

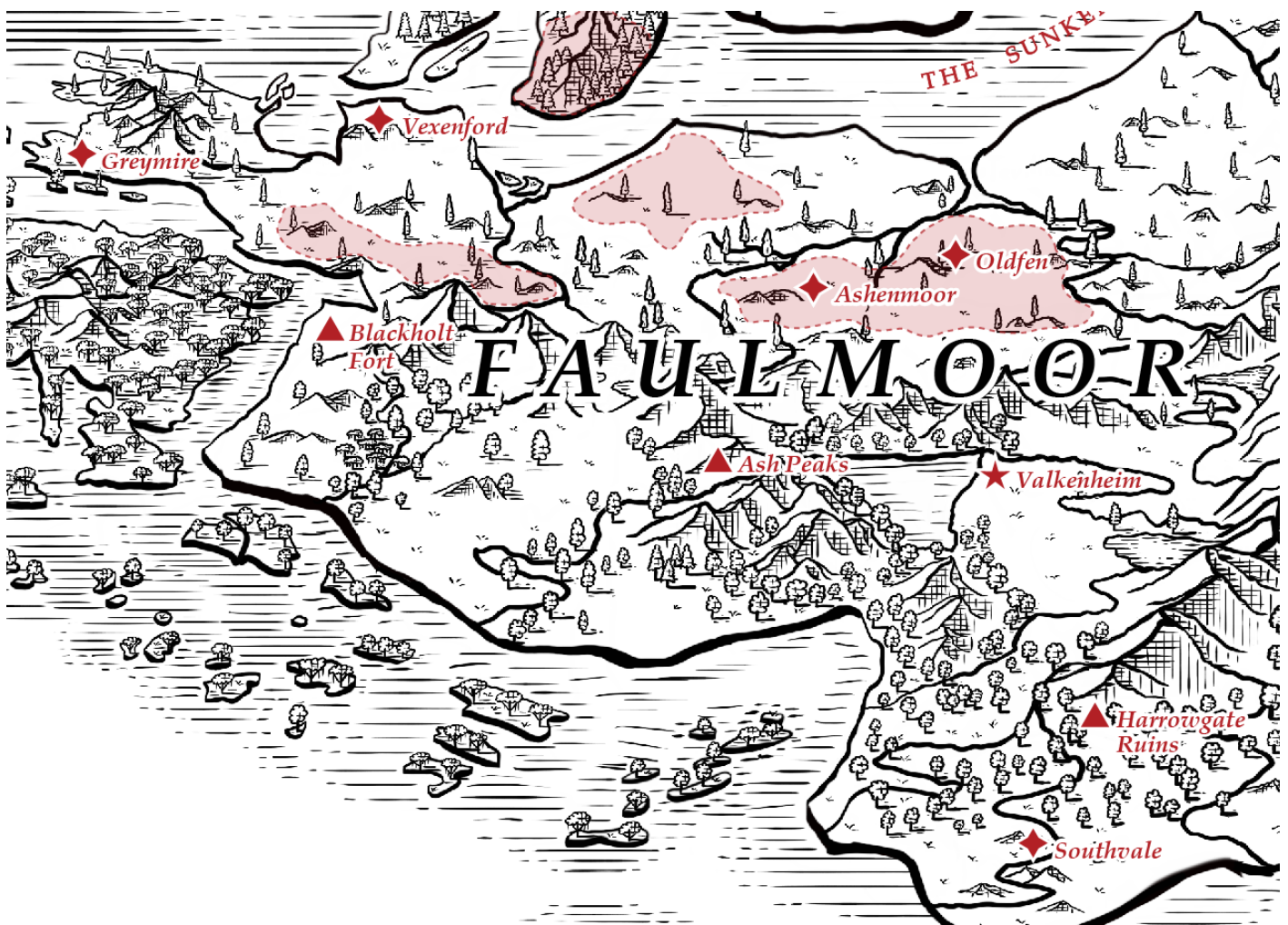
Southvale

The Town That Wealth Devoured

“I don’t see what all the fuss is about. We pay them, don’t we? They should be grateful to have work at all—better than rotting away in some plague-ridden gutter. Honestly, the way they whine, you’d think we weren’t the ones keeping this town alive.”

— **Lady Evelyne Marsten, noble resident of the Gilded Pits**

Southvale was once a peaceful village, nestled in an idyllic valley along the banks of a slow-moving river, its surroundings untouched by the worst of the [Rotmire Blight](#). Rolling green hills and ancient oak groves stretch across the landscape, and in better times, it could have been a retreat for nobles seeking respite from the burdens of courtly life. The town’s architecture reflects its humble origins—stone cottages with moss-covered roofs, wooden homes reinforced against the cold, and a modest central square with a crumbling fountain that once served as a gathering place for festivals and markets.



