



BEOWULF
age of heroes
THE ELFSHOT

AN ADVENTURE FOR ONE HERO OF LEVEL 4-5 AND ONE GM
FOR THE WORLD'S FAVOURITE ROLEPLAYING GAME



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THE ELFSHOT

FOR A HERO OF LEVEL 4 OR 5

SUMMARY

News has come down the Whale Road that the meadhall of Giorsala stands empty and all the surrounding farmhouses are unpeopled as well. Those who have visited the empty hall left quickly, feeling in their bones that something was not right.

Now the Hero will make a voyage to Giorsala's meadhall and walk the empty places. Eventually, they find a few survivors, enough to learn that the rest of the people were ensorcelled by ylfes. The Hero must make contact with the ylfes, resist their magic and convince them to free the people. They will need to venture forth and rescue the people, and lead them back to mortal lands.

A DIFFERENT SORT OF ADVENTURE

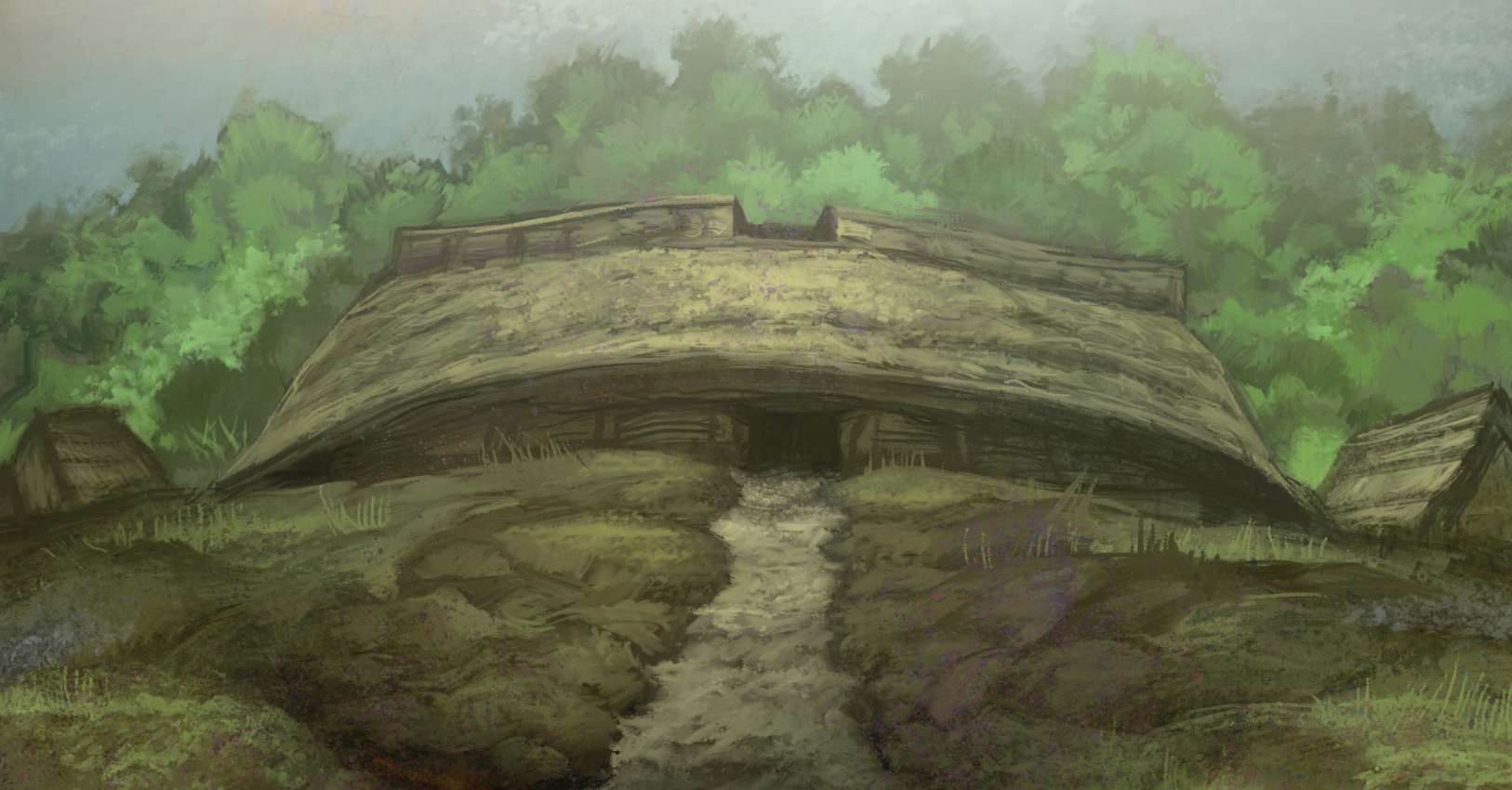
Unlike most *BEOWULF: Age of Heroes* adventures, there is not a proper Monster to fight. There are some challenges with small-m monsters but the core of this story-to-be is a mystery dealing with the ylfes and mortals. No one, not even a Hero, can properly fight a group of ylfes without great aid. Instead, the Hero must make choices, some of which might aid the common

folk, some of which might aid the ylfes. It is possible, though difficult, to assure everyone ends up happy.

THE YLFES

This adventure involves a group of ylfes (elves). In the world of *BEOWULF*, ylfes are fey spirits who barely understand anything about us mortals and have no compunctions about using us in their japes and jests, nor do they hesitate to punish us when we transgress (though they'll never explain the rules) and just expect us to know how to behave. Here's some well-known 'facts' about the ylfes and how to behave yourself:

- Never tell an ylfe your true name, they will gain power over you if you do.
- Never lie to an ylfe, that enrages them.
- Never accept an ylfe's invitation somewhere, they have no sense of mortal time or space.
- Never refuse an ylfe's request outright, they will be horrendously offended.





PART ONE: WHISPERED WORDS

Wherever the Hero, they have heard tales from other travellers about Giorsala's empty meadhall and sense an adventure in the making. If the Hero chooses to do some research before attempting the voyage, each success at a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) or Wisdom (Insight) check allows them to learn one of the following rumours: (As they learn rumours cross them off and if you get the same result on the table just use the closest rumour that hasn't been crossed out.) After the third check, the Hero's Followers begin to get restless and will insist on setting out soon. If the Hero persists, every Follower gains the Disinterested temporary burden.

Disinterested. *This Follower has disadvantage on ability checks until they take a long rest or succeed at an attack roll or saving throw. This burden is removed when the disadvantage is lifted.*

ELFSHOTS

In almost all of the communities scattered across the Whale Road it is known that if you (knowingly or not) upset an ylfe, it might shoot you with a magical, invisible dart that causes some sickness or strange behaviour. In this adventure, several different kinds of elfshots can be seen. Those affected by the elfshot can also be called 'the elfshot' and this is what the title of the adventure refers to: the folk trapped under the elf-mound.

PREPARATION AND PORTENT

Once the Hero learns of the adventure, they can begin to prepare for it, by selecting Followers, loading their ship with provisions and learning the Portent of the coming adventure, creating the inspiration pool at the same time.

SAIL AND SWELL

The meadhall should not be too far away, perhaps a short or medium voyage. The overall sense of the trip should be a sort of quiet oppression, with the dangers of the world weighing down the heart of the Hero. You might want to recast any challenges that occur into this framework as well.

ARRIVAL

Soon enough, the Hero's ship reaches the beaches near Giorsala's meadhall. There seems to be few dangers around, and the crew should be able to keep the ship safe here. It is up to the Hero if they wish to leave one or more Followers here as additional guards.

There are several other smaller boats here as well, with long ropes that are tied to various trees. Investigation shows that they are just small fishing boats, with nets and other fishing gear kept underneath the upturned craft.

A wide path leads gently up a slope and the Hero can see the top of a meadhall above the top of the heather and gorse that surrounds the Forest proper.

RUMOURS

1D6	Rumour
1	A fisher by the name of Konneg reports visiting the meadhall last month when he needed resupplying. He says no one was there but food, weapons and tools were left in place. He took the minimum he needed to get back home and left quickly, because it felt like he was always being watched, despite the fact that no one was there.
2	Tenenan, a trader, normally visits Giorsala twice a year. He called out to the meadhall from the deck of his ship a couple of weeks ago but when he got no answer he fled the scene, worried that some wasting disease had befallen everyone.
3	Katarin is a fisher-woman who makes do with her small ship and nets. She sailed near to the meadhall and spent a night on the beach, unwilling to get any closer. She swears that she heard noises and voices from beneath the earth, speaking in some unknown tongue.
4	Aostin was on a trip to visit his uncle when the weather turned bad and he decided to shelter at the meadhall. He approached the hall and was spooked by the fact that there was no one there. He's pretty sure there were some trails heading into the nearby forest, but he decided it was too dangerous to continue.
5	Solena is a scout for one of the local rulers. She was sent to Giorsala's hall to confirm the rumours. She saw no people and nothing other than scattered tools and rotting food. Sensing something magical, she wisely retreated to make her report.
6	Ronan is would-be Hero, who's been collecting his courage (which he often finds in tankards of ale), he can relate one of the above tales as a second-hand story or he can advise the Hero that he believes it's some sort of spirit or ghost that has been scaring the people away. Ronan might reappear in time to help the Hero in Part Four.

THE MEADHALL OF GORSALA

- 1: THE MEADHALL
- 2: THE GARDENS
- 3: THE STREAM
- 4: THE FORGE
- 5: ABANDONNED HOMES
- 6: THE PADDOCKS
- 7: THE DIRT FIELD
- 8: GROVES AND COPPICES
- 9: THE TRAILS
- 10: MIDDEN PIT





PART TWO: THE QUIET HALL

When the Hero investigates the meadhall and the surrounding community they will find them completely abandoned. No one is here and the settlement is very quiet, other than the occasional bit of birdsong from the forest. It also feels a bit eerie, the Followers and the Hero might occasionally get the sense of being watched, although they never see anyone.

HEROES OF THE BOOK

This adventure is tricky — it deals with the objective reality of ylfes as a powerful force in the world, and one of the most direct resolution methods is for the Hero to reject the teachings of the Church and insist that Giorsala and her folk continue to believe in ylfes and honour them (by leaving milk or other treats out on occasion and respecting the elf mounds).

