



Homeward Bound

Simple rules for player-owned base

Janek Sielicki

Contents

I. Introduction	1
II. Acquiring the Manor	2
III. The Sleeping Manor	4
IV. Upgrading the Sleeping Manor	8
V. Using the Manor in the Campaign	10
VI. The Lands and Neighbors	12
VII. The Baron	18
VIII. The Baron vs. the Heroes – Campaign Ideas	21
The Map	24



Written by Janek Sielicki, Typesetting Anna Madrjas-Dymek

Any suggestions?

Contact the author at writetheauthorrpg@gmail.com or on *Homeward Bound Facebook* page.

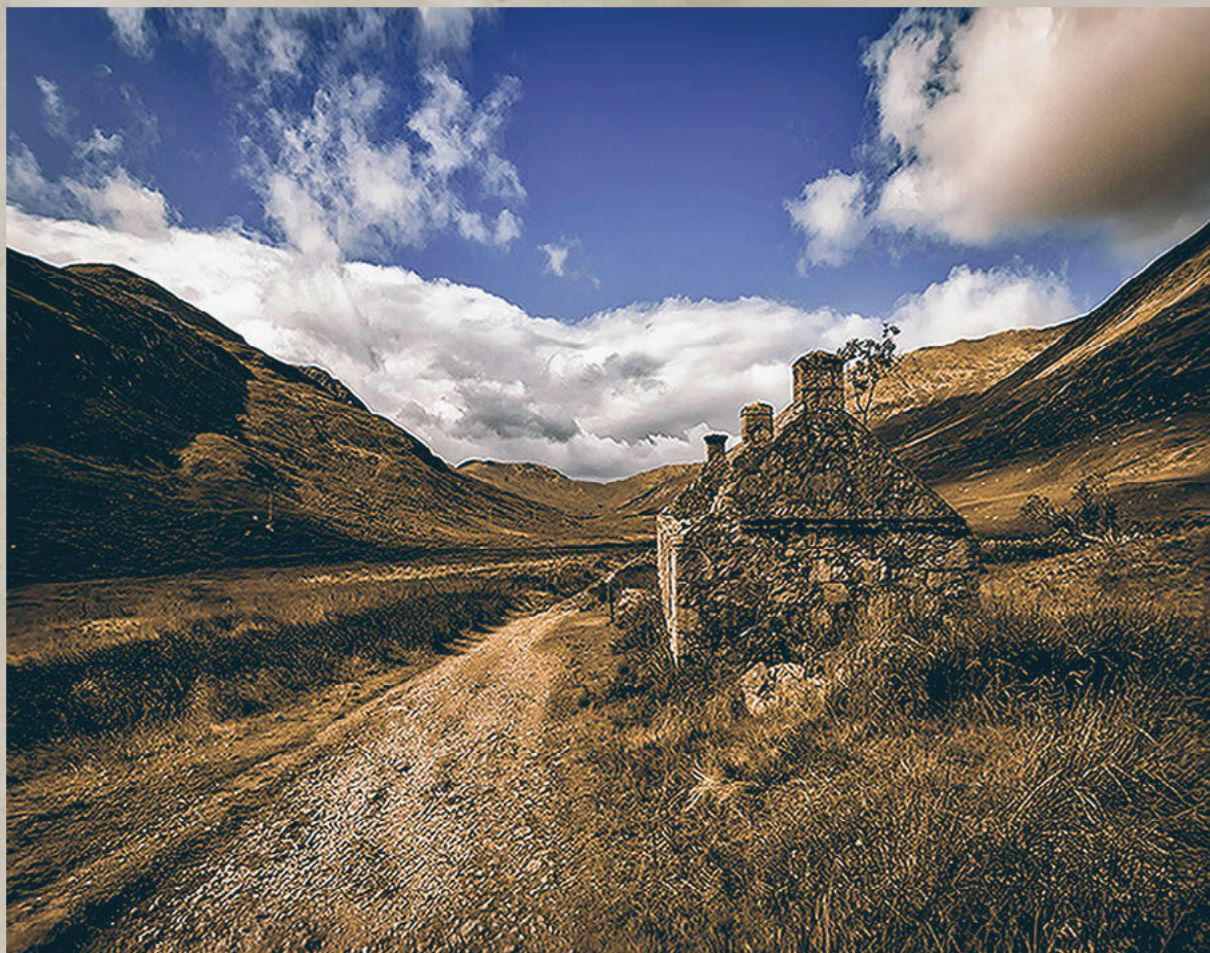


copyright © 2016 Janek Sielicki | cover photo and map art copyright © 2016 Anna Madrjas-Dymek

I *Introduction*

There comes a time in the lives of Player Characters when they start wondering about the point of adventuring and accumulating wealth and experience. Of course, some mercenary types do so for the sake of doing so, entering the vicious circle of killing monsters only so they can kill more powerful monsters and eventually die a horrible death in a forgotten tomb, their bodies eventually looted by some other adventurers. Yet other players want their alter egos to actually achieve something in their lives, have a place to return to between adventures, something to protect and care about. A home.

However, preparing a whole area where such a home would be located is a lot of work for a DM busy with dealing with other aspects of a campaign. This short sourcebook lifts this burden off your shoulders and not only provides a description of a mansion for the players to inhabit, but also details about the surrounding area, neighbors and interesting locales. Although it assumes a *Forgotten Realms*® campaign, it can be easily used with any other fantasy setting, or, with little work and reskinning, with non-fantasy worlds. Most of the book is for DM-eyes only, especially if extended campaign options are used, so if you are a player you'd better stop reading or skip directly to Chapters III and IV, should your DM permit.



II

Acquiring the Manor

There are several ways for the PCs to become landowners. Consider the following options:

1. **Reward.** Receiving the Mansion and the land as a reward for their heroic deeds. It is probably the best option, since everyone likes being appreciated, and history-wise and stories-wise giving land and titles for heroic deeds is expected. By doing so, the local ruler also ensures that powerful characters are kept in check and also contribute their skills and means to protecting the common folk. Moreover, official campaigns assume PCs cooperating with important political and magical figures who, logically, can award such a prize to a group of heroes who risk their lives protecting the Realms. And – last but not least – this option allows you to seamlessly insert the Mansion into an ongoing campaign.
2. **Treasure hunt.** During their adventures the PCs find a fragment of a noble's last will, which states that "whoever shows the whole document at the court [of the city near which the mansion is located] becomes the sole owner of the house and the lands." After an investigation they discover the story of the noble, are able to track his adventures and recover missing documents. Alternatively, they can just find the will intact and thus become landowners. This introduction allows you to introduce later a competitor to the inheritance.
3. **Inheritance.** If you are starting a new campaign, you might plan ahead and make one (or more) of the players the owner of the Mansion in need of money and influence to develop their lands. A variation of this option might assume the PC being in debt (500 gp) – before settling down they have to pay off their father's debts. A character starting with the noble background is best suited for this role.
4. **The right of conquer.** Forgotten Realms® is a dangerous land, especially in the regions located far away from any centers of civilization. A roving group of monsters, demons or an evil wizard may have killed everyone in this abandoned mansion and now terrified





villagers are begging the PCs – who are passing through the area – to drive the marauders off and maybe even settle down. When the local authorities (if any) finally arrive, they are presented with *fait accompli* and decide to leave the PCs alone. Alternatively, the campaign you are running might already include an adventure taking place – or incorporating – a largish house (perhaps a villain's base). Just exchange it for the Mansion presented here, adding and subtracting details from the campaign as you see fit.

5. **A cry for help.** An aging nobleman or lady, awed by the PCs' heroics, makes a deal with them: they will take care of his

lands and profits are theirs, but the noble wants to see his lands flourish again before he dies. Such a character can be a great source of local legends and history and is especially valid if you want to use the rivalry with the baron plot hook (see Chapter VII). Alternatively, a dying noble (whom the PCs are unable to

save) begs them to take care of his wife and child, left alone in a large house somewhere in the wilderness. This might lead to a fantastic love story, with the wife initially hostile and in mourning, but later developing feelings towards one of the PCs. Or there is only the child and their nanny. Or one of the children the PCs saved from monsters turns out to be a young noble, who needs help in managing their lands.



III

The Sleeping Manor

This section contains a description of the mansion. In keeping with the “theater of the mind” approach suggested in the 5th edition of Dungeons and Dragons, there are no floor plans and even the actual size of the mansion is vague. You, the GM, know your players best and you should know what kind of headquarters they would like. A small keep? A wizard’s tower? Several tree-houses connected with precarious rope-bridges, located on a giant talking tree? If you don’t know – ask them.

