

Craven's Hollow The Lay of the Land Part I

a Dark Return, SagaBorn 1.5 Compatible adventure module by Michael Bielaczyc

Edited by Dane Clark Collins Cover Art by Michael Bielaczyc Interior Art and Maps by the Brothers Bielaczyc, Michael and Paul

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Introduction

THE SETTING

Atheles is a harsh world, especially the Eastlands. Acid rain and electric storms pock the landscape. Disease and sickness curse its inhabitants. Magic destroyed the world in the Great War and disappeared soon after. But now magic has started to make its presence felt again, along with creatures, people, and monsters touched by magic.

The city of Kowal sits in the unclaimed lands of the East, a city-state ruled by a Baron (a hereditary title passed down from the old days of the Uthgard Empire). The city itself is in ruins, its people ravaged by disease, hunger, and violence for centuries. Wars, famine, and defense against the roving armies of barbarians have left Kowal a shell of its former self.

WHO SHOULD PLAY?

More than a Gamble is a SagaBorn Roleplaying Game compatible adventure for 4-6 characters of 4th level.

WHAT DO I NEED TO PLAY?

This adventure, some friends, the SagaBorn Roleplaying Game 1.5 Core Rulebook, and some refreshments and you are ready to go. Some dice may help too.

WHAT CAMPAIGN SETTING IS APPROPRIATE?

Though intended to be set in the Dark Return setting, this adventure can easily be adapted to fit in any fantasy RPG setting, though will fit most readily in a "low fantasy" setting or remote region of a world, where the inhabitants have not had much exposure to magic or non-human NPCs. An experienced gamemaster should have no difficulty converting the module for play in a another campaign world or alternate d20 system.

CHOO1 THE LAY OF THE LAND PART I

The first adventure in the Craven's Hollow campaign sets the stage for the events to come, as well as introduces the characters to the village of Craven's Hollow and the city of Kowal.

RESOURCES:

You can find many resources for SagaBorn at www. sagaborn.com/games/sagaborn-rpg/ There is a Craven's Hollow Player's Handbook at www.darkreturn.com/cravens-phb/ and an interactive StoryGuide's Codex at www.darkreturn.com/cravenshollow-storyguides-codex/ (password is storyguide).

Darkreturn.com is also a large and ever-growing encyclopedia for the lands of Atheles.

STORYGUIDE INFORMATION

This is an intro adventure to the SagaBorn Roleplaying Game. This adventure takes full advantage of the new SagaBorn rules for Strongholds, Allies, and Factions. The adventure is set up loosely, giving you and the players an open sandbox to play in. We provide a goal, a secret, and information on the area where it takes place while giving the players the flexibility to choose their own path.

Of Note:

- The adventurers are level 1, but due to their residence in the tower, they already have a renown of 1.
- When an NPC has a name in parentheses after their first mention, that means you should use the stats from the Character Gallery. Example: Bandit (Rogue 4), this means the NPC is a Rogue class of level four. The Character Gallery can be found at www.sagaborn.com/ sagaborn-character-gallery
- The Adventure is made up of many smaller Events and Quests. Each one will give a brief introduction as well as give you the goal for the heroes.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

There are three goals for this adventure.

The first is to introduce the town of Craven's Hollow and its inhabitants.

The second is to develop in the players a love for the Hollow and allow them to find NPCs they connect with. Encourage them to make plans for expanding and growing the town and their stronghold. Rules for Allies and Strongholds are up on the Sagaborn SRD (www.sagaborn. com/srd) for your reference and theirs.

The final goal of the adventure is to usher them into the events concerning the Cult of the Crimson King.

The cult is trying to master drawing energy from living creatures and has decided to practice on some local livestock. They will make progress after killing and reviving Edwin Murwood's cattle, and they will move out of their small hideout in the old Zhou Temple. The heroes arrive as the last of the cult are leaving. The heroes may glean some details of what is happening if they capture the cultists, but all cult members are under the influence of a geas that prohibits them from talking directly about the cult without extreme pain and wounds, which could lead to death.

THE SECRETS

Rumors

- Uthgard is fortifying Kowal. Kowal is no longer a free state, having now become a duchy under Uthgard. *True*
- Rindlebok tricked the Red Guard into summoning a lesser god, which destroyed the Greystone. *Partially True*
- Baron Zadeku (now Duke Zadeku) is deathly ill. False
- Orlocks have been harassing settlements along the Urtgen Forest. *True*
- Eredar, the Wizard's Tower, has declared war against Uthgard. *False*
- There is an old mine of riches somewhere nearby. True
- A new crew has arrived in Craven's, led by a scarred man named Face. They are disgraced mercenaries who are now bandits. They live in the Tents. *True*
- Vrede, the man who lives in the tower, is viewed as a wise man and leader of the Hollow. He is scarred and missing a leg. He lost this in battle with a warlock.
 Partially True

HOW TO RUN THIS ADVENTURE

The StoryGuide (SG) is a fan of the players. While the SG does design the challenges, scares, and combat the adventurers will face, they are there to facilitate the game for the players; they shouldn't work against them.