It's possible for the Hero to successfully complete the adventure without making this promise however. A follower of the Book is likely to classify ylfes as tricksters, evil in nature, or fallen spirits that now serve the Great Enemy. Such a Hero might proceed to directly confront the elf magic (see page 24).

Or the Hero may choose to have a more practical approach — the Book tells of many ancient wonders, and how such things have since been lost, usually due to the foolish decisions of mortals. And the ylfes do not seek worship, nor claim themselves as divine, only a part of the natural world — neighbours to be respected certainly, but not gods.

THE MEADHALL

This is the primary building and is quite a bit larger than any other structure in the community. The sides of the long-house are clay-coated wattle-and-daub, with a reed roof. There are double-doors on each of the long sides, one facing the beach and one facing the forest. Both are closed and secured from the inside. It requires either a DC 13 Dexterity (Thieves Tools or Sleight of Hand) or DC 15 Strength (Athletics) to get the doors open.

Inside, the great hearth fire used to burn in a long trench in the centre of the hall. Now even the coals are cold, though you can still see the soot from the smoke in the dried reeds of the roof. On one end of the hall sits a treasure-seat on a dais, with a screened section behind it. In front of the treasure-seat are a series of tables with benches and a large cauldron that hangs over the trench from an iron-wrought tripod.

On the other end of the hall, there is a collection of wargear, including the standard of Giorsala (an elk skin stretched on a pole and crossbar with a snarling face painted onto it). There are also a series of containers, some with milled grain, some baskets with vegetables, other jugs with mead. All seem in order.

Between the two ends of the hall are a series of alcoves with bedding materials and other small personal items tucked into each of them. There is no one in the hall, and no sign of sudden assault or violence at all.

THE GARDENS

Outside the meadhall are a series of small gardens with vegetables, spice plants and other beneficial herbs. It looks to have been well-tended for a while but now needs a good weeding. There are a few scattered tools and baskets around. A DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check allows the Hero to discover some footprints in the soft dirt. They mill around the garden for a little while and then head away, towards the trail going into the forest.

THE STREAM

A narrow, spring-fed stream winds its way through the settlement. It flows from its source at the base of one of the hills located in the woods, through the cleared area around the meadhall and then down into the woods again before eventually joining the ocean. Near where it cuts through some ancient stones at the north edge there are several buckets and earthenware jugs, all just laying in the springy grass.

THE FORGE

This is the largest of the buildings here (other than the meadhall itself) and the only one that seems to be maintained. It is a lean-to structure, sort of like half of a longhouse and only part of it is enclosed. The exposed area has a forge with a chimney, a heavy anvil, a collection of smithing tools alongside a few finished pieces and a small box containing some raw iron stock.

On the other side of the forge is a stack of firewood and a similarly sized stack of charcoal. Near to the wood is a woollen cap with exaggerated flaps over the ears. A DC 15 Intelligence (Legends) can determine if something a person worried about the ensnaring songs of monsters might make for themselves. A success by 5 or more calls to mind the ylfes specifically.

The enclosed area seems to be a family area. There are some food supplies here, a large amount of bedding material, and a couple of toys here, a stuffed doll that is well sewn and a miniature wooden horse that is roughly carved.

ABANDONED HOMES

This is a series of roundhouses that were abandoned long ago. Now their roofs have fallen and sections of their walls have been taken to help build the meadhall and the rest of the 'new' buildings.



A DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) allows you to find a number of scattered footprints, mostly those of small, barefoot children. There doesn't seem to be any clear pattern as they tend to overlap each other.

A PERFECT PLACE TO FIND SOMETHING

These old homes are a great place to stash some secret benefit for your Hero. If the Player has been wishing that they brought something along instead of their regular gear, or another Follower needs to be re-equipped with a basic weapon or something to do with one of their Gifts or Burdens then you can ask for a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check and have one of the items that they're looking for show up in one of the abandoned homes.

THE PADDOCKS

This set of enclosures was made from the wattle taken from the Abandoned Homes. Giorsala's people raised sheep and a few goats and chickens. All of the enclosures are broken and a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Animal Handling) check reveals that the animals broke themselves out, probably soon after they stopped being regularly fed.

THE DIRT FIELD

This patch of flat ground is flat, with any stones or other obstacles removed. There are a few broken toys at its edges, this

is where the warriors of the meadhall drilled while any children without chores watched them from the side. It was also a popular gathering place on high days when the weather was good. There are no other clues here.

GROVE AND COPPICES

On the edge of the community near to the forest are a small collection of fruiting trees (plums and apples) and bushes (raspberries and bilberries). Alongside them are a series of ash, beech and hazel trees that are coppiced (cut down to the stump and allowed to regrow from there).

Each of the trees is in a different stage of growth, according to its natural timetable. A casual observer might think that the people simply made use of the trees close to them, but a Follower with the appropriate gift might point out that the trees here have been purposefully planted.

THE TRAILS

There are two obvious trails heading away from the meadhall. Both of them are about 5 feet wide and made with packed dirt, occasionally lined by rocks that were removed from the path. The first is the one that the Hero and companions almost certainly used to come here, and leads down to the shoreline. There's plenty of evidence of usage, though nothing extremely recent.

The second trail leads into the forest. It is just a little bit narrower, with fewer stones at its edges. Roots sometimes emerge from the trail, meaning that you have to be a bit cautious when walking it. The trail leads into the Forest (see the next page).

MIDDEN PIT

Near the abandoned houses, on the other side of them and away from the stream is a dug-out pit that has a faint smell of rot. This is the community's midden pit, or refuse area. When done with, anything from the bones of last night's cookout to a damaged fastener or piece of overly damaged clothing gets thrown in here.

If the smell gets too bad or the pile too high, it is covered with dirt and a new pit is dug. A DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check confirms that this pit hasn't been used for several weeks at least.



PART THREE: THE FOREST

After visiting the village, the Hero will likely choose to move into the forest, in order to continue their investigations. There are a number of scenes that the Hero may come across. Instead of providing a map or a set order, you can just use these scenes as appropriate as the Hero explores. Only the last one, The Survivors, is strictly necessary, though it will help the Player have a sense of the size of the forest trails if they visit three or four other scenes before finding the village runaways.

THE TOADSTOOLS

This is an open meadow area where several large sets of mushrooms grow. Each of them grows in a circle, with diameters ranging from three to seven feet. Almost all of the circles are made up of brown-and-black toadstools, but there is a ring of smaller white mushrooms in the centre of the glade. It seems cool, quiet and peaceful here.

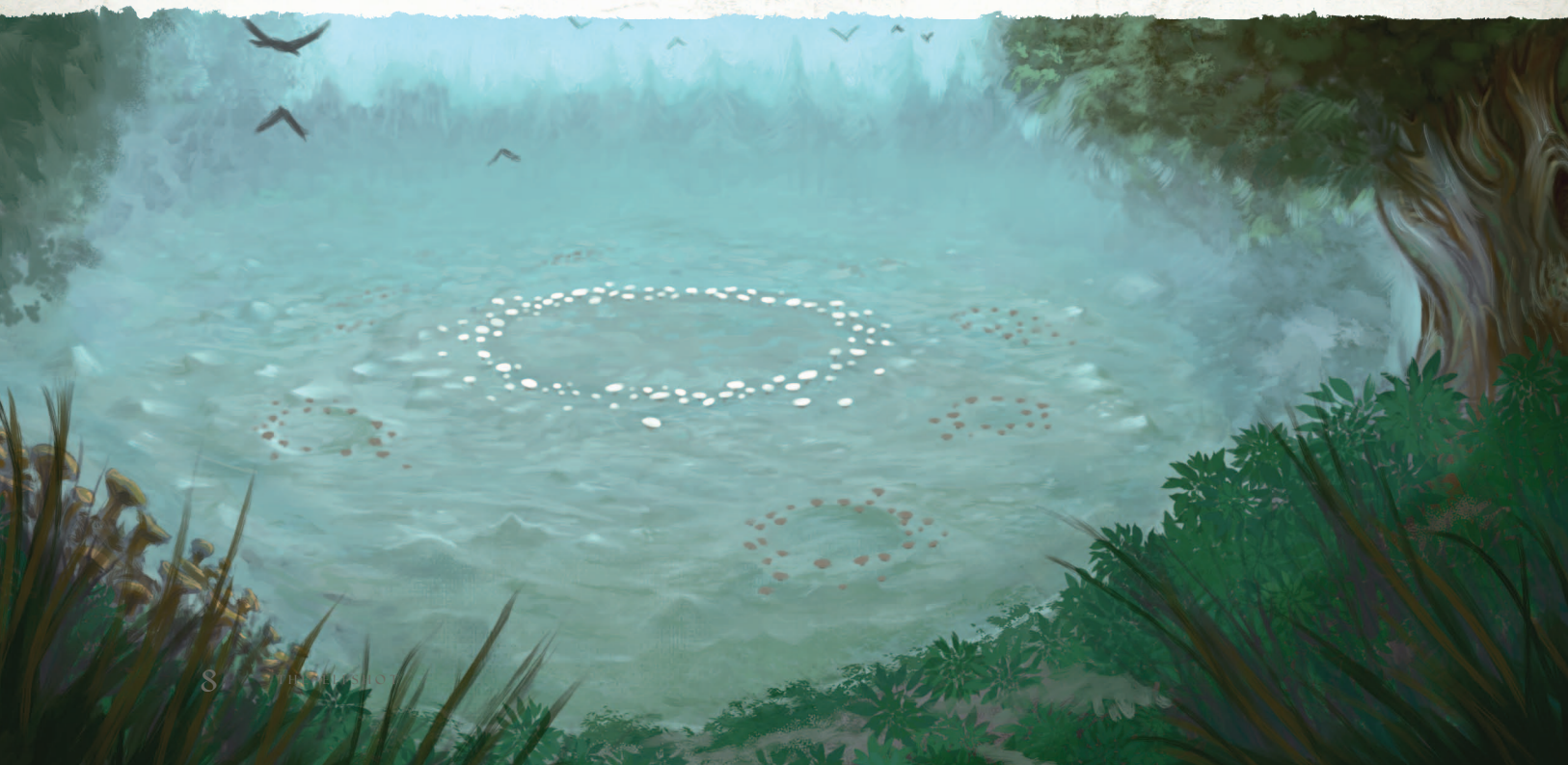
A Follower with the appropriate tags might advise the Hero about elf rings and ask them to be cautious. Simply being here is safe, but the ylfes will be upset if anyone damages the circles. Most of the rings have no effect, but if the Hero rests within the centre ring of white mushrooms and tries to focus their mind on the natural environment — a DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check — then their mind's eye grows dark and distant and it is as if they can hear singing — the voices of many people, of all ages, in the depths of the earth. Digging here will not reach them and will only make the ylfes angry.

