

Cottington Woods Player's Guide

Part Three: Adventuring

14 Gear

“He who dies with the most toys, wins.”

~*Author Unknown*

Following is a list of some of the gear you might find or need to survive adventure in the Written World. These items can only be purchased in game, not brought to game. Geoffrey Hamille is the Cottington town merchant, and he or one of his staff will usually be around. All items may be purchased with in-game coins.

This list is far from complete.

Bottled Lightning

Men of Science always have a use for these items.

Spell Foci

There are usually a few magical foci at the shop.

Collectables

Because one man's trash is another man's treasure, Geoffrey always has a collection of trinkets that have no obvious worth.

Contracts

Folks are always looking for work. Geoffrey holds many contracts that can be purchased and used to perform some Between Event Reactions.

Feather Dye

Other than the occasional brer, no one really has a use for these things.

Grapple

A grapple is a hook that ties to the end of a rope, and is used to anchor the rope. Without a grapple, a rope cannot be secured, and upwards climbing is impossible without the use of climbing colds.

Healer's Bag

This bag is stocked with every bit of gear designed to make a healer's life easier. A healer with a healer's bag automatically drops 10 seconds from the time it takes to perform first aid from a target. The bag must be replaced or restocked each event.

Healer's Bag Restock

For slightly less than the cost of a complete healer's bag, the restock replaces just the bits that are missing. Purchasing the restock

Rope

Lengths of rope can typically be purchased at the market. The length is about twenty feet. Ropes are useful for climbing and for binding prisoners.

Well Fed

Eating a hearty meal will grant you +1 Body for the duration of the event.

Wire and Pliers

These are certainly not for making lock picks, because lock picks are illegal.

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15.1 Adventuring Notes: Climbing

"Just a reminder — a guidebook is no substitute for skill, experience, judgment and lots of tension."
—Charlie Fowler

Climbing requires the use Climbing Holds. A rope can be substituted for Holds. For a downward climb, the rope or holds are all that is needed. For an upward climb, a grapple is also necessary. In any case, because a climb requires the rope to be secured at the top (with a grapple or a tight knot), after a downward climb a rope is often lost.

How to Climb

Climbing requires that the character have three points of contact on the surface being climbed. That means only one hand or foot may be moved at a time. Securing the contact requires that the character leave the hand or foot in contact with the surface for three seconds before moving again.

Use of the **Climbing Skill** (See Chapter 12. 2) allows you to climb faster. Instead of leaving a hand or foot in contact with the surface for three seconds, the character only has to make contact before moving again.

15.2 Adventuring Notes: Swimming

The water is your friend. You don't have to fight with water,
just share the same spirit as the water, and it will help you move.
- Aleksandr Popov

Swimming is difficult, and progress while swimming is much slower than normal.

How to Swim

Swimming is represented using a Slow Walk, which requires that the character take a step, make a three second count, then take another step. Use of the **Swim Skill** (See Chapter 12. 2) allows you to move at a normal WALKING pace. Again, this is not a fast walking pace, just a normal one.

Fighting in Water

Fighting in water is also difficult. If you are under water, you may not flurry at all. The small weapon double attack may still be used, with the idea being that the attacker is stabbing and not slicing his target. The use of the Swim skill does not allow for faster combat.

Casting spells and using abilities while in water is very difficult. If the spell requires a verbal incant, it cannot be cast unless the character also has some way of breathing (and speaking while doing so).

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15.3 Adventuring Notes: Locks and Picking Locks

"I have six locks on my door all in a row. When I go out, I lock every other one. I figure no matter how long somebody stands there picking the locks, they are always locking three."
--Elayne Boosler

Expect the use of locks to be slightly more involved in Cottingham Woods than in other games you might have played. Rogues should familiarize themselves with the following section.

John's Philosophy on Picking Locks in LARP:

Just as we wouldn't field a fighter with a real sword to fight the PCs, or even a fighter with a wooden practice sword, we wouldn't use a proper lock and ask our players to pick it. There might be some exceptions, but only if we know the individual player well enough to know that they would enjoy such a challenge.

No in game challenge would require a player to know more than a basic understanding of how to pick the simplest type of lock, and *I believe that anyone can learn to pick such a lock in five minutes or less.* This won't give a player the ability to break into a house, or even into someone's luggage, but it WILL give them the know-how to pick the sort of lock you might run into at a LARP.

A General Note on Locks Found In Game:

Most locks will be encountered by themselves with no associated key, and to bypass them a player must pick the lock. Because there exist skills that allow a player to bypass the lock without needing to pick it, the lock will never actually seal a container shut, but will be attached to a container by an eye bolt or similar means. Use of the appropriate skill will bypass the lock.

Normal Locks

A Normal Lock can be opened using the Pick Locks skill, the Pick a Lock skill, or by using a "Normal Key".

Normal Keys

A Normal Key will open any one Normal Lock. A Normal Key will typically have one use before it snaps and becomes useless, and a Normal Key cannot be repaired. A Normal Key will not open a Difficult Lock.

Difficult Locks

A Difficult Lock will always have a tag indicating that it is a "Difficult Lock". This tag will include an identifying number. A Difficult Lock can be opened using the Pick Locks skill, the Pick a Lock skill, or by using the exact key that matches the identifying number on the lock. A Normal Key will not open a Difficult Lock.

Magic Locks

Some locks are magic, and cannot be picked using normal lock picks. A Magic Lock can be opened using Magic Picks, or by using the exact key that matches the identifying number on the lock.

Difficult Keys

A Difficult Key will only open the lock it is associated with. It will have an identifier on it that matches the identifier on the appropriate lock. A Difficult Key cannot open any lock except the specific lock it was meant to open. Unlike a Normal Key, a Difficult Key will not break upon use, and can be used over and over again.

Magic Keys

Magic Keys can open any Normal or Difficult Lock as if the user had the Skill: Pick a Lock. Such items are usually single use items, or have a limited number of charges.

Magic Lock Picks

These items are illegal, and usually only found in the possession of the King's Jacks. They may be used to pick any Normal, Difficult, or Magic Lock. Such items are usually single use items, or have a limited number of charges.

Further Complications

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There exist other, different types of locks, and while a typical rogue might always try to open them, they might not always have the means. Make sure to read any tags nearby. Remember, a good rogue will always find a way!

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16.1 Glossary of Terms

"Watch your thoughts, for they become words. Watch your words, for they become actions. Watch your actions, for they become habits. Watch your habits, for they become character. Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny."
--Unknown

Aaron Farraway The current High King of Farraway and the Houselands.

Adept, Sandman A sandman who specializes in manipulating his own abilities while in the Slumberlands.

Anathema Home of demonkind. It is a hostile place that is deadly to anything native to the Written World.

Archer A fighting man who specializes in attacking from a distance.

Architect, Sandman A Sandman who exerts control over the Slumberlands.

Asylum A town within the woods, near the Collamoore border. Asylum is a hospital for the mentally unstable and is the headquarters for the Sandmen.

Barumbi Basin A region of tropical jungle west of the Dust Lands, separated from it by a great escarpment. The House Lands have several settlements on the north and west edges of the basin, but most of the basin remains unexplored.

Bracken A goblin town on the border of UnderMarsh in Cottington Woods. Bracken is at least partially underwater, making travel there difficult for non-goblins.

Brawler A fighting man who specializes in fighting bare-handed. Usually a precursor to being dead or becoming an unarmed monk.

Brer An animal that walks and sometimes talks like a man. Also, pants. Brer, in every other way, are animals.

Briardown The capitol of the Heart Lands.

Canyon Lands The region east and south of the House Lands, described by a series of great canyons. The people of the Canyonlands can read and write, but they choose to pass their history and legends from one generation to the next by spoken word.

Carroway Fortress A ruin dating back to the time of the Robber Barons. It is expansive, built over a thousand years by baron after baron. Carroway Fortress is the current base of operations for the Riding Hoods.

Church of the Word The institutions dedicated to the study of the Written World and the works of the First Patron.

Club Lands One of the four House Lands in the Kingdom of Farraway. Also known as Collamoore, or the House of Clubs.

Codex A publication assembled by the Grimm Brotherhood. The codex is part bible, part adventurer's journal.

Collamoore See the Club Lands. Also the capitol of the Club Lands.

Cottington Woods A fairy enchanted woodland in the upper middle of the four House Lands.

Craft The talent that witches have to control the natural world around them.

Curren, Lord The first known Robber Baron. Credited with the invention of currency. Lord Curren is believed to have a hidden tomb somewhere in Carroway Fortress.

