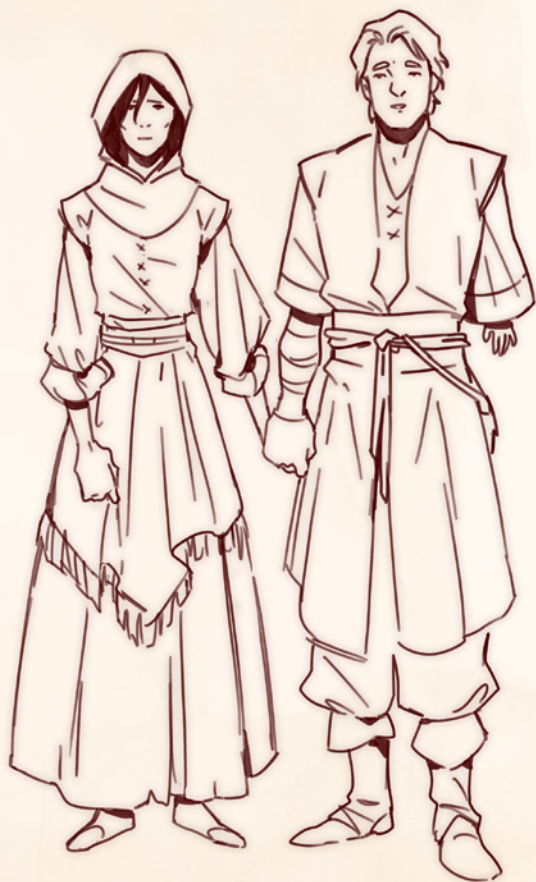


— I —

A Marriage of Families



Anything But Simple

Cityfolk with their heads in the clouds love to write songs and stories of the romantic lives peasants lead in the isolated country. They imagine pure hearts and strong backs, proud labor and simple joys. They think they know these countryfolk because they've read parables or passed through some village on well-worn roads many years past. These cityfolk know nothing of hamlets like Hauthell.

For decades, none would have even called Hauthell a hamlet. It was just one family, one house, and one farm. Three generations of Hauthret men and women cultivated temperamental fields of oats. Once or twice a year, the Hauthret patriarch would make the lengthy trip to the closest village, a two-day trek with mule and cart. He'd return with seeds, metal tools, and—if the harvest produced a surplus—a beast of burden to help with the labor. This was no town but a single-family farm surrounded by endless acres of empty as far as the eye can see.

Then, young Brennis (he/him) came of age to marry. Other Hauthret children had left their little homestead to pursue a trade in **THE VILLAGE** or join other families in their distant farms. Brennis, however, had a withered arm, and he knew he'd find no work outside his home. Fearing for the future of their family—and their wellbeing in their golden years—the Hauthret parents negotiated a convenient marriage with one Lissa Ellbund and her family. The Ellbund farm had washed away in





a once-in-a-century flood, and they were desperate. The Hawthrets and the Ellbunds came to a unique agreement: Lissa would offer her hand in marriage, and in lieu of a dowry, the two families would farm their lands together. On the day of the wedding, the hamlet of Hauthell was born.

Now, the Hawthrets and Ellbunds work and live together. They don't yet know it, but this simple wedding was the catalyst that will transform Hauthell over many decades. The hamlet is yet sparse, little more than three homes, a meager barn, and a small gathering hall for storage, prayer, and hamlet-wide meals. Yet, in the years to come, Hauthell will blossom, the result of hard work, wise choices, outside aid, and a touch of good fortune.

In many ways, the cityfolk who dream of the idyllic countryside are right. Peasants do work hard. They take pride in their labor and enjoy the fellowship of their common man. Nevertheless, these cityfolk miss the greater picture. The people of Hauthell live challenging lives and are often as sinful as their urban counterparts. They are at the mercy of the elements, and a single paltry harvest will mean death for the weakest. Some Hauthell residents are gifted and intellectual, and some are equivalently closed-minded. Rural living is *complicated*, and sanitized tales misrepresent just how rich a single life can be in joy, sorrow, hope, and doubt.



Setting Hauthell

Hauthell is unique in Borough Bound's catalog of settings for three reasons:

There is no magic in Hauthell. Your party may have mages, and you may place Hauthell in a world that includes magic, but no plot elements in the hamlet involve magic, and none of the residents possess any extraordinary abilities. It is up to you whether villagers see wizards and healers as miraculous or demonic. In all likelihood, the people of Hauthell ought to have complex views regarding any magic your party introduces to the hamlet.

