COMPATIBLE WITH FIFTH EDITION

Lowmere

A valley in the bottom of a lake that is not there

Three hundred years ago the lake drained overnight. People moved into the bottom of it, because everything grows there. They have been living on top of whatever the water was covering ever since, and they hold a festival almost every month to keep from thinking about it.

A SETTING YOU CAN RUN WITHOUT A SINGLE ADVENTURE IN IT

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READ THIS AND YOU CAN RUN THE PLACE

What Lowmere Is

Lowmere is a green valley in the bottom of a lake that is no longer there. The old waterline runs a storey up every wall in the valley, and everyone can see it from everywhere, and nobody mentions it.

- *A dark level line a storey up every old wall, from one end of the valley to the other*
- *Soil so rich that a dropped apple core is a tree in four years*
- *Stone quays and mooring rings in towns forty miles from any water*

How big it is, and how long anything takes

about forty miles end to end - two days' walk from anywhere to anywhere

The valley road runs the length of the floor, Coldstile to Saltless, and a cart takes two days. Off it, everything is a half-day: Nettlecombe up the orchard track, the Stranding across the wheat, Candle Fen up the hill path, the Reed Roads down and wet. Nobody in Lowmere considers any of this far.

Weather

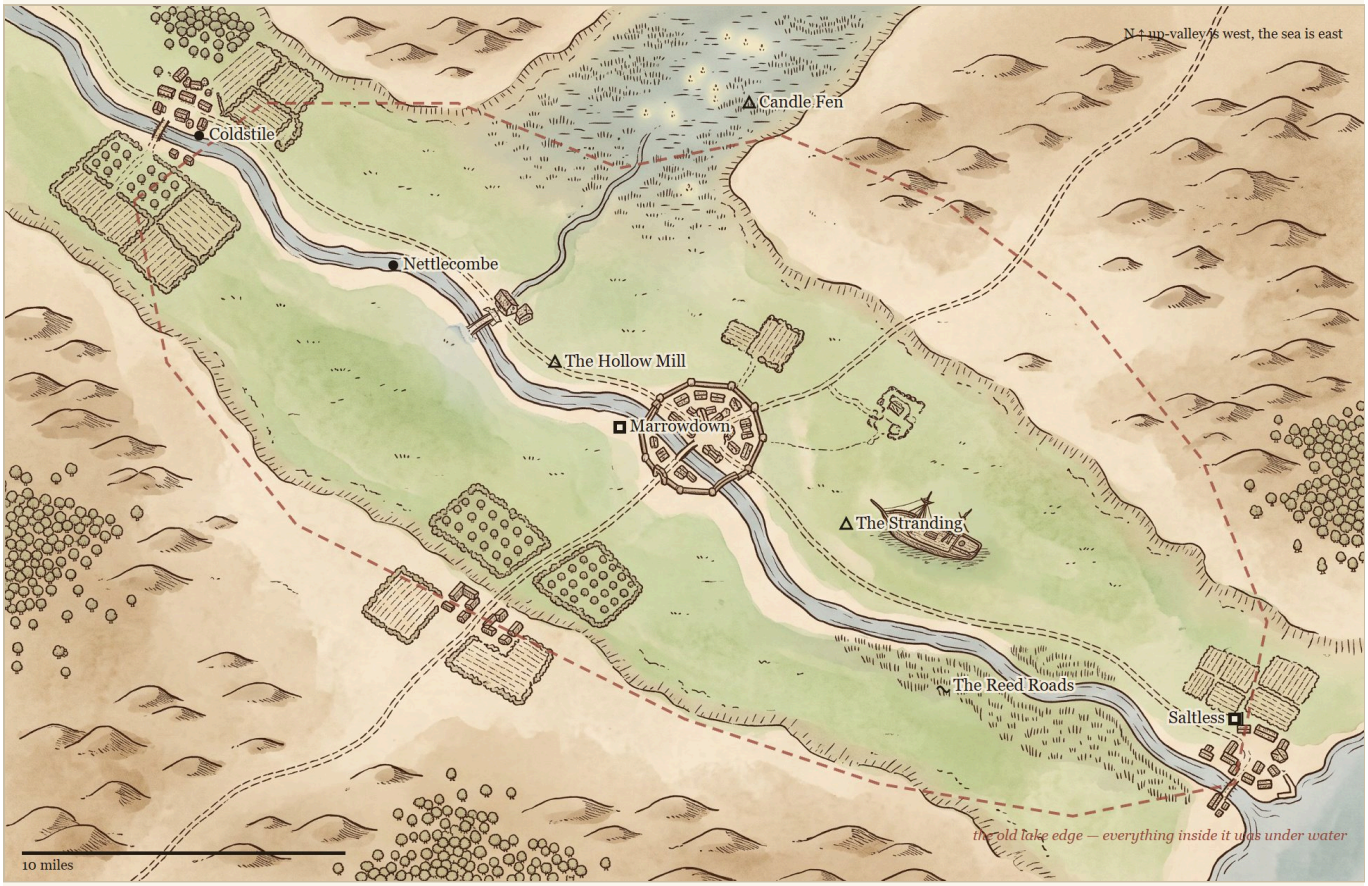
Warm and damp. Mist sits on the valley floor most mornings until the sun clears the waterline, which locals use as a clock. Winter is mud rather than snow, except at Coldstile.