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Death At the end of your life, you die. A person can sometimes die a number of times before true Death claims him. The dead sometimes come back as undead. If not, they will often be drawn to a graveyard.

Death, True A person who dies and does not come back. This may occur any time a person dies.

Demon A creature of Anathema. Demons are unquestionably evil, and seek to undo the Written World.

Diamond Lands One of the four House Lands in the Kingdom of Farraway. Also known as Westall or the House of Diamonds.

Dust Lands A vast desert south of the House Lands.

Elf A human-like fairy-esque race native to Greencloud, east of Cottingham. They are extremely long-lived. They are at war with the goblins of UnderMarsh.

Empath, Sandman A Sandman who specializes in aiding others to gain control over their own dreams.

Fairy A being from the Fairy Lands.

Fairy Lands An otherworldly place that is connected to the Written World by the Mists.

Farraway The seat of the high King and capitol of the House Lands.

First Patron The author of the Written World.

Frostwroth The land over the waters to the north. Also the people who live in that land. The Frostwroth remain a constant threat to the people of Collamoor, and by extension to the House Lands.

Gant A giant ant, of course.

Gobaleen Mountains The range of Mountains northwest of the House Lands.

Goblin A humanlike race native to the Gobaleen Mountains. Goblins have green skin and are amphibious, but otherwise appear as humans. They are short-lived compared to humans. They are at war with the elves of Greencloud.

Golem A human-like being created through unusual means.

Graveyard The place you go when you die, and often, if you do not give up the ghost, the place where you come back to life.

Greencloud The mysterious land of the elves. No non-elf has ever seen Greencloud.

Greencloud Mountains An impassable mountain range that surrounds the elven lands, east of Cottingham.

Grimm Abbey Home of the Grimm Brotherhood. Also, the place where the Codex is compiled and published.

Wanderkin Any of a number of groups originating from the Dust Lands, but without a permanent home, who move about the Written World.

Halfway Once a way station for the Red-Castle railway, now the Halfway is an Inn on the south side of Cottingham Woods.

Harrier A fighting man who strikes hard and fast in combat, often from behind the target and with surprise.

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Healer One who heals the injured. Also a priest who specializes in healing through the power of Faith.

Hearth Witch A witch who specializes in controlling her environment, especially a home. Hearth Witches are unparalleled healers.

Heart Lands One of the four House Lands in the Kingdom of Faraway. Also known as the Heartlands or the House of Hearts.

Herbalist A person who studies herbs and their uses, and can create potions using herbs.

House Down Under The name assumed by the colonists of Lakupaparoo.

Houselander A person native to the Houselands.

House Lands The area under the control of the High King in Faraway. The Houselands include the Houses of Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts and Spades. It also includes Cottington Woods, The House of White in the Barumbi Basin, and The House Down Under in Lakupaparoo.

House of Cards The neutral forum used by the four House Land governments. The House of Cards existed from 1500 to 1700.

Invasion of Dreams The name given to an attempted invasion by demons of Anathema around two hundred years ago.

Jack An agent in service to the King of Faraway.

Kingdom of Gold A great kingdom that fell about a thousand years ago. It existed in the middle of the Dust Lands.

Laketown A town in the Spade Lands.

Lakupaparoo A land far to the west over the sea, colonized by the Houselands. The colonists have established the House Down Under. The House Down Under currently seeks recognition as a new house by the High King of faraway, and tensions are high between the House Down Under and the other houses.

Lands The various regions around the Written World. The word land is sometimes used alone and sometimes used as a prefix.

Example: House Lands and Houselands are both considered correct.

Lands, Inner Any land that exists on the Written World that could be reached by normal, non-magical means. These include, but are not limited to, the Houselands, the Barmmubi Basin, the Petal Kingdom, Frostwroth, Lakupaparoo, the Wikapapuji Islands, the Dustlands, and the Canyonlands.

Lands, Outer Any land that cannot be reached using normal means, or that is not connected to the Written World. These include Anathema, the Deep Black, the Slumber Lands, the Fairy Lands, the Death Lands, the Wonder Lands, and the Never Lands.

Magic Loopholes in the way the world works. Generally considered by the Priests of the Word to exist between the lines of the First Patron's works.

Magic The exceptions to the way things should normally work.

Magician One who studies and uses magic.

Man of Science One who studies the Laws of Science.

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Midcastle The capitol of the Diamond Lands.

Mind Illuminated An organization of Men of Science responsible for toppling the House of Cards over three hundred years ago.

Mists (in particular the **Fairy Mists, sometimes called the Change Winds**) An often invisible force or phenomena thought to be fairy in nature that causes “odd things” to occur. Typically this effects the time it takes to travel from place to place, but the mists have been known to effect other things as well.

Mount OverMarsh A mountainous ruin north of UnderMarsh in Cottington Woods. Once home to many goblins, Mount OverMarsh is now abandoned.

Oldwood The deepest part of Cottington Wood. Not much is known of Oldwood.

Paladin A warrior who fights with the power of Faith. Paladins are very effective when fighting demons or undead.

Patron A powerful entity. Patrons write events as they occur around the Written World. It is unknown whether the Patrons write things and then those things occur, or if things occur and then the Patrons write about them.

Point, also Silver Point or Gold Point A single unit of currency. Ten silver points equals one gold point. Also, paper money has been issued by the Church of the Word.

Priest of the Word A student of the Written World. See also Healer, Paladin, and Scholar.

Redbridge A town in the Spade Lands. Currently Redbirdge is the site of the new Grimm Abbey

Red-Castle Railway A series of railways crossing the three southern House Lands.

Redfeather Canyon The greatest of the canyons in the Canyon Lands. Also the name of the town that exists in that canyon. Redfeather Canyon is the cultural center of the Canyon Lands.

Restless Dead The body of a dead person that has animated and seeks to harm the living.

Riding Hood A warden of the forest. Once an organization backed by the king of Faraway, now the Riding Hoods act on their own. The officers of the Riding Hoods wear red hoods to mark their station.

Ritualist A type of magician who specializes in the slow use of magic and the creation of magical items.

Robber Barons A term used to define the hundreds of kingdoms that rose and fell across the land from before the beginning of recorded history until about 1500.

Rollinghill See the Spade Lands.

Sandman One who remains lucid while dreaming, and has some control over her dreams.

Scholar One who studies. Also, a priest who specializes in collecting, verifying and studying written works.

Science, the Laws of Science The rules, rituals and patterns that make sense of the world. Science is a fading art, and is out of favor in the world today.

Skinchanger A witch who is able to become an animal. Skinchangers are generally feared.

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Slumberland The Place of Dreams. Dreams can be created, but never destroyed, and the Slumber Lands are the sum of every dream that was ever had.

Spade Lands One of the four House Lands in the Kingdom of Faraway. Also known as Rollinghill or the House of Spades.

TaidenSheh A kingdom east of the Canyon Lands and Greencloud. Also called the Petal Kingdom.

Terrors (Night Terrors) The horrifying fears beneath the Slumberland that seek to consume all dreams.

Thornwall An elven town east of Cottington. Thornwall is on an island, and is as far into the elven land of Greencloud as any non-elf has ever gone.

Trace The Capitol of the Spade Lands.

Troglodyte A humanoid race that dwells deep beneath the ground. Troglodytes are also called Trog.

Undead Anything that was once living, but died and is animate again. The Restless Dead are the most common form of undead, but other forms (ghosts, ghouls, vampires, etc.) exist.

UnderMarsh A boggy wetland in northwest Cottington Woods, just this side of the Gobaleen Mountains.

Virtue Faraway The daughter of the current high king.

Very Bad Bargain A term used to describe a bargain between Queen Equiline Faraway and a fairy, which resulted in the loss of every horse in the House Lands.

Warrior A fighting man who specializes in close combat.

Westall See the Diamond Lands.

Witch A person who is attuned to the force of nature, and usually is in harmony with his environment. See also Hearthwitch, Woodwitch, and Skinchanger.

Word, The The teachings of the First Patron. The term “word” is synonymous with “Knowledge” or “Truth”.

Wolf A type of hostile animal that is common to Cottington Woods. Also, the first written word.

Woodwitch A witch who is especially in tune with the natural world around her.

Written World The world.

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16.2 Once Upon a Time, A Brief History of the World

"If a thing is not written, it never happened."
-unknown Patron

Wolf

Before the Robber Barons and the rise of man, wolves roamed and ruled the wild places of Cottington Woods. The first word was written. The word was wolf, and it was carved into stone as a warning to travelers who walked within the woods. That stone sits in the center of Cottington Woods.

