

The Perilous Wilds

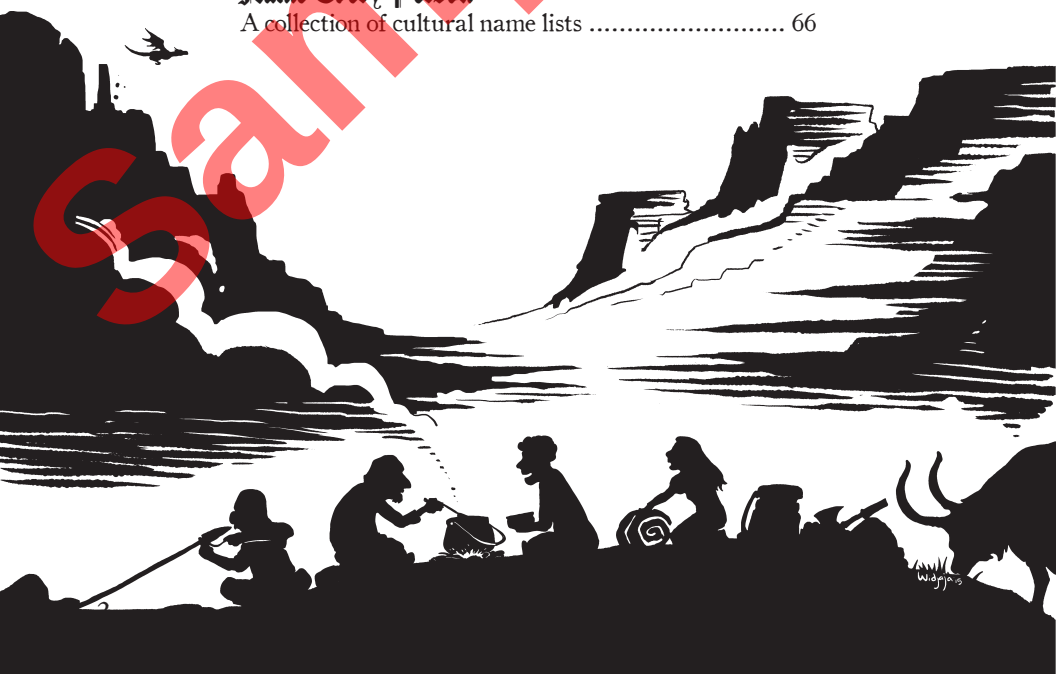
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Overland adventure
for *Dungeon World*



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Introduction

This supplement details a system for creating and exploring a campaign setting using the *Dungeon World* rules. As such, it presumes familiarity with those rules.

Herein you will find guidelines for building a world from scratch, fleshing out the geography of a preexisting setting, and/or exploring *terra incognita* on the fly; new rules for wilderness travel, exploration, and hiring followers; a system for generating random encounters; and a variety of other resources.

Many of these different rules are co-dependent, but not inextricably so. You should find it easy to choose which ones you want to incorporate into your own play, and which ones to ignore.

Ask, say, or roll

Underlying nearly every aspect of this rules supplement is a basic philosophy of collaborative world-building that can be summarized as “ask, say, or roll.”

A particular strength of *Dungeon World* is the way in which the Principle “ask questions and use the answers” shifts creative responsibility partly off the GM and helps players become invested in the world of the game. With that in mind, the first step of world-building in *The Perilous Wilds* is **ask**.

The GM should ask the players questions about their characters and their surroundings whenever she feels like it, knowing that every answer deepens the involvement of everyone at the table. Some believe that, in the interest of player immersion, the GM should only ask a player a question to which their character might conceivably know the answer; others treat any question as fair game, making the players and GM co-authors at close to the same level.



Wherever your group falls on this spectrum of play, if a question that demands an answer arises, someone (usually the GM) should probably ask it.

If there is no desire or call for a question, but the fiction demands advancement, it becomes someone’s job (again, usually the GM’s) to **say**: to use her knowledge of the fiction-to-date and improvisational instincts to flesh out the world, define the circumstances, narrate the next step. The GM need not be the ultimate authority, but does hold the office of narrative failsafe: the one who takes up the threads spun by everyone at the table and weaves them into the greater whole.

