

THE WORLD

Much of the adventuring life is spent in dusty, forgotten tombs or in places of terror and life-threatening danger. When the time comes to emerge — laden with spoils or beaten and bloody — an adventurer seeks out safety and solace: a warm bath, a meal of mead and bread, the company of fellow men and elves and dwarves and halflings.

This chapter covers the wider world — the grand and sweeping scope outside the dungeon. The always-marching movement of the GM's fronts will shape the world, and, in turn, the world reflects the actions the players take to stop or redirect them.

STEADINGS

We call all the assorted communities, holds, and so on where there's a place to stay and some modicum of civilization **steadings**, as in "homestead." Steadings are places with at least a handful of inhabitants, usually humans, and some stable structures — as big as a capital city or as small as a few ramshackle buildings.

CREATING THE WORLD

When the players leave the site of their first adventure for the safety of civilization, it's time to start drawing the campaign map. Take a large sheet of paper, place it where everyone can see, and make a mark for the site of the adventure — use pencil, since this map will change. Keep the mark small and near the center so you have room to grow.

Add the nearest steading, a place the characters can go to rest and gather supplies, and fill in the space between with terrain features — try to keep it within a day or two of the adventure site. When you have time, use the steading rules below to create it properly, and add marks for any other places already mentioned.

WHILE YOU'RE IN TOWN

When the players visit a steading there are special moves they can make, following the fictional flow of the game just like anywhere else. Ask "What do you do?" and let their actions trigger moves covering respite, reinvigoration, and resupply. A steading isn't a break from reality — keep making hard moves when necessary, and keep thinking about how the players' actions (or inaction) advances your fronts. The impending doom is always there, whether the players are fighting it in the dungeon or ignoring it while getting drunk in the local tavern. Don't let a visit to a steading become a permanent respite.

ELEMENTS OF A STEADING

A steading is any bit of civilization that offers some amount of safety to its inhabitants. Villages, towns, keeps, and cities are the most common steadings, described by tags for **Prosperity**, **Population**, and **Defenses**, plus any number of tags illustrating unusual properties.

Steadings are differentiated by size, which indicates roughly how many people the steading can support; the population tag tells you if the current population is more or less than that.

Villages are the smallest steadings, usually out of the way, off the main roads. If lucky they can muster some defense, but it's often just rabble with pitchforks and torches. A village stands near some easily exploitable resource: rich soil, plentiful fish, an old forest, or a mine. Coin is scarce.

Towns have a hundred or so inhabitants, springing up around a mill, trading post, or inn, usually with fields, farms, and livestock. They might have a standing militia of farmers strong enough to wield a blade or shoot a bow, and the basics for sale, though no special goods.

A **keep** is built specifically for defense, sometimes of a particularly important location like a river delta or a rich gold mine. Found at the frontier edges of civilization, inhabitants number between a hundred and a thousand and are inured to the day-to-day dangers of the road. Keeps won't often have much beyond their own supplies, but will almost always have arms and armor.

The **city** is the largest stead — bustling trade centers or sprawling metropolises where folk of many races can be found, often at the confluence of trade routes or built at a place of spiritual significance. They rely on nearby villages for food and raw materials, but always have crafted goods and stranger things for sale.

Tags in the Prosperity, Population, and Defenses categories can be adjusted: -Category moves to the next lower tag, +Category to the next higher. Tags will change over the course of play as a snapshot of *right now*, updated as the players spend time in a stead and your fronts progress.

ADDING STEADINGS

You add your first stead when you create the campaign map — just a name and a location at first, fleshed out with the rules below when you have time. The first stead is usually a village, or a town if the first adventure was closely tied to humans. Once created, add other places referenced in its tags (oath, trade, enmity in particular) or anywhere else referred to in play — but don't add too much in the first session; leave blanks and places to explore.

As play progresses, add new steadings, dungeons, and locations as they're discovered or heard about. Villages are often near a useful resource, towns where several villages meet to trade, keeps watch over important locations, cities rely on smaller steads. Consider adding a distinctive feature nearby — a forest, standing stones, an abandoned castle — so the map isn't just steadings and ruins with nothing in between.

