

~ Strange Adventures from the Multiverse! ~

of Conks & Cons



The Greenfields
Adventure Series



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Hints

A nice day to you kind sir or madam! I'm a blue box that offers precious tips and information about the world, gods, or famous people who might be known to the characters but not to you, the DM. Therefore I'm here to fill these holes.



The Senses

I'm a box that contains information about things the characters might see, hear, smell or feel! You can read me out loud or paraphrase. I also contain information you might elect not to share with the characters since the circumstances demand it. A deaf character might not hear anything, or a person who is mentioned isn't actually present. Every now and then I also contain dialog. Make sure to prepare an ample supply of funny voices in advance!



Of Conks & Cons

An enchanted potato—property of the Baldur's Gate mages' guild—was stolen by Lord Fiddlestick. Severely disappointed, he fenced it to a hapless village boy. The rube planted the potato in the garden, hoping the yield would feed his famished family. To the village boy's dismay, instead of a full belly, the family got an angry garden tenant. A grotesque tree shot out of the earth during the night and threatens the family's home and hearth.

Of Conks & Cons is part of the Greenfields Adventure Series, a growing collection of stories set in and around the Greenfields. The series is intended for Tier I adventurers, meaning characters of level 1 to 4. Additionally, the adventure is optimized for a group of 5 level 1 characters but can be adjusted with minimal effort.

Of Conks & Cons serves as an introduction to the Greenfields Adventure Series and as an introduction to *Dungeons & Dragons* for players and Dungeon Masters alike. For this purpose, I included notes with random thoughts to support you—the Dungeon Master. Don't necessarily accept my tips as gospel, however! More often than not your players will stray from the path I present here and surprise you with their witty or suicidal ideas. Don't attempt to steer them back on the course of action you perceive as the correct one. Your players will notice, and you will deny yourself the chance to improvise a potentially great experience.

To run this adventure, you ideally need a copy of the *Player's Handbook* (PHB) and the *Monster Manual* (MM), but you can also manage with the *System Reference Document* (SRD). I also advise you to get a copy of *Volo's Guide to Monsters* (VGTM) since it has lots of flavor and contains so much interesting monster lore!

All my adventures follow the same formatting rules: If a monster name is formatted in bold, like a **caretaker**, it means that the characters encounter this monster and a fight might erupt. New non-player characters (NPCs) are introduced like so (alignment gender race **statistics** page document). For example, later on, you will read about Narfi Granitetooth (NG female dwarf **priest** MM 348). If a passive check is called, like a **passive Wisdom (Perception) of 15** to notice some shiny leaves, it means that characters succeed if they have a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 15 or higher even if the player hasn't explicitly stated that the character searches for something interesting. The DC for an active or passive check does not differ.



You are playing for the first time, and you have no idea what you are doing? Null sweat! Before you start, tell your players that everything is subject to change and that you will make up rules on the fly to keep the game moving. Don't let the game grind to a halt because either you or a player hasn't read up on every ability and spell. If you don't have time to check something, ask a player who isn't in the scene to look it up. If players forget how a spell works in the midst of combat, skip their turn until the information is found.

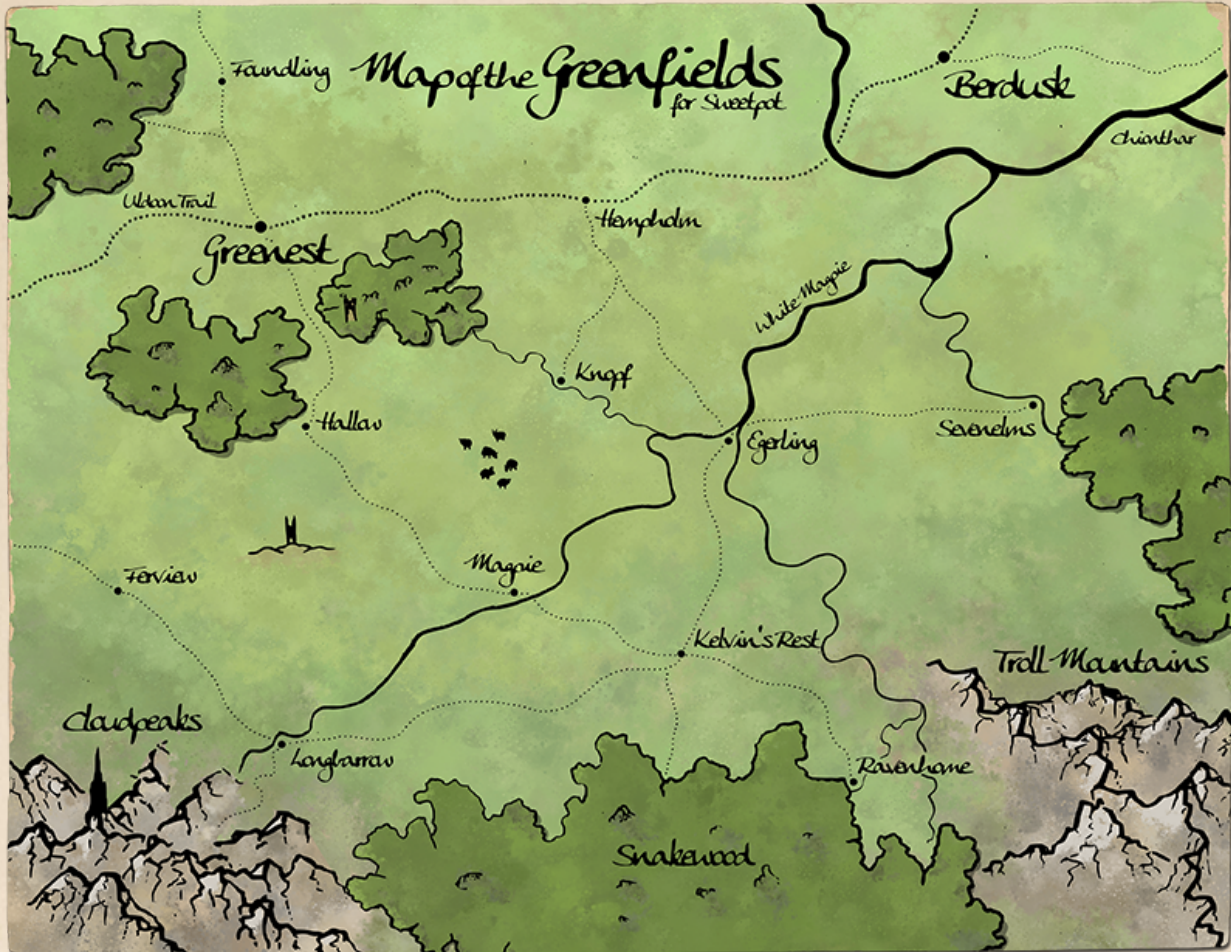
The Greenfields

The Greenfields are part of the Western Heartland of Faerûn and lie just south-east of Baldur's Gate. Not much is known about the Greenfields in terms of official canon. In the south, the Greenfields border the Cloudpeaks, the Snakewood, and the Troll Mountains. In the north lie the river Chionthar and the Wood of Sharp Teeth. The only larger settlement in the Greenfields is known as Greenest, whereas all other settlements spring from my imagination.