But when asking won’t work, the GM is at a loss for words, or the simple urge to mix things up is felt, you are exhorted to **roll**.

Rolling dice for moves is already integral to seeing what happens in a game of *Dungeon World*, and *The Perilous Wilds* adds more opportunities for rolling by introducing a host of randomized prompts to push the fiction in unexpected directions.

Because when *no one knows the answer* before the dice are rolled, the sense of discovery is heightened. And given its focus, this would be a poor supplement indeed if that feeling were not exploited to its fullest.

Learn the Language

A glossary of terms and tags

With new rules comes new terminology. This section explains the usage of many of the words used throughout this book.

The foundation of overland adventure is the **map**, a drawing or diagram showing the spatial relationships of different physical features in the game world. A map is divided up into named **regions**, which may, in turn, contain a number of **areas**, **steadings**, and/or **sites**. Regions, areas, steadings, and sites are referred to collectively as **places**.

A **region** is a large swath of landscape with a set boundary, or outline. The overall character of a particular region is determined by its dominant natural or political aspect. For instance, one region might be contain mostly a single terrain type—such as forest or desert—while another might be defined by its political border—such as a kingdom or barony.

The decision of what exactly constitutes a region in a given campaign is left to the GM and players; the main thing to understand is that regions break the map into distinct, manageable units, like spaces on the board in a boardgame.

Each region has an associated **almanac**, or written record of that region's contents, including tags, places, general impressions, obstacles, hazards, and anything else of interest. An alma-

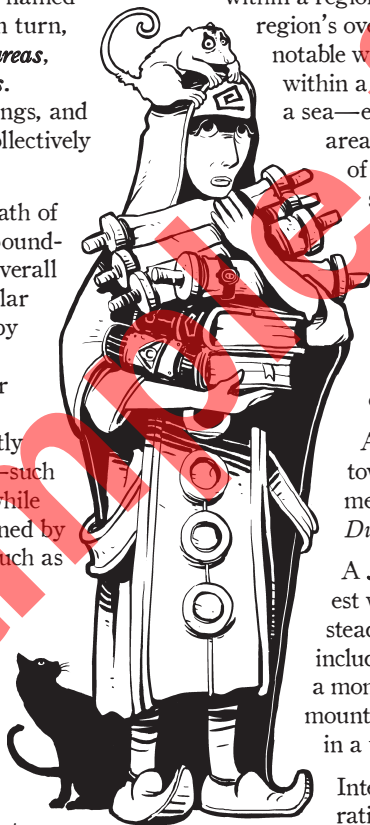
nac may be pre-written (by the GM or a third party), outlined during collaborative world-building (see page 10), or filled in by the GM on the fly. An almanac is a living document which can grow and change over the course of play.

An **area** is a smaller piece of geography within a region that stands out from the region's overall character in some notable way. A hunting ground within a great forest, an island in a sea—either of these might be an area. Areas are subdivisions of regions that can vary in size and shape to suit their contents. Like the region that contains it, an area may be described in that region's almanac, sketched loosely by the players, or discovered by everyone together.

A **steading** is a village, town, city, or other settlement, as described in the *Dungeon World* rules.

A **site** is a point of interest within a region, area, or steading. Examples might include a waterfall in a jungle, a monastery within a region of mountains, or a chieftain's hut in a village.

Integral to travel and exploration in a world of fantasy adventure are the things that make that world both fantastical and full of adventure. For purposes of these rules, these **encounters** are broken into two categories: **Discoveries** and **Dangers**. They come into play as a result of certain moves (see pages 25-27), or when introduced at the GM's discretion.



A **Discovery** is anything the party finds that is interesting, but not an immediate threat. It might be beneficial, like a freshwater spring; something worth investigating, like an overgrown ruin; or an obstacle, like a bog or chasm.

A **Danger** is anything which, if left unchecked, may be harmful. Traps and hostile creatures are the most common types of Dangers. A Danger encountered in the course of a journey may be incidental, or it may become a Danger in a larger Front, at the GM's discretion.

Place tags

Regions, areas, and sites may be assigned tags to help guide the fiction, just like equipment, monsters, and steadings. The list here is intended as a starting point, and should by no means be considered exhaustive. These tags are organized into general categories, arranged from most significant to least, to give you some sense of the kinds of ways in which a region, area, or site can be tagged.

