

The

Wolf

in the

Sky



D&D adventure path levels 2-8
Background and Episode 1

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Owlbear, Dire (Adapted 4 July 2020 from <https://www.dndbeyond.com/monsters/owlbear> using <https://dmdave.com/dire-creature-template/>)

Skeletal Champions (Taken 15 February 2021 from [https://www.dandwiki.com/wiki/Skeleton_Knight_\(5e_Creature\)](https://www.dandwiki.com/wiki/Skeleton_Knight_(5e_Creature)))

Sphinx (Adapted 23 July 2020 from <https://roll20.net/compendium/dnd5e/Gynosphinx#content>)

Orangutan siblings (Taken 3 Jan 2021 and based on: <https://roll20.net/compendium/dnd5e/Ape#content>)

Hairy men - (Taken 3 Jan 2021 and based on: <https://roll20.net/compendium/dnd5e/Ape#content>)

Giant hackled wolf, based on dire hyena.

Owlbear that falls through the ceiling (Adapted 4 July 2020 from <https://www.dndbeyond.com/monsters/owlbear> using <https://dmdave.com/dire-creature-template/>)

Kharrum - (Adapted 27 Jan 21 from <https://rpgtinker.com/index.php>)

Mind flayer - (Adapted 29 Aug 2020 from <https://www.aidedd.org/dnd/monstres.php?vo=mind-flayer>)

Venomax - (Adapted 29 Aug 2020 from <https://roll20.net/compendium/dnd5e/Ancient%20Red%20Dragon#content>)

The gus (Inspired and Adapted 7 June 20 from <https://www.d20pfsrd.com/bestiary/monster-listings/magical-beasts/flail-snail/>)

Uncharacteristically loyal drow (Adapted 22 May 21 from <https://roll20.net/compendium/dnd5e/Drow#content> and <https://fastcharacter.com/results.php>)

Shade of autumn (Inspired 16 Jan 2021 from <https://www.5esrd.com/gamemastering/monsters-foes/monsters-by-type/undead/specter/> and <https://roll20.net/compendium/dnd5e/Young%20Green%20Dragon#content>)

Flying wolves (adapted 9 Feb 21 from <https://www.dndbeyond.com/monsters/dire-wolf>)

Stuktaag (Adapted 7 July from <https://www.d20pfsrd.com/bestiary/monster-listings/humanoids/giants/giant-true/giant-stone/>)

Pterosaurs (adapted 6 July 2020 from Section 15: Copyright Notice. Pathfinder Adventure Path #37: Souls for Smuggler's Shiv. © 2010, Paizo Publishing, LLC; Author: James Jacobs.)

Demonic dire wolves (adapted 9 Feb 21 from <https://www.dndbeyond.com/monsters/dire-wolf>)

Hate drakes (Adapted 11 July 2020 from <https://www.d20pfsrd.com/bestiary/monster-listings/dragons/drakes/drake-forest/>)

The she wolf (Based 11 July 20 from <https://www.d20pfsrd.com/bestiary/monster-listings/magical-beasts/abyssal-wolf-tohc/>)

Items and rules

Staff of power (Adapted 6 Feb 21 from <https://www.5esrd.com/gamemastering/magic-items/rods-staves-wands/>)

Spell spectral hand (Section 15: Copyright Notice. Searred Lands Player's Guide © 2016 Onyx Path Publishing Authors: Bill Ashbless, Jason Bolte, Chris Cowger, Adam Eichelberger, Alain Giorla, Nathan Knaack, Chris Sims, Eddy Webb. Taken 7th august 2020 from <https://www.5esrd.com/spellcasting/3pp-spells/spells-onyx-path-publishing/spectral-hand/>)

Madness (adapted from <https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/basic-rules/running-the-game#Madness>)

Maps

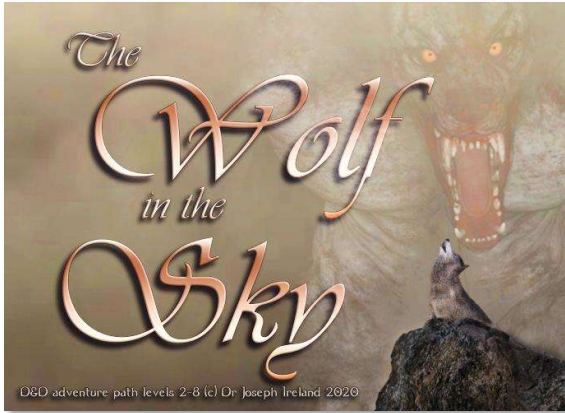
Map of Narrowhaven - Courtesy of <https://watabou.itch.io/medieval-fantasy-city-generator>, taken and adapted 27 April 20

Map of Hammerville - Courtesy of <https://watabou.itch.io/medieval-fantasy-city-generator>, taken and adapted 27 April 20

Map of Bittern - Courtesy of <https://watabou.itch.io/medieval-fantasy-city-generator>, taken and adapted 27 April 20

Cheeky monkey - (Adapted 1 Aug 2020 from <https://roll20.net/compendium/dnd5e/Stone%20Golem#>)

Introduction



A hundred generations ago your land lost its name, now it is only known as *Abandon*. You live in poverty and fear, hounded by a brutal and idle military force known as the *Sons of the Wolf*. None dare challenge them, none can.

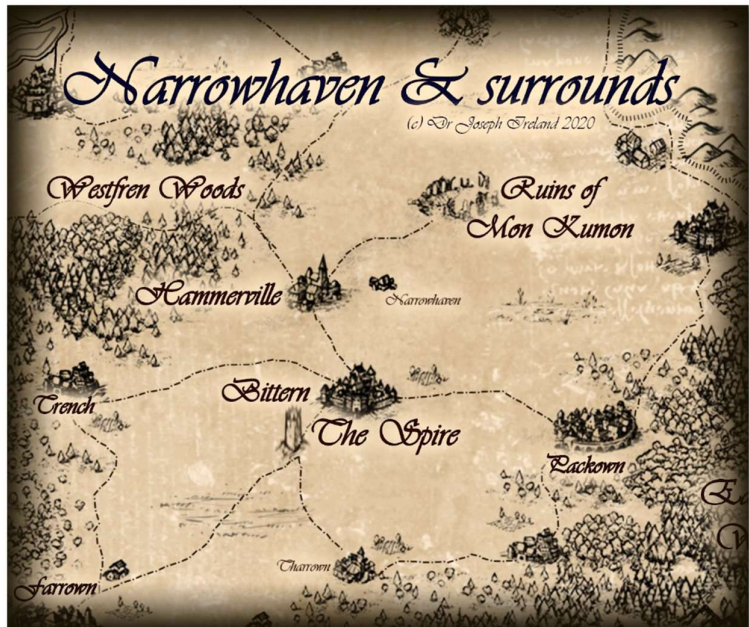
A hundred generations ago, or so it is told, the land was not steeped in the eternal gloom of an endless autumn, where a pale sun streams fading light even at midday, where the leaves of every tree begin to die before they are even fully formed. Crops are hard, and food is scarce, and magic belongs only to the military.

But even in this world you have found a few friends, and skills enough to get by. Now time or fate has brought you to the tiny hamlet of *Narrowhaven*, considered too poor and isolated for the military to usually be troubled with. Far greater and more dangerous places exist, such as the crowded capital city of *Bittern*. Yet there are also places of legend, such as the hidden druidic enclave of the *Westfren* woods, or the haunted ruins of the castle of *Mon Kumon*. Each seems to speak of the lost glory of a people long gone, the *Fallen Ones*. Rumors tell of their soldiers wielding swords of fire, of artisans who forged hammers that sundered mountains at their command, or of a mighty tree who could give life back to the dead.

But nothing of the sort has been seen in over a hundred generations, for every month at the full moon all citizens tremble in their houses. Nearing midnight at the appointed time, the *Wolf in the Sky* howls from atop his enormous, mountain sized *Spire* – the sound a mind-wrenching, gut-twisting, soul-crushing horror. No one knew why he did this, but even his own military would cringe on the ground at the sound. And every month, the land would seem darker, bleaker, less free...

Then, this month, the howl came late, in the early hours of a pale dawn. No one knows why, yet the howl was but a shallow memory of its normal power. Rumors have been spreading; is he growing weak? Does some other deity seek his throne? Does this herald the beginning of the dawn of winter for an already starving land? Or will some worse fate yet claim power over a broken and frightened people?

None can say, but it is clear the *Sons of the Wolf* are mobilizing. The conscriptions are beginning again. Even as you watch, messengers race into *Narrowhaven*: A pack of military are marching on the hamlet where you have been staying. You will have to act quickly...



Important Context

This adventure path is designed to be particularly helpful to DM's new to running games or developing their own adventure path. It is relatively short, and begins as a low magic campaign where characters are steeped in poverty, magic is new and exciting, and a single sword is worth half a year's labor. Gold is *precious*, and anyone wielding even the slightest spell is rare, frightening and *powerful*.

This adventure path can be easily merged into any established game world you enjoy. It is set in a small nation tucked away between three greater powers. Any news and history of the outside nations has been held back by the military for 'a hundred generations', so any maps or information about the outside nations PCs will have access to are well and truly outdated.

Players can choose from 5 pre-generated PCs, or they can generate their characters in the optional encounters in episode 1, learning the skills of the game as they go. Other characters start at level 2 – they have already established themselves as standing out in their respective communities; for good or evil. The campaign ends battling a weakened deity at level 8. What happens to the heroes after this is entirely between you, your players, and your gaming world!

Above all else, this adventure path includes more details than you usually need to run your game, so feel free to audit and edit as needed – just be sure to jot it down! Yet D&D is also a game of infinite variety, thus no adventure path can ever hope to cover every act, deed, and misdeed the characters might get up to. Prepare to improvise, adapt, apologize, and at times gently

suggest that you as DM are not prepared to have a game go ... "there".

Game set up

Make sure players get the introduction (page above), and read the Player Aid: Living in Abandon to them prepare for the unique game flavor. They will also need to choose at least one of the 4 main character histories (Appendix). Any extra players are from the military history.

The following details below are for the DM, and you may use them to help generate and envision the game world, sharing this information at key times to help the game world develop as the PCs experience it.

Oppressed

All live in fear of the Wolf, a lesser deity who conquered the land generations ago. His brutal and cruel followers are known as the Sons of the Wolf, who have been known to hew entire towns to the dust just, apparently, at a whim. While the Sons are officially both the military and policing force of the nation, they seem to rarely do either.