The Name

The mansion’s name comes from an unusual quality of its windows, which show the view outside – but as it was 12 hours earlier. It means that you cannot simply look through the window to check what is going on outside – you have to open the window or leave the house. The name, given by the wandering wizard Ishmar, stuck. Ishmar studied the

“Sleeping Manor” and declared that it once must have been the site of a powerful magical battle, one that tore a rift through time itself. For some reasons the windows absorbed a fraction of this magic, now a completely harmless, if inconvenient, magical effect. When local villagers heard the story, they liked the name and kept using it, especially that the owner at the time was always late – for battles, religious observances, and even his own death.

Appearance

The descriptions below offer a “default” look, but you might want to change them a bit by assuming the mansion and its lands were damaged or left untended for a period of time and it is up to the PCs to restore the former glory. Volo’s letter, which they may find, might give them an idea what they are going to have once their work is done. On the other hand, especially if you are using the reward option for acquiring the estate, it may be good idea to read or paraphrase Volo’s letter as the PCs arrive to their holdings.



From the outside

Volo, who visited the estate soon after it was built, wrote in a letter to a friend:

“Only one, southern, road leads there, but the journey among green hills is a pleasant one. Herds of sheep graze on the slopes and more than once my ears caught a beautiful, haunting tune played by the shepherds. Once the road reaches a small lake (and every local has their own legend about its origins), it climbs uphill and the traveler is treated to a magnificent vista. Emerald green fields contrast sharply with the dark line of a forest to the north, but are beautifully complemented by the blue skies above. I can easily imagine the changes in the view as the seasons come and go, the forest’s lush greens transforming into a cascade of autumn colors, to the black line set against snow and overcast sky, to finally become the tentative, fresh green of spring again.

Once you start admiring the view your eyes eventually set upon the manor house. Perhaps understanding the natural beauty of the area, the builders decided to erect a simple form: a square, two-floor building with a mansard roof and a small tower to the side. From the proper perspective, the distant forest seems to explode from the tower’s tip! The Manor’s famous architectural detail also immediately called my attention: the magic windows that, as I indeed learned not long after, show a delayed view of the outside. And although a number of sources mention this phenomenon, none state that from the outside the windows always look like light-blue panes of glass, as if a child drew them with colored pencils.

As I approached the building along the curving road, the various outbuildings – until then cleverly hidden behind the manor – came into view. When I visited, only a stable and servants’ house had been constructed, but there were plans for other extensions.”

The Sleeping Manor’s walls are made from dark-red brick with stone accents in the corners



and along the foundations. Two walls are entirely covered with various species of vines, whose leaves in autumn turn into a rainbow of colors.

The Interior

Instead of a detailed, floor-by-floor, room-by-room description of the mansion below you will find descriptions of several rooms – use those that you think will fit yours and your players’ idea of their house, leave the rest out or keep it as upgrade options. Each room is presented in two versions: utilitarian and lavish. Again, you can choose the option yourself, but perhaps it would be better to ask your players what they want. For example, if the estate is a reward, before the PCs travel to their newly acquired home a wizened, fussy gnome can approach them, explaining he is an employee of the PCs’ benefactor, tasked with preparing the house for their arrival. To do so, they just have to use one of the options. Remember also to encourage the players to add their own details! If such a detail is just cosmetics and doesn’t change game balance – take it! For example, a player might want one of the house’s windows to show events older than 12 hours – maybe from the time when dragons ruled the world. This is ok, since it affects only a view from a window. But if the same player wants the window to be a portal to another time – that’s a bit too much. Finally, remember that due to the windows’ enchantment it is usually dark during the day and light when it is night outside.

Type of room	Utilitarian	Lavish
Entrance Hall	This hall is obviously designed as a fortified position, a place where the house's defenders can find a lot of cover and fire at intruders. Two narrow staircases in the far corners lead to the first floor, where thick balcony railings provide cover for archers. A small fountain, with a sculpture of a sleeping naiad, is located in the middle of the hall: it can provide cover for the defenders, or offer guests an opportunity to freshen up.	In keeping with the main motifs of the structure, the entrance hall composes natural light, greenery and marble into one, cohesive whole. The sculpture of a sleeping naiad that adorns the centrally located fountain immediately draws the eye, lightly curved stairs and the ornate balcony stretching along the far wall forming a frame for the marble sleeping beauty. Two young potted blueleaf trees grow near the windows, providing light even in the middle of the day.
Dining Hall	The dining hall resembles an inn: there is a bar in the back and a number of smaller tables, allowing the lord's soldiers to eat or rest as their duty hours require. The place is neat, the space between tables allows for quick evacuation or creating an impromptu sleeping space. The lord's longtable is on an elevated area, the wall behind it covered with a large family banner.	This room emanates the aura of quiet resolve and continuity of tradition. The long family table is always covered with fresh, green tablecloth. The candleholders are always polished and candles lit, the flames reflected in important family heirlooms displayed in niches in the walls. A large fireplace dominates one of the walls, the marble mantelpiece sculpted to resemble a large platter held up by two naiads – perhaps sisters of the one from the hall.
Sample Bedroom	The room is simple and functional – a bed, a writing desk, a chest, and a washbasin in the corner. However, there is more than meets the eye – one of the walls hides a secret passage that connects all the bedrooms and – via an extremely narrow staircase – eventually leads to the cellar.	The room is dominated by a four-poster bed, complete with thick curtains and a soft mattress. Blueleaf shrubs grow along the window wall, while other walls are covered with tapestries depicting gorgeous views from exotic lands. A small extension is hidden behind a door in the back – it can serve as a changing room, boudoir or mini-armory.
Solar	Commanding probably the best view of the area with its 3 large windows, this room is ideal for relaxation, studying or holding meetings. One of the walls is covered with a cleverly designed system of bookshelves, with a constantly grumbling mephit named Sly sworn to serve as a "librarian"; he keeps the catalogue in his head and also brings the book or map you might want. This room is also special for it has the only non-magical window in the building. It is located in the ceiling and – thanks to the roof's design – it makes the room lit with sunlight day and night.	This room, one of the largest in the mansion, is an excellent choice for either a grand ball or a quiet conversation and admiring the view of gently rolling hills. Although it is quite large, it can be divided with beautifully adorned partitions and screens. Two fireplaces provide heat during cold months and a number of plush sofas and animal skins (including two dire varieties) add to the comfort. But perhaps the most extraordinary feature of the room, or even the house, is a clockwork mechanism covering the ceiling and depicting the stars, moons and sun in their eternal movement across the sky – a grand time-telling mechanism, incredibly useful in this strange house.
Kitchens	These are standard kitchens with a large tiled stove, worktables, utensils, bags and baskets of food and herbs. Piles of bowls and platters form a messy artistic installation in a corner. Usually it is a bustling place, with the cook shouting at her underlings, warmth emanating from the stove and the smell of freshly baked bread in the air.	Even the kitchens in this house are aesthetically pleasing. Rows of bowls and platters line the walls, orderly lines of potato baskets, eggplants and cucumbers march toward the cutting board and hop into large boiling pots of stew, directed by the cooks' deft hands. Worktables line the walls and differently colored cupboards indicate their purpose. The week's menu is displayed on a board. It is an orderly and efficient place.
Trophy Room	This small room's bare walls are covered with well-preserved heads of various animals and beasts, each with a metal plaque beneath explaining how, when and by whom it was killed. You quickly gather that these lands are quite regularly attacked by marauding monsters, like the dire bears, wyverns or even bulettes presented here. There is plenty of room for more trophies, and one wall is left empty except for the plaque, which reads: "Whoever claims the head of the black dragon Sithikurrosethan, which attacked the house in 1350 DR, should mount it here and a great treasure shall be theirs."	It is a very unusual trophy room: instead of heads of dead creatures staring at you with their glass, lifeless eyes, the walls are adorned with a variety of objects brought in from exotic lands by previous owners and guests. Profiled shelves hold decorated vases, unusual weaponry and strange items whose purpose you cannot fathom. Glass cases line the walls displaying rare books and manuscripts penned by famous writers and philosophers. Framed maps hang between the shelves and you realize the way everything is arranged takes the visitor for a peculiar journey around the known world. It is a place of history and exploration, a place that encourages you to go farther and see more. And then return here – return home.

Other possible rooms include: attic, cellar, bathing room, armory, training room, meditation chamber.