One easily underestimates the size of the Greenfields since the region spans 250 miles from west to east and 150 miles from north to south. In comparison, the region would be as large as South Korea or Iceland. Traveling from east to west by foot would take a group of adventurers around 10 days, but feel free to cut the size in half. Looking at the map of the Greenfields that comes with this adventure, a group of adventurers would be able to travel between settlements within a day after you halved the landmass.

At least in my imagination, the grasslands of the Greenfields are dominated by herds of wild horses, goats, and sheep. Arable land surrounds the sparse settlements, and frequent copses break the monotony of the grass sea. Curiosities like long barrows, ruined towers, and abandoned shrines are just as likely to be found as a shepherd searching for lost lambs. Surprisingly, the temperatures fall the further south one travels since the altitude constantly increases. The primeval Snakewood, the Cloudpeaks, and the Troll Mountains shield the Greenfields from the southern winds that would bring warmth and the smell of spices. However, the Greenfields also owe their lush vegetation to the frequent rain the forests and mountains bring.

Although the countryside appears mirthful, it's anything but. The populace is under constant threat from simple robber bands, worg-riders that roam the Giant's Plane to the east, as well as mythic beings and forgotten monsters that leave their forest or mountain homes to hunt and make mischief. In other words: the perfect starting place for a great adventure.



Adventure Background

Lord Fiddlestick—a gnomish bard, hasardeur, sneak thief, and entrepreneur—lifted a strange tuber from a traveling alchemist's rucksack. In the face of this disappointment—A potato? What has my life become!—Lord Fiddlestick decided to rip off a hapless farm boy at Greenest's market. He only needed a mere fraction of a second to make out his mark: A simple boy who understood the fields and the earth, but not the cruelty of man. With promises of great fertility and prosperity, Lord Fiddlestick sold the alleged magical tuber for an outrageous price. The boy gave away all of the day's earnings with which he should have bought provisions for his ever-growing family. Winter was fast approaching, and with the new baby girl Laura, the family had another mouth to feed! Little did Lord Fiddlestick know, that the take was an enchanted plant indeed, ready for its first field test in one of the Greenfields' many provincial backwaters.

Once the boy returned, he was beaten badly by his sire. In his despair, he planted the seed nevertheless. Lo and behold! Within a few days, a large tree grew rampant. Alas, the tree was not as docile as his conspecifics. It looked sickly, had no leaf to its name, and to add injury to insult, the tree attacks passers-by with its rock-hard branches!

Meanwhile, the tree's roots dig greedily into the ground. Deep down, in the bowels of the earth, the roots harvest gold, silver, platinum and more. Slowly but surely, the tree transports these precious metals to the surface where they finally face the sun. A kin to the star they were born in eons and eons ago? By day and by night dutiful caretakers roam the network of hollow roots beneath the tree. They caress their holy mother, fight off rodents, and savor the smell of their home soil. Woe to you, if you decide to disturb their placid lives!

The conk's true purpose is only known to few members of the Baldur's Gate mages' guild who elected the hinterlands of the Greenfields for a preliminary field test. Far away from prying eyes, the tree could have been studied without interference...

Adventure Hooks

The Alchemist's Despair

A man with both panic and worry in his eyes approaches you during your stay in Greenest. He calls himself Korden and tells you of a terrible theft that puts his life's work in jeopardy. He implores you—looking like the adventurers you are—to find the culprit or at least a trace of the valuable conk! The Baldur's Gate mages' guild will be most pleased and generous in case you return the tuber, Korden promises. For a few days, you scour the town and the surrounding farms, finding no trace of either. At long last, a traveling merchant tells you of a strange plant which terrorizes a village not far from Greenest. You set out to investigate!

In Service of the Guild

You were employed to deliver a package of great import to a temple of Chauntea in Berdusk—a town in the countryside. The client is a mages' guild based in Baldur's Gate, and a good friend of yours facilitated the deal, vouching for your skills. When you accepted the quest, it seemed easy enough, and the promised pay was rather high. Alas, the package was stolen one fateful evening. You tracked down the culprit—a gnome who calls himself Lord Fiddlestick—but he already sold the package to a hapless boy! Fortunately, the boy told the thief about the village he hails from. It is high time to retrieve the package or otherwise the quest is null and void. You never know what creative punishment a malevolent wizard might come up with...

A Small Hamlet on the Horizon

With an empty stomach and pouches full of gold, you approach a hamlet which lies on your way. Overlooking the village from a small hill, you cannot help but notice a grotesque tree growing in one of the gardens which towers above all other trees and buildings in the area. When a bird tries to perch on one of its branches, the tree lashes out and turns the bird into minced meat. This event equally arouses your suspicion and lust for adventure!

Adventure Summary

The characters arrive in Hempholm and recognize the problem immediately: A grotesque tree grows in one of the gardens and viciously attacks creatures that come too close. After taking care of the problem—one way or the other—the characters are invited by Hempholm's denizens to celebrate their heroic deed, unless the characters burned down the village in the process of saving it.

Several hours after the tree is destroyed, the tree's former caretakers descend upon the village to take revenge for the characters' deed. Should the characters survive the ordeal, the inhabitants of Hempholm urge them to climb down into the tree's hollow roots to finish off the surviving monsters. Inside the tree's roots, the characters encounter the guardian and find a baby seemingly trapped in a wooden helix. The baby is unlike any other the characters ever saw and it's upon them to decide how to deal with it.