The Hero or one of their Followers can make a DC 10 Intelligence (Legends) check to realise that the presence of these rings hints that Elf mounds might be nearby.

SLAUGHTERED GOAT

In the middle of the trail ahead is the bloody carcass of a goat. Its throat has been ripped out and the rest of its body torn open. Most of the choicest pieces of meat have already been taken and the entrails are about to spoil. Flies buzz around the carcass and a few ravens wait cautiously in the tree branches overhead.

The Hero can make a DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check to confirm that the goat was killed by a wild animal, almost certainly a wolf. Since it was only one wolf, it was probably an independent adolescent. It might have been spooked by another creature, or even the arrival of the Hero and crew, since the kill is not that old and still has plenty of meat on it. The Hero could choose to lie in wait for the wolf to return, but there's no particular benefit for doing so. Fooling the wolf's senses requires a DC 19 Dexterity (Stealth) check, since the wolf has exceptional hearing and sense of smell. If so, a young wolf does return to the site in 3d6 hours.



YOUNG WOLF

Medium beast

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Armour Class 12

Hit Points 9 (2d8)

Speed 40 ft.

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4

Senses passive Perception 13

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Defeatable. If the wolf takes damage it becomes defeated.

Keen Hearing and Smell. The wolf has advantage on any Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 10 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.



SPRING SOURCE

On one of the branches of the forest trail the Hero hears the sound of bubbling water. If it is very late in the day, they might also hear the croaking of frogs or the buzzing of insects. The stream is nearby. If the Hero succeeds at a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check they find the source of the stream. From a small collection of rocks a spring pours forth. If the Hero moves the rocks they can find the actual crack from which the water is coming. The spring indicates the presence of caves nearby, though, of course, the one that feeds the spring is filled with water. Others, however, might be dry and suitable for people to explore.

CROW COURT

The Hero comes across a curious sight, a collection of crows perched on several nearby trees whilst a single crow stands unsteadily on a small flat stone in the centre of the clearing. As long as the Hero does not get too close, they can observe as the perched crows croak out and then swoop down to peck at the lone crow, then fly away to give another crow the chance to attack. A Follower with an appropriate gift can inform the Hero that this is a natural process, or the Hero can make a DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check to learn the same thing.

Crows have excellent memories and are capable of abstract thinking. In most cases, the victim is actually a criminal; a thief who stole food from another crow or bullied younger crows. If the Hero has some way of communicating with the crows, a cautious approach with a greeting might get some details from them. If they accidentally scatter the birds, then the single crow will not flee (being too injured to do so). If the Hero speaks with them, they are full of angry defiance and denial.

THE TREE OF THE CROSS

On one of the side trails, the Hero discovers a tree that has a wooden cross on a leather strap nailed to the tree. Below this are some runes that spell out 'LUCUS'. There is a patch of ground between the strong roots that shows some signs of being disturbed, though it has been some time.



If the Hero decides to dig here, about four feet down they find a body. It is wrapped in a woollen cloak, holds a leather covered codex in which various psalms and proverbs are written in Latin by a thin and shaky hand.

There's a pouch nearby with almost one £ in mixed coinage, including some trade items like a silver cross on a fine chain, much like the wooden one found above, and a few pellets of bronze and iron. A DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Medicine) confirms that the man fell sick — there are no wound marks and the body was respectfully treated before being buried.

PAOLA

Paola and her children are dressed in simple linen clothing that have been dirtied and torn by scrambling in and out of the cave. The middle-aged woman watches the hero with a cautious but defiant stare. She has short, dirty-blonde hair and speaks with an unexpected eloquence, and a precise pronunciation. Her younger child clutches at her leg, while the older girl stays several steps back, her eyes darting to the cave opening on occasion.

Challenge. Paola has some idea of what happened to Giorsala and her people, but she is overly cautious with strangers. This requires a delicate push and pull with the frightened woman, represented by a DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check.

Advantage criteria. A Hero willing to be exceptionally patient with Paola, perhaps waiting until she has become comfortable with their presence or sharing a meal with her and the children before asking questions can earn advantage with their check.

Disadvantage criteria. A Hero that sharply starts asking questions without introductions earns disadvantage immediately.

Follower hook. If one (or more) of the Hero's Followers are Young or a noble animal then Paolina and Paolig are intrigued. If the children are allowed to play, then Paola herself becomes more relaxed. Count the result as one step better on the chart below.

Results

- **Success by 5 or more.** Paola's tale is haphazard, but she explains the legends of the ylfes in the mounds nearby ('even though the priest that came here last summer said that ylfes were evil sprites and shouldn't be heeded') and that she and the children came back to the hall from a day of berry-picking to find it all alone ('as if everyone had just got up and walked out, without tending to a thing, as if they were sleepwalking'). She explains that she grew afraid for herself and the children and decided to come here ('this is an old bear cave, but I hope the bear's long gone').

Though this might first seem ominous, the truth is both simpler and more sad. Lucus came to the community last summer, spreading the word of the Church and the forgiving God. While he found few adherents among Giorsala's folk, he died of some wasting disease. The locals, of course, diagnosed him as being elfshot. He expired in his sleep after declaring that he would be moving on in a few days. Bewildered and with no way to contact anyone who knew the ways of the new God, the folk tried to honour him as best as they could, keeping his belongings intact and putting his holy symbol up on the tree for all to see. Paola knows his story and can tell the Hero it, should they ask.

- **Success.** Paola's tale is even more fragmented and she is unlikely to mention the ylfes or the visiting priest unless pressed about them. She does mention that her dreams are sometimes troubled by the voices, almost seeming like it is other folks from the community calling out for help. She only expresses concern about the bear's location is pressed as well.
- **Failure.** Paola only tells the Hero that she and the children went berry-picking and came back to find the mead-hall and other buildings abandoned. They found this bear cave empty as well and have taken it as a home, since they have a feeling of being watched when in the settlement.
- **Failure by 5 or more.** Paola only makes some confusing mutterings about the whole community being 'elfshot' and tells the Hero not to wander near the mounds.

Further challenges. If the Hero leaves one or more Followers with Paola to keep her and the children safe then if the Hero returns here they will then learn the story as if they succeeded at the highest level. (Since Paola will then feel much safer and will be calmer.) If the Hero asks about sleepwalking, she admits that sometime Paolina does so, and when woken up, she told her mother she was 'dancing with the beautiful folk'. If all of the Hero's Followers remain here while the Hero explores the elf mounds then they might take it upon themselves to track down the bear and deal with it, see page 17.

Recruitment. Paolina and Paolig are too young to reliably contribute and Paola will not leave them alone, so she won't join with the Hero. Even if the crew or Followers volunteer to watch the children she won't separate from them.



THE SURVIVORS

Another one of the trails leads closer to the hills and a section where wind and rain have exposed some of the stone beneath the grass covered mounds. Towards the ground the Hero can see a semicircle of darkness, what looks like the entrance to a cave. From it comes a low growling sound, somewhat like a bear.

A Hero with passive Perception of 12 or better, or anyone who succeeds at a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check can tell that it is someone mimicking the sounds of a bear. Caution is best here, if the Hero dives in, they'll be swatted with a tree branch for 1d4 points of bludgeoning damage. Instead if they convince the people inside that they're here to help — A DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check — then it will be much easier to deal with them.

Whether in the cramped cave or outside of it, the Hero meets Paola and her two children, 8-year old daughter Paolina and 5-year old son Paolig. Their father, a trader, died last summer after returning from a trip with a wasting disease. The rest of the family survived, each has a bitter cough and rough voice, but they are not infectious.



PART FOUR: FINDING THE ELF MOUNDS

One of the trails from the forest emerges at the elf mounds. There are a half-dozen such hills, with dolmen, menhir and broken stones standing on most of them. Each hill rises about 20-40 feet above the surrounding terrain, with gentle slopes that can be easily climbed. They are covered with grass and wildflowers.

RONAN, THE WOULD-BE HERO

If the Hero met with Ronan while collecting rumours about Giorsala's hall, it's possible that he might appear here. If the Player is struggling with understanding the elf mounds or has gotten themselves considerably confused about what happened and who is to blame then Ronan might ask questions or restate the Hero's tale in order to point things in the right direction. However, if the Player is doing well, Ronan can remain collecting courage at the bottom of ale tankards in some other hall, far away. If Ronan is recruited, see his Follower card on page 30.



THE SINGLE MENHIR MOUND

At the top of this hill is a single standing stone, about ten feet high and three feet on a side. It is just about perfectly vertical. A DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds faint markings underneath the accumulated weathering; they consist of dots and lines in various configurations. A DC 15 Intelligence (Legends or Religion) check recognises them as constellations, perhaps signifying the solstices and equinoxes.

The rest of the mound is covered by soft, springy grass. There are no signs of any openings in the mound or any burials at all.



THE DOUBLE MENHIR MOUND

This mound has two standing stones on it, both of them about 9 feet tall and about 2 feet on each of their sides. They are spaced apart at just the right distance for the creators to have added another stone and turned the structure into a dolmen but there is no sign of a third stone. The two standing stones are smooth and do not have any runes or symbols carved into them. The mound seems to be unfinished; at the base on the south side there are the beginnings of a tunnel but it goes less than a dozen feet into the hill before coming to a dead end.



ONE MENHIR AND RUBBLE MOUND

This mound is not quite as high as the others and has more patches of bare ground than the others. There is a single standing stone here, surrounded by rubble — there's enough broken material that it's likely that the mound once held a complete dolmen. On the remaining upright stone there are runes. A Hero making a DC 15 Intelligence (Legends) check or a Follower with the appropriate gift can determine that they seem to be warning the ylfes away from this mound.

At the base of the mound, on the south side, is another large stone, surrounded by smaller stones fit into the hill. With a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check the Hero can roll the stone aside and reveal a tunnel going into the mound. It proceeds straight into the mound and has spaces dug out for corpses on either side of the tunnel. Each of the corpses is very old, and poorly preserved. There is little of value buried with them and it would be uncouth to steal from the dead in any case.