Steeped in poverty

Most commoners earn a single copper piece a day (the D&D standard is 1 silver piece a day). People are *poor*. Bread is *scarce*. The goddess Autumn secretly intercedes a thousand times a day to provide food to stop people starving to death. Almost all national wealth is hoarded and squandered by the military. Any roads just about anywhere the heroes will want to travel are run down and poor.

While characters do gain and, indeed, exceed normal wealth for a D&D game, they still start poor unless they are military. No character, despite being level 2, owns more than 1 weapon and one suit of appropriate armor.

Optional low magic adventure - initially

It is vital that players understand that this campaign begins as a low magic campaign. This means that the PCs have probably never seen a magic item or a magical spell – at least without it being used to terrify or control them.

Wizards and clerics must study in secret, often for years and without proper training. Clerics do not know the correct rituals to appease their deity; the voice of the Gods is scarcely heard amongst this downtrodden populace. Wizards have had to piece together their research with only sporadic clues and possibly a single spell scroll. Even sorcerers, warlocks and others are mysteriously weak for some unknown reason. Magical items are hidden for generations for fear of being claimed by the military. This means that *all* spell casters begin with only *one spell* per spell level, and only gain new ones at the direct imposition of a deity. Even so, anyone else who knows the PC possesses this power will fear and revere them mightily for it.

Yet this also means that any magic the PCs manifest might be the first time they've ever seen it. And as new powers manifest it's a topic of great interest. For gaming benefit you can stretch out the mystique, for example, as sorcerers gain new spells they are completely unaware of their new powers until

they mystically manifest it at propitious times. This is intended to put the magic back into being, well magic.

Also, everything is blown out of proportion by a superstitious and hope-starved people. *Wind wall* is a supernatural gale that can level forests. A +2 thundering maul has thrown down mountains. A wizard with *charm person* can control the minds of others and force them to do unspeakable things. As the heroes gain powers, they too can get caught up in the dramatic hyperbole that surrounds those who wield magic of any kind.

It may be useful to have players give you a list of the spells and the order they hope their PCs will gain their magical abilities, as such do accrue quickly in game when the need is indeed very great.

Gods at war

Three gods are in conflict throughout this scenario.

The Wolf – A chaotic evil god who thrives on fear and hopelessness. A condition of his victory millennia ago was that the good aligned gods would abandon the land, which they have done. This does not stop them from influencing the people, however. The Wolf is cruel, malicious, wonton and evil.

The Goddess of Autumn – The lawful neutral regional goddess of autumn. Having sided with the Wolf for millennia she uses the bulk of her now formidable power to protect the people from complete starvation. Yet while relishing the eternal autumn he promised her, she is still at conflict with herself for what she helps to create.

Enimaea – The neutral goddess of conflict and trial. While never an outright evil, she can be a bit of jerk at times. She is always looking for ways to strengthen and challenge both friend and foe. Enimaea sees in the Wolf's late howl her first real chance to redeem a suffering people.

To increase the sense of conflict between the gods, and the sense of paranoia among the heroes, Enimaea and Autumn manifest themselves to the heroes at least

once per episode. Usually they do so individually, but occasionally they do so in dreams, visitations, etc., Be sure to keep a record of which deity manifests to which heroes so that there is a fair sharing of divine interventions amidst them. Note you should only ever share the image of a deity to the player from the area where this avatar resides – in order to increase their mystique and player apprehension. For some helpful details on how each deity manifests, and a table to help you keep records, see the *DM aid: Gods at War!* in the appendix.

Other gods do have a minor role in the campaign, not counting any actual PC gods. They include **Windchime**, the Lawful Evil deity of tyranny, and **Nago**, the Chaotic Good gnomish god of gifts and mischief.

Abandon - a broken nation

The Fallen Ones

The citizens living in Abandon are descendants from what was once a privileged, wealthy nation amidst other more powerful nations. However, descriptions of the past, and of the powers of magic, now tend to be over exaggerated. They, all they once built, are now known only as *the Fallen Ones*.

As spoken by the sage Merrifyrth of Bittern;

We were once Scindillon - a small yet prosperous nation. It is said that the Wolf secured a promise from the other deity that if he concurred this nation, they would leave. Yet the cunning immortal took his time sewing chaos and gaining power. The innocent and careless people did little to stem the growing tide of evil till it was far too late, frustrating our deity with our sloth and willful ignorance to the cries of suffering among our own people, cries we cannot now stem.

Religion

“There is one only god in Abandon...”
the Red Wolf.

Religion is rare in the land. Few trust any god to deliver them, and the Sons of the Wolf actively oppose any religion but their own as, they claim, it encourages laziness and distracts the citizens from working (twenty four hours a day, seven days a week). Most people believe the gods were asleep when the Wolf took the land as his own. Others feel the gods are too powerful to care for a little nation such as this, and the solution must be found within the people themselves. Most just don't know.

There are no public displays of divine power other than the Sons of the Wolf. Some clerics to good deity exist in secret, wondering from town to town, trying to kindle the faint embers of hope. Stories are told, but few PCs have ever seen a cleric capable of channeling positive energy.

Any publicly calling on the name of any god other than the Wolf are publicly burnt at the stake. Any not declaring their loyalty to the Wolf before any other god are hung. Any showing potential favor of any deity, almost without exclusion, disappear.

Magic

Magic ‘belongs’ to the Wolf in Abandon. Any caught practicing it are either executed or conscripted – usually the former. All magical items of any power are confiscated on sight. There is no training for wizards, and no magical items have been seen in a generation.

Magical creatures; such as fey, outsiders, or even elves were all forced into hiding generations ago.

Any PC has scrupulously studied in secret. Perhaps a wizard found a scroll and interpreted it, or perhaps a sorcerer has manifested a power. Both know greater power is to be had, but neither know how to look or where to find it.

Races

Almost everyone is human. Most other races are sent into hiding or exile, or interbred with the humans. Full blooded races are rare and treated with some suspicion.

Other nations

Rumors and trade occasionally reach the populous about the three other nations that surround the Wolf's territory, and which are each in a state of constant war with the Wolf – though it has been noted that in a hundred generations he seems to have yet to conquer any of them, it is assumed this is because he simply cannot be bothered at this time. Perhaps Abandon sates him? It is impossible to tell.

As a DM you can edit these local nations as needed for your campaign world, as what these nations currently look like and are called may have changed dramatically over time. These nations are merely mentioned for gaming flavor, to flesh out the world and help it seem real. But be careful not to mention these too early or the players will assume they are vital to their quest.

Current rumors in Abandon attest to three nearby nations;

Salsdain

Knights and sailors to the northwest. While dignified and honor bound, the Wolf spreads lies about their continuous treachery and dishonesty. Instructions are to kill on sight in order to prevent the Sons from learning the truth. The tabard of the defeated knights pays well in Bittern.

Fenwaven

Desert nomads and half dragon kin to the north east. Again, the Wolf lies and calls them savage lands with no leaders and no rules, leaving some to wonder why the Wolf does not simply overrun their lawless lands. In truth, they are fierce and noble defenders of their own lands and people.

Barsh

A cooler mountain climate to the south gives way to dwarven fortresses and the abodes of giants. The Wolf spreads rumors of their lands being filled with treasure and adventure; it is considered a great honor to raid into these lands.

The military

While auspiciously lawful, the truth is that the strongest always prevails. None are good aligned due to the deeply torturous and humiliating initiation rituals. All are required to worship the Wolf in the Sky, whom they believe gives them strength. (+2 to be precise, as long as they obey him without question.)

PCs can have military service as their background, but if they are good aligned they must keep it a secret and can no longer claim the +2 bonus to strength. Some aspire to replace the Wolf one day, but none have succeeded.

The military has a handful of genuinely competent and powerful archmages and clerics, but each suffers no heir and actively continues the suppression of the populace. There are also highly dangerous melee warriors, but again, their activity dissuades competence in others.

The Sons are all expected to survive the wilderness alone (taking the survival skill), and fight in packs of around four using *pack tactics*, *protection* or other abilities. They are known for being to be athletic, fast, and doggedly determined.

Grey Wolves

Standard military. Most are neutral evil, and they are selfish, craven individuals. The military is harsh, but cleverly organized. They are fond of setting ambushes and traps. They often have wolves as companions to help with tracking and terrorizing.

Each Grey Wolf has Perception and Survival as a skill, with other skills painstakingly honed for individual merit, such as; Animal Handling (for wolf handlers), Insight (popular among commanders),

Medicine (for field medics), or proficiency in trapsetting or siege equipment (for traps and siege engines respectively).

Find their statistics at <https://ddb.ac/characters/30680971/yIAMGM>

Red Wolves

Soldiers dressed in red half plate armor dedicated to the Wolf are his priests and clerics. They are rare and few, and their powers are feared greatly by the people.

A point in fact is that the Wolf is not very good at granting prayers, and most Red Wolves must appeal to the generic powers of fear, hunger, evil and community to gain their powers. A few manage to channel positive energy by adhering secretly to some neutral deity, and they are highly valued by the military.

Any military unit of 100+ individuals, such as a platoon, will more often than not host a highly revered and deeply feared Red Wolf, who will answer directly to the unit commander, and rest and eat in his pavilion.

Black Wolves

Military dressed in black robes embossed with the sacred symbols of the Wolf are usually his wizards or, occasionally, sorcerers. While they are put under enormous pressure to get to level 5 and cast fireball, they are almost without exception dead before level 9. This is because whomever is the current Lieutenant of the Black Wolves risks no heir.

Any military unit of a thousand individuals, such as a legion, inevitably hosts a Black Wolf with up to three assistants, also of the black cloak. Magic is rare, and life is cheap, in Abandon. Black Wolves can be expected to look after only themselves.

The Wolf's Lieutenants

The Wolf has always had three key advisors, known as his lieutenants. While his original three were all highly loyal and competent, he has not found their equal in all his reign.



DM notes on the Lieutenants

A point of note, these three do not play any direct role in the current adventure path, but are left here to enrich the gaming world, and to help the DM decide how the system might play out during and after the fall of the Wolf. Military or well-informed PCs (such as the one from Bittern) might know of or perhaps even met these dangerous individuals. Of his three current lieutenants;

Ksathé, the swordmaster

A talented swordmaster and capable military leader, Her Lawful Neutral persona means she not only keeps the military in line better than anyone, but she is likely to survive the Wolf's overthrow as she will serve any leader that rises.

Ksathé is headed northwest to fight the encroaching Salisdain Knights. She had draconic blood as her split iris's attest.

Sarkrow

This dark mage is headed northeast to deal with the Fenwaven half dragon desert nomads who have suddenly started to raid the nation with earnest. His command of the elements are truly legendary, and his necrotic powers the stuff of nightmares.

