



HARPER'S TALE



SATURDAY MORNING SCENARIOS

Harper's Tale:

A Forest Adventure of Hope and Redemption



Saturday Morning Scenarios

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SPECIAL THANKS TO: Bill Benham, Dan Dillon, Will Jones, Adam Lee, Hannah Rose, Encounter Roleplay, Kobold Press, Petersen Games, and Wizards of the Coast. And our streamers: Charlie (@encounterRP), Hans (@HansCTweets), Lisa (@Dark58), and Greg (@grimjack21502)

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Harper's (e)Friend

Ian Leong, Logan Timmins, Adam Thomas, Gatan Voyer-Perrault, In Memory of Damian Smart, Eoin O'Connell, Shye Axelson, In memory of Gale Maynor, Sean Van Damme, Mitchell Espinosa, Vanessa Ly, Patrick & Joanne O'Keefe, In Honor of All of the Heroes, Gabrielle Bleu, Erik Talvola, Richard Green, Mark Anthony Cherico, Murder Publishing, Evan Stanley, Kusal Mudalige, Mathieu Lucas, my wife said I can't buy any DnD books until she heard Harper's tale, but still I can only get the \$15 one. -Reggie Tsai, Jim Stoner, in loving memory of missing family members-Elizabeth Crow, Loren Small, Amber Cartier-Page, Ashran Firebrand, Monika Himmelsbach, Ross Aitken, Dylan Dunlap, Candi & Chris Norwood, Brian Ray, Jared Dockery, In memory of my "kid" brother - Mike Bauer, In Memory of Bruce Cohen, For Tang Tru Khai - CáCái, Ching Lee, Drew, Stephanie McNamara, " W, A, T, & D. - in memory of Peg. in memory of Joel, in memory of Catherine, in memory of Beverly, in honor of Jean, in honor of Lilia, in honor of Diane, in honor of Opal, in honor of Vonnie, in honor of Martha, in honor of Kelly, Alyksandrei, Callum Timings, Jesse Rosen, Galen, Tatum & Mila Morell, In honor of the Cannons, Kristofer Lee, Ovr4tee, Jen Clements, Nate Hasiak, Spot, Hileak, Tan Juan Gee, Jonathan Brown, Ami, in honor of Donna Cullen, Ian Abbene, In memory of Finn Shet, in honor of Nancy Wieland, in honor of Louise O'Neill-Wieland, Etienne De Montigny, Grims, Cay and Justin Tressler, in honor of all out there, keep up the fight, In honor of families with LFS, Noah B, James "JR" Juden, The Lowry's, Ragnarokkr, Angie, Paul & Bryan Clinkingbeard, Jacob S Kellogg, CW, Tim Wagner, Anthony Havelka, In honor of Kate Hansen, Chris Scharf, Jonathan Alvear, Jim Ryan, Timothy Haritun, Bretemaches, Toodles, John M, Melani Weber, Jared Sage, Matt Z, Brent Tunnicliff, In honour of Gavin Barr, Nyessa, Chris Matosky, In honour of Cooper and Harper Uhle, Subcultures, Paul Keiter, Mike Welham, Stacey Cotham, John Cheraz, Olivier AL, William Moore, Nina Lawson-Moore, Olivia Moore, Henry Moore, Evan K. Yeung, "Lizzy""The Monster Hunter""Miller, Gabby ""The Indomitable"" Miller", Jerome Devie, Nicholas and Angela MacDonald-Wu, Michael Pixton, Christopher Brown, In Honor of Henry, Aimen Aberra, Seth Johnson, M Oughton, Matt Herrera, Esther "Gambi" Mangas Martan, A Friend, In memory of Michael Ederer, In Memory of Harrison, Gabriel Dagostin, Jessica O'Hair, Lady Shel, In honor of those who have gone before, Bryan Winter, Tim Lanning, Frank Turfler, Jr., Danny Wagenaar, Andrew Grapsas, Hendrikus Pretorius, In honor of all those who fight this faceless enemy. ~John W Burke, Markus Plate, To family who have gone befor, David Stanley, Tim Jordan, Dan Friel, Roane Beard, Anonymous, In memory of Janet Gisleson and Jane Yagley, Dennis Eastwood, Brian Tyrrell, Karen

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Harper's Friend

Samuel Richards, Micah Watt, Meirion Hopkins, Daniel Gregory, Ethen Meneley, John & Deb O'Brien, Michael Greszler, Michael Irby, Sunny, Joey and Peter Griffin-Hazlett, , TheEternalDM in behalf of- The Black Huntress 17, Lifestyle Marketplace, Dillan R Tanner, Jean Lorber, in honor of Ash Marquis, in honor of Rowan Marquis, Arc Chase, John Carney, Peter Dorney, Christian Lindke, Philip Hindley, Stanley Port, Val Steklac - In honor of James Metcalfe, Mx. Colleen Murphy, Morgan Gordon, Mariel Kricun, Dave, Henry Gibbons, Jera Jordan, Harper Schill, In honor of all the families impacted by childhood cancer, Erik Zeek, Alexander Dietrich Stoldt, in memory of Irmgard Stoldt, in honor of Claudia Stoldt, in honor of Julia Maller, Mitchell Pardue & Randy Pardue, Travis Price, Kyle T. Berthiaume, Sam Langoulant, Karmipsy, Tim Shannon, Bobby Jennings, Bryce and Alison Blake-Lobb, In memory of Edgar Schmidt Z, Stuart Tiffen, Lucas, Genny, & Maddie Satterly, Erin Ratelle, In memory of Maddy Gladen, The Karn Family, In loving memory of grandma Ebba, grandpa Niels Christian, all the kids from my daughter Zilles school who struggle with cancer, thoughts to their parents who struggle with them, from the Kirketerp-Helenius family, Christian Potter, Kim Baker, and Connor Potter, Matt H, Witchknight - in memory of Wade Bennett, In honor of Fred Stein, Paul Smith, Bradly Sudkamp, Nora Tretau, Nathaniel Blakley, Goblinskatie, Paul Gibbs, Brian Harboldt, In memory of Jamie Roppa Greene, Alec Seppelt, In memory of Red Tiger, Blaise Burns, Matt Hopper, In honor of Adrian Gutierrez, The Bigenho Family, Randy Smith, Ian & Mia Spredemann Plasencia, Maxwell "Big Red" Wiseman, In Memory of Margaret Ann Spicer love your kids Carl, Emma and Craig, Luethian, Justin Lafreniere, Sinan Turnacioglu in honor of the children and families facing the challenges of pediatric cancer, Smugglers Coffee, Michael Brassell, J.S., Paul Blank, Chris McGurr, In Honor of all those who fight, Jesse Metcalf, Platon, Dylan Verfuss, In honor of Harper Corley <3, In memory of Brooke Hester another hero in the battle against Childhood Cancer, Russel Hiatt, Jason Corfman, Chester Martini, Chris and Alysse Bride, In memory of Sue Curewitz Arthen, Matthias Natzli, Brett Ouimet, The Meanderers, Harper Lin Doherty, In honor of Harper Corley, Anders Sivertsson, Gevin, Michael Perry, Jake Austin, Andrew Clark - in memory of Susan Hern, Cami Grijalba , Susan Brownsberger - in honor of all those who face the challenges, Jason Conlon, In honor of Moira and Astrid Fortier, For Kitty and Genie, Paul Smith Greg, in memory of Lenore, Del Yakes, Callen Latz - in Honor of Harvey Dent Attorney at Paw, Steve Scott, D. Newell, Cybil Flora, Brian Fitts, Simon Hunter, Fa'Finn Pehlke, Nicolas Cassez, Aaron Blankenbeker, Henrik Bartels, Matt

McGown, Craig Griffis, Calum J. Weidner, Rod MacDonald, trevpb_101, Martin Blake, Jon Woodall, Richard Dracconos "The Great Riki Goulart", In honor of Harper Corley, Dominic Lopez, Aaron F Stanton, Evander and Phineas Taylor, Todd Miller, Ben & Alisha Westbrook, Philip W Rogers Jr, Lee Donovan, Pozoj, Andrew & Christie Marques, In Memory or Pirate Swayze, In memory of all those who fought cancer and lost, In honor of Harper Corley and all other children who must go through this, Jarrett Sacks, Jeff & Jess Villanueva, In memory of Judy Spredemann, The Chamberlain Family, Jay James, Logan "Maldo" Maldonado, Anon, Rob Jameson, Kathryn Cottam, Jesper Cockx, Bil White, In memory of Julius Miley Jr. & In honor of Harper Corley, Emma Hoskins, Brian Colin, In Memory of Shirley Parker, John E. Bailey - n honor of Rebecca Taylor, in honor of Caleb Winter, In honor of Harper Corley, Robert & Tiffany Salling-Grant, In honor of Harper Corley, Andrew O. Johnson, Amy, Seneca (this_chick25), Josh Simons, Robdog, The Bogner Family, Wendy and Jeroen van Leeuwen, Evan Bright, Emma Linton, Zac Searles, Aaron, Amber, Gwenyth, and Fiona, Thomas Labanick, MM, Gasiska, Brad H., Oubliette, Tim Wogmon, Joe & Baz Monti, Grant Martin, Leon C Glover III, Lou Anders, Brandi, Kelly A. Bryan, Victor E. Serrano, In honor of Harper Corley, in memory of John J Diffley, Patricia A Diffley, and Thomas Tafero, Arthur Petersen, Jay Griffiths

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In honor of F. Haight, in memory of W. Lindsa, in love and memory of Kevin Terrell, Scott McCollough, Cynthia Barnett Ben Messer, Andrew Ewers, The Greficz Family, Morgan and Rob Kostelnik, In memory of Michelle Hastings, Edelyn Parker-Frye, Patrick Pautler, JF Paradis, Mark W., Nikolai Yglesias, Wysteria and Wizzy, Nick Eliopulos, Will Brett, Michelle Alvarado, In honor of Cormac, Brock Heinz, James and Charles McGinnis, Vince vi, Barthsarafin, Lars Olesen, Rupert Harwood, in memory of Fred Pola, In honor of those who fight cancer every day and in memory of those who are no longer with us, Kyle Monson, Jamie Lin, Pedro Vargas, Pete, James T. King, Theo Thourson, Grady Wang, Liz Gnecco, Dodge Family, In memory of Dr Karin Margolius OAM a Ronald Solomons, to everyone that can find comfort through friendship, EncounterRoleplay, Evelinda & Jared Gonzales-Pryor, James Tipton, Teos Abadia, Becca and Matt Espinoza, The Carpenter Family, Arthur Petersen, In memory of Chris, In memory of Gary Mager, Terry Knox, Amelia Wenger, Andrea & Blair Driedger, Scott Paquette, Niki and Celina, In honor of Harper Corley, Jay Moore, Avery and Sydney Greco - in honor of Jimi, In memory of Vicktor Parker, In memory of Michael, Keith Jones, Josh Rose, Zack Loran Clark, Steve Eves, in honor of Rebekah Carter, in honor of Jessie Carter, William Fisher - In memory of Mary Anne Veach

One For You & One For Me

Jesse Aguilar, Eric Minor, Quentin Bracken, The Dame Family, Matt "Catapult" Wang, Mike Mears, Jonas Vilnius, Your friends - Craig, Jerry, Pat, Chris, Mikaela, and Todd, J, Chuck Fecteau, In honor of Harper Corley, Warren Deehring, Chris Duncan, The Lear Family, In honor of Sutton Parker, In honor of James T. Bean, T. Jeremy Slocum, In memory of Charlene Chung, CallyAnn Hamilton, Pete and Jack Fajman, Richard "Godfather" Downey, Dustin Warren, Bob Geis - You Too Can Cthulhu, Even Nelson, David Duncan, Qwit Nimblehands, The Hall

Family, "Joey Fergs - in honor of Kathi Stein, who win against Thyroid Cancer, In memory of Fiona, Bill and Valerie Watts, in Honor of my children Cullen and Kahlan Salke, The Botkins Clan in Maine, Peter Kryszinski, David and Becky Meese, HJ Gillham and Eleanor Gillham, Ellie Naiser, Geoff Gander, James Mummert, Ben Luber, Scott Underwood, Jeff Scifert, Daniel Robino, Anonymous, Tracy Gosell, Tyler Miller, The Rosenthal Family, Paul, Tony J, In memory of Carol Kristan, David Donoghue, Yara "Yariloira" Ohrt, Mark Greenberg, A.H. Helmi, David D., In honor of Harper Corley, in memory of John M Diffley, Patricia A Diffley, and Thomas Tafero, Juliet Youngren, The McNutt Family - in memory of Robin D. Lee, Ryan A. Bonatesta, In memory of Iris M. Hutchinson, Glenn Magas - In honor of all the real heroes out there: kids with cancer!, in memory of Doug Barden and Chris James, Louis-Andre Pelletier, Ben and Samuel Borders, Alan G, Jake Murdock, The Bates Family, Samantha Plate - in honor of Rebecca Plate, Ashley Turcotte, in honor of all kids fighting cancer and in memory of all those whose fights have ended, Nate Laleman

Online Game with a Designer

In honor of Lonnie, Matthew @ProudNerdery, in Honor of Henry Hance, Branton-Williams Family, Erik Saari - for the hero in all of us, William Archer & Graham Alexander Jacobsen - In honor of my children, Hunter Jones - In honor of Heidi, in honor of all the brave adventures who are still battling.

Dedicated Friends

ARM & CLP, Cy Nicose, in honor of Chaney Edwards, Joshua Renz, James Hatchett and Brenna Woslum, love & support from the Jones Family, Adam Weeden, Dave & WindeeFreireich, Shawn Kelly, in honor of Lilly, Aaron Wetiford, in memory of Tom Hodge, Leigh Candalino, Nick Landry - inhonor of Trinity Arya Landry, Winston N. Weaver, LoreleiRose, Matt Stanley, in memory of Marilyn Wallace, Greg Miles, Kate and Jordan Huggins - in Honor of Linda Huggins and InMemory of Tammy Brown Horner, David Druse, Papa Bob - inHonor of Harper Corley, John 'Wags' Wagner, In memory ofMadlynn Teiber, Javie Patag, for all the Fighters, Matt, Sara, & Nora Lee Young, Uncle Ken - for Harper, Jeremy Hochhalter, James Svoboda, Krista and Delane St. Cyr.

Kid's Best Friend

Devin VanDalinda, Benoit Sanscartier, Jacob Sulpice, Lisa Nunez - in Memory of Linda Behrens, in honor of Dianne Nunez, in honor of Laurie Newton, the Connelly family - in honor of Brianna Connelly and Harper Corley who inspire love, Joshua & Andrea Fortin - To the heroes lost and new ones found, Danial Marino, Jon Glover, Vivienne Finn, Matt Lillard

Harper's Heroes

Devin Hamilton, Victoria & Richard Lleras-McConnell, in honor of Harper Corley and all the other players - may your dice always roll high, Kennady Hash, Phillip Hash, Kaitlyn Van Dorn - in honor of all the amazing kids fighting cancer, John C. Byram - in memory of James Lee

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Thank You

From Friends of Kids

On behalf of everyone at Friends of Kids with Cancer, especially the families we serve, thank you to everyone who helped bring this remarkable project come to life. Harper and Matt have given Friends this ultimate gift by pouring their love and talent into this story to benefit the kids and families we serve for years to come. There is no greater complement to our organization than when a family gives back, especially in such a special way. Friends is a local organization providing Educational, Emotional and Recreational support to children with cancer and their families. *Harper's Tale* will create countless memories and smiles for these amazing kids and families. Thank you for this truly meaningful gift to help kids with cancer... be kids!

—Brandy Bimslager

Executive Director, Friends of Kids with Cancer

From Harper

Thank you for buying *Harper's Tale*! It was a lot of fun to make. My top three favorite things were the art, writing, and finally talking to all different types of writers and artist! My absolute favorite piece of art work is Sir Cheddar drawn by Kayla Cline. I loved writing the story of Rose and when she was a kid. The inspiration for Denton the bad tree guy in my part of the story was from me getting mad at my dad and drawing an evil looking tree. I named it Denton after my dad. Last but not least talking to Kienna during the live stream especially when we funded was super fun!

—Harper Corley, 2020

Matt's Note. Thank you so much to Joshua, the backer who commissioned Sir Cheddar. He was a hit not only with Harper, but with our writers and artists too!

From Matt

On February 2nd, 2019, my youngest daughter, Harper, was diagnosed with leukemia. The next few days were the hardest days of my life, and then we had a visitor. The diagnosis had sunk in, treatments started, and Kelly from Child Services came in to visit us. Friends of Kids with Cancer gave Harp a gift card to use however she wanted (Friends of Kids does this for every newly diagnosed child). Harp immediately perked up, and within 15 minutes she'd sent me out of the hospital to spend that money! Friends of Kids with Cancer gave us our First Good Day. Harp is in remission, doing great, and we wanted to give back some of what they gave us.

Enter Harper's Tale (named after its author not the faction by the way) is based on an outline she and I came up with while in the hospital. I'd seen videos of celebrities playing the game for kids in hospitals, thought it would be a great project for us to keep our minds busy, and that we could do the crowdfunding as a donation to Friends of Kids.

Fast forward over a year and here we are. The book is done and there aren't enough pages to thank everyone who helped us. If you pledged, commented, shared, liked, or spread the word you were part of our success, and we couldn't have done it without you. The TTRPG community came together to support *Harper's Tale*, and it was inspiring.

I can't articulate how grateful I am to everyone that shared their stories with me. I vividly remember reading through my emails, DMs, and messages every night and being brought to tears by someone else affected by cancer. I wasn't alone. Harp wasn't alone. They weren't alone. In sharing their stories with me, and sharing our story with others, we gain strength, we heal, and we grow.

Thank you again. We will remember this experience forever, and are better people for it.

—Matt Corley, 2020



Rose's Tale

By Harper Corley

Once upon a time there was a little girl named Rose. Rose loved the woods, wandering through the forest, looking for bugs, and just being outdoors. When Rose went to her grandma's house her grandma would let her wander the woods, play in the dirt, and do all the things that little kids do. Every time her grandma would call her inside for something Rose would tell Grandma all kinds of stories about all the magical, whimsical creatures that were her friends.

Rose played with Daisy, Tiger Lily, Bluebell, and Tulip almost every day, they were her best friends. They called themselves the Lilacs and they had purple mermaid hair! The Lilacs always hung out by the pond. They loved to splash around and play with the frogs. They were very adventurous and Rose's best friends. Rose and the Lilacs played with anyone else that came to the pond. They were all great friends.

One day Grandma called Rose into the house for dinner. Rose ran inside quickly. She sat down and started with her stories between bites of food. She wasn't sure what she liked more: her dinner of chicken pot pie, or sharing her adventures? She decided that doing both at the same time would be best. The story today was of saving the fairy's village from Denton the mean dryad.

There was one creature she talked about more than any other — Denton. He was a tree fairy, a dryad. At least half of Rose's stories included Denton. They were mean stories because he was a bad guy. Rose also liked talking about a group of fairies most of all.

Denton was trying to steal all the gold from the village, and the tiny fairies weren't strong enough to stop him. They were so very small. Even working together, they couldn't slow him down. They tied him up with their ropes, but they were too weak and he broke free! They tried everything, and nothing could stop him.

He walked through the village yelling, "Where is your gold! Tell me or I'll step on you!", but they refused to answer.

When they ran out of ideas, they had a fairy huddle to come up with something new.

"What if we yell and scream really loud? Then someone will come to help."

Their yelling was heard by a friendly troll, who rushed to find Rose. When Rose found out she spirited into action! Rose ran right up to Denton, looked up into his eyes, and said, "STOP!"



Rose's Tale

Denton didn't stop, and Rose got so mad she yelled even louder. And still, Denton carried on. Rose had never been so upset in her life. She went right up to him, kicked him behind the knees, and watched him crash down to the ground. He stood back up so fast he barely touched the ground, and then ran away.

"Hooray! Thank you, thank you, thank you!"

"No problem! It's my job to protect the forest," Rose said with a smile.

"Hooray! Rose, Knight of the Forest, Protector of the Small (and the Big when they really need it)."



Between bites of food Rose asked Grandma if she wanted to hear another story. This would be a nice one, she promised. "Of course sweetie," Grandma said.



On the day before Rose's 8th birthday the Lilacs and their friends were in a panic because they didn't know what to get Rose. She was their best friend and Knight of the Forest, Protector of the Small (and the Big when they really needed it). After another fairy huddle they decided, and couldn't wait to see Rose tomorrow.

On the morning of her birthday Rose entered the forest skipping, giggling, and singing to herself. When she entered the fairy village everyone shouted, "Happy Birthday!" Rose sat down and everyone rushed towards her to wish happy birthday and to have her best day ever.

They played lots of fun games like Mancala with pebbles. After the games they ate delicious forest berries

and desserts and had Black Forest cake. For Rose's present the fairies gave Rose pixie dust and when she had enough she could take it to the wishing well.

Rose waited and every year they gave her a little more pixie dust. Finally, when she was 13 she had enough to grant her wish. Rose closed her eyes and threw the pixie dust into the well. Suddenly magic was swirling around her like a mini tornado. When it stopped Rose looked AMAZING! The fairies had given Rose the most beautiful fairy hair ever, her hair matched theirs, and it looked STUNNING!



Welcome to Grove

An investigative adventure for 4 to 5 characters of 1st level
By Matt and Harper Corley



Adventure Synopsis

The village of Grove has been targeted by a foul creature as the testing ground for experimentations. The heroes find themselves unknowingly drawn into its plot when they stumble across the unnaturally quiet village. Grove is a small settlement—just a handful of homes and shops, really. Even so, there should be some activity: children playing, adults shopping, farmers working in the fields. There is none.

Heroes can explore homes, shops, and buildings of Grove to satisfy their curiosity. Their explorations are interrupted by animals, domestic and wild, behaving peculiarly, but they soon get back on track and are able to fill in the pieces of the tragedy. The old and young were affected first, but all fell prey to the Sleeping Sickness. All save two young women: Rose and Grace.

The sisters have gathered their friends and neighbors in one place to care for them, but they need help. The keen eyes and intellect of the heroes

Welcome to Grove

soon unravel what it is that makes the sisters so special, and the origin of the Sleeping Sickness, too. To make a bad situation worse, a quartet of good-for-nothings have been looting the abandoned town, stalking the women, and when they heroes start poking around, these ne'er-do-wells attack them! The brave adventurers fend off the villains and follow their trail to the town well, further confirming earlier suspicions.

Adventure Hooks

COMING HOME. The heroes are the sons and daughters of Grove. They have been away and come home to find their beloved town in shambles and their friends in dire straits.

