



BLOODWRAITH

STONE HOUSES

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A young man is accused of stealing from the enclave and the people want vengeance. But the enclave leaders want justice. What if he is not the thief? What if the crime is a cry for help?

Like all *Bloodwraith* adventures, the details are vague, to give the gamemaster an opportunity to incorporate the adventure into her campaign. There is no agenda here. This document is a tool for getting an adventure or campaign started, but not forced.

INTRODUCTION

Asher is a young unmarried man, roughly 16 years old, who has recently become sick and unable to hunt. This sickness has spread into a malaise and his general worth to the hunting parties has diminished. Asher is being accused of stealing from a family in the enclave — the father and mother (Eibul and Taline) want vengeance against him.

There is a short list of important NPCs at the end of this adventure. It is hopeful that the gamemaster and players have already worked together to build the enclave. But even if they haven't, there's enough information to go off of on the fly. The names should be changed, if those NPCs have been defined already.

STRUCTURE

This adventure is more an overview of ideas to help the gamemaster frame a game session, rather than a railroad of events. A casual read-through reveals the crime is not set in stone, nor is the criminal's identity. Instead, this adventure tells the backstory of the enclave, identifies some its major players, and hints at several possible futures based on the verdict of said crime.

Do with it as you will.

THE ENCLAVE

This is a perfect starting adventure for *Bloodwraith*. The risk of personal safety is low, it establishes the community, and gives the PCs a chance to interact with several NPCs, while also exploring the boundaries of the enclave.

Stone Houses can be set in any non-straggler enclave, of nearly any size, though keeping it small makes the adventure more intimate. The PCs should have relationships to some of the NPCs in this adventure, if possible. Being familiar with the adventure before playing will make enclave creation easier, especially if these factors are taken into account.

Gamemasters are encouraged to use the following enclave if they do not already have one created.

SAMPLE ENCLAVE: MASIS

Masis is not among the nine enclaves from the setting book. It is a remote enclave, some 10 miles from the icewall in the Southeast of Gyrr, nestled in a dense forest. Less than 100 people live in the semi-nomadic enclave that has escaped bloodwraith incursion for most of its existence, though a recent elf raid did result in the death of a dozen adults and some of the livestock. All of the elves were killed and/or wounded, leaving the people wondering if another attack is imminent. The attack was two months ago, but tensions are still high and people have been less than kind to each other during this time.

The Avag and Namak — Vahan and Sahak respectively — have been focused on defenses and training since the attack and less on the welfare of the community. The two other leaders, Gohara and Yeva have their own agendas and obligations, leaving them unable to meet all of the community's needs directly.

It should be noted, the people are mostly self-sufficient and only turn to leadership to settle disputes or protect the people during raids. One-third of the community farms and forages, one-third is under the age of 15, and one-third toils in trade work, hunting, fighting, and leadership. Life expectancy is roughly 45 years, though some people occasionally live longer. While gender roles are not enforced, children below a certain age require breast milk to grow, leaving women to nursing for the first couple years of a child's life.

The enclave is semi-nomadic and moves three times each year, during roughly the same time each year. They also pack and up and move everything whenever patrols indicate a large enemy is approaching.

Parts of the surrounding forest have been cleared for slash and burn farming, while other places are perfect for hunting and foraging. It is almost idyllic, despite the ever-present fear of the bloodwraiths, elves, and orcs.

Livestock is mostly comprised of chickens and lamb, with the occasional white pig (a genetic defect among all the pigs the people of Masis have been breeding over the years). They eat whatever fruits and vegetables they can find or grow, having little access to grains. Rats and field mice round out the enclave diet during leaner times.

Left alone, the people of Masis could live here for hundreds of years, so long as the population doesn't explode and/or the natural resources dwindle from weather changes or natural disasters.

Sickness generally includes colds and flus, with the occasional outbreak of cholera when unhealthy water is consumed. There is both a community druid and a witch for dealing with such illnesses, albeit with varying degrees of success.

Sahak leads the militia in training, daily, taking advantage of a few weapons procured from the elves after the last attack. Generally, however, the people are armed with spears and the occasional hatchet. Sahak has only a few defenses in place, using the forest's natural cover and underbrush to help defend the enclave.

IMPORTANT LOCATIONS

Masis is a small enclave, with roughly 30 family tents, including a few larger ones for community gatherings, meetings, and the enclave leadership. Because of the small nature of the enclave, there is very little specialization among its citizens, though they maintain a small portable forge, a cooper's shed, and a loom for the weaver. These tools are all extremely valuable to the community and rigorously taken care of.

There are no wells in the community, so water must be hauled several times a day from a river nearly a mile away. This river, however, provides a great line of defense, with several of Sahak's men posted with spears and ram horns, in case the enemy is spotted trying to cross the river.