Earning money

The Sleeping Manor and the surrounding lands provide a variety of products: milk, wool, meat, timber, etc. These can be sold in the nearby town (see Chapter V). In order to do so, the PCs have to negotiate a deal first. This could be a great role-playing opportunity, especially if they are doing it for the first time, but it is ok

to reduce it to a simple die roll later on. Whenever the PCs return home, ask them if they want to renegotiate their trade deal in the city (which takes a few days) and have one of them roll the dice. Use Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation, with regard to the consequences of this choice) for the test, and consider advantage/disadvantage for factors like the character's fame or notoriety, local standing, prolonging a previous deal, competition, natural disasters, quality of their goods, etc.

The base revenue from the mansion is 100 gp (this assumes DC 5 and automatic success). For simplicity, it assumes this is the net value and all the running costs are covered. This is what the PCs get if they do nothing in the given month. To negotiate a deal, the PCs first decide how risky their deal is going to be and decide the difficulty of the roll on their own. For each increment of 5 they

earn additional 100 gp: at DC 10 they get 200 gp, at 15 DC 300 gp and so on. Failing the test means receiving only the base amount of money.

The deal can be renegotiated each month, and if it is not, its value deteriorates at the rate of 50 gp per month until it reaches the basic value. Note that upgrading the lands will increase the gain.

Example: the players declare that their PCs return to the Sleeping Manor and they want to negotiate a new deal for the goods their lands produce. They go to the town and after some roleplaying or without it they decide upon the difficulty level of the deal, let's say 15. One player – the group's main negotiator – makes the roll. If successful, at the end of the month they group will receive 300 gp. Next month the group is away, so they cannot re-negotiate the deal and at the end of the following month the group receives 250 gp, stored in the mansion's treasury and awaiting their return.

It is a quick and easy system that promotes investment and encourages the PCs to often return to their home and oversee its development.



IV Upgrading the Sleeping Manor

This section presents several ideas for purchasable upgrades for the house. As always, if your players have their own ideas regarding the upgrades below or completely new ones, consider them carefully with the “why not?” attitude. Even if they are buying one of the upgrades suggested below, ask them to come up with ideas what exactly they are improving. For example, if they are purchasing the “land improvement” upgrade, ask them if they want to improve textile industry on their lands, get better wool, better looms and eventually produce region-specific warm woolen sweaters or cassocks? Or perhaps they want to go into food and produce regional cheeses and beverages? Or become mine owners?

Moreover, the mechanical bonus awarded by certain upgrades is just another incentive for the players, a way to encourage them to return home and care about and for it. However, certain bonuses might make the party slightly more powerful in terms of game mechanics, and you should take this fact into consideration when designing combat encounters. On the other hand, make the bonuses provided by the house worthwhile – as always, balance is the key.

Finally, you might be tempted to use “realistic” construction times. Although in real life construction of a building or improving a swath of land takes at least months, the game is called “Dungeons and Dragons,” not “Constructions and Deadlines” – assume that completing each upgrade takes a month and get on with the game.

Name	Type	Bonus	Cost
Basic bonus	Returning home and resting in the Manor's peaceful setting provides small mechanical bonuses even if no upgrade has been bought.	In addition to the income discussed above, spending a month home confers an additional 1 HP restored during short rests for the following month.	-
Land improvement	Larger fields, grazing areas, mining network with modernized infrastructure, more skilled workers etc.	+50 gp income per month. This upgrade can be bought 5 times to eventually provide +250 gp income bonus.	250 gp each
Fortifications	Living in the wildlands is dangerous: marauding bandits, monsters or even more sinister foes can assault your lands and people and the mansion should offer protection for all. This upgrade includes a stone wall around the mansion and watchtowers on the estate's borders.	Although this upgrade does not provide any individual mechanical bonuses for PCs, the watchtowers ensure that the lands cannot be attacked by surprise, and the wall grants cover for the defenders should the enemy close in on the mansion.	500 gp
Vault	A secure, fortified room in the mansion, complete with one or two traps and magical password-protected dwarf-made door. Perfect for storing treasures and income that accrues while the PCs are away adventuring.	Should any thief make it to the vault, bypassing the lock without the password is a DC 20 task. There is one deadly trap or 2 dangerous traps or 3 setback traps. See “Dungeon Master's Guide,” page 121 for details on traps.	500 gp, plus 500 for each additional set of traps or upgrading the lock's DC by 5.
Barracks	A small group of dedicated fighting force that patrols the lands and roads and lives either in the mansion's wing, or in a separate, modest building in the nearby village or next to the Manor.	Drawn in by the PCs' fame, the force consists of 20 soldiers, sworn and paid to protect the manor. They are loyal level 1 warriors, led by Captain Castigar, a level 3 fighter. If any of them dies, after a month another recruit takes their place. This upgrade significantly reduces chances that something wrong happens when the heroes are away and adds +5 to the Dangers roll if you are using Dangers and Blessings option presented below.	500 gp

<i>Garden</i>	A beautiful garden, full of flowers, gurgling fountains, gazebos and benches where you can sit and watch your kids play.	The garden provides additional +1 HP (for the total of +2 HP) restored during short rests (see the basic bonus above).	300 gp
<i>Additional servants</i>	Adventuring is a deadly game and when a hero returns home, they should not deal with mundane things like doing the laundry, cleaning armor or the like. They should rest, recuperate and plan. The servants can do the rest!	The servants take care of all the heroes' needs, so they can concentrate on their next adventure. After spending at least a month being pampered, the PCs gain 1 inspiration point. This upgrade can be bought up to 3 times, providing additional inspiration points.	1 st : 300 gp (basic staff) 2 nd : 900 gp (specialized servants) 3 rd : 2,000 gp (masseurs, dancers, singers etc.)
<i>Roads</i>	Roads are vital for any community, for they speed up travel time and contribute to the safety of the region.	Good roads halve travel time around the lands and to the nearby town, allowing your trade goods to reach the market faster, which grants an additional +10 gp income bonus per month.	200 gp
<i>Furnishing</i>	Softer beds, comfortable sofas and chairs, a washbasin in every bedroom, or perhaps even a dedicated bathing room with a small fire elemental heating up water – all these and more make the PCs miss their home when they spend another dreary evening huddled in the dark and rain somewhere out in the dangerous world.	Player Characters who live at least a month in such comforts start their next adventure with additional 5 temporary Hit Points. This upgrade can be purchased three times, to provide maximum 15 temporary HP.	1 st : 400 gp 2 nd : 1,000 gp 3 rd : 1,500 gp
<i>Shrine</i>	A room or a small building (or in some cases – a tree) dedicated to the worship of one of the many Faerunian gods. The devotees can spend their time here, making the connection with their patron god stronger.	After spending at least 1 month in the Manor with this upgrade, for the following month spellcasting characters that base their magic on faith (cleric, druid, ranger, paladin) can prepare 1 spell more than their level and spellcasting attribute normally allow.	1,000 gp
<i>Laboratory</i>	A room, for safety reasons located in the tower or the basement, full of alchemical equipment and ingredients. It is the kingdom of Ignato, a wizened derro alchemist, who hates when people intrude asking him about stuff.	Every week it produces 1 common-quality potion (for example the potion of healing), which is then stored in the vault (if available).	500 gp
<i>Hospital</i>	Having a small hospital on one's lands not only ensures the people's and soldiers' gratitude, but also provides medical professionals whose instructions, recalled on the battlefield, can save lives.	After spending at least a week in the Manor with this upgrade, for the following month, any PC reduced to 0 HP automatically succeeds at their first death saving throw.	250 gp
<i>Training course</i>	Some adventurers just cannot sit tight and continuously strive to get better, faster and tougher. Everyday athletic training is what they call resting. This training course includes beams, ropes, walls, mud, swinging targets and sergeant Thorbrug, a gruff veteran dwarf soldier, who will make you pump iron and ignore your manly tears.	If a PC regularly visits the training course for a month (at least 4 hours a day), for the following month their Speed increases by 5 feet.	150 gp
<i>Library</i>	Books bring relaxation, wisdom and knowledge and especially arcane magic users find that studying benefits their spellcasting abilities.	After spending at least 1 month in the Manor with this upgrade, for the following month spellcasting characters that base their magic on arcane magic can prepare or "know" 1 spell more than their level and spellcasting attribute normally allow.	1,000 gp

Using the Manor in the Campaign

This book assumes that the Sleeping Manor is used as PCs' HQ, home and redoubt, a place where they return between adventures to rest, recuperate, do the shopping, etc. Additionally, should your players like the idea of having such a place to manage, there are several places nearby which PCs can visit to interact with the neighbors or solve various problems plaguing their lands. With some work, the whole idea might be turned into a separate campaign, or greatly augment the one you are currently running.

