



Diamond Lake

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At a perfumed arcade known as the Emporium, Governor-Mayor Lanod Neff rubs shoulders with common laborers awaiting an appointment in the Veiled Corridor. In an adjoining antechamber, snakes and exotic dancers gyre to a sonorous weave of cymbals and seductive pipes. A floor below, a gaggle of grasping miners presses against the windowed door of a darkened cell, impatient for a glimpse of a two-headed calf.

Out in the street, a gang of rowdies screams obscenities at a crumpled halfling, kicking it as if scrambling for a ball. Their drunken laughter echoes off shuttered windows and bolted doors.

In a tower-flanked fortress across the shadowy square, filthy men with nothing to lose shout hymns to St. Cuthbert, clutching to their idealism and principles like cornered animals.

Their wild-eyed chief minister smiles as he draws a cat-o-nine-tails across his bare back, awash in their adulation and the spirit of his god.

But it's just another night in Diamond Lake.

The Age of Worms Adventure Path opens in the small mining town of Diamond Lake, where desperate folk toil in lightless depths for a pittance while corrupt mine managers live in relative largesse, ruthlessly scheming to undermine one another and protect their piece of the action. Most residents of Diamond Lake can be categorized into two groups: those with nowhere else to turn and those who have come to exploit them.

A garrison of sixty militia soldiers stands ready to defend the mines from bandits and rogue lizardfolk from the southern swamps. Rival cults share the

same flock of potential converts only because the timing is not yet right for outright warfare. They muster their forces for the coming battle. Things are not safe in Diamond Lake, and a right-thinking person would have every reason to want to get out of town as soon as possible.

Enter the player characters. In the Age of Worms Adventure Path, all of the players begin play as residents of Diamond Lake who share one common goal—escaping to a better life once certain financial obligations have been met. This motivation binds the party on its first all-important adventure, and the character of Diamond Lake, as well as the portentous events that will occur there, will resonate in the lives of the PCs throughout every stage of the campaign.

A detailed section at the end of this article provides suggestions on how to integrate the player characters into Diamond Lake and how to use the town as

a launching point for the Age of Worms Adventure Path (or any other D&D campaign). But first, unfold the map provided with this issue of *DUNGEON* and get familiar with your new home.

Diamond Lake in Brief

Diamond Lake nestles in the rocky crags of the Cairn Hills, three days east of the Free City to which it is subject. Iron and silver from Diamond Lake's mines fuel the capital's markets and support its soldiers and nobles with the raw materials necessary for weapons and finery. This trade draws hundreds of skilled and unskilled laborers and artisans, all hoping to strike it rich. In ages past, Diamond Lake boasted an export more valuable than metal in the form of treasure liberated from the numerous tombs and burial cairns crowding the hills around the town. These remnants of a half-dozen long-dead cultures commanded scandalous prices from the Free City elite, whose insatiable covetousness triggered a boom in the local economy. Those days are long gone, though. The last cairn in the region coughed up its treasures decades ago, and few locals pay much mind to stories of yet-undiscovered tombs and unplundered burial cairns. These days, only a handful of treasure seekers visit the town, and few return to the Free City with anything more valuable than a wall rubbing or an ancient tool fragment.

In the hills surrounding the town, hundreds of laborers spend weeks at a time underground, breathing recycled air pumped in via systems worth ten times their combined annual salary. The miners are the chattel of Diamond Lake, its seething, tainted blood. But they are also Diamond Lake's foundation, their weekly pay cycling back into the community via a gaggle of gambling dens, bordellos, ale halls, and temples. Because work in the mines is so demanding and dangerous, most folk come to Diamond Lake because they have nowhere else to turn, seeking an honest trade of hard labor for subsistence-level pay simply because the system has allowed them no other option. Many are foreigners displaced from native lands by war or famine. Work in a Diamond Lake mine is the

The Rival Adventurers

Auric (N male human fighter 5): The human gladiator Auric wears a unique red and black leather girdle topped with the representation of a haunted female face—the Champion's Belt of the Free City Arena. Auric fancies himself the leader of the trio, but he's very susceptible to Khellek's poisoned whispers and diabolical insight. Assuming he survives, Auric will later encounter the PCs when they do battle in the Free City Arena.

Khellek (NE male human wizard 5): This balding, dark-haired human wizard wears a high-collared red cape fastened with a skull clasp over a green jerkin and pants. His receding hairline reveals his advancing age, as do the white streaks at his temples. Khellek belongs to the Seekers, an untrustworthy organization of corrupt archeologists and adventurers

who seek knowledge regardless of the cost. He recently heard a rumor of a new chamber discovered in an allegedly "empty" tomb elsewhere in the Cairn Hills, and has maneuvered the trio to Diamond Lake to seek out similar riches. Conventional wisdom suggests that all of the cairns were completely plundered decades ago, but Khellek has never considered himself conventional.

Tirra (N female elf rogue 5): The vivacious Tirra is in the adventuring life for the money, and is a member in good standing with the Free City's notorious Guild of Thieves. The way the PCs treat Tirra in Diamond Lake will have implications later in the Adventure Path, when the PCs visit the Free City and get a chance to meet members of that guild face-to-face.

last honest step before utter destitution or crimes of desperation. For some, it is the first step in the opposite direction: a careful work assignment to ease the burden on debtor-filled prisons, one last chance to make it in civil society.

Despite its squalor, Diamond Lake is crucial to the Free City's economy. The city's directors thus take a keen interest in local affairs, noting the rise and fall of the managers who run Diamond Lake's mines in trust for the government. The city's chief man in the region is **Governor-Mayor Lanod Neff** (NE male human fighter 6), a lecherous philanderer eager to solidify his power and keep the mine managers in line. Neff exerts his capricious will via the agency of the grandiloquent **Sheriff Cubbin** (NE male human fighter 5), a man so renowned for corruption that many citizens assumed the announcement of his commission was a joke until he started arresting people.

The alliance between the governor-mayor and his pocket police might not be enough to cow Diamond Lake's powerful mine managers, but Lanod Neff holds a subtle advantage thanks to the presence of his distinguished brother, the scrupulous **Allustan** (N human male wizard 8), a wizard from the Free City

who retired to Diamond Lake five years ago. None dare move against Neff so long as Allustan is around.

Instead of scheming against the government, Diamond Lake's six mine managers plot endlessly against one another, desperate to claim a weakened enemy's assets while at the same time protecting their own. While they are not nobles, the mine managers exist in a strata above normal society. They consider themselves far above their employees, many of whom are indentured or effectively enslaved as part of a criminal sentence. The miners' loyalty tends to map directly to the working conditions, pay, and respect offered to the miners by their wealthy masters.

The most ambitious and manipulative mine manager in Diamond Lake is **Balabar Smenk** (CN male human rogue 7), a disquieting schemer who hopes to gain a monopoly on the town's mining patents by forcing his enemies into bankruptcy and offering to buy their claims at the last minute for coppers on the gold piece.

But Smenk's most dubious plots seem like petty crime in light of the current activities of another mine manager, **Ragnolin Dourstone** (LN male dwarf expert 6), a dwarf of formerly unimpeachable ethics who has fallen under the sway of a terrible cult called the Ebon Triad.



The Triad hopes to merge the deities Vecna, Hextor, and Erythnul (or three other evil gods appropriate to your campaign) into an unthinkable powerful overgod. A chamber carved in ancient times below the town might prove to be vital to this diabolical plot, but before the great god of darkness may take form, certain preconditions must be met. Most importantly, Ebon Triad liturgy suggests that the overgod may rise only during an era of darkness, decay, and writhing doom. This is the Age of Worms, and it's starting in Diamond Lake.

Diamond Lake (small town): Conventional; AL N; Population 1,023; 800 gp limit; Assets 40,920 gp; Isolated (96% human, 2% halfling, 1% gnome, 1% other races).

