

RAGING SWAN PRESS

GM'S SCREEN #6: BORDERLAND KEEP



SYSTEM
NEUTRAL



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GM'S SCREEN #6: BORDERLAND KEEP

Space behind your GM's screen is precious (and limited). You've got dice, figures, the adventure, reference books—obviously a drink and snacks—as well as pencils, pens, a notebook and more! Often times a GM needs to be a juggler to make it all fit. That's why we created the GM's Screen line. Most GM screens focus on presenting the rules. This GM's Screen line is different. Instead of rules, each instalment presents hyper-focused pages of dressing, minor events and more all designed to add depth and flavour to an adventure. (And better yet, you can use the tables without your players realising what you are doing!)

This instalment of GM's Screen comprises three tables designed to bring to life the borderland keeps in your campaign and is compatible with virtually any roleplaying game.

DESIGN CREDITS

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HOW TO USE THIS SUPPLEMENT

Using this supplement is easy. Simply print out page 2 and pin it to the inside of your GM's screen. (You can also print it out and cut it up before clipping it to your screen so you do not obscure vital tables printed on the screen itself).

When play calls for it, roll on the relevant table and use the result to build verisimilitude, detail and flavour into your game. Always re-roll inappropriate results, but consider any given result as a starting point. Describe the situation and see how the players react!

Because words have power, we've also added some flavoursome examples to help you bring the setting alive in your players' minds.

SYSTEM NEUTRAL EDITION

Welcome to this Raging Swan Press System Neutral Edition supplement. Herein you'll find evocative, inspiring text designed to help you—the busy GM—run better, quicker and easier games.

This book is compatible with most fantasy roleplaying games. It's impossible to create a truly system neutral book, though, and some generic game terms—wizard, fighter, human, elf and so on—lurk within. These generic terms are easily modified to the GM's system of choice.

One special note about the NPCs in this supplement. While some are wizards, fighters, clerics and so on, others are simply normal folk. Because different game systems handle normal folk differently we've made no attempt to note their "class" leaving them simply as "female human" and so on.

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BORDERLAND KEEP

DRESSING

1. A line of sparring dummies stands in the courtyard. Nearby, a small group of trainee men-at-arms cluster around a bin holding wooden practise swords.
2. A few stones have fallen from a wall, and lie scattered on the ground. Crumbled mortar also dusts the ground and nearby a set of mason's tool stand propped against the wall.
3. Smoke rises from chimneys in several of the fort's towers. The air is preternaturally still; the smoke lingers over the fort like a shroud and does not dissipate until the wind picks up in the afternoon.
4. A lewd picture daubed on a wall depicts a warrior decapitating a goblin, orc or some other kind of evil humanoid. The blood spurting from the humanoid's neck is particularly overdone.
5. Rain has turned the churned earth of the courtyard into a muddy morass. A single boot juts forlornly from a patch of particularly thick, cloying mud.
6. A section of crudely whitewashed wall holds several weathered notices hung on nails driven into the wall.
7. An empty, unattended wagon sits lopsidedly in the mud. One of the wagon's wheels is missing.
8. Enticing smells wafting from the kitchen fill the air. Perhaps the lord plans a feast? Several small children and a few ragged beggars wait nearby for scraps.
9. A section of wall near the front gate is scorched and blackened as if it has once been deluged in flaming oil or similar. (Three trolls attacked the fort last year).
10. Wooden scaffolding encases one of the fort's towers; several workers—under a master mason's direction—work to repair pitted, weather-worn mortar. A pile of dressed stone suggests the work will be extensive.

SIGHTS & SOUNDS

1. The clamour of sword striking sword and the grunts of warriors fighting foreshadows the sight of two fighters practising their craft.
2. A particularly large raven squats on a tower's battlements and watches folks' coming and going with strange intensity. It flies off, if the PCs take particular note of its presence.
3. Dark clouds scud across the sky, plunging the fort into shadow.
4. Several travellers—the mud of the road fresh upon their boots—stagger to the inn in search of fresh ale, warm food and a comfortable bed.
5. A small boy—dirty and thin—darts through the crowd. He clutches a beautiful scabbarded longsword to his chest. If stopped, the boy—Arthal—explains he is delivering it to his father's customer.
6. A shout of alarm from one of the fort's tower has several men-at-arms rushing to investigate whatever their companion has spotted.
7. A servant emerges from a tower carrying a chamber pot at arm's length. She climbs the steps to the outer wall and then—surreptitiously—dumps the pot's contents over the wall.
8. A flag flying from one of the fort's towers breaks free and drifts down to the ground. It lands in a particularly large patch of horse manure.
9. Laughter and singing float through an open window. It sounds like someone is in excellent spirits.
10. A cowed figure lurks in a shadowy doorway, seemingly watching the PCs. If accosted, the man protests his innocence maintaining he was merely lost in thought.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

1. Strange things are going on at the chapel. A hooded figure has been seen entering the building late at night. (The priest is having an affair).
2. The fire at the blacksmith's last month was not accidental. Had it not been for his apprentice's quick thinking, the whole building could have burnt down.
3. Bandits have once again been seen in the fort's vicinity. Rumour has it the Captain of the Guard is preparing an expedition to drive them away.
4. The fort's lord is expecting an important guest soon. He has already despatched a patrol to meet his guest and preparations to receive a person of note have kept the servants busy for the last week.
5. Someone stole a pig's carcass from the kitchens. When the thief is found, there'll be hell to pay.
6. Strange tracks have been found by hunters in the surrounding area. Judging by their size, the creature is roughly the size of a horse, and has claws!
7. The tavern is infested with bedbugs!
8. The Company of the Cloven Shield visited the fort last month. They had a map of the surrounding wilderness and one of them—while deep in his cups—boasted it showed the site of a lost treasure. They haven't been seen since they left three weeks ago.
9. The castle is haunted. A couple of years ago, an evil necromancer was burned at the stake in the courtyard. With his dying screams, he cursed all those present to never rest easily in the grave.
10. The well providing drinking water for the fort is old—far older than the fort itself. Writings attributed to the original settlers of the area speak of caverns—now bricked up—accessible from the well shaft.

WORDS & DETAILS HAVE POWER—USE THEM TO ADD FLAVOUR AND ATMOSPHERE TO YOUR GAME

Battlement: bastion, bulwark, crenelations, rampart, stronghold, wall; **Castle:** citadel, fastness, fortress, hold, keep, tower; **Castle Descriptors:** impregnable, lofty, stark, stout, strong; **Soldier:** guard, man-at-arms, warden, warrior; **Wilderness:** borderland, frontier, march, wilderland, (the) wild; **Human Female Names:** Alma, Elinia, Esteri, Pia, Rauhu, Satu, Ulpa; **Human Male Names:** Aaro, Einar, Jani, Onni, Teijo, Usko, Vesa; **Human Surnames:** Aalto, Eerola, Laitnen, Ojanen, Purho, Sianio, Varala.

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