A STOP ON THE WAY. The heroes are traveling to their destination and must go through an enormous primeval forest. They come across the town of Grove and are drawn into E'thor's plot.

ANSWERING A CALL. Rose and Grace get word out to a nearby city, asking for help. The heroes answer the call and are shocked by what they find.

Essence of Periwinkle

The gentlefolk of Grove are the subjects of a vile experiment. Their water supply is polluted with a compound that E'thor hopes will cure a magical disease affecting his loved ones. Any humanoid drinking from the polluted water supply must succeed a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or gain 2 levels of exhaustion and be poisoned. If the affected imbibes additional polluted water while poisoned, they automatically fail the save. When the target reaches 6 levels of exhaustion, they are in stasis with 1 hit point.

Grove

The town of Grove is small, apparently abandoned, and free for the characters to explore. The heroes' journey to Grove has been long but blessedly uneventful. Their backs and feet ache from the weeks of travel, and the signs of civilization are most welcome.

A. WELCOME TO GROVE

The forest opens up as the road continues westward. A smaller foot trail leads north. Following the smaller path leads to the river you've been hearing, and—through a break in the forest—a farm.

Heroes examining the trails notice the following on a successful Wisdom (Survival) check:

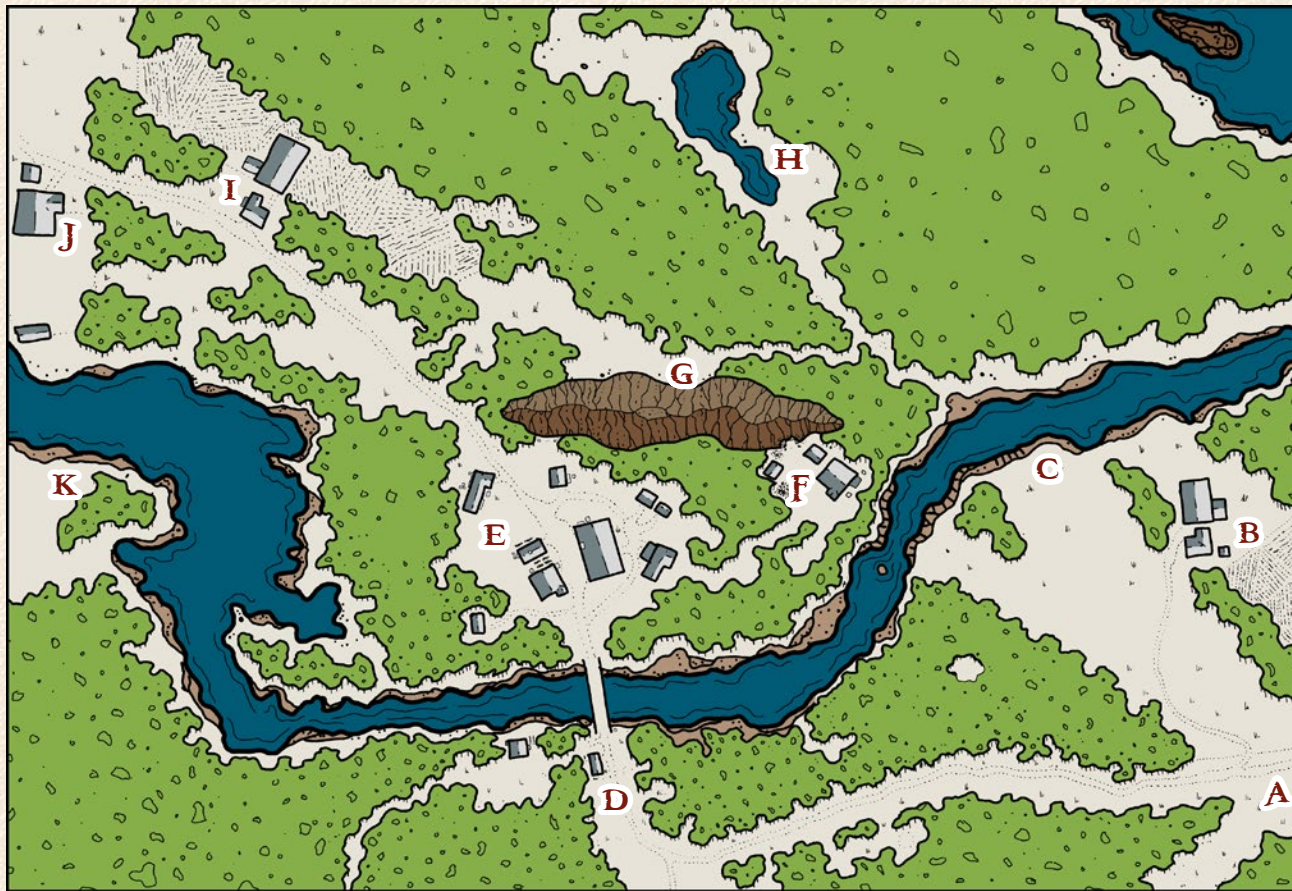
- **DC 12** – The trail leading north sees significantly less traffic than the road the characters traveled.
- **DC 15** – Weeds, grass, and other rapidly-growing plants have sprouted along the trail, showing that it's had little use in the previous two weeks.
- **DC 19** – With the exception of the northern trail, no travelers have used the paths for at least two weeks.

B. BOLKER FAMILY FARM

Nestled in a clearing between the forest and the river are a trio of buildings. A white-washed two-story home, the largest of the structures, is nearest to the river. A pair of swings hang lazily from a large oak in the front yard.

To the south is a stable, and behind it is a small, rickety building, likely an outhouse. There are several acres of tilled farmland beyond that.

Welcome to Grove



THE HOUSE. The first floor is divided into a large parlor and eat-in kitchen. The second floor is taken up by four bedrooms: two of the bedrooms have a pair of straw pallets in them, one bedroom has arrangements for three to sleep on the floor, and the final room—the largest—has a single large bed. The smaller bedrooms housed the family’s seven children: four boys and three girls, and the largest room is for Mama Linda and Papa Bob.

Handmade toys of wood and cloth are strewn about the house, and, even empty, a cheerfully chaotic energy suffuses the entire dwelling, making the current silence all the more unsettling.

TREASURE. Characters searching the home find enough food to feed five adults for three days and the **Bolker family journal**. The journal is Mama Linda’s record of the family’s lives in her small,

precise, pen. Heroes examining the journal learn the following with a successful Intelligence check:

- **DC 10** – The last entry in the journal is from one week ago.
- **DC 14** – The heroes learn that the children took ill over several days, starting almost two weeks ago, until they’d all fallen into a deep sleep from which their parents could not wake them.
- **DC 18** – The heroes learn the exact order in which the family became sick. The youngest and weakest first, later progressing to the parents. The first child affected was 12 days ago, and the final adult succumbed 5 days after that. Two days before the sleeping sickness (as it’s called in the journal) manifested, the animals around the farm began acting oddly. The journal does not go into additional details aside from noting the strangeness.

GM's Note: Characters stating that they are looking for specific pieces of information, such as timelines of when the family fell ill, automatically succeed at finding that information.

THE STABLE. There are four empty stalls in need of mucking.

DEVELOPMENT. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check reveals the tracks of the family's ponies leading to the town.

TREASURE. Bit, bridle, reins, and saddles for four ponies sit neatly between the stalls.

THE OUTHOUSE. It stinks like nothing the heroes have ever smelled before. Any character who gets close experiences watering eyes, and their stomachs churn from the noxious fumes. Any character who gets within 5 feet of the outhouse must make a DC 8 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for one round as they retch from the stench.

TREASURE. Characters braving the effluvia find a waterskin filled with 28 cp within the structure with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

THE FIELDS. The fields hold bountiful crops ready for harvesting. A scarecrow in brightly-colored rags, hanging lazily from a pole, stands as the lone guardian of the fields.

C. SLUDGEWATER

Swiftly flowing, murky, and with muddy banks, the Sludgewater river snakes throughout the forest from the mountains far to the west to its inevitable assimilation with Crystal Lake in the east. The river is swift, deep, and cold enough that crossing it can be a challenge, hence the bridge into town.

D. LORELEI'S BRIDGE

Around the bend, a bridge comes into view, before it a small wooden outbuilding, and immediately after that a tributary of the trail veers west.

A dirt path leads to a bridge of rough, irregular stones. It is wide enough for three to walk abreast, with knee high walls on each side. It curves gently to span the river.

Lorelei's Bridge is so named after a legend of a girl who waited there for hours for her father to return from a journey. It became a local tradition: typically, someone sits there from dawn to dusk waiting for partners, friends, and family to return from trips abroad.

DEVELOPMENT. Local heroes know the tradition and the significance of there being no one at the bridge.

There are symbols on the underside of the bridge. They are not magical, but are thought to protect the town and ensure its prosperity. A DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals the superstition behind the symbols and their mundane nature.

THE BOOTH. A bench, writing desk, and a battered journal. The journal has daily entries of everyone that has come to Grove, with special notes for those coming home. There are no entries within the last week. If the heroes are local and they look far enough back, they find their own names in the journal.

FISHERMAN'S HUT. The remains of a fisherman's hidey hole, complete with fishing tackle and pungent smell.

E. TOWN SQUARE

The town square has several buildings in a central location, but it is defined by three buildings: the townhall, the Boot and Slippers, and a stable. All are deserted.

E1: MILO BELLBOTTOM'S STORE. The front is open and has everything you would expect in a village general store. There is no stock that costs more than 1gp. The majority of the building is one large showroom. Rows of shelving and tables display the goods and wares, and a counter for conducting business runs the length of the back wall. Behind the counter is a door leading to Milo's personal quarters. If the characters search the building they find:

- A sack of 37 copper pieces in the till.
- Produce that has turned and is rotting. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check shows the food has been sitting out for about a week.
- The receipt ledger next to the till. The last entry is from seven days ago.
 - Heroes succeeding on a DC 14 Intelligence check note that the sales began to decline twelve days ago, until ceasing seven days ago. If the characters state they are searching for this information they have advantage on the check.

E2: BLACKSMITH. An anvil, bellows, and other tools of the trade are displayed prominently in the open-air workshop. Farming implements in various stages of completion line the walls. There are 1d4 kitchen knives (as daggers), and a pair of unfinished, matching (short) swords.

E3: ROOT CELLAR. Dark, cool, and slightly damp. The village's food supply is stored here.

E4: THE BOOT AND SLIPPER (TAVERN). The first floor is a large room with four scattered tables and a swinging door leading to the kitchen. A staircase

leads up to a hallway that overlooks the dinner room. Off the hallway are three rooms for boarders, and one room for the owners of the Boot and Slipper (a half-elf and half-orc couple). The rooms are unlocked.

- Characters entering the tavern find a ledger near the entryway. Within it are the names and check-in and check-out dates of the patrons of the Boot and Slipper. There have been no entries for a week. There is one name that has a check-in but not a check-out date: Chaz Grynsby, who checked in seven days ago.

E5: THE WELL. The well is built of smooth river rock, waist high, and large enough for a full-grown humanoid to crawl into. Regardless of the placement of the sun overhead, the bottom cannot be seen from above. There is a bucket, attached to a winch by a coiled length of rope, on the ground nearby. The ground surrounding the well is well-used, with a clear trail to the town's center. Heroes succeeding on a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check while examining the trail notice that a fresher set of tracks leads from the well to town.

E6: THE O'CONNOR HOME. The home has two stories, a wraparound porch, and white trim around the doors and windows. A pair of rocking chairs and small table sit to the left of the entryway positioned to watch passersby. The first floor is filled with a large common room that opens to a kitchen and is framed by staircases to the upper floor. The second floor has the home's two bedrooms, a linen closet, and privy. A nice, clean, feather-filled bed, a writing table, and a shelf with books on it fills out the larger bedroom. The smaller bedroom has a bed with an empty, unlocked chest at its foot.

- The journal in the master bedroom belongs to Orrin, the sole occupant of the home. Orrin spent her days on the porch watching the goings on of the town and being harmlessly nosy.
- Orrin's diary can be found in her bedroom and is filled with daily entries. Heroes taking time

to read the journal learn the following on a successful Intelligence check.

- DC 10 – The last entry is seven days ago, and there is a clear pattern of fewer folks walking past her porch starting twelve days ago.
- DC 15 – Orrin notes that she's not seen any of the town elders, nor the small children. This entry is dated ten days ago.
- DC 18 – A pair of strangers were seen two days before the last entry. Despite being in town, they were loaded down with rations and provisions.

GM's Note: Characters stating that they are looking for specific pieces of information, such as timelines of when folks fell ill or strange occurrences automatically succeed at finding that information.

E7: STABLES. There are six, mostly clean, stalls. The stalls smell of stale horse droppings and are otherwise completely empty.

E8: TOWNHALL. The twin doors open to a large room, filled with two rows of chairs that all face a podium that rests on a stage raised a few feet from the scuffed, wooden floors. It is eerily silent; motes of dust catch the light from the high windows, and any footsteps echo loudly off the bare walls. An attendance log rests on a table near the door, in a corner. A character succeeding on a DC 12 Intelligence check while reviewing the log realizes that the meeting coincides with every new moon, and that there should have been a meeting last week but there wasn't one.

E9: THE SQUARE. The ground of the square is less traveled than expected, and calls to mind abandoned villages of the frontier. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check (or a passive Perception 14), notes the convergence of at least a dozen trails combining into a single path that leads to area **1F**. Heroes succeeding the check by at least 4 also note drag marks.

F. THE CRANE'S HOME

Three buildings—built of roughly hewn, unpainted wood from the nearby forest—occupy the opening in the forest. The smaller two are nestled close to a monolithic rock rising well above their rooflines. The natural lines of the edifice are marred by a collapsed cave. A pile of rubble, full of weeds and grass, are the remnants of a long-abandoned effort to clear the rubble.

The Crane family farm is nestled against the rock and surrounding forest. The largest structure, notable for a set of oversized double doors, is the barn. The women's home is a short distance from the farm, and the root cellar is near the barn.

THE HOUSE. There are four rooms in the home: the front room, which occupies the bulk of the house and includes a sitting area, the kitchen, an indoor privy, and a bedroom the women share.

ROOT CELLAR. A simple root cellar. It contains their father's breastplate and shield, wrapped in oilcloth for protection.

BARN. The barn is little more than four leaning walls, a roof in obvious need of repair, and a pair of double doors barely hanging by their hinges.

THE ROCK. A collapsed mine shaft mars the otherwise pristine surface of the rock.

DEVELOPMENT. Proceed to Scene 2, Meeting Rose and Grace (*page 18*).

G. MOUNT CANDALINO

A monolith of dun rock rises, stark and unblemished, from the center of the town. Seams line the face of the stone as it rises above the nearby trees.

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Heroes getting close enough to examine the rock immediately notice two things: the stone is cool to the touch regardless of the temperature, and there is a pervasive smell of wet minerals despite the stone being dry.

DEVELOPMENT. “Mount” Candalino is 45 feet tall and can be climbed with a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check. A failure indicates no progress was made, and if failed by at least 5, they fall from the sheer surface.

H. WITCH'S WHIRL

Crystal clear, still waters fill the rocky depression, forming a sizeable, languidly swirling pool. The sides are sheer, save two spots on the north and east of the sinkhole. An offshoot of the pool lies to the south. An ancient sign says, “beware” in Common, Elvish, and Sylvan.

Cold radiates from the pool. There are no trails or signs to show it's used as a water source for the inhabitants of Grove or nearby wildlife. Any character with proficiency in the Survival skill immediately recognizes this as unnatural.

The pool has the reputation of being cursed, and the villagers will not under any circumstances drink, fish, or swim in its waters. Characters from the forest have heard these stories, otherwise they need to succeed a DC 13 Intelligence (History) check to recall the details. The exact nature of the pool's deadly frigidity is beyond the scope of this adventure, but other than its temperature, it is safe and pure.

DEVELOPMENT. The southern outlet's bottom, 50 feet below, can be seen, but the clarity of the water makes judging the depth impossible. Any character who ends their turn within the water must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or take 1 point of cold damage from the frigid waters. Creatures with resistance to cold damage automatically succeed this saving throw.

Characters venturing into the depths of the main pull feel the soft tug of underwater currents, and can resist as long as they stay within 30 feet of the surface. At 40 feet the current requires a successful DC 8 Strength saving throw to resist. The check is made at the end of each round and increases by 1 for each 15 feet deeper the character swims. The pool is hundreds of feet deep, and is for all intents and purposes bottomless.

I. HODGE FAMILY FARM

The path out of town leads you to an open-air produce stand, behind which sits near a home similar in style to the others you've encountered in the village. A haze of flies can be seen from a distance, and, closing in, the sickly-sweet smells of over-ripe fruit reach your nostrils. Fields of fruit and vegetables flank a single-story log home with low-pitched roofs.

The Hodges' produce stall has been abandoned and left to the animals and elements since they succumbed to the tainted water of the well. An elderly couple living on their own, Tom and Lilly were among the first to be affected.

The Hodges' log home was built decades ago from the very wood harvested to clear the land for the fields on either side of it. A simple lock, which can be opened with a successful DC 10 Dexterity (with thieves' tools) check is all that bars the characters from entering the home, which is a single expansive room. Colorful curtains and partitions have been placed strategically to give the impression of rooms, including a kitchen, sitting area, and sleeping quarters.

DEVELOPMENT. The fields are overgrown, but not so much that they show clear neglect. The produce stand is another matter altogether—here, fruits and veggies have been left to the elements. Characters succeeding on a DC 12 Wisdom (Nature) check realize that the fruit has been sitting out for nearly two weeks.

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TREASURE. A thorough search of the home takes 1d4 hours and with a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds a small sack of 17 cp, 13 sp, and 7 gp that was hidden in the hearth.

J. TANNER'S TAN TANNERY

The trail leads to a tannery, and further on is an outhouse; in the day's heat, it's hard to say what smells worse. The combination of the two is enough to bring tears to the eyes of all but the most hardened adventurer.

Animal skins, barrels, a lime pit, and other tools of the tanning trade are scattered throughout the room. There are glassless windows and vents throughout. There is a closed door in the northwest corner of the room that leads to a storage room. A handmade wooden sign proclaims the business to be "Tanner's Tan Tannery."

DEVELOPMENT. The storage room in the building is locked and can be opened with a successful DC 12 Dexterity (using thieves' tools) check. Alternatively, the rickety door can be forced open with a successful DC 10 Strength check. Characters checking the windows find they are all unlocked, and offer easy ingress to the structure.

TREASURE(s). An array of leather goods hangs on the walls and drying racks in varying stages of completion. Characters who search the tannery find: one suit of studded leather, three slings, and with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check, leatherworker's tools and a sack containing 38 cp and 12 sp.

K. THE EDDIES

A sharp bend in the river has created an expansive, slow-moving eddy in the Sludgewater. The river widens considerably, and the still, deep waters are held in by steep rocky banks. A wooden ramada looks out over

the river. The stale, pungent scent of fish permeates its floors removing any question of its purpose.

The villagers use the eddies for swimming, fishing, and other activities. There are no signs of recent activity, and the eerie quiet of the eddies is unsettling.



Investigating Grove

The order of the scenes below is left to the GM's discretion and the activities of the players. The GM is encouraged to insert *A Chance Encounter* and/or *Eyes are on You* as pacing allows to break up long periods of investigation.

Scene 1 - A Chance Encounter

This scene can occur at a time and place of the GM's choosing. Many animals have escaped their pens and roam the town. This encounter can be repeated as needed at the GM's discretion.

The GM can roll or choose from the following table to determine what the heroes find.

d8 Encounter

- 1 A frothing bull (uses **elk** stats) bellows and charges forward, horns down. Characters within 30 feet of the bull must succeed on a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or have disadvantage on their initiative roll from surprise.
- 2 Untended livestock have drawn a pack of 1d4 + 1 **wolves** from the forest. They are more interested in food than the characters, but will fight if cornered or provoked.
- 3 A gods' awful racket pierces the eerie quiet of the town. If they investigate, the characters see a brood of chickens being attacked by a mated pair of **blood hawks**. The hawks are in a frenzy and will attack any creature that gets within 30 feet of their prey.
- 4 A **giant boar** has freed a passel of swine from their pen, and is herding them towards the forest. If it's interfered with, it defends its new litter.
- 5 The characters see a **brown bear** feasting on the remains of an unidentifiable animal. It doesn't notice the characters unless provoked.
- 6 Three **ponies** have found a batch of sweet grass, and are feasting, blissfully unaware of their surrounds. They can be befriended with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check.
- 7 A murderous **swarm of ravens** make their presence known via their cacophonous caws and screeches. They remain at a distance, watching with disturbingly intelligent eyes. Do they attract other predators?
- 8 A character with passive Perception 18 notices a familiar shrub. An **awakened shrub** lives in Grove and entertains itself by watching the town folk.

Scene 2 - Meeting Rose and Grace

There is only a one in four chance that the women will notice the heroes as they approach due to their focus on tasks around the farm and caring for their neighbors. Parties that succeed on a group DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth) check evade notice by **Grace** (see *Appendix 1, page 22*) or **Rose** (see *Appendix 1, page 23*). The women, either alone or the pair, will be at one of the locations below, as determined by the GM, when dramatically appropriate. Whenever Rose is accompanied, her faithful dog **Apollo** (see *Appendix 1, page 24*) is by her side.

THE HOUSE.

The front door opens with the barest touch, opening to a long hallway. There is a room a few paces down on the left with chairs and a hearth. Further down on the right are two closed doors. The hallway ends at the large kitchen.

Entering the kitchen, the characters see a wood-burning stove, a wash basin, a table, and chairs. Two plates, three cups, and several eating utensils are carefully placed on a drying rack.

Characters with a passive Perception of 14, or those asking about the cups, notice that two are upside down, and one is not. They are all handmade, each is different, and none have distinguishing marks. The cup that is not upside down is robin's egg blue. The blue cup is an everfull cup (see *Appendix 1, page 24*).

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ROOT CELLAR. A locked and heavily reinforced door bars passage to an underground cellar. It can be opened with a successful DC 10 Dexterity (with thieves' tools) check or a successful DC 11 Strength check. The cellar contains the Cranes' food stores and their father's breastplate and shield wrapped within an oilcloth.

BARN.

Loose doors on rusty hinges open, revealing the expanse of the barn. The faint smell of cut grass reaches you, and streaks of light shining through the gaps and knot holes in the wall illuminate floating dust.

Three rows of six pallets are neatly arranged, catching the light when possible. Upon the pallets are nine adults and seven children sleeping peacefully, their soft snores barely perceptible in the quiet.