Local caves, two miles to the north, are part of Sahak's retreat plans should the enclave ever be overrun. Sahak's plan is not foolproof, however. The caves are extensive and have never been fully explored. While the main three chambers can easily hold the enclave (in a pinch), the network of tunnels beyond there could hold any number of enemies. Sahak has considered it, but pushes the fears of the unknown out of his mind.

It is a last-recourse kind of plan, anyway.

IMPORTANT PEOPLE

The following is a list of important NPCs in the enclave, with most of the focus on the leadership. The gamemaster is encouraged to create roughly six to ten more citizens and pariahs for the PCs to know or associate with.

THE AVAG

The chief of the enclave is Vahan, a previous Namak who believes in the security of the enclave above all other matters. By most estimates, he is approaching 50 years of age, but shows no signs of slowing down. He keeps his work as leader separate from his familial duties and is especially hostile to any mention of his family during a community meeting or conversation.

THE HIMNAKHAN

The second in command is a calm and sensible old woman named Gohara. Her wizened reactions to the community are a welcome voice in Vahan's ear. The two have known each other for years and share a camaraderie few others enjoy. Gohara is widowed now, which only emboldens her dedication to the community.

THE ISHKHAN

Yeva is the third in power and the youngest. She recently took over the position when her husband died during an elf raid on the enclave. While she still mourns, she has a family to look after and a community to act upon. Her emotions are still raw and she is unlikely to advocate for the death of an enclave member, given the present climate. Her oldest son is 12 and she cannot imagine what she would do if people accused him of theft and wanted him punished.

THE NAMAK

Sahak is the enclave guardian, tasked with the community's protection, inside and out. It is most-likely the characters work for Sahak, though this is not required. If so, their goals most likely run parallel to his.

DRUID

The enclave enjoys the spiritual guidance of both a druid and witch. Where Hayk's powers are mostly magical, he is bestowed with a great deal of earthly knowledge as well. While his wisdom is not always listened to, he still considers himself part of the enclave, a deep sense of community that cannot be fully explained.

WITCH

Lucine lives a mostly nocturnal lifestyle, albeit she is awake more daylight hours in order to help the sick. But her natural rhythm has always been to stay away most of the night. This makes her less than sociable, and when she is among people, she is quite tired.

OTHER CITIZENS

There are a few pariahs living outside the enclave, as well as a cooper named Khajag, who is quite adept at making barrels from strips of bark. Khajag is well-liked, but a little strange at times. He is helpful to everyone, but unmarried — which is strange for a man of his age.

Azniv is a smith, though her forge is small and there is little coal to burn. She mostly uses whatever dry wood she can find, which means the forge doesn't get hot enough to work with hard metals.

Siroun is the dedicated enclave weaver. Despite the fact that most people make their own clothes from whatever materials they can find, Siroun works mostly with the tanned hides of animals to make whatever protective armor she can for the enclave, in addition to clothing for those who need it. It is rumored she is the secret bastard child of Vahan. If this is true, nepotism would explain why she has a dedicated role like this in the community.

Bagrat is a blind, aging woman, having lost her family to war. She provides guidance and help to some of the families who struggle to raise their own children (with so many enclave duties), but her abilities are limited.

THE ACCUSED...

Asher is an unassuming and relatively unimportant member of the enclave. There has never been a problem with him before, but without a family and much tie to the community, it is easy to see why he may have stolen the items in question — or at the very least is being accused.

His life is not ideal.

The accusers are also not perfect members of the community, but they do work, and they have five children of varying ages who all contribute to the future of the enclave. The mother, Taline, considers her matronly contributions to the community of importance, and often struts around the enclave flaunting her family size. She either believes her children are all destined for leadership, or the sheer size of the family gives her prominence. It is not clear, which. Her husband, Eibul, is a tired and broken man who generally goes along with Taline's wishes.

THE THEFT

There is no argument that something was stolen. But as of yet, the item has not been found. It may not matter what was taken, or the gamemaster may have trouble brainstorming something. Use this list at your discretion.

1d8 What Was Stolen

- 1 Blankets
- 2 Clothing
- 3 Food
- 4 Herbs
- 5 A Medicinal Unguent
- 6 Something Personal, But Not Valuable
- 7 Tools
- 8 A Weapon

The adventure may or may not determine who has stolen the items and why. That is not the point. Instead, this adventure introduces the PCs to various members of the enclave, explores the duties of the characters, and shows how daily life can be impacted by even the most trivial thing when people take their 'eyes off the prize.' Before the adventure concludes, the PCs will uncover important facts about the community and its fate (as detailed below).

VISIONS

PCs suffering visions during this adventure may see images of a strange object they've never seen before, especially if this adventure is tied to *Earthly Riches*. The object is tied to a menacing event on the horizon. Gamemasters planning a longer campaign should consider plotting out the bloodwraith's endgame, with cryptic messages hidden inside the visions.