ONE DOLMEN AND RUBBLE MOUND

At the top of this mound is the only complete dolmen in the area. It is aligned north to south, and while at first glance, the rubble seems scattered around it, they are in fact set so that they mark the dolmen's shadow at important times of the day across the year. Dawn and dusk seem to be the important times to the people who built it.

Once again at the south end of the mound is another large capstone. If moved aside — another DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check — then there is another tunnel plunging into the hill. This one is much like the other one, except it is better braced and has side tunnels that contain extra bodies. It is clear that these are also very old and once a great number of people lived here.





A. This large capstone can be moved aside with a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.

B. This long tunnel extends all the way to the collapsed area (I) and has many branches. There are cavities dug into the dirt that hold bodies, each has some personal belongings but most are rotted to uselessness.

C. This round room close to the entrance was used to prepare the dead. There are rotted remains of burial shroud material here and a now dry depression where the dead were once ritually bathed before being laid to rest.

D. This short side tunnel seems to be one of the last ones dug and not all of the cavities have a body within them.

E. This side tunnel is fairly long and seems to have some of the oldest bodies, except for the main tunnel (B).

F. This short tunnel is dug out but has no cavities or bodies.

G. This U-shaped tunnel contains more bodies than any other tunnel. The Tomb Guardian (see below) usually stays around here (perhaps its family are nearby).

H. It seems like the people who built this barrow started digging this tunnel but gave up fairly soon.

I. This tunnel looks like it once continued deeper, but the roof and the wooden supports have collapsed. The dirt is too unstable to dig a way forward.

Unfortunately, this mound does have a designated protector, a Tomb Guardian. It stands man-high and, like many of the bodies within this mound, wears a variety of both bronze and iron wargear. It itself has a full battle helm, below which one can barely see white bones and pale yellowish glowing eyes.

A rotted wooden shield remains together, strapped to its bone arm, due to magic and an iron band at its edge. Its bronze hauberk is tarnished and its leggings are a colourless grey.

Long ago, a great warrior was enchanted to stand eternal vigil here, but over the long years less and less of the original warrior's understanding has remained with their bones and it now indiscriminately attacks any who come into the mound, not matter what.

TOMB GUARDIAN

Medium undead

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)

Armor Class 20 (Mail hauberk, battle helm, shield)

Hit Points 57 (6d8 + 30)

Speed 30 ft.

Saving Throws Con +7, Wis +4

Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

Damage Immunities poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft, passive Perception 11

Languages Those it knew in life

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Defeatable. If the tomb guardian is not on its own burial grounds and starts its turn with 28 or fewer hit points it becomes defeated. It will return to its burial grounds. If it reaches its burial grounds it loses the defeated condition but will remain on guard. If prevented from reaching its burial grounds it will attempt to negotiate, giving up weapons, armour or information in order to return to its duties at its burial grounds.

Earthen Power. If the tomb guardian is inside or in contact with its burial area, it recovers 1d10 hit points at the start of its turn.

Slow to Act. The tomb guardian has disadvantage on initiative rolls.

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the tomb guardian to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the tomb guardian drops to 1 hit point instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The tomb guardian makes two attacks with its sword and one attack with its shield bash.

Sword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage.

Shield Bash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft, one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Magical Feature: Fog. As an action, the tomb guardian creates a 20-foot-radius sphere of fog centred on a point within 120 feet of it. It lasts for up to an hour or until a wind of moderate or higher speed disperses it.

REACTIONS

Parry. The tomb guardian adds 2 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the bandit must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Burdens/Gifts: Magical Feature, Slow to Act



BROKEN STONES MOUND

This wide and flat-topped hill has only scattered and broken stones atop it. There is no pattern to the stones (though you still should allow the Hero or a Follower to make ability checks to determine this). At the base of the mound there are stones and no signs of digging. This mound was never disturbed by either humans or ylves.

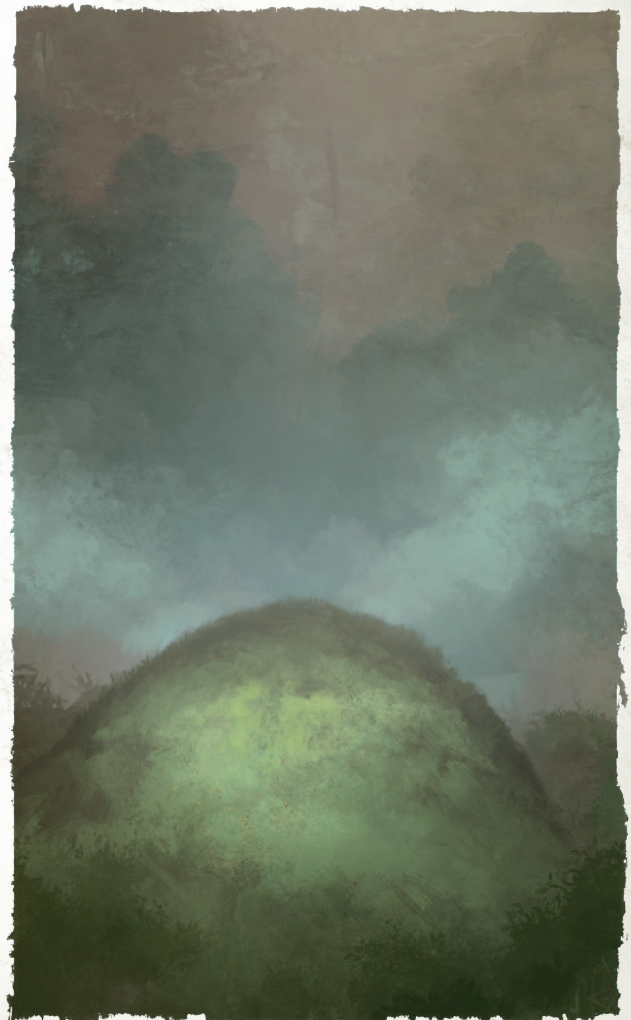


THE UNADORNED MOUND

This final hill is covered by the soft springy grass of the other hills and has nothing of note on its top at all. However, the first time the Hero climbs the mound, they notice a gentle breeze blowing and the pleasant smell of the grass. For a moment, it seems like early morning, as if the Hero just awoke from a restful night's sleep full of pleasant dreams. The breeze continues and the sun feels warm and enveloping on their shoulders as it looks down.

At the base of the hill is a standing stone on the north side, considerably larger than the others. It is set into the hill, and the grass grows all the way to its edge. The stone is covered with ancient ogham that neither the Hero nor any Follower can decipher, other than to call it 'Elf-Writing'. It is too large and too heavy to move — no effort, even by the strongest of bench-breakers, can make the stone roll or shift in place at all.

This is the secret hall of the ylves, but they do not quite inhabit the same world as mortal folk and thus their home is one of those 'impossible places' that can only be entered in by making use of dream magic.



OPTIONAL: BEAR HUNT

It is most likely that the Followers have either accompanied the Hero as they explored the elf mounds during the day, or they might have remained with Paola to keep her and her children safe at the bear cave. But now the Hero will be going somewhere they can't follow (into the dreamlands of the ylves).

If you want to have a scene with the Followers to contrast the Hero's dream exploration with the a physical challenge then you might choose to run these scenes. You will probably choose to intersperse these scenes between the Hero's attempt at learning from their dreams, perhaps at a ratio of two Hero scenes for each of the Follower scenes.

THE PRIME FOLLOWER

In order to efficiently run these scenes, have the Player choose one of their Followers to be their primary viewpoint character. Normally, of course, the Hero is the Player's viewpoint character. This Follower instead will be the one that the Player is directly in control of, instead. Note that even though the Player is controlling the Follower, all of the Followers (including the prime) use the Follower pool for inspiration.

SCENE ONE: GETTING THE FOLLOWERS INVOLVED

If the Followers stayed behind at the cave then this is easily accomplished. One night, a Follower (the chosen prime) is on watch late at night and hears some sniffing at the ground from outside the cave. A DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check allows them to hear other details, including the creature pawing at the ground and a low grumbling growl. If they rush outside, they can see and hear a large creature bounding away in the underbrush. Once a distance away, it turns and growls loudly — a long and low sound that promises its return to reclaim its cave.

— or —

The Followers are with the Hero, examining the elf mounds and just beginning to debate the idea of the Hero sleeping in or near them. Paolina runs up, nearly breathless and relates the above events, except that it was only her, her brother and her mother that were at the cave.

In the latter case, the Hero might assign the Followers with the task of searching out and destroying the bear or in the earlier case, the Followers might take it on themselves.

SCENE TWO: BEAR SIGN

In order to find the bear, the Followers will need to move into the deeper parts of the forest, away from the man-made paths that they've explored so far. As they search for the beast, have the best-suited Follower make a DC 13 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom

(Survival) check to recognise any spoor of the bear. On a success, the Followers have found some important sign of the creature:

BEAR SIGN

1D4	Discovery
1	A tree trunk, ripped asunder. The tree was infected with various insect larvae and the bear seems to made a meal out of them.
2	An area of soft ground, with a clear set of bear tracks. From the size and depth of the prints, the Followers know that they are following a large and powerful creature.
3	The rotted remains of a deer carcass. Close examination indicates that the animal likely died of exposure over the winter and then the carrion was consumed by the bear.
4	A patch of ground with blood stains and bits of fur and bone. Tracks indicate that the bear confronted a wolf pack and seems to have stolen their kill.

Once you use one of the discoveries, cross it off and use the closest remaining one if you roll the same number again.

Each check represents about half a day's worth of searching and travelling through the forest. Once the Followers succeed at the third check, they know the bear is very close and can set an ambush for it.

SCENE THREE: THE DEADLY ARTH

The Followers are within close range of the bear. As a massive cave bear borne of elder days, it won't be scared of any group of warriors and the only home to keep Paola and her children safe is to defeat it. The Followers can make a group DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check. If at least half of them succeed then the bear is surprised and cannot act in the first round.

ARTH

Huge beast, unaligned

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	6 (-2)	19 (+4)	3 (-4)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)

Armor Class 12 (natural armour)**Hit Points** 38 (8d12 + 32)**Speed** 40 ft., climb 20 ft.**Skills** Athletics +7, Perception +4, Survival +4**Senses** passive Perception 14**Languages** —**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

Defeatable. If the bear starts its turn with less than 19 hit points it will retreat from combat unless it is defending its young.

Keen Smell. The bear has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The bear makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d4 + 5) slashing damage.

REACTIONS

Desperate Attack. The bear spends inspiration and attacks a creature within reach with both its bite and claw attacks.

