



# Dark Deeds in Last Hope

*Dark Deeds in Last Hope* is an adventure for starting characters. As with all starting adventures, it provides the origin story for the group of characters that will venture into the world and fight against the encroaching darkness. Unlike other starting adventures, this one provides a bit more guidance to help novice Game Masters get their start. However, any GM interested in kicking off a new campaign will find this adventure a great starting point.

As citizens of Last Hope, the player characters find themselves drawn into a tangled plot that involves the efforts of a scoundrel working to pilfer a valuable relic from the local temple and the mayor's disgraced son who has been dabbling in dark magic. As the characters investigate the plot, they must find ways to work together and overcome the myriad challenges in their path. If they succeed, they will forge the bonds of friendship and the trust they need to carry them on to even greater adventures.

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# GETTING STARTED

The very first thing you should do is take a few minutes to read the entire adventure to gain an understanding of the plot. The adventure unfolds in a series of scenes. Based on the choices the players make in those scenes, the adventure will direct you to the next scene. Since players are famous for throwing wrenches into narratives, being familiar with how the adventure goes will help you adjust when the players do the unexpected.

## ADVENTURE SETTING

You'll find a few details about the town later, but it's up to you to stick it somewhere on the map. If you prefer a more detailed environment, consider the western lands of the Northern Reach, the province described in the main rulebook. If you want to develop your own setting, then choose some place else, preferably in a remote corner of the world.

## SHADOW OF THE DEMON LORD

Choose or randomly determine the effect the Demon Lord's shadow has on the world (*Shadow*, page 195). If this is your first campaign, just use the default Fall of Civilization effect. Other options can alter the environment and make the adventure more challenging.

## CREATE CHARACTERS

Have the players create their characters together. You can download copies of the character sheet from [schwalbentertainment.com](http://schwalbentertainment.com), so have the players print off their own or print them yourself. Before the players choose their ancestries, tell them they all come from the same town and that story takes place there. Some suggestions on how to fit the ancestries into the community follow.

**Humans:** Most people in Last Hope are human, so human characters are ideal.

**Changeling:** The town could sit near a borderland to one of the hidden kingdoms. The faeries might have snatched a baby to fulfill their tithe to Hell or because the faeries wanted something new to play with. The changeling is what the faeries left behind to cover their theft.

**Clockwork:** A local child could have discovered the character in the Abandoned Workshop and turned its key, restoring it to awareness. The clockwork would be a wonder to the locals, and people might still gawp when the character moves out in the open.

**Dwarf:** The town is large enough to have attracted a couple of dwarfs. The character would be one of them. Most dwarfs living in human lands do so because they lost their homes to some calamity.

**Goblin:** The town employs a few goblins to help keep the town clean, work the fields, and keep the vermin population in check.

**Orc:** Even before the Empire's apparent collapse, orcs were gaining their freedoms all across imperial lands. Some claimed it by force while others were released. Orc characters in the community might have settled here after escaping their chains.

**Other Ancestries:** *Shadow of the Demon Lord* presents an incredible selection of ancestries to help you and your players tell the stories they want to tell. Some, such as fauns and halflings fit easily into backwater, rural communities, while others such as centaurs and vampires can break the suspension of disbelief. After all, they are rare, dangerous, and possibly unknown. Most ancestries include background elements to help you introduce the character into the setting.

Ancestries able to pass for human might just hide in plain sight. A vampire, by day, might lurk in a nearby cave or inside one of the old tombs standing in the nearby graveyard, emerging under the cover of night to feed on the living. Similarly, a cambion or revenant might just keep her identity a secret.

Centaurs, strange looking clockworks, salamanders, or other characters with rare ancestries need some reason to be in the town. Such characters could be refugees, exiles, fugitives, or explorers who happen to be passing through. Work with the player to come up with a suitable reason. No matter what you decide, the character should have lived in the community long enough to consider it home and for the locals to have become accustomed to their unusual neighbor.

## ESTABLISH CONNECTIONS

During the adventure, the characters come together to form into a group. Since the adventure assumes the player characters all come from Last Hope, and considering the small size of the town, the characters ought to have at least seen each other or maybe even know each other. Use professions and background elements to come up with reasons for their connections and consider using character bonds to strengthen them (*Shadow*, page 44).

## STARTING EQUIPMENT

Player characters determine their starting equipment using the normal rules. During the adventure, they can find additional items to help them survive. The adventure offers specific items, but whenever the player characters investigate a site, you can award them with items from the following list, though they cannot find more than one of each item or set of items.

- A hand weapon such as a sword, hammer, or battle-axe
- A bow with 12 arrows
- A tool kit
- A *healing potion*
- A healer's kit
- An incantation of the *arcane sight* Arcana spell

## PROFESSIONS AND ADVENTURE CLUES

Each character should begin the adventure with a clue associated with one of his or her professions. The clues are presented at the end of this adventure.

Print them off and hand them out to the players based on their professions. A soldier, for example, would gain the Martial Clue. A scholar of theology could gain the Academic or Religious Clues. Just be sure that each player gets his or her own clue and avoid duplication.

If you have more players than clues, give the players without clues Fortune.



