

The Huntsman's Isle

An Adventure for Novice Characters

In the dimly remembered past, a ruthless group of pirates commanded a length of river for decades. They became so good at fleecing travelers and at being a law unto themselves that they eventually raised a castle on an island at the center of the river and ruled over the surrounding lands as tyrants. Over the generations, their descendants forgot their origins and came to believe they were worthy souls, born of noble blood.

The last of them was Baron Afton Stocesa. He, more than any other before him, was convinced that his aristocratic blood warranted the status and comforts his family had bestowed on him. Afton cared little for anything except hunting. He enjoyed the chase and the kill, and he especially

loved witnessing the terror his quarry felt as it desperately tried to escape.

One autumn day Afton and his hounds were on the hunt when a group of brigands ambushed him. They hoped to capture him and hold him for ransom. Afton slew most of his attackers and sent the survivors fleeing, but not before he received a mortal wound. His companions returned him to his castle, where he died within a day.

Afton inspired fear in his subjects but had little talent for instilling loyalty. So after his death, his retainers stripped the castle of everything they could carry and then abandoned the place, leaving the corpse in the bed and only a few of the baron's most savage hounds to guard the makeshift grave.

Afton's frustration over his abbreviated hunt and anger at his servants stayed with him even in death, preventing his spirit from moving on. The baron remains in the world as a phantom, and a particularly nasty one at that. For decades, the spirit has plagued the river and now ranges farther and farther from the castle to antagonize the travelers on the river and the people living nearby.

The Huntsman's Isle is a challenging adventure for novice characters. The characters complete the mission when they destroy the baron.

~CREDITS~

WRITING AND DESIGN: SKIP WILLIAMS

DEVELOPMENT AND ART DIRECTOR: ROBERT J. SCHWALB

EDITING: KJM MOHAN

GRAPHIC DESIGN: HAL MANGOLD

LAYOUT: KARA HAMILTON

ILLUSTRATIONS: IVAN DIXON AND BRITT MARTIN

CARTOGRAPHY: CECIL HOWE

The Huntsman's Isle is ©2015 Schwalb Entertainment, LLC.
All rights reserved.

Shadow of the Demon Lord, *The Huntsman's Isle*, Schwalb Entertainment, and their associated logos are trademarks of Schwalb Entertainment, LLC.

SCHWALB ENTERTAINMENT, LLC



PO Box #12548
Murfreesboro, TN 37129

info@schwalbentertainment.com www.schwalbentertainment.com



shadow of the demon lord

GETTING STARTED

Before running this adventure, you first need to decide where the island is located. It sits in the middle of a fast-flowing river, somewhere in or on the edges of a civilized region. In the Northern Reach, the rivers in the east near Sixton, Good Fortune, and Landfall all work well.

Second, you need to come up with a reason for the group to become involved. The island and its castle have a nasty reputation among the people living nearby. They tell anyone passing through their lands that the castle houses a restless and greedy spirit who demands a toll from anyone using the river.

Locals might recruit the group after the spirit becomes restless and starts ranging the surrounding lands to menace anyone it finds near the river. The beastmen lurking on the island could also raise concerns from locals, who would be willing to pay up to 5 gc as a reward to clear them out. Alternatively, the characters could discover some facts about the castle, learning that the former inhabitants were rich aristocrats who left behind a vast treasure when they died out. Some claim that their wealth remains hidden somewhere on the island.

STOCESA ISLAND

Rising from the dark waters of a mile-wide river is a bramble-covered mound of dark stone on which stands the ruin of a castle and outbuildings. The island takes its name from the family that built the structures and controlled the lands all around it. Since the last baron's death, the island has become a forlorn and accursed place. Little moves on the island, though passersby sometimes hear the barks and snarls of the descendants of the vicious hounds left behind when the old baron died.

Along the river's shores is a marshy verge thick with cattails, willows, and other tangled vegetation. Beyond, thick forest grows, spreading out for a mile or so on either side of the river.

The river flows dangerously fast, and the current can pull an incautious swimmer down to its depths, to tumble against the sharp rocks and wreckage that litter the bottom.