Burdens/Gifts: Cave Bear, Clumsy, Desperation Attack



PART FIVE: DREAMS OF THE DEEP

The next step to make forward progress may be non-intuitive, depending on what the Hero has learned. Here are some factors:

- The menhirs and dolmen of the mounds provide clues about transitional times of the year and the day. The cycle of night and day seems extremely important (the equinoxes — equal day and night — and the solstices — longest night and shortest day, longest day and shortest night).
- The Hero may have heard from Paola about the people ‘sleepwalking’ or her own disturbing dreams.
- The dead’s eternal rest within the barrows of the elf mounds are another hint about sleeping.

The Hero might make Intelligence (Legends) or Wisdom (Insight) checks to learn some of the above, or a Follower might make a similar roll, or just approach the Hero with a theory. Set the DCs from 10 to 15, depending on how much the Hero has already learned.

FINDING SLEEP

Sooner or later, the Hero will need to sleep. Depending on what they’ve learned they might understand that they will learn more, especially if they sleep near the mounds (especially the unadorned mound). Here are some places the Hero might choose to take their rest. If they sleep somewhere else, adapt one of these suggestions:

- If they sleep in the meadhall, the Hero dreams of visiting the mounds, but only have a chance to interact with a single figure before they wake. If they visit the mounds during the next day, there is no sign that they actually came to the mounds directly.
- If they sleep elsewhere in the village, the Hero dreams of voices crying out to them, but can remember no details.
- If they sleep near or in the elf ring (see The Toadstools, page 8) then the Hero has horrible dreams of being lost in the dark, searching for a way out that they never can find.
- If they sleep next to the priest’s grave, the Hero has a restful and dreamless sleep.
- If they sleep in Paola’s cave, the Hero has a hard time getting to sleep, but wakes up rested and with the feeling of having forgotten a very important dream.
- If they sleep next to any mound other than the unadorned mound, they have what seems to be a waking dream. The air is cool, the grass is damp with dew and they see the forms

of the stones upon each of the mounds. The Hero can visit the mound they slept on (or next to) and two other mounds before the land becomes covered in mist and they wake up, feeling strange but rested.

- If the Hero sleeps next to or on the unadorned mound, they have enough time to visit all of the mounds in a single night.

In every case, visiting the mounds and finding them as described below only happens in a dream state. During the day or night if the Hero is awake or accompanied by their Followers then the hills appear as described in the previous section. The ylves are willing to interact with the Hero, but only on their own terms.

THE SINGLE MENHIR MOUND

There is a single solitary standing figure here, with its back to the menhir. In the moonlight it seems grey as a stone, and does not seem to have any detailed features. A stylised hood hides most of the details.

THE JUDGE

The carven figure holds both of its palms face up, with its elbows parallel to its body, as if someone might hand it a heavy load. It is cool to the touch and seems to be of the same temperature as the menhir itself. The height is just about that of the Hero and it is impossible to see any details of its face inside its low-hanging hood. A Hero that reaches into the hood to feel its carven eyes will discover that there are no eye sockets or eyes, and its upper face is completely blank and smooth.

Challenge. The judge can answer yes or no questions but only answers three questions a night. Phrasing a question can be done by either the Player making the effort or the Hero can make a DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check to structure a more general question into an appropriate format. **Advantage criteria.** A Hero proficient in Legends can recall many stories of tricksters that bend the meaning of even simple-seeming questions and cause the Hero to be extra careful in phrasing the questions, giving advantage on each roll. **Disadvantage criteria.** None. **Follower hook.** A Learned Follower can suggest one question to the Hero, but only if they discuss their dreams with the Follower the next day and then return to this hill another night.

Results

- **Success by 5 or more.** The Hero quickly deduces the judge's system and is able to learn three things tonight.

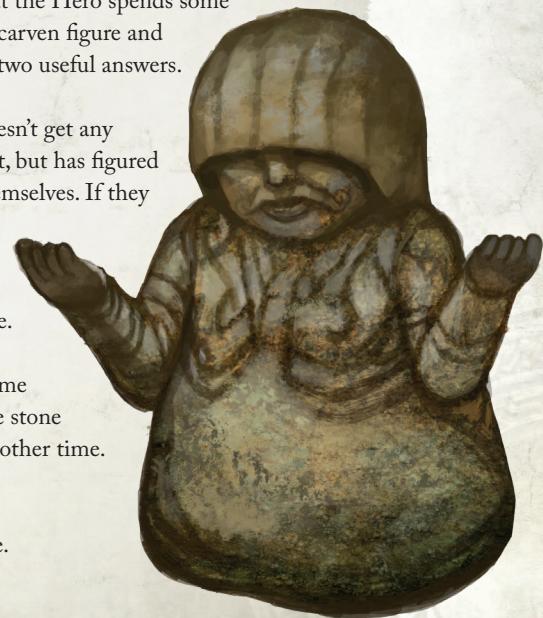
DESTROYING THE STONES

Some Heroes, used to accomplishing goals by physical action, might attempt to destroy one of the stones. This is actually very easy — the small figures can be picked up and then thrown down upon the ground or smashed against a stone. The larger carven rocks can be toppled with a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check, shattering when they fall. However, the figures are not 'real', instead they're a way that the ylves have chosen to interact with the Hero. A Hero that destroys a carving feels their dream state ending, and wakes up to find a bright and early morning. They can return to the mounds when they sleep again. However, if they continue to destroy the figures, the ylves will become frustrated and slowly reduce the number of mounds by which they communicate with the Hero. A Hero that loses contact with the ylves can still try a direct approach to saving the people, see *Against the Magic of the Elves* on page 24.

They might ask questions like “Do you know where the villagers are?” (**Yes**), “Are the villagers safe?” (**Yes**), “Am I dreaming?” (**Yes**), “Is this really happening?” (**No**), “Can I trust you?” (**Yes**), “Will you let the villagers go?” (**No**), “Are you afraid of something?” (**Yes**), “Is there a dangerous monster nearby?” (**No**) and so on. If the Player asks their own questions, remember that the ylves are frightened by the unfamiliar faith of the Church and its power, especially since it categorises ylves as the soulless servants of God's Enemy.

- **Success.** As above, but the Hero spends some time figuring out the carven figure and thus gets only one or two useful answers. See below.
- **Failure.** The Hero doesn't get any useful answers tonight, but has figured out the system for themselves. If they visit this hill on another night they are guaranteed to get the best result possible.
- **Failure by 5 or more.** The Hero might become frustrated by the mute stone and must try again another time.

Further challenges. None.
Recruitment. Not possible.



THE DOUBLE MENHIR MOUND

This hill has two figures on it, both as eyeless as the other stones. For these two, their lips are slightly parted and the Hero can feel a faint breeze swirling between the two figures.



THE WHISPERING ONES

If the Hero stands near to the two stones patiently and quietly, they feel the breeze and can almost hear words in the wind. It seems as if the two figures are talking to each other. If the Hero speaks or makes another large noise, the breeze dies down and it seems like everything is quiet for a little while. After a few moments of quiet pass, the 'conversation' returns.

Challenge. If the Hero is quiet and still, they can listen in to the whispers between the two figures. This requires a DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) or Intelligence (Investigation) check.

Advantage criteria. If the Hero has made no loud noises or other interruptions at all tonight, they have advantage on this check.

Disadvantage criteria. If the Hero openly wears symbols of the Church or has tried to join or interrupt the conversation, they have disadvantage.

Follower hook. The Followers are not present with the Hero and cannot affect the roll.

Results

- **Success by 5 or more.** While most of the conversation seems to be half-heard and nigh-incomprehensible gossip (*'mist on the flowers has upset the dream of a warm morning by preferring the company of cracking ice in winter'*) but the Hero learns that the people of Giorsala are being held asleep underground, in a shadow-dream of their regular lives. Some ylfes feel this is for the protection of both peoples.
- **Success.** The Hero listens carefully and learns that Giorsala's people are being held by the ylfes but does not learn any of the other details.
- **Failure.** While the Hero hears something of Giorsala and her people and might reasonably conclude that the ylfes have them, they learn nothing definitive.
- **Failure by 5 or more.** The Hero is distracted by the curious gossip and learns nothing of value from listening in to the conversation.

Further challenges. The Hero can return to this hill and listen in again. They receive advantage on their next roll since they are more used to the strange gossip that comprises most of the conversation.

Recruitment. Not possible.

ONE MENHIR AND RUBBLE MOUND

There is one large figure here, in a curious pose. The stylised figure rests upside down, appearing to stand on its head. The front of which appears worn or broken, obscuring the details of its face. It is almost as if it had been taken from somewhere else and placed

upside down here, but the careful design and balance of the figure argues against such a conclusion. There are a series of smaller carvings scattered around. Whenever the large figure speaks there is a murmur from the smaller ones, as if a polite round of applause at a performance.

THE LIAR

If the Hero looks carefully at the figure's face, it first appears to be smiling. However, a closer check — DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check — reveals that, properly orientated, the smile is much more of a sneer. When the Liar answers, it is as a whisper on the breeze, a low and gravelly voice.

Challenge. This figure always lies, but because it is consistent, it can be as useful as any of the others. The Hero can make a series of enquiries to determine this by making a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check, comparing the figure to other tales — a DC 12 Intelligence (Legends) check, or simply ask the stone questions directly (see below).

Advantage criteria. If the Hero is proficient in Deception, it is easier to suspect the (lack of) truth from this figure and the Hero receives advantage.

Disadvantage criteria. If the Hero has made a name for themselves as being an honest leader, it is less likely they will suspect the carving and thus they have disadvantage.

Follower hook. The Hero's Followers are not present in the dream-state.

