

RAGING SWAN PRESS

THE VILE STAR
STORYLINE





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STORYLINE: THE VILE STAR

The Duchy of Ashlar is small and constrained. Always, the forces of evil and shadow press inwards upon its borders. If it were not for a stout few, death and darkness would have long ago overwhelmed the land. Dunstone was once Ashlar's northern bulwark. Now, it is a dangerously sleepy and insular place. Wicked humanoids yet lurk in the dark forests and deep valleys of the surrounding hills. Abandoned mines and crumbled ruins stud the surrounds, calling with their siren song to bold adventurers. To the west, lies the time-worn, oft-cursed ruin of the ancient Nameless Monastery.

Not all dangers lurk without, though. Folk—both fair and foul—have plans for Dunstone. Change is coming, to the Town on the Borderlands.

Design Creighton Broadhurst and Bart Wynants; **Art** Matt Morrow

USING A STORYLINE

A Storyline is a self-contained mini-campaign tying together three (or more) Raging Swan Press products. While each instalment provides a complete, standalone scenario, they contain plenty of adventure hooks leading to the linked products and can be played in any order. The Storyline provides an overarching narrative, tying together these three products in a flexible, non-prescriptive way.

While we have done much of the design, you, as a GM, still have some decisions to make to tailor this Storyline to your campaign. First, you must determine the Storyline's Four "A"s:

- **Antagonist:** Who (or what) is the main enemy?
- **Agenda:** What are they trying to achieve?
- **Agents:** Who is helping or supporting them?
- **Assets:** What special advantage(s) do they have?

Second, refer to "Running the Storyline" for ideas to help you decide where to start and how to weave the selected elements together. Third, "Conclusion" offers suggestions on handling the story's climax. It also lists several questions to consider during play, and you need to come up with definitive answers to these by the time you reach the end.

SETTING

The Vile Star Storyline's nominal setting is the town of Dunstone in the Duchy of Ashlar. However, with only minor modifications, you could set Vile Star in virtually any borderland town close to a wild swath of wilderland.

STORYLINE SYNOPSIS

Dunstone is a sleepy borderland town in the northwest of the Duchy of Ashlar. Once a place of danger and opportunity, it is a sleepy place. Dunstone's defences have not been tested for many years and its people, once hardy and brave—and have grown indolent and complacent. Similarly, its ruler, the elderly Benjam Oksanen, has grown old and seems content to live out his days avoiding struggle and strife. His grandson and heir—Aavo Oksanen—is altogether a different story; he nurtures big plans for

Dunstone and sees it as his duty to bring prosperity to the town. Aavo is energetic in his pursuit of that goal. Young, handsome and brave Aavo has many supporters among the younger folk, but many of the older townsfolk see him as a dangerous influence on the town. His drive has also brought other ambitious folk to the town. Some seek to tie themselves to Aavo while others work toward their own ends...

THE FOUR "A" S

Select one from each of the categories below, or devise your own:

ANTAGONIST

Who seeks to secure all the tordel in Dunstone's environs?

- **Nuythel Wilmatyn:** Nuythel Wilmatyn appears in *Dungeon Backdrop: Ruin of Bleak Hill* and *Dungeon Backdrop: Pit of Unquiet Souls*. The half-elf warrior seeks to establish a small domain in the hills beyond Dunstone's hinterland. Modify Nuythel's listed alignment to better oppose the overall ethos of the characters' group.
- **Auni Ilakka:** Auni Ilakka appears in *Dungeon Backdrop: Ruin of Bleak Hill*. The wizard has recently become interested in tordel and the opportunity it presents to further her magical and temporal power. Modify Nuythel's listed alignment to better oppose the overall ethos of the characters' group.
- **Thrayxix:** Thrayxix is an intellect devourer who recently come to Dunstone. It masquerades as Jyrki Klemetti, the owner of the Gilded Swan (location 5 on the Dunstone map), and dreams of leading the town's burgeoning thieves' guild. Eventually, its plans to rule the town through a puppet leader.

UPDATING THE VILE STAR

This is version 1.0 of the Vile Star Storyline. It deals with the dungeons and mini-ventures listed in "Running the Storyline". An updated edition of Dunstone is in the works as well as supplement details. This document will be updated, when such resources become available.

AGENDA

Why does the Antagonist seek control over the deposits of tordel scattered across the lands surrounding Dunstone?

- **Artifice:** The Antagonist requires a goodly supply of tordel to complete some great work. This could be a mundane item for a singular purpose or a unique magical item of surpassing power. Tordel is in exceedingly short supply, so the Antagonist will stop at nothing to secure all known caches.
- **Control:** The Antagonist seeks control over some or all of the unclaimed lands around Dunstone. The quest for star metal is merely a cover to map and clear various ruins in the locality. The Antagonist's long-term goal is to supplant Dunstone's rulers or become so powerful and influential they rule Dunstone from the shadows. Once they control Dunstone, they'll turn their attention to the rest of the duchy.
- **Power:** With tordel the Antagonist can craft, or have crafted, a weapon or other device designed to imprison the souls of its enemies and those who otherwise may be useful. Such folk could include its enemies' loved ones, those whose knowledge is useful to the Antagonist and so on.

AGENTS

Who (or what) are the Antagonist's minions, servants or followers?