THE ADVENTURE

This is an introductory adventure, meant to get the ball rolling quickly. There are no goblins to kill and no traps to find. It's about the community. This may not feel like a traditional old school adventure in that regard. And that's fine. Gamemasters with the right tools can easily add a monster that stumbles into the camp, or a trail of proverbial bread crumbs that lead the PCs in the unknown, all while the story of Asher hangs in the balance. In fact, giving the PCs too much to think about at once is a great way to overwhelm them with the stress of life in Gyrr.

Note: If you intend to run *Earthly Riches* after this, consider a few other stolen items from the community, including the artifact from the chart inside that adventure.

Perhaps the PCs receive the item (if the scale of this adventure merits it). Since no one knows it's an artifact of any value and/or because the item doesn't look like anything that belongs to the community, the community may not care if the PCs take it. See *Earthly Riches* for more information.

Also of note, the visions in *Earthly Riches* could make an appearance here, as a prelude of what is to come.

IN MEDIA RES

Stone Houses opens in *media res*, with some dialogue already prepared. The gamemaster is welcome to just open the story there and worry about defining relationships later. This, of course, is based on the group's play style. Just how much information needs to be front-loaded in order for everyone to feel comfortable starting?

THE STONING

Taline has spread rumors of Asher's crime around the enclave. In fact, some people are upset enough that they want the leadership to do something. Immediately. A small group has gathered outside the main pavilion tent, stones at the ready — most certainly to mete out their own justice.

Others aren't so sure. But once the crowd amasses, it's hard to stop the crowd's fervor. Since angry voices always drown out apathetic ones, mob violence escalates quickly. Such a tone puts an egg timer on the adventure. If anyone lollygags about finding out who the thief is — if that is the intent of the adventure for the PCs — the people will turn quickly on the Avag and the Namak.

OPENING SCENE

The following is not etched in stone, but rather is a less-than-common way of opening a fantasy adventure. At the end of this read-aloud text is an opening for one of the PCs to get involved with the debate.

"We don't feel safe anymore. We want justice." A voice rang from the crowd. Other voices murmured similar sentiments, though no one sounded confident enough to shout over the other voices of the enclave.

Avag Vahan stood before the community, trying to raise his aged voice. At his side, Sahak stood in confidence, making sure no one would interrupt the chief. Behind them, the large pavilion meeting tent, aged from years of abuse symbolized their station. To Sahak's right stood Asher, a young man accused of theft.

"Good people. Please. An injustice has happened here. We all feel violated when one of us is harmed. Even moreso when we feel this harm came from within."

"It did come from within!" A voice shouted. This time it was obviously Eibul, who was already angry over the course of events. More voices raised this time, until Sahak put his hand to his belt and grabbed for the pommel of his curved dagger.

"We don't know anything yet," Gohara croaked from her stool, unable to shout above the noise previously. "We need to make sure we are not condemning an innocent person. Some of you already brought stones —"

Gohara was cut off by a shrill voice in the crowd. This time it was Taline. "Asher is guilty. He stole from me. From my family. Stoning is the law. The old way. It is what we do. Stand aside old woman and let us have our way with him!"

The crowd's mood shifted. No longer were most people neutral on the subject. They were turning to anger. A few picked up stones from the ground, ready to act once anger turned to rage.

"Enough!" Sahak's voice was commanding now. He rarely spoke to the community unless he was giving orders to the militia. When he spoke, people listened. But there was a sense the crowd would not be patient this time.

The silence lasted a few moments before Taline shouted again. "No! All you do is talk! We've heard enough. We want justice!" Taline cocked her arm as though to throw the first stone, when Sahak stood in front of Asher. His face grew stern and grim. The people sensed the tone, even if no words were spoken.

Disgruntled sounds echoed from the crowd. Someone needed to say something. Someone needed to take charge. The pregnant pause hung in the air like a dying calf, turning the hostility into awkward tension.

At this point, one of the players (the one best at improvisation, perhaps) joins the conversation. If necessary, give her the opening phrase, *"We all want to see this issue put to rest..."*

The conversation continues until a compromise is reached or the crowd grows so hostile the stoning cannot be avoided, which certainly ends (or changes) the adventure. Everyone has a chance to chime in, while the gamemaster is responsible for voicing the many NPCs in the scene.

Use index cards to indicate who is talking, if necessary.

Note: The *conversation* is organic. NPC reactions are varied and reflect the ongoing fears and goals of the people. People like Taline want vengeance and their reactions reflect that. The leadership's reactions reflect a need to control the crowd and its mood.

IF THE CROWD CALMS DOWN

When the conversation reaches a natural pause, the crowd disperses, and the PCs can retreat to the pavilion tent or to their homes. In a traditional adventure, this is when the PCs start to investigate the crime; though in this adventure they are welcome to pursue any avenue.

