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WORLDBUILDING IN GAMES:
Creating a Functioning World
For a Role-Playing Game

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<p>Maailmanrakennus peleissä jättää usein yhdistämättä pelimaailmaa sen mekaniikkoihin. Kun tämä elintärkeä osa pelintekoprosessia jätetään tekemättä, lopputuloksena on kauniita, mutta loppujen lopuksi tyhjiä ja merkityksettömiä maailmoja, sekä abstrakteja, mihinkään liittymättömiä mekaniikkoja. Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoite oli tutkia tapoja, joilla yhdistää pelien tarina ja mekaniikka.</p> <p>Opinnäytetyö tutki useita maailmanrakennusmetodeja luodakseen prosessin, jota sittemmin käytettiin maailman luomiseen Dungeons & Dragons –roolipeliä varten. Tätä maailmaa käytettiin sitten pohjana ja tapahtumapaikkana seikkailumoduulille, joka luotiin samanlaisen prosessin kautta. Prosessin tarkoituksena oli rakentaa pelimaailma, joka sitoisi pelin mekaniikat ja tarinankerronnan yhteen mahdollisimman tiukasti.</p> <p>Lopputuote oli Working Title: Dream Stone, 5th edition Dungeons & Dragons – seikkailumoduuli. Moduulin tapahtumapaikkana toimii yllämainitun prosessin kautta luotu maailma.</p> <p>Lisäaikaa ja resursseja olisi vaadittu, jotta maailmanrakennusprosessi olisi voitu viedä loppuun asti. Tämän lisäksi moduuli olisi vaatinut enemmän pelitestausta, jotta sen toimivuuden tasosta olisi saatu parempi kuva. Tästä huolimatta lopputulos tuotti tärkeää informaatiota liittyen pelien maailmanrakennusprosesseihin.</p>		
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Abstract		
<p>The process of worldbuilding in games often forgoes the aspect of connecting the setting with the game's mechanics. Skipping this vital process often leaves games with beautiful, but ultimately empty and meaningless worlds, and abstract, disconnected mechanics. The objective of this thesis was to study and present ways to intertwine the mechanics and the story of a game.</p> <p>The thesis studied several methods of worldbuilding to create a step-by-step process of worldbuilding, and used the set approach to construct a fictional fantasy world as a campaign setting for Dungeons & Dragons roleplaying game, building each part with applying the same rules in layers. This fantasy world was then used as a basis for an adventure module, built using similar process. The aim of the process was to build a game world that would link the story aspects of the world with the mechanics of the game as tightly as possible.</p> <p>The end result product of the thesis was Working Title: Dream Stone, an adventure module for 5th edition Dungeons & Dragons. The adventure takes place in a fictional world created using the process detailed in this thesis.</p> <p>However, more time and resources would have been needed to complete the worldbuilding process in its entirety, as well as to refine the product. Additionally, more playtesting would have been required to gain full understanding of the functionality of the adventure. Despite this, the final product managed to produce valuable information regarding the processes of worldbuilding in games.</p>		
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1 INTRODUCTION

Worldbuilding is the process of constructing a fictional world, often as a setting of a book, a movie, or a video game. Doing this well can enhance the player's experience and make the setting seem real; incoherent or otherwise ill-though worldbuilding can raise more questions than it answers, constantly breaking immersion as the reader gets distracted by wondering how certain parts of the world function.

While many game developers make their worldbuilding in a serviceable manner, few games do the legwork required to successfully marry the mechanics with the setting. As a result, the mechanics feel disconnected from the world of the game. The developer or game designer might present you with a breathtakingly-beautiful, vast landscape, but if it exists only as an aesthetically pleasing background for abstract collectibles and repetitive fetch quests far removed from the reality of the game world, the potential of the setting is wasted.

An area of gaming where this connection is possibly even more important than in other formats are table top roleplaying games. As most of these games rely on the narration and the imagination of the players, using mechanics removed from the game world are at even greater risk at marring the immersion. As such, the thesis will study the creation of the world for a pre-existing roleplaying system, the fifth edition of Dungeons & Dragons.

The thesis aims to answer the main question of how does one go about to intertwine the story and the mechanics as closely as possible. Subsidiary questions are how can one balance originality and adhering to pre-existing rules of a game system in worldbuilding, and if potential addition mechanics can be created on top of that system without breaking the pre-existing system.

First the thesis will explain the concepts and principles behind worldbuilding. After that the process will be broken down into pieces, which will each be ran through an established worldbuilding process. The process is then described in detail, from rough drafts to the final product, ever focusing closer in both detail and in scope. The end goal is to create a finished Dungeons & Dragons

adventure set in a completely new world (or campaign setting), fully playable by anyone with knowledge of the rules of fifth edition Dungeons & Dragons.

The greatest risk involved in this process is the sheer size of the subject. Worldbuilding encompasses a wide array of subjects ranging from cartography to anthropology and linguistics. There is a possibility that finishing this type of project is simply not feasible in the time frame given. Whatever the result, the document will provide some knowledge into the field of worldbuilding in games.

2 WORLDBUILDING IN GAMES

As the name implies, worldbuilding is the process of creating an entire world. This covers a wide array of subjects: geography, history, mythology, politics, biology, language, even physics, if the builder so wishes. The goal of worldbuilding is to create a believable, functional world with its own unique infrastructures and biomes.

Even if the term “worldbuilding” is most often used in connection to science fiction and fantasy, more or less all video games require some degree of worldbuilding. In her book *100 Principles of Game Design (2013)* game designer Wendy Despain notes that games should treat their settings as real, living environments. While this should be applied to all games, some games benefit from approach this more than others: the world of cartoony puzzle game like *Plants vs. Zombies* doesn't require the same level of refinement and internal consistency as the world of a more dramatic and narrative-heavy game such as *Dragon Age: Inquisition* or *The Last of Us*.

There are relatively few studies of the subject, namely *Fantasiamaailman suunnittelu pöytäroolipeliin* (Huohvanainen, 2013), and *Ideasta valmiiksi tuotteeksi: pöytäroolipelin kirjoitus ja julkaisu* (Suontaka, 2014). Neither of these studies quite touch the subject I'm approaching.

2.1 Serving a Purpose

In his essay *Metaphor vs. Mechanics: Don't Fight the Fusion (2011)* Matt Forbeck says that the game consists of the aspects: the mechanics and the metaphor. As an example, mechanically Magic the Gathering is two players attempting to reduce each other's score to 0 by playing cards from the decks they have constructed themselves. Metaphorically, Magic is about two duelling wizards tapping into the magical power of the lands they control in order to destroy one another.

Additionally, Forbeck argues that in the best games the two support and influence one another. Contradictions between the mechanics and metaphor are going to be detractory to the game experience. As such, the two should be

as tightly-knit as possible, informing and feeding into one another seamlessly. Even though he applies this idea mainly to traditional board games, the principle used can be easily adapted to other forms of games.

Worldbuilding in games should serve two purposes: the intradiegetic purpose and the extra-diegetic one. Intradiegetic or Watsonian purpose refers to something that has a point within the story. The counterpoint this, extradiegetic or Doyleist purpose refers to something that has a point out of the story. For example, if someone were to ask themselves “Why does the universe of *Ratchet & Clank* contain so many habitable planets within few minutes’ spaceflight of each other”, the intradiegetic reasoning could be “Gadgetron corporation’s space travelling technology is advanced and affordable enough to be commonplace”, meanwhile the extradiegetic reason is probably “Setting the game across multiple planets instead of just one makes for more varied environments, enemies and challenges, plus the travel from one planet to another can be used to mask the level loading times”.

When building the world, this principle of two purposes is going to be applied as often as possible, in all levels of the design.

2.2 The Process

When playing Dungeons & Dragons, the role that in computer roleplaying games would be done by the computer falls in the hands of the designated Dungeon Master or DM. The Dungeon Master describes the scenes, plays the parts of the non-player characters and enemies, and acts as the referee of the game. Large amount of information how to run the game as a Dungeon Master is included in the fifth edition *Dungeon Master’s Guide* (2014). It also contains extensive information for creating the world and the campaign for the game. All of these guidelines cannot be used for a pre-written adventure like this, but the ones that can be applied will be utilized in the process.

Additionally, I’m going to use some other sources in the creation process. *The Game Narrative Toolbox* (2015) defines two distinct ways of approaching the process: the macro-level and micro-level worldbuilding. Macro-level is a top-down approach, which means starting by deciding on the big questions;

the likes of system of government, geography, and the prevalence of magic in the world. The micro-level approach is the opposite, which means starting out small and expanding the scope over time. I decided on using the macro-level approach, as it not only ensured that at the end of the process I would have a rough outline of the world at large as a tool to use for any future creative endeavours, but also that I wouldn't accidentally contradict myself by creating a macro-level rule that would render void one of my earlier, micro-level creations. Considering this, I can focus on the less game and mechanics heavy aspects of worldbuilding, which means I can broaden my scope of instructions and influences beyond worldbuilding just in in games.

In his column for *Writer's Digest* (2014) author David Hair tells what he thinks when he builds a fictional fantasy world. He also likes to remind the reader: "fantasy" is not synonymous with "illogical". Even if more fantastic elements are introduced, they should not be nonsensical.

Hair's process is detailed below:

Driving Conflict:

- What is the conflict of the story?
- What kind of place best showcases this conflict?
- How do the protagonists relate to the conflict?
- Do the protagonists differ from everyday people? If yes, how?

Population:

- How do people live here? How do they get their food and other resources required for living?
- What is their history, and how has it shaped them, their attitudes and their beliefs?
- What races are present? What languages are spoken, and by whom?
 - (Note: "race" here refers to fantasy races such as dwarves and elves, not human ethnicities.)
- How much migration is there from other places, and how do the locals treat the migrants?

History:

- How long has the world existed? How did it come to be? What are the big events that shape the people's behaviour today?
- What are people's beliefs about their creation, their purpose, their past and future? What divergent interpretations of these beliefs are present?

During the process below, I'm going to apply the same basic creation process in layers, constantly focusing the scope: from the campaign world as a whole to the adventure at hand, to the design of an individual town and a dungeon. My goal is to end up with a finished adventure module, playable to anyone with a grasp of the rules of 5th edition Dungeons & Dragons.

3 BUILDING AN EMPIRE

When speaking about D&D worldbuilding for a home campaign, not all of the steps are necessary. In fact, many long-time Dungeon Masters encourage player involvement in the process to make both the players and their characters more invested in the world.

Relying on the principle of finding balance between the extradiegetic and intradiegetic purposes, the challenge will be balancing between originality and a world that can still adhere to the rules of Dungeons & Dragons. Also, a setting too fantastical makes the world feel alien and hard to relate, or at worst hard to comprehend; it also distracts from the story if the player must first learn the basic rules of the world first. Many premises for fantasy worlds are “it’s like our world, but...” rather than “everything’s different, except for...”

We are going to apply both the guidelines of the *Dungeon Master’s Guide*, alongside *The Game Narrative Toolbox* and David Hair’s process, to both the world and the adventure.

So, to start, I’m going to start thinking about the world as a whole. I’m trying to avoid certain clichés, like making the world simply seem like medieval Europe, and making the world map left-justified, as popularized by Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*. Of course, veering too far from the standard expected by the rules creates its own set of problems: if I set the game in a world reminiscent of Victorian England, I’d have to create rules and mechanics to all inventions that have come since, such as firearms and steam engines. As this is not the direction I wish to take the game, I settled on basing the world roughly on latter-era, declining Roman Empire. By making the empire dysfunctional and corrupted I ensure meaning that the players will never run out of adventures; even if there’s a law enforcement around to keep peace in the settlements, it is up to the player characters to deal with any other problems. However, to make the comparison to Rome less transparent I’m going to make the empire monotheistic, based around a goddess of the sun. The religion itself could be based on the Templars, a tangled order that makes horrible things in the name of what they believe is the greater good. I soon started to take the

Empire into more modern, totalitarian form, inspired by designer Viktor Antonov's dystopias in *Half-Life 2* and *Dishonored*. This would further help to differentiate the Empire from the Tolkienesque fantasy setting now practically considered the genre standard. As Huohvanainen notes in his study, it is too easy to get railed into using similar types of works as influences, which will result in the end product being derivative and unoriginal.

