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# JOURNAL



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SESSION ONE



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# INTRODUCTION



## FOREWORD

This month I'm going to review what happened at the table during the first game in my new campaign setting: The Lost Kingdoms. I haven't planned any stories or adventures for this setting. No overarching plots, character development stories, or villains have been determined. I'm just going to go with the flow of the table.

I do have a handful of prep in the form of some Inspirations to help me visualise the setting, some Themes to guide and shape what adventures do arise, a starting point for the campaign, and a random encounter table to evoke some consistency and feeling to the starting region.

I don't know what's going to happen, but I need to start by having my players roll-up some characters.



## CHARACTER CREATION

Character creation was pretty fast. Despite having no knowledge of the rules, my players managed to create their characters in around an hour. That included reading through all the character choices, equipment lists, and spells.

### CHARACTER BACKGROUNDS

Before starting play, I asked each of my players to say a few words about their character. Nothing taxing. Just a few simple ideas.

I think every character should have the basis of a background. I find them invaluable and they invest my players in the setting I've created. Right now, none of the players know anything about the world they'll be adventuring in, so asking them to create a background for which they have no context is a huge ask. Instead, all I ask them for is:

- A brief physical detail of their character
- An interesting detail drawn from an aspect of their character build, like a skill or piece of equipment
- The reason they are in Lamros

Just asking my players to invent these three, simple details gets them thinking about their characters. In return, I get story details.

I learned long ago that RPG campaigns are about the player's characters. Knowing some details about those characters allows me to create stories about them, and I know that's what really matters to my players! So, by taking their ideas and weaving them into my Inspirations and Themes, I should end up with a self-generating campaign.

By the time we'd finished rolling-up, I had these details about each character:

# THE CHARACTERS



## Nobitz

*Nobitz is an alcoholic pugilist. Orphaned as a child, he survived as a bare-knuckle boxer, fighting for money in seedy taverns. He had little success until he received an epiphany and found religion. Ever since, he's been travelling from village to town fighting for "The Lord" and spreading his holy word.*

## Askeladd

*Askeladd is a giant of a man who favours a wakizashi-style blade. He serves a secret order of assassins and possesses a mysterious red crystal. Somehow, the crystal guides him in dreams and visions, one of which brought him to Lamros.*

## Bjorn Fisher

*Bjorn was a simple fisherman when his village came under attack. Foul creatures emerged from an underwater fissure following an earthquake. They wreaked havoc and destroyed the villagers livelihood. Now, armed with his grandfather's whip, Bjorn has travelled to Lamros seeking help.*

## Lord Galmor

*Lord Galmor has a strange penchant for accumulating small, magical baubles. While surveying his father's lands for new fishing grounds, he received a divine revelation. It prompted him to relinquish his heritage and devote his life to serving the Holy Order. It is his holy duties that have brought him to Lamros.*

## Guntha Le Toll

*Descended from a family that has always operated the toll gates at a river crossing, Guntha met danger when he stole a magnificently carved bow as a young man. Fearing retribution for his crime, Guntha fled into the wilds to live off the land and avoid capture. Always looking to stay one step ahead of his pursuers, Guntha's flight has most recently led him to Lamros.*



# SCENE ONE

## THE OPENING SCENE

*...then, you hear the sound of an echoing, gong-like bell, clanging a warning! The townsfolk are rushing past the door of the tavern, armed with spades, pitch-forks, and seemingly whatever weapon they could get their hands on. Dashing after them, you see a huge swarm of black locusts with searing, red eyes has descended to ravage the Outer Fields...*

After establishing the character's backgrounds, I showed them the map of the town so they had some familiarity with where they had been living for the past few weeks. I briefly introduced **Karamos Kain** and **Laird the Smith**, allowing these NPCs to reveal some of the town's background, along with some of the history of the Sworn Swords mercenary company. Once the players had a grasp of where they were, I invited them to describe any other places of note they might have discovered during their stay here.

Of course, they made a Tavern first. **The Merry Pig**. Apparently a popular place, After asking the players to repeat what they'd just said, then spell it for me, I figured out the landlord's name was **Groracs**.