If Rose or Grace were found in the barn, they are leaning over one of their neighbors, fussing with a blanket or administering a thin broth to the sleeping figure. She is completely focused on her patient. Her loving care and attentiveness are clear to any observing her.

THE ROCK. Characters examining the rubble of the cave soon realize that there is no easy way to move the rubble or explore the tunnels. A dwarf, a character proficient with mason's tools, or an adventurer with a suitable background knows that to clear the collapsed mine would take an enormous investment in time and resources. A character succeeding on a DC 22 Wisdom (Perception) check at the entrance of the sealed mine notices the faintest of breezes.



Meeting Grace and Rose

When the characters encounter the women, they are *indifferent* to the party, and can be swayed to *friendly* via roleplaying or appropriate ability checks. The girls want and need help. Heroes offering sympathy, a helping hand, or who are empathetic to their plight have advantage on their Charisma checks. Attempts to threaten them are not well received and the canny women have advantage on opposed checks to resist Charisma (Intimidation) checks.

Grace and Rose realized that something was wrong 10 days ago. Their small community grew quiet and the sounds of the Bolker children, always underfoot, were notably absent. Within days, everyone save the sisters, had been affected by the Sleep. Grace suggested bringing everyone to their barn to care for, and that's exactly what they've done.

The women have been caring for the villagers as best they can—feeding them a thin broth, keeping them warm, and protecting the sleepers from the elements. When the sisters become *friendly*, they are eager to discuss the situation in Grove, and have the following information which they share freely. The ladies take turns answering questions, sometimes finishing the other's sentences and speaking with the soft drawl common to folk from the area.

Welcome to Grove

THE CAVE. "Fell in on itself when we were little. Papa and the others tried to unbury it, but couldn't." The girls admit to not knowing much about it as it was well before their time.

CHAZ GRYNBY. "Who?" The girls have never heard of anyone by that name.

THE CUP. "A gift from our aunt. She was an adventurer, like y'all. Not good for much, other than saving us trips to the well." The girls are so accustomed to the cup, they take it for granted and do not appreciate it for the wonder it is.

WHY AREN'T YOU AFFECTED? "I don't rightly know." The ladies haven't had time to investigate the town or think too much on what's going on. They've been busy gathering and taking care of the townsfolk.

THE WELL. "Everyone uses that well." They go on to explain that for as long as they can remember everyone avoids Witch's Whirl because it's haunted and the Sludgewater is only used for fishing, watering animals, and irrigation. The well has never run dry, and the water is also cool and crisp.

WITCH'S WHIRL. "So cold it'll take ya toes off!" The other sister immediately adds, "They say it's bottomless," in a hushed whisper. They find the place unsettling, and have not been there in years. Their only visit was on a dare as children, and the visit unsettled them deeply.

THE SLUDGEWATER. The river winds throughout the forest with villages, outposts, and other settlements near its shores. Silty water and muddy bottom make its water murky on even the clearest day. This is part of the reason the folks of Grove do not drink from it.

LOOSE ANIMALS. "I've seen 'em all over. Stayin' close, but acting real odd sometimes. Somethin's gotten into 'em. Only one acting sensible is our Apollo."

STRANGERS. "None for a while. They come sometimes, but never stay long." If the characters mention the entry from Orrin's journal (area E6) or the fresh tracks leading away from the well, they trigger a comment from Rose, "Grace doesn't believe me, but I think someone was watching us last night. Apollo was really jumpy." The girls argue

briefly, as siblings often do. A character succeeding on a DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check notice that Grace is disturbed by these comments.

THE SLEEP. "They just sleep. Can't wake them no matter what. We make 'em comfortable, and feed 'em soup to keep their strength up." The sisters have placed their neighbors in the only room large enough for all of them, the barn, and care for them day and night. Heroes examining the bodies learn the following on a Wisdom (Medicine) check; if the character has proficiency in the Nature skill and/or a Poison Kit, she has advantage on the check.

- **DC 10** — The victims are living and under no clear distress.
- **DC 15** — They respond subtly to light, and they drink in small quantities.
- **DC 20** — The effects are eerily similar to poisoning by periwinkle, though more intense.

Scene 3 – Investigations

Rose and Grace are not willing to leave their charges to assist. When they have filled the heroes in on the situation to the best of their ability, they suggest investigating the town further. If the characters are not sure of their next steps, or if the GM wishes to move the story along quickly, proceed to the next scene.

Scene 4 – Eyes Are On You

The unnatural quiet of the village is broken by the snap of a nearby twig. The hairs on your neck stand and your heart races in anticipation.

This encounter can happen at the time and location of the GM's choosing to maintain pacing and tension.

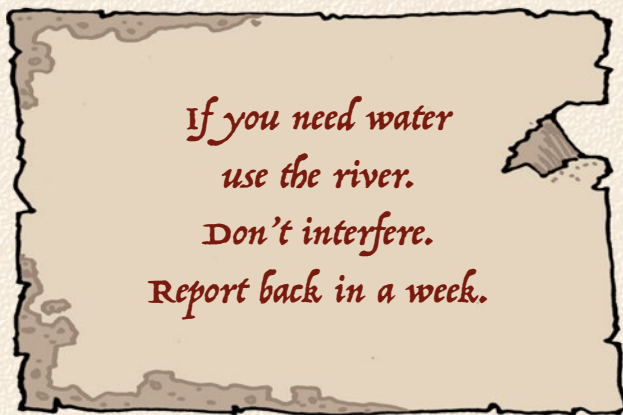
DEVELOPMENT. The characters are ambushed by a scouting party sent from the depths of the well to

Welcome to Grove

observe the effects of the treatment. They have taken it upon themselves to take advantage of the town's predicament and make some easy coin.

CREATURE(s). Tomi, Kimi, and Didi (**commoners**) are led by Chaz (**bandit**) and follow his instructions. They are cowards, and any time one is defeated, the remaining members of the band must make a DC 10 Wisdom save or retreat as quickly as possible to the well.

TREASURE. Tomi, Kimi, and Didi have 2d10 sp each, Chaz has 2d4 gp and an unsigned note:



Scene 5 - A Temporary Fix

The simplest solution is for the villagers to stop using the well's contaminated water. Witch's Whirl, the Eddies, or any inlet to the Sludgewater can be used. No villager willingly or knowingly drinks the water from Witch's Whirl. If the Cranes believe that the well is contaminated, they grudgingly agree to use the Sludgewater for water.

DEVELOPMENT. Convincing the sisters that the water is the source of the sickness can be accomplished via roleplaying or appropriate group skill checks with a DC 12. Heroes that mention that the sisters have not drunk from the well and are the only ones not effected have advantage on the check. If the characters present the note from the bandits as proof, they succeed without a check.

If the heroes investigate the well without convincing Grace and Rose, they continue their tasks

and care for their friends. The villagers recover on their own a week after the source of contamination has been removed, or in three weeks when it has run its course.

The Well

*Welcome to Grove ends when the heroes, through careful planning or the pursuit of their cowardly enemies, descend into the depths of the well. Their adventure continues in *Below the Grove*.*

Conclusion

The heroes have learned that the machinations of someone, or something, bigger than the bandits is behind the Sleeping Sickness. The only hope the town has of returning to its former prosperity is for the characters to descend through the depths of the well while Grace and Rose remain behind to care for the villagers. What challenges and beasts lie under the town? Can the brave heroes remove the source of the sickness and return Grove to its former way of life?

At the end of this adventure, the heroes gain enough experience to progress to level 2.

Appendix 1

Crane, Grace



“There are many paths. Many ways to get lost. Sometimes you just keep going until you find a new way.”

Quick to anger, never at a loss for words, and with an opinion on everything, Grace makes a strong impression on everyone she meets. Whether or not that impression is good is a different matter entirely. Despite her brash nature, Grace has a heart of gold, a compassionate streak a mile wide, and is always the first to help a friend in need.

Grace is a young woman with sharp features, a lithe frame, and is just beginning to outgrow the awkwardness of her youth. Her preferred method of dress is a loose tunic, tight breeches, and with her mane of strawberry blonde hair pulled into a loose ponytail or bun.

Medium humanoid (human), neutral good

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 39 (6d8 + 12)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 11 (+0) | 14 (+2) | 15 (+3) | 13 (+1) | 10 (+0) | 16 (+3) |

Saving Throws Cha +5, Con +5

Skills Arcana +3, Deception +5, Medicine +2, Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Sister's Bond. Grace has advantage on ability checks when she is within 5 feet of her sister, Rose, as long as Rose isn't incapacitated.

Draw Strength. Grace regains one 2nd-level or two 1st-level spell slots. She regains her use of this ability after completing a long rest.

Spellcasting. Grace is a 3rd-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). She knows the following spells:

- Cantrips (at will): *mending, vicious mockery*
- 1st level (4 slots): *charm person, healing word, speak with animals, unseen servant*
- 2nd level (2 slots): *calm emotions, hold person*

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage

Crane, Rose



"I won't stop, give up, or quit fighting...ever."

Where her sister is boisterous, Rose is quiet, contemplative, and always smiling as if she's just remembered a joke. Rose is content to spend her time with her animals and sketchpad or practicing her marksmanship. A fast friend to most, Rose's ire is a terrible thing to witness indeed, and her temper has gotten her into more than a few scraps.

Rose is most easily identified by her topknot. Her hair, a panoply of blues, greens, and reds, is

a gift from a fey she encountered as a child that, to her delight, has never faded. While she has the stature of her sister, her muscles are more toned and conditioned from long hours of hiking, hunting, and sport. Though she rarely wears it, Rose has her father's breastplate and shield hidden away in the root cellar.

Medium humanoid (human), neutral good

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 39 (6d8+12)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 16 (+3) | 14 (+2) | 14 (+2) | 14 (+2) | 11 (+0) | 13 (+1) |

Saving Throws Con +4, Str +3

Skills Athletics +3, Animal Handling +2, Insight +2, Nature +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Sister's Bond. Rose has advantage on ability checks when she is within 5 feet of her sister, Grace, as long as Grace isn't incapacitated.

Deadeye. Rose has a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls with her longbow.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Rose makes two attacks with her longbow.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) piercing damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, ranged 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8+5) piercing damage.

Welcome to Grove

Apollo



Protective growling.

Apollo is Rose Crane's dog. He's loyal and true, and he never leaves her side. He's concerned for her wellbeing now that she's caring for all of her neighbors, and it pains him that he can do so little to help. Not even Rose knows how intelligent Apollo is, believing he's just unusually clever for a dog. Apollo is aware that he's smarter than other dogs, but he has no idea that he was a gift from the same fey who magically re-colored Rose's hair, bestowed on her to provide a truly exceptional guardian for young Rose whatever scrapes she got into.

Apollo is a big, smooth-coated sheepdog with wise brown eyes and a tail that curls into a question-mark shape when he's alert. He's extremely proud to wear the blue bandana Rose usually ties around his neck.

Medium beast (dog), lawful good

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 19 (3d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| 13 (+1) | 14 (+2) | 15 (+2) | 8 (-1) | 13 (+1) | 13 (+1) |

Skills Perception +3

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages Understands Common, but cannot speak

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

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

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6+1) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 11 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

REACTIONS

Protect. When an attack hits a creature within 5 feet of Apollo, Apollo can use his reaction to push them out of the way, adding +2 to their armor class against that attack.

Augusta Goodmead's Everfull Cup

Wondrous item, uncommon

When tipped as if to drink from, cool, clear water flows from the chalice. When used in this manner, the chalice can create up to 2 gallons of water daily. It recharges daily at dawn.

Below the Grove

An exploration adventure for 4 to 5 characters of 2nd level
By Jeff C. Stevens



Adventure Synopsis

Having learned that the well water was tampered with, the heroes enter the well and explore the dark caverns below Grove. During their journey through the dark, damp, and eerie caverns and tunnels, they face natural hazards, meet creatures from below, discover what's tainting the water, and come closer to discovering the reason for the contaminated water supply.

Adventure Hooks

A STOP ON THE WAY. During an overland journey between missions, a side-quest during an existing adventure, or in a stop in a town or city, the adventurers come across a well for a quick drink of freshwater. A grappling hook has been affixed to the side of the well and they can't help but notice it as out of place. The rope leads into the waiting darkness, thrusting the heroes into the machinations of E'thor.

ANSWERING A CALL. In a previous adventure, the heroes heard a rumor of a village having fallen under the sway of a fell sickness to which virtually everyone has succumbed. One of the rumors in particular mentions the current theory circulating the land: that the well has been poisoned or ensorcelled in some manner and is the cause of the calamity.

WHILE WE'RE DOWN HERE. The heroes have just completed a subterranean adventure and through luck, happenstance, or divine intervention, they come across the chamber at the base of the well. It doesn't take long before they're drawn into the mystery of Grove.

The Well

The well is waist high, built of smooth river rock, and large enough for a full-grown humanoid to crawl into. Regardless of the placement of the sun overhead, the bottom is not visible from above. Nearby, a bucket attached to a winch by a coiled length of rop, sits on the ground. The ground surrounding the well is well-used, with a clear trail to the town's center. Characters succeeding on a DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check while examining the trail notice that a fresher set of tracks leads from the well to town. These tracks start at the well, as if someone came out of it.

A. ENTERING THE WELL

A creaking winch, frayed rope, and ancient bucket suggest the well has been in use for generations. The bottom cannot be seen from above and a cool breeze emanates from it, suggesting a much larger cavern below.

The well is 90 feet deep and can be entered by using the following:

- **USING THE ROPE, WINCH, AND BUCKET** – The rope and winch can lower or raise a character 30 feet per minute. A character succeeding on a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check notices both the rope and winch look old. When in use, roll 1d20. On a result of 18+, as the character nears the bottom of the well, the rope breaks and the winch seizes up, dropping the character 30 feet to the bottom of the well, landing in the 10-foot-deep lake, and suffering 1d6 bludgeoning damage from the cushioned fall. The winch can be repaired with a successful DC 12 Intelligence check, but the rope must be mended (by spell or successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check) or replaced.
- **USING THEIR OWN ROPE** – The characters may use their own rope, securing it to a cart or nearby tree.
- **MAGIC** – A spell such as *feather fall* allows a character to jump into the well and safely reach the bottom.

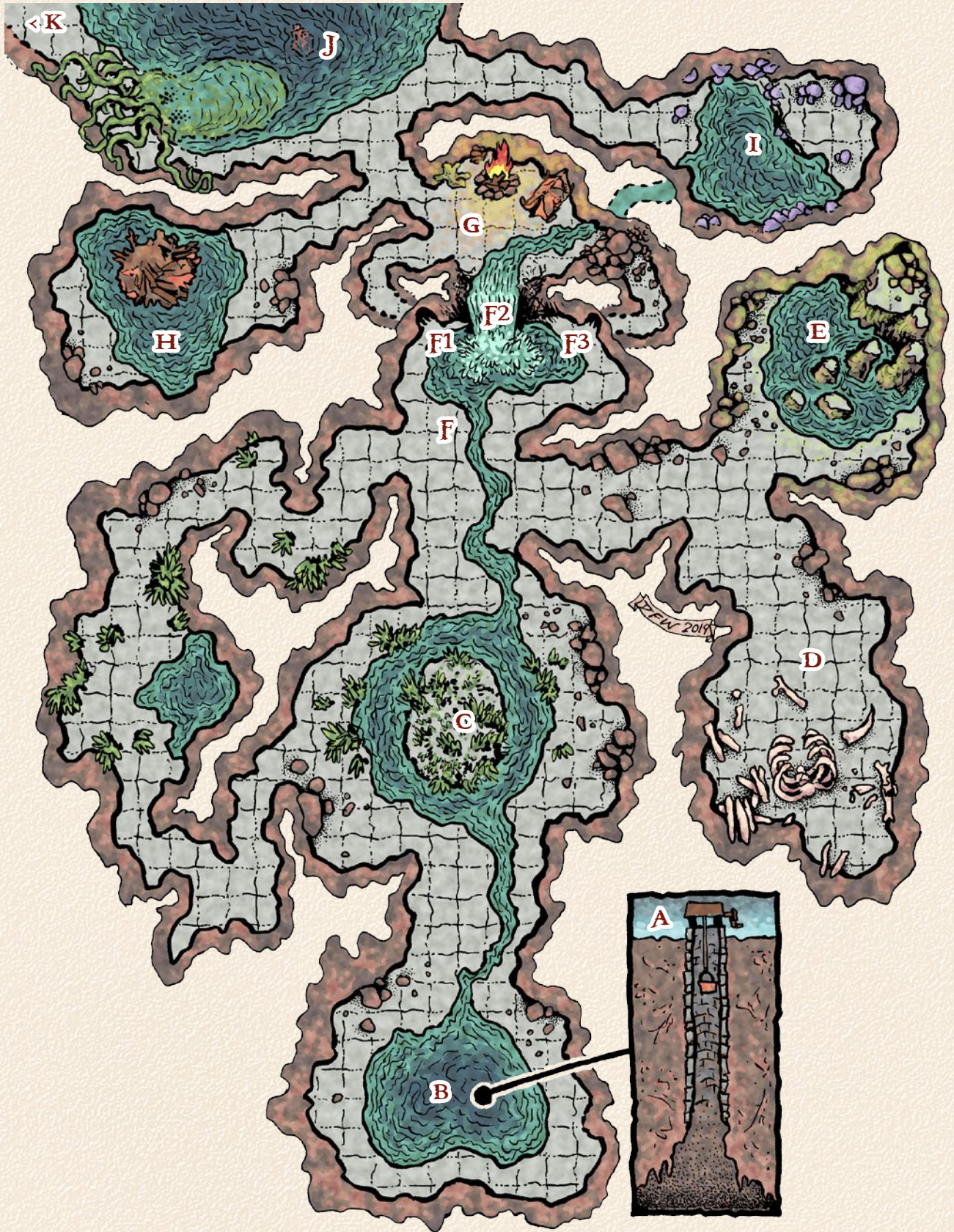
After descending 60 feet, the well opens to a large, cathedral-like domed cavern with a large pond below. Unless the character swings themselves to the rocky banks of the pond, they end up in the center of the 10-foot-deep water. Reaching the banks in this manner requires a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check if the character does not have a swim speed.

B. THE BOTTOM OF THE WELL

A clear pond, smaller than expected, with rocky banks lies at the bottom of the well. A thin stream emerging from the darkness beyond replenishes the reservoir. The stillness on the surface suggests great depths below the mirrored surface of the well's reservoir.

THE POND. The pond is deceptively deep, the bottom lies 30 feet below, with a sheer slope, and wide enough that jumping across it would be

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difficult. A hero wearing medium or heavy armor finding themselves in the pond must succeed on DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check each time they attempt to move while in the pond. Failure means they are unable to move their heavy body while they tread water.

TREASURE. Characters who search the bottom of the pond find 10 gp worth of various coins. In addition, characters succeeding on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check or Intelligence (Investigation) check find 8 gp worth of various coins within the rocky banks – wishes from above.

CREATURES. Four juvenile **rock toads** (see *Appendix 2, page 36*) sit on the bank, blending in with the rocky shore, their natural camouflage ability keeping them hidden. The toads attack the characters if they attempt to pick up any of the coins from the rocky bank. They attack with their sticky tongue attack first, then ram the character they're stuck to.

C. THE LONELY ISLAND

A damp, rocky, and plant-covered island rises from the middle of a small pool. A thin layer of peat moss, algae, and lichen provide a fur-like coating to the jagged ground. From the center of the island, there is a glint of something shiny and sparkling that pierces the damp moss partially obscuring it.

THE ISLAND. A 10-foot-wide, 6-foot-deep moat-like stream surrounds the 20-foot radius island, which is the moss-covered back of a giant snapping turtle. Characters with a passive Perception of 15 notice an irregularity to the ground suggesting it's not merely an island.

TREASURE. A scimitar with a blue topaz encrusted hilt rests in the moss. The scimitar is known as Rime – a magical shortsword inflicting an additional +1 cold damage on a successful hit.

CREATURE. A **giant snapping turtle** (see *Appendix 2, page 36*) named Frood lives in the caves. She wanders from cave to cave searching for places to rest, hide and feed. The bandits managed to avoid her notice through luck and happenstance. Frood is *indifferent* to the heroes unless provoked, or treated aggressively in which case she will become *hostile*. Offers of food have the same effect as a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check and change her attitude to *friendly*.



D. TRAPPER'S CAVE

A high-pitched snarl catches your attention, followed quickly by a burst of chittering and hissing... and then a very human cry.

Up a short passageway to the north, you find the source of the noise. An old trapper's hideout, out of place underground. It's crammed with dusty, musky, furs and hides, and rotting furniture. At present it's also host to a cowering, yelling, human wearing a cloak of writhing

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furs, and a tartan-clad corgi the size of a mastiff playfully yapping and snarling at the man's cloak of living... weasels? Muskrats? The dog's teeth catch one of the beasts' tails, and the cloak - and its wearer - explode into a cloud of mustelids.

A few seconds later and a few feet away, they reform into a disheveled young man in a pointed blue hat.

TRAPPER'S CAVE. Long ago, a trapper used this cave as a base to hunt, skin, and process weasels, badgers, giant toads, and the Mystic Muskrats who live further into the cave. The *Cloak of the Mustelidae* was his greatest creation and proudest possession. His skeletal remains still rest in the bedroll in one corner of the cave, and patterns for the cloak, drawn on tanned toad hides, and in an unlocked chest nearby.

CREATURES. Cal, a Diviner from a small town near Grove, took it upon himself to investigate the poison of the town's water source when the residents started acting strangely. He, his rat familiar Wizzywig, and his brave canine adventuring companion Sir Cheddar descended into the well, began exploring... and got distracted here, when Cal found and donned the *Cloak of the Mustelidae*. No corgi in his right mind, even one as sophisticated as Sir Cheddar, can resist playing with a cloak entirely made of muskrats.

Cal (see *Appendix 2, page 39*) is a scatterbrained, easily distracted young man with a tendency to say exactly the wrong thing. Right now, he's also disoriented from briefly turning into muskrats.

Sir Cheddar (see *Appendix 2, page 37*) is an awakened corgi sorcerer. He's brave - fearless in fact - and enthusiastic about everything. Everyone who's not an enemy is his friend, and he gladly throws himself into danger for his friends.

DEVELOPMENT. Sir Cheddar offers to accompany the party on their expedition. Cal is distracted by the new mystery of why a magic cloak was lying unused in a fur trapper's lodge.

TREASURE. The *Cloak of the Mustelidae* (see *Appendix 2, page 40*) is a thick, warm, cloak made

from the skins of assorted weasels, ferrets, a couple of badgers and even a couple of mystic muskrats. Cal is fascinated by it, but never wants to wear it again and gladly lets the characters take it.

