

# Cottington Woods Player's Guide

## Part One: Character

### 1 Introduction

*"Once Upon A Time, in the land of Farraway, there was Cottington Woods."*  
*-unknown Patron*

The Cotting House sits in the middle of enchanted Cottington Woods, where it serves as a meeting place and the center of commerce for landholdings and craftsmen throughout the community. The House rests south of Collamoor and Asylum, north of Farraway and Halfway, east of Greencloud and west of UnderMarsh. Travelers from and to any of those places pass by the house each day. So far neither the High King in Farraway nor his reluctant vassal, the King of Clubs have laid claim to the tiny town, but it's young yet, and hasn't attracted much attention.

The surrounding woods are home not only to humans, and more distantly to goblins and to elves, but to the Fair Folk as well. And while it's wise to avoid fairies at all costs, in Cottington Woods it's just not possible.

The characters of Cottington Woods are those settlers whose will it is to make the tiny town thrive, and to do so they will have to overcome many obstacles, not the least of which is the Spirit of the Woods itself. Our players will explore fairy tales and fables in their darkest form. Wait, fairy tales? Don't for a second think that Cottington Woods is a game for children. The earliest stories were written as warnings of things to avoid.

Herein, there be dragons!

#### **Back to the basics.**

- Player characters are human.
- Classic character types. We have fighters, rogues, magicians, priests. We also have witches, sandmen and Men of Science.
- Damage is low. Health is also low! This extends not only to the player characters, but to the adversaries they will fight.

#### **That small town feel.**

- The townsfolk are encouraged to seek solutions to their own problems, since asking for aid will often come with a price.
- The characters will fill the major roles about town. Cottington is theirs, and they can develop it in the way they choose. They should be mindful of the King's Law, of course.
- Each character is required to declare an occupation. Is he a butcher, a baker, a candlestick maker? Cottington is a small town, and cannot afford to support those who do not help to support it.

#### **Games within Games**

- The Merchant Board -- Occupations equal influence, and influence allows a character to vote on the direction the town will grow.
- The Codex -- Part encyclopedia, part bible, part adventurer's journal, the Codex is a piece of lore that any player may possess. Researching the Codex will reveal more information that may be helpful over the course of the campaign.
- Not every challenge will be won by spell or by sword. Things here like to play, and they make up the rules. Expect to swing or throw, but expect as well to miss a turn, or play a card, or move a piece across a board.

# Cottington Woods Player's Guide

## Part One: Character

### 2 Table of Contents

*"Would you like to play a Game?"*  
-WOPR

#### Part One: Character

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Table of Contents
- 3 Character Creation Overview
- 4 Character Concept
- 5 Occupations
- 6 Player Character Races
- 7 Cultures Around the Written World

#### Part Two: Skills

- 8 Skills Introduction
- 9 Rules Specific to Cottington Woods
- 10 Vitality, Life and Death
- 11 Headers
- 12 Skills and Descriptions
  - 12.1 Free Everyman Skills
  - 12.2 General Skills
  - 12.3 Fighter Skills
  - 12.4 Rogue Skills
  - 12.5 Priest Skills
  - 12.6 Magician Skills
  - 12.7 Sandman Skills
  - 12.8 Witch Skills
  - 12.9 Man of Science Skills
  - 12.10 Bard Skills
  - 12.11 Racial and Cultural Skills

#### Part Three: Adventuring Information

- 14 Gear
- 15 Adventuring Mechanics
  - 15.1 Climbing Mechanic
  - 15.2 Swimming Mechanic
  - 15.3 Locks
- 16 World Lore
  - 16.1 Glossary of Common Terms
  - 16.2 A Brief History of the World
  - 16.3 The King's Laws
  - 16.4 Common Patrons
  - 16.5 Currency

#### Part Four: Appendices

- 17 Appendix One: Ethical Concerns
- 18 Appendix Two: Character Points, CP Earning and CP Cap by Event

# Cottington Woods Player's Guide

## Part One: Character

### 3 Character Creation Overview

*"Every man's life is a fairy tale written by God's fingers"*  
~Hans Christian Andersen

#### Step One: Concept

We are pretty open about what we will let you play, but we insist that every character has a plot approved character history. To help with the flavor of the game, we suggest strongly that you decide on a concept before considering skills. "I am a sword and board fighter" is far less interesting than "I know the beast that killed my little sister is still out there somewhere, and I *will* be ready!" Remember that this is a game influenced by fairy tales. Your concept should be influenced by them as well.

