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VILLAGE BACKDROP: CAHILL ABBEY





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VILLAGE BACKDROP: CAHILL ABBEY

Cahill Abbey was for much of its history a village of no special significance, a small community home to several dozen families who made a good living from the fertile woods and soil around them. But now a mysterious prophecy has brought the king's men to the village, determined to find and protect a promised saviour. Transformed by their arrival, the village struggles to hold on to its former way of life, unaware an old, long-forgotten evil stirs in the bowels of the ruined abbey that gave the village its name.

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CAHILL ABBEY AT A GLANCE

For much of its history, Cahill Abbey was a village of no special significance. Though its namesake abbey was long ago abandoned, the small community built to support it remained home to several dozen families who made a good living from the fertile hills around them and the bountiful Grayflash Creek. Though blessed with rich granite reserves in the nearby hills, the village's distance from nearby towns made it uneconomical to export the quarried stone.

Then, far from Cahill Abbey, the king's soothsayer was granted a vision promising the kingdom's saviour would come from the village. Unaware of any threat to the kingdom much less the need for a saviour, the king sent soldiers, ordering his men to protect Cahill Abbey, find the saviour and make sure he would fulfil his prophesied role.

To avoid bringing attention to his true purpose in the village, the king's agents, Heshia Kingseye, spread rumours of a darkness growing in the surrounding Morigain Hills. His troops, she said, were there to protect against this threat. Unwittingly, though, she echoed the events that led to the original abbey's founding and roused a slumbering evil

The villagers, oblivious to the soldier's true purpose, struggle to adapt to their new circumstances. The sleepy village's residents are outnumbered by their new guardians, and frightened by the supposed need for the wall rapidly growing to defend them. While some few welcome the increased opportunities the Royal Sentinels bring with them, most merely wish to slip back into the cosy, safe lives they had before.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler Heshia Kingseye

Government Overlord

Population 86 (60 humans, 2 elves, 9 half-elves, 11 half-orcs, 4 halflings); plus 120 Royal Sentinels and support staff (60 humans, 24 half-elves, 23 half-orcs, 5 gnomes, 8 halflings)

Alignments LG

Languages Common

Corruption +1; **Crime** -4; **Economy** -1; **Law** +5; **Lore** -1; **Society** -2

Qualities Insular

Danger 0; **Disadvantages** None

NOTABLE FOLK

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

Aongham Cooperstave (location 3; LG male human fighter 5) This Cahill Abbey native left years ago to join the Royal Sentinels, but now finds himself home training the local youths.

Brom Abbott (location 5; LG male human expert 3) The now mostly powerless mayor resents the disruption to his village.

Cadwinne Raighmane (location 4; CG female middle-aged human expert 2) The innkeeper is making the best of the village's new situation.

Heshia Kingseye (location 8; LG female halfling oracle [life] 10) The king's oracle has a single-minded focus to protect the kingdom.

Teehan Winberry (location 7; LG female elf expert 2) This longtime midwife and herbalist simply wishes to be left in peace.

Verun Reig (location 4; LN female human rogue 6/shadowdancer 2) This agent of the king poses as a waitress in Cahill Inn.

Yerris Lyedenbur (location 2; LG male half-orc paladin 8) The head of the Royal Sentinels would rather be almost anywhere else.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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

1. **Old Cahill Abbey:** Cahill Abbey's namesake was abandoned long ago; its original purpose is long forgotten.
2. **The Wall:** This half-built stone wall looms over the village.
3. **The New School:** This school was set up to ensure village residents were equipped with the necessary skills should they become the prophesied saviour.
4. **Cahill Inn:** The village's sole inn and tavern has seen business boom since the Royal Sentinels arrived, much to the landlady's (Cadwinne Raighmane) pleasure.
5. **Abbot's Goods:** This general store, owned by the descendants of the village founder, is Cahill Abbey's centre of commerce.
6. **New Chapel:** Despite its name, this humble church has ably served the village for decades.
7. **The Winberry Home:** Teehan Winberry works from home, where she also deals in herbal and other remedies.
8. **The Sentinels' Camp:** This Royal Sentinels have been more focused on building the wall than homes for themselves, meaning they continue to live in tents.