The Craven's Hollow campaign is set up as loose events and adventures to introduce the players to the world. Through the adventures, the characters will become invested in the people of Kowal, build their small stake in the world, and defend it against a supernatural threat.

The heroes have inherited this parcel, so they are now landowners, but it is a land most people wouldn't want. They should be happy but also mystified about how they got it. Work to build a connection between the characters and their new home. Find ways to excite the players that this is their land and that they can shape it in whatever way they choose.

The Adventure

INTRODUCTION

Read the following to the players:

Date: Ces the 9th, 5707

You find yourself living in an abandoned guard tower. It is supposedly haunted, but no spirits have yet chased you away. Others in Craven's Hollow succumb to their fears and burrow away in small shacks or tents across the small valley. Sure, the tower is old and bloodstained, and yes, there are some strange noises that come up out of the well every once in a while, but it's a comfortable place. Well, as comfortable as you can get in the Hollow. "Good bones," says Vrede, the only other occupant of the tower. Vrede is an Ishian man who has lived in the Hollow as long as anyone. And that's about all he will tell you about that. He is right, though. The tower was built by dworvs, so the walls are thick and solid, and the roof's tiles still turn away the rain and snow.

The tower has a long history of violence and death. It was built to keep out the demons of the forest back in the days of the Warlock King of the North. As the Uthgard Empire fell, the soldiers in the tower ran the area as a small fiefdom ruled by the soldiers as warlords. The Lord of Kowal wiped out the warlords, and for years, the blood-soaked ground lay empty. In more modern days, as the Lord and his cronies brought down a more iron-fisted grip on the city, Craven's Hollow has been given a second life as a place of escape for those who do not fit into the "civilized" world. These are the forgotten, living among the ghosts of the past.

So this is where it all starts: living like pauper kings in an old tower built by a long-dead empire.

CRAVEN'S HOLLOW

About

Statistics: Crime 7; Danger 8; Economy 2; Law 1; Knowledge 3; Magic 5 Highest Stat is 10, lowest 1

Size: Tiny Village

Government: Anarchist Democracy

Economic System: Capitalist

Population: 37 (Diversity: 97% Teran, 3% other)

Craven's Hollow is home to outcasts, thieves, and the unwanted—the home of those who want to escape notice. Many did not choose this residence, but the small group of ramshackle buildings welcomes anyone who does not have any other place.

Once, it was called, simply, Tower Five, the last defensive line of the Kowal barony. It got its nickname, Craven's Hollow, as it was the most dangerous assignment, and soldiers stationed there would often desert their posts. When they were found, they were brought back to serve the rest of their days in the dark and gloomy tower. Even hundreds of years later, as the tower fell into disuse and disrepair, the area never lost its nickname.

Since those days, Kowal has long forgotten about the towers. Seeing its remote location and lack of any official law, many have flocked to Craven's Hollow as a refuge from the city.



Events and Adventures

STRONGHOLD EVENTS

During this adventure, feel free to have things happen around the Stronghold for the players to handle. These events may happen at any time of the StoryGuide's choosing. There is a chart of Stronghold Events on the website at www.sagaborn.com/stronghold-events/

EVENT 1: VREDE'S JOURNAL Event Hook

Vrede will want to get to know the newcomers. He will offer them his journal with notes about the Hollow and judge them by their reaction. He is protective of the community's people and hopes the new landowners will feel the same. The journal is available at: https://www. darkreturn.com/cravens-phb/

Goal

To introduce the heroes to Vrede, as well as to set him up as their trusted advisor. He has no motive besides making sure the good people of the Hollow are protected. If the heroes doubt him, he will do his best to prove his good intentions.

Read the following to the players:

The last of the Fall leaves outside dance in a cold wind. The air whistles through the cracked stones of the ancient tower. Vrede sits on a comfortable stool in front of a small firepit, his crutch resting in the crook of his arm.

"I am glad you all have found your way here. You could say I knew you were coming, seen you all in my dreams, as it were. Times in the Hollow are changing, and I hoped for guidance to those who might protect it. And you were revealed to me." He pauses and looks into the flames, his brow furrowing. Then it relaxes.

"I hope you grow to love this place as I do and protect it from what may come." He looks up to you all, his face softening. "I welcome you to the Hollow."

Secret: the truth about Vrede's "vision"

Vrede was visited by a stranger who was very interested in the Hollow. Their meeting went deep into the night as Vrede felt compelled to tell this stranger all about the place. The stranger left three large crates of food as a gift to the villagers and told Vrede that change was coming. Soon, some who would make the Hollow better would arrive, and they should be cautiously welcomed. As the stranger left, he turned to Vrede and told him it would be best not to mention his visit.