#### Step Two: Occupation

What does your character do to support himself? Characters in the Cottington Woods game are not required to pay a maintenance fee. However, each character must declare what he does to support himself.

Your first occupation is free. Each level after the first must be purchased using character points, but offers the character additional in game funds at the start of each weekend event.

#### Step Three: Race

You are human.

Some few of you may be brer and golems, which are both considered human, but are different, and generally considered less than men. Because we are going for a specific, human-centric feel for Cottington Woods, we are limiting the number of brer, and severely limiting the number of golems. Both require plot approval to play, and we will only accept a brer or golem character concept from a player if a fully human concept has been submitted as well. Please, don't be discouraged if your sub-human character concept is not approved.

#### Step Four: Culture

Without exception, all characters are from the Houselands. Several cultures are available that may influence your appearance and the way your character acts. Don't search for a culture on the world to fit your needs. If you don't immediately see one, just ask. If it isn't on the map, we can probably add it. The Written World is vast.

#### Step Four: Headers

Choose your header or headers. Consider the skills and flavor you want for your character. Be mindful that while taking multiple headers opens up more skills, it reduces the amount you can do with each header.

#### Step Five: Purchase Skills

Choose skills for your character.

# Cottington Woods Player's Guide

## Part One: Character

### 4 Character Concept (Character History)

*"Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it.  
Because what the world needs is people who have come alive."  
--Howard Thurman*

You are a character out of legend. While not Snow White or Peter Pan, your story may be similar. Instead of like Cinderella you may be more like one of the stepsisters, or even one of those enchanted mice. Design your character with as rich a background as you wish, and we'll be flexible with what we will allow. This is a game about stories, and you should feel free, within the limits of the game world, to write your own.

Character concepts may be submitted in any format (bullet-points, outline, story format, journal, essay, etc.). Character concepts may be of any length, but should answer a few basic questions:

#### Who are you?

- Don't name your character Jack or Jackie. The Jacks are an organization in the Houselands, and that would just be confusing.
- Don't name your character Prince or Princess. Also, you are not the heir to the throne of Faraway or the Prince of the House of Diamonds. Cottington is a story about common men and women dealing with the uncommon.
- Children form the foundation of many fairy tales and fables, but we ask that you play a character that is at least believably close to you in age. After all, you see what you see.

#### Where are you from?

- Without exception, all characters are from the Houselands (including the four Houselands, the city of Faraway, Cottington Woods, and the Houseless).
- Though you must be from a Houseland, several cultures are available that may influence your appearance and the way your character acts. Don't search for a culture on the world to fit your needs. If you don't immediately see one, just ask. If it isn't on the map, we can probably add it. The Written World is vast.
- Cultural clothing from distant places is allowed. With roads and water routes, the Ways, the Mists and even goblin Door Magic, traders have covered the lands. Consider, however, that Cottington is a working community. It's very possible you will find yourself crawling through passages, or running through the woods.

#### What motivates you or drives you? What goals do you have?

- Your story should be incomplete. If your own personal tale is done when the game begins, you won't have room to grow.
- We have an occupation system in place, which acts as a money skill and replaces any need for a maintenance fee. Generally speaking, however, the folks who live in Cottington Woods are not rich.
- Do not create your own religion, civilization or culture.
- Our apologies, but player characters cannot be Jacks, Riding Hoods, Grimm Brothers or monks. That will probably change through gameplay.
- You may have been a soldier or a mercenary, but you are not one now. Cottington is not currently at war, and not many folk therein can afford the services of a mercenary. When threatened, the people in Cottington Woods generally pick up their torches and pitchforks and face the threat themselves.
- **Please read Chapter 16, which addresses Ethical Concerns!** Characters in Cottington Woods are encouraged to be "good". They do not have to be "pure", and a bit of darkness can always make things interesting. but we will not reward evil behavior. Don't play evil.

#### Why are you coming to Cottington (and why would you stay?)

- You have come to Cottington for a reason. The default reason we provide is to schedule your business with the other members of the Cottington Woods community, but you are welcome to come up with your own.
- Come to each event with a goal or goals that you can accomplish on your own. Don't be disappointed if those goals are not met, since every other character will have goals of their own, and they may be counter to yours. It's a good idea to give your character a reason to interact with other characters, as well as be interested in many things.