Authority Figures: Governor-Mayor Lanod Neff (NE male human fighter 6); Balabar Smenk, mine manager (CN male human rogue 7); Chaum Gansworth, mine manager (N male human rogue 4); Ellival Moonmeadow, mine manager (CN male elf bard 4); Gelch Tilgast, mine manager (N male human expert 6); Luzane Parrin, mine

manager (N female human rogue 3); Ragnolin Dourstone, mine manager (LN male dwarf expert 6); Sheriff Cubbin (NE male human fighter 5); Tolliver Trask, garrison commander (LN male human warrior 10).

Map Key

Diamond Lake crouches in the lowland between three hills and the lake itself, a splotch of mud, smoke, and blood smeared across uneven terrain marked by countless irregular mounds and massive rocks. The oldest buildings pack the lakeshore, where fishing vessels once docked and stored their impressive catches. That commerce has abandoned the town entirely, for the shining waters that once gave Diamond Lake its name are now so polluted as to make fishing impossible. Many old warehouses have been converted into cheap housing for miners and laborers, and no one is safe outdoors after dark. As one walks north along the streets of Diamond Lake, the buildings become sturdier and the spirits

of their inhabitants likewise improve. A great earthen road called the Vein bisects the town. With few exceptions, those living north of the Vein enjoy a much better life than the wretches living below it.

All of the town's social classes congregate in the Vein's central square. Roughly every two weeks, someone in the town upsets someone else so greatly that the only recourse is a duel to the death at the center of a ring of cheering miners. The book-makers of the Emporium and the Feral Dog do brisk business on such occasions, which tend to draw huge crowds. On less violent nights, the square is still home to a thousand pleasures and poisons; if Diamond Lake is a creature, the Vein's central square is its excitable, irregular heart.

The following short descriptions cover key locations found on the Diamond Lake poster map provided with this issue of *DUNGEON*. Note that several buildings do not have numbers, and can easily stand in for any locations not listed below.

The Mine Managers

Balabar Smenk (CN male human rogue 7): A corpulent elemental of corruption and bad taste, Balabar Smenk lords his political clout over everyone in Diamond Lake save the governor-mayor and garrison commander, whom he privately mocks. Smenk has wrestled four mines into his possession in the last 10 years, and has designs upon the rest. A coven of sycophants and hired goons surrounds him at all times. Rumors suggest that he has powerfully connected friends in the Free City.

Chaum Gansworth (N male human rogue 4): Diamond Lake's youngest mine manager is also its most cautious. He's sympathetic to the appeals of his paramour Luzane Parrin to join her and Gelch Tilgast in an alliance against the spreading influence of Balabar Smenk, but his inherent pragmatism suggests that even together they may not be strong enough to hold back the inevitable. Gansworth coldly views Parrin as a political tool, and would sell out the whole alliance to Smenk if he could only trust him. For now he refuses to take sides.

Ellival Moonmeadow (CN male elf bard 4): Regulars at Lazare's gaming parlor know this reclusive elf as "The Prince," since he is a minor noble from the distant elven realm of Celene, a land so fabled it might as well be imaginary as far as most of Diamond Lake's residents are concerned. Moonmeadow remains aloof from the affairs of the human mine managers, and sees their iron-based operations as more vulgar than his local silver monopoly.

Gelch Tilgast (N male human expert 6): Ten years ago, the aging Gelch Tilgast held the reins of Diamond Lake's ore trade, a position he'd enjoyed most of his life. Then Balabar Smenk and his

boundless ambition came to town. In his youth, Tilgast would have relished the challenge, but he didn't move fast enough to block Smenk's ascent, which has led directly to his own decline. Tilgast currently fuels enormous energy into building an alliance against Smenk that includes Luzane Parrin and a handful of weak mine managers from the neighboring towns of Steaming Springs and Blackstone.

Luzane Parrin (N female human rogue 3): As the yield of her mines faltered in the last decade, so faltered the fortunes of Luzane Parrin, inheritor of her mother's proud legacy as one of the town's wealthiest managers. First, a humiliated Parrin discharged her house staff. Then she scornfully sold her demesne to Balabar Smenk, who had rudely courted her for years despite the fact that she was married. Two years ago, her husband died mysteriously. She now clings to a hopeful relationship with Chaum Gansworth and a political alliance with Gelch Tilgast as the last defenses against Smenk's disgusting advances.

Ragnolin Dourstone (LN male dwarf expert 6): About 50 years ago, Ragnolin Dourstone left his clan home in the halls of the dwarven stronghold of Greysmere after intentionally collapsing part of his family's mines in return for a hefty bribe from a competing human mining consortium. His greed and lust for power drove him to establish several mining operations in the area, with the most lucrative centered in Diamond Lake. As his career improved he came into contact with a cadre of strangers from out of town, evil cultists who forced Dourstone to provide them sanctuary in one of his mines in exchange for their silence about his complicity in the Greysmere disaster. Exploration of this cultist stronghold comprises the bulk of "The Three Faces of Evil," the second Age of Worms adventure.

collection passing through Diamond Lake. The two soon joined forces, and a cavalcade of freaks and eccentrics moved into the building's lower floor. Thus was born Zalamandra's Emporium, and Diamond Lake has never been the same.

Upon entering, visitors encounter a small desk station manned by a grinning, businesslike attendant named **Gaspar** (N male human rogue 2). The thin, balding man smiles wryly at all times, a gesture accentuated by his upcurled moustache. The house charges three coppers for access to the "Gallery of Science" along the first floor's central corridor, and three silver for access to the lushly decorated upper floor, which features a large gaming hall, an exclusive entertainment club, and the infamous Veiled Corridor, where any pleasure may be obtained for the right price.

The private chambers of the Veiled Corridor are frequented by the community's elite, including the governor-mayor, sheriff, most of the mine managers, and several prominent merchants. **Zalamandra** (CN female human rogue 7) does not tolerate blackmailers among her staff, but nonetheless keeps a mental file of the predilections and preferences of all of her prominent customers, silently wielding this knowledge as an anvil over the heads of potential political enemies. That she has not yet been assassinated is a tribute to her considerable political skills and to the shielding influence of Professor Marat's motley assembly of living oddities.

Although the professor himself abandoned Diamond Lake three years ago, nearly a dozen of his former employees remain at the Emporium, making more money here than they ever did on the road. Foremost among these nonesuch is the affable **Shag Solomon** (N male quaggoth aristocrat 6), an aristocratic shaggy "wild man" from the northern pine forests. Solomon's vicious teeth and jagged claws contrast with his shabby gentleman's garb and cultured demeanor. When not on display, he frequents the opium lounge upstairs, where the wealthier patrons adore his clever stories.

1. The Emporium

Every week, hundreds of miners boil up from the depths, their pockets lined with freshly earned coin. The Emporium exists to separate the men from the money, and at this it is paramount among Diamond Lake's

diverse businesses. Ten years ago it was simply Zalamandra's, one of a dozen vice dens along the Vein. Its ill fortunes changed the day its charismatic young madam seduced Professor Montague Marat, proprietor of a traveling sideshow and curiosity

Other attractions include the misshapen contortionist **Tom Shingle** (CN male bog-gie rogue 4), the combustible magician **Ariello Klint** (CN male halfling sorcerer 3), a two-headed calf named **Esmerelda, Jr.**, and the alluring **Chezabet** (CG human female bard 4), who reads fortunes using a replica deck of many things.

The Emporium offers several rotating games of chance, with the most popular being dragonfire (an ante-based card game), norebonne (a polyhedral dice game), and a contest known simply as the Rat Game, in which four rats scurry to be the first through an open-topped maze. When the winner reaches the labyrinth's central chamber, an attendant injects it with a serum that immediately triggers a rabid frenzy. At this time, four doors built into the sides of the maze slide open, revealing four Tiny spear-wielding jermaline (*Monster Manual II*, 131). Patrons wager on all aspects of the ensuing melee.