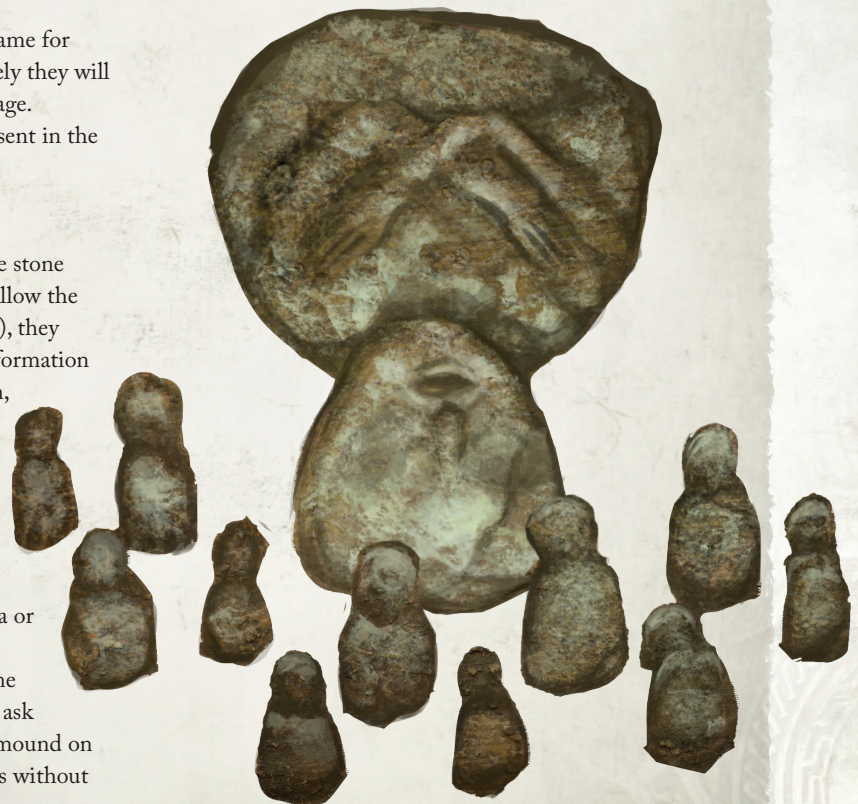
Results

- **Success by 5 or more.** The Hero suspects the stone of lying consistently and proves it quickly. Allow the Player to ask inverted questions (up to three), they can learn some of the following pieces of information (present here is the information in true form, to avoid confusion): 1) the ylfes believe they are in danger; 2) they also believe that Giorsala and her folk were in danger; 3) they took Giorsala and her folk in order to protect them; 4) a recent visitor brought the danger to both the ylfes and the people; 5) the ylfes have no desire to release Giorsala or her folk.
- **Success.** The Hero requires a bit of extra time to verify the Liar's reliability. The Player can ask one question tonight. If they visit the same mound on a different night they can ask three questions without needing to make another check.

- **Failure.** The Hero doesn't get any useful answers tonight, but is confident of the Liar's reliability and can return on another night.
- **Failure by 5 or more.** The Player can ask questions but is not certain of the truth of the answers. (Allow the Hero to ask questions above, but reverse the answers to make them untrue.)

Further challenges. The Liar will withstand being mocked only for a couple of nights and then become permanently silent. If, for some reason, the Hero remains trusting of the Liar's information, then it will continue to provide more information, wilder and more improbable each night.

Recruitment. Not possible.



ONE DOLMEN AND RUBBLE MOUND

In the dream-space, the top of this hill has three figures, each of them nearly identical to the stones on other hills, except that these

have linked arms and stand close together. They are surrounded by a semi-circle of smaller rocks that seem to serve as an audience for the larger ones.

THE CHORUS

These three linked figures provide commentary on the Hero and their chosen actions. Each of them strongly resemble the other carvings, but their mouths are open, as if in song.

Challenge. The stones know three different songs: one of exultant triumph for wisdom and discretion, one of terrible tragedy and poor choices, and a third of confusion and deep misunderstanding. If the chorus learns of the Hero's plans (by the Hero announcing them by speaking out loud or by pantomiming the plan within sight of the carvings) then they will likely respond with one of these three songs. For the Hero to learn this, they must make a DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) or Charisma (Performance) check.

Advantage criteria. If the Hero is skilled with a musical instrument, they are more sensitive to the effect of music upon a person's mood and have advantage figuring out the chorus.

Disadvantage criteria. None.

Follower hook. Although the Followers are not present, it's possible that a Well-traveled Follower might have told the Hero about a similar tradition of people who live on the coasts of the inner sea. If so, the Hero has advantage on the above check.

Results

- **Success by 5 or more.** The Hero is able to readily deduce the function of the chorus and how to 'ask' it questions (by proposing an action or pantomiming the same). Some sample proposals and responses: 'I will fight the ylves' (tragedy), 'I will rescue the people' (confusion), 'I will tell the people of the power of the ylves' (triumph), 'All folk should be free' (triumph), 'Giorsala's people are not free' (confusion and then tragedy), 'The church is the future of all folk' (tragedy), 'I can convince the people to keep the old ways' (triumph), 'you must all learn to live together' (confusion), 'release Giorsala's people' (confusion).
- **Success.** As above, but the Hero can only propose one or two actions before

the sun rises and the dream ends. If the Hero chooses to return to this mound then they automatically get the best result and can make more proposals.

- **Failure.** The Hero didn't get a chance to make any serious proposals tonight, but is confident of the chorus and can return another night, as if they had scored the best possible result.
- **Failure by 5 or more.** The Hero is uncertain of the purpose of the chorus. They can repeat the check if they visit this mound again, this time with advantage.

Further challenges. If they propose that Giorsala's people must go free, then one of the small figures approaches the Hero after the chorus is done. It tugs politely at a scabbard, boot, or trouser leg. "If you want to find the mortal folk, you must enter from the mushroom ring and make your way straight into the darkness," it says. The sky begins to grow lighter and the dreamworld begins to fade, so there is no time to ask other questions.

Recruitment. Not possible.



BROKEN STONES MOUND

On top of this hill are dozens of small figures, most no higher than one foot. Some of them resemble people, others seem to be carved to represent animals or curious hybrids of animals and

people. Despite these strange appearances, the Hero does not get a sense of the monstrous from the carvings. Instead, they seem whimsical and almost child-like.

THE WATCHERS

A low murmur emanates from the collection of stones and it is impossible to get all of them to be quiet or to focus on the Hero or any other speaker. Unusual events might cause most of them to focus but never all of them, even destroying one of the figures just sends gasps through the crowd and then the murmur continues until the Hero wakes up (see page 19).

Challenge. The watchers represent an almost direct line of communication with the ylfe. However, this means that the conversation can be more confusing (instead of less) because of the strange thoughts and priorities of ylfe minds. This requires a combination of critical thinking and poetic approaches — the Hero must make a DC 15 Intelligence (Performance) check.

Advantage criteria. A Hero that crouches, sits, or lays down on the hillside in order to be eye-to-eye with the watchers gains advantage on their check.

Disadvantage criteria. If the Hero has earned disadvantage at any other mound (this night or a previous one), they have disadvantage on this check as well.

Follower hook. The Hero's Followers are not here and cannot influence this roll.

- **Success by 5 or more.** The Hero is able to make a strong connection with the watchers and learn many things. Some questions they might get a response to: 'What went wrong in the village?' ('The silly mortals started to fear us.'), 'What happened to the people?' ('They are singing now and forever'), 'What are you scared of?' ('Stories becoming true.'). 'What stories that might come true?' ('Ones without us.'). 'What is your favourite colour?' (This causes a tremendous row among the rocks as does any other question about a preference. Several stones are smashed before the crowd calms down), 'Are you ylfe?' ('No, we are dreaming songs of ylfe minds'). Feel free to answer other questions with amusing non sequiturs or strange responses; the watchers are only direct about what they are actually worried about — the rejection of the ylfe by the mortals and the Church's resistance to the supernatural.

- **Success.** It takes a while for the Hero to get the watchers calm or to get coherent responses from them. They can only get a couple of questions answered before it is time to leave. However, the Hero can return another night and automatically get the best response out of them by trying again.
- **Failure.** The Hero cannot get the watchers to directly respond. They can determine that they are worried about something to do with the mortals but will need to try again.
- **Failure by 5 or more.** The Hero's attempts at asking questions tend to make the watchers fight amongst themselves. Many figures become broken and silent. If the Hero returns another night, they have advantage on this check, since many of the most contentious watchers are no longer present.

Further challenges. Once the Hero has visited the empty mound (see below), they might choose to visit here again, to ask one of the more helpful watchers about it. If the Hero succeeds at a DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check, they identify a helpful figure who tells them that they must sleep within the elf-ring and focus on the unadorned mound as they fall asleep. "From inside you can get out," says the little rock.

Recruitment. This is not possible.



THE UNADORNED MOUND

The final hill of the six had nothing on it during the day and it is similarly empty in the night-time dream space. That doesn't mean, however, that it isn't worth visiting. A Hero that visits the mound and listens for a little while can make a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to hear singing coming from within the hill. A DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check can allow the Hero to determine that the singers are sad, or at least melancholy.

If the Hero travels around the mound, listening at different places on top of the mound and even on its sides, they can determine that the sound is coming from within. It is hard to distinguish any actual words, it seems much more about a certain feeling — a blending of a sense of loss with a desperate effort to hang on, despite a time of changes.

If the Hero visits the north side of the mound, where the huge stone is found during the day, it is instead represented by a doorway, with a great white stone seal set inside a stone frame. The whole assembly takes up the space of the single massive stone and the Hero may well feel that they should be able to shift the seal-stone. However it does not budge.

The singing can only be heard in the night dreams. If the Hero calls out, there is no response or interruption of the song.

RIDDLES AND ANSWERS

Each time morning and wakefulness comes, the Hero will remember all of their explorations in the dream-time. But that is not to say that they surely will understand the events. Heroes should be encouraged to talk it out, either by chatting with Followers or returning to the old bear cave and talking to Paola and her children.

This last avenue will be surprisingly productive — Paolina has also visited the ylfes in her sleep and her innocent questions may help draw out information from the Hero. Questions that she may ask in order to help the Hero:

- Why were the ylfes upset with the people? (the answer is that Lucus's stories did not include the ylfes and when Paolig asked him about them, he told the children that the ylfes were dangerous and evil tricksters)
- Where did the people go? (Paolina already half-suspects that they are under the unadorned mound but wants to hear it from an adult. She might also mention that when she dances with the fair ones, she hears music, but it always seems to come from afar.)
- How do you get inside that mound? (When talk turns to the unadorned mound, either the Hero, Paola, or Paolina may ask this question, depending on who suspects what. Paolina has no clear memory of doing so — children more easily slip

between the worlds of dream and the waking world — but talk may also bring up the elf rings and how that might be a good place to try and connect with the ylfes.

CONCLUSION

Hopefully the Hero has spent at least a couple of nights investigating the elf mounds and learning (or at least more clearly suspecting) what is going on here. When the Hero has made up their mind that it is now time for action, they are ready for the next section.



