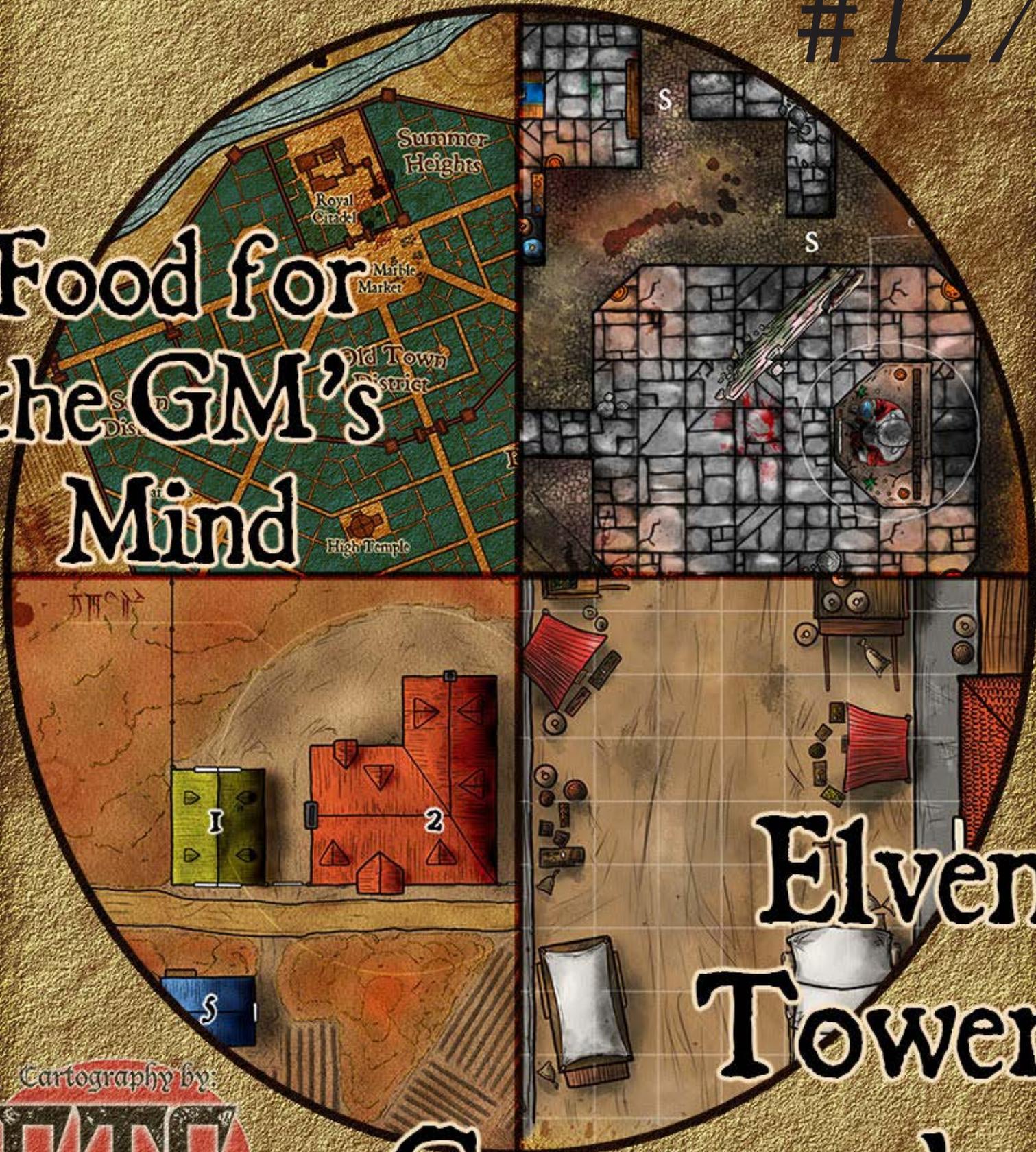


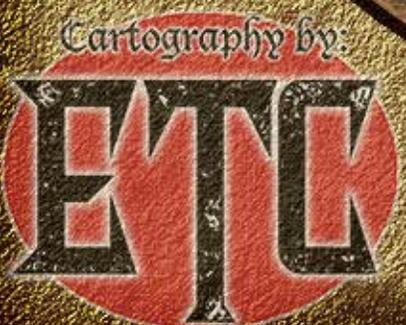
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#127

Food for the GM's Mind



Elven Tower



Cartography

Elven Tower Cartography

October - 2017

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127 - The Hillfort of Ashben

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The Hillfort of Ashben



urrounded by hills and farms, the fortified settlement known as the Hillfort of Ashben is a bastion of trade. The common folk call it Ashben colloquially. Most of the villagers in Ashben are farmers or herders, the town depends on outside traders and merchants to acquire other goods.

