



## - THE UNTIMELY WAR -

A TALE FROM WHISPER

Elias the clockmaker times his instruments to the whistling of the fissure near Cleft. For the life of him, Elias cannot fathom why his clocks run 69.3 seconds late every 30 days, forcing him to make frequent returns to Whisper in order to reset his timepieces. None of Whisper's residents appear to notice this fundamental discrepancy. Elias is unaware that his problem lies with the fact that the fissure near Cleft and Whisper keep their own time. Dweomner, the time keeper of Cleft, relies upon Elias' clocks in order to maintain his livelihood. Sadly for Dweomner, one of his specialties is meticulously timed traps...

This disequilibrium causes words to fly like a murder of crows. Known as the Untimely War amongst the Vale's residents, Dweomner rails against Elias' incompetence, while Elias counters with accusations of Dweomner's shoddy workmanship, using discount parts from Swindle.

While drinking ale in Whisper's tavern one fine evening, Elias was approached by an unhappy Dweomner, who stopped by the tavern for his daily mug of ale. He had just set Toki's thatched roof home security hammer trap, which sprung while he was halfway down the ladder. Dweomner was launched head-first into a nearby stack of hay. As he entered the tavern, Dweomner eyed Elias, who was lamenting his own misfortune. Elias had just finished resetting 7 clocks in Whisper for a total of 2,564.1 seconds. Dweomner approached Elias and threatened to expose the dark secret behind his shameful lack of facial hair. Incensed, Elias responded with a wild swing, which went wide and hit Vyvyan, the innkeeper's daughter, knocking the wind out of her.

The ensuing battle slogged back and forth as chaos spread in the tavern's common room. The conflict spilled into Whisper's square, as people poured from nearby shops to join the fray. A mob formed, replete with torches and pitchforks. The violence escalated from there. Their personal cold war went hot. Tempers flared.

On a visit to Whisper from his home in Cleft, Toki calmly surveyed the scene, soaking in the sordid behavior in the square. "Such rampant buffoonery is an affront to decency," quoth Toki wryly, and he remained to bring law and order to Whisper. He is reluctant to leave Whisper on the grounds that he is all that stands between order and anarchy. Toki is, however, interested in helping adventurers who seek to get to the bottom of the rising tide of social dysfunction.

## CRANK

Every one of Crank's clients has a story to share. He rejects such intrigues as so much noise. Kurtiss moves his contraband via this vagabond halfling. Following a series of unfortunate events wherein Toki (Whisper's enthusiastic constable) figures prominently, Crank moved his operation to a more appropriate venue. Crank stands on a dusty corner in Swindle as he engages in commerce on Kurtiss' behalf.

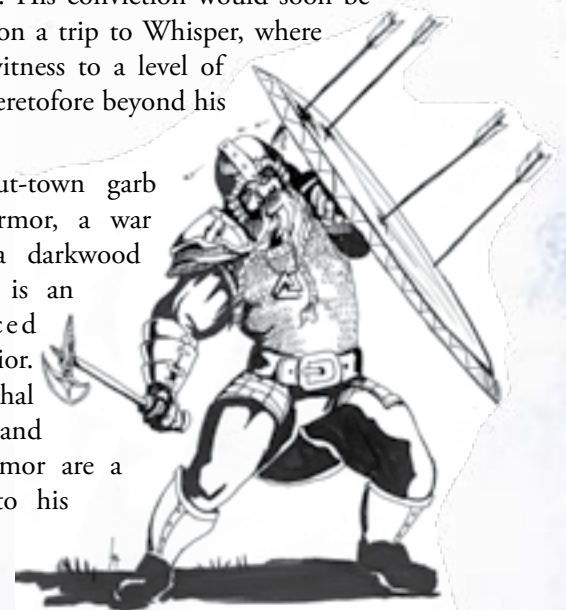
## CONSTABLE'S BUILDING

When a sudden argument in Whisper involving visitors from Cleft became a riot, many requested a plan to prevent encore performances by the newly self-assured mob. Citizens who suffered torch burns or bruises from trampling boots waited for a proposal. The first suggestion involved prohibition and curfew, which was vetoed by a spontaneous mob. A mob-pleasing alternative was quickly proffered. An old disused building on the edge of town was unlocked and deeded to the dedicated new constable. A safe distance from Whisper's inn, this converted barn, with its strong stalls, had once been used as a holding tank for Whisper's drunk and disorderly. Having spent an uncomfortable night with frisky rats, these unfortunates were released the following day, returning home to a good tongue-lashing from their spouses.

## TOKI 'WRYMOUTH' CONSTABLE/MORAL AUTHORITY

Toki is a 'believer'; he works in the service of a dwarven god. A tolerant polytheist, Toki advocates for order and the general weal. Toki's unflinching belief is that no one is beyond redemption. His conviction would soon be challenged on a trip to Whisper, where Toki was witness to a level of depravity heretofore beyond his experience.

Toki's about-town garb is chain armor, a war axe, and a darkwood shield. He is an experienced holy warrior. His marshal bearing and polished armor are a testament to his virtue.



# DWEOMNER SCHMEIDESTAHL

## TRAPMAKER

As a dwarf, Dweomner's philosophy is that no task is too tall for brute strength and a low center of gravity. He seeks to prove himself through stout tenacity. Opportunity came knocking when Dweomner was offered bellows duty in Cleft. He attacked this task with exuberance, straining his muscular frame with each compression. Unfortunately, his enthusiasm resulted in a fire at the forge. As Dweomner departed, he mused at the flimsy tools employed by the loafers at the former forge.