MARKETPLACE

Resources & Industry Light farming, light forestry

Base Value 500 gp; **Purchase Limit** 2,500 gp; **Spellcasting** 3rd; **Minor Items** 2d4; **Medium Items** 1d4; **Major Items** –

When the PCs arrive in Cahill Abbey, the following items are for sale:

- **Potions & Oils** *oil of erase* (50 gp), *oil of purify food and drink* (25 gp), *potion of sanctuary* (50 gp), *potion of cure light wounds* (50 gp), *potion of protection from evil* (50 gp)
- **Scroll (Divine)** *scroll of spell immunity* (700 gp), *scroll of order's wrath* (700 gp)

VILLAGE LORE

A PC making a Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (local) check may know something about Cahill Abbey. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser result.

DC 10: Cahill Abbey was a sleepy village until the Royal Sentinels arrived to defend it against some growing threat in the surrounding Morigain Hills foreseen by the king's soothsayer.

DC 15: The village was founded centuries ago by a religious order to support its namesake monastery. The order abandoned the site long ago, but the village remained.

DC 25: The Royal Sentinels keep a close eye on any visitors to Cahill Abbey, shadowing their every movement.

VILLAGERS

Appearance Natives of Cahill Abbey have broad, blunt faces, with pale, freckled skin, red hair and light-coloured eyes. The Royal Sentinels and their support troops are more varied, though typically have darker skin, hair and eyes.

Dress Natives of Cahill Abbey dress in simple peasant woolens, typically in shades of brown, gray or white, bringing out brighter garb for festivals. The king's men wear uniforms featuring a sky-blue tunic marked with the kingdom's sigil.

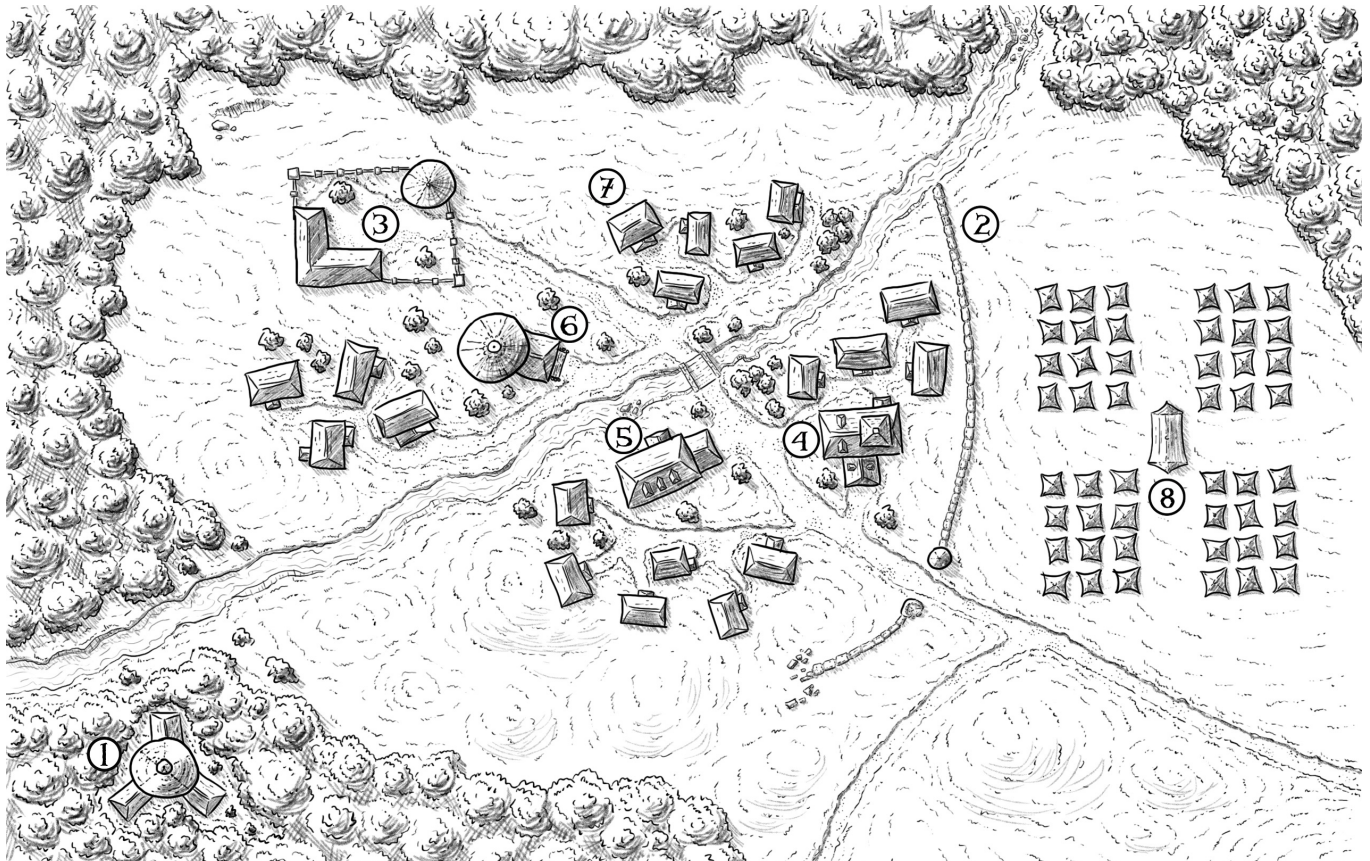
Nomenclature *male* Arawn, Hod, Meuril, Taletan; *female* Aderyn, Glane, Nie, Sioma; *family* Dellhill, Glascrick, Woodrugn.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A PC can use Diplomacy to gather information about Cahill Abbey and its surroundings. This takes 1d4 hours and requires a DC 10 check. A PC exceeding this check gains one additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10. Use the table below, to determine which rumour(s) the PC learns.