## **Cottington Woods Player's Guide**

### **Part One: Character**

- We'll have events for you to join or things to overcome, and we'll attempt to spread those events around, but having your own agenda will make sure you always have something to do. This is a game about stories, and you should feel free, within the limits of the game world, to write your own.
- If you consider being part of a group or team, you could be part of a single homestead, or it could be a collection of tradesman traveling together to town.

#### **Consider the following:**

- Demons are anathema to the Word. Anyone who sees them will desire to destroy them or flee in terror. You don't bargain with them or summon them to gain power. They are an evil, destructive force.
- Fairies are rarely "nice" just to be "nice." Even the "kindest" of fairies will generally expect something in return.
- Don't worry if we ask you to change something. This just means we care and want to incorporate your history into the world and our plots.

Have fun with it. We're pretty open about what we will let you play, but we do insist that every character has a plot approved character history before we'll allow you to play.

**Important Note:** While pretty fonts add tremendous character to histories and PELS, please save the fancy scripts to the in game letters or notes you may send. A plain, easy to read font is best.

# Cottingham Woods Player's Guide

## Part One: Character

### 5 Occupations

*"It's what I do, darlin'"*  
--Capt. Malcolm Reynolds

Every character must declare an occupation, which determines what the character does to maintain his style of living. The occupation takes the place of a maintenance fee. It is free – the player does not have to purchase it with character points.

You should choose an occupation that makes sense for your character. For instance, don't choose Magician as an occupation if you have no magician skills. On the other hand, having a skill does not require that you choose an occupation that uses it. For instance, you could pick the armor smith skill and not choose armor smith as an occupation.

Generally speaking, an occupation is a role playing tool meant to add flavor to your character. Use it to support the small town feel we are striving for in the Cottingham Woods game. The Brave Little Tailor, the Butcher, the Baker or the Candlestick Maker, the Shoemaker, these are all examples of occupations that appear prominently in fairy tales.

The first occupation does not grant the character any skills or money in game.

#### Occupation Levels

The first level of occupation is free, but it offers nothing in the way of benefit beyond the role playing option. A player can purchase additional levels, which grant extra coin at each game event. This is our money skill.

- Additional levels can be in the same occupation as the first. This could represent a degree of success which allows the character to make more money, or an expanding client base.
- Additional levels can be in a different occupations. The character could for instance, be a rancher who gains a second plot of land and plants crops on it. He could be a tailor who decides to start making armor.

In any case, the effect is the same. The character benefits from the added coin at each event. If we present plot that targets a specific occupation (it could happen) then a person could benefit from any occupation he has purchased.

#### Selling Back Occupations

You may decide that you wish to "sell back" levels of an occupation, in effect forgetting that level and getting back the character points you spent in it. We will allow this to some extent. You cannot sell back the first level of an occupation, since that level represents the knowledge you have learned in order to perform that job. You can sell back any additional levels of an occupation, however. Thus, a person with three levels of farmer could sell back two levels, but not the last level. Barring unusual circumstances, he's stuck with it.

A person who knows two different occupations may sell back any additional levels, but cannot sell back the first level of either.

#### List of Occupations

##### Header Occupations

Some headers make appropriate occupations. Being a Priest of the Word is pretty much a way of life. A wood witch could create and sell potions, while a hearth witch is sought for her healing. Magicians cast spells that have all sorts of effects.

Examples: Magician, Priest of the Word, Witch, Man of Science.

##### Craftsman Occupation

A person who builds or repairs things is a craftsman. Tales are full of craftsmen, a well known example being the short but sweet tale of seagoing adventure featuring the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker.

Examples: Smith, Leatherworker, Herbalist, Carpenter, Baker, Wine maker, Shoemaker.

##### Service Occupation

Servicemen perform tasks to make a living. A bartender serves drinks, a courier runs messages, and a Town Crier delivers news.

Example: Bartender, Courier, Fortune Teller, Chef, Healer.

# Cottington Woods Player's Guide

## Part One: Character

### **Landowner Occupation**

Landowners tend to land all around the woods. Each level of the landowner occupation represents a different unit of land. Landowners might also take the role of team leaders, with the other team members working for him.

Example: Farmer, Rancher, Miner

### **Entertainer Occupation**

We encourage folks to entertain. The Cotting House will always be open and there will be time set aside for folks to sing or tell stories or dance. The master of the Cotting House will always pay for folks to entertain.

Playing an entertainer should be a role playing choice. Unlike other occupations, however, it might be best to play an entertainer only if you decide you want to entertain.