EVENT 2: THE QUICK TRADER

The heart of the Hollow is the Quick Trader. With no real tavern, Vesson's overpriced food and drink is the only thing that comes close. Vesson even set up a small table and chair inside for up to four to sit and "enjoy his company." While exploring their new home, it is only a matter of time before they end up at the small general store.

Read the following to the players:

There are many small buildings in the Hollow ramshackle wooden structures often with a footprint no larger than ten by ten feet. In the center square of the town, a large building towers over the others at two stories and is made of slightly better wood. By no means a good quality structure, it still outshines the others in the village.

Fight - The Drunken Blades

Event Hook

Two of Face's gang, the Grinning Blades, have been day drinking at the Quick Trader. When they see the new "landlords," they decide to pick a fight. They do not have weapons and will just want to "rough up" the newcomers. Wez or Vesson can come in to help ease tension if needed.

The Goal

To set the stage and have some social interactions (both positive and negative) with other Hollow inhabitants.



Blu and Crass

Blu (Brawler 1) is a short but muscular man with a nose scarred from many breaks. Crass (Melee Fighter 1) is a short man with dark hair, his mustache hanging down, long and wispy, on either side of his small mouth.

The Store

Read the following to the players:

While the building may be rickety on the outside, it feels cozy inside. The tables and shelves are stacked with odds and ends, and a slight smell of the last cooked meal still lingers in the air. The wood of the floors and tables is clean and well-polished. Vesson sits behind his tall counter, engrossed in some task and only half paying attention to any who enters.

Vesson sells most supplies for their standard cost, but buys items back at only 40% retail (50% is standard).

<u>Vesson</u>

Level 4 Factor, Level 1 Fighter, Teran

A middle-aged Tiren man who owns the Quick Trader. He is generally grumpy and unpleasant to be around. He runs a fair establishment for trade and provides many side jobs to the citizens of Craven's Hollow.

History

Vesson was a successful merchant in Kowal but was pushed out of the Tritium trade as Uthgard moved in. Before he was outcast, he was very successful. He was a traveling merchant and was quite good at making contacts. He isn't too shabby at swinging a mace if the need arises.

What They Want

Vesson is not content with his place in Craven's Hollow. He is always looking for more contacts and people to add to his network.

Qty	Item	Cost (Each)	Qty	Item	Cost (Each)
4	Animal Glue	5 sp	5	Piton	1 sp
1	Astrolab	1000 gp	1	Pot	8 sp
2	Backpack, Masterwork	40 gp	20	Rations (day)	5 sp
5	Bedroll	1 sp	3	Rope, Hemp	1 gp
7	Candle	1 cp	1	Soap	5 sp
1	Chain (10')	30 gp	1	Spyglass	500 gp
1	Chalk	1 cp	1	Tent, Medium	15 gp
2	Cloak, Leather	10 gp	1	Tent, Small	10 gp
1	Crowbar	2 gp	10	Torch	1 cp
1	Grappling Hook	1 gp	1	Twine	1 cp
1	Lamp	5 sp	8	Waterskin	1 gp
1	Lantern, Bullseye	12 gp	8	Whetstone	2 cp
1	Lock, Good	80 gp			
1	Map, Local	15 gp			
1	Mirror, Steel	10 gp			
Food, D	Drink, and Smoke		1		
20	Dusty Ale	7 cp	100	Tabac	7 sp
1	Meal, poor	2 sp	35	Varga Leaf	1 gp
/	Meal, Common	4 sp	100	Vodka, shot	4 sp
Kits		·		•	
1	Climber's Kit	80 gp	1	Thieve's Tools, Masterwork	100 gp
Alchem	nical Items	I	1	I	
1	Acid	10 gp	1	Universal Solvent	25 gp
1	Alchemist's Fire	20 gp			
Armor		ł	1		
1	Studded Leather	25 gp			
Weapor	ns	•		-	
2	Net	15 gp	1	Warhammer, Cold Iron	24 gp
1	Short Sword, Rusty	5 gp			
Vehicle	s and Mounts				
1	Cart	15 gp			
1	Donkey (named Bilee)	8 gp			
Illicits ((must gain trust to purchase)				
4	Konk	40 gp	9	Wolly Eye Poison	40 gp
1	Totem Bag	45 gp			

ADVENTURE 1: THE SUPPLY RUN Quest Hook

Vesson asks the heroes to go on a supply run. He will pay 5 sp per person per day (and his "eternal gratitude") when they return with everything completed as requested. It is a nine-day journey to Kowal, with an extra two days given for rest. The return trip will be the same. If they agree, he will give them a pouch containing 500 gp and 40 sp.

