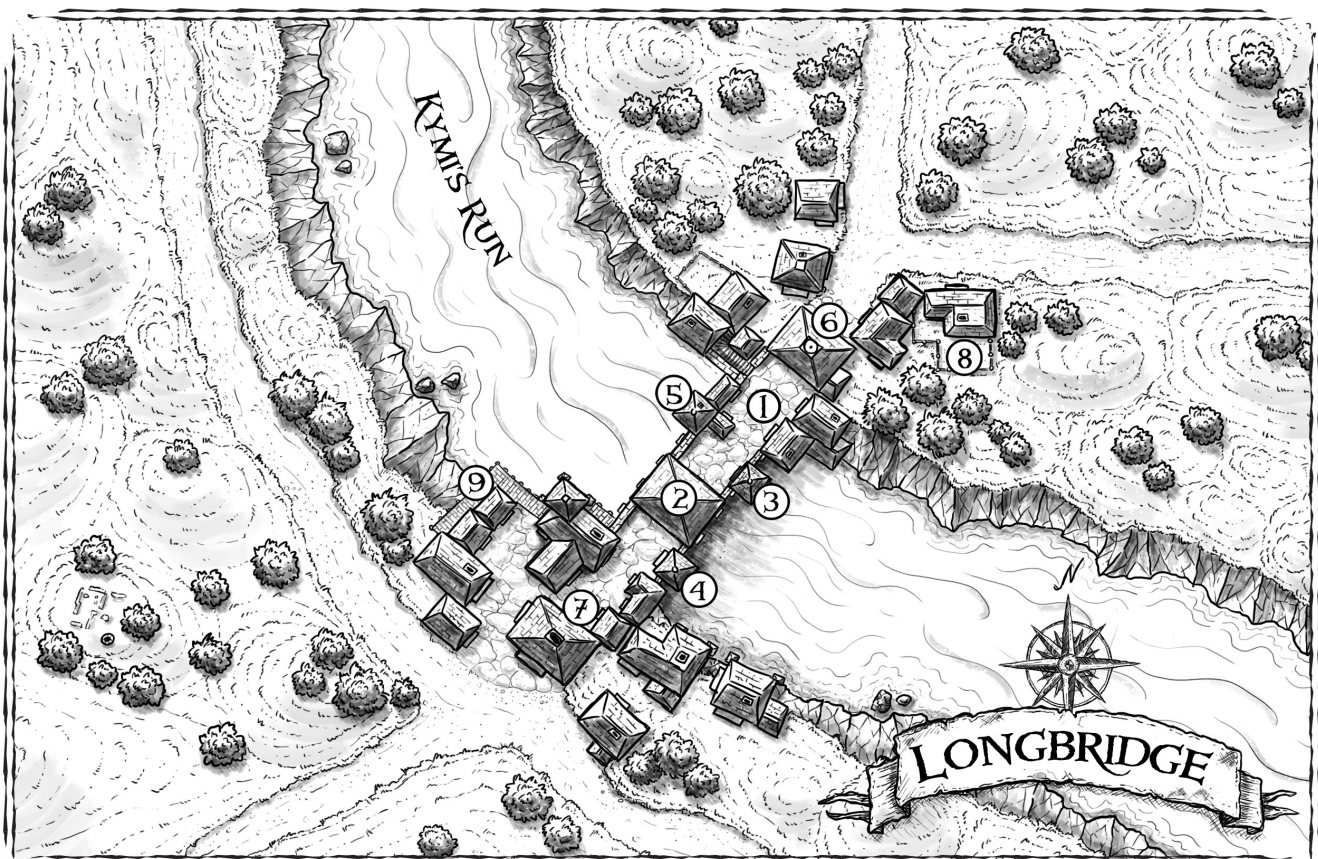
WHISPERS & RUMOURS

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

D6 RUMOUR

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

*False rumour



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: THE LONGBRIDGE

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

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

2: THE WELCOMING HEARTH

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

3: RIDETH'S HOUSE

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

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

4: THREAD & BALL

A sign depicting a needle and thread hangs above this small building's front door. The owner, Dricolen Thornhill (LN male halfling), is a fine craftsman, but normally ends up repairing traveller's clothes (much to his chagrin). He remembers fondly the days of crafting fine clothing in nearby Languard and bemoans his fate—forced to flee here when his brother got into too much debt and the moneylender decided his family should honour his obligation.

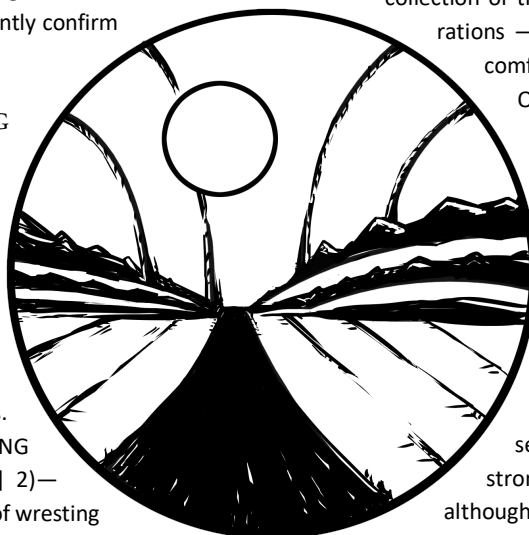
5: MALDREC'S

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

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

6: THE NORTH TOWER

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



KYMI'S RUN

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

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

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

7: THE SOUTH TOWER

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

8: THE MERRY TRAVELLER

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

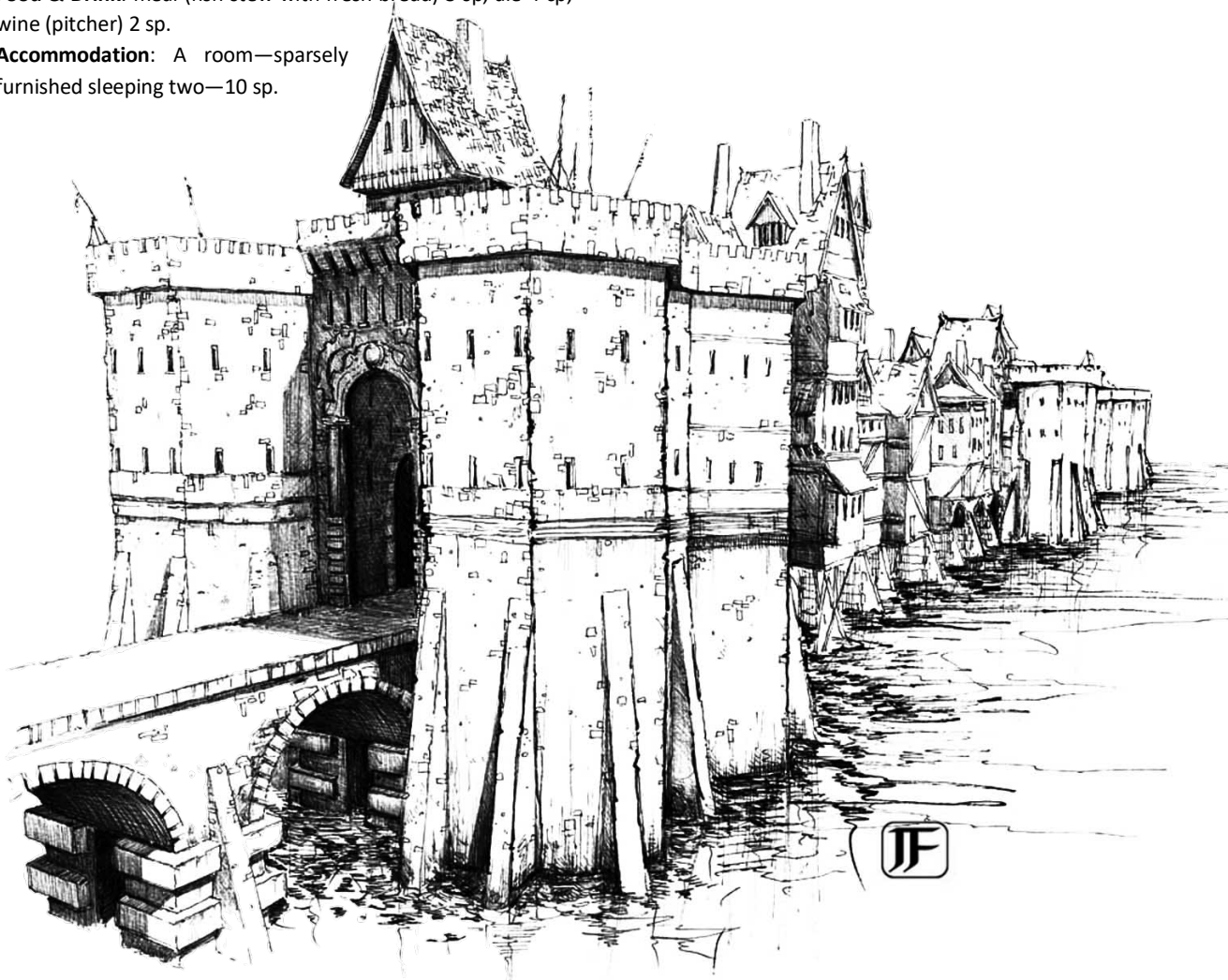
- **Food & Drink:** meal (fish stew with fresh bread) 3 sp, ale 4 cp, wine (pitcher) 2 sp.
- **Accommodation:** A room—sparsely furnished sleeping two—10 sp.