## OPTIONAL: PATH POINTS

Players choose their characters' novice paths based on the decisions they make in the starting adventures. Characters who pick up weapons and bash their opponents might go on to become warriors while those who find incantations and successfully cast them might become magicians or possibly priests. Most starting adventures released thus far provide some opportunities for helping players make their novice path choice, while others leave it up to the GM to create. *Dark Deeds in Last Hope* takes a more direct approach by introducing path points.

You award path points based on the choices the players make during the adventure. Players can earn warrior points, rogue points, priest points, and magician points. At the end of the adventure, the players with surviving characters add up the various points they gained to get four totals. The path with the highest total points should indicate which path the player ought to choose when the group advances to level 1.

A partial list of activities worthy of points follows for each path. Once you award a point, cross off the activity. You can assign path points for other things the characters do in the game at your discretion.

### MAGICIAN POINTS

- The first character to attempt to cast a spell from an incantation.
- The character who takes the books found in Adelmarr Clemp's tent.
- The character who takes the graven skull from Adelmarr Clemp's tent.
- The first character to get a success on an Intellect or Will challenge roll.

### PRIEST POINTS

- The first character to take the relic from Edgar.
- The first character to attempt to cast a spell from an incantation found in the temple vault.
- Any character who suggests and initiates the cleaning of the temple.
- The first character to perform some sort of selfless action, such as the giving of a *healing potion* to another character.

### ROGUE POINTS

- The first character to successfully hide.
- The character who finds and takes the lock picks.
- The character who notices the damaged lock on the cell door in the constable's office.
- The first character to get a success on a Perception challenge roll.

### WARRIOR POINTS

- The first character to make an attack roll using a weapon.
- The first character to cause another creature to become incapacitated using a weapon.
- The first character to find and take a weapon.
- The first character to get a success on an attack roll.

## REPLACEMENT CHARACTERS

Starting characters are fragile and often only a few characters survive the first adventure. While attrition is in keeping with the spirit of the game, character death might prevent a player from participating. If a character dies, you can give Handout 2 to that character's player. The handout presents a replacement character drawn from the locals. The replacement character should enter the story 13 minutes after the character's death or at a time you deem appropriate. Characters introduced this way do not receive a starting clue. When the adventure ends, the player can create a new character and join the group at a point during the downtime before the next adventure begins.

## CREATING LAST HOPE

Unlike many other adventures written for *Shadow of the Demon Lord*, the town in which this adventure takes place, Last Hope, is something you and the players build together. Print off the region map at the end of the adventure and place it where everyone can reach it. Grab a d20 and nine or more six-sided dice. Holding all the dice in both hands an inch above the map, drop them onto the paper. Each die becomes a building. Remove the die and draw a box and number to indicate the building's location. The building depends on the die or number rolled. Some locations are unique; no matter how many of a particular number were rolled only one counts for placing the location. The table below tells you how to use dice that show the number beyond the first.

### TOWN BUILDER TABLE

Dice Roll	Building
d20	Temple of the Holy Finger
6	Abandoned Workshop. Unique, treat other rolls as 1.
5	The Ribald Reeve. Unique, treat other rolls of 5 as 2.
4	Constable's Office. Unique, treat other rolls of 4 as 3.
3	Blacksmith, leatherworker, brothel, or other trade.
2	House
1	Shack

## PLACES AND PEOPLE

The following entries briefly describe the most important locations and people in Last Hope.

### TEMPLE OF THE HOLY FINGER

Last Hope's only temple, this stone and wooden building was once dedicated to the Old Faith. Ten years ago, a priest of the New God re-consecrated it to serve as a house of worship. Much of the structure acts as a great hall with a dozen smaller shrines against the walls. The icons of the old gods have been removed and now display plaques showing crude paintings of religious scenes. At the center of the hall stands the dais where an idol of the World Mother once stood. Now, there stands a statue of Astrid pierced by blades.

A door in the back wall leads to a short hall with four doors. The doors lead to the priest quarters, vestry, vault, and the outside.

### PRIEST'S QUARTERS

The first door on the right leads to Father Solomon's living quarters. It contains a cot, writing desk, stool, chest, and wardrobe.

The writing desk holds a sheaf of papers, two pots of ink, four pens with nibs, a bag of sand, and a bundle of letters containing correspondence with other priests concerning religious matters, gossip, and advice.

The chest and wardrobe hold garments and black vestments befitting a priest of the New God. At the bottom of the wardrobe is a small lockbox containing 123 cp.

### VESTRY

The vestry lies through the door after the one to the priest's quarters. The 1-yard square closet contains vestments and the implements of faith that include a censer, incense, and an icon of the New God.

### VAULT

A steel door stands at the end of the hall, and it's normally closed and secured with a fine lock that imposes 3 banes on challenge rolls to open it without using the key. A small vault lays beyond and contains a low altar on which sits a reliquary containing the *Finger Bone of the Ascended* along with a vellum scroll containing an incantation of *denounce* (Theurgy) and *minor healing* (Life).

### EXIT TO OUTSIDE

The wooden door on the left leads to the outside. Normally, a wooden bar secures it.

### CEMETERY

A low iron fence surrounds the town's old cemetery. Locals don't use the cemetery often. Grass and wildflowers cover the grounds within and the crooked stone markers bear illegible text and symbols.