With each release of Hauthell, *the town progresses through time*. Instead of expanding the scope of Hauthell geographically, we will instead revisit the town as it fills with homes, as the family tree evolves, and as small acts cascade into transformative consequences. You can either choose to insert Hauthell into your campaigns at a specific stage in its development, or you can periodically revisit the hamlet as years pass in your campaign.

More so than most of our other settings, *Hauthell's surroundings are modular*. The hamlet's broad geography is left intentionally vague, and many plot points will be referenced only obliquely. Anytime you see text written in **RED**, that's your cue to insert a relevant location, event, or NPC from your campaign. Consider referencing the "Common Modular Elements" below when planning how to incorporate these into your campaign.

Here are some additional considerations as you prepare adventures in the muddy hamlet.

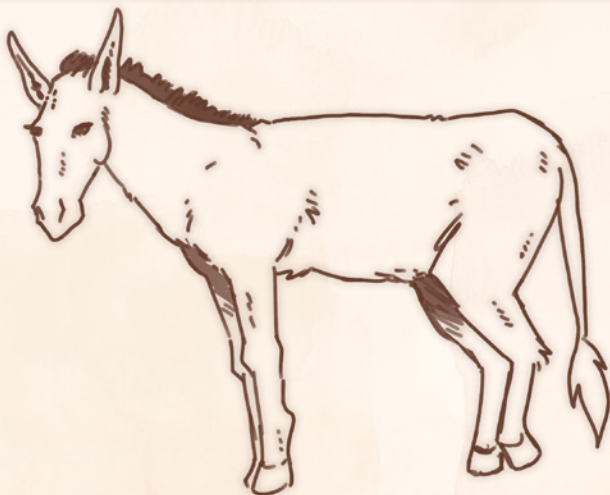
- ✠ Hauthell is an ideal town in which to start a campaign. A dirty hamlet in the middle of nowhere acts as the perfect humble beginning for a story that will culminate with your party of epic heroes defeating god (or whatever). Starting in Hauthell also gives you the opportunity to repeatedly return to the hamlet to see how it has evolved.
- ✠ The people of Hauthell are not simple. They may lack formal education, but their inner lives are as complex as those of any noble.
- ✠ Be careful not to glamorize Hauthell. This will be a more dynamic setting when you are honest about the challenges of squalid, rural living.
- ✠ We identify many elements that we intend to be modular, but we also encourage you to swap out additional details as necessary. You can make this a village of halflings, change naming conventions to be less Germanic, or tweak family trees to include members of your party.
- ✠ Our description of rural life in Hauthell is meant to be somewhat realistic to medieval Europe. That said, you do not need to be a history expert to GM this setting. Feel free to incorporate any magical nonsense or historical anachronisms as your campaign demands. Let history inform your fantasy, not strangle it.



COMMON MODULAR ELEMENTS

Throughout this guide, you will see many references to certain modular elements that you are meant to fill in from your own campaign. The following is a list of the most common elements and some considerations for how best to link them with equivalent places, people, or events from your campaign world.

- ✠ **THE VILLAGE** is a nearby settlement. It is described as being a multi-day hike away, but you can adjust the distance as necessary. This village is decidedly modest, but it does contain individuals practicing trades and easier access to distant urban centers.
- ✠ **THE CONFLICT** is a war, revolution, or other armed struggle. It did not directly touch Hauthell, though one of the Hauthret children died fighting. This can be as grand or as petty as you need, and it can either be ongoing or in the recent past.
- ✠ **THE GODS** are a pantheon of deities. The specifics of how the people of Hauthell worship are left intentionally vague, so feel free to insert any relevant faith (polytheistic or otherwise) as you see fit. Whether or not **THE GODS** are canonically real is left intentionally ambiguous.
- ✠ **THE SICKNESS** is a poorly understood affliction. It is probably terminal and probably not contagious, though you can alter both of those details if it better matches your game world or to respect triggers.



The Hauthret-Elbund Family Tree



Heidi
Elbund

Mattheus
Elbund

Nils
Elbund

Adrus
Elbund

Fissa
Hauthret

Brennis
Hauthret

Edward
Hauthret



Morgan
"Dmi"
Hauthret

Volkmar
Hauthret
Died of old age

Marga
Hauthret
Died in childbirth

Achim
Hauthret

Johanna
Hauthret

Serald
Hauthret
Died in the conflict

Walter
Hauthret
Has his own Farm

Oda
Hauthret

Sarrana
Luttsfeld
Lives in the village

Hanna
Grobbich

Morgan
"Momo"
Hauthret

The Hauthret Home

Achim Hauthret

*The stern patriarch, 52
years old, (he/him)*

As patriarch of the Hauthret family, Achim has had to make many tough decisions. He chose to remarry after his first wife Marga died giving birth to wee Brennis. He chose to welcome the Ellbund family to share his land. After his son Gerald died in **THE CONFLICT**, he chose to allow his late son's widow and daughter to move in. Achim is stern and serious, though this is largely an act. He wants his family to trust his judgment, and so he plays the part of the diligent taskmaster. In truth, Hauthell has grown specifically because Achim is a generous and loving man. He desperately *wants* to share his life and his bounty.