D6	RUMOUR
1*	A thrush woke Teehan Winberry moments before Calla Dewwet's husband summoned her for their child's birth. The thrush now follows Calla and the baby around.
2*	Can you believe Cadwinne Raighmane hired a girl to provide "companionship" for the Royal Sentinels?!
3	As a child, Aongham Cooperstave snuck further into the old abbey than anyone in a generation. He left the village shortly after and only came back at the king's command.
4*	Tif Dager saw some sort of demon bear last week in the Morigain Hills. (The huntsman's imagination made what was just a mangy ursine into something more sinister.)
5*	The king ordered no children under 13 could leave the village and that every child who comes of age must go to the capital for a year to personally serve him.
6	The Royal Sentinels were encouraged to bring their wives or husbands with them or to woo locals, and promised a 50 gp bonus for any children born in the village.

*False rumour



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: OLD CAHILL ABBEY

Centuries ago, rumours of a dark threat rising on the very fringes of civilisation led a religious order of monks and clerics arising to stop its growth. Unable to completely vanquish the threat, they locked it away, establishing first an abbey to keep guard over it and then a village to keep the abbey supplied.

The abbey survived for decades, growing into a solid redoubt as the religious community built the structure with fine granite quarried from the nearby hills. In time, though, the clergy became complacent. First they forget the reason for their vigil and eventually they abandoned the abbey altogether for homes in more comfortable and civilised places.

Today, the abbey stands vacant, an overgrown relic of days long past. Children sneak through ivy-choked doorways to claim they experienced the thrill of entering, and young lovers take advantage of its shelter away from the watchful eyes of their parents.

Yet some few delve deeper, into underground chambers no outsider was allowed to enter when the Old Abbey was still used. They return with stories of feeling watched by some unseen presence and of a cold miasma lingering on their skin. Some wake screaming in the night for days or weeks afterwards, suffering from horrible nightmares they can't remember.