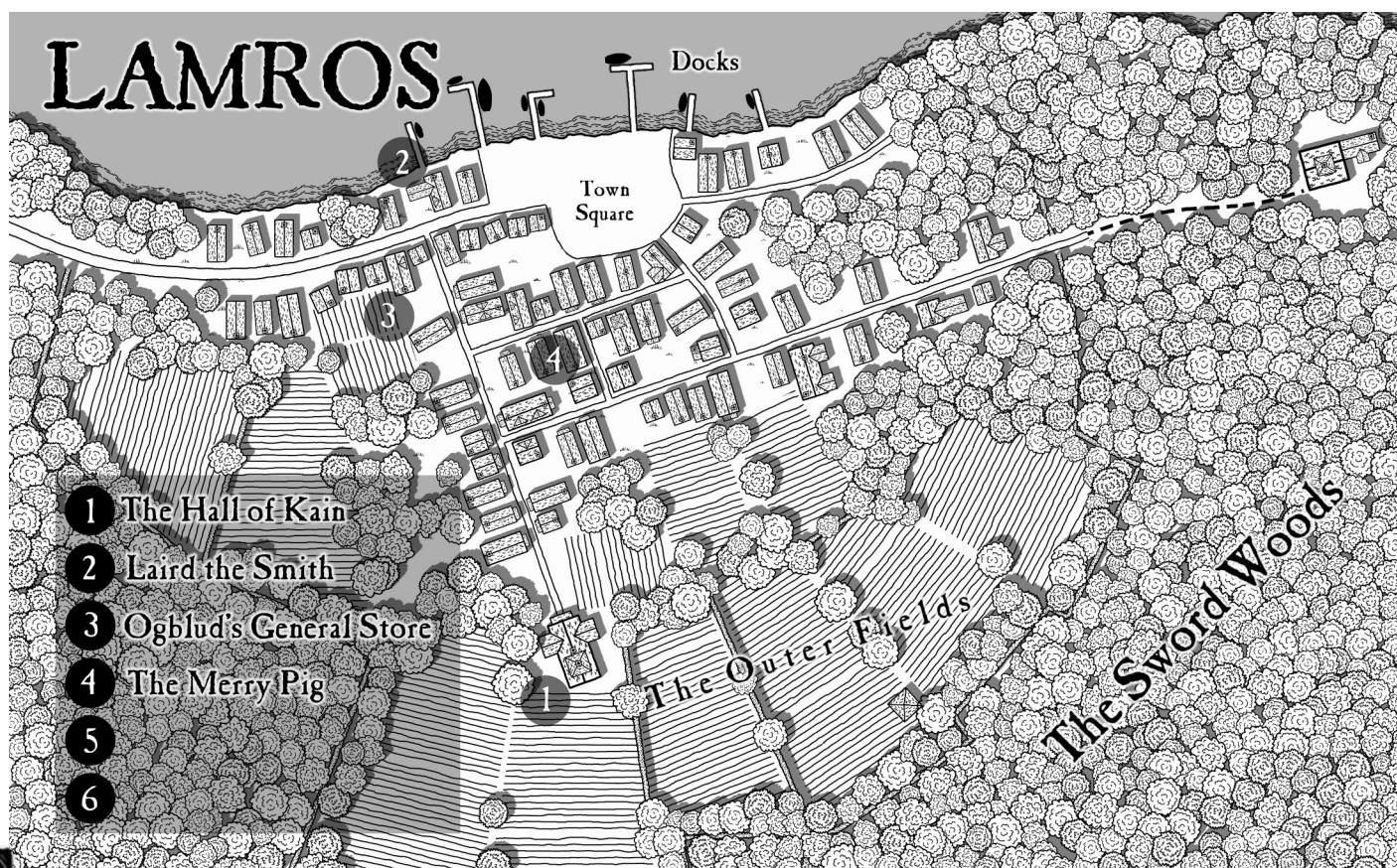
So the players created their own *Place to Stay*.

