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VILLAGE BACKDROP: KINGSFELL



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VILLAGE BACKDROP: KINGSFELL

Standing hard against the River Ost, Kingsfell is seemingly a tranquil and prosperous village on a well-travelled trade route. However, the village stands on the site of a long-forgotten battlefield and not all the dead rest easily in their graves. Strangely, while the paladin—and lady of the village—Mira Lankinen, the scion of an ancient line, keeps watch over her lands, a subtle unease shrouds the village. Strangers sometimes arrive in Kingsfell armed with spades and picks intending to dig beneath the Kingstones, for rumours and old stories vaguely place buried treasures beneath their feet. Local laws and traditions prohibit such treasure hunting, however, and few dare to face down Mira Lankinen and her skilled, vigilant men-at-arms. Thus, so far the stones and whatever lies beneath remains undisturbed.

Designed for use with the 5th edition of the world's most popular roleplaying game.

CREDITS

Design: Creighton Broadhurst

Development: Creighton Broadhurst

Art: William McAusland, Marc Radle and Maciej Zagorski (The Forge Studios). Some artwork copyright William McAusland, used with permission.

Cartography: Tommi Salama

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gatekeeper@ragingswan.com

KINGSFELL AT A GLANCE

Kingsfell stands in a strategic location upstream from the extensive saltmarsh sprawling outwards from the River Ost's muddy banks. The village straddles the road looping around the marsh's sodden bounds and consequently many travellers stop to rest and recuperate after their harrowing journey.

The paladin Mira Lankinen rules Kingsfell with a firm, fair hand, as her family has done for generations. However, an elder shade of fell aspect lies upon the village. Centuries ago, a great battle was fought on the site. After the slaughter was done, the dead were interred in burial mounds about which the village eventually grew. Some of the dead rest uneasily and wait for the return of their ancient enemies and a resumption of the slaughter. This malice and hate are beginning to leach into the villagers' psyche creating an aura of unease over Kingsfell.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler Mira Lankinen

Government Overlord

Population 174 (148 humans, 12 half-orcs, 11 halflings, 3 dwarves)

Alignments NG, LN, LG

Languages Common, Orc, Halfling

Resources & Industry Farming, fishing

NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than hardworking peasants. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

Elren Araral (location 6; LN female dwarf **priest**) Elren has traced the legend of Thegn Delthur Werlan's final battle to Kingsfell and is preparing to begin digging into the village's various burial mounds.

Heimo Eskola (location 5 & 8; N male human wizard 1) A failed wizard, but successful merchant, Heimo is the richest commoner in the village.

Issodair Highhill (location 2; NG male halfling **scout**) The young and dynamic owner of the Rat and Cup is popular throughout the village.

Merla Shortstep (location 5; CN female halfling **spy**) Merla runs Eskola's, but is less than honest; she has been skimming a small take off the top for years.

Mira Lankinen (location 4; LG female middle-aged human paladin 5) The lady of the village is beloved by her subjects. She wears the ancient tri-sword device of her family with pride.

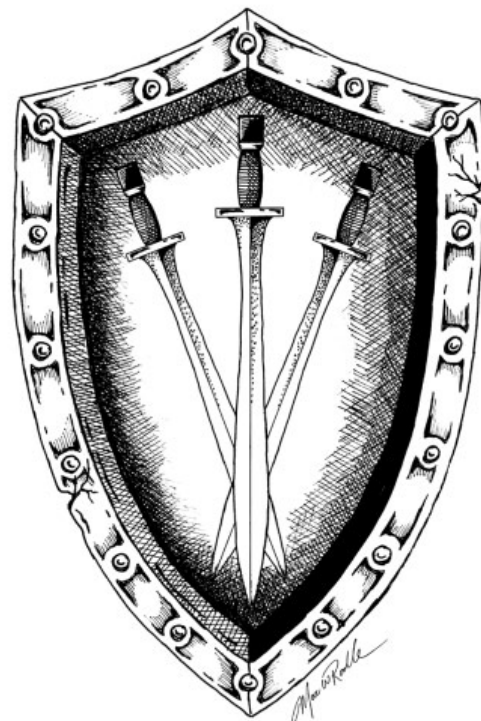
Riku Markku (location 1; N male middle-aged human **commoner**) The taciturn miller is often seen poking about in the exposed mud of the Ost's banks, when the tide is out.