Whenever there is a break between adventures, you can ask your players if they want to return to the mansion, if not for roleplaying reasons then for the game mechanics bonuses it provides. They may want to spend weeks or even months of in-game time there, which is great and contributes to the realism of PCs' development. After all,

a lot of players often complain about the necessity to rush from one adventure to another and taken to the extreme, the whole "zero to hero" process (or from level 1 to 20) takes mere weeks! Providing the PCs with a home to return to allows the Game Master to pace the campaign and give it a more realistic timeframe.

And – last but not least – the PCs have something to spend money on, invest and reap the results. The 5th edition of Dungeons and Dragons restores the unusualness of magic items and in the default setting it is difficult to just buy such objects, especially if they are rare. This leaves the PCs with a lot of gold they do not know how to spend, especially if the players come from the previous editions of the game. By spending their hard-looted gold pieces on their own house, your players have a sense of accomplishment, especially if such investments return to them in the form of more money, influence or both.

Dangers and Blessings

A great house is also a great responsibility and the Sleeping Manor can be affected by various things while the owners – the PCs – are away saving the world, or whatever they do during their adventures.

If you want to use the Dangers and Blessings option, below you will find a double list of events that occurred during the PCs' absence. Whenever the PCs return home, roll (or select) one event from each column. If you are using this book and the ideas it contains as a mini-campaign and/or the PCs spend a lot of time on their lands, simply roll on the table each month.

TIP: Each time the PCs return home, try to play on their emotions – don't just roll and read, but try to gradually describe what they see as they return – happy faces, signs of destructions, both?



D20 roll	Dangers	Blessings
1 or less	The Awakener has returned – black dragon, Sithikurrosethan has once again emerged from the lake and lays waste to the lands. Until it is slain, modify further rolls in this column by -5.	An annual folk festival is taking place on your lands. Fine food, dancing and joy shared with your people fill your hearts with happiness and optimism. Each PC gains one Inspiration point.
2	Great fire of mysterious origin devastated the lands. D3 random upgrades (or upgrade stages) to the mansion destroyed.	A minor treasure hoard was unearthed on your lands! To determine what was found, roll on the first (Challenge 0-4) treasure hoard table in the Dungeon Master's Guide, page 137.
3	A master thief paid visit to your vault. You lose all the accumulated gold and anything valuable left. If you have the vault upgrade, roll d20 and add 10, subtract 2 for each trap upgrade; if the result is equal or higher than your vault's lock DC, the same effect takes place.	Sometimes everything falls in line, the stars are right or you are just lucky. After hard studies, rigorous training or being in the right place at the right time you managed to make the lessons last longer. A selected upgrade bonus lasts for 2 months. Each player may select a different upgrade.
4	Sometimes in order to advance you have to take a step back. New, experimental farming (or alchemical, or training, etc.) methods proved to be unsuccessful. An upgrade bonus becomes its opposite, which only becomes apparent when the PCs set off on a new adventure.	Soft mattresses, warm meals and beautiful views did wonders for your body. You managed to rest really well and are at peak physical form. The basic bonus lasts for 2 months and provides +2 HP healed during short rests.
5	Due to a monster attack, fire or similar disaster one random upgrade is destroyed or its level reduced by one.	The villagers really appreciate what you are doing for them. They trust your protection and guidance – select any other result in this column.
6	There is growing resentment among the local people towards the PCs. Maybe they did something wrong, or perhaps this is all a misunderstanding. The difficulty of all local social interaction tests increases by 5.	Residual time magic affected a villager, who had a vision of the future and came to warn the PCs. The DM should reveal, in a suitably cryptic fashion, one important detail of a future adventure.
7	Nothing happens, life goes on.	Nothing happens, life goes on.
8	Due to bad weather conditions – blizzards, extreme heat, heavy rains, etc. – travel time in the area is doubled.	Excellent weather conditions – warmth, sun, just enough precipitation – halve the travel time in the area.
9	Due to machinations of your competitors, the trade deal you had previously secured has been lost. Unless a new one is negotiated, only the basic income is generated each month.	Your contractors are really happy with the goods your lands produce and decide to continue the cooperation. Your last trade deal is automatically reset to its starting value and automatically prolonged, without the need to revisit the nearby town.
10	Bad harvest, cattle disease, horrible weather or bandits who raided your trade caravans – whatever happened, the result is the same: no income this month.	Your contractors are really happy with the goods your lands produce and do not want to lose the deal, thus offering better conditions. Your trade deal increases by one stage, as if the negotiations were more difficult, thus providing more monthly revenue. Additionally, the trade is automatically prolonged, without the need to re-visit the nearby town.
11	Villagers or patrols spotted a group of marauding monsters approaching your lands! It is going to be a very difficult battle, but unless they are stopped people will die and more troubles arise! If you fail to stop the monsters, next time roll twice in this column, subtracting 5 from each roll.	A group of friendly mercenaries – the famous “Merciful Marauders” – visit the area, keeping trouble at bay. The Danger column result for this month is cancelled.
12	A druid passing through the area is angry with you and your people for not treating nature right. Unless you deal with him, he will continue to harass villagers and “free” their animals (-100 gp income).	A helpful druid stops in your village, healing animals, advising the people and blessing the crops. +100 gp income.
13	A priest visiting your lands took offence and threatens to call the wrath of her god upon the area. Unless she is dealt with, the PCs cannot gain or spend inspiration points.	A benevolent priest decided to pay a visit to your estate. The blessing of her god is upon you. During your next adventure, whenever you use an inspiration point to gain advantage, you may re-roll the lower die.
14	An angry, mad wizard decided to study the Manor's famous windows. Unfortunately his experiments involve destruction of a support wall... Unless he is stopped, a random house upgrade is destroyed.	A wizard stopped at the Manor. Grateful for the opportunity to study its magical windows, he left a minor magical item for you.
15	An (in)famous warrior and his band decided to settle in the village inn. They grow unruly, upset the people and things are slowly escalating towards violence. Unless they are dealt with, their numbers grow and eventually they might even attack the Manor! Cancel the Blessing result for this month.	It is all about the money. Your land's produce was extremely popular, people were queuing for hours to get some! Then a visiting lord bought out all that was left – just like that! Paying double, no less! Your income for the last period is doubled.
16	Nothing happens, life goes on.	Nothing happens, life goes on.

17	An influential noble decided to pay an unexpected visit and felt offended when the hosts were not at home. They went on to the town and farther, spreading the news about your inhospitality. For the next month the difficulty of all social interaction rolls is increased by 5.	Sometimes everything falls in line, the stars are right or you are just lucky. After hard studies, rigorous training or being in the right place at the right time you managed to better understand certain things. For the next month the bonuses provided by upgrades are twice as good. Each player may select a different upgrade.
18	A body of a local villager has been found bearing mysterious symbols on its skin. The people are in shock and sense that something ominous is going to happen soon. During your next adventure the Dungeon Master may give you one disadvantage (per player) for no reason at all.	Sometimes everything falls in line, the stars are right or you are just lucky. After hard studies, rigorous training or being in the right place at the right time you managed to make the lessons last longer. The bonuses provided by all the existing upgrades last 2 months.
19	A young man and woman appeared claiming that the Sleeping Manor is actually theirs! Whether it is true or an elaborate con, arguing with them, visiting courts of law and lords costs you precious time and resources. Unless you pay them 1,000 gp, you do not get any upgrade bonuses.	A good omen appeared and everyone believes the time is right to make important decisions. People are getting engaged, new houses erected, joy and prosperity sweep the land. Roll twice in this column and apply both effects.
20	Sleeping on soft pillows and eating warm food 3 times a day made you soft! Get your s..t together! The very first damage roll you make during your next adventure deals minimum possible damage (as if you rolled 1 on the damage die).	The people love you and wanted to do something for you while you were away risking your life and limb. A random upgrade is automatically built for free, or improved one stage (if applicable).

The Lands and Neighbors

Use this section if your players not only like the idea of having their own house, return there often and generally are interested in their lands, but also they actually want to be more involved in what is going on in their estate and with their people. The chapter presents several locations surrounding the Sleeping Manor, as well as discusses travelling around the area and random encounters. Each location entry is divided into the description of the place and the people who live there, followed by additional ideas and plot hooks. Due to the nature of this book, which aims to be universal and not PC-level dependent, the NPCs are presented without stat blocks. Instead, it is suggested how difficult opponents they should be for your players.

Travelling and Random Encounters

The lands belonging to the PCs stretch for about a day of travelling from the Manor.

For simplicity, assume that travelling from the house to any of the locations listed below takes 2 days and thus a journey between two most distant points on the map takes about 4 days. The only exception here is the Nearby Town, which is not so near and it takes a tenday to get there. Note that with the roads upgrade these times are cut by half. Naturally, if your campaign takes place in a particularly harsh environment (dense jungle, high desert) and the Manor is located in such a place, you might want to revise the suggested times.