Sometimes players, especially new ones, feel awkward and roleplaying doesn't come naturally to them. Throw the players' characters directly into the action! The adventure could start while the characters are already battling against the tree or you could impersonate an NPC who takes the characters by the hand and eases them into the world with some exposition and roleplaying.





Of Conks & Cons

Part 1: Enter Hempholm

The following sections describe points of interest in Hempholm in more detail. Naturally, Hempholm features several simple artisans like a blacksmith, a cobbler, and a carpenter which aren't worth mentioning. All villagers in Hempholm have the statistics of **commoners** (MM 345) unless otherwise stated. As the name suggests, Hempholm specializes in the cultivation of hemp. Hempholm's peasants grow some of the most durable and strongest hemp in the Western Heartlands which finds its way to the marketplaces of Greenest and Berdusk. Around 80 people live in Hempholm proper and several dozens more in outlying farms that surround the village.



This adventure includes tables (Appendix C) which list a number of random names for villagers the characters might encounter during their stay in Hempholm. Why is this noteworthy?—you may ask yourself.

Even if you forget it after several weeks, the players will vividly remember the arbitrary shoeshine boy—and his three-legged dog—they met in front of the tavern that one time their characters got drunk.

Thank the gods that you used the trusted random name table to note the name and background of that boy and his poor puppy!

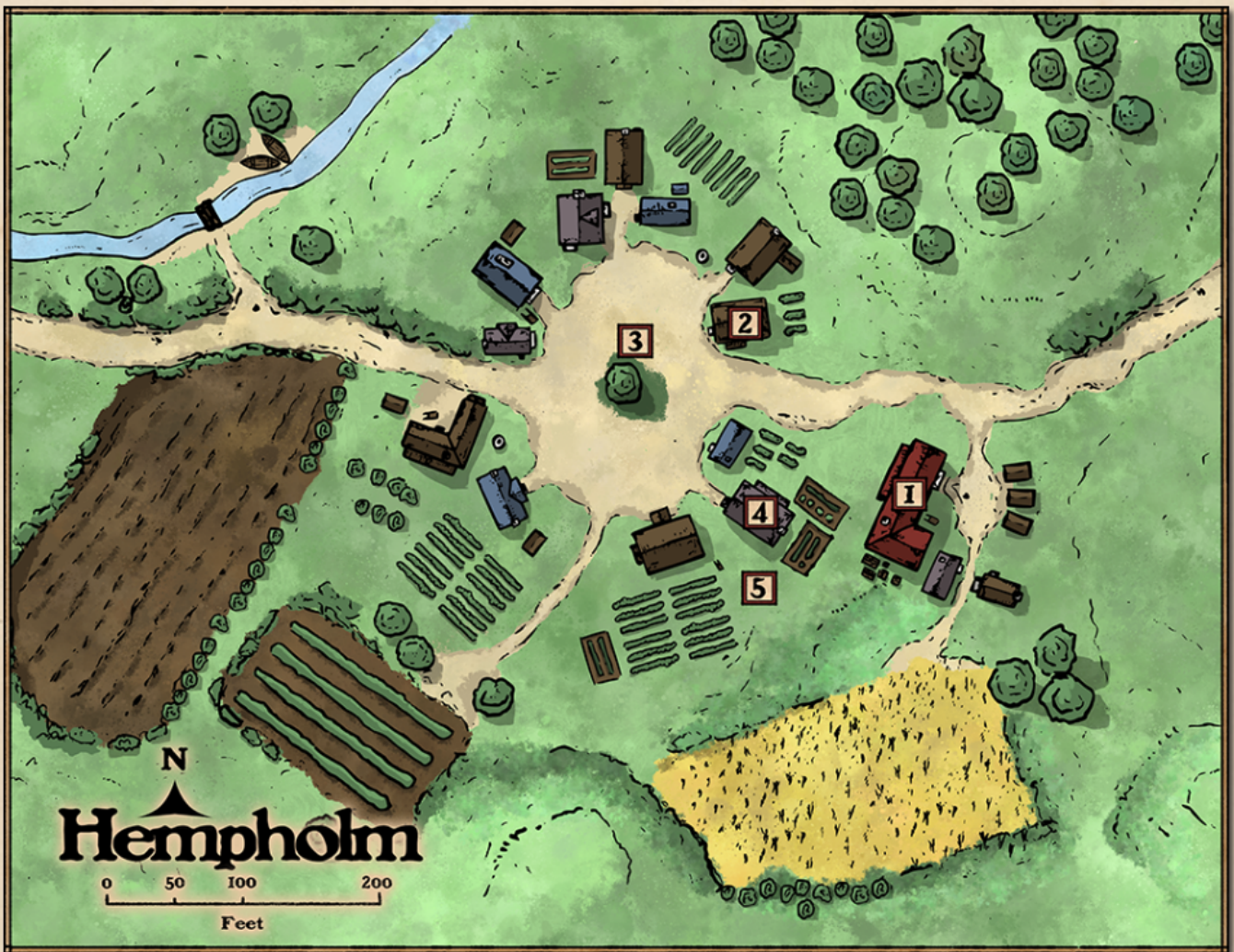
Area 1: The Shacks



You stand in front of the village's largest building when a peasant with an oddly noggin-shaped nose flies through the door out into the cold. Following this display, you hear the sweet sound of a cursing dwarf who demands more ale. After that, the evicted rube gets up, mounts his donkey, and hightails.

The so-called Shacks consist of a large building and a number of huts on the outskirts of Hempholm. Travelers and migrant workers may stay in the huts free of charge or pay a few coins for a furnished room in the main building. A small soup kitchen and a tavern can be found inside the main building, but they serve nothing fancy. The quality matches the coin, or so they say. Nevertheless, if you need a roof over your head and some comfort in your veins, this is the place to go.

The Dwarven Lady. One grim customer in the Shacks never rests her mug-arm: A dwarf who gives visitors the evil eye if they dare to approach her. Narfi Granitetooth (NG female dwarf priest MM 348) is a perpetually drunk dwarven woman who lost her daughter and will to carry on. In the olden times, Narfi and her child Sarni were simple wanderers who healed for board and lodging. One day, Sarni fell victim to a murderer they rescued from a roving band of brigands.