2: THE WALL

The king ordered a protective wall be built around Cahill Abbey, sending engineers and workers to complete the work. Built from stone quarried in the surrounding hills—along with occasional magical help from Heshia Kingseye (LG female halfling oracle [life])—the half-built wall stands 10 feet high.

Yerris Lydenbur (LG male half-orc paladin 8), the head of the Royal Sentinels at Cahill Abbey, can often be found here, ostensibly overseeing construction. While loyal to the king, he resents being sent to what he considers a backwater part of the kingdom for a prophecy in which he puts little faith. He has no interest in the daily life of the villagers beyond what his duties require and barely manages to be polite to them; his attitude is even worse toward strangers, each of whom he considers a potential threat and the reason he's stuck in the village.

3: THE NEW SCHOOL

Heshia Kingseye (LG female halfling oracle [life] 10) ordered all children in the village to spend half their day at the school she began, getting their basic education as well as training in martial combat, magic and religion. The education is also secretly meant to indoctrinate the village youth to ensure the prophesied saviour willingly serves the kingdom.

Among the handful of teachers is Aongham Cooperstave (LG male human fighter 5), who grew up in the village but left after venturing deep into the Old Abbey as a child. He joined the King's Sentinels and was eventually ordered to return to train his former neighbours. He still has the occasional nightmare about the Old Abbey, and warns any from visiting the ruin.

4: CAHILL INN

This two-storey inn of hewn granite looks imposing from outside, but offers a warm interior decorated in rustic fashion with hunting trophies mounted on almost every wall. The inn saw little use before the coming of the Royal Sentinels, with only the occasional visit from a passing adventurer or wandering merchant to fill its rooms.

In the last months, however, innkeeper Cadwinne Raighmane (CG female middle-aged human expert 2) has had more business and made more money than during the rest of her 30-some years. Much to her delight, the steady flow of goods to support the Royal Sentinels has increased the number of merchants staying at the Cahill Inn and the gold flowing into her coffers. She has begun to think quite highly of her business acumen and (entirely mistakenly) considers herself quite the sophisticate. She has begun dressing more finely—unaware the fashions she's had brought in from the capital are well and truly out of date—and takes time to converse with any willing guests.

With little else to do in the village, many of the Royal Sentinels spend their off time drinking in the inn, and Cadwinne has had to hire help for the first time. Among those she's hired is Verun Reig (LN female human rogue 6/shadowdancer 2), a pretty brunette waitress. Ostensibly the younger sister of one of the Royal Sentinels, she is an elite spy for the king who keeps close tabs on any visitors to the inn. She doesn't hesitate to use poison to render a stranger unconscious so she has time to search a room or, in the worst case, eliminate a threat.

WHAT LURKS IN THE OLD ABBEY?

The Old Abbey is a potential site for adventure; what lurks below is open to interpretation and GM fiat.

A powerful evil outsider, such as a demon or devil, locked away by the original clerics would fit thematically, but the site could also feature a powerful undead lord—perhaps a lich, vampire or even mummy with levels in a spellcasting class—or some other threat just waiting to be unleashed after centuries of imprisonment on the world. Whatever the lurking evil's identity, its first order of business will inevitably be the destruction of Cahill Abbey and the death of all its inhabitants.

5: ABBOTT'S GOODS

This general store is packed floor to ceiling with a vast array of goods organized in haphazard fashion. Where it once did a trifling business, often closed unless someone specifically asked for something inside, business is now booming. Its shelves are stocked with all manner of common goods thanks to demand from the Royal Sentinels and the increased traffic through the village. This is a busy place.

Owner Brom Abbott (LG male human expert 3), traces his family line back to the founders of Cahill Abbey and served as the village's mayor before the Royal Sentinels arrived. Though he had few official duties, he was inordinately proud of his title, and resents being shunted aside by Heshia Kingseye. He's wise enough to keep quiet about his discontent but—in revenge—often adds a small surcharge onto his goods to those in the king's employ. Wandering adventurers may find him an excellent source of local gossip—as long as the gossip portrays Heshia Kingseye in a bad light.