What is in this book

- The valley, and the eight places in it that have names.
- Marrowdown, keyed — the town every adventure comes back to.
- Fourteen people, four of whom turn up again and again.
- The year: thirteen festivals and two days that are not, which is how Lowmere counts time.
- 5 tables, 56 entries.
- Twelve things currently wrong in the valley, with no adventures attached to them.

FORTY MILES, WEST TO EAST

The Valley



Lowmere. The dashed line is the old lake edge: everything inside it was under water three hundred years ago, and the waterline it left is visible on every old wall in the valley. Coldstile and Candle Fen are the only named places above it.

HOW IT GOT LIKE THIS

A Short History

Three hundred years ago	The lake went out in a single night. Nobody living saw it; every account is second-hand and they do not agree on the season.
The first year	Salvagers, then squatters. The old harbour towns were still standing and mostly dry, so people simply moved in and shut the doors.
Within twenty years	The soil made the valley rich enough to be worth governing. Marrowdown was the biggest surviving building, so Marrowdown became the town.
Since then	Nine generations, one road out, and a festival calendar that everybody follows and nobody can explain the origin of.

What nobody in the valley will tell you

Not because it is secret. Because it has never come up. No record anywhere in Lowmere says *why* the water left, and no generation since has thought that strange enough to write down. Coldstile keeps the oldest papers and does not show them.

THE TOWN EVERYTHING COMES BACK TO

Marrowdown

Marrowdown

TOWN · ABOUT 900 PEOPLE

Market town of nine hundred, built into the stone quays of a harbour with no water in it.

- *Streets that are dock stone, with iron mooring rings every twenty feet*
- *Cellars colder than they have any right to be, going down further than anyone has mapped*
- *The waterline, dead level, a storey up, on every wall you can see from the square*

Marrowdown sits where the old harbour was, and it never stopped being a harbour - it just stopped being wet. The streets are the docks: long straight runs of fitted stone, far too grand for the buildings now standing on them, worn into runnels by three centuries of cartwheels. Children swing on the mooring rings. Nobody has ever removed one.

The cellars are the old warehouses, which is why Marrowdown ages more cheese than any three towns should, and why the town is wealthier than its fields explain.

Nine hundred people, and every one of them can name the other eight hundred and ninety-nine. Strangers are not unwelcome; they are an event.

What it is like to stand there. Stone underfoot, everywhere. Cut grass, cellar-damp and, always faintly, cheese. And on every old wall, a storey up, a dark horizontal stain as straight as a drawn line.

Something is wrong here. The cellars go down further than the maps, and the maps are two hundred years old.