However, when the Blight began, the wealthy flocked to Southvale, believing it to be a temporary refuge where they could ride out the crisis in comfort. What was meant to be a brief escape became permanent as the Blight spread, and soon, they seized control of the town entirely. Lavish manors, hastily constructed with imported materials, now loom over the original homes, standing in stark contrast to the village's rustic charm. The scent of roasted meats and spiced wine drifts from their halls while the common folk ration their meals, surviving on what little they can afford. Overcrowding has turned the once-charming village into a festering den of tension, as the town was never built to accommodate such a large population. While the elite enjoy the comforts of their ill-gotten haven, the original residents are squeezed into slums on the outskirts, forced into servitude or left to scrape by in misery.

To maintain their sense of security, the wealthy have erected a meager stone wall around Southvale, though it is more of a symbolic boundary than a true defense. At each checkpoint, hired guards clad in polished armor—mercenaries rather than true soldiers—inspect those who enter or leave, ensuring that no desperate refugees slip through. These private enforcers are more concerned with protecting the interests of the elite than maintaining order, often turning away those who cannot bribe their way inside. Though the [Rotmire Blight](#) is rare in Southvale, occasional reports of undead have begun to surface, their numbers small for now but enough to stir unease. The checkpoints, however, serve less to prevent the spread of the Blight and more to keep Southvale exclusive to those with means.



Despite the illusion of control, Southvale teeters on the edge of collapse. The original residents, forced into servitude or driven into the slums, grow increasingly resentful of their new overlords. Some have formed mobs, rioting in the streets when their suffering reaches a breaking point. Others turn to crime, smuggling supplies and spreading whispers of rebellion. There are even rumors that the elite are hoarding silver, a precious resource known for its effectiveness against the Blight, further fueling resentment.

Yet the true specter haunting the rich is **the Copper Judge**—a ruthless and unseen executioner who preys upon the worst among them. Those found guilty of hoarding food, evicting families, or withholding silver for their own greed are discovered lifeless, their mouths and throats stuffed with copper coins, a grim message that they have choked on their own avarice. To the rich, the Copper Judge is a monster, a murderer who must be stopped. To the poor, they are a phantom of vengeance, punishing those who exploit the town.

Even Southvale's leadership has been consumed by corruption. The town's first mayor, who may have been complicit in the growing injustices, was murdered by the Copper Judge, his body found with copper coins jammed down his throat. His death sent a message—those who enabled the rich would be judged just as harshly. In response, the elite wasted no time installing a replacement, one who would serve their interests without question.

The current mayor is little more than a puppet, a cowardly bureaucrat who bends to the will of the wealthy and turns a blind eye to their hoarding, their cruelty, and the suffering of the town's original residents. He upholds their illusion of power, ensuring that Southvale remains a haven for the privileged while the common folk are pushed further into poverty. Behind the scenes, the mayor is more concerned with **keeping the rich calm than addressing the town's true problems**. He dismisses the suffering of the people as "unfortunate but necessary," refusing to intervene as families are evicted and driven into the slums.

He **downplays the Copper Judge’s killings**, publicly calling them the work of a madman while secretly funneling coin into private mercenary groups to hunt the vigilante down. His guards are instructed to protect the interests of the elite, not the town itself, and those who complain too loudly about the injustices in Southvale often find themselves accused of conspiring with the Copper Judge, arrested, or quietly "disappeared." While the mayor presents himself as a stabilizing force, those who look deeper will see that he is nothing more than a lackey—a man who holds no true power, but merely maintains the illusion of order while Southvale rots from within.

Detailed Overview

Attribute	Details
Region	Faulmoor
Ruling House	None (De facto control by Lord Alistair Veyne and the elite)
Population (Before Blight)	~800 (Estimated) (Small village)
Population (After Blight)	~1,500 (Estimated) (Overcrowded due to wealthy refugees)
Major Industries	Previously farming, fishing, and small trade; now dominated by luxury goods, black market dealings, and service to the elite
Primary Exports	None (Once a trade stop, now mostly self-contained due to unrest and elite control)
Current Ruler	Lord Alistair Veyne (unofficial, but holds true power)
Government Type	Corrupt bureaucracy, with a bribed mayor serving the elite
Defenses	Modest stone wall, guarded checkpoints manned by private mercenaries , used more to keep out refugees than to protect against threats
Notable Features	The Gilded Pits (fortified noble estates), The Lantern’s Hollow (overcrowded common house), The Hearth & Oak Tavern (now catering only to the elite)
Status	Tense and on the brink of collapse , with open class division, growing unrest, and murders carried out by the Copper Judge

Notable Establishments

The Hearth & Oak Tavern

The **Hearth & Oak Tavern** stands near the heart of Southvale, its timbered walls and stone foundation radiating a rustic charm that once made it a cherished gathering place for locals. A grand, ancient oak tree—once a symbol of the town’s unity—still looms beside it, though its branches now cast longer shadows than before. The massive hearth within, once a beacon of warmth and camaraderie, still burns, but its welcoming glow is now reserved for the wealthy. Plush chairs and polished tables have replaced the well-worn wooden benches of old, and the once lively atmosphere has dulled to a quieter, more refined murmur of aristocratic conversation.