Folk of all social classes flock to the Emporium throughout the day and night, so the place makes an excellent staging ground for a chance encounter with an important NPC. Because Zalambda tolerates absolutely no conflict within her walls, even sworn enemies must treat each other respectfully in the Emporium or risk the attentions of **Kurlag** (N male half-ogre fighter 4), the establishment's imposing bouncer.

2. Lazare's House

Those seeking a relatively cultured nightspot often congregate at Lazare's House, a cozy gaming parlor situated on the Vein's central square. In contrast to the ostentatious banners and garish chipped paint on the Emporium across the street, Lazare's exudes a quiet sense of class with a stylish stone and timber construction and distinctive crooked-peaked roof. Inside, Diamond Lake's elite match wits over dragonchess, a popular game in which two sides of 42 pieces contest over three 96-square boards representing the sky, the earth, and the underworld. Pieces include the griffon, sylph, oliphant, basilisk, hero, thief, and paladin. Scholars claim that the game is a metaphor for the celestial struggles of

fundamental law, chaos, good, and evil. In Diamond Lake, it's principally another justification for gambling.

A central hearth, constantly stoked to comfortable warmth by the courteous staff, serves as the hub of a roughly circular interior. Along the ring, eight alcoves offer an excellent location for private conversation or even romantic trysts. Each alcove is a half-moon of posh benches encircling a rectangular table bearing a special built-in dragonchess board. Visitors are expected to bring their own pieces, but may rent a house set for 2 gp. This fee effectively keeps out the riff-raff, making Lazare's a haven for visiting dignitaries and Diamond Lake's upper class.

A game of dragonchess takes a full hour and is played conversationally. Many casual players prefer the discussions to the game and play accordingly. Others dedicate considerable passion toward memorizing strategies and perfecting surprise traps and feints. To resolve a dragonchess game, both players make an opposed Profession (gambler) skill check. Characters with 5 or more ranks in Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate receive a cumulative +2 synergy bonus on this check for each appropriate skill. Wagers of up to 100 gp can be found on any given night, but most tend to be of the 5–10 gp variety. **Lazare** (NG male human rogue 4; Profession [gambler] +9) frowns on side bets by non-players, but not so much as to ban the practice. Some of the more avid players (including all of the mine managers and Lazare himself) politely refuse to accept the challenge of anyone who lacks their own dragonchess pieces, valued at 50 gp or more. The game attracts dilettantes and devotees, but the two groups seldom mix.

Lazare himself was a dragonchess champion in the Free City some 20 years ago, and used ample winnings gained there to purchase a mine in the hills northeast of Diamond Lake. He and his family moved to the village and a new life as mine managers, but failed to anticipate the desperate, appalling politics of the mud-soaked mining town. Within three years,

Lazare was all but bankrupted, forced to sell his mine to Balabar Smenk (whom the usually serene chessmaster still hates with undisguised passion). Lazare blames Smenk for the death of his beloved wife, who grew gravely ill at the height of the ownership struggle. Lazare cherishes his daughter, **Dannath** (NG female human aristocrat 2), who reminds him of his lost love and the stakes of Diamond Lake politics.

Lazare swiftly allies himself with anyone who makes an overt move against Balabar Smenk, but he does so cautiously and without fanfare. He summons them to his parlor for a private audience, during which he attempts to gauge their abilities and reasons for moving against Smenk. If his attitude is changed from friendly to helpful during this encounter, Lazare contacts the PCs a week later and again summons them to his establishment. This time, he takes the PCs on a circuit of the gaming alcoves, where he introduces them to Gansworth and Parrin. The female mine manager stays silent during the encounter, but Gansworth challenges one of the PCs to a game of dragonchess. If the PC manages to beat him (Profession [gambler] +5), he invites the group to his restaurant, the Rusty Bucket (area 25), to propose a formal alliance.

Another unusual patron is **Khellek** (NE male human wizard 5), leader of the trio of Free City adventurers currently exploring the empty Stirgenest Cairn outside Diamond Lake. Khellek makes a point to challenge any seemingly worthy opponent, using the game as a pretense to pump natives for information on nearby tombs. Khellek wears a simple silver ring on the third finger of his right hand. The face of this ring bears an eight-pointed star symbol, and is identical to the ring found on the finger of the ghoulish Ulavant in area 21 of "The Whispering Cairn." Both Ulavant and Khellek belong to a secret society of unscrupulous archeologists and pseudohistorians called the Seekers, and if Khellek sees a PC with the ring he assumes that PC is also a member. At the sight of the ring, Khellek arches



Kullen

his eyebrows respectfully and says "Revelation comes also in darkness." When the PC does not respond with the appropriate "Thus darkness is also light," Khellek grows suspicious and changes the subject, convinced that the PCs have stolen the ring from another Seeker. He begins pestering them about how they came across the trinket. If told about the Whispering Cairn, Khellek gathers his companions Auric and Tirra and sets out to plunder its riches for himself.

3. The Feral Dog

Since both Lazare's and the Emporium charge a small fee for entry, Diamond Lake's poorest laborers must turn to a collection of run-down ale halls with more sullied reputations. The busiest by far is the Feral Dog, a sleazy tavern on the Vein's central square. Every night and especially when the workforces of

several local mines let out at the same time, cheering laborers within the bar scream obscenities and wave betting vouchers over two dogs in a lethal pit fight. No one savors the tinny ale, but the place is more about camaraderie, bravado, and desperation than about expecting exemplary quality or service.

A gang of criminals indentured to the corrupt mine manager Balabar Smenk casts a broad shadow over the Feral Dog's squalid taproom. The patrons know from experience to respect the word of **Kullen** (NE male half-orc barbarian 3), the silently seething albino half-orc who leads the motley band with little tolerance for insolence and a powerful backhand. The PCs cross paths with Kullen and his subordinates in "The Whispering Cairn."

Arguments commonly erupt at the Feral Dog, especially during the dog-fights, when betting often grows contentious and even violent. About once a month, a drunk miner falls or is pushed into the thrashing dogpit, with predictably tragic results. During the worst brawls, someone usually gets knifed. A festering garbage pit in the sharp crags behind the building is said to hold the corpses of as many humans as dogs.

In addition to a rotating cast of criminals and oblivious visitors from out of town, the Feral Dog draws its share of thrill-seekers and scrappers, honest folk who thrive on danger and excitement. Among them is a sleek, self-assured elf named **Tirra** (N female elf rogue 5; +7 ranged attack) who flirts confidently with handsome patrons and who dominates all takers in the bar's contentious dagger tossing contest. Tirra makes pleasant conversation with anyone who approaches her, but she takes a real interest only in men who ask to join in one of her games.

The dagger contest consists of three rounds, during which an unlimited number of contestants take turns throwing a house-provided dagger into a large wooden target on a wall 25 feet away. The target consists of two wide concentric rings around a central circle. All players agree upon a common wager (3 sp is typical, but Tirra likes to push her opponents as far as she thinks she can). In the first round, each contestant attempts to strike within the largest ring, requiring a ranged attack against AC 10. Anyone who fails to do so is eliminated. In subsequent rounds, contestants attempt to strike within the inner ring (AC 15) and the central circle (AC 20). The last contestant to resist elimination wins the pool, with play focusing on the central circle until only one player is left.

Tirra befriends any character who at least shows promise in the dagger game, and confesses that she is among the adventurers from the Free City currently exploring the Stirgenest Cairn across Diamond Lake (see "The Whispering Cairn"). If a PC so much as mentions exploration of the Whispering Cairn, Tirra subtly invites the

character next door to Lazare's House, where she introduces her associate, Khellek. This encounter could trigger a rivalry that lasts throughout the Age of Worms Adventure Path.