Examining the site reveals several graves have been disturbed, though someone went to lengths to conceal the evidence. A success on a Perception challenge roll or inspecting two or more graves reveals shovel marks in the soil and loose sod. Digging up any of the graves reveals the body of Father Solomon wrapped in a tarp. Additional excavated graves turn up empty coffins.

### FATHER SOLOMON

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A deeply pious and spiritual man, Father Solomon has been tending to the people of Last Hope for the better part of ten years. It was he who consecrated the old temple to the New God and he who, using personal funds, renovated the building to serve his needs. He carries out his duties with solemn authority, and though many think him a bit stodgy, he's helped a great many people through difficult times.

A man almost at the end of his middle age, Father Solomon has tonsured blonde hair and a clean-shaven, sagging face. He walks with a bit of a limp and is rarely seen in anything other than the black robes of his office. A bronze symbol of the New God hangs from a leather cord around his neck.

**Secret:** A changeling named Muck stole Father Solomon's identity and then murdered him. She wrapped the corpse in a tarp and buried it in one of the looted graves. Muck is Adelmars lover and has been keeping the young mans grave robbing a secret from the rest of the community.

Muck looks just like Father Solomon and watched him long enough to pick up his mannerisms. She wears the priest's clothing and goes through the motions of running the temple, though his sermons are uninspired and brief. Muck just needs to maintain cover long enough for Adelmars to fully discover the Necromancy tradition.

### FINGER BONE OF THE ASCENDED

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Father Solomon acquired the *Finger Bone of the Ascended* from a seller a few years back during a pilgrimage to Seven Spires in the Holy Kingdom. Certain of its authenticity, he brought back the bit of bone inside a golden box decorated with angelic figures and brought it forth on holy days to impress the congregation. That he believes the bone once belonged to Astrid is enough for him and the bone does, in fact, possess some minor magical power.

**Holy Implement** If the relic is your implement, it grants you 1 boon on attack rolls made when you cast Theurgy attack spells.

**Minor Healing** The relic contains one casting of the *minor healing* life spell and you can cast the spell from the relic if you are holding it. The relic regains the expended casting after 24 hours.

### ABANDONED WORKSHOP

Five years ago, an artificer from the Nine Cities drifted into town and set up shop here. Strange and reclusive, he rarely emerged from this old barn, but people could hear all manner of strange things sounding from within. Then, one day the noise stopped. The constable investigated and discovered the artificer had been killed by one of his creations. Not knowing what to do about the weird devices and other dangerous materials contained within, he had the place boarded up and put a sign on the door warning people to stay out. Other than a few inquisitive children, no one has gone inside.

The workshop holds a couple of tables on which rest gears, cogs, springs, and mechanical devices, all covered with rat droppings, spider webs, and dust. A non-functioning **medium construct** stands in the corner under a tarp—repairing it so that it can become a creature takes 1d3 weeks of work, 5 gc worth of rare materials, and an associated area of scholarship. A thorough search of the place turns up 1d3 ss, 2d6 cp, and one enchanted object (see *Shadow*, page 208 for rules on creating such items).

### RIBALD REEVE

Locals congregate at Last Hope's only watering hole, a rundown tavern with accommodations run by Mercurio Blanche (as **commoner**), a cigar-chewing, middle-aged woman who hasn't said a kind word about anyone for as long as she can remember. She is thin with a pinched face and long gray-black hair pulled back in a bun, and commands a small army of servers, cooks, and servants to keep the place running despite its shabby appearance.

The Reeve caters to locals and the many caravans passing through town en route to someplace far more interesting than Last Hope. The Reeve offers standard fare, usually stew with bread, and has a full bar stocked with local ale and spirits. A common room in the attic with cots for up to twenty people is the only accommodation provided. All but Blanche herself live in and around town; Blanche lives in a small room off the kitchen.

The main floor appears worn and broken in, but clean. Eight tables with four or five chairs each are arranged around the middle of the room, with booths against the walls, and a bar with ten stools at the back. A fireplace warms the place and Blanche keeps a pot of brown bubbling on the flames for folks without the coin for something better. A staircase near the door leads up through the floor of the drafty common room above. There are usually 1d6 + 1 people staying at the Reeve on any given day.

## CONSTABLE'S OFFICE

The constable enforces law and order from this small stone building. Iron bars cover the four windows and the front door has a stout lock that imposes 1 bane on challenge rolls to open the door without using the key. Inside, there's an iron cage at the back containing four cots and a bucket.

## BUSINESSES

Last Hope has a few businesses that provide finished goods for the locals and for caravans looking to resupply. As none of these buildings play a direct part in the adventure, you can define them or not. Better still, have the players decide the kinds of businesses that are present in town and let them come up with any details they'd like to add, such as who owns them, how long they've been in operation, and at least one interesting thing about each place.

## HOUSES AND SHACKS

The rest of the town is made up of residences. Houses tend to be nice, tidy, and large enough to accommodate families of modest size. Shacks are smaller or are rundown houses. Player characters can claim some of these buildings based on their starting wealth. Characters that are comfortable or have greater wealth can have houses, while poorer characters might live in shacks or on one of the farms outside town.

## BEYOND LAST HOPE

Thick woods cover the lands for a few miles to the west and locals cut timber from them, though few venture too deep as most believe the forest to be haunted. To the south stands a large lake and the fish taken from it is a staple in the townspeople's diet. Farmland and pastures cover the lands to the north and east. Small farms lightly populate these areas, and they help feed the nearby communities.

