

"You have acquired the deed to a ruined tower..."

BY VANCE ATKINS

...out on the border of civilization and chaos, in a territory in flux. Word is it's surrounded by foul beasts and men alike. What's really going on out there? Maybe it's time to carve out your own little fief and bring some order to Chaos? Or perhaps just embrace the Chaos?

FACTIONS:

A. Staert Tower: "Your" tower overlooks the Eldoina River in the east highlands. Three stories, in disrepair for a generation. Gate is rotted and haphazardly braced with a handcart. Any attempts to approach are met by a hail of slingstones. Feral Halflings have infested the tower. By their surprisingly poor marksmanship, it appears that they are sober, and out of ale... [18, sling/club, may be bribed out, may stay on as stewards, baking bread from racial memory]

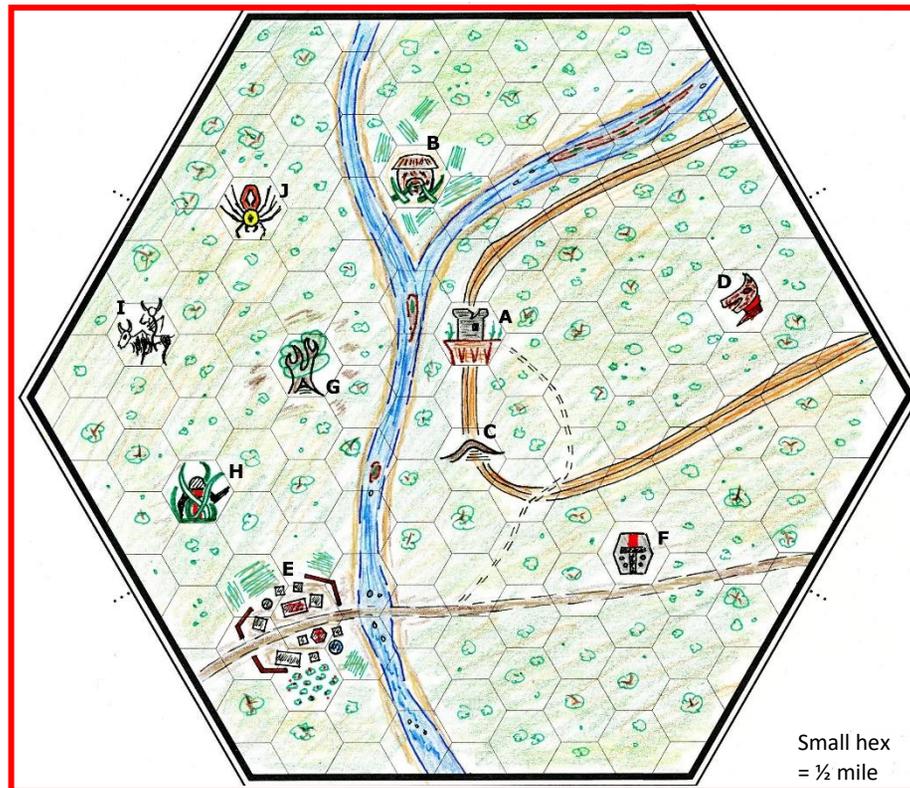
B. Orc Village: The Feersum Rhubarbs, a clan of socialist vegetarian orcs, has settled near a fork in the Eldoina River. They live in palisaded huts surrounded by rough gardens. Tribe shaman, BeetRoot Nutcracker, approaches to proselytize on the benefits of kale. Frowns at your iron ration jerky. [30/24 combatant, club, spears, farm implements, trade root vegetables, surprisingly pacifistic]

C. Goblin Caves: Mined into the sandstone cliffs, the BoogerFlickers have weathered the ebb and flow of multiple border migrations and conflicts. Scavenging the skirmish lines has been lucrative, scoring armor and trinkets, which they turn into impressive art installations. They have built a hot air balloon that they use to snipe at river otters. Prefer to be left alone. [48/24 combatant, shortbow/short sword, very proud of their balloon, may not be aware of magic or valuable equipment in their 'art'.]

D. Gnolls: A bunch of right bastards. Most everyone hates them. These habitual scofflaws and slavers have a nasty habit of picking up stragglers. Led by a lawyer-gnoll using obscure eminent domain laws, claims everyone is an escaped slave to sell at the slave-pens in the East. [18 with 2 hi HD leaders, axe and spear, willing to sell captives or argue law]

E. Cultists: The Lost Souls of Frirth occupy the village of Shinbark, abandoned during the last overrun of Chaos. They have attempted to create a small theo-utopia. Tidy orchards and grain fields surround the village. A well-fortified and well-stocked roadhouse and brewery greets travelers who wish to ford the Eldoina. Their Prophet passed away from a batch of bad mushrooms. Greet visitors a bit too enthusiastically, asking after their new Prophet. [120/32 combatant (militia), spear, lt crossbow, susceptible to religious or hi charisma influences.]

<http://leicestersramble.blogspot.com>



Small hex = 1/2 mile

F. Robber Knights: Formerly of the Hospitallers of St. Chachi, this band of heavily armed and armored soldiers has suspended its vows, and charges 'protection' to caravans and pilgrims moving along the border roads. Will look the other way if gnolls raid non-paying caravans. [12 w/ 1 leader, 2 sgts, sword, heavy crossbow, may retain vows under strong cleric]

Faction Relationships: Although most have an uneasy neutrality, there are a few rough alliances and fierce antagonists:

(N-Neutral, A-Ally, E-Enemy)

	A	B	C	D	E	F
A		N	N	E	N	N
B	N		A	E	N	E
C	N	A		E	A	N
D	E	E	E		E	N
E	N	N	A	E		N
F	N	E	N	N	N	

WILD CARDS/INDIVIDUALS:

G. Militant Druid: Br'er Tascha meditates in the boll of a massive oak. Begrudgingly provides advice and weather predictions. Anyone approaching the tree must divest themselves of all worn or carried metal. Has been known to call

down lightning in a fit of pique, evidenced by scorched areas surrounding tree. Has a pendant for orc spaghetti squash.

H. Clockwork Knight: Imprisoned in vines by the Druid as an abomination. Stout gnome-built metallic automaton, follows simple commands, damage +1 due to strength. Consumes gems for sustenance. Druid will have nothing to do with party accompanied by device.

I. Stentorian Wraith: Terrifying horned visage riding an undead ox. Formerly a bard in life, combatants may end up *charmed* into in multi-part duets in lieu of level drain. In the market for a fixer-upper barrow.

J. Aesthetic Orb-Weavers: A colony of 12+ semi-intelligent giant spiders, will enmesh the occasional forest traveler, insisting that they judge their most recent web design competition before releasing.

WANDERING CRITTERS:

1-3: Patrol of Knights: (1d4+1); **4:** Orc smuggling bacon; **5:** Stentorian Wraith, "Care to join in a duet?"; **6:** Party of gnomes (1d4+2) seeking lost automaton; **7-8:** Gnolls (1d8+2) with 1d6 'slaves', random races; **9-10:** Giant caecilian (if by river) or immature ankheg; **11:** Goblins in balloon (1d3+1, shortbows and rocks); **12-13:** Feral Halflings (1d3+1) dragging stolen keg of ale; **14:** Pair of young cultists 'communing' in bushes; **15:** Very lost yeti; **16-18:** Caravan or pilgrims (on road), 4 in 6 have paid protection money; **19:** Bear with pot stuck on head; **20:** Disgruntled Aesthetic Orb-Waver, chittering, "No one appreciates my art!"

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