He is evil to the core, always seeking for new miseries to inflict on others. He quests to replace the Wolf one day, of which Autumn is well aware. An ordinary looking human of nondescript appearance, he usually weaves the illusion of being a living skeleton in order to up his ante, and trick attackers into using positive energy against him; almost everyone thinks he's undead.



Xmenwah

Part elven priestess of treachery and evil, she is headed south to Barsh, to quell attacks by the giants and dwarves. Filled with ambition, she is a highly competent if not entirely self-serving cleric. She uses magic to make herself appear less than a third her real age.

Seduced to ever darker and darker powers she may tempt good characters of her potential redemption, only to betray them in the end. Hedonistic and sadistic, she seeks not to rule, but to see whatever else she can get away with before Fate steps in. Celebrating death, she may well ascend to undeath of her own wicked vices if slain. If she could replace Autumn as the Wolf's greatest ally, she would.



Rules and Gameplay

Skill checks

A brief reminder about the skill checks in this book are set out for 5th edition as follows;

Typical Difficulty Classes

Task Difficulty	DC
Very easy	5
Easy	10
Moderate	15
Hard	20
Very hard	25
Nearly impossible	30

So, a Survival DC very hard check is equal to 25. Most checks in this adventure path are medium difficulty.

Texts of might and power

There are 5 valuable texts PCs should not miss. If given to the National Council of Hidden Chambers, they are worth a fortune in wealth, and opportunity.

- The **Tome of Penwhistle** (Rather than telling how to defeat the Wolf, it tells how to restart the Order of the Knights of Virtue – one of his most successful adversaries).
- **Book of Humility** (an inspiring read from Mon Kumon regarding virtue and kindness that grants *see invisibility*).
- The **Sacred Texts of the Fallen Ones**. These instructive texts describe in sufficient detail much about the Fallen Ones, their lives and their relationships with the divine. Aside from being a compelling historical read, these well

indexed books allow PCs to access their full character class powers (if you, as DM, have had enough of the low magic campaign). They can be found at Mon Kumon, Westfren, or the Archives – whichever PCs visit first.

- **Sacred writings of Westfren Druids**. Careful to preserve all forms of sacred knowledge, the druids have records on various deity. They will not, however, allow PCs to take the texts.
- **Manual of the Heart of Power** (found at Kath Makrah. This manual helps the primate ‘Hairy Men’ to reorganize their order of artisans and weaponsmiths – some of the Wolfs most dangerous adversaries.)
- The **Concealed Codex** of the Cult of the Dragon in Bittern (These intricate records detail the wolf’s allies, actions, powers and limitations. Thus, *they* are a clear clue on how to defeat the Wolf.)

Lessons of the conquest

Each of the four main areas visited deeply regret their failure to save the nation long ago, and try vainly to recover what they have now lost. You can use this information to help PCs unite the disparate forces into a coherent nation once more.

- The Knights once *protected* the people
- Westfren once *healed* the people
- The Archives once *taught* the people
- Hidden Chambers once *ruled* the people

Who needs XP?

This adventure path is set up so that gamers do not need to bother with the added complexity of XP. If you wish, you may simply take the episode number as an indication of what level all the PCs should be.

For added fun, if players miss a game and therefore their characters would miss out on XP, you may ask the player to write up an in-character description of the adventure their PC was on while the rest of the PCs were following the main storyline. Perhaps the errant

Artisan's Workshop



*(c) Dr Joseph Ireland 2020. The Wolf in the Sky
This map has been created using map symbols from www.fantasymapsymbols.com.*

PC was distracted by a love interest? Arrested by the authorities? Seeking a secret act of vengeance? It's all up to you, oh DM, and what the players think is fun.

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Block text overload

In order to help new DMs and gamers there is deliberately more **readable block text** offered herein than most groups need. Feel free to summarize, and adapt, the text to suit your group's preferences. You, as DM are not bound by the block text, but may edit as needed. It is wisest if you prepare such changes before hand, and record any such changes throughout, in writing, to help clarify the best of human memories.

The Wolf in the Sky



A feral, half man, half wolf sits on a throne hewn from the suffering of his people. He speaks, 'Mortals... you have made a grave mistake in coming here,' and the earth trembles at his growl.

The Wolf is a chaotic evil deity with a hybrid human/wolf form – he looks like a werewolf but, technically, he's not. Millennia ago, he conquered these lands, and has wallowed in his victory since then. The Wolf rules from his **Throne** – an unmitigated evil, a powerful artifact that draws strength from fear, misery and hopelessness. Each full moon he gathers power by performing a profane ritual known as **the howl**; terrorizing everyone in the country up with trembling and fear. However, with time came carelessness, and he failed to complete the ritual that once gave him enough power to subjugate these lands. Now his enemies have seen their chance.

The Wolf lives at the top of an enormous mountain, **the Spire**, the heights of it a sheer tower that rises high above the perpetual clouds of autumn. It is a 4 day to climb the peak at best.

The Wolf's role in this adventure path is to be the big bad, the Dark Lord, who rules from above and that needs to be taken down in order to free the world. He takes little direct action against the PCs until it is far too late for him to do anything effective.

Yet a solar eclipse is approaching, and rumors are that if he swallows the sun, the land will die forever.

The Wolf

Colors – Black and red

Sacred Animal – Wolves

Favored weapon – Teeth

Manifestations – Howling wolves, endless autumn, sounds of breaking twigs as though one were being hunted.

Forms – Wolf, a humanoid wolf, some say the disease *Wolfblight*.

Summons – Dire wolves, *so many* dire wolves.

Divine realm – The Spire

Divine abode – The Throne

The Throne

While a key piece of the Wolf's enslavement, the Throne actually plays very little role in this adventure.

Seated on the throne, you see right through the clouds as if they were glass. Looking down, you can look over each and every individual of the nation in avid, entrancing detail. Yet they also sicken you – they seem so small, so weak. So disgustingly worthless. You are suddenly filled with a baleful desire to make their lives as miserable as possible, as if this might bring you some dark satisfaction in some perverse way. They are beneath your dignity, less than worms. And yet at the same time you cannot look away. You must make them suffer in every way imaginable...

The Throne

Aura strong enchantment, evil; CL 20th

Slot none; Weight 6000 lbs.

Description

The Throne is an item of great power, a minor artifact redesigned by the few remaining mages and priests of the Fallen Ones, all slain by the Wolf immediately after.

The Throne allows the Wolf to *scry* on his populace, up to the borders of his land, as per the spell. Once a day he can cast *dominate monster* (DC 16) through the scrying sensor, with a +4 to overcome

the will of the Sons of the Wolf since they fear him and think so much like him already. He can also cast *doom* (DC 13) at will, or *suggestion* (DC 14) and *fear* (DC 15) once per hour as long as he is seated on the throne.

The throne cannot scry into veiled areas, or into other areas not officially part of the Wolf's kingdom.

Regional Effects

The region containing a legendary Wolf's Spire is warped by the Wolf's cruelty, which creates one or more of the following effects:

- Anger, fear, and every other dark sentiment of the human heart are common within 60 miles of the Wolf's lair.
- Within 6 miles of the Wolf's Spire a sense of fear abides; eerie howls, snapping branches, and the scent of blood can be sensed.
- Whenever a creature that can understand a language sleeps or enters a state of trance or reverie within 1 mile of the Wolf's spire, the Wolf can establish telepathic contact with that creature and converse with it in its dreams, usually to torment and afflict the creature. The creature remembers its conversation with the Wolf upon waking, but rarely wants to.

If the Wolf is slain, the effects end instantly.

Destruction

The Throne is a lesser artifact that can only be destroyed when an ally who *does not want to destroy the Wolf* does at least 50hp damage to it. The Wolf could never imagine any circumstance that would bring this about; for should an ally *want* to harm him the artifact was immune to damage, and should an ally *not want* to harm him, they would not want to damage the Throne. Ignoring the fact that an accidental attack could make the Throne vulnerable to damage, it still simply has never happened, and the Wolf considers his Throne one of his most powerful, important, and indestructible items.

The profane ritual - the howl

A deafening, heart crushing, soul destroying howl.

Every month, without fail, at midnight of the full moon.

Every month a night without sleep while you all lived a nightmare. Every month... except one...

The Wolf could summon around a score of demonic dire wolves to fight his enemies at each howl. He uses it to maintain power in the land, and used his ritual to overthrow the previous rulers of the land.

Time in game is measured as days from the late howl, starting on the third day of the month, as it soon becomes officially known, *The Month of the Late Howl*.

Rumors abound about why the howl came so late this month, and at a fraction of its power. Some believe he was prevented by some other deity; others jokingly suggest he was too busy indulging his other profane lusts. In truth, he simply forgot, overate, overslept, and is now painfully aware of his vulnerability for the next month.

The Spire

An unnatural edifice of stone several kilometers high from whence the Wolf rules supreme. Some consider it a natural phenomenon, some a remnant of the Fallen Ones. Others prefer the story the Sons tell; that the Wolf raised it himself, tearing it from the earth on the day of his victory. But one thing is certain, from here he rules uncontested. His military forces surround it day and night, training constantly for leagues around.

Most of it is protected by the tress of the Autumn wonderland, the stronghold of Autumn herself. But there is also Heartfell, the industrialized military zone where much of his machinery for war is forged. And it is upon the Spire that the monthly howl takes place, and has taken place for the heroes' entire life... except for about three days ago...

Autumn & the Dragon



Perhaps I am a monster, as you say. I could probably tear him down from his den but still, I do not. Perhaps I just don't want to see every man, woman and child of this sorry nation ploughed mercilessly into the dirt, and some feral monster take their place? Because that is what will happen if your rebellion takes hold. Perhaps because, without him, a far greater evil would decimate this land within a year. Perhaps I simply love Autumn time? But I am what I am.

The regional expression of the deity of Autumn. Not happy with the Wolf's treatment of the people, she is still happy to go along with his plan as she *likes* eternal autumn – and she feels it's the only way to preserve life at the moment even though she knows it's bad for everyone. Also, human's lives are so fleeting; she cares for them more on the cultural level than as individuals. If the Wolf is slain she will take her natural role without complaint.

Using her enhanced powers as the Wolf's key ally she creates hundreds of avatars of herself each day in order to watch over and provide for the broken people. In fact, each PC already knows her, as a caring local, wise archivist, or other minor figure.

One of the main ways she protects the Wolf is by using *suggestion* spells to discourage him from doing something overly stupid. She has a specific deity power that allows her to turn into a raging Autumn dragon if physical conflict is needed, though she is still unwilling to battle the Wolf in his power in a one-to-one fight.