## MAJOR CHARACTERS

The adventure features two important characters not tied to any particular location and they're described here. In addition to these characters, you can create other characters to help bring life to the town. It's also a good idea to have the players come up with at least one resident their characters know and with whom they have relationships. See "Secondary Characters" in *Shadow of the Demon Lord* for guidance on creating minor and background characters.



## ADELMAR CLEMP

The son of Last Hope's mayor, who lives on a fine estate four miles east of town, Adelmar Clemp has never wanted for anything thanks to his father's riches. A sullen boy, quick to cry when things didn't go his way, his father sheltered him from the hardships of life. As he grew older, he developed an interest in magic after watching a traveling magician perform miracles with nothing more than a word and a gesture. The mayor used his considerable wealth and influence to secure a place in the Academy of Occult Sciences in faraway Lij and thought the experience would do the boy good. A year later, Adelmar returned to Last Hope in the company of a young woman. Adelmar did not explain why he left the Academy and has spent little time on the estate since his return. Of the woman, she hasn't been seen since, and the mayor believes she left town soon after.

Adelmar found himself unprepared for life in a big city. Frightened by the noise and the chaos on the streets, he kept to the library, where he spent his time studying books. There, he met Muck, who then wore the guise of a young woman with flaming red hair and a pretty smile. She fell in love with the young man, but he seemed more concerned with chasing down dark magic, and his research uncovered dangerous books filled with unspeakable spells. It wasn't long before his instructors discovered his work and cast him out of the school. Adelmar and his companion, who had by then revealed her true nature, made the long journey back to Last Hope.



## EDGAR

The best thing Edgar got from the whore who birthed him was his silver tongue. A liar, cheat, and unrepentant thief, Edgar has made his way through the world using any and every dishonest trick he has been able to devise. He looks out for himself and has no loyalty to anyone or anything.

A few weeks ago, however, he learned about the relic in Last Hope and recruited some thugs to help him steal it. Once they reached town, his hirelings got drunk at the Ribald Reeve and started a fight with some locals. Frustrated at their unreliability, Edgar slipped away to carry out his plan on his own, leaving the brutes to whatever fate they had earned themselves. The night the adventure begins, Edgar has slipped inside the temple to rob the place when everything goes sideways.

Edgar is a young man, handsome and lithe, with a mop of curly blonde hair and bright blue eyes. He has an easy smile and an air of confidence others find appealing. He has a knack for reading people and telling them what they want to hear.

### EDGAR THE SLY

#### Size 1 human

**Perception** 11 (+1)  
**Defense** 11; **Health** 13  
**Strength** 10 (+0), **Agility** 11 (+1), **Intellect** 11 (+1), **Will** 9 (-1)  
**Speed** 10  
**Trickery** Once per round, Edgar can make an attack roll or challenge roll with 1 boon.

#### ATTACK OPTIONS

**Dagger** (melee or short) +1 (1d3, plus 1d6 if Edgar had 1 boon to the roll from Trickery)

#### SPECIAL ATTACK

**Subterfuge** Edgar can use an action to make an Intellect attack roll against the Intellect of one creature within short range that can hear him and understand what he says. On a success, the target becomes charmed for 1 round or until Edgar attacks it. On a failure, the target becomes immune to Edgar's Subterfuge until after it completes a rest.

Frustrated by his failures but thoroughly convinced of his own abilities, Adelmarr has been trying to learn a spell to restore life to the dead he once discovered in a grimoire entitled, *Breaking the Wheel*. He used the last of his coin to set up a camp in the forest and sent Muck to dig up corpses for him to practice on. Currently, Adelmarr swings from weeping frustration to feverish obsession as he struggles to master the complex words of the spell.

### ADELMARR CLEMP

#### Size 1 human

**Perception** 12 (+2)  
**Defense** 10; **Health** 9  
**2 Insanity**; **1 Corruption**  
**Strength** 9 (-1), **Agility** 10 (+0), **Intellect** 12 (+2), **Will** 10 (+0)  
**Speed** 10

#### ATTACK OPTIONS

**Dagger** (melee or short) +0 (1d3)

#### MAGIC

**Power** 0  
**Arcana** *magic dart* (1)  
**Necromancy** *spectral grasp* (1)

## THE STORY

The adventure unfolds in a series of scenes that tell you the situation and any challenges the characters might face. The scene also tells you what happens next. Together, they account for the most likely outcomes for the decisions the players make, but they cannot account for everything. Be ready to improvise when and if the players do something unexpected.

Begin the adventure in the early evening when at least one player character is in a place where he or she can see the Temple of the Holy Finger. Proceed to **scene 1**.

## 1. THE BLOODY BOY

A young man covered in blood and dirt bursts out through the doors of the Temple of the Holy Finger. Wide-eyed and afraid, he stumbles into the street, and runs toward the nearest building. The boy is **Edgar**, who is described under “Major Characters.”