Use random encounters only if you are using the Sleeping Manor and the surrounding lands as an extended part of the regular campaign. As with the travel time, the actual frequency and make of random encounters strongly depends on the type of region where the Manor is located. Use the standard tables from the Monster Manual, but remember that not all random encounters have to end with fighting dangerous monsters. The PCs can meet friendly traders, a villager whose cart broke an axle, signs of a magic duel, etc.

Reverie, the Village

The village, located a 2-hour walk from the Manor, is named “Reverie.” Although it used to be large and prosperous, when the PCs arrive it is obvious that the settlement has seen better times – a number of houses are in ruin, some with boarded-up windows, others still blackened by long-forgotten fires. However, those houses that are still inhabited are clean and well maintained – pots dry on recently painted fences, hens cross the road, children chase dogs and one another only to stop, stare at the PCs and then pester them with a million questions.

The market square is located in the middle, with a large, narrow rock standing in its center. The locals call it “Giant’s Spear,” although other names related to the rock’s elongated shape are also in use. Once a month the villagers from Reverie and those living in their quaint cottages in the hills come to the village to sell and buy goods, exchange information and have fun. Usually a low-ranking priest of a good-aligned deity is also present for the occasion. Two important buildings can be found at the square – the alderman’s house and the inn.

Traditionally this or that branch of the Roose family has always been leading the village and **Varid Roose** “of the Rooses” is the current alderman. A reed-thin, stooped and bearded man, he is as prone to anger as to laughter, and has been managing life in the village for almost half a century now. He believes he is doing a great job, but some other villagers resent his “meddling” which intensified, as they are eager to explain over an ale, after Mrs. Roose passed away a couple of years back and his son, Madrik, took over the family’s business. Varid remembers how prosperous the village was when he was young and how it fell into decline despite his efforts, so he welcomes the PCs’ arrival and immediately starts treating them with respect, while at the same time expecting the impossible from them.

In your game: Roose can be used as a barometer of the villagers’ attitude towards the PCs. He will openly criticize their actions if he does not like something or praise them to the heavens if the village prospers. Social interaction tests against him should never be too easy – after all, he spent decades mediating between villagers.

The inn – “Giant’s Head” – is a two-floor, sprawling building that looks like several houses stitched together, painted over, hammered down and then kicked for a good measure. People speculate that it was the very first structure built in the village, maybe even on the ruins of something older, but they love their “ugly giant” for the multitude of its nooks and crannies where you can nurse your beer in solitude, the large common hall, low ceilings and rickety stairs. An energetic, young half-elf woman named **Leina Silkrose** has been running the establishment ever since she won it in a high-stakes drinking game everyone agrees was of epic proportions. The previous owner, Albert Dable, still helps to run the business, though.

Despite her young age, Leina is tough and has had her share of adventures, but she never talks about her past life. Probably each villager has their own theory about Leina – she is an exiled princess, a criminal on the run, a shapeshifter, no – a dragon shapeshifter, time-travelling wizard responsible for the Manor’s magic and more. Whatever the truth, two things are certain: Leina (despite living



in the village for 10 years, still considered an outsider) is probably the only person in the village who is able to openly oppose Roose’s ideas and, at some stage of their lives, every man in the village wants to marry her.

In your game: First you have to decide about Leina’s past – if she really is an experienced

adventurer, she can provide occasional help or suggestions, especially if the PCs gain her trust. She is also a viable romantic interest for a PC.

Splendid, the Nearby Town

Located a tenday away, the Nearby Town in your campaign can be an already existing settlement, well-established in the Forgotten Realms universe, or your own creation. If it is the latter, make sure it is large enough for the PCs to be able to sell their loot and the land's produce, upgrade equipment and stock up before their next adventure. Moreover, the Town may be a place where they can get recognition as the Sleeping Manor's new owners, where their liege lord resides (if they have one), and where legal disputes are settled. Below you will find a description of the town of Splendid, which you can use or adapt for your campaign.

Splendid is a town planned by dwarves, built by humans and run by halflings. Its sturdy, reddish walls are a sight any traveler in these wildlands welcomes, and a large crystal located on top of a ruined elven tower serves as a beacon, guiding those lost in the darkness to safety. The town is an important stop for many trade caravans and as such is full of inns, guesthouses and drinking holes. There are only a few permanent citizens since most of the people who decide to settle move on after some time – there is something in the town, the atmosphere of urgency lingering in the air,

the constant squeak of cart wheels rolling to or from other parts of the world that makes people, especially youngsters, dream about their own adventures, businesses and travelling.

The Council of Three holds power in Splendid. They are nominated by the overlord of the area and each councilman has a different responsibility: safety, trade, and infrastructure, and all are equally important. Currently three halfling siblings, whose father was the overlord's money master, make the Council and they have been successfully running the town's affairs for 5 years.

Until the halflings – or “the Peas,” as people call them – took over, the safety in the city was a joke: each merchant arrived with their own security force, the soldiers got drunk and started fights and fires and the local boys, dressed up as “town guards” but without any proper training were unable to stop professional mercenaries. The Peas introduced a new tax and hired their own mercenaries. Five years later membership in “The Red Wall Rounders” is a badge of honor and order has been restored to the town – troublemakers are quickly dealt with and the merchant they work for has to pay a hefty fine or be banned from the town for 2 years.

The Loner is one of Splendid's permanent residents. This mysterious elf lives in the ruined tower and tends the crystal beacon. He never speaks and seldom leaves the tower – and seeing his small, strangely misshapen form is considered a bad omen. Some claim they saw him cast spells, while others swear dark figures visit him in the darkest hours of the night.

Private Monsoon (female tiefling) is a low-ranking Rounders member, eager to prove herself and always sticking her nose into other people's business, looking for “criminal activity.” She is somewhat tempered by her partner, **private 2nd class Dogruk**, a half-orc monk so patient that it is annoying and scary.

Where money flows and deals are made, there always those who work in the shadows. **Marriah Fenrir**, a half-elven woman, created a myth about “The Shadow Council” and – while the Rounders are busy searching for “Shadow Councilmen”



– she is getting rich smuggling illegal goods, extorting money from merchants and building her own fighting force. She also sent feelers to the Zhentarim, not realizing they are already present in the region.

The Temple

The Temple represents a place where the PCs might find potential allies (especially if you are using the baron), but at a cost. It does not have to be a temple devoted to a Faerunian deity – a small road-side shrine where miracles happen can have its own rustic charm as well. Alternatively, you might consider a darker bent and place a sinister cult at the place, people who are outwardly friendly and helpful, but slowly corrupt the villagers and set them against the PCs.

Two days away from the Sleeping Manor the gentle hills become rougher, sharper, a maze of dead-end ravines, crags and whistling wind. From the air the whole area looks as if a gigantic being has stomped their foot, splintering the ground at the point of impact, and thus locals call this region “Titan’s Stomp.” It is an unhospitable place and people from Reverie avoid it – an unwary traveler might lose their way, break legs and/or be eaten by harpies, which infest the ravines.

Some nights a strange greenish glow spreads across a section of the Stomp and moaning fills the air. Anyone brave enough to navigate the winding passages to the center of this radiance will find a small stone temple, stuck to the wall some 30 feet above the ground and with no apparent stairs leading to it. The actual entrance is hidden behind a cleverly painted rock and leads to a warren of crisscrossing tunnels and caves. A large, yellow-green crystal is embedded in a wall of the largest grotto and on certain nights it emanates intense light that attracts beasts and people alike.

They live in peace and harmony but – when food and supplies run out – they start fighting with each other until only one survivor is left to lead and teach new arrivals about the “Multi-Faceted Way.” The new leader does not remember what happened to his previous group and all the bodies and belongings mysteriously vanish.

Currently the congregation consists of a few dozen kobolds, two ogres, an orc raiding party,

three driads, a group of humans and a mantichore. They are led by an ettin named Grosh, whose savage looks contradict his peaceful, even docile behavior. They are happy to share their “crystal-clear” visions of prosperous future, show the crystal in the wall, but will never leave the cave complex. They fight if attacked (or anyone tries to damage the crystal), but try to use non-lethal ways to subdue opponents.