The eight places a DM needs to know

> The Dry Quay
> The market square, which is a stone wharf with no sea. Ten iron mooring rings along its edge, worn shiny. Every festival in the calendar happens here, and the stalls set up in the same places each time because that is where the ring-posts are.

> The Ninth Bell
> The inn. Rumours, jobs, and the board by the door. Named for a bell in its yard that rings once a year, on no fixed date - some morning in early spring - and which nobody has managed to stop or explain. Bets are laid on the day. The landlord, Odo Trice, keeps the book and has never won it.

> The Deep Cellars
> The old warehouses under the town: barrel-vaulted, bone dry, and colder than they should be. Where Marrowdown ages, stores, hides and forgets things. The Sealed Cellar is one room of them. The current map is two hundred years old and is known to be incomplete.

> Bramm's
> The cheesemonger. Three stalls on the Dry Quay, a knife for every rind, and the loudest voice in the valley. Hessa Bramm can tell which cellar a wheel was aged in by smell, and will do it unasked to prove she can.

The Counting House

The council. Panelled, over-warm, hung with portraits of mayors who all look faintly apologetic. Four Pells among them. The town accounts are open to anyone who asks, which nobody ever does.

The Watch Post

One room, one desk, one cell that has held nobody since a cider dispute in the spring. Sheriff Quill sleeps in the back and has done for twelve years.

The Weir

Where the river leaves the valley. Everything that floats ends up against it eventually, and the town counts what it catches once a year at the Weir Count, which is a festival, a lost-property office and a competition at the same time.

The Waterline

Not a building. The dark horizontal stain a storey up every old wall in the valley, dead level, from one end to the other. Visible from everywhere in Marrowdown. Never mentioned by anyone who lives there, and pointed at by every visitor within the hour.

EVERYWHERE ELSE WITH A NAME

The Rest of the Valley

Nettlecombe

VILLAGE · ABOUT 400 PEOPLE

Orchard village up-valley where every family has an opinion about every other family.

- *Nine hundred apple trees in rows that stop dead at the old waterline*
- *A feud nobody can now explain and everybody can describe in detail*
- *Cider stronger than it tastes, pressed in a barn with no door*

Four hundred people and nine hundred trees. Nettlecombe sends Lowmere its cider and its gossip, usually in the same cart, and considers Marrowdown to be full of people who think they are better than everyone.

The feud is between the Aldertons and the Vasses and has been running for six generations. Its cause is not written down. Both families will tell you, at length, and the two accounts share no facts whatever. (The Aldertons also have a smaller quarrel of their own with the Mabbs, ninety years old and about a hedge, which nobody in Nettlecombe confuses with the feud.)

What it is like to stand there. Blossom or windfall depending on the month, and either way the sweet-rot smell of fruit going over.

Something is wrong here. Somebody has been grafting cuttings from the oldest tree, which is not theirs to graft.

Saltless

PORT · ABOUT 2,200 PEOPLE

The port at the river mouth, forty miles down - a harbour town that still has a harbour.

- *A tide, which no one born up-valley has ever seen and all of them stare at*
- *A customs house that taxes cheese by the wheel and argues about the count*
- *Ships that go somewhere, which is more than anything in Lowmere does*

Saltless is what Marrowdown used to be and is faintly smug about it. Two thousand people, a working dock, a customs house and a genuine crime problem. Its name is a joke that stopped being funny two centuries ago: it is the only town on this coast that tastes of salt, and up-valley they say it as though that were a failing.

Everything Lowmere sells leaves through here, which means Saltless knows the price of everything in the valley before the valley does.

What it is like to stand there. Tar, rope, fish, and the particular racket of a working dock at any hour of the day or night.

Something is wrong here. The customs house has begun weighing the cheese as well as counting it, and nobody up-valley believes the scales.

The Stranding

LANDMARK

A wheat field with three ships standing upright in it, exactly where the water left them.

- *Three hulls of three different builds, none from any yard anyone recognises*
- *Wheat that grows to the old waterline on all three and stops*
- *Timber that has not rotted in three hundred years and does not smell of anything*

Three ships, upright, in a field. They came to rest when the water went and they have not moved or rotted since. The farmers of the district have collectively decided not to think about this and will change the subject if pressed.