Achim wants company. As travelers pass through the little town, he'll act as though they're a burden, but if they show any interest in staying the night, he'll tactfully acquiesce.

Johanna Hauthret

*The determined second wife,
42 years old, (she/her)*

Beautiful Johanna lived in **THE VILLAGE** her whole life. She met Achim whenever he would come to barter his surplus. After Johanna's first husband passed from **THE SICKNESS**, she doggedly pursued the taciturn but charming farmer. Johanna gets what she wants. When she determined she could enjoy a second life on the Hauthret farm, she committed to Achim completely. After realizing how perilous the situation on the farm had become, she negotiated a marriage for Brennis with the newly desperate Ellbund girl.

Johanna wants stability. After years of tumult, she just wants her approaching old age to be one of relative comfort and minimal change.

Hanna Grobick

*The scarred youngster, 17
years old, (she/her)*

After Hanna's father died, her mother married Achim and dragged them both to Hauthell. This was not a life Hanna could stomach. She missed **THE VILLAGE** and the relative independence she once enjoyed, so she ran away. She spent months on her own, stealing what she needed, traveling the countryside in rickety wagons, and falling afoul of the law. Hanna saw the worst sides of humanity and the environment, suffering at the hands of wicked people and weathering generational storms with minimal shelter. She returned to Hauthell changed, both weaker and more callous.

Hanna wants to heal. Time will tell whether she finds solace in **THE GODS** or at the bottom of a bottle.

Oda Hauthret

The resilient widow, 35 years old, (she/her)

Oda is trying her hardest to remain strong. She helps in the fields. She raises little Momo. She does her best to live by Achim's rules. Nevertheless, she still hurts. Six years after her husband Gerald's death, things don't seem to be much easier, even after moving in with her father-in-law. Luckily, Brennis has helped guide her toward peaceful teachings. **THE GODS** have answers, and if Oda keeps her mind clear, she may yet emerge from her anguish even stronger. Perhaps Oda will one day learn to read for herself instead of relying on Brennis's casual sermons.

Oda wants her daughter to be happy. Life is hard enough for Oda, but if she can be a good parent, perhaps Momo can avoid similar woes.

Morgan "Momo" Hauthret

The precocious child, 10 years old, (she/her)

Momo's mother, Oda, relies on Brennis to teach her, but Momo picked up reading quickly. She has read what few books exist in Hauthell many times over. As she grows older, however, the family expects her to pull her weight in farming and household duties. It is well and good that Momo fancies herself a young intellectual, but she needs to help with cooking, cleaning, sewing, and so forth. So long as she is healthy, it seems unlikely that she will get the chance to pursue her true interests.

Momo wants to learn. She doesn't care if that means joining a convent or taking an apprenticeship in **THE VILLAGE**. She just wants to know more about the world around her.

Morgan “Omi” Hawthret

*The judgmental grandmother,
69 years old, (she/her)*

If Omi is to be believed, everything used to be better when she was younger. The fields were healthier, the rains more bearable, and the villagers less sinful. The Hawthret farm was a perfect home for the cozy family. Now, everything has gone to hell. **THE GODS** cursed Brennis with his withered arm, cursed Marga to die in childbirth, cursed Gerald to die in **THE CONFLICT**, and will certainly curse foolish Achim for remarrying that witch from **THE VILLAGE**. Omi is not healthy, and she fears what sort of hamlet she'll leave behind when she dies. If her late husband could see the farm now, he'd surely be devastated.

Omi wants a return to tradition. She is disappointed that everything in Hauthell has gotten so complicated. A family farm should not be a tangled web of sin, and it is clear that many of her neighbors do not even recognize the wickedness of their misdeeds.





Brennis, and Lissa's Home

Brennis Hawthret

*The disabled bridge builder,
23 years old, (he/him)*

Brennis sits at the very center of the Hawthret-Ellbund family tree. His marriage to Lissa is the reason the hamlet has grown, and it may have saved both families from total devastation. As a result, Brennis has had to become something of a peace-maker, easing tensions between the two families. Even before the wedding, Brennis was no stranger to smoothing over conflict. He has been blamed for the fall of his family his whole life. Due to his disability, people have always told him he'll never be the strong patriarch his father is. Nevertheless, Brennis is strong in his own ways. He is thoughtful, a follower of **THE GODS**, and a patient leader.