Autumn's role in the campaign is to gently tempt PCs to give up their quest and return to the safety of normal. She turns up at least once an episode to a PC who is alone to try and give up this 'fools quest' and embrace mediocrity.

She is also the 'dragon'; she who must be defeated for the heroes to take on the Dark Lord. In the end, if they are thoughtful, prepared and kind, she provides no obstacle to them. If they do win, she sides with them immediately.

Goddess of Autumn

Color – Red, brown and yellow

Sacred Animal – the maple treant

Favored weapon – the club

Manifestations – wilted red maple leaves, maple syrup.

Forms – a gargantuan red-leaved maple treant, a colossal brown/red dragon

Summons – treants of Autumn

Divine realm – Abandon, shared with the Wolf

Divine abode – Autumn wonderland, just at the base of the Wolf's tower.



Avatars of Autumn

Using the divine power *Avatars of the faithful*, Autumn maintains up to a thousand dependent avatars to help keep the peace, by infiltrating most societies, having eyes in every town, and generally providing bread and food when there is no other source.

You can use the following images, cut and pasted to individual's players email or social media, to help them recognize their local Autumn. Done cautiously, once a game and to individuals only, should help invoke a sense of paranoia and excitement in players when they finally realize they somehow all know the same 'old lady'.

Granny Dot of Narrowhaven



Water bearer of Westfren



Lantern bearer of Bittern



Archivist from Hidden Chambers

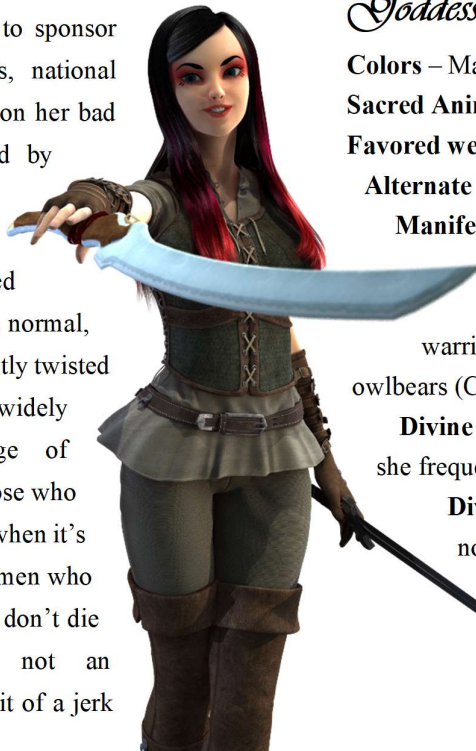


Enimaea



Before you stands a singular being – a short half elven female of divine proportions, yet her expression is one of dark challenge, perhaps amusement. Her armor appears to be a perplexing yet dangerous assortment of blades.

Enimaea is known as the goddess of conflict, challenge and rivalry. Generally not considered an outright evil, she is known to sponsor conflicts from lover's quarrels, national sporting events, to all out wars on her bad decades. Her name is invoked by anyone wanting a serious challenge that will bring out their best, and her name avoided by those who want to live quite, normal, simple lives. Known for her slightly twisted sense of humor, she is also widely regarded the Impartial Judge of conflict. She takes issue with those who complain about how hard life is when it's not actually too bad, such as women who survive childbirth and men who don't die in battle. While certainly not an unmitigated evil, she can be a bit of a jerk at times.



The moment *The Month of the Late Howl* began, Enimaea managed to convince the nearby nations to harass the borders of the Wolf's land, which they do and with a level of success that surprises even themselves. This draws away almost all of the Wolf's forces, and he is not prepared to risk his person in his 'fragile' state – meaning he is essentially unpowered, almost unguarded, and just about completely alone.

She then acts from behind the scenes to take down the Wolf forever, engaging in several projects including taking advantage of the initial situation the PCs find themselves in. She knows she is virtually the only deity not good enough to exist in this land, yet kind enough to actually want to free the frightened and stagnant populace.

Enimaea's role in the campaign is to nudge characters along, help them out of tough spots, and keep things challenging and interesting. She will help out in person via an avatar (named Aea, see appendices) if needed, though prefers to send dreams or challenges (esp owlbears). If they are unworthy of her help she quickly leaves them to their own devices.

Goddess of the challenge

Colors – Magenta and black

Sacred Animal – the owlbear

Favored weapon – bladed armor

Alternate forms – a red stag, a dire owlbear

Manifestations – a spinning coin, a dire threat.

Summons – 1d3+2 Viking warriors (barbarian level 4) or 1 dire owlbears (CR8, summon VII)

Divine realm – a plane on Mt Celestia where she frequents workshops and a battle arena

Divine abode – the battle arena. She does not sleep; she battles to the death for 'down time'.

Pictured: her avatar, a farmgirl "Aea"

Player Aid: living in Abandon

Oppressed

All live in fear of the **Wolf**, a lesser deity who conquered the land generations ago. His brutal and cruel followers are known as the **Sons of the Wolf**, who have been known to hew entire towns to the dust just, apparently, at a whim. While the Sons are officially both the military and policing force of the nation, they rarely seem to do either.

The Wolf rules from his **Throne** – an unmitigated evil, a powerful artifact that draws strength from fear, misery and hopelessness. Each full moon he gathers power by performing a profane ritual known as **the howl**; terrorizing everyone in the country up with trembling and fear. The Wolf lives at the top of an enormous mountain, **the Spire**, the heights of it a sheer tower that rises high above the perpetual clouds of autumn.

Steeped in poverty

Most commoners earn a single copper piece a day (the D&D standard is 1 silver piece a day). People are *poor*. Bread is *scarce*. Almost all national wealth is hoarded and squandered by the military. Any roads just about anywhere the heroes will want to travel are run down and poor.

While characters do gain and, indeed, exceed normal wealth for a D&D game, they still start poor unless they are military. No character, despite being level 2, owns more than 1 weapon and one suit of appropriate armor. Money, life, and strength, all “belong” to the Wolf in Abandon.

Low magic adventure - initially

It is vital to understand that this campaign begins as a low magic campaign. This means that PCs have probably never seen a magic item or a magical spell – at least without it being used to terrify or control them.

Wizards and clerics must study in secret, often for years and without proper training. Clerics do not know the correct rituals to appease their deity; the voice of

the Gods is scarcely heard amongst this downtrodden populace. Clerics of Good deities learn quickly to hide their power. Wizards have had to piece together their research with only sporadic clues and possibly a single spell scroll. Even sorcerers, warlocks and others are mysteriously weak for some unknown reason. Magical items must be hidden for fear of being claimed by a capricious and heartless military.

All spell casters begin with only *one spell* per spell level (though they do have the usual number of spell slots, etc.). PCs only gain new spells at the direct imposition of a deity. Even so, anyone else who knows the PC possesses this power will fear and revere them mightily for it.

Yet this also means that any magic the PCs manifest might be the first time they’ve ever seen it. And as new powers manifest it’s a topic of great interest. Feel free to stretch out the mystique, for example, as sorcerers gain new spells they may be completely unaware until they mystically manifest it at propitious times. This is intended to put the magic back into being, well, magical. Also, everything is blown out of proportion by a superstitious and hope-starved people. *Wind wall* is a supernatural gale that can level forests. A +2 thundering maul has thrown down mountains. A wizard with *charm person* can control the minds of others and force them to do unspeakable things. As the heroes gain powers, they too can get caught up in the dramatic hyperbole that surrounds those who wield magic of any kind.

It will be useful to give your DM a list of the spells and the order you hope your PC will gain their magical abilities, as such do accrue quickly in game when the need is indeed very great. Magic “belongs” to the Wolf in Abandon.

Races

Almost everyone is human. Most other races are sent into hiding or exile, or interbred with the humans. Full blooded races are rare and treated with some suspicion, and must often pretend to be humans to live.

Player handout:

Character History

These **private details are secrets** known only to one character each. As a player you, ideally, only share this secret information *in game* and *in character* at an appropriate role-playing opportunity.

Westfren enclave

Somewhere hidden within this dark and foreboding forest lies the legendary remnants of the Westfren druids and their allies. Once a mighty elven nation, now only broken stones and empty houses. Rumors abound that some survived, hunting in near starvation yet still helping lost travelers. But none have been seen in some time, and now all alive wonder if the druids have finally fled or been slain.

You hail from the hidden sanctuary of the Westfren druidic enclave. Perhaps you only visit there occasionally? Perhaps you are a spy sent out to seek heroes in the land of Abandon? But you know the elves and others there are desperate and afraid. Food, ever scarce, is beginning to finally fail. Magic, once potent, is beginning to wane.

You have never met the powerful druids at the heart of the Westfren, but you know they exist, and you know how to find them. If you meet their guards at the *golden falls* at daybreak they may, repeat; *may*, allow you to speak to their druids. You have heard they keep sacred

records on the correct ways to appease each deity who has a concern in this world, but with the complete lack of capable clerics in the land you are afraid that this, too, may simply be a rumor.

You know about the Ebonpulse – the most powerful tree in the whole world, so powerful it can protect the entire Westfren from the Wolf’s powers, or so it would seem. You know the highest ranking and most powerful druid is an individual known as Ebonheart, though who or what he might be has been a mystery for as long as you have been alive.

You have heard the sad legends of the “Hairy Men”; apes, orangutans and chimp with minds of such creativity and intelligence they, apparently, once built flying cities, and developed tools and weapons the likely of which have never been seen in the world since. They lived in peace with the elves of the Westfren. But they all died when the Wolf took power.

It has long been prophesied that if the Wolf ever swallows the sun, the land will die and he will grow in divine power. All fear that should he succeed in swallowing the sun one day.



You are from Narrowhaven.

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The derogatory name given to the small, isolated, local hamlet that sprung up not a half day's journey from Hammerville. The town is spared most of the depravity of the Sons of the Wolf as it is far from any major trade routes and the locals are generally considered too poor to rob. The town and its people are dingy, rundown, and poverty ridden.

You have lived most of your life in the reasonably peaceful and out of the way town of Narrowhaven. You have been spared most of the cruelty of the Sons, but still have your fair share of tragedy and pain to tell. However, being outside the tyranny has given you a chance to develop unique skills often brutalized in larger cities.

And at least you have family here, though all who can leave to make a better life for themselves; like your father's wealthy **brother Groff** who lives at

Hammerville, or your aunties nephew **Bob** who joined the military years ago.