9: THE IRON FIST

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

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

- **Food & Drink:** meal (thin rabbit or fish stew with vegetables) 6 sp, ale 4 cp, wine (pitcher) 2 sp.
- **Accommodation:** A room—sparsely furnished sleeping four—4 sp.



LIFE IN LONGBRIDGE

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

TRADE & INDUSTRY

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

LAW & ORDER

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

EVENTS

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

D10	EVENT
1	An outraged traveller refuses to pay a toll at both towers. An argument quickly develops.
2	Einhard Kochel stands at the Welcoming Hearth's threshold loudly (and charmingly) inviting travellers to rest within.
3	A muttering dwarf wanders the bridge, closely examining its stonework, as if searching for something.
4	A fisherman sits in his craft in the shadow of the bridge. He suddenly shouts that "something big" is in the water below his boat.
5	As one of the bailiffs inspects the bridge, a bucket of excrement is "accidentally" dropped from the rival's tower and narrowly misses its target.
6	Freun Deadeye wanders the bridge ostensibly for fresh air, but in reality she is checking on the guards at the South Tower.
7	Loud voices emanating from the Weary Traveller mark the another argument between Kuno and Gunda.
8	Three figures—all wearing voluminous cloaks, but obviously by their stature dwarves—stand outside Rideth Sehiatyn patiently waiting for her to answer the door.
9	Dark clouds hover low over the bridge and a heavy rain begins to fall. Within minutes, the bridge is seemingly deserted as everyone—guards and travellers alike—seek cover.
10	A brawl erupts at the Iron Fist as rival, off-duty men-at-arms from the two towers come to blows.

TRAVELLERS

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

D10 TRAVELLER

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

THORNHILL

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

THORNHILL AT A GLANCE

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

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

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler Aelfgar Wymer

Government Autocracy

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

Alignments N, LN, CN, NE

Languages Common, Draconic

Resources & Industry Fishing, hunting

NOTABLE FOLK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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

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

GENERAL VILLAGE FEATURES

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

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

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

VILLAGE LORE

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

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

VILLAGERS

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

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

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

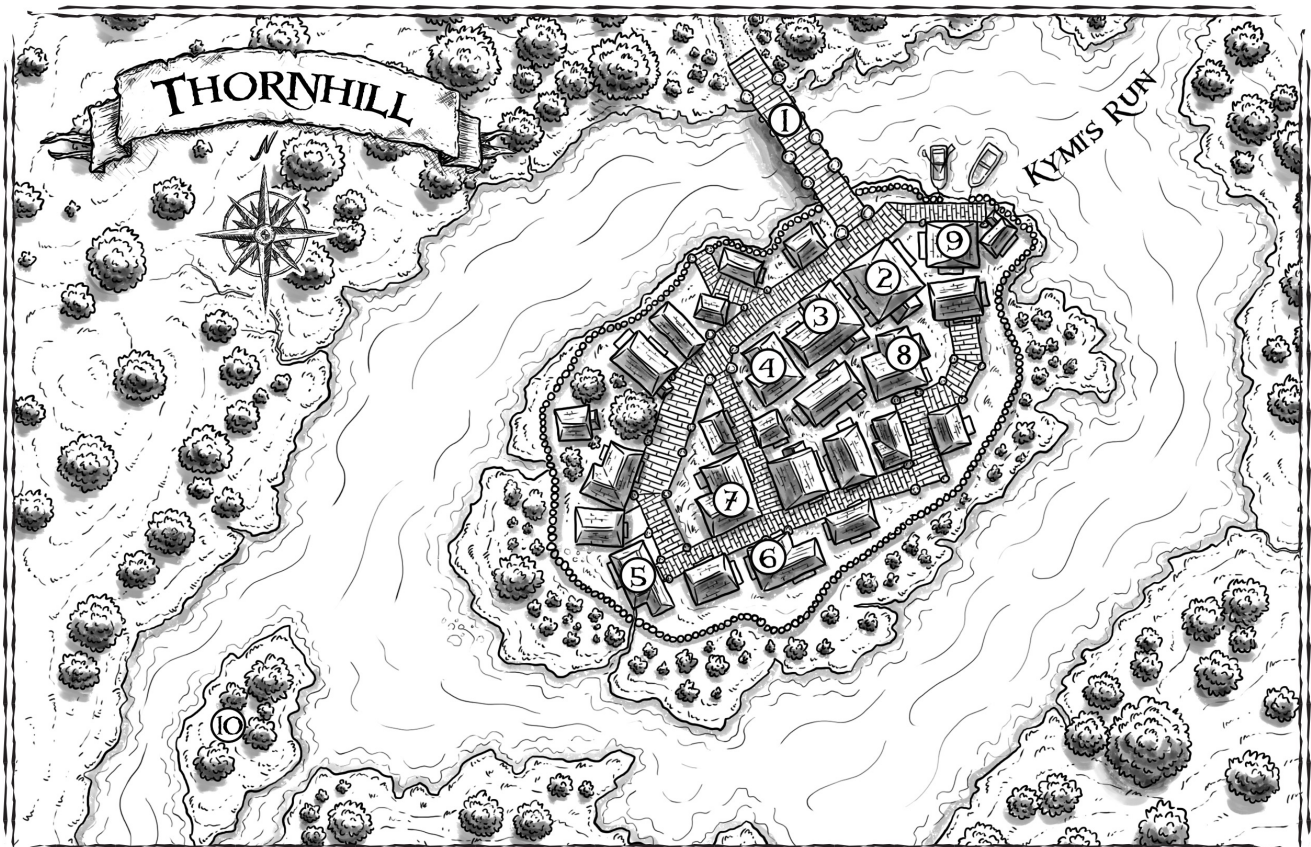
WHISPERS & RUMOURS

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

D6 RUMOUR

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

*False rumour



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: MUD BRIDGE

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

2: THE DRUNKEN LIZARD

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

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

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

3: WENNELL'S

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

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

4: AELFGAR WYMER'S HOUSE

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

5: HALL OF THE SUN

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

THE SURROUNDING AREA

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

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

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

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

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

6: GYRIC WALWIN'S HOUSE

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

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

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

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

7: OSRED'S HOUSE

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

RED FERN BARROWS

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

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

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

8: BLACKSMITH

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

9: YONWIN'S

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

10: ISLE OF THE LIZARDS

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

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

LIFE IN THORNHILL

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

TRADE & INDUSTRY

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

LAW & ORDER

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

EVENTS

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

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



UNDERDELL

The once quiet and quaint halfling community of Underdell rests along the Old Road near the Salt Mire. Steeped in tradition and idleness, the Underdellians found themselves unprepared to deal with the horrors of the plague outbreak in nearby Ashford. Terror gripped Underdell, tearing apart the strong bonds of family and friendship. Fear and paranoia took root in the halflings' hearts as they tried to escape sickness and death. As Underdell falls apart, a vile halfling bandit has used the chaos to take control of Underdell, enforcing a strict martial law. As neighbour turns on neighbour, a group of bandits terrorize merchant caravans traveling through Ashlar, raiding with impunity and aided by a rich noble. The Underdellians, their smiles and laughter turned to tears and hopelessness, live in fear of another plague outbreak and the harsh punishment of the bandits who insist they are protecting and enriching the village.

UNDERDELL AT A GLANCE

Ruler: Vihtori Ikonen

Government: Secret Syndicate

Alignments: LG, NG, N, CN, LE, NE

Population: 152 (12 humans, 140 halflings)

Notable Folk: Vihtori Ikonen (location 8), Mayor Linodal Mannerheim (location 5, Mannerheim Brewery), Father Jalo Tammi (location 4, Eveninggarden)

Languages: Common

Resources & Industry: Beer, crafts, produce

Underdell resides under the shadows of a line of hills along the Old Road in the Duchy of Ashlar. A hundred years ago, halfling immigrants to the duchy settled Underdell to get away from the crowded city life of the duchy's larger towns. The halflings quickly created a small, quiet community, sending exports throughout the duchy of their ales as well as produce from their carefully tended gardens.

Life remained somewhat unremarkable in Underdell until recently when a traumatic event shattered Underdell's way of life. The black tendrils of death ensnared Underdell's nearby neighbour, Ashford, with the plague, devastating the village. At first, Underdell tried to help, taking in refugees fleeing from their hellish plight. But when the first plague victims appeared amongst the Underdellians, the halflings' generosity turned to fear and from fear to paranoia and despair. Though the plague affected Underdell far less than Ashford, the scared halflings looked to a savior, no matter who, to save them. Vihtori Ikonen, a former thug of the Shadow Masks, had recently fled to Underdell. Quickly, he formed a band of fearful halflings, killing any plague victims and enforcing marshal law on the village. Vihtori then began training his accomplices as bandits, preying on the merchant traffic in the area.