I consulted the World Archetypes of *The Game Narrative Toolbox* to help me give guidelines for the further worldbuilding. I decided on using the Changing, as I wanted the empire to be merely declining, rather than in an outright war, under an otherworldly invasion, or destroyed completely, as I felt these options would take the focus off from whatever the story is at hand.

After some consideration for the name of this world I decided on "Shadowless Empire". In addition to connecting the world to its real-world inspiration, "Empire" is often seen having more negative connotations and implicit malevolence than, for example "Kingdom", particularly due to its use in *Star Wars*. In addition, the "Shadowless", despite being the opposite, draws the mind to the word "Shadow", which implies something obscured or suspicious; something shady. "Shadowless" then again has a strong connection to light, implying that it's not the darkness you should be wary of in this world. In addition, it gives off a totalitarian vibe: you're constantly under a blinding spotlight, with no shadows to hide into. From an intradiegetic standpoint, the name reflects the empire's faith in the sun goddess Illustra; as all that the sunlight touches is her domain, the whole empire is metaphorically shadowless. It also sends a message to the empire's enemies: there's no place to hide. Illustra herself is a feminine alteration of the latin word "illustro", "light up" or "make clear". Additionally, it is a name of a security camera model, which helps to drive home the message of "You are being watched" extradiegetically.

3.1 Core Assumptions of Dungeons & Dragons

After this very rough base for my world I will consider the guidelines in *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The book's instructions regarding worldbuilding start

with certain core assumptions related to the world, based on the rules of the game.

Gods Oversee the World. The core idea of the divine magic in D&D is that the gods are existing beings that claim dominion over certain aspects of the world, and grant divine magic and influence to their followers. This idea largely persists also in the Shadowless Empire, with the principles being detailed further in the section “Gods of Your World”, below.

Much for the World is Untamed. The assumption behind usual D&D worlds is that civilized settlements dot the untamed wilderness, and that people know little beyond the area they live in. The Shadowless Empire is more known, with the entire continent being mapped and inhabited. However, large areas of unpredictable wilderness and treacherous geography sequester the many settlements from one another, making travel dangerous and eventful.

The World is Ancient. In D&D the world is assumed to have seen rise and fall of numerous civilizations, leaving behind areas rich with adventure and mystery. The Shadowless Empire conforms to this assumption, having numerous ruins of past civilizations, from the high-magic Eladrin constructs to the massive giant ruins of Voninheim, spotting the landscape, with plenty of opportunities for adventure, magic and swift death.

Conflict Shapes the World’s History. The worlds in D&D are riddled with conflict between different factions, be they large religions, long-lived kingdoms, or some other type of societies. Their confrontation shapes the history of those worlds and creates drama and conflict. The Shadowless Empire features numerous factions of varying power, striving for their own goals while seeking to quench their opposition. These factions and their relationships are detailed later, in the section “Factions”.

The World is Magical. In most worlds of D&D magic is common, even if understanding and practice of it is rare. Usually the more impressive magic is hidden in the ruins of the ancient empires. The Shadowless Empire follows the pattern, with most settlements having few, if any, practitioners of magic. Most

magic items are either artefacts of the eras past found or inherited through generations, with few choice individuals and factions having access to more potent arcane powers.

After these assumptions, the guide breaks down different aspects of the game world. This process is utilized here, in order of appearance in the book:

3.2 Gods of the Empire

Dungeon Master's Guide lists several ways of creating the pantheon of your world, from the usual loose pantheons to animism, and even discusses the possibility of replacing the religions with philosophies. The important thing from the gameplay aspect is that each of the possible divine domains to be chosen by the cleric class are represented. While this would be the most mechanically efficient way of creating the pantheon of the Shadowless Empire, it was not deemed as the optimal route from the viewpoint of both the gameplay and the story, as even if it did cover the cleric domains, it would leave large thematic gaps to the pantheon and leave many important concepts such as wealth, travel, luck and peace without any sort of patron deity. Thus the construction of the loose pantheon of the gods of the Shadowless Empire.

The Empire itself is devoted to one central deity, Illustra, the goddess of the sun, life and light. In a way derived from medieval Christianity, most people of the Empire do not pray directly to Illustra, but one of her twelve saints, each representing a certain virtue. These virtues were based on the classical Roman virtues, with some modernization and streamlining: compassion, conquest, culture, dignity, dutifulness, harvest, industriousness, mercy, piety, righteousness, temperance, and wholesomeness.

In addition to Illustra and her saints, the totemic pantheon governs over subjects that are left outside the portfolio of Illustra. This set of eight deities was created in strict duality in mind, with the pantheon being formed of four pairs: fire and water, earth and air, life and death, space and time. In a similar fashion, most of the deities created afterwards were created to fill in specific gaps left behind the pre-existing gods, like Aesis, the god of law; Hadhaena,

the goddess of hunting, and Yhldir, the goddess of winter. In addition, many races got their own creator gods, like Samndar the Earth-Mother for dwarves, and Prismoth the Primordial Beast for dragons and dragonborn. These deities were then connected to the appropriate domains so that they could be used by the clerics in-game. The result of this process can be found in the final product in Appendix D, “Deities of the Empire” (appendix 1).

As listed as one of the preconceptions above, the general rules of D&D that the gods actively influence to the lives of mortals. This is something that Shadowless Empire defies as a setting: while deities are believed to oversee the mortal world, there is no absolute proof of their existence, nor do they influence to affairs of mortals in any meaningful way.

3.3 Commerce in the Empire

The rules of D&D account for five types of currency: gold pieces (GP), silver pieces (SP), copper pieces (CP), electrum pieces (EP), and platinum pieces (PP). These are used universally in the rules for clarity, with the following values: one platinum piece equals ten gold pieces, one of which equals ten silver pieces, one of which equals ten coppers. As an odd one out, electrum piece is worth five silvers, or half a gold piece.

To avoid converting the in-game prices for all the equipment, weapons, armours, magic items and services available, The Shadowless Empire sticks to these values. For simplicity’s sake, three of the currencies are in common use, while two other are designated as “special” currency not used in everyday transactions, as described below. Even the rarer currencies use the values determined in the rulebooks: while possibly unrealistic, it avoids undue complexity.

The Empire currency comprises of gold, silver and copper coins. The imperials often refer to gold coins as “sundiscs”, but in the more remote settlements further away from imperial influence they’re usually simply called gold coins or gold pieces. All coins that move through any of the Citadel cities of the Empire, either through taxation or trade, will be minted and registered by the Imperial Treasury. Each of the coins will have the Symbol of Illustra on

one side, and the coat of arms of the city it was minted in on another. However, it is not uncommon to see coins not minted at all or minted with different symbols, especially in the farthest reaches of the Empire. The greater port cities also see a fair share of coins minted with emblems of faraway lands and kingdoms.

In addition, many of the ancient ruins spotting the Empire lands conceal troves of undiscovered treasures left from the empires of the past. The coinage of these lost kingdoms often includes platinum and electrum pieces, which are not used in the modern day Empire.

3.4 Languages & Dialects in the Empire

The languages spoken in the Shadowless Empire vary from people to people, being restricted to the usual Dungeons & Dragons languages for the sake of keeping the world within the game system: Common acts as the standard Imperial language, used by humans and in communication between races; among themselves, elves speak Elvish, dwarves Dwarvish and halflings speak Halfling. In addition to the regular languages, Elvish was given an ancient version that can be found in old elven ruins in the Empire. This language can be read by creatures that understand modern Elvish, but only if they succeed in an Intelligence (History) check first.

When using the standard fifth edition Dungeons & Dragons rules for character creation, the characters are always at least bilingual. However, many of the non-player inhabitants do only know one language: the simple farmers living in remote settlements might only speak Common without being able to read or write it.

It was considered to add Imperial as a separate language from Common, which would emphasize the importance of the secondary languages the players picked in character creation. However, due to limited playtesting opportunities, this part of the language system was shelved, possibly to be integrated at a later date.

3.5 Factions & Organizations

Dungeon Master's Guide has elaborate instructions on how to create factions and organizations to your world. It describes tracking renown for each faction, plus the possible benefits and drawbacks the said renown to each faction could have. The book starts by asking what is the role of the organization: what are its goals, who founded it and why, and what do the members of this organization do. It also instructs the reader to create factions that the players would want to interact with, be that as allies or enemies. Using the book's instructions as rough guidelines, several major factions were created for different roles and purposes within the world and the game, detailed below.

3.5.1 Brotherhood of the Helm

One of the newest power groups in the Empire, the Brotherhood of the Helm consists of holy warriors, monks, and clerics of faiths with aligning worldviews and principles. They vacate remote, independent strongholds around the Empire, looking to protect the people of distant settlements which do not get enough attention and protection from the imperial forces.

Goals. To crush evil, promote justice, and bring order and civilization to the wild borderlands. However, this occasionally leads to conflict, as from time to time the Brotherhood and the Empire have vastly different opinions on what consists of 'justice'. Despite their occasionally anti-imperialist views, the members never hide in the shadows, promoting their causes openly.

Renown. A character with renown within the Brotherhood might gain additional reinforcements for dangerous quests, gain safe housing in the temples and shrines allied with the faction, and have possible ailments and curses treated by the faction's priests. As a counterpoint, the same character might draw the ire of faiths opposing the Brotherhood's goals, criminal organizations, and sometimes the Empire itself.

Role. The role of the Brotherhood of the Helm in the game world is to be the unquestionable good guys, to offer a certain moral clarity in the otherwise ethically grey world of the Shadowless Empire: an option for the players who enjoy playing the role of a hero. The faction opposes the Empire right down to its name ("Brotherhood" being an intentional jab towards the matriarchal

Empire), and does it out in the open, signalling the players that the Empire does not go unopposed.

3.5.2 Crimson Sword Syndicate

The largest and most notorious group of mercenaries on the continent, the Crimson Sword Syndicate is a vast network of sellswords spread throughout the Empire. Consisting of skilful fighters, no job is too dirty or difficult for the agents on the Syndicate payroll. Thus, the careers within the faction tend to be short but eventful.

Goals. Opposed to the other major faction, Crimson Sword Syndicate possessed no unified greater purpose. It simply seeks to make the life of its members easier by taking care of the networking between the mercenaries and their potential customers.

Renown. A character with renown within the Syndicate might gain additional companions on quests, housing from the barracks and inns allied with the faction, and get their equipment, armour and weaponry maintained for lowered or no cost. However, the same character might gain the attention of less organized, rivaling mercenary groups. In addition, many smaller settlements and communities consider the Syndicate a group of thugs, which makes certain interactions more difficult.

Role. The role of the Crimsons Sword Syndicate in the game is to act as a sort of neutral party: regardless of the players' alignment, they're just as likely to meet Syndicate members on missions both as allies and as foes. As traveling sellswords, the NPCs that act as syndicate members are also a good source of information from faraway locations.

3.5.3 Darkcandle Conclave

An underground network of mages and spellcasters, The Darkcandle Conclave hides in shadows, preferring to infiltrate the system in order to change it from inside, influencing others with enchantments and illusions.

