

Diamond Lake

The ramblings of Knuckston Grizzlebeard, common miner and regular patron of the Feral Dog Tavern, a week before his death by a falling girder in the Tilgast Mines:

So, you wanna know what life is like in Diamond Lake? Hells man, why would you want ta give a s&~@ about this place? It's a piss hole. My old bones sweat their last in those mines, and I've got nothing to show for it except a case of gout and the hacking lungrot.

You ain't going away are, ya?

Well then, sit down. . . I'll talk to ye about the sights around here, but it'll cost ya a few rounds . . . the Good Dwarven stuff too, you cheapskate.

Okay, where was I? Diamond Lake, a s&~@hole like no other. . .

Politics

Governor-mayor Lanod Neff is the head cheese around here. He's been appointed by Greyhawk itself because his father was a head cheese and got him started with a position at the Garrison that he didn't deserve. Now, he sits in his massive manor house on the hill overlooking the town. It's constantly under construction, mostly so Neff can try to outclass the other bigwigs in this berg.

The man himself? Hells! He's a lying, cheating philanderer who spends more time chasing tail than doing any real work. He lines the pockets of his cronies to stay in power, and pays off that sheriff to keep him and his boys in line.

If it weren't for his brother, Allustan Neff, Lanod's body would have been dumped into a dry mine years ago by the other power brokers in town. Allustan's a pretty powerful Wizard, probably the smartest man in town. I

heard that back in Greyhawk, he had designs on being the head of a wizard's academy, but fell out of favor and was forced into retirement. Since he was born and raised here, he ended up back where he started. I like to think he may have ran away from the big city with his tail between his legs, but, um . . . don't tell anyone I told you that.

Anyway, the law around here, if you wanna call it that, is a big old bastard named Sheriff Cubbin. It's no secret he's in the pocket of the Mayor, and spends his time drinking and carousing in the various cathouses. When he got elected Sheriff, we laughed in our cups and threw darts at his head, until he arrested us all with his private battalion of cronies. Son of a b~!#@. . .

The only other law in town is the Garrison, ran by Captain Tolliver Trask. He runs about 60 men in the old keep, but the snots never bother to step foot inside the town proper. Mostly, they patrol the miles of wilderness outside of town, and pray to their self-righteous god of honor. Truth is, Trask doesn't care a lick for Diamond Lake, and he keeps his men out of our affairs. He's just here to make sure his precious metropolis Greyhawk don't get attacked from our direction. If anything really bad happens here, the gates of the keep will shut so fast that any honest wage earner standing in the way'll get dashed against the walls.

Business

The mines are everything here, and I've been breaking my back inside of 'em for 30 years. The mine managers come and go, and deeds exchange hands over blackmail, gambling, and even downright murder and theft. At least that's the rumor. It a tough business and I can say that through it all, I'm still here, digging away to line the pockets for every backstabbing

son-of-a-b~!#@ that ever owned a mine.

Right now, there are six mine managers, who are considered to be the ones that matter in town. They have the chink to ignore the law, and hire their own thugs to keep order in their respective areas of business. They fight with the mayor sometimes, but for the most part they don't do much but bicker amongst themselves for every scrap of ore they can squeeze out of the hills.

You want a rundown of who they are? What's the point of that? It won't last. .

Ah . . . the hells with it . . . keep the ale coming. . .

Right now, the comer is Balabar Smenk. He is a fat, lecherous bastard who got his start from his old contacts in Greyhawk. He spends his time gambling, drinking, and scheming up new ways to take over this entire town. The mayor hates him, mostly because he's scared. Smenk owns 4 mines right now, and is poised to get more. Balabar may have just enough of the town in his pocket to stage a coup of his own, but he's usually too powdered up with perfume and sweaty finery to think about lifting a sword.

Of course, this has really pissed off Gelch Tilgast. Right now I work for the old fart, but it may not last. Before Smenk come into the picture, Gelch reigned over this berg for years like a petty lord, and now he's getting a taste of what it's like to be on the outs. I've even heard rumors that he's trying to get support from other mine managers to fight off Balabar Smenk, but that's probably hogwash. Tilgast doesn't know which way is up these days, and they sure as hell wouldn't deal with him after the way he's backhanded them over the years.