Today, Vihtori and his bandits lurk in the background, the imprisoned mayor, Linodal Mannerheim, serving as a puppet leader. Far from being hunted, Vihtori made alliance with a noble from Dulwich to harass caravans from the town's powerful merchants. The village's halflings remained cowed by Vihtori, under threat from the plague's return and the harsh protection he offers.



VILLAGE LORE

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

- Underdell is the duchy's only halfling community, renowned for its excellent beer. Mannerheim Brewery, run by the local mayor, is their most famous brewery.
- A plague savaged Underdell a year ago. Not as virulent as in Ashford, it still claimed a number of lives.
- The once jovial halflings have become insular and unfriendly towards visitors. People visiting the village sometimes disappear.

VILLAGERS

Appearance: Underdellians appear as typical, portly halflings; however, their wide smiles are gone. Most appear downcast or watch others with furtive, nervous glances.

Dress: The halflings prefer brightly dyed loose clothing that is easy to move in. Most wear simple jewellery. Lately, their clothes appear shabby and dirty. Many wear strange charms made by the local wizard.

Nomenclature: *male* Esko, Joni Ukko, Seppo; *female* Anu, Eleni, Helvi, Railii; *family* Eskola, Korpela, Mustonen.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Underdell, a PC may hear one or more rumours. The PC 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 PC learns.

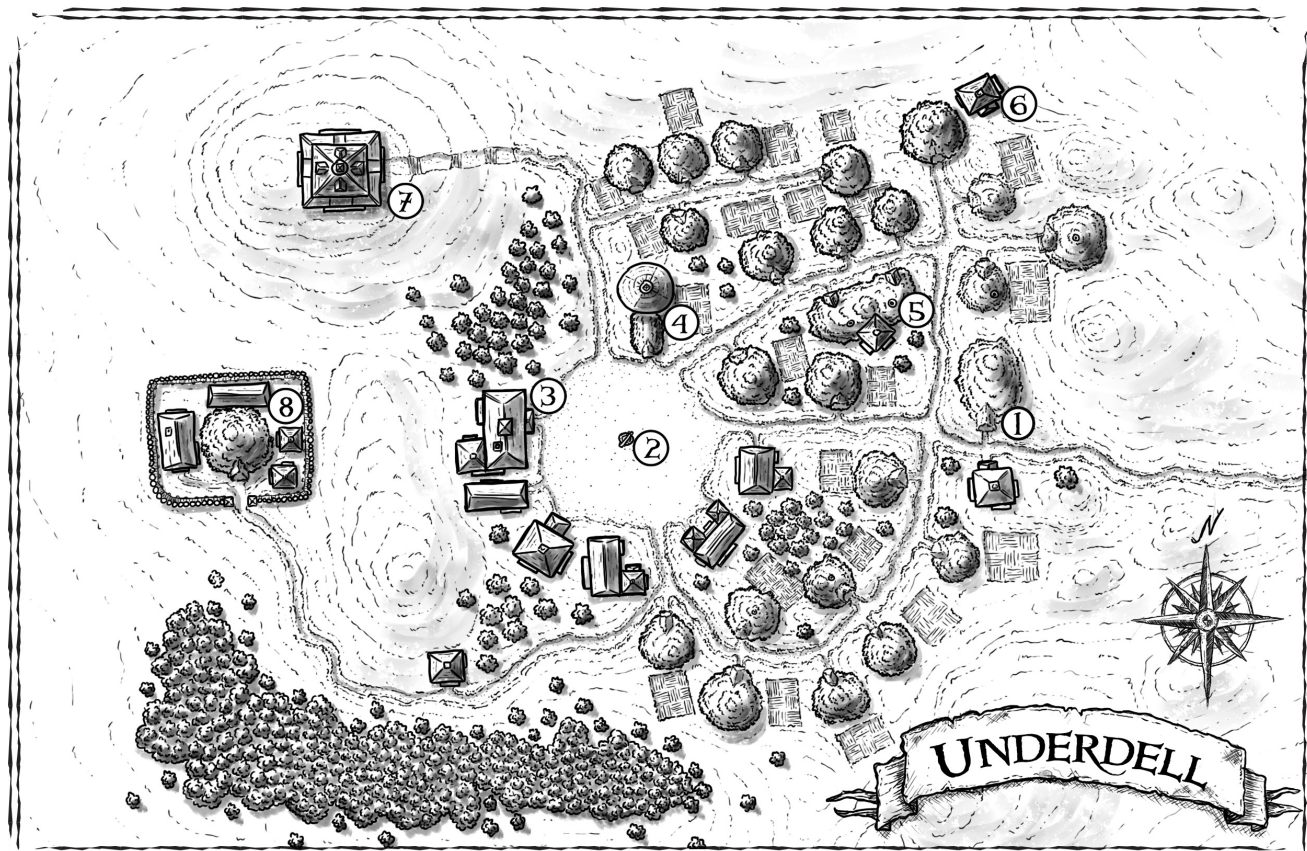
D6	RUMOUR
1	Outbreaks of the plague ravaging Ashford still occur from time to time in Underdell.
2*	Lately, the mayor, Linodal Mannerheim isn't taking any visitors. Apparently, he's occupied with brewing a new batch of Mannerheim beer.
3*	The Finger of Conn was built to conceal a great vault of treasure. I bet the treasure is still there!
4	A beautiful wizard in Underdell crafts charms for the villagers to ward off the plague.
5*	There are no acolytes at the Eveninggarden, a temple of Conn. The priest worships a devil and sacrificed them all to abate the plague.
6	A band of warriors has recently been seen inhabiting the village's old watchtower but no one seems to know who placed them there or why.

*False rumour

NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

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

1. **Jail:** Recently built, as Underdell never had a need before, the jail lies along the road leading to the village. A small, wooden guardhouse sits across from the jail as a security checkpoint. Guards rigorously screen all visitors for signs of the plague, before allowing them entry. Anyone suspected of illness is held here before their lifeless body is dumped in the pits out back.
2. **Marketplace:** A number of small businesses stand around an open space once the heart and soul of Underdell. Weekly markets, replete with entertainment as well as festivals, took place here before fear and paranoia gripped the village.
3. **The Gallows:** Once a bit of dark humour, the local tavern and inn's name seems more fitting now. Formerly a cosy, accommodating place, its regulars now grip their mugs tightly, casting suspicious glances at everyone.
4. **Eveningarden:** A beautiful church of flowing greenery and flowers dedicated to Conn was Underdell's spiritual heart. Few now find faith in Conn, feeling betrayed by the god. Its resident priest, Father Jalo Tammi, still holds services, vainly attempting to instil hope back into the community.
5. **Mannerheim Brewery:** This large halfling home is both the mayoral residence for Linodal Mannerheim and Underdell's most famous brewery. Vihtori's bandits keep the mayor imprisoned in his own home, using him as a puppet leader.
6. **Kirsi's House:** The halflings converted this dwelling to accommodate the human wizard, Kirsi Niskanen, replete with another building to serve as her workshop. Kirsi, a former prisoner in Dulwich's dungeons, reluctantly works her magic in Vihtori's service to pay off her debts. To the outsiders, she is Underdell's eccentric wizard.
7. **Conn's Finger:** A forty-foot-high watchtower stands atop a squat hill originally built by the Knights of the Eternal Watch to safeguard the Old Road and survey the Salt Mire. Abandoned for years, it now houses a contingent of human mercenaries from Dulwich who aid Vihtori and act as a liaison between him and the mysterious noble who feeds him information on plump merchant caravans.
8. **The Compound:** Vihtori built a base hidden from view by a small, rocky hill. The compound serves as a barracks for the bandits along with pens for the riding dogs and ponies. A 10-foot-high wooden palisade surrounds the complex.



LIFE IN UNDERDELL

Underdell is a shadow of what it once was. The smiling halflings with ever-open doors now shuffle about suspicious and fearful, their homes shuttered from their neighbours' prying eyes.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

The halflings of Underdell remain largely self-sufficient, producing what they need and trading with their neighbours for what they don't have. Nearly every halfling home has a well-tended garden and maybe a small animal pen with chickens. This results in a lot of produce, the surplus of which was formerly carted off to nearby Ashford or down to Kingsfell. Now the extra is jealously hoarded or used to feed the mercenaries stationed in Conn's Finger. The halflings main export of beer remains undisturbed by recent events. The Underdellians are known for their fine brew, particularly from Mannerheim Brewery. Vihtori ensures these exports go out as normal as to do otherwise could arouse suspicion of something happening in Underdell. Many other halflings practice various crafts traded their wares in the village's lively marketplace.

LAW & ORDER

Once a peaceful halfling community, Underdell's citizens policed themselves. They looked out for their neighbours and came together to help anyone struggling. Ashford's plague shattered Underdell's ideal community, breaking the bonds of goodwill. No one could tell who might secretly be harbouring the plague and so the halflings became suspicious of each other. The arrival of Vihtori only inflamed their paranoia allowing him to seize power. Vihtori and his bandits serve as the law now, ruthlessly executing those suspected of having the plague. Anyone attempting to overthrow Vihtori is similarly dealt with. The Underdellians constantly spy on one another, eager to report to Vihtori.

CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS

Underdell once held many monthly festivals in the marketplace, often loosely based on halfling interpretations of Conn's teachings. It did not take much to get the Underdellians to pull together for a large feast replete with dancing and games. Weddings were elaborate affairs, often lasting for two days. Even the weekend marketplace meet-ups were a cause to over eat, partake in games and drink copiously. Sadly, today, the halflings no longer celebrate or engage in any sort of festive activities. Most stick to their families, suspicious of everyone around them.

VILLAGE DRESSING

Use this table to generate the minor sights and sounds the PCs experience as they move about Underdell.

D20 DRESSING/EVENT

1	Father Jalo performs a solo funeral service, carrying a dead halfling into Eveninggarden while he haphazardly waves a censer.
2	Four warriors on horseback thunder through the streets, heading towards the large watchtower.
3	A wagon is seen disappearing along a narrow road winding past a rocky hill.
4	A group of dirty halfling children chase an old woman down the street, hurling curses and stones at her.
5	A group of female halflings surround an elegant human woman in robes. They seem to be asking her for some sort of charm.
6	A wild-eyed woman stumbles out of the Gallows, mug in one hand and an attractive, but wriggling, male halfling slung over one shoulder.
7	Three armed halflings roughly drag someone out of one the homes and head towards the jail.
8	Eyes stare at the PCs from the windows of the halfling homes. Many of the inhabitants make signs to ward off evil or spit in the PCs' direction.
9	A legless halfling shuffles towards the PCs using his arms to move and begins begging for coin so his children can eat. If given any money, he immediately heeds towards the Gallows.
10	A group of halflings in filthy robes dig through a patch of mud though it's unclear what they are collecting.
11	Two halflings quarrel over a wilted vegetable garden between their homes. It quickly comes to blows.
12	A halfling dressed in a black mourning robe howls despondently in front of a grass covered temple.
13	A halfling bursts out of a home, carrying a bundle of vegetables only to be chased down by their owner.
14	A group of halflings huddle together whispering before two well-armed halfling guards force them to disperse.
15	A halfling is flung from a catapult located on top of a large watchtower.
16	The cloying smell of incense wafts along the street.
17	A bar fight spills out from the Gallows followed by two cheering well-armed human warriors.
18	Two halfling guards on shaggy ponies patrol the street, causing a few halflings to retreat indoors.
19	A family of sullen looking halflings trudge joylessly about their business, deigning to even look at the PCs.
20	A lone halfling sells vegetables at the marketplace but most seem to be avoiding her.



NOTABLE LOCATIONS IN UNDERDELL

1: UNDERDELL JAIL

A large, grass-covered building abuts the road leading into Underdell. Directly across the way stands a wooden guard post.

Built not long after Vihtori took control of Underdell, the jail houses those suspected of carrying the plague. A small contingent of bandits garrison the jail and guard post, ruthlessly interrogating visitors to the village. Those exhibiting signs of the plague are killed and their bodies dropped into pits behind the jail.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

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

D6	EVENT
1	Four well-armed halflings torment a ragged family seeking shelter within Underdell.
2	Two halfling guards carry a shroud-wrapped body, unceremoniously dropping it into a pit behind the jail.
3	Bored guards loiter around the jail, throwing dice. One of them coughs, spits up phlegm and causes the other guards to suddenly panic.
4	A halfling guard holds a hungry dog on a leash while a skinny, ragged human attempts to get away.
5	A man bursts out of the jail, terribly wounded. Halfling guards follow, brandishing bloodied weapons.
6	A merchant's wagon is waved through without fanfare, making its way towards a distant spire of rock.

2: UNDERDELL MARKETPLACE

A number of wooden buildings surround a beaten clearing of packed earth. A few halflings listlessly roam about.

The heart of Underdell was once a thriving marketplace of cheery halflings going about their daily business. Here, the halflings held weekend open markets, festivals and other celebrations. The shops remain open—a general store, bakery, craft store, the Gallows and a few others, but flowers droop in their window boxes and windows remain shuttered. It feels forlorn and uninviting.

- **For Sale:** +1 dagger (500 gp), Alli's sweets and baked goods (3 sp), a worn map of the Salt Mire (10 gp).



WHAT'S GOING ON?

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

D4	EVENT
1	A small halfling girl in a shabby dress bumps into a PC and attempts to pick pocket one of the party.
2	A halfling wanders by, hacking and coughing before he collapses on the ground.
3	A heavily armed warrior leaves the bakery and heads towards the watchtower, eyeing the PCs.
4	A pack of underfed dogs fight over the carcass of large, dead bird and attack anyone who gets too close.

3: THE GALLOWS

A squat stone building with a grass thatched roof flanks the marketplace. A sign swinging above the double doors depicts three figures swinging from a rope.

Once a quaint tavern and inn excelling in halfling hospitality, the Gallows was a favourite stopping point for travellers and local gathering place. Its name, a bit of dark humour poking fun at the village's peaceful life, unfortunately is now grimly apropos. Inside, a smoky hearth seems to hide dismal halflings who stare at one another with suspicion. The rooms reek of neglect and smell of mould. Outsiders are charged exorbitant prices to encourage them to leave. The inn's staff regularly reports gossip and news to Vihtori.

- **Food & Drink:** meal (baked river trout and cabbage and onion soup) 5 sp, Mannerheim ale 3 sp, wine (pitcher) 4 sp.
- **Accommodation:** One-bed human-sized chamber 5 gp; two-bed halfling chamber 10 sp.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

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

D6	EVENT
1	A halfling patron starts retching uncontrollably, causing the patrons to flee the tavern.
2	Four halfling guards abruptly appear, point out a halfling patron and then proceed to drag him away.
3	Six rough looking halflings, obviously drunk, begin making jokes about the PCs' appearances.
4	A halfling sobs into his mug repeating the name "Annita" over and over again.
5	One of the servers whispers into the barkeep's ears, pointing towards the PCs.
6	A number of patrons suddenly get up and abruptly leave when the PCs are seated.

4: EVENINGGARDEN

Flowering vines flow down the walls of this large earthen building. Two small trees frame the building's entrance.

Eveninggarden stands near the marketplace, a beautifully crafted building of interwoven trees, vines and flowers. Dedicated to Conn, Eveninggarden served as Underdell's spiritual heart. Unfortunately, hope fled the halflings and few now attend services or even acknowledge the temple's existence. The Underdellians believe Conn failed them. Its high priest toils by himself, his acolytes having moved on to more hospitable villages. Having no allies, Father Jalo Tammi fights a losing battle to restore hope to the halflings and confront the evil of Vihtori and his bandits. He provides what relief he can but feels he betrayed the village; his faith was not strong enough to cleanse the plague, allowing Vihtori to take control.

Reclaim a Holy Object: A high priest of Conn has determined a holy object (a magical vessel whose water causes plants to grow quickly) residing in the Eveninggarden should be returned and tasks the PCs to retrieve. Of course, Father Jalo Tammi does not want to relinquish it and beseeches the PCs to aid him instead.

5: MANNERHEIM BREWERY

The smell of brewing beer wafts from the double chimneys of a large grass-covered mound and halfling home.

Underdell's most famous brewery also serves as the residence of Underdell's mayor, Linodal Mannerheim. The Mannerheims have

KIRSI NISKANEN

LE female human wizard 5

A permanent scowl threatens the beauty of a robed woman, her spectacles perched on an imperious nose.

Mannerisms: Kirsi can be very charming, using her looks (and magic) to her advantage when she wants something. Otherwise, she has little patience for others.

Personality: Vain and a bit cold, Kirsi is beginning to realize that in her current situation, she may have to become more open and tolerant of others. She is still shocked by the kindness the halfling villagers (excluding Vihtori's bandits) have shown her.

Background: Kirsi grew up in Languard but moved to Dulwich to practice her spells on the town's rich nobles. After her ploys were discovered, Kirsi spent time in Dulwich's prison awaiting trial. A noble approached her, offering to broker her freedom if she would work for him. Her assignment ended up being in Underdell, using magic to assist Vihtori. She detests both Vihtori and Jeela Jaakola.

been brewing the beer sold throughout the duchy since the village's founding, though Linodal is the first Mannerheim to enter politics. Unfortunately, he was not equipped to deal with the hysteria of the plague and quickly lost control of Underdell to Vihtori who keeps Linodal locked inside his own house as a puppet leader. It's also important for Vihtori to keep Mannerheim Brewery in operation to avoid unwanted notice.

Message in a Cask: The PCs have at some point been gifted a cask of Mannerheim's best brew. Upon emptying the cask, they find a note sealed in a scroll tube. It's a plea of rescue from Linodal Mannerheim and an offer of reward.

6: KIRSI'S HOUSE

A human-sized door fronts this typical halfling home. Additionally, a small stone building with no windows stands nearby.

Vihtori set aside a house for his wizard, Kirsi Niskanen, as well as a workshop for her use. There, she studies magic and plots new tactics to help Vihtori in his raiding. Vihtori favours spells like *enlarge*, *invisibility* and *obscuring mist* to avoid detection in battle. Most villagers believe Kirsi is an eccentric wizard who moved to Underdell to escape the hustle and bustle of the duchy's larger settlements. Kirsi fashions mostly functionless charms, selling them to the villagers, to keep up this ruse. She longs to escape from her current role and go back to swindling rich old nobles.