4. Church of St. Cuthbert

Each of the establishments along the Vein's central square trade in the exploitation of human vice or false hope, and the tower-flanked Church of St. Cuthbert is certainly no exception. Within this austere stucco structure, the poorest of Diamond Lake's poor huddle in a torch-lit sanctuary listening to the fiery sermons of **Jierian Wierus** (LN male human cleric 7), a bombastic orator whose populist rants appeal to the best virtues and values of the common man while at the same time preying upon their fears and superstitions. Wierus endlessly preaches a creed of common sense, honesty, and self-sacrifice, encouraging his faithful to give penance to St. Cuthbert by whipping themselves in repetitive acts of self-mortification. His growing cult, now some 150 strong, gives succor to the dregs of Diamond Lake society and is seen as a menace by the town's mine managers, government, and other religious figures. Many claim that the flagellants seem to follow Wierus as much as they do St. Cuthbert, and it is only because the charismatic firebrand somehow keeps his followers from breaking the law that his sect has been allowed to thrive.

Wierus spends most of his time in seclusion, writing sermons and communicating with his god during intense self-flagellation sessions. Rarely, he pays a personal visit to Jalek's Flophouse (area 9) to evangelize directly with his flock, usually attracting a dozen or more new converts to his cause each time. Because he is so frequently absent, PCs visiting the church for healing must deal with a secondary acolyte such as the scrupulous **Hameneezer** (LG male human cleric 3), a hard-working cleric who manages the day-to-day affairs of the church facility and who can nearly always be found within. After religious ceremonies, Hameneezer often soaks the congregation's congealing blood into rags, which

are later sold as holy relics of the faith. Hameneezer and an assortment of 1st-level acolytes also offer healing potions and spellcasting services to the general public at standard rates. Members of the flock receive these boons for half price, so Cuthbert's faithful constantly drone on about the value of regularly attending church services.

Wierus performs three sermons a week; each fills to capacity at least an hour before the high priest arrives and is a rambunctious affair. Not all devotees whip themselves into religious fervor, but enough do that those who abstain mark themselves as outsiders. Wierus views new arrivals as thrilling challenges, and tailors his sermons to first-time visitors, urging them to join his growing congregation and reclaim Diamond Lake under the banner of community and strong values. "Dark times is coming," he says, eyes afire. "Writhing times. You best be ready when the clouds snuff out the sky."

5. Tidwood's

Sooner or later, characters looking to sell loot discovered in the Whispering Cairn will cross paths with **Tidwood** (LE male gnome expert 5), a cantankerous jeweler with a meticulously arranged shop located on the Vein's central square. Tidwood's is as close to a bank as one can find in Diamond Lake, and the gnome keeps several small vaults in the crawlspace below his workshop. He maintains an illusory collection of his finest gems in a showroom display case, boasting that his establishment is completely theft proof. A shield guardian named Festus helps to keep the gnome's theft-free streak alive with powerful stone fists and a constant focus on protecting the shop.

Tidwood hails from Grossetgrottel, a gnome warren several days to the northwest. He looks more favorably upon gnomes than upon members of other races, whom he considers oafish or overly delicate. He hosts 1d6 gnomish lodgers in the apartments above his workshop. These rooms enjoy an exterior staircase to the street level, and do not attach to the main-floor workshop.

The gnome jeweler charges a 5% exchange tax on all gems traded for

coins, and will buy non-gem valuables at 30–50% their true worth, depending upon the persuasiveness of his clients. Tidwood frequently paces upon the surface of his business counter, exclaiming that his customer's efforts to get a better deal will drive him into a debtor's prison. He reports news of any significant items to both Balabar Smenk and Chaum Gansworth, who keep the gnome on a retainer to look out for possible marks with more valuables than good sense.

6. Sheriff's Office

When a barroom brawl gets out of hand or when visitors threaten to upset the balance of power in Diamond Lake, Governor-Mayor Lanod Neff relies upon the discretion and agency of his private police force, assembled from a collection of corrupt watchmen gathered during Neff's youth as a watch captain in the Free City. Nearly all of them were drummed out of service in the capital due to some indiscretion, but each maintained a hold over municipal authorities (often in the form of potential blackmail fodder) strong enough to ensure that they were not bounced from the service entirely, but instead reassigned to Diamond Lake.

Led by a boisterous alcoholic named **Sheriff Cubbin** (NE male human fighter 5), the six thugs who comprise the constabulary see to the general safety of the town and ensure that Neff's schemes go off without a hitch. They take a keen interest in unusual visitors and in the dealings of the town's mine managers, Balabar Smenk and Gelch Tilgast in particular. The police don't care one bit about crimes committed against the mine managers' agents, but decorum insists that they persecute overt crimes committed against the managers themselves to the full extent of the law.

Should the player characters come into conflict with Sheriff Cubbin or his right-hand man, **Deputy Jamis** (NE male human fighter 3), they find the constables eminently bribable and subtly hostile. They like things the way they are in Diamond Lake, and don't appreciate anyone upsetting the balance of power unless their

actions explicitly benefit the governor-mayor. If the PCs kill a constable, they must contend with the fury of Lanod Neff, who presses Garrison Commander Tolliver Trask into helping him hunt down the criminals. Despite his misgivings about Neff and his strong dislike for Cubbin's cadre, Trask remains an agent of the Free City, and reluctantly agrees to assist the governor-mayor. Once the garrison has turned against them, the PCs find life in Diamond Lake extremely difficult.

The Sheriff's Office off the Vein's central square contains living quarters for all six constables and a twelve-cell jail filled with a motley assembly of drunks and maniacs. Picking the sturdy cell door locks requires a DC 15 Open Lock check. Two deputies (N male human fighter 2) guard the cells at all times, and can raise an alarm bell that summons two more within 1d4 minutes.

7. General Store

Running a successful business in Diamond Lake means avoiding entanglements with the constantly maneuvering mine managers and scrupulously avoiding favoritism (real or perceived). No merchant better understands this reality than **Taggin** (N male human expert 4), the amiable master of the town's largest general store. Tables line the walls within, stacked high with rope coils, lanterns, bottles, gloves, and gear. Wagon wheels rest against barrels filled with nails or candles. The inventory includes most common adventuring gear, and Taggin cheerfully offers to special order anything he does not have in stock from the Free City, a process that "usually takes about a week." He's even willing to procure especially rare items such as spell components for a 15% mark-up on the standard price. If a PC ever explains why he needs a specific item or makes any comment about adventuring or illegal activity, the handsome shopkeep holds out his hands and politely shakes his head.

Balabar Smenk



"Your business is your business," he says with a smile. "Wouldn't be right for me to overhear." Taggin is just shy of middle age, but dresses somewhat stylishly for his class. He has a handlebar mustache and full, receding blond hair. He treats women of any race with exceptional politeness.

8. The Hungry Gar

Guld Tortikan (NG male human expert 2), head chef at the Hungry Gar, claims to serve the finest meal on the Vein. He is mistaken.

9. Jalek's Flophouse

When the lake turned foul, Diamond Lake's modest fishing industry fled the town, leaving a wake of empty warehouses and bankrupted fishers. Some of these warehouses became stockades for

mine managers, packed with raw ore and letters of credit from the Free City and beyond. Others fell to ruin and became infested with squatters and addicts. Jalek's Flophouse, situated on Front Street within smelling distance of the lake, is the town's most famous warehouse, as it houses nearly a hundred pitiful indigents fighting off destitution with a handful of copper. A rotting wooden framework within supports a lurching, mazelike second floor, where every step brings an alarming creak and the walls thrum with muffled conversation. Lodging is 5 coppers a night, paid to a massive, helmeted mute named **Golot** (NE half-orc barbarian 3). The brute pummels those who do not pay until they flee or die. No one has an address at Jalek's—the room you have is the room you can keep. Most rooms lack doors, let alone locks, but the shifting inhabitants and the chaotic layout of the

upper floor makes it one of the best places to disappear in all of Diamond Lake. The landlord **Jalek** (NE male halfling rogue 2) lives in a rooftop apartment and is seldom seen. The Cuthbertine flagellant **Jieran Wierus** frequently visits the flophouse, where he recruits a growing tide of converts.