VERUN REIG CR 7 (XP 3,200)

This pretty, short-haired brunette flashes a flirtatious smile as she swishes around the inn, deftly balancing a tray of drinks and food.

Female human rogue 6/shadowdancer 2
LN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +11 (+14 vs. traps), Sense Motive +11
Speed 30 ft.; **ACP** 0; Acrobatics +10, Climb +5, Escape Artist +9, Stealth +12 (hide in plain sight)

AC 17, touch 15, flat-footed 13; **CMD** 21; +2 vs. traps; Mobility, improved uncanny dodge
(+2 armour [+1 *glamered leather armour*], +1 deflection [*ring of protection* +1], +3 Dex, +1 dodge [Dodge])
Fort +8, **Ref** +9 (+11 vs. traps; evasion), **Will** +5
hp 60 (8 HD)

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +5; **CMB** +6
Melee +1 *dagger* +5 (1d4-1/19-20)
Ranged dart (range 20 ft.) +8 (1d4-1)
Atk Options Combat Reflexes, sneak attack (+3d6, slowing)
Combat Gear darts (6), *potion of cure moderate wounds*, oil of taggit (4 doses), blue whinnis (4 doses), giant wasp poison (4 doses)

Abilities Str 8, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 16
SQ rogue talents (coax information, hard to fool [2/day], slow reactions), trapfinding (+3), trap sense (+2)
Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Iron Will, Mobility
Skills as above plus Bluff +14, Craft (poison) +8, Disable Device +15, Diplomacy +12, Disguise +12, Knowledge (local) +7, Perform (dance) +9, Profession (waitress) +5, Sleight of Hand +12, Survival +6, Disguise +9
Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven
Gear as above plus belt pouch, 12 gp

6: NEW CHAPEL

This simple one-room wooden church was built after the Old Abbey was abandoned. Despite its name, it has been a centre of village life for decades, home to weddings and other celebrations, along with weekly prayer services.

It has been the recipient of much largesse since the Royal Sentinels' arrival, thanks to Heshia Kingseye's belief that encouraging villagers to be devout will ensure the prophesised saviour remains loyal to the kingdom. She has brought in new prayer books, cushions for the pews, golden religious icons and an ample supply of holy water.

Young Father Emlin (LG male human cleric 2) is quite overwhelmed by the changes to the village and his circumstances but continues to do his best to provide for his charges. Most of the Royal Sentinels attend to their religious devotions in their own camp, but a few attend events at the New Chapel. Whether that's out of genuine interest or just part of their keeping a watchful eye on the village is unclear.

7: THE WINBERRY HOME

This modest wooden building has been home to Teehan Winberry (LG female elf expert 2) for longer than most of the villagers (and Royal Sentinels) have been alive. It's filled with mementos of all shapes and sizes—gifts from families for the midwife's help in delivering babies. She remembers who gave each trinket and treats them all as treasures of incalculable worth. An addition in the back, with many windows to allow in sunlight, holds a wide variety of herbs, a side project of Teehan's for when she's not delivering children.

Teehan has little patience for the Royal Sentinels or the change in circumstances transforming Cahill Abbey, declaring to anyone who listens she's delivered hundreds of babes in her days and seen them live to a ripe old age without help from any meddling king's guards.

8: THE SENTINELS' CAMP

The Royal Sentinels have had little time to establish permanent lodgings, with Heshia Kingseye immediately setting them to protect the village. They live in a meticulously ordered tent camp not far from the village's heart.

Though many of the king's guards are of different races, use the Royal Sentinel stat block to represent a typical soldier. They are some of the most loyal forces the kingdom has and are all aware of the true reason for their presence in Cahill Abbey, though all are too circumspect to divulge it under anything but magical compulsion.