Even your cousin's grandfather; **Merrifyrth**, chosen because of his formidable intellect, and rumor holds he found his way to the archives – or what remains of it – somewhere in Bittern. With his vicinity to the Spire and the Sons of the Wolf, perhaps he might know where to start if one wanted to, hypothetically of course, overthrow the Wolf. For a hundred generation of suffering are more than any mortal people should bear...

You know for yourself the rumors of some kind of mind control in the army must be true. You have seen for yourself even sweet, innocent men conscripted into the military, the "Sons of the Wolf", turn into controlling, brutal, hedonistic savages barely capable of thinking of anything more than their next meal. You know about the military divisions of Red (clerics), Black (wizards) and Grey wolves (general military).

You have visited Hammerville and the surrounds, and have a map of Narrowhaven and Hammerville.



You have intimate knowledge of the ruins of the Castle at Mon Kumon

These **private details are secrets** known only to one character each. As a player you, ideally, only share this secret information *in game* and *in character* at an appropriate role-playing opportunity.

History does not record if this castle was ever the castle of the Fallen Ones, or simply a castle. But upon one main principle the whispered histories agree; it was here that the knights of the Fallen Ones made their last stand against the ravenous hoards of the Wolf in the Sky. It was here that, apparently, the Wolf himself was seen in battle. And it was here, millennia ago, that all hope was lost.

For centuries since then hopeful adventurers have dared to explore the ruins in the expectation of finding weapons forged to defeat the Wolf. Few have returned, and none now visit the crumbling ruins; the haunt of broken dreams and lost souls.

Whether by the unpredictable hand of fate, or perhaps drawn by legends of weapons who can harm the Wolf, or perhaps simply by the gentle yet persistent nudging of an unnamed deity, you have made the ruins at Mon Kumon a frequent place you visit. You know the general layout very well, have explored most of the upper ruins, and have probably even conversed with the confused and generally unhelpful undead who lurk here. You know for a fact that weapons of might and power lay here, and perhaps you have come here to seek such yourself. In particular, history records of four;

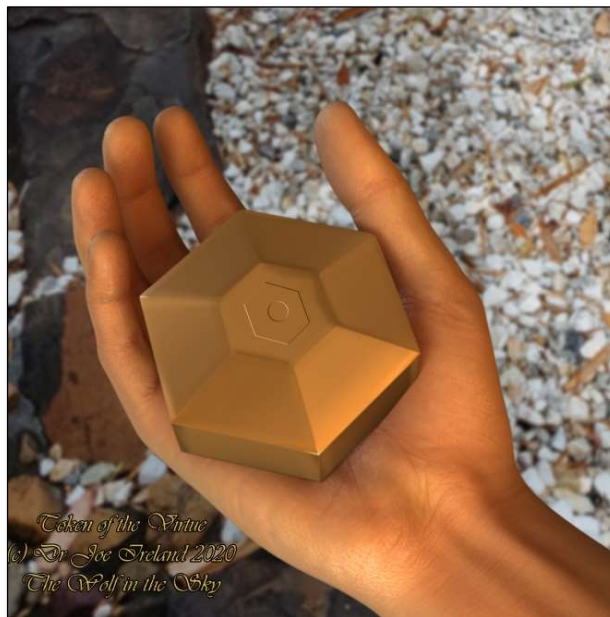
- The sword of Sir Green. Legend holds its sacred green flames would frighten the Wolf and his minions, making them easier to slay.
- The Scimitar of Lady Fang, known as “Lady Mild”. A powerful item that granted healing from disease and injury at will, and could raise men from the dead.

- The pendant of The Charmed. A sorcerer of, apparently, androgynous humanoid origin was said to use this item to lift up entire mountains, or forge fortresses in a single day.
- The tome of Penwhistle. A book outlying the tactics and powers used by the Wolf and his minions. Such could prove invaluable in preparing for his final defeat.

You have also encountered weapons, and furniture fittings, made out of some form of hardened bronze as strong, yet far lighter, than steel. The alchemy of how this was achieved is still a mystery, but legends speak of a secretive order of artisan mystics, the ‘Hairymen’, who once worked such wonders on a daily basis.

To date you have no clue or hope of finding out where these great treasures lie, but you are beginning to face the inevitable: you will have to travel deeper underground if you wish to ever find them. It would be dangerous, even fatal, to go alone – so you will need to make some new friends soon.

Amidst your foraging you have barely found enough to live by, but you have uncovered a flawless, heavy bronze amulet that does seem important, and that you have kept secret up until now. The bronze is somehow harder, and yet lighter, than steel.



Bittern (Hidden Chambers)

These **private details are secrets** known only to *one character each*. As a player you, ideally, only share this secret information *in game* and *in character* at an appropriate role-playing opportunity.

The largest city in the nation covers directly under the shadow of the dread Spire. Crowded and treacherous, the law here is scant and rarely anything other than self-serving.

You have lived your life predominantly in Bittern – the run down and tyrannized capital city of Abandon, built over the bones of the Fallen Ones. You know the backroads and inroads of that city and can pass through twice as quickly as any visitor unfamiliar with the streets might ever hope to.

You are one of the few who have come across the secret truth of the *Hidden Chambers*, a secret organization dedicated to preserving the downtrodden populace, and to one day overthrowing the Wolf. Perhaps you are born to the hidden ancestors of

nobility? Perhaps you are an informant sent by the Wolf to infiltrate the Chambers? But you are privy to far more intel than the average citizen; for it is only by their secret intervention, courage, generosity, and the hand of an unknown deity, that the people haven't yet starved to death.

Within the Hidden Chambers are magical creatures living in hiding, rumors of giant snails that once ferried people all across the entire nation, and weapons of deity defying power... it is a sad truth that the royal line ended with the conquest of the Wolf. However, the Hidden Chambers await resurgence of a true king or queen to restore peace to the land.

Amongst the secrets are rumors of a magical book, known only as the Concealed Codex, with apparently the power to destroy the Wolf himself. You have never seen it, however, though those who have speak with such reverent tones that you can only assume it must be true...

Incidentally, with your rare chance at education, you do know that a full solar eclipse is predicted at the end of *this month*. You also have heard about the other nations that surround this one, Salisdain Knights,

Fenwaven Nomads and Dwarven Barsh Lords. Each have begun to attack Abandon during the month of the late howl, but you don't know any of the details.



The Military

These **private details are secrets** known only to one character each. As a player you, ideally, only share this secret information *in game* and *in character* at an appropriate role-playing opportunity.

Once you had a life, but that was all taken from you when they made you join the military. Perhaps you enthusiastically signed up to defend your nation, or as the clearest path to power within it? Perhaps you were forcibly conscripted, torn from your families' arms? Either way, your life before is like a fading dream, your life now a constant struggle of rage, power and cruelty. You do not know from one moment to the next when the whims of your military commanders will call upon you to suffer, nor when such rage within you drives you to inflict it upon the innocent. Deep down, you hope for some kind of change...

You serve in the military, perhaps as a valued commander, more likely as an ordinary foot soldier. You know the names and personalities of the Wolf's key lieutenants, and know very well the divisions of power within the military.

You automatically succeed on charisma checks with military lower ranked (i.e., with less levels than yourself), as long as you aren't recognized as a deserter or traitor to the Wolf's cause. Of the Wolf himself you know almost nothing.

You are proficient in ONE of the following skills or proficiencies, depending on your character's role in the military; Animal Handling (for wolf handlers), Insight (popular among commanders), Medicine (for field medics), Survival (for hunters and trackers), proficiency in climbing and spelunking (for mountaineers), trapsetting (for manhunters), or siege equipment (for large scale siege weapons).