10. Smenk Residence

Balabar Smenk lives in a sodden old mansion a century past its prime. Three thugs (N male human warrior 2) patrol the streets around his home, warning anyone they see to go away with a sneer and the brandishing of a lead pipe. Despite these precautions, Smenk's front door is always wide open, fulfilling an old public promise that he would always be available to his miners. No one dwells within the wide halls beyond the front door, for three great bestial apes prowl the outer corridors, chained to a rail that runs through all the rooms, within reach of nearly everywhere. The dire apes attack all visitors who do not reek of Smenk's personal cologne, an odious needlefolk extract from the distant south.

11. Deepspike Mine

When former political allies in the Free City grew uncomfortable with their relationship with Balabar Smenk, they contrived to grant him the near-worthless deed to this failing mine, necessitating that he leave the capital to personally see to his affairs. Smenk swiftly squeezed the last ore from the mine and used the profits thus generated to launch an extensive black-mail operation aimed at consolidating his power in Diamond Lake by forcing other mine managers out of business and pressing his embarrassed friends in the Free City's government to re-assign the deeds to the failing operations to him. He now uses this abandoned mine only for storage and occasionally to disappear the body of a slain enemy. It is protected by a padlock on an iron door (Open Lock DC 20).

12. Garrison

Centuries ago, long before the foundation of the Free City, a petty lord commanded the shores of the lake and the nearby iron ore and silver mines from

a sturdy hilltop keep. Today, the refurbished ruin of that keep serves as home to more than 60 members of the Free City Militia, soldiers tasked with patrolling the northern hills, keeping watch over the lizardfolk-infested Mistmarsh to the south, and liaising with halfling, gnome, and dwarf communities in the region.

A third of the soldiers are always out on patrol, a wide circuit of nearby roadways and wildlands that takes them away from Diamond Lake for a week at a time. Remaining soldiers drill, maintain the garrison, hunt, and familiarize themselves with local terrain.

The bored soldiers present rich mining ground for a cadre of clerics and paladins of Heironeous, who provide spiritual and magical aid to the warriors from a stately chapel within the garrison fortress.

Captain Tolliver Trask (LN male human warrior 10), the garrison's aging commander, distinguished himself in a recent war and has the respect of his charges and of the community at large. He cares little about the day-to-day politics of Diamond Lake, and encourages his men to stay out of local business. He sees his job as critical to the defense of the Free City. Diamond Lake is just something that happens to be near his important work.

He supports Governor-Mayor Lanod Neff out of respect for the political process that put him in power, if not for the man himself. He trusts three advisors more closely than any of his other associates. The Heironean chief cleric **Valkus Dun** (see below) acts as Trask's spiritual advisor and foil. Trask's best friend is **Dietrik Cicaeda** (NG male human expert 4), the middle-aged Chief Cartographer of Diamond Lake. Cicaeda is the region's sole legal authority regarding issues of land ownership, making his journals and maps among the town's most valuable treasures. He and his work thus enjoy the official protection of the garrison's walls and soldiery, and remain safely locked away from the town's manipulative mine managers. Chief Scout **Merris Sandovar** (NG male human ranger 3), lately of the Bronzewood Lodge druidic community three hours northeast of Diamond Lake, rounds out Captain Trask's inner circle.

The complete garrison force consists of 60 soldiers (24 1st-level warriors, 24 2nd-level warriors, and 12 3rd-level warriors). Militia members typically wear leather or chainmail armor and carry a longsword or shortbow. This force is divided into thirds, with each squad led by a lieutenant. These individuals have the ear of Captain Trask and the admiration of their charges. They are **Dobrun Trent** (LN male half-elf fighter 6), **Mikela Venderin** (N female human fighter 5), and **Trovost Skunt** (LN male human fighter 5), who exploits his authority with regularity and aplomb.

The Chapel of Heironeous

Most of the guards and soldiers serving in the Diamond Lake garrison honor Heironeous as the patron of justice and martial prowess. The Invincible One's temple is little more than a large high-ceilinged chamber within the garrison itself, but it boasts the second largest congregation in Diamond Lake, as well as one of the village's most dynamic personalities in the form of its high priest, **Valkus Dun**.

Dun came to Diamond Lake two years ago, after the previous high priest vanished under mysterious circumstances. Local gossip holds that Dun once had great prospects in the Free City's immense Sanctum of Heironeous, but that politics saw him exiled to an assignment in squalid Diamond Lake. Nevertheless, Dun took to his assignment with zeal, and the weekly services have taken on an activist spirit. While the garrison commander urges his charges to stay out of local affairs, Dun instills in them a duty to the villagers and urges them to make a difference in the community. The resulting tension, between the garrison commander and **Valkus Dun** as well as between the Heironean soldiers and the disreputable elements of Diamond Lake (which is to say nearly all of them), is palpable.

A massive wall fresco of a mythic battle between perfect Heironeous and his traitorous half-brother **Hextor** looms over the chapel's bronzewood altar. The holy image is lit by dozens of guttering

seek an education and placing Lanod in a plum assignment with the city watch. Allustan soon found himself in the prestigious University of Magical Arts, where his apt scholarship and bravado caught the attention of a powerful master wizard named Manzorian, a dynamic figure who traveled with some of the most renowned heroes of the day.

Manzorian offered to take on Allustan as his apprentice, assuring him a life of thrills and discovery. What Allustan got was a window into a world of manipulative chessmasters willing to backstab trusted friends to honor abstract principles of balance and neutrality. Though he thrived in the company of Manzorian and his ilk, the politics proved too much to handle, and he split with the group more than a decade ago after a bitter ethical dispute. He retired to Diamond Lake only to find his inept brother in charge and facing challenges from all sides. So he remains, knowing that his presence supports a corrupt leader but unwilling to leave his family to the wolves. The same political disinterest that got him into trouble with Manzorian keeps him from seeing the worst of his brother's offenses.

Allustan offers his library and considerable intelligence to the citizens of Diamond Lake as a sage, although few miners have reason to seek his services. Allustan charges a standard rate of 20 gp per question. He does this more to sate his curiosity than for the money; gains from his adventuring days easily cover his modest lifestyle.

The old tombs in the hills fascinate Allustan, and were a primary factor in his decision to relocate to his childhood home. He hopes to make a long-term study of the cairns, and plans eventually to publish his findings in a small encyclopedia. Any questions the PCs bring to him about the Whispering Cairn immediately pique his interest, and adventurers who bring regular news of plundered tombs and traps avoided find him more and more welcoming with each visit.

After a few days of consulting his books, Allustan immediately identifies any ancient items or glyphs from the Whispering Cairn as artifacts of the Wind Dukes of Aaga, a

powerful pre-historic race of elemental beings who are said to have once dominated an empire that spanned worlds. Eventually, these paragons of law clashed against the Queen of Chaos, a primordial being of the early Abyss. In the great final battle on the fabled fields of Pesh (thought to be far to the north), seven of the most powerful Wind Dukes employed a weapon called the *Rod of Law*, that shattered even as it struck down Miska the Wolf-Spider, the Queen's demonic consort. The *Rod of Law* became the *Rod of Seven Parts*, one of the most legendary artifacts in all of folklore.

With a few days of study, Allustan can identify each of the glyphs found in the Whispering Cairn and can explain the significance of key frescoes within the tomb. As he learns more of this growing mystery, Allustan becomes more and more helpful, eventually assisting the PCs at no charge simply to learn more about the cairn. The Wind Dukes, he claims, were the oldest civilization to build tombs in the Cairn Hills. All of the other cultures have simply emulated their practice. The wealth in an un plundered Wind Duke cairn, he says with a subtle flicker of greed in his eyes, might be beyond calculation.