Witch Hunt: Relatives of the noble Kirsis scammed which lead to her imprisonment aren't happy at her recent disappearance. The PCs are hired to track her down and bring her back to Dulwich to face justice. Rumour has her in Underdell.

FATHER JALO TAMMI

LG old male halfling cleric 5

Dark bags lurk under the eyes of this white-haired halfling who wears the garments of a priest of Conn.

Mannerisms: Stress and exhaustion have taken their toll on the good priest. He walks slowly, needing frequent rests and occasionally dozes off mid-sentence.

Personality: While Jalo still strives to do right in the community, doubts about his own worthiness to serve Conn slowly devour him, marring his once bright and jovial attitude. He is increasingly sceptical about his own faith.

Background: Jalo inherited the position of high priest from his mother decades ago. A hard worker, he was a pillar of Underdell's community and was consulted in almost any matter of importance. Now, he is slowly becoming but a shell of the priest he once was.

7: CONN'S FINGER

Moss and ivy crawl along a 40-foot-high tower perched on a hill. Its lofty battlements command the surrounding area for miles.

Built originally by the Knights of the Eternal Watch, the tower offers a large view of the surrounding area, particularly the Salt Mire. Lack of resources caused the watchtower to be abandoned and the Underdellians used it for storage. Shortly after Vihtori took control, his noble sponsor sent a group of mercenaries lead by Jeela Jaakola to occupy the tower and serve as a liaison between Vihtori and himself. The mercenaries do not participate in the raids but instead ensure the noble receives his fair share of profits and information is passed along. The mercenaries also deal with outsiders sticking their nose in the village's business. The bored mercenaries often descend from the tower and bully the harried halflings, particularly when Vihtori is away.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

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

D4	EVENT
1	Eight warriors unload a large wagon at the tower. The goods appear to comprise furs and fabrics.
2	A wild-eyed woman stuffs a hapless halfling into a barrel before rolling it down the hill. She laughs the entire time, swigging from a mug.
3	Two halfling men fan a wild looking woman relaxing in a camp chair with a large mug in her hand.
4	A wild looking woman argues loudly with a scowling, bespectacled woman in a robe before both storm off.

JEELA JAAKOLA

CN female human fighter 4

Scars from battles criss-cross the body of a fierce woman with wild hair and a crazed look in her eyes.

Mannerisms: Jeela is very loud with any action she takes—from hearty guffaws to heavy smacks on the back for a job well done or a boot to the groin for failure.

Personality: Brash, bold and loud, Jeela likes to fight and drink or preferably drink and then fight. She's getting bored with her current assignment which only inflames her temper.

Background: A wild warrior, Jeela hails from the Lonely Coast. Her temper caused her to bounce between various mercenary companies until she ended up fleeing the Lonely Coast entirely and ended up in the Duchy of Ashlar. Lately, she takes out her boredom by harassing Kirsi, frequently interrupting her work for a drink.

8: THE COMPOUND

A 10-foot-tall wooden palisade surrounds a large central building covered in grass. Numerous pens and storage buildings surround the main building.

The bandit compound in Underdell lies hidden from the main road into the village by a partially man-made rocky hill. A wooden security checkpoint guards the road looping up towards the compound which is surrounded by a 10-foot-tall wooden palisade. Vihtori and his bandits live and plan within the grass covered central building. Nearby are various storehouses with supplies and pens containing riding dogs and small ponies. Vihtori prefers to strike hard and fast, aided by Kirsi's magic. He always has Kirsi cast *invisibility* on him before attacking.

Vengeance: The Shadow Masks aren't ones to forget any slight done to them. The PCs are engaged by a proxy who spins a tale of woe denouncing Vihtori and offering a reward for his elimination.

Find the Sponsor: Dulwich's merchants believe there is a link to the bandit raids and a noble in Dulwich. The PCs are paid to investigate Underdell and discover the noble's identity.

VIHTORI IKONEN

NE male halfling fighter 6

Faded tattoos cover the arms and chest of a burly, grim halfling. A flattish nose, broken and smashed from numerous fights, lies splayed across his face.

Mannerisms: As a former enforcer, Vihtori knows how menacing silence can be. As such, he is a man of few words, often fixing someone with a steely glare before speaking.

Personality: Greed and power rule Vihtori. A base creature, he believes you need to take what you want by force or have it stolen away.

Background: Orphaned at young age, Vihtori was taken in by Ashlar's preeminent thieves' guild, the Shadow Masks. Abused and mistreated, Vihtori learned he had to be strong to survive. Despite his small stature, he became one of the guild's top enforcers. Feeling held back by the guild, Vihtori left (leaving a pile of corpses is a common rumour). Fortuitous for him, he arrived at Underdell during the onset of the plague in nearby Ashford. It did not take him long to take charge and engage in banditry. Shortly afterwards, one of Dulwich's more shady nobles approached him and offered to give him information on merchant caravans leaving the town in exchange for some of the profit.

WELLSWOOD

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

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

WELLSWOOD AT A GLANCE

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

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

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

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler Ilmari Issakainen
Government Overlord
Population 192 (139 humans, 37 dwarves, 15 halflings, 1 half-elf)
Alignments LN, NG
Languages Common, Dwarven, Halfling
Resources & Industry Fishing, hospitality/lodgings, travellers' services

NOTABLE FOLK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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

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

DON GALIR'S HIDDEN HISTORY

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

VILLAGE LORE

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

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

VILLAGERS

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

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

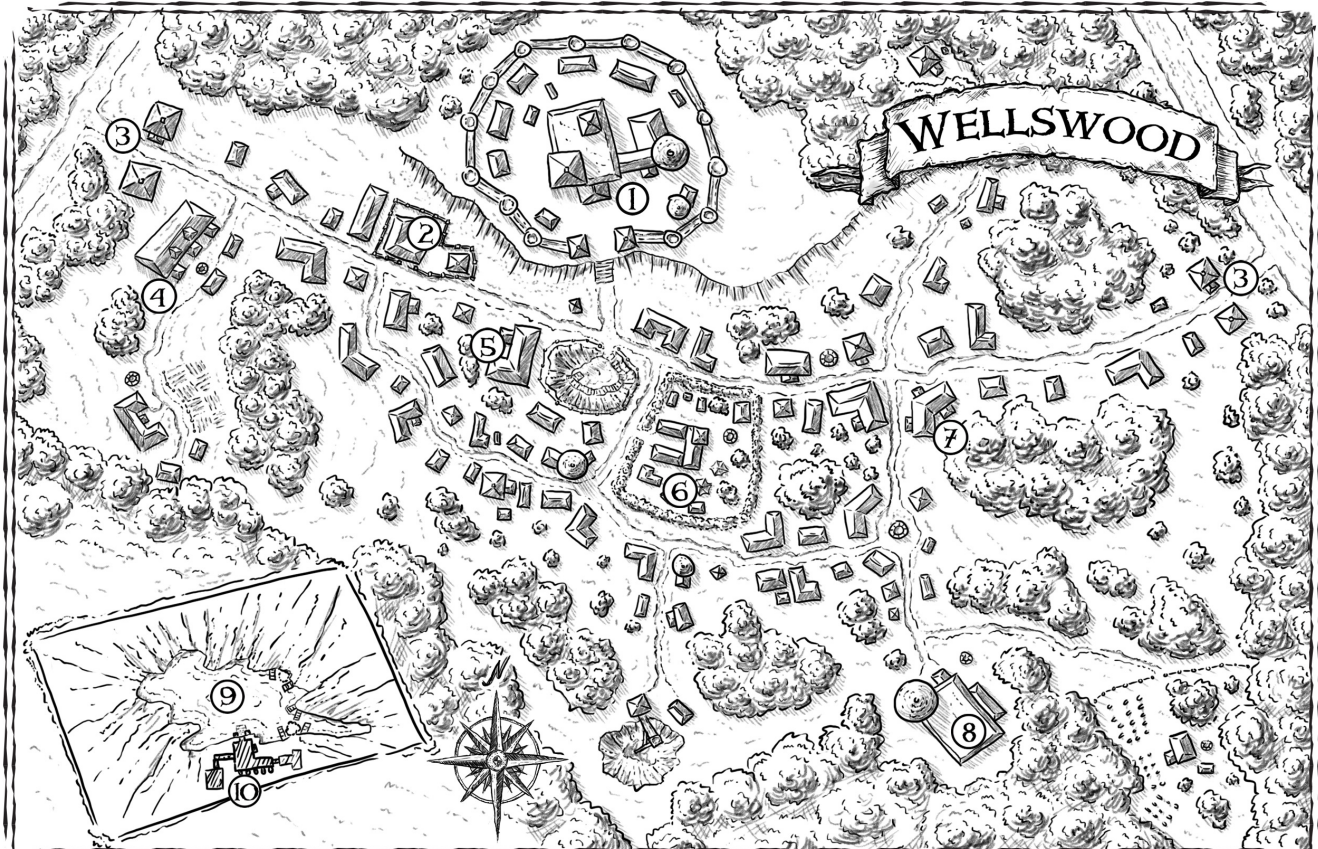
Nomenclature *male* Armas, Hannu, Kaarlo, Veli, Vesa; *female* Aila, Asta, Irina, Pia, Satu; *family* Rantanen, Siano, Tuomi, Varala.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

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

D6	RUMOUR
1*	Something terrible dwells in Lake Thraren; occasionally it takes one of the fishermen.
2*	Cracks have appeared around some of the wells—a collapse is imminent! The whole village is doomed! Those dwarves are up to something. Their digging is going to cause a collapse—half the village will probably fall into Lake Thraren.
3	Lord Issakainen has grown wealthy from his control of Lake Thraren, and he grows increasingly paranoid someone is planning to steal his riches.
4	Jani Leino wants to buy the Boot and Wheel; he dreams of controlling all the village's various inns so he can increase prices and get very rich.
5	The Angry Badger has a secret cellar which hosts monthly animal fights—hence the name. The fights are to the death, and attract a hard-core following.
6	

*False rumour



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: CASTLE ISSAKAINEN

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

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

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

2: THE FOOTSORE WANDERER

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

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



3: TOLL BOOTH

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

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

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

4: WHEELS & WAGONS

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

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

BEHRON

N god of Travel

Epithets: The Farwanderer

Symbol: The open road running to the horizon.