PART SIX: VOICES UNDERGROUND

The Hero has learned that almost all of the community is being held underground, apparently by the ylfes. A Hero with little patience or who feels that they have no supernatural powers to apply to the situation at hand may desire a straightforward approach. Other Heroes might know that there can be great power in dreams and decide the dream within the dream is the way to go.

AGAINST THE MAGIC OF THE ELVES

Heroes who approach the unadorned mound at day or at night find that it is still blocked by that single great stone. If the Hero has no other options, they might choose to directly dig into the mound. This will work, but at a terrible cost.

The Hero makes a Strength (Athletics) check, with the result determining how successful and careful they are at exhuming the bodies of the villagers:

- With a **20 or higher**, the Hero digs carefully down to around the level of the huge stone and then carefully discovers one of the community member's bodies. Impossibly, the villager seems to be sleeping within their own little cocoon of dirt, but awakens sputtering when the bright sunlight hits their face and begins to gasp for air. The Hero has advantage on the next set of checks (see below).
- With a **15 to 19**, the Hero digs into the side of the mound, hitting a person's boot. Dragging them out of the hole causes it to collapse with the weight of another body and soon choking and gasping sounds come from within the hill. The Hero realises what must be done, but does not have much time as their direct approach has its limitations. The Hero makes the next set of checks as normal.
- With a **14 or lower**, the Hero is vigorous in their attempt to rescue the community members and this effort causes the first body they find to be badly hurt by a too eager

blow of the spade. The Hero can continue to dig, but has disadvantage on each check.

There are dozens of people contained within the mound. The Hero and Followers can dig them out, but at great danger to the sleepers. To track their efforts, have just the Hero make a Strength (Athletics) check, starting at DC 11 and going up by 1 for each rescue (each success by the Hero represents them and their Followers dragging 1-3 sleepers out of the mound and rousing them). Even on a success, the mound topples inwards and covers other sleepers in more dirt so that every victory also comes with a loss.

Each failure causes the Hero to gain a level of exhaustion. The Hero can stop whenever they wish or if they succeed against DC 30, which are the last of the community members to be found within the mound.

Giorsala herself is among the living, but she is deeply troubled by those who are missing or known to be dead. Her rewards to the Hero are miserly (see page 28).

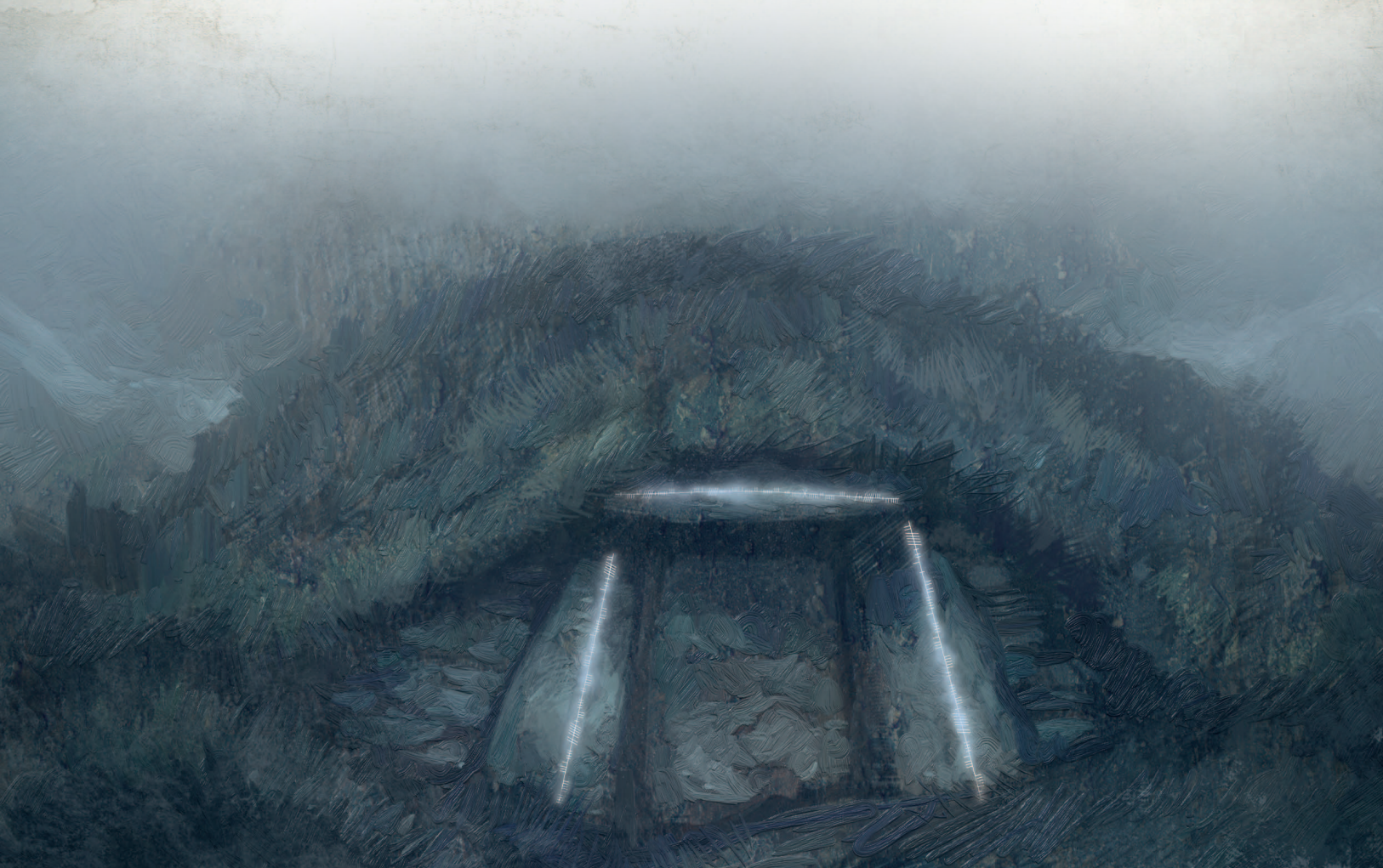
This is a rather crude solution to the trouble here, but the Hero has rescued the folk. Go ahead to “A Grateful People” but know that the ylfes, in their frustration, will torment the people here for years to come. While initially grateful, the people may come to blame the Hero for their troubles in time to come.

A DREAM OF DOORS

If the Hero has guessed that they will be most successful in the dream world, they must choose where to sleep. This essentially breaks down to three possibilities:

- Sleep within the elf ring: the Hero stumbles through the dark passageways of the ylfes, see “Wandering the Halls” on page 26.
- Sleep next to the mounds: the Hero must try to make their way inside the unadorned hill, see “Entering the Mound”, next.
- Sleep anywhere else. The Hero will not be able to enter the hill. See page 18 for an overview of the Hero’s likely dreams but they will also hear distant voices call out, gaining in intensity the more nights the Hero goes without reaching them. (You might also take pity on a stumped Player and have one of Paola’s children suggest the circle of toadstools as the most likely place to make a connection with the ylfes.)

Heroes that want confirmation of their ideas or a hint forward might be able to make a DC 15 Intelligence (Legends) check or confer with a Follower that has any suitable sort of gift in order to figure out that they will be best helped by using the toadstools or the mound itself.



ENTERING THE MOUND

The Hero awakens into the dream state once again, finding themselves in front of the stone set into the north side of the hill. The ‘elf writing’ flares to life under the bright moon, but the Hero still cannot read it (even if they know the secrets of Ogham writing).

If the Hero reaches out to the stone and tries to move it within the dream, it will not go inwards. But if they try to pull on it, it begins to move slightly. A Hero needs to succeed at a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to pull the door open. On a failure, the Hero must rest for some time, before getting one more chance, this time with advantage. If they fail again, they soon wake up, but can try again another night.

On a success, the door opens wide, revealing a pitch-black dark tunnel proceeding into the mound. In the dream-state, no effort at making or lighting a torch succeeds and the Hero must venture into the darkness. See the next section, “Wandering the Halls”.

WANDERING THE HALLS

If the Hero elects to sleep within the white ring of mushrooms, and concentrate upon the door to the unadorned mound, they fall asleep with the voices of the singers in their ears. They then ‘wake’ into the dream state, hearing the singing all around them and being positioned so that they have just pushed the door open from the inside.

If the Hero forced the door from outside, then they instead have just stepped into the ylfé mound and are staring into the pitch-black tunnel. They can just begin to make out the sounds of the song as they enter the mound. No matter which way they made their way into the mound, have the Hero make a DC 15 Wisdom

(Perception) check, or if their passive Perception is 15 or higher, they maybe just automatically know which hall to head down, in order to get closer to the pure singing tones of the ylfes. The song grows stronger as the Hero approaches and their head begins to be filled with images of both drastic beauty and stark danger — scenes of flower petals of perfect shape and alignment; brief flashes of lightning illuminating a tall cliff over a rock-strewn shore; bright eyes watching from the darkness; and the terror and thrill of the hunt for both predator and prey.

Eventually the Hero comes to a hall filled with a brilliant radiance. It takes their eyes some time to adjust, and eventually they see a figure, sitting comfortably on a raised dais. The living figure is neither old, nor young; neither male, nor female; neither smiling, nor frowning.

TRICKY WORDS

The Hero automatically senses that they are in the presence of a representative of the ylfes and that a judgement will be made. It looks up and directly at the Hero. “Who comes before us?” the creature asks and the voice seems to echo, as if a thousand such creatures all asked the same question at once.

If the Hero remembers their ylfé-lore (see page 24), they’ll know that the answer is not as easy as it might seem. If you need to judge the ylfé’s response to the Hero’s answer then make DC 15 Charisma check but any clever answer that doesn’t reveal the hero’s real name but still answers the ylfé’s question is acceptable.

The ylfé then asks the Hero to stay and celebrate their rescue of Giorsala and her people from the dangers of the outside world.



A PROMISE MADE

Hopefully the Hero has realised what the ylfe means by the 'rescue' of Giorsala and the others. It might help the Player organise their thoughts to list things out. (Also, this allows you to have the Hero make a DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check to fill in one of the blanks if the Player is missing a component listed below.)