### INTERACTION

If any characters go to the boy, they find him jabbering about a mud man, and he struggles to get away from them. Roleplaying or a success on a Will attack roll against his Will calms him enough to get him to reveal there is some kind of monster in the temple and that the monster tried to kill him. A failure on the attack roll results in him trying to run off. If the characters catch him, which they can do, and restrain him (a success on an Strength attack roll against his Strength), he thrashes a bit and then calms down, and can impart the following clues:

- Edgar claims to have been tormented by evil spirits and went to the priest for help.
- The priest attacked him for no reason.
- Edgar stabbed the priest with a dagger, and the priest’s face melted away to reveal a mess of dirt and stones.
- Edgar then fled the temple.

**Secrets:** Edgar is lying. He went to the temple to steal the relic. The priest caught him in the act and tried to stop him. The priest is, of course, Muck, so when Edgar stabbed him with the iron dagger, Muck reverted to her natural form. Edgar stuffed the reliquary containing the *Finger Bone of the Ascended* down the front of his pants and ran off.

### AWARDING FORTUNE

As the Game Master, you keep the story moving, advocate for the players, and ensure everyone playing has fun. Starting characters are quite fragile and have few tools at their disposal. One way you can help them is to award Fortune (*Shadow*, page 45) often. Here are some suggestions on when you might hand it out.

- A player makes a decision in game based on the character’s personality or motivations.
- A player makes an attack roll or challenge roll, and the total of the roll is 20 or higher.
- A player handles a dispute or conflict through roleplaying.
- A player makes a connection with one of the locals.
- A player becomes incapacitated but survives.
- The player’s character finds the relic.
- The player’s character follows the changeling to the necromancer’s camp.

### STORY DEVELOPMENT

If the characters go to the Temple of the Holy Finger, go to **scene 2**. If the characters go to the Constable, go to **scene 3**.

If the characters do not intervene or do nothing, Edgar runs off until he finds a hiding place. An hour later, he calms down enough to wash off the blood and dirt. He then steals fresh clothing from a clothesline. The next morning, he joins the next caravan out of town. Go to **scene 10** to discover the consequences for inaction.

## 2. INVESTIGATE THE TEMPLE

Player characters going to the temple from scene 1 find the front door stands open, and the interior is filled with shadows cast by a few lit candles on the floor around the altar. The door at the back stands open. No one seems to be around.

### INVESTIGATION

Exploring the temple can turn up any of the following clues.

- A few candles have been knocked over and extinguished.
- Through the open door to the hall, the door to the outside and the steel door to the Vault both stand open. The bar that normally secures the door to the outside lays on the floor.
- The door to the Vault is open as well. The altar is bare. From the hall, a success on a Perception challenge roll made with 1 bane reveals the scroll containing the incantations lying on the floor (see the Vault description). Any character entering the Vault finds the scroll automatically.
- Any character looking at the floor notices blood spatters and small piles of dirt everywhere. Footprints through the mess lead through the door outside.

### STORY DEVELOPMENT

If the characters attempt to follow the tracks outside, go to **scene 4**. If the characters instead go to the constable, go to **scene 3**. Note, if Edgar is with the characters, he asks to be taken somewhere he can clean up and rest from his ordeal. He has no intention of encountering the constable again, rightly fearing the man will recognize him.

If the characters do nothing, Muck the changeling reaches the edge of the forest, finds a woodcutter, assumes his appearance, and then heads on to find Adelmarr at the camp, only to discover he’s gone missing. If the characters do not reach the camp by dawn, the changeling disappears, likely murdered by beastmen. In any event, inaction leads to **scene 10**.



### 3. HELP FROM THE CONSTABLE

A visit to the constable's office can play out in a couple of different ways depending on when the characters visit and if Edgar is in their company. Characters from the community know the constable to be a good and reliable man. He has held the post of town constable for a few years, and before that he spent time patrolling the roads, fighting beastmen and stranger creatures. He's well liked and good at his job. He's tall, his muscle slowly going to fat, with thinning brown hair and dark brown skin.

#### INTERACTION (BEFORE MIDNIGHT)

The front door to the office is unlocked, but if the characters knock, they hear a voice invite them in.

Inside, the office is as described earlier in the adventure, but the constable, Harold Cray (as **veteran** with 13 damage), sits at a desk, his arm in a sling. Four brutish thugs (as **bandits** each with 9 damage and no weapons) sit or stand in the cage at the back of the office, glaring at the constable and the player characters. The constable greets the characters, but warns them to keep away from the prisoners, "They're a dangerous bunch, and I'm waiting for the magistrate to haul them off to the city for a few months of hard labor."

If the characters ask what happened to the constable, he explains that two days ago, a group of thugs caused a lot of trouble at the Ribald Reeve by roughing up the patrons and messing up the place. Cray intervened, taking down four. A young man he believed to be part of the group escaped. Cray would have given chase, but he was injured in the fighting.

If the characters come looking for help, the constable listens to the player characters' situation, but he explains he's in no shape to do more than hold down the jail. If any of the characters look competent, the constable tries to deputize them, urging them to look into the matter themselves. If they agree, he gives each a red badge to pin to their clothing, indicating their status as deputies, a club, a lantern, flask of oil, tinderbox, a *healing potion*, and 5 cp in pay.

#### IF EDGAR IS PRESENT

If the player characters have Edgar with them, one of the thugs calls out, "You little shit. You left us innit, didn't you? Look brothers, young Edgar has come for a visit!" The constable recognizes Edgar right away and tries to put manacles on him. Edgar draws a dagger and tries to fight his way free, attacking the constable first and then attempting to flee.