The monster slit Sarni's throat during the night, stole her gold, and tried to pull the same stunt with Narfi. She managed to slay her assailant, but for Sarni, help came too late. Since then Narfi wastes away in the Shacks and trashes the locals if they grow too chummy. A character who is proficient in Religion can set Narfi straight with a successful DC 20 **Charisma (Persuasion) check**. Thereupon Narfi bethinks her convictions and the teachings of Sharindlar and considers going back to her wandering life. Additionally, she looks upon the characters kindly.



Sharindlar

Sharindlar is the dwarven goddess of healing, fertility, life, and mercy. Sharindlar's priests are known as Thalornor which means those who are merciful. Her symbol is that of a burning needle.

Area 2: The Store



The store's interior is dusty and untidy much like its proprietor. Bundles of hair shoot out of the old man's nose and ears and he appears to be sleeping behind the counter.

The only store in Hempholm—popularly called Morwin's—is run by Morwin Blackwell. Morwin is an old man and has problems with his eyes and ears. He will often mistake the characters for someone else if they find their way to his shop. Morwin is in a black mood since Saladin arrived in Hempholm and he curses Saladin's name in every other sentence he mutters.

Items For Sale. The shop offers items from the Adventuring Gear table which are worth 10 gp or less (PHB 150) and basic farming equipment. Additionally, Morwin sells potent hemp in household quantities and offers his personal blends Green Cracker and Ancient Green Dragon.

Area 3: Saladin's Wagon



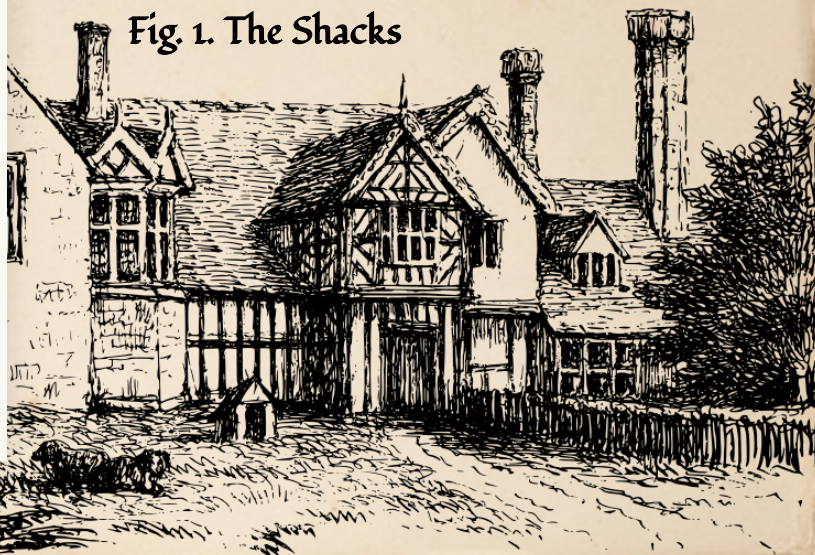
A wagon stands smack in the middle of Hempholm's village square so that no denizen or traveler is deprived of its ... beauty. The words '*Saladin's Mobile Emporium*' flaunt on the wagon's sides in large golden letters and its coloration is reminiscent of a kaleidoscope. When you enter the gaudy vehicle, you notice that it's considerably larger on the inside than on the outside. An elf clothed in a purple robe sits behind a small desk and expectantly raises his head when he notices your presence.

Saladin (N male elf **mage** MM 347) is a traveling merchant who stopped in Hempholm to stock up on tradable goods and to rest. His wagon is approximately 10 feet high, 12 feet long, and 8 feet wide. On the inside, it can stretch for 600 feet in each possible direction. Saladin was a well-respected mage in the past but is now almost forgotten. He is well past his prime, almost 500 years old, and is often visited by unbidden thoughts. Where other elves turn inward and return to their home and family in old age, Saladin created a home for himself on the road. He decided to spend his last centuries as a simple trader who travels the world. The friendships and rivalries he forges on his journey invigorate him, he hopes, and ward off the calcification of his mind.

On the Record. Saladin often ceases talking mid-sentence, draws out a small notebook, and notes the unbidden thoughts that come to him. He intends to collect all the unbidden thoughts he as to allow scholars to piece together a complete story or cross-reference with other records. Upon request, Saladin explains the concept of unbidden thoughts and his reasoning behind the notes.

A Traveling Merchant's Lack of Wares. Saladin sold out his stock and looks to buy. He will acquire almost anything and pays fair prices to boot. With around 10,000 gp securely stored in his bag of holding he won't run out of coin soon. Saladin has only one item left which is *Maglubiyet's Statue* (Appendix B). He looted from the corpse of a hobgoblin priest and would part with it for the measly price of 500 gp. The disgusting looking statue which seems to ooze blood stands right next to him on Saladin's desk.

Fig. 1. The Shacks





Unbidden Thoughts

When elves reach a high age or lead an exciting life of adventure, they are inevitably visited by unbidden thoughts—allegedly arbitrary memories of past lives or hallucinations of unknown origin. These unbidden thoughts mark an upheaval in the life of an elf and are regarded as a blessing by most and as a burden by some.

Area 4: The Jove's Home



The menacing tree stands right in the center of this houses' garden. Otherwise, the house is in no way different from the others in the village. It is squat, built of wood and clay, and the windows are small and unglazed.

Most of the village's buildings are arranged in a circle around the village square, the house of the Jove's being one of them. The grotesque tree occupies the garden directly behind the house. The house itself took some damage due to the wild nature of the tree, and the boy Torbin is occupied with roof repairs. The characters encounter Mark Jove when they enter or knock. Mark is the father of Torbin, who is the boy who bought the magical conk. Mark is a fair bit distraught and tells the characters the following:



Mark Jove

By the gods, did you see the tree growing behind our home? We have enough problems already. I hope you are not here to add anything to it! My stupid boy brought this bewitched 'tato home and now look at it! A tree two stories high which attacks everything in sight. Now I can't even harvest the vegetables I grew. We will starve before the winter finds the time to come around! He planted it just the day before. I don't even want to think about its size when the morrow comes! You look like the adventuring sort, can't you figure this out somehow? Then we can talk about a reward. The whole village will chip in; I'm sure of it!

Torbin Jove tells the characters the following in case they speak to him:



Torbín Jove

By golly! You look like real adventurers! Are you here to fell that tree in our garden? I think my pa will chase me out of the village if nothing is done! I can't tell you anything useful, honest! There was this little man on the market, and he was very friendly. He told me that this strange 'tato will be enough to feed my whole family for the span of a year. But now this... I told my pa to just burn it down. But he warned me that we would put the whole village to the torch if we are not careful. And I'm never careful, or so he says.

