



The Dark Eye

New Bonds
— and —
Ancient Quarrels



Joborn

- 01 Castle Joborn
- 02 Clock Tower
- 03 Marketplace
- 04 Town Hall
- 05 Fish Market
- 06 Ferry
- 07 Tollhouse
- 08 Watermill
- G01 House Joborn (tavern)
- G02 Ingvallian (inn)
- G03 King Wendolyn (pub)
- G04 Peace (beer cellar)
- T01 Fortified Temple of
Peraine and Travia

327 FEET



New Bonds and Ancient Quarrels



Credits

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Publishing Management

Markus Plötz, Michael Mingers

Editorial Staff

Nikolai Hoch

Rules Design

Alex Spohr

Authors

Marco Findeisen

Edited by

Eevie Demirtel

Copyediting

Thorsten Most, Timo Roth

Art Director

Nadine Schäkel

Cover Illustration

Djamila Knopf

Layout, Composition, & Design

Thomas Michalski

Layout Design

Patrick Soeder

Interior Illustrations and Maps

Steffen Brand, Markus Holzum, Djamila Knopf,
Annika Maar, Hannah Moellmann, Nikolai Ostertag,
Nathaniel Park, Matthias Rothenaicher, Elif Siebenpfeiffer,
Nadine Schäkel, Holger Schulz, Rabea Wieneke

With thanks to Maria Ivicic, Hannes Krützkamp,
and Yanis Mandavit

English Version

Studio Director

Timothy Brown

Managing Editor

Kevin MacGregor

Editing

Kevin MacGregor, Trisha DeFoggi

Translation

Eduard Lerperger

Layout

Ben Acevedo, Alida Saxon

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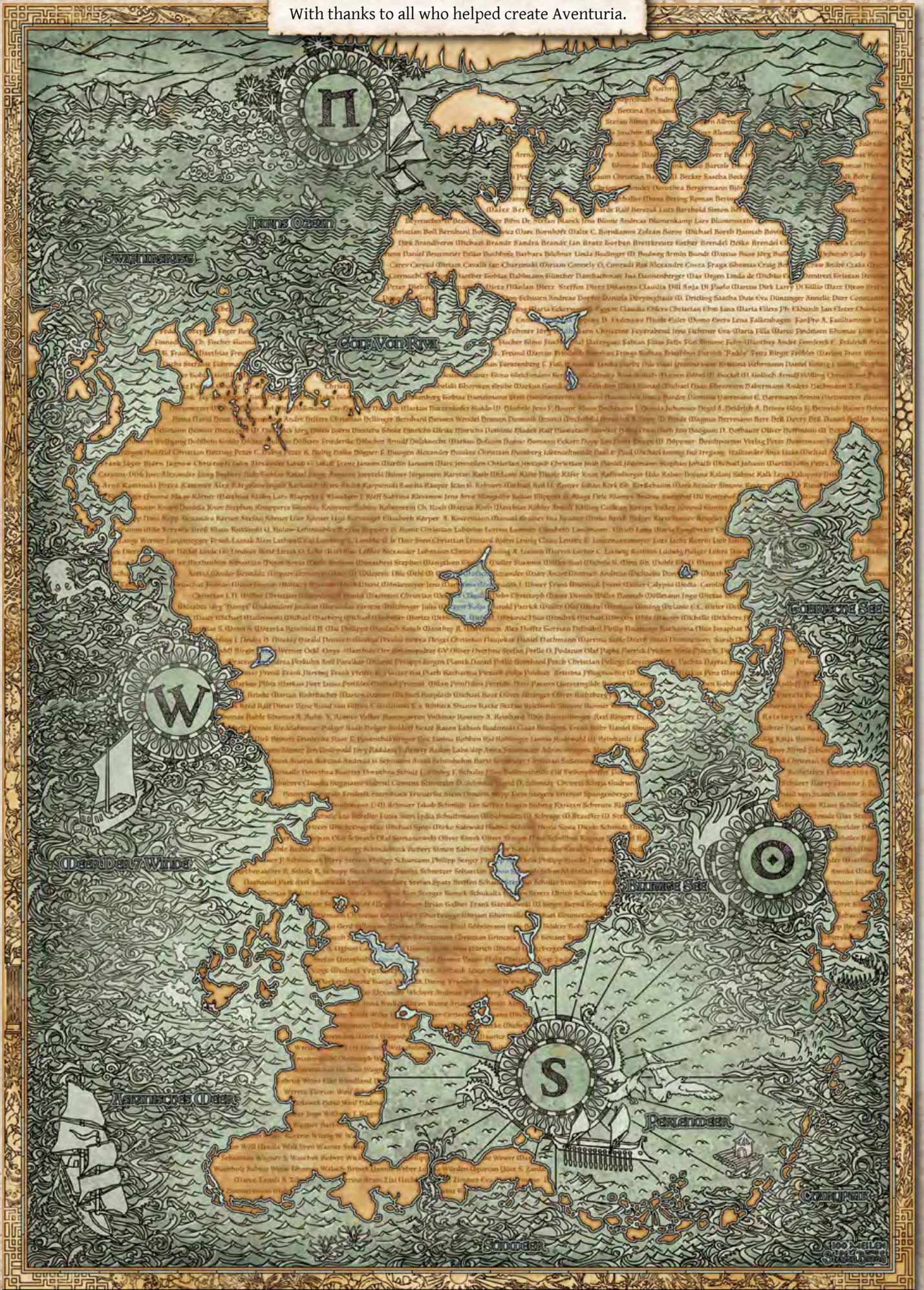


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To make a scene easier for the heroes, use the suggestions in this paragraph.



To make a scene more difficult for the heroes, use the suggestions in this paragraph.

- **Read Aloud Text:** Some sections include text to be read aloud or paraphrased for your players. These sections contain no GM-only information.
- **GM Information:** This text offers helpful hints for the GM and may contain information that your heroes need to discover or deduce, bit by bit. Some information serves only as additional background information for the GM.
- **Rumors:** When heroes try to gather information, they might hear gossip and hearsay. Rumors are marked with a + (true), a - (false), or a +/- (partly true, partly false).
- **NPC Stat Blocks:** Note that some NPCs, such as spellcasters and Blessed Ones, possess a large number of skills, but this book does not necessarily list every skill with a rating higher than 0 if it is not immediately relevant to the scenario. Feel free to add skills and assign ratings as you see fit.

• These boxes contain important information about the scenario!

regional-specific information from that sourcebook is marked in the text.

Taverns & Inns: Quality, Prices, and Beds

Taverns, inns, and the like have ratings for *Quality* (Q), *Prices* (P), and *Beds* (B). Q refers to the level of accommodations, while P modifies the standard prices for services as listed in the *Core Rules* on page 382. See the table for an explanation of these ratings. B is simply the total number of beds available. For example, a place with a rating of (Q4, P3, B25) is a good inn that is cheaper than expected and offers 25 beds.



NPCs with this symbol play an important role in future official adventures.



NPCs with this symbol hold a *position* that is important for future official adventures, but the character itself can be replaced with one of your choosing.



NPCs with this symbol do not appear in future official adventures. You can reuse them freely in your campaigns and adventures.

Level	Quality	Price
1	Sorry excuse for a rat trap	Very cheap (50% of the standard price)
2	Dirty dive	Cheap (75% of the standard price)
3	Average tavern	Normal (standard price)
4	Good inn	Expensive (150% of the standard price)
5	Exquisite hotel	Very costly (200% of the standard price)
6	Luxurious accommodation	Prohibitively expensive (400% of the standard price)

Introduction

For the GM

Greetings in the name of the Twelve! You hold in your hands the first companion adventure to the regional sourcebook, *The Warring Kingdoms*. This book includes all information needed to run this adventure, but feel free to embellish and expand it with elements from *The Warring Kingdoms* sourcebook. Throughout this adventure, the abbreviation *TWK* followed by a page number refers to entries in the regional sourcebook that provide further information on topics, places, or characters not included in this book. Feel free to introduce more storylines into this adventure, bring more characters into the plot, or try out some of the new spells. Naturally, the new professions introduced in *The Warring Kingdoms* fit well here, too.

And now, onward to adventure!

The Story Thus Far

Joborn, along with the Nostrian-Andergastan border region along the river Ornib, is the most hotly-contested territory in the Warring Kingdoms and suffers from the unending enmity like no other. The armed conflicts create constant companions of poverty, fear, and hunger for the residents, and even those who fervently hate their neighbors sometimes yearn for a life of peace. *Raitjan Angmund*, the Jobornan Blessed One of Rahja, and several influential city guild leaders arranged a wedding to unite the two kingdoms, which seems to be a step in the right direction. Young *Gosthelm of Joborn*, son of *Rufus of Joborn*, the Great Baron, is to marry the beautiful *Noraletha*, daughter of the affluent Nostrian knight *Rondrastin Kasmyrai of Eichenschlag*.

There is much distrust on both sides and rumors say that the stern Great Baron is secretly opposed to this marriage alliance. Behind closed doors, the people of Joborn say the marriage is only going forward due to the influence of Rufus' wife, *Wenzeslausia Zornbold*, the sister of the King of Andergast. Many believe that *King Wendelmir VI* expects the marriage to pacify the Joborn region, end years of bitter skirmishing, and eventually bring him higher tax revenues.

Rufus knows only too well that if another war breaks out, Joborn will likely be one of the Nostrians' first targets. If he must forfeit his fiefdom, he would suffer the fate of many a landless knight, and as the king's brother-in-law, this would be an unbearable shame. The arranged marriage could procure a measure of neutrality for Joborn. Should Nostria conquer it in the future, chances are good that it would come under the control of his future daughter-in-law, thereby securing Rufus' legacy.

The bride's mother, a knight named *Rondrastin Kasmyrai of Eichenschlag*, appreciates the social advancement that a wedding between her daughter and the son of a Great Baron would bring her family. For her, the marriage is also a safeguard: if the Nostrians fail to retake Joborn, she can

console herself with the fact that her grandson will one day reign over the city.

The influential Andergastan sumes—who secretly helped Angmund arrange this marriage—hope this wedding is the first step toward reconciliation between Nostria and Andergast. ◦

◦ The marriage arrangement is actually the effort of the old sume, *Arbogast* (TWK page 125). He is well aware that this one wedding will not quell the unending hatred between the two kingdoms, but he believes it is the first of many steps required for peace.

What is About to Happen: The Enemies

Not everyone in the Warring Kingdoms is rejoicing about this planned alliance—quite the contrary. The further you travel from the war-torn borderlands, the more people you'll find who oppose a marriage to the archenemy. While most are simply resigned to rant about it, one man decides to act.

The impoverished knight *Rodegrimm of Blutbuchenforst* is an ardent supporter of the Nostrian cause and a member of the *League of Forest Knights*, founded by Countess *Melanoth of Ingvalsrohden* to protect the borders. He feels betrayed by this wedding for two reasons. First, it appears the Nostrian queen and her husband have lost their minds, as they seem to prefer to wed their children to Andergast instead of retaking Joborn by force. Second, the marriage between Rodegrimm's son *Marolyn* and *Noraletha* of *Eichenschlag* was already decided, until *Kasmyrai* suddenly changed her mind and accepted Joborn's offer instead. Therefore, Rodegrimm decides to hire henchmen to crash the wedding and abduct the bride, setting up his chance to appear as *Noraletha's* savior by rescuing her. He hopes that in doing so, he can still arrange a marriage between *Noraletha* and his son.

In the general excitement of the wedding, his hired thugs go on a rampage and abduct the bride in the resulting chaos. To make sure no witnesses remain who could reveal that he is playing both sides, Rodegrimm murders the abductors during the handover. Then, he flees with *Noraletha* to his hiding place, the witch *Erlgunde's* tower, above the *Ingval* river.



Meanwhile, behind the scenes, all signs point toward war. Nostrians and Andergastans muster their forces and seem ready to settle the question of blame on the battlefield—that is, if a small group of outsiders—the heroes—cannot resolve the situation before it's too late.

What is About to Happen: The Heroes

The heroes get caught up in the middle of the *Jobornan Bloody Wedding* and are subsequently hired to rescue Noraletha. They follow the abductors' trail and, after a few detours, finally reach Erlgunde's tower, where Rodegrimm has hidden Noraletha. They finally capture the knight's men-at-arms after an exciting water chase, but Rodegrimm manages to escape with Noraletha once more. Cornered, he seeks protection from his patroness, the *Countess of Ingvalsrohden*, who inhabits the impregnable *Castle Nordvest*. But, what kind of adventurers would the heroes be if they could not find a way inside?

Choosing Heroes

This adventure's resolution does not depend on foreign heroes and can be solved by motivated local champions from either of the two kingdoms (if they desire the best for their homeland and are not blind warmongers, that is). A group comprised of heroes from both kingdoms is possible, as long as others step in to mediate if hostilities between the Nostrians and Andergastans arise. Perhaps they'll discover during the course of the adventure that their archenemy is not quite as terrible as they once believed! This adventure also provides suitable challenges for heroes who can navigate social affairs—whether in town or on the battlefield.

Avoid including too many exotic characters in your group; though Nostrians and Andergastans do not like to admit it, they share a strong distrust of all things foreign. This means Forest Folk, southern Aventurians, and even Tulamydes might face difficulties. Thorwalians are unwelcome in Nostria, due to their numerous past raids. They should expect trouble in Ingvalsrohden, especially, as Countess Melanoth has fought for years to honor the legacy of her daughter, *Kendrar*, who was lost to the Thorwalians.



The Jobornan Wedding

At the start of the adventure, the heroes are mere festival-goers participating in the Jobornan wedding. They meet several important personalities from the adventure, and from the Warring Kingdoms in general, but chaos erupts shortly before the wedding ceremony. Unexpectedly, the heroes find themselves caught up in a frenzy of Nostrian and Andergastan violence. The bride disappears in the confusion, and, since the heroes (hopefully) fight valiantly, they are subsequently hired to rescue her and uncover the reason behind this bloody incident.

An Atmosphere of Excitement

The upcoming wedding is the biggest festival this small settlement in the border region between Nostria and Andergast has seen since the consecration of the new Temple of Rahja in 1034 FB. The joyful occasion becomes a veritable sensation if one considers the betrotheds' origins: Gosthelm Longford of Joborn is an Andergastan Great Baron's son, while Noralettha of Eichenschlag is a Nostrian knight's daughter. Talk of their union is on everyone's lips, in even the Warring Kingdoms' most remote settlements, and has been the main topic of conversation for weeks as Joborn prepares for the celebration.

Note: In Aventuria's official history, the *Jobornan Bloody Wedding* takes place in summer at the end of 1040 FB. Feel free to modify the date to suit your campaign.

Getting Started

There are quite a few reasons to visit Joborn besides the wedding celebration. As GM, you'll know best why your heroes chose to travel to this border town on the Ingval. The better the plot hook fits the characters' backgrounds, the more likely it is your players will follow your suggestions and embellish them with their own ideas.

- Heroes from Nostria or Andergast might have come to witness the wedding with their own eyes. Perhaps they simply cannot believe it, or truly hope that this is an important step on the path to reconciliation. It is also possible their liege lord commands them to attend and serve in his retinue. Heroes with the social status *Free* have some spending money (up to 2 ducats each), and it is certainly a great honor for them to attend.
-  **Councilor Kasimir Tryming** (47 years old; blond; stocky; broad shoulders and strong upper arms; master baker; clouds of flour dust erupt from his clothes with every movement; *Commerce* 9 (12/14/13), *Willpower* 7 (11/14/13), *SPI* 2) is master of the local



Ingerimm's Guild and proud of the wedding he helped arrange. He expects it to lead to a longer period of peace and increasing prosperity, and fears nothing more than agitators who could ignite enmity between the Nostrians and Andergastans in the city. The presence of rogues and pickpockets could quickly lead to quarrels and unrest; therefore, he seeks help from foreign (supposedly neutral) individuals to support him in keeping the peace.

🦋 **I** The Andergastan (or, optionally, Nostrian) knight *Lindbert of Eichelstätt* (28 years old; broad shoulders; striking face; vain, narcissistic, and always eager to be the center of attention; a patriot who has no love for a wedding with the enemy, but who doggedly tries to bite his tongue at every critical word against it; *Willpower* 8 (14/13/11), *SPI* 1) is taking advantage of the wedding to find a bride for himself. Because he wants to make a grand entrance, he enlists the heroes to act as his entourage. While fighters serve to protect him, he also uses mages, elves, dwarves, and other exotic characters to draw attention to himself. For their services, he provides a tabard bearing his colors and pays them each 2 silverthalers per day.

🦋 The festival also draws performers, storytellers, and entertainers of all kinds to the city. There is no other topic of conversation on both sides of the Ornib, and the city guilds promise a premium of 10 silverthalers to every performer who makes the arduous journey to Joborn.

Accommodations

There are two large inns in town, the *House Joborn* (Q3/P4/B15) and the lodging house *Ingvallian* (Q4/P3/B20), which have nearly doubled all their prices and are still almost fully booked. Some enterprising burghers and farmers are more than willing to let travelers seeking shelter sleep in their parlors (single accommodation, 5 silverthalers; multi-bedroom, 8 halers) or barns (2 halers).

Noble heroes or characters from a nobleman's retinue are able to set up their tents in the west (the Nostrian camp) or in the south (the Andergastan camp).

Joborn: A Tour

The following description is limited to places of importance to the upcoming wedding. For a *Map of Joborn*, see this book's inside front cover. For a more detailed description of Joborn, see *The Warring Kingdoms*, page 38.

In the Streets

The major roads in Joborn connect the three town gates to the port and intersect in the marketplace. Merchants and performers turn these streets into one, large trade fair. Tents, canopies, and carts crowd together on the narrow paths and merchants praise the qualities of their

Andergastan hams, Nostrian saltarels, and Jobornan pretzels with loud, piercing voices. Toolmakers, barber surgeons, and tooth pullers offer their services and compete for the crowd's attention with jugglers, fire-eaters, and acrobats, who cause people to stop in their tracks with amazement. Vivid garlands and pennants in the bridal couple's colors stretch across the streets, where the scents of roasts and sweets mingle together.

The Marketplace

The final wedding preparations are underway in the marketplace. The guild apprentices carry tables and set up seating, while Jobornan women decorate the dining tables with oak leaves and thick candles. There are fireplaces with large skewers already set up, and workers carefully build a large counter for serving drinks.

The Port

These days, Joborn's small river port must manage unprecedented ship traffic. Many nobles and traders arrived on boats, which now lie moored in two, sometimes even three, rows in the small harbor bay. The fishing crews are disgruntled about this, as reaching the river now requires complex maneuvers.

There are many merchant stalls in the port area, as well. Entire troupes of performers come together to present their acts on stages or in tents. *Birsel the Nimble* fascinates the crowd with several daring acrobatic stunts performed on a thin rope strung between the warehouse and the old tower. Despite several booths offering fragrant food, a repugnant fish smell lingers over the entire area.

Tent Town

From a distance, it almost appears as though Joborn is under siege again. Two veritable cities consisting of more than 30 tents each have sprouted up to the south and west of the town. Many of these tents bear the colors of the nobles to whom they belong. Banners wave from most of them, declaring the identities of their owners to those with the proper knowledge. The Nostrians gather in the tents to the west, while the Andergastans settle in the tents to the south.

Using *Etiquette (Heraldry & Family Trees)*, heroes gather the following information: most of the nobles here are knights from the forest county of Joborn (Nostria) or the barony of Joborn (Andergast). Some hail from neighboring provinces. They all congregate around the tents of Forest Count *Eilert* (Nostria) and *King Wendelmir* (Andergast).

Besides the nobility and their retinues, a few prostitutes have also set up shop in the area. And some performers and bards give additional performances here. Joborn's residents are exuberant—they drink, play games, and sing freely. Nevertheless, the frequent clanking of armor provides a constant reminder that two armies gather here.

NPCs

Naturally, an event as significant as this wedding draws many important people to Joborn. Some of them play an important role in this adventure (main characters), while others are significant only to the first chapter or two (minor characters).

The heroes should meet at least the main characters, if not a few minor characters, before the scene *United in Hatred* (see page 13). The suggested *Events* (see page 11) are ideal for such meetings, though they can occur at anytime, anywhere in the city. Once the heroes get to know the soon-to-be-abducted bride, her family, or the family of her betrothed, they are likely more motivated to volunteer their help. If they are truly heroes, the crime itself should suffice as the impetus to begin an investigation.

Main Characters

Free Knight Rodegrimm of Blutbuchenforst

Summary: Aging knight in his mid-50s; 6'3"; angular head; broad-shoulders; gray-flecked hair and full beard; wears a patch over his left eye; has a scar stretching across half his face, largely concealed by his beard; tough fellow, embittered and consumed by self-hatred; rarely laughs and looks grim.

Titles: Master knight

Motivation: Rodegrimm feels betrayed by the bride's mother, Kasmyrai of Eichenschlag, who had already promised her daughter's hand to his son, Marolyn. He is practically destitute, and the marriage would have secured his family's future. Moreover, he hates the Andergastans with all his heart and cannot believe an upright Nostrian would even consider such a union.

Agenda: He wants to prevent the wedding by any means necessary, thereby bringing his family back into play as a good match. To achieve his goal, he plans to abduct the bride—twice. First, he has hired thugs to disrupt the wedding and abduct Noralettha. Later, he and his stalwart companions will “rescue” her. Once he has hidden the bride somewhere secure, he plans to contact Kasmyrai to remind her of their agreement—basically, sending her a politely-worded ransom demand.

Role: The villain who puts the plot into motion. Ultimately, his fate rests in the hands of the heroes.