Teuvo Eerola (location 7; LN male human **priest** [Conn]) This pompous, but well-meaning, priest leads Conn's congregation.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of the village comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **Redshank Mill:** Here dwells the taciturn miller Riku Markku and his family. Because the Ost is a tidal river, the family keeps odd hours.
2. **The Rat and Cup:** This inn offers a homely, basic welcome to travellers. Those on a budget stay here, while the well-to-do end up at the Weary Traveller.
3. **The Kingstones:** Five carven stones of stout dwarven warriors surround a sixth regal-looking dwarf atop this burial mound.
4. **Vigil:** This towering fortress stands atop the highest of the burial mounds. Deep below its foundations lie the mouldering, jumbled bones of hundreds of orcs.
5. **Eskola's:** This large shop has an eclectic range of goods.
6. **The Weary Traveller:** Kingsfell's best inn, The Weary Traveller provides welcome rest to those visiting the village.
7. **Hall of the Lawgiver:** Dedicated to Conn, the hall is the spiritual heart of the village.
8. **Heimo's House:** This large, well-appointed house overlooks much of the village. Here dwells the failed wizard and wealthy merchant Heimo Eskola and his family.
9. **Shrine of the Shining Light:** This temple of Darlen also serves as a watchtower. Few worship here beyond the Lankinens and their retainers.



VILLAGE LORE

A PC may know something about Kingsfell, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

DC 10: Standing on the banks of the River Ost, Kingsfell is a busy place. Many travellers and merchants stop in the village, which is quite prosperous as a result.

DC 15: The village sprawls about several ancient burial mounds. Farmers often turn up splinters of bones and rusting metal in their fields. A battle was once fought on the site.

DC 20: Fanciful ancient legends place a long-dead king's crypt somewhere under the village.

VILLAGERS

Appearance Predominantly dark of hair and pale of skin, the villagers of Kingsfell typically have dark or light brown eyes. Light-coloured eyes are rare among them.

Dress Villagers working in the fields wear drab, sensible clothes; those with businesses in the village dress in more colourful, fashionable clothes.

Nomenclature *male* Aaro, Ilari, Ossi, Uljas, Vesa; *female* Alma, Elena, Irina, Pia, Ulla; *family* Alanen, Hirvonen, Leino, Varala.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Kingsfell, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

D6	RUMOUR
1	An ancient king slumbers beneath the earth waiting for the return of an elder evil. When the time is right, he will return to smite it down.
2	Every now and then, farmers tending their fields plough up bones or rusted, broken weapons and armour.
3	The treasure of the slain lie interred with their owners within the village's burial mounds.
4	Riku Markku is odd. At low tide, he is often seen poking about in the Ost's muddy banks. For what is he looking?
5*	Fell things dwell in the depths of the Ost. Odd ripples have been seen and strange tracks have been found on its banks.
6*	Teuvo Eerola shares a very close, personal relationship with both his acolytes.

*False rumour



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: REDSHANK MILL

Visitors often suspect Redshank Mill of having a sinister past, because of its past. In truth, however, the building is named for the redshanks nesting among its eaves. The birds hunt the Ost's muddy banks for worms and molluscs and bring welcome colour to the drab surrounds.

Riku Markku (N male middle-aged human **commoner**) has been Kingsfell's miller for almost 20 years. He inherited the mill from his father and now works it with his family: Aila (his wife; NG female middle-aged human **commoner**) and their sons (Elmo and Panu) and two daughters (Irja and Satu). A taciturn man, he is obsessed with treasure hunting and is widely thought of as odd. As a boy he found a trove of old coins in the river mud and he dreams of finding yet more treasure. Unbeknownst to all but his wife, he still has the coins—worn golden coins of ancient, unknown artifice. Sometimes he sits alone fondling them in the dead of night and dreaming dark dreams of what might be.

2: THE RAT AND CUP

The Rat and Cup caters to travellers on a tight budget. Here, the fare is wholesome, but basic. It has a large common room and offers five private rooms for rent.