The river's main channel (area A) is to the east. A swimmer might manage the half-mile swim to the island, though a swimming creature makes the Strength challenge rolls with 2 banes. As well, if the result of a roll is 0 or lower, the current pulls the swimmer under, causing 2d6 damage from bouncing against the rocks.

Using a boat is a better option. Visitors might beg, borrow, or steal suitable boats in the nearest town or find one or more abandoned craft, its owners long gone.

To the west lies a rocky area of rapids, pools, and sinkholes (area B). It's a hazardous trip, but it's possible to wade through the rocks and walk to the island.

The easiest point of access to the island's interior is at the old stone jetty and boathouse on the eastern side.

INHABITANTS

The baron's spirit haunts the islands and keeps company with a number of savage hounds. In addition, a group of beastmen squatting on the island have managed to form an uneasy alliance with the baron. A group of redcaps with a gremlin ally vie with the beastmen for control of the island, eager to snatch passing boats and bleed out their passengers.

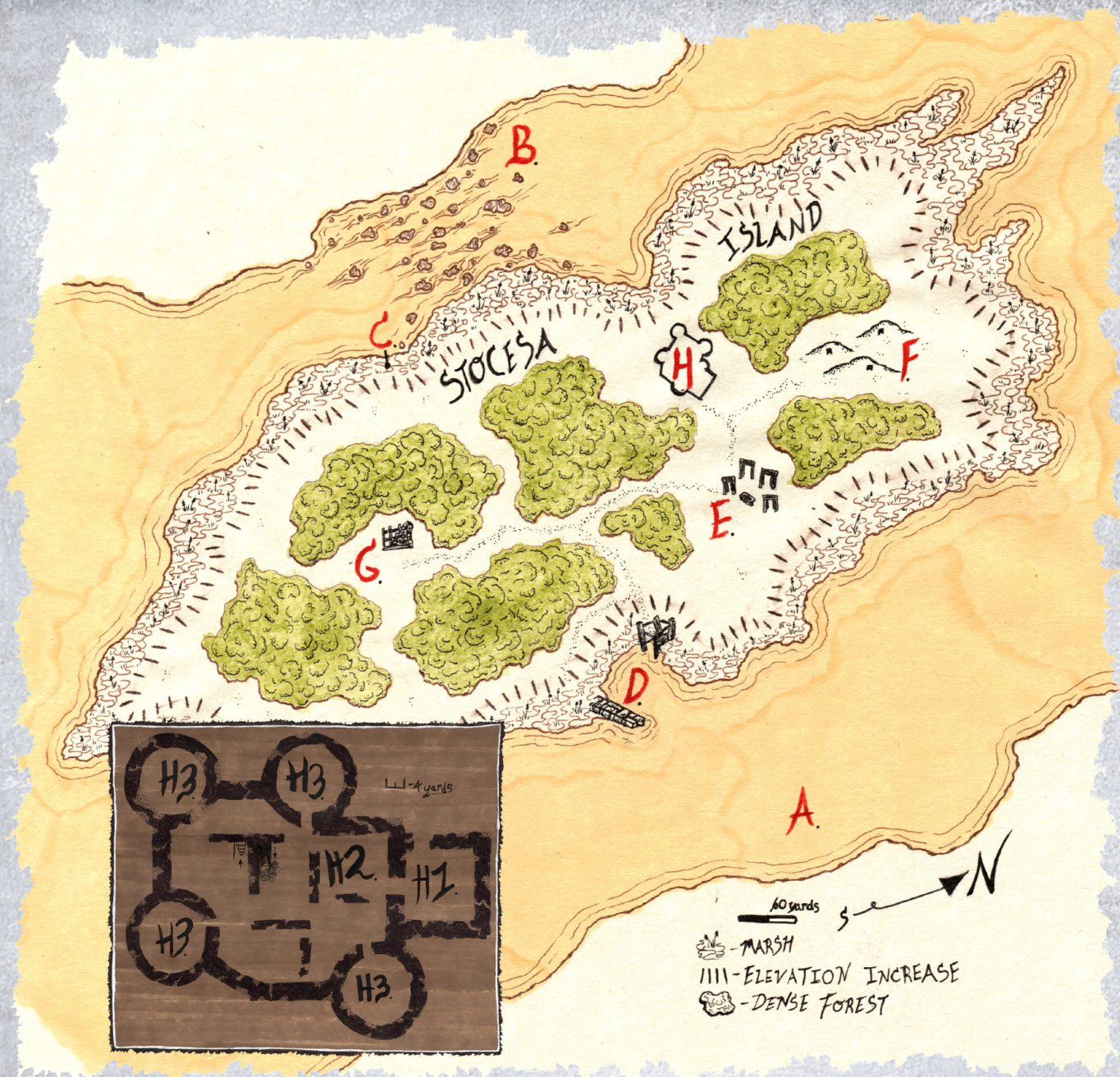
KEY LOCATIONS

The following locations correspond to those shown on the included map.

A. MAIN CHANNEL

The river is deep (20 yards in some places) and swift. Navigating the channel in a boat is simple for experienced boaters, though others might have trouble landing exactly where they want to because of the current. Anyone who has a wilderness profession or a profession that involves rowing or sailing can guide a boat from the riverbank to the island in about 10 minutes. Others must make a Strength challenge roll with 1 bane. On a failure, the boat drifts off course and into dangerous waters. Each character in the boat must roll a success on an Agility challenge or fall off the boat and be pulled under the water, taking 2d6 damage from being jostled against the rocks. A submerged character can swim free as described above.





B. FORD

Characters can carefully walk over the rocks in this area and wade through the shallows to reach the island. The broken terrain is too treacherous to cross at a pace any faster than walking. If combat occurs here, the area counts as difficult terrain.