LIFE IN CAHILL ABBEY

Cahill Abbey was a sleepy, peaceful place until the coming of the Royal Sentinels and the ensuing (and extensive) building works. Many of the villagers are still coming to terms with their new lot. Still, essentially the village is peaceful and its folk friendly toward strangers and travellers.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Historically, Cahill Abbey was a simple, self-sufficient village, with more than enough to supply its residents, especially once it no longer tithed to the local abbey. Business is far brisker since the Royal Sentinels arrived. The old road, once barely more than a forest path, is now deeply rutted from wagons bringing regular shipments of food and goods to keep the guards supplied. Talk has begun about exporting granite once the village wall is completed.

LAW & ORDER

Cahill Abbey was always a small enough village that the biggest scandal involved farmer Raf Haraldson getting drunk and letting his cows wander. Now crime is nearly non-existent, with the Royal Sentinels keeping a close eye to make sure everyone in the village remains safe at all times.

ROYAL SENTINEL CR 3 (XP 800)

This soldier, clad in a sky-blue tabard marked with the crowned bear symbol of the kingdom, keeps a close eye on all around him. His glaive and armour are polished to a bright lustre.

Male human fighter 4

LG Medium humanoid (human)

Init +4; **Senses** Perception +7, Sense Motive +7

Speed 20 ft., base speed 30 ft.; **ACP** -2; Acrobatics -2 (jumping -6), Ride +3

AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17; **CMD** 19
(+7 armour [+1 *breastplate*], +1 dodge [Dodge])

Fort +6, **Ref** +1, **Will** +2 (+3 vs. fear)

hp 34 (4 HD)

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +7

Melee mwk glaive (reach 10 ft.; Power Attack [-2/+6]) +9 (1d10+6/x3) or

Melee short sword (Power Attack [-2/+4]) +7 (1d6+3/19–20)

Ranged shortbow (range 60 ft.) +4 (1d6/x3)

Combat Gear arrows (20), *potion of cure moderate wounds*

Abilities Str 16, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 12

SQ armour training (1)

Feats Alertness, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (glaive), Weapon Specialization (glaive)

Skills as above plus Intimidate +6, Profession (soldier) +6, Survival +6

Languages Common

Gear as above plus 15 gp

EVENTS

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

D6 EVENT

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Prince Hebrin arrives with a large entourage to inspect the village and the Royal Sentinels at the command of his brother, the king. |
| 2 | A woman goes into labour just as a solar eclipse begins, delivering a child at the very moment the sun returns from behind the moon. |
| 3 | A new section of wall collapses, injuring several workers, including some who are trapped under the rubble. The collapse is determined to be the fault of too shallow foundations, but Hesha Kingseye wanders if a newly arrived band of adventurers could have had something to do with the accident... |
| 4 | A group of rough mercenary adventurers arrive in town, having heard rumours of opportunity based on the king's sudden interest in the village. |
| 5 | Two children don't return after an expedition into Old Cahill Abbey. Their parents are distraught and beg any who'll listen for help. Unless the PCs step up to help, Aongham Cooperstave (location 3) volunteers to look for the children. He enters the abbey ruins and promptly disappears. |
| 6 | Farmer Raf Haraldson has a little too much to drink again and starts yelling at Royal Sentinels that they don't belong in the village. Nothing seems able to calm his drunken ranting. |

THE PROPHECY

The prophecy drawing the king's attention to Cahill Abbey is purposefully vague, stating only that the kingdom's saviour would come from the village. While the king and his men have interpreted that to mean the saviour will be a child born in the village, they're not guaranteed to be correct. It could be someone—say, a PC—who finds some measure of success in the village, setting him on the road to a greater purpose.

Alternatively, the king's reading of the prophecy could be correct, and a child (or even a newborn baby) could end up being of great import. Still, the PCs may have some role to play, perhaps protecting the child in some dire situation so she doesn't die before she can fulfil Heshha Kingseye's vision or otherwise shepherding her to her destiny. Even what she will provide salvation from is mutable—the darkness beneath the Old Abbey could become a greater threat, but perhaps something else lurks out there in your campaign that would better fill the role.

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