E. STAIRWAY TO THE STARS

An opening filled with a glowing green light beckons you closer. Five natural stone pillars, each a different height, creates a hazardous stairwell ending at an outcropping near the top of the cave. A precarious overhang just before the ledge makes scaling the walls a daunting feat. A human hand, wearing a sparkling ring, dangles over the ledge.

THE FIGURE. The form is the unconscious body of Conrad McLeod, a human apprentice wizard traveling with the bandits who entered the village. Bringing up the rear, he was caught in falling debris from a collapsing tunnel. His companions didn't go back to help him, and he remains unconscious and dangling from above. The adventurers lack the means to clear the debris completely from the tunnel but they can free Conrad.

THE LIGHT. Conrad wears a *headband of light* which is currently activated and emitting a green light. Once donned, the wearer can utter a command word ("eyes") and cast *light* once per day. The spell remains until the wearer says a command word ("closed") which extinguishes the light. The command words are engraved on the interior of the circlet in Common. If the characters save him, Conrad gives the *headband of light* to the party as a way of saying thanks and states, "My life of adventure is over. I'm going home."

Conrad is grateful to the heroes and answers questions to the best of his ability, but knows frustratingly little about the situation. He has surmised that the bandits were hired through an intermediary to observe the people of Grove over a period of weeks. He strongly suspects that the effects

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| Pillar | Height in feet | Falling Damage | Jump Distance | Strength Required to Make Jump without a check | Strength (Athletics) DC |
|--------|----------------|----------------|---------------|--|-------------------------|
| A | 10 | 0 | 0 | NA | NA |
| B | 12 | 1 | 7 | 14 | 10 |
| C | 15 | 2 | 8 | 16 | 12 |
| D | 25 | 3 (1d6) | 10 | NA | NA |
| E | 27 | 4 (1d6 + 1) | 7 | 14 | 10 |
| F | 32 | 5 (1d6 + 2) | 10 | 16 | 12 |

of the contaminant will naturally dilute within the reservoir over the course of time and that the effects will diminish as a result. He knows other details about the cavern system at the GM's discretion.

THE CAVE. The cave is 40 feet wide, 45 feet deep, and 60 feet tall, with a 5-foot-deep lake. The stone pillars vary in height, with the first pillar being 10 feet tall. An odd overhang makes climbing the walls of the cave nearly impossible.

CROSSING THE PILLARS. Creatures are limited to standing jumps (a number of feet equal to half their strength score) due to limitations of space.

FALLING. The bludgeoning damage inflicted from the impact of falling is reduced by the water per the table above.

SCALING THE WALLS. A creature attempting to scale the walls to the overhead ledge finds itself stuck as it reaches an overhang just before the ledge. To successfully maneuver the overhang, it must succeed on a DC 16 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Failure results in the creature slipping, falling into the lake, and suffering 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning.

TREASURE. The explorer wears a diamond ring worth 100 gp. In addition, she wears a chain shirt, carries a shortsword, a dagger, a *potion of healing*, and a leather pouch containing 12 gp and 15 sp.

F. THE THREE WAYS

A rumbling crash, faint mist, and soft cool breeze fill the tunnel as the creek is followed upstream to a rushing waterfall, 30 feet high, into the reservoir at its base. Light flickers from the ledge above, throwing shadows over the craggy walls and floor. Flanking the cascade are a pair of small cave entrances.

F1. CAVE ENTRANCE #1. The cave leads up to the landing above the waterfall which is inhabited by three sleeping **stirges**. Characters with a passive Perception of 12, or a character looking around the cavern who succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check notice them hanging from the tunnel ceiling. The party can sneak past them by succeeding on a DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth) check. If awakened, the stirges attack immediately and without warning.

TREASURE. A creature succeeding on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) sees the glint of two filthy +1 *arrows* (or *bolts*) buried in the stirge dung.

F2. THE WATERFALL. The waterfall spills into a 10-foot-radius, 15-foot-deep pool which overflows, creating the stream. Hand and footholds are cut into the rock, allowing a creature to climb along the side of the waterfall to reach the ledge above. Creatures not using a rope and grappling hook to climb must

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succeed on a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check to climb the 30-foot-tall slippery cave wall. Those using a rope and grappling hook succeed automatically.

TREASURE. A creature diving to the bottom of the pool and succeeding on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check or Intelligence (Investigation) check finds an old, rusty shovel, a small leather pouch containing three small, uncut emeralds (10 gp each), and a white turtle shell with a smiling face painted on it. **NOTE:** The turtle shell belongs to the hermit Gibber. It was his most prized possession.

F3. CAVE ENTRANCE #2. The cave leads up to a platform above the waterfall, but the exit is blocked by a cave-in of loose stones, small boulders, and detritus. Creatures succeeding on three DC 10 Strength checks successfully clear the opening of debris. With each failed attempt, a portion of the cavern collapses, dealing 1d6 bludgeoning damage to any creature within 5 feet of the blocked passage. If the characters fail these checks three times, the cavern collapses completely and becomes unpassable.

G. ABOVE THE WATERFALL

Along the far wall, a small, smoldering fire flickers, throwing shadows of strange shapes on the wall and onto a small tent made from scraps of leather, burlap, and cloth set up nearby. Twigs, leaves, and dried cow patties are piled next to the fire, along with a petite, human-looking ragdoll dyed an uneven green.

THE FIREPIT. The ragdoll is called Ewo and she is Gibber's constant companion and best friend. Having no other goblins to speak with, she stole the doll from a nearby village and painted it green using algae and fungus she found in the tunnels.

GIBBER & THE DOLL. Gibber cherishes her doll. If she returns and finds Ewo missing, she goes mad as she tears through her tent, bedroll, and firepit while yelling "Old Goot! She did this!" As she does,

have Gibber make a DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check. On a success, she notices the adventurers' footprints, stops, and speaks in Common:

"I know you here! I see you footy steps. Come out!"

Unless the doll is returned, Gibber does not share any information with the adventurers.



THE TENT. The tent belongs to Gibber, a hermit goblin. Inside is a straw bed, several small wooden bowls containing berries (fresh and dried), a broken wood fish trap, and a handful of shiny rocks she's found in the cave.

GIBBER. Gibber is currently out hunting for food (berries, small frogs, birds). She is alone as her goblin tribe left many years ago. She has a bad leg from a misadventure years ago, which causes her to limp and slows her movement. After leaving her tribe she wandered for some time, eventually finding this cave to live in.

TREASURE. A small piece of polished quartz (10 gp) hides under Gibber's straw bed.

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GIBBER RETURNS. Shortly after the characters reach Gibber's area, she returns, whistling as she approaches. A character succeeding on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check hears the whistling 2 rounds before Gibber reaches the area.

As she walks into her grotto, the whistling stops and she can be heard mumbling to herself in a mix of Goblin and Common. Characters who understand both common and goblin hear:

That Old Goot. She's always messing with me. Got worse since the water change. She's even more evil now.

Characters only speaking Common hear:

...Goot. ... Got worse... water change... evil now...

SPEAKING WITH GIBBER. At first, Gibber is indifferent. She is standoffish and afraid of the adventurers. If they are nice to Gibber, she quickly warms to them and asks them to sit and have a meal with her. She's had a successful day hunting and gathering (a large lizard, a few yams, and a small bird) and would like to share her bounty; she's very proud of what she's found. She's also excited to have company, it's lonely living in a cave. In addition to her own story, Gibber has the following information to share:

- **OLD GOOT:** "Be careful of Old Goot. She a mean one. Likes to play tricks and hurt things. She's always been mean, but she's gotten meaner. The water. It's because she lives in the bad water."
- **THE BANDITS:** "Noisy humanoids entered the caves. Go up well. Use rope. One hurt in caves. Not moving. I watch—they not see me. They came from behind Old Goot's nest."
- **THE WATER:** "The water is still bad. Wicked creature came into the cave. Dropped a sack into lake. It makes water taste bad. Yuck! I sneak my water. Get it from the cold well in the forest."

- **THE FOREST VILLAGE:** "Keep going through tunnel. Past big lake where container dropped. Them getting sick now, too."
- **THE SACK:** "Don't know. At bottom, I guess."
- **MUSHROOMS:** "Wicked creature took mushrooms from cave. I show you where they are. I not eat. Taste funny. Old Goot live with mushrooms. Old Goot mean."

H. MUSKRAT CAVE

As written, much of this encounter assumes that the heroes have encountered Old Goot, and understand the value of the muskrats. If that is not the case the GM may need to make minor adjustments.

Water fills the center of this cave, which is currently occupied by three muskrats—two brown and one white—who swim about. Walking in, you catch a glimpse of their backends as they dive out of sight and presumably into their den. The den, a makeshift island cobbled together of twigs, branches, mud, and detritus, rises a few feet above the surface of the pond. The ripples fade in moments, and all that's left to indicate their presence is a strong scent of musk and wet fur.

THE CAVE. An underground stream feeds the pool. Three **mystic muskrats** (see *Appendix 2, page 37*) are playing in the water, but they dive and retreat to their den when the adventurers enter the cave. The adventurers must formulate a plan to get the muskrats for Old Goot.

- **WAIT IT OUT:** After 5 minutes of being quiet, a muskrat leaves the lair and begins swimming in the pool, only surfacing if the party succeeds on a DC 13 group Dexterity (Stealth) check. If they fail, the muskrat does not surface and returns to the safety of its lair. Repeat this process as needed.

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- **ENTER THE DEN:** The den is constructed of mud, clay, and grass. In addition, the mud and clay has mixed with the loose gravel in the cave, giving it an AC 15 with 50 HP. The den can be entered from the water, though the entrance is submerged 2 feet. An adventurer encounters three muskrats if they enter the den.
- **WHATEVER ELSE THEY THINK UP:** Reward the players for creative thinking. If the idea is a good one, go with it.

TREASURE. The gnawed ends of a leather sack protrude from the floor of the den, buried in the gravel and mud mixture. A successful DC 12 Strength check allows a character to pull the sack from the ground. The sack contains an old piece of dried elk, a moldy piece of rye bread, and a dagger.

Each muskrat pelt could be sold to a tanner. The brown pelts are worth 5 gp and the white pelt is worth 25 gp. To skin a muskrat and save the pelt requires a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Survival) check. On a failed check, the pelt is too damaged to be of any value.

I. OLD GOOT AND THE MUSHROOMS

Wet, thick air tinged with the loamy smell of mushrooms greets you as you enter a grotto at the end of the tunnel. Another pool of water, this one with a rocky ledge dotted with mushrooms, dominates the area. There is a single figure in the room: a giant toad! It sits on the opposite shore watching, glaring, in silence. Something about its skin is unnatural...

OLD GOOT. Old Goot (a **giant toad**, AC 16), is the mother rock toad. She's large, has a beard made of roots and vines, and her back is covered in ten small pockets, each containing a nesting baby as it grows to maturity. She's ill-tempered and transformed by the tainted water she lives in, which caused her

skin and that of her babies to become stone-like. She normally doesn't accept strangers into her lair, though she may listen to them if a druid or someone using speak with animals tries to communicate with her. The entire brood defend themselves if attacked.

For a more challenging encounter, the GM may add a **juvenile rock toad** (see *Appendix 2, page 36*) for every adventurer in the party.

Old Goot doesn't recall anything about anyone entering her lair or taking mushrooms. She only knows that she took a nap and when she woke up, many of her precious mushrooms were gone. She blames Gibber, thinking the goblin stole them while she slept.

GIBBER AND OLD GOOT. If Gibber is leading the party to Old Goot's den, she stops at the entrance, holds a finger to her lips and says, "Old Goot in there. Sshhh..."

Gibber has the knack of learning languages quickly. She's learned to speak to Old Goot and can translate for the party if needed. When they speak, they exchange ribbits, croaks, and groans.

THE MUSHROOMS. Old Goot loves the mushrooms. Others may find that they taste funny and make their tongue tingle. A creature eating the mushrooms must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a fail, the creature's tongue goes numb for 1d4 hours and they find it difficult to talk. Additionally, if a creature attempts to cast a spell requiring verbal components, roll a d20. On a 14 or higher the spell is not cast due to fumbling the words, the spell slot is not expended.

Goot is not willing to give away any of the mushrooms, but she will trade for them. She loves the taste of muskrat and gladly offers 10 mushrooms in exchange for a muskrat. Muskrats can be found in another area of the cave system and Gibber can guide them there. Her babies have told her of a shiny thing in the green cave. She would happily trade 10 mushrooms for the shiny thing (the *sparkling ring*) if the adventurers can retrieve it for her.

The Mushrooms.

After the contaminant was deposited into the water in **Area I**, one of the bandits snuck into Old Goot's lair to gather several of the mushrooms growing in her lair knowing that their employer is always on the lookout for unusual ingredients to experiment with.

J. OCTOPUS LAKE

Still waters form a large, placid lake that fills the cavern. A ten-foot-wide ledge along the northwest wall, just a few feet from the water's surface and dotted with gravel and thin vines, allows for continued passage. The glow of sunlight sneaks in from the far wall.

THE LEDGE. The ledge leads to the end of the cave system, opening to a forested area. A thin game trail leads away from the cave. Characters notice the lights and sounds of a village in the distance.

THE LAKE. The lake is fed by a freshwater spring, making it clear and easy to see into. Characters who peer into the lake and succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check notice the freshwater octopus. If that character succeeds on another DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check, they realize the thick roots and vines are the creature's tentacles. The freshwater octopus is not immediately hostile and remains motionless until it is attacked or jarred.

GETTING THE POT. The contents of the pot are no longer of high enough concentration to be a danger to the heroes. The use of *mage hand* or other method that does not involve the characters entering the water is sufficiently subtle that the octopus does not stir. Heroes entering the water, however, draw its attention and must succeed a DC 10 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check to placate it. Bribes of food or shiny objects calm the creature immediately without the need for a check, allowing them to gather the pot.

CREATURES. An ancient **giant octopus** lives in this lake, its 15-foot-long tentacles splayed out on



the floor of the cave to resemble vines and tree roots while its head remains submerged near the shore.

THE CONTAINER. A sealed clay pot with holes bored into the lid rests at the bottom of the lake, seeping E'thor's experiment into Grove's water supply.

K. BEYOND THE CAVE

Hidden in the back of the cave, in a cleft of the stone, is a narrow tunnel.

A pile of rotting leather lies heaped in a niche of the tunnel, smelling strongly of musky, acidic, substances.

A cursory investigation shows evidence of someone mixing several bags of powdered substances together, and then leaving the bags in a pile. The materials are

too long exposed to be alchemically analyzed and won't harm any investigators handling the bags.

There is clear evidence, offered through muddy footprints in the damp floor of the tunnel, of at least one individual spending time here, entering the cave, working near the bags, and then departing back the way they came. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check reveals they did so at least three times, or arrived with companions. Characters exceeding the check by 2 or more also learn that the person wore good boots, and probably made several trips.

The locals of Grove are unfamiliar with this tunnel, but it is clearly natural. Whether its length is occupied by any creatures or other hazards is left to the discretion of the GM, but could provide opportunities for additional experience to parties needing such assistance.

The trail leads deeper into the rock, continuing many miles before emerging onto the surface again. Characters following it proceed to *Harper's Tale* Chapter 3, *How Does Your Garden Grow*.

Returning to Grove

Once the contaminant is removed from the reservoir, the water will be safe to drink and use in a matter of days. If they do not discover the pot, the contaminant slowly dissipates naturally and the village returns to its normal state in two weeks. Rose and Grace are able to care for everyone in either circumstance.

Conclusion

Having explored the well and cave system and interacted with the creatures below, the party should have learned about a few events that occurred prior to village becoming ill. With this information, they may return to Grove, or they may decide to continue their investigation.

If they return to Grove, the remaining villagers are surprised by what the adventurers tell them. The news they bring of their findings—ill creatures, the trapped bandit, and the concoction in the octopus lake—all suggest that there is more to this than a simple illness affecting the village. The villagers ask that they continue their investigation; Rose and Grace in particular insist that the heroes find the source of the contamination and in doing so perhaps they can find a cure. When they are ready to continue their investigation of the caverns, proceed to *Harper's Tale* Chapter 3: *How Does Your Garden Grow*.

At the end of this adventure, the heroes gain enough experience to progress to level 3.

Appendix 2

Giant Snapping Turtle

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 28 (4d10 + 6)

Speed 20 ft., swim 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 15 (+2) | 13 (+1) | 13 (+1) | 2 (-4) | 10 (+0) | 3 (-4) |

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Natural Camouflage. While the giant snapping turtle remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from its surroundings.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 2) piercing damage plus 2 bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 13). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the giant snapping turtle can't bite another target.

Crush. The giant snapping turtle makes one bite attack against a Medium or smaller target it is grappling. If the attack hits, the target takes 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

TACTICS

The giant snapping turtle rarely passes up an easy meal. If it feels something on its back, it tilts and jostles its body, attempting to knock the creature into the water.

Juvenile Rock Toad

The juvenile rock toad is too large to stay on its mother's back. It now is left to fend for itself in the wild. Not only do these underground toads blend in with their environment, but they are also very resilient, possessing a naturally hardened skin. Another adaptation is their sticky tongue, which they can use to catch prey and pull it into their mouth, or to catapult themselves to the prey they stick to, inflicting more damage.

Small beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 7 (2d6)

Speed 20 ft., swim 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| 2 (-5) | 13 (+1) | 10 (+0) | 1 (-5) | 8 (-1) | 3 (-4) |

Saving Throws Con +4, Str +3

Skills Perception +1, Stealth +3

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Natural Camouflage. While the rock toad remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal rock.

Small in Stature. The juvenile rock toad may occupy the same space as another creature as it clings to it.

ACTIONS

The rock toad makes one attack, using either its sticky tongue attack or its head slam attack.

Sticky Tongue. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* The rock toad's sticky tongue acts like a bungee cord, pulling the toad from its current location and catapulting it at the creature, inflicting 4 (1d4 + 1) bludgeoning damage. The toad then sticks to the creature, occupying the same space.

Below the Grove

Head Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 1) bludgeoning damage

TACTICS

The rock toad prefers to move from one target to another, using its sticky tongue attack to jump from target to target.

Mystic Muskrat

Small beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 7 (2d6)

Speed 30 ft., swim 20 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 7 (-2) | 15 (+2) | 11 (+0) | 2 (-4) | 12 (+1) | 8 (-1) |

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages —

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Thick Hide. The muskrat's hide gives it a +1 to AC.

Pack Tactics. The muskrat has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the muskrat's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Slippery Varmint. The mystic muskrat can cast misty step once per day.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Sir Cheddar



"Alright, lads and lasses! I've never met a problem a good heart and a wee bit o' magic couldnae solve. Once more unto the breach, dear friends!"

Sir Cheddar (true name Teg Cáis) is at once the bravest dog you'll ever meet, and not actually a dog. He's a kindly fey creature, alone in the material plane and desperately seeking purpose after the loss of his fairy master. He attaches himself to any good-hearted magically inclined being, and does his best to help those in need. Currently, he's teamed up with the young wizard Cal to help save the stricken town of Grove. He adores Cal, but he fears his new friend isn't cut out for action; he'd much rather join up with a team of brave adventurers.

Sir Cheddar is a stocky corgi with a spring in his step, a constantly wagging tail, a red tartan cloak and a battered leather wizard's hat perched at a jaunty angle atop his head. He always has snacks.

Small fey, lawful good

Armor Class 11 (14 with mage armor)

Hit Points 35 (10d6)

Speed 25 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 10 (+0) | 12 (+1) | 11 (+0) | 13 (+1) | 14 (+2) | 17 (+3) |

Saving Throws Con +3, Cha +6

Skills Arcana +4, Insight +5

Below the Grove

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Sylvan

Challenge 5 (1800 XP)

Keen Hearing and Smell. Sir Cheddar has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Fey Step. As a bonus action, Sir Cheddar can teleport up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space he can see. Once he uses this trait, he can't do so again until he finishes a short or long rest.

Tides of Chaos. Before making an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, Sir Cheddar may choose to grant himself advantage. Once he does so, he must either finish a long rest before doing so again, or roll on the Wild Magic Surge table.

Wild Magic Surge. Roll a d20 whenever Sir Cheddar casts a spell of 1st level or higher (maximum of once per turn). On a roll of 1, he triggers a Wild Magic Surge, as described in the PHB.

Sorcery Points. Sir Cheddar has 10 sorcery points, which he regains on a long rest.

Extend Spell. When Sir Cheddar casts a spell that has a duration of 1 minute or longer, he can spend 1 sorcery point to double its duration, to a maximum duration of 24 hours.

Twinned Spell. When Sir Cheddar casts a spell that targets only one creature and doesn't have a range of self, he can spend a number of sorcery points equal to the spell's level to target a second creature in range with the same spell (1 sorcery point if the spell is a cantrip).

Spellcasting. Sir Cheddar is a 10th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). He knows the following spells:

- At will: *detect magic, identify, mage armor*
- 1st level (3 slots): *charm person, healing word, speak with animals, unseen servant*
- 2nd level (3 slots): *darkness, enlarge/reduce, invisibility*
- 3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic, tiny hut*
- 4th level (2 slots): *dimension door, fabricate, polymorph*

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) piercing damage. Sir Cheddar would not dream of biting except in a life or death situation.

REACTIONS

Bend Luck. Whenever a creature Sir Cheddar can see, within ten feet of him, makes an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, Sir Cheddar may use his reaction and spend 2 sorcery points to roll 1d4 and apply the number rolled as a bonus or penalty (his choice) to the creature's roll.

Mage Hat

Wondrous item, common, requires attunement

The mage hat is a battered, conical, brown leather hat with a deep green gem glued to it.

You can use this hat as a focus for your sorcerer spells. You can also use it to cast a sorcerer cantrip you do not know. To do so, you must make a DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check. On a success you cast the cantrip as though you were a 1st level character. On a failure, you trigger a wild magic surge (see PHB).

Below the Grove

Cal de Vries



“No, please don’t touch that! Everything is to be done in the proper order. Introducing chaos into the system is needlessly – ow! I stubbed my toe.”

Cal is a scatterbrained, disorganized, perpetually worried man who compensates with lists, plans, and schedules. He’s a stickler for rules, because without them he’s lost in a sea of disorder. He’s a kind man, and quick to try and help those in need with his divinations and arcane knowledge. Despite that, his only true friend is his rat familiar, Wizzy Wig.

Sir Cheddar has latched onto Cal as his new adventuring companion. The little fey dog is a tiny force of chaos. Cal finds him very sweet, but gets frustrated with him.