Goals. The Darkcandle Conclave seeks to prevent the excessive accumulation of power or wealth. As such, they're often seen as the enemy of the Empire despite their peaceful and benevolent nature. With their emphasis on magic,

the members are often concerned with safely securing powerful artifacts and dangerous magical phenomena from those who seek to misuse them.

Renown. A character with renown within the Conclave might gain access to potions, spell scrolls, teleportation circles, and magic items that wouldn't be otherwise available for them. In addition, the members of the Conclave can help the characters with identifying and, if needed, suppressing certain types of magical phenomena. However, due to the group's methods, many see them as a network of disruptive thieves and spies.

Role. The role of Darkcandle Conclave in the world of the game is like that of the Brotherhood of the Helm in spirit, but vastly different in execution: while the Brotherhood acts as a beacon of hope visible to all, the Conclave seeks to work covertly, leaving the smallest trace possible of their involvement. However, due to their occasionally questionable methods, Darkcandle is not only more morally ambiguous than Helm, but because of their opaque policies Darkcandle would be easily infiltrated by a person seeking to use their influence to their own gains, which lends the faction for more intrigue-driven plotlines.

3.5.4 Order of the Ancients

A shadowy order that has existed long before the rise of the Shadowless Empire, the Order of the Ancients worships the ancient Totemic Pantheon of Gods. The most isolationist of the major factions, the 'Order' consists of loose, interconnected collectives of druids, rangers, hunters and other folk who live off the land. The order often vacates its own private outposts in the borderlands, and are rarely present in larger settlements.

Goals. The Order of the Ancients seeks to maintain balance in the natural order, and to combat the forces that threaten that balance.

Renown. A character with renown within the Order might gain access to survival equipment, rare herbs and spell components, unearthed artifacts and ancient maps held by the order. In addition, they gain access to many of their guarded groves and sites. While characters allied with the Order are less likely to gain adversaries than those in other major factions, the faction's name also holds far less sway compared to those of others. In some circles, their "some secrets are better left buried" policies are seen as regressive.

Role. Similarly to Darkcandle Conclave, the Order of the Ancients seeks to protect the world from dangerous arcane phenomena. Where the Conclave

seeks to repossess and hide away the potentially dangerous magical items, the Order is usually contempt with leaving the artefacts be, just making sure that nobody else collects them from their ruinous crypts. The NPCs belonging to the Order are also well acquainted with their surroundings, and give the players valuable information about the lands and the locations they conceal.

3.5.5 Tempest Trading Company

Spanning across several continents and operating on every ocean, the Tempest Trading Company sells anything, anywhere and to anyone. The faction draws employees and associates from many walks of life, and is not above questionable methods when it comes to conducting business.

Goals. Agents of the Trading Company always try to strike a deal that satisfies every party involved, seeking to accumulate their own wealth and influence in the process.

Renown. A character with renown within the Trading Company might gain additional resources and monetary assist for dangerous quests. They would also gain access to many of the company facilities and equipment, as well as gaining reliable fences for selling their more questionable acquisitions. Due to the company's amoral attitudes towards conducting business, characters allied with Tempest might draw the ire of factions that see the company as potentially dangerous.

Role. Out of all the major factions the Tempest Trading Company is the closest to an antagonist. However, their threatening nature is rarely due to malice, rather than a winning combination of greed and incompetence stemming from the company's ill thought-out business plan: each merchant of Tempest is encouraged to branch out, to carve out their own destinies and fortunes. What Darkcandle Conclave and the Order of the Ancients seek to conceal, Tempest seeks to monetize.

3.6 Magic in the Empire

Dungeon Master's Guide lists certain points to think about when considering the magic of the campaign setting: How common the magic is? Is it restricted in any way? How do the schools of magic work?

When constructing the Shadowless Empire, the magic was approached from a practical point of view: how to make the magic of the world distinct without the need of altering the game's rules of magic. For this reason, the schools of magic were left untouched, as they work fine in the setting as they are.

As mentioned with the core assumptions above, the magic is uncommon, but rarely utilized. What this means is that while magical creatures and phenomena are not rare, magic itself isn't very well studied or understood concept. Only larger settlements have any practitioners of magic, and these magic users are rarely more capable than mid-level player characters. This helps to make the player characters seem more special, and avoids the NPCs from overshadowing them. Most magic shops work with simple consumables such as spell scrolls or potions. Most magic items are either artefacts of the eras past found or inherited through generations, available for purchase only in the most exclusive of auctions.

As mentioned above, magic is rather mysterious to the citizens of the Empire, which causes magic users to be treated with mixture of respect and caution. Due to the fluid nature of most magic, few laws restrict the use of magic, but the imperial authorities might arbitrarily charge a magic user for malicious use of their powers, such as attempting to charm, control or attack an unwilling human being.

A specific detail the *Dungeon Master's Guide* brings up are the teleportation circles. Unlike in many pre-existing D&D worlds, teleportation circles in the Empire do not act as major pathways between continents. Rather, few choice factions have access to their own exclusive networks of teleportation circles. This is done to further cement the Empire's low magic nature.

3.7 Anthropology of the Empire

Now I can continue to the less game-heavy aspects of the world, using Hair's method.

3.7.1 Population

How do people live here? How do they get their food and other resources required for living?

This is an aspect that doesn't really tie into the mechanics in any way and due to its mundane nature, it is unlikely to be that interesting to the player.

Therefore, it is not wise to spend time creating a societal structure for the world, and I can rather straightforwardly translate an existing model to the fantasy world.

Because of this, the Shadowless Empire resembles the agricultural, webbed society of Imperial Rome. The people in remote settlements live mostly in self-sustaining fashion, with the Empire having little effect on their lives; the people in the bustling cities make their living as craftsmen and merchants, with the resources needed transported from the outside farms and fields. Most people that don't specifically make their living from long-distance trade might not venture more than a dozen miles from their place of birth during their lifetimes.

What is their history, and how has it shaped them, their attitudes and their beliefs? What races are present? What languages are spoken, and by whom?

The history of the Empire as a detailed timeline is at this point largely unnecessary, so we should only focus on the important parts that shaped the Empire as it is today.

The Imperials arrived to the land now known as the Shadowless Empire over a thousand years ago. Back then it was known as the land of the giants, and most of the continent was ruled by giant tyrants. However, the influence of the giants slowly waned, and simultaneously the imperials started gaining foothold on the lands. Eventually, the Shadowless Empire supplanted the giants as the supreme rulers of the lands, and the giants left to find a new home. As time went by, the Empire had spread to encompass the whole continent and all its people.

The races present are going to keep in line with the options (dragonborn, dwarves, elves, gnomes, half-elves, halflings, half-orcs, humans and tieflings) provided for the players in *Player's Handbook* (2014) to give the players the

full freedom of choice. Additionally, all the player races featured in subsequent books such as *Sword Coast Adventurer's Guide* (2015) and *Volo's Guide to Monsters* (2015) are included in the world. However, one exception was made: the hill dwarf was changed to the coastal dwarf. This because I felt like hill dwarves were too similar with stout halflings, which were specifically described "dwarf-like" in *Player's Handbook*, and have much stronger connection to the hills due to decades of halfling portrayals being based on *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*. While mechanically indistinguishable from the original hill dwarves presented in *Player's Handbook*, the voyaging and island-dwelling coastal dwarves were based on the dwarf-like Menehune people appearing in Hawaiian mythology, as documented by folklorist Martha Beckwith (1940). This helped to give the dwarves of the Shadowless Empire something to distinguish themselves from the subterranean, bearded cliché.

In addition to the coastal dwarves, I tried to subvert or twist the most closely-knit assumptions and clichés regarding the fantasy races at hand: the wood elves still live in the woods in elusive communities, but instead of being graceful and harmonious they're feral hunters and barbarians; the dark elves are not all evil slavers, but rather use their ill reputation and aggressive foreign politics as means to protect their rich settlements from intruders; the orcs are still the scourge of the lands, but due to their Hun-like marauding lifestyle rather than just being evil to the core. Similarly, I tried to justify the stereotypes with some sort of historical reasoning, making them closer to cultural identity rather than a factual description of a race as a whole: in the ancient times the dwarves were miners, the elves were hunter-gatherers, the gnomes were mages, and the halflings were farmers. Even though the races have long since moved away from these strict categories regarding their livelihood, these stereotypes still exist.

How much migration is there from other places, and how do the locals treat the migrants?

To keep in line with *Player's Handbook*, I made the races the book lists as 'rare' as migrants, to give an intradiegetic reason to the rarity of these races. All dragonborn, gnomes, half-orcs and high elves of the Empire are descendants of migrants from other lands. However, due to the difficult and

hazardous transcontinental travel, relatively few outsiders appear in the Empire. The locals often treat these people with caution, as anything that you don't know could be dangerous.

However, this question can be applied to migrants inside the Empire as well, such as the player characters. And especially in remote settlements, the treatment is often discriminating and shunning. This is because adventurers like the player characters often do nothing but needlessly complicate the lives of the simple farmers and their homesteads. While the adventurers might save the blacksmith's daughter that was kidnapped by goblins, they're also just as likely to draw thugs, mercenaries and other sorts of criminals to them.

3.7.2 History

How long has the world existed? How did it come to be? What are the big events that shape the people's behaviour today?

According to most sources, the Shadowless Empire (as a world and setting, not as a political force) has existed for tens of thousands of years. The current, shared creation myth goes as follows: in ancient times, the world was storming, constantly changing, inhospitable landscape on which powerful beings of pure chaos, known as primordials, raged and reigned. Then the deities appeared, and either tamed the primordials, cast them down, or destroyed them, and the land of today is the result of this conflict. When gods oversaw the land, it became a place where living beings could survive, even prosper.

Due to time constraints, I decided that due to their extended exposure to each other, all the creation myths in the Empire have melded into one, unified story, rather than creating a unique one for each culture. Similarly, this will show to

What are people's beliefs about their creation, their purpose, their past and future?

As covered above, the creation myth of the world is rather uniform. However, most races have their own myths about their creation. The dwarves were moulded from the Earth by Samndar the Earth-Mother; dragon-goddess Prismoth created the dragonborn as servants of the dragons; the first orcs were birthed by Krogonn the Blind Fury. These beliefs further define how the races acted in the dawn of civilization, and how some of them still do. The

wood elves became hunter-gatherers under Hadhaena, goddess of hunting; the orcs live as marauders guided by Krogonn, and the coastal dwarves became fishermen and voyagers under the protection of Caeruleus, the goddess of the seas.

What divergent interpretations of these beliefs are present?

Due to the cultural melting pot that is the Empire, most religions curiously seem to agree about the creation. However, there are differences in regards of the roles each deity played in the creation myth, and certain deities are revered and interpreted in different ways: some people revere Yhdlir as a goddess who protects travellers from frost and wind; others sacrifice in her name to appease her, as not to face her fury in form of a blizzard or an avalanche.

4 BUILDING AN ADVENTURE



Figure 1. The map of the Shadowless Empire. The red rectangle represents the same area as the entirety of the adventure map in Appendix 3. (Sorvo 2017).

As evident from the map above, relatively small portion of the information I've gathered about the Shadowless Empire makes it to the adventure itself. *The Game Narrative Toolbox* describes as "The Worldbuilding Iceberg"; the players don't require all the information about the setting, nor should you give it to them. Players forced to sit through endless, unnecessary exposition is a prime way to make your players lose interest, and one of the reasons why I chose this subject in the first place.

4.1 Story Outline

Here I can utilize the remaining part of David Hair's worldbuilding process: note that in his process "story" does not refer to the plot of the work at hand, rather than the greater events that are forming the background of the main plot. However, this process can be used in forming the basis for the plot of the adventure itself, as well.

What is the conflict of the story?