0: The Robber Barons

The first tales of men did not discuss towns or armies. Men did not dress in finery, and the words they used were simple words. They were set apart from the animals by their ability to read and write. They were smarter, and they learned that when they gathered in numbers they were stronger. The time of the Robber Barons began. Of course they were not all robbers, and the first among them were not called barons, but, perhaps learning from the wolves, the stronger did command the weaker and took what they needed to survive.

Over the fifteen hundred years of their rule in and around Cottington Woods the Robber Barons made and lost hundreds of tiny kingdoms, and created the foundation of what would later become the four Houselands.

Battling the Things that Go Bump in the Night

Men were afraid of the things in the dark. Often those things were other men, but just as often they were other things, terrible things like creatures of fairy or demons or the dead. To fight the darkness, men assembled a collection of rules, rituals and patterns that, when put together, caused effects to come to pass, every time, in the exact same way. The name they gave to these rules, rituals and patterns was the Laws of Science.

Lord Curren and the Love of Money

Lord Curren was the first known Robber Baron. A volatile man, he was also well known for the fairness with which he treated his men. Curren had five lieutenants, each as greedy as himself. It occurred that they acquired a small fortune in gold, and there came the question of how to split it equally among them. Lord Curren melted it down and fashioned it into a measureable form. The only mold he had on hand was one to fashion arrowheads, so what resulted was a pile of golden points. They had no markings on them, no crest or date. They were simple, but they were uniform, and that's what Curren needed. He divided them equally between the men, keeping the greater share for himself, and sent them on their way.

The lieutenants didn't make it to the forest's edge before four turned against one. They killed him and divided his share. They fought until one remained, and the last turned his greedy eyes toward the baron. Curren killed the man, and reclaimed all the points for himself.

Now, if Lord Curren were the sort of man to learn a lesson, the tale might have ended there. Instead, he hoarded the points and used them, in small allotments, to reward others. As he was the most powerful man of the time, points became the universal form of barter, and currency was introduced to the land.

A single triangular coin is called an arrowhead, or, more commonly, a point.

Frostwroth

The Frostwroth are an aggressive people, and frequently crossed the waters from the north to raid against the Robber Barons. They built the walled town of Collamoor to serve as a staging ground to press into the woods and beyond. For many generations they were an almost constant scourge. Eventually the Robber Barons were forced either to unite or to fall completely to the barbarians.

The Frostwroth typically raided during the early winter, after crops had been taken in and sheds were full. On this occasion when they struck the first settlement, the barbarians found it empty. The harvest had been brought in early, and neither the livestock nor the people were to be found. The barbarians raided farther afield to find the same, over and over, until finally they had to return to Collamoor. When they did return they discovered their own town turned against them.

Days before, the barons had taken everything and waited until the Frostwroth set off from Collamoor. They then entered the town and slaughtered the few defenders who had been left behind. They brought in all the harvest's bounty and every piece of livestock that would fit, and they prepared for a siege. But the Frostwroth were outside the walls with no food and few supplies. To no avail the barbarians threw themselves against their own walls.

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Ultimately, outmaneuvered, they were defeated. Some surrendered to the barons. Other fashioned boats from the wilderness to attempt a return home across the bay.

Collamoor remained in the hands of the barons. Eventually it became the seat of the House of Clubs and later the birthplace of the first High King of Faraway.

The Day of the Dead

Though there had always been tales of the restless dead, it was at one time the expected norm that a body would stay beneath the ground once it had died and was buried. Prior to this time, tales of ghosts were not uncommon, but it was never the case that the dead would arise with any control over their bodies. This changed at a time late in the history of the Robber Barons, when to the surprise of all, the dead rose with the motivation to consume the flesh of the living.

Many thought it was the end of the world, and it might have been except for the presence of the Priests of the Word. Though less organized than the church of today, the priests were still the only organization that spanned the entire known world and acted with a single set of motivations. These new undead, these walking bodies, they were new to the world and were an abomination, much like the demons of Anathema. The priests employed the very same tools of their faith against the undead that they used against the demons, and those tools worked just as well. Battles raged all across the land, and what took what seemed a single night to begin took almost a year to resolve, but the Robber Barons were able to control the restless dead and put them down.

Not all dead now rise. Some do. Graveyards typically are surrounded by sturdy walls, not to keep folks out, but to keep them in. There are several rituals now to keep the dead from rising, and every priest of the Word is trained to know them. Every year the Day of the Dead is observed to remind the people of the world of how it almost all came to an end. Now, so many years later, the day has more the feel of a celebration. To the priests of the Word it is always a serious affair, but they have a hard time helping other remember that.

The Rules of Science and Magic

As time passed and the hold of men on the Written World grew stronger, they learned to trust in themselves. The need for the Laws of Science became less. Study of the Word had revealed spaces between the lines, loopholes in the way of things that could be manipulated. Men discovered magic. While the Laws of Science still exist and are studied around the world, magic is the science of the day. Once it was understood, magic was just easier than any scientific method.

1500: The Four Houses and the House of Cards

Around five hundred years ago the Robber Barons ruled the four nations of Collamoor, Rollinghill, Westall and the Heartlands. They took the titles of kings and queens. As was customary by that time, each house had an associated symbol. Collamoor was the House of Clubs, Westall was the House of Diamonds, Rollinghill was the House of Spades, and the Heartlands was the House of Hearts. The tales then did mention towns, and even cities. There were armies. Men dressed in finery and their words were far less simple. Though less so than in the time of the wolf, it was still a violent time. Borders changed frequently and armed conflict was not uncommon. But there remained the House of Clubs in Collamoor, the House of Diamonds in Westall, the House of Spades in Rollinghill, and the House of Hearts in the Heartlands.

Prompted by the House of Diamonds, the four nations formed a body known as the House of Cards, a council where the four houses could discuss and resolve difficulties without resorting to warfare. And for nearly two hundred years, the House of Cards and the four nations stood.

1700: The Mind Illuminated, The Fall of the House of Cards

For almost two hundred years, the House of Cards kept peace by giving the four Houselands a forum to discuss conflict rationally and without bloodshed. More recently, and with alarming frequency, conflicts were exploding into open hostility. In particular, Spades and the Heartlands were in a constant struggle, and the Midland River was unsafe for fear of abuse from one side or the other. The House of Cards shook. The epicenter of this conflict was Faraway, wherein the House of Cards met, and where each House had a small force of men. Clubs had the strongest presence, and was closely allied with Diamonds at the time. Together they traced every event to a single organization and uncovered the plot behind the conflict.

There existed a group of like-minded men and women who believed in the importance of the Laws of Science. They called themselves the Mind Illuminated. Their ranks were filled with higher ranking members of society, many only a few short steps away from the thrones of each of the four Houselands. On the surface, the Mind

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Illuminated seemed to be a school of enlightened thought, but for two decades they had been maneuvering behind the scenes to steal control of the Houselands for themselves.

The Mind Illuminated succeeded in toppling the House of Cards. Before they could assume control, however, the houses of Clubs and Diamonds exposed them and brought their plans to an end.

High King Faraway

The same king of Clubs and queen of Diamonds who foiled the plot of the Mind Illuminated took control of the ruined House of Cards and united the four Houselands under the throne of a High King. They relinquished control of their individual houses to their successors and settled in the city of Faraway. Each of the four Houselands swore fealty to the new High King, and such is the way it has remained for the last three hundred years.

Cottington Woods

Stretching north over the Border Hills to just south of Collamoor is the enchanted Cottington Woods. During the early years of the Robber Barons the forest covered much of what is now the four Houselands. Over time the forest has seen over three quarters of its acreage removed. The forest seems to have a mind of its own, and it now resists the passage of men.

Legend tells of a force of three hundred Frostwroth that travelled south along the coast to invade Collamoor. Normally this would not be a treacherous journey, except the path brought the men through Cottington Woods. The force was never heard from, and the Frostwroth have never again attempted to send men to raid the coast except by sea.

The Riding Hoods were assembled by one of the later kings of Faraway. Woodsmen all, it was their job to patrol the forest and to protect the Houselands. They were very proud and highly dedicated men and women.