Cal is a thin man with short red hair, spectacles, and sensible clothing with plenty of pockets. His only nod to luxury is his pointed blue hat, patterned with silver stars. He has to wear it, apparently. “Guild rules.”

Medium humanoid (human), lawful neutral

Armor Class 10 (13 with mage armor)

Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|
| 11 (+0) | 10 (+0) | 13 (+1) | 17 (+3) | 8 (-1) | 11 (+0) |

Saving Throws Cha +5, Con +5

Skills Arcana +6, History +6, Investigation +6

Senses passive Perception 9

Languages Common, Elven, Sylvan

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Read the Signs. Once per short rest, Cal may cause another creature to re-roll a single d20 roll.

Diviner. When Cal casts a divination spell (*) he regains an expended first level spell slot.

Spellcasting. Cal is a 6th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). He knows the following spells:

- Cantrips (at will): *light, message, prestidigitation, shocking grasp*
- 1st level (4 slots): *detect magic**, *feather fall*, *identify**, *mage armor*, *magic missile*
- 2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts**, *locate object**, *rope trick*, *see invisibility**
- 3rd level (3 slots): *clairvoyance**, *counterspell*, *nondetection*

ACTIONS

Quarterstaff. Melee Weapon Attack. +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage.

Cloak of the Mustelidae

Wondrous item, rare, requires attunement



This cloak is gloriously soft, made of the pelts of dozens and dozens of mustelids ranging from weasels, to ferrets, to stoats, to the occasional badger — even one or two mystic muskrats*. The cloak is always warm to the touch, and seems to appreciate being stroked: sometimes a soft, happy, chitter rises from one of the furs, or the eyes of a muskrat open for a moment. In spite of its aesthetic appeal, there is room in the cloak to add at least a couple more furs.

Created by accident by the trapper and would-be artificer Haelin Gont, the Cloak of the Mustelidae offers comfort, protection, and the possibility of occasionally turning into a scampering heap of live weasels.

* Not technically mustelids, as any competent artificer will tell you, but mistakes do occasionally happen.

While you are wearing this cloak, if a weapon attack scores a critical hit against you, you can use your reaction to transform into a pile of scampering mustelids, immediately move your speed, and then revert back to your original form. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks. You can move through spaces occupied by other creatures but must end your movement in an empty space. You take half damage from the triggering attack.

ENHANCING THE CLOAK

Haelin Gont never completed the Cloak of the Mustelidae — at least, not to its full potential. The first time you add the pelt from a new type of mustelid to the cloak, all the furs become slightly more animated. The cloak gains the following power:

- You gain +1 to AC while wearing the cloak, and you gain swimming and climbing speeds equal to your normal movement speed.

The second time you add a new type of mustelid pelt to the cloak, it becomes thick enough to absorb most weapon blows. The cloak gains the following power:

- As long as you are wearing no armor, you gain an armor class of 10 + your Wisdom modifier. You may still carry a shield, and your Dexterity modifier applies as normal.

How Does Your Garden Grow

An adventure for 4 to 5 characters of 3rd level
By Ben McFarland



This product references mental health and addiction, which are no joke. If you or someone you know has an addiction or struggles with mental health, please reach out for help. There is always someone ready to talk at the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

1-800-273-8255.

Ask for help. #ChooseLife.

~Ben McFarland and rest of the *Harper's Tale* Team

Adventure Synopsis

This adventure follows the events of the second Chapter of *Harper's Tale*, the adventure *Below the Grove*. Emerging from the underground tunnel discovered there, the characters discover a cache of supplies and a makeshift alchemy lab in a small cottage in the forested hills, guarded by strange plant sentries. Notes left at the workbench suggest an impending disaster for the nearby town of Prince's Harbor. A narrow game trail departs from the site and continues out to the road into town.

At the end of the trail, the characters find a town on the cusp of a celebration—or at least decorated for one. However, the residents have all taken part in

a recent ritual, one subverted by Gwynn Troutscapes, and have ingested concentrated “joyfruit.” When the party finds members of the community, they’re either blissed-out, freaking out, gone mad, or hiding. It’s up to the characters to stop a number of joyfruit-instigated situations and discover the source of the fruit.

E’thor inflicted his most recent iteration of the curse and cure on Gwynn, his wife, and his daughter. This killed two other members of Troutscale’s family, but drove him insane. Deluded beyond rational thought, he created joyfruit while thinking the two plant creatures left behind by E’thor are the transformation of his dead family. Once the party finds Gwynn, they can stop him and destroy the joyfruit, destroying this particular iteration of the disease.

Afterwards, Gwynn’s old aunt, also a former student of Deng who became a sage rather than a druid, directs the party onward, noting that Deng should be able to help cure the cursed druid’s mind, and might know more about what’s happening.

Adventure Hooks

For groups not engaging in the larger story of *Harper’s Tale*, here are a few potential story hooks to embroil them in the strange events.

PROBLEM PRODUCE. Characters may have been invited to Prince’s Harbor at the request of a local relative to investigate a strange fruit which has recently become available. The contact is concerned about the behavior of fellow villagers exposed to this produce and concerned the situation may spiral out of control.

PEER REVIEW. The characters travel to visit the druid himself, who is either a peer, a relative, or a potential mentor, only to find tragedy has struck the village. The characters must help resolve the situation before they’ll be able to talk to the druid.

SO MANY QUESTIONS. The characters may be traveling to the village to speak with the druid’s sage aunt, in order to have an unrelated question answered. Or they may be traveling to inspect or visit the shrine kept in the center of the village within the great rock. In these situations, they discover the calamity by coincidence.

Adventuring Outside the Tale

In cases where you use this adventure without utilizing the progression or plot of *Harper’s Tale*, you may need to tailor the events of the conclusion such that the druid’s madness is the result of the joyfruit or fever, or he is healed of his madness after several days or weeks. The fate of his family might likewise be less grim and should be adjusted to fit your story and group.

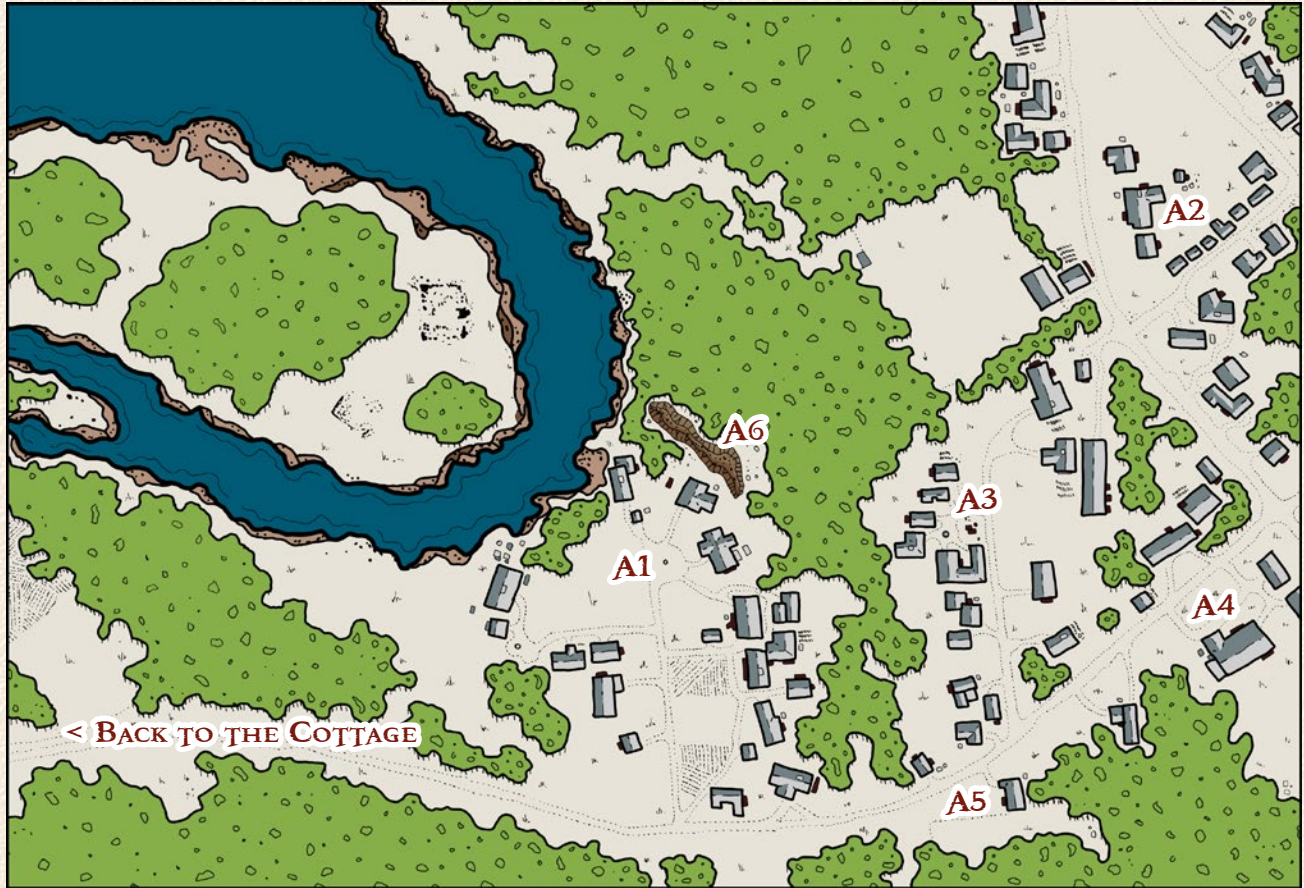
Prince's Harbor Overview

Prince’s Harbor is a bucolic village of about 500 people. It has a smattering of storefronts, a mill, a smithy, a tavern, and a tailor. An older druid-instructed sage, Trinity Arya, lives here, as well as the region’s druid, Gwynn Troutscapes.

A. PRINCE'S HARBOR

Prince’s Harbor has a variety of structures mixed together along the main road; its homes and farmsteads stand next to workshops and storefronts. Most of the buildings are wooden—some have thatched roofs, others are shingled, a few have slate tiles. The road is primarily hard packed dirt and gravel, but offshoots into areas with many buildings are paved with flagstones.

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If things weren't about to get out of hand, characters could expect to purchase most normal items costing under 75gp, as well as up to 4 healing potions at 150% cost. There are a few mules available for purchase, but nearly every animal in town is either a pet, working beast, or livestock.

AREA 1: FERRY CROSSING AND TOWN WELL. The Sludgewater River flows past Prince's Harbor, and this part of town is where the mill, ferry crossing, and primary well are located. Across the water is the old, ruined fort of Ser Artorius; though there is nothing of interest there for this adventure. Event A occurs by the well.

AREA 2: TOWN COMMONS. This is the primary commercial area. The baker, the town common square, the Walrus and Seagull pub, other merchants and homes are located here. This is where Event B occurs.

AREA 3: FIRST HOMESTEAD. One of the first households to establish themselves in Prince's Harbor, this site is a complex of well-maintained farm buildings. It is important for Event C.

AREA 4: THE HATCHETTS' HOME. This is one of the larger farmsteads. It's a single-story cottage with several rooms. It's important for Event D.

AREA 5: DRUID'S HOME AND GROVE. The southernmost home in the village, Gwynn's sacred grove and irmansul is located slightly behind the house and to the south, along a stone path. Across the street lives his Great Aunt Trinity Arya. There is a fenced off garden along the southern side of the house, where a pair of large joyfruit plants are flowering, hidden from view. This is where Scene 3 occurs.

AREA 6: MOUNT CANDALINO. Just to the north of the well stands the Sheriff's home and Mount Candalino. Bearing the same name as the immense stone in Grove, this large formation is 75 feet tall and can be climbed with a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check. A failure indicates no progress was made, and if failed by at least 5, they fall from the sheer surface. At its base are two hand-carved caves. One is a shrine, and meditating here for a short rest will restore all spent hit dice once per day; the other is the town jail, sealed with a heavy iron-bound oaken door and lock, which requires a successful DC 20 Dexterity check (using thieves' tools) to open.

GM's Note: If the characters attempt to cross the river to explore the ruins on the far side, have one of the events, B-D, draw their attention. The fire at the Hatchett Homestead can use the discarded match brushfire as a lure.

Adventure Progression

The order of the scenes assumes the characters are investigating the cause of the contamination in Grove and are on the hunt for the individual responsible.

Scene 1 - Out of Darkness, Into the Woods

Emerging from a tunnel hidden amid a collection of large boulders into a thick forest from the previous adventure, *Below the Grove*, the characters find a small cottage nearby. A "U"-shaped hedge surrounds the structure, blocking it from view from three sides. The rock formation obscures it from the fourth.

Forcing entry into the cottage is a trivial matter, and characters can break in through a door or a window. However, entering this way leaves evidence of the intrusion unless the characters take magical steps to repair the damage. Picking the lock requires a successful DC 14 Dexterity (using thieves' tools) check.

This is a single-room, 40-foot square structure with a small cooking space, an alchemy lab and growing table, a small sleeping area, and a large table. A half-dozen basket-sized metal cages hang from the rafters. There are two doors into the structure, one which faces the stone pile where the tunnel emerges and one which opens into a small greenbelt between the cottage and the pine hedge, where firewood is split and stacked. There is also a small clay kiln, here full of ash and bone fragments, two shrubs, and a small well.

The shrubs are actually two shambling mound variants, sitting on either side of the well, which is 15 feet deep and 3 feet in diameter.

Inside, a manuscript rests on the table with the alchemical equipment, under a small crate filled with dead plant seedlings in small pots of dried soil; their leaves crumble at a touch. The manuscript is written in code using three languages (Elvish, Draconic, and Druidic), requiring a DC 25 Intelligence (Investigation) check, and 4 (1d6) days to decipher. A *comprehend languages* spell does not help with this text, as it is encoded, but translates it as gibberish. The text shows a member of stylized plants and animals, and appears to detail the effects of some malady on several animals. If decoded, it offers advantage on checks to treat other diseases created by E'thor. A scrap of paper used as a bookmark says, "Prince's Harbor?" in Common and is underlined.

CREATURE TACTICS. The shambling piles attack if anyone attempts to leave or enter the cottage through the front door. They fight to the death.

DEVELOPMENT. About 500 yards to the north, an east-west road runs between Grove and Prince's Harbor. Characters discover this road with about fifteen minutes of searching; determining which

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way is north requires a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check. A sign nailed to a tree two miles in either direction indicates Prince's Harbor lies to the East. Prince's Harbor is about five miles from the cottage.

CREATURE(S). There are two **shambling piles**, *see Appendix 3, page 55.*

TREASURE. At the bottom of the well is a dimly glowing emerald, which keeps the water fresh, cool, and full. It is a *water elemental gem.*

What if they're not exiting the tunnel?

If the party is not arriving in Prince's Harbor through the tunnel, but instead began their journey elsewhere, consider having them attacked on the road by a berserk owlbear (Monster Manual), which consumed some joyfruit growing from a last, stray plant at the cottage, and followed Gwynn's trail back to the main trade route. It's clear and crazed path leads directly to the cottage laboratory. If the party still doesn't want to check it out, and continues on to Prince's Harbor, then consider leaving notes in E'thor's workbooks on joyfruit indicating "the genius loci says the old cottage is now to be abandoned, soon to become a new heart of the woods. I will happily leave it untouched until next spring, as it instructs."

Scene 2 - Arriving in Prince's Harbor

When the party reaches Prince's Harbor, the town is about to celebrate the Festival of Saint Isaac, known before his sainthood as Isaac Whitten. This is a large party held in the streets and common areas of the community, where everyone shares food and drink, dances, performs, and otherwise enjoys themselves late into the night. Traditionally, the citizens first participate in the Ceremonial Libation of Fellowship, to mark the start of the Saint's heroic

journey. This happens at a significant religious, civic, or personal location, and then most residents either head home to change into specific clothing for the evening's activities, or depart directly for community feasts. Houses are locked and shutters are closed, but there are a few houses with smoke coming from the chimneys. However, none of these occupants respond, except in marked areas, where community members have gathered to celebrate the Festival of Saint Isaac

The village is festively decorated with garlands of flowers strung across the street; houses sport bundles of greenery and flowers on the lentils. Bright ribbons and banners festoon all manner of poles and front porches, including the front of the local pub, the Walrus and Seagull. The community appears prepared to enjoy a celebration of some kind. You see a number of icons depicting a stylized heroic figure. However, no one is around for the actual celebrating. A stray dog lounges on a front porch, and several cats scurry across the street between houses, but there isn't a humanoid in sight.

Should someone communicate with the pets, they indicate their owners were headed to the town square, Area 2. Depending on which direction the party goes, the GM should proceed to Scene 3, and begin the appropriate Event. If they head into one of the areas first, begin with that event. Scene 4, the battle against Gwynn, can't happen until at least three events have occurred.

Scene 3 - Mass Hysteria!

These encounters occur when the characters search the areas marked on the map.



EVENT A: THE TEETERING WAGON

As the group approaches **Area 1**, read or paraphrase the following:

There is a terrible clatter, a whinnying, followed by a crash. There, a man lies in the road, and a pair of horses stomp, attempting to dig into the flagstones with their shod hooves. Their yoke stands, skewed into the air as the wagon slides over the rail with an awful howl. It hangs over the rim, dangling above the town well.

If you don't pull it back over the rim, the wagon will fall into the water and drag two horses with it, polluting the drinking supply with their deaths!

The characters begin 50 feet from the well. They have four rounds before the wagon pulls the horses down. Pulling the wagon back requires 6 successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) checks. Failure inflicts 4 (1d6) bludgeoning damage; a character who fails two or more checks gains a level of exhaustion. Casting *enhance ability* on the horses reduces the DC by 2 for each horse receiving the spell. Casting it on a character making a check reduces the DC by 2 and grants advantage on the checks for the duration.

A successful DC 17 Strength check allows a character to release the yoke, dropping the wagon into the well, but saving the horses immediately. Failure reduces the number of rounds remaining by one, and inflicts 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage.

DEVELOPMENT. The driver, David Elder, has passed out from his Draught of Saint Isaac. He is lying on the cobbles, uninjured, and cannot explain how the wagon ran out of control. A cure wounds spell causes him to awaken briefly and mutter, "What, druid? The Hatchett homestead? That way," he gestures vaguely in the direction of Areas 4 and 5.

Up ahead, at a table of food and flowers, there are thirty people passed out around a feasting banquet. It is clear they all fell unconscious before eating, some still holding cups and chalices bearing a trace of deep red liquid. The liquid smells fruity, with hints of an astringent scent. It still stains many people's lips, but it's lost in the straw and dirt surrounding the tables.

The wagon was carrying barrels of lamp oil. If the characters saved the vehicle, the water is not polluted and the villagers offer the party free room and board, should they ever return to Prince's Harbor, and free passage across the river.

- If Event C has not yet occurred, there is a scream of a frightened horse towards **Area 3**.
- If Event D has not yet occurred, there is a hint of smoke on the wind towards **Area 4**. Along the way, the party finds a careless match has scorched a 10-foot circle before burning out.

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EVENT B: BREAKING SKULLS, NOT BREAD

(MEDIUM ENCOUNTER). As the group approaches **Area 2**, it becomes apparent there is a large gathering in the square.



The gentle hum of voices, subdued and drunken, buzzes in the courtyard.

As you approach, a woman bursts from the door of the bakery, gesturing aggressively.

“Hey you! Stay away! I’ll show you!”

She swings a loaf of bread which misses you but hits a villager, who turns to strike a neighbor. A man in priestly robes lays about him with a heavy, holy, book. Suddenly, tempers flare and the crowd erupts in a brawl!

Combat begins in the square as everyone starts fighting with everyone else; the characters begin in the middle of the swarm unless they’ve taken precautions.

CREATURE TACTICS. The bar brawlers fight until subdued, but continue unabated if the party retreats.

DEVELOPMENT. If the characters interview the baker, Maureen Elizabeth, after the brawl ends, she apologizes, nursing a black eye.

“We taken the Draught of Saint Isaac Druid Gwynn had delivered. I had but a swallow when I realized my last batch of sweet rolls were burning and went to pull them out. But I was overcome with horrendous anger.

That’s never happened before. I wondered if something was off with Gwynn; he’s been off lately. I think this confirms it. Gwynn lives in the house at the southern edge of town. But I can only imagine what else is happening elsewhere in the village!”

Characters may choose to take a short rest here.

- If Event C has not yet occurred, there is a scream of a frightened horse towards **Area 3**.
- If Event D has not yet occurred, there is a hint of smoke on the wind towards **Area 4**. Along the way, the party finds a careless match has scorched a 10-foot circle before burning out.



FURTHER DEVELOPMENT. One of the brawlers, the priest in brown robes, sits on the ground, staring aghast at the beautifully illuminated book he used as a weapon. It's badly damaged, and a couple of pages have fluttered loose.

"It's ruined. I've ruined it. The holy scripture of Saint Bergitte, a year of my life to find it, and I've ruined it..."

If asked, Cygnus Starborne relates how he spent a year tracking down this lost holy text, intending to return it to the library of his holy order. He intended to spend the rest of his life uncovering its secrets, and instead he ruined it in a common brawl. If the characters help him restore the book, with a few *mending* cantrips, or appropriate tools, he will gladly

provide them with healing magic, and gift them his two *potions of healing*.

CREATURE(S). 1 **bar brawl**, **Cygnus Starborne**, *see Appendix 3, page 53.*

TREASURE. 2 *potions of healing* (*see Further Development above*).

EVENT C: BUGBEAR BARNSTORMING

(HARD ENCOUNTER). This event occurs as the characters approach **Area 3**.

A woman stumbles in the front yard of the farmhouse. She looks at you with unfocused eyes and asks with impaired speech, "Are you here for the horses too? You'll have to wait until the

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Miller's boy is all done," she trails off and gently collapses in a heap onto the lawn.

From behind the house, over by the barn, there is a crash and the sound of splintering wood followed by a squeal of chickens. A horse makes a terrified whinny, and rough, guttural voices mutter something to each other. Those who speak goblin recognize it as a deep voice saying, "Grab it quick, we'll have fresh steaks tonight. Save the humans for later." Three **bugbears** are attempting to kill the farmer's plow horse.

CREATURE TACTICS. The bugbears fight until they're at less than 10hp, then attempt to flee. They do not surrender, as they're known bandits in the region, and the Sheriff has issued bounties for their capture (50 gp each).

DEVELOPMENT. The bugbears are creatures of opportunity. They were contemplating raiding the livestock during the celebration, but then saw the town became incapacitated by the Draught. They're planning on a terrible rampage once they've had a quick bite of horseflesh.