Next, they went for **Ogblud's General Store**, for all the gear they wanted ready access to, but couldn't afford. A *Place to Shop*.

Any idea what they went for next?

Lord Galmor asked for a church (Nobitz' church is the tavern, being an alcoholic). To this, I said...

*...Sorry, there's no church. No one outside the Holy Order believes in the gods any more, much less has access to divine magic. You and Nobitz are two unique heroes... Queue the alarm...*



# SCENE ONE



Reaching the Outer Fields, the players soon discovered the futility of attacking the locust swarm with blades and arrows. They didn't even have any offensive magic. They needed a better plan.

Bjorn decided to "carefully" set the fields on fire, hoping to drive the locust off with the flames, heat, and smoke. Of course, a few poor dice rolls later, the fields, characters, and several townsfolk were all on fire, but at least the locusts were forced away.

Wanting to know more, the players questioned Karamos Kain about the locusts.

Karamos explained the locusts had been plaguing Lamros for some weeks, having ravaged their fields twice before. With the remaining fields consumed by either fire or locust, Karamos now needs a new source of food for the townsfolk and a solution to the locust problem.

Having a wilderness background, Guntha volunteered to forage for herbs that the party

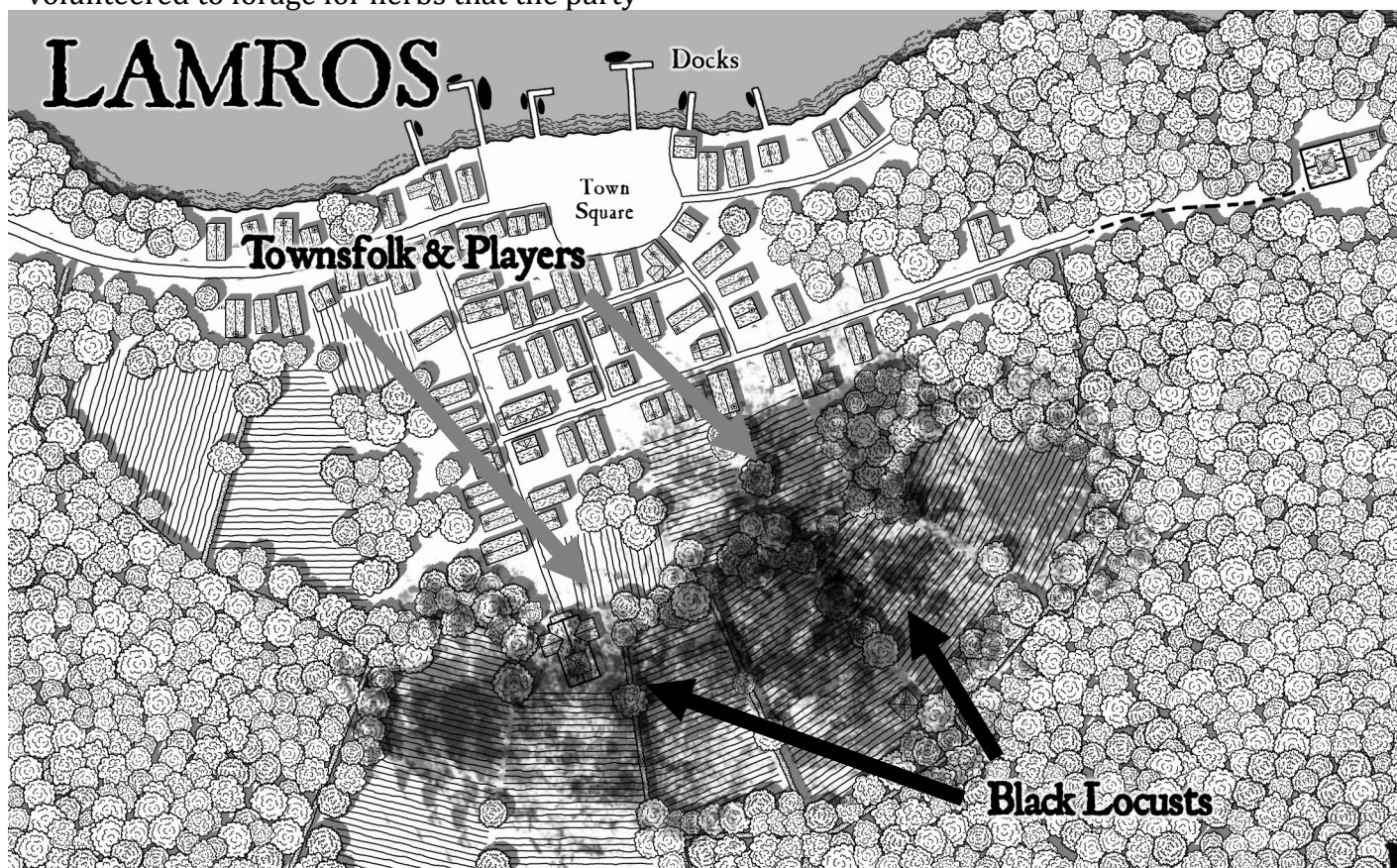
could develop into some kind of mass-produced, industrial insect repellent. All the players thought this was a great idea, so I thought – let's give it a go!