	COST
Accommodation (private room/night)	5 sp
Accommodation (common room/night)	2 sp
Meal (per day)	3 sp
Ale (mug)	4 cp
Wine (pitcher)	2 sp

The young, dynamic owner, Issodair Highhill (NG male halfling **scout**) hurls himself into each day with unrestrained enthusiasm. He is popular with locals and travellers alike, but his business skills are not as developed as his flute-playing. Recently, the inn has been the scene of several nasty brawls.

3: THE KINGSTONES

Atop this burial mound, among the wild flowers and long grass, stand five intricately carved statues of dwarven warriors. The five are depicted arrayed for battle—facing outwards—about a dwarf warrior of kingly mien. All are heavily armed and armoured. These statues depict Thegn Delthur Werlann and his slain bodyguards and were raised by his surviving warriors in tribute to their fallen lord's final victory. Many fanciful stories swirl about the statues. The most prominent tells how a travelling band of dwarves was waylaid by a wandering medusa.

Unbeknownst to all, though, Thegn Delthur Werlann (LE male dwarf **skeleton knight**) and his bodyguard (LE male dwarf

skeleton veteran) do not rest easily. In life, Deltur was a kind and just ruler, but death has warped his heart and he has fallen into darkness. Consumed with lust to slay orcs and other evil humanoids he has returned to unlife as a skeletal champion. Lurking in his crypt, Delthur awaits his enemies. When he sense their return, he will march forth to crush them once again.

4: VIGIL

This four-towered fortress commands sweeping views over Kingsfell, the Ost and wide swaths of surrounding territory. Here the paladin Mira Lankinen (LG female middle-aged human paladin 5) watches over the village and its folk. Her family has long ruled the surrounding territory and their governance has been mostly harmonious and benign. Consequently, Mira is beloved by the populace.

Vigil is a powerful fortification. Within, Mira maintains a well trained force of 86 men-at-arms (LN male or female human **guard**) and a score of elite cavalry (LN male or female human **veteran**) who patrol the surrounding countryside.

5: ESKOLA'S

This large, rambling building holds an eclectic array of stock. Run by Merla Shortstep (CN female halfling rogue **spy**) on behalf of Heimo Eskola (N male human wizard 1) the place caters to travellers and locals alike. While Merla likes Heimo she has grown resentful of his wealth; for the last few years she has been skimming a small percentage of the take for herself. She has hidden this in her chambers on the second floor halfway up a disused chimney. Eskola's does not stock any weapons, armour or alchemical items, but virtually every other common item is available within.

KINGSFELL'S HIDDEN HISTORY

Centuries ago, a bloody battle between marauding orcs and dwarven warriors raged upon the Ost's muddy banks. The dwarves were victorious—barely—and the orcs driven away or slain. Victory came at a great price, however, and most of the dwarves along with their leader, Thegn Delthur Werlan, were killed in the battle. To commemorate their victory—and to honour their dead—the surviving dwarves raised up four burial mounds. Now wreathed with wild flowers and worn by time's remorseless passage few clues remain as to their grim contents.

Where orcs and dwarves once fought and died now stands the human village of Kingsfell. Unknowingly, the villagers—largely ignorant of the area's bloody history—have built their homes over a mass grave.

6: THE WEARY TRAVELLER

Kingsfell's best inn, the Weary Traveller caters to the wealthier travellers. Owned and operated by the pasty-skinned but welcoming Uljas Rantanen (NG male human **commoner**) and his family, the Weary Traveller offers both fine accommodation and food.

	COST
Accommodation (private room/night)	2 gp
Accommodation (dormitory/night)	5 sp
Meal (per day)	5 sp
Ale (mug)	1 sp
Wine (bottle)	10 gp
Wine (pitcher)	2 sp

The Weary Traveller is often busy at night. During the day few villagers visit the inn and so it is normally quiet. The common room is comfortably appointed and Uljas stocks an impressive array of wines and beers.

Elren Araral (LN female dwarf **priest**) has lived in the inn for almost three months. She is obsessed with the legend of Thegn Delthur Werlan and his final battle. Following a trail of half-clues and fragmentary first-hand accounts of the battle, she has come to Kingsfell to learn more. The locals are beginning to wonder about the purpose of her slow, daily rambles around the mounds and whispers follow in her wake.

7: HALL OF THE LAWGIVER

Dedicated to Conn (LN god of community, family and rulership) the Hall of the Lawgiver is Kingsfell's spiritual heart. A steep path, cut by worn stone steps leads up to the church from the village proper.