Favoured Weapon: Light mace

Raiment: Plain brown robes

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

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

5: TUOMI'S OUTFITTERS

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

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

6: THE BOOT & WHEEL

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

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

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

7: THE ANGRY BADGER

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

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

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

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

8: TRAVELLER'S REST

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

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

9: LAKE THRAREN

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

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

10: DON GALIR

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

LIFE IN WELLSWOOD

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

TRADE & INDUSTRY

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

LAW & ORDER

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

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

EVENTS

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

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



WHITE MOON COVE

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

WHITE MOON COVE AT A GLANCE

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

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

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

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler Barro Godwyn

Government Council

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

Alignments NG

Languages Common

Resources & Industry Fishing

NOTABLE FOLK

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

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

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

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

THE SUNKEN PYRAMID

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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

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

MARKESSA & MERMAID'S MISTRESS

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

VILLAGE LORE

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

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

VILLAGERS

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

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

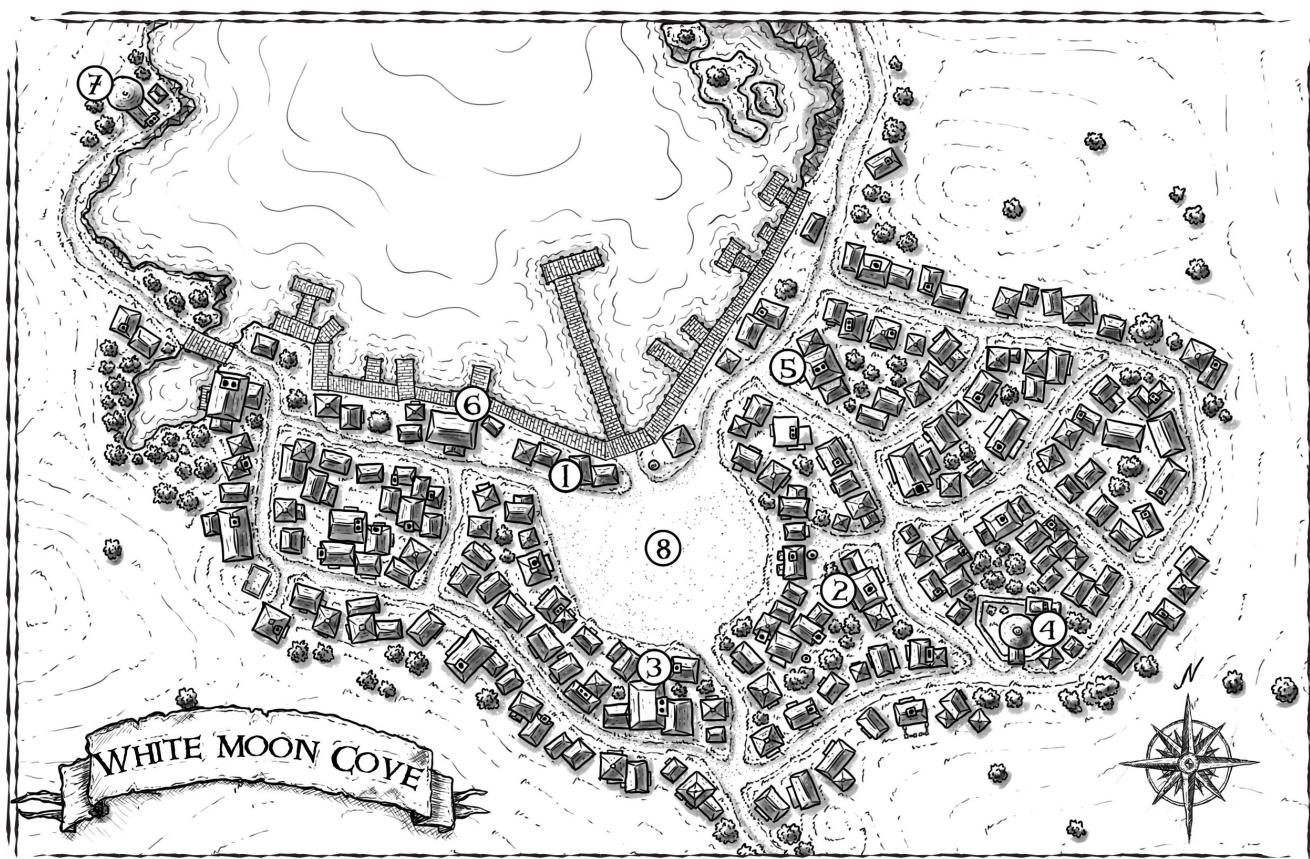
Nomenclature *male*: Atheric, Bosa, Eohric, Liofa, Ulf; *female*: Aebbe, Bebbe, Inga, Saeith; *family*: Alston, Elvey, Isgar, Sirett.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

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

D4 RUMOUR

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



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: SEAFOAM TRADE GOODS

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

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

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

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

2: GWYN'S SMITHY

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

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

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

3: SLEEPING TRITON

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

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

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

4: THE WHITE CHAPEL

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

CORWYN REDCROW

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

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

5: VILLAGE HALL

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

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

Galen Nrek (LN male human fighter 4) is the village constable. He is a large, intimidating man with a gruff, abrupt personality. He is honest to a fault and takes his responsibilities as constable very

OLD GRIF SERANN

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

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

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

6: DORNA'S FISHMONGER'S SHOP

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

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

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

7: THE CYCLOPS

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

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

8: MARKETPLACE

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

LIFE IN WHITE MOON COVE

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

TRADE & INDUSTRY

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

LAW & ORDER

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

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

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

EVENTS

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

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



WOODRIDGE

Ruled over for centuries by the scheming, ambitious Lorsch family, Woodridge is little more than a backwater village standing on the eastern bounds of the Duchy of Ashlar. Standing astride an ancient, now little-used trade route the village is a poor, but seemingly peaceful place. Its folk tend their small fields, pay their lord his due and are content to be left in peace. But all is not as it seems. Spies lurk among the populace, and dark forces gather which would see Woodridge's lord, Hilduin Lorsch, converted to their faith or dead.

WOODRIDGE AT A GLANCE

Ruler Hilduin Lorsch

Government Overlord

Population 185 (172 humans, 7 half-elves, 4 half-orcs, 2 halflings)

Alignments LN

Languages Common

Resources & Industry Agriculture, hunting

Ruled over for centuries by the scheming, ambitious Lorsch family, Woodridge is little more than a backwater village standing on the eastern bounds of the Duchy of Ashlar. Standing astride an ancient, now little-used trade route the village is a poor, but seemingly peaceful place. Its folk tend their small fields, pay their lord his due and are content to be left in peace. But all is not as it seems. Spies lurk among the populace, and dark forces gather which would see Woodridge's lord, Hilduin Lorsch, converted to their faith or dead.

A settlement has stood on the site for centuries. First a robber baron claimed the area. After he was slain and his followers scattered, the victors raised a church to Conn, The Father, and started farming the surrounding land and hunting the nearby Briarwood. The people prospered and trade flowed through the village along the Ridgeway. But the opening of an alternate trade route bypassing Woodridge brought hard times to the village and its lord. This new route, sponsored by the ruler of the nearby town of Dulwich, sparked a rivalry between the two families—the Galls and the Lorsch—which endures to this very day. Even now, the two families struggle for control of the village of Longbridge, its strategically important bridge and its plentiful tax revenues.

Thus, while Woodridge is a peaceful place, an undefinable but palpable tension seems to hang in the air. Its people know war is likely soon for their lord is not a patient man and they dread its approach. Many of the villagers serve in the local militia and many will likely fall in the coming battles.

VILLAGERS

Appearance Weather-beaten and poor, the villagers can seem dour to outsiders. In truth, they are often simply exhausted.

Dress The villagers wear stout peasant garb well suited for days of hard labour in the fields. Many peasants own short hunting bows and are often found in huntsman's garb in Briarwood's fringes.