1800: Anathema and the Invasion of Dreams

Demons from Anathema crossed to the Written World through the dreams of the inmates of Asylum. The countryside of Westall saw violence on a scale like nothing this side of total war as invaders attacked without warning and retreated, using patients as living gateways to and from the Slumberland. There was little anyone could do to defend themselves. Even the Priests of the Word could not act fast enough to fend the creatures off. It was the inmates of the Asylum themselves who managed to face the demons, sealing the gates that were created. Asylum was moved from Westall to its current home on the side of the Black Mountains, where it remains as the training ground and headquarters of the Sandmen.

The Red-Castle Railway

The Red-Castle Railway was a joint venture by the Diamond and Spadelands to build a lightning powered railway to connect the lands. Tracks were laid between Redbridge and Midcastle, with stops in central Faraway, the Faraway Warehouse district, and the Heartland city of Briardown. The loud screeching cry and the earth shaking vibrations it created as it went by, combined with most people's lack of trust for anything built using the Laws of Science, saw the railway in constant disfavor.

Still, the building of the way continued, and plans were even made to run a track through Cottington Woods from Faraway all the way to Collamoor. The Halfway station was built on the north side of the Border Hills and construction on the tracks began. With the tracks laid down only a few miles into the woods, construction stopped, and the project was shelved indefinitely. The way stations were decommissioned, and in most cases the bodies of the lightning powered cars were left where they were.

1850: Colonizing Lakupaparoo

A fleet of settlers from Faraway traveled west to colonize Lakupaparoo. Originally made up of members from the various Houselands, the settlers eventually established the House Down Under.

1950: Queen Equiline Faraway and her Very Bad Bargain

The mother of the father of the current King Aaron Faraway was Queen Equiline Faraway. Her love of horses was well known, but her reign as High Queen would forever be remembered because of her Very Bad Bargain.

Equiline took the throne when she was very young, the Queen before her falling to an illness the Priests of the Word could not cure. While out riding one day the young Queen encountered an old woman on the road. Being short of sight, the woman did not move out of the way. The queen insisted, and when she did the woman asked, "Who are you, young thing, to tell me to get off the road?"

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Equiline told her, "I am Equiline Faraway, and I am the Queen. Because I am queen, all these roads belong to me, and I can do what I want."

The old woman regarded her. She said nothing more, and she moved herself laboriously out of the queen's way.

Many years later the queen was married and she bore in turn four children, all sons. When the boys were older, it came to pass that the oldest son, the heir to the throne of Faraway became ill, and it was realized that he was ill with the same sickness that took the queen's mother. The Priests of the Word still knew of no cure to save him.

The queen called before her the three younger sons. In turn she told them, "Your brother is ill, and there is no known cure for his illness. Yet you are princes of the land, and as such you can do what no other can. I want you to travel the land and find for your brother a cure." The boys set out in different directions. Many months passed and the oldest brother grew worse.

When the youngest brother returned he found his mother. "I have failed to find for my brother a cure." Queen Equiline was disappointed.

When the second youngest brother returned, he also found his mother. "I have failed to find for my brother a cure." Queen Equiline was disappointed and distraught, for there was only one brother left.

But when the final brother returned, he was not alone. With him was a woman, a witch from the woods. "It is as you asked, mother," the son told the queen. "I have found for my brother a cure."

The witch told the queen, "I can cure your boy, and I will do so, but only for a price."

Equiline said, "Do you know who I am? I am Equiline Faraway, and I am the Queen."

The witch said, "Be that as it may."

Equiline grew stern, but the witch would not change her mind. Finally, because her son's life was at stake, she said, "Very well, what is the price?"

The witch said, "Your horse."

The queen's love for her horse was well known. She thought to refuse, but she saw the witch would not be moved. Besides, she planned to back out of the bargain as soon as her son was cured. She was the queen, and could do what she wanted. She told the woman, "Fine. One horse, a dozen horses, it doesn't matter to me. Just cure my son."

The witch did, and when she did she said to the queen. "I have upheld my part of the bargain, Queen Faraway. Now it is time for you to uphold yours. I would have the horse."

The queen told the witch, "You will leave with nothing."

"Are you sure?" the witch asked. The queen did not respond, so the witch said, "That is twice you have shown me rudeness, Queen Equiline Faraway. Do you remember?" The witch revealed herself to be the same old woman that the queen encountered years before on the road.

The queen remembered. She grew angry. "Get out," she told the witch.

The witch said, "I shall take the horse."

The queen called her guards.

The witch told her, "That is thrice, and that is unforgivable." She did not grow, but her presence suddenly filled the room.

The queen grew very afraid. "You are no witch. You are a fairy."

The witch said, "I would have taken your horse and left with it, and the scales would be balanced. But you were rude, and now I shall take them all."

The queen was rash, but she was wise enough not to argue. "Yes, of course. I'll show you to the stables myself."

The witch told her, "You don't understand. You are Equiline Faraway, and you are the Queen. Because you are the queen, all the horses belong to you. I will take them all."

Equiline blanched. "You cannot."

The witch smiled cruelly. "I am fairy. I can do what I want."

That is why there are no horses to be found in the Households.

For Want of a Horse

The loss of every horse in the Households was felt across the land.

The Riding Hoods were without steeds to ride. The queen, feeling the riders were now ineffective, disbanded them. But the Riding Hoods were loyal to their cause. Most were very proud and many, after all, had no place else to go. They regrouped and reformed under their own banner, private patrollers and protectors of the woodland and

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of the people who live there. They still wear the riding hoods of their former office, and still attempt to carry out their duties on foot. The leader of each band of Riding Hoods wears a red hood as a badge of office.

There was renewed interest in the Red-Castle Railway. Many of the way stations were reopened, and one train was refurbished and readied for active service. However, damage to the tracks that crossed the land was extensive, and, while interest was renewed, there were not enough funds raised to breathe life into the project again.

The Halfway Station was among those that were reopened. Without a functioning railway, however, it served no purpose. It was sold to a private owner and refitted to serve as an Inn for travelers about to set off into Cottington Woods.

1980: The Beanstalk and the Jacks

There was a boy in the land of Diamonds who traded a cow for a handful of magic beans. Needless to say, the boy was punished severely when he returned home to his mother, who in turn took the seeds and threw them out the window. In the morning, both mother and boy were found crushed to death with a beanstalk reaching into the sky where their house had been, and bits of cottage scattered all over the Diamondlands.

The King of Diamonds regarded the beanstalk, saw that it reached into the sky and out of sight, had no idea what to do about it, and so left it well enough alone. The next day his guards were found flat beneath footprints that led off into Cottington Woods. The tracks disappeared in the UnderMarsh, but it was clear as day where they had come from.

It was also clear that exploring a sky-high beanstalk was not a job for normal soldiers, so the King of Diamonds asked for aid from the High King of Faraway, and the High King sent the jacks. Three jacks spent hours climbing the stalk, resting often on leaves as wide as houses. Though the day was clear, after nearly half a day the Jacks began to climb through clouds, and when they finally emerged it was to a mist enshrouded landscape of floating mountains.

The jacks saw the enormous beings that inhabited this land above the clouds. Exploring, they came to a modest home, equal in proportion to the giant men, and they entered it. They split up, for there were many rooms.

The first jack came to a room filled with bags of coins. Each golden point was as large as a warrior's shield, and hefting one was about all he could manage. The second found a kitchen and a counter, and a nest on which sat a goose that laid eggs of gold. The third found a magical harp with the face of a maiden that begged him to secure its freedom. The three jacks met back at the cottage door. The harp warned them that the giant master of the house would be back soon, and they must hurry and be away. Sensing the wisdom in her words, the jacks hastened toward the stalk and their way home.

The third jack carried the harp upon his back, and so the thing could see the cottage as they left it. It saw the giant return even when the giant did not see the jacks. The harp let out a shriek of terror and cried out for the jacks to run. The giant heard the cry, and gave chase.

The three jacks ran faster, but they were no match for the long legs of the giant, and he was almost on them when they reached the top of the long climb to the ground. The first jack was burdened with the heavy gold point and was last in line, and the giant picked him up and hurled him out into the sky, where he fell past the stalk and tumbled a very long way to the ground far below. The second jack was soon overtaken, and hid himself in the vines of the stalk where the giant was hard pressed to reach him. The third jack continued with great haste down the stalk. The harp continued to cry out, and he was tempted to toss it if it did not shut up, but he did not. When the second jack sailed by him and the stalk began to shake, he looked up to see the giant on its way down.