Unable to procure traditional employment, Dweomner turned his talents to engineering powerful traps. His motto, 'might makes right', is deeply entrenched in all of his designs. His peerless ability to create complex kinetic snares has found favor with the Vale's wealthier folk, who prefer to catch perpetrators in the act. Such interlopers face hard time in the temperance society's moral correction facility. Dweomner's ambition drives him to use his gifts for the good of the world and fixing that which needs fixed... one way or another.

While officially a citizen of Cleft, Dweomner is usually found at the inn in Whisper.



# ELIAS NOCK

## CLOCKMAKER

For the gnome Elias, fashion sense ended in a flash. It was not a clean death. For years, he has lived in a state of fashionable dysfunction, a byproduct of Elias' keen focus on his two obsessions. He is obsessed with time. While the details are vague, Elias was changed after an event which wrested somewhere between seven and twenty-five hours from his mortal coil. Clocks, unlike people, can be trusted.

Elias doesn't suffer fools; he despises and avoids them. He spends his time jotting down plans for sophisticated projects. Most days, Elias journeys to Whisper's busy inn, where he scribbles diagrams, ignoring other patrons. Elias sits stooped over the bar, his graying locks showing more interest in his tankard than he does.

While his creations are elegant and intricate, they invariably are no more accurate than a discarded sun-dial in Swindle. Fortunately, Elias avoids Swindle at all costs, and lives in blissful ignorance of the sun-dial-turned-lounge.



## - HELL'S BELL -

A TALE FROM CLEFT

The goblins of Swindle, having stolen the monastery's ornate bell, could not get the device to ring. Told that eliminating deposits in the bell would solve the problem, Swindle's council accepted an offer to clean the bell from a pair of friends from Cleft. Their only stipulation was that the bell be transported to Cleft for the job. Swindle's council charged the town crier, Faudder, to accompany the bell on its journey. He was admonished never to let the bell out of his sight.

Having secured Swindle's bell in the woods near Cleft, the inseparable tinkers, Dweomner and Elias, were keen to use a black 'scrubbing' powder recently discovered. Dweomner placed a miniscule amount of the powder inside the inverted bell and proceeded to scrub. His steel brush created a spark, creating a small detonation. The pair looked excitedly at each other through the billowing smoke. Without a word, Dweomner poured the remaining contents of their large sack into the bell. Suddenly, Elias had an epiphany: He concluded that they could use the bell to project the lead-lined barrel of rotgut into Cleft's Guildworks, thus proving their genius and saving them the effort of dragging the hooch into town.

Dusk was falling, so Dweomner lit a torch to help Elias with his work. Faudder stood dutifully behind as the friends worked feverishly. This invention would change the very nature of trade. Elias proceeded to scrub the bell as before. Noting his friend's trouble seeing in the deepening dusk, Dweomner drew his torch closer to Elias, who was intensely focused on his work. Accounts differ on the details, but are clear on the outcome. Their lifelong friendship ended abruptly.

To this day, the crater remains charred. Faudder returned to Swindle empty-handed and mute. Dweomner woke up the following morning on the bank near Cleft's ferry. Elias disappeared from daily life, eventually resurfacing to lead a quiet life in Cleft, using his expertise as a clockmaker in the fashioning of clever toys. Speculation abounds over the fate of Elias' long beard.

# WHEAT'S END

The miller and his son operate Whisper's mill to grind local grain for baking and barter. Business has been downright bad lately as the families struggle with poor harvests and suspicious activities. The friendly miller will feel inclined to help in any manner available to him just to bring the town (and his business) back to normal. He has one adventurous son, Runem, who often has good reason to make himself scarce from some of the town's other inhabitants, as his eye for other men's women is renowned and (not surprisingly) unpopular.

## NIGEL MILSTON MILLER

Nigel is Whisper's hardworking miller. He is a regular at the inn. He is agreeable and never argumentative - due in part to his being functionally deaf. He does little negotiation without his ears, aka his son, present. His love for both the village and his son is readily apparent.



## LIN LIREN DOCTOR

Lin Liren hails from a distant shore. While checking investments in 'a southern port', the gnome spied a travelling circus. Never one to miss a circus, he dropped in. To his delight, the affair was a front for a travelling gladiator faire. There were astonishing acts of senseless brutality. The gnome was impressed. After an impeccably choreographed bloodletting, the gnome was rapt. Never one to miss an opportunity, he approached the fight's victor, Lin Liren, proposition in hand. A clandestine agreement was reached, thus heralding the end of the faire fight. Fixing the faire quickly proved profitable and dangerous. Under cover of darkness - and heavy suspicion - the conspirators left 'the southern port'. The gnome returned to the Vale, his new friend in tow.

Quickly tiring of the gnome's undesirable company, his companion wound up in Whisper. He filled a busy niche as the town's healer. Recognizing the necessity for the treatment of the town's bizarre burns and bruises, Dr. Liren molded his practice to the treatment of physical manifestations of moral failure. He has become a master in this specialty as he applies his unorthodox techniques. The townsfolk might have protested were they not so spent. They came to realize that the good doctor's approach actually worked. This freed up the priest and his leeches to attend to other matters.

The respected doctor plies a healthy trade. Despite his inauspicious arrival, he has become one of Whisper's own.

The gnome's sporadic excursions continue, but he does not travel alone. They miss their doctor during his long house calls to 'some southern port'; the other one... not so much.