Nomenclature *male* Aaro, Elmo, Reima, Sauli, Usko; *female* Aune, Eeva, Irja, Oirjo; *family* Eronen, Leino, Ojanen, Takala.

VILLAGE LORE

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

- Woodridge is an isolated village in Ashlar's eastern reaches. Hilduin Lorsch—a brooding, ambitious man—rules.
- Woodridge is a poor place. It straddles the Ridgeway—an old trading route now superseded by an easier trail. Lorsch dreams of adding the nearby village of Longbridge to his holdings, but his rival continues to thwart his desires.
- Strange things are said to live in the woods to the north of the village. Sometimes, thick fog boils forth from the forest and travellers go missing.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

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

D6	RUMOUR
1	Ancient ruins lie hidden deep in the Briarwood.
2	Hilduin Lorsch is consumed with ambition and wants to better his father who did much to improve his family's fortune.
3*	Caves below the Lorsch manor hold great stores of ancient gold coins.
4	Something strange is going on at the Travelling Man. Vesa Ahokas has occasional furtive meetings with travellers who never stay long and who seem to have no real reason to visit Woodridge.
5*	Weird things live in the Briarwood. When the fog rises, they steal forth to fall upon and eat any travellers they find on the Ridgeway.
6	Father Turkka is an ingrate who cares more for his own comfort and pleasure than his flock's well-being.

*False rumour



NOTABLE FOLK

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

Eeva Keto (location 5; NE female human cleric [Baal] 5) A new resident, Eeva plots to seduce Hilduin and lure him into her dark lord's embrace (or kill him).

Father Turkka (location 3; LN middle-aged male human cleric [Conn] 3) Priest at the Father's Sanctum, Turkka frets over the state of his lord's hall and seeks funds for its repair (while jealously guarding his own comfortable lifestyle).

Hilduin Lorsch (location 1; LE male human fighter 2) Lord of Woodridge, Hilduin constantly schemes to add the village of Longbridge to his possessions.

Kanbrar Aralivar (location 7; LG male half-elf wizard 2) Varma's apprentice, Kanbrar is a kindly soul who now performs most of her duties.

Reima Lankinen (location 2; LN male middle-aged human) Courteous and clever, Reima is a consummate merchant; he is always looking for a way to enrich himself.

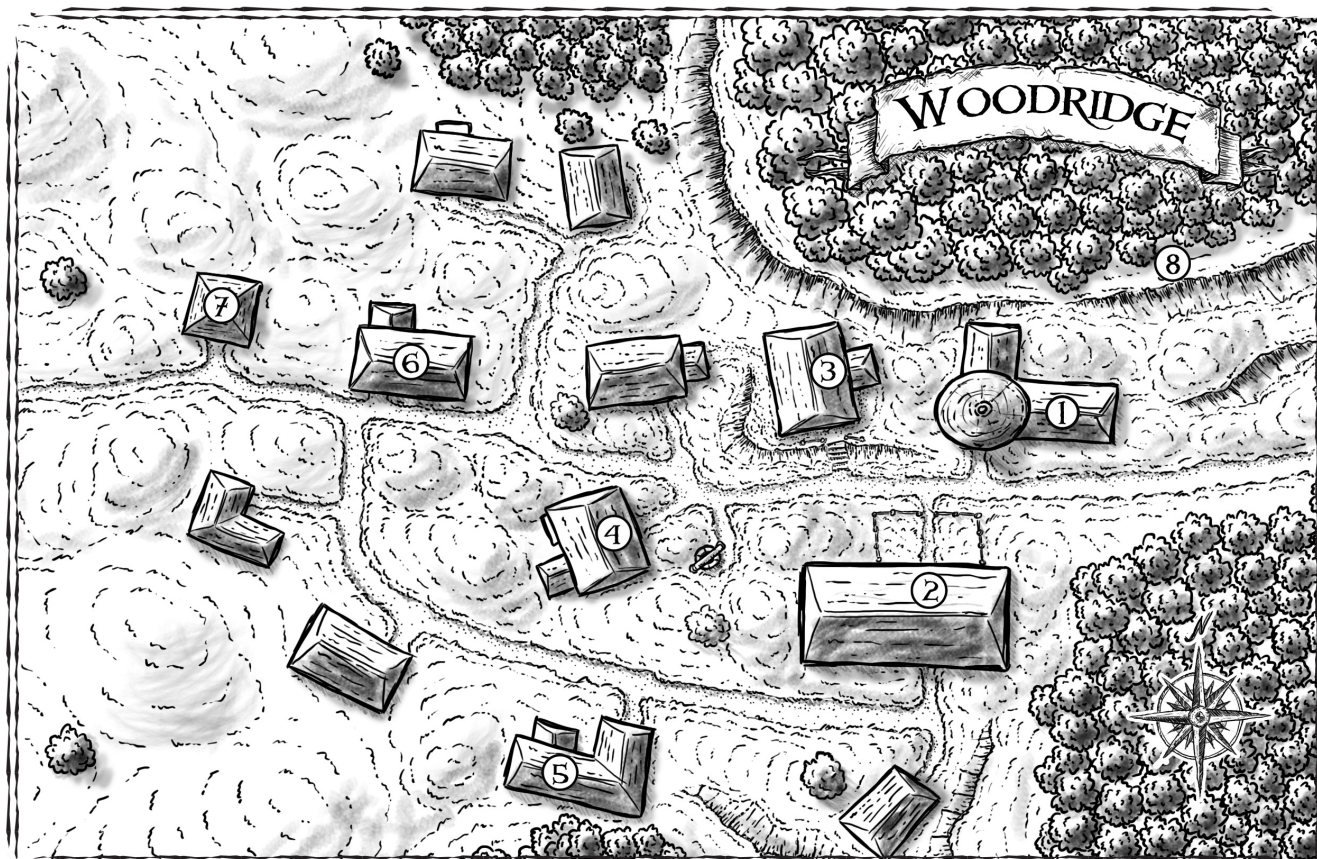
Varma Timonen (location 7; N old female human wizard 3) Now growing forgetful, Varma serves as Hilduin's court wizard. She rarely leaves the Smoking Tower.

Vesa Ahokas (location 6; N middle-aged male human) Vesa runs the Travelling Man. He secretly (and reluctantly) spies on Hilduin Lorsch and his doings.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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

1. **Lorsch Manor:** This brooding fortified manor is the Lorsch ancestral home. Here dwells Hilduin Lorsch and his family.
2. **Lankinen's:** This large building is a general provisioners, stables and moneylenders. Reima Lankinen is the second richest man in the village.
3. **Father's Sanctum:** Dedicated to Conn, this is the oldest building in Woodridge except for parts of the Lorsch Manor. Dilapidated, it has seen better days.
4. **Priesthome:** Home to Father Turkka, this is a substantial building.
5. **Eeva's Home:** Here dwells (and plots) Eeva Keto.
6. **The Travelling Man:** Woodridge's only inn is welcoming and comfortable, but rarely busy.
7. **The Smoking Tower:** Varma Timonen dwells here, as she has for decades. She feels the cold terribly; consequently, smoke always belches from the tower's chimney.
8. **Briarwood:** These tangled, ancient woodlands are said to hold ancient ruins and to be the home of certain horrible creatures. Thick fog often blankets the area.



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Woodridge is a far-flung community. Homesteads and forester's huts are scattered throughout the surrounding area, while the village's mercantile businesses and other places of import cluster about an old well that has never run dry. The Ridgeway—an old trade route—runs through the village, but is little used now. As well as being far-flung the village is a poor place; only a few individuals have real wealth; the rest of the populace live hand to mouth.

1: LORSCH MANOR

Here dwells Hilduin Lorsch (LE male human fighter 2), his family and two score or so family retainers and soldiers. The Lorsch family manor is heavily fortified. It comprises a squat and weathered ancient keep-tower and two newer fortified wings built by Hilduin's father.

The Lorsch family has ruled Woodridge for hundreds of years, but have ever chafed at their relatively minor standing among Ashlar's noble families. Lorsch means to increase his power and wealth by extending his rule over the nearby village of Longbridge. Unfortunately, Wido Gall (LN male human wizard 4), the ruler of the nearby town of Dulwich, also covets Longbridge. Thus far, the two rulers' struggle has not spilled over into violence, but such a confrontation cannot be far off.

Hilduin is married to Aila (CN female human ranger 1), daughter of a wealthy woodsman, who brought with her a substantial dowry. While the two are relatively happy, they are not in love and Aila spends an increasing amount of time in Briarwood. Not particularly religious, Hilduin pays lip-service to Conn the Father. In search of an advantage over his rival, he is in danger of falling for Eeva Keto's (location 5; NE female human cleric [Baal] 5) charms and into Baal's ebon clutches.

2: LANKINEN'S

This large building rivals the Lorsch Manor in size, but not grandeur. Obviously a business, it rambles over two floors. At the front, a fenced yard often holds cattle and horses for sale.

Lankinen's is the only commercial operation in Woodridge except the Travelling Man (location 6). Reima Lankinen (LN male middle-aged human) owns the establishment. For a finder's fee, he can get almost anything a villager needs through his extensive contacts in the near towns of Dulwich and Languard. Whispers also endow him with links to the smugglers of dismal Coldwater to the north. He laughs at such conjecture—perhaps a little too heartily—and no one has thus far proved the truth of the matter.