One character must lead the way across the ford, choosing a path for the others to follow. Finding a safe path requires the leader to make a Perception challenge roll with 3 banes. A character who has a wilderness profession makes the roll with 1 boon, reducing the number of banes to 2. Using a pole or a similar implement (there are plenty of branches and saplings on the riverbank to cut for poles) grants 1 boon. Moving at a cautious pace also grants 1 boon. On a failure, roll 2d6 and consult the following table.

MISHAPS AT THE FORD

Roll	Result
2	Treacherous current. Each character must roll a successful Strength or Agility challenge with 2 banes or fall prone and be carried 3d6 yards downstream, taking 1d6 points of damage per 3 yards traveled.*
3-4	Ambush. A group of 1d3 + 3 lizardmen ambushes the party.
5-10	Delay. Trip delayed 5d6 minutes.
11-12	Dead end. The group must return to the riverbank and start again.

* If the characters roped themselves together, the characters on either side of the fallen character can make Strength challenge rolls. If both succeed, the character between them falls and takes 1d6 damage but is not swept away. If either character fails the roll, that individual falls as well, but others roped to the character can attempt Strength challenge rolls to save them as described here. A character makes this roll with 1 bane for each extra fallen character.

C. MARSHLANDS

On the north end of the island, a marshy verge forms a band 10 to 30 yards wide. Closer to the river, one finds more water than land underfoot. Inland, the land rises and become less wet until the reeds and willows give way to tall grass and brambles and, finally, thick forest. The marshlands are difficult terrain.

During most of the year, the marshes teem with birds, turtles, frogs, and fish. When the group visits the island, a band of 1d3 lizardmen is combing the marsh for whatever prey they can find. If the characters explore the marsh, they encounter these creatures.

The lizardmen aren't looking for a fight. If they are not attacked, they talk, eager to trade what they know for items they can use—fishhooks, nets, or tools. They don't care much for coin, but they accept pretty trinkets. The lizardmen reveal the following information if given the right inducement.

- Some kind of hostile spirit lurks in the castle's ruins, and the lizardmen fear it.
- The soft-skinned (humans) leave small gifts at the old jetty (area D), hoping to appease the spirit. Beastmen have moved in there to take advantage of the humans' superstition.
- Strange people came across the ford a few days ago, dragging some human captives along with them. They're camped somewhere on the island now. These people fought the beastmen at the jetty at least once.