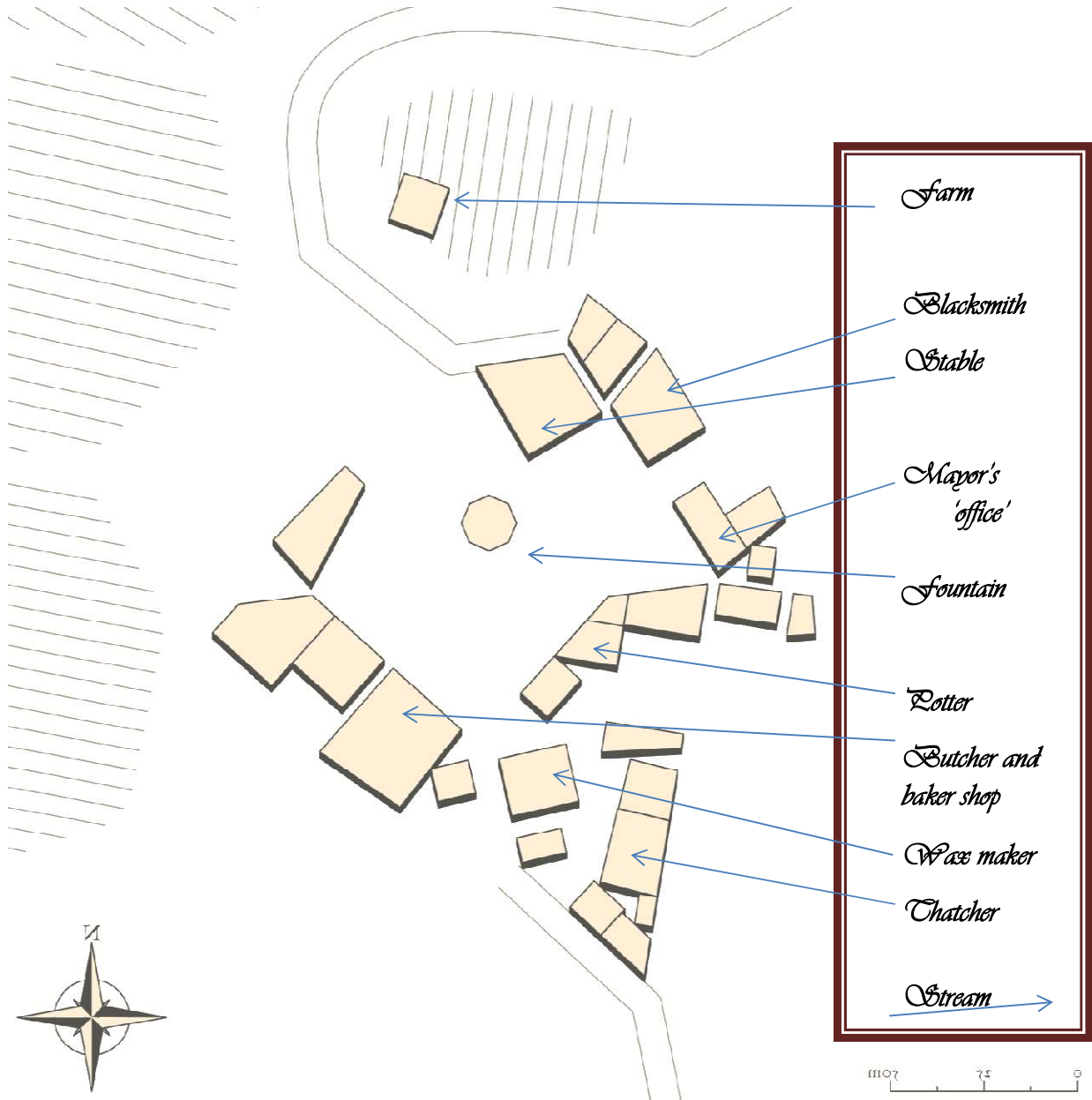


Sons of the Wolf
(c) Dr Joe Ireland 2020
The Wolf in the Sky

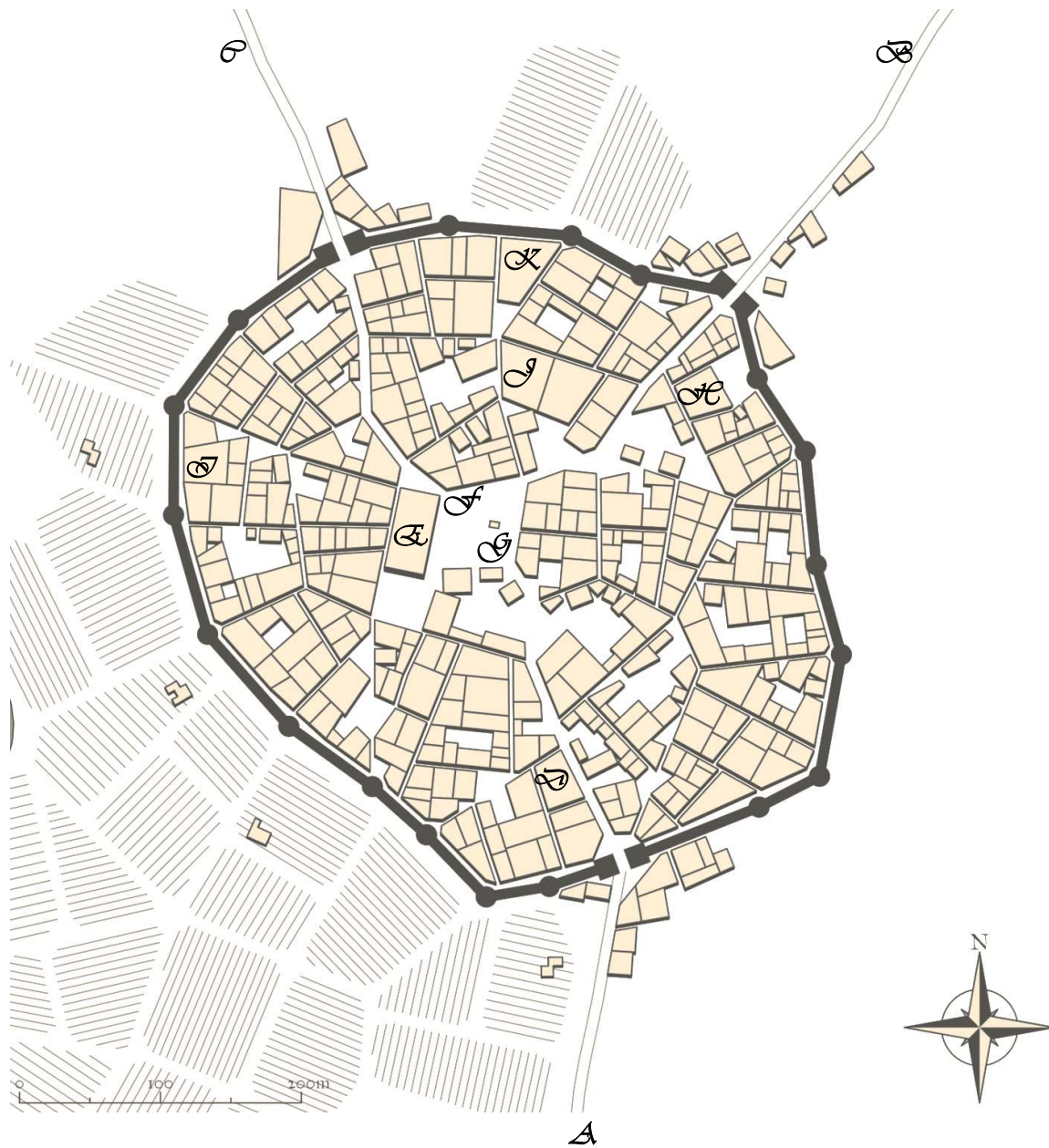
Maps

Courtesy of <https://watabou.itch.io/medieval-fantasy-city-generator> , taken and adapted 27 apr 20

Narrowhaven



Hammerville

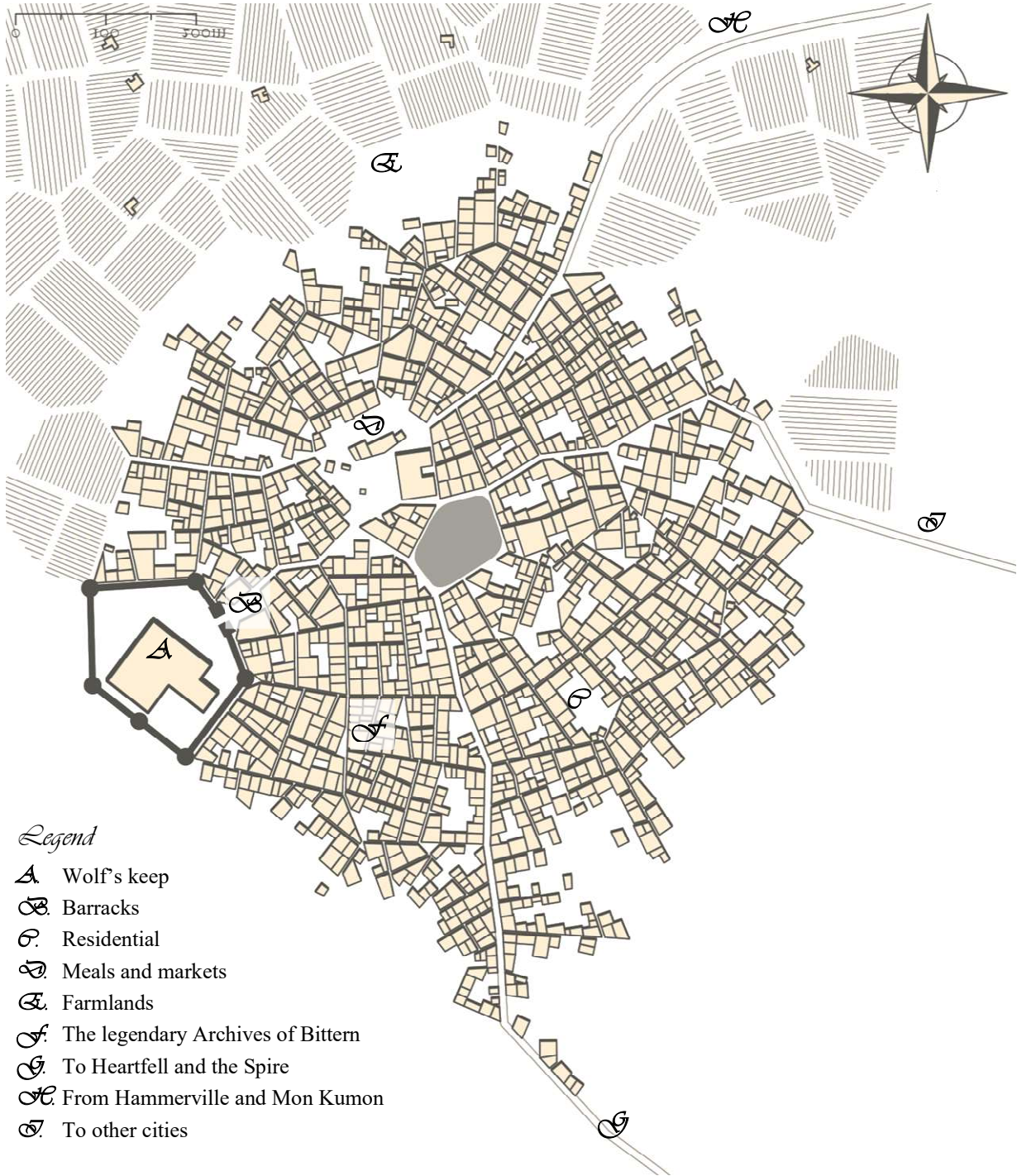


Legend

- | | | | |
|----------|------------------------------------|----------|--|
| A | Road to Bittern (danger!) | G | Statue of the Wolf |
| B | Road to Mon Kumon (least deadly) | H | Uncle Groff's place |
| C | Road to Westfren (caution advised) | I | Phephrit the Unfortunate (weaponsmith) |
| D | Main military supply area | J | Tregul the Supplier (food and equipt) |
| E | Mayoral barracks | K | The Plastered Dragon (lodging and information with Sak the informant.) |
| F | Market square | | |

Courtesy of <https://watabou.itch.io/medieval-fantasy-city-generator> , taken and adapted 27 April 20

Bittern



Courtesy of <https://watabou.itch.io/medieval-fantasy-city-generator>, taken and adapted 27 April 20

Abandon - National map



Note. While the token upper left is a known symbol attributed to Fallen Ones, local names are clearly used, leading to much debate regarding the authenticity of the map. It is most likely a more modern map barely 200 years old, based on a far older version - Sage Merrifyrth

Episode 1 (Optional): Character Creation game

Expert gamers & DM

If you're an established gaming group, you can skip this event and go right to episode two after you have players **carefully read** the *Wolf in the Sky – Introduction, Player aid: Living in Abandon*, and then generate a level 2 PC or use one of the pre-generated characters available. While not necessary, it is certainly helpful if the party has at least one of each of the four main types of characters – a warrior, a thief, a mage and a healer. Finally, players will need to choose one of the following places of origin:

- Narrowhaven (the adventure begins here)
- The ruins of the castle at Mon Kumon
- The secret druid enclave of the Westfren
- The capital city of Bittern
- Any further players are from the military.

Once players have chosen, make sure you give them the secret information *Player Handout: Background Histories*.

All characters are level 2 – this means they have already done something to make a name for themselves; saved a cousin from a wolf, served in the militia for years, etc., at player and DM digression.