Brennis wants to support his family. He can't work the fields like his "uncursed" brothers-in-law, but he can lead the hamlet in prayer, resolve conflict, and assist the women in household chores. It is clear more changes will soon come to Hawthell, and Brennis intends to steer his family through uncertainty with a deft hand.

Lissa Hautfhret, née Ellboud

The steadfast mother, 20 years old, (she/her)

After the flood, Lissa thought her life was over. Home destroyed, crop yield washed away... what hope was there? Then her parents suggested that she marry the Hawthret boy. Unlike her boneheaded twin, Lissa is practical. She did the math and figured this was her family's best bet. Now, Lissa has grown to genuinely love Brennis. He is a kind man and loving father. Life is not easy for Lissa, but it is not nearly as hard as it would be with a bastard of a husband. She has a beautiful boy, a newly built house, and a plan for the future. Things are looking bright in Hauthell.

Lissa wants nothing to change. Her baby boy is healthy, her brothers and parents are adjusting to their new life, and the farm produces what they need. What else could she want?

Edward Hautfhret

The newborn, 7 months old, (he/him)

Lissa became pregnant almost immediately after her wedding, proof in part that Brennis is not quite so impotent as so many judgmental elders say he is.

Nine months later, Edward was born perfectly healthy. If there were any doubts about the longevity of Brennis and Lissa's arranged marriage before, those doubts have since been laid to rest. The parents love their baby boy, and the rest of the town cares for him in kind.

Edward wants milk, shelter, and love. He's just a baby.



The Ellbund Home

Mattheus Ellbund

The defeated father, 42 years old, (he/him)

Lissa may have bounced back after the flood, but Mattheus never did. He saw enough reason in the Hauthrets' offer, but saying "yes" to the marriage may have been the last proper decision Mattheus ever made. The Mattheus of today is little more than a shell of a man. He tends the crops vigorously despite his worsening joints, he tries his best to keep his wife happy, and he rarely shares more than a few words with any of the Hauthrets. The family may be in a better position now than they ever had been at the old farm, but Mattheus has given up altogether anyway.

Mattheus wants to be left alone. Even if someone could break down the barriers Mattheus has established, he wouldn't want them to try.

Heidi Ellbund

The afflicted mother, 44 years old, (she/her)

Even before the flood, Heidi's **SICKNESS** seemed insurmountable. As far as anyone can tell, her condition is unlikely to spread, but that doesn't make it any easier to live with the confused and withering woman. Luckily, Heidi's spirits are high. She may be disoriented much of the time, but she knows

that tiny Edward is a good boy, and she rarely complains about her bizarre malady. Heidi keeps busy during the day trying to teach Momo the important tasks a young woman ought to learn: sewing and baking and such. Momo is polite with Mrs. Ellbund, but it's a trying situation nonetheless.

Heidi does not know what she wants. She has good days and bad. On the bad days, she has trouble remembering who she is. On the good days, she mostly just focuses on her chores and needlework.

Adrus Ellbund

*The charming nonconformist,
22 years old, (he/him)*

Adrus is yet young, but he has already had a lifetime of experience. He spent some time fighting in **THE CONFLICT** before taking an apprenticeship in **THE VILLAGE**. Had it not been for the flood, he likely would have stayed, but family responsibilities forced him to move to Hauthell with his siblings and parents. Adrus learned much during his time away. He is literate, proudly irreligious, and notably crafty. He is also lamentably lazy and a poor farmhand compared to his brother Nils. Unsurprisingly, Adrus's unorthodox priorities have put him at odds with many other Hauthell residents—notably Achim, Omi, and even Brennis. Were it not for Adrus's likable demeanor, these spats may have grown out of hand.

Adrus wants independence. He was willing to help resettle his family after the flood and wedding, but Adrus does not intend to stay in quaint little Hauthell indefinitely.

Nils Ellboud

*The sturdy farmhand, 20
years old, (he/him)*

Lissa's twin Nils does not examine life too carefully. He does not read, nor has he ever shown any interest. He does not speak of **THE GODS** or of much of anything beyond farming and animals. Notably, Nils has not shown much interest in finding a wife, much to the chagrin of his parents. Were Mattheus still a man capable of enforcing his will, that may have been a sticking point, but for now, everyone seems content to let Nils do the most backbreaking labor needed on their communal farm. He may not be the best conversationalist, but his efforts are invaluable in terms of keeping the people of Hauthell fed.