Example: Singer, Storyteller, Dancer

### **Restricted Occupations**

Some occupations are more appropriate as part of a character's history rather than as a current occupation.

The soldier is a good example. While there will be plenty to fight in Cottington Woods, the game is not about professional men at arms, and at least in the beginning Cottington cannot support them.

Mercenaries are less appropriate. It is less likely that person in peril would be seeking to hire help than it is that he would simply be seeking it, and very few people in the woods could afford to pay the price for a person to put his life on the line. Don't pick an occupation that will force you to avoid plot. If adventure comes looking, it will always seek the lowest bidder. If your character requires money to be part of the Cottington community, you'll eventually have to look elsewhere for work.

No player can be an Innkeeper. The only inn in town is the Cotting House, and that inn is owned by Vigo Cotting. He does, however, employ a large staff, and PCs are very welcome, encouraged even, to join that.

Lastly, our economy is world driven and not solely affected by the actions of the player characters. While PCs can buy and sell things on the small scale, they are not general merchants. They could claim butcher, cobbler, or bee farmer, and sell meat or shoes or beeswax, but a character cannot have a far reaching merchant business.

Example: Soldier, Mercenary, Innkeeper, Merchant

# Cottington Woods Player's Guide

## Part One: Character

### 6 Player Character Races

#### Human

*"The human race is governed by its imagination."  
--Napoleon*

Humans are the most common of the races on the Written World, and are the race against which others are measured. They require no racial makeup, no special costuming and no role playing guidelines.

Humans come from one of the four Houselands, from the city of Faraway, or from Cottington Woods itself. Be sure to read the cultures section to determine which of these locations best suits your concept, though keep in mind that the culture section is a guideline only.

All non-brer and non-golem human characters have the Human Trait.

#### Important Note on Sub-Human Character Concepts

We have a very specific vision for the Written World, and part of that vision is that the world is very "human-centric". No sub-human concept will be considered for any player unless that player also submits a normal human character concept. As a guideline, consider that of every ten player characters, seven will be human, two will be brer, and maybe one will be a golem. We are very willing to work with folks to make their characters as interesting as possible, but on this point we must be strict.

#### Human, Golem

*"I want to be a real boy!"  
--Pinocchio*

Parents sometimes go through extraordinary means to bring children into the world. Consider the case of Pinocchio, Tom Thumb, the Scarecrow, or the fact that we know what happens when you combine frogs and snails with puppy dog tails. The result is a golem -- a created man. Each golem must have a unique creation story. Don't stick with the tales you know, since somewhere in the world, those tales have been taken.

Golems are not gargoyles or robots. As such, they are no less vulnerable than any other human character. The exception is the toughness of their skin. Golems can purchase Golem Armor. Though they are never entirely made from stone or metal, they could be made of wood or earth. If it is appropriate for the golem to be armored, and if a character purchases Golem Armor, he must wear make-up or costuming that makes the armor obvious. In any case, a golem character must always look fabricated. His skin could be painted like bark, or pale like snow, or ruddy and rough as if he was made from clay. The exception is green. A golem cannot be green, since he might then be mistaken for a goblin.

Not always, but often, golems contend with a desire to be more. They are almost human, but really they are not. Their strange look and sometimes strange, not-quite-human behavior sets them apart. They are acutely aware of this.

Golems do not start with the skill to read or write, but they can purchase it with character points.

Golems are extremely rare, and as such we will severely limit the number of golem characters allowed into the game. All golem characters require plot approval.

All golem characters have the Golem Trait.

#### Human, Brer

*"All animals are created equal but some are more equal than others."  
--Animal Farm  
"I could not help myself. It is my nature."  
--the scorpion*

Long ago, animals changed skin freely. This practice became less common over time, but the evidence remains. Brer are animals. They look like men. They walk and sometimes talk like men, and they dress in men's clothing, but they are still animals. It is easy to pick out a brer from any crowd, as every brer has some physical feature or features distinctive of their animal type. They may have a black wolf's snout and ears, a fox's bushy tail or a head of feathers in place of hair.