The Haul:

- 4 kegs (8 gallons, 64 lbs, 15 sp retail / 8 sp wholesale each) of Dusty Ale must be picked up at the village of Secton at the Dusty Shield Inn and paid for (32 sp).
- 2 kegs will be taken to Kowal and delivered to the Darkwinter Tavern, with payment to be collected (16 sp total). Pick up any empty kegs from the establishment.
- Visit Sasha's Storehouse and pick up two crates (pay 500 gp). Do not look in the crates*. They should be treated as fragile (they contain blackrock, an explosive). Do your best not to have the crates inspected by any authority.
- Return and drop off the empty kegs at the Dusty Shield on the way home.
- Deliver the crates and two kegs to Vesson.

*Vesson wants to test the party to see if they will follow orders and how trustworthy they are. He will tell them it isn't their business what is in the crates at first, but if pressed, he will relent and divulge the contents.

Goal

In World - Vesson wants to see how useful the newcomers can be. He does need a supply run, but he is using this offer to see if they will be good for future jobs.

StoryGuide - Vesson is a Factor and is quite good at getting what he wants. He will offer more money or better deals at the store if needed to motivate the heroes. You should do your best to develop at least a minor business relationship between Vesson and the party, as he will play a role throughout the campaign, offering the heroes more jobs.

This quest also gives the heroes a tour of the local area while also getting paid to do it.

Secret

Vesson is always looking out for himself and Mahesh. He does not mean the village harm. There is a mystery about him, but there is nothing the heroes can do at this point to discover more.



SECTON, THE NEXT TOWN OVER

About

Statistics: Crime 2; Danger 2; Economy 6; Law 8; Knowledge 5; Magic 5 Highest Stat is 10, lowest 1

Size: Village

Government: Mayoral, Aristocracy

Economic System: Capitalist

Population: 89 (Diversity: 90% Human, 6% Elf, 3% Dwarf, 1% other)

Secton was once just Tower Six, one of the many guard towers along the borders of Kowal. Due to its location on the main road between Kowal and Fort Utliest, a small town sprang up next to it. Since the Great War and the fall of the Uthgard Kingdom, the tower has not been manned by soldiers, but the small town still

remains.

Today, it is in the midst of a transformation. The Uthgard kingdom, in its alliance with Kowal, has marked Secton as a place of interest. Uthgard and the Unelesia Church have begun construction on a school for those "touched by the Creator and blessed with powers." The Red Dragoons have also started to build a keep here to fortify the road to the north.

Some old residents are unhappy about this, as they do not want to see their town change so much. Others see this expansion as a welcome growth.

Notable NPC's:

Mayor Margery Ellebeth: the elected mayor of the town. Margery has made the Kowal government happy with rigid tax collections but has also earned the love of her citizens, as she has been very fair and honest with them. She holds strict to the rule of law, but has a kind heart and may look the other way if her people need it. Lady Lana: the headmistress of the School for the Ministry of the Arts that is under construction.

Knight Hurst: the head of the Red Dragoons in Secton. The king appointed him to make the town and school a stronghold for Uthgard.

Notable Places: Tower Market Dusty Shield Inn

Merchants: Eva Harls: blacksmith and weaponsmith Gurdris Gemstone: jeweler Sol: rye distiller Margery Ellebeth: carpenter Theodoric Predrow: book, map, and paper seller



SECTON, EVENT 1: GUARDS

Read the following to the players:

As you arrive along Cravens Road, you see two guardsmen turn and start making their way to you. Their armor is polished bright red, and their swords are twohanders, hanging heavily from their backs. They are no ordinary town guards; these are professional soldiers. In the distance, at the crossroad, another soldier sits atop a large war horse, his armor heavier and more ornate.

Event Hook

The building of two Uthgard facilities has given some extra importance to Secton, leading to both the Ministry and the Dragoons being on higher alert. Two Red Dragoons (Melee Fighter 4) and their Sargent (Melee Fighter 5; DC 12 Knowledge check to identify) have been tasked to guard the roads in and out of Secton. As elite soldiers, they are mind-numbingly bored, so they have taken to bullying those who come and go. They will not turn to violence, but they are not above fleecing a few silvers out of those coming through. The sergeant, who feels this post is below him, casts a blind eye to what the soldiers do.

Goal

Giving a taste of the oppression of Uthgard, this small encounter is to do a little world-building. This should not result in violence, if possible, but threats of jail or serving in the mines could be tossed about. If these soldiers are provoked into a fight, the heroes will become wanted by the biggest military in the area.

Secton, Event 2: The Dusty Shield Inn

Read the following to the players:

A squat, wide building sprawls under a large thatch roof. A worn, battered shield hangs from a bent beam, the word Inn painted in a flourishing font on the front. A warm orange glow peeks out through heavy curtains, rippling out of the old glass windows.