Background: Rodegrimm lost his knight's estate to the Andergastans as a young knight during the last *Nostrian-Andergastan War* in 1010 FB. Without lands or holdings, he had little chance to lead an honorable life befitting someone of his station. Out of necessity, he entered the service of the old counts of Ingvalsrohden, but they paid him only enough to keep up appearances. Losing his independence, having to sell his services like a mercenary, and being dependent



on others gnawed at Rodegrimm. His self-hatred is at least as strong as his hatred for all Andergastans, on whom he blames his fate. He does not understand *Queen Yolande's* restrained politics, and would much rather support Old Countess *Melanoth of Ingvalsrohden's* aspirations to unite her forest knights and secure the borders.

He sees his son's marriage to the affluent Eichenschlag family as his last chance to restore his family's honor. He has long foregone knightly virtues to accomplish this goal.

Fate: Rodegrimm's fate lies in your hands. He will likely meet his end during the final act of the adventure, but it is also possible the heroes capture him and deliver him to the Andergastans or the Nostrians, if Countess Melanoth does not intervene in his favor. While the Andergastans will execute Rodegrimm for his actions, the Nostrians could imprison him in Fortress Gordelyn (the infamous *Bloody Fortress*). If you plan to run more adventures in this region, then Rodegrimm could reappear one day, reformed or, far more likely, as an antagonist.

Role playing tips: Look cantankerous and stubborn. Talk with a husky voice and keep your body tense, as if ready to parry a blow at a moment's notice, or to strike one yourself. Rodegrimm does not simply drink, he drinks like a fish. And when he speaks, he curses so extensively every sailor within earshot blushes with shame.

Stats: for Rodegrimm's stats, see page 48.

"If you want something to happen, you need to make it happen yourself!"

"A queen who really loved Nostria would forbid something like this!"

🦉 Erlgunde the Witch

Summary: Competent witch and experienced ranger; about 30 years old; chestnut brown, slightly wavy hair; green eyes; good-looking; folks regard her uncomfortable, piercing gaze as eerie, and many claim she has the *Evil Eye* (she loves using this assumption to intimidate opponents).

Role: Rodegrimm's henchwoman; she offers him magical support.

Background: Erlgunde is the daughter of an intemperate lumberjack from the border region of the Warring Kingdoms. Her magical potential first manifested itself in a hefty *lumbago* curse after her father, on one of many occasions, attempted to beat her and her mother. She fled and found shelter with a Nostrian witch named *Asmolinda* (see page 29), who recognized her gift and trained her in the *Silent Sisterhood*. She gained a sort of appreciation she had never known before as a woman, and she increasingly rejected all things Andergastan. The power of hatred has long held Erlgunde in its grasp, and she now serves the hateful Rodegrimm as a ranger.

Fate: Erlgunde's fate rests in the heroes' hands. If they do not kill her, she could serve as an important witness against Rodegrimm—if guaranteed free passage, she is quite willing to reveal what she knows of his plot.

Role playing tips: Stare directly into the eyes of those whom you address and maintain eye contact until they look away. Stay calm and friendly, but somewhat aloof, as long as those who address you act politely. Turn into a shrieking harpy if someone rouses your anger. Treat all Andergastans with a cold hatred.



Quirks: Her familiar is a skull owl named 🦉 *Uhlgar* (Erlgunde's familiar does not let the witch out of her sight. For the skull owl's stats, see page 34.); she uses a spear as her flying instrument.

Important stats: For Erlgunde's stats, see page 35.

"What are you looking at?"

"Everyone gets what they deserve."

🦉 Noralettha of Eichenschlag

Summary: 17 years old; light brown hair; dark eyes; delicate figure.

Role: The abducted bride and damsel-in-distress.

Background: Noralettha spent most of her young life on her parents' knightly estate. When she turned 14 years old, she entered the Royal Court as a lady's maid, which gave her insight into high-level politics. She admires the queen's wisdom and foresight and wants to follow her example in all things. Her marriage to Gosthelm arises from political duty, not love. She met Rodegrimm, who was to be her father-in-law, once before at a tourney in Nostria and, therefore, trusts him.

Fate: Hopefully, the heroes rescue her, but she might also get killed. Whatever the outcome, she does not marry Gosthelm of Joborn.

Role playing tips: Greet everyone with respect, think for a moment before you answer questions, and try to be diplomatic. Act responsibly, but also allow a child-like fascination or silliness to show on occasion, only to bring it quickly back under control.

Important stats: *Disguise* 4 (12/13/12), *Empathy* 5 (12/12/13), *Fast-Talk* 4 (12/12/13), *Pick Locks* 5 (12/13/13), *Stealth* 6 (12/12/12)

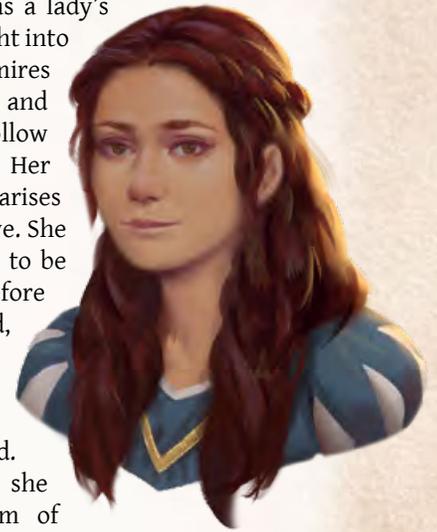
The Henchmen

Rodegrimm's men-at-arms are experts with Andergasters and Nostrian longbows. For their stats, see page 35.

🦉 *Tommegrimm* (32 years old; Nostrian; stout; muscular figure; shoulder-length hair; loves his greatsword; hates all Andergasters; needs money)

🦉 *Ingvamir* (23 years old; Nostrian; tall and thin; choppy hair; loves his newborn baby; hates himself for his large gambling debts; needs money)

🦉 *Algane* (25 years old; Nostrian; long, stringy brown hair; unusually low voice; loves tobacco; hates to be outside on cold mornings; appreciates a warm bed)



♠ *Blattislaus, Borkfried, Eberlieb, Eichwart, and Steinhard* (in their late 20s; medium height; brown hair; matted beards; love money; hate all Andergastans; never had lessons in good behavior) are Rodegrimm's undercover henchmen (secretly, these Nostrian rogues' real names are Basilio, Cargo, Gero, Halvo, and Murro, respectively). On Rodegrimm's orders, they infiltrate the wedding disguised as Andergastans, interrupt the festivities at just the right moment, and abduct Noraletha. Rodegrimm hired the rowdiest men he could find and dressed them as backwoods yokels to fit his image of Andergastans. He disposes of them after the abduction.

Minor Characters

♠ *Gosthelm Longford of Joborn* (19 years old; Andergastan; groom-to-be; Rufus of Joborn and Wenzeslausia Zornbold's son; *Arbold of Bearvalley's* squire; wants to become a good and just knight; hates his cowardice and needs someone to bolster his courage; devoted to his bride-to-be out of a sense of duty and resigned to his wedding—even though he has never met her).

♠ *Rondrastin Kasmyrai of Eichenschlag* (46 years old; Nostrian; dark hair with gray streaks; slender; wears a serious expression; dresses in chainmail and tabard; the bride's mother; deft power politician with the pride of a knight; initially agreed to marry her daughter to Rodegrimm's son, the change of plans sets the events into motion; seeks to increase her family's influence; hates Andergastans; knows how to make an arrangement).

♠ *Great Baron Rufus Longford of Joborn* (in his early 50s; Andergastan; graying red hair; green eyes; stern demeanor; wears chainmail and tabard; the groom's father, lord of Joborn, and brother-in-law to the king; rules Joborn with an iron fist, but is secretly controlled by his wife; was talked into this marriage; loves his position; hates the Nostrians; needs his wife's wise council; fears the Nostrian population might revolt if he acts too severely).

♠ *Princess Wenzeslausia Zornbold of Joborn* (about 40 years old; Andergastan; dark blonde, braided hair; wears expensive green clothes with golden embroidery; the groom's mother and the king's sister; ambitious, stubborn, and hard to influence; loves her children; hates that she must accept a subordinate role as a woman; fulfills her ambition through her husband).

♠ *Esquire Belenolian of Eichenschlag* (in his late 40s; Nostrian; shoulder-length gray hair; wears a beret and ruff collar instead of armor; the bride's father; of noble birth, but without knightly accolades—has the temperament of

a merchant; loves his wife; hates the ridicule of the Andergastans who find it amusing his wife is the one involved in politics; wants his daughter to marry a civilized (Nostrian) man).

♠ *King Wendelmir VI Zornbold of Andergast* (34 years old; 6'10" tall; blue eyes; blond hair; quick-tempered and cruel; in dire need of amusement; King of Andergast; the groom's uncle; loves power, but hates when others urge him to enforce his power). For a detailed description of the king, see *TWK*, page 124.

♠ *Forest Count Eilert II Rheideryan of Mirdin, Prince of Nostria* (40 years old; 6'13" tall; ice-blue eyes; dark blond hair; striking scar; rarely smiles; proud and unyielding, more of a knight than a nobleman; married to Nostria's *Queen Yolande, Kasmyrai of Eichenschlag's* liege lord—they share the same swordfather; would take back Joborn, the lost seat of his family, by force if he had the means to do so; believes the marriage is a step in the right direction, as it means the Nostrians gain another foothold; loves his wife; hates Andergastans, especially Rufus of Joborn). For a detailed description of the forest count, see *TWK*, page 122.

♠ *Raitjan Angmund* (in his mid-40s; brown hair and eyes; if not for his weight, he would be considered classically handsome; masterful singer with a sonorous voice; High Blessed One of Rahja and guardian of the *Love Light*, a clay lamp associated with a famous miracle; loves to sing and revel; hates the eternal conflict between the kingdoms; is proud of his role in arranging this marriage).

Events

Use the following events to give the players an impression of the tension in Joborn at the start of the adventure and to introduce important characters. These scenes are suggestions—adapt or change them as you like. However, we recommend the heroes meet all the main characters (see page 9) before proceeding with the scene *United in Hatred* (see page 13), to increase their motivation to intervene.

The Rabble-Rouser: A cluster of people forms around a gaunt man in the harbor. From atop a barrel, he vociferates against the Andergastans—his face a deep shade of red. Shouts rise up from the growing crowd, as people begin to recount all the injustices the Nostrian population endured under Great Baron Rufus' reign. The great baron's guards are quick to arrest the instigator, but Andergastan intervention could quickly lead to escalation in this volatile atmosphere.

One Tankard Too Many: Numerous guests squeeze into the few taverns in Joborn in the evenings. The air is stuffy, space is scarce, and alcohol flows freely. An exuberant Andergastan claps a friend on the shoulder, who then stumbles forward and spills his beer on the man next to him—who is, unfortunately, Nostrian. A proper tavern brawl ensues, one in which no piece of furniture remains intact.

Miscounted: The Albernian alchemist **Theowyn Flux** (in his mid-50s; pot-bellied; loves his work; hates unfriendly people; desperately needs fresh *mibelreed*, a potent but addictive healing herb) gets into a conflict with a man wearing the green tabard of an Andergastan (*Blattislaus*; see *Henchmen*, page 48). The Andergastan is 4 silverthalers short of the agreed-upon price of 115 silverthalers. Theowyn's hired protector is about to drive the Andergastan away, ignoring his protests that he desperately needs the bottle for his ill mother.

Blattislaus is secretly trying to purchase anesthetics. If the heroes become suspicious, they are able to learn more by making successful checks on the following skills:

- **Empathy:** The alchemist seems to feel just as uneasy about the sudden attention as his customer. It is possible the herb is illegal, but the alchemist still does not want to give in and lose money.
- **Empathy (Discern Motivation):** The amount of the alchemist's asking price is very high for a simple man-at-arms to afford.
- **Etiquette (Heraldry & Family Trees):** The heroes do not recognize the knight's coat of arms. Perhaps he traveled a great distance? (Secretly, the coat of arms is fake.)

The heroes are also free to help Blattislaus by giving him the 4 silverthalers needed to settle the dispute.

Should the heroes discover and eliminate Blattislaus, his accomplices act without him. The real victim in this case is poor Noraleta, who gets knocked out instead of drugged.

Get Out of the Way! An older knight with a grim expression and an eye patch, accompanied by his men-at-arms (the knight Rodegrimm, plus Ingvamar, Tommegrimm, and Algane), ride into the city from the direction of the Nostrian camp. The streets are blocked, but the knight takes no notice and makes his way through the crowd on horseback while his men-at-arms roughly push the people aside (perhaps one of the heroes is among them). A farmer with a basket of onions falls, and the onions roll all over the street. The farmer, as well as his goods, might be trampled by the crowd if someone does not intervene.

Gossip

Wherever there are people, there is much gossip. The following gossip provides background information to the plot of the adventure. Make sure the heroes overhear some of it before proceeding to the section *United in Hatred* (see page 13).

- *"This isn't a marriage of love. The bride and groom have never even seen each other."* (+)
- *"This marriage was only made possible by the influence of the guilds and his Eminence, Raitjan Angmund."* (+)
- *"Supposedly, the Andergastan king also had a hand in this; or, if you ask me, his sume. After all, everyone knows the king is only his Mirhamionette."* (+/-)
- *"This marriage is the best thing that could happen to Joborn. The others may quarrel all they like! No one will attack Joborn when it belongs to both sides. We will finally have peace and prosperity, just like the people of the capital."* (wouldn't that be nice?)
- *"Great Baron Rufus secretly opposes this marriage and is trying to stop it."* (-)
- *"I am not surprised the Great Baron agreed to the marriage. His wife is the king's sister, after all. It's clear who has the final say in this matter."* (+/-)
- *"Forest Count Eilert does not approve of this marriage. If it was up to him, he would retake his family's ancestral seat by force."* (+)
- *"The bride is Eilert's bastard child. He and the knight Kasmyrai trained under the same sword father."* (+/-)
- *"Noraleta of Eichenschlag, the bride, was supposedly promised to another before this, but her mother broke the bond. This new bond seems to be more lucrative."* (+)
- *"The jilted man is said to be the son of a knight. What was his name again...? The marriage deal only failed because the knight is destitute."* (+/-)
- *"I tell you, those [floundermunchers (Nostrians)/pigheads (Andergastans)] cannot be trusted. They are up to something..."* (-)

Don't Be So Coy! A pretty woman (around 30 years old; chestnut brown hair; *Erlgunde*, see page 35) tries to escape the tavern *Rathskeller*, but a drunkard (mid-30s; 6'10" tall; blond hair, blue eyes; expensive green and brown clothes; *King Wendelmir*, see page 11) with a sloshing goblet in one hand grabs her arm with the other. His lustful gaze is unmistakable. The heavily intoxicated king misreads *Erlgunde's* piercing stare as an invitation. The angry woman struggles and shrieks.

Three armored men step out of the taproom to assist the drunkard. The situation is about to escalate, as the aggressive witch is preparing to place a hefty curse on Wendelmir.

What Do You Think?: A tailor on the street has a heavy curtain in his shop to allow patrons to try on clothes without having to fear prying eyes. Just as the heroes walk by the curtain, they hear a voice: “*I think the dress could be a bit tighter around the waist, what do you think?*”

The young woman (Noralettha) is quite surprised to find the heroes instead of her handmaiden on the other side of the curtain. With a successful *Etiquette (Fashion)* check, a hero might suddenly turn into a fashion advisor. The bride-to-be’s anger at the unreliable handmaiden is quickly quelled when Noralettha learns the heroes are able to help her with other matters. For example, she would like a peek at her future husband, but he is currently staying in the fortress. Therefore, it would be best if someone could guide him outside for a moment.

The Mural Painter: The heroes watch a young man putting the finishing details on a mural in a side alley. It shows, in great detail, a king with his pants dropped (unmistakably, King Wendelmir) copulating with a contently grinning pig—*lese majesty*, a serious crime!

If the heroes are able to catch the painter, possibly after chasing him, a retinue including the Nostrian Forest Count Eilert comes along. Begging for mercy, the mischief-maker throws himself to the ground in front of his fellow Nostrian, the count. While Eilert’s soldiers find the mural amusing, and make quite a few allusions themselves, Eilert hears what the heroes have to say. Even though Joborn is his family’s ancestral seat, he does not want to dispense justice in Andergastan territory. His response depends upon the way in which the heroes approach him:

- If they appeal to Eilert and suggest a way (discreetly removing the painting, a thrashing for the perpetrator, and so on) for him to save face, he is willing to turn a blind eye and let his compatriot go free.
- Otherwise, to the horror of his followers and the delinquent, he gives the heroes an icy stare and tells them to deliver the criminal to Great Baron Rufus or Wendelmir’s guards for punishment. Whether the heroes carry out his order is up to them. However, a successful *Law (Andergast)* check makes it clear that the mural painter will receive severe corporal punishment at best—as even King Wendelmir has enough decency to avoid spoiling the day with an execution.

United in Hatred

Once the heroes experience enough of the atmosphere in the city and meet enough key people, it’s time for the wedding celebration. The Blessed One of Rahja, Raitjan Angmund, performs the wedding, which includes a public celebration and a ritual marriage vow the couple makes in front of the gathered crowd. According to Joborn custom, festivities take place both before and after a wedding. The ceremony proper takes place at the second Hour of Rahja, shortly before midnight, when the full moon is at its zenith—a concession to those Andergastans and Nostrians to whom druid and witch cults are important and who believe this makes for an auspicious beginning. But sadly, this wedding celebration does not even make it as far as Angmund’s blessing...

Let Us Celebrate!

At sunset, everything is ready for a jubilant feast. The marketplace is full of makeshift seating—benches, chairs, and barrels—illuminated by the sunset’s glow and multiple rows of lanterns. Oak leaves and thick candles adorn the tables. At the head of the square, beneath the central statue

of Dorlen, a saint of Rahja, stands a U-shaped banquet table where the bridal couple and their families dine. Raitjan Angmund, the High Blessed One of Rahja, hangs the *Love Light of Joborn* (see page 16) from the statue’s outstretched arm, where its soft flame shines over the festival as a sign of unconquerable love.

Almost everyone in the entire town, as well as the inhabitants of both camps, gathers in the market square. They quickly fill the tables and benches; the nearly 700 people must take care not to step on each other’s feet. Behind a long counter on one side apprentices and journeymen from the different guilds draw fresh beer from a long row of oak barrels. The line is so long that complete strangers have in-depth conversations while waiting for their turn. Several cooks tend six different fireplaces, turning roasted pigs, and fresh wine gushes from a fountain set up for the festival. The fountain is a gift from the self-proclaimed *Duke of Angasal*; but it is not well-frequented, as the wine is so sour it needs a large helping of honey and spices to make it palatable.

Festival Scenes

The festival presents an opportunity for the heroes to talk to people who might otherwise be well out of their reach, socially. Let your players decide how much they want to involve themselves in the festivities. Feel free to add a few of the following scenes to the adventure, or simply play out the conversations at the table.

- The feast proceeds with plenty of carousing and friendly brawling. Suddenly, the crowd grows silent and you hear the deep and sonorous voice of a single man: Raitjan Angmund, the Blessed One of Rahja. The mastersinger of Andergast rises from his seat as he begins to sing. His voice, heard over the entire square, gives you goosebumps. Confident heroes might want to join in or accompany the Blessed One with an instrument.
- The bride-to-be asks one of the heroes to dance (especially appropriate if you played the scene *What Do You Think?* on page 13).
- The groom sits at the table and looks yearningly at his bride, who is clearly enjoying herself at the dance. A successful *Empathy* check reveals Gosthelm would like to join her, but is not brave enough to do so. Perhaps someone could discreetly provide some encouragement?
- While they are waiting in line for a drink, one of the heroes has a short conversation with the raftsman **U** *Ulward Dreubner* (in his early 30s; 5'5" tall; dark, red hair; light-blue eyes; wiry and bowlegged; likes to smoke pipes; see page 21). Dreubner is a daring log driver and ladies' man, whom the heroes encounter later as a witness. He is already quite tipsy, but remains clear-eyed and able to remain standing, even after a few more beers. He tries to enchant female PCs with his rustic charm, even if he has no chance with them.
- King Wendelmir is drinking quite heavily. When his cupbearer tries to refill his goblet, Wendelmir grabs the jug and barks at the youth, "Bring me more already, and go find me some proper wenches!"
- Forest Count Eilert watches the reveling with a stony gaze, very rarely sipping from his cup.
- The father-of-the-bride, esquire *Belenolian of Eichenschlag*, gets two tankards of beer for his wife, Kasmyrai, and himself. Two Andergastans see him and begin to laugh. They ask the surprised esquire if it is common, in Nostria, for men do women's work, and whether he also wears skirts at home?



- Nostrians and Andergastans sit next to each other at a table. Quite drunk, they sway and howl to the music and shout cheers to one another.

The Bloody Wedding

Read Aloud or Paraphrase

Suddenly, a woman's shrill cry disrupts the festive mood. The music dies down and conversations fade until the only remaining sound is the crackling of the fire.

You hear another cry, this time louder and shriller, which seems to go on forever. The crowd becomes restless; people look around hastily, trying to identify the source of the scream. You see a woman wring her skirt in terror, her hands shaking. Following her eyes, you see a soldier stumbling forward, his tabard dark with blood and the grip of a dagger protruding from his chest. He sinks down to the ground in front of the woman—dead.

[Give the heroes time to react.]

Nostrians and Andergastans who had just been linking arms in merriment now step back from each other in horror. Then, they break the heavy silence with accusations, and weapons are drawn.