## **Cottington Woods Player's Guide**

### **Part One: Character**

Most any type of normal animal can include brer, but most common to Cottington Woods are bears, boars, dogs, foxes, geese, crows and wolves. Brer players are required to role play as the animal they are. Please don't play a brer goose if you do not want to act like a goose, or if you are not prepared to be treated like one. Forget what animals usually are like, and play up the stereotypes. A pig is usually unkempt. Geese are silly. Dogs are loyal. Oh, and watch out for camels. They spit. Crows and ravens are thieves, and worse, they like dead things. It's also fair to remember that, in tales, wolves are portrayed as the bad guys more often than not, and so they will be viewed, at the very least, with suspicion. If you consider playing a brer, it is best to ask plot if the animal you wish to play is acceptable.

No brer can claim natural armor or any other type of protection derived from his animal type, but some brer can use the natural claws they were born with. When a player decides to play a brer, it should be obvious if his animal type would have claws. If so, that character would have access to the Skills: Short Claw, Two Claws and Clawed Reach. All brer have access to the Skill: Speak with a Specific Animal Type, which allows him to speak without limitation to any animal of his type. Brer are never literate. Again, to be absolutely clear, brer cannot ever learn to read or write.

Though not as rare as golems, brer are far less common than pure humans. We will limit the number of brer allowed into the game. All brer characters require plot approval.

All brer animals have the Animal Trait.

**A note on wild brer:** While all brer are animals, some are more like animals than others. PC brer are always of the sort that walk like men, and of course they always dress like men. Talking like men is optional. The vast majority of brer do not talk like men and are as wild as the woods they live in. If an animal is met in the wild, even if it walks upright, it is best to treat it with caution. Consider the scorpion.

**A note on playing wolves:** We all love wolves. Heck, without them, what would we put on our t-shirts? I debated disallowing wolves as an option for brer player characters, but decided against it. However, a player choosing to play a wolf MUST be aware that there is a serious prejudice against wolves in Cottington Woods. Heck, it's even written in stone, and I assure you, NPC wolves will show you why that is. Don't take this as a role playing challenge. It will not ever get any better.)

# Cottington Woods Player's Guide

## Part One: Character

### 7 Cultures Around the Written World

*"Back where I come from there are men who do nothing all day but good deeds. They are called phila... er, phila... er, yes, er, Good Deed Doers."*  
--the Wizard of Oz

There are four local human lands, and two local non-human lands. Player characters may come from any of the four Houselands, from the city of Faraway, or from Cottington Woods itself.

In addition to the four Houselands there are several cultures from around the world. Cottington Woods exists in a special place, and there are lots of comings and goings. Traders travel all over the Written World and discover all sorts of exotic things. Characters cannot originate from any of these distant lands, but they could be inspired by the cultures found there. That said, we'd like to maintain a small town atmosphere.

Below is a very general overview of the lands.

#### **The House Lands**

The four House Lands border Cottington Woods to the north and south, with the Clubs to the north, and Diamonds, Hearts and Spades to the south. These three southern lands surround the city of Faraway. Each house land is ruled by a king or queen, who in turn, at least in theory, is subject to the rule of the High King in Faraway.

#### **Collamoore, the House of Clubs**

North beyond Cottington Woods, the House of Clubs is removed from the other House Lands. Clublanders place great emphasis on strength of arms and on physical prowess. More so, they value one's ability to be productive. Farmers are no less valuable than the militia. Clublanders are the most down to earth and practical of the Houselanders, disdaining the Hearts as full of fluff, the Diamonds as twofaced and shallow, and Spades as arrogant busybodies. They are often sought as bodyguards and protectors. The Clublanders sponsor the annual Games, and their fighting school is considered the best in all the lands, such that other houses often send their own to study there.

If there is a reason that the Clublanders fight so well, it is because they fight often. They are under constant threat from the Frostwroth barbarians to their north, and it is a rare winter when those barbarians do not attack somewhere along the Clublander coast. Collamoore boasts a large number of standing troops, but even so they cannot be everywhere, and those who live farther away must be ready to defend themselves when the barbarians attack. Clublanders take pride in knowing they defend the rest of the Houselands from the Frostwroth, but feel some resentment that they get little support from the other houses.

The Collamoore colors are green and black, often with a black club on a green field, though sometimes the colors are reversed.

#### **The House of Diamonds, Westall**

Diamondlanders are shrewd businessmen who place great emphasis on material wealth. They are very much about appearance and position, and often display both in complicated games of intrigue. No one throws a party like a Diamond. While Diamonds often appear on the surface as benevolent, beneath the surface is often found a heart as cold and unforgiving as their namesake. Diamonds love to make deals, though be careful what deals you make, because a Diamond will hold you to your end. Diamondlanders tend to look down their noses at the other Houses. They are well aware that they are the wealthiest, and flaunt that wealth. Many great Men of Science workshops and guilds are found within the Diamondlands, as well as some universities.