If the characters defeat or capture Edgar, they can search his body and find the reliquary hidden in his clothing. As well, the characters can question him if he is still conscious or when he wakes up. The

characters might gain the following information through roleplaying or with a success on an Intellect or Will attack roll against his Will, the former using persuasion and the latter using threats. Torture gets him to reveal the information immediately but earns the torturing character 1 Corruption.

- Edgar admits he joined up with the thugs to rob the temple, but they're fools and nearly spoiled everything.
- Everything he said about the priest was true.

If the constable is still alive, he asks one of the characters to help him get Edgar in the jail. Have the character who does so make a Perception challenge roll with 1 bane. On a success, the character notes the lock is in poor condition. A tool kit, 1 minute of work, and a success on an Intellect challenge roll can repair the lock. A character that does so should earn Fortune.

#### EXPLORATION (MIDNIGHT OR AFTER)

If the player characters come to the constable after midnight or return here, the situation is likely much different. Unless the characters secured the lock to the cell, the prisoners with, possibly, Edgar, broke the lock and stabbed Harold Cray to death with a crude knife hidden among their possessions. The knife remains stuck in the constable's body resting in a pool of his blood. Of the prisoners, see **scene 6**.

However, if the player characters secured the lock, the group finds the office as they left it.

#### STORY DEVELOPMENT

From here, the characters have a few choices to make. They could go to the temple, in which case go back to **scene 2**. If, earlier, they found the tracks leading from the temple, they can follow them as described in **scene 4**. And, if the player characters choose to do nothing, go to **scene 10**.

### 4. FOLLOW THE TRACKS

After Edgar stabbed Muck, the changeling fled the temple, knowing her cover was blown, and headed to Adelmarr Clemp's camp in the woods to warn him. Once the changeling reached the forest edge, she surprised a woodcutter and took his form. She murdered the man, hastily hid his body, took his clothes, and continued to the camp. Muck makes no effort to cover her tracks since she's bleeding and afraid she's going to be caught.

#### EXPLORATION

The changeling left prints in the blood and dirt in the temple hall, and these tracks lead down a few steps to the dirt street outside. They appear to be headed

toward the trees, but following the tracks proves difficult since they are lost in the other prints on the road. A character with the tracker profession (or something similar) can make a Perception challenge roll with 2 banes. Other characters can help on this task. On a success, the character picks out the tracks enough to follow them to the trees. A failure means the tracks are lost, but it should be clear that they were headed toward the forest.



Reaching the forest edge, the characters find a dense wood with lots of undergrowth. Game trails break through the foliage in places. A character with a hunter (or similar) profession sees a free break through the growth leading deeper into the woods that is unlikely to have been left by an animal.

Have characters following the new path make a Perception challenge roll with 1 bane. A success reveals a naked body lying in the woods. A success by 20 or higher also reveals blood droplets on the leaves and weeds covering the forest floor along the path from this point forward.

If the characters inspect the body, they find it belonged to a middle-aged, bearded man. He's naked and a woodsman's axe can be found in the underbrush a yard away. As well, searching characters can find a pile of priestly vestments covered in blood and dirt. A bloody hole in the middle suggests whoever had worn it had been stabbed.

### STORY DEVELOPMENT

If the characters follow the tracks further, proceed with **scene 5**. If the characters decide to go back to town, they might go back to the temple, **scene 2**, the constable, **scene 3**, or do something else, **scene 10**.

## 5. CAMP IN THE WOODS

Adelmar has spent a couple weeks hiding out in the woods at a camp consisting of three tents centered around a small cook fire.

If the characters came here directly from the temple by following the tracks, they catch up to Muck (as a **changeling**) in the woodsman's form, just as she enters the camp. As well, there's an **animated corpse** of a withered woman shuffling out of one of the tents, and it attacks the nearest character when it can.

If the characters came here after visiting the constable, Muck reached the camp, found Adelmar gone, and went to find him. The animated corpse is still here and attacks the characters.

Finally, if the characters went to **scene 10** before coming here, neither the changeling nor the animated corpse are present. Instead, an **animal swarm** of rats are here, feeding on the cadavers in the third tent.

### INTERACTION WITH MUCK

Muck, in the guise of the woodcutter, attempts to play the part, acting surprised to find the animated corpse, the camp, and the characters. The changeling maintains the ruse for as long as she can, but if the characters aren't buying it, her fear for Adelmar convinces her to reveal what is going on, including summarizing Adelmar's backstory.

- Her job was to excavate cadavers for his research and keep the locals from inspecting the graveyard.

- She killed the priest and buried him in one of the emptied graves.
- She came here to warn Adelmarr that their cover was blown. She is worried he might be in trouble.
- She suggests that if the player characters help her find him and return him to his father, the mayor, they would be rewarded.

## INVESTIGATION

Examining the camp can turn up clues.