By then the king's men below saw the giant. The golden coin had long since fallen to the ground and had narrowly missed striking the Diamondland king. The jack who carried it, however, landed atop the monarch and crushed him dead. Now the king's men watched in horror as the second jack struck the earth. Not seeing the third jack and fearing he had met his fate high above, they set upon the stalk with swords and axes. As the giant grew closer they forwent the sharp instruments, and set the stalk ablaze. They fled, and it was then that the third jack and the harp reached the safety of the ground. They also fled while the stalk shook and wavered and the giant came down after them. The monster reached the ground and gave chase, and at that moment the stalk, weakened by the damage at its base, by the fire and by the weight of the giant, broke. It fell upon the giant, the jack, the harp and the fleeing king's men, crushing them and killing them all.

To this day the remains of that great stalk still lay along the northeast border of the Diamondlands, attracting herbalists and wood witches who seek its various strange growths.

1990: Mount OverMarsh Closes its Doors

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At the best of times, goblins do not make good neighbors. They frequently get into things and take things that don't belong to them. Typically, upstanding people do not seek them out. But goblins are great burrowers, and from their warrens they pull the greatest supplies of precious metals in the world. So despite their role as society's estranged, it was very clear when, about twenty years ago, they faced a crisis. Mount OverMarsh, considered the capitol of things goblin, sealed its doors, cutting off the goblins outside from those within.

For a society whose magicians specialize in making doors to almost instantly transport themselves from one place to another, the event was also very curious. The goblins have no answers.

2012 to 2026: The Evil Fairy Queen

These events occurred during the Cottington Woods: The Evil Fairy Queen Campaign.

2012: The Cotting House and the Woods Awakens

Vigo Cotting announced the opening of the Cotting House, an Inn near the center of Cottington Woods, just about halfway between the cities of Faraway and Collamoor. Gatherings commenced wherein the settlers around the woodland met at the Cotting House to conduct business.

The large number of new travelers in the woods awakened the Old Forest, and houses and people were swallowed by the Woods. After many trials, a bargain was struck with the Arafel, the Guardian of the Woods, who spoke on behalf of the Spirit of the Forest. Four anchors were placed within the Woods to extend the protection of the Woods to the settlement of Cottington.

2013: The Burning of the Grim Abbey: The Fairy Queen Baeldannen burned the Abbey of the Grim Brotherhood to the ground. The ruling abbot died in the fire. The Church remained without an Abbot for some time.

The Burnt Tree

An ancient Treant was awakened in the Woods and gathered an army of Treants that began to attack human settlements along the southern Clublands. The Burnt Tree was eventually put to rest

The High King's Wedding

High King Aaron fell in love with the Lady Arislin, and planned a wedding at the Cotting House. The people of Cottington Woods learned that the Lady Arislin was in fact the Evil Fairy Queen Baeldannen in disguise, and that the High King was bewitched. They discovered that Aleena Crofter, High King Aaron True Love who was long believed to be dead, was still alive. They located her and brought her and the High King Together, undoing the spell on the High King and thwarting the wedding.

2014: Nightmares Walk

Nightmares walked in the Cottington Woods, consuming and harming many, and the Church of the Word sent a contingent of priests to bring an end to the threat. Woodlanders gathered to confront the Lady of Nightmares, who had taken possession of Ishariel, the head Sandman, and used her to invert the Waking and Nightmarish worlds. The Woodlanders defeated the Lady of Nightmares and restored the Woods. Ishariel fell into a deep coma.

Ulkarion, the Demon Wolf

Ulkarion Bearkiller, a local wolf king, united all the packs of the woodland and brought war to the people of Cottington Woods. It was later learned that Ulkarion had been possessed by a demon from Anathema. The Paladins of the Church of the Word, the Riding Hoods, the Clubland Army, and the Woodlanders fought the wolves and banished the possessor demon.

The Telling

The Telling was an event that occurred once every hundred years, and it allowed mortals to re-write any one tale. The Moon Children, those woodlanders with a tie to the fairy Moon, told the tale of awakening Ishariel, who recovered from her coma.

The High War Begins

The King of Collamoor married Lady Belladonna, who was in truth Baeldanne, who had again taken human form to try and wrest control of the human lands.

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High Queen Aleena fell victim to the Stepmother Curse, placed on her by the angered Fairy Queen, Baeldannen. She took control of the Houselands and accused the woodlanders of bewitching the High King. The Houselands were divided in civil war. The High King led a group of Woodlanders into the throne room in Faraway City using secret means and dethroned Aleena. Aleena escaped with the King of Collamoor.

Collamoor declared war against the other Houselands.

2014-2016: The High War (or the War of the Curse)

The Heartlands and the Diamondlands come to the aid of the High King, with the Clublands on the side of the High Queen. The Spadelands initially refused to take sides, but eventually joined sided of the High King.

Lady Belladonna Collamor forged an alliance with Simrock, King of the Frostwroth, and gave the Frostwroth entry to the Houselands, where they begin to pillage. War came to Faraway City.

The people of the Cottington Woods again come to the rescue, revealing the curse upon the High Queen and that Belladonna was in truth the Evil Fairy Queen herself, who had ensorcelled King Roderick of the Clublands. Arafel, Guardian of the Woods, came to the aid of the Woodlanders to declare war against the Evil Fairy Queen, and in the end, the heroes of Cottington Woods defeated the Evil Fairy Queen and imprisoned her. King Roderick gave his life to save the High King and High Queen.

The notorious brigand, Robin, was exposed as the bastard son of King Roderick, and forced to take the throne of Collamoor upon his father's death. Princess Virtue Faraway and Prince Robin are betrothed.

The Invasive

While the war raged, a strange plant-like life form, *the Invasive*, began to appear throughout the woodland. It choked and consumed plants, destroying crops and causing starvation, and quickly began to consume and twist animals and people as well, turning them into creatures controlled by the hive-mind of the Invasive Queen. The Woodlanders eventually discovered that it originated in a distant corner of the Fiary Land, and had been introduced to the woods by Baeldannen. With great effort the woodlanders located the Lygodium, a species of moth that fed on the Invasive, and used it to consume and destroy the Invasive.

The Deadwood (aka the Deathwood)

In 2015, a grove of the Cotting Woods suddenly and mysteriously died, and any living creature that came within it would sicken and die as well. Stories claimed that the Daughter of Death, Morrigan, had made this grove her home while she sought her living love, and her presence caused all around her to die. In 2016, stories further told tales of how the woodland heroes, having united Morrigan with her true love, beseeched Death on his Daughter's behalf, and that Morrigan was made living so that she might be with her true love for whatever remained of their life, though Death did not promise that life would be kind to them.

The Shadows of Mount Overmarsh

The Goblin Trickster, Rimple, with the adventurers of the Woods, had opened a Door to Mount Overmarsh, only to discover the mountain home of the Goblins was overrun by dark Shadows from a Door opened to the Deep Dark. With great difficulty, they closed the Deep Dark Door and then resealed the Door to Mount Overmarsh, trapping the remaining Shadows within.

The new Patron, Alice

Alice, Princess of the Heartlands and inmate of Asylum, ascended to become the Patron of Madness. She introduced Paradox to the Written World.

The new Brother Abbot of the Grim Abbey

The Abbey Grimm was rebuilt in Redbridge. Father Nolan became the new abbot.

2016: The Wedding and Rebuilding

Princess Virtue and Prince Robin married. Both the Clublands and faraway rebuilt after the short but brutal war against the Evil Fairy Queen. Animosity between the Clublands and the other houselands remained, but there was an overall time of peace.

2021: The Naming Day of Prince Roderick

Princess Virtue and Prince Robin bore a son. In a small ceremony at the Cotting House they named the boy Roderick, after the late King of Clubs.

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2026 to 2029: Cottington Woods

These events occurred during the Cottington Woods: Tales of the Cotting House Game.

2027: (The Start of the Tales): The Library of the Cotting House

Abbot Nolan blessed the Cotting House library, recognizing on behalf of the Abbey and the Church that this was one of the locations where the new Patron, Alice, had often told her Tales.

2026: The Long Youth of Prince Roderick

In Midsummer of 2026, Prince Roderick of the Clublands was kidnapped from the castle in Collamoor, though some claimed he had wandered into the Fairy Mists and was lost. Some stories claim he was taken by the Fairy, Arafel, to whom it is whispered the now-deceased King Roderick had made a bargain. Queen Virtue, with the Prince's Protector, Cyril of the Silver Hounds, and various Heroes of the Woodlands, ventured into the Fairy Mists to rescue him and while they were successful, freeing the prince in the course of just a couple of days, 15 years had passed for the Prince while within the Fairy Realms, learning to be a hero himself in service to the Guardian of the Woods. If the stories are to be believed, he hunted down the thieves who had stolen lamp prison of the Evil Fairy Queen, recovering the bottle and tossing it into the volcano, Scheherazade's Crown (called Demon's Doom or Demon's Eye in old, old stories, but named later after the Grimm Abbott, Scheherazade, who herself had hailed from the Dustlands before rising to Grimm Abbott, known for the Thousand and One Tales she wrote of that far away place), though some stories claimed this happened in Fairy, not in the Written World. The heroes, summoned to him by the Horn of Heroes, aided the Prince in his quest and then returned him home, now a young man.