They see Clublanders as "brutish and boorish;" flashy dueling is more the Diamondlander style. While many Diamondlanders sponsor the artisans within the Heartlands, having great appreciation for their work, Diamondlanders see Heartlanders as easily manipulated and foolish for putting more value on love and friendship than on wealth, power, and position - emotions are ephemeral things with no lasting power. Diamondlanders see Spadeslanders as the only House that could possibly compete with them, though they often see Spadeslanders as nosy and prying.

Westall, the Diamondlands, is the northernmost of the southern Houselands. The Gobaleen Mountains form the Diamondlander's northern border, and those same mountains are honeycombed with the mines of both men and goblins. It is not unusual for the Diamondlanders and the goblins to engage in conflict, armed or otherwise, over ownership of the valuable ore found there.

The Diamond Colors are blue and white, and the symbol is typically a blue diamond on a white field. Sometimes the colors are reversed.

# Cottington Woods Player's Guide

## Part One: Character

### **The House of Hearts, the Heartlands**

As the name implies, Heartlanders are ruled by the heart. They place great value in love and friendship, and courtly love traditions reign. Art and music are considered the greatest pursuits, and even those in other professions typically practice some form of artistic hobby. Many priests of the Word are Heartlanders. The bardic college in Briardown is the greatest in the land, and nowhere else in the Houselands are bards so well-respected.

Heartlanders see Clublanders as reliable, dependable and fearsomely brave, but feel sorrowful that they forget that strength of the heart is needed as much as strength of arms. Heartlanders and Diamondlanders rarely, it seems, see eye to eye, yet many Heartlanders have Diamondlander sponsors. Certainly the Diamondlanders have an appreciation for the Arts that the Heartlands produce, but often usually as a status symbol and a thing of beauty to be flaunted, not something to be appreciated for what it truly is. They often find Diamondlanders cold and, well, heartless, and their game of intrigues rarely take into account the feelings of those involved. There is something about Spadelanders that Heartlanders tend to find both intriguing and also at times a bit disconcerting. They share an intense curiosity, but the Spadeslanders have a lack of respect of privacy. Their sense of justice is often removed from their sense of heart, and they sometimes see things too black and white, too life and death.

The Heartlands are the most expansive of the Houselands. They sit between Diamonds and Spades with their northeast corner just touching the city of Faraway.

(For inspiration, read "A Song for Arbonne" by Guy Gavriel Kay.)

The Heartland colors are red and white. Their symbol is the red heart on a field of white. This is never reversed.

### **The House of Spades, Rollinghill**

Fortune favors the Spades. Their lands are smaller than the Heartlands, but have great abundance, and certainly no other house can claim as many marriages into the royal line of Faraway. They have extensive trading routes and engage in many business ventures with the Diamonds. Spadelanders place a great deal of value on knowledge and discovery. This does not mean they are all scholars or priests, but that they share a great curiosity. For this reason, some of the greatest explorers and rogues hail from this house. They place a strong emphasis on justice, and are often called upon to settle disputes, investigate matters, or enforce the King's law. The first Jacks were Spadelanders. It is said, however, that their pursuit of knowledge and truth sometimes goes too far, and many of the other Houses accuse them of prying into matters not of their concern.

Spadeslanders appreciate the prowess of the Clublanders - but also see them as somewhat straight and narrow. Sometimes even simple, due to their disdain of playing the Game of Cards. But they can be relied upon, and no one makes a better bodyguard that doesn't ask questions. Spadeslanders see the Diamondlanders as so caught in their games and one-ups-manship that they miss the larger picture, and don't appreciate that knowledge for knowledge's sake is often its own reward and by far the best game. Their emphasis on status and material goods is sometimes seen as gauche. Spadeslanders find the Heartlanders refreshing and delightful. Their patronage of the arts means they often have some of the best libraries and collection of knowledge, and Spadeslanders do love collecting knowledge. They also have an adventurous spirit the Spadelanders appreciate, and perhaps only the Spadelanders truly realize what strength the Heartlanders truly have.

Rollinghill is the southernmost of the four Houselands. To the southeast is the Canyonlands, and the Spadelanders have a strained history with the people there.

The Spade color is black, and the symbol often shows a black spade or spades on a red or white field.