The current story of the Shadowless Empire is the political power struggle between the Empire and the factions mentioned earlier. The Empire has for years been riddled with structural problems and corruption, and their recent, more militant action against certain religious groups has caused the empress to fall out of favour. The influence of the Shadowless Empire is slowly declining, as the other, newer power groups gain notoriety and resources. What results in is a lot of political unrest.

This story can be used as a background for many types of adventures, and creates a setting where the players are free to choose which of the morally grey factions to ally with, if any. This should make the players feel like there's no clear right or wrong.

To support the idea, the story of the adventure should be tied to this conflict. Perhaps it revolves around one of the religious groups persecuted by the Shadowless Empire. To avoid too strict black-and-white morality, the religious group in question could be some sort of potentially dangerous cult. This idea could be expanded further, to put a twist on the cliché of the evil cult threatening the peaceful settlement that has been used in many D&D adventures over the years, such as Gary Gygax's *The Village of Hommlot* (1979), Douglas Niles' *Against the Cult of the Reptile God* (1982), or *Princes of the Apocalypse* (2015), published by Wizards of the Coast. As I felt that few of those adventures tap into the potential intrigue and horror aspects this kind of cult-based adventure could provide, I wanted to take the adventure into more horror-oriented direction, influenced by the works H. P. Lovecraft.

Instead of a standard D&D adventure I wanted to make the players feel like they were dealing with something more ominous than the usual orc horde terrorizing the area. From this mentality was born the Cult of the Waking Eye, the antagonist of our adventure. The Cult of the Waking eye is an ancient order that believes to be serving and revering Thalos, the god of dreams. However, unbeknownst to the cultists, the figure posing as Thalos is in fact a nightmarish, aberrant being from the astral plane of dreams of thoughts. This

sort of scenario would not only allow more psychedelic, dreamlike imagery, but also potentially make the cultists tragic and sympathetic in their own way.

However, this adventure needed a focal point. A red string to tie the cult into the adventure, something more refined than “characters battle evil cultists”. I wanted something with more potential for intrigue and horror. Eventually, inspired by the Staff of Rhaptorne in *Dragon Quest VIII: Journey of the Cursed King*, I came up with a gem containing the creature posing as Thalos. This gemstone would allow the entity inside to touch the mind of whoever touches the object, potentially possessing them or rendering them insane. Following the trail of destruction the gem creates would act as the initial main plotline of the adventure, now named Working Title: Dream Stone (abbreviated as WT:DS in the future).

Due to limited time and resources, I decided to aim for something that, while small and focused, would still retain many of the sandbox elements of Dungeons & Dragons. So, I set my sights on *Lost Mine of Phandelver (2014)* (*Phandelver* from this point onward), an adventure included in the Dungeons & Dragons 5th Edition Starter Set. *Phandelver* is set into a single valley and takes the player characters from level 1 to level 5. Similarly, the scope of conflict should be something smaller: in *Phandelver* the characters trail a missing dwarf and end up struggling for the ownership of the titular mine with a single dark elf wizard. It’s not plausible that the player characters will resolve the entire imperial power struggle during those five levels of play, nor would it necessarily even be compelling or interesting.

At this point it would be appropriate detail the plot of the adventure itself. For this purpose, I’m basing my process on Evan Skolnick’s book *Video Game Storytelling: What Every Developer Needs to Know About Narrative Techniques* (2014). According to Skolnick the conflict of a story boils down to “someone *wants* or *needs* something, *but* someone or something stands in the way”. Based on this simple idea I can create the entire main plot of WT:DS (appendix 2).

- The party is tasked by a mysterious patron to find a box, stolen from him. The player characters *want* to find a mysterious box, *but* it is currently located in the hands of a criminal gang.
- The party infiltrates the hideout of criminals and finds the box. The player characters *want* to acquire the gem inside the box, *but* it has been stolen from the criminals.
- The party trails the gem thief to city of Brancus. The player characters *want* to find the thief, *but* the thief has been killed and the new owner has been rendered insane by the gem's power.
- The party acquire the gem. The player characters *want* to return the gem to their patron, *but* the patron has been murdered by the cultists of the Waking Eye.
- Two new factions show up, each requesting to be handed the gem. The player characters *want* to give the gem to one party, *but* in doing so they're going to upset the other party.
- The gem renders the faction leader mad. The player characters *want* to stop the leader, *but* they have to find the leader first.
- The party trails the leader into the hidden shrine of the Waking Eye. The player characters *want* to stop the leader from handing the gem to the cult, *but* the cultists stand in their way.
- The cultists want to release the entity from the gem. The player characters *want* to stop the ritual to release the creature, *but* the cultists stand in their way.

What kind of place best showcases this conflict?

Given the power struggle in the centre of the story, an ideal setting for the adventure would be a place where this conflict is the most visible. Perhaps a location farther away from the centres of imperial influence, where the other factions can more openly attempt carving their own footholds. In addition, the cult described above should be based around the area.

Based on this information, I chose the Cutstone Coast region from the map; far enough from the greatest imperial centres, but not so far in the borderlands that the imperial influence wouldn't become inconsequential. Similarly to *Lost Mine of Phandelver*, the area would act as a limited sandbox for the players.

Cutstone Coast is an area with a distinct property: the trade road traveling through the area is literally cut through stone in many places, giving the region its name. To emphasize this theme, the central city in the area became the scenic Brancus, a city known for its sculptures and stonework. As the location has been chosen, I can start spotting the surrounding area with other minor locations and points of interest for the players. The most important for the story will be the shrine of the cult in the center of the adventure. In addition to this, I created many different areas to act as stages of various kinds of side quests (appendix 3). Some of them are more straightforward hack-and-slash dungeon delves, like clearing out the goblin-infested Cliffside Watchtower; some require more coordinated action, like the hostage situation at the Stone of Elders; places like the pirate cave of Cragmaw Grotto and Iriwynn's abandoned camp function more like puzzles. To better tie these encounters into the main plotline I placed hooks and clues in each location so that completing these quests would be beneficial for the progression of the main storyline as well.

How do the protagonists relate to the conflict?

As per the tradition of Dungeons & Dragons, the player characters are a blank slate, so predetermining their ties to the story would go directly against that idea. However, this question could be used for considering the most important non-player characters in the adventure. It was important that each of the characters not only related in the main storyline in different ways, but also showcased a different aspect of the Shadowless Empire.

Mr. Wayne, a mysterious collector, is the one who sets the players after the gem. He is unaware of its properties, and refuses to even consider that the gem could somehow be more trouble than it is worth. This attitude will eventually get him murdered for interfering with the cult of the Waking Eye. Originally, Mr. Wayne was supposed to know about the properties and history of the gem; however, this was later changed not only to make his actions more plausible, but also to avoid frontloading too much exposition on the players. Skolnick called this technique "seeding" (2014): this way the

information would be spread more evenly, and the story could retain its mystery longer.

Umbrea is the leader of the Darkcandle Conclave cell active in Brancus. The wood elf is suspicious of the Empire, and has been trailing the gem for some time. Her main goal is to prevent the gem from ending into wrong hands. However, she is unaware of its capabilities, and thus is in danger of becoming Oneiromon's possessed vessel.

Lucius is the captain of the imperial guard in Brancus. Due to his upbringing, the aasimar man has almost blindly idealistic image of the Shadowless Empire, and believes that the gem should be in the hands of the Empire. However, like Umbrea, he is unaware of the capabilities of the gem, and is likewise in danger of becoming possessed. As a counterpoint to Umbrea I wanted Lucius to be her opposite in every way. One's a secretive anti-imperialist, while the other is proudly loyal to the Shadowless Empire to the very end. This extends to even their combat mechanics: Umbrea is physically weak, but a powerful magic user, meanwhile Lucius is a more straightforward, heavily armoured fighter.

Faunalynn is the leader of the cult of the Waking Eye, and the instigator of the events of the story. Her search for the gemstone has led to the inciting incident setting the adventure in motion. A tragic character, the moon elf has been twisted by nightmares and visions: as a result, she has travelled from one cult to another in search of answers, becoming a heretic in the eyes of the Empire. Now she blindly worships Oneiromon, believing his lies, and herself to be a conduit of the dream god Thalos.

Oneiromon, the entity trapped inside the gemstone, is the main antagonist of WT:DS. His lies feed the actions of the cult and fuel their fervour. I based the creature to the Astral Searchers as described in Jeff Grubb's Advanced Dungeons & Dragons source book *Manual of the Planes* (1987). The Astral Searchers were incorporeal creatures of thought existing in the astral plane of thoughts, wandering in search of a human form to inhabit. This type of

formless creature whose modus operandi consists of possessing other creatures was a perfect match for a more Lovecraftian adventure.

Do the protagonists differ from everyday people? If yes, how?

In the D&D tradition, the player characters are extraordinary people. While at level 1 they are barely more than a peasant that one morning picked up a sword instead of a pitchfork, over the course of the 20 levels the characters become gods among men. The scarcity of magic in the Empire emphasizes this: if the adventuring party contains more than a one spellcaster, they've likely already doubled the number of magic users in the region. This ensures that the players do not feel overshadowed by the NPCs, and it prevents the players from wondering "If this wizened wizard can make problems disappear by snapping his fingers, why are we needed in the first place?". As such, the adventure features relatively few powerful non-player characters. Few mages and priests now couple of basic spells in case the players are in a dire need of spells like *cure wounds* or *remove curse*, but largely the player characters are the ones who can handle the challenges of this world, and as such are the ones likely get tasked with the quests.

4.2 Engaging Players

In the introduction of *Dungeon Master's Guide* the reader is encouraged to know their players in order to find things they enjoy the most, thus being able to tailor the adventures so that they are engaging to the player. As the WT:DS is meant to be a published adventure that can be played by anyone, it cannot be tailored towards specific individuals. However, the information provided in the section can be used as a checklist to ensure all types of players are considered.

Acting: Players who enjoy acting like getting into character and the interaction with NPCs. In the adventure the players are given numerous NPCs with varying roles and personalities to interact with, from the suspicious patron Mr. Wayne to the babbling beggar Scruffy. In addition, the madness mechanic gives the players a unique opportunity to take the acting to a whole new, unhinged level: the player characters lose their grasp on reality, become

burdened by imaginary deeds, and start to adapt the personalities and mannerisms of one another.

Exploring: Players who enjoy exploration want to know what the world around them has to offer. The setting of the adventure is dotted with unique locales with additional flavour, treasure, and hints advancing the plot to reward these kinds of players. The abandoned ruins of Fort Naeworth are full of coins, equipment and small magic items, left behind by the travellers eaten by the ogres inhabiting the ruins. While the player characters are dealing with the crooks of the Crossbone gang, they come across a map that could potentially lead them to a hidden gnome pirate treasure. In chapter 3, the players must locate the villains' hideout based on clues scattered around the setting.

Fighting: Players who enjoy fantasy combat like battling various foes in the game. In the adventure, numerous, varying combat situations are offered to the players, each with different dynamic. While exploring the marshes to find the thieves' hideout, the crooks guarding the entrance spring an ambush on the intruders. Meanwhile, when looking to siege one of the potential crisis areas in Chapter 2, the players can pinpoint exactly who to attack, how and when.

Instigating: Players who enjoy instigating action are eager to keep the game moving by making things happen by their own hand. In the adventure there are several situations that let the players take lead on moving the adventure along. During the adventure the player characters must find ways to infiltrate both a black market auction and a remote cult hideout, and at a certain point of the adventure the players must themselves make the choice who to hand over the possessed gem, if to anyone.