He's still better off than Luzanne Parrin. She inherited her mines from her mother, who died in the Red Death

when she was still a pup. Now, twenty years later, she's almost bankrupt, and it's no secret that she's sleeping with Chaum Gansworth to try and protect her own skin. She'll be broke soon.

Chaum Gansworth has been in town for a while, and keeps a pretty low profile. Other than the fact that he's sleeping with Luzanne, there ain't much to tell. He does own the Rusty Bucket, and has dinner there quite often. I guess his mines are doing okay, but then again . . . how the hell am I supposed to know?

The same can be said for the other two mine managers. One's an elf, some prancing panty waste named Ellival Moonmeadow. He only owns one silver mine, and doesn't have anything to do with regular townfolk like us. He just hangs out with his fellow elves, doing . . . well, whatever it is elves do when they're together. Haw ha!

The other one is a dwarf, named Ragnolin Dourstone, who's been here ever since I can remember. Like most Dwarves, he does well for himself in the mining profession, and has handpicked a number of spots to start new mines, all of them pretty damn successful. So far, neither Tilgast nor Smenk has managed to dent his business one bit . . . though they've both tried their best over the years.

In addition to the mines, all six mine managers share a single smelting house, located near the old piers. It's pretty much monopolized by the city council in Greyhawk, and run like a tight ship. The chief smelter, Vulgan Durtch, is a recluse, and the entire operation resembles a fortress with no windows, and no unguarded entrances. They had to step things up a bit security wise, after one of the mine managers sabotaged a rival's shipment.

History

Well, I can't really go back all that far. My memory gets a little fuzzy when I think back to the old days. . . I do know that the area near the lake was run by some uppity feudal lord a long time ago. He built a keep, which currently houses the Garrison's men. There are also a couple of old fences in the cairn hills where he tried to get his farming subjects to grow carrots and potatoes. I wonder how many of the idiot's subjects starved to death!

Well, his sons started exploring the cairns and old gravesites that litter this whole area. I guess they found quite a bit of loot from the olden days . . . and I don't mean 50 years ago. I mean really old days. Hundreds of years ago. Anyway, all this loot attracted the attention of Greyhawk, and pretty soon they bought off the noble kids and annexed this whole area for themselves. They hired a group of adventurers to explore it all, and sucked every last treasure dry from those old tombs.

That would have been the end of Diamond Lake, except prospectors and surveyors came in and took measure of the land. It's still s&~@ for growing anything but weeds, but wouldn't you know they discovered a massive cache of silver lodes and massive veins of iron under the hills, including the one we're sitting on right now?

Now, years and years later, it's said that that we're the cornerstone of Greyhawk's ore supply. Not like they'd pass any of that wealth onto common laborers like us, you understand. When I was a kid, getting a meal was as easily as casting a line in the Lake. Now, the smelting house and associated runoff has polluted the water so much, the merchants have to send off to Greyhawk just to get a week-old, salted flounder.

As far as recent history goes, there ain't much to tell . . . honest folk are still getting screwed and the wealthy are still getting richer off of our sweat. Let's see. . .

There's an old ring of stones out in the boonies, called the Menhirs. It's visited by Rangers, Druids, and other freeloaders. No one knows who built it, but they say the worn stone have been there for centuries.

The Old Observatory used to be a haven to some scholarly Monks, who used to prance about and read off astrology. They packed up shop when I was just a kid, and since then it's pretty much sat abandoned.

Then, of course, about 19 years ago, a pretty bad plague called the Red Death swept through and killed a good many of us. I lost my sister to the Boneyard, and me son's still got vapors and can't make a living. I even had it myself, but it's weren't too bad on me. I did get a pretty lumpy scar from it on the back o' my head though. You wanna see it?

No?

Ah well. . .