### **Faraway City**

The city of Faraway is the seat of the High King of the four Houselands. The citizens of Faraway typically adhere to the characteristics of the various lands, with the added rush and hustle of city life. It is largely considered unnecessary to travel to the various Houselands in order to taste the flavor of them. In most cases, it is enough to visit Faraway, where each house is well represented.

The city stands at the northern border between the Heart and the Spadelands. It is south of the Border Hills, north of which is Cottington Woods.

### **Cottington Woods**

Most folks in Cottington Woods grew up on the borders, and tend to take after whichever house was closest to them, but some grew up deeper in the woods, and claim no ties to the Houselands. Those rare individuals are often considered odd, perhaps a little fairy touched, or just plain crazy. At best they are considered backwards or out of touch by mainstream Houselanders. The goings on outside of the woods have a hard time reaching into the woods,

# Cottington Woods Player's Guide

## Part One: Character

and they often don't seem to matter so much. Woodlanders tend to be more focused on the simple yet frequent day to day challenges that the wood presents.

Locals to Cottington Woods, although not belonging to a specific house, Woodlanders are still considered Houselanders. Prior to the start of game, there is no community within the woods, per se. There is no governing body or place where the woodlanders gather to discuss issues.

### **The Houseless, Wanderkin**

Most Wanderkin clans migrate in and out of the Houselands, and player characters cannot come from these clans. However one clan, or collection of clans, spends most of its time wandering the four Houselands and Cottington Woods.

See Wanderkin below for more.

### **Non-Human Lands**

There are two known, non-human lands that are close to Cottington.

#### **Greencloud**

Home to the local wood elven population, Greencloud is a place that no non-elf has ever seen. It rests in the forest to the east of Cottington. The town of Thornwall guards the only known approach to Greencloud, and is guarded vigilantly by aggressive elves perched on high walls.

Elves appear as humans, though they have pointed ears. Their clothing always incorporates leaf shapes into the pattern.

Elves are not a player option, but they are a presence in the woods, and cannot be ignored. They typically do not approach human settlements, and on the rare occasions that they do, they never stay for long. They view non-elves with poorly concealed disgust, and it is well known that the touch of a non-elf is disgusting to an elf. This constant distance is also evident in how elves fight – they choose to wield bows and to kill from a distance.

While elves seem to dislike humans, they absolutely abhor goblins, and will often threaten goblins on sight or even come to blows. That Cottington sits between Greencloud and UnderMarsh is unfortunate, since elven and goblin hostilities will occasionally occur nearby, drawing the men of town into the conflict.

#### **UnderMarsh**

UnderMarsh is a very boggy swampland west of Cottington, and is home to marsh goblins. Beyond UnderMarsh are the Gobaleen Mountains and south are the Diamondlands. Much of UnderMarsh is under water, which is fine for the amphibious goblins, but makes travel difficult for non-goblins.

Goblins have green skin, though otherwise they appear human. Because the constant in and out of water is hard on fabric, goblins care little about the quality of their clothing, and they typically dress in rags.

Goblins are not a player option, though perhaps even more than the elves, they are a presence that cannot be ignored. Goblins are very curious, and have a poor sense of boundaries. Since they occasionally take things that belong to other people, they are viewed with distrust, and very few people will let a goblin into their home.

Because the Diamondlanders and the goblins of UnderMarsh have such a history of violence, goblins tend to regard all humans warily, though they do have dealings and humans don't typically fear for their lives when traveling goblin lands. Goblins have the same hatred of elves that elves have for them.

### **Other Lands**

While Houselanders will have the most exposure to other Houselanders, there are other cultures out there that may interact with them. Most frequently they would meet Canyonlanders or Frostwroth barbarians, and occasionally they might meet travelers or traders from Taiden Sheh, the Dust Lands or the Barumbi Basin. Lakupaparoo or the Wikapapuji Islands are so far away that only extreme measures would ever serve to create an interaction. But of course, you never know.

#### **The Barumbi Basin**

The Barumbi Basin is a tropical rainforest that stretches over a large portion of the Written World, south over the sea from the Houselands. The deep canopy formed overhead by the massive trees of the basin make the place seem even deeper and larger than it is, and it is easy to get lost. Of all the lands on the Written World, none is filled with such an air of natural mystery.