If the woman is given a *cure wounds* spell or stabilized with a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Medicine) check, she becomes momentarily lucid, purring "Why Druid Gwynn, what would your wife think?" then becoming melancholy and continuing, "Oh, yes, I forgot about her sickness, so sorry." She



then points back towards Area 4 or 2, depending on where the characters have been so far, and mumbles, "I think they're waiting for you there," before returning to her stupor.

- If Event D has not yet occurred, there is a hint of smoke on the wind towards **Area 4**. Along the way, the party finds a careless match has scorched a 10-foot circle before burning out.
- If Event A has not yet occurred, there is a scream of frightened horses towards **Area 1**.

CREATURE(S). Three **bugbears** linger here.

TREASURE. The bugbears have 10 (3d6) silver each. Near the corral, they've stashed a sack of five dead chickens, four stolen bottles of wine, and a still-cooling strawberry rhubarb crumb pie stolen from **Area 2**.

EVENT D: FIRE FOR FIGHTING

This event does not occur until the group approaches **Area 4**. When they come within 50 feet, Yvaine Winter Woslum Hatchett exits the cottage, mesmerized by a lantern held in both hands.

"Isn't it beautiful? Look how it dances. So pretty. So, so pretty."

Count to 30. If no one engages Yvaine by the time you complete your count, read the following:

"The girl begins to open the lantern, to start the grass on fire. As she does so, a plume of smoke pours out of the front door. The cottage is on fire."

If someone engages her before you reach 30, she rambles, staring into the flame.

"They're so pretty, so graceful, how they dance. So, I let them free inside, to dance and grow, to see them dance everywhere, the whole world!"

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She starts to open the lantern to set the grass here on fire. If asked about people inside, she pauses, replying,

“Oh yes, I think so. Yes, a couple! And a cat.”

The group has five rounds before the cottage is engulfed with flame and considered fully on fire.

If the cottage is not fully on fire yet:

- There are five rounds until it is fully on fire.
- Each spell slot used to cast create water or fog cloud reduces the remaining rounds by one round. Reducing the number of rounds to zero puts out the fire.
- Other spells which extinguish flame reduce it by one round per spell slot level equal to or over 2; i.e., a level 4 spell which extinguishes fire reduces the number by three: one for the spell, plus one round for every level over 2.
- A water elemental or similar creature extinguishes the fires in one round.

While the cottage is not yet fully on fire, characters entering the building must make a DC 13 Constitution save. Inside the cottage are three unconscious or incoherent people. If they saved, they must succeed on DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check to see one of the people; if they failed the save, they gain a level of exhaustion and may make a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check with disadvantage. If they fail on the Perception check, they must make another DC 13 Constitution save or suffer an additional level of exhaustion.

Once the building is fully on fire, the DC for Constitution saves required to enter the building increases to 15. If successful, they must make a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check to find the people trapped inside and suffer 4 (1d6) fire damage. If unsuccessful, they may choose to leave the cottage

or make a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check with disadvantage and suffer 5 (2d4) fire damage. After being fully on fire for five rounds, it is too dangerous to enter the structure; treat every round inside the building as if being affected by a wall of fire spell.

Three people lie incoherent inside the cottage; they are in corners, under blankets, and in a cupboard. After two people are rescued, a white cat escapes the building and twines around Yvaine's legs; she is oblivious. A successful DC 11 Wisdom (Perception) check made outside allows the characters to spot the cat, to which Yvaine happily says, “Goose! He's my cat!”

After three successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) checks to spot the people inside, a DC 11 Wisdom (Perception) check allows a searcher to be certain the cottage is empty.

DEVELOPMENT. None of the individuals here can explain how they got in their current state. If healed with a *cure wounds* spell, they can explain they took part in the Draught of Saint Isaac, and returned home to change. That is the last thing they remember. Druid Gwynn led their Ceremony of the Draught, and may be doing the same at **Area 1, 2, or 3**, and lives in **Area 5**. Clearly, a tragedy occurs if the party is unsuccessful in their efforts to clear the house.

- If Event A or C has not yet occurred, there is a scream of frightened horses towards **Area 1** or **3**.

CREATURE(S). The four **commoners** are in no condition to cause any trouble to the group. The **cat** is not hostile.

TREASURE. There is no treasure here, however, if the characters speak to the cat, it tells the group that the druid left here headed for **Area 5**. Of course it knows who the druid is, don't be dense. And they should feed Goose before they go, because it's hungry. Seriously.

Scene 4 – Showdown at the Druid's Home

(HARD ENCOUNTER). Having learned of the characters' interference in his attempt to share the joyfruit with the villagers, Gwynn believes they intend on destroying his work. He responds with aggressive violence, the fever madness clouding his judgment and impairing his decision-making skills. He returns here to protect his joyfruit plants, augmented by his verdant mantle.

Wrapped in heavy greenery, an amalgam of man and plant life draws a scimitar and menacingly waves it. "You'll not take my beloveds! They're my family, and they'll bring happiness to the world!"

CREATURE TACTICS. Gwynn is mad. He believes the party intends to take his now-plant ascended family from him and destroy his newly created joyfruit. He fights until dead, but can be subdued. He is aided by the shambling pile. The second, unattuned verdant mantle does not attack.

DEVELOPMENT. After this battle, proceed to the conclusion if the party has completed at least three of the four events. Otherwise, if Event A or C has not yet occurred, there is a scream of frightened horses towards **Area 1** or **3**. If Event D has not yet occurred, there is a hint of smoke on the wind towards **Area 4**. Along the way, the party finds a careless match has scorched a 10-foot circle before burning out.

The villagers recover on their own a day or so after consuming the joyfruit-laden draught. If Event C is not completed within the hour, the bugbears kill the people at the First Farmstead, and steal the horse.

CREATURE(S). The **Druid Gwynn** is here, wearing a **verdant mantle**. Don't forget to apply the benefits of the mantle to Gwynn. One of the joyfruit plants is a **shambling pile**, the other is an unattuned verdant mantle. For details, see *Appendix 3, page 54*.

TREASURE. There is no traditional treasure here, however, canny players may notice the second joyfruit plant did not attack. It has no fruits left, and a portion of it is an unattuned verdant mantle. It is possible for a character to enter symbiosis with it; see appendix.

Conclusion

With the druid defeated and either dead or captured, the party will likely begin looking for answers. His home does not show any signs of the materials used to poison Grove. His wife and child are dead in their beds, clearly succumbed to their disease and in a rough state. It is evident Gwynn kept them in quarantine for a very long time. Gwynn's journal records the notes and observations he made during their treatments, revealing they had been infected by the same plague which affected Grove, but with a longer incubation period. He appears to have been immune, but driven mad by the experience.

Sometime after midwinter, the journal indicates Troutscales saw a manifestation of the genius loci in the heart of the nearby Forest. This glowing magical representation explained the disease was a trial and he had shown "willingness to sacrifice." Now, he would learn how to grow the joyous boon of the forest. The notes then detail the process to grow the root plant in his garden which allowed the joyfruit plants to thrive.

The handwriting in the journal does not match, in either point, the handwriting of the notes found in the cottage. Someone else, someone yet unknown appears to be the author of the manuscript from the forest laboratory. That author clearly has extensive knowledge on alchemical, herbal, and disease-related matters.

Deranged, Gwynn Troutscales only experienced mild euphoria when eating the joyfruit. He believes the spirits of his child and spouse live in the two shambling piles and joyfruit plant. There is no genius

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loci of the nearby forest, or if there is, at the DM's discretion, it knows nothing about joyfruit or what entity could have instructed Troutcales.

When the characters have defeated the druid and have begun investigating his home, an older woman arrives. Her name is Trinity Arya, and she was Gwynn's great-aunt, and neighbor; she noticed the druid's behavior had become extremely strange. Once a student of Deng, Gwynn and E'thor's druid master, Trinity Arya found she did not enjoy a druid's path, and instead became an herbalist and sage of the woods. Her handwriting doesn't match the laboratory text from the forest, and she is unaware of the cottage. Trinity Arya admits that it has been at least a decade since she has been more than two hundred paces into the woods; she is just not as young as she used to be.

If the characters didn't kill Gwynn, Trinity Arya recommends they take Gwynn to Master Deng's Grove for treatment in the next adventure. As a former student, Druid Deng might be able to heal him or at least take care of him until he recovers. She warns the group that Deng is cantankerous and can hold a grudge but is dedicated to his duty to the land and community; they should be certain to be very polite when they visit him. She can help arrange transport there on a river barge or provide directions overland, but suggests that Gwynn be held here, on house arrest, until they can send word and escort for him.

The town has little means to repay the kindness of the group, but Trinity Arya does have a trio of healing potions she was keeping for emergencies, which she happily offers to the group, indicating "making new ones will be a good project for helping mend fences between neighbors after all this."

Barring any personal activities, the group can proceed to the next adventure, *A Forest Strangely*.

At the end of this adventure, the heroes gain enough experience to progress to level 4.

Appendix 3

Bar Brawl

Mob Brutality. A bar brawl arises suddenly and violently, often after a vile insult is lobbed or an accusation of cheating is lodged. Once enraged, the bar brawl attacks indiscriminately, assailing both the faultless and offending patrons with whatever weapons readily come to hand.

Irrational Resilience. As a throng fueled by anger and chaos, a bar brawl battles harder the more one tries to kill its participants. Constables have found that attacks intended to subdue a bar brawl are more effective than blows that inflict serious bodily injury.

Fraternity in the Aftermath. Many an adventuring party has been formed in the wake of a bar brawl. Less fortunate adventurers have found themselves incarcerated once the constabulary has quelled the disturbance.

Huge swarm of Medium humanoids, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (leather armor)

Hit Points 67 (9d12 + 9)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 14 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 13 (+1) | 11 (+0) | 10 (+0) | 9 (-1) |

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Resistances piercing, slashing

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any two languages

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Liquid Courage (Recharge 5–6). As a bonus action, the bar brawl imbibes nearby alcohol to gain access

to a hidden reservoir of audacity and grit. The bar brawl gains 7 (2d6) temporary HP for 1 minute.

Swarm. The bar brawl can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the bar brawl can move through any opening large enough for a Medium humanoid. Except for Liquid Courage, the bar brawl can't regain HP or gain temporary HP.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The bar brawl makes two melee attacks or two darts attacks.

Barstool. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, range 0 ft., one target in the bar brawl's space. *Hit:* 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage, or 7 (2d6) if the bar brawl has half its hit points or fewer.

Broken Bottles. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, range 0 ft., one target in the bar brawl's space. *Hit:* 10 (4d4) slashing damage, or 5 (2d4) if the bar brawl has half its hit points or fewer.

Darts. Ranged Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, range 20/40 ft. *Hit:* 10 (4d4) piercing damage, or 5 (2d4) if the bar brawl has half its hit points or fewer.

Cygnus Starborne

"My life's work. Years of searching and struggle, and I ruined it in a bar brawl."

Cygnus Starborne is a priest and seeker after knowledge. He's dedicated his entire life to finding the lost Scriptures of St. Birgitte, and is excited and proud to return with them to his isolated monastery/library. He takes life very seriously: living up to other people's expectations is of primary importance to Cygnus. He hates to disappoint.

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Cygnus is a pale man with short brown hair and a thoughtful expression. He wears voluminous brown robes and simple leather sandals.

Medium humanoid (human), lawful good

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 19 (3d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 13 (+1) | 10 (+0) | 14 (+2) | 14 (+2) | 16 (+3) | 12 (+1) |

Saving Throws Wis +5, Cha +3

Skills History +4, Religion +4

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Spellcasting. Cygnus is a 3rd-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). He knows the following spells:

- Cantrips (at will): *guidance, light, spare the dying*
- 1st level (4 slots): *bless, cure wounds, purify food and drink*
- 2nd level (2 slots): *lesser restoration, prayer of healing*

ACTIONS

Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 bludgeoning damage

Gwynn Troutcales, Mad Druid of Prince's Harbor

"Always intense, that one, but a good heart."

Once a generous but sometimes overzealous defender of Prince's Harbor, and a loving husband and father, Gwynn suffered terribly from being infected by the disease by E'thor. While struggling to fight the infectious curse which he could not cure, he thought

it was a test by the spirit of the woods. He had no idea he suffered to advance the cruel vengeance of E'thor.

Gwynn is gaunt, with dark rings beneath his eyes, and his thinning black and grey hair pulled into a pony tail. He wears his druidic vestments, but they are rumpled. He seems strange and unsettled, but tired. He is convinced that this is all working out for the best, this is his destiny, the forest chose him. That is the madness talking.

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 45 (6d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 10 (+0) | 14 (+2) | 16 (+3) | 12 (+1) | 16 (+3) | 11 (+0) |

Saving Throws Int +4, Wis +6

Skills Medicine +6, Nature +6, Perception +6

Senses passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Druidic, Sylvan

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Fever Madness. Gwynn suffers from the delusions of E'thor's cursed malady; this grants him advantage on saving throws against enchantments or other effects which might affect his mental state.

Draw Strength. Gwynn regains one 2nd-level or two 1st-level spell slots. He regains his use of this ability after completing a long rest.

Spellcasting. Gwynn is a 5th-level druid spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). He knows the following spells:

- Cantrips (at will): *druidcraft, produce flame, shillelagh*
- 1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds, entangle, faerie fire, thunderwave*
- 2nd level (3 slots): *barkskin, flame blade*
- 3rd level (2 slots): *call lightning, dispel magic*

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ACTIONS

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6+1) bludgeoning damage.

Shambling Pile

“I’d never thought of it as anything more than the scenery, but then that’s probably by intention, isn’t it? If we’d suspected they were out to eat us, we probably wouldn’t have strayed so near.”

Shambling piles are slow, silent ambush hunters. Intent on stunning prey with their heartspark and then consuming it, they strive to grow big enough to eventually become shambling mounds.

These plant predators appear to be shaggy, dense bushes, rough cones, or mounds of vines, branches, thorns, and rootlings. They push forward limbs and roots to move with more speed than one would suspect, and they always keep their heartroot protected.

Medium plant, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 22 (4d8 + 4)

Speed 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 15 (+2) | 13 (+1) | 13 (+1) | 2 (-4) | 10 (+0) | 3 (-4) |

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Colony Consciousness. For every shambling pile within 30 feet of another shambling pile, verdant mantle, or shambling mound, and no more than 60 feet from all shambling piles, mantles, or mounds in the group, the creatures gain advantage on attacks and saving throws, +2 temporary HP per creature, and an additional +1 to hit per creature, maximum +4.

Lightning Aligned. Whenever the shambling pile is subjected to lightning damage, it has advantage on the saving throw; if successful, it takes no damage and regains a number of hit points equal to the lightning damage dealt.

ACTIONS

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) piercing damage plus 2 bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 11). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained.

Heartspark. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30 ft., special. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) lightning damage, and the target is stunned for one round (DC 11 saving throw). The shambling pile makes a ranged attack against a target; any target it is grappling must also make a saving throw or be stunned and suffer the damage.

Verdant Mantle

“It grows on you... literally. I’ve found them wild in the forest, but if an enterprising creature finds it first, you’re going to be sorry anyone found it at all.”

Patient ambush predators, verdant mantles lie in wait, usually in groups, attacking foraging prey who wander too close and react too slowly, or dropping on them from tree branches or overhangs to strangle and kill. They hunger for fleshy creatures to kill and absorb, their roots burrowing in and eventually digesting the corpse.

A verdant mantle most resembles an octopus of roots, thorns, and vines, swirled around a large fruit or pulpy root. They move with a slow undulation, creeping up on small creatures, insects, and birds to crush or skewer before drawing the broken form into its digestive root bundle near the heartroot.

How Does Your Garden Grow

Medium Plant, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 30 (4d8 + 12)

Speed 10 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 15 (+2) | 13 (+1) | 16 (+3) | 2 (-4) | 10 (+0) | 3 (-4) |

Senses blindsight 30 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Willing Symbiote. The verdant mantle will attune to a creature which offers it 1d6 HP of its blood and makes a successful DC 13 Constitution saving throw, becoming a living attachment. On a failure, the mantle refuses and attacks until it or the creature attempting to attune to it are dead. If it becomes attuned, the verdant mantle provides the following benefits:

- +2 natural armor;
- +2 to Strength (Athletics, Acrobatics) checks;
- A slam attack as a bonus action, using the attuned creature's Strength + Proficiency bonus + 2 or +4 to hit, whichever is higher, and doing 5 (1d6+2) bludgeoning damage on a successful hit;
- The first 20 hit points of damage suffered by the attuned creature are inflicted on the verdant mantle instead.

After suffering 20 HP of damage, the attuned creature no longer gains the bonus to checks or slam attack ability, and suffers the effects of level 3 exhaustion until the verdant mantle is fully healed. The verdant mantle can be healed normally and recovers half of the suffered damage per long rest. As a bonus action which does not provoke opportunity attacks, the attuned creature can make a sacrifice to heal the mantle. The attuned creature may sacrifice either hit points or hit dice from its available pool of hit dice usable during a short rest; every 7 (2d6) HP or 1 short rest hit die heals the mantle 5 HP. An attuned creature cannot sacrifice more than half their

hit points or short rest hit dice, rounded up, in a single bonus action to heal the mantle.

The mantle does not attune to constructs, undead, or oozes, and can't attune to a different creature once attuned. If the verdant mantle suffers 30 HP of damage in a single attack, it dies from shock and cannot be healed. A dead mantle's benefits last until the attuned creature's next long rest. Attempting to remove the verdant mantle from the attuned creature while it is alive requires a successful DC 18 Constitution saving throw; it's removed with a success, but on a failure it remains attached and attuned. Attuned creatures who remove a verdant mantle gain disadvantage on all saving throws until they receive a restoration spell.

ACTIONS

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Grasping Tendrils. The verdant mantle flails its vines and restrains any creature within 10 feet, as if affected by an entangle spell. Unless they succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw at the start of each of the verdant mantle's turns, they take 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage. If the mantle moves, entangled targets move with it. It cannot use this ability when attuned to a creature.

A Forest Strangely

An exploration adventure for 4 to 5 characters of 4th level
By Brian Suskind

Adventure Background

The mighty Neblina Forest has been a druidic stronghold for centuries and, in that time, it has sheltered a variety of denizens and creatures both large and small. High Druid Deng is the latest caretaker of the Neblina. Three months ago, the druid's adopted dryad daughter Arpistis was abducted. Though Deng continues to exhaust every effort to locate her, he is bound to the forest and cannot leave its borders. The druid suspects his former apprentice E'thor is behind the kidnapping and the re-emergence of the disease known as Chranc.

Adventure Synopsis

Following the advice of Trinity Arya, the brave adventurers travel to Neblina Forest, the home of the reclusive Deng. They are greeted by a magical cat who advises them that the great druid's tower is hidden by magical mists and warns them against killing. Only by unlocking three keys in three locations can the heroes unlock the path to Deng. As the adventurers explore the forest and interact with the inhabitants, they can learn tantalizing clues about who might truly be behind the calamities in Prince's Harbour and Grove. When they finally reach Deng, however, the great druid has one final test the heroes must overcome or perish in the attempt.

Adventure Hooks

THE NEXT STAGE. Following up on the events of the last adventure, *How Does Your Garden Grow*, the heroes travel to the domain of the Great Druid Deng hoping to learn what is behind the strange events occurring in Prince's Harbour and Grove.

A MISSION OF MERCY. The heroes search for Deng to find a cure for Gwynn, the druid from Chapter Three.

SEEKING AN AUDIENCE. If using this adventure separately from the *Harper's Tale* arc, perhaps the heroes need knowledge only a great druid can provide.

Traveling to the Forest

The exact distance from Prince's Harbour (or Grove) to Neblina Forest is left to the GM to determine. Some may want to prolong the journey, running side quests or random encounters. Others could jump right to the border of the woods.

Neblina Forest

The ancient and vast Neblina Forest is a primeval woodland full of old-growth oaks, firs, and pines, many of which are over one hundred feet tall. The diverse assortment of creatures who live in the

A Forest Strangely



A Forest Strangely

Neblina all possess the ability to speak Common and most have a higher level of intelligence than similar creatures outside of the forest.

A heavy, drifting, magical mist pervades the forest beneath the thick canopy and obscures vision past forty feet. The fog persists day and night regardless of weather or season. This mist also makes it much harder to navigate, which requires a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check. When characters fail to navigate successfully, they may find themselves tripped up on roots or shrubs or turned around, prolonging their journey.

Running the Adventure

Once inside Neblina Forest, the adventure is presented in a sandbox style using three types of encounters.

- **RANDOM ENCOUNTERS:** small confrontations
- **SANDBOX LOCATION:** areas where the heroes can interact with the denizens of the forest
- **KEY LOCATIONS:** areas holding one of the three keys needed to reach Deng's Tower

While there is no strict order to the progression of the adventure, one suggested progression is Random Encounter, Sandbox Location, Random Encounter, Key Location, and then repeat until all Key Locations have been visited.

1. Welcome to the Woods

The heroes have watched the verdant line of the forest grow ever closer, but now as they pass across the boundary, they find a different world.

Within the Neblina Forest, a thick, white fog flows and coils around the dark trees, obscuring

your sight. The woods elsewhere in the area pale in comparison to the great Neblina. Massive trees, some easily one hundred feet tall, form a verdant canopy dimly seen above your heads. The ground around the wide tree bases is filled with hearty grasses and rich with the smell of loam, moss, and vibrant plant growth. A faint trail leads deeper into the forest.

GMs may include a random encounter here or proceed immediately to the meeting with Old Tom The Hermit (see below). Eventually, the heroes come upon a strange individual.

Just ahead, a low tree branch stretches across your path, and reclined upon it is a cat, far larger than any house cat. The feline wears a rather dapper looking vest and a jeweled necklace. It regards you with golden eyes and speaks! "Well, look what we have here! Visitors! And mortals at that. Who are you and why are you here, I wonder?"

Old Tom The Hermit (see *Appendix 4, page 71*) is a mischievous temple cat who serves Deng as a guide and scout. One of his tasks is to tell outsiders about the three keys so they might be tested to see if they are worthy enough to reach the Great Druid. Although he could tell them about each task and the other dangers that await them, he isn't really supposed to give any hints.

Once introductions have been made, Tom gets to business:

"If you seek the Great Druid Deng, it is my task to give you some guidance."

Tom The Hermit clears his throat then suddenly coughs, turning his head aside to spit something out.

"Hairball. My apologies. Now, where was I? Oh yes, the poem.

Ye seek the Great Druid? Yet the mist keeps ye apart,

A Forest Strangely

So three keys must be freed.
Within the World Tree Stump, a golden heart.
By the swamp's nest, a silver seed.
And the last one I shall disclose
Nestled in Finn's Meadow, a copper rose.

