

SCARS OF RISENHOLM

PLAYER QUICKSTART SETTING GUIDE



“You who inherit tomorrow: We have sacrificed everything so that you might live on free of the burdens of our folly. Live for the future, for there is naught but sorrow behind you.”

- *The Message In Stone*

Introduction

Scars of Risenholm takes place in an original fantasy setting, unrelated and unconnected to The Forgotten Realms or other popular D&D settings. Players take the role of near immortal amnesiacs crawling out of a mystical “well” within the settlement of Risenholm and are encouraged to engage with the local institutions or forge their own trail through the strange realm and circumstances they find themselves in.

This guide is meant to give a player who is familiar with playing on Neverwinter Nights Roleplay Persistent Worlds an overview of the custom setting our server takes place in. Many details of the denizens of Risenholm and the wilderness around it will be left to discovery in the game world, but this guide should serve as an introduction for what a player can expect of our unique setting.

The Risen

The player characters of Scars of Risenholm are many things, but they are all Risen. With little memory of their previous life, they emerge from the well with a near-immortal body. The town of Risenholm was founded by similar individuals, though whether all children of Risen have retained the Well's protection is in doubt.

While their memory of places and people are hazy, their memory of their own actions and general sense of self can be well defined. They might recall that they were a mighty warrior or learned scholar, but often the details of what wars they fought in, or where they studied can be hard to grasp.

The Well

The long climb up the Well is the welcome a Risen has to their new life in town. Its origins and workings remain a complete mystery, with few being willing to toy around with the thing that keeps everyone alive.

One such person who seemed willing to try to tinker with the Well itself was the previous Captain of the Reeves, Thommald Vollan. For most of Risenholm's existence, people would emerge from the Well in small groups at regular times. However, when Thommald attempted an unknown alteration to the Well, the structure was damaged by an explosion. Since then, those emerging from the Well have been irregular, and often in poor shape.

The Well is considered by most within the town to be the root of the Risen's immortality, as those who arise from death usually do so at the Well's mouth. Though where Risen go while they're dead is unknown, and even less is known about the Boatman, a hooded figure that ferries the dead back to the Well.

Risenholm, Within and Without

The young settlement of Risenholm was built from the trees and ruins that once held the space it now occupies. Nestled between the high cliffs and the immense woodlands of the Suthwood, Risenholm has swiftly grown from some makeshift shelter amidst crumbling ruins into the burgeoning village the Risen reside in today.

Restoration and new construction continue in recent days - with new Risen being brought to purpose much quicker than the early times as efforts to understand and protect the Well have borne fruit. The Risen themselves are a diverse people consisting of many unique ancestries, and although their memories of their old cultures has been lost in the Well, the Risen are generally known as an industrious and tenacious people who banded together against the elements to thrive in this still unknown world.

The wilderness surrounding the settlement is yet untamed, with many Risen wisely choosing to stay within a safe distance of the Well. Those who brave the wilds frequently and press into the Scars for adventure, although impressive to some residents, are looked upon as foolhardy by others. The Well ensures the Risen has a near-immortal existence, but the wilds are full of obvious and not so obvious dangers. Many souls since the founding have gone wandering simply to not return, even by the Well's magic.

While an ever present melancholy lingers about the dreary Suthwood and coastline surrounding Risenholm, the settlement itself enjoys a relative peace and comfort with it's constantly guarded gates and close knit community. Risen who adventure out into the wilds are not only drawn back for the tangible comfort of the Well's waters, but for needed respite against an oppressive and isolating existence beyond the gates.

Due to everyone being amnesiacs, the idea of identity has been in flux since the first Risen dragged themselves from the Well. The early ideology of Risenholm was that you are not some cobbled together set of old memories, but the person in the current moment. Therefore, whatever name you emerged from the Well with might not be as important compared to what name you take for yourself.

This has led to many 'fashions' within naming. One of the more notable is the practise of exchanging names in marriage, though there is little consistency there. Some partners

choose one of their existing surnames, others opt for a new name entirely. Others still agree they're married but don't change their names as a sign of independence.

Another is for elves to fashion their well-given name into a simpler form so that it can be more easily spoken. Isabella Fordren is a prominent member of the group of elves who agree to this movement.

Scars

The phenomena known as "Scars" are generally accepted as lingering wounds in the world, caused by traumatic events in the past. Scars manifest as black tendrils and, if left unchecked, eventually grow and twist the world around them. These mysterious spaces appear to echo events in the past, though every retelling seems to be slightly different each time.

Adventurers who enter the Scars are generally tasked with weakening it by going against the natural course of events within.