Children are told not to go inside. Most of them have.

What it is like to stand there. Wheat to the waist, absolute silence, and three shadows in the wrong shape.

Something is wrong here. One of the three has begun to lean, this month, for the first time in living memory.

Coldstile

VILLAGE · ABOUT 200 PEOPLE

A hill village above the old waterline - the only place never underwater, and they will tell you so.

- *A view down the whole valley to the sea on a clear day*
- *The oldest written records in Lowmere, kept in a locked press*
- *Wind, constantly, which the villagers claim to find restful*

Two hundred people who consider themselves the valley's only genuine natives, on the grounds that their families watched the water go from up here rather than moving in afterwards. This is technically true and they never stop saying it.

They keep the oldest records in Lowmere and are extremely reluctant to show them to anyone, which is generally put down to pride. It is not only pride.

What it is like to stand there. Wind, always, and woodsmoke that goes sideways.

Something is wrong here. The village sends nobody to the Harvest Cutting, and gives a different reason each year.

The Reed Roads

WILDERNESS

The marsh at the valley's low end that never fully drained.

- *Causeways of packed reed, laid by somebody, maintained by nobody*
- *Birdsong that stops all at once and starts again a minute later*
- *Standing water that is warmer than the air, in every season*

Where the water is still winning. Four square miles of standing water and reed at the low end of the valley, and the only part of Lowmere that never dried.

The causeways run straight, which reeds do not. They are packed reed over a stone core, they are older than the town, and they go to places nobody in Lowmere admits to visiting. Somebody maintained them once. Nobody does now, and they have not sunk.

The reed-cutters work the edges by day, take what they need, and are back on the valley road before dark. Ask any of them why and you get a shrug and a change of subject; they are not frightened of the marsh, exactly, and they will not stay in it after sunset.

What it is like to stand there. Methane, still water, and the particular quiet of a place where something has just stopped singing.

Something is wrong here. A causeway that was not there last year now runs south-west, and it is well made.

Candle Fen

LANDMARK

Where the valley buries its dead - above the old waterline, deliberately.

- *Every grave cut into the hillside, none of them below the line*
- *Small candles in small niches, thousands of them, lit by anyone passing*
- *A register in a dry stone hut, kept unbroken for nine generations*

Every grave in Lowmere is cut into the hillside above the waterline. This is not a burial ground so much as a decision, and it was made by the first generation. The reason given in the oldest register is four words: "so they stay dry."

Nobody has ever proposed changing the practice, and nobody has ever asked why in writing.

What it is like to stand there. Cut turf, beeswax, and a great many small flames that do not blow out in the wind.

Something is wrong here. The register has a gap of eleven months, ninety years ago, in a different hand.

The Hollow Mill

LANDMARK

Where the river still turns a wheel - and the cavern underneath it.

- *A wheel that almost never stops, which you notice only when it does*
- *Ground that sounds hollow for two hundred yards in every direction*
- *A miller who will not take payment for the first sack of the year*

The one mill in Lowmere that never needed rebuilding, because the river has always run through it. Below the millrace the ground is hollow for a long way, which the millers have known for nine generations and have never had a reason to investigate.

What it is like to stand there. The wheel, endlessly. You stop hearing it after ten minutes and notice instantly if it stops.

Something is wrong here. The wheel stopped for six seconds last Tuesday. The miller has told nobody.

The People

Mayor Bertrand Pell

Mayor of Marrowdown, fourth of his family to hold the office

Looks like. A round man in a coat two sizes too grand, always holding pages of a speech he will not stop rereading.

Wants. For whatever this is to be over, and for nobody to remember it happened on his watch.

Sounds like. Starts every sentence twice. "The thing is — the thing is, you see —"

Always. Never lies outright. Omits, delays, offers money, and hopes.

Sheriff Odett Quill

Village sheriff, twelve years in the post

Looks like. Grey braid, mud to the knee, a badge she polishes and a sword she has never drawn.