- One tent appears lived in, with bedroll, spare clothing, and personal effects scattered about the place. In addition, there is a graven skull, food and water for a week in the woods, and a couple of books on the subject of magic, the occult, and Necromancy.
- The second tent is larger and has a diagram drawn in dung on the ground under it. Unlit black candles stand around the edges. A grimoire lies open on the floor covered in High Archaic scrawl that details the secrets of Necromancy. In addition, the book contains two incantations of Necromancy spells Adelmarr had not yet cast: *grave grasp* and *bone splinters*.
- The third tent holds four decomposing cadavers, recently plucked from their graves and on which Adelmarr has been performing experiments. Rats have been gnawing on these bodies.
- A search of the grounds around the camp shows a lot of activity, but the most recent prints head deeper into the woods. A success on an Intellect challenge roll indicates whoever left them did so with great haste.

## STORY DEVELOPMENT

If the characters follow the new tracks and caught the changeling in the camp, proceed with **scene 8**. If the characters follow the tracks but didn't catch the changeling, go to **scene 9**. If the characters decide to go back to town, they might go back to the temple, **scene 2**, the constable, **scene 3**, or do something else, **scene 10**. If the characters get back to town before midnight, go to **scene 6** when they arrive.

## 6. JAIL BREAK

This scene happens only if the characters return to town before midnight and did not secure the lock on the cage inside the constable's office.

Just as the characters move to a position where they can see the building, they see the four thugs emerging from the constable's office with clubs in hand.

Edgar might be with them as well. The thugs want vengeance so they go from house to house, butchering

the inhabitants and stealing any valuables they find. The thugs drank *healing potions* they found in the constable's desk and so now count as **bandits** with 6 damage each.

## STORY DEVELOPMENT

If the characters do not interfere, the thugs and Edgar have their fun and after the fourth house, they flee, running for the woods. The characters might pursue, encounter them later, or let them get away.

In any event, proceed with **scene 7**.

## 7. MAYOR'S PLEA

Shortly after the thugs have escaped or been killed, the mayor arrives, drawn to the community by his conscience to find his wayward boy. The mayor arrives alone on horseback. He's a middle-aged portly man with thinning black hair and a bulbous nose. He might have several reasons to seek out the player characters—they dealt with the thugs, recovered the relic, or are upstanding members of the community.

The mayor finds the player characters, dismounts, and begs for their help. He believes his son can be saved, though if the group reveals what they found at the camp, he breaks down in tears. Regardless of what Adelmarr has done, the mayor wants him home, safe, so he can help him. He's willing to pay each member of the group 1 ss for doing so.

## STORY DEVELOPMENT

If the characters agree to the mayor's terms, proceed with **scene 9**. Alternatively, they can investigate any of the other scenes taking place in town. Finally, if they do nothing, go to **scene 10**.

## 8. CATCH UP TO THE KID

After a few minutes of travel through the woods, the characters finally catch up to Adelmarr. He's obviously frightened and believes the characters are witch hunters. He realizes he has made a terrible mistake dabbling in Necromancy, and the corpse he animated scared the life out of him. Any aggressive move on the player characters' part results in Adelmarr casting *spectral hand* at the beginning of combat. If the characters try to calm him through roleplaying or with a success on an Intellect or Will attack roll against his Will, he surrenders to them. Failure results in a fight.

Sounds of combat draw 1d3 **fomors** to investigate the noise at the end of the second round.

## STORY DEVELOPMENT

The adventure more or less ends after this scene. See the Conclusion for how to wrap up the story.

## 9. WRETCHED BEASTMEN

In Adelmar's frantic flight, he stumbled upon a band of beastmen. These brutes captured him and dragged him back to their camp about a mile away from where he animated the corpse. Pursuing characters find the camp with little trouble, and through the trees they can see **8 fomor** building a fire, bleating, and mocking Adelmar whom they have hanging by his ankle from a rope tied to a branch in a tree. The fomor intend to eat him. The camp is horrid, with gnawed bones littering the ground amidst piles of scat and discarded equipment.

A fight against these numbers should be challenging for the group, so entertain just about any workable plan. Note, no more than half the numbers leave the camp to investigate noises. The beastmen flee if reduced to 3 or fewer.

Searching the camp turns up a sword, two daggers, a bow with quiver of 12 arrows, a bedroll, a suit of hard leather armor, one enchanted object (which you create), and 1 ss, 12 cp, and 43 bits.

## STORY DEVELOPMENT

The adventure more or less ends after this scene. See the Conclusion for how to wrap up the story.

## 10. INACTION

The player characters might not engage the story, and either do something else or nothing at all, especially if they decide to rest for **8 hours**. You can introduce new challenges to steer them toward the conclusion. A wild dog (as a **small animal**) could come out of the woods with a withered arm in mouth. Following the dog's trail could lead back to **scene 5**. If the characters have spent most of the night in town, the **animated corpse** Adelmar created comes out of the woods. Investigating this could lead the characters to **scene 5** or **scene 9**. Finally, if the characters leave Adelmar to his fate or hunker down to wait out the adventure, a group of **8 fomors** come into town to destroy it, kill people, and take other people as slaves. If this happens, Adelmar is likely dead, Muck too, or vanished, and the thugs in the jail have either made their escape or were killed by the beastmen.

## CONCLUSION

The best outcome for the adventure is for the player characters to find Adelmar and return him to town. Whether or not they are acting in the mayor's employ, he rewards them each with 1 ss, and the characters gain his favor. At any point in the future, the characters can go to him and receive his help in any way they need that neither puts his life, the lives of his household, or his property at risk. Of course, the situation might grow more complex if an inquisitor comes to town, chasing rumors about someone dabbling in dark magic.