Optimizing: Players who enjoy optimizing their characters like to fine-tune and micromanage their characters to achieve peak combat performance. For these players the adventure contains treasure, magic items and other rewards to make their characters more potent than ever. Getting rid of the dwarven barbarians harassing the travellers the player characters gain access to the loot, including a unique magic item that helps the more magic-oriented characters to maintain focus on their spells. Choosing to return the possessed

gemstone to the order of the mages grants access to a foe-freezing magical axe.

Problem Solving: Players who enjoy problem solving like to plan their actions and solve puzzles. For these players, the adventure gives multiple different approaches when infiltrating such locations as the Crossbone Hideout and the cultist shrine. In addition, side quests like locating the lost trove of the mage hidden in Old Gurgler and finding the hidden treasure of Cragmaw Grotto are riddled with puzzles.

Storytelling: Players who enjoy storytelling like moving the story forward and contributing to the narrative. WT:DS contains numerous colourful NPCs with elaborate motivations, and even the most trivial encounters and tangential side quests have been designed to move the story forward in one way or another.

4.3 Random Encounters

A particular element I found important when creating the adventure were the random encounters; events that could happen anywhere and anytime in the adventure. In Dungeons & Dragons tradition, the DM rolls a die and consults a specific table to determine what exactly the adventurers encounter; it could be anything from a corpse of a traveller to a hungry red dragon. As such, constructing a random encounter table that serves the adventure both extradiegetically and intradiegetically was important. I wanted the encounters to tell something about the world around the characters, and possibly lead towards new adventure hooks and paths. In too many games the random encounters are there just to fill a space.

When building the random encounters table for the adventure, I consulted several pre-existing fifth edition Dungeons & Dragons adventure books. My first, most obvious choice was to base the table on the one presented in *Lost Mine of Phandelver*, as similar to WT:DS, it takes the adventurers from level 1 to level 5. However, while the simple day-night cycle presented in the adventure works fine in the geographically uniform area where *Lost Mine of*

Phandelver takes place, it is too simplistic for the purposes of WT:DS, which takes place in much more varying terrain.

The random encounters of Dessarin Valley in *Princes of the Apocalypse* (2015) are divided into two tables: one to be used when the player characters are on levels 3-9, and one for levels 10-11. This way, the encounters are scaled to be balanced for the players, but it is cleverly masked as the situation in the valley growing direr as the apocalyptic cults threatening the area grow more powerful. Again, the two different tables corresponding to the level of player characters works for *Princes of the Apocalypse*, which takes the player characters from level 1 to 15, but would be largely unnecessary when applied to an adventure with the scope of WT:DS.

Out of the Abyss (2015) presents a unique random encounter table in each chapter, based on the adventure location. However, *Out of the Abyss* is much larger in scope, and assumes the players are going to spend a prolonged period of time in each location, meanwhile in WT:DS the players are unlikely to stay in one environment for long. One area with its unique encounter table in *Out of the Abyss* is roughly as large as the whole Cutstone Coast in WT:DS.

RANDOM WILDERNESS ENCOUNTERS

Encounter	Forest	Grassland	Hills/Moors	Mountains	Road/Trail	Sea	Tundra
Bandits	01–08	01–07	01–04	—	01–08	01–20	—
Barbarians	09–18	08–32	05–24	01–10	—	21–40	01–15
Battlefield	19–21	33–37	25–28	—	—	—	16–19
Cloud castle	—	38–39	29–30	11–15	—	—	20–22
Crag cats	—	—	31–35	16–32	09–13	—	23–35
Dig site	22–29	40–46	36–38	33–35	—	—	36–41
Dragon	—	—	39–41	—	14–20	—	—
Elk	30–37	47–53	42–50	36–43	—	—	42–54
Elves	38–53	—	—	—	—	41–50	—
Fire giant	54–55	54–55	51–53	44–49	21–28	—	55–56
Food hunters	56–62	56–62	54–59	50–52	29–37	—	57–58
Frost giants	63–67	63–66	60–61	53–60	38–41	51–70	59–70
Hill giants	68–70	67–68	62–76	61–62	42–46	—	71–74
Horse-drawn wagon	71–75	69–75	—	—	47–55	—	—
Knight	76–80	76–78	77–80	63–64	56–64	—	—
Ogres	81–82	79–84	81–85	65–66	65–69	71–80	75–76
Orcs	83–90	85–91	86–90	67–79	70–73	—	77–87
Ranger	91–95	92–95	91–94	80–83	74–78	—	88–93
Stone giants	—	—	95–97	84–95	79–80	—	94–95
Travelers	96–00	96–00	98–00	96–00	81–00	81–00	96–00

Figure 2. The random encounter table from *Storm King's Thunder* (Wizards of the Coast LLC, 2016).

Appropriate model was found in *Storm King's Thunder* (2016), which condensed the *Out of the Abyss* tables into single, terrain-based chart. The table presented divides each encounter by environment with little regard for the level of the characters, which corresponds better with the varying terrains of Cutstone Coast, as well as the smaller span of levels present in WT:DS. Thus, the random encounters were built by following the table presented in *Storm King's Thunder*, as it best served the purpose of the adventure.

4.4 New Elements

Many pre-existing fifth edition Dungeons & Dragons adventures feature unique equipment and enemies to give the adventure some additional mechanics and flavour: the elemental cults in *Princes of the Apocalypse* came with a new batch of appropriately themed spells; *Storm King's Thunder* featured a completely new magic item type in form of giant runes; *Out of the Abyss* created statistics for the invading demon lords. So, I decided to follow the suit and create some creatures and magic items to make The Shadowless Empire more distinct as a setting.

4.4.1 Magic Items

First of all, I decided to emphasize the Empire's fixation with the sun by creating some sort of magic items. As magic was discerned to be relatively rare in the setting of the Shadowless Empire, I decided to go with relatively mundane, consumable magic items. I wanted something that would represent the sun's life-giving aspects, as well as its destructive power. As such, I came up two objects representing these aspects: the sun balm, and the solar gem. Sun balm is a salve mixture that can provide magical healing, created from the local corona plants, believed to be blessed by Illustra herself. To make the salve different from the standard potion of healing described in *Player's Handbook*, sun balm heals more over time, but slower, as opposed to the potion's instant healing. In addition, the balm has multiple uses in forms of "doses", meanwhile the potion is consumed after single use. The solar gem is a polished chunk of a mineral found throughout the Shadowless Empire, believed to be condensed sunlight. It is highly volatile, and explodes in the

sunlight, which in practice means that it is magical hand grenade of pure searing light. The imperial forces have refined the use of this mineral in their wands, which exposes the mineral to the sun in a controlled manner, creating a contained blast, similar that to a shotgun. These weapons' similarity to modern day firearms is not a coincidence: not only made drawing from real life sources the determining the mechanics revolving around the weapons much easier, but it also helps to enforce the totalitarian connotation of the Shadowless Empire.

Other magic items featured in WT:DS were largely made to tie into the stories at hand: the nightblade is a magic blade created by the cultists, allowing them to attack their enemies' psyche in addition to their bodies, fitting their goals and theming. The Ring of Arcane Knowledge, found from the trove of Iriwynn the wizard, contains powers that the mage herself could have found useful in her studies. In addition, the ring is cursed so that its wearer has troubles attacking magic users, making sure that the ring cannot be used against its prior owner. The magic breastplate that can be found at the grave of green dragon Vezperoth is ornamented with dragon patterns and inlaid with emeralds; in addition, it is cursed so that the wearer gains vulnerability to poison damage, which means that if any of Vezperoth's descendants seek to avenge the graverobbers, their poison breath weapon would be doubly as effective.

4.4.2 Creatures

In addition to magic items, I felt it important to create distinctive creatures to inhabit the imperial lands. Two of these, the undertoads and the ratroaches, are fantastic vermin, both in their unique terrains. Undertoads, small subterranean carnivorous amphibians inhabiting caves and mines, were partially inspired by the subterranean blindheim and the flame-spewing fire toad from *Fiend Folio* (1981) for *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*. However, undertoads are more of a nuisance than an outright danger. Ratroaches were created as the ultimate urban vermin, combining traits of rats, cockroaches and pigeons. These tiny monstrosities swarm in sewers and basements in smaller cities.

Fifth edition *Monster Manual* (2014) lists ten types of dragons, each with their own elemental breath weapons. As none of the dragons had a breath weapon that dealt radiant damage, it was instantly clear that the sun-obsessed Empire would need its own, light-spewing wyrm. This was the spark that caused the creation of prismatic dragons, named so after their relation to the dragon-goddess Prismoth, and because I decided to place them to the island of Prism. Appropriate to their name the dragons have clear, slightly translucent scales, which in sunlight gleam in all colours of the rainbow.

Other creatures were tied to the main adventure at hand. The animated statues are constructs created by the sculptors of Brancus, meant to protect the city from intruders. However, with the recent pirate attack on the city, many of the creators of the statues died, and left the statues to roam without control. Figments are semi-corporeal beings, living illusions, created by the cultists of the Waking Eye to act as spies and infiltrators. The goblin priest of the Eye is a variation on the usual goblin, rendered mad by the corrupting power of the Waking Eye. Sleepwalkers are zombie-like, living humanoids, empty husks left of Waking Eye initiates that don't pass the cult's initiation ritual. Void of will of their own, the sleepwalkers are puppets that defy the cult's orders without question. The sleepwalkers were inspired by the similar somnambulistic character from *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, as well as an enemy named Razerblast in *Princes of the Apocalypse*; a fire cultist whose heart has been replaced with volatile, magical flame that gives the cultist a supernatural fervour towards their cult.

4.4.3 Madness

Diverging from the usual additions provided in the published adventures WT:DS introduces one new gameplay mechanic not used in standard D&D: Madness. The main mechanics of madnenses are based on a ruleset found in *Dungeon Master's Guide*. This concept was further fleshed out in *Out of the Abyss*, where the demonic madness caused by the invading demon lords was measured in stacking levels, something I decided to use in my adventure. Based on this information, I created total of 44 different madness conditions, affecting the player characters. As per the guidelines of *Dungeon Master's Guide*, the short and long term madnenses are more mechanical, while the

indefinite madnesses are more of a character flaws. Double vision gives the player disadvantage on perception checks, shaking hands makes the same for dexterity checks. Social anxiety gives the character disadvantage on all Charisma checks, and nightmares cause the character not to regain health from long rest. The infinite madnesses will make the characters blood-hungry, paranoid, obsessed with the acceptance of others, or adopt someone else's mannerisms and personality. If the character stacks too many madnesses, they die. This mechanic was added to emphasize the more horror-oriented, Lovecraftian tone of WT:DS.

5 BUILDING A SETTLEMENT

After creating the outline for WT:DS, I have determined a need for two settlements: Litwick, the smaller starting location, and Brancus, where most the adventure takes place. *Dungeon Master's Guide* provides guidelines to creating settlements in the campaign world. For comparison's sake, both settlements appearing in the adventure are built back to back using the guidelines in the book.

What purpose does the settlement have in your game?

Litwick is a small village acting as the starting location of the adventure. Brancus acts as the central town of the adventure, acting as the home base of sorts. However, their roles are slightly inverted from the standard dichotomy, as the home base town of Brancus also acts as an unsafe adventuring site, meanwhile Litwick acts as a safe haven from all the surrounding wilderness. I intentionally wanted the two settlements to contrast each other in as many ways as possible.

Additionally, as each of the settlements are tied to the main story, I felt it necessary to litter both with clues and hooks not only to the main story, but also the many side quests available.

How big is the settlement? Who lives there?

Litwick is small village of some hundred people, consisting mainly of harvesters living off the nearby lands. Due to the fewer people, much larger portion the villagers get any sort of characterization. Clef Branchmere, the richest merchant in town, spends his days drinking, mourning the disappearance of his daughter; the boisterous woodcutter Mildred will offer the players clues if they manage to defeat her in arm wrestling; Sherry Tanner, the uptight proprietor of The Black Mallard tavern, will offer the players a reward for getting rid of her competition. In contrast, Brancus is a port town with multiple thousands of inhabitants, with large portions of the population formed by miners and sailors. However, apart from the few central figures tangled into the main plot, few of the citizens gain more prominent role or characterization.