INSIDE THE TAVERN Read the following to the players:

The Dusty Shield is a single-floor establishment, but it is clean and cozy. A low fire burns in the fireplace, reflecting off the well-polished floor. A group of elflings sits at a corner table, talking amongst themselves. Their facial tattoos and wild hair mark them as feral elflings those who were trapped in the In-Between for centuries. They glance at you, sneer, and return to their discussion.

Behind the bar is Kjorni, a bald dworv with a wide grin. He is filling four more tankards with an amber-colored drink from a keg on the wall. "Welcome, welcome. Have a seat. I'll be with you in a moment."

Menu:

Roasted Mutton and Pinenut Bread, Tankard of Ale (9 cp) Wheat Biscuits and Curd Cheese, Tankard of Ale (2 cp) Boiled Eggs and Pinenut Bread, Tankard of Ale (8 cp) Vegetable Stew, Tankard of Ale (5 cp)

Dusty Ale 4 cp Vodka 2 sp

Room 4 sp

Event Hook

This is a simple pick-up-and-pay job. Kjorni is friendly enough, offering them a room for half price.

Goal

Another roleplaying event that can be as short or long as players want it to be.

Other Occupants:

Feral Elflings

Dagga, Felrith, Egrada, and Serrc, are feral elflings (Ranger 2) of the Forgelighter Tribe. The tribe has settled nearby in the forest, keeping mostly to themselves. These four were sent into town to make some trades, and they have little interest in the heroes. If drinks are bought for them, they may loosen up a bit. They will tell them of the forest and the good hunting in the area. They will not speak of the time their tribe was lost in the In-Between. It is still too fresh in their minds.

TRAVEL BETWEEN SECTON AND KOWAL

The travel between Secton and Kowal is uneventful. A Skill Challenge with a DC of 10 can be used to add a little flair if you so like. The heroes will pass through the NorthGuard Inn, the Upland Basin, and Yorik. Information on these places can be found on www.Darkreturn.com, and random charts for weather and encounters can be found in the Craven's Hollow StoryGuide's Codex at www.darkreturn. com/cravens-hollow-storyguides-codex/ (Password: storyguide)

KOWAL

The city of Kowal is bustling, if a little subdued. People come and go from the northern gate about their everyday business.

Goal

These interactions in the city are meant to form some bonds with the heroes for future adventures. Also, the description below includes a Ministry mage and his magic-using prisoners to once again demonstrate the oppression of Uthgard.

The term Nulthari is a name for the Northern wizards who work for the Ministry of the Arts to help the Uthgard Empire grow and thrive. They are part of the Ministry of the Arts, a powerful group in charge of the use of magic within the empire. More can be learned at www.Darkreturn. com



Read the following to the players:

You fall into a line of travelers, a flowing stream of people heading from the rural outskirts into the walled city of Kowal. The stark gray walls meet the ice-blue sky above. Red and black banners flowing in the wind. As you enter the gate, a portcullis looms overhead, but there are no menacing guards or watchful bureaucrats; the people flow in and out of the city freely.

The streets are clean. Small piles of snow have gathered around the feet of lampposts. Colorful clothes adorn many of the citizens, proof of the brisk trade with the dye makers of Harun. Blue flags showing the Duke's Walled Tower and banners of Uthgard flutter in the slight wind from the north. Garlands hang from lamp posts and doorways, a reminder of the upcoming seasonal holidays of Darkwinter and Candlenight. A large caravan wagon lumbers by, pulled by a kuduu, a four-legged furry creature that is almost as tall as the buildings around it. People move out of the way, but there are no grumbles or curses.

The city has changed. Five years ago, the street would have been half empty, save for the scavvers and beggars. Back then, the Chimneys would be cold and lifeless, and now they bellow smoke into the chilled air. The markets are full, and trade is brisk. Iron comes down from Uthgard and Tritium from the nearby mountains; no furnace houses are left unmanned. The alliance with the Uthgard Kingdom has awoken the city's long-hibernating economy, and the streets hum with awakening.

As you take in the wonders of Kowal, the crowd parts to reveal a regimen of soldiers, their red armor marking them as Uthgard Dragoons, walk in lockstep in front of a wagon. On the large wagon, an iron-barred cage sits on display. Three figures can be seen inside the cage, wearing off-white wool and chained neck to hands, hands to feet. They look about with dull, sunken eyes, exhibiting no recognition of the show that they are a part of. In the back of the wagon, on a raised seat, a man sits cross-legged. His robes of black and gold mark him as important within the Ministry ranks.

"Sodding Nulthari warlock," mutters a woman nearby. The man turns and peers out from under his hood in the direction as if he heard. The woman shrinks back into the crowd and moves along quickly.

The wagon passes, and the street falls back into its normal rhythm.