2026: The Defeat of the Harrowed Nightmare

With the aid of the Heroes of the Woods, the Sandman – led by Ishariel (beloved leader of the Sandmen and Caretaker of the Asylum) and Doctor Johan Burgess – were able at last to free the Woods from the Nightmare of the Harrow, but Ishariel herself was slain in the attempt. Rumors claim, however, that her ghost still remains, haunting the Asylum.

2027 to 2029: The War with the Wolves

The white wolf, Ovinhur, raised in the ways of war by the Frostwroth and responsible for wiping out the Clubland village of Hapmoor, took control of the wolf packs of Cottington Woods and waged a war to kill all humans. While the Riding Hoods lost many in the battles that followed, the woodland heroes rose up to at last defeat the wolf and return peace to the Woods.

2029: The First Letter of the First Patron's Name (and the Ghosts of the Cotting House)

Rumors had always persisted that the Cotting House was rife with ghosts. Sometime in the early history of the house a ritual had been performed, and a side effect of this ritual created a sort of trap that collected those who died while bearing the Cotting name. Late in 2029 the woodland heroes entered these spectral hearthscapes and learned the reason for this ritual. An ancient artifact of extreme if unknown importance was hidden in the house, a letter of the First Patron's name. Demonic agents had been hunting this artifact, and the heroes defended it from one such agent, a demon called the Relentless. They thwarted the demon and banished it to Anathema, met the ghost of Callahan Cotting, who had first cast the ritual and had since become a new patron while he was secluded in the Cotting House, and returned to the living world with the Letter in their possession.

2029: The Change Winds of the Fairy Mists

The Change Winds of the Fairy Mists swept over Cottington Woods, stealing away many of the woodland heroes and leaving only questions in its wake: what caused it to sweep out of the Ealdwood? What happened to the woodland heroes?

2029: The Winter That Wasn't

For a reason that isn't entirely clear, winter never came to the Houselands in 2029-2030. The frozen north remained frozen; it is not as if unusual summer came. But rather, the frosts never came in the fall, and while temperatures cooled with the turning of the seasons, winter itself never made its way south. Some claim that the Fairy, Jack Frost, had gone missing, and while known as a Jack among the Fairies, he was also the harbinger of

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winter's coming. Others claimed that this was because of the Fairy Mists rolling out of the Ealdwood, home to the endless Summer of Fairy it is said.

2029-2031: After the Change Winds

In the two years since the Change Winds swept through the Cottington Woods, much has changed even as much has remained the same: The Cotting House continues to be a waystation for those traveling through the Woods and a central gathering place in the small but growing community in the Woods. But the Change Winds shook things up; moving a river here, a house there, making the distance between one point shorter and another longer. And the Mists lingered, spreading out from the Ealdwood, sometimes pooling and appearing in the Woods without warning; some who wander into them never return, some pass harmlessly through them. The Woods have grown darker and more dangerous, with many fairy beasts once confined long within Fairy now roaming at night or in dark stretches, preying on the unwary. Some of have been haunted by Nightmares, speaking of a Hollowed Lady. The Riding Hoods have been hard-pressed to keep the Woodlanders safe and provide protection for merchants, traders, and travelers. It is whispered that the Guardian of the Woods, the fairy Arafel, is less patient with the mortals trespassing in places outside the established paths of the Woods. Certainly the Woods itself is less tolerant of large caravans crossing the Woods, and as such – and the need for protection from dangers in the Woods – trade has slowed between the Clublands and the southern Houses, and from Taiden Sheh to the Houselands, as a result. Prince Roderick of the Clublands has remained serving with the Riding Hoods during this time.

The Deadwood (also called the Deathwood) had receded somewhat in the first five or so years after it came to be, but the heart of its grove has not healed in all this time, despite efforts from the Grandmother of the Woods and her Apprentice, though a single lily has grown in the heart of the Wood. And it is said that in some parts of the Wood, a strange blight has affected some of the trees.

In the Houselands, the affects of the Change Winds were felt, though less so. Life continued much as it always hard, though the hit to trade caused hard times in some areas, and reports of rising undead, or bands of trolls, fearsome werewolves, or hungry dragonlings maudering in the countryside, became more common than they had before.

The High King Aaron and High Queen Aleena continue to rule, and are generally much loved by the people and their reign is good, but of course politics among nobles remain as they ever are, with each Houseland seeking power and favor, not to mention the internal politics of each Houseland.

The finding of the First Patron's First Letter has invigorated excitement among the Church and would-be adventurers that the remaining letters might be found, and a number of expeditons have set off in the hopes of finding them; for example, The Society for Extraordinary Adventurers it is said has undertaken an expedition to the Dustlands, at the behest and funding of the Church. Other adventurers set out across the Houselands and even de

2031: The Long Winter of 2031

The winter of 2030-2031 was a harsh one, with winds carrying snowflakes swarms from the north before any sign of frost after the Harvest. It caught the Woods unaware, and before all harvests were brought in, leading to a hard winter in the Clublands and Woodlands. But when the spring came, the winter storms remained. Spring planting was delayed in the north, and while the South faired better, the spring was colder than it had been in recent memory. As cold spring turned to cold summer, it seemed almost as if the Woods fought back, fairy mists rolling out among the trees in the dawn of day carrying with it the warmth of summer winds, only for snowflakes to often return in the dark of night like a swarm of bees rattling among the treetops. And though they melted in the dawn's warmth, the summer was cold and the plantings in the north faired poorly. Worry set in at what little harvest there might be. It is whispered in rumors that the High King and Queen even journeyed to the Woods, to meet with their old friend Vigo Cotting and the others who remained of the Company of the Heart, perhaps seeking an answer.

And if the long cold of the year wasn't enough, in early Fall, the Change Winds of the Fairy Mists returned...

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16.3 The Kings Laws

The King's Laws are followed throughout the Houselands, and in every Houselands city around the world. Misinterpreting the laws is difficult, but becomes easier as you get into the details. The farther you enter the wilderness, the harder it is for agents of the King to establish order, the more often the laws break down.

Cottington is under the direct control of none of the Houselands, but they still follow the laws. The woodlanders appreciate their pseudo-independence, and should try and seek an end to any legal issues without asking for outside help. Attracting too much attention in this way might result in the High King or the King of Clubs seeking to take a more active role in Cottington's affairs. (Right now, the woodlanders do not pay taxes...)

Listing the complete Kings laws and their clauses would fill a library. Here are a few of the major laws, and some thoughts behind them.

1. Do Not Cause Harm to Come to Others.

You should not assault others, directly or indirectly.

If someone assaults you in someone else's name, either for pay or not, the penalty is the same for both the attacker and the originator.

2. Do Not Stand Idle and Allow Harm to Come to Others.

A clause to the first law, this is harder to enforce. For instance, you are exempt from this law if trying to aid another would put you in direct harm. You are also exempt from this law if you THINK aiding them would put you in direct harm. Then there's the definition of direct, to consider.

Very strict law abiding folks attempt to follow this law, but it is almost never enforced.

3. Do Not Compel Others to Act Against Their Will.

Taking Away another person's freedom of choice is an option only for those with authority, and that authority must come from the High King (directly or down the chain of command). Certain effects and items that have those effects (love potions, for instance), are illegal.

There is some question as to what is the legal age of consent, wherein a parent is no longer able to make decisions for their child. Typically this is judged on a case by case basis, and either is fairly cut and dry, or take so long that the child grows up, and the case is no longer an issue.

4. Do Not Take That Which Belongs To Others.

This law is the easiest to understand. Don't steal. Ownership claims may cloud the issue. After a period, the dead lose the right to claim ownership of their belongings, and those belongings should fall to any rightful heir. Ancient robber baron tombs and caches, however, muddy the issue further. While information found in those places should go to the church, the church as no need for the items of treasure that may be found within.

5. Do Not Act Against The Good Of The Houselands.

You should not harbor enemies of the Houselands. You should immediately alert any figure of authority if such an enemy is discovered. You should not act in any way as to endanger the nation, to steal from it, or to abuse it.