Here dwells the pompous, but well-meaning Teuvo Eerola (LN male middle-aged human **priest** [Conn]) and his two acolytes

Irmeli Purho (LN female human **acolyte** [Conn]) and Cora Wildthorn (LN female halfling **acolyte** [Conn]). The three oversee the villager's spiritual needs and tend to any injured or diseased among the populace. All have led relatively sheltered lives and none would be able to effectively deal with a real crisis.

An extensive, well-tended graveyard stands near the church surrounded by a moss-wreathed, tumbled stone wall. Some of the wealthier families maintain mausoleums in the graveyard.

8: HEIMO'S HOUSE

The grandest personal residence in the village, this house is home to Heimo Eskola (N male human wizard 1) and his family. Although he failed in his studies as a wizard, Heimo has a keen business mind and has made much of his natural talents. Now easily the richest commoner in Kingsfell, he dreams of marrying one of his children into the Lankinen family. He has recently noticed takings at his shop are slightly down. This vaguely bothers him, but a vague sense of encroaching dread has him distracted.

9: SHRINE OF THE SHINING LIGHT

Isolated from the village proper this stout, fortified church dedicated to Darlen (LG god of law, order, justice and the sun) boasts a small watchtower sometimes used by the garrison of Vigil to watch for approaching intruders.

Ratuz Korpela (LG male half-orc **priest** [Darlen]) tends the shrine and leads weekly services. A close confidant of Mira Lankinen, Ratuz is secretly in love with the paladin, and does not tolerate ill words about her or her actions. A particularly perceptive fellow, he senses something is not right with the village but as yet does not know the source of the problem.

A small, but surprisingly deep crypt lies beneath the shrine. Here lie the long-dead Lankinens and the remains of those who have tended the shrine.

THE FOUR BROTHERS

Colloquially known as "the Four Brothers," four burial mounds stud the Ost's bank.

The largest of the mounds holds the skeletal remains of hundreds of slain orcs. Dwarven warriors lie in the two smallest mounds while the highest mound is the resting place of Thegn Delthur Werlan and his fallen bodyguards. All are ancient and timeworn. Wild flowers and long grass cover the mounds, giving little hint of their macabre contents.

Although the four mounds are widely acknowledged as burial mounds attempts to dig into them in search of grave goods are strongly discouraged. Mira Lankinen's family long ago prohibited such desecration and among the populace is a general feeling that what is buried should remain buried.

THE SURROUNDING AREA

Kingsfell occupies a swath of fertile land replete with fields and farmsteads. Standing on the bank Ost upstream from a sprawling saltmarsh the village stands at a strategic crossroads.

To the north lie the towns of Dulwich and Languard and the small halfling community of Underdell. Other villages—among them Coldwater and Wellswood—stud the surrounding territory.

To the south lies a towering, steep-sided plateau upon which sprawls the forbidding and legend-shrouded Forest of Gray Spires. Dwarves are rumoured to have once dwelled in the mesa's cliffs, but their holds have not felt the tread of dwarven feet for centuries.

LIFE IN KINGSFELL

Life is generally peaceful in Kingsfell, but an indefinable feeling of unease is beginning to settle over the villagers. Arguments are becoming more common, and some even result in brawls.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Kingsfell survives on a mixture of fishing and farming. A few villagers hunt the outer reaches of the nearby Salt Mire. A fair amount of coin flows into the village, brought here by travellers, and is mostly spent at the Weary Traveller and the Rat and Cup. Consequently, the owners of both establishments are among the wealthiest in the village.