What does it look, smell and sound like?

Litwick is a cosy, relatively new, small town built mainly of lumber, lit by numerous lanterns. Due to its lanterns the village smells of smoke and lamp oil. On the other hand, Brancus is an ancient, large coastside town carved into the cliffside, providing a lot of verticality. The buildings are full of ornamental little details, and the smell of the ocean never leaves the streets. Due to the recent pirate attack on the city, the streets of Brancus are littered with loose rubble, and many of the ornamental facades of the buildings have been shattered.

Who governs the settlement? Who else holds power?

Litwick is governed by a noble living in Brancus. The noble's reeve acts as the ruler in town, with the imperial guard acting as the main foundation of the noble's power. Meanwhile the city of Brancus is ruled by a town council, consisting of influential merchants and members of the town's prestigious sculptors' guild. Neither of these actors are not particularly important in the story, so further detailing is largely unnecessary.

What are the defences of the settlement?

Village of Litwick is surrounded by a wooden palisade to keep out the beasts, and guarded by roughly half a dozen armed guards who keep peace inside the walls of the settlement. As a settlement of significant size, Brancus has an imperial guard comprising of almost hundred men, hefty stone walls, and a small army of animated statues to protect it.

Where do characters go to find goods and services?

Despite being a tiny town with few inhabitants, Litwick has services for a town roughly three times its size due to being on a major trade route. These small establishments are often run by few individuals with a couple of hired extra hands. As expected from a small town, Litwick provides a rather limited array of services. In return, Brancus contains relatively few services for a town of its size, owing to the recent pirate attack that destroyed or bankrupted many of the local businesses. Despite the city's poor state, the characters have access to much wider array of services than in Litwick. The damage of the pirate attack was also a convenient way of limiting the number of businesses available for the player characters.

What temples and other organizations feature prominently?

Due to its small population, Litwick only has one, smaller shrine, collectively dedicated to all of Illustra's saints. Apart from the temples, the expansive Thorngage halfling family has set their tiny claws on the town, and owns the only commercial stable in town. In contrast, Brancus hosts a variety of Temples and shrines. The most important and influential is the Cathedral of Antinanco, the saint of dutifulness. The cathedral holds most of the religious power in the town. Tempest Trading Company is major mercantile force in the city, both for good and bad.

What fantastic elements distinguish the settlement from an ordinary town?

Litwick is known as the town of lanterns due to the overabundance of lamps and lanterns on every porch and windowsill. This is because according to an old superstition among the townsfolk malicious spirits live in the nearby marshes, seeking to lure unwary travellers to their dooms. The lanterns are kept lit through the night to 'dim out the lights of the swamp'. Known as the city of Sculptors, large parts of the buildings of Brancus are carved from stone and feature elaborate decorative patterns, reliefs and statues. Many of these statues are secretly animated by magic, ready to defend the town against a threat.

6 BUILDING A DUNGEON

Out of all the aspects of adventure building, building a dungeon is the closest to traditional game design, especially level design. Similarly to level design, the result of dungeon building should achieve multiple goals.

Christopher Perkins, the lead story designer for Dungeons & Dragons at Wizards of the Coast, discusses the evolution of dungeon design on his article *Waking Gygaxian* (2012); the change from sprawling labyrinths devoid of logic into more compact, sensible spaces. The game became less “gamey”, and plot and reason started to rule over wacky concepts. Thus, more logic was applied into the dungeon design: where do the inhabitants store their food? Where do they sleep? Are there monsters? If there is, what keeps them from slaughtering the inhabitants?

He also states that the best dungeons tie into the themes and the stories of the campaign. If the dungeon has no real ties to the story, it is nothing but a distraction, no matter how balanced or mechanically intriguing it is.

However, YouTube producer *Extra Credits* gets more analytical on the subject. On their *Design Club* series game designer James Portnow (2016) discusses dungeon design of Durlag’s Tower from *Baldur’s Gate*, a 1998 video game based on the setting and rules of Dungeons & Dragons. In this series James breaks the individual rooms of the dungeon down to four individual components:

- **Story:** This includes both the story of quest at hand, as well as the inner ‘story’ of the dungeon itself: the elements that make it feel like a real place with history. While this includes the NPCs and any information they might give to the players. The official D&D adventures usually have this element of the dungeon room marked under a subheading called “Developments”.
- **Combat:** The most straightforward component: are there any enemies to be fought in the room and if yes, what are they?

Note: While basically anyone can be fought in a game of D&D, and the combat encounters are sometimes prone to escalating beyond the borders of the specific space designed for it, I am

going to limit this component to the spaces where the combat is expected to take place.

- **Puzzle:** This includes all and any non-combat obstacles, from simple locked doors and pit traps to more complex 'actual' puzzles.
- **Reward:** While to some the discovery of the story or the dungeon might be a reward to itself, it is good to also keep the players who are not so keen on the story incentivized. The official D&D adventures usually have this element of the dungeon room marked under a subheading called "Treasure".

Note: Similarly to the combat note above, anything can (and often will be) looted by the players if given a chance. So, I am limiting this component to rooms that have something more to offer than the mere basic equipment found in a person's closet.

He also states that a good designer is able to deliver, at least to some small extent, on three of the four components in each room, even if each room incorporates these components in different degrees.

So, based on these two different principles I'm going to build the first dungeon of the adventure from a scratch. First, I'm going to look at the main point: what is the purpose of the dungeon from the point of the story?

The first dungeon of the adventure will be a thieves' hideout. The player party has been tasked by a mysterious patron to find a box that was stolen from him. The players then follow different threads and tracks, trailing the box to the hideout. However, at the time of the arrival the occupants of the hideout are in the middle of hosting a black market auction, selling many of their stolen valuables to the highest bidder, the box among them. This development will work both for and against the players: while the number of potential enemies in the dungeon is much higher than it would be without the event, many of the different crime factions present are rivals and are easily driven to direct conflict with one another.

So, the main goal for the players is to infiltrate the hideout and get away with the box. However, the hideout also serves the regular dwelling of the gang of criminals hosting the event, which gives some additional functionality

requirements for the dungeon. In addition, the dungeon should be made distinct; too many dungeons are just endless stonewalled corridors, and dimly lit dungeon chambers.

I could first decide on how the dungeon came to be. It is occupied by thieves, and located in a remote swamp a few miles away from civilization. But surely it was not created by the thieves? A bunch of shirtless crooks just cannot haul all the required equipment and building material to a nigh impassable swamp without drawing any sort of attention to themselves.

So I can assume that the hideout is the remaining part of ruined building, perhaps the old basement of a crumbled castle. Maybe the castle was even surrounded by a small town, but the swamp has swallowed the last cornerstones of that village decades ago.

Similarly to Perkins, Despain notes that the levels should tell their own story, using elements in the environments instead of direct exposition (2013).

Following her examples, I'm going to hint at the history of the hideout without any sort of direct exposition given to the players: the location should speak to itself. However, due to the limited visuality of the Dungeons & Dragons game system (often also referred to as the "Theatre of the Mind"), all of the storytelling must be done in descriptive text.

6.1 Initial Plan

Initial Rooms required making the dungeon serve both the purposes of the auction and the dwelling, with the four dungeon design components applied:

Entrance

Combat Element: The guards on the door will attack intruders: if outsiders have found the entrance to their hideout, they already know too much.

Puzzle Element: Providing non-combat options for bypassing the combat encounter acts as a puzzle: engaging the guards in combat may jeopardize the dungeon delve before it has properly begun if even one of the guards has time to shout as much as "Hey!". In addition, the door is probably locked and/or barred shut.

Reward Element: The guards are carrying some pocket change; as the first room of the dungeon, the players are not expecting too much. As such, it is better not to spoil them immediately and have them be disappointed at the actual loot later.

Auction Hall

Story Element: The climactic point of the dungeon's flow: this is where the auction takes place, and where the players will most likely discover the box they were sent for. Usually this space serves as the common room of the hideout, but for the auction it has been redecorated to serve the needs of the event.

Combat Element: Many criminals of different factions are stationed here. They can be fought, but they are likely to overwhelm the players. However, playing the factions to attack one another will even the odds considerably. In addition, few of the enemies are likely to fight to the death, and will attempt to flee with their new purchases if the players manage to gain the upper hand.

Reward Element: Many of the crime bosses are carrying substantial amounts of money with them, and it is likely that they haven't had the chance to haul their new purchases out yet.

Backstage

Story Element: This is the area where the stolen objects are held before they're auctioned. This is where the box will be held, and if the players play their cards right, they might sneak out with the box without ever being caught.

Puzzle Element: Most of the stolen objects are held in locked containers.

Reward Element: Apart from the story-relevant box, many of the other containers hold valuable items inside them.

Storage

Story Element: The room serves as the more mundane storage room for the thieves inhabiting the lair. This is where they hold their food and other equipment. Might be divided to multiple rooms later, if need for a separate armoury or pantry is required.

Puzzle Element: Locked. As the hideout is inhabited and in frequent use, the dungeons is unlikely to have any larger or more complex puzzles.

Reward Element: While the items here are more mundane and less valuable than the artifacts that are to be sold, a significant number of supplies are held here to sustain the thieves' gang. These can be used for restocking.

Barracks

Story Element: The room where the bandits rest.

Combat Element: A number of enemy bandits always inhabit this room. They will either attack on their own if the players storm into the room, or join another group in another room as a backup unit.

Puzzle Element: Some of the thieves have hidden loot in the room. Suspicious of each other, these stashes are often well-hidden and locked. Some of them might be even spring-trapped to release a smoke bomb and alarm the people with a loud bang.

Reward Element: The aforementioned loot: most likely to contain more valuable items than what the bandits carry in their pockets, including some more unique valuables.

Master's Study

Story Element: The chamber of the gang's boss. As of now, no motif or further characterization has been made for the bandits, but the room will be made to reflect its owner after I have pinpointed who that person is.

Puzzle Element: As the sanctum of the head of the gang, the study is one of the more well-guarded rooms in the hideout. The door will be locked, and most of the important equipment and valuables will be locked away.

Reward Element: As the boss of the gang, the room's owner is likely to have the choice cuts of the gang's loot in their possession.

Dungeon

Story Element: Occasionally, the bandits will capture some of the people they rob in order to extort their relatives or loved ones. This is where those people are held; currently, the cell holds one prisoner, who will be able to provide some information about the dungeon, as well as might offer a reward if they are escorted back into civilization.

Combat Element: The dungeon will be guarded.

Puzzle Element: The dungeon is locked. The players must find a way to either get the prisoner out, or alternately, find a way to break out of the cell themselves.

Reward Element: In the small side closet the bandits keep a stash of items taken from the prisoners. While most of it will be clothes and old weaponry, few overlooked valuables still remain in the room.

In addition, some corridors, stairs and other passages are required to tie and connect the spaces into each other.

6.2 Considerations

Some things to consider from the top of my head:

Do the criminals have any sort of vehicles or steeds? Shouldn't those have a dedicated space in the dungeon too?

After a short consideration, I would say 'No'. The swampy terrain surrounding the dungeon doesn't really support horses or carts. If the swamp is wet enough, the thieves might be using boats. All of these vehicle options are subjected to the same problem: they are inconvenient to store in the cramped underground space, and storing them on the surface would greatly increase the risk of being exposed.

Are there any sort of guest chambers for accommodating guests?