There my lovelies, that's the whole thing. Find the keys and the path to Deng's Tower will be yours."

If the heroes have questions, Tom has the following bits of information, provided he can be convinced to part with them.

- The inhabitants of the forest are mostly peaceful folk, but some will take issue with the heroes and might be violent.
- As outsiders, you won't find your way in the mist but if you keep going, you'll surely get to where you need to go.
- Deng is heartbroken and sad, but it isn't Tom's place to tell that tale.
- To find a key you may need a strong body, or a clever brain, or a sturdy blade but not necessarily more than one for each key.
- (If bribed with gems or other shiny "toys") Helping the inhabitants of the forest would go a long way to convincing the Great Druid of your worth.

After answering questions, or when he gets bored, Tom stands to leave.

"Oh, before I go. One other thing I should mention—just a little tidbit of advice: The druid doesn't mind folk defending themselves, but he isn't fond of those who outright kill the creatures of this forest. To be sure, they might try to kill you, but it is our home, after all. Ta!"

Tom grins at you and fades out of sight.

GM's Note: If at any point the characters are unsure of what to do next, Tom may appear to provide a bit of guidance. He follows them invisibly during their time in the forest.

Non-Lethal Attacks

Tom warns the characters not to kill the inhabitants of the forest. The "Great Druid" would not take kindly to such actions. They can, however, defend themselves as long as they avoid inflicting permanent injury or death. This generally means restraining or knocking a target out instead of dealing a death blow.

When an attacker reduces a creature to 0 hit points with a melee attack, the attacker may choose to render the target unconscious (and stable) instead of killing it. The attacker can make this choice the instant the damage is dealt.

DEVELOPMENT. The heroes are now free to explore the forest. As they proceed, their ability to use skills to determine direction is inhibited by the mists, but they should arrive at one of the three key locations eventually.

2. Random Encounters

As the heroes move through the forest, they encounter various denizens and inhabitants. Roll 1d12 and consult the table below or choose an encounter to suit specific circumstances or personal preference.

A Note About The Mists

The creatures who live in Neblina Forest do not actually see the mists which seem ever-present in the woods. This is a magical effect created by Deng to safeguard his privacy and the safety of the locals. The creatures cannot give the characters specific directions to Deng's Tower, or if they do, it doesn't do any good; if characters attempt to follow the directions, they end up turned around and right back where they started. Only unlocking the three key locations can open the path.

A Forest Strangely

Encounters in Neblina Forest

d12 Encounter

- 1 **TREE CULLING.** The smell of burning wood leads you to a handful of old trees, one of which is wreathed in flames. Two **green dragon wyrmlings** scamper around the burning tree, which they ignited to keep tree rot from spreading to the rest of the forest.
- 2 **TRAIL BLOCKED.** A huge **stone giant** with moss and small shrubs growing on his skin and clothes sleeps in the clearing ahead. Probably best not to wake him. The stone giant attacks if startled, but he can be calmed.
- 3 **TREANT MIGRATION.** A dozen **treants** tromp across the trail heading to a different part of the forest. With a DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check, a treant warns of a coming danger (skip the next random encounter).
- 4 **RESTING HUNTER.** A human **scout** named Serg sleeps at the foot of an old oak tree. The 6 **sprites** hiding invisibly do not appreciate anyone waking Serg and attack anyone who attempts to do so.
- 5 **MYSTERIOUS CROSSROADS.** After passing through the intersection of two trails, you find every path returns to the same crossroads. A *dispel magic* (DC 12) or DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) uncovers the way to break the cycle.
- 6 **MADLYNN'S REST.** A **unicorn** stands in a green glade, under the shelter of a spreading oak tree, gazing sorrowfully at a wounded **elk**. If the characters remove the arrow from the elk and heal it with magic, they each gain inspiration.
- 7 **WHITE STAG.** A majestic white stag (use **elk** stat block) springs across the trail in a panic and vanishes into the trees.
- 8 **SWAMP SERENADE.** 2d6 **giant frogs** croak a familiar tavern song popular in the last town the characters visited. At the chorus, the frogs all stop and look at the characters expectantly. If the characters take up the tune, the frogs croak happily and the characters gain inspiration. If they don't join in, the frogs croak and hop away, and the characters have disadvantage on their next skill check.
- 9 **LOG BRIDGE.** Maris, a female **wereboar** (in hybrid form), stands upon a felled tree stretching across a 10ft wide crevasse. She challenges the strongest character to an arm-wrestling match (best two out of three opposed strength checks) before she allows anyone to cross.
- 10 **A WOLF IN STAFF'S CLOTHING.** A glowing wooden staff adorned with golden runes sticks up out of a tree stump in the middle of the trail. Both the staff and the stump are **mimics**.
- 11 **FOREST MERCHANT.** Fekber, a **satyr**, drives a small wagon down an intersecting trail. He is a peddler with goods both mundane and strange to trade.
- 12 **LOST!** Somehow you have gotten turned around and end up back at your last location but something else is interested in the area. Roll again to determine what creature is now there.

3. Sandbox Locations

The following sandbox locations can be encountered in any order.

BEARS IN DISTRESS

As the heroes navigate through the forest they hear frantic roars and pitiful whines from up ahead.

MAMMA BEAR'S CAVE. A small cave set into a rocky hill is the scene of an emergency. A fallen tree has blocked the entrance to the cave. Frantically pacing back and forth in front of this obstacle, and occasionally throwing herself at it, is a large female **brown bear**. A frightened whine can be heard coming from inside the cave.

The mother bear calls out the cave as the heroes come within earshot:

“Mother’s here! Mother will get you out!”

When the heroes approach (or when she detects them), Mother Bear initially warns them away and acts to defend her trapped cub. Heroes who succeed at a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check convince her to allow them to help.

Moving the tree requires three heroes to succeed at DC 15 Strength checks.

DEVELOPMENT. If the heroes move the obstacle, there is a joyful reunion between mamma bear and her cub. The mother bear thanks the heroes and gives them one of the following rewards:

- **WARNING.** Allowing the heroes to bypass the next random encounter.
- **HINTS.** Gain advantage on their first rolls at the next key location
- **INFORMATION.** The bear tells the heroes that the druid searches for his kidnapped daughter.

TREASURE. The mother bear also retrieves an old leather bag from inside her cave and gives it to the heroes as a gift. It seems to contain stale rations but the bag itself is a *bag of holding*.

CRUMBLING RUINS



Around a bend in the trail, the forest parts to reveal a squat, ruined structure, half-buried and covered with undergrowth.

This ruined tower predates the arrival of the ancient druids to the forest and is the origin site of the Chranc disease.

Disease Backstory

Twenty years ago, teenage E'thor (then apprentice to Deng) and Arpistis explored this ruin. They found a hidden coffer. When they opened it, they were showered with a strange gray dust. Delighting at the small treasures within the coffer, they did not realize they had been exposed to Chranc until years later.

If the heroes enter this ruin, they trigger a memory spell left over from when Deng himself investigated the events that occurred here.

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As soon as the heroes enter the ruin, they experience a vision:

As if experiencing a waking dream, you see two teenagers exploring the ruin. One is a human lad of about 15. The other is clearly a dryad, a girl with bark-like skin.

The boy pulls an old, metal coffer out of a hidden nook. "Look what I found, Arpistis!"

"Maybe we shouldn't, E'thor." The dryad looks nervous. "Father wouldn't like us poking around this place.

"What Master Deng doesn't know won't hurt him"

The two teenagers open the coffer and a blast of air from within showers them with a fine gray powder. They cough and sputter but are quickly distracted by the small pile of golden coins and gems. Then the vision fades away.

A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check discerns that the vision was the side-effect of a powerful *legend lore* spell cast on the ruins.

DEVELOPMENT. If the heroes search the ruins with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, they find a small chest behind a loose stone. Of course, it is locked and trapped.

Poison Needle

Mechanical Trap

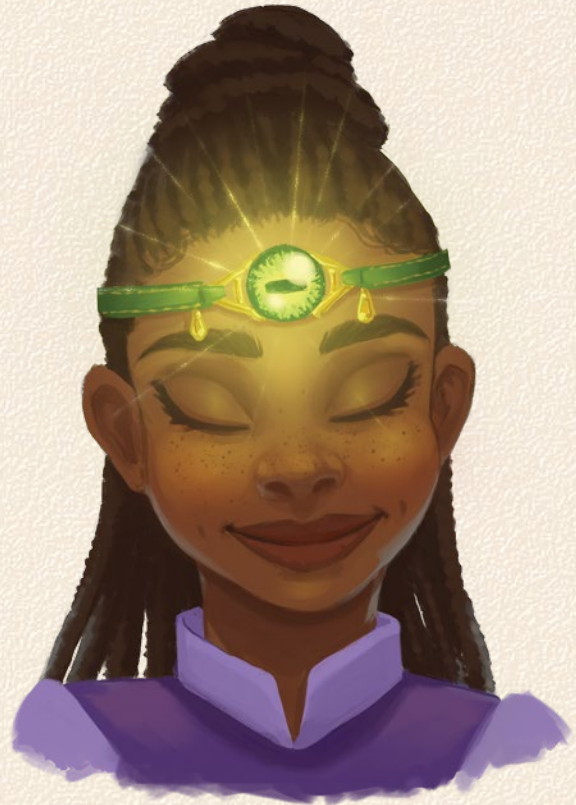
A poisoned needle is hidden within the chest's lock. Opening the chest causes the needle to spring out, delivering a dose of poison. When triggered, the needle extends 3 inches straight out from the lock. A creature within range takes 1 piercing damage and 16 (3d10) poison damage, and must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check allows a character to deduce the trap's presence. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools unlocked the chest and disarms the trap. Unsuccessfully attempting to pick the lock triggers the trap.

TREASURE. Within the chest the heroes find a few tattered cloaks and blankets wrapped around a +1 *longsword* and a *scroll of guiding bolt*.

DRYAD'S TREEHOUSE

The heroes come upon a towering oak tree with a wooden treehouse nestled in the branches. There is a feeling of sadness to the tree and the house. The leaves of the tree droop and the once bright paint on the house is now faded and peeling.

OAK TREE. This is the oak tree of the **dryad** Arpistis, adopted daughter of Deng. The tree pines for its mistress (who was kidnapped by E'thor). A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check identifies the tree as a dryad's oak. A 15 or more also reveals that the dryad of this oak is somehow missing.



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TREEHOUSE. Heroes who enter the treehouse via a hanging rope ladder find the house is larger on the inside than the outside. A frame on the wall displays a child's stick-figure drawing of two girls and a boy and is labeled "Arpistis, Mavka, and E'thor." The house is otherwise empty.

TREASURE. The heroes find a *headband of light* (page 29) if they weren't able to recover one in *Below the Grove*.

FORGIVENESS'S GARDEN

This small clearing is carpeted with flowers in a riot of colours. Gossamer-winged sprites flit between the flowers, giggling and flinging pollen at one another. Occasionally one or two of them team up to pluck a flower from the ground. From the balcony of a sturdy treehouse a slight woman with short, green hair shakes her staff and yells at the tiny fey to leave her garden alone.

PESKY SPRITES. The gnome Forgiveness cultivates this garden of rare and beautiful blooms, many of which have medicinal or magical properties. The sprites find them irresistible and are a constant nuisance. If the characters find a non-violent way to make them leave Forgiveness in peace, she allows them to take a nap in the garden (the equivalent of a *catnap* spell).

CREATURES. 12 **sprites** dart around amongst the flowers and **Forgiveness** (see *Appendix 4, page 72*) watches from her treehouse.

MUSHROOM GROVE

This area of the forest contains tree-sized mushrooms with wide caps interspersed among the normal woodland plant-life. At the center of this grove of fungus is a small house built out of mushroom stalks. It is surrounded by a white-picket fence and a small garden of vegetables.

This is the home of Baba Griba, a grandmotherly **green hag**. She can usually be found tending her garden. If the heroes approach her peacefully, she is willing to trade for the magical mushrooms she grows.

MUSHROOM EFFECTS/PRICES. Baba Griba has a selection of mushrooms for sale (see table below).

The mushrooms are about the size of a walnut and do not decay or rot. Baba Griba accepts coin or items of equal value.

SIDE EFFECTS. What Baba Griba does not mention is that for every mushroom you eat in the same 24-hour period you gain a cumulative 10% chance of a side effect. You can roll on the following table or choose one that fits your campaign.

| Roll | Effect |
|------|--|
| 1 | Confused! As the <i>confusion</i> spell |
| 2 | Reduced! As the <i>reduce person</i> spell |
| 3 | Slowed! As the <i>slow</i> spell |
| 4 | Cursed! As the <i>bestow curse</i> spell |
| 5 | Deafened! As the <i>blindness/deafness</i> spell |
| 6 | Bane! As the <i>bane</i> spell |

| Amount in Stock | Mushroom | Functions as | Price (GP) |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------|
| 20 | Blue Mushroom | <i>potion of healing</i> | 25 |
| 10 | Blue Green Mushroom | <i>potion of greater healing</i> | 150 |
| 5 | Blue Green Mushroom with Purple Spots | <i>potion of superior healing</i> | 750 |
| 2 | Yellow Mushroom | <i>potion of heroism</i> | 750 |
| 2 | Red Mushroom | <i>potion of hill giant strength</i> | 250 |
| 2 | Black Mushroom | <i>potion of speed</i> | 500 |

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These effects last until the end of the next encounter or location unless negated by dispel magic (DC 12).

RACCOON VILLAGE

A village of treehouses connected by rope bridges hang from towering oak trees. Nimble, raccoon-like humanoids scamper from tree to tree and eye the heroes with cautious curiosity.

This is an **azeban** (see *Appendix 4, page 72*) village called Nanta-Romba. The azeban are generally peaceful and welcoming if approached in friendship. They can offer a safe place to rest or the opportunity to resupply as well as act as a source of information. Since they do not see the magical mist, they cannot give accurate directions to any key location.



NOTABLE AZEBANS

- **CHIEF TIRPA** (Female **azeban** noble): Knows of the kidnapping of the druid's daughter since her scouts were sent to search for Arpistis.
- **PALOO** (Male **azeban** priest): Medicine man of the tribe. Offers magical healing.
- **LUMA** (Female **azeban** scout): Crafter and merchant. Supplies most non-magical common items

RUMORS & INFORMATION

The azeban know the following rumors, some of which are actually true. To determine the validity of a rumor, characters must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom check (these are not Insight checks as the azeban are sharing rumors, not lying). If the characters attempt to discern the validity of a rumor regarding a creature or area they have already encountered, the DC is reduced by 4.

- A great dragon has been seen in Pantano Swamp (False—it's a drake)
- Baba Griba is grouchy but sells wonderful magical mushrooms (True)
- The treants sense great danger coming from the East (False)
- The Great Druid hasn't been the same since his daughter was kidnapped (True)
- Sprites can be lulled to sleep if you sing songs to them (False)
- A white stag can lead you to great treasure if you can follow it (False)
- Arpistis once became very ill with a strange disease but her father cured her (True)

TALKATIVE STREAM

A fallen log spans a 30-foot-wide stream that crosses the trail. As the heroes approach, a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check allows them to spot colorful fish leaping and playing in the water. When the heroes reach the log, a fish talks to them.

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A colorful fish sticks its head out of the water and speaks! “Hello! Hello! Crossing our bridge is fun! Go on! Cross! Do! Fun!”

THE FISH. The fish (use **quipper**) are harmless but mischievous. They giggle, bombard the heroes with inane questions, and tell bad jokes.

THE BRIDGE. Crossing the bridge requires a successful DC 15 Dexterity check (or a DC 10 Athletics). Failure results in the hero falling off the log (see below). Additionally, the fish spit strong streams of water at each of the heroes who attempt to cross.

Water Spit. Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 0 damage but forces the target to make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or fall off the log.

Heroes who fall off the log are instantly teleported back to the shore before they land in the water. Similarly, characters who attempt to wade or swim across the stream are also teleported back to the shore.

TREASURE. Any hero who crosses the bridge the first time without getting knocked off receives a coin from the fish which grants them advantage on their next roll and then crumbles away.

4. Key Locations

These locations each contain one of the three keys the heroes need to open the path to Deng’s Tower. Once they have acquired all three, continue to Part 5 of this adventure.

A WORLD TREE STUMP

A massive tree stump covered in vines stands in the middle of a clearing. As the heroes approach a DC

15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals faint giggling coming from the nearby shrubberies.

SPRITE GAMES. A troupe of **sprites** hides among the underbrush watching the heroes approach. The bravest of their number, a female sprite named Saoirse Glimmertwig and her brother Henrik, challenge the heroes to three tasks. Best two out of three wins. If the sprites lose, they will give over the key, if they win, they want a coin, a present, or a kiss.

If the sprites are threatened or attacked, they simply turn invisible and flee. Luckily their memories are short so if the heroes return after going to other locations, the sprites do not remember being attacked.



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The sprites' magic produces the key from the stump so there isn't any way to gain the key without agreeing to the games.

During the contest, the sprites cheer everyone's efforts and bring the heroes food and drink while other sprites play instruments and create a party-like atmosphere.

- **THE CHALLENGE OF SKILL.** One of the heroes must defeat Henrik in an archery contest. They both shoot at a nearby apple tree. The one who rolls a higher ranged attack score is the winner. The sprite archer has a +6 to hit. When this challenge begins, Henrik whistles and his companion, **Kona** (see *Appendix 4, page 73*), comes trotting out from the shrubbery. She's a tiny dachshund who gazes at Henrik adoringly. She carries his quiver full of arrows, and is trained to fetch apples he shoots off the tree.
- **THE CHALLENGE OF DANCE.** One of the heroes must defeat a sprite in a dance contest. If none of the heroes have proficiency in Performance, one can make a Charisma check. The sprite has +0 to its Charisma.
- **THE CHALLENGE OF RIDDLES.** Saoirse recites a riddle and the heroes must provide the answer.

One night, four men sat down to play
They played all night to the break of day
Some played for coin, others played for fun
If no man lost that night, what did they play?

Answer: Songs/Music

If the heroes win, the sprites cheer and clap. Saoirse points at the World Tree Stump which groans open revealing a glowing Golden Acorn.

If the heroes lose, the sprites cheer and clap. Saoirse shoos the heroes away but promises if they come back later, they can try again. The heroes must attempt a different key (or a sandbox location) before returning.

PANTANO SWAMP

The heroes enter an area of swampland. The ground grows marshy and, in several places, crude wooden bridges span murky water. A DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check picks up voices calling for help up ahead.

DISTRESSED KOBOLDS. The Shadow Fish Tribe of **kobolds** huddle at the edge of the large swamp known as Shadow Fish Bog, wailing and moaning. If approached peacefully, they beg the heroes for aid. If threatened, they scatter into the swamp. The heroes must attempt a different key (or a sandbox location) before returning.

Rek Sogu (old male **kobold**) tells the heroes of their plight:

"Live here, we do. In Pantano Swamp. Good food. Grubs! Fish! But much fear, now. Much fear! Dread Lizard has sacred nesting ground! Eggs! Eggs in danger! Even swallowed silver egg! Help you will? Pretty pleasees?"

The kobold chief has the following bits of information:

- Two days ago, the Dread Lizard (a **swamp drake**, see *Appendix 4, page 71*) moved onto the island holding the tribe's nesting ground
- The dread lizard is not one of the druid's creatures so it can be killed without issue
- The silver egg swallowed by the dread lizard is the one given to the tribe by Deng
- The nesting ground currently holds "many" eggs
- The warriors of the tribe tried to retake the island but were defeated by the dread lizard
- If the heroes aid the tribe, the chief will reward them with the silver egg

Though the kobolds are fairly cowardly, they can be convinced, with a successful DC 20 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check, to aid the heroes in battling the dread lizard. If this occurs, the remaining 6 **kobolds** join the characters in the battle.

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THE ISLAND. The nesting ground island is 40 feet from shore, in the middle of Shadow Fish bog. It is round, roughly 60 feet in diameter, and covered in high grasses and thin trees. The kobolds can show the heroes a hidden route to the island which keeps them out of the muck, or they can wade through difficult terrain to reach it.

If the swamp drake detects the heroes approaching, it hides (Stealth +4) in the tall grasses to ambush them when they reach the island.

SWAMP DRAKE. A wingless dragon with a snake-like neck and a body covered in enormous quills.

If the dread lizard is defeated, the heroes find the kobold eggs are buried in the warm sands of the island and largely undisturbed by the dread lizard. The kobolds are overjoyed to have their nesting grounds back. Rek Sogu shows them where the dread lizard hid its small hoard and offers the heroes a place to rest, if they need it.

If they don't think of it, Rek Sogu directs the heroes to cut open the belly of the beast to recover the glowing Silver Egg.

TREASURE. Heroes succeeding at a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, or who are guided by the kobolds, find a shallow pit dug beneath a tree containing 394cp, 976sp, 72gp, two malachite gems (10gp each), and a leather case holding a *potion of greater healing* and three *potions of healing*.

THE FLOWER FIELD

The heroes come upon a wide meadow completely filled with a dazzling variety of blooming flowers. A wooden sign at the edge of the clearing reads:

“BEWARE OF BLIND SHARKY”

The meadow is a rough oval about 200 feet across and 150 feet wide.

This beautiful scene hides two strange obstacles. The first is “Blind Sharky” and the other are the flowers themselves.

CONFUSION FLOWERS. Creatures entering the meadow must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw each turn or be affected by a *confusion* spell. Creatures who do not breathe are not affected by the confusion flowers.

BLIND SHARKY. This near-sighted bulette lives in the meadow and spends much of his time smelling the flowers and loafing in the sun. When he detects the heroes, he attempts to grab them in his mouth one at a time and spit them out next to the wooden sign. If Sharky takes 80 points of damage, he flees.

Use **bulette** with the following modifications:

- **Speed** 50 ft., burrow 50 ft.
- **Skills** Athletics +10, Perception +6
- **Senses** darkvision 30 ft, tremorsense 40 ft., passive Perception 16
- **Grappling Jaws.** If the bulette uses a special attack action to grapple, it can hold a creature smaller than itself in its jaws without inflicting any damage and may take a bonus action to move up to its speed.

DEVELOPMENT. At the center of the meadow is a hidden depression containing the Copper Rose. To find the rose, an individual hero needs to succeed on three consecutive DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) checks to search the meadow. Suffering from the effects of the flowers or being attacked by the bulette disrupt consecutive attempts.

When the heroes pick up the Copper Rose, the petals on all of the flowers in the field immediately close up, ending the *confusion* effect.