STEADING TAGS

Prosperity:

- ♦ **Dirt** — nothing for sale, nobody has more than they need; unskilled labor is cheap
- ♦ **Poor** — only the bare necessities for sale; weapons scarce unless heavily defended or militant
- ♦ **Moderate** — most mundane items available, some skilled laborers
- ♦ **Wealthy** — any mundane item can be found; most skilled laborers, but in demand
- ♦ **Rich** — mundane items and more, if you know where to look; specialist labor at high prices

Population:

- ♦ **Exodus** — the steading has lost its population and is on the verge of collapse
- ♦ **Shrinking** — population is less than it once was; buildings stand empty
- ♦ **Steady** — population in line with current size, slow growth
- ♦ **Growing** — more people than buildings
- ♦ **Booming** — resources stretched thin keeping up

Defenses:

- ♦ **None** — clubs, torches, farming tools
- ♦ **Militia** — able-bodied folk with worn weapons, no standing force
- ♦ **Watch** — a few watchers who look out for trouble and summon the militia
- ♦ **Guard** — armed defenders at all times, pool under 100
- ♦ **Garrison** — armed defenders at all times, pool of 100–300, multiple patrols
- ♦ **Battalion** — up to 1,000 armed defenders, manned maintained defenses
- ♦ **Legion** — thousands of armed soldiers, intimidating defenses

Other Tags:

- ♦ **Safe** — outside trouble doesn't come here until the players bring it
- ♦ **Religion** — a listed deity is revered here
- ♦ **Exotic** — goods and services unavailable anywhere else nearby
- ♦ **Resource** — easy access to a listed resource, significantly cheaper
- ♦ **Need** — an acute or ongoing need for a listed resource, which sells for considerably more
- ♦ **Oath** — sworn to listed steadings, generally fealty or support
- ♦ **Trade** — regularly trades with listed steadings
- ♦ **Market** — everyone comes here to trade; +1 to Supply
- ♦ **Enmity** — holds a grudge against listed steadings
- ♦ **History** — something important once happened here: battle, miracle, myth, romance, tragedy
- ♦ **Arcane** — someone can cast arcane spells for a price; +1 to Recruit an adept
- ♦ **Divine** — a major religious presence that can heal or raise the dead for a donation; +1 to Recruit priests
- ♦ **Guild** — a listed guild type has major presence; +1 to Recruit an associated hireling
- ♦ **Personage** — a notable person makes their home here
- ♦ **Dwarven / Elven** — significantly or entirely that race; their goods more common and less expensive
- ♦ **Craft** — known for excellence in a listed craft
- ♦ **Lawless** — crime is rampant, authority weak
- ♦ **Blight** — a recurring problem, usually a type of monster
- ♦ **Power** — holds sway of some type — political, divine, or arcane

STEADING NAMES

Graybark, Nook's Crossing, Tanner's Ford, Goldenfield, Barrowbridge, Rum River, Brindenburg, Shambles, Covaner, Enfield, Crystal Falls, Castle Daunting, Nulty's Harbor, Castonshire, Cornwood, Irongate, Mayhill, Pigton, Crosses, Battlemoore, Torsea, Curland, Snowcalm, Seawall, Varlosh, Terminus, Avonia, Bucksburg, Settledown, Goblinjaw, Hammerford, Pit, The Gray Fast, Ennet Bend, Harrison's Hold, Fortress Andwynne, Blackstone.

MAKING A VILLAGE

By default: Poor, Steady, Militia, Resource (your choice), and an Oath to another stading of your choice. If part of a kingdom or empire, choose one: naturally defended (Safe, -Defenses); abundant resources (+Prosperity, Resource, Enmity); under another stading's protection (Oath, +Defenses); on a major road (Trade, +Prosperity); built around a wizard's tower (Personage the wizard, Blight arcane creatures); built on religious ground (Divine, History).

Choose one problem: arid land (Need Food); dedicated to a deity (Religious, Enmity with a rival deity's settlement); recently fought a battle (-Population, -Prosperity if fought to the end, -Defenses if lost); a monster problem (Blight, Need adventurers); absorbed another village (+Population, Lawless); remote or unwelcoming (-Prosperity, Dwarven or Elven).

MAKING A TOWN

By default: Moderate, Steady, Watch, and Trade (two of your choice). If listed as Trade by another stading, choose one: booming (Booming, Lawless); stands on a crossroads (Market, +Prosperity); defended by another stading (Oath, +Defenses); built around a church (Power Divine); built around a craft (Craft, Resource for that craft); built around a military post (+Defenses).