The Reeves

“We aren’t what we once were, but that only shows how much better we can become.”

- *Boubacar Salif*

The Reeves are Risenholm’s defenders and police force. Tarnished by the betrayal of their once founder and captain, they now fight to maintain their importance in Risenholm, despite having their influence torn away from them from all sides.

Originally there was only one Reeve, Thommald Vollan, who was given his role by the Elder after he was the first person to venture into a scar and return safely. This was intended as a simple administrative and defensive role to ensure that the various materials coming into town did so safely, and ensure people were getting their fair share. As the population increased, Thommald recruited others to take up the Reeve role with him, mostly from the logging community who he had the closest ties with. As logging slowed, and the Millers took over custodianship of the harvest, the Reeves have since shifted into being almost exclusively protectors and law keepers.

Since Thommald’s exile, his son was appointed Captain by his mother, Elder Agnes Vollan. Once named after his father, he has rejected his birth name and currently is only referred to as ‘Captain Vollan’ (though many derisively still refer to him as ‘Junior’). While many (perhaps save Grillsson and his crew) are reluctant to openly speak about the sins of the father and the burden the son must carry, there is still a palpable sense of unease among the residents when the topic of the Captain’s bloodline comes up in conversation. He has since taken a less active role in the community, choosing instead to focus on his considerable abilities as an unmatched warrior and apply them towards frequent rangings into the wilderness. Some have speculated that he searches for his exiled Father, though it is debated whether he seeks to enact his own justice or to join his cause against Risenholm.

Presently, the Reeves’ day to day operations are coordinated by the Captain’s second in command, Quartermaster Olivia Hawke . A woman in her middle years, she is known for her icy demeanor and no nonsense approach to command, in direct contrast with the

Captain's relaxed and rankless style of leadership. With her superior frequently absent from town, Olivia has taken to instilling a more disciplined flock of Reeves, so that their dedication and loyalty will be beyond question. She has been outspoken in her drive to expand Risenholm's influence to the surrounding area, and believes firmly in an 'aggressive defensive doctrine'.

Reeve characters can expect to serve as the forefront of Risenholm's martial defenders, law keepers and to be involved with pacifying areas ready for further expansion. While most Risen are expected to resolve matters among themselves, the Reeves serve as the authority that is needed when a matter needs an impartial party, whether diplomacy or force is required.

Reeves begin and usually end their careers in the muster as a Sprout, a sometimes derogatory title used internally. The few who prove their mettle to Olivia or veteran Reeves may earn a unique nickname - this typically signifies the end of a Reeve's time as a Sprout.

The Millers

“Seven of thirteen dandelions wilted. Crow etchings resonating. Foreman’s got to be pleased with this... Right?”

- A Field Agent, heard remarking to themselves upon leaving a Scar

The Millers are a guild of inventors, craftsmen, and magi who work at the behest of the founding and still current Architect Isabella Fordren and her husband. They own and operate the Fordren Mill, a marvel that has quickly evolved from a simple mill into an incredible foundry of technological and magical wonders that has emerged from years and years of research. In recent years they have begun focusing on research in the Scars and have begun recruiting all sorts to tend to their field work.

Even if their focus has changed, some craftsmen traditions have remained in the everyday life of the Millers. The veteran members of the Guild are fiercely protective of their secrets and newly joined "apprentices" are usually sent on mindless efforts of labor or unexplained research to amass ridiculous amounts of data to earn their keep. This has led some of their critics, especially those who have since left the organization since the re-prioritization to Scar research, to argue that the organization has become incredibly wasteful and absent of practical purpose in these trying times.

Miller characters can expect to be field agents for the organization, performing bizarre experiments with purposes that aren't fully explained or gathering esoteric knowledge and resources for the Mill itself. Those who manage to rise in the ranks will be granted mentoring, resources and agents to pursue their own projects.

The Dredgers

“Risenholm’s big mistake continues as long as Agnes VOLLAN is in charge. There’s only one man fit to lead Risenholm. Me.”

- **Markus ‘Big Fish’ Grillsson**

The Dredgers are a hardy band of fishermen, spelunkers, trawlers and other miscellany who inhabit the caves beneath Risenholm. While the group had no official leadership for a number of years, they eventually settled on Markus Grillsson, a polarizing figure who is as loved by some as he is hated by others. The ‘Big Fish’, as he is often called, is the most outspoken against Agnes Vollen for her role in her husband’s actions, and has been championing a change in leadership since his exile.