Another 'No'. Apart from the few cells where they store their hostages, the thieves are not comfortable with the idea of accommodating outside people. The auction is a rare exception, and short enough of an event for it not to require any sort of facilities for the guests.

Most of the enemies are regular humanoids. How could I add more variety?

Consider assigning a more monstrous creature as a bodyguard for one of the crime bosses. A bugbear works fine.

Maybe one of the auctioned 'items' is a monstrous creature that can be released to cause chaos; some sort of monster that can be hazardous but not instantly deadly for the party. Something like a giant wolf spider: a mobile and

terrifying creature that, while with its paralyzing bite and restraining web can be disruptive, is only Challenge Rating $\frac{1}{4}$, and thus unlikely to kill anybody by itself.

The hideout needs another story element: it should not only show have the current occupants are using it, but also hint at its original purpose.

Continuing the segment above of how the dungeon came to be, I need to establish what the dungeon was used for before it was converted as the hideout of today. This could be used as a means of both exposing the players to another side of the world, something that is not crucial to the plot at hand, as well as to give the dungeon some additional character. This doesn't need to be very explicit, however; it is likely that the current occupants have gotten rid of everything they didn't find useful.

6.3 A Dungeon's History

Like many other aspects of building your adventure for Dungeons & Dragons, the process of building a dungeon is detailed in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. One of the things it emphasizes is the dungeon's creator and purpose, something this dungeon has twofold. The book also mentions the dungeon's factions and ecology, which in this case are simple. The sole faction vacating the dungeon are the Crossbone Gang members, who are actively using it as a hideout. The ecology is something I already covered above, where the inhabitants sleep and eat, and how do they guard the entrances, etc.

So, I can expand the dungeon's history: maybe the hideout is the remaining part large keep the borderlands, acting as the trading post of the remote settlement. Maybe the Auction Hall is an old chapel or shrine dedicated to Mog, the god of barter. This would explain why the hideout has a space conveniently built for presenting something on a dais in front of an audience; perfect for hosting an auction. It would also add a hint of irony, as the house of the patron god of merchants is now occupied by bandits primarily preying on the same merchants.

This theme can be expanded further: as Mog is a deity primarily worshipped by halflings, it can affect the architecture of the whole dungeon. Maybe the corridors are claustrophobically tight, made to accommodate diminutive

halflings instead of adult humans. Maybe all the original torch handles are awkwardly low, the ceiling lanterns keep hitting the taller people on the head, and the stairs are placed between inconveniently short intervals. This already makes the standard stonewalled basement a bit more flavourful; it will also give a dash of surrealism to players that are not used to deal with halflings. Thus, I have arrived to a conclusion with the backstory of our dungeon: it is the stone foundation and basement of an old watchpost located in the swamplands, originally built and inhabited by halflings. At some point, the halflings left (or were driven out?), and the settlement was left to rot. Eventually it was reclaimed by a group of bandits who now use the ruin as their base of operations.

6.4 The Layout

Now, having the rough components laid out, the next task should be the initial layout draft: which room connects to which, and how can one maneuver from one room to another. One of the more common 'unspoken rules' of dungeon design, as well as the design of the whole adventure, is to avoid strict linearity: that is why I'm going to make the layout so that the dungeon can be approached from multiple angles.

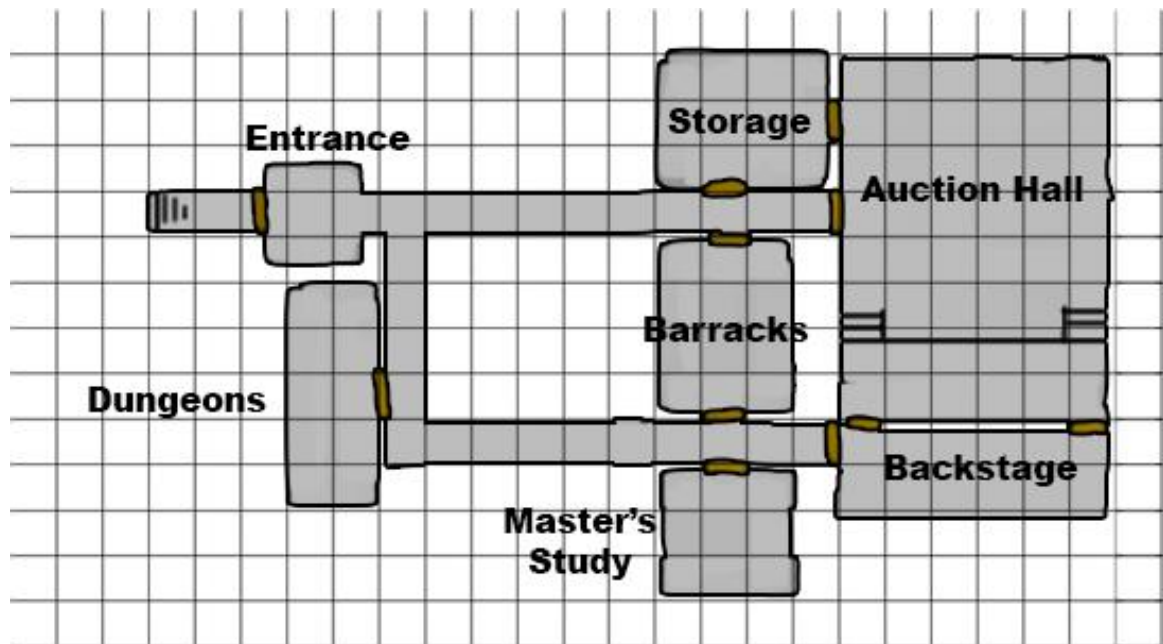


Figure 3. The hideout map, version 1 (Sorvo 2017).

Now, here's the first draft of the dungeon in a five-foot grid, with individual rooms placed and doors clearly marked. There is a clear and logical flow in

between the places (auction hall / common room is accessible straight from the front door; the Storage which contains the stuff the inhabitants require to survive is conveniently easily accessible from both the common room and the sleeping barracks; the master's study is close to the barracks for easy and immediate communication and chain of command), but there's also a weird batch of negative space in between the living areas and the entrance, right in the middle of the map. Maybe the horizontal corridors could be shortened so that the distance from the entrance would be less arduous. Alternately, I could add some of the spaces mentioned above, like an armoury or pantry, into the empty space. The first one makes more sense, given the negative space is located next to the entrance; storing your weapons close to the guard post seems convenient, meanwhile storing the food into the room furthest away from the common room where it is most likely consumed seems not. Then again, I could add an additional space in the form of a mess hall that is separate from the common room.

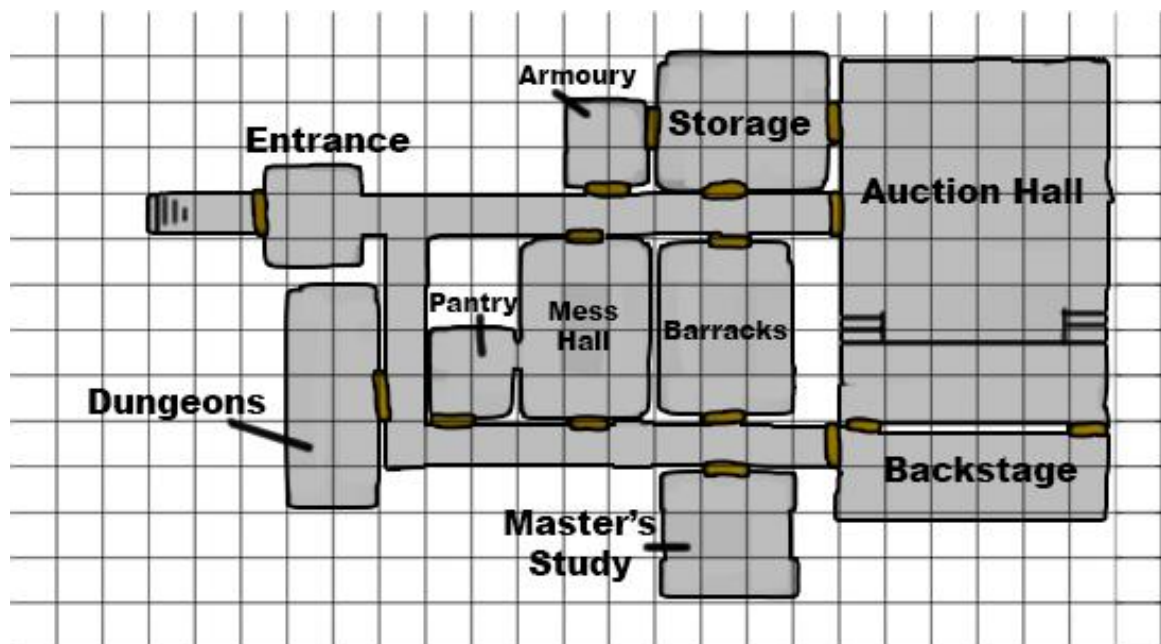


Figure 4. The hideout map, version 2 (Sorvo 2017).

Now this already looks better, removes a lot of negative space, and adds several new cycles into the dungeon flow. However, it could still be condensed.

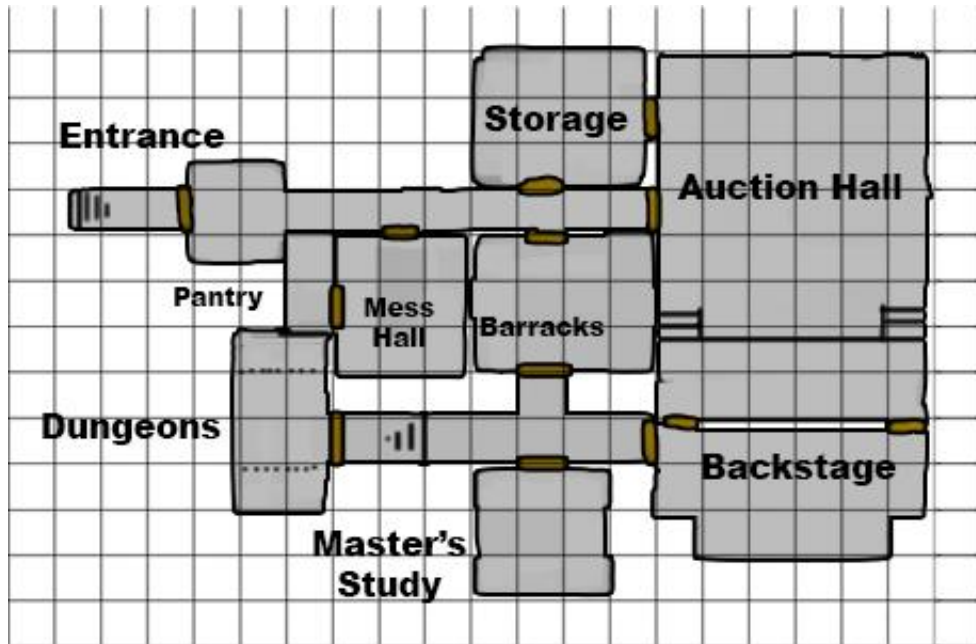


Figure 5. The hideout map, version 3 (Sorvo 2017).

This version looks much better. Now we can add some minor modifications, in addition of adding some small details on the map. We can also replace the room names with numbers that will be used in the adventure document itself.