Area 5: The Grotesque Tree



The further you approach the tree, the stranger it appears. The tree's bark looks as tough as any armor you've seen and the branches are covered in thick thorns.

A character with a **passive Wisdom (Perception) of 15** notices a hand full of shiny leaves which grow from the odd branch. The leaves appear to be made of solid metal. A character with a **passive Wisdom (Arcana) of 12** feels a magic aura around the grotesque tree.

If that character succeeds in a subsequent **DC 17 Wisdom (Arcana) check**, they determine that the tree is indeed infused with arcane magic and that a system of magic roots stretches beneath village.

Monsters & Tactics. The **grotesque tree** (Appendix A) attacks any creature that comes within 30 feet of it and retaliates against ranged attacks. It always targets the nearest enemy and seizes hostilities once it is no longer under imminent threat. **Treasure.** The characters find leaves made of precious metal worth 100 gp in case they search the former battleground.

Advancing the Adventure. When the characters eventually destroy the tree, continue with Part 2 of the adventure. Should the characters leave the tree and the village behind, they will soon hear of a tree that grew to be almost 300 feet tall, destroyed an entire village, and forces travelers on the Uldoon Trail to make a wide detour.



Small Problems Around the Village

A Broken Distillery

In front of the blacksmith's workshop stands an old distillery that's slowly accumulating rust. Upon request, the blacksmith shares with the characters that it's broken beyond repair, but they can have a look at it. A character manages to repair the machine with a successful **DC 15 Dexterity (Tinker's Tools)** or **DC 20 Dexterity (Smith's Tools)** check. The blacksmith rewards the characters with 10 gp and offers to engrave their weapons or armor.

Diamonds In the Rough

Morwin Blackwell recently acquired a handful of uncut gems. He traded an old amulet he had laying around against 10 uncut blue quartz crystals—each worth 2 gp. Morwin asks each and every dwarf he encounters if they could cut the stones for him and offers 20 gp for the service. If there is no dwarf among the characters to initiate the encounter, consider adding banter of the village people who joke about Morwin's funny idea that all dwarfs are into gems. A character must succeed in a **DC 10 Dexterity (Jeweler's Tools)** check to properly cut one of the gems. During the work, the responsible character notices that two of the gems are not blue quartz but tourmalines worth 100 gp each—once properly cut.

Competition in the Shacks

Bill the Belly—the proprietor of the tavern located in the main building of the Shacks—regularly hosts the big “Meal n’ Moonshine” competition. Travelers and residents are invited to serve their best dish or homebrew spirit to sway the Belly's judgment in their favor. The winner receives a bottle of *Belly's Mouthwash* (Appendix B). Characters who are proficient with either cook's utensils or brewer's supplies are allowed to enter and must outdo the competition. There are 1d6+2 contenders besides the characters and you must roll a d20 for each of them to determine the quality of their entry. The characters have a slight edge since the contenders add no bonus to their roll. A tie is broken by an additional cook- or brew-off.



Usually, players love to roll their dice especially when it's their characters' time to shine. It's your job to make that happen without pushing their noses into it. After your players created their characters, note their tool proficiencies or possible guild background. When the characters later mingle with the populace of a village, one of the residents could mention that old Baba's wagon broke down and that she must rely on her rickety legs in the future. A character who likes to tinker might decide to repair that old wagon and sack a reward!



Recurring NPCs

Introducing recurring NPCs like Saladin or Narfi is a splendid idea for several reasons. Players are always happy to spot a familiar face in an unknown and possibly dangerous environment, an NPC can reflect upon the characters' deeds and make note of their good or detrimental influence on the world, and you can send NPCs into peril or into their death to shake the players. However, do so sparingly!

Advancing the Story

Should the characters idle around for too long, implement the following events to emphasize how dangerous the tree is to the village.

The Growth Spurt

The tree undergoes a rampant growth spurt and now measures 30 feet in height. After the growth spurt is over, the tree clobbers the home of the Jove family and the houses of two neighbors since it needs more room to grow. The victims besiege the characters to do something in the face of this mindless destruction. Should the characters decide to use fire against the tree at this stage, roll a d20. On an even number, the surrounding houses catch fire. The conflagration might consume the whole village if the characters do not manage to douse the fire in a timely fashion.

Mount the Attack!

Four of the strongest villagers are fed up. Each of them downs an ale after which they approach with their axes drawn. They flex their muscles and go in for the kill—four thunderous battle cries disrupting the once peaceful village. The tree descends on them with deadly precision and mauls the axe-wielding rubes. The villagers manage to withdraw with broken bones, bleeding wounds, and hurt egos.

The villagers ask the characters to help carry these brave souls to Narfi who might be able to stop the bleeding.

However, Narfi is only willing to help after a character succeeds in a **DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check**. A character who appeals to her faith and dedication to her god must succeed in a **DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check** to secure her help. Narfi helps of her own accord, if the characters managed to get into her good graces before.



The Difficulty Class (DC) of a skill check hardly ever represents reality—especially when roleplaying is involved—and should only serve as a rough guideline. A player put forward a convincing bit of roleplay? Lower the DC or forgo the skill check completely. A character insults an NPC by purposely mispronouncing their name or mocking their needs or convictions? Increase the DC or make that NPC an enemy of the character in question.





Part 2: Peace For Our Time?

A Premature Celebration

If the characters manage to destroy the tree without burning down the village, the villagers gather and throw an impromptu party in the Shacks. The characters are treated as heroes and the villagers serve the best food, ale, and spirits they have to offer. The village children swarm the characters, begging them for exciting stories. Additionally, the children ask whether they can play with the characters' weapons to reenact their heroic deed. In case the characters grant their wish, the children run off to the hill north of the Shacks, where they fight against an innocent and unsuspecting tree.

Hop & Malt. During the course of the celebration, the characters are to be subjected to Constitution saving throws to ward off the effects of the consumed alcohol, if they decide to partake of it. In general, a character must make a **DC 10 Constitution saving throw** for each hour of drinking. On a failed save, the character is **poisoned**. Interpret this as a character going from a state of mild drunkenness to near uselessness.