Entertainment

There's nothing like spending a day's wage in Diamond Lake. We may not get much in the way o' housing, sanitation, or any of that frilly city crap that doesn't do any good anyway . . . but we do have entertainment in spades.

If you have the money, the Emporium is the place to be. It's run by a lady of the night, Zalamadra, and she's got a whole cadre of the sweetest ladies you ever saw at her disposal. They sit in perfumed glory in the upstairs area she calls the Veiled Corridor. There aren't any veils there that I've seen, but then again, I've never asked for one. There's also a Den on the top floor where you can obtain the use of other substances that twist your mind around

and make you talk funny, if you're into that. There are plenty of games of chance, and a very interesting freak show downstairs full of dangerous and exotic creatures. Just last week, I heard a rumor that a crazed demon child escaped its cage and went on a fiery rampage. They haven't caught it yet, and I'm keeping a sharp lookout. They say its hide has magic designs on it, and I'll bet its worth a few pennies to its owners. I have a boot dagger handy in case I run into the thing.

If you like boredom, you can always visit Lazare's House. It's a fancy, high class place with a steep price I remember when Lazare managed a mine in town, until his wife got sick and he was bankrupted, selling everything to that bastard Smenk. Inside his place, there's no music, no dancing girls, and no fun. I heard everyone sits at tables and plays Dragonchess, a game with over 40 pieces and a multilevel board. Lazare used to be a champion, and has somehow pushed his habit on some of the upper crust. It's a snore, but at least you can gamble on it.

If you find yourself a little light of chink, there are a few other places you can visit for fun. The Midnight Salute is a pretty cheap place to get some female action, but they cater heavily to the Garrison's crowd. If you're looking to get drunk or do some low-end betting, there's the Feral Dog, where you can see some pit dogs tear each other to pieces, and get into a bar brawl or two. It can get rough, even for a guy like me, but it's worth it because they don't charge you to get in. Your other choice among the chaff is the Spinning Giant, but the other patrons are usually garrison soldiers, so you have to be tolerant of drunken chants and men who like to slap each other on the butt. They don't tolerate stealing or bad manners, and there isn't a card game to be found anywhere in the vicinity.

If you're just hungry for some food, you can go to the Hungry Gar. The chef there is a pretty decent cook, but there's only so much you can do with snared rabbits and deer meat. One alternative is the Rusty Bucket, which has a pretty decent common room as well.

Finally, if information of the outside world is your cup of tea, many out-of-towners stay at the Able Carter Coaching Inn. The main thrust of the business is running coaches and supplies back and forth to Greyhawk, Blackwall Keep, Elmshire, and other parts west. Boarders from all over stay there, mostly for short term business, so a good conversation about Greyhawk and other part o' the world are in good order there. Plus, if you're willing to pay, they'll take horses too.

Nine Hells, you can always do what I do. You can always spend thirty years of your life slaving away to Gelch Tilgast, only to see your life get poured down the drain when he sells the mine to Balabar Smenk in a few years. Smenk pays two coppers cheaper, and you work a longer shift. Bastards.

Shops

There are plenty o' places to get business done in Diamond Lake. You got something to buy or sell, you can most likely procure your needs right here.

Let's see. . . we got Tidwood's Jewelry, run by a uppity gnome of the same name. He cheated my mother out of her jewels for half their worth, so I can't vouch for his honesty, but you should see his collections in the window – whew! . . . He swears that his shop is burglar proof, and so far, no one's taken him up on the challenge. I'd like a few of those baubles for myself, that's the honest truth.

The General Store is where you can pick up just about any mundane

equipment you'd ever need. Taggin runs it pretty reasonable, and has all the supplies you need to travel overland for a month, or survive a mountain climb. He stays outta people's business, and sticks to his own outfit.

The Lakeside Stables are run by a half-elf named Lanch Faraday. I ain't ever owned a horse myself, so I don't know him well. I only met him once, during a card game, but I took my leave when he upset a table and pulled a knife. He's a mean, sour drunk, but he takes care of most of the community's horses, so he can't be all bad.