- **Mercenaries:** Whether forced, bought, enthralled, misled or just inherently evil, the Antagonist's hired help work against the characters, matching them move for move. Mercenaries are unlikely to know the Antagonist's true agenda.



- **True Followers:** A collection of devoted apprentices, cultists or other loyal henchfolk united in their misguided dedication to the Antagonist's cause. True followers will likely know the Antagonist's actual agenda.
- **Unwitting Dupes:** The Antagonist works through a network of unwitting accomplices. The unwitting dupes don't know the Antagonist's true identity or agenda. The unwitting dupes could be true believers or mercenaries.

ASSETS

What item, power or other advantage does the Antagonist wield?

- **Wealth:** Either because they are being funded by a wealthy patron, or because they possess a vast trove of treasure, the enemy can rely on an almost inexhaustible supply of gold to fund their sinister endeavours.
- **Organisation:** The Antagonist belongs to a larger organisation. They may be a powerful figure in the organisation or but a cog in its wheels. In any event, the organisation possesses greater resources than the Antagonist which they may be able to call on.
- **Weapon:** The Antagonist already possesses a tordel weapon. The weapon could be complete or it could be broken or in need of additional tordel to upgrade or complete.

RUNNING THE STORYLINE

Modify or ignore any of the notes below to suit your campaign.

WHERE TO START

This Storyline encompasses the following three Dungeon Backdrops, which can be played in any order:

- *Dungeon Backdrop: Ruin of Bleak Hill*
- *Dungeon Backdrop: Starfall Chantry*
- *Dungeon Backdrop: Pit of Unquiet Souls*

Each Dungeon Backdrop presents several adventure hooks, to introduce the Storyline to your campaign. Additionally, the Vile Star Storyline compilation presents several mini-ventures designed to be run between the Dungeon Backdrops. Such mini-ventures can be run in virtually any order, depending on your scheme and plot. At time of writing, they comprise:

- *Drinking at the Gilded Swan*
- *Drinking at the Dwarf's Folly*
- *Shopping at the Merchant of Coin*

These mini-ventures—Patreon-exclusive supplements—are not vital to the running of the campaign, but rather provide some downtime and roleplaying opportunities for heroes returned from the wilderness.

Before hurling your characters in the wilderness, however, give them time to explore Dunstone and get a feel for the place.

DEVELOPMENT

The following encounters can develop the Vile Star story as you choose. The details have been left deliberately vague to make them easily adaptable to your campaign.

I. AFTER THE FIRST ADVENTURE

At the end of their first adventure, the characters may have secured a small supply of tordel—or, at least, know where such a supply may lie in the case of the Pit of Unquiet Souls.

SUGGESTED ENCOUNTER: LET'S MAKE A DEAL

The Agents approach the characters and attempt to (openly and pleasantly) buy the tordel from the group. If the characters have already sold the tordel or given it to their employer the Agents seek to learn the identity of that individual. If they are rebuffed, they attempt once more to reach an agreement with the party.

Encounter Goal: This encounter serves to alert the characters to the fact that other interested parties seek the tordel.

II. AFTER THE SECOND ADVENTURE

Once the characters have completed the second Dungeon Backdrop, they return to Dunstone.

SUGGESTED ENCOUNTER: ATTACK

The Agents ambush the party while they are in the wilderness far from help. (Perceptive characters may have noticed, of course, they are being watched and followed). The Agents' goal is to secure any tordel the characters possess and any other items of interest to their employer. This could include various handouts, maps and the like.

Encounter Goal: This encounter shows that other interested parties are not above murder and violence to achieve their goals. The borderlands are a dangerous place, and far from Dunstone's safety, there is little help to be had in the wilds.

III. AFTER THE THIRD ADVENTURE

By now, the characters have likely stymied the Antagonist's initial attempts to secure the tordel. This has greatly angered the Antagonist who now decides to violently solve the situation.

SUGGESTED ENCOUNTER: ATTACK

The characters are attacked during the first night after they have returned to Dunstone. This could happen at the inn where they are staying or in the streets as they go to meet their employer. The Antagonist is not present for this attack, but the characters will find evidence on the bodies of the Agents sent to slay them that identifies their as yet unseen enemy.

Encounter Goal: In this encounter, the characters learn the identity of their Antagonist. A small amount of local research

should be enough to turn up a location where they can confront their foe. This sets up the dramatic final battle of the Storyline.

CONCLUSION

Once the characters have explored all three Dungeon Backdrops and have defeated the Antagonist the Vile Star Storyline is finished—unless you decide to extend it! Dunstone is still a place of opportunity and danger. Likely, the characters' actions have come to the attention of several powerful people in the town. Depending on how they have acted, even Aavo Oksanen—Dunstone's de facto ruler—could have learnt of their identities and actions. Aavo is looking for adventurers of the "right sort" to help him revitalise Dunstone. A whole new set of adventures could await them!

FURTHER ADVENTURES

Dunstone is rife with possibilities for adventure. Several other Raging Swan Press adventures and supplements are set in and around the town. This include:

- *Dungeon Backdrop: Delthur's Folly*
- *Dungeon Backdrop: House of Yspher*
- *Dungeon Backdrop: The Splintered Crypt*
- *Sepulchre of the Wolf King*
- *Town Backdrop: Dunstone*



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