Within moments, the joyous festival turns into a massacre. Everyone tries to get as far away as possible from the person next to them. Nobody trusts anyone. People shove and kick, throw plates and silver, and even flip entire banquet tables over. Nostrians and Andergastans run past each other, screaming, and anyone with a weapon attempts to stab or strike any perceived enemy within reach.

Combat!

The heroes suddenly find themselves in the middle of a battle—initially, they must defend themselves. Most of the people running around simply want to leave the square as quickly as possible, which means they regard the heroes as obstacles they must get past—by force, if necessary. They either push the heroes aside, or stop to exchange blows if the heroes draw their weapons.

However, a few people regard anyone they do not recognize from their own camp as enemies—they attack, their hearts full of hatred. This especially applies to heroes who take an active part in combat, or heroes whose clothes place them in one of the two camps. Most of the opponents the heroes face are men-at-arms, but some knights also take part in the turmoil.

What Happened?

Rodegrimm's henchmen launched an attack to disperse the wedding party and abduct Noraletha, unnoticed. While Blattislaus, Eberlieb, and Steinhard wait near Noraletha's table to follow her when she flees, Borkfried and some of his cronies attempt to secure the escape route by untying some of the ships' moorings. They hope to increase the chaos and prevent anyone from following them. Several ships are now adrift in a tangled mess in the middle of the harbor. There is damage to multiple vessels, and it takes quite some time to restore order. Their plan was not well thought out, however, as the henchmen need to escape by boat themselves, and this leaves another trail.

Eichwart killed an unfortunate Nostrian in the market square, as he believed indiscriminately stabbing a drunken wedding guest was an appropriate means of distraction. He tries to rejoin the others and leave the city with them, which gives the heroes the opportunity to run into him (he must cross the entire square while everyone else is trying to escape).

The Heroes in Battle

For the villains' plan to work and the bride's abduction to succeed, it is important to divert the heroes' attention away from the bridge. Even though she is the bride, Noraletha is but one girl in a crowd of many—so this should not be too difficult to accomplish. If needed, use the optional content presented in *Scenes During Combat*, below, to further distract the heroes.

Golgari's Wings

To add shock value and increase the drama in your adventure, kill off characters the players met just a short time ago. Good candidates include anyone the heroes meet at the counter or sit next to at the festival—as well as the father-of-the-bride, Esquire Belenolian of Eichenschlag, because he plays no major role in the rest of the adventure. Main characters and most minor characters have important roles later in the adventure—wounding them is fine, but they should survive the Bloody Wedding. If one of them dies, you must adjust the rest of the adventure accordingly.

Find the Perpetrator

If the heroes try to determine where the combat started and who was responsible, they deduce the fighting started in the southern part of the square, but it is difficult to find Eichwart. To reach the point in the square where the fighting began, the heroes must push past the fleeing guests. This requires a cumulative check with *Feat of Strength* (interval 5 CR, any number of attempts). After each check, roll 1D6. On a 5 or 6, an opponent moves into the heroes' path.

Men-at-Arms

COU 14 SGC 11 INT 13 CHA 10
DEX 13 AGI 13 CON 13 STR 13
LP 31 AE - KP - INI 12+1D6
DO 6 SPI 1 TOU 2 MOV 6

Combat Techniques:

Unarmed: AT 10 PA 5 DP 1D6 RE short

Battle Axe: AT 10 PA 4 DP 1D6+4 RE medium

Short Bow: RC 10 LT 1 DP 1D6+4 RA 10/50/80

PRO/ENC: 3/1 (leather armor) (armor modifiers already added)

Special Abilities: Forceful Blow I

Skills: *Body Control 4, Feat of Strength 4, Intimidation 4, Perception 3, Self-Control 3, Stealth 4, Willpower 2*

Combat Behavior: Varies; some attack anyone they cannot identify as part of their group with blind hatred. Others only defend themselves or their followers and want to leave the chaos of battle.

Escape: Flee after losing 50% of their LP

Pain +1 at: 23 LP, 16 LP, 8 LP, and 5 LP and less



Knights of the Warring Kingdoms

COU 13 SGC 12 INT 13 CHA 12
DEX 11 AGI 13 CON 14 STR 14
LP 33 AE - KP - INI 12+1D6
DO 6 SPI 1 TOU 2 MOV 8

Combat Techniques

Battle Axe/Mace: AT 12 PA 6 DP 1D6+4 RE medium

Andergaster/Nostrian Long Bow: AT 12 PA 3 DP 2d6+5 RE medium

PRO/ENC: 4/1 (chainmail) (includes armor modifiers)

Special Abilities: Forceful Blow I, Inured to Encumbrance, Mounted Combat, Tilt

Skills: *Body Control 6, Feat of Strength 7, Intimidation 5, Perception 5, Riding 10, Self-Control 10, Stealth 0, Willpower 3*

Combat Behavior: Varies; some attack anyone they cannot identify as part of their group with blind hatred. Others only defend themselves or their followers and try to leave the chaos of battle.

Escape: Flee after losing 50% of their LP

Pain +1 at: 25 LP, 17 LP, 8 LP, and 5 LP and less



If the heroes achieve 6 QL and make a successful *Perception (Spot)* check with a penalty of 2, they notice Eichwart's erratic behavior (nearly everyone else is trying to flee from the market square, but he is attempting to cross it—and he is short on time) and might suspect him.

◦ If the heroes challenge Eichwart to combat, he fights to the bitter end. If he dies, adjust the remaining number of henchmen accordingly for the rest of the adventure.

Eichwart is clearly having trouble getting through the crowd to join his fleeing comrades, especially because he is still wearing an Andergastan tabard. If you want to make it harder for the villains to escape, make a *Feat of Strength* 7 (13/13/13) check for Eichwart to see

- how far he gets. If he participates in battle, he loses one-fifth of his LP. If he reaches 10 QL before the heroes do, he escapes.

Scenes During Combat

Optional Content

- **Street Battle:** The burghers arm themselves. They grab burning logs from the grilling fires and hurl them at presumed enemies. Roll 1D6 (1 check/CR). On a 1, a log hits a hero. If they cannot successfully *Dodge*, they suffer 1D6 DP.
- **It's Raining Arrows:** Archers shoot into the tumult of battle. Roll 1D20 (1 check/CR). On a 19-20, an arrow strikes an exposed hero and inflicts 1D6+4 DP.
- **Barricade Fights:** Some people erect barricades made of tables and benches to strengthen their defenses. Heroes can try to aid in this effort by making a cumulative *Feat of Strength (Lifting)* check (interval 1 CR, 3 heroes, any number of attempts) with a penalty of -1. The people of Joborn add 4 QL per round. When the heroes reach 16 QL, the chance of being hit by a projectile is cut in half.
- **Back-to-Back:** Behind a barricade, two villagers or men-at-arms notice they are on opposing sides. They draw their daggers and a fight ensues. The barricade begins to wobble, and eventually collapses if no one breaks up the fight between the two with a successful *Feat of Strength (Dragging & Pulling)* check. A hero failing this check sustains a 1D6+1 DP dagger injury.
- **A Royal Quarrel:** Seemingly unconcerned by the tumult around them, Forest Count Eilert and Great Baron Rufus deal each other heavy blows. Both are bleeding from multiple wounds. Suddenly, some beer barrels behind the counter start to roll toward the two men. A successful *Feat of Strength (Pushing & Bending or Dragging & Pulling)* check at -1 allows a hero to push the combatants

out of their path. On a failed check, the barrels slam into both men. They gain the state *unconscious* and someone must carry them from the battlefield.

- **Damsel-in-Distress:** Two archers hiding behind a tree target the overturned nobles' table. Councilor Kasimir Tryming (already wounded, *Pain II*) and Princess Wenzeslausia are hiding behind the table, but it is only a matter of time before the arrows hit them. The heroes can attempt to stop the archers by firing shots across the square (the square is 82' x 164', and the archers count as small targets (checks are at -4) when behind cover). Alternatively, the heroes can attempt to escort the nobles to safer ground. If they do not distract the archers first, the archers shoot at the heroes 4 times during the rescue attempt. At least two heroes must protect the nobles with shield parries or their own bodies to keep them safe. It is also possible to use a table as cover. With a successful *Feat of Strength (Lifting)* check, two heroes lift the heavy oak table and use it as a shield to cover the nobles' retreat to the safety of a side alley.
- **Save the King!** Six Nostrian men-at-arms, blind with rage, maneuver King Wendelmir and two of his knights into an alley. The heroes can choose to come to their aid and fight the Nostrians, who still have ¾ of their LP remaining.
- **A Knight's Heart:** The Andergastan knight **Arbold of Bearvalley** (50 years old; gray walrus moustache, bald) lies incapacitated on the ground, where two Nostrian men-at-arms continue to attack him. The groom, Gosthelm of Joborn, stands on shaking legs and challenges them, but he cannot defeat them on his own.

The Love Light of Joborn

Raitjan Angmund, the Blessed One of Rahja, attempts to reach the statue of Saint Dorlen, where he hung the *Love Light of Joborn* during the festival. Its power could immediately put an end to the battle. He makes the heroes aware of the divine artifact by calling out something like "Hold the Love Light aloft!" At that moment, however, a grim-faced knight brutally shoves him aside. Unfortunately, Raitjan hits his head against the edge of a table and falls, *unconscious*, to the ground. Someone else must activate the *Love Light*.

Before they may activate the divine artifact, the heroes must first fight off (number of heroes +1) men-at-arms, who each have 50% LP remaining.



Afterward, they must make a cumulative *Climbing* check with a bonus of +1 (interval 1 CR, any number of attempts) to scale the statue's plinth. They must also make a successful *Body Control (Balance)* check with a bonus of +3 to prevent the statue from toppling over, hitting the ground, and cracking. If the statue falls, the heroes might still catch the *Love Light* with a successful *Body Control (Acrobatics, Running, or Jumping)* check.

If the heroes do not activate the *Love Light of Joborn*, Raitjan does so when he regains consciousness. Alternatively, another festival guest might accomplish this heroic feat.

The End of the Battle

If no one activates the *Love Light*, the battle dies down on its own, as the opposing parties cautiously retreat. However, without the *Love Light*, there are twice as many dead and injured than indicated below. Since no one knows who is or is not trustworthy, everyone retreats to their houses or their tents outside the city.



After the Battle

After the battle, the market square and surrounding merchant stalls lie in ruins: small fires burn uncontrolled and puddles of wine and beer mix with blood. Ownerless animals roam about, relatives search for their loved ones, and the air fills with the cries of the wounded and those mourning their dead. There are more than 50 casualties and nearly 200 injured. Those able to escape in time

The Love Light of Joborn

Description: A divine talisman that looks like a rather simple oil lamp made of clay. When activated, it emits a mild, but intoxicating, smell of roses.

Effect: The *Love Light* affects only *Intelligent* races. The *Love Light* works by creating a peaceful and happy mood in those within range.

When the *Love Light* is activated, it emits a pleasant rose scent and removes 1 level of *Fear* from anyone who smells it. If someone explicitly does not want to enter a harmonious mood (because, for example, they are planning a murder), the effect does not apply.

If a Blessed One activates the *Love Light* and holds it above eye-level for at least 30 seconds, anyone who either smells or sees it (maximum radius of 328 feet) sheds all levels of *Fear*. In addition, all disadvantages that stir up hate or fear (such as *Afraid of...*, *Personality Flaws* (such as *Envy*, *Feistiness*, and *Prejudice*), and *Negative Traits* such as *Short Temper*) immediately cease until the light's effect comes to an end. All states end as well. Once activated, the *Love Light's* effect lasts QL x 4 hours.

When the effect takes hold, enemies shake hands and drink together, friends embrace each other, and lovers celebrate exuberantly. No one thinks of conflict or combat, no matter their previous mood. As its effects come to an end, enemies go their separate ways with respect for one another. If the artifact achieves 6 QL, unattached celebrants might even fall in love with someone they just met at the wedding.

Cost: Unknown

Price: Priceless

General Information on Talismans

- Talismans are unbreakable
- Blessed Ones of the correct tradition (in this case, Rahja) use karma to activate talismans. Heroes must use a fate point. The deity must agree to the talisman's use, which prevents misuse by villains. However, even non-believers may activate a talisman if their intended use aligns with the deity's ideals.
- For purposes of determining effect, talismans make a RC check (RC 18; 14/14/14)
- Certain (*Nameless One*, *demonic*) ritual can desecrate talismans. Once desecrated, a talisman may be destroyed.
- Extremely powerful (*Nameless One*, *demonic*) rituals are able to corrupt talismans

barricaded themselves inside their homes and refused to grant anyone entry. Nostrians and Andergastans who made the journey to Joborn for the wedding fortify themselves in their respective camps, regarding anyone who cannot name a resident advocate as an enemy.

Everyone has their own theory about what happened. Clearly, this entire wedding was a trap by the damned Nostrians/Andergastans from the beginning! Naturally, such a devious act calls for vengeance; therefore, both sides immediately send out heralds to circulate the sad tale of the wedding of Joborn throughout the land. It is the conservative traditionalists' hour, for they "always knew this would happen," and their call for war falls on very fertile ground. Many people are packing their things and hastily leaving town, out of fear, sadness, or to gather their troops in their homeland.

The heroes might also ask how this could happen, and might have suspicions if they noticed Eichwart retreating during combat. Because of his tabard (or the rumor that Great Baron Rufus wanted a way to prevent the marriage), they might suspect an Andergastan plot. However, the fact that the great baron and his family were nearly all killed (and possibly saved only due to the heroes' quick actions) should soon free him from suspicion.

The Missing Bride

Shortly after the battle, knight Kasmyrai (accompanied by her husband, if he survived the fight) starts searching for Noralettha. She asks the heroes if they have seen her daughter. If the heroes help search for the girl, they gather the following information.

The Witness: Noralettha's handmaiden, Dina, is found unconscious and close to death in a field behind a house to the north of the market square (cumulative *Perception* (*Search*) check, interval of 5 minutes, any number of attempts). After Dina regains consciousness, she tells the heroes she was attacked by three men with matted beards. They held Dina at bay while they pressed a cloth against Noralettha's nose (or knocked her unconscious, if the heroes prevented the purchase of an anesthetic; see page 12). The men wore green and gold tabards—the colors of Andergast.

A Strange Find: With a successful cumulative *Perception* (*Spot*) check (interval of 5 minutes, any number of attempts), the heroes find three green and gold tabards behind a house that lies between the market square and the harbor. An *Etiquette* (*Heraldry & Family Trees*) check

reveals that the coat of arms on the tabards does not exist. Alternatively, a successful cumulative *Etiquette* check at -1 (interval of 15 minutes, any number of attempts) gives the heroes the same information after a few conversations with some of the nobles.

Cast Off: The scene of destruction in the harbor is similar to that in the market square. Somehow, numerous ships slipped from their moorings and collided with each other in the harbor. Ropes are tangled, poles and oars are cracked, some boats are filling with water, and others have sunk. A group of fishermen stands on the shore, gaping in disbelief. The fisherwoman ♀ *Selda* (37 years old; brown stringy hair; pale complexion; patched clothes; *Willpower* 4 (12/12/12), *SPI* 1) looks for her riverboat in the bundle of timber, but cannot find it anywhere. A successful *Perception* (*Search* or *Spot*) check reveals someone cut all the mooring ropes. Selda's riverboat is lost. Moreover, the heroes find yet another fake Andergastan tabard floating in the harbor.

The Raftman: With a successful *Perception* (*Spot*) check at +1, the heroes notice movement on one of the drifting boats. A raftman, *Ulward Dreubner* (see page 21), tells the heroes he and an unknown beauty were walking along the harbor when passion overtook them both. They made love in one of the boats and fell asleep. When Ulward awoke, he was alone, but he noticed a man wearing a green shirt cutting the boat's ropes. He heard screaming from the market square as the boat drifted to the middle of the harbor. Ulward decided it was safest to stay where he was and must have fallen asleep again because of the alcohol. Ulward is quite certain a riverboat of the same type as Selda's set sail and turned downstream, shortly after the screaming began.

Ulward's guilt over failing to help due to his intoxication and the rapture of love prompts him to offer his help. Depending on the situation, the heroes may count on him if they need passage on water. Luckily, his raft lies moored nearby. As he says, "All these ships squashed in here together... It had to end badly!"

After Them!

It should dawn upon the heroes that someone took advantage of the turmoil to abduct Noralettha. They might even suspect the abductors are responsible for the massacre.

With a vague clue (the boat sailed downriver) and the perpetrators' description (as many as five men; around 30 years old; matted beards), the heroes should have enough information to set out on their own and find the truth. If they still need



convincing, Nora-letha's family asks them to rescue the bride. Before the heroes leave Joborn, however, you should reward them for their heroic deeds during the battle.

To Prevent a War

If the heroes helped or saved any important NPCs during the battle, they invite the heroes to their homes (or tents) to thank them personally. Different people might invite different heroes, depending on who left an impression. Not only do these NPCs grant the heroes the honor of an audience, they also show their appreciation in the form of hard coin: heroes who distinguished themselves receive 100 silverthalers as a reward.

However, the heroes soon discover that appreciation is not the only reason for this honor. The NPCs are very interested to learn everything the heroes know about the events before and after the feast. They recognize the heroes intervened to save people and are now asking questions around town. If the heroes require further motivation to get involved, NPCs who remain unsure about what really happened (see *We Have Doubts*, on page 19) provide a specific mission.

It Was Nostria!: King Wendelmir and Great Baron Rufus are certain the Nostrians are responsible, despite the villains having worn fake Andergastan tabards. Wendelmir plans to depart for Andergast the following day to raise an



The Villains' Plans

Rodegrimm's henchmen sailed downriver with Nora-letha in Selda's stolen riverboat. They are to meet Rodegrimm at a branch of the river shortly before *Kalking*, about half a day's journey away, for the handoff. They are unaware that Rodegrimm's retinue is traveling with him.

Because they sail through the night, they reach their destination the next morning. Rodegrimm and his retinue left Joborn on horseback directly after the battle and arrive shortly thereafter. Their hasty departure did not arouse suspicion, however, as they were not the only ones who left quickly after the events at the feast.

It is vital the henchmen and Rodegrimm have a slight lead for now. Achieving this should not be difficult, as it is not initially clear what happened, and the heroes must first gather information and rest if they are wounded (see *Departure*, on page 20).



army against their sworn enemies. They will then muster their men outside Joborn's gates under the Great Baron's command. Both reassure the heroes that the Nostrians will get what they deserve.

It Was Andergast!: A discussion with Forest Count *Eilert* goes similarly. He also plans to leave town the following morning to muster a Nostrian army. The tabards are proof enough of the Andergastans' wretchedness for him and he believes it is time to drive them back across the Ornib for the last time.

We Have Doubts: *Princess Wenzeslausia*, the Blessed One *Raitjan Angmund*, and Councilor *Kasimir Tryming* fear an impending war. They even suspect betrayal within their own ranks and speculate someone could have provoked the massacre to spark a new war between Nostria and Andergast. The alleged Andergastans fleeing downriver, in the direction of Nostria, is one indication of this. As the heroes do not seem to belong to either camp, these NPCs ask them to rescue the missing bride and catch the perpetrator and discover his motives. If they can do so, they might prevent a catastrophic conflict. The NPCs promise the heroes a reward of 150 silverthalers each, plus an additional 100 silverthalers if they capture the person responsible.

Through the Warring Kingdoms



The heroes must now journey downriver, which eventually leads them to Nordvest. They lose the trail multiple times, but also gain allies such as the druid *Barl* and the witch *Asmolinda*. In the Andergastan forest, they meet a nymph and help stop a group of birdcatchers who threaten the witches of *Hallerû's* familiars. Finally, a fast-paced raft chase leads the heroes to *Noralettha*, *Rodegrimm*, and his surviving henchmen's hideout.

Departure

Time is short, but the trail is fresh, so the heroes should consider departing that night. If they agree to act on behalf of one of the NPCs mentioned above, their benefactor provides support in the form of necessary equipment (to an extent) and even a healing potion, which restores 1D6+4 LP to the most severely injured hero.

The heroes have several different encounters on their journey, all of which are marked in yellow on the following map, for the GM's convenience. Feel free to move the locations for the meeting with the druid or the nymph, if needed, but if you do, be sure to adjust the travel time for the new routes.

The heroes must make good speed to catch the villains. On horseback, they could travel as much as 50 Middenmiles per day on roads in good condition, such as the *Sâlway*, but they already know the villains aren't sticking to the road, and traveling off-road or in the dark is problematic anyway, as the thick forest underbrush is impassable for horses. Therefore, travel by water is the best option, and the *Ingval* is a quick-flowing river.

However, the chaos in the harbor makes finding a boat difficult. Fortunately, *Ulward Dreubner*, the raftsman whom the heroes encountered earlier, already volunteered to help. His raft is moored outside the harbor.

The heroes travel about 40 Middenmiles per day downriver; this gives them a chance to take a *Regeneration Phase* to regain LP, AE, and KP.

Heroes who forego their *Regeneration Phase* may instead help *Ulward* steer the raft, *Make a Sailing (Long Distances)* check with a bonus of +5. Each QL subtracts 5% from the normal travel time of 8 hours.



⚔ Ulward Dreubner

Summary: In his early 30s; 5'5" tall; dark red hair; light blue eyes; wiry and bowlegged; likes to smoke pipes; an Ingval's raftsman and ladies' man who is always up to something.

Role: The heroes' means of water transport. He knows the region like the back of his hand and a story about every location; and he teaches the heroes important, basic raft-steering skills, which come in handy later in the adventure (see *Get Them!* on page 32).