However, all characters outside the military are dirt poor, undereducated, and abandoned. Each character starts with only one non magical weapon, one suit of armor and equipment or professional tools as needed. Any obviously magical item is confiscated by the Sons on sight. Everyone tries to look as poor as possible so as to avoid being robbed by the local law enforcement.

Also, magic is almost illegal. Spell casters only have access to one spell per level, which they may have cast only once after years of struggling, studying, or preparing.

Once everyone has a PC, jump to **Episode 2**.

New gamers & DM

If you're running a game with brand new players, this chapter provides an introduction to the game of D&D from the beginning up, focusing on the most important rules, and helping structure situations for role playing fun. **Read aloud text such as this** is to be shared with players. Everything else is secret background information just between you, the DM, and myself, the author.

Step 1 - Read

You, the all-mighty Dungeon Master (AKA "DM") will need to have read this entire document at least up until this point right here. Feel free to explore the maps and images at the end of the document and scattered throughout.

Once you feel ready to game invite some friends over and you're good to go!

Step 2 - Make or choose a PC

Nothing is known of the Wolf in the sky. All that is known is that he came to the land a hundred generations ago, bringing the Endless Autumn. Once there was a mighty nation, now the great cities lie in ruins. Once every tree bore a dozen fruits each year. Now, food is scarce. The ancestors, now called the 'Fallen Ones', once knew the secrets of wielding weapons of fire, or calling down lightning from the air, or healing the sick even from the brink of death. Now... all such thoughts are forbidden, and any who question are slain... The land cries out for rising heroes to take the fight to the Wolf in the Sky. Who here heeds that call?

"PC" stands for Playing Character, and it is the heroic individual that the player controls in this imaginary world. This game assumes at least 4 players, and if you have less you may want to run one of the heroes as an NPC (non-playing character) under DM's control. For your convenience, we have some pre-generated PCs and their statistics as provided

online. Otherwise, players are free to choose a heroic character concept from medieval fantasy literature that they already like, and we will begin to develop that character through this chapter. While not necessary, it is certainly helpful if the party has at least one of each of the four main types of characters – a warrior, a thief, a mage and a healer.

Where is your character from?

Each hero will need to take a *different character locality* for their PC to help them role play their character, and to help the flow of the game at various venues. The options are given in the “Wolf in the Sky – Player starter kit.”

- Narrowhaven (the adventure begins here)
- The ruins of the castle at Mon Kumon
- The secret druid enclave of the Westfren
- The capital city of Bittern

And if you have any further players;

- The military

Once each player has picked a character concept, including a character locality (or, to make things simple, have chosen one of the pre-generated PCs), make sure you give them the special, secret information at the end of this episode titled, “Player handout: Character History.” It can be a good idea to highlight, copy and then paste to your favorite social media messaging service to players. They can also use that messaging service to send private messages back to you as DM, in case there’s things they’d like their character to do without other’s knowing in game. So to help you;

I’m sending you players some private information about your character based on where they are from. I hope it can inspire you in role playing your character. There is no need for you to share this information with other players yet; you should share it in game and in

character when, and if you think your PC would share that sort of information with the kind of people they’d like to think of as new allies, or perhaps even friends one day. But for now, your PCs probably have never met each other.

Step 3 - Practice game

For players new to the game, you can run a quick side quest for their PCs to help them get to know the game rules and their PCs personalities just a little better. It is called the ‘Quest of the Red Stag.’

Quest of the Red Stag

(Optional game to help understand the basic rules)

You know you are dreaming, but the dream has such a vivid and deeply realistic quality to it! You seem to be in a forest of some kind, one you have never known before. You look down, and find yourself armed.

Looking around more than a dozen other ... creatures ... are with you. Are they human? Most don’t look it. But they do seem excited.

One of them turns to you and says with a grin, ‘Haven’t you heard! The Red Stag has been cited! The creature of legend!’

Another person turns to you, ‘It is said that any who can capture the Red Stag may have one wish – the deepest wish of their heart. Do you know what thing you wish most, above all?’

Before you can reply, a horn is sounded. You turn towards the sound, and see silhouetted against the sunrise a mighty red stag, its antlers seeming to touch the sky. It bows towards you, as if welcoming you to the hunt. Then, with a mighty leap, it is gone.

The others begin to charge.

‘Come on!’ someone shouts, ‘Let’s see what you’re really made of!’

Begin the hunt - Strength

You take off after the others, climbing and scrambling up a steep hill. It will take great strength to be the first up.

During this event as PCs chase down the Red Stag they will make several attribute checks and saving throws. Record the total number of successes and fails, and the player with the highest total number of successes over the episode wins.

Have players make a **strength check**, that is, everyone rolls the d20 and adds their bonus to strength, or subtracts their penalty, from the roll. The final number is their result. To succeed, your result has to be equal to or above the “difficulty class”, or DC. In this case, the DC is set at 10. That is, 9 or below is a failure, 10 or above is a success.

As the hunt continues you, or your players, must record the number of successes and fails they have.

Those who succeed press on, while those that fail fall behind in the race – but they don’t quit! Still, the character with the highest result on their strength check is now in the lead.

If there is a draw for leaders (or losers!) you can have them make a second check, or allow the PC with the highest bonus to be in the lead, OR simply allow them to be tied for the lead.

Dexterity - Dodging vines

You press on, the forest seeming to become thicker with every step. Thorns catch on your clothes, and twisting vines block your way. It will take great dexterity to work your way quickly through this mess.

Dodging dangers takes great dexterity. Make **Dexterity checks**, again recording a DC 10 failure or success. The character with the highest check pulls into the lead.



Constitution - carry on!

The dashing Stag leads you deeper and deeper into the woods. The ground is level, but it takes enormous fortitude and constitution to keep up!

Constitution is a general measure of health and fitness. It includes your ability to resist poisons or to concentrate at difficult times. Make **Constitution checks**, DC 10, and keep a track of successes and failures.

Intelligence - knowing

You find the Stag resting up on a hilltop, a mossy field all that remains between you and it.

The greenery is actually Catchmoss, a regional variety of moss that, while appearing solid, collapses like mud under any pressure and holds one there. Anyone trying to cross the field will be trapped. Thus, PCs must make an **intelligence check** to see if they recognize the Catchmoss and know they’ll have to take the long way around. Intelligence is used to

measure your characters general smarts – ability to learn new things quickly. Anyone who fails the DC10 check falls behind as they struggle to extricate themselves from the icky, sticky moss.

Wisdom to choose

The light darkens as though evening is drawing near. The forest is dark and silent. You can see no sight nor sound of your quarry. Where could it be? Make a wisdom check.

Perceiving and getting into the mind of another creature by sensing its motivation or when handling an animal are all governed by Wisdom.

This is a **wisdom check** DC 10, to see if they can catch on the Stag's trail or they have to wonder around until someone shouts 'There it is!' and they can join back in.

Again, the person with the most successful checks is in the lead.

Charisma and change

You chase the Stag into a small gully. There, you are surprised to find what look like magical fish-ladies, the mermaid, enjoying the lake. The stag passes by them without pause, but they draw seashell daggers when they see you. If you don't get back on the chase soon the Stag will get away. It soon seems they do not know your language, perhaps you can simply charm your way past them?

PCs must convince the mermaids they mean no harm, and should be allowed to pass safely. It is a DC 10 **charisma check**, and a failure means the PC is held up by the suspicious and dangerous merkin. Charisma is used to measure and PCs force of personality, and not necessarily good looks! High charisma people tend to stand out in a crowd.

Saving throws

Saving throws are usually used to avoid the negative consequences of actions against the PCs.

Remember some PCs will have advantage on certain checks, depending on their race or class.

You see now that you have chased the Stag into a deep ravine in the forest. There will be no escape for it now... you hope...

Strength to beat monster

Suddenly a large, owl-bear-like, creature leaps from the bushes and throws itself against you. It will take great strength to throw it away!



Strength saving throw DC10, any who fail are knocked back on their butt, those who succeed press on.

Dexterity to avoid danger

You must cross a steep ravine to reach the Stag, your only means a narrow, slippery log.

Dex saving throw DC 10, those who fail fall off and take 1d6 damage. Those who succeed are in the lead.

Constitution to overcome poison

You are getting closer, when you suddenly feel a small pinprick on your hand. You look down to see you have accidentally touched some poisonous itchweed!

A constitution save DC 11 allows PCs to ignore the effect; otherwise they are afflicted with an itch so painful that they quickly fall behind.

Intelligence to disbelieve illusions

You are catching up to the Stag! You can hear its fevered breathing; almost touch its velvet hide.

Suddenly a mighty dragon leaps down from the sky in front of you. With a sulphur, steaming breath it glares at you. And yet, such a powerful beast seems out of place in a lush green forest such as this...

Make an intelligence save DC 12 to see that the dragon is merely an illusion. Those who fail will have to wait around until the illusion disappears, losing a few precious seconds.

Wisdom resist charm



Again, you draw near! Yet this time you are distracted as a beautiful tree spirit, a dryad, appears nearby. She beckons you to follow her, and for a moment it seems like the most sensible, responsible thing to do. Make a wisdom saving throw to avoid being charmed.

The dryads disappear after a few seconds, but not before anyone who fails the DC 10 wisdom save has lost their direction and fallen behind.

Charisma resist domination

Finally, you have the beast cornered! The stag looks at you, exhausted but... with honor, in some way. You can hear the others struggling to keep up! Then the Stag looks amused, and glares at you. In that moment you are suddenly filled with the thought that what you must most defiantly be doing is stopping anyone else from catching this Stag. You look at yourself as if from afar, feeling the Stag's powerful will taking over your body. What will you do!

Make a charisma save DC 10 or you waste this point in the chase chasing the wrong thing – other people.

Gotta catch it!

You shake off the Stag's powers, claiming your mind and body as your own. But the Stag's ability to grant a wish? That is something you must have! But first, you need to catch it.

This is a combat. Tally up the successes and fails of each PC, and subtract the fails from the successes. The player with the highest successes goes first, the player with the second highest goes second, etc., any ties can go in the same round, depending on an initiative roll.

The stag is cornered, trapped in a steep hole, but it is prepared to fight!

The stag does no damage and does not retreat, so it will eventually be caught by someone. It has only 1 hit point, so the first hit wins. Players may use spells and powers as they please, getting to know them as they go.

The Red Stag

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 21

Hit Points 9 (1d8+5)

Speed 50 ft.