Wants. Order, and no outsiders making Lowmere look foolish.

Sounds like. Short sentences. Asks a question, then waits far longer than is comfortable.

Always. Always three steps ahead and never says so first. Decides who is competent within one conversation, and never revises it.

Hessa Bramm

Cheesemonger, three stalls at the fair, loudest voice in the valley

Looks like. Forearms like hams, an apron of many colours, a knife for every rind.

Wants. To be the one who solves it, publicly, in front of everyone.

Sounds like. Booming. Talks over people and apologises without stopping.

Always. Getting louder is what she does instead of confessing. A thief, not a liar.

Wick

Cellar-boy, eleven years old

Looks like. Too-large boots, an apron he sleeps in, hay in his hair.

Wants. To not be blamed. Then, once he trusts you, to come along.

Sounds like. Fast, breathless, gets ahead of himself and has to go back.

Always. Tells the truth and is not believed. Never a combatant.

Faces to use once

Odo Trice	Landlord of the Ninth Bell	Keeps the betting book on his own bell and has never once won it.
Alder Finch	Pie-seller, forty years at the same pitch	Calls every customer, including the sheriff, "young man".
Marrow Vasse	Nettlecombe cider-press, and half of the feud	Will not say the word "Alderton" and works around it in every sentence.

Til Alderton	Nettlecombe orchard, the other half	Refers to the Vasses exclusively as "that family", with a pause first.
Sennet Crake	Reed-cutter, works the Reed Roads edges	Counts out loud while she works and starts again if interrupted.
Bel Hardaker	Keeper of the Candle Fen register	Writes with her left hand and signs with her right.
Grig Mullens	Miller at the Hollow Mill	Will not take payment for the first sack of the year and gives no reason.
Anser Pell	The mayor's sister, and the reason the accounts balance	Answers questions addressed to her brother before he can start.
Cobb Reeve	Saltless customs officer, up-valley twice a year	Writes down everything anyone says to him, including greetings.
Old Toller	Coldstile, oldest person in the valley	Remembers a version of every story in which he was present.

The Year

The valley runs on festivals. There is a reason for that and Lowmere half-knows it: when the water went, the first settlers started marking every month, and nobody has stopped. Each of the adventures in this line is one of these.

FESTIVAL	SEASON	WHERE	WHAT HAPPENS
First Thaw	late winter	Marrowdown	The first cart to reach Coldstile after the mud sets is met with beer. Nobody hurries it and everybody watches the road.
The Ninth Bell	early spring	Marrowdown	Whenever the bell in the inn yard rings, the town stops for the day. It has never rung twice in a year and it has never been silent for one.
Blossom Fair	spring	Nettlecombe	Nettlecombe under nine hundred trees in flower, and the one day of the year the two families sit at the same table without an argument reaching the shouting stage.
The Weir Count	spring	Marrowdown	Everything the Weir caught in a year, laid out on the quay, claimed or auctioned. Half the valley comes to look for something they lost and goes home with something else.
Bell Founding	summer	Marrowdown	The anniversary of nothing anyone can name. Marrowdown casts a small bell every year, hangs it, and rings it once. There are two hundred and nine of them.
The Stranding Day	summer	The Stranding	A picnic in a wheat field between three ships. Nobody goes aboard, and the reason given is that the wheat would be trampled.
Saltless Regatta	summer	Saltless	The one day up-valley people go down to the sea. Boat races, a fair, and the annual reminder that Saltless has a harbour and Marrowdown does not.
Harvest Cutting	autumn	Marrowdown	The valley cuts its best cheese in public. Most years it is a good wheel. Once a century it is the Hundred-Year wheel, and that year the whole valley comes.
The Long Table	autumn	Marrowdown	One table, a mile of it, down the valley road. Everybody brings a dish and sits where they land. It is the only day nobody in Lowmere sits with their own family.
Lanterns at Candle Fen	late autumn	Candle Fen	Every niche lit at once, and the hillside visible from Saltless. The dead are read out from the register, all nine generations, which takes until dawn.
Longnight	midwinter	Marrowdown	The Deep Cellars are opened and the town spends the longest night underground, warm, drunk and singing,