Kowal, Event 1: Darkwinter Tavern

Goal

Establish a contact in the city and find a safe place to rest with Rob and the Darkwinter Tavern. The introduction of Willem provides the heroes with an ally whose connection to the Protectorate may come into the campaign later.

Read the following to the players:

The tavern sits between two hulking buildings on Fellowship Lane. The walls of the first floor are made of straight-cut stone, a hallmark of the Dworven construction of many old buildings in Kowal. The second story juts out from the stone, the timber bent with the weight of age. The wooden sign reads in simple carvedout letters: Darkwinter.

About the Darkwinter Tavern

Darkwinter Tavern was opened 15 years ago after the long winter of '93. It is owned and run by Rob Besvaskin, a war veteran and ex-merchant. It is often called the adventurer's tavern. Its location near the Wanderer's Guildhouse, as well as Sascha's Storehouse, made it easy to access for those returning from adventures. Rob's easygoing manner and general support of the adventuring lifestyle made the tavern vibrant and well-loved. Since Uthgard took over Kowal, with the banning of the Wanderers and the new stricter laws, the Darkwinter has struggled with few patrons and more taxes.

ROB BEVASKIN

History

A citizen of Kowal and owner of the Darkwinter Tavern. He was a soldier in the Return Wars, fighting with other citizens against the ghuls and then the invading Tirens. He was then a merchant known for delivering the goods on time no matter the danger. He "retired" by opening the tavern.

What they want

He wants Kowal to become free of the yoke of hereditary leaders and represent the people. As for his business, the loss of travelers and adventurers has hurt business. He despised the Red Guard and now despises the Nulthari, the Academy, and most of the "Uthgardian overlords."

Read the following to the players:

The long open building is filled with tables and chairs, and everything is made from dark red wood, giving the establishment a warm, cozy feeling. The center of the room hosts a small firepit, its copper chimney hanging from chains in the ceiling. A man slumps in one of the chairs, staring into the fire, his wooden mug dangling from his hand. Two others, the dark soot marking them as foundry workers, sit at a far table, talking quietly as they take long draws from their mugs. Behind the bar, a large man with red and gray hair reads a book. Behind him, a large mace adorns the wall, casting a long shadow on the kegs and bottles below.

The two miners are enjoying a cheap beer after their shift. They have nothing to share with others, and if pressed, they will pay their tab and leave.

Rob will welcome the heroes and offer them a drink and dinner with a smile. If the heroes run off the miners, he will admonish them, asking them not to run off any more customers.

The man drinking by the firepit is Willem. He looks ill at ease and tries to relax. Willem is a good-looking man, his hair a little long, but is battle scared and missing two fingers and his left ear. He wears a medallion with a shield and lock engraved into the surface, the symbol of the Protectorate. He is pondering what he might do now that his old friends have gone. If the heroes do not approach him, he will turn to them and start a conversation. He is friendly and openly shares his story. He is eager to find a job, but he will not become allies if the heroes seem overly violent or use ravaging magic.



WILLEM

History

Willem grew up in Kowal. His parents were friends with Martyn (the Guildmaster of the Wanderers in Kowal), so he always had dreams of becoming an adventurer. When he was young and at the market with his parents he witnessed a warlock who was being pursued by the Red Guard of Kowal. The warlock grabbed his father and, using ravaging magic, pulled the life from him as he called fire down onto the Red Guards. His father passed that day, and Willem began to idolize the Red Guard as protectors. When he was old enough, he joined their ranks but soon found that the institution was as corrupt as any, using their power to subjugate those they deemed "unwanted."

Martyn introduced him to a group who sought to take down the Red Guard, and he became first an informant, then an ally, and finally a student of Roe, an archeon with that group. These rebels, known as the Heroes of Dworvtown, due to saving the area in a terrorist attack, gave Willem a drive to see Kowal become better.

When the Red Guard was destroyed in the Catastrophe of the Greystone, he was left behind with no memory of what had occurred. He was left alone and his friends, the Heroes of Dworvtown, were gone.

Since then, he has taken odd jobs but is still looking for a movement or group that will aid him in making this city what it could be.

What they want

He wants Kowal to be a better place, and Willem wants to find Roe and the rest of the Heroes of Dworvtown.

KOWAL, EVENT 2: THE ROBBERY Event Hook:

Four members of a new gang called the Red Dagger have gotten drunk and come up with the bright idea to rob the Darkwinter Tavern. They think there are some hidden magic items in the basement or a horde of elvish gold leftover from past adventures. They have no wish to fight to the death but are just drunk enough to start a fight, even if the odds are stacked against them. This is a way to introduce the Red Dagger, who will play a part later in the campaign. Both Rob and Willem join in a fight against them, though Rob insists that the thieves not be outright killed. "Ain't going to have to explain to the City Guard, or anyone else, why there are some slaughtered thugs in my tavern. A bone-headed robbery attempt shouldn't be a death penalty."