Nils wants Achim to buy more animals. Every time Achim heads into **THE VILLAGE**, Nils does his best to work up some courage and ask the patriarch to consider buying another ox or mule, or—even better—a horse.



The Gathering Hall

Hauthell is a hamlet of thirteen people, hardly a metropolis worthy of a town hall. Nevertheless, the added labor and fruitful harvest this year gave the families an opportunity to build one new building in town: the gathering hall. Along with baby Edward, this new structure is a sign that the marriage of two families will continue to bear fruit.

The gathering hall serves a number of purposes.

Prayer. Aside from Adrus, everyone in Hauthell is at least nominally religious. There is no proper priest in town, but Brennis does his best to lead informal sermons. Brennis keeps a handful of holy books—perhaps the most valuable objects the Hauthrets own—available for anyone to peruse as they so choose.

Storage. The three homes in Hauthell are not large. The last time Achim housed six people in his home, four of them were children. As such, the gathering hall is used for storing anything that the families can't keep at home and don't want to keep in the barn.

Meals. Most evenings, everyone in town comes together to sup in the gathering hall. Brennis and the women spend much of the day baking and cooking to ensure everyone ends the day with a full belly. There are days when this is a challenge, but feeding the town is always easier when everyone helps.



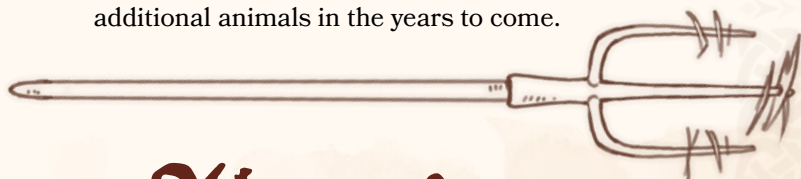
—“Young Brennis leads his family
in informal prayer.”—

The Barn

At present, there are only a few animals in Hauthell:

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| ✠ 2 oxen | ✠ 1 cow |
| ✠ 1 mule | ✠ 3 terriers |
| ✠ 8 chickens | |

These animals live in the barn. Even with so few animals, the barn is undoubtedly too small. This matters little in the summer months as animals graze outside, but the space is decidedly cramped in the winter months. Even if Hauthell remains as small as it is, most agree that they will have to expand the barn to better accommodate additional animals in the years to come.



Adventures in Hauthell

Noble voyagers often head to metropolises, ruins, or settlements under siege. Hauthell is decidedly none of the above. Nevertheless, adventurers may travel to this sleepy hamlet in the countryside for a number of reasons.

The adventure's outset. Many adventures have humble beginnings. It is possible that one such adventure begins in Hauthell. Perhaps an amnesiac stirs and finds himself in the barn's haystack, or perhaps restless Adrus decides to assert some autonomy and head off into the countryside in search of excitement. The Hauthrets and Ellbunds might be able to spare a few tools, a bit of food, and a change of clothes for any young upstart ready to head out into the world.

GM NOTE

You should feel free to edit the Hauthret-Ellbund family tree as necessary to account for your players' backstories. Give Achim one more child, or establish that the Ellbunds brought their distant cousin with them when they moved to Hauthell after the flood. Hauthell is a perfect home for a party member about to head off on a grand campaign, especially if you plan on returning to the player characters' homes later in the adventure.

A place between places. Hauthell may not be near any main roads,¹ but adventurers don't always take the easy path to their destinations. As the party passes from the end of one quest to the start of another, they may pass through Hauthell. As they reach the sleepy hamlet, they may decide to trade, ask for rumors, or even spend the night in some proper shelter. Some residents may not take too kindly to dirty travelers, but Achim, Momo, Brennis, and Adrus will be glad to welcome the company.

1. *For now! Events to come will put Hauthell much closer to a THOROUGHFARE.*

GM NOTE

Hautbell's vague geography means you can slot the hamlet into the middle of any lengthier travel arc as necessary. Plop down Hautbell into your world whenever you need a small settlement for a quick encounter or roleplaying scene.

A shelter in which to lie low. If the adventurers anger powerful forces, they may decide the best course of action is to temporarily go into hiding to keep away from the heat. Where better to slink off to than a quiet, faraway, unassuming little farmstead? The party will have to contribute to Hautbell—assisting in farmwork, sharing in meals, and perhaps donating a bit of coin—but they'll be welcome to join the town if they mind their manners and pull their weight.

GM NOTE

After a tense moment in a campaign, it can be fun to incorporate a brief "go into hiding" mini-arc. Treat it like a montage. Narrate simple scenes of labor and domesticity while the players wait for the pressure on them to drop. Then, conclude the arc with an intense standoff as the party's enemies track them down to peaceful Hautbell.