FESTIVAL	SEASON	WHERE	WHAT HAPPENS
			above the waterline of a lake that is not there.
Coldstile Wake	winter	Coldstile	Coldstile mourns the drowning of a valley that nobody in it drowned in. Down-valley finds this in poor taste and goes anyway.
Second Thaw	late winter	Nettlecombe	The quiet one. Two weeks after First Thaw, when the work starts again and the valley goes back to being ordinary.
The Reed Roads	any	The Reed Roads	Not a festival. The one part of the year with no festival in it, and the only time anyone goes down to the marsh.
The Waterline	any	Marrowdown	Not a festival either. The name of the thing nobody mentions, and of the last adventure in the year.

Tables

Rumours at the Ninth Bell (d12)

1	The bell in the yard rang twice last week. Odo Trice denies it and has taken the book down.
2	Somebody has been selling shavings off cheese that is not theirs. Everyone knows. Nobody says.
3	The mayor was seen on the cellar mound at midnight with a lantern and no coat.
4	Coldstile has not sent anyone down to a festival in three years and gives a different reason each time.
5	A dog will not go near the Hollow Mill and has not for a fortnight.
6	The waterline on the Counting House is a foot higher than the one on the mill. Nobody can explain it.
7	One of the ships at the Stranding has begun to lean.
8	There is a new causeway in the Reed Roads, running south-west, and it is well made.
9	The Candle Fen register has eleven months missing, ninety years back, in a different hand.
10	A reed-cutter came back up the marsh road at a run last month and has not gone down since.
11	Saltless has started weighing the cheese as well as counting it.
12	Somebody has been grafting cuttings from Nettlecombe's oldest tree.

What the Weir has caught this year (d12)

1	A boot, filled with river sand, far too large for anyone in the valley.
2	A shutter from a building that does not exist in Marrowdown.
3	Forty feet of good rope, coiled and tied, dry in the middle.
4	A wooden sign reading HARBOUR MASTER, split down the middle.
5	A crate of apples, unspoiled, from an orchard nobody claims.
6	A ship's bell, green with age, with a mark cut into its lip.
7	Somebody's wedding chest, locked, initials worn off.
8	A church door, complete with hinges, from no church in the valley.
9	Eleven fishing floats of a pattern nobody here has ever used.
10	A child's shoe, dry, on top of everything else, this morning.
11	A signpost with three arms, all three pointing at places that are not there.
12	Nothing at all, for the first year in nine generations.

Roll twice and combine with *Rumours at the Ninth Bell* for a complication.

On the valley road (d10)

1	A cart with a broken axle and a driver who will not accept help.
2	Two of the Nettlecombe families passing in opposite directions, in total silence.
3	Mist to the knee, moving against the wind.
4	A funeral party going up to Candle Fen, walking, no cart.
5	Sennet Crake counting reed bundles aloud and starting again because you spoke.
6	A dog that follows for four miles and turns back at exactly the same tree every time.
7	Cobb Reeve of Saltless customs, writing down that he met you.
8	A field being ploughed up and something in the furrow the ploughman has stopped for.
9	Children playing on the mooring rings of a quay six miles from Marrowdown.
10	A stranger going the other way who greets you by name and does not stop.

What is in a Deep Cellar nobody opened this century (d10)

1	A rack of thirty bottles, all empty, all corked and sealed as if full.
2	Chalk figures at a child's height, counting in a system nobody uses now.
3	A door in a wall that opens onto packed earth, hinges worn smooth from long use.
4	Eleven barrels laid down for a wedding the register says never happened.
5	A cold draught coming up through a floor with no gap in it anywhere.
6	Somebody else's lantern, still warm, set down neatly against a wall.
7	A wheel-track in the dust running into the cellar, not out of it.
8	Fitted stone older than the town, with a mark cut into it at knee height.
9	Three feet of standing water that is warmer than the room.
10	A stair going down that is not on any map of the cellars.