Ashben is strategically located in a place of transit, on the top of a great hill. Decades ago Ashben was a properly manned fort. An outer dry moat surrounds the town, the original builders dug the moat to counter siege weapons and cavalry, only two narrow bridges connect the moat to the main town level, which is twenty feet higher than the exterior. Right after the inner side of the exterior moat there is a wall, squat towers built every so often all around town. The town proper features over thirty buildings and the great house of faith.

The center of Ashben is another elevated patch of land, it is also surrounded by a dry moat. The center is connected to the town by a single narrow bridge with its own gate. Inside the inner circle is the manor house, the granary, the wine deposit and some houses. The manor house is currently occupied by Baron Rams d'Lao, he and his family have lived in Ashben for the last six years. Baron d'Lao is a just lord. He has a good reputation in the realm. Everybody knows he is a strong and capable soldier. He was appointed to oversee the reconstruction of Ashben, after it had been abandoned and neglected for almost a decade. His oldest son and heir Lorenz d'Lao came of age recently. Unlike his father, Lorenz is impatient. He is already a great swordsman with dreams of greatness.

The market is in the southern part of town, in the outer circle. Merchant stalls are set there permanently, the market opens every day as merchants and traders come from north and south of the Northern Road. They peddle their goods for other merchants and the settlers of Ashben to buy.

Other than Baron d'Lao and his immediate family,

the only other noble in town is Sir Kevan Aranadi. He is an old man who lives in a large property in the north. Sir Kevan's reputation as an impressive swordsman precedes him. Stories, songs and rhymes about his achievements are often part of bards' repertoires. He is old and spends his time caring for his crops and plants. Twice a week he trains the baron's son, Lorenz. Adventurers and would-be heroes come from time to time seeking counsel and training from the old war master. Sir Kevan refuses all, he holds no love for violence anymore. He trains Lorenz out of courtesy to the baron. Out of practice, old and unmotivated, Sir Kevan is still one of the best swordsmen in the realm.

Close to the south gate, there is a big building that serves as the only inn in town. It does not have a name. The owner and innkeeper is Bartholomew Sagast, he is a rough man, middle aged and burly. He is not a man of many words, most people already know not to try to engage him much. He has however a topic that he loves to discuss, it is the proper way to ferment and care for grapefruit to brew a good wine. Bartholomew used to be a brewer for years before the winery burned down to the ground and he lost everything.

Quest Ideas

- 1. While the adventurers are in town, the fortified settlement is attacked by a war band of orcs. The town is defensible but orcs are numerous. The PCs might have to hold one of the gates before being forced back to the inner circle and hold a second gate there. If things go sour they will have to fall back to the manor house. This is a great opportunity to show off Sir Kevan who would be a high level combatant.
- 2. Sir Kevan is an old knight whose achievements are the source of songs and legends. He still holds an unfinished business. Back when he was younger, he and a cherished friend explored a forgotten dungeon in search of fortune. The

The Hillfort of Ashben



threats they faced there were too much for them, Sir Kevan escaped but his friend perished. Now in his old age, Sir Kevan wishes to fulfill a last adventure before retiring for good after avenging his friend. This is a great opportunity to lead the party to a dangerous dungeon. Alternatively, the danger could be so high that even now Sir Kevan won't be able to survive, he might just be looking for a valiant way to end his life.

- 3. Bartholomew Sagast, the innkeeper has finally gotten over the trauma of losing his winery many years ago. He is currently building a cellar under the inn, he already bought some land to start harvesting grapefruit. He still needs the Baron's permission to do so. Being that he is not

the most extroverted person, he'll try to get the PCs to help him do the talking when the audience with the Baron is granted.

- 4. Lorenz d'Lao, the Baron's heir, is a young evil man. He is of the opinion that his father is too slow and too kind to his subjects. He would have them work harder and longer. Lorenz is secretly plotting his father's death by "accident". Depending on the party's general alignment and disposition, this is a good chance to either help Lorenz get rid of his father by "accident", or have the party find out about the assassination plan, and let them try to stop Lorenz.