If the characters fail to recover Adelmar or bring back his body, the mayor is devastated. After a private funeral, he quits his post and withdraws to his estate.

He might kill himself out of grief, or he might consort with dark powers to bring his son back.

Edgar and some, or all, of the thugs might be at large. They could return in a future adventure to cause trouble for the group, be potential allies for a mission. Or, they might disappear.

The player characters are expected to return the relic to the temple when the next priest comes to town. Failing to do so could make them enemies of the New God's cult, but delivering the relic to the faith could earn an important ally.

After a few weeks, life returns to normal in Last Hope and the characters are lauded as heroes for stepping forward to do the right thing or scorned as cowards for flinching away from danger.

## WHAT NEXT?

Surviving player characters have likely forged bonds with each other and established themselves as a group, ready to choose their novice paths. Allow a few weeks of time to pass in the story to give the characters a chance to gain the necessary training to make their path choice. Locals might be able to guide the characters. The constable could train a character to become a warrior, while Adelmar or a magician passing through town might teach a character the fundamentals in magic. A particularly devout player character might learn from the priest who comes to take Father Solomon's place. Finally, Edgar, if still in town, might teach a cunning character a few things, though criminals and scoundrels pass through Last Hope all the time.

Encourage the players to come up with ideas about how their characters pass the time, what they learn, and who they might have met along the way. When you gather to play through the next adventure, have the players share details about what they've been up to before you hook them into the next adventure.

# HANDOUT 1: CLUES

## ACADEMIC PROFESSION

While walking through town, you were surprised to see Adelmarr Clemp leaving a fine carriage drawn by four horses. Clemp is the mayor's boy, and he's supposed to be at the Tower Arcane.

## COMMON PROFESSION

There have always been a lot of wild dogs in these parts. People feed them scraps, and the animals do a good job keeping the rat population low. You noticed the other day you have not seen any dogs about town. It's almost as if they all vanished.

## CRIMINAL PROFESSION

Someone's been digging up graves in the local cemetery, which would be weird enough if it wasn't for the fact that no one's talking about it, and even the priest has been "business as usual."

## MARTIAL PROFESSION

The caravans usually bring in some unsavory characters, but the one that came through a couple days back was the worst you've seen. Some thugs from the big city caused a lot of trouble at the Ribald Reeve, the local watering hole. The constable rounded up the lot, though he took a nasty cut or two. Your lover, who was there, said the constable only captured four, but it's likely the last one took off.

## RELIGIOUS PROFESSION

The Temple of the Holy Finger, the local temple dedicated to the New God, is supposed to have a relic from the prophet Astrid herself. The locals believe the priests keep one of her finger-bones in an ornate box somewhere in the temple. It's said to have great healing powers, though no one you know has ever seen it.

## WILDERNESS PROFESSION

You or someone you know found weird markings on the trees in the woods. Dark runes of sinister character and appearance. People whisper that beastmen might be at large.

# HANDOUT 2: REPLACEMENT CHARACTERS

You died! Luckily, one of the stalwart townsfolk comes forward to help deal with the trouble. You can use this character for the rest of the adventure, and then either continue using the character or create a new one to join the group after the adventure ends. If you keep this character, be sure to choose or randomly determine a second profession. You can add more detail by rolling on the human tables found in the main rulebook. If not, your character has an average height, weight, and appearance, and nothing significant happened to you before this adventure.

This character has a set of clothing appropriate to his or her profession.

## CHARACTER NAME

d20	Name
1	Aengus
2	Agnes
3	Manfred
4	Alice
5	Anselm
6	Beatrice
7	Breandan
8	Caitlin
9	Charles
10	Cormac
11	Ella
12	Fiona
13	Richard
14	Giselle
15	Henry
16	Hugh
17	Walter
18	John
19	Kane
20	Kiera

## PROFESSION

d20	Name
1	Animal trainer
2	Apothecary or healer
3	Artisan—Choose a manufacturing trade such as baker, blacksmith, bookbinder, brewer, carpenter, chandler, cobbler, dyer, glassblower, jeweler, leatherworker, mason, potter, printer, or tailor
4	Artist—Choose a medium such as painter, sculptor, and poet or writer (literate in one language)
5	Boatman or ferryman
6	Butcher
7	Cook
8	Drover or herder
9	Entertainer—Choose a style such as actor, athlete, comedian, courtesan, dancer, orator, puppeteer, singer, or storyteller
10	Farmer
11	Fisher or whaler
12	Groom
13	Laborer—Choose a labor such as chimneysweep, gravedigger, porter, stevedore, or street-sweeper
14	Merchant—Choose a good such as grains, livestock, slaves, spices, textiles, or weapons
15	Miner
16	Musician—Choose an instrument such as percussion, string, or wind
17	Sailor
18	Servant or valet
19	Shopkeeper
20	Teamster

## LOCAL

*Size 1/2 or 1 human*

**Perception** 10 (+0)

**Defense** 10; **Health** 10 (healing rate 2)

**Strength** 10 (+0), **Agility** 10 (+0), **Intellect** 10 (+0), **Will** 11 (+1)

**Speed** 10

## WEAPONS

**Club** (melee) +0 (1d6)

**Dagger** (melee or short) +0 (1d3)



LAST  
HOPE