Never Split the Party. Some of the villagers might elect to spend the night with one of the characters if this seems appropriate considering your group of players. If the characters are dispersed during the course of the night, the following attack will seem all the more threatening.

The Coming Storm. During the celebration, it is crucial that the players do not suspect that something is awry. As the DM you will have to show no malicious joy when the players let their characters get careless. Some players might suspect that there might be more to the adventure because everything went over rather smooth and fast. Placate them by hinting at what else might lie before them.

Hempholm Caught Fire?

In case the characters cause a fire in the village they are tied up extinguishing the flames which threaten to burn down the village—unless they decide to make a run for it. This is taxing work and the characters must succeed in a **DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check** or gain 1 level of **exhaustion**. Roll a d4 to determine how many houses are destroyed during the conflagration. The former inhabitants move into the Shacks while they rebuilt their homes.

Rampage Of the Caretakers

The tree still poses a great threat to the village after the characters dealt with the figurative tip of the iceberg. Its roots harbor a myriad of caretakers which resemble large beetles made of roots. Some hours after the characters destroyed the surface portion of the plant, the caretakers dig their way to the surface to attack whatever hurt their mother tree. At some point during the celebration or fire-fighting operations, the alarm is raised and the villagers descend into panic.

Monsters & Tactics. 20 **caretakers** strike during the night, attack any villagers they can find, and attempt to destroy structures they encounter. The caretakers have the statistics of **twig blights** (MM 32) and return underground after a few hours have passed or flee after at least 15 caretakers are dead. Until then they roam the village in groups of 5 which would be a **medium** challenge for 5 level 1 characters. Additionally, the caretakers are afraid of fire and attempt to avoid it.

Treasure. The caretakers carry nothing of worth, but a character proficient with either woodcarver's or carpenter's tools notices that the roots the monster are made from are of high quality. Each caretaker corpse is worth 1 gp.



Part 3: The Descent

Down Into the Rabbit Hole

To root out the threat beneath the village, the characters must descent into the root-corridors. Before their attack, the caretakers tore open large holes all over the village. These openings connect to various root-corridors which ultimately lead the characters right into the heart of the plant. Once the characters enter the root-system, paraphrase or read out loud:



The air down in these tunnels is dank, and the temperature is higher than you would have anticipated. The hollow roots are warm to the touch but feel more like stone or metal than wood. At first, you have to bend down to fit into these tunnels. However, soon you can walk upright, and you ready yourself for whatever lies in the center of this alien network.

The large hollow roots are dotted with smaller corridors which quickly become too narrow to traverse. Having learned their lesson, the caretakers watch the characters while they make their way through the root-corridors. The caretakers make clicking noises when the characters pass by, alerting their brethren and the guardian. When the characters try to attack any of the caretakers which hide in the narrow corridors, they withdraw deeper into the inaccessible network.

The Marrow

Once the characters make their way to the center of the root network, paraphrase or read out loud:



You reach a large chamber where many of the root-corridors converge.

The room is faintly lit by a sickly green light, emanating from the center of the room. In the midst of this chamber, a large wooden helix structure winds itself through the ceiling, most likely reaching almost up to the surface. At a height of 20 feet, you see a large translucent sack which is the origin of the green light. The sack is cradled inside the wooden helix which forms a protective shell around it. Before you find the time to take a closer look, you notice movement from the corner of your eye.

Monsters & Tactics. The characters are attacked by the **guardian** (Appendix A) and 2 **caretakers**. The guardian is a large creature made of roots who features four legs and iron reinforced spear-like arms.

Treasure. After the enemies lie dead, the characters will eventually investigate the glowing sack. Inside they find a toddler with green skin, partly made of bark and stone. To reach the sack, the characters must cut through the wooden helix-structure that surrounds the toddler.

Once the characters damage the helix, an amalgam of liquid gold, silver and platinum oozes out of the cuts. The metal hardens as soon as it is exposed to the air much like resin. The characters can take the toddler with them if they so desire.

The characters are able to safely harvest metal resin worth 200 gp. If they decide to harvest more, the characters notice that the structural integrity of the helix is critical and any more damage may lead to a collapse. Since the room and the roots span below the entire village, Hempholm would be destroyed in such an event. Should the characters destroy the helix to harvest more metal, they gain additional metal worth 200 gp. After the central structures collapses, the characters must succeed in a **DC 10 Strength (Athletics)** check to escape the root-system. A character that fails is buried and the whole village of Hempholm collapses into the ground and is destroyed.



Balancing encounters is a form of art. The *Kobold Fight Club* is an excellent resource which can determine the difficulty of a combat encounter but can't take into account the characters' state and available resources. In general, a fully equipped and rested party can make it through a deadly encounter without losing a companion. An additional hard or medium combat encounter right after might result in several character deaths, however. If the characters have the support of an NPC be mindful of the fact, that an NPC with a challenge rating (CR) of 1 is approximately as strong as a level 3 character.

Concluding the Adventure

The Fate of the Child

In case the characters decide to cut the child out of the helix and open the strange cocoon, the child emerges alive and well but not fully grown. To become a proper adult it must consume metal, no matter what—simple iron will do. It's a magical creature, an amalgam of earth, wood, and metallic blood. Its growth will be quite rapid and it has no ascertainable sex and since it's a blank slate it will quickly learn. Its ultimate alignment depends on the characters' teachings. If the villagers catch a glimpse of the strange creature the characters dug out of the earth, they tell the characters that they are thankful, but the characters need to leave the village as soon as possible. They had their share of magic, and it's high time that peace returns to the village. Both Narfi and Saladin would care for the child should the characters ask for their help.

Hempholm's Gratitude

Depending on the characters' actions, the villagers either treat them as true heroes or accursed villains. The villagers will carry word about the characters to the surrounding towns Greenest and Berdusk, where the characters either suffer under their ruined reputation or receive the odd ale on the house.

Continuing the Adventure

An Agent of the Mages' Guild

Naturally, the mages' guild which is responsible for the creation of the conk is highly interested in erasing any evidence of the matter. A wizard named Paelias Sian (N male elf) is sent to investigate the matter, pay off any witnesses, and destroy the tree. Paelias Sian has the statistics of a **mage** (MM 347), except that he has only access to 1st and 2nd level spells. Paelias quickly finds out about the occurrences in Hempholm and visits the village. He pays reparations to the affected families in return for their silence, and acquires information about the characters and the tree's child. Paelias pursues the characters and catches up eventually. Should the characters have given the child into the care of a different person like Narfi, she will catch up to them before Paelias arrives and get the characters up to speed. Paelias' goal is to erase any evidence, including the strange offspring.