The characters grabbed some stray locusts that were left behind, stuffed them in a jar, and set off to try and find some suitable plants with insect repellent properties.

Before they left, the players had one more question for Karamos Kain:

## Where do the locusts come from?

While telling the players no-one knows where the locusts came from and that the species is unheard of across the Golden Coast, I decided they were demonic in origin. I love the character of Prince Koura in *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad* and want to include a similar villain. Perhaps they sent the locusts for some reason? I'll see if the answer to this question emerges from the story, but I'll have a think about it later. For now, I just want to establish the locusts as an unnatural threat.





# SCENE TWO

## THE FIRST RANDOM ENCOUNTER

*...You see an old orchard up ahead, surrounded by crumbling stone walls. Most of the trees are dead and the orchard long overgrown. You hear a grinding of metal as the colossal form of a bronze construct, spraying molten bronze from its outstretched palms, strides from the ruin of a stone storehouse in the orchard's corner...*

The party sets off in search of some insect repellent and rolls a 6 followed by a 5 on the encounter table, indicating they stumble across an **Old Orchard** occupied by a **Bronze Construct**!

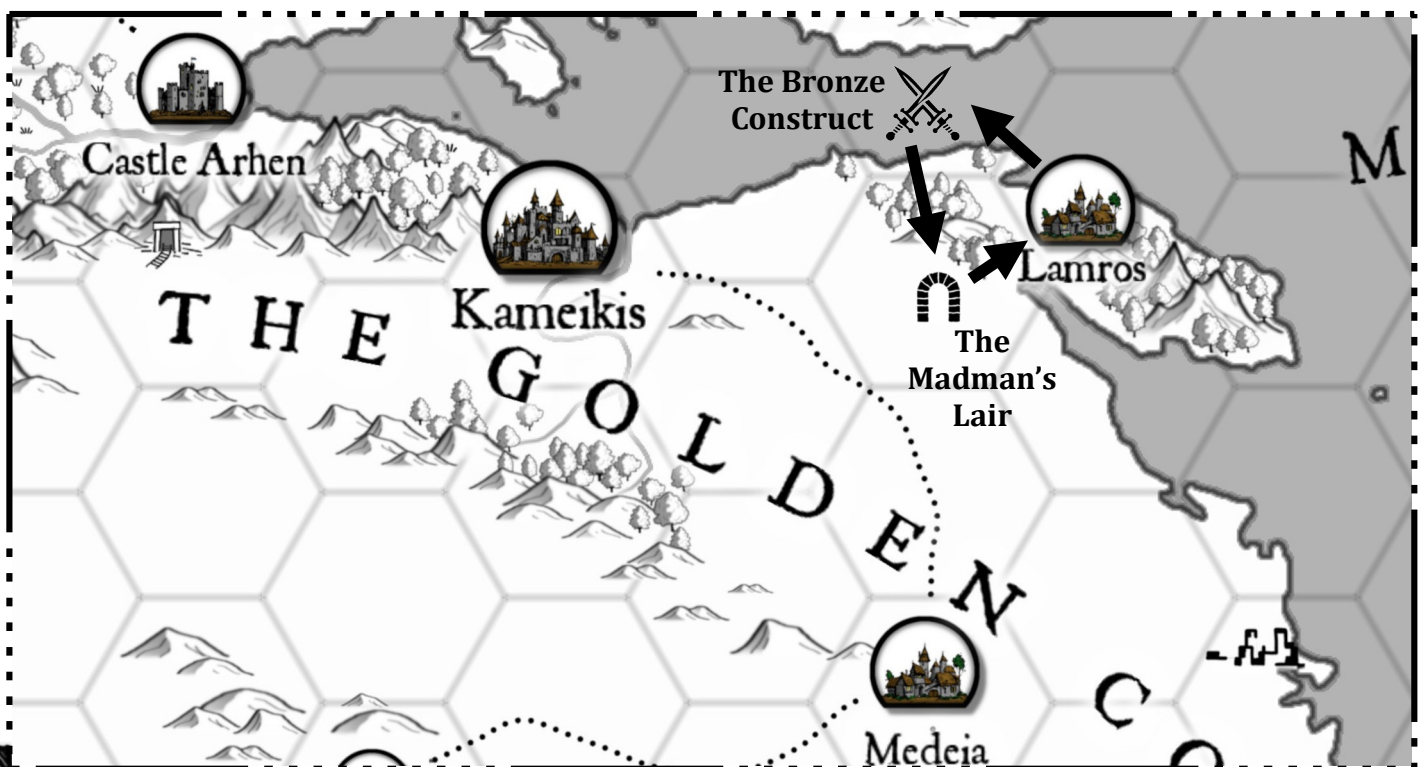
As soon as it came up, I knew this encounter would be overwhelming for starting characters. The Bronze Construct has quite solid armour which the character's weapons would hardly scratch.

Of course, the players were in an immediate panic! They couldn't understand what such a creature was doing in the abandoned orchard. Then **Bjorn Fisher** suggested it might be looking

for something? I thought "that's a great idea", so I ran with it.

Remembering that **Askeladd** possessed a mysterious crystal, I decided that was what the construct was looking for and turned its attention onto him. Of course, I didn't disclose this to the players, only causing Askeladd to question why the construct was attacking him?