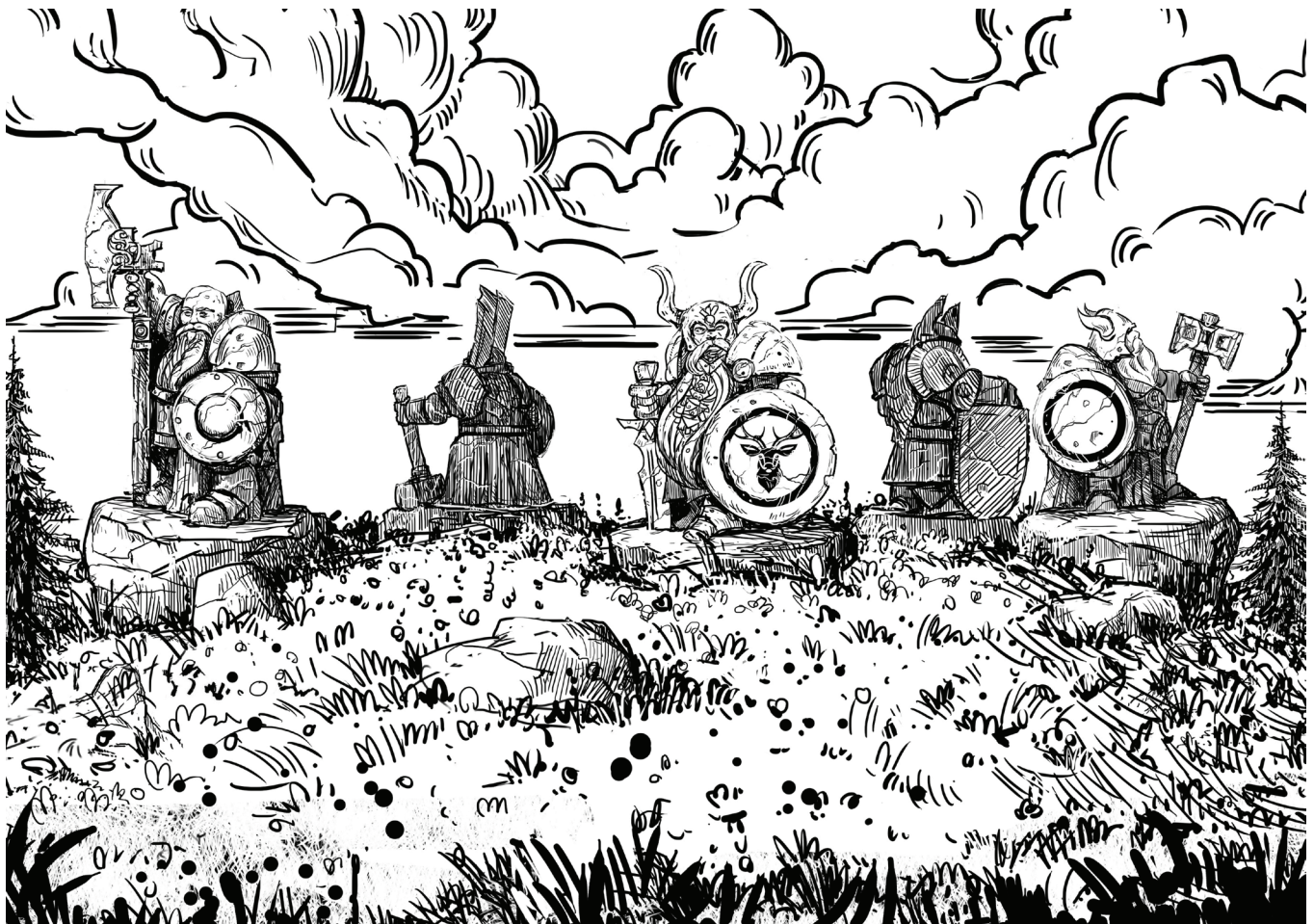
LAW & ORDER

The Lankinens have ruled Kingsfell for generations, and are well loved by the bulk of the populace. Laws are generally fair and crime is surprisingly low given the number of travellers and itinerants passing through the village. The only real area of contention comes when travellers arrive in the village with the intention of digging at the Kingstones.

EVENTS

While the PCs are in Kingsfell, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

D4	EVENT
1	Mira Lankinen rides out with a small patrol to safeguard the surrounding area. Several hours later, the patrol returns without incident.
2	Elren Araral wanders among the Kingstones. At sight of her, villagers begin muttering among themselves, but none approach her.
3	A travelling merchant enters the village. He has goods for sale and tales to tell. He lodges at the Rat and Cup and sets up shop in the common room. Issodair Highhill demands a cut of this profits and turns a blind eye when the merchant approaches other customers.
4	Riku Markku searches the Ost's river banks at low tide for lost treasures. He wields a spade with almost manic energy and is soon covered in mud. He finds nothing.



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