When the PCs first encounter Allustan, the wizard prefers to deal with them while walking around his grounds. A large tree stump in the front yard serves well as an impromptu table where Allustan frequently deals with patrons. After he has gotten to know the party he becomes somewhat less guarded in his approach, and invites them inside to his study. Hundreds of books stuff shelves built into each wall. A dragonchess board sits frozen in mid-game on a mahogany table, exactly as it was when Allustan's falling out with Manzorian ended their ongoing long-distance contest. Should a PC challenge him, Allustan presents his own set of intricately carved pieces. "Dragonchess," he explains, "is a metaphor for life and the forces that squabble for control of the world. Before you can win, you must know that you are playing the game at all."

19. Tilgast Residence

The grandeur of Gelch Tilgast's stylish estate far outstrips its owner's

current influence, which has been in free fall since Balabar Smenk first infected Diamond Lake. Tilgast maintains a family of seven fine thoroughbred horses within a well-managed stable enclosed in a stockade wall. Wealthy visitors and a few residents of the town pay 1 gp per day to stable a favorite horse within the compound, where a clutch of meticulous grooms tends to the animal's every need. One resident of the stables is Usare, a fine white stallion owned by the mine manager Luzane Parrin, whose mother was once Tilgast's greatest rival. Now the pair hatch plans in secret to protect themselves from Balabar Smenk.

The tendrils of this conspiracy reach as far as the neighboring towns of Steaming Springs and Blackstone, where allied mine managers work to thwart Smenk's shipping and supply lines using thugs disguised as simple bandits. Yet at home Tilgast has failed to attract the support of Ellival Moonmeadow, Ragnolin Dourstone, or Chaum Gansworth, all of whom remember a time when Tilgast was king of the hill and lorded his power over everyone else. Parrin remains his only shield against Smenk, and he will sacrifice her if need be. He'll do anything to preserve his power as long as he possibly can, even if that time can be measured in minutes.

20. Old Piers

In decades past, nobles from the Free City flocked to Diamond Lake to sail upon its crystal clear waters. Mine tailings, waste runoff, and other pollution ended the practice almost a century ago, but the rotting carcasses of once elaborate piers still jut into the lake's murky waters. A few masts peak out from the surface, tombstones of abandoned fishing vessels from more recent times. Regular fish cannot survive in the tainted waters, leaving only dangerous, hardy predators like the ravenous, toothy gar that have become such a problem in recent years. Those who venture across Diamond Lake do so at their own risk.

For a piece of silver, a retired marine named Durskin (N male human commoner 1) will ferry up to six passengers across the lake in his sloop, a

dinky vessel called the *Autumn Runner*. The destitute boatman lives on the deck of his boat, which smells of urine and teems with fleas and sea mites. Those seeking a safer passage must rely upon the *Harkness*, a ten-man sailboat maintained by the shadowy Cult of the Green Lady, who use the vessel to cross back and forth between Diamond Lake and the cairn in which their order holds its services to Wee Jas, goddess of magic and death. Passage on the *Harkness* costs 3 sp, and passengers must endure bothersome sermons on the exquisite beauty of death and the arcane prowess of the Dark-Eyed Lady. In either case, it takes about 30 minutes to cross from one shore of the lake to the other.

21. Able Carter Coaching Inn

The Able Carter Coaching Company connects the Free City to its satellite towns via a fleet of horse-drawn coaches and an inn positioned at every leg of the journey. Diamond Lake's hostelry offers 20 rooms for let at a rate of 1 gp per day. Stable services are available for a fee of 5 sp per day. Four guards (NG male human warrior 1) keep watch on the place throughout the day and night, and can be hired to ride with a coach for an additional 5 gp per day. The following chart shows travel time from Diamond Lake to other locations important in the Age of Worms Adventure Path. Journeys listed as "wild" involve at least one night in the wilderness, when the coach is a sitting duck for the numerous bandits who infest the hills and vex the garrison's militia.

Destination Days Direction Wild?

Blackstone	1	East	No
Blackwall Keep	2	East, South	Yes
Elmshire	2	North	Yes
Free City	3	East	No

Characters who begin the campaign as non-natives to Diamond Lake should start play as a lodger here, having recently arrived in town. Other notable guests include **Rontabont Mur** (CG male human rogue 4), a copper miner from nearby Blackstone who has come to town

at the invitation of Gelch Tilgast, who hopes to embroil him in his political alliance. Mur's boorish self-interest and whining, critical manner screams for attention at the inn's unremarkable on-site tavern, where Mur might come into petty conflict with a PC lodger. A permanent guest named **Fester Trollump** (N male human ranger 2) traps badgers in the hills and sells their pelts for a modest profit on monthly trips to the Free City. On rare occasion he traps more exciting beasts like griffons or manticores, which he personally takes to the Free City for sale to his wealthy patron, a menagerie-owning noble named Henway. Trollump is the only NPC in town willing to make a fair offer for the baby owl-bear rescued from the Land farmstead in "The Whispering Cairn," but the PCs must look for him (Gather Information DC 15), as he likes to keep a low profile. A rambunctious band of seven halfling tourists from Elmshire—the Curlyfoot party—currently dominates one wing of the inn. The vacationing merchants constantly chatter about incredible freaks of nature and acts of skill witnessed at the Emporium, or the succulent steaks at the Hungry Gar, or anything else that makes them stand out as easy marks for Diamond Lake's vigilant opportunists, con men, and thieves.

22. Parrin Residence

Luzane Parrin inherited her family's claim on three mines outside Diamond Lake when her mother, the influential Millicent Parrin, died nineteen years ago from a sickness called the Red Death. Only 17 at the time, Luzane grew up fast, adapting to Diamond Lake politics with comfort. Her inexperience got the better of her once Balabar Smenk arrived in town, however, and she's been scrambling to protect her assets and holdings ever since. Over the last few years, she has watched as her closest friends, allies forged during her mother's time, fell into bankruptcy or were killed thanks to the machinations of Balabar Smenk, who at the same time continued to press her on the romantic front. Her allies removed, Smenk began nibbling at the exposed belly of Parrin's mining operations,

stealing away a mine and several of her best-earning foremen and overseers. In desperation, Parrin has initiated an alliance with Gelch Tilgast and a romance with Chaum Gansworth, hoping either or both will protect her holdings and her honor (which is questionable at any rate).

Parrin once lived in the home now occupied by Balabar Smenk (area 10), but was forced to relocate to this shabby manor about three years ago. She employs an old friend of her mother's, an aging witch called **Amelliante** (N female human sorcerer 3), to keep watch on the house with a *wand of magic missile* at the ready. Her paranoia has deeply influenced her staff, which sees a dagger in every shadow.

23. Greysmere Covenant

Three prominent representatives of the dwarven stronghold of Greysmere, many days to the south across the treacherous Mistmarsh, live in this sturdy brick and timber structure. Greysmere imports some of the raw iron ore unearthed by local humans, as it bears a color prized by the most skilled artisans and metalworkers of the dwarven clans. **Dulok Blitzhame** (LN male dwarf expert 5) leads the delegation with straight talk and cunning pragmatism. Governor-Mayor Lanod Neff frequently invites the dwarves for meals and parlor discussions, and Blitzhame in particular shares a strong friendship with Ragnolin Dourstone (though he knows nothing of his affliction), from whom he gets most of the ore exported to Greysmere. The other councilors, **Galuth Grobadore** (LG male dwarf expert 3) and **Bitris Ruthek** (LN female dwarf expert 4) spend much of their time representing the interests of Greysmere in neighboring communities. The councilors' busy work requires a cadre of assistants and underlings, providing a perfect reason for a dwarf player character to be in Diamond Lake.