Lowmere names (d12)

1	Odett · Bertrand · Hessa · Anser · Grig · Sennet
2	Marrow · Til · Bel · Cobb · Wick · Odo
3	Alderton · Vasse · Pell · Bramm · Crake · Hardaker
4	Mullens · Trice · Reeve · Toller · Finch · Quill
5	Ansel · Perrin · Dole · Whin · Tabor · Neap
6	Cress · Lark · Mabb · Sperrin · Gant · Yarrow
7	Fenn · Rush · Sedge · Marl · Silt · Weir (all common surnames here)
8	Names ending in -stile, -combe or -down mean the family came from that place
9	Names ending in -ward or -keep mean the family came in from outside, and everyone knows it
10	A first name repeated across generations means the family held an office
11	Two first names and no surname means Reed Roads, and is not asked about
12	A surname taken from a caught object at the Weir Count, which happens about once a decade

NO ADVENTURE ATTACHED TO ANY OF THESE

Twelve Things Wrong in the Valley

Each of these is true right now and none of them has scenes written for it. They are here so Lowmere can be run without any of the published adventures at all.

1. A beehive at Nettlecombe has swarmed three times this season, which cannot happen, and its keeper has stopped counting.
2. The oldest vine at Nettlecombe has put out roots above the ground this spring, all of them running the same way, and that way is downhill.
3. One of the three ships at the Stranding has begun to lean. The farmers want it propped. Nobody wants to go aboard to do it.
4. Sheriff Odett Quill has started walking the old shoreline once a week with a tally in her hand, and will not say what she is counting.
5. Coldstile's locked press has been opened. Not forced - opened, by somebody with a key, and closed again.
6. A square of field at Candle Fen has stopped growing anything at all, in a valley where everything grows, and its corners are true.
7. Three doorsteps on the low street have been replaced inside a month, at night, by nobody anyone saw arrive or leave.
8. The Nettlecombe carrier has changed his round for the first time in nine years, and the new way is a mile longer.
9. A reed-cutter came up the marsh road at a run last month and has not gone down since. She will not say what she saw and she is not frightened - she is embarrassed.
10. The waterline on the Counting House is a foot higher than the one on the mill, and both walls are original.
11. Wick has stopped sleeping indoors and gives a different reason every time he is asked, and none of them is the reason.
12. The Marrowdown well ran cloudy for two days and cleared again. The two wells either side of it did not change at all.

The Mark

A mark cut into old stone, always below the waterline, always the same: a single horizontal line with a smaller line dropping from its centre. Old. Deliberate. Nobody in Lowmere can read it, and the few who have noticed it in more than one place have not mentioned it to each other.

How to use it

Put it wherever old stone is exposed below the waterline, and never explain it. No adventure in this line requires it, none of them resolves it, and none of them mentions another. A group that plays one will not notice. A group that plays four will.

IT TRAVELS

Using Lowmere Elsewhere

Lowmere needs nothing around it. To drop it into a world you already run, keep three facts and change everything else: the water left three hundred years ago, the cellars are older than the town, and there is a festival almost every month.

A coastal valley, a drained reservoir, a river that moved, a city built in a dry canal - all of them work. The waterline is the only thing that must survive the move, because it is what makes players ask the question the whole setting is built on.

LICENCE

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A NOTE FROM US

Thank you for playing

We are a small studio, and we read everything our players tell us. What you say decides what we make next — and how we fix what we have already made.

So, once you have played: what worked? What dragged? Was anything unclear? Did anything surprise you?

> TWO WAYS TO TELL US
>
> 1. ***Leave an honest rating on itch.io.*** *Sign in, open* ***onegoodeveningdnd.itch.io/lowmere****, and under More information choose Rate this. The stars help other players find it; any words you add are read only by us.*
>
> 2. ***Or leave a comment*** *at the bottom of the same page. We answer every one.*

If anything in the file is wrong or missing, tell us and we will fix it. Good or bad, it all helps. Thank you.