In your game: You must decide if the crystal is an autonomous, intelligent magical being (perhaps a legendary artefact), or it is controlled by a malevolent being hiding in the shadows. What happens to the community if the PCs manage to break the spell? Resisting the crystal’s mind-influencing magic should be hard, but not impossible, or you might find your PCs all under the object’s sway, only to wake up when the Time comes and everyone starts fighting with each other, when you can allow the PCs another, much easier saving throw. Alternatively, this strange group might not be affected by a magical effect at all – tired with constant fighting and survival and led by a charismatic leader, they really want to be left alone and the tales the villagers tell about their bloodthirsty rituals are just tales.

The Lonely Farm

A house without an annoying neighbor is a boring, dreary place. The Dagford clan have always been an unruly, rebellious lot that bows to no-one and takes care of their own. They are a numerous family that own some of the most fertile fields of the region and raise the best cattle – and the so-called Dagford-beef steak is famous even in Waterdeep. Officially they accept local laws, but woe betide the unfortunate traveler who trespasses their lands, or tries to flirt with the fair Dagford maidens.

The family is ruled with an iron fist by Wyntham Dagford, a physically powerful and cunning man, who hates weakness, stupidity and insolence. And he has some old scores to settle with the Sleeping Manor and its owners – years ago a fight broke out between a Dagford and a Reverite, and the court in Splendid decided that as compensation the Dagfords have to give away some of their prime grazing spots to the Manor.

Wyntham, and all Dagfords, believe that was not justice, but politics, and their man was not the one to blame. But he has his honor and even though the Manor's lands were neglected, he did not move onto "what's his." Wyntham has many sons and daughters and they are all skilled warriors, archers and farmers. Black sheep are sent or married away.

Dagford lands border the PCs' lands and the moment they move into the Manor, Wyntham invites the new neighbors to visit his farm and tries to convince them to give the disputable lands back, which "will mark the beginning of our peaceful and mutually beneficial relationship." Should they refuse, he will swear to make their lives in the Manor difficult. He won't openly attack them or the villagers, but will harass their cattle, occasionally burn a barn, mysterious masked raiders will start attacking caravans to Splendid, etc.

In your game: The Dagfords are here to introduce a more "western" feeling into a fantasy campaign, which may sound like a convoluted idea, but works really well – after all, rivalry between neighbors is a constant in any society. If you are not using the Baron as the main adversary, the Dagfords are a good replacement (or addition), and if the Baron's shadow looms over the Manor, the Dagford clan – once befriended (not an easy task!) – will certainly be a powerful ally.

The Lady of the Swan Manor

To the north of the Manor lies the Forest and on its border the PCs will find Lady Roccacio, who lives alone in the Swan Manor. Of course, alone is a relative term when one discusses nobles – dozens of servants and a full company of soldiers live on the estate, but the lady has no family – her third husband returned from a war and died from wounds, leaving the soldiers sworn to the wife. She does not speak about her children.

A sense of doom and gloom permeates these shadowy halls and gardens, no-one cares about anything, people spend hours staring at nothing or doing the same thing over and over again. The lady, if she finds strength to leave her chambers, moves like a white butterfly between these somber figures, quietly urging them to do this and that, to take heart, not to give up – yet.

There are few servants left, most of them young and inexperienced, and no-one knows or remembers what happened to the old staff. Occasionally a soldier disappears, but it is assumed he or she broke their vow and left, so no-one searches for these "deserters."

And so they live on. Or perhaps just dream about living...

In your game: This is a mysterious location, obviously with a secret behind the strange behavior of Swan Manor's inhabitants. Is the Lady the one responsible, perhaps she is a vampire who struggles with her nature? Or is there something else, hidden in the forest? Or a powerful curse the late husband brought upon his lands? Make sure to emphasize the depressing feeling of the location: shadows of ancient trees, the house's dilapidated conditions, groups of soldiers sitting around unlit campfires, staring at their cards or endlessly polishing armor pieces. Play melancholic music in the background, speak slowly and sigh with sadness.

Whatever the source of the Lady's troubles, if the PCs manage to remove them they will discover that Lady Roccacio, though grateful, is a shrewd and skilled courtier and diplomat and she might not become their ally just like that, especially if you are using the Baron. She realizes she has to rebuild her power and keep the soldiers – her only current asset – at her side, and the Baron (or perhaps another rival of your PCs, maybe the main campaign's antagonist) might be a better choice for her.

The Abandoned Village

Located between the marshlands and the Dagfords' lands, at the foothills of the highest mountain in the area is what is left of the village of Prosperity. Founded half a century ago – with the overlord's blessing – by a group of ex-soldiers, Prosperity was supposed to be a gold mine – literally. But what gold was there to find was excavated in the first few years and then the village began to deteriorate. Now wind whistles around empty houses and rattles abandoned mining equipment for fun, to eventually plunge into the dark mouth of the mine. No-one lives here.

The Abandoned Village is an ideal hideout place for bandits, wandering monsters and the like. The mine complex may be as sprawling as you see fit – it may even hide a secret entrance to the Underdark!

The Marshlands

To the South-East, beyond the lake, the ground begins to flatten and turns into a vast swamp, full of frogs, snakes and lizardfolk, who have at least one village somewhere in the mists. They usually keep to themselves and villagers leave them alone too, but recently something has riled them up and some Reverites recall that the last time this happened it meant that Sithikurrosethan, the black dragon who sleeps in the swamp, has awakened.

However, the unrest among the lizardfolk has a mundane source: a group of smugglers and drug dealers, closely affiliated with the Zhentarim, have discovered that a rare herb grows in the Marshlands. The bluecap's roots can be used to create a highly addictive drug, but to do so, it must be made when the root is still fresh. The drug dealers set up a small outpost in the middle of the swamp and managed to divide the lizardfolk by supplying some of them with the drug and better weaponry. They also have a spy in Reverie and at least one another in Splendid, but generally they try to stay out of sight and venture from the base only when a shipment is ready and has to be delivered to the town.

Natarith Ter'malik, a charismatic and handsome elf, is the boss of this outfit. Under the façade of a friendly and caring person hides a ruthless and intelligent killer. He often travels to Splendid and back, pretending to be a harmless medicine man looking for herbs and helping those

in need, all the while making sure his operation in the swamp remains secret.

Short-tail is a very young lizardman who does not understand why suddenly his people started fighting with each other and why his first-clutch brothers are not in the village anymore, but moved on to live deeper in the swamp. Short-tail is desperate to see his tribe united again and is considering asking the hoo-mans from the non-water lands for help.

Sithikurrosethan is a black dragon who sleeps in a cave hidden in the swamp, or perhaps under the lake. He is a powerful reptile, but luckily he seldom wakes up and even if he does, he stays active only for short periods of time. But those who encounter him when he hunts never return home.

In your game: The drug dealers are not numerous, but know the lay of the land and are able to execute deadly ambushes. There is always a patrol on the lookout and each herb-gathering alchemist is protected at all times. Moreover, several dozen lizardfolk live in the area as well, creating an outer ring of protection around the drug factory. Attacking the place should not be easy!

The characters might not be aware of the drug dealers for a long time and you might want to seed the clues about their activity throughout the campaign: a youth from the village who got addicted to a new drug when visiting the town, the growing power of the underworld in Splendid, strange caravans sighted in the middle of the night, etc. And when the PCs finally confront the dealers, they should be given a hard to refuse offer of cooperation with the Black Network, which might secure their flank or even increase security in the region, but well... drug-dealing?



VII

The Baron

If you want to use the ideas from this book to enrich and extend your main campaign, the Baron is a good example of a local adversary and a source of endless troubles for the PCs. In a way, he is also another incentive for them to return home regularly and check what is going on in their lands.

Baron Henig Zandro and his family own a swath of land beyond the river Mudlet. He is rich, influential and ambitious, and currently – thanks to a discovery made in the mountains – his plans may come to fruition. He does not want much – only to become the sole owner of all the lands between his castle and Splendid, and eventually own the town as well.

He was about to move in onto Sleeping Manor's lands and claim them for himself, arguing that the neglected area on the way to Splendid attracts bandits and monsters, when news reached him that the PCs had become the Manor's new owners. He is not powerful enough – yet – to openly start a war and oppose the overlord, so he decided to bide his time, grow in power and see how the PCs cope with their new responsibilities, prodding and poking here and there to test their reactions.

The Baron's Might

A few months ago, while surveying a newly opened mine, the Baron discovered an ancient secret buried deep underground: the titanic body of a strange being, preserved but clearly dead, or at least devoid of any signs of life. It was soon revealed that the blood of this "god" has a number of amazing magical qualities – among others, it can heal wounds, temporarily make weapons and armor "magical," serve as a power source for gnomish contraptions and animated inanimate objects. And it was the last two qualities that the Baron decided to lean on: he is building an army of animated armors and metal

monsters, and his engineers begin experiments with bizarre walking machines and even think about flying ones. There are also attempts to "industrialize" production and eventually make people dependent on "the fuel," whose origins are a secret known to a select few.