On page 7 you will find an example of how a region can be defined entirely by a nested listed of places and tags.

CLIMATE

The first tag of a region is always its climate, three basic examples of which are given here:

Frigid: the coldest part of the world, often covered in ice and snow.

Temperate: mild, with temperatures generally ranging from warm to cool, and usually subject to the four seasons of spring, summer, fall, and winter.

Torrid: the hottest part of the world, including arid deserts and humid jungles.

TERRAIN TYPE

A region, area, or site is usually tagged with a descriptor that sums up its prevailing landscape or political organization. Since making a comprehensive list of such tags is impossible, offered here are just a few examples:

A region defined by a natural boundary might be *Oak Forest*, *Farmland*, or *Snowy Mountains*, while one defined by a political border might be a *Kingdom*, *Barony*, or *Tribal Lands*.

An area within a *Forest* region might possess the terrain type *Blighted Woods*, *Elf Hunting Grounds*, or *Rocky Hills*.

A site within a region or area might have the tag *Ruins*, *Cave*, or *Landmark*.

DANGER LEVEL

A given place usually possesses a tag which indicates how dangerous it is, and the travel moves defined starting on page 25 refer to "safe" and "dangerous" lands. Ultimately, the GM decides whether a given move qualifies as dangerous, but the *Unsafe* and *Perilous* tags are helpful cues.

Safe: A civilized land, refuge in the wild, or sanctuary, where daily life is relatively safe.

Unsafe: If you watch your back and travel in numbers, you'll probably get through unharmed.

Perilous: Here be monsters. Be vigilant, or meet your end.

ALIGNMENT

As characters in *Dungeon World* possess specific alignments, so may places on the map. While most parts of the natural world are considered *Neutral* by default, a civilized kingdom might be *Lawful*, orc lands might be *Chaotic*, and the twisted wood surrounding a necromancer's tower might be *Evil*.

OTHER TAGS

A place can have as many or few tags as its writer cares to add. Place tags can be thought of as a kind of shorthand for what might otherwise be paragraphs of descriptive text. Following are some examples; you are encouraged to invent more as needed.

Barren: lacks abundant water and fertile soil. Foraging (see page 25) on *Barren* terrain is difficult.

Blighted: cursed, poisoned, or diseased by some malicious force.

Civilized: possesses cultural, social, and/or economic infrastructure that has withstood the test of time.

Contested (____ / ____): claimed as property by two or more parties, i.e., “*Contested* (Hawk Tribe/Bull Tribe).”

Defensible: fortified or possessing natural defenses (cliffs, high ground, etc.)

Difficult: hard to traverse (swampland, dense jungle, steep hills, etc.).

Enchanted: imbued with arcane energy that causes some particular effect.

Holy or Unholy: blessed by some divine power or stained by blasphemy.

Property (____): owned by an entity, i.e., “*Property* (King John).”

Resource (____): contains a substantial amount of something valuable and extractable (gold, timber, crops, etc.), i.e., “*Resource* (iron).”





~ EXAMPLE ~

ABBREVIATED ALMANAC

This abbreviated almanac is provided as an example of how places can be tagged and nested within one another. In this case, the **region** is defined by a political boundary—it's a kingdom—as opposed to a prevalent terrain. See the following page spread for an example of a more detailed almanac.

REGION - OTTHON ("Home of the People")

Human Kingdom, Unsafe, Lawful, Civilized

AREA - COUNTY LAZLO

Farmland, Safe, Lawful, Civilized, Resource (marble)

STEADING - WHITESTONE

Human Town, Safe, Lawful, Civilized, Moderate, Growing, Guard, Religion (Tuzhela), Personage (Count Lazlo, High Priestess Antonia, Szabol the Smith), Enmity (Fenkin Village)

SITE - WHITESTONE KEEP

Keep, Safe, Lawful, Civilized, Defensible

SITE - CHURCH OF TUZHELA (Goddess of Home and Hearth)

Temple, Safe, Lawful, Civilized, Holy

AREA - HEARTWOOD

Forest, Unsafe, Neutral, Resource (game), Property (Count Lazlo)

AREA - THE FELL-FEN

Wetland, Perilous, Neutral, Difficult, Contested (Count Lazlo/Chief Yellow Eye)