- Leera (Rogue 1): Leera is the brash leader of this little troupe, who are all small players within the gang. Leera hopes this will get the attention of Father, who may reward them with more jobs if they can bring home some coin.
- Chiv, Tooth, and Tom (Brawler 1): These three are street toughs, little more than muscle behind Leera.
- Deek (Wylder 1): Deek is smarter, and he isn't drunk like the rest, but his thirst for power makes him agree to this plan. He will be the first to argue that it is time to back down, but he defers to Leera.

Robber's Treasure:

5x Hand crossbows, 5x cold iron daggers, 5x short swords, 10 gp of magical regents, 24 sp

SASCHA'S STOREHOUSE

The Storehouse is the best place in Kowal to unload goods found in the ruins and wilds of Atheles. Its proprietor, Sascha, is well-known to any adventurer in Kowal.

Read the following to the players:

The Storehouse is a small one-story building on the corner of Fellowship Lane and Smithway. Inside, it is filled with assorted goods of all types, organized and labeled on the many tables and shelves. Brightly lit by many gas lanterns, the store is comfortable and well organized.

Sascha

History

Sascha is an ex-adventurer who settled in Kowal from the far lands of northern Uthgard after meeting his wife. He doesn't miss his adventuring days. "Too much walking," he always says. But by running his "storehouse," he still gets to play with all the trinkets and toys the adventurers bring in to trade and sell. He is very knowledgeable but can be irritable. If his patrons get out of hand or ask too much for a "bauble," he curses at them in the Uthgard language. He is a collector of games, as he loves to experience new ways to test his strategic mind. The quickest way to this man's heart is a new game with good rules and a glass of vanilla-flavored liquor. But watch out if the dice or games of chance are not going his way; prices may double on anything needed by those who best him.

What They Want

Sascha enjoys his job and shop, offering him the ability to collect and purchase interesting trinkets.

Goal

For the heroes to pick up the shipment for Vesson and meet Sascha. Sascha's store is a safe place to sell all manner of goods and items, as well as a secondary course of information in Kowal.

Event Hook:

Sascha will take payment for the kegs and help the heroes load them onto their wagon. He will stress not to hit too many bumps on the way home and avoid any nosey guards.

The two crates each contain a small 1 lb keg of blackrock supported by straw. Each keg is worth 640 gp retail, and if it is set on fire or dropped, it will explode, doing 16d8 damage to all in a 30' radius.



THE WAY HOME

Events:

Dropping off the empty kegs to the Dusty Shield is an easy task and should include as much or as little as the players wish.

There can be some run-ins with guards, but it should be easy enough for the heroes to transport the small crates unnoticed. Once again, adjust to the desires of your table. A skill challenge with a low DC of 10 can add tension without dragging out gameplay.

The Way Home, Event 1: Bait and Switch Event Hook:

As they travel along the road past Secton towards Craven's Hollow, a ghul bursts from the forest, panting. Give the players just enough time to react but not enough to initiate combat. A moment later, three zombie-like creatures also crash out of the woods and kill the ghul. The zombies then turn and head back into the woods unless the players engage them.

Goal:

This foreshadows problems for the heroes. They could surmise that ghuls infest the Urtgen forest, and that these fast-moving zombies were spawned from some local farmers. There are no definitive answers for the heroes, but you may note to them that these could be things to remember.

Read the following to the players:

You are about a day's hike away from the Hollow, and the waves of Velk Lake gently lap against its shore to your left when a creature bursts from the woods. Its slim, muscular body is covered in patchwork leather and iron armor. Its small-pupiled eyes widen with fear. It pauses for a moment, deciding which way to go, and in that small space of time, three other creatures explode from the foliage, their pale white skin revealing black veins underneath. Their eyes are solid blood-red. They grab the first creature and pull it to the ground as it struggles futilely. They tear at it until it no longer moves, and as quickly as they appeared, they rush back into the woods. The zombie-like creatures are unchosen, people who have had their spirit stolen by the Order of the Masked King (also referred to as the Cult of the Crimson King), the main protagonists in this campaign. They are experimenting and learning to gather living beings' energy in hopes of unlocking their imprisoned god, Nithiel. The husks left behind in this ritual become unchosen—violent, unthinking creatures who, when left to their own devices, hurt and kill any living creature they come across.

This unlucky group was a family of farmers the cult drained. If the heroes leave them alone, they will wander back to their farm, where they will stay until they fall to the ravages of time. If the heroes attack, they'll find that the unchosen are not only vicious and unthinking, but they are also fast, with a base speed of 40'. If the heroes follow them back to their homestead, they'll find them living in a small one-story building. Inside are signs of a struggle and a large mask symbol painted on the wall. No other clues can be found here.

