How to use the 'Caves of Kabash'

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August 24, 2021

Abstract

The source book is a collection of ideas meant to be rearranged. It is not cannon. The purpose is to provide a starting foundation with the intent for it to be changed.

I. Introduction

World building for table top RPG is a challenge. One that a lot of people feel is the hobby at its heart.

I am assuming you are a storyteller and you need a place to get started. That's why I wrote '*Caves of Kabash*'. It is a framework designed for verbatium use, modifying locations or adding new locations. Its intent is a pre-built portion of a world which the storyteller can add modules to while maintaining a certain amount of cohesion.

A 'one-shot' game is a great example. The players arrive through whichever method seems appropiate. They meet up at an inn, then head out to have an adventure.

In other situations a storyteller may have a world which is active, but the players need a change. Something like tracking down a smuggling ring could work. The storyteller will need a city, an inn, a warehouse and some secret underground passages. The city of Jarios has those. You could even add another inn or two, no one would notice.

When the players traveled to this area via ship, a martime adventure would ensue. Upon arrival they have a new city to explore. They discover multiple rumors, some are true and some are not. There are guilds and religious groups. The city has a mountain range as a backdrop with cities on either end of a trade road. There are lands further west and an island that nobody visits for some unknown reason. . .

The source book allows for options. It gives the players the feeling of control as they decide where to go next. This approach expands the storyteller's world. There are new names and places. You can easily add several more. You can even change a few of them to pull the campaign world together.

The goal of the source book is modularity. It is meant to have connections and swapable components. The goal is to easily allow the addition of other modules. This is not without risk, for the addition of any one component impacts the entire region.

II. Exchanging Locations

There is an abandoned watch tower located at the bottom of the regional map. This can be traded out for an active look-out tower staffed with the Empire's guards.

Or perhaps it is an old keep.

Or even an old mage's tower.

Then there is the landscape. The rocky outcropping high in the air can be exchanged for the highest hill in the area. Place an old keep on it and you can describe it as, "A weather beaten struture, long since abandoned, defies sun and wind. Its siloutte marks the edge of a political boundary long since dismissed." Add your favorite adventure module and your all set!

The swamp area, located in the lower section of the regional map between the mountain range and the watchtower, is another area which is meant to be replaced or modified.

The area is a rather indescript. There are enough lizardmen in the area to give players something to do, but it really needs more. This area can be exchanged for a module requiring a swamp or you can build your own adventure in this area. Like many of the areas in the source book, it is isolated from the rest allowing easy exchange or replacement.

I included the most common terrain types in the source book: mountain, swamp, hills, forest, underground areas and an ocean. A lot of modules can fit into these terrains. Hex grids were used to allow easy documentation and placement. The size of each hex grid is a quarter-day travel.

III. Effects of Additions

It is always a good idea to ask yourself how the addition will impact the environment. Grab a piece of paper to jot down ideas as you are working. Ask yourself what kind of infrastructure this building or event would have. What things does it need to stay functioning? What does it produce?

For example, there is an abandoned mine entrance in the southern portion of the mountain range. I added the remains of a small village or campsite to the western edge of the mountain range as a contact point for that mine. This campsite might not be located on any current map in the game world, but it may exist on an old map. This could lead the players on a new adventure. Review what this feature will need. It will have inputs and outputs. It will also affect the area.

If the old watchtower was a wizard's tower, either currently occupied or vacant, there is sure to be some ramifications. The average person would probably avoid the area. Superstitions might be associated with the area. The affects of magic having pockmarked the area. The remains of roads or paths leading to the site might still be visible. Then there is the history of the tower itself. Who built it? How long did it last? Why was it abandoned? What lives there now? Each of these questions leads to other questions.

Another line of questioning is for the city of Jarios itself. Is it a busy city or quiet one? Is it on the rise or in decline? Ruled well or poorly?

These are changes you can make to the source material. You can even turn the map upside-down to make Jarios a city on the western coast. How would the weather change? Would it impact the landscape? Would the sea become more harsh?

IV. The Process

To generate a dynamic region one only needs three answers per category. Ask a question for a given category and give it three answers.

Scenario: Mage Tower

Category: Time, age of tower

Answers:

1. Ancient tower
2. Currently occupied tower
3. Future tower

For each answer, we divide it into a two-part boolean or a three- part range:

1. Ancient tower

    (a) Vacant
    (b) Occupied

2. Currently used tower

    (a) Occupant is good
    (b) Occupant is evil
    (c) Occupant is isolated (neutral)

3. Future tower

    (a) Now being built
    (b) Will be built
    (c) Planning on being built

Let's try some other categories.

Size: Tiny, Medium, Large

Security: Guarded, Unguarded

Visibility: Known, Unknown

Built by: Pocket dimension, Real world materials

Design: High fantasy (few physic laws impact the design), Low fantasy (normal physics apply)

I generated these by choosing one category, size, then giving it three answers. One of these answers was "tiny". I used this to generate a line of thought. Following it, I then asked myself, "How would a tiny wizards tower even work?" The answer was a pocket dimension. This then gave me a new category which in turn required more answers. I chose to divide that category into magical and non-magical.

From there, I began asking questions from the point of view of someone whom lived there. Did they like visitors? If they didn't, how did they keep them out? This generated the category of 'security'. Using this method of two-part on/off or a three-part amount created more answers.

As you walk through this process, it will begin to ask you questions. If there are guards, then how do they eat? Where do they sleep? Do they have down time? What do they do? What kinds of guards are they? Magical or non-magical? Choose an answer, it doesn't really matter which, then follow that line of thought defining its inputs and outputs as you move along.

V. Infrastructure

Each idea has infrastructure. There are things that it needs. For the guards, it's food, water and shelter. There are also supplies like weapons and armor, communication to leadership and whomever pays their salaries. Then there is the question of what does this entity produce? Physical security? An alarm? Each one of these questions should be answered. If

one uses this method, one can create a connections map. With this map of connections, events in one portion of the world will impact seemingly unrelated components in another, thus allowing the players to follow a trail.

Let's look at a simple question: how do the guards eat? Magical or non-magical? I'll pick magical for this line of thought. Some kind of magical dining room. The next question is: how does the dining room get its magical power? There are several ways. I'll chose an underground magical current that supplies the tower with magical energy. This is also why it was built here. Now what would happen if that magical current was turned off or decreased?

The noticable result is that the dining room wouldn't work anymore. This would result in food needing to arrive through other means. As food is now being redirected, this would generate work. The supplies would need to be transported to the tower, perhaps by the players - adventure hook.

The other direction to follow is what would cause the magic to decrease. Is the supply of magic running out? Is something absorbing a lot of the magic? Having something simple such as transporting food to a tower that develops into an archmage building a portal to bring a nasty demon into the realm is what some players are thrilled with. Every group is different. Modify the game to fit your group. The purpose of building this map is to give you a way to find disparet connections.

VI. Conclusion

The purpose of this guide is to encourage you to change things. When we see something in print, it has been trained into us to leave it as it is. This is how we preserve information. This book is different. It is a collection of ideas. As it is a collection, feel free to add to it. Or to remove items that don't belong. Use it as a source of inspiration. Build upon it or rebuild it. That is the purpose.

Now go forth and create!