STEADING - FENKIN VILLAGE

Fenkin Village, Perilous, Neutral, Poor, Steady, Watch, Religion (Vaank), Personage (Chief Yellow Eye, Swamp-Doctor Rillik), Enmity (Whitestone)

SITE - SHRINE OF VAANK (Salamander god of Wetlands)

Shrine, Neutral, Holy

SITE - BOGBEAST BURROW

Lair, Perilous, Neutral, Difficult

~ EXAMPLE ~
DETAILED ALMANAC

Chalkwood Downs

Temperate, Wooded Highland, Perilous, Neutral

Details

- * Severe, rocky hills
- * Jutting slabs of pale stone
- * Sparse, slender, white-leaved trees
- * Roots like snakes, reaching into rock
- * Knee-high yellow grass
- * SPRING: carpet of pale yellow flowers
- * SUMMER: Pale stone, blindingly bright
- * FALL: Leaves, black and drifting
- * WINTER: Ceaseless wind, like a knife of ice

Discoveries

AREA • SKYSPLITTER

Perilous, Neutral

A needle-like spire of rock, rising aberrantly from the surrounding downs, visible at a great distance, always further away than it appears.

- * What does local legend say about Skysplitter's needle-like appearance?
- * What are the roots of the mountain said to embrace?
- * What calls Skysplitter's peak home?

ENCOUNTER • MISSIONARIES

Good

A pair of priests escorted by four members of a holy fighting order, seeking to establish a shrine on the slopes of SKYSPLITTER.

SITE • THE RIBS

Unsafe, Neutral

A colonnade of curved white pillars resembling the ribcage of some great beast, half-submerged in the earth.

AREA • DELVER'S DEFILE

Perilous, Evil

A narrow ravine slicing fifty feet down through rock to a clear trickle of water. A desiccated corpse is wedged in a narrow spot halfway down. Upstream, the water emerges from a break in the rock that opens into a natural cave system. Something glitters in the streambed.

When you *venture into the caves of Delver's Defile*, roll +WIS: **on a 10+**, You find your way to the vein of precious metal deep within, but getting out is another matter; **on a 7-9**, you encounter a foul denizen or deadly hazard (ask the GM what).

SITE • THE TOOTHY STAIR

Perilous, Neutral

A natural stair ascending a cliff face, each step a sharp edge of rock that allows an easy to climb for the well-shod, but poses a potentially crippling hazard to anyone who loses their footing.

SITE • WHITE WALKER DEN

Perilous, Evil

Two large openings side-by-side in a rocky hillside overlooking a wooded vale lead into a set of caves which are home to a mated pair of WHITE WALKERS. During the day the creatures stay deep within; at night one or the other goes hunting. Amongst the detritus in their "trophy room" is the SEAL OF SARDOZA.

TREASURE • SEAL OF SARDOZA

1 weight, 200 coins

A stone disc one hand wide, carved with an ancient seal: a stag's skull wreathed in thorny vines. Of great value to collectors, historians, or scions of Saragoza.

Dangers

SITE • GHOST HOLLOW

Perilous

On warm mornings in winter and spring, thick mist fills the hollows and vales of the Downs. In one such depression, the mist grows so thick that it obscures the presence of a deep crevice narrow enough to leap across, but deadly to any who step into it unawares.

When you *cross Ghost Hollow on a misty morning*, roll +WIS: on a 10+, You notice the drop, and not a moment too soon; on a 7-9, you step into it, but you have a split-second to save yourself from falling to a fate of the GM's choosing. What do you do?

MONSTER • MARROWSUP

Horde

Damage Beak 1d4 (*hand*, 1 piercing)

HP 2 **Armor** 0

Special Qualities Winged

Gray-feathered carrion birds known to attack the wounded as well as the dead.