(3) Unchosen

See Creature Compendium at the end of this book

ADVENTURE 2: SOUNDS IN THE DARK

The people of Craven's Hollow have always cast a wary eye towards the well of the tower. They say that the blood of the dead warlord washed down into the well, cursing it. The noises and echoes that emanate from it at night are his spirit cursing those who damned him to an eternity in this valley. In truth, the well is inhabited by miglins, small malicious Navirites that delight in hurting and tormenting others. They have lived in the well for years, eating worms and insects, coming out occasionally to pilfer objects from the people of the Hollow.

Quest Hook:

Wez is frantically looking for a lost item (his locket containing a charcoal drawing of his deceased wife). He is distaught as he asks around the Hollow. Tolin says he saw someone or something go down the well the night before.

What Happened:

The miglins came out of the well last night and broke into Wez's house, stealing his locket and some food. They then scurried back to their lair to eat worms and gloat at their new treasures.

The Goal

This is a small quest to let the heroes meet some of the townsfolk and make some allies or enemies. Maybe they accuse someone of taking the locket. Or they follow the trail to the miglin lair and make everyone happy.

If the players seem unclear about how to investigate, ask for a Skill Challenge. This should be kept light, with a DC of 10 for successes that lead them to the miglin lair.

Example Skill Challenge Results

- 5 successes: the heroes learn about miglins and their weaknesses and find a bottle of alchemist fire in the tower.
- 4 successes: the heroes find the lair and get +3 to any thievery checks for hiding and sneaking.
- 3 successes: the heroes find the lair.
- 2 successes: the heroes find the lair, but the miglins are ready for them (no surprise).
- 1 success: the miglins have been watching the heroes and gain +1 to damage.
- 0 successes: the heroes find the lair but no miglins; instead, the miglins attack them at night!

THE MIGLIN LAIR

Miglins are nasty little creatures with no empathy and an inclination toward violence. They will protect their lair to the death. The lair is large and filled with holes and crevices that they dart in and out of. The miglins have the Nimble talent and use this to great advantage. They will dart out of their tiny holes, attack, and then retreat. These tunnels are only 1' in diameter, so even the miglins barely fit, but they can move at full speed within.

The miglins have no guards, but they are like rodents and always wary.

<u>Miglin</u>

(3 +1 per hero) Miglin CR 1/3 HP 6, AC 15 2 claws +2 (1d3-1) and bite -3 (1d4-1) See Creature Compendium for full stats

Treasure

1x Scroll of Knock (150 gp)
1x Book Healing Poultices and Anti-inflammatories (2gp) - Vrede's
1x Small Painting of a Young Merchant (25 gp, but only to Vesson) - Vesson's Self-Portrait
1x Silver Locket (3 gold) - Wez's
1x Silver Dagger
1x Cold Iron Short Sword (20 gp)
12x Arrows
1x Barbed Cold Iron Arrow
1x Lantern
1x Azurite (10gp)
35 sp
27 cp



Craven's Hollow Campaign

CR000 - The Inheritance

A group of unrelated people find they have inherited a strange, old tower and some land. They must come together and protect their new home.

CR001 - The Lay of the Land

While getting to know the citizens of Craven's Hollow, the heroes take a job from Vesson that involves exploring the lands around the village. Soon after they return from the caravan job, they are asked to help when red-robed figures perform a deadly ritual in a local farmer's field.

CR002 - A Green Hood Gambit

Vesson has a client with deep pouches, and she wants a tome stolen from a rich merchant's secret lab. Along the way, the heroes discover the Ministry is setting up headquarters in the village next to Craven's Hollow.

CR003 - Warcries in the Dark

Ghuls attack the Hollow at night, and when they are dealt with, some paperwork is found, raising some odd questions. After that, a quick jaunt through the other local settlements may or may not attract some new allies. All paths lead to Kowal, and the heroes find themselves selling a magic item to the Librarians, introducing a new faction for them to align with.

CR004 - The Occurrence at Radzyn

Hired by the Librarians to help deliver a shipment to their safehouse in Radzyn, the heroes get caught up in a murder mystery that involves the whole city. The Cult of the Crimson King is behind it, but why?

CR005 - Return to the Eldar Temple

Vesson sends the group in search of an ancient artifact in the now-infamous Eldar Temple in the North. The tablets found bring more information on Nithiel, the demigod known as the Crimson King.

CR006 - The Red Storm

The cult is approaching their goal of summoning their god. The heroes hear of a play being performed in the largest theater in Kowal by the Riddle House Players, the same troupe that caused the murders in Radzyn. They must try to stop them from unleashing terror on Kowal.

CR007 - The Keep of the Crimson King

The dramatic end of the Craven's Hollow campaign. Can the heroes make it to the Keep of the Crimson King and stop the cult from raising their god? Or will Atheles fall under the control of this deity who wishes to bring the ultimate order under his authoritarian hand?

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