Background: Ulward is a multiple-winner of the lumberjack games in Andrafall, and it is believed he is one of very few to navigate the Ingval's entire length. The seasoned Andergast native from Oakhaven knows the river—and its meadows and inflows—like the back of his hand, and even mastered the rapids below the Chalk Cliffs of Hallerû. He shares his wisdom with few words, but mixes the mundane with fantastic elements when he does speak. People retell the most fantastic stories about Ulward in taverns along the river, claiming he has even attended Witches' Night festivals on multiple occasions. He reacts to such stories with a wide smile.

His one worry in life is that all of his children (at least, those he knows of) are magically gifted. Two of his daughters are being raised by witches, and his only son was taken to study with the sumes.

Fate: Ulward survives the adventure, possibly becoming a friend whom the heroes can count on.

Role playing tips: Pretend to smoke a pipe or chew on a straw. Answer questions first with a grunt, nod, or shake of your head; only speak afterward. Always be courteous to women, and do not try to force a relationship—let it come naturally. Remain unruffled—you have pretty much seen it all.

Important Stats: *Sailing* 12 (14/14/14)

Rumors About Ulward:

"A real winner, I can tell you that. He's even mastered the rapids at Hallerû! Ulward's your man!" (+/-)

"Ulward Dreubner never had to sneak into witches' festivals—they invited him!" (+/-)

Downriver

Read Aloud or Paraphrase

It appears the rushing Ingval dug its broad bed right through the forest. Oak trees and protruding willows stretch their branches far beyond the riverbanks and cast cool shadows over large portions of the river. Now and then, a single ray of blinding sunlight pierces the canopy and you must shade your eyes. The almost-humid air is filled with forest smells. There is something magical and primeval about this region; indeed, you might enjoy this raft ride if the events in Joborn were not fresh on your minds...

A Lame Horse

After sailing for a few hours, the heroes see a man standing on the Sâlway, near the left bank of the river. He has a small cart with two wheels sits off to the side, and a horse grazes some distance away. The man seems to be lost in thought, and shakes his head occasionally as he unloads the cart's contents—12 barrels of oaken beer. He is attempting to tie the barrels together with a rope in an attempt to fashion them into a raft.

The merchant ⚔ Wenzl (46 years old; blond hair; bulbous nose; green vest and hat; dark-colored clothes; *Speech Impediment* (pronounces each "B" as a "P"); *Commerce* 10 (13/13/13), *Willpower* 7 (13/13/13), *SPI* 2) was traveling downriver with his horse and cart when a group of riders came upon him from the direction of Joborn, just a few



hours ago. One of their horses was lame, and the group's leader—an older knight with an eyepatch—demanded Wenzl unhitch his cart and hand over his horse. Wenzl did as he was told—the man was a knight, after all, and he seemed quite dangerous.

The knight left the lame horse as compensation, which is of little benefit to the merchant—how can a lame horse draw his cart? But, since Andergastans are resourceful, and the only remedy for a lame horse is plenty of rest, Wenzl is grateful for any help the heroes provide to construct a raft from the beer barrels (cumulative check with *Woodworking*, interval 1 hour, 3 heroes, 10 checks).

The merchant has not seen a riverboat, young men with matted beards, or a young woman fitting the description

the heroes give. But, he gladly gives an animated description of the traveling party who seized his horse and left him in this predicament:

- There were five riders. One was a knight wearing an eyepatch, chainmail that was repaired many times, and a blue tabard bearing a black and white wolf. (A successful *Etiquette (Heraldry & Family Trees)* check with a penalty of 2 reveals this is a Nostrian coat of arms, and that the knight is probably a forest knight from *Ingvalsrohden*.)
- The riders had a woman with them (Erlgunde, see page 35). Wenzl cannot stop thinking about her because she kept staring at him in an eerie manner the whole time.
- The three remaining riders, two men and another woman, had to be the knight's men-at-arms. Wenzl does not remember any specific details about them.

The Bloodstained Altar

Sometime after the heroes meet Wenzl and help him on his way, they make a surprising discovery: a riverboat lies hidden in a minor cove of the river, separated from the Ingval's main flow by a small tongue of land.

If Selda gave them a description of her riverboat, they identify it as hers. Ulward is also certain he saw the boat before. It does not look like it has been here long, though it does seem abandoned. The riverbank is heavily overgrown here, and branches obstruct the heroes' view like a curtain.

With a successful *Perception (Spot)* check, the heroes realize the area is unusually quiet. Furthermore, with successful a *Perception (Search or Spot)* check with a bonus of +2, they find tracks in the waist-high shore grass. The blades of grass are snapped in bunches; therefore, the heroes gain a bonus of +3 on *Tracking (Humanoid Tracks)* checks to follow the trail.

A Gruesome Discovery

The tracks lead to a gigantic weeping willow with a gnarled trunk so thick the heroes could not collectively wrap their arms around it. Its far-reaching boughs block other trees from growing in a wide radius. The heroes don't hear any birdsong, but the buzzing of flies is quite loud.

In front of the mighty willow's trunk, the heroes find [# of remaining henchmen at this point] corpses. The heroes don't need a medicus to determine the cause of death, as arrows protrude from the bodies and they have deep, gaping wounds. Half of one man's face looks like it was smashed in with a heavy object, while another corpse's face is marred by scratches (a successful *Animal Lore (Wild Animals)* check attributes them to a bird of prey). Their simple clothes are completely blood-soaked, and they have matted beards, dirty fingernails, and rotting teeth—all cliché of the typical backwoodsman.

Heroes who noticed Blattislaus, Borkfried, Eberlieb, Steinhard, and Eichwart (if he escaped) in Joborn now recognize the corpses. Ulward identifies some of them as the men he saw stealing the riverboat. He seems entirely unmoved by this discovery and looks at the bodies as though they were nothing more than acorns lying on the ground.

The Villains' Next Move

The henchmen planned to deliver the bride to Rodegrimm at a prearranged meeting place. But instead, they found Tommegrimm, Ingvamir, Algane, Erlgunde, and the skull owl, Uhlgar, waiting for them. Caught by surprise, the henchmen died quickly and the so-called rescuers unshackled Noraletha and brought her to Rodegrimm, who was waiting on the nearby road. Rodegrimm promised to bring Noraletha to a safe place, and so he did. Together, the six rode along the road, heading north.



Heroes who take the time to look around (*Perception (Search or Spot)* check with a bonus of +3) find signs of a struggle near the tree. With a successful *Tracking (Humanoid Tracks)* check at +1, they follow the trail to the road, but quickly lose it again on the well-trodden ground. Many centuries ago, the willow's trunk overgrew an ancient stone. There are a few fresh splatters of blood on the stone. Moss and lichen grow on the stone's surface. If the heroes push them aside, they discover faded carvings of a bull around a disc of badly tarnished metal. A successful *Metalworking* check reveals the green metal disc is made of copper.

Knowledge (Religions) check with a penalty of -1

QL 1: The forces of nature reclaimed this ancient place long ago. It could be an old altar to the Aurochs King, which is revered especially by Andergastans.

QL 2: People in the Warring Kingdoms blend local nature cults with aspects of the Twelvegods. They also revere forest and water spirits. People may have worshipped the earth goddess, Sumu, here.

QL 3: The copper disc could symbolize the moon, and might represent Mada or an associated deity.

QL 4+: The orcs worship gods with the shape of bulls, so the altar could be of orcish origin. If so, it would be associated with Tairach, their god of death and magic.



Read Aloud or Paraphrase

Suddenly, a strong gust of wind blows through the willow's branches. Leaves and twigs trickle down on you. A flock of ducks takes flight from the grass near the shore, quacking loudly. You suddenly notice a man, who seems to be materializing out of the surrounding area. His dark brown, shaggy hair blends into his beard, which looks as though it is never cut. Beneath his green loden wrap, you notice his greasy, patched, leather clothes. Frowning his bushy eyebrows, he fixes his gaze on you—clearly displeased. Like a father scolding his children, he raises his voice: "What are you doing here? Can't you see what you've done?"



The sume,  *Barl* (36 years old; brown beard and shaggy hair, in which birds seem to enjoy perching; loves Sumu's creation, which seems especially harmonious in this place; hates everything that disrupts this harmony; sometimes needs someone to baby-sit his moorhen, *Holdtraud*; *Magical Lore* 14 (15/15/15), *Willpower* 13 (15/15/15), SPI 3), is the guardian of this site, where the earth mother *Sumu* once defeated an ancient evil. He believes the desecration caused by these murders will reawaken this evil.

Barl tells the heroes the following:

- He did not witness the murders. Birds told him about the attack, and he came as quickly as he could.
- It makes no difference to him whether the heroes or others are responsible. Humanity is all the same to him, and humans rarely consider the consequences of their actions.
- No matter who is responsible, the site is desecrated. To undo the damage, he must rebuild Sumu's power in this place, a task that is only possible if he re-consecrates it with her life force.
- Nothing in nature goes unseen. You just need to know who to ask. In exchange for help, Barl promises to ask the birds and trees to identify the humans responsible for this sacrilege.
- Deep in the forest, there are places where Sumu's wounds still gape wide and her life force flows into the world. The heroes must bring him a bowlful of this healing water.
- The healing water only retains its qualities when transported in a special bowl. The sume takes the heroes to his home: an abandoned beaver dam converted for his purposes. There, he gives them a gnarled, 15" diameter bowl that looks like it grew from tree roots. Barl emphasizes the heroes must transport the water in this bowl.

The heroes may protest that they are in a hurry and don't want the murderers (and *Noraleta*) to get too far ahead of them, but to the druid, restoring balance to this site is just as important. Without another way to talk to the birds or trees, or some way to pry the information from the druid, the heroes must either accept his mission, or travel on without knowing who they are chasing.

Finding the Source of Life

The place the druid describes lies about 20 miles inland, in the dense heart of the forest. Getting there takes about two days. Barl gives them rather precise directions using prominent landmarks, and wishes them well. Ulward also says goodbye to the heroes at this point and continues his journey down the *Ingval*.

Thick, deciduous forest soon surrounds the heroes and the chirping of birds swallows up the rushing sounds from the nearby *Ingval*. Ferns fill the spaces between trees and, though the heroes only just left the road, the surrounding area suddenly seems primeval and forlorn.

Following the sume's directions requires a successful cumulative *Orienteering* check (3 heroes, 5 attempts). If they fail, they become lost in the thicket and must add an additional travel day to their journey. To get back on track, they must succeed at another check.

Stumbling Block

Eventually, the heroes come to a shallow river, about 20 feet wide. Fortunately, several stones protrude above the surface. Crossing the river without getting their feet wet requires successful *Body Control* (*Balance*) checks.

This is a good place for a random encounter, as the area is full of forest spiders (see *TWK*, page 97) and forest wolves (see *TWK*, page 98). If you feel something more fantastical is in order, a treant appears (see *Aventuria Almanac*, page 166).



Read Aloud or Paraphrase

As you trek ever deeper into the heart of this region, the trees grow closer and closer together—their branches soon block out even the tiniest ray of sunlight. You no longer feel the warmth of summer on the shaded forest ground. Moss grows rampant on thick, knotted tree trunks, and toadstools open wide their white-dotted umbrellas. The thick underbrush crunches under your feet; each step demands a great deal of strength in this nearly impassable terrain.



The heroes must struggle to make headway in this pathless terrain. It is quite possible no humanoid has ever passed through here before. Travel requires a successful cumulative *Survival* check (interval 2 hours, 4 attempts) with a penalty of -1. Heroes can contribute to the total by using the skills *Climbing*, *Feat of Strength*, and *Orienteering* (see *Core Rules*, page 27). If they fail, they must add an additional travel day to their journey.

Shoving Beetles

On the second day of their journey, the heroes hear first a rustling and then a loud clacking noise, like two wooden balls colliding at high speed, in the undergrowth.

The heroes find two huge beetles, each about the size of a large dog. They stalk and circle around each other before

pushing themselves off the ground and knocking their heads together like rams. This continues until one of the beetles lies helpless on its back.

Animal Lore (Wild Animals) check with a penalty of -1

QL 1: This seems to be some sort of mating ritual.

QL 2: This species of beetle is called a shoving beetle.

QL 3+: These beetles live primarily in the *Aranian* steppes and the *Orclands*. Apparently, they have expanded their range to the southern portion of the *Stone Oak Forest*.

The Pond Nymph

Read Aloud or Paraphrase

In the shadow of moss-covered trees, which seem to be as old as the mountains, lies a dark pool. Water lilies grow on the grayish-blue surface, beneath which seaweed and algae veil the bottom of the pond like a dark green curtain. Fireflies dance in the shadows, and croaking frogs gather for a choir. The heavy aromas of tree sap and forest herbs fill the humid air.



A forlorn frog pond may not be quite what the heroes expected for Sumu's holy site. At first glance, the pond seems to be abandoned; however, the heroes learn otherwise when they approach its bank. The water is home to a nymph named *Lorayella* (5'4" tall, pale, light blue, shimmering skin; black hair; naked except for a water lily and some floral chains; childlike curiosity; falls in love again every day; loves new things; hates to be alone; longs for a lover—of either gender).

Lorayella watches the newcomers with curiosity; she initially makes herself known with only a childlike giggling, which echoes off the surrounding trees and might give superstitious heroes quite a scare. The first hero to step to the shore of the pond and look into the water sees the nymph instead of their reflected image.

She reacts exuberantly to the unexpected visitors—she's been stuck in this pond, where nothing really happens, for far too long. She wants to get to know the heroes, hear their stories, and generally keep them there for as long as possible. It is highly likely that she'll fall madly in love with one of the heroes and want to keep them all to herself.

Before she reveals herself to the heroes, she casts *Satuarial's Splendor* on herself—considering the bonus from her advantage, Good Looks II, one or more of the heroes is highly likely to become infatuated with her. To help this



along, she casts *Bannbaladin* on the first hero to whom she reveals herself; not to dominate them mentally, but to create a friendly atmosphere in the tradition of elves.

With childlike curiosity, Lorayella asks the heroes where they come from and bids them to tell her all about their homeland and their heroic deeds. She shows uncommon interest in trivial matters and pays little attention to more important matters. Most of all, she is desperately lonely and longs for love. She is especially interested in robust heroes with a rebellious streak; she regards them as a challenge and tries to ensnare them with her feminine charms. Once she chooses a target for her affections, she does not relent until she gets what she wants. She gains a bonus of 2+QL for all of her *Seduction* and *Fast-talk* checks, due to her advantage (Good Looks II) and the spell *Satuarial's Splendor*.

When she realizes the heroes intend to scoop water from her lake, Lorayella does everything in her power to prevent it, for she fears the heroes will leave her alone again once they get the water. To accomplish this, she uses her charm, asks child-like questions to distract the hero with the bowl, or even simply forbidding the scooping of water with a strict "No!"

Lorayella the Pond Nymph

Size: 5'4"

Weight: 88 pounds

COU 13 SGC 13 INT 15 CHA 16

DEX 14 AGI 13 CON 11 STR 11

LP 24 AE 100 KP - INI 13+1D6

DO 7 SPI 4 TOU 0 MOV 8

PRO/ENC: 0/0

Advantages/Disadvantages: Good Looking II, Aquatic Creature (see the *Aventurian Bestiary*, page 121; alternatively, see *TWK*, page 54)

Special Abilities: Combat in Water (no penalties for combat in water; see *Core Rules*, page 239)

Skills: *Body Control* 12, *Climbing* 4, *Commerce* 2, *Empathy* 3, *Fast-Talk* 7, *Feat of Strength* 3, *Intimidation* 4, *Perception* 7, *Seduction* 15, *Self-Control* 3, *Stealth* 10, *Swimming* 14, *Willpower* 6

Spells: *Bannbaladin* 15, *Breathe Water* 18, *Salander* 14, *Satuarial's Splendor* 16, plus additional spells from Tradition (Fairies)

Number: 1

Size Category: medium

Type: Fairy, humanoid

Loot: none

Combat Behavior: Lorayella uses her charm and magical powers to avoid combat; she turns potential troublemakers into fish or frogs.

Escape: She flees into the depths of her pond if she loses 25% or more of her LP

Sphere Lore (Beings from the Spheres)

QL 1: Nymphs are a type of fairy. They choose bodies of water as their homes and seduce humans to take to the fairy world.

QL 2: Not all nymphs seduce humans, but their otherworldly beauty drives most men (and quite a few women) mad with desire.

QL 3+: Fairy gates exist near their homes. Those they seduce follow the nymphs there, often returning only after years or decades in the fairy world.

Special Rules

Lifebond: Each day a nymph spends in *Aventuria* costs her 1 LP, and she cannot regain life points from Regeneration Phases.

Pain +1 at: 18 LP, 12 LP, 6 LP, and 5 LP and less



In a worst-case scenario, she casts *Salander* and simply turns heroes who ignore her orders into frogs or fish. She turns them back only if they agree to comply with her wishes.

Bring Me Some Water

The heroes can attempt to obtain the pond water in several different ways. Two possible ways are as follows, but other creative solutions are possible, as well. Be careful, though, not to place too many obstacles in the heroes' way. If needed, the skittish Lorayella turns out to be far more open-minded than others of her kind, and gladly gives the heroes some water as a gift in exchange for some entertainment.

- ◆ A gifted storyteller might, for example, command the nymph's attention in such a way that she forgets everything around her, while another hero calmly fills the bowl. Recalling a suitable story requires a successful *Myths & Legends* check. Of course, the heroes may also try to distract her with tales of their own deeds. This requires a *Persuasion (Oration)* check with a penalty of -1. Success grants a bonus of QL/2 to other heroes' competitive *Stealth (Sneak or Hide)* checks against Lorayella's *Perception*.
- ◆ A daring hero may attempt to satisfy the nymph's desire, but doing so is not without risk. As Lorayella embraces the hero, she carries both of them into the depths of the pond, which is indeed far deeper than anyone suspects. The hero must make a cumulative *Swimming (Diving)* check with a penalty of -1 (5 attempts). Failure incurs one level of *Stupor* and the risk of drowning (see *Core Rules*, page 341). If necessary, the other heroes may dive in and try to save them (this requires a *Swimming (Diving)* check).

Pond Water

Magical analysis reveals that the water carries wild, unbridled magic. A hero with a corresponding knowledge skill can identify it as fairy magic.



Every Precious Drop

After filling the bowl with water, the heroes must make their way back to Barl. This requires the same cumulative checks encountered on the way to the pond (see page 24). However, obstacles that were easy before prove more difficult to tackle while carrying a bowl of water. The bowl holds 20 units of water, and Barl needs at least 5 units to perform his ritual.



The heroes must bring Barl 10 (or more) units of water, instead of 5.

Jealous Beetles

The heroes stumble across four giant shoving beetles engaged in a mating battle. Watching shoving beetles compete for mating partners is amusing, but it's not so funny when they suddenly consider the heroes to be rivals. The beetles attempt to knock the heroes off their feet. The heroes may use weapons to fight back. If the beetles succeed in knocking a hero to the ground, they immediately turn to the next hero. The hero holding the bowl cannot try to defend without spilling the water.

The heroes can attempt to defend the bowl-bearer from attack. This requires a successful competitive group *Feat of Strength* check; all heroes except the bowl-bearer participate. Each time a hero fails the check, the bowl-bearer spills 1 unit of water. To escape from the beetles, the heroes must make a cumulative group *Body Control* check with a penalty of -1. For every escape attempt, the heroes must make another competitive group *Feat of Strength* check.

Bad Weather

At the worst possible time, the sky grows dark, a summer storm blows in, and heavy rain pounds the forest. The heroes get soaked to the bone. Unless the heroes took precautions, the rain pours into the bowl and dilutes the magical water. The heroes must quickly cover the bowl or risk losing valuable units of the magical liquid. But simply covering the bowl doesn't solve the problem, as the rain seeps through most fabrics and every hasty movement through the dense underbush has the potential to lose units of water.

- The heroes are only able to press on through the storm if they have a way to protect the magical water by covering the container. This requires a *Stealth (Conceal Item)* check—if successful, the bowl-bearer adds the QL to a cumulative *Body Control (Balance)* check (3 attempts). Every additional attempt required to reach 10 QLs decreases the units of water in the bowl by 1.
- Additionally, the heroes may try to find shelter and wait out the storm. To do so, the bowl-bearer must



Shoving Beetle

COU 16 SGC 8(a) INT 12 CHA 13

DEX 10 AGI 13 CON 16 STR 13

LP 10 AE - KP - INI 15+1D6

DO 7 SPI 3 TOU 1 MOV 7

PRO/ENC: 2/0

Advantages/Disadvantages: None

Special Abilities: Takedown (Shove)

Skills: *Body Control* 3, *Feat of Strength* 7, *Intimidation* 3, *Perception* 5, *Self-Control* 13, *Stealth* 10, *Willpower* 11

Combat Behavior: Shoving beetles attack anyone they consider a rival, even humans.

Escape: Shoving beetles never flee.

Pain +1 at: Shoving beetles do not suffer from *Pain*

make a *Body Control (Running)* check or lose 3 units of magical water as rain streams into the bowl. If successful, each QL reduces the loss by 1 unit. The heroes also lose travel time looking for dry shelter (GM's discretion, or 1D6 hours).

Obstacle

The river they crossed on their journey into the forest is now swollen significantly from the rain. The bowl-bearer must make a successful cumulative *Body Control (Balance)* check with a penalty of -1 (5 attempts) to make it across the stepping stones. Failure causes the bowl-bearer to slip and spill 3 units of water.

Alternatively, the bowl-bearer must make a cumulative *Swimming* check with a penalty of -2 (5 attempts) to attempt to swim across. The strength of the current, plus the fact the hero must hold the bowl while swimming, increases the difficulty of the check accordingly.