Lankinen's features a large shop space, filled with gear of interest to travellers and farmers, and a stable on the ground floor. The family dwell in a series of well-appointed rooms on the second floor. Above it all, a surprisingly spacious attic is a riot of

disorganisation filled with dusty and unwanted goods. Reima Lankinen fills many roles in the village: trader, moneychanger and pawnbroker. A necessary evil, he is not popular; many in the surrounding countryside owe him money. He hides a substantial store of coin, and the most valuable items pawned at his establishment, in the attic behind a false wall.

3: FATHER'S SANCTUM

This once-fine chapel has seen better days. Dedicated to Conn (LN god of community, family and rulership), it was built over 200 years ago and is Woodridge's oldest structure except for the central tower-keep of the Lorsch manor. Father Turkka (LN middle-aged male human cleric 3) preaches here weekly, officiates at funerals and generally tends to his flock's spiritual needs. He dwells in his home (location 4) across the road.

An extensive ossuary fills several natural caverns found when the chapel's foundations were sunk. Here lie the bones of the deceased watched over by equally dead village priests.

4: PRIESTHOME

This substantial building overlooks both the Father's Sanctum (location 3) and the Ridgeway. Father Turkka (LN middle-aged male human cleric 3) dwells here. Two young acolytes, Raisa Leino and Alma Eerola (both LN female human cleric [Conn] 1), live in a small, cramped room at the rear of the house. Father Turkka likes the good things in life, but he rarely shares his bounty with his acolytes. Thus, they resent him. At the weekly service, Eeva Keto (location 5) has noticed their animosity toward the priest and has begun quietly working on the two.

5: EEVA'S HOME

This large house on the village's southern bounds houses the beautiful and cunning Eeva Keto (NE female human cleric [Baal] 5). Masquerading as an apothecary and seer, Eeva has lived in the village for two years. Eeva came here after her malevolent lord sent her a dream. In it, he revealed it was her destiny to come to Woodridge and seduce Hilduin to Baal's dark embrace. Faithful to her lord, she has toiled at her task, but has been stymied by Aila Lorsch (location 1) who has divined the apothecary's (apparent romantic) interest in her husband. Still, she has other irons in the fire—Father Turkka's acolytes are in danger of falling under her spell and soon she intends to arrange an accident for Aila. With her out of the way, Eeva can seduce and marry Hilduin. If he converts to Baal's worship, all well and good. If not, accidents happen with surprising regularity in the woods and Eeva has always wanted to be a Lady of the Realm.

6: THE TRAVELLING MAN

A sign depicting a heavily laden traveller complete with stout walking staff and comically bulging backpack marks this place as an inn and rest stop. The Travelling Man is a welcoming, cosy inn. The beds are soft, the rooms are warm and the food hearty.

Food & Drink meal (mutton in a creamy mushroom sauce or lamb chops with parsnips and leeks) 5 sp, ale 4 cp, wine (pitcher) 1 sp.

Accommodation A standard room costs 2 gp a night. A bed in the small communal dormitory can be had for 2 sp.

The guest rooms on the second-floor command far-reaching views over the village's western approaches. Here Vesa Ahokas (N middle-aged male human) sets a watch for travellers toiling up the Ridgeway. He does this partially for practical, commercial reasons and partially because he is a (reluctant) spy for Wido Gall. Vesa's eldest son, Oskari (NG male human fighter 1), is in Wido's service as a man-at-arms. The wily noble has suggested a terrible accident would befall Oskari if Vesa refuses to cooperate. Thus, Vesa reluctantly spies for Wido, while trying to come up with a plan to safeguard his son's safety.

Vesa runs the inn with help from his wife, Irja (NG female human), and a half-dozen or so servants drawn from the folk dwelling in the locality. Often the inn is empty, or near empty, and the arrival of rich adventurers is a cause for celebration. Such folk often spend gold like water and have much news to share.

HIDDEN STRUGGLES

While Woodridge may seem peaceful on the surface, tension and conflict seethe beneath society's veneer. Hilduin Lorsch lusts after the village of Longbridge and ceaselessly plots to bring it into his dominion. Hilduin will use any tool to achieve his goals, and is in danger of falling into the dark god Braal's ebon embrace.

To counteract Hilduin's plots, his rival Wido Gall has placed several spies in Woodridge. Chief amongst those is Vesa Ahokas, owner of the Travelling Man. Thus while Hilduin seeks to control Longbridge, Wido seeks to undermine his authority in Woodridge. At the same time, Braal's agent in the village, Eeva Keto, plots against Woodridge's priest Father Turkka and schemes to remove Hilduin's wife, Aila. Thus tensions are slowly rising in the village, but few of its folk really understand why or how this happening (and thus can do little to calm matters).

7: THE SMOKING TOWER

Enticed to Woodridge by Hilduin's father, Varma Timonen (N old female human wizard 3) serves as the Lorsch's court wizard and magical advisor. Given Hilduin's struggles against Wido Gall this is an important position. Sadly, Varma is old and getting more than a little forgetful. She rarely emerges from the Smoking Tower these days, and leaves her apprentice Kanbrar Aralivar (LG male half-elf wizard 2) to deal with visitors and Hilduin's occasional enquiries.

Now she is old, Varma feels the cold terribly, and the tower's chimney near constantly belches forth smoke as she tries to warm her old bones. This results in a steady stream of villagers bringing wood to the tower in exchange for Varma's burnished copper coins. Several villagers are convinced she is up to no good and is engaged in some (no doubt) sinister experiment. Some also believe Varma is dead—she rarely appears in public now—and that Kanbrar is the tower's true master.

8: BRIARWOOD

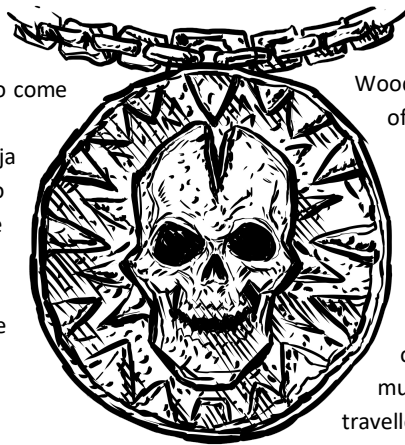
A great swath of tangled woodland lies north of Woodridge, straddling a line of rugged, high hills. Fog often swallows the woodland giving them an otherworldly, ill-aspect. Local legend places any number of bogeymen and the like in the woods.

Persistent rumours place more than one overgrown, ancient ruin within the woods. Gossips speak of the old gold coins Hilduin Lorsch's father found therein and which Hilduin occasionally uses to settle his debts. They also mutter about the occasional disappearance of travellers and hunters when the fog rises about the wood's ancient boles.

In truth, in the olden days a small clan of elves dwelled in the Briarwood. They struggled against terrible, evil creatures dwelling along the coast until their numbers dwindled and the survivors fled to the south. Time's inexorable progress has not yet destroyed all their settlements. The ruins of a few such places, now briar-choked and lost, still stands among the Briarwood's ancient trees. The few druids and their fey allies dwelling in the Briarwood jealously defend such places.

THE RIDGEWAY

This broad, but little-used track meanders through the duchy's eastern hills connecting Woodridge to Longbridge and Dulwich to the west and Coldwater to the north. To the north of Woodridge, it wends its way beneath the Briarwood's tangled canopy. Just north of the woods, a spur leads to Languard, Ashlar's capital.



LIFE IN WOODRIDGE

Despite its lord's plots, schemes and ambitions, Woodridge is a quiet place. Here the rhythm of life—slow, boring and unhurried—is only broken by the occasional traveller using the Ridgeway. Hilduin fancies himself a great warrior and general. He drills the militia and his men-at-arms once a week.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Woodridge is a poor place; most of its habitants subsist on a mix of small-scale farming and hunting. Villagers live throughout the surrounding area in small wooded plots surrounded by gardens or small fields. All must pay a tithe to the Lorsch, and most do so with produce rather than coin.

Woodridge's few businesses survive by servicing the trickle of travellers using the Ridgeway. Such folk often stay only a single night before moving on.

LAW & ORDER

Hilduin Lorsch is the law in Woodridge. Those threatening the peace are dealt with ruthlessly. He is a hard, inflexible man. His dreams far exceed what his resources can achieve and he jealously guards his power base.

EVENTS

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

D4	EVENT
1	At dawn, thick and cloying fog cloaks the Briarwood. The locals mutter darkly at this and advise the PCs to delay their travels until the fog lifts.
2	A wandering tinker enters the village. Actually a spy for Wido Gall, he spends hours in deep conversation with Vesa Ahokas before leaving. Perceptive PCs notice the so-called tinker didn't complete any jobs or do any trading while in the village.
3	A traveller—Jani Varala—staggers into the village. Battered and bleeding he raves about the "living trees" before collapsing. His clothes are ripped and torn and he has lost his pack.
4	Hilduin Lorsch rides through the village. If he sees the PCs—and any of them are obviously warriors—he demands to know their names. If the warrior PC(s) are deferent, he offers them employment in his guard.



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