24. Gansworth Residence

In the 14 years since he came to Diamond Lake, Chaum Gansworth has remained in the background, never drawing too much attention to himself while quietly amassing a fortune from three very

productive mines. The first four years were the hardest, for Gelch Tilgast, then the most prominent mine manager in the town, did everything he could to thwart Gansworth's business. The doddering old pillar of the community now needs Gansworth to join his anti-Smenk alliance, but the younger mine manager remembers his early years in Diamond Lake all too bitterly to forgive and forget. He honestly doesn't know which side will win in the struggle between Tilgast and Smenk, but his current thinking is to betray his lover Luzane Parrin to Smenk, thus destroying Tilgast's strongest local ally, weakening him enough for Smenk to finish him off. But the plan changes every day, as do the enemies and allies.

Gansworth lives in the heart of Diamond Lake, at the end of a cul-de-sac marked by a memorial obelisk dedicated to the memory of a mine collapse 70 years ago that killed more than 300 miners. A low wall surrounds most of the two-story structure, and five loyal sentinels (N male human warrior 2) guard the compound at all times. Luzane Parrin spends about three nights of every week here.

25. The Rusty Bucket

This popular restaurant used to specialize in fish, but since the lake went bad it's been forced to adapt to a land-based menu. Within, green stained-glass windows filter eerie light into the main dining room, where the intertwining melodies of a trio of pipers enhances an ethereal atmosphere. Guests dine in a large common room, with a handful of nicer tables situated in a roped-off area beside the main dining hall. The far table, on a raised platform overlooking the private room, is reserved for Chaum Gansworth, Diamond Lake's most calculating mine manager and the owner of the Rusty Bucket. Gansworth rigorously pursues a neutral stance in all political dealings, afraid to expose himself to an enemy's treachery by making an overt move against one of the other mine managers. As a result, all of the town's major political players consider the Rusty Bucket neutral ground.

About the time the player characters achieve fourth level, they receive a summons from Chaum Gansworth to meet

him at the Rusty Bucket. The mine manager confesses to having monitored their progress, and gauges their interest in forging an alliance. After hearing tales about the PCs, Gansworth has decided that they might present the edge he needs. Once a friendly relationship has been established, Gansworth does everything he can to encourage illegal acts against the other mine managers, especially Balabar Smenk. As time goes on, Gansworth attempts to use the PCs as hired muscle, even concocting imaginary reasons to set up raids on a rival's manor or mining operations. Gansworth works with the PCs to plan these attacks in a secret library accessible through the kitchen. He pays well for each job and always has something new for the PCs to do. If things slow down and the players get stuck in a rut, spice up the campaign with a mini-mission of your own design orchestrated by Chaum Gansworth and planned over dinner at the Rusty Bucket.

26. Moonmeadow Residence

Unlike the other mine managers of Diamond Lake, Ellival Moonmeadow manages only one mine for the directors of the Free City. He has no aspirations beyond his current holdings, and seems oblivious to the machinations of his rivals, which he has survived for more than a century. Moonmeadow owes his longevity to a keen intelligence and a reclusiveness that offers few chances to become embroiled in local affairs. The only thing that brings him into the public eye is dragonchess, and even then he plays only with opponents capable of challenging his instinctive, complex style. The blond, well-dressed elf rarely consorts with humans at all, preferring the company of six gray elves (NG male and female elf fighter 3) who also hail from his homeland, the distant realm of Celene. These agents serve as Moonmeadow's confidants and protectors, constantly on the watch for trouble even when relaxing, always within arm's reach of a weapon. Decades younger than their master, these elves mix more readily with the folk of Diamond Lake, occasionally visiting the Emporium's opium parlor, Lazare's House, or Venelle's. Conversation with them leaves one with the impression that they think they're here on

a temporary assignment; that Moonmeadow's silver mining operation is merely a pretense for his presence in the region. If that's true, it's a ruse that's been going on for more than a century, for the elf has lived in Diamond Lake longer than any current resident.

Moonmeadow's sprawling manor surrounds a central courtyard containing a meditation garden, an ostentation of peacocks, and two green-and-brown-pelted cooshees named Kanemar ("Honorable Eagle") and Tatae ("Beloved Fox"), mated elven dogs who have accompanied their master since his days in Celene. A private covered dock leads to a slim boat capable of crossing the lake in 20 minutes. Swan motifs decorate the swift vessel. An elven player character might begin play as an assistant to one of Moonmeadow's lieutenants, an out-of-the-loop young elf charged with the inglorious duty of maintaining the swanboat and keeping it scrubbed of the lake's odious pollution.

27. Osgood Smithy

The distinctive "O" maker's mark of **Manlin Osgood** (N male human expert 5) is a regional sign of quality powerful enough that lesser blacksmiths in neighboring communities often forge it to maintain competitive parity. Osgood and his team of seven apprentices and journeyman smiths specialize in masterwork armor and household items like canteens, canisters, tools, and the like. Osgood is a somewhat coarse, unfailingly polite middle-aged human with a bald head and a walrus-like mustache. He always remembers a customer's name, and greets frequent patrons with a hearty handshake and a slap on the back.

28. Smelting House

A century ago, local mine managers maintained their own smelting houses, but constant conflict resulted in frequent sabotage that choked the flow of resources from Diamond Lake to Free City markets. The city directors reluctantly stepped in, monopolizing the smelting trade and basing the town's only smelting house in a massive fortress-workshop perched on the edge of the lake. Runoff slag belched from

great sub-surface pipes accounts for the majority of the pollution that has killed off most aquatic life in the region, and production these days is more robust than it has ever been. Five massive furnaces and great chemical vats crowd the building's interior, criss-crossed with shallow channels containing molten iron. Noxious fumes and scalding heat require special suits that filter the air and protect exposed skin. The rarely seen chief smelter, **Vulgan Durtch** (N male human expert 4/warrior 2), is one of the richest men in Diamond Lake, but few neighbors know anything about him. Durtch runs the place with a precision that requires his near-constant supervision over a team of two dozen menials and overseers, but rumors suggest more sinister motives for his seclusion.

A tower on the building's northwest corner serves as the residence and workshop of **Benazel the Alchemist** (NG male half-elf expert 6/wizard 3), a talkative chemist from the Free City who oversees the alchemical rituals and reagents necessary for the smelting process and who makes a minor fortune selling potions from his first-floor office. An upstairs door in Benazel's tower leads directly into the smelting house itself, and represents the most vulnerable point of entrance into the otherwise unassailable fortress.

29. Diamond Lake Boneyard

The town's overcrowded cemetery used to be a great source of bodies for medical students in the Free City and unscrupulous necromancers, but the Cult of the Green Lady has put a stop to that. Throughout the day, 1d4 green-robed acolytes wander the cemetery chanting songs holy to Wee Jas while tending graves and clearing vines and mud from stone markers dating back hundreds of years. Governor-Mayor Lanod Neff finds the cultists distasteful, but appreciates their vigilance. With the fanatics watching the boneyard, his boys at the sheriff's department can focus on more important things. Tales abound that one coffin in the boneyard—no one is sure just which one—contains not a dead body, but dozens and dozens of gold bars. Ample evidence supports the rumor, but

anyone who tries to test out the theory must first deal with the cultists.

30. Neff Manor

Governor-Mayor Lanod Neff's sprawling manor house squats atop the hill overlooking Diamond Lake, a tangle of scaffolding, wires, and workcrews. Protected by a wooden stockade wall, the manor houses the political apparatus of the town, including several meeting rooms, a courthouse, and numerous bedchambers for visiting dignitaries and (just as frequently) Lanod Neff's countless cronies and concubines. Several chambers within the compound are completely empty—Neff continues his endless construction projects merely to ensure that the size and grandeur of his home outpaces that of the mine managers, whose power and influence he jealously covets.