On the Abductors' Trail

Read Aloud or Paraphrase

The sume's eyes sparkle with tears as you give him the bowl with the healing water. He carefully places it next to the mighty willow tree, from which he has already cleaned the spilled blood. "You kept your word; I will keep mine, as well."

Barl extends his arms like a scarecrow, glances around, and then makes duck sounds in a loud voice. A flock of ducks rises up from the water and flies in a "V" formation before one of them lands in front of Barl. The druid's question barely leaves his lips before the duck begins to flap its wings and quack excitedly.

He Speaks to Ducks

The ducks give Barl the following information, which he passes on to the heroes.

- The [# of remaining henchmen] human males with nests in their faces brought a female to the tree. The female seemed weak. Maybe it was sick?
- The ducks initially assumed the males were asking for Sumu's healing and quickly lost interest in them.
- Then, more humans arrived—two males and two females. Without warning, they attacked the men with the nests on their faces.
- A female with a piercing gaze had a skull owl companion with whom she could communicate. The owl participated in the battle.
- The owl scared the ducks so much, they hid behind the reeds and did not watch the rest of the battle.
- One drake bravely flew over the battle and saw the strangers bring the sickly female to a large, one-eyed man dressed in jingling, shining plumage. He waited for them next to some horses.
- They all rode up the human path together, away from the midday sun.

The heroes deduce the following from the ducks' information.

- The knight with the eye patch has the abducted bride. This same knight also stole Wenzl's horse.
- His followers apparently killed Noralettha's abductors.
- The group rode north (away from the sun), not back toward Joborn.
- If the heroes don't come to the conclusion on their own, Barl informs them the woman with the owl is probably a witch.

At this point, the heroes might be wondering if the unfamiliar knight saved Noralettha. The ducks confirm he did, but his group did not ride straight back to Joborn, which should give them cause for doubt. Was Noralettha still unconscious? Could his castle be nearby? What is he really up to? The GM's goal should be to convince the heroes to continue the chase; after all, war still threatens Joborn if they do not learn the reason for the abduction.



The sume does not know a witch with a piercing gaze who speaks to owls. But his friend, *Asmolinda Schnabelstek*, lives not far from here and is quite influential in her witches' circle. And, since nearly all witches in the region belong to the same circle, Barl is certain his friend can help the heroes. He tells the heroes they can't miss her: the enterprising *Asmolinda* runs a roadside inn on the *Sâlway*, between *Vardall* and *Ingfallspeugen*.

Witnesses on the Roadside

Rodegrimm and his men-at-arms have a head start of at least four days by the time the heroes part with Barl. The heroes meet quite a few people along the *Sâlway* who saw the one-eyed knight and the woman with the eerie gaze, so they are certain they are on the right track. These witnesses also say three men-at-arms (two men and a woman) and a young woman in festive, but dirty, clothes accompanied the knight and witch. However, the festively dressed young woman did not appear to be their prisoner. The party rode along the *Sâlway*, following the *Ingval*, and slipped past the old border stone into *Nostria*.



Hunter and Hunted

The 60-Middenmile journey to Asmolinda's inn, the *Witches' Kitchen* (Q3/P3/B10), takes about two days on foot (or a little more than a day on horseback). The inn sits next to the Ingval, about halfway between the Nostrian villages of *Vardall* and *Ingfallspeugen*. Its timber construction, lavishly curved, pointed roof, crooked beams, and pointed, playful little tower make it look precisely how most people imagine a witch's cottage from a fairy tale should look.

An attractive wooden fence surrounds the building, and a large oak grows in the courtyard. The lady of the house maintains a large herb garden that obviously nurtures more than culinary herbs. A pair of owls nests in the beams of the stable next to the house.

Asmolinda Schnabelstek

Summary: 76 years old; 5'3"; delicate build; gray, pinned-up hair; simple farmer's clothes; near-sighted; stooped body posture; walks with a stick and wears a pince nez with cloudy lenses on a chain around her neck; loves her rocking chair (which is also her flying instrument); hates bad manners; needs the heroes' help.

Role: Helps the heroes; wants to assure her position in the witches' circle, so she sends the heroes on a quest; healer, priestess of *Satuaria*, and soul healer to the farmers of the surrounding area.

Background: Proprietor of the *Witches' Kitchen* and an influential sister in the Coven of *Hallerû*. *Erlgunde* was once Asmolinda's student, but is so consumed by her hatred for all *Andergastans*, she turns a deaf ear to Asmolinda.

Asmolinda thinks little of modern ideas and despises *Karlitta of Lyckweiden* (see *TWK*, page 123), one of the High Three of the Coven of *Hallerû*.

Fate: Asmolinda continues to manage her inn together with *Belrike*. She speaks out against *Karlitta* and supports *Naringrath's* ideas instead (see *TWK*, page 123).

Role playing tips: Pretend to rock in a rocking chair. Squint and pretend to hold the pince nez before your eyes when you look at your players. Be friendly, but quickly fall into the *strict, but fair, schoolmarm* role if given a reason to rebuke the heroes.

Special Features: A small owl familiar named *Haldomyr*, and a black housecat named *Elbion*.

Important Stats: *Treat Wounds* 13 (13/14/14), *Magical Lore* 12 (13/13/16), *Willpower* 12 (15/16/16), *SPI* 3

Patrons and Other Inhabitants

Haldomyr (Asmolinda's small owl familiar; brown-white plumage; cheeky and smart; loves to be petted; hates rain; always playing with some object).

Belrike (43 years old; black hair; ample bosom; crude humor; Asmolinda's former student, but now the hostess at

the *Witches' Kitchen*; has a little female owl familiar named *Frantje*; loves exuberant festivities; hates topics that sour the mood; wants a steady boyfriend).

Noriloth (13 years old; long, brown hair; quiet and shy; *Belrike's* student and serving girl; loves the housecat, *Elbion*; hates work; wants time to play).

Ulward Dreubner (see page 21) arrived yesterday; he enjoys a mild affair with *Belrike*. He is drinking with colleagues and wants to catch up with the heroes and hear about their experiences after they parted company.

Ludemar (26 years old; dark curls; broad shoulders; polite, but a bit dim-witted; loves his job; hates the conflict between the kingdoms, wants to be just like *Ulward*) has drunk quite a few beers with *Ulward* already, and is extremely impressed with any story he hears.

Ala (17 years old; round, pregnant belly; brown hair hidden beneath a hood; farmer) is expecting her first baby; came here seeking Asmolinda's advice.

Orniward (32 years old; wears a mended gambeson one size too large; carries a threshing flail; loves music; hates fighting; does not want to go to *Nordvest*) is a local yeoman on his way to the mustering in *Nordvest*, the castle of *Lady Melanoth of Ingvalsrohden*, the local landholder and lord, by order of his knight.

Rumors

The heroes gather the following information from guests at the inn.

“Old Countess *Melanoth of Ingvalsrohden* is gathering her knights, each of which is calling in their men and women, as well. The events in *Joborn* will have serious consequences for all of us!” (+/-)

“The pig-noses plundered a hamlet two days ago, just beyond the border. They burned everything to the ground and didn't even spare the children.” (-)

“The wedding was staged only so someone could abduct a Nostrian bride. It was probably planned by an old druid who wants the *Andergastans* to sacrifice her to the forest.” (+/-)

Getting to Know You

Asmolinda grants the heroes an audience after listening to several farmers who came seeking her advice. Even though her old friend *Barl* sent them and it is obvious her former student is involved, the heroes can't seem to persuade her to reveal what she knows about the woman with the piercing gaze. The old lady avoids giving a clear answer.

“Assume this woman you describe is a sister in my coven—why would I sell her out to you?”

- “My dear child, there is always the threat of war. You must give me a better reason than that to send one of my own to her doom.”
- “We are not a guild, only a coven. We share the same interests, nothing more. None of us is responsible for the actions of another.”



Though the heroes might feel they are banging their heads against a brick wall, a successful *Empathy* (*Discern Motivation*) check reveals the devious old lady is quite willing to sell out her sister—for the right price. Asmolinda does not want to see herself or the Coven of Hallerû caught up in this affair because of Erlgunde’s actions. With 3+ QL on a successful *Treat Soul* check, the heroes realize that, as Erlgunde’s former teacher, Asmolinda feels partially responsible for Erlgunde’s actions and is quite depressed about the whole matter. If the heroes ask Asmolinda to name her price, she drops the masquerade and agrees to talk business.

A Bargain with a Witch

Asmolinda asks the heroes to understand that she cannot simply betray a sister of her coven. However, if the heroes did the coven a favor, she would certainly make an exception and tell them where Erlgunde is hiding.

- For some time now, odious birdcatchers have been operating in the vicinity. They seek birds of prey, probably to train and sell them.
- They almost caught her familiar, Haldomyr, in a trap not too long ago. But the shrewd little owl escaped in the nick of time.
- The birdcatchers pose a serious threat to the local bird of prey population.
- They are also a threat to the witches of Hallerû, since the *Silent Sisters* and the *Seers of Today and Tomorrow* typically choose their familiars from these magnificent birds.
- If the heroes agree to free the captured birds and drive the birdcatchers out of the area, Asmolinda promises to give them Erlgunde’s location.
- Haldomyr is able to lead the heroes to the birdcatchers.

The Birdcatchers’ Camp

The birdcatchers’ camp is south of the road, about a half-day journey on foot, where the forest becomes denser and the land hillier. With Haldomyr’s guidance, the heroes have no problem finding the camp. However, the familiar does not dare approach closer than half a mile from the camp. Perhaps he fears capture or becoming a larger bird’s dinner. Once the heroes spot the camp, he immediately flies back to the inn.

The birdcatchers built a small cottage at the base of a steep cliff using timber they collected nearby. The cottage shelters them from the wind and other sudden weather changes. In front of the cottage stands a large firepit, which smolders even during the day. Behind the firepit—between the wall of the house and the cliff side—the birdcatchers built a large aviary. Even at this distance, the heroes hear the sounds of many birds squawking. Six mules, probably the birdcatchers’ draft animals, graze in a clearing near the camp.

There are five people in the camp—two stay behind at all times to protect it from wild animals. They occupy themselves by making single cages from wood and bast, which they’ll use later to transport the birds and sell them. The remaining three check the bird traps twice a day, in the morning and early evening, leaving camp each time for at least two hours—sometimes longer (4-6 on 1D6), if they go hunting afterwards. When they return, they put the new birds in the aviary and then feed all the birds individually, which distracts the birdcatchers for about one hour.

Birdcatcher

COU 13 SGC 11 INT 13 CHA 11

DEX 13 AGI 13 CON 13 STR 13

LP 32 AE - KP - INI 11+1D6

DO 6 SPI 1 TOU 2 MOV 6

Unarmed: AT 11 PA 6 DP 1D6 RE short

Dagger: AT 10 PA 5 DP 1D6+1 RE short

Short Bow: RC 13 LT 1 DP 1D6+4 RA 10/50/80

PRO/ENC: 3/1 (leather armor) (includes armor modifiers)

Actions: 1

Advantages/Disadvantages: Direction Sense / Negative Trait (Superstition)

Special Abilities: Feint I (Unarmed, Dagger)

Skills: *Animal Lore* 9, *Body Control* 7, *Climbing* 7, *Commerce* 6, *Fast-Talk* 2, *Feat of Strength* 4, *Empathy* 3, *Intimidation* 3, *Orienting* 7, *Perception* 8, *Plant Lore* 5, *Stealth* 8, *Self-Control* 6, *Survival* 8, *Swimming* 2, *Willpower* 5

Number: 5

Size Category: medium

Type: Intelligent, humanoid

Loot: per individual; random loot of 2D6+2 halers

Combat Behavior: Birdcatchers attempt to use feints against enemies. They prefer to attack only when they have the advantage of numbers.

Escape: Per individual; they attempt to flee after suffering *Pain I*

Pain +1 at: 24 LP, 16 LP, 8 LP, and 5 LP and less

Chasing Away the Birdcatchers

The heroes must free the captured birds and drive the birdcatchers away. There are numerous ways for the heroes to achieve this goal.

Naturally, violence would make short work of the birdcatchers. But, a solid argument could also convince the birdcatchers to leave the region. A successful *Law* (*Nostris* or *Andergast*) check at +1 reminds the heroes that only nobles have the right to hunt in these woods, though whether that include birds of prey is up for debate. The heroes may add QL/2 from this check to the results of a *Persuasion* (*Debate*), *Fast-Talk*, or *Intimidation* (*Threats*) check. It is possible to convince the birdcatchers to leave, even without knowledge about local laws.

The birdcatchers are not naïve; they know that out here in the wilderness, the law flows not from the hand of a noble, but from their own ability with a sword. However, when faced with an equal number of heavily armed heroes, their resistance (*Willpower* checks) wanes and they agree to go (the birdcatchers always try to avoid combat when they feel there is a good chance they'll lose).

The birdcatchers are quite superstitious, so they are susceptible to magic and spiritual phenomena. It is possible to accidentally frighten them off, whether the heroes actually use magic or only pretend to do so—and this likely has more long-term impact than being chased from the region by threats or force.

The Aviary

The aviary, a framework completely covered in bird droppings and feathers, is locked with two wooden latches that require little physical strength to open. Opening the aviary poses little problem, but setting the birds of prey free is another matter entirely. Each bird wears a leather hood to keep it quiet and prevent it from attacking other birds. As soon as the heroes remove a hood, the freed bird starts to screech, flap its wings, and attack in frustration. The aviary holds 1D6+5 birds total, including an eagle, a hawk, two skull owls, and a raven.

Freeing the birds requires a cumulative *Animal Lore* (*Wild Animals*) check with a bonus of +1 (interval 1 minute, 5 attempts, no more than 3 heroes). This check gets no bonus if the heroes do not first chase off or incapacitate the birdcatchers, as liberating the birds requires relative peace and quiet. If there is too much noise, the heroes face 1D3 angry birds of prey. If the heroes try to release the birds stealthily without first defeating the birdcatchers, give them 2D6 CR to act. After that, the birdcatchers may make *Perception* (*Spot*) checks with a bonus of +3 to notice what is happening.

Birds of Prey (Various)

Size: 3.5 to 4.75 feet long; 9 to 9.75-foot wingspan

Weight: 19 to 22 pounds

COU 15 **SGC** 12 (a) **INT** 14 **CHA** 14

DEX 11 **AGI** 14 **CON** 14 **STR** 12

LP 15AE - **KP** - **INI** 15+1D6

DE 8 **SPI** 0 **TOU** 2 **MOV** 1/20 (on land/in the air)

Beak and Claws: **AT** 13 **DP** 1D6+3 **RE** short

PRO/ENC: 0/0

Actions: 1

Special Abilities: Attack Weak Spot (Beak and Claws; see page 35), Flying Attack (Beak and Claws; see page 35), Improved Dodge I

Skills: *Body Control* 10, *Feat of Strength* 6, *Flying* 11, *Intimidation* 7, *Perception* 14, *Self-Control* 12, *Stealth* 6, *Willpower* 6

Number: 1 or 2 (pair)

Type: Animal, non-humanoid

Size Category: medium

Loot: 5 rations (meat), trophy (feathers, 8 silverthalers)

Combat Behavior: The birds attack for 7 CR (or until they lose 50% of their LP), then they flee.

Escape: see Combat Behavior

Pain +1 at: 11 LP, 8 LP, 5 LP, and 3 LP and less

Read Aloud or Paraphrase

You did it! With loud screeches and wild flapping of their wings, the birds leave the cage and take to the sky. The wind created by their wings stirs up the feathers scattered around the filthy cage floor, leaving you standing in a soft, but foul-smelling, cloud that slowly settles back to the ground.

The Letter

A hero who makes a successful *Perception* (*Spot*) check at +3 in the vicinity of the cage finds a small rolled-up piece of leather on the floor of the aviary. The roll looks like it was meant to be attached to a bird's leg; the draft from the birds' wings must have exposed it. Inside the leather roll, the heroes find a disturbing message, as follows.

Deare Kasmyrai,

I hav saufed yor dowter. She is safe with me. I will gladly retern her to yu. Bud maybee we cud talk ones mor about the weding between her and me son?

Uhlgar awafts yor respons.

Yours Trully, Rodegrimm of Blutbuchenforst

It appears the heroes have gained insight as to the motives for the bride's abduction.

If the heroes look up into the sky at this point, they see one of the liberated skull owls far above, circling the camp. It flies off as soon as the heroes see it (the owl is too far away to shoot down).

An Old Lady's Gratitude

Asmolinda readily holds up her end of the bargain. She tells the heroes the following information.

- *Erlgunde* lives in an old tower on a hill above the *Ingväl*—just outside *Kravik*.
- If someone as conspicuous as the one-eyed knight wanted a hideout, this would be the perfect place.
- If, for some reason, *Erlgunde* is not home when the heroes arrive, they should at least find some clues as to her whereabouts.

Furthermore, Asmolinda cordially invites the heroes to stay at *Witches' Kitchen* free of charge.

When the heroes decide to head out, Ulward offers to take them to their destination quickly on his raft. If the heroes previously made good traveling companions, he does not charge them; otherwise, he gives them the special *friend's price* of 2 silverthalers per person.

The witch's tower is about 50 miles away, a journey of another two days on foot, or just over one day on horseback or Ulward's raft.

If the heroes look closely (*Perception (Spot)* check with a penalty of -1), they spot the half-ruined, round, clay-brick tower from the river. The densely wooded, steep slopes of a shale hill rises before them in a bend of the river. The tower juts out from a sea of tall trees on the crest. The hill would be no challenge for a mountaineer; but it is a difficult ascent for the heroes, even with equipment.

If the heroes are traveling on Ulward's raft, he drops them off at the shore and promises to wait for them in a shaded spot along the bend. It is a popular place for raftsmen to gather, and he hopes to meet his colleague, Ludemar, there once more.

The Villains' Next Step

The skull owl the heroes saw circling the camp was none other than Uhlgar, *Erlgunde's* familiar. He was supposed to deliver *Rodegrimm's* message to *Kasmyrai* of *Eichenschlag* in *Joborn* and wait for her response. But, Uhlgar was caught in the birdcatchers' trap while hunting, and was imprisoned until the heroes freed him.

When Uhlgar realized he lost the message, he circled above the aviary, waiting for the heroes to leave so he could return and find the roll of leather. When the heroes spotted him, he knew his mission had failed, so he flew back to the hideout to tell *Erlgunde* and the knight about the incident.

Which Owl?

The heroes might suspect, as they work to free the birds, that one of the skull owls is the familiar they're trying to find. But, since Uhlgar already lost the message, he looks no different from regular skull owls. If the heroes still manage to identify him somehow and bind him, he can lead them to *Rodegrimm's* hideout, where they are able to use him as leverage against *Erlgunde*. However, they should not underestimate the witch. *Erlgunde* is able to spy on the heroes through the owl's eyes—up to seven miles away—by casting *Unseen Watcher* (see *Core Rules*, page 280), and might turn the tables once more.

It is possible to follow the owl, and the heroes may keep up with Uhlgar using magic or a flying instrument, but the heroes should not underestimate Uhlgar, either. If he believes he can defeat an opponent (such as a witch on her broom, or a mage or elf who shapeshifts into the form of a smaller bird), Uhlgar does not hesitate to attack. For Uhlgar's stats, see page 34.



Get Them!

The Villains' Plans, Continued...

Rodegrimm and his men-at-arms did take shelter in *Erlgunde's* tower. From there, the knight made his attempt to contact *Noralettha's* mother. But, as the heroes already discovered, the message never reached its destination. *Rodegrimm* has not yet made a second attempt. Thanks to *Erlgunde's* familiar, he knows the heroes found his message. He fears they might also find him in the tower, so he does not send anyone else out for the time being. He wants to face the heroes at full strength. Only if his fears prove unfounded (such as if the heroes do not arrive at the tower within 1D3+2 days) does he send *Erlgunde* and Uhlgar to deliver the message to knight *Kasmyrai*.





If you think Rodegrimm's group is too powerful for the heroes, the knight concludes they are no threat to him and sends Uhlgar and Erlgunde on their way to deliver the message before the heroes arrive.

The Heroes Arrive

Rodegrimm does not risk a fight with the heroes. Since his men and the heroes are about equal in number, he deems the risk too high, and he doesn't want to lose. Consequently, he decides to flee. He has already packed everything and is ready to leave. The group intends to flee to the river and force someone at the raftsmen's meeting point to transport them to *Nordvest*. Since Rodegrimm has no other hiding place, he plans to seek refuge with his feudal lady, Countess *Melanoth of Ingvalsrohden*.

Noraletha

Noraletha knows and trusts Rodegrimm. Because she thinks he rescued her, she believes he has her best interests at heart. She fears the heroes work for whomever had her abducted from her own wedding, and does everything in her power to escape them—even if they previously met her in Joborn under different circumstances.

The Liberation Process

When the heroes arrive on the shore beneath the tower, Rodegrimm's men already expect them. Perched on a branch, Uhlgar keeps watch on the river and plains toward *Kravik* (the only direction with a bridge). On a successful *Perception (Spot)* check with a penalty of -3, the heroes spot the owl taking wing and flying off toward the tower. From this point on, the clock is ticking, as the escape preparations are already underway in the tower.

Up the Hill

The heroes must scale a stony slope to reach the tower. This would not be an issue if they were not pressed for time; but, in their great haste, it could end in a painful slide down. Scaling the hill requires a cumulative *Climbing (Mountains)* check with a bonus of +1 (interval 3 minutes, 7 attempts) from each hero. The results determine how long they take to climb to the top. A botch results into a downhill slide and inflicts 1D6 DP.

