DARKSHIRE WOODS

BY JOHN W. OTTE

From the royal court to the commoners in the village, Darkshire Woods is a dangerous place.
Think The Lord of the Rings, or A Game of Thrones, or any number of fairy tales or fantasy stories.

Any comments or questions can be sent to john@johnwotte.com

RELATIONSHIPS...

1 FAMILY

- Siblings.
- Distant relatives.
- Unrelated, but close as blood.
- Parent/Aunt/Uncle and Child
- Parent and Son-or-Daughter-In-Law.
- Blood relations, but only one of them knows it.

2 ROMANCE

- Married or Lovers.
- Formerly Married or Lovers.
- Lovers, in secret.
- Would be lovers, except...
- Unrequited love
- Both set on the same person.

3 THE ROYAL COURT

- Co-conspirators in a secret plot
- The puppet and the power behind the throne
- Rivals for royal recognition
- Up-and-coming noble and the member of the inner circle s/he might replace
- The King's Champion and his/her biggest fan
- Assassin in disguise and the one who hired him/her

4 HISTORY

- Apprentice and master at one time, but now the tables have been turned
- One of us saved the other.
- Blood's on our hands, but it was necessary
- Brothers-in-arms a long time ago
- The only ones who know where the ancient relic is hidden
- We were enemies, but this is so much bigger than us.

5 THE COMMONERS

- Inn-keeper and loyal patron
- A cleric and a faithful believer
- Petty thief and his/her latest victim
- Half-blood outcast and the one who discovered his/her heritage
- The blacksmith and his/her client
- Practitioner of dark arts and his/her client

6 THE FANTASY TROPES

- Foreign royalty destined for marriage and his/her intended
- Wizard and apprentice/minion/lackey
- United by a noble (or not so noble) quest
- "Evil" step-parent and child
- Unlikely friends from different races
- Members of an obscure secret order

...IN DARKSHIRE WOODS

NEEDS...

1 TO GET IN...

- ...With the court's inner circle
- ...To the vault that holds a powerful relic.
- ...To the royal family.
- ...To their dwelling without them knowing it.
- ...To the enemies' lair.
- ...The master's good graces, at least for now.

2 TO GET OUT...

- ...Of your obligation to him/her before it kills you.
- ...Of here, before they find out.
- ...His/her good graces.
- ...From under suspicion, for what you did.
- ...Of the kingdom and back home again.
- ...Of your promise to give it back, since you don't have it anymore.

3 TO GET REVENGE...

- ...On the ones that pointed the finger at you.
- ...By taking back what they took from you.
- ...On all of those half-breeds, even if there is a peace.
- ...On those usurpers who stole the throne.
- ...On the one that damaged your family forever.
- ...On both of them, by turning them on each other.

4 TO FIND ANSWERS...

- ...About where the relic is hidden.
- ...About your heritage and what's lurking in your family tree.
- ...About the secrets the family has been keeping from you.
- ...About what happened during the former ruler's last days.
- ...About someone's fidelity, or lack of it.
- ...About someone's history.

5 TO WOO...

- ...Anyone who'll have you.
- ...Someone close to an enemy.
- ...Anyone who isn't your spouse/lover.
- ...An old flame.
- ...As a means to an end.
- ...To secure a necessary alliance.

6 TO GAIN POWER...

- ...By ascending to the throne, one way or another.
- ...By finding the relic that will unlock your ultimate power.
- ...By blackmailing those implicated in the evidence you have.
- ...By eliminating your rivals.
- ...By sabotaging the alliance before it makes you obsolete.
- ...By finding more puppets to dance to your tune.

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LOCATIONS...

1 DARKSHIRE CASTLE

- The throne room.
- The king's chambers.
- The queen's boudoir.
- The high tower.
- The Great Hall.
- The chapel.

2 THE KEEP

- The Commander's Quarters.
- The soldiers' barracks.
- The armory.
- The dungeon.
- The main gate.
- A guard tower overlooking the woods.

3 DARKSHIRE VILLAGE

- The Broken Crown Inn.
- The smithy.
- The local church.
- The lord mayor's residence.
- The stable.
- The remote cottage on the edge of town.

4 DARKSHIRE WOODS

- The Darkshire brook.
- A burned-out hunting cabin.
- A copse of trees that is perpetually chilled.
- An abandoned rangers' campsite.
- A mostly unexplored cave.
- An ancient burial site with a recently disturbed grave.

5 THE MARCHES

- A dark wizard's lair.
- The ruins of an ancient civilization.
- Wild, untamed forests.
- The mountain stronghold of a noble family.
- A guardpost on a contested border.
- An mysteriously abandoned village on the coast.

6 THE PAST

- The pivotal battle in a bloody war.
- The night of the previous king's death.
- The gala ball where it all went wrong.
- A summit of wizards discussing the encroaching evil.
- The end of the last age, when the spirit of man failed.
- A church conclave, called to cover up dark secrets.

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OBJECTS...

1 MAGICAL OBJECTS

- A wizard's staff.
- An amulet of ancient origin.
- A draught of (alleged) healing potion.
- An enchanted dragon-scale pendant.
- A mind-control spell.
- A magic mirror.

2 FROM THE ARMORY

- A sword with a dull blade.
- A shield that's never been used.
- A poisoned dagger.
- A morning star.
- A set of chainmail armor.
- A helmet that's been partially caved in.

3 THE COMMON

- A cask of ale.
- A bow and an empty quiver.
- A moldy cloak.
- A staff.
- A raven's feather.
- A cleric's robes.

4 THE WRITTEN WORD

- A spellbook of incredible power (with half the pages missing)
- Illicit love poetry that's better left unread
- A royal decree detailing the rules for succession
- Correspondence between a spy and his patron
- A map to a lost and mythical land
- A holy book with a serious transcription error

5 THE PRECIOUS

- A signet ring.
- A chest full of gold coins from the neighboring kingdom.
- A bag of precious gems.
- An heirloom necklace.
- A bottle of rare wine.
- The crown and scepter.

6 THE UNUSUAL

- A vial of blood
- Fragments of dragon egg shell
- The head from a broken idol
- A bag of seemingly ordinary stones.
- Horn from a unicorn...maybe.
- A skull with unusual features.

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