Visitation with the governor-mayor is by appointment only, with an audience sometimes taking 3d6 days to arrange. If the PCs cannot convince a minor functionary that their plea is important (requiring a DC 15 Diplomacy check), the request is simply never filed, and the orderlies politely tell the PCs to "keep checking back" without any intention of helping them in the least. Neff is Allustan's brother, so if the PCs can show that the wizard vouches for them (such as by presenting a letter to that effect or if they are in his company), a meeting can usually be arranged on the day.

Neff himself has little time for strangers, and listens to the PCs' appeals impatiently. He conflates the good of the people with the good of Lanod Neff with alarming certainty, to the point at which something that does not threaten him directly does not, in his view, threaten the community and is hence unworthy of swift action. He favors delaying tactics and excessive information gathering to direct action. Appeals to his vanity or sense of self-preservation have the best chance of success.

31. Dourstone Mine

This iron ore mine has kept strong for centuries, predating the formal establishment of Diamond Lake as a vassal of the Free City. Ragnolin Dourstone has managed the

mine since the very beginning, when he chose this spot seemingly at random. But it was the influence of an enigmatic being known as **The Faceless One** (NE male human wizard 6) that guided his hand, for Dourstone Mine stands above an ancient subterranean cathedral containing a magical pool of potent malevolence. The Faceless One and his cohorts in a cult called the Ebon Triad have dark designs upon this chamber that could spark the Age of Worms. "The Three Faces of Evil," the second installment of the Adventure Path, pits your PCs against this apocalyptic cult.

32. Abandoned Mine

It's been so long since this mine was in operation that nobody even remembers its name.

33. Menhirs

This worn old stone ring is often visited by residents of the Bronzewood Lodge, and is sacred to druids and rangers, a relic from a time when the laws of the wilderness governed man as well as animals.

34. Old Observatory

This crumbling abandoned observatory once housed an order of monks obsessed with the heavenly bodies of the nighttime sky. Now it houses a constantly rotating group of unusual tenants with ties to Balabar Smenk. The latest such tenant is a vile Free City necromancer named **Filge** (CE male human wizard 3), who came to town to help Balabar Smenk understand secret events unfolding below the Dourstone Mine (area 31). This location is described in detail in "The Whispering Cairn."

35. Dourstone Residence

This squat, well-protected manor is the home of Ragnolin Dourstone, who appears to be one of Diamond Lake's more responsible mine managers but in fact jerks to the strings of the Ebon Triad. His manor holds no evidence of the evil being committed in his mine, and any open confrontation against him risks drawing the ire of the governor-mayor, Gelch Tilgast, and Chaum Gansworth at the least. Even if presented with evidence of Dourstone's collusion with the cult, these community pillars insist that the

dwarf must be under some sort of compulsion (which he is).

Getting the Players Involved

Working with your players before the campaign begins is the best way to ensure a healthy and long-lasting game. Before the first session, ask the players what sort of characters they would like to play. Stay general, but try to get a sense of each player's preferred race and class, and use those details as the basis for weaving the characters into Diamond Lake and hence into the Age of Worms Adventure Path. The following suggestions ought to get you started, but don't be afraid to go in a completely different direction. The best choice is the one that makes both you and your player happy.

Dwarf: No dwarves call Diamond Lake home, though a few live there. Most have some sort of business with the Greysmere Covenant (area 23), perhaps as a guard, negotiator, or even magical advisor.

Elf: Right-thinking elves loathe Diamond Lake, as it represents everything elves find churlish and cruel about humans. Only Ellival Moonmeadow (area 26) and his deputies—exclusively elfen—seem to have the stomach for the place. A PC elf might serve as a guard or confidant of one of these deputies, or might be a deputy himself!

Gnome: Gnomes might be lodgers at Tidwood's (area 5) or agents of any of the mine managers. Those with a theatrical flair might find steady work with the Emporium (area 1). Most come from the nearby warren of Grossetgrottel.

Halfling: Many halflings in Diamond Lake work in the hospitality field, as a clerk, cook, or menial of some sort. Others are (relatively) wealthy visitors from the halfling community of Elmshire to the north.

Half-Elf: Half-elves might belong to the Bronzewood Lodge community (detailed in *DUNGEON* #125), or might live among the "civilized" poor of Jalek's Flophouse (area 9). They might find themselves in the employ of Ellival Moonmeadow, but soon become aware that the mine manager simply doesn't like anyone other than elves, and half-elves don't quite qualify.

Half-Orc: Half-orcs' increased Strength and low Intelligence makes them ideal miners or thugs, and Diamond Lake is filled to bursting with both. A more original approach might cast a half-orc as a roustabout or performer at the Emporium. The garrison does not employ half-orcs as a rule, and most soldiers despise them thanks to an ongoing war against an orc nation far to the southwest.

Human: Humans can fill any role in Diamond Lake, from the humble miner to the child of a prominent citizen. Most are laborers.

Barbarian: In the secluded valleys of the Cairn Hills, primitive traditions hold strong and humans at times seem more like beasts than like men. In the vast swamp to the south, wiry, feral humans fiercely contest small patches of dry land, narrowly holding out against lizardfolk and more horrible denizens of the murky marsh.

Bard: Bards looking for an interesting way to fit into Diamond Lake need look no further than the Emporium. Players looking for a slightly less debauched hook might make good performers at the Spinning Giant (area 15) or another unnamed venue.

Cleric: For the easiest fit, encourage the players to select Heironeous, St. Cuthbert, Obad-Hai, or Wee Jas as their deity, which will allow them to interact with a local faith. (Temples to Wee Jas and Obad-Hai just outside the town proper will be covered in *DUNGEON* #125). If those gods don't appeal to your player, consider the character an adjunct cleric "loaned" to an allied local temple or a lone prophet amid the common folk of Diamond Lake.

Druid: Druids fit perfectly into the Bronzewood Lodge community (described with Diamond Lake's hinterlands in *DUNGEON* #125), and might get into the campaign as representatives of Nogwier, the cleric of Obad-Hai who leads that community and who sends them into the hills chasing stories of unkillable undead and unnatural green worms.

Fighter: Most fighters in Diamond Lake are part of the garrison contingent, but a few work as muscle for the mine managers. For an interesting spin, consider making a PC fighter a dep-

uty serving under the corrupt Sheriff Cubbin (area 8).


Monk: Monks native to the Diamond Lake region uniformly come from the Twilight Monastery, an edifice located just outside the town and described in *DUNGEON* #125. A PC monk might befriend another PC before the campaign begins, making him an ideal invite when the other PC learns of the Whispering Cairn.

Paladin: The Chapel of Heironeous (area 12) regularly houses one or two young paladins from the Free City, who work within the garrison sanctuary as a lesson in humility on a path to bigger and better things within the greater church. A paladin beholden to St. Cuthbert or Wee Jas would be a minor figurehead in the cult, uniformly respected by the flock.

Ranger: Few rangers dwell within Diamond Lake, but the druidic community at the Bronzewood Lodge includes several who might have reason to regularly visit Diamond Lake. Other rangers might come from the wild tribes of the Cairn Hills or the Mistmarsh.

Rogue: Rogues are right at home nearly anywhere in Diamond Lake, but especially in vice dens like the Emporium or the Midnight Salute. Each of the mine managers sponsors at least one gang of toughs, making a rogue PC a great point of contact with the town's seedy underworld. For a compelling challenge, make the PC a gofer for Balabar Smenk.

Sorcerer: The Emporium is always on the lookout for charismatic exhibitors with a magical trick up their sleeve—the flashier the better. Sorcerers might also be affiliated with a street gang that frequents the Feral Dog or might be in the employ of one of the mine managers.

Wizard: Consider apprenticing wizard characters to Allustan (area 18), one of the central NPCs in the Age of Worms Adventure Path. Such characters will feel even closer to the action of the campaign, and will serve as excellent interlocutors between the party and their arcane patron. 

Next Issue: Diamond Lake's hinterlands, encounter tables, setting conversion notes, random rumors, and as many stat blocks as we can fit.