Heroes making it to the top of the hill may assist weaker climbers, by throwing them a rope, which grants a +2 bonus to the weaker hero's next check, for example.

If the heroes fail the check or take longer than seven attempts to reach the top, they lose enough time that Rodegrimm and his men-at-arms are just small dots on the river.

If one or more heroes make it to the top of the hill faster than expected, use the following list as inspiration.

Convict the Villain? But How?

Unless Rodegrimm implicates himself during his final monologue like a true villain, the heroes still need evidence to convict him. The message on the roll of leather is not enough evidence at this point, as it could be a forgery.

Though Rodegrimm's current behavior might be strange, he is still a knight—and Noraletha swears that his story about rescuing her is true. The heroes' suspicions alone are not enough to prove otherwise, and Rodegrimm covered his tracks thoroughly—only his companions know the truth. To ensure he cannot weasel his way out of being held responsible for his actions in the end, possibly igniting a war between Andergast and Nostria, the heroes need strong proof of his actions—not even their word is enough. Therefore, at least one of his men should survive the encounter. It certainly does no harm to keep at least one of them alive. Doing so could also make the episode at *Castle Nordvest* go more smoothly, especially if the witness agrees to testify before the countess (which is risky, since Rodegrimm is hiding in her castle).

A statement from one of his men-at-arms would be best, and Tommegrimm, Ingvar, or Algane agree to testify with a bit of pressure, especially if their knight no longer has the ability to protect them. Erlgunde would also make a particularly useful witness, since she was involved in Rodegrimm's plans. Her word as a witch also carries some weight in Nostria. However, she agrees to testify against Rodegrimm only if the heroes promise impunity and do not harm her owl.

If Erlgunde is still at *Castle Nordvest*, the heroes are able to capture her there. If she has already set out to hand-deliver the message to Noraletha's mother, she goes into hiding and vanishes, and the heroes must rule her out as a witness.



The Hero makes the climb within:

- 2 Attempts:** The hero who quickly reaches the top of the hill arrives at the tower before Rodegrimm and his henchmen escape. A fight ensues, and the absconding group attempts to incapacitate the hero as quickly as possible. The hero must withstand attack for at least 3 minutes (time interval of the check), before other heroes arrive to help.
- 3 Attempts:** The hero sees the villains escape from the tower. Tommegrimm, Ingvimir, and Algane make sure the others escape by shooting at the hero (also see *4 Attempts*).
- 4 Attempts:** The heroes find the door of the tower open. They hear the sound of running feet coming from the woods in front of them, in the direction of a path that

leads down the other side of the hill. If they follow the sounds, they see Rodegrimm, Noraletha, and Erlgunde fleeing in the distance. Tommegrimm, Ingvamir, and Algane are hidden behind some trees and open fire when the heroes appear. The heroes may advance and move from cover to cover by making a successful *Body Control* check to run to the next tree, and a *Stealth* check to hide behind it. The three men-at-arms do the same as they try to reach the river, and provide each other with covering fire and shoot at whichever hero seems to be catching up to them. They all escape before they can be killed.

5-6 Attempts: The heroes see the open tower door. The path down the other side of the hill leads to the meeting point, where three people, including *Ludemar*, lie dead. There are two rafts afloat on the river: Tommegrimm, Ingvamir, and Algane occupy the closest raft, and Rodegrimm and Noraletha (and Erlgunde, if she didn't leave earlier) are on the farthest one. The heroes realize with horror that Rodegrimm is forcing Ulward to steer his raft. To follow them, the heroes must board a raft themselves—hopefully they paid attention to Ulgar's lessons, otherwise they may have trouble steering.

7+ Attempts: The tower is abandoned. If the heroes hurry, they can still make out the villains' silhouettes on their rafts as they sail into the distance (otherwise, see *5-6 Attempts*). The heroes are not able to catch up with them, and don't see Rodegrimm's raft again until they get to *Nordvest* (see page 36).

 If the heroes are unable to steer the raft on their own, one of the raftsmen is merely injured, instead of dead. If the heroes patch him up, he helps take up the pursuit.

Duel on the River

When the heroes climb onto their raft, Tommegrimm, Ingvamir, and Algane's raft is already 65 feet away, and Rodegrimm's raft is 262 feet away. Rodegrimm's men-at-arms do everything in their power to ensure their knight escapes. • ◉

• The adventure's plot assumes Rodegrimm escapes to *Nordvest* with Noraletha. If the heroes capture him at this point, the adventure ends. If the heroes have made a real effort, and you feel Rodegrimm's repeated escapes would only frustrate them, let them succeed here.

To simulate the raft-chase, use the rules for Chases in the *Core Rules* on page 349, substituting the skill *Sailing (Chases)* for *Body Control*. The rafts' MOV is 12; and the raftsmen have SR 10 (13/13/13).

- If multiple heroes help steer the raft, decrease the difficulty of the check for the person navigating the raft by 1 per helper (up to a maximum of 2).
- In the second and fourth rounds of combat, the heroes must avoid obstacles, which increases the difficulty of the check by 1. If they fail the check, each hero must make a successful *Body Control (Balance)* check or else fall into the water.

- If combat occurs, all AT, PA, and RC checks suffer an increased penalty of 2 due to the raft's uneven, moving surface.
- Ranged combat is possible once the heroes get within range of their ranged weapons. Close combat requires that the rafts be within 6 feet of each other.
- Heroes may jump onto an enemy raft with a successful *Body Control (Jumping)* check. Adjust the difficulty accordingly for distance.
- If the heroes do not reach the first raft within 5 CR, they fall too far behind to catch up. If they engage in combat, the knight and his victim are long gone by the time the fighting ends. It is futile to speed after Rodegrimm if they cannot see him.

 If you think this battle is too difficult for your heroes, take Erlgunde and Rodegrimm out of the scene by having them escape together. However, keep Erlgunde in mind as a potential opponent for the rest of the adventure.

Skull Owl (Uhlgar)

Size: 2'-3' tall; 9'-11' wingspan

Weight: 16 to 20 pounds

COU 12 **SGC** 14 (a) **INT** 14 **CHA** 13

DEX 12 **AGI** 13 **CON** 12 **STR** 12

LP 22 **AE** - **KP** - **INI** 13+1D6

DE 7 **SPI** 0 **TOU** 2 **MOV** 1/15 (ground/air)

Beak and Claws: AT 12 DP 1D6+2 RE short

PRO/ENC 5/0

Actions: 1

Advantages/Disadvantages: Darksight II, Exceptional Sense (Sight)

Special Abilities: Attack Weak Spot (Beak and Claws; see page 35), Flying Attack (Beak and Claws; see page 35)

Skills: *Body Control* 5, *Feat of Strength* 4, *Flying* 7, *Intimidation* 6, *Perception* 12, *Self-Control* 4, *Stealth* 12, *Willpower* 4

Size Category: small

Type: Animal, non-humanoid

Loot: 4 rations (meat), trophy (feathers, 7 silverthalers)

Combat Behavior: He attacks on Erlgunde's orders and defends her to the end.

Escape: If not defending Erlgunde, he flees after losing 50% of his LP

Animal Lore (Wild Animals)

QL 1: The mere sight of a skull owl can cause fright.

QL 2: This nocturnal hunter is not usually active during the day.

QL 3+: Skull owls sometimes attack human-sized targets.

Special Rules

Intimidating Appearance: When seeing a skull owl for the first time, make a *Willpower (Resist Threats)* check or suffer the disadvantage *Afraid of...(Skull Owls)* I for one day. The disadvantage ends when the owl is chased off or killed.

Pain +1 at: 17 LP, 11 LP, 6 LP, and 5 LP and less



The Men-at-arms:

Tommegrimm, Ingvimir, and Algane

COU 14 SGC 12 INT 13 CHA 12

DEX 13 AGI 14 CON 14 STR 13

LP 36 AE - KP - INI 14+1D6

DO 7 SPI 2 TOU 3 MOV 8

Andergaster: AT 14 PA 3 DP 2d6+5 RE medium

Mace: AT 14 PA 6 DP 1D6+4 RE medium

Short Bow: RC 13 LT 1 DP 1D6+4 RA 10/50/80

Nostrian Long Bow: RC 13 LT 2 DP 1D6+8

RA 20/120/180

PRO/ENC: 0/0

Advantages/Disadvantages: None

Special Abilities: Feint I, Precise Shot, Throw I, Forceful Blow I

Skills: Body Control 7, Feat of Strength 9, Intimidation 8, Perception 7, Sailing 5, Self-Control 10, Stealth 6, Willpower 6

Combat Behavior: The henchmen like to use their bows, especially for ambushes. In melee combat, they use Forceful Blows.

Escape: Per individual

Pain +1 at: 24 LP, 18 LP, 12 LP, and 5 LP or less

Erlgunde

COU 14 SGC 13 INT 13 CHA 15

DEX 13 AGI 13 CON 13 STR 12

LP 33 AE 40 KP - INI 14+1D6

DO 7 SPI 2 TOU 2 MOV 8

Unarmed: AT 12 PA 6 DP 1D6 RE short

Dagger: AT 12 PA 6 DP 1D6+1 RE short

Spear: AT 12 PA 6 DP 1D6+4 RE long

PRO/ENC: 0/0

Advantages/Disadvantages: Spellcaster/Negative Trait (Vengeance)

Special Abilities: Feint I

Skills: Body Control 6, Feat of Strength 4, Flying 10, Intimidation 6, Perception 8, Sailing 3, Self-Control 6, Stealth 10, Willpower 8

Spells: Witch's Bile 13, Witch Knot 7, Witch's Claws 8, Fighting Stick 12, Spiderwalk 6

Combat Behavior: As soon as melee combat begins, she flies from Rodegrimm's raft to that of the men-at-arms. She casts *Fighting Stick* on her spear and supports the men-at-arms with spells from the background.

Escape: She is not willing to die for Rodegrimm. If she loses a large number of LP or runs out of AE, she flies away. She fights to the bitter end only if Uhlgar gets killed, but things should not come to that.

Pain +1 at: 22 LP, 17 LP, 11 LP, and 5 LP and less



Always Target the Leader

Naturally, the heroes want to attack Rodegrimm, if possible, and not his men-at-arms, and they'll likely think of something clever to reach him. But the knight still has a few tricks up his sleeve to distract the heroes. First, he injures Ulward and pushes him into the river. The raftsmen suffers *Pain I* and might drown if the heroes do not pull him from the water. Should this not be enough of a distraction to escape, Rodegrimm shoves Noraletta into the water (she cannot swim), forcing the heroes to choose between catching him and saving the bride.

Ulward Escapes

If Rodegrimm does not wound him and push him into the water, Ulward soon realizes he is only excess baggage and Rodegrimm likely plans to dispose of him when they reach their destination. When the knight's attention is focused elsewhere, Ulward jumps into the river, swims for it, and hides in some bushes. The heroes won't meet him again in this adventure as he doesn't turn up in Nordvest, the ill-humored knight's destination.

Attack Weak Spot

(Special Maneuver)

The creature may attack an unprotected part of the body.

Rules: If the creature's AT succeeds and the target's defense fails, the attack ignores PRO from clothes and armor. This attack cannot circumvent magical, karmic, and natural PRO.

Penalty: -2

Prerequisites: creature must possess this SA naturally

Flying Attack

(Special Maneuver)

Rules: Increase DP by 2. Attacker must have a Flying MOV of 4+ and move at least 24' before attacking. Target defends as usual. If Flying Attack fails, defender makes an attack of opportunity. If target counterattacks that same CR, target suffers a penalty of 6. Attacker finishes the round MOV/2 yards from the target. Flying Attack cannot be combined with Feint.

Penalty: -2

Prerequisites: Creature must possess this SA naturally.



Nordvest



Rodegrimm escapes to the count's castle at *Ingvalsrohden*. The heroes have trouble picking up his trail again in *Nordvest* and must question the villagers as well as the men and women in the small army camp who are preparing for war. The heroes might even learn of a secret path into the fortress, thanks to a clue from *Lady Rondriane of Sapstem*. Here, they must finally catch Rodegrimm and free *Noralettha* from captivity.

Nordvest

Population: about 300

Political Affiliation: Nostria

Rulership: the old counts of Ingvalsrohden in the person of Old Countess Melanoth

Temples: Shrines to some immortals

Trade and Industry: Timber, maple, cloth, leather, crops

Inns: *Woodchooper* (Q2/P2/B10), *Beer Flood* (Q3/P3/B-), and *Count's Parlor* (Q4/P4/B10)

Mood in the City: simmering irritation after the events in *Joborn*; the countess' hastily summoned knights and men-at-arms fill the inns and taverns and bring variety into the villagers' dull, daily lives. But the men are bored, and brawls are now a daily occurrence in *Nordvest*. Quite a few innkeepers long for the day the armed men set out to war.

Read Aloud or Paraphrase

Surf sprays your face as you watch a flock of ducks rise from the Ingval, quacking in protest. They fly low over a settlement enclosed by palisades and head toward an imposing rock needle rising from a dark green conifer forest. A gray, basalt castle stands on the rock, which slopes sharply toward the river. Its daunting presence seems to guard the village and the river meadows around it. More troubling is the sight of about a dozen tents between the castle and the settlement. Above them flies a blue banner bearing a silver saltarel. After the recent events in Joborn, it seems the countess issued a call to arms.

When the heroes finally reach *Nordvest*, at least one week has passed since the events in *Joborn*. Heralds have spread the terrible news to the entire kingdom. The heroes now witness an attempt to muster a Nostrian army under the

command of Marshal *Rondriane of Sapstem* (for her stats, see below). While Forest Count *Eilert* marches from the south via *Mirdin* to *Joborn*, *Rondriane's* task is to take control of the *Sâlway*.

A successful *Perception (Spot)* check with a bonus of +1 allows the heroes to find *Rodegrimm's* raft beached on a sand bank to the south of the settlement, close to the rock needle. Neither *Rodegrimm* nor *Noralettha* are anywhere to be seen.

The Villains' Next Move

Rodegrimm landed the raft close to the settlement and pushed it back into the river. Unfortunately for him, the raft grounded on a sand bank in the *Ingval*, allowing the heroes to find it. *Rodegrimm* entered the fortress through a secret passage running from a cave underneath the rock needle, so he would not attract attention. He learned about the secret passage from his liege lady, *Countess Melanoth of Ingvalsrøhden*. In her presence, he acts as *Noralettha's* savior and pleads for the countess' protection from his pursuers.



Search for Traces

A search for clues along the river bank is futile. The forces mustering here have left so many tracks in the vicinity that the heroes cannot discern *Rodegrimm* and *Noralettha's* tracks among them. The heroes have little choice other than to question people in the village, the army camp, and the count's castle.

The Village of Nordvest

If the heroes wish to ask around the village, let them decide with whom they speak. Shorten this scene by calling for a *Streetwise (Asking Around)* check from each hero. Success garners one of the following pieces of information for each QL, based on which questions they ask. The heroes should be careful not to disclose too much information, themselves. Neither the villagers nor the knights and men-at-arms, who are all brimming with patriotism, enjoy stories where heroes accuse *Nostrian* knights of dishonorable deeds... such as a bride's abduction or a bloody massacre. Some might even view such actions as heroic, shouting "*Excellent! No upstanding Nostrian would marry an Andergastan pig!*"

...About a Knight with an Eyepatch

- ☛ "A knight with an eyepatch? You should ask at the army camp. More than enough knights there" (certainly, but *Rodegrimm* is not among them).
- ☛ "Yup, I've seen him. Had a gal with him. Don't really know if he was a knight, though. Didn't have a horse. He was floating down the *Ingval* on a raft, but he didn't stop here." (+)
- ☛ "I've seen a knight with an eyepatch before. I think he used to serve the countess, maybe? But that was some time ago... He hasn't come through here recently." (+/-)

...About the Army

- ☛ "This is only the first muster. We're just waiting for a few more reinforcements, and then the *Andergastans* will bleed." (+)
- ☛ "I heard the queen of *Nostria* is reluctant to go to war against *Andergast*. I wonder how much longer we should wait? We want revenge for *Joborn!*" (+)
- ☛ "It's all an act, I tell you. They don't really plan to go to war. *Nostria* doesn't have the coin for that." (pure speculation)

...About the Old Countess

- ☛ "The countess has more than enough trouble at her borders, with *Thorwalers* and *Andergastans* alike. She has long beseeched her forest knights to do something about it, (+) but the capital sends little aid. Perhaps things will finally change!" (unlikely)
- ☛ "Between you and me, the old counts always pursue their own agendas. I wouldn't be surprised if the countess is involved in all of this." (-)

The Army Camp

The army camp consists of about a dozen tents, in various colors and bearing different coats of arms. Around half a banner is assembled here; among them knights and their retinues and men-at-arms. The camp commander is Noble Lady *Rondriane of Sapstem* (late fifties; 6' tall; pale blue eyes; graying black hair; masterful knight; brilliant commander; harsh tone toward subjects; hard, but fair; ambitious; Marshal of *Nostria*, see *TWK*, page 121), who attempts to keep her army busy with weapons training and entertained with prize fights.

Information

To discover *Rodegrimm's* whereabouts, the heroes may try speaking with the rank-and-file soldiers or even seek an audience with the marshal herself, in the hopes that she would hand over a traitor like *Rodegrimm*.

Searching the Camp: An adventuring party creates excitement in a camp full of bored soldiers. The heroes won't have a moment's peace. To be sure *Rodegrimm* is not in the camp, they must check every tent, a risky proposition that is only possible with *Stealth* checks. Those caught sneaking around a *Nostrian* military camp are assumed to be *Andergastan* spies. Such people should count themselves lucky if they are not killed on sight.

Asking the Soldiers: The soldiers (men-at-arms and drafted farmers) are very suspicious of strangers in their midst, especially those asking strange questions about one of their own knights.

The heroes must do a lot of convincing to find out Rodegrimm is not in the camp (most of the soldiers don't know him, anyway). The soldiers have *Willpower* 4 (14/13/11) and *SPI* 2. The heroes should be careful not to disclose their reasons for inquiring to these soldiers.

Talking to Marshal Rondriane of Sapstem: Whether the noble lady grants the heroes an audience depends largely on their social class (at least level III). However, an emphasis on the truth, such as, *"We have information that could prevent the war,"* should lead to an audience. Even a group of heroes who are not *Free* may be granted a meeting, if they are smart enough.

- The marshal finds it hard to believe a Nostrian knight was so heavily involved in the Bloody Wedding of Joborn. Still, she believes it is important to consider the matter, since it could determine whether Nostria goes to war.
- She swears that no knight fitting Rodegrimm's description has set foot in her camp.
- She recommends the heroes seek an audience with Countess Melanoth, as she has taken a few knights who lost their lands into her service. Perhaps Rodegrimm is among them?

Rumors

- *"It's said that Noble Count Albio of Salta is also sending troops to the muster. They should arrive any day now. Allegedly, he openly criticized the queen because she has not yet declared war. He's not wrong, I tell you! We must show the Andergastan rabble that we won't stand for this."* (+)
- *"It's all or nothing for Marshal Rondriane of Sapstem. Since the queen married Forest Count Eilert, she has been fighting to keep her standing."* (+/-)
- *"The Noble Lady Marshal Rondriane was the power behind the throne for many years. But, when Queen Yolande married, her influence at court quickly waned. She didn't take it well, I hear. I've even heard she's now working with her old rival, Noble Count Albio of Salta."* (+/-)

The Count's Castle

Read Aloud or Paraphrase

Castle Nordvest perches on a solitary rock needle above a sea of dark treetops. Though it looks quite majestic from the river valley, the ascent to the gatehouse is exhausting. A well-worn path, barely wide enough for a cart, snakes its way up the hill through a tangle of pine trees. Sweat runs in streams down your forehead and back by the time you near the top and the stony defensive structure comes into view once again. The only connection between the



rocky promontory and the outside world is a bridge guarded by a large gate tower. The guards at its entrance wake from their slumber and snap to attention when they see you approaching.



The heroes must think quickly. Old Countess Melanoth only receives visitors who announce their arrival ahead of time or are of noble birth. If the heroes tell the truth—they are searching for a knight with an eyepatch, whose arrest might prevent the war with Andergast—the guards grow worried enough to announce the heroes to the countess. But, to their surprise, a short while later they are told the countess does not know such a knight and does not give refuge to traitors, and they are sent away.

Alternatively, telling a white lie might lead to far greater success for the heroes. Indeed, the gates open faster than the heroes can say “*Old Countess of Ingvalsrohden*” if they claim to be the queen’s heralds or perhaps merchants who wish to make a deal with the countess. Reward the players for creativity. They should get the strong feeling that the countess is hiding something, and what conveys this notion better than a face-to-face meeting?

For a map of Castle Nordvest, see the inside back cover. Guards lead the heroes into the Great Hall (P10), where the countess receives them. Once she sees them in person, the countess uses *Empathy* checks to see if the heroes lied to obtain access.

🐉 Old Countess

Melanoth of Ingvalsrohden

Summary: In her mid-30s; 5’7” tall; green eyes; red hair; likes to wear expensive dresses; friendly, but melancholy at times; strong sense of justice; feels forsaken by the queen; no longer believes in the unity of Nostria; loves her daughter, Silaleth; hates Noble Count Albio of Salta; needs help to reclaim her lost lands, which is now occupied by Thorwalers.

Role: Rodegrimm’s powerful protector stands between him and the heroes and denies sheltering him. She trusts his word, believes he saved Noralettha, and—as his patroness—gracefully grants them both refuge until the situation subsides. She distrusts the heroes and might even come to believe they are Andergastan spies—they must convince her of the truth.