If you're looking for weapons, Tyorl Ebberly has a good shop. He claims to be a watch captain in Greyhawk, but he must've done something wrong to end up here. He has a few artifacts from the Cairn hills that he's found. If your interested his place is called The Captain's Blade.

Venelle's contains some of the finest bows in the land. Venelle herself is happy to sell anything she has, if she can locate it through all the clutter o' her shop. I took up bow hunting myself once, and stood all day in a tree stand, on her advice. The only thing I caught was a damned cold.

Manlin Osgood. . . now there's a man I can hang a reputation on. He's a right fellow and an able drinking companion, if his head's right. He doesn't bluff at cards, he's always ready with a backslap and a handshake, and he makes the finest masterwork armor in the region. A few from Greyhawk come to Osgood's Smithy special, just to access his team of apprentice blacksmiths.

That's about it. There are other places in town to get things, but I wouldn't recommend it. When your life depends on a wooden girder underground, you better make sure the right hands set it up, if you catch my meaning.

In Diamond Lake, it's better to be gouged by an honest exploiter than outright cheated by a thief, so stick to those places I mentioned . . . you should be fine.

Churches

There are a few churches in town that have gained a following, but I wouldn't recommend any of 'em. The best church for me are the Halls of the Veiled Corridor, where you can tithe your money for a cause that's worthy of your coin, and get a little bit of sweetness besides.

However, if you insist, you can go to the Church of Ct. Cuthbert, right on the center of town. The sermons there are full of piss and vinegar, led by Jierian Wierus, whose favorite activity is to flog his own backside with a cat-o-nine-tails, and go to the seedy parts of town to covert others to do the same. His following is 150 strong and growing.

If they'd make you feel welcome, you can go to the garrison and sit at the Chapel of Heironeous. It's mostly full of soldiers, who like to puff themselves up with honor before riding around the countryside in their fancy armor. Valkus Dunn is the righteous bastard in charge, preaching about public do-goodery, but doing nothing about it. He opens the service up to the public, but no one goes except men who swing swords for a living.

If you like nature, you can traipse out in to the boonies to visit the Bronzewood Lodge. Its run by Nogweir, a cleric of Obad-Hai who likes to scare people about bogeymen in the hills, but I can't imagine why they'd sit out in the middle of nowhere with nothing to entertain them. Trying to fill the coffers so he can get back to real civilization is my guess.

There's also a Temple of Wee-Jas around here somewhere, called the

Cult of the Green Lady, but you won't see them much unless you go the Boneyard and visit the graves they tend to. When my Suzie died from the Red Death, they took her thin, deformed bones and washed her up real pretty. Then they stood around and gave a little speech about mortality and life, but I didn't have a penny to give 'em. They went ahead and did it for free. Anyway, that's pretty much a good rundown of Diamond Lake for ya. You wasted enough of my time, so get out of my face and stop asking questions. I got a few coppers left in my pocket, and I want to get to the Emporium to see that damned two-headed mule again . . .

Knuckston Grizzlebeard was buried in the Bonyard of Diamond Lake. His burial was overseen by the Cult of the Green Lady, and he is survived by his adult son Renald Grizzlebeard, in the direct custody of the mine manager Gelch Tilgast.

“The joys of the rich man are nothing, as they who hang around with sinners, scoffing at the simple paths of righteousness. Their delights are a pittance compared to eternity, and their rewards shall be devoured by the wriggling powers of darkness. They seem as trees along a riverbank bearing luscious fruits, but I tell you: they are plagued from within by blind, consuming things that eat without mercy and leave nothing behind. Not a one of them will be safe on the day of final judgment, when the slithering darkness feasts upon them. We tread toward a red day, full of writing doom and a dread feast of bloated, ravenous hunger. Dark times is coming. Slithering times, when the clouds snuff the sky and the austerity of flesh is the path of salvation. Be ready, and prepare your body for the coming Age . . . an Age of Worms . . .” - Jierian Weirus, Priest of St. Cuthbert