Appendix A: Monsters & NPCs

GROTESQUE TREE

Huge plant, unaligned

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)
Hit Points 39 (6d8+12)
Speed -

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| 17 (+3) | 9 (-1) | 15 (+2) | 7 (-2) | 10 (0) | 10 (0) |

Damage Immunities piercing
Damage Resistances bludgeoning
Damage Vulnerabilities fire
Condition Immunities charmed
Senses blindsight 600 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10
Languages -
Challenge 1 (200 XP)

ACTIONS

Branch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) slashing damage.

Rock. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

Snare. When the grotesque tree hits a creature with its branch attack, it can use a bonus action to snare that creature. The creature must make a **DC 13 Dexterity or Strength saving throw**. On a failed save, the grotesque tree **grapples** the target and suspends it in mid air at a height of 20 ft. At the start of its turn, the grotesque tree can pull a grappled target 10 ft. closer to its stem. The grotesque tree can grapple two targets at a time.

Sling. The grotesque tree throws a creature that it has grappled 60 ft. away. The thrown creature must make a **DC 13 Dexterity saving throw**. On a failed save, the thrown creature takes 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage, or half that amount on a successful save.

GUARDIAN

Large plant, unaligned

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)
Hit Points 39 (6d6+18)
Speed 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 15 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 17 (+3) | 10 (+0) | 15 (+2) | 10 (+0) |

Saving Throws Str +4, Con +5
Skills Perception +4
Damage Vulnerabilities fire
Damage Resistances piercing
Condition Immunities charmed
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages -
Challenge 1 (200 XP)

TRAITS

Limited Iron Spikes. The guardian has four iron spikes. Used spikes regrow after a long rest.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The guardian makes two melee attacks.

Iron Spike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage. When the guardian hits a creature with its iron spike, it tries to pin it to the ground. The target must succeed in a **DC 7 Dexterity saving throw** or its movement speed is reduced to 0 and the spike is detached. At the start of its turn, the target can attempt a **DC 10 Strength check** to remove the spike and shake this effect.

Adamantine Helix Barrage (Recharge 5-6). Hundreds of fine adamantine needles shoot from the body of the guardian in every direction. All creatures in a radius of 15 ft. around the guardian must make a **DC 13 Dexterity saving throw**. On a failed save, the creatures take 5 (1d10) piercing damage, or half as much on a successful one. Each time the guardian uses this feature, its AC is decreased by 1 until it finishes a long rest.

Appendix B: Magic Items

Maglubiyet's Statue

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

This item has 3 charges and it can recover 1 charge per day by covering it in the blood of a dead creature. You can use a bonus action and expend 2 of its charges to cast the fear spell on a single creature. The DC for the corresponding Wisdom saving throw is 15 and you must not maintain concentration.

This oaken statue of Maglubiyet is completely covered in blood. No matter how long you wait, the blood will not dry. When you cover the statue in the blood of a fallen enemy its eyes glow, and you feel a wave of excitement and battle hunger wash over you. Weaker minds break under the Battle Lord's aura's terrible manifestation since its exceptionally strong.

Belly's Mouthwash

Wondrous item, uncommon

This item has 4 charges which cannot be recovered. After the last charge is used, the item is consumed. You can use a bonus action and expend 1 of its charges to take a mighty swig from the bottle after which you are under the effects of the heroism spell. Your spellcasting ability modifier counts as 2, you must not maintain concentration, the effect cannot be dispelled, and the effect lasts for 10 minutes.

When you loosen the stopper of this bottle, the smell almost knocks you off your feet. This so-called mouthwash could etch paint off a stained glass window, you argue. Nevertheless, down the hatch, it goes!



Appendix C: Tables

Male Villager Names

| 1d12 | Name | Notes |
|------|----------------|-------|
| 1 | Ryan Burke | |
| 2 | Adam Campbell | |
| 3 | Logan Hunt | |
| 4 | Hans Hertner | |
| 5 | Thorwald Dohna | |
| 6 | Artur Seyler | |
| 7 | Ansgar Wachs | |
| 8 | Roduulf | |
| 9 | Cannabaudes | |
| 10 | Bilimer | |
| 11 | Ebbo | |
| 12 | Haldemarus | |

Female Villager Names

| 1d12 | Name | Notes |
|------|---------------------|-------|
| 1 | Edda Ehrhardt | |
| 2 | Wilhelmine Lindwurm | |
| 3 | Bianka Eugster | |
| 4 | Frida Schor | |
| 5 | Riciberga | |
| 6 | Brenhilda | |
| 7 | Avina | |
| 8 | Aregund | |
| 9 | Richildis | |
| 10 | Hana Baker | |
| 11 | Mariam Murray | |
| 12 | Nicole Bates | |

Nicknames

| 1d12 | Name | Notes |
|------|------------------|-------|
| 1 | Honest Jon | |
| 2 | Smart Alec | |
| 3 | Old Torsten | |
| 4 | Kord Nine-Finger | |
| 5 | Toothless Janny | |
| 6 | Pie Karen | |
| 7 | Mean Karen | |
| 8 | Stutterer | |
| 9 | Lying Ted | |
| 10 | Greenface | |
| 11 | Tenderfoot | |
| 12 | One-eared Jim | |

Credits & Afterword

I hope you enjoyed *Of Conks & Cons!* If you find any errors, or if you want to relay some feedback, don't hesitate to contact me via [e-mail](#) or on [Twitter](#)!

Author: Christian Eichhorn

Christian Eichhorn is the author of several bestsellers listed right over there in the right column. He started playing ttRPGs only 2 years ago but grew up with classics like *Fallout*, *Fallout 2*, *Icewind Dale*, *Baldur's Gate II*, *Planescape: Torment*, *Diablo*, and *Morrowind*. Since nothing captured the spirit of these experiences in more than a decade, Christian set out to write his own.

Would you like to see more?

A short blurb about choice products:

The Soulmonger. The village of Longbarrow faces a dire threat. Dozens of devils besiege the village to relieve the inhabitants of their souls. It is up to the heroes to put an end to the machinations of Igach, a sly devil in services of Azaketh. Seek out the source of the devil incursion, and deliver the helpless villagers!