For now he keeps these warriors deep in his lands, but some of the traders in Splendid talk about mysterious, metal-clad knights spotted beyond the river, and a wandering bard told a tale of a two-legged creature of metal and wood, with a human in a cage that washed up downriver. There are also strange lights and columns of dark smoke in the mountains to the East...

The Baron resides in his castle, for the shape and number of its towers called the Trident. A modest town surrounds the structure and the Baron's banners bearing his sigil (a trident) can be seen everywhere. Knights and soldiers are everywhere, and there is a large and well-organized army camp near the castle.

The Zandro Family

Henig Zandro is a bear of a man with a large beard and fierce whiskers. He is accustomed to commanding troops in battle and his deep, rumbling voice carries far.

People back away when he whispers – it means that bad things are about to happen.



He has always been a formidable warrior, especially when mounted, but ever since he discovered "the Fuelsource" he began dabbling in the powers he barely understands and his magical prowess keeps growing. He keeps these new skills to himself. Zandro does not take no for an answer and – when faced with a setback – he immediately begins designing new ways to get what he wants. And if razing a village or killing a child is this new way – so be it. His children are his only weakness – although he would never admit it, he is proud of his son and daughter and his spies regularly inform him on his progeny's accomplishments and failures.

Elena Zandro is a statuesque beauty, a work of art you admire but are afraid to touch. Although she does not really love her husband, she loves the power he provides and urges the Baron to become something more. Elena is a master manipulator who spent her youth in the king's (or the area overlord's) court, and knows all the key players in the kingdom. She hates interacting with commoners, soldiers, merchants and rude people; and thus, to screen her from such inconveniences, she always travels accompanied by four beautiful female bodyguards, called "the Muses," who are unfailingly loyal to her. Each Muse has a different specialty: archer, heavy knight, agile monk and assassin.

Marik Zandro – the baron's heir and only son – is a slim, bearded young man who never smiles. On his tenth birthday his father kicked him out of the castle and told him to return in 10 years "when he becomes a true man." No-one really knows what young Marik did during his journey, but when he returned on his 20th birthday, Henig took one look at him and embraced him, proclaiming him his one and only heir. Marik is a versatile fighter and spends several hours each day practicing with various weapons (including poisoned blades). When interacting with other people he is very polite, but one might sense that he seems a bit tired with all the talking and might actually prefer directness. For now he is content to do what his father tells him, realizing that the more Henig builds, the more will be left for him when father dies. Marik is one of the few

who know the secret of the fuel and is always accompanied by some or all members of his party, whom he collected during his travels, and which includes such individuals as a red wizard and a drow.

Clarissa Zandro is young and clueless. She lives in the world of wealth and knights, painting flowers in the garden and laughing with her friends. Of course, this is all a lie and perhaps Elena's greatest achievement – Clarissa, thanks to her youth, is even better at manipulating people than her mother. She is also a talented singer and actress with still not fully developed magical abilities. Clarissa loves her life but understands that for her father she is only a pawn in the great game of power, to be sacrificed in a marriage to some lord. She envies her brother his adventures, whatever they were, and looks up to Marik, even if he treats her like air. Clarissa is perhaps the only ally the PCs can find in the Trident and she will remain one only as long as they do what she wants, with her demands becoming more and more unreasonable.

Important Characters in the Baron's lands

Chief Engineer Lissa Valio was with the Baron, surveying a cave for a new mine, when they found the Fuelsource. And suddenly her life changed, her dreams come true as soon as she finishes making new designs. In her laboratory in the Complex she devises new ways the fuel can be used, not shying away from experiments on live subjects. She is completely obsessed with the vision of the future where machines work instead of people, not realizing the actual impact of her work on the outside world. When she was young her family was killed in a war, and she wants to create armies of constructs that fight instead of real people, who stay behind the frontlines during a conflict.

Nikaus Zen is the Baron's resident wizard and historian. He prefers to stay in his tower, but can be occasionally spotted as he travels, usually to the mountains and back, on his

flying carpet. Although he realizes that experimenting with strange beings that are neither fully dead nor alive is never a good idea, he is afraid of the Baron and does not want to lose his head and/or his position in the castle. Regardless, he began a private research into the Fuelsource and in secret sent letters to Waterdeep asking discreet questions about long-forgotten wars and gods.

Dhorguk Onyxpick is a shield dwarf who has recently become the Baron's most trusted advisor. He dresses in fancy clothes, his beard is always well trimmed and adorned with jewels, and he has a nice word for everyone, often tempering the Baron's unpleasant remarks. In reality he is a powerful warlock who seems to know more about the Fuelsource than he lets on and some people, especially Marik, begin to wonder about Dhorguk's true intentions.

Lariana Silvereye is a young half-elf priestess of Lathander, who recently became the new high priestess of the temple in Trident Town. It would be a great honor for one so young, except for the circumstances: one night the previous high priestess mysteriously disappeared and – when the Baron was asked to help with the search – he off-handedly appointed the youngest present acolyte as the new high priest. Lariana does her best and day and night prays to the Mornignlord to send her help or at least a clue regarding her predecessor's fate.

Yul the Kicker is one of the leaders of the rebellion, an anti-baron movement that slowly consolidates on the far fringes of the Baron's lands. Most of his village was taken to the Complex by strange armor-clad knights and – when he wanted to get help – he was almost killed by soldiers wearing the Baron's sigil. By travelling the land, he discovered other people whose stories resembled his own and who are hunted and depicted as "dangerous bandits," all of them from remote, now non-existing villages. Yul realizes that their movement is doomed if they don't get help from the outside so, against the odds, he travels to Trident and even to Splendid, searching for allies.

Important places in the Baron's lands

The Border

The border between the Sleeping Manor's and the Baron's lands is set on the river Mudlet. A nice, broad stone bridge connects the banks and a toll is taken for using it. The border is patrolled day and night and those caught without travel permits are escorted to the border, have to pay a heavy fine, are thrown into dungeons or disappear without a trace.

The Trident

The Town of Trident is an orderly place and it is clear that its inhabitants love their lord, who brings them wealth and prosperity. The townspeople have no idea what happens in the mountains or about the growing rebellion, and believe the Baron when he urges them to speak out about any illicit activities they might witness. Trident is a fairly large town, with a large temple devoted to Lathander and several smaller shrines for other deities.

Unfortunately, Splendid is better located and the majority of best trading deals there, so most do not like Splendid or

take place
Tridentians
people from
those supporting
the town –



a sentiment the Baron fully utilizes for his conquest plans.

The Complex

Far in the mountains, the source of Baron's wealth – and recently also his power – can be found: a silver mining complex, now perhaps the most secure and heavily guarded place in the general area. Roads are regularly patrolled and all non-authorized travelers are immediately imprisoned. Miners live in terrible conditions and many of them are prisoners or debtors. Unruly ones are shifted to the "Deep Section" and no-one leaves those dark corridors alive, for this is where the work to excavate more of the titan's body continues. Metal-men guard these halls, their heavy steps echoing in the darkness. Strange liquids bubble in wooden pipes installed along the tunnels and occasionally a tremor causes dangerous cave-ins.

Outside, a miniature castle has been built on a large rock outcropping – it offers an excellent view of the area and its walls hide what is going on inside from prying eyes. Constant hammering, clanking and the growing number of metal-men and beasts that regularly depart the castle may give an idea about the Baron's plans.

The Rebel Camp

The rebellion is still in its infancy and only a few realize that the Baron must be stopped. Those rebels never know if they are going to see the following day, since common people think they are bandits – soldiers hunt them, the Baron denies their existence. But despite the odds, their numbers continue to grow and – in need of a place to meet and plan ahead – they decided to set up a permanent camp. It is located in the forest on the far southern reaches of the Baron's land. It is a sparsely populated, wild area where monsters are as likely to kill a rebel as a Baron's patrol. The rebels are always ready to pack up and disappear in the forest, and the area is full of cleverly hidden traps and early warning systems. They fight only when they have no other option.

The Baron vs. the Heroes – Campaign Ideas

It is time to put all the ideas contained herein together, but a reminder is needed: these are just plot hooks and ideas, not an actual, full-fledged campaign, which should be personalized for your players and their PCs and should require additional work from the Dungeon Master. The Manor Campaign can be run as an interlude to your regular campaign, each stage happening between normal adventures, or as a separate mini-campaign should you wish so.