# Cottington Woods Player's Guide

## Part One: Character

While the Robber Barons reigned and fell in the Houselands, other kingdoms did the same in the Barumbi Basin, and ruins of those great kingdoms persist, buried and hidden beneath vines and under roots. Though there is civilization in the Basin, there is more wilderness, and deeper into the jungle civilization is harder to find. Characters can draw their ideas from the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs or H. Rider Haggard.

### **The Canyon Lands**

To the south and east of the Spadelands are the Canyon Lands, an enormous stretch of land that is cut and cut again by maze-like ridges and valleys. The proud Canyonlander braves are primitive by Houselander standards. The Laws of Science were learned and forgotten in the Houselands before the Houselanders ever reached the canyons, and even magic is not as well known.

The greatest of the canyons is RedFeather Canyon, and built into the wall of this canyon is the RedCliff Dwelling Place, the center of Canyonlander culture. While the people of the canyons are divided into many nations with many dispositions, once each year they gather at the RedCliff Dwelling Place to trade and speak of matters of import.

Over the last few generations the Church of the Word has sent many missions into the Canyon Lands to try and bring the people there into a more enlightened state. There has been some success.

The Canyon Lands should draw ideas from the native cultures of North America.

### **The Dust Land, the Kingdom of Gold**

East and above the Barumbi Basin, separated from it by an enormous rock escarpment thousands of miles long are the Dust Lands. While it seems that nothing could possibly grow in such a dry place, the Kingdom of Gold is one of the Written World's oldest cultures. Over a thousand years ago the Dust Land was home to the Kingdom of Gold, a kingdom that reigned since the beginning of time. Eventually the Kingdom of Gold fell, and today the land is divided into dozens of tiny states.

Based very loosely on ancient Egyptian mythology, the people of the Dust Land envision their patrons as having the heads of animals.

### **Frostwroth**

Frostwroth sits across a great bay from Collamoor, north of Cottington Woods. Frostwroth is a bitterly cold region during the long winter, and a stunningly beautiful one during its very short summer. Carved out of the surrounding highlands by glaciers at some point during the world's shrouded prehistory, the land is rugged and filled with dramatic valleys, ancient evergreen forests, and craggy rocky spires that are never without a cap of snow.

The people of Frostwroth are as rugged and violent as the land they claim to have tamed. They regard battle as honorable, and to die in any way but on the sword of an enemy is considered a shame.

Frostwroth is inspired by classic Viking tales and from tales of the Scottish highlands.

### **Lakupaparoo**

Several generations ago, a colony of settlers traveled from the Houselands to settle the far distant land of Lakupaparoo. Lakupaparoo is one of the few places in the Written World that exists just over the horizon. On the otherwise flat Written World, this gives rise to the saying that Lakupaparoo is down under the rest of the world, and the colonists there have even assumed the name the "House Down Under". Travelers from the land down under tell of coastal jungles and of an inland made of burning sand.

Aside from the expanding colony of former Houselanders, Lakupaparoo is home to a secretive native culture called the Mungo that even the settlers know very little about.

Lakupaparoo is influenced by tales from Australia and New Zealand.

### **The Petal Kingdom**

Taiden Sheh, the Petal Kingdom, is loosely based on the Asian cultures of feudal China or Japan. The Petal Kingdom rests beyond Greencloud and beyond the Canyonlands on the far eastern shore of the continent. Travel to and from there is difficult, as the traveler must pass through the winding ways of the Canyonlands.

Petal Kingdom fashion influences can be seen in the Houselands, although it may be considered a bit overdressed in rural Cottington Woods.

### **Wikapapuji Islands**

## **Cottington Woods Player's Guide**

### **Part One: Character**

The Wikapapuji Islands rest about halfway between Lakupaparoo and the Houselands, resting in the ocean about a month's travel from either location. They stretch from the north edge of the world to the south, although they are so far spread out that travelers could miss them completely without the use of a map. Those who live on the more extreme northern and southern islands are not even aware of the others. Near the center of the north/south line is the Wikapapuji Archipelago.

The Wikapapuji are inspired by tales of the islands of the South Pacific, including Tahiti and Hawaii.

#### **The Wander Kin, Wanderkin**

These wandering clans migrate all over the Written World. Some suspect that the Wanderkin families did something in the past that lost them their home, though if that is the case, none can recall what that thing was. A mysterious and spiritual people, the Wanderkin have a deep sense of personal freedom and a rigid sense of cultural honor. Their habit of never staying in one place for long has resulted in a deep mistrust of them by people of other cultures.

The Wanderkin are loosely based on the gypsies of common folklore.