Choose one problem: outgrown a supply (Need that resource, Trade with a source); offers defense to others (Oath, -Defenses); notorious outlaw rumored to live there (Personage, Enmity where crimes were committed); cornered a market (Exotic, Enmity with an ambitious rival); a disease (-Population); popular meeting place (+Population, Lawless).

MAKING A KEEP

By default: Poor, Shrinking, Guard, Need (Supplies), Trade (a supply source), Oath (your choice). If owed fealty by at least one settlement, choose one: belongs to a noble family (+Prosperity, Power Political); run by a skilled commander (Personage, +Defenses); watches a trade road (+Prosperity, Guild Trade); trains special troops (Arcane, -Population); surrounded by fertile land (remove Need Supplies); stands on a border (+Defenses, Enmity with the far side).

Choose one problem: naturally defensible (Safe, -Population); conquered from another power (Enmity with that power's steadings); a haven for brigands (Lawless); built to defend against a specific threat (Blight); seen horrible bloody war (History Battle, Blight Restless Spirits); given the worst recruits (Need Skilled Recruits).

MAKING A CITY

By default: Moderate, Steady, Guard, Market, and Guild (your choice), with Oaths to at least two other steadings (usually a town and a keep). If it has trade with at least one stading and fealty from at least one, choose one: permanent defenses like walls (+Defenses, Oath); ruled by a single individual (Personage, Power Political); diverse (Dwarven or Elven or both); a trade hub (Trade with every stading nearby, +Prosperity); ancient, built on its own ruins (History, Divine); a center of learning (Arcane, Craft, Power Arcane).

Choose one problem: outgrown its resources (+Population, Need food); designs on nearby territory (Enmity, +Defenses); ruled by a theocracy (-Defenses, Power Divine); ruled by the people (-Defenses, +Population); supernatural defenses (+Defenses, Blight related creatures); lies on a place of power (Arcane, Personage who watches it, Blight arcane creatures).

FRONTS ON THE CAMPAIGN MAP

Fronts are organizational tools, not something the characters think of, so don't put them on the map directly. Instead, for each front, add some feature that indicates its presence — the orcs of Olg'gothal might be marked with a burning village, fires in the distance at night, or a stream of refugees; a lich might be marked by a tower where dead plants take root and grow. As fronts change, change the map.

UPDATING THE CAMPAIGN MAP

The campaign map updates between sessions or after significant downtime. Check each of the following conditions for all steadings before moving to the next:

Growth. When a village or town is Booming and its prosperity is above Moderate, reduce prosperity and defenses to move to the next larger type; new towns gain Market, new cities gain Guild.

Collapse. When a stading's population is in Exodus and prosperity is Poor or less, it shrinks a size (city→town, keep→town, town→village, village→ghost town), gaining +prosperity or +defenses and steady population as appropriate.

Want. When a stading has an unfulfilled need, it takes -prosperity, -population, or loses a related tag, your choice.

Trade. When trade is blocked, the stading gains Need (the traded good) or takes -prosperity.

Capture. When control of a resource changes, move that resource tag to the new owner; the previous owner gains Need for it if they had Craft or Trade based on it, and the new owner loses any matching Need.

Profit. When a stading has more trade than its current prosperity, it gets +prosperity.

Surplus. When a stading has a resource another needs, they set up trade (barring enmity or other obstacles): the resource-holder gets +prosperity and their choice of Oaths, +population, or +defenses; the needy stading erases its Need and adds Trade.

Aid. When a stading has oaths to one under attack, it may take -defenses to give the attacked stading +defenses.

Embattled. When a stading is surrounded by enemy forces, it suffers losses: fighting back costs -defenses (and -prosperity if defenses drop to Watch or less); waiting it out costs -population (and a lost tag if population drops to Shrinking or less). If the stading's defenses outclass the attacker's, it's no longer surrounded.

Opportunity. When a stading has enmity against a weaker one, it may attack, becoming -defenses while the attack continues.

Clash. When two steadings attack each other, their forces meet between them: if evenly matched, both take -defenses and return home; if one has the advantage, they take -defenses while the other takes -2 defenses.

OTHER UPDATES

These conditions cover the most basic interactions between steadings — the presence of your fronts and the players' actions mean things can get far more complex. Since tags are descriptive, add them as needed to reflect the players' actions and your fronts' effects on the world.