Stage 1: Meet the Baron

As explained above, the Baron was ready to "acquire" the Sleeping Manor to "stop the bandits who infest the neglected lands." He only forgot to say that the bandits were actually hired by him. When the PCs arrive at the Manor, they are greeted by a group of rough-looking fellows who claim the Manor is theirs and threaten to set it on fire should the PCs attack. If the PCs withdraw (and the villagers suggest getting help from the town), the bandits send a messenger to Marik, who waits with soldiers beyond the river. When Marik hears about new owners, he realizes that the rules have changed, goes to the Sleeping Manor with his retinue and kills off the bandits. Then he welcomes the PCs apparently happy to help – "he had been hunting these bandits for some time" – and invites the PCs to meet his father and family.

If the PCs manage to arrive within 12 hours of the killing, the Manor's windows will show them that the bandit's chief comes out to meet Marik as if they knew each other and they go into the house in friendship.

The first thing Baron Zandro does when he meets the PCs (assuming the mutual relations are still at least neutral) is offering them a significant amount of money or even a magic item to buy off their rights to the Sleeping Manor. The sum should really make your players consider the offer and depends on the wealth level of your campaign.

Stage 2: Cold War

Assuming the PCs refuse the offer, the baron will start his cold war campaign – he does not and can't kill them right off – such an action would discredit him in the overlord's eyes and he is not ready for an all-out war with all his neighbors. Instead, he pretends to be hurt with their refusal, but outwardly remains helpful, while collecting information about the PCs, which will take some time, during which the PCs might upgrade the Manor a bit.

The PCs should also realize that they are no match for the Baron and need allies. At this stage they should be visiting all their neighbors and try to gain their support. The Baron might be doing the same thing, too! He will sabotage their trade deals, his wife

and daughter will lure them with false promises, he will recruit a spy in Reverie (or maybe even one of the PCs!), etc. He will be getting ready.

Towards the end of this stage the rebels should have contacted the PCs, who might support their fight by providing supplies, trainers, refuge or even venture deep into the Baron's lands to see with their own eyes the strange metal creatures that attack remote villages.

Stage 3: Escalation

At this stage Zandro's actions become more direct, he just needs a provocation to legitimize his attack. For example, if a PC is seen helping the rebels, or the Baron has enough minor proofs of them being supported by the PCs – he will attack. If not, his soldiers dressed up as bandits will start attacking trade caravans and the PCs' supporters; the baron will also try to destabilize the town by supporting its underworld, blackmailing a councilmember, or both. He will also try to appear as a great benefactor, providing his revolutionary machines for free and knowing their users will be dependent on the fuel. Smoke-belching mills appear in the countryside, animated suits of armor start patrolling Splendid's streets, merchants come from afar to buy the fabled "self-propelled wagons."

Stage 4: War

Once Zandro has enough reasons to attack, or his patience runs out, his troops cross the Mudlet and converge on Reverie and the Sleeping Manor. Unless the PCs have an army of their own, probably cobbled from their allies' forces, their victory should be highly unlikely. Losing the battle, or even the mansion, does not have to mean the PCs' death (well... one of them could die heroically while covering the others' escape...): with the Baron's agents at their heels, they might run away to the overlord, or at the last moment discover the truth about the Fuelsource and – in the last ditch attempt – infiltrate deep into the Baron's



lands, to the Complex, and destroy the mine. Likewise, if they repel the attack and move onto the Baron's territory, he will first fall back to Trident, and later to the Complex, where he will try to hasten some experiments with blood, perhaps dying or perhaps becoming a truly terrifying enemy.

Stage 5: Finale

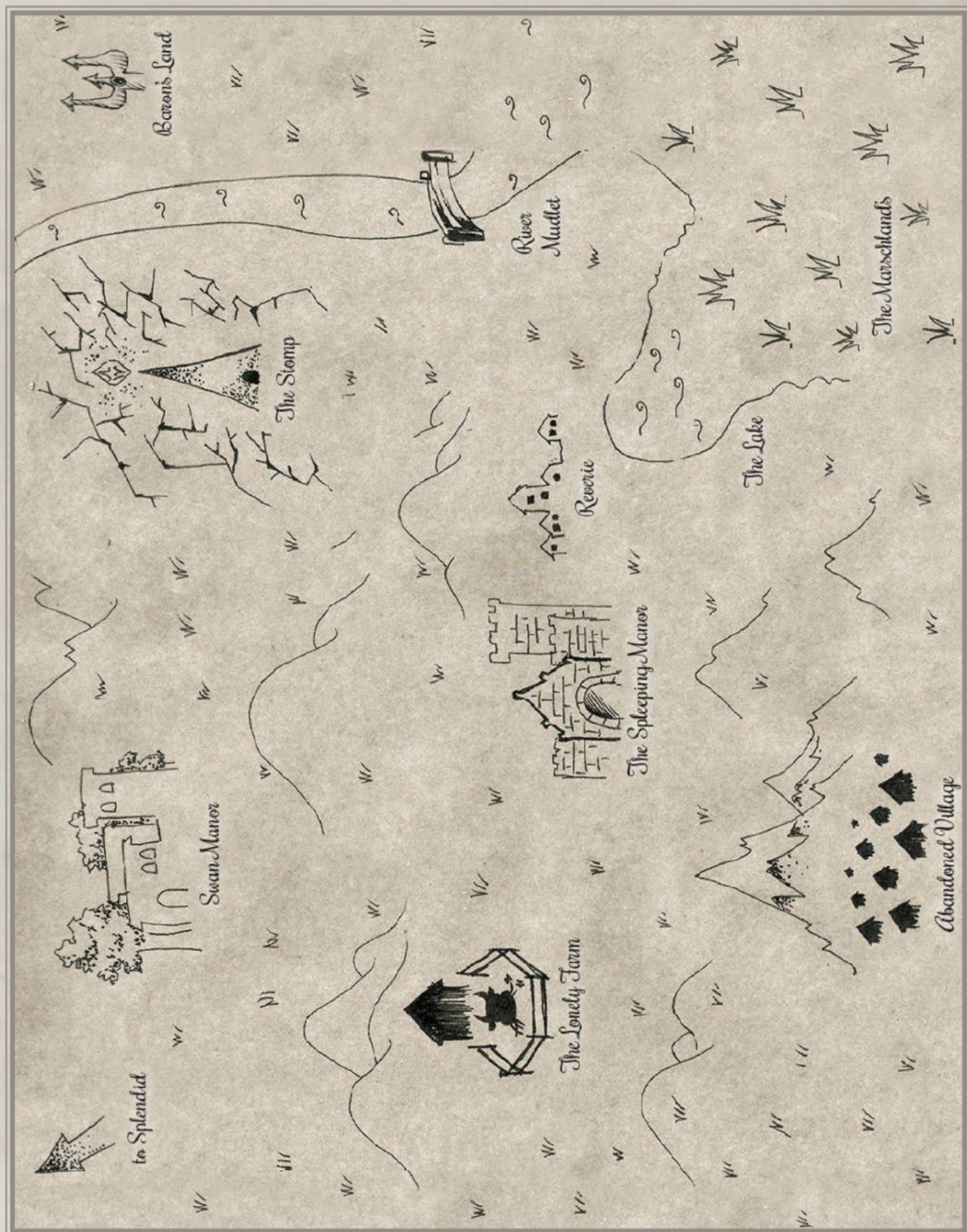
By this stage you should have decided about the Fuelsource's nature. Is it really a sleeping god? Just their body, now inhabited by echoes of its malevolent mind? In a truly epic finale the creature might wake up, destroying half the mountain in the process, the Baron might realize he was deceived and fight side by side with the PCs, only to die at the end a heroic death... If the PCs lost their fight for the Manor, this finale may happen years later, when they decide to return home – now a desolate land full of smoking chimneys and terror – one last time and punish the Baron once and for all.

Conclusion

Whether you use only selected parts of this book or the whole thing and all the ideas it contains, I sincerely hope they will make your games better: more interesting, more involving and more fun! I realize I only just skimmed the surface of the topic – settling in a house in real life is a game-changer, and the same is true for adventuring fantasy heroes. You might also consider scaling the whole thing down or up: the former – the Manor might be just a simple house, Splendid a village, the Baron a quarrelsome neighbor; in the latter case the PCs might own a real castle, perhaps one of them the ruler of a small kingdom? As always with role-playing games, the possibilities are endless and I hope this book has helped you to unleash your imagination.



The Map



The Bridges we Burn

A NUMENERA ADVENTURE

Janek Sielicki



Be sure to check my other title! *The Bridges we Burn* is an epic adventure for Numenera and Cypher systems, but it can be easily adapted to other games. Try it out!