The King of Faraway is an Extension of the Houselands.

This includes the royalty of the four houselands and their families. Acting against them is treason, and in direct violation of the Fifth Law. The Second Law is strongly enforced where the high families are concerned.

Again, these are loose interpretations of the Laws and some issues surrounding them. Most woodlanders seek to avoid breaking them, and when that does happen, they try and sort things out for themselves. That said, they cannot lawfully ignore the laws, and they know that doing so would bring down a large ration of trouble on them.

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16.4 The Patrons

The First Patron wrote the Written Word, creating the world and all the things on it. He created the realms of fairy, the mists, the Slumberlands and even Anathema, home of demons. He is the author of all things.

Other Patrons followed.

Patrons were once men and women, but are now something both more and less. They can sometimes be seen walking the world, but they do not interact with the world, and nothing at all seems to affect them. Only on some far away level do they seem to hear or see the world around them.

On rare occasions, wisdom may be gleaned from a patron's words, but this is tricky because the patrons never speak directly to the people around them.

It is usually best to leave the patrons alone, when experiencing them or not. It is most likely true that they can sense the world without being present, and to that end people will try to direct their attention, either to them or away. Patrons are often known to embody the kinds of stories that they write. At the same time, it isn't absolutely certain if the patrons write the events of the world and so those events occur, or if the events occur and are then written down.

As with fairies, it is sometimes best to leave patrons well enough alone.

The Greater Patrons

There are countless patrons who roam the world, ghost-like with their eyes glued to the pages of their tomes. Below is a list of some of the better known patrons, and how they are associated.

Mother Goose

The Mother is considered by many to be the second patron. Some believe she is called the Mother because to her, all others are like children, and others believe it is because she favors tales for children or about them. Her tales are the oldest of any other Patron, and although there have been no new ones discovered recently, most suspect she is still around. Mother Goose rides an enchanted goose through the sky, and some believe that she lives in a comfortable cottage on the side of the moon.

Longstride, The Wanderer

The Wanderer is thought to have been to every place on the Written World. His tales typically involve much travel, or take place over a very long time. More often than not, they end without a satisfying conclusion, and it is very clear that the journey, to him at least, is what is important. He is well known for his attention to detail, and his pages often begin with a detailed map of his protagonist's route. He left markers called the Footprints of the Wanderer to announce his passing, or maybe just to remind himself of where he has been. Historians pay handsomely for the location of these places.

The Harrow

The Harrow is a patron to be avoided. He is attracted to the macabre, or perhaps he just writes that way. His characters typically meet unsavory ends. When a death is very painful or drawn out, most believe that Harrow penned it. Soldiers might ask that he sharpen their blade before battle, but even then they fear the same blade will be turned against them. Harrow is believed to be a scarecrow-thin individual, cloaked in shadows and accompanied by ravens.

Noss (the Curious)

Noss is not an exciting patron, which, in a patron, is often a good thing. Those who catch his attention often lead unexciting yet still fulfilled lives. He tends to write stories that explain things -- how they work and why. There's little action in a Noss tale, and ultimately, sometimes with persistence, the focus of his tales discover what they are after, and often end with a deeper understanding of the quieter dramas that unfold in the subtext of their lives.

Cupid

Cupid writes loves tales with a child-like innocence, and prefers stories of love and deep, throbbing emotion. Sadly, he seems to lack much understanding of how men and women act when thought is not involved, and his characters get themselves in a great deal of trouble that, ultimately, could have been avoided. The wise tend to want to avoid Cupid's notice, while the foolish or young at heart try very hard to seek him out.

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Johanna the Warrior

Johanna is a free spirit. Her stories typically are of high adventure and derring-do. Those she writes about typically have no cause to be bored, and to that end, she is another patron that most would rather avoid. That said, her stories are filled with reward, and those who embark on adventure on purpose could do worse than to have her write their tale.

Humphrey

It is a matter of some speculation as to how Humphrey found his way to become a patron. While his tales tend to cover a wide range of topics, they tend to ramble, and more often than not they end abruptly without any resolution. It cannot even be said that, as with the Wanderer, it is the journey that matters to Humphrey, because even those tend to be rambling and introspective without a process. Those who would embark on projects would do well to avoid the notice of Humphry, or face the more than likely possibility that that project will never see fruition.

Alice

The youngest of the Patrons, Alice - formerly Princess Alice of the Heartlands - ascended to be a Patron only twelve years ago. Her tales are often ones of Madness and Paradox, of Dreams and Nightmares, of things that are a reflection of the world we know but reveal a different truth. She was once a patient for many years at the Asylum, and it is said that Alice still sometimes visits, telling her tales to the patients there. Her greatest story is the tales of *Wonderland*, and some say that this world paradoxically exists on its own, a mad reflection of the Written Word.

Festia

Festia writes of celebration. Birthdays, weddings, and holidays are her bailiwick – such days always feel the touch of her pen, and on those days it is common to raise a glass in her name. While other famous figures feature prominently in the tales of Winterfire, it was clearly Festia who made the day as popular as it has become. She is perhaps the happiest of the Patrons.

Festia's husband is Papa Jingle, the Hearthfather, who was once a mere man but who became something much, much more as a result of Festia's writings.

Callahan Cotting

Callahan is the newest addition to the roster of known Patrons. When considering the scope of the Written World Callahan's influence is not great, but within Cottington Woods is vast, as his tales have to do with the members of the Cotting family and the heroes who visit the Cotting House.

Other Patrons

There are hundreds, maybe thousands of other patrons. Their names are not all known, even to the Church of the Word. Many of these have the same level of fame or infamy as the patrons listed here, but most are far less well known.

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16.5 Currency

"For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil."
--*Timothy*

10 silver points = 1 gold point

Briardown

Modern coins are minted in the Heartlands, in a well protected castle just outside the city of Briardown.

The Shape of the Coin

There is some controversy over the shape of the point. Ages ago the coins were fashioned after arrow heads, and that shape has been largely maintained. But there is no denying that the current silver and gold points bear as much resemblance to the symbol of the Heartlands as they do to the arrowheads of old. There is some movement by the other houselands, especially the House of Diamonds, to move the production of coins to a less partial location. Naturally they recommend themselves.

Types of Coins

Curren Gold Points

Around two thousand years old a couple hundred of these were minted. Most have been melted down or lost. They are larger than the common gold point, but because the gold content is less pure, they are still worth a single gold point. Collectors will often pay a great deal more to obtain these relics.

Common Silver Point

These small coins are the foundation of the economy of the Written World. One silver point is the lowest coin value possible.

Common Gold Point

The gold point is about four times the size of the silver point. Ten silver points is equal to one gold point.

Paper Bills

Conceived of by the Church of the Word, paper bills are the new thing in currency. They are maybe two generations old. They are legal and recognized by all the houses. They are available in several denominations, and valued on the bill in points (never stars), although the reference is understood when the bills are used.

Currently, there exists the 5 point bill, the ten point bill, and the fifty point bill.

Other Coins

It is possible to find coins from places around the world. The Petal Kingdom and the Dustlands have their own form of currency. The natives of the deep Barumbi Basin and the Wikapapuji Islands, and the tribes of the Canyonlands each barter for trade, but they understand the value of points, and will sometimes trade for them. The Houseland cities, even as far as Lakupaparoo and the Barumbi coast, all rely on points.

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16.6 Common Holidays of the Houselands

"There's nothing like a good party to put you in the festive mood. Let's celebrate!"
--*ascribed to the Patron Festia*

"To celebrate a festival means: to live out, for some special occasion and in an uncommon manner, the universal assent to the world as a whole."
--*Josef Pieper*

"You cannot celebrate the Festival of Light before combating the darkness within!"
--*Kapil Raj*

WinterFire ("Gifting")

When the wind blows hard and cold down from the frozen Frostworth, and snow blankets the Woods in the sparkling dust of Winter, when the light has fled such that the night reigns as the longest and darkest of the year, the people of the Houselands gather about their Hearths to celebrate the Winter's Fire - or WinterFire as it is commonly known.

Stories say that this is the day the word "Fire" was first Written, when the First Patron gave the Written World warmth to chase away the winter's cold. The Men of Science and some who favor Noss's stories say that this is when Curious Noss first struck two stones together, creating the spark that would start all inventive creations. Many, however, argue that moment was well after the word "Fire" was written. Others like to say that the Fire was given by the Fairies - or stolen from them, or won from them by a mortal who struck a better bargain. But even with all the other stories that tell of the first WinterFire, all generally agree it was the day the Word Fire Was Written, and so the name came to be.