D. JETTY

The Stocesas built a stone jetty and boathouse here. The area once held a variety of watercraft, but has been reduced to a few sunken hulks and a pair of usable but decrepit-looking boats that the beastmen use. The boathouse is a roofless shell, and the jetty has broken into several pieces. It is still possible, however, to tie up a boat here.

People who leave offerings here usually pull up to the far end of the jetty, drop off their goods, and back away quickly. A few bowls and baskets are always stacked up here. Until recently, any tribute left here simply rotted or corroded.

About a month ago, beastmen moved into the neighborhood. The group now consists of 3 wargs and 3 fomors. These creatures have been to area H and made contact with the baron, which resulted in several of them meeting their ends. For the moment, the baron has grown bored with hunting them and suffers their presence. The beastmen, for their part, lure or deliver superior prey to the baron's lair whenever they can.

The wargs use a pair of boats, taking one to travel to the riverbanks. They leave the other one hidden under piles of willow branches inside the remains of the boathouse. The beastmen keep themselves hidden in the brush around the boathouse. Half of them rest while the others keep a lookout. Mostly, they concentrate on the jetty, but one or

two look inland to guard against a visit from the redcaps from area G or the savage dogs from area H.

The beastmen are smart enough to allow visitors coming by water to leave offerings and not start a fight, but they attack anyone coming ashore or who approaches overland.

The fomors have bows with quivers of 12 arrows each. They fire arrows at enemies, while the wargs stay hidden until they can spring out and fight with their axes in close combat. If the fight goes against them, survivors retreat to area H, where they hope to gain the baron's help.

The beastmen have amassed a small treasure consisting of 4 ss, 36 cp, and 121 bits. In addition, they have one enchanted object.

E. CHAPEL

A semicircle of trilithons arrayed around a three-sided stone table serves as the island's chapel. The Stocesa family found the site when they moved in and claimed it for themselves. A single, rough-hewn pillar, topped with a pair of massive antlers, stands before the semicircle's opening. Brambles and willows have overgrown the place, and the stonework lies buried under thick moss.

Examining the stone table reveals the symbols of several of the old gods inscribed on its sides. The antlers atop the pillar symbolize the Horned King. The antlers were carved from wood and covered with thin sheets of copper, which has turned green with verdigris. The wood inside has rotted away, leaving only a hollow copper shell. Any rough handling makes them crumble to powder. Intact, they are worth 1 ss each.

F. GRAVEYARD

The ground south of the marshland rises and falls in a series of natural mounds and hummocks. Many of the raised areas have been turned into stone-lined crypts, which hold the remains of many generations of Stocesas and their servants. Each of the nine crypts is sealed with a pair of stone doors that are stuck. The doors have Health 20, and they can be broken open only by creatures that have a Strength score of 16 or higher.

Each crypt holds moldering human remains. There is a 2-in-6 chance that a crypt holds 1d3 + 1 grave thralls guarding the dead.

G. STABLES AND MEWS

The area south of the keep contains old stables, storage areas for grain and fodder, and areas for holding tack and harness. Little more than the foundations of the outbuildings remain, except for one fragment of a granary wall that stands some 6 yards high.

A group of 3 redcaps and 1 gremlin camp in these ruins. The redcaps came to the island intending to prey on the humans leaving offerings at the jetty (area D). The redcaps did not anticipate finding beastmen squatting at the jetty, so they occupied this place instead. The redcaps have brought

along a pair of humans (captured from the riverbanks), imprisoned in a pair of wicker cages that hang on the wall of the ruined granary. The redcaps have been slashing the humans' bodies for blood to keep their caps wet, and now these unfortunates have been nearly bled dry. They can be ordinary people or potential allies as you decide.

H. KEEP

In life, the baron was a poor steward of the castle, more interested in hunting than keeping up his ancestral home, so the place was falling into decay even before it was abandoned. Now it's just a shell. The keep's general outline remains discernible, with shattered walls standing between 1 and 3 yards high. The round towers have been reduced to stumps about 4 yards high. Inside, the floors are uneven and covered in vines and brambles. The whole area is difficult terrain.