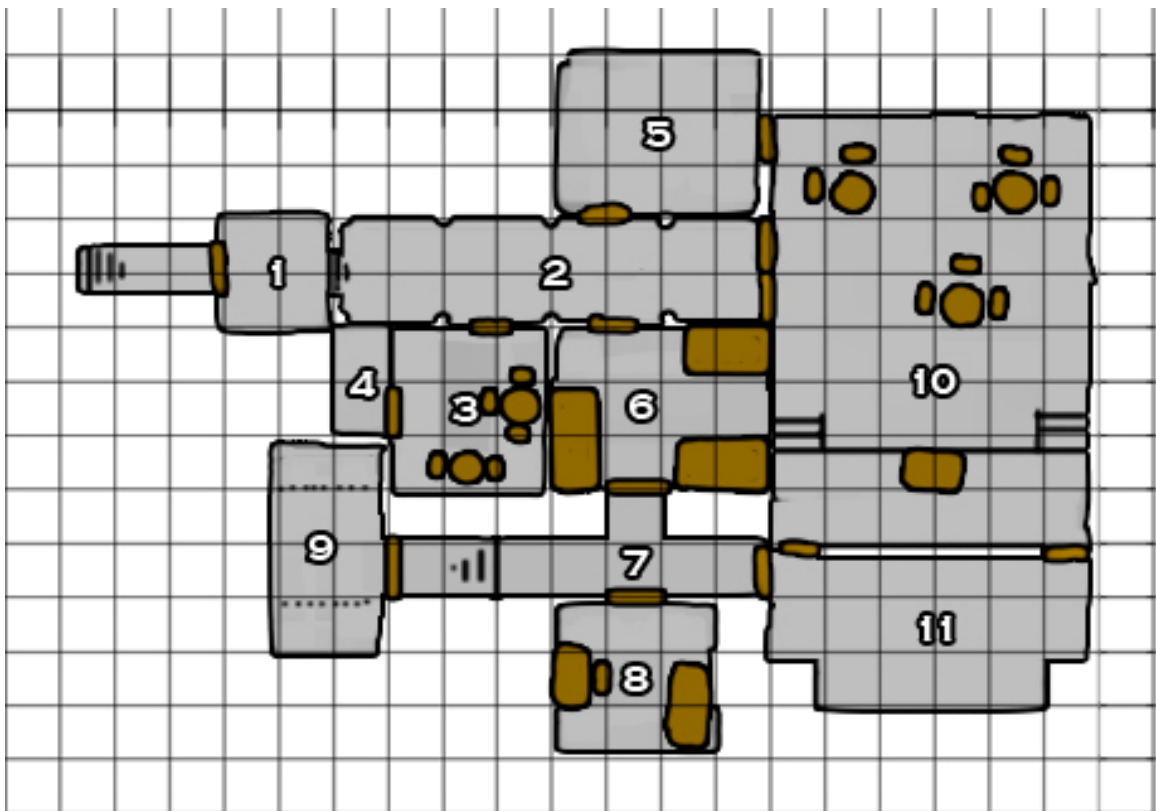


Figure 6. The hideout map, version 4 (Sorvo 2017).

At this point, some final tweaks are done into the layout of the building; the dungeon space is made to a bit more interesting shape instead of a basic

rectangle, and the pantry is absorbed into a part of the kitchen. After that, I can focus on making the map look easily readable and then finalizing the artwork.



Figure 7. The hideout map, finalized artwork (Sorvo 2017).

The *Dungeon Master's Guide* also features lengthy sections about dungeon hazards and traps. However, due to the hideout being an inhabited place with every room being occupied and used constantly, having any sort of dangerous traps to protect the dungeon wouldn't be feasible. However, one smaller trap was placed in the barracks, as mentioned above: one of the thieves has set a smoke bomb to go off if anyone touches his loot.

7 CONCLUSION

As predicted earlier, the size of the subject proved detrimental to the product. Finishing this type of project in this scale was simply not feasible in the time frame given. Fortunately, this did not greatly affect the quality of the worldbuilding, even if it did force skipping some subjects and leaving other aspects of the world underdeveloped. However, the work done here created a fully functional foundation for future worldbuilding.

Overall, the finished adventure met the set expectations in terms of writing and design. Due to time constraints some aspects of the adventure were forced to be condensed or cut completely, but this does not greatly affect the end result. The adventure was partially play tested within the limits of the timeline. Due to the limited playtesting and the small test group the reliability of any results are questionable. However, the few results gained were positive and to some degree proved that the process of worldbuilding had indeed been successful. The playtesting also provided some valuable insight on the adventure structure, as well as several smaller aspects of the module.

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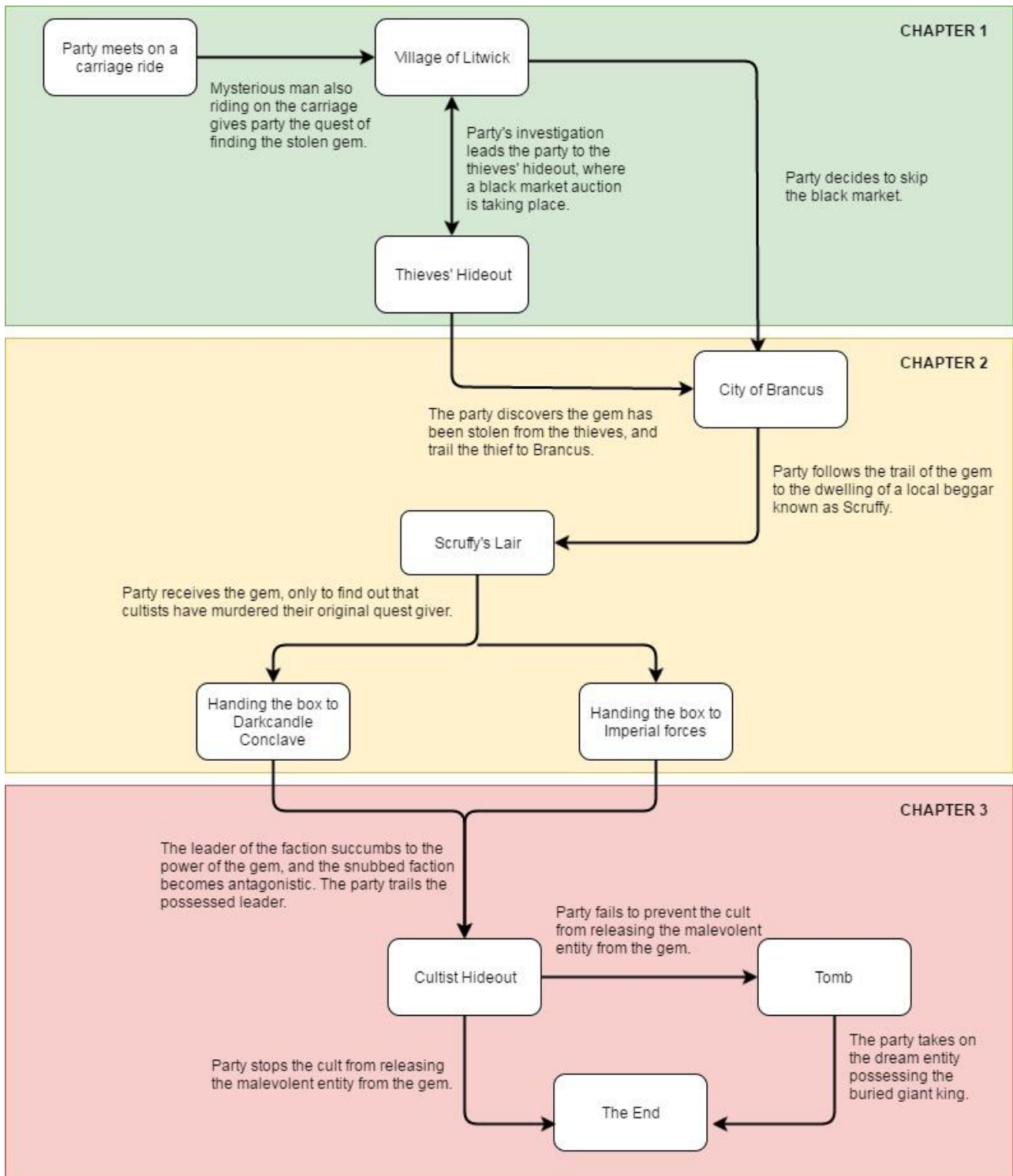
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Deity	Domain	Symbol
The Imperial Pantheon		
Illustra , goddess of the sun	Light, Life	Sun with an eye in the center
St. Aelius , patron saint of industriousness	Light, Knowledge	String of gold coins
St. Antinanco , patron saint of dutifulness	Light	Imperial helmet with elf ears sticking out
St. Elanor , matron saint of conquest	Light, Protection, War	Flaming sword
St. Haul , matron saint of mercy	Light, Life	Sheathed dagger
St. Heliodora , matron saint of piety	Light, Protection	Sun-capped staff
St. Honeydew , matron saint of harvest	Light, Nature	Golden beehive
St. Marisol , matron saint of humour and compassion	Light, Protection	Hearthfire
St. Ocheng , patron saint of dignity	Light, Death	Gilded battleaxe
St. Ravindra , matron saint of culture	Light, Knowledge	Open scroll scribed with the Eye of Illustra
St. Shams , matron saint of wholesomeness	Light, Life, Nature	Nine-leaved corona plant
St. Solveg , patron saint of temperance	Light, Knowledge	Skeletal figure in a meditative position
St. Tesnia , matron saint of righteousness	Light, Protection	Winged sword
Totemic Gods		
Albusia , goddess of light and the circle of life	Light, Life	White-shelled scarab
Auruginia , goddess of storms and skies	Tempest	Three feathers
Caeruleus , goddess of seas	Tempest, Nature	Crown of coral
Cinereus , god of time and science	Arcana, Knowledge	Silver hourglass
Fuscus , god of darkness and death	Death	Dried thistle flower
Grossus , god of forests and nature	Nature	Bonsai tree
Purpura , goddess of stars and divination	Arcana, Light, Knowledge	Constellation of eight stars
Rufus , god of fire, love and war	Forge, War	Flaming lyre
Other Deities		
Aesis , god of law and order	Knowledge, Protection	Gauntlet holding scales
Byjameena , goddess of peace and harmony	Protection	Open palm
Comorr , god of lies	Trickery	Smiling dog
Deqari , goddess of guardians and protectors	Protection	Rose-patterned shield
Evmere , goddess of pleasures	Trickery	Infernal drinking horn
Fygian , goddess of dawn	Life, Light	Rising sun
Gaella , goddess of dusk	Death, Trickery	Crescent moon
Hadhaena , goddess of hunting	Nature	Bow and arrow
Irreus , god of madness	Arcana, Trickery	Three arrows pointing at different directions
Judorn , god of smithing and law	Forge, War	Hammer and anvil
Krogonn , goddess of slaughter	Death, War	Jagged, bloody greataxe
Levitas , goddess of magic	Arcana	Glass staff
Mog , god of merchants and travellers	Protection, Trickery	Golden sandals
Nefesis , goddess of deception and treachery	Trickery	Smiling white mask
Oribtyx , god of knowledge	Knowledge	Human brain
Prismoth , god of dragons	Arcana, Light	Crystallized dragon horn
Samndar , goddess of mining and treasure	Life, Nature	Two crossed keys
Thalos , god of dreams and nightmares	Knowledge	Crown floating above a closed eye
Uheiya , goddess of punishment	Death	Necklace of skulls
Urion , god of incarceration	Protection	Keyhole
Xidite , god of undeath	Death	Circle of locusts
Yt , goddess of luck	Trickery	Smiling face of a woman
Yhldir , goddess of winter	Nature, Death, Tempest	Frozen moose skull
Zazmat , the goddess of deserts	Nature, War	Knot of serpents

Appendix 1. The Deities of the Shadowless Empire (Sorvo 2017).



Appendix 2. Initial plot structure of Working Title: Dream Stone (Sorvo 2017).



Appendix 3. Map of Cutstone Coast, detailing the area where the adventure takes place, as well as pointing out different points of interest (Sorvo 2017).