Background: The once fun-loving countess became quite stern when her beloved husband, *Muragio of Kendrar*, was banished to *Fortress Gordelyn*, an act for which she still blames the queen. She seeks to secure her borders, to protect her land and its inhabitants. She sees the impending war as a great threat, as she could lose her land once again. However, in some ways, she also sees it as chance to improve her situation. For many moons, she

has called on her forest knights to retake *Kendrar*, so her daughter might someday reclaim her legacy.

Role playing tips: Assert yourself. Act friendly, but as though you are accustomed to being in command. You are a woman of honor—if you give your word, it is binding. If the heroes accuse you of lying, throw them out unceremoniously.

Important Stats: *Empathy* 8 (13/13/14), *Fast-Talk* 10 (12/13/14), SPI 2

The Old Countess’ Motivation

Melanoth protects Rodegrimm, who is one of her knights, in every way possible. She does not know the heroes and cannot assess their motives; therefore, she doesn’t hesitate to lie to protect him.

If it becomes obvious to the heroes that she has something to hide, she has them escorted out under expedient pretenses.

If the heroes did not suspect anything before, it is clear now that something is wrong here. However, they should be smart enough to avoid insulting or threatening her. Melanoth does what she believes is right.

If the heroes produce a credible witness to Rodegrimm’s nefarious deeds (see *Convict the Villain? But How?* on page 33), Melanoth begins to doubt his honesty and confronts him face-to-face. However, she won’t show weakness in front of strangers.



Search for Information

A quick chat with the castle staff is far more revealing than a lengthy conversation with the countess. *Fast-Talk* (various applications) or *Seduction* (*Flirting*) checks are helpful when trying to gather information here.

Depending on their approach, an *Intimidation* (*Threats*) check might also garner some success, but the heroes need leverage over the person in question. A menacing appearance is not sufficient and only leads to trouble with guards or other armed people.

- The gate guards (check at -1) are strict and dismissive, but they reveal that the one-eyed knight is no stranger. His name is Rodegrimm of Blutbuchenforst, they say, and he is in the service of the countess. One of them thinks he saw Rodegrimm only yesterday, practicing with his sword in the castle courtyard.
- With a bit of patience, the heroes can find servants and maids outside the castle walls. They are able to convince (check with a bonus of +1) a servant on his way to the marketplace or a stable-maid walking the

horses into revealing that Rodegrimm and the missing bride actually are in the castle. The servants even tell the heroes where the two are staying—Rodegrimm in the castle next to the Great Hall, and Noralettha in the Keep.

- Heroes with the ability to fly might do some reconnaissance on the castle from the air and spy on Rodegrimm or Noralettha in the castle courtyard or through a window. The success of such a mission is at your discretion, and might depend on how well the heroes disguise themselves (a hero in the shape of a bird is far less conspicuous than a witch on a broom, for example).

Help from the Army Camp

If the heroes did not already meet with the noble lady of Sapstem, their investigation arouses her interest. Unlike Melanoth of Ingvalsrøhden, she considers the possibility the heroes' accusations against the mysterious one-eyed knight could be true. She even considers the notion that the countess herself might be angling to bring about a conflict with Andergast to request more protection for her borders.

However, she cannot investigate these accusations herself. If Countess Melanoth is innocent, such inquiries would lead to diplomatic entanglements in which Rondriane would

rather not be involved. She secretly helps the heroes, if she is able, as they are just what she needed—at best, they shed some light on the events in Joborn; at worst, she has lost nothing and can use them as scapegoats.

Because Rondriane wants to help the heroes with their investigation, at least indirectly, she sends a soldier named  *Lyspeth Tryvard* (27 years old; black hair; scar on her forehead; strong voice; *Willpower* 7 (13/13/13), SPI 2) to contact the heroes secretly at some point. Lyspeth tells the heroes a well-kept secret, one that Rondriane has known for many years: there is an old escape tunnel under the castle, where the heroes are able to enter, unseen.

- Lyspeth first acts curious and tries to feel out the heroes: “*They are already placing bets in the camp as to whether you’ll find what you’re looking for up there.*”
- Then she speaks in more concrete terms: “*Rumor has it the countess is more involved in this whole affair than people suspect.*”
- Finally, she gives them the crucial information: “*If you want to get into the castle unseen, you should look at the foot of the rock spur and follow the trail of the fish.*”
- If the heroes succeed in their mission, she questions them afterward. She helps the heroes flee from Ingvalsrøhden after they rescue Noralettha, if necessary. She then discreetly forwards all information to Marshal Rondriane.

Alternative Ways to Find the Secret Passage

Forgo using Lyspeth as an intermediary, if you wish, and instead have Rondriane summon the heroes directly to her tent. She reveals the vulnerable entrance and indirectly admits she does not trust Countess Melanoth; however, this requires great confidence in the heroes. If you prefer your heroes find the entrance to the castle themselves,

skip this scene and give them another hint about the secret passage under the castle. This might come from a servant who secretly wants to sneak into the castle to meet his lover, or from one of the countess' forest knights, who has had too much drink while waiting for battle. Other ways exist to get inside the castle, but they are far riskier. This adventure assumes the heroes use the secret passageway.



Inside Castle Nordvest

A vast rift gapes in the side of the steep cliff, in a place where the rushing Ingval has carved a stony channel and old willow trees stretch their branches out wide. The heroes discover the opening with a successful cumulative group *Perception (Search)* check (interval 15 minutes, any number of attempts). Sharp, broken edges stretch out to the beholder like teeth in a gigantic maw. The blackness beyond the entrance is just as unwelcoming. The tunnel is gloomy and dark, unless the heroes bring a light source. Adjust the following checks according to visibility (see *Core Rules*, page 348).

If the heroes examine the entrance (cumulative *Perception (Spot)* check (interval 5 minutes, any number of attempts)), they find an engraved fish silhouette after a bit of searching. The fish's mouth comes to a point, like an arrow.

Through the Mountain

The old tunnel was built to supply the castle during a siege. Today, the countess' heralds and forest knights use it to enter the castle unseen. A few servants know about this entrance, too, but they keep it a secret.

The inconspicuously carved fish symbols guide the heroes through the cave, otherwise they could easily get lost.

As long as the heroes remain on the correct path, they should not fear any traps or falling rocks. To find further fish symbols that lead the way into the castle, the heroes must make a cumulative group *Perception (Spot)* check at -2 (interval 15 minutes, any number of attempts). Failure means they wander in circles until they notice they took a wrong turn.

Read Aloud or Paraphrase

You quickly scrape the moss from the rough rock wall and breathe a sigh of relief as you find another fish symbol underneath. Whoever laid this path with these markers long ago wanted to make certain no one got lost down here. It is cold, dark, and damp in the tunnel; and the rocks crunch beneath your feet. There must be a colony of bats living down here, because you hear screeching in the distance.

Time and again, you must crouch to pass through narrow passages, only to find yourself in vaulted tunnels with ceilings far above your heads. The path winds steadily uphill. Rough steps ease the climb in places where the mountain did not grow the way humans would have preferred.

Out of breath from the strenuous climb, you finally arrive at the last fish carving, identifiable from the fact that its mouth points toward a dark, wooden door.

The heroes stand in front of a wooden door reinforced with iron bands (90 structure points) and an inlaid, warded lock shaped like an open fish's mouth. Opening the lock is easy with a successful *Pick Locks (Warded Locks)* check. Alternatively, a hero is able to break down the door with brute force with a *Feat of Strength (Breaking & Smashing)* check (interval 5 seconds, 1 hero, 10 attempts; if the heroes don't succeed after 10 checks, the door is so deformed that it may never open with brute force). Attempting to break the door down creates a lot of noise, and the heroes might be easily detected.

The Cellar Vault

Behind the door lies a natural vault with a 10' ceiling. On the far side, a wooden stairway leads up to a wooden hatch. The hatch was once forced opened and no longer fully closes. It leads to the castle's wine cellar (PW). • ○

The Count's Castle

Castle Nordvest

Population: about 30

Governance: Old Countess Melanoth of Ingvalsröden
Standing Troops: 8 castle guards under Captain Bosper's command

Atmosphere in the Castle: careless and distracted; every day is much like the last; rarely anything exciting going on, and even the mustering in the valley does not change this. However, the recent arrival of the strange knight and the young woman caused quite a stir, as strangers rarely remain in the castle for more than a few hours.

A Living Dungeon

When they leave the stair tower, the heroes step into the inhabited part of the castle and the most unrestricted phase of the adventure. How things proceed depends entirely on the heroes. They may attempt to sneak about the castle using *Stealth*, preferring to hide and make daring climbing maneuvers rather than risk being discovered. If they choose to act in a less subtle way, they must act quickly. There are only a few armed men in the castle itself, but a large muster of Nostrian troops is underway in the nearby camp. If the heroes decide to use violence, they should also prepare to hold the castle, or their victory will be short-lived.

The heroes might also try disguises, with some restrictions. • ○

If they are lucky, they find a way to meet with the countess once more and discuss Rodegrimm's public handover—though on her

• A map of Castle Nordvest appears inside the back cover.

• Disguises only work at great distances inside the castle. Everyone knows each other and quickly notice strangers. If the heroes attempt to speak with castle residents under the guise of being new hires or nobles who are here for the mustering, the difficulty increases by up to 3 points.



terms, of course. If they give the countess a way to save face, she might even order her guards to let them act with relative impunity.

Who, What, When, and Where?

- For a detailed description of the rooms in Castle Nordvest, see below (use the *Map of Castle Nordvest* inside the back cover for reference).
- The heroes' options depend on the time of day they arrive in the castle. The descriptions include the ways in which certain parts of the castle change during the *Day* or *Night*.
- For an *NPC Summary for Castle Nordvest*, see page 48. This overview helps you quickly locate descriptions for the castle's numerous residents.
- Rodegrimm appears wherever you like in the castle—for his stats, as well as those of the castle guards, see the *Appendix*, starting on page 48. For details of the final encounter with Rodegrimm, see *The Final Battle*, on page 46.

Excitement is Key

The most important component for this adventure's finale is excitement. No matter which path your players choose, the atmosphere you should convey is that the heroes are living on the razor's edge.

- A snoring guard sleeps restlessly and starts to mumble just as the heroes sneak past.
- A maid calls to a hero from the shadows; only later does it become clear that she mistook the hero for one of the castle's residents.
- Silaleth, the countess' eight-year-old daughter, suddenly appears before the heroes in her nightgown. In her drowsiness, she believes one of the heroes is her father who has finally returned.

Make your players sweat a little. Confront them with situations in which their FtP slowly melt away, and only then have them encounter Rodegrimm. Keep in mind, though, that the heroes must still find a way out of the castle (hopefully, with Noraletha and Rodegrimm in tow) and they might need to hold a few FtP in reserve to ensure their escape.



Wine Cellar (PW)

During the day, little light enters the room through the two narrow windows. Barrels full of wine and beer sit on shelves in two rows. Most are local, but there are a few bottles of finer vintage—such as a genuine Sparkling Bosparaniard from Arivor, which might soon be a rarity. The air is dusty and dry, and spider webs stretch between the barrels. From here, the heroes are able to access the upper floors via the stair tower (P8), which terminates on the third floor in the fireplace room (P15).

Day: The heroes hear the servants' muffled voices, the clatter of plates, and various sounds from the castle courtyard. It is quite busy. During a quiet moment, the majordomo sneaks in and secretly takes a drink.

Night: In the early evening hours, a maid appears—she fills a carafe with wine, possibly for the countess or one of the guests.

The Palace—First Floor

Despite its compact configuration, the castle's main building appears as spacious as possible. The arched windows—all glazed—are eye-catching.

Day: The court chaplain holds first services at dawn, but often nobody attends. Meanwhile, the servants do their best to put food on the table in the Great Hall (P10) before the countess rises. The chambermaid sets out the countess' clothes for the day. Everyone busies themselves with work, often in closed rooms, but there is almost always someone in the corridors, running errands. At dusk, the chaplain holds a second service. Toward evening, the servants serve the second large meal of the day, in the Great Hall. The castle grows quiet again after servants clear the plates away.

Night: After the castle's residents go to bed, the only light comes from the few candles that flicker in the entrance hall. The chaplain must often rise from bed because of his weak bladder. Sometimes, a servant named Ettl sneaks up to the nursemaid's chamber.

Entrance Hall (P1)

Those stepping from the castle courtyard into the main building through the double doors for the first time notice the hall's gray brickwork, which swallows the natural light. Multiple oil lamps help people see the portraits of the counts of Ingvalsrohden, which hang above the two wooden stairways that lead to a balcony (P9) on the second floor. Above it hangs a banner with the noble family's coat of arms. Weapons and suits of armor decorate niches under the stairs.

The Majordomo's Chambers (P2, P3)

The majordomo of the castle, ♀ *Brinette of Hugenholt* (50 years old; thin as a rake; brown hair in a pageboy cut; loves comfort; hates disorder; needs more employees) resides and works here. The most imposing object in the castle administrator's office (P2) is an exquisitely detailed wooden model of the castle. The adjacent bedchamber (P3) holds a sizable clothes chest, a bed, and a chamber pot. Two large windows provide a great view of the Ingval.

The Court Chaplain's Chambers (P4, P5)

The hallway allows access to the chambers of ♂ *Ornisius* (63 years old; large, round belly; horseshoe-shaped fringe of hair; loves his orderly chaos; hates paperwork; wishes for a larger congregation), the Blessed One of Travia who serves both as court chaplain and as steward of the castle.

Stacks of levy and income tax lists, correspondence, and historical documents overflow from the writing desk and wall shelves in the steward's office (P5). A sympathetic person might easily understand why, when faced with so much work, Ornisius stares dreamily out the window.

Ornisius' bedchamber (P4) contains an assortment of robes, a bed, a chamber pot, and a finely carved statuette that depicts Trabina, a pugnacious goddess of home and hearth, along with a sun eagle.

Hallway (P6)

The hallway connects the entrance hall (P1) to the steward's office (P5), the court chapel (P7), and the stair tower to the upper floors (P8) and the wine cellar (PW).

The Court Chapel (P7)

Large, yellow, stained glass windows set into the front of the chapel, behind the altar, catch the fading sunlight in the evening hours. Built directly into the cliff, this room allows a clear view of the countess' lands, below. A welcoming hearth fire burns continuously on the altar, bathing the carved benches in warm light even when the sun does not.

Stair Tower (P8)

The stair tower connects the hallway (P6) on the first floor with the wine cellar (PW) and the two upper floors.

The Palace—Second Floor

Many people pass through here each day, but the corridor outside of the Great Hall still seems deserted at times.

Day: The countess and her daughter dine three times a day in the two-story Great Hall (P10), along with guests and high-ranking servants. The lady of the house also sometimes receives her subjects or guests here, and meets with her servants. Many chambers on this floor stand empty, as their inhabitants attend to tasks elsewhere. One exception is the guest chamber (P11), Rodegrimm's room. The heroes might encounter him here during the day, though he also frequents the keep, dines at the countess' table, and spends time in the courtyard training with his sword.

Night: Activity continues in the Great Hall until late at night. Once the countess rises from the table, servants clear it and clean the hall. Rodegrimm typically sends a maid down to the cellar to fetch wine, which he greedily drinks. Afterward, he is often so drunk he falls asleep sitting up. He wakes eventually and stumbles back to his bed. He rarely wakes up before late morning.

The countess' eight-year-old daughter, Silaleth, sleeps restlessly, giving her nursemaid, Lina, hardly a pause. Sometimes, the servant Ettel sneaks into Lina's chamber.

Balcony (P9)

A wooden balcony connects the rooms on the second floor. A narrow corridor leads to the chamberlain's room (P14) and the stair tower (P8).

Great Hall (P10)

This large (about 59' by 16'), wood-paneled room stretches across the castle's entire southern side. The countess and her daughter dine with dignitaries, such as the majordomo and the court chaplain, at the hall's long banquet table. The lady of the house receives guests and holds feasts here. A large fireplace heats the room, and high lancet windows provide a great view of the valley below. Armor, weapons, and artfully woven tapestries adorn the walls, and banners hang from the high ceiling. The heroes may access the floor above without being seen by climbing through the fireplace vent in this room (*Climbing* check with a penalty of -2).

Guest Chamber (P11)

The castle's proper guest chamber lies next to the Great Hall (P10). Warm furs and carpets cover every inch of the stone floor in this large, wood-paneled room. A wide canopy bed provides restful sleep for guests, and a bathtub stands behind a partition wall, heated by a small oven mounted below. Plenty of locking chests give guests a safe place to store their belongings.

This is currently Rodegrimm's chamber.

Nursemaid's Chamber (P12)

This sparsely furnished chamber belongs to ♀ *Lina* (20; blond; joyful disposition; loves Ettel; hates hopscotch; needs a night of undisturbed sleep), the nursemaid for Silaleth, the countess' 8-year-old daughter. Lina's room contains only a bed, chamber pot, clothes chest, and some personal effects. A steep wooden staircase leads to a hatch in the ceiling that opens directly into the Nursery (P18). The room's single window looks out onto the castle courtyard.

Lady's Maid's Chamber (P13)

The countess' personal servant, ♀ *Firumine of Graystone* (in her early 30s; rigorously braided, ash-blond hair; full-figured; unremarkable; loves good food and smart humor; hates know-it-alls; craves an adventure), occupies this room. Her chamber is sparsely furnished, as she assists the countess or keeps her company most of the time, and only sleeps here.

Chamberlain's Room (P14)

While the majordomo's task is to run the castle, ♂ *Haldorigion* (60 years old; black hair; goatee; bushy eyebrows; always stressed; loves his work; hates unexpected events; wants more hair dye), the chamberlain, concerns himself with the countess' well-being. Fur blankets and a fine tapestry adorn his chamber, which is otherwise as sparsely furnished as the lady's maid's chamber (P13).

The Palace—Third Floor

Day: During the day, hardly anyone frequents this part of the castle. After everyone rises from their beds, they spend most of the day working elsewhere in the castle.

People sometimes meet in the fireplace room in the afternoon. Otherwise, Silaleth usually has the run of the hallways and plays there and in her room. Furthermore, this floor provides the only access to the castle's keep; therefore, guests housed in the keep (such as Noraletha) also visit this part of the castle.

Night: This floor becomes quiet by midnight, at the latest. A lone guard patrols the floor occasionally.

Fireplace Room (P15)

The stair tower (P8) ends in a room adorned with bearskins and tapestries. The countess and her guests withdraw here for their personal leisure, to tell stories and enjoy the view of the Ingval. The heroes may access the Great Hall (P10), one floor below, through the fireplace vent. The door in this room opens onto the hallway (P16).

Hallway (P16)

The hallway connects the fireplace room (P15) with the countess' chambers (P17), the nursery (P18), the washing chamber (P19), and the wooden bridge that leads to the keep. Portraits of previous counts line the wall; removing the correct one reveals two spy holes that give a good view of the Great Hall (P10).

The Countess' Chamber (P17)

Melanoth of Ingvalsrohden's chamber is characterized by a large canopy bed and a soft mammoth fur on the floor. She sleeps here alone, ever since her husband, *Muragio of Kendrar*, was imprisoned in *Fortress Gordelyn*. The countess' varnished jewelry chests (jewelry value: 100 ducats) match the wood paneling on the walls, and the thick, red curtains on the windows could easily conceal a large man in armor.

Nursery (P18)

The countess' daughter, *Silaleth* (8 years old; dark hair and eyes; pale skin with freckles; energetic; loves hopscotch; hates needlework; misses her father) occupies the nursery. The room is furnished with a fancy bed and two large chests for storing clothes and toys, which are often strewn about the room, instead. A hatch opens on wooden stairs that lead down to the nursemaid's chamber (P12).

Washing Chamber (P19)

The countess' personal family washing chamber features a luxurious bathtub made of zinc and warmed by an attached oven. The room also contains a dressing table with various toiletries, a porcelain washbowl, and a mirror that provides a rather distorted picture of its beholder.

The Servant's House

Most of the castle's servants work and sleep in this outbuilding, which features a large kitchen, where all meals are prepared, a bakery, a large storage chamber that holds about two weeks' worth of food, and the castle's large laundry room, which the servants and maids visit once a week to bathe. The servant's house has access to the cellar cistern, which collects rainwater for later use. People can haul water up with buckets, or pump it directly to the castle courtyard.

Servants and maids sleep in the house; whereas the cook, **♠** *Maily*n (in her late 30s; rotund; brown braids; loves garlic; hates when people peek into her pots; needs more spices in her kitchen), and the stableman, **♠** *Ettel* (in his early 20s; blonde hair; shrewd; loves Lina; hates injustice; wants a nice present for his beloved), have their own chambers. *Ettel* sometimes sleeps in the palace when he secretly meets with the nursemaid, Lina.

Day: During the day, servants and maids buzz around—much like an industrious beehive. Shortly after breakfast, the kitchen staff heat bakestones in the kitchen's oven, begin preparing lunch, and carry water from the castle courtyard to the washing chamber. Servants meet in the dining room for their meals, and also to allocate any unexpected manual labor. These meetings are characterized by much chatter and laughter, despite the stress of castle life, and no one takes any notice of things happening in the next room or outside the windows.

Night: The halls and workrooms are just as deserted at night as they are busy during the day. The servants meet one last time in the dining room in the evening, but the last servant goes to bed by midnight, at the latest.

The Castle Courtyard

High walls surround the courtyard on all four sides, keeping it cloaked in shadow for most of the day. This decrease in natural light makes it feel constricted despite the volume of daily activity in the courtyard. From here, the heroes may enter all the buildings except the keep. A large pump in the courtyard extracts water from the cistern so servants do not have to carry it up in buckets—it runs through a small, wooden viaduct into the horse trough. Many of the castle's windows face toward the courtyard, but the wide-reaching branches of the chestnut tree growing here obstruct the view. The castle's residents often visit the courtyard because the privy is located here.