H1. GATEHOUSE

A few shards of rotted wood hang from corroded hinges in the doorway here. Beyond the threshold, two of the baron's hounds (as **medium animals** with the pack fighting trait) hide in the rubble and brambles. When the characters enter this area, everyone must make a successful Perception challenge roll with 1 bane or become surprised for 1 round. If one hound is defeated, the survivor retreats to area H2.

H2. MAIN HALL

This area, once made up of several chambers, is now an open space that contains the remnants of interior walls, each about 1 yard high, rising up from the rubble-strewn floor. A shattered staircase to the west once led to the upper floors but now ends after a few steps. A similar staircase leads down to the rubble that fills the dungeons below the castle. The baron's skeleton lies somewhere under the rubble where he fell when the upper floors of the keep collapsed.

Baron Stocesa (see the statistics box) haunts the top of the stairs leading up, and 2 hounds (as **medium animals** with the pack fighting trait) lurk at the base of the stairs. When anyone enters the hall, the baron uses Fear the Hunter on everyone in sight except his hounds. Then he manifests and attacks, using his sword and whip. Against frightened targets, the baron uses Mind of Prey. The baron chases creatures affected by his panic of the prey trait, making free attacks against such creatures as they rush away from him.

H3. TOWERS

The towers are open to the sky and filled with heaps of moss-covered rubble. The northwest tower is home to 3 **vampire bats**. They roost under the remains of an old spiral staircase. They avoid the baron, but attack living creatures that disturb them.

BARON STOCESA

DIFFICULTY 100

Size 1 horrifying spirit

Perception 13 (+3); darksight

Defense 16; **Health** 50

Strength —, **Agility** 13 (+3), **Intellect** 12 (+2), **Will** 13 (+3)

Speed 10

Immune damage from cold, disease, fire, and poison; gaining Insanity; asleep, blinded, deafened, diseased, fatigued, immobilized, poisoned, slowed

Insubstantial The baron takes half damage from weapons, can move through solid objects and other creatures, and ignores the effects of moving across difficult terrain.

Naturally Invisible The baron is invisible to all creatures other than phantoms, animals, and children. While invisible, the baron lacks the horrifying trait and cannot use his attack options. The only special attack he can use is Fear the Hunter.

Panic of the Prey When a creature gains Insanity from the baron, it becomes convinced it is a hunted animal and must flee for its life. Until the creature is no longer frightened from gaining the Insanity, it must use an action to move at full Speed away from the baron each round the creature can see him. If the frightened creature is within short range of the baron at the end of the round, it becomes dazed for 1 round.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Phantom Sword (melee) +3 with 2 boons (2d6 + 2)

Phantom Whip (melee + 1) +3 with 2 boons (1d3 + 2)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Fear the Hunter The baron uses an action or a triggered action on his turn to cause any number of living creatures he chooses within short range to hear the baying of hounds. A target creature must make a Will challenge roll with 1 bane, or with 3 banes if it has a Corruption score of 1 or higher. On a failure, the creature gains 1 Insanity. Once the baron uses Fear the Hunter, he must wait at least 1 minute before he can do so again.

Mind of Prey The baron uses an action to reach into the mind of one frightened creature within short range to drive it toward madness. The baron makes a Will attack roll with 1 boon against the target's Will. On a success, the target gains 1 Insanity. On a failure, the target becomes immune to Mind of Prey until it completes a rest. The baron can make this attack just once each round.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Manifestation The baron uses an action or a triggered action on his turn to become visible. He remains visible until he uses an action or a triggered action to become invisible once more.

END OF THE ROUND

Epic Recovery The baron removes one affliction from himself.

Epic Adversary Roll 1d3 + 1 to determine how many actions the baron can use during the next round. The baron can use these actions during any turn and can do so before his enemies act. Each time the baron uses an action, he can move up to his Speed before or after the action.