Whatever the legend, this is the day in the Written World where the Longest Night of the year passes, and the next day (WinterFire Day) the light of the sun begins to reclaim the seasons, leading towards Spring. It also marks the New Year, when Tales begin anew. Beginnings of any kind are auspicious this day, just as endings the night before are blessed. While the Spring Equinox may mark the end of Winter and is a cause of celebration of new life, WinterFire is a reminder that the Winter will end and a time to gather to tell new Tales in preparation for the new year -- to gather round a fire to remember that the sun always returns and indulge in a spirit of companionship and goodwill and charity, to share what one has with others. It is tradition, on the night of WinterFire, to give a gift of something Written (or drawn), whether a book, or a story, a letter or a poem, or even just a name embellished on paper.

But for many in the Houselands, WinterFire is also known as "Gifting" and is a time when people exchange gifts, do good deeds, and generally try to help each other out. It began long ago, so the Stories say, near where the Cotting House now stands, deep in what was then called the Ealdwood by the Fair Folk and the Cottington Woods by those mortals who had come to make it home. An old toymaker made his first toy, a gift for a child in need, and began a tradition of crafting toys for all the children of the Woods, delivering them in the middle of the long dark night so that they would have a surprise awaiting them come morning. **Festia**, his wife, so taken by his deeds, wrote of them, until he became well known and caught the attention of the Fairies; the story of the First Gift moving even the Fair Folk. Jack Frost, so delighted by his deeds and the gift given him, Touched him with Fairy Magic to make him Immortal to that he could continue to deliver his toys to children forever. The people of the Woods called him the **HearthFather**, given his kind nature like that of a father and his coming through the Hearths to leave gifts, and the name Nicholas was lost to all but the most dedicated of scholars. The children, though, had a different name: **Papa Jingle**, they called him, for the sounds of the Bells upon his sleigh. Listen, they would say, if you listen with your heart, you can hear his bells upon the wind.

Some, though, wonder if it were not Festia's writing that made the HearthFather immortal. Her stories so inspired that she earned Noss's favor and became a Patron, of the WinterFire celebration and celebrations of all kinds. She wrote many stories - including those of the Kringles, fairies much like elves (and governed by their rules) who came to help Papa Jingle make all the toys for the children in his workshop. And Papa Jingle always helped with the toymaking, using the same tools he had with that very first special toy, for crafting the gifts was his joy.

To their parent's delight, children worked hard to earn Papa Jingle's favor in hopes that he would bring him a toy. However, some parents found the promise of toys was not enough and began to tell stories of a bogeyman, the

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Krampus, who would steal away naughty children in the cold nights of Winter. This creature finds its way into some of Festia's stories, despite her husband's plea, for he hated those tales. Children often carry bells, because, so the story says, the Krampus avoids the sound.

The Woods has many other traditions not as widely followed in the Houselands. It is said that those with a kind heart and generous soul might find their way to see the Tree of Jewels on this night, welcomed on this one night by the Guardian there. Many Woodlanders decorate trees in or near their homes with candles or magical lights in honor of the Tree of Jewels and in the hopes, perhaps, of earning the favor of the Fairies of the Forest on this night, so some say, the slumbering fairies of spring begin to awaken.

The Riding Hoods caution any from wandering too deep into the Woods - many dangerous and dark creatures roam the woods seeking a different ending to the year. Any Woodlander knows this for truth, and though it may seem counter-intuitive, they all carry lights when walking that night, to signal to the fairies that they are friends, that they are of the light that is returning. It is also why many sing songs, carols of the season: to earn the favor of fairies (they say the Guardian is fond of human music) and soothe the hearts of any beasts or dark creatures that may be lurking deep in the woods. It is said that one's house is blessed if carols are sung at the doorstep or within the Hearth, and it has become a favored pastime of the holiday for some. There is magic in song, they say.

Every year, Festia writes of the WinterFire, of the gifts and celebrations, of the kindness and joy of family and friends. Papa Jingle brings toys to nice children, and people across the land come together to celebrate the return of the light and the gifts of fire, friendship, and goodness. The magic of the holiday lives within the hearts of those who truly believe.

Midsummer

While many throughout the Houselands celebrate that Midsummer with games, stories, songs, and festivities, those who dwell within the Woods hold the celebration with especial esteem: it is said, after all, that the Woods are Fairy-Enchanted, and that the Fairies themselves will often come out to sing and dance within the Fairy Circles.

For those who have not lived long within Cottington Woods, these stories may be a thing straight out of the fairy tales themselves, and there are those who scoff at the idea of the Fairies coming to celebrate. But still, every year, there are those who travel to the Woods for the Midsummer celebration and come back with fanciful tales... and still those who never come back at all.

At the center of Midsummer Celebrations is often a Summer Tree. Throughout the Houselands, this might be a literal tree, or a pole is erected in the town to represent the tree. (It is considered bad luck to cut down a tree on this day, as it would draw the ire of the Fairies). Within the Woodlands, the Summer Tree is often one surrounded by a fairy circle of mushrooms; many of the Woodlanders gather at the Balmbearer Estate where the Great Summer Tree resides. The Summer Tree is decorated with hanging ribbons, bells, and other decorations, and attached to each decoration is a little note from the hanger asking their wish of the Fairies.

Throughout the Houselands, sweets and milks and other things are left on doorsteps at night, and it is considered a sign of good luck if the offerings are gone by morning. Within the Woods, these offerings are often left in Fairy Circles for the Little Folk, and doors are often unlocked – or even open – to show the Woods and its Fair Folk that they are both welcome and that the Woodlanders have not forgotten that they are in fact the guests here.

Even so, Woodlanders are careful to avoid entering a fairy circle unless invited, and while Midsummer does not carry the same threat as Mists Eve, an unwary mortal might still find themselves whisked away not to be seen for a hundred years, if at all.

The Woodlanders celebrate with games and competitions, songs and music, flower crowns and dancing. It is a joyous time to come together and celebrate all that the Woods are and give thanks to the Fairies within.

The Harvesting (more recently known as The Harrow's Reaping or The Harrowing)

As the harvest draws to a close and autumn begins to fade to winter, folks about the Houselands prepare for the upcoming **Harvest Day**, and the two dark evenings that surround it: **Lost Eve** (which some call the **Harvester's Eve**) and **Mists Eve** (called the **Harrow's Eve** by some, especially within the Asylum, or in those places where the tales of that particular Patron are often spoken on that night).

Last Harvest Day is the celebration of the last of the harvest for the year and the end of Autumn. This is usually celebrated with feasting, pumpkin carving, and the creation of gifts to appease the fairies and the dead for the coming evening.

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It is said that in the evenings surrounding the Last Harvest Days, the Lands of the Dead, the Fairy Mists, and even the Slumberland grow closer to the world, allowing for strange encounters. Many people put up superstitious signs and symbols and try to sleep through it. Others choose to enjoy gatherings and dares. Many people wear masks and disguises on that night to fool evil spirits and such creatures, though in many cities masks are worn only at parties and celebrations held indoors. Those who live within the Woods celebrate too, but they whisper it is because no fool would be walking the Woods on the Mists Eve. They know that the stories are true, and that all manner of creatures walk the Woods that night.

Lost Eve (or the Harvesters Eve) is the night before Last Harvest Day, and is more strongly associated with the Lands of the Dead.

Mists Eve is the night of Harrow's Eve (or The Harrowing), and is more strongly associated with the Slumberland.

Both nights the Fairy Nights draw close and pull in the unwary.

Some people refer to both evenings as Mists Eve, as tales say the dead can be seen either night and Nightmares haunt both.

In more recent years, especially about the Woods, many have taken to refer to the two nights and days celebrations as "The Harrow's Reaping" (or the Harrowing) because of the many dangers that are whispered to befall the unwary and the foolish. Certainly if ever there was a night to gather about a fire and tell stories of horror, the dead, and the lost, this would be the night... but equally foolish, too, to answer the knock at the door that follows the telling of the Tales.

“The Night of Veils”

In the **Diamondlands**, Mist Eve is known as “**The Night of Veils**” and is celebrated with Masquerades. While in most villages, this was a fun festival of elaborate costumes and guessing who is who, among the nobility, the powerful, and the wealthy, their Masquerade Balls were actually an opportunity for people of importance to gather information on their enemies or to set up moves in their political machinations.