If they retreat to the pavilion to talk with any of the ranking enclave members, there is an opportunity for tasks to be given out or favors to be procured, depending on play style.

If the PCs work for Sahak, Sahak wants a quick resolution to this problem. Whatever it is. If the PCs work for Vahan, he wants the community's safety assured. If they work for Gohara or Yeva, they want what's just, right, or wise. If the PCs are regular citizens, they can make their own decisions.

If the PCs retreat to their homes, they can do whatever they want. Certainly, there will be consequences if this is the case.

IF THE CROWD KILLS ASHER

The PCs are not required to stop the crowd. In fact, they may be unable if the crowd is too big. Certainly Sahak can not handle everyone himself. Nor would he want to harm or kill enclave members unless provoked. If the story drives in this direction, the adventure may be over faster than expected, but the long-term effects on the enclave would be interesting to roleplay.

Know the ramifications of the story going in, before proceeding to alter the enclave irrevocably.

THE CRIME

Taline claims something was stolen from her, placing the blame is squarely on Asher. But if the PCs investigate the crime, it does not take much work to realize Asher is innocent. Asher has been sick and bedridden for a long time. Even while his malaise was fading, he under the care of the enclave witch, Lucine, who can clearly vouch for his condition (and sometimes whereabouts).

The PCs may be driven further to uncover the true criminal, which is purposely undefined and left to the gamemaster. A number of ideas are presented.

- Someone is collecting sympathetic items in order to put a curse on Taline (and others in the enclave), however knowledgeable they are on curses. If this is Lucine, there is no way she would defend Asher and would instead let the burden fall on him.
- Someone jealous of Taline (or merely angry at Taline's attitude) is out to make her look stupid.
- A malevolent spirit (or blood elf) is turning Taline against the enclave in order to foment paranoia and resentment, leaving the community open for another attack. Perhaps this is coordinated magic.
- Taline's youngest child has lost the item and is afraid to tell the truth. This has the ear-marks of a sitcom ending, so be careful how this is presented.
- Taline's has an admirer in the community (perhaps Khajag) who expresses his admiration in strange ways.
- One of the elves killed during the attack was a wight elf and its spirit remains in the enclave, until a ritual is performed to exorcise the spirit. This is a particularly straight-forward solution common to fantasy adventures.
- The item was never stolen. Taline has hidden it in order to gain attention. It has been years since she was pregnant last and she misses Eibul's doting.
- The item was lost during the recent struggle with the elves, but it was only noticed recently. This may require some stretching of past stories.

During the investigation, the PCs have the opportunity to explore the community, talk to the other NPCs, and uncover additional details planted by the gamemasters. Depending on your playstyle, these details might be other citizens who have an axe to grind, a goblin squadron hiding in the forest within a few miles of the enclave, a hidden cache of items stolen from the community, or whatever else strikes the group's gaming sensibilities. There is no reason to keep the game focused on the crime and no reason to solve it all if something else catches the PCs' attention.

IF THE CRIME IS NOT SOLVED

Unchecked, the people exact vengeance in the middle of the night against Asher. He is stoned to death before anyone can stop them. This in turn leads to a witch hunt that kills three more people in the coming weeks before order can be restored.

Without the PCs' involvement, Vahan and Gohara are forced to exile Taline and Eibul, along with her five children. Another family joins them in protest, but the rest of the community settles down. Both families move to outskirts of the community, joining a handful of other pariahs who live off the enclaves scraps.

Overtime, tensions between the two groups lead to more crime, leaving the community open to outside attack again. In a few years, the two enclaves fracture and become bitter enemies, which weakens both of them.

IF THE CRIME IS SOLVED

If the PCs prove Asher did not steal the item, it leads to a different set of consequences, all of which impact the enclave and story.

Taline and Eibul are upset by the verdict, but accept it, given enough evidence. Taline bemoans the situation and sours people around her for a few days but gives up eventually. Her relationship with Asher never repairs and Asher may eventually leave the enclave as a result.

AFTERWARDS

What happens when Taline claims something else has been stolen a few months later? Is she using her influence to get rid of people she does not like? Is she hiding things from her husband and blaming others? Are her children the thieves? Are spirits at work? Or has she been giving her things to a beggar shadow without anyone's knowledge? Is Eibul having an affair and giving Taline's belongings to the mistress as gifts?

Over time, the enclave may forget what happened here, or never be whole again. If the aim is to drive the PCs to become a straggler enclave, avoid rushing to this conclusion. Allow the PCs to explore Masis for a while before the accusations start and the community falls apart. The players should see how enclave life works before it all comes crumbling apart.

If the community survives, Masis can become a great base of operations for the PCs to explore the world of Gyrr. Especially a small enclave where the characters can know all of the people intimately.

Super-especially if they've quelled the problems and made nice with everyone.



CREDITS

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