Everyone knew they were outmatched by now. Bjorn's hands had been seriously burned while protecting himself from the spray of molten bronze and the party's efforts to damage the creature had completely failed. Recognising it was focussing its attacks on him, Askeladd decided to draw the Bronze Construct away from his companions and lead it into the countryside surrounding the orchard. It was a good move. He lured it far enough away that his companions could start healing themselves. Then he used his Stealth abilities to hide and sneak back to the orchard while the construct wandered off into the distance. Danger averted!





# SCENE THREE



## THE MADMAN

*...While passing through a small copse of trees, a glint of treasure in the undergrowth catches your eye. Upon inspection, you find an ancient stone staircase leading underground purposefully concealed under several bushes...*

By the time the party had moved on from the orchard, a quick glance at my watch revealed we only had around an hour and a half left and still needed to find some insect repellent ingredients. So, at this point I decided to deploy my drop-in dungeon and ran *The Madman* to soak up the last hour or so at the table.

Running this short dungeon encounter worked exactly as intended. It was a welcome distraction for the players and a chance to experiment with some more of the new rules we were all learning. It also focused the players in a different way than everything they'd done so far in this adventure, because what player doesn't love a good, old dungeon crawl?

Creeping through the ancient Khytaan ruins, the players learned a little about the history of the region and the Khytaan Dynasty from the carvings on the dungeon walls, quickly dispatched the madman and his abominations, rescued the kidnapped villagers, and earned a reward of gratitude for their help. They also discovered some fungus in the damp, partially flooded dungeon (I'd actually forgotten about their search for insect repellent by this point) that appeared to have an adverse effect on the locusts they'd trapped in the jar. It also startled them to watch the huge, black locusts, with fiery red eyes, transform into normal locusts when they died. A detail I made up on the spot that raised suspicion amongst the party, but which neither they nor I had any answers for right now.