The organisation has attracted an informal band of unlikely allies who divide their time between Grillsson’s cause, and the practical tasks of feeding the town. Never one to miss an opportunity however, the Big Fish has used the recent food shortages to lever more power for himself and his loyal thugs. When previously they were seen as little more than an unruly but necessary part of Risenholm’s community, they are increasingly growing into a power bloc capable of contending with the big two factions on the town’s surface.

Dredger characters can expect to be people in the Big Fish’s trust, performing underhanded deeds to further what they hope to be a noble cause. Those who prove themselves may rise in the Big Fish’s esteem, but the real prize to a Dredger is the chance to truly change Risenholm for the better.

“Power”

The loose term associated with being able to achieve things through supernatural abilities. Risen are capable of harnessing Power through a nearly endless amount of ways, but the most common and blatant manifestations of Power comes from invoking magic.

When asked where one can acquire more Power, most Risen agree that it is through dedication towards *something* that makes one more capable of harnessing the supernatural. Whether that dedication be strict and disciplined training, a relentless pursuit of forbidden knowledge, or harnessing the very life around you, it is the daring and adventurous that finds their body becomes a ready conduit for this mysterious force.

The Arcane Arts

The discipline of the so called “arcane” is defined by shaping Power that flows from Scars into magic. The first practitioners who harnessed this power likened it to visualizing and directing a “flow” of the Scar’s influence into a tangible spell in reality. Since then, analogues to wind and water have become commonplace when practitioners speak of their magic.

After almost a decade of study, arcanists have managed to identify a large number of spells that could conjure an echo of energy from a nearby or distant scar. A fireball, for example, draws destructive force from nearby Scars featuring burning debris or explosive conflicts. The difficulty and dangers in uncovering new spells has not been lost on the Risen, as it is generally agreed that it would likely require the creation or disruption of a Scar.

Wizards have typically dedicated no small part of their Risen lives studying the known flows of Power and methodically weaving it to harness a wide variety of spells. Sorcerers however use an intuitive sense on how to weave the flows - preferring to directly pluck the Power from the stream itself to shape the spell into what it *wants* to be.

Bards are a curious outlier. Their Power is intuitive, looking and feeling quite similar to sorcery, yet they are able to occasionally tap into flows emanating off the Risen around them. Some have theorized that they are unconsciously harnessing Power that lies

“between” the flows and life itself - a middle ground between arcane, primal and divine forces.

Primal Forces

Upon and within every living creature is the potential for Power, drawn forth by those attuned to the energy of life itself. Druids and Rangers can conjure forth the most obvious manifestations of this force, but primal energy is latent within all Risen who seek to push their bodies beyond what is considered their limit. A rush of adrenaline to assist a warrior in kicking down a door is one thing - the Power to bend a portcullis open with their hands is quite another matter.

Religion

There are many who believe Power is not something simply to be handled, but something that is granted or earned through their service to a cause or entity. References and remnants of monuments to various Gods and distant creeds have, from what the Risen can gather, existed in the world for countless years. The old words and tenets struck true to many of the Risen, and some have found they can harness Power through their devotion. Paladins were among the first in the Risen to grasp this aspect of Power, finding themselves infused with it as they spoke - and adhered to, Oaths. Typically these Oaths are extremely strict, requiring a dedication beyond maintaining a simple code of conduct or morality.

Clerics are those who have devoted their lives to a particular entity, beseeching Power from it to see its ideals realized and to ensure it is never truly forgotten. Remnants of lore and the dogmas of various deities have been recovered from the Suthwood and surrounding ruins, listed below.

Aer: the god who is everything and nothing. All things that are and aren't make up its body and mind, Its practitioners often take a bird's eye view of events, and try to seek long term outcomes that they perceive as beneficial to the world as a whole.

Shentar, the prophet: Shentar lived in the distant past, performing great deeds and providing the world with enduring teachings. Many have since taken up the mantle of

Shentar, and all have advocated for a philosophy of self improvement that would elevate those around you.

The Sleeping Gods: A multitude of petty deities who rest beneath the plains to the east of Risenholm. Their worshippers, few in number, seek to placate them from being involved in their daily affairs. The worst thing to them is for a god to do anything but stay asleep beneath the ground.

The Well, the site of rebirth: Well worship is a strange beast, as while many in Risenholm look to the well for protection, and wish to keep it safe, most see this as a pragmatic necessity to keep themselves alive. The true devotee of the Well, however, elevates this to divine purpose, protecting Risenholm and the Well with fervour that others may find unsettling.

Other religious sects exist, with a small minority of clerics drawing from their own esoteric philosophies. They currently have no official backing in Risenholm, but the town's temple leaves enough room for the addition of new shrines, should any petty ideology gain more prominence.