STR DEX **CON** INT **WIS** **CHA**
20 (+5) 20 (+5) 20 (+5) 20 (+5) 20 (+5) 20 (+5)

Senses passive Perception 20

Languages —

Challenge 0 (10 XP) **Proficiency** +2

Actions

Bite: Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 1 (1d3) nonlethal damage.

The stag will continue to defy PCs, running around until someone hits, damages or touches it. Then it surrendered to the lucky PC.

The winner

Reality dissolves around you, leaving only yourself, the victor, and the Red Stag. It looks deep into your soul, and when it speaks, you hear its voice deep within your mind, 'Well done, mighty traveler. You have earned one wish from the gods today. So, tell me, what is it that you most wish to see in the world? What is the truest desire of your heart?'

His voice causes you to think deeply, and so many of your wanton and willful wishes now seem... trite, and deeply unfulfilling. It is as though he has asked this question not only of you, but of your very soul. What is the truest desire of your heart?

This is, in actually, a role-playing challenge. The stag is asking for their Bond.

PCs, like people, rarely want simply money or power. They want such things for a reason – they want to feel safe, or feel connected to their loved ones. Of course, some really do want simply money or power and in this case it's fair to reward such roll play.

But take, for instance, the pre-generated NPCs available for this campaign. They each share their truest wish;

- Ember – to see the endless autumn end, and balance restored to the land.
- Zagun – to have the power to establish law and justice in the land.
- Pal – to see the people free, and hope restored to the land.
- Scamper – to see the land green again, and to have true friends for once.
- Trech – to be free of cruelty, and to find himself at last.

None of which necessarily have to do with money or power. So, it is hoped the players can develop *deep* motives for their PCs. If they do, they are rewarded with an inspiration point for the next episode – meaning they can declare they have advantage on one roll (or avoid disadvantage on a roll).

If you wish, the Stag can hear the wishes of the other PCs, but does not promise to grant them.

Suddenly, the dream fades, and you find yourself back in your body, the world seemingly unchanged around you.

But, inside, something *has* changed. You can *feel* it. A tingling, a burning... a *hope*... that something of great importance is about to happen to your world...

Player *handout:*

Character History

These **private details are secrets** known only to one character each. As a player you, ideally, only share this secret information *in game* and *in character* at an appropriate role-playing opportunity.

Westfren enclave

Somewhere hidden within this dark and foreboding forest lies the legendary remnants of the Westfren druids and their allies. Once a mighty elven nation, now only broken stones and empty houses. Rumors abound that some survived, hunting in near starvation yet still helping lost travelers. But none have been seen in some time, and now all alive wonder if the druids have finally fled or been slain.

You hail from the hidden sanctuary of the Westfren druidic enclave. Perhaps you only visit there occasionally? Perhaps you are a spy sent out to seek heroes in the land of Abandon? But you know the elves and others there are desperate and afraid. Food, ever scarce, is beginning to finally fail. Magic, once potent, is beginning to wane.

You have never met the powerful

druids at the heart of the Westfren, but you know they exist, and you know how to find them. If you meet their guards at the *golden falls* at daybreak they may, repeat; *may*, allow you to speak to their druids. You have heard they keep sacred records on the correct ways to appease each deity who has a concern in this world, but with the complete lack of capable clerics in the land you are afraid that this, too, may simply be a rumor.

You know about the Ebonpulse – the most powerful tree in the whole world, so powerful it can protect the entire Westfren from the Wolf’s powers, or so it would seem. You know the highest ranking and most powerful druid is an individual known as Ebonheart, though who or what he might be has been a mystery for as long as you have been alive.

It has long been prophesied that if the Wolf ever swallows the sun, the land will die and he will grow in divine power. All fear that should he succeed in swallowing the sun one day.



You are from Narrowhaven.

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The derogatory name given to the small, isolated, local hamlet that sprung up not a half day's journey from Hammerville. The town is spared most of the depravity of the Sons of the Wolf as it is far from any major trade routes and the locals are generally considered too poor to rob. The town and its people are dingy, rundown, and poverty ridden.

You have lived most of your life in the reasonably peaceful and out of the way town of Narrowhaven. You have been spared most of the cruelty of the Sons, but still have your fair share of tragedy and pain to tell. However, being outside the tyranny has given you a chance to develop unique skills often brutalized in larger cities.

And at least you have family here, though all who can leave to make a better life for themselves have; like your father's wealthy **brother Groff** who lives at

Hammerville, or your aunties nephew **Bob** who joined the military years ago.

Even your cousin's grandfather; **Merrifyrth**, chosen because of his formidable intellect, and rumor holds he found his way to the archives – or what remains of it – somewhere in Bittern. With his vicinity to the Spire and the Sons of the Wolf, perhaps he might know where to start if one wanted to, hypothetically of course, overthrow the Wolf. For a hundred generation of suffering are more than any mortal people should bear...

You know for yourself the rumors of some kind of mind control in the army must be true. You have seen for yourself even sweet, innocent men conscripted into the military, the "Sons of the Wolf", turn into controlling, brutal, hedonistic savages barely capable of thinking of anything more than their next meal. You know about the military divisions of Red (clerics), Black (wizards) and Grey wolves (general military).

You have visited Hammerville and the surrounds, and have a map of Narrowhaven and Hammerville.



You have intimate knowledge of the ruins of the Castle at Mon Kumon

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History does not record if this castle was ever the castle of the Fallen Ones, or simply a castle. But upon one main principle the whispered histories agree; it was here that the knights of the Fallen Ones made their last stand against the ravenous hoards of the Wolf in the Sky. It was here that, apparently, the Wolf himself was seen in battle. And it was here, millennia ago, that all hope was lost.

For centuries since then hopeful adventurers have dared to explore the ruins in the expectation of finding weapons forged to defeat the Wolf. Few have returned, and none now visit the crumbling ruins; the haunt of broken dreams and lost souls.

Whether by the unpredictable hand of fate, or perhaps drawn by legends of weapons who can harm the Wolf, or perhaps simply by the gentle yet persistent nudging of an unnamed deity, you have made the ruins at Mon Kumon a frequent place you visit. You know the general layout very well, have explored most of the upper ruins, and have probably even conversed with the confused and generally unhelpful undead who lurk here. You know for a fact that weapons of might and power lay here, and perhaps you have come here to seek such yourself. In particular, history records of four;

- The sword of Sir Green. Legend holds its sacred green flames would frighten the Wolf and his minions, making them easier to slay.
- The Scimitar of Lady Fang, known as “Lady Mild”. A powerful item that granted healing from disease and injury at will, and could raise men from the dead.

- The pendant of The Charmed. A sorcerer of, apparently, androgynous humanoid origin was said to use this item to lift up entire mountains, or forge fortresses in a single day.
- The tome of Penwhistle. A book outlying the tactics and powers used by the Wolf and his minions. Such could prove invaluable in preparing for his final defeat.

You have also encountered weapons, and furniture fittings, made out of some form of hardened bronze as strong, yet far lighter, than steel. The alchemy of how this was achieved is still a mystery, but legends speak of a secretive order of artisan mystics, the ‘Hairymen’, who once worked such wonders on a daily basis.

To date you have no clue or hope of finding out where these great treasures lie, but you are beginning to face the inevitable: you will have to travel deeper underground if you wish to ever find them. It would be dangerous, even fatal, to go alone – so you will need to make some new friends soon.

Amidst your foraging you have barely found enough to live by, but you have uncovered a flawless, heavy bronze amulet that does seem important, and that you have kept secret up until now. The bronze is somehow harder, and yet lighter, than steel.



Bittern (Hidden Chambers)

These **private details are secrets** known only to *one character each*. As a player you, ideally, only share this secret information *in game* and *in character* at an appropriate role-playing opportunity.

The largest city in the nation covers directly under the shadow of the dread Spire. Crowded and treacherous, the law here is scant and rarely anything other than self-serving.

You have lived your life predominantly in Bittern – the run down and tyrannized capital city of Abandon, built over the bones of the Fallen Ones. You know the backroads and inroads of that city and can pass through twice as quickly as any visitor unfamiliar with the streets might ever hope to.

You are one of the few who have come across the secret truth of the *Hidden Chambers*, a secret organization dedicated to preserving the downtrodden populace, and to one day overthrowing the Wolf. Perhaps you are born to the hidden ancestors of

nobility? Perhaps you are an informant sent by the Wolf to infiltrate the Chambers? But you are privy to far more intel than the average citizen; for it is only by their secret intervention, courage, generosity, and the hand of an unknown deity, that the people haven't yet starved to death.

Within the Hidden Chambers are magical creatures living in hiding, rumors of giant snails that once ferried people all across the entire nation, and weapons of deity defying power... it is a sad truth that the royal line ended with the conquest of the Wolf. However, the Hidden Chambers await resurgence of a true king or queen to restore peace to the land.

Amongst the secrets are rumors of a magical book, known only as the Concealed Codex, with apparently the power to destroy the Wolf himself. You have never seen it, however, though those who have speak with such reverent tones that you can only assume it must be true...

Incidentally, with your rare chance at education, you do know that a full solar eclipse is predicted at the end of *this month*. You also have heard about the other

nations that surround this one, Salisdain Knights, Fenwaven Nomads and Dwarven Barsh Lords. Each have begun to attack Abandon during the month of the late howl, but you don't know any of the details.



The Military

These **private details are secrets** known only to one character each. As a player you, ideally, only share this secret information *in game* and *in character* at an appropriate role-playing opportunity.

Once you had a life, but that was all taken from you when they made you join the military. Perhaps you enthusiastically signed up to defend your nation, or as the clearest path to power within it? Perhaps you were forcibly conscripted, torn from your families' arms? Either way, your life before is like a fading dream, your life now a constant struggle of rage, power and cruelty. You do not know from one moment to the next when the whims of your military commanders will call upon you to suffer, nor when such rage within you drives you to inflict it upon the innocent. Deep down, you hope for some kind of change...

You serve in the military, perhaps as a valued commander, more likely as an ordinary foot soldier. You know the names and personalities of the Wolf's key lieutenants, and know very well the divisions of power within the military.

You automatically succeed on charisma checks with military lower ranked (i.e., with less levels than yourself), as long as you aren't recognized as a deserter or traitor to the Wolf's cause. Of the Wolf himself you know almost nothing.

You are proficient in ONE of the following skills or proficiencies, depending on your character's role in the military; Animal Handling (for wolf handlers), Insight (popular among commanders), Medicine (for field medics), Survival (for hunters and trackers), proficiency in climbing and spelunking (for mountaineers), trapsetting (for manhunters), or siege equipment (for large scale siege weapons).



Sons of the Wolf
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The Wolf in the Sky