The relatively easy encounters within this dungeon also provided my players with a sense of victory, allowing the session to end on a high.

## ENDING THE SESSION

As the game was ending, the players decided to return to Lamros with what they'd discovered.

Wondering how they might mass-produce insect repellent from the jar of mushrooms they had, they decided to add an Apothecary to the town and named the owner, **Holbar**. However, after consulting him about the potency of the mushrooms, and the possibility of manufacturing some insect repellent, he told them they didn't have enough and he was unsure of the process they were suggesting. His advice was to seek out **Amir the Wise**, a herbalist of some renown who lives in the nearby town of **Medeia**. Perhaps he could help them?

We wrapped up this first session at that point, rewarding the characters with some XP and praise from Karamos Kain.

The party are already making themselves known amongst grateful locals, achieving a good measure of success in their first adventure.



# SESSION NOTES

## RECORDING WHAT HAPPENED

After arriving back at home, taking the time to think about the events that had transpired during the game, I put down some session notes.

I always follow this practice as soon as reasonably practical following a game. I feel it's the most important step when running an emergent campaign. As all the plots, stories, NPCs, histories, and events are being determined by the players and I at the table, it becomes essential to record the things that happen and the details discussed to maintain consistency.

It's a simple exercise that I break down into these three (surprise, surprise!) steps:

- The Overview
- Character Achievements
- Campaign Developments

### THE OVERVIEW

In this section I'll compose one or two sentences

that succinctly describe the events of the session, both as a reminder of what it was about and to use as a recap at the beginning of the next session.

### CHARACTER ACHIEVEMENTS

This is where I list all the player characters that took part in the session and record any notable events they were involved in, along with any associated complications or consequences. I try to detail at least one instance for each character, but it could be more depending on how large a part they played in the session.

### CAMPAIGN DEVELOPMENTS

In this section I consider how the party's actions might have influenced the overall campaign, making notes on any quest ideas, NPCs, factions, world-building, or locations that might be involved. These notes record the truths of the campaign, allowing me to plan the next session and see how the story is progressing.

The notes I made for this session look like this:



# SESSION NOTES



## Session 1: A Plague of Locust

*A plague of infernal locusts ravaged the town of Lamros, destroying essential food crops. Seeking a means to prevent future attacks, the party sets off to find a natural insect repellent and stumbles across the lair of a madman.*

### CHARACTER ACHIEVEMENTS

#### Askeladd

- Used cunning and stealth to lure away the Bronze Construct and escape
  - The construct was attracted by Askeladd's crystal

#### Lord Galmor

- Protected his companions with his mighty shield
- Discovered there's no church or believers in Lamros
  - Perhaps build his own church at later levels?

#### Nobitz

- Discovered the Merry Pig Inn, and the Apothecary, making friends with Goracs & Holbar
- Has been handing out "Bibles" to everyone he meets.

#### Bjorn Fisher

- Discovered the General Store making friends with Ogblud

#### Guntha Le Toll

- Developed the idea of the insect repellent

### CAMPAIGN DEVELOPMENTS

- Lost ruins of the Khytaan Dynasty dot the region, identified by their architecture
- The Bronze Construct must have a master. Who is it?
  - What does it need the crystal for?
- Made grateful friends of the villagers kidnapped by *The Madman*
- PCs demonstrated willingness to help Karamos Kain and his town



# SUMMARY



## PREP THE NEXT BIT

The first game is in the bag and the campaign is underway!

Do I have any idea where this is going? None at all!

Is everyone having fun? So far, yes.

Based on the events of this first session, I can now see what kind of prep I'll need to complete before the next game:

- **The characters have been advised to talk to *Amir the Wise* in *Medeia*. So, I need to create them both**
- **I need to give myself time to create another town, so I need another distracting drop-in dungeon**

I'll get to work developing those!

Until next time, let your imagination go wild!

-DMG