At first glance, the tavern still carries the illusion of warmth, but to those who knew it before, it is merely a husk of what it once was. The scent of spiced wine and roasted meats lingers in the air, but none of it reaches the lips of the common folk anymore. The cheerful bard songs that once filled the halls have been replaced with subdued string quartets playing elegant, soulless melodies to entertain noble patrons. **Oswald Caskholt**, the owner, remains behind the bar, polishing glasses with a forced smile, his once jovial nature dulled by the reality of catering to a clientele he neither loves nor trusts. Though he regrets what the Hearth & Oak has become, he knows that to resist the whims of the elite would be to lose everything.

For those willing to pay, the Hearth & Oak offers the finest food and drink in Southvale. For those who cannot, it is a painful reminder of what has been lost.

The Lantern's Hollow

Tucked near the town's outskirts, **The Lantern's Hollow** was once a simple but welcoming inn, where weary travelers could always find a warm bed and a hot meal. The iron lantern that hangs above its entrance, said to have guided lost wanderers for generations, still sways in the wind—but now, it is a light for those who have nowhere else to go. No longer an inn, the Hollow has become a **common house**, a desperate refuge for those displaced by the elite's arrival.

The once tidy and orderly rooms have been converted into makeshift dormitories, with thin sheets strung between beds to give the illusion of privacy. The common room, which once bustled with travelers swapping tales of the road, is now packed with displaced families, struggling workers, and those who can barely afford to eat. The air is thick with the smell of damp straw, unwashed bodies, and desperation. Yet, despite the overcrowding, there is still an air of defiance within these walls—a place where whispers of rebellion are spoken in hushed tones and where **Mira Thornbrook**, the innkeeper, does her best to care for those under her roof.

Mira is a woman worn by hardship, her hands calloused from constant work and her eyes darkened by sleepless nights. Though exhausted, she refuses to turn away anyone in need, even as supplies dwindle and tensions rise. She has no love for the elite and is one of the few in town willing to openly speak against them. Some believe she may be involved with the Copper Judge, though whether she is an ally or merely a sympathizer remains unknown.

The Lantern's Hollow is one of the few places in Southvale where **the party may find true allies**—but it is also a place where fear, frustration, and desperation grow by the day.

The Gilded Pits

Towering over the rest of Southvale like a monument to excess, **the Gilded Pits** is the cruel nickname given to the walled-off cluster of lavish estates where the elite have barricaded themselves. What was once an open part of town has been **sealed off by tall stone walls**, reinforced with iron gates and patrolled by **hired mercenaries**, making it nearly impossible for anyone uninvited to enter. The irony is not lost on the common folk—while the rich see it as a fortress of safety, to those outside, it is a **prison of their own greed**, where the elite wall

themselves off from the suffering they created.

Within the Gilded Pits, **lavish mansions** stand in stark contrast to the decaying streets of Southvale. Fine silks and rich foods are in abundance here, hoarded away while the rest of the town starves. Private gatherings, grand feasts, and decadent parties are still held behind closed doors, with the wealthy pretending that life is as grand as it ever was, even as the world outside crumbles. Many within the Pits still cling to the delusion that the Blight will eventually pass, and that they will one day return to their old estates in the capital. In the meantime, they live in selfish indulgence, oblivious—or willfully ignorant—to the suffering beyond their walls.

The de facto ruler of the Gilded Pits is **Lord Alistair Veyne**, an aging noble who considers himself the true authority in Southvale. Cold, cunning, and utterly indifferent to the struggles of the common folk, he ensures that his fellow nobles remain comfortable, bribing the mayor and manipulating the town's guard to maintain his power. He dismisses rumors of silver hoarding as baseless paranoia, though **it is widely suspected that the Gilded Pits holds vast stockpiles of supplies and silver**—hidden away from those who need it most.

Though heavily guarded, the Gilded Pits is not impenetrable. Smugglers, servants, and desperate insiders may provide ways in for those who know where to look. However, those caught trespassing face swift and brutal punishment—Lord Veyne ensures that anyone foolish enough to challenge the elite **never sees the light of day again**.

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