The Tower Golem. Azaketh, a sly and industrious devil, prepares his revenge against his bitter enemy Zirkex. Naturally, the mortals affected by his schemes are mere pawns to further his goals. It is up to the heroes to stop Azaketh in his tracks before he takes control of a powerful weapon – Logrimm's Tower Golem.

Ravenhome's Plight. The village of Ravenhome is plagued by a ferocious army of rats which feasts on the village's supplies and threatens the survival of the villagers. Venture into the caves beneath the hamlet to stop the onslaught on the ravaged village of Ravenhome. Either dispose of the cranium rats, which are behind the attacks or strike a deal with the devilish creatures!

Waterdeep's Notice Boards. A collection of 42 quest seeds in Waterdeep and Skullport. Pit your players against criminal masterminds, monsters from the deep, or seemingly unsolvable mysteries. Waterdeep! Come for the adventure, stay for the outstanding payment.

The Beggar Prince. A fiend with a thirst for power established an almshouse in Waterdeep's underbelly. Will the characters strike down the cambion Dax or support him in his humanitarian mission? Descend into the aromatic sewers of Waterdeep, uncover the circumstances behind a mysterious coin shortage and approach the problem the old-fashioned way: hours of indecisive planning.

Lledrith's Wagon. Lledrith is a trader who travels the world incognito. She has a wagon, a giant spider, and several magic items to her name. Each of the 66 items in the collection comes with a short excerpt about the item's history or the adventures of a famous owner.

Eberron: Sharn's Bounty Hunters. Sharn's Bounty Hunters is a collection of 10 NPCs that characters can hunt to progress through the ranks of the guild. Each new rank brings boons to the characters and in the end they might discover the secret behind the guild. Some people see the guild as a simple collection of unwashed mercenaries. Others realize its real value: An efficient refuse removal service that prevents illness and disease in the creature that is Sharn.

Storm King's Barrows. Ten unexplored dungeons in the north of the Sword Coast and a party of eager adventurers is the recipe for an exciting evening. Delve into abandoned chapels, beleaguered mines, haunted barrows and demon-infested crypts. Put an end to evil machinations, unearth ancient treasures, or perish by the hands of your enemies.

Of Conks & Cons Version 2.1

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Map of the Greenfields for Sweetpot

Fandling

Berdusk

Chionthar

Wldon Trail

Hemphdm

Greenest

White Magpie

Knopf

Hallow

Sevenelms

Egerling

Ferriev

Magpie

Kevin's Rest

Troll Mantains

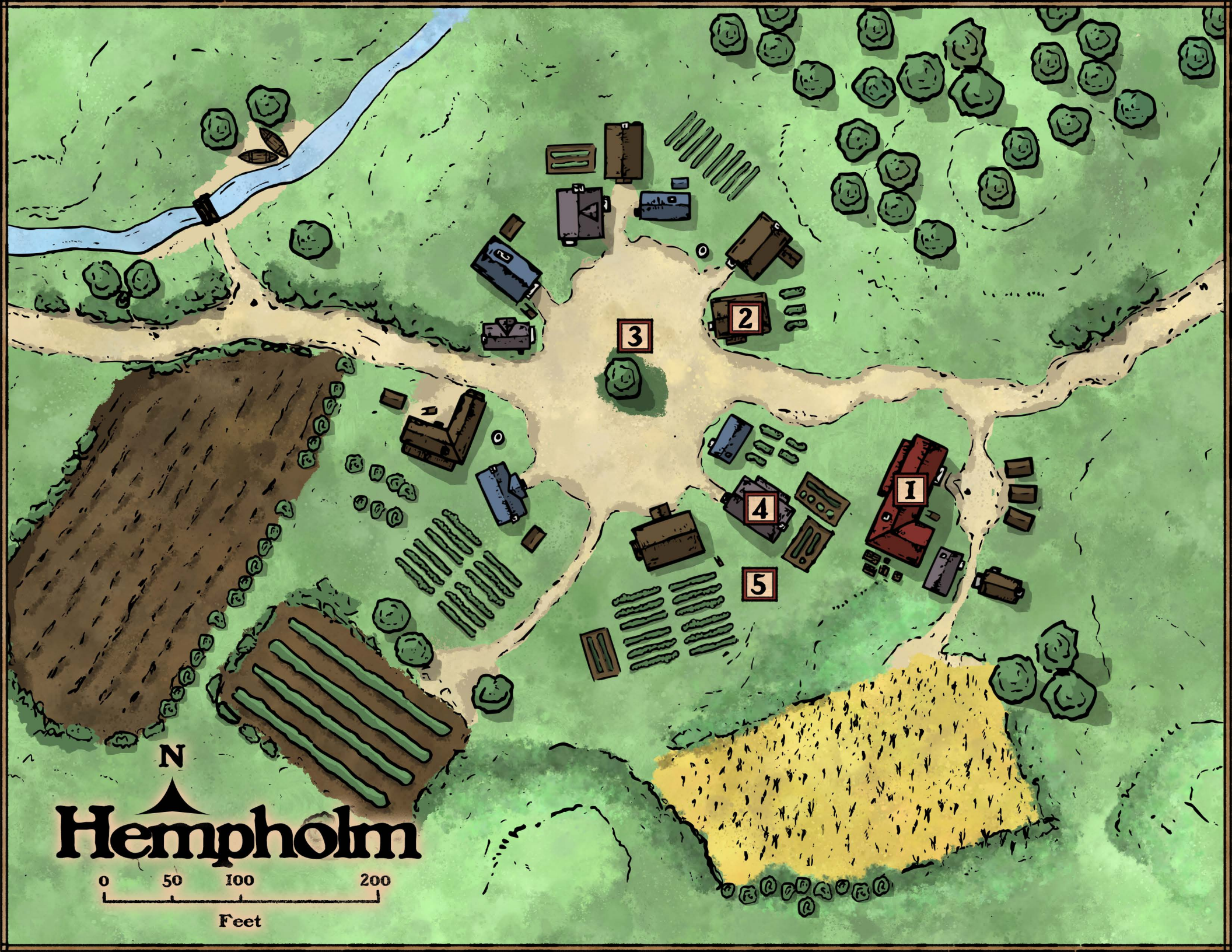
Cloudpeaks

Longbarrow

Ravenhome

Shakerood





Hempholm

0 50 100 200

Feet