Day: The courtyard is the castle's central hub. The clattering of hooves echoes off the walls when the servants lead the horses from the stables to the trough. Servants and maids visit the large pump many times a day to draw water. Sounds of clanking hammers issue from the smithy, and the air is alive with the laughter of children playing catch. Pigs rush about, competing for fallen kitchen scraps,

and startled chickens cluck in protest. 🏰 *Captain Bosper* (66 years old; gray, short, cropped hair; groomed, full beard; loves dice games; hates too much excitement; longs for his retirement) musters the castle guard here after dawn and shortly before dusk for their shifts.

Night: The courtyard looks deserted in the darkness, but looks are deceiving. Thanks to the many windows facing the courtyard, people inside are easily able to see anything that happens below, provided the chestnut tree's branches are not in the way. When not asleep at their posts or absorbed in a game of dice, the castle guard patrols here regularly. The courtyard's smooth, high walls reflect and amplify soft sounds (*Stealth (Sneak)* checks suffer a penalty of -1).

Stables and Smithy

The stables and smithy nestle close to the castle walls, next to the gatehouse. This is 🏰 *Stablemaster Grotto's* (32 years old; brown ponytail; friendly; loves animals; hates the smell of garlic; needs better iron to work with) domain. Not only does he care for the handful of horses, pigs, and chickens, which shelter in the stables; he also serves as the castle blacksmith, and knows how to fashion horseshoes and tools himself.

A pulley eases the chore of hauling straw bales up to the hayloft. From there, it is easy to get to the stable roof, and from there to the guardhouse wall or roof.

Day: Stablemaster Grotto and a servant named 🏰 *Sapperlaus* (22 years old; brown locks; very tall; diligent, but slow; loves knowledge; hates working in the stables; needs to be challenged mentally) work in and around the stables the entire day. They lead the pigs and chickens into the courtyard by sunrise and then clean the stables, disposing of dung outside the castle wall and spreading fresh straw in the stalls. They must also milk the cow, *Gunilde*, twice a day and bring the milk to the storage room.

Night: The stables are never silent. The pigs snort, the chickens cluck, and, occasionally, a horse nickers or whinnies. The castle's tomcat, *Milas*, hunts for mice here at night. The animal noises could seem like the best disguise for less-than-stealthy heroes at night; however, the castle residents know the difference between the chicken's usual clucking and hysterical chicken sounds. Sapperlaus sometimes secretly meets the maid, 🏰 *Albine* (26 years old; black braid; sparkling blue eyes; petite, but feisty; loves sweets; hates life in the countryside; wants to see more of the world), in the stables at night, as she is teaching him to read.

Gate Tower and Wall

A double door, flanked by two, eight-sided towers, provides the only external entry into the castle courtyard. The

heroes may access the wall's battlements and the cranks, which the guards use to raise the heavy drawbridge, via the two towers. The guardhouse here is very popular among the guards, as the battlement outside is short and the table is useful for dice games. Duty on the outer wall is far less rewarding, as the guards must patrol for long periods.

Day: Two guards patrol the gate tower, but they are not very attentive and rely instead on their colleagues on the outer wall to report anything unusual.

Night: The castle hasn't faced a serious threat for as long as anyone can remember, so the guards relax during the night watch. Even though the drawbridge remains down most nights, the guards sometimes doze in their chairs, carouse, or roll dice—not even the call to muster has changed their habits.

Small Guardhouse

Between the keep and the stables lies the small guardhouse, which includes a common room on the first floor and the rooms of the captain and the eight guards, divided among the first and second floors. A rusty, steel door leads to a torture chamber and—one floor below that—a few cells in the keep. The torture instruments and the cells do not see much use, judging from the rust on the tools and the cell bars.

Loud snoring issues from the guards' rooms at all hours, as the garrison works in shifts. The guards also use the guardhouse for friendly gatherings.

The Keep

The keep is the inhabitants' last place of retreat in case of a siege, as evidenced by the large storage chamber (**B3**) and the wooden bridge (**B1**). However, since the castle has not faced a serious threat in many decades, the count converted some of the keep's upper floors into additional guest quarters. The keep's bay windows are large enough and spaced closely enough for a daring hero to scale the building (*Climbing (Walls)* check with a penalty of -3). Noraletha is staying here.

Day: Noraletha occupies one of the keep's guest chambers. However, she does not spend all of her time in her room. She sometimes joins Rodegrimm and the countess at mealtimes, and she likes to stretch her legs in the courtyard.

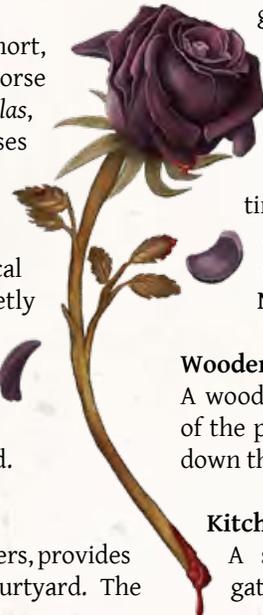
Night: Noraletha usually retires early.

Wooden Bridge (B1)

A wooden bridge connects the keep with the third floor of the palace. In the event of a siege, the guards can tear down the bridge to isolate the keep.

Kitchen and Common Room (B2)

A simple table and four chairs allow for social gatherings, even in the case of a siege. The room



has a small kitchenette with an oven, pots and pans, and a chimney. A long, blunt axe hangs on the wall, for use by occupants to cut the bridge supports and destroy the connection between the palace and the keep. Wooden stairs lead down to the storage chamber (B3) and up to the converted living quarters (B4). Opposite the entrance is a privy with a shaft that exits somewhere on the cliff face. The shaft provides a hidden, alternate entrance into the keep for anyone daring enough and not above taking such a route.

Storage Chamber (B3)

This windowless room is empty, save for one crate of old zwieback and a barrel of saltarel ersatz (pickled cucumbers). These are, apparently, the keep's iron rations. It would not last through a siege, but it would feed the inhabitants for a few days.

Living Quarters (B4)

The wooden stairs continue past this floor. The Count converted the room on this level into living quarters. There are no luxuries here, not even an oven, but an abundance of furs covers the bed and the stone floor. A chair sits in a wooden alcove that protrudes from the keep wall and provides a breathtaking view of the Ingval Valley. Noraletha lodges here, waiting for the situation to calm down so her mother can come get her.

If the heroes approach Noraletha, they must first convince her that they have come to rescue her; otherwise, she fears she they are here to abduct her again (for Noraletha's stats, see page 10). Only after the heroes earn her trust does she join them and do what they ask. Because she is known throughout the castle, Noraletha is well placed to protect the heroes from being discovered and help them escape.

Living Quarters (B5)

The room at the top of the wooden stairway is nearly identical in construction to the room below, but is currently uninhabited. A ladder provides the only access to the level above.

Tower Hoarding (B6)

The tower's drafty top floor is fitted with a stone hoarding that extends nearly 15' beyond the keep's walls. Arrow slits protect archers from incoming attacks, while holes in the hoarding's floor allow defenders to drop heavy rocks or other items on besiegers. However, the tower's cache of (1D20) small rocks is mostly for show, as the hoarding has never been used for this function. A large barrel set to collect rainwater leaking in under some broken shingles on the keep's roof hints that people rarely come up here. If needed, a clever person could easily remove the shingles and gain access to the keep's roof.

The Final Battle

The heroes' final encounter with Rodegrimm probably happens at Nordvest. How it unfolds depends on your players' actions and your personal preferences. The heroes should be interested in capturing the knight alive, but Rodegrimm has nothing left to lose and does not give up without a fight.

The heroes should find it easy to defeat Rodegrimm if he is alone, but as the countess' guest, he may call for help when outnumbered—if he does so, 1D3+1 castle guards arrive and delay the heroes 1D6+4 CR, giving Rodegrimm time to escape. In fact, he might not even need to cry for help, as sounds of battle echo throughout the castle.

If the heroes manage to incapacitate the castle guards or block their access to the fight, use magic to silence all battle sounds, or arrange a deal with the countess, then Rodegrimm fights a losing battle. Rodegrimm panics, rendering him unpredictable but also leading him to make mistakes. This scene can develop in many ways. Use the following guidelines and suggestions to decide what happens.

- Rodegrimm attempts to flee toward the secret passage in the wine cellar (PW). If someone blocks his way, he takes a hostage (preferably an important person, such as the countess, her daughter, or Noraletha) and threatens to kill them, unless the heroes let him leave. He uses the narrow hallways as cover to avoid arrows and spells.
- The knight locks himself and any hostages in the Great Hall (P10), barricades the doors, and threatens to shoot anyone who tries to enter the room. He demands a horse and safe conduct, which the countess promises him, on her honor. But his escape plan only gets him as far as the castle gates. The heroes may access the room without being seen via the fireplace or—after a daring climb along the cliff—a window (*Climbing* or *Climbing Mountains*) check with a penalty of -3).
- In classic villain style, Rodegrimm flees to the castle's highest point—in this case, the keep's hoarding (B6)—before realizing he has made a mistake and is now trapped. Depending on how quickly the heroes catch up to him, he climbs further up and threatens to throw himself (and possibly Noraletha) from the roof, or else tries to cut the bridge supports to lock himself in the castle's keep. If the heroes have already explored the keep, they know he could hold out for a long time on the iron rations. To cut the bridge supports with the blunt axe hanging in the tower, Rodegrimm must make a cumulative *Feat of Strength* check with a penalty of -1 (interval 2 CR; any number of attempts). If he succeeds, the bridge collapses down into the courtyard. The keep is built for just this purpose—protecting those inside—and unless the heroes come up with a good plan, such as gaining access to the keep via the roof, they might need to rely on their negotiation skills.

The Victors' Return

With any luck, the heroes capture Rodegrimm, convince Noralettha to leave Nordvest with them, and make their way back. The knight offers no further resistance. After his ignominious capture at Nordvest, he confesses his deed—borne out of desperation—curses all Andergastans to their cores, and appears to resign himself to his fate.

If Rodegrimm survives the adventure, and does not escape, the heroes' next move depends on what they decide to do with him. Do they hand him over to the Marshal of Sapstem, who camps down in the village, or deliver him to the Nostrians under the command of Forest Count Eilert, who gather in Mirdin? Do Marshal Rondriane or Forest Count Eilert judge the traitor themselves, or do they ask the heroes to deliver Rodegrimm to the Andergastans, since the *Bloody Wedding* took place on their territory? The deciding factor could be the affiliation of the person who originally asked the heroes to rescue Noralettha and capture Rodegrimm in the scene *After Them!* (see page 18).

A Villain for All Times

Once the heroes rescue the bride and defeat the villain, the tension subsides. We suggest summarizing the heroes' return trip with just a few words. If you wish, Rodegrimm attempts to escape once more. If he succeeds, he could reappear as a hated archenemy in a future adventure.

In *Aventuria's* official history, the heroes of Joborn dole out justice to the guilty—feel free to allow the heroes to determine how that plays out.



Whether the heroes journey to *Joborn* or *Mirdin*, their arrival draws a great deal of attention. They are quickly brought before the leaders, who ask them to describe over and over again, in detail, the events at the wedding of Joborn. If the heroes are able to prove he acted alone and out of personal motivation, the leaders immediately send heralds to the opponents' camp to arrange peace talks on the Eichenschlag's family estate or halfway between *Mirdin* and *Joborn*. There, the heroes recount the events to the other side, leading to an armistice between Forest Count Eilert and the *sume*, Kusmin (see *TWK*, page 125), King Wendelmir's envoy. Both sides agree to disband their armies.

If the heroes wish to leave Rodegrimm's sentencing to others, the officials ask a hero of appropriate rank (a noble, a Blessed One, a servant of Sumu, or a witch) for advice regarding a suitable punishment. In this way, the heroes might be the deciding factor in Rodegrimm's fate.

Rodegrimm's Fate

Rodegrimm did not strike the first blow during the *Bloody Wedding*, but he did give his henchmen the order to do so. If Rodegrimm does not confess, as described above, the heroes must find evidence to convict him (see *Convict the Villain? But How?* on page 33).

If the heroes deliver the knight to the Nostrians, they outlaw and banish him, which means he may never set foot in *Nostria* again without the risk of being killed on sight. Alternatively, the Nostrians imprison him in the *Blood Fortress'* dungeon as a traitor, where he might one day earn the chance to redeem himself. In either case, you have the option to let him reappear as a villain in later adventures.

If the heroes deliver Rodegrimm to the Andergastans, they execute him. Even though he qualifies for execution by sword because of his noble status, the *sume*, Kusmin, demands a more cruel death—in the name of the king—and Rodegrimm is sentenced to be publicly "oakened" in *Joborn* (boiling oak tar is poured over his body).

The Bridal Couple's Fate

If Noralettha dies, her family goes into mourning and demands even harsher punishment. If she survives, her mother is overjoyed to see her daughter safely back in her arms. A wedding is unthinkable after the events in Joborn, as the distrust between the common people has only increased. Noralettha and Gosthelm must find different marriage partners, now.

Reward For the Heroes' Efforts

The heroes receive what they were promised in the scene *After Them!*, plus up to 25 bonus AP each—20 for rescuing Noralettha and investigating the events in Joborn, and an additional 5 if they helped purify the druid's sanctum and liberated the birds of prey.

Appendix

Rodegrimm of Blutbuchenforst, Knight

COU 15 SGC 12 INT 15 CHA 12

DEX 11 AGI 15 CON 16 STR 16

LP 40 AE - KP - INI 13+1D6

DO 6 SPI 2 TOU 3 MOV 8

Long Sword: AT 15 PA 8 DP 1D6+5

RE medium

Great Sword: AT 15 PA 5 DP 2D6+5 RE medium

PRO/ENC: 6/2 (plate armor) (includes armor modifiers)

Advantages/Disadvantages: Hatred for Andergastans (see *TWK*, page 177), Rugged Fighter/Personality Flaw (Arrogance), Negative Trait (Vengeance), Maimed (One-Eyed)

Special Abilities: Forceful Blow I, Inured to Encumbrance I, Mounted Combat, Tilt

Skills: *Body Control 10, Flying 10, Feat of Strength 11, Intimidation 9, Perception 9, Riding 14, Sailing 3, Self-Control 14, Stealth 0, Willpower 7*

Special Features: Animosity IV (see *TWK*, page 177)

Combat Behavior: Rodegrimm becomes increasingly brutal and reckless in his fighting. He has little left to lose, and his knightly virtues are only a faint echo in his memory.

Escape: Depends on the situation. If the heroes cannot make him yield, he seeks his death in battle—but the heroes should prevent exactly that. Ideally, they apprehend him alive.

Pain +1 at: 30 LP, 20 LP, 10 LP, and 5 LP and less



Guards/Henchmen

COU 14 SGC 11 INT 13 CHA 12

DEX 11 AGI 13 CON 13 STR 13

LP 32 AE - KP - INI 12+1D6

DO 6 SPI 1 TOU 2 MOV 7

Unarmed: AT 12 PA 6 DP 1D6 RE short

Dagger: AT 11 PA 6 DP 1D6+1 RE short

Halberd: AT 13 PA 4 DP 1D6+6 RE long

Long Sword: AT 13 PA 6 DP 1D6+4 RE medium

Short Bow: RC 12 RT 1 DP 1D6+4 RA 10/50/80

PRO/ENC: 4/1 (chainmail) (includes armor modifiers)

Actions: 1

Advantages/Disadvantages: - /Negative Trait (Submissive to Authorities)

Special Abilities: Feint I (Unarmed, Dagger, Halberd, Sword), Forceful Blow I (Unarmed, Dagger, Halberd, Sword), Inured to Encumbrance I

Skills: *Body Control 5, Climbing 2, Empathy 4, Fast-Talk 2, Flying 10, Feat of Strength 5, Intimidation 6, Perception 8, Riding 14, Sailing 3, Self-Control 6, Stealth 6, Swimming 2, Willpower 5*

Number: see adventure description

Size Category: medium

Type: Intelligent, humanoid

Loot: 2D6+4 halers

Combat Behavior: per individual

Escape: per individual; attempts to flee after suffering *Pain II*

Pain +1 at: 24 LP, 16 LP, 8 LP, and 5 LP and less



NPC Summary for Castle Nordvest

Name	Designation	Map No.	Location	Description
<i>Albine</i>	Maid	-	Stables	Page 45
<i>Bosper</i>	Captain	-	Courtyard/Guardhouse	Page 45
<i>Brinette of Hugenholt</i>	Majordomo	P2, P3	Majordomo's Chambers	Page 42
<i>Ettel</i>	Servant	-	Servant's House	Page 44
<i>Firumine of Graystone</i>	Lady's Maid	P13	Lady's Maid's Chambers	Page 43
<i>Groto</i>	Stablemaster, Blacksmith	-	Stables/Smithy	Page 45
<i>Haldorigion</i>	Chamberlain	P14	Chamberlain's Room	Page 43
<i>Lina</i>	Nursemaid	P12	Nursemaid's Chambers	Page 43
<i>Maily</i>	Cook	-	Servant's House (kitchen)	Page 44
<i>Melanoth of Ingvalsrohden</i>	Countess	P17	Countess' Chambers	Page 39
<i>Noralet</i>	Missing bride	B4	Keep	Page 10
<i>Ornisius</i>	Court Chaplain	P4, P5	Court Chaplain's Chambers	Page 42
<i>Rodegrimm</i>	Wanted knight	P11	Guest Chambers	Page 9
<i>Sapperlaus</i>	Servant	-	Stables	Page 45
<i>Silaleth</i>	Countess' daughter	P18	Nursery	Page 44

Castle Nordvest



Palace



Third Floor



Second Floor



First Floor

Keep



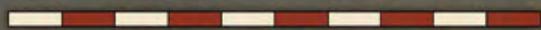
Guardhouse



Cellar



North



Scale: 65 feet

New Bonds and Ancient Quarrels

by Marco Findeisen

Deep hatred has divided the inhabitants of the Warring Kingdoms since the dawn of history. Now, a daring alliance promises to change everything and pave the way to forgiveness. All hope hinges on an arranged marriage taking place in a long-disputed border town. But not everyone in Nostria and Andergast longs for peace, and someone abducts the bride!

To prevent another disastrous war between the realms, the heroes set out to scour the Warring Kingdoms for the bride and bring her abductor to justice. Along the way, they face the dangers of the forest and the Ingval River's rushing waters. If they fail, the alliance will disintegrate and the land will drown in blood. The fate of the Warring Kingdoms rests in the heroes' hands...

New Bonds and Ancient Quarrels is the companion adventure to the regional sourcebook *The Warring Kingdoms*, which describes the kingdoms and history of Nostria and Andergast in detail.



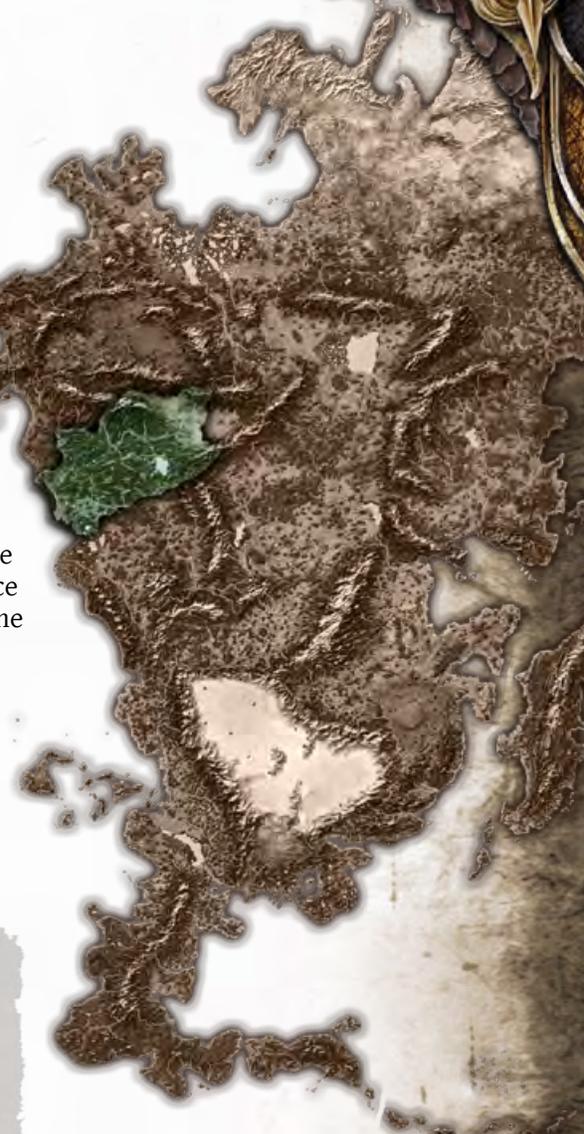
A TDE group adventure for 1 GM and 3-5 heroes

Genre: Travel Adventure
Prerequisites: Stealthy heroes who know how to survive in the wilderness
Location: Joborn, Nordvest, the Ingval River on the border between Nostria and Andergast, the forest
Date: after 1040 FB
Complexity (Players/GM): low/medium
Suggested Hero Experience Level: Experienced to Competent

Challenge Level

Combat	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆
Physical Skills	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆
Nature Skills	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆
<i>Living History</i>	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

To play, you need the *Core Rules*, the *Aventuria Almanac*, and *The Warring Kingdoms* sourcebook. This volume contains all other necessary information, such as stats, maps, and handouts.



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