- Ylfes are not creatures of reality but rather stories and dreams. Their ability to influence the real world is based on the strength of people's belief in them.
- When Lucus the priest came to visit last year (see page 9), the ylfes became afraid as his teachings rejected them and told the people to consider them evil tricksters.
- Afraid for their future, the ylfes killed Lucus with an elfshot, but could not kill the ideas he had introduced to the community. They decided to take the people into the mounds, giving them a more subtle elfshot. Now, they live in a forever darkness, neither awake, nor asleep and time does not properly pass here either, as they join the ylfes in a forever song.

The Hero must convince the ylfes that the humans should be allowed to return to the village and allowed to resume their normal lives. Here are some arguments that may be used, along with relevant ability checks and the ylfe's likely response to the argument.

Once the Hero has scored three successes then the ylfes have been convinced to let the people go.

- **Natural Freedom.** The Hero may argue that it is the right of all thinking individuals to order their own lives. This requires a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) or Charisma (Persuasion) check. If successful, the ylfe acknowledges that they enjoy their sovereignty.
- **Traditional Lifestyle.** The Hero might ask if some among the villagers honoured the old agreements, leaving milk or sweet-treats out for the ylfes. This is a DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) or Intelligence (Legends) check. If successful, the ylfe admits that many of Giorsala's folk once did this.
- **The Turning of the Years.** The Hero might argue that mortals have a different destiny than the ylfes. Children are supposed to grow up, learning from both hurts of the heart and bodily injuries to become adults and one day wise elders among their folk. Stuck underground and trapped within the elfsong, this will never happen. This requires a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion or Intelligence (Nature) check. If successful, the ylfe acknowledges that the ways of mortals are strange to them.
- **A Promise to Remember.** Finally, the Hero might promise the ylfes that they will attempt to convince the folk to remember and honour their neighbors the ylfe-folk. While

they can't promise obedience, they will try their best to convince Giorsala and their folk. Being forgotten (and thus being discarded) is truly what the ylfes fear, so this automatically succeeds and counts as two successes. The ylfe acknowledges that the Hero can only speak for themselves but thanks them for the effort.

If the Hero is successful, then the dream ends and the Hero awakens. Go to the next section, "Homeward Bound".

If the Hero is unsuccessful then the ylfe promises to consider their words and the dream comes to an end. The Hero can try again the next night (perhaps sleeping in a different location and/or talking to their Followers or the survivors to get advice on what arguments to make the next time). Or, if they become sufficiently frustrated, they might try to force their way into the mound during the day, see "Against the Magic of the Elves", page 24.



HOMEWARD BOUND

The Hero awakes from their dream in their original sleeping place, well rested despite however long they wandered the dark halls of the Elf-mound or argued with the ylfe. If near the mounds, they can already see Giorsala and her folk. They stand in the bright morning sun, rubbing their eyes and stretching their limbs. Otherwise, the Hero might wander back towards the Meadhall to see the people begin to filter in, still a bit bleary and confused to how much time has passed and why they found themselves at the elf-mounds in any case.

It is probably best for the Hero to find Giorsala and meet with her. A Follower with the Lore of Kings gift will recommend for the Hero to have some patience, so that she can receive them in the meadhall with her guards and advisors present. The Hero might want to spend the extra time returning to the bear cave and retrieving Paola and her children so that they can be welcomed home as well.

GIORSALA

A renowned warrior in her youth, Giorsala still keeps her grey hair shorn short so that it will fit into her war-helm. She also walks with a limp, another reminder of her adventures in years gone by. These days, she wears long robes of colourfully dyed wool and advises her people from the treasure-seat. She feels that she has won the respect of all and expects deference from visitors and her folk as well. She still sits high in the treasure-seat and her blue eyes are keen and judging. Despite this, she is not above sudden humour, usually a cutting but witty remark on a person's character.

Challenge. Like the rest of her people, Giorsala has no memory of the elfshot or her time singing under the elf mound. The Hero must first explain what happened and then, perhaps, convince her that instead of taking revenge on the ylfe they must honour and remember them instead. This is a DC 15 Intelligence (Legends) or DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

Advantage criteria. A Hero of the Old Ways has the advantage of having the vocabulary to explain the events of the recent past more easily (and more neutrally) than a devotee of the book. Old Ways Heroes have advantage.

Disadvantage criteria. If the Hero approaches Giorsala before she has returned to the meadhall and become settled, they have disadvantage due to the impromptu meeting.

Follower hook. As above, a Follower with the Lore of Kings can advise the Hero on when to hold the meeting. The presence of a Noble Animal in the Hero's retinue is a well-favoured sign for folks of the Old Ways and the Hero will get a result one step better than normal if such a beast is present for the meeting.

Results

- **Success by 5 or more.** Giorsala listens calmly to the story of her folk being ensorcelled by the ylfe, but clearly lays any blame at the feet of the dead traveller Lucus rather than the ylfe-folk. The Hero has

advantage on their check to convince Giorsala and her folk to remember and honour them (if they made such a promise to the ylfe).

- **Success.** Giorsala attends carefully to the Hero's story, at turns becoming upset at the ylfe, her own people, Lucus and perhaps even the Hero themselves. She will listen to the Hero's request regarding the ylfe if they make it (the Hero can request them to remember and honour the ylfe but as a normal roll).
- **Failure.** Giorsala is uncertain as to the likelihood of ylfe-magic but acknowledges that the Hero themselves seems not to have taken advantage of the situation. She will listen to further requests (if any) but only at disadvantage.
- **Failure by 5 or more.** Giorsala can see no evidence that this is ylfe-magic and not the workings of a tricky sorcerer who is now claiming to be a Hero. She commands the Hero and their Followers to leave immediately before she has them prosecuted for their evil magic and stealing the memories of her folk. There can be no further requests.

Further challenges. If the Hero had promised the ylfe that they would ask Giorsala and her folk to remember and honour the ylfe then they can make a DC 15 Intelligence (Legends) check to explain the ylfe's reliance on mortals and their beliefs, why they made the elfshot and to remember and honour the ylfe instead of fearing them or considering them demonic spirits.

Recruitment. Giorsala feels deeply responsible for her folk and won't abandon them for any reason.



PART SEVEN: A GRATEFUL PEOPLE

Once the Hero has explained events to Giorsala and she in turn has reassured her folk, the Hero and their Followers will be properly welcomed to the meadhall (as long as they weren't run off during the meeting, that is). A feast will be prepared and the folk might ask the Hero to repeat their story of the ylfe, perhaps with some exaggerations for story effect. Paola and her children are welcomed back to the hall as well.

Before the long night comes to an end, Giorsala will reward the Hero for their efforts. She gives them 10£ in treasures (or only 5£ if she and the others were drug out bodily from the elf mounds). A Hero that successfully convinced the folk to honour the ylfe also finds an unfamiliar golden amulet among their things:

Golden Amulet of the Elf Mounds. A Hero that wears this may spend inspiration and use their action to sing, directing their attention to a single creature. That creature must make a Wisdom saving throw with the DC equal to 10 plus the Hero's

Performance skill or fall unconscious. An unconscious creature can be awoken by another creature spending an action to awake them or by taking any amount of damage.

The Hero is welcome to stay here as long as they like, but there is no one here capable of fixing or improving the Hero's ship. The Hero might volunteer themselves or their Followers to help recapture domestic animals nearby or the folk might ask for their aid. Refusing to help garners ill will and the Hero will no longer be welcome at the common meal each night in the meadhall. Some folk might offer services to the Hero, in line with their capabilities, such as a seamstress offering to repair sails or nets.

Eventually the Whale Road calls again, and the Hero and their Followers leave to face danger somewhere else...



APPENDIX

In addition to the above monetary awards, characters can earn the following:

ACHIEVEMENTS

Each of the below marked sections are worth an Achievement award or XP if completed successfully. Consider a half-reward if the Hero requires more than one visit to fully explore the area or successfully meet with the ylfе representatives. At the conclusion of this adventure, the Hero should either have newly reached 5th level, or have substantial XP or awards to count towards 6th level.

PART TWO

An exploration Achievement award or 350 XP.

PART THREE

An exploration Achievement award or 350 XP.

If the Hero defeats the Young Wolf, count this as an enemy Achievement award or add 25 XP.

PART FOUR

An exploration Achievement award or 350 XP.

If the Hero fights and defeats the Tomb Guardian, this is an enemy Achievement award or 1100 XP.

PART FIVE

There are a number of meeting Achievement awards. Each is worth 350 XP (though see the note above). They are:

- Single Menhir
- Double Menhir
- One Menhir and Rubble
- One Dolmen and Rubble
- Broken Stones

PART SIX

There are two possible solutions here, one better than the other:

- Against the Magic of the Elves — a enemy Achievement award or 450 XP.
- A Promise Made — a Monster Achievement award or 1100 XP.

PART SEVEN

There are two possible Achievement awards or XP opportunities:

- The basic meeting with Giorsala — a meeting Achievement award or 350 XP.
- Asking Giorsala for the folk to honour the ylfes — a meeting Achievement award or 350 XP.

Note that you can compute partial rewards if the Hero has some measure of success without it being a complete victory.

FOLLOWERS

The only possible Follower is Ronan, if he makes an appearance in Part One and returns in Part Four.





NAME Ronan



SPENT



SLAIN



KILLED



RELEASED

BURDENS **Awkward.** This Follower has disadvantage on Charisma checks.

Envious. When you pay this Follower you must either pay them 20 shillings for each of their gifts or you must make a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check to retain them. On a failure, the Follower leaves the Hero.

Foolish. This Follower has disadvantage on Wisdom checks.

GIFTS **Engage.** When you roll initiative, each Follower with this gift can be assigned up to two opponents in a battle. Engaged opponents spend their turn fighting the Follower unless the Hero is within reach, in which case the opponent can attack the Hero as normal. On the third and subsequent rounds, the Follower must make a death saving throw at the end of the opponent's turn if they were the target of the opponent. At the end of a round, a Follower can disengage from the opponent, becoming spent. Another available Follower can then use this ability to engage that opponent.

Hardened. This Follower has advantage on death saving throws in combat.

Keen Sense (Sight). This Follower has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks involving that sense.

Multiple Strikes. When this Follower takes an attack action (for example when Weapon-bearer is activated), they make two attack rolls.

Two-handed Blow. When this Follower makes a Weapon-bearer (Axe or Spear) attack, they use a d8 instead of a d6 for damage.

Weapon-bearer (Spear). Activate all weapon-bearers to make attack rolls. This Follower does 4 (1d8) piercing damage on a hit.



WOODLAND



TRAIL

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