Instinct To feed upon death and injury

- * Swarm them
- * Savage a preexisting injury
- * Pierce to the bone, and hang on

MONSTER • WHITE WALKER

Solitary, Large

Damage Sickle-like claws 1d10+2 (*reach*, messy, forceful)

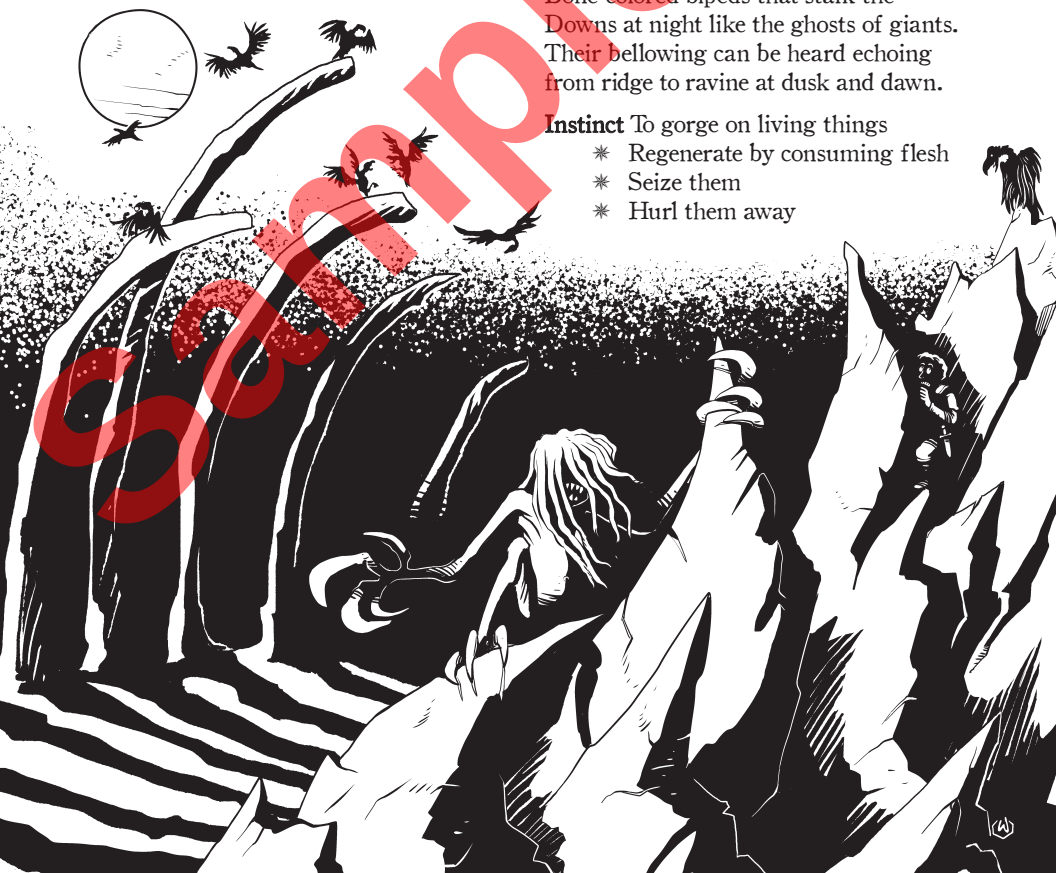
HP 16 **Armor** 2

Special Qualities Vulnerable to fire and sunlight

Bone-colored bipeds that stalk the Downs at night like the ghosts of giants. Their bellowing can be heard echoing from ridge to ravine at dusk and dawn.

Instinct To gorge on living things

- * Regenerate by consuming flesh
- * Seize them
- * Hurl them away



Draw the Map

Making the world together



A map of some kind is essential for overland adventure, and can be drawn on anything that works for your group: a blank piece of paper, a sheet of hex-grid paper, or even a bunch of index cards, with each card representing a different region.

Since all judgements of travel time and distance will be made by the GM on a case-by-case basis, an accurate scale of measurement is unnecessary. However, if the GM is a stickler for realism and consistency, you may find it helpful to use a hex grid for your map, and use a scale that fits your vision of the playable world (3 or 6 miles per hex is common).

You may wish to create your map at the start of your first session, so everyone knows the lay of the land before play begins, or you may want to “zoom out”

at some point after play begins, taking a break from the action to define the wider world. In any case, you’ll want everyone to have a character already, so their personal histories and goals can play into the making of the map.

The main thing a map needs to convey is the geographic relationship between different places (regions, areas, steadings, and sites). Specifically, it needs to show which regions are adjacent to which other regions, and roughly where known areas, steadings, and sites are located within each region. The relationship of these places to one another is important because the map provides physical context: it shows where the characters are in the world and helps them plan their movements from place to place.