5. THE DRUID'S TOWER

Once the heroes have all three keys the mists in front of them part:

The three keys glow and the mists around you suddenly part, revealing a wide trail leading toward a tall, tree-like stone tower. Flowering ivy runs up the sides of the structure and various fey creatures and animals fly, crawl and climb around the tower.

When the heroes enter the clearing around the tower, Old Tom The Hermit appears in front of them, a grin on his face.

“Master Deng, Great Druid of the Neblina, welcomes you to his home. One final test awaits, if you be worthy.”

The cat gestures to the side of the tower where a huge, bipedal lizard steps into view. It has a long tail, a massive head and jaws, but small arms. The beast roars in fury as it sees you!

This is an ancient lizard beast (use **tyrannosaurus** with only 90 hit points) summoned from the past by the Great Druid to test the heroes.

For each inhabitants of the forest killed by the heroes in the random encounters, sandbox or key locations (not including the swamp drake or mimics) add **10 hit points** to the dinosaur. When the heroes defeat the ancient lizard beast, they hear a slow clapping.

A gaunt, thin-faced human man stands on one of the tower's balconies and slowly claps his hands. He is bald with an unkempt black beard and a sharp, hooked nose.

“A passible display. Perhaps you'll do, after all. I am Deng, Druid of the Neblina. I suppose you should come in.”

He gestures and a door at the base of the tower slowly creaks open.



Conclusion

If the GM is running this outside of the campaign arc of *Harper's Tale*, Deng grants the heroes an audience and is willing to listen to their requests though he may want them to accomplish a task for him before he agrees to help them.

For those GMs running *A Forest Strangely* as part of *Harper's Tale*, the heroes enter to meet Deng, the great druid. If they mention the plight of Trinity Arya and her nephew Gwynn, he promises to send aid to them.

The heroes can speak to Deng to learn what he knows of the disease afflicting Grove and Prince's Harbour, and how the druid's missing daughter ties into everything.

But that is a tale for another adventure.

At the end of this adventure, the heroes gain enough experience to progress to level 5.

Appendix 4

Old Tom the Hermit

Small beast, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 40 (9d6 + 9)

Speed 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 8 (-1) | 19 (+4) | 12 (+1) | 12 (+1) | 16 (+3) | 18 (+4) |

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Sylvan

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Keen Smell. Old Tom has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Innate Spellcasting. Tom's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

- At will: *invisibility*
- 3/day each: *charm person*, *cure wounds*
- 1/day: *enhance ability* (only Cat's Grace)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Tom makes one bite attack and one claw attack.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d4 + 4) slashing damage.

Teleport (Recharge 4–6). Old Tom magically teleports, along with any equipment he is wearing or carrying, up to 40 feet to an unoccupied space

he can see. Before or after teleporting, the cat can make one bite attack.

Swamp Drake

Large dragon, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 68 (8d10 + 24)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 20 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| 17 (+3) | 14 (+2) | 16 (+3) | 6 (-2) | 14 (+2) | 10 (+0) |

Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +5

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +4

Senses darkvision 90 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Spiky Hide. A creature that touches the swamp drake or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 9 (2d8) piercing damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The swamp drake makes a bite or tail attack and a ranged barb attack.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) piercing damage.

Tail. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) poison damage.

Barb. Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, range 20/80 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Breath Weapon (Recharge 5–6). The swamp drake uses the following breath weapon:

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Acid Breath. The drake exhales acid in a 15-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Forgiveness

"A comfortable home, a beautiful garden, and songbirds as your morning wake-up call. What more is there to life?"

Unlike many gnomes, Forgiveness doesn't like hustle and bustle. She likes pretty gardens with bumblebees buzzing between the flowers, and time to experiment with finding new magical and medicinal properties amongst her collection of rare blooms. Occasional visitors are fine but really, she'd rather talk to the birds. They're good listeners and they don't talk back.

Forgiveness is tall for a gnome, with a shock of green hair and dirt under her fingernails.

Small humanoid (gnome), chaotic good

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 11 (2d6 + 4)

Speed 25 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 7 (-2) | 16 (+3) | 14 (+2) | 15 (+2) | 14 (+2) | 13 (+1) |

Skills Medicine +4, Nature +4, Survival +4

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

Botanist. Forgiveness has advantage on checks to establish the properties of any plant, or plant-derived substance (e.g. ointments or some poisons).

ACTIONS

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 (1d6-2) bludgeoning damage

Staff of Blossoming

Wondrous item, common

This simple wooden staff, topped by a blue stone, causes all flowers within 20 feet to bloom.

Azeban

Medium fey, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 24)

Speed 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|
| 16 (+3) | 16 (+3) | 14 (+2) | 15 (+2) | 8 (-1) | 18 (+4) |

Saving Throws Dex+5, Wis +1

Skills Deception +6, Perception +1, Sleight of Hand +5, Stealth +5

Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks not made with cold iron

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Elvish, Sylvan

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Elusive. The azeban can take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

Magic Resistance. The azeban has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Innate Spellcasting. The azeban's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

- At will: *dancing lights, disguise self, faerie fire, minor illusion*
- 3/day each: *creation, major image, mislead, seeming*
- 1/day each: *mirage arcane, programmed illusion*

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ACTIONS

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

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Ear-Splitting Yawp (Recharge 5-6). The azeban emits a piercing yell in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, a target takes 21 (6d6) thunder damage and is deafened for 1 minute. On a success, a creature takes half the damage but isn't deafened. A creature made of inorganic material such as stone, crystal, or metal has disadvantage on this saving throw. A nonmagical object that isn't being worn or carried also takes the damage if it's in the area.

Kona

Delighted yapping, and whole-body wagging.

Kona is best friends with Henrik, a sprite archer. She's trained to carry his arrows and spare bowstrings, and to fetch whatever he shoots. Her favorite prize is apples, and she's constantly disappointed that she's not allowed to eat them (Henrik says they're bad for her).

She is a tiny, rather fluffy sausage dog, always smartly outfitted in a green blanket and a brown leather belt that holds Henrik's quiver on her back. She's usually carrying at least one toy, and playing fetch with her is a very quick way to her heart.

Tiny beast (dog), neutral good

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 7 (2d4 + 2)

Speed 30 ft.



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

Skills Perception +3

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages —

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

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

Find. Kona is specially trained to retrieve arrows. When she collects used arrows and crossbow bolts from a battlefield, she finds all expended ammunition instead of the usual half.

Helpful Girl. When Kona is within 5 feet of a creature using a ranged weapon, and is carrying suitable ammunition, that creature can use a bonus action to make an additional attack with their ranged weapon.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 piercing damage.

Be Ye Heroes of Worth?

An exploratory adventure for 4 to 5 characters of 5th level
By Ashley Warren



Adventure Background

After their run-ins with mysterious illnesses and unusual mayhem, the heroes sought the help of High Druid Deng based on his Aunt Trinity Arya's instructions. The heroes had to solve riddles and overcome obstacles while navigating a thick mist in the Neblina Forest before they could find Deng. Deng has granted the adventurers an audience and a quest: collect the ingredients needed to brew a curing

potion for Gwynn. The components are strange varieties of flora found only in the Neblina Forest.

This is easier said than done. Embroiled in a territorial dispute are two groups of creatures: the wily zoogs and the keen-eyed Cats of Ulthar. Both factions have staked a claim over areas of the Neblina Forest that bridges into the Dreamlands, where these creatures originate. Savvy collectors can brave the dangerous areas of the forest to harvest valuable and hard-to-find ingredients.

Adventure Synopsis

After their encounter with Deng, the characters are tasked with collecting ingredients to create a cure for Gwynn. Doing so means embarking into the hostile territory of the zoogs and the Cats of Ulthar and crossing temporarily into the Dreamlands. Brokering passage into areas of the forest is difficult but achievable with some clever negotiation. But the hostile factions aren't the only dangers that lurk in the forest; environmental obstacles and a menagerie of beasts put the heroes through their paces. Will adventurers be able to negotiate truces with the hostile clans to gain access to the areas of the forest where the elusive flora grows, or become ensnared in the conflict?

Adventure Hooks

AUDIENCE WITH THE DRUID. The adventurers are in need of a cure/potion/elixir only a high-druid can provide. They confront Deng and are given a quest to collect an assortment of ingredients that can be used to brew a cure/potion/elixir.

A HOSTILE FOREST. A quest-giver from a previous adventure may task the characters with exploring the Neblina Forest in search of ingredients or treasure. The characters begin the adventure in media res—they are being chased by a bear through the forest.

Running the Adventure

If you've played the previous adventures in this series, begin with the Prelude, otherwise begin with Scene 1.

The adventure begins in media res. After the first encounter, the characters can explore at their own discretion. The ingredients they seek are found beyond the territories controlled by both the zoogs

and the Cats of Ulthar, so the party must pass through the Dreamlands first.

OVERLAND TRAVEL. There is much to see in the lush and verdant Neblina Forest. As established in the previous adventure, the forest is engulfed in a thick fog that makes travel difficult. Characters must make a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check to navigate without getting lost.

DIM LIGHTING. The trees and the mist block out much of the natural daylight. At night, the forest is nearly pitch black save for the occasional glowing fungi or firefly.

CLEARINGS AND THICKETS. The Middle Forest is patchy, alternating between dense thickets and mossy clearings.

The Factions

- **THE ZOOGS.** These marsupial creatures may appear non-threatening, but they are unkind to those who may stumble upon their communities. To deter these unwanted visitors, Zoogs develop clever traps to harm and hinder unsuspecting creatures.
 - **THE CATS OF ULTHAR.** These creatures are tiny cats and travel in swarms, or clowders, but their size does not deter from their ferocity. These Cats are hostile toward other creatures and attempt to thwart wayward adventurers by causing storms that make travel difficult.
 - **THE CONFLICT.** Both the zoogs and the Cats of Ulthar are territorial. Chance meetings of the two creatures result in feral disputes where each group of creatures attempts to outsmart the other by leveraging the features of their shared environment.
-

Prelude. An Audience with the High Druid Deng

STARTING POINT A. The characters have earned an audience with High Druid Deng. He invites them into his tower. The tower interior mirrors the outside; vines tumble down the stone walls. It smells earthy inside, and the stone floor is covered partially in soil.

Deng is a gaunt, old man. He sits cross-legged atop a stool made of a large petrified tree trunk. He addresses the characters:

“You have done well to find me. The Neblina Forest has ensnared more experienced travelers than you, and your work against the puzzles and creatures you’ve encountered is admirable. What do you seek?”

When they share their mission to find a cure for Gwynn, Deng agrees to help. He shares the following information:

- Strange things live and grow in the forest. Many alchemists travel through the Neblina Forest to gather such ingredients.
- The characters should find the forest witch, Ruiying Mystruen who can give them guidance. She lives deep in the southeastern corner of the forest, and finding her cottage is not easy.
- To reach this area of the forest, the characters must travel through dangerous territory occupied by creatures known as zoogs and Cats of Ulthar. Deng calls this area the “Middle Forest” and notes that it crosses over into the Dreamlands, where both the zoogs and the Cats originate.
- As a druid, Deng knows about these creatures but abstains from interfering in their conflict. Deng advises caution when traveling through this area and suggests that the characters avoid combat in

favor of making offerings or even brokering a truce. Ultimately, however, their approach is up to them.

After their discussion with Deng, the heroes can continue their exploration through the forest. Go to **Starting Point B** to kick off the action.

Scene 1. Bear Necessities

Who is Fred?

Fred is a purple alicorn who lives in the Neblina Forest. He is sassy, enjoys teasing adventurers, has a golden horn, rainbow-colored mane, and great purple wings that shimmer in the lowlight. Despite his demeanor, Fred is protective over creatures in the forest and dislikes when outsiders hurt the beasts that don’t know any better.

STARTING POINT B: The adventure begins in media res. The party is being chased by a **brown bear**. Allow the players a minute to make a decision: do they run or stay put and fight?

- **RUN.** The bear’s speed is 40 ft. It has innate knowledge of the forest and can easily traverse through the foxholes and brambles. Characters can attempt to outrun the hostile beast or climb a tree. If the characters are successful in thwarting it, the bear loses interest and stalks back into the forest.
- **FIGHT.** The characters can confront the bear and dispatch it. However, before a killing blow strikes, **Fred** (see *Appendix 5, page 84*) appears and interrupts, suggesting mercy rather than violence. If the characters acquiesce, the bear scampers off.

DEVELOPMENT. Armed with information, the heroes can continue through the forest with Fred as a guide. Fred’s presence prevents the party from getting lost. However, Fred puts the onus on the characters to navigate. Use Fred as a helper rather than a leader. Fred can serve as the heroes’ ally and

guide. Like Deng, he prefers to stay out of the zoogs vs. Cats conflict but gives the heroes some helpful information:

- Cats of Ulthar live in dense thickets, lurking high in the trees. The tell-tale sign of their encampment is a harsh wind and concentrated rainstorm that occurs about 20 feet before a thicket. It can be difficult to differentiate between the forest's typical climate and the cat-summoned storm.
- Zoogs are hunters and trap-makers. Surrounding zoog territory are cleverly laid traps that blend into the environment. Heroes should keep a keen eye out for such traps, particularly pit traps that cause an adventurer to fall into a pit.

Interludes.

Encounters in the Middle Forest

There is always much to see and do in the forest. Although it's not uncommon for some of the native creatures to hunt each other or get into scuffles, the animals that live and lurk near the contested zoogs vs. Cats of Ulthar territory tend to be more hostile. The conflict between these two groups has caused a disturbance in the natural order of things.

When pacing and time allow, choose or roll for an encounter from the table below.

d12 Encounter

| | |
|-----|--|
| 1-6 | No encounter |
| 7 | Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 11 or higher hear a whimpering sound coming from the base of a tree. Pushing aside twigs and moss reveals a rotting tree trunk, several feet in diameter. A blink dog resides in the tree, nursing her new puppies. The dogs are all in good health. A blink dog, Blaze , protects her litter of five. Blaze is not hostile unless she or her puppies are harmed by the characters in any way. Lurking near the tree trunk is a constrictor snake , lying in wait to prey on the puppies. The snake can be scared off or dispatched. |
| 8 | Two huge, towering pines break through the fog. The awakened trees are non-hostile unless attacked. Characters can make a successful DC 14 Dexterity check to dodge out of the way from the approaching trees, or take 3 (1d6) points of bludgeoning damage from a stray root that lashes them as they pass. |
| 9 | A giant boar roars and dodges through the forest, straight at the characters. The boar is ferocious and feral. |
| 10 | Two giant elk dash through the forest, spooked elsewhere by a Cat of Ulthar that scared the elk out of their territory. The elk are large and motivated to get to safety. Characters who make a successful DC 13 Dexterity saving throw dodge out of the way, else they incur 5 (1d10) bludgeoning damage from being trampled |
| 11 | What looks like an especially thick cloud of mist is the intricate webbing of a phase spider . The web and spider are detectable by characters who make a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check. Otherwise, the characters begin the round surprised. |
| 12 | Characters who make a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check avoid stepping into the writhing nest of poisonous snakes ; otherwise, they are caught unaware by a lashing snake that bites at their ankles and begin the round surprised. |

Scene 2. Venturing Into The Dreamlands

A character who makes a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check spots an especially dense thicket, which marks the foray into the Dreamlands. At the base of the thicket are glowing purple mushrooms; characters who make a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) discern that there is something strange about these mushrooms.

As the party nears the thicket, the branches twist and move to form an archway that leads into the Dreamlands. This is where Fred departs, although the heroes may meet up with him again later after they've traveled into the Dreamlands.

A chasm has formed in the forest floor, forming a 10-foot-wide gap that plunges into darkness. The mist shrouds the forest floor and partially obscures the chasm, but it is still detectable with a passive (Wisdom) Perception of 13 or higher.

A chasm severs the forest floor; through the mist, the rift appears like a river of darkness. Rocks and twigs tumble over the edge into the depths. The edges of the chasm are jagged as if the ground was ripped apart with force.

Both the zoogs and the Cats of Ulthar have claimed a strip of the forest that forms a portal to the Dreamlands where both creatures originate. Their territorial pockets are interspersed throughout this strip, denoted on the map. This next part of the adventure is written sandbox-style. Allow the heroes a chance to decide which direction they head in, and use the landmarks below to facilitate the story. But first they must cross the rift to properly enter the Dreamlands.

DEVELOPMENT. The fall is a steep 100 feet; characters or creatures who fall into the chasm suffer 10d6 bludgeoning damage. Characters may fail to detect the chasm before falling into it, but you



can hint to the threat without saying it outright by describing the sound of rocks and twigs falling into the pit. There are a multitude of ways characters can safely cross the chasm, including magical abilities that allow characters to fly or levitate over the breach. Allow the party a chance to strategize.

The abundance of trees can be used for building a makeshift bridge across. This activity requires an axe and three hours (in game time) to complete. During this time, you may choose to roll for an additional random encounter. Upon completion of the bridge, characters who make a DC 12 Intelligence (Survival) check discern that the bridge is sturdy and can be safely crossed if characters cross one at a time. Small characters can cross two at a time. If two Large or three Medium characters cross at the same time, the bridge begins to splinter. The splintered bridge has a 50 percent chance of collapsing.

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Crossing the chasm leads through the Dreamlands veil. Characters who make a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check can detect the changes in the forest.

The forest still resembles a forest—the trees still loom and the mist still swirls between them—but the change is palpable. The color and atmosphere of this area is different; the pine needles are an inky blue rather than deep green and the mist is a smoky gray rather than a cloudy white. Clustered around the thick trunks of trees are glowing purple mushrooms. Here, the colors are darker and moodier, the rare lights are brighter, and the air is colder.

Depending on where the heroes travel, they venture into hostile territory. *Note:* Neither the zoogs nor the Cats of Ulthar are evil. Each faction is motivated by self-preservation. Although they can be hostile toward outsiders, they do not attack or harm outright. They respond to the characters with fear and wariness rather than anger.

A Familiar Guide

Also lurking in this area of the forest is Fred. Like many forest creatures, Fred is able to travel into the Dreamlands with relative ease. However, most creatures have chosen to stay away from the zoogs and the Cats lest they get entangled in the conflict. Fred is eager to see balance restored and is willing to risk whatever dangers exist in the Dreamlands. In this area, Fred appears especially vibrant; the Dreamlands enhance his already colorful features.

CATS OF ULTHAR TERRITORY

The Cats of Ulthar live within a ring of twisted trees. Surrounding the trees is a circle of nearly

impenetrable mist, 20 feet wide and 30 feet tall, that contains a storm. Think of it like a storm-donut, and in the center of the donut is a thicket of trees where the cats reside.

In the storm ring, visibility worsens and a bolt of lightning strikes once per minute. Characters who remain in the storm for an extended length of time are struck by the bolts. Each lightning strike causes 1d4 points of lightning damage. Characters that are Medium or Small in size must make a successful DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or are knocked off their feet and hover in the storm. If the characters struggle, Fred extends a hoof that the characters can clasp onto to get to the other side.

You see a thicket of spindly black trees. The trees are twisted and the branches are entwined to form a large domed structure. Through the spaces between the branches, you see a dozen small black cats prowling around.

Standing outside of the dome is Delane St. Cyr, a werecat (uses **weretiger** stats) and the liaison between the Cats of Ulthar and other creatures. Delane's lycanthropic abilities allow her to serve as the champion of the cats and coexist in humanoid and cat communities. In her humanoid form, she appears as a middle-aged woman with dark, braided hair and purple eyes. She wears long black robes.

Delane St. Cyr is accompanied by a **Dreamlands cat** (see *Appendix 7, page 114*) named Serafina. Serafina understands Common, but only speaks Cat, so Delane St. Cyr serves as a translator when necessary. Serafina is wary and not keen on the characters, but requests a favor: one of their own, a young cub, is caught in a trap in the zoog territory. If the characters help retrieve the cub, Serafina agrees to an audience with the zoogs or to let the party pass safely through the Dreamlands.

ZOOG TERRITORY

The 100-foot radius surrounding the outskirts of the zoog territory is riddled with six pit traps.

Characters who make a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check note the absence of small footsteps over a patch of moss, and a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check indicates a pit trap lying beneath it. If they do not perceive this, they fall 20 feet into a hole carved from the soft soil, incurring 2d6 points of bludgeoning damage.

In this pit is a young **Dreamlands cat**, caught the day before by zoog trappers. The cat is uninjured but frightened and hungry. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Animal Handling) earns the cub's trust; they also respond positively to Fred's presence.

RUINS. The zoogs live in the ruins of an old temple. The stone structure has crumbled and the interior is mostly open and exposed to the elements. Roaming the perimeter of the ruins is Vox Que-Varian, a **grove keeper** (see *Appendix 5, page 86*) and the leader of this group of zoogs. Vox Que-Varian is a wily trickster and trap-maker, but ultimately wants to protect his people.

The dark mists part and reveal the crumbling ruins of a temple. The stone is slick with rain and dew.

A small, furry, rat-like creature approaches you. Its many eyes flicker over you, taking stock of you and your companions. "Travelers to the Dreamlands, are you? You made it through our many defenses so you must be here with a purpose. What is it, then?"

If the characters share their mission, Vox Que-Varian agrees to meet with Delane St. Cyr if the party helps him. The zoogs live in an old temple that once served the Great Old One, but the temple is in ruins and the storms from the Cats of Ulthar have made what remains perpetually wet and moldering. Vox needs the party's aid to stop the storms.

Areas of the Temple

T1. STAIRS AND ENTRY

A crumbling staircase leads to the front entrance of the temple. If accompanied by Vox Que-Varian, he leads them through this way. The wooden door that once filled the doorway has largely rotted away but stone archway remains.

T2. MAIN HALL

The ceiling of the temple hall has collapsed. The stone floor is slippery with rain. This large chamber is empty. Some fungi have grown in the corners of the room, and vines tumble over the walls.

T3. THE TRAPROOM

Two **zoog** trappers (see *Appendix 5, page 86*) occupy this room. On a workbench before them is an array of trap-making supplies, including twines, pitons, and darts used to create the pit traps. They are frightened by the sight of the heroes and do not attack, although they reach for pitons to use in self-defense.

T4. ALTAR

In the main hall is a large ruined altar basin below the statue of the Great Old One. Although the statue's shape is hard to determine after years of neglect, characters who make a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Religion) check discern that the tentacle markings on it indicate an otherworldly being.

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T5. OFFERINGS ROOM

Three **zoog** trappers (see *Appendix 5, page 86*) are clustered in this room, which once served as a storage room for offerings. Some of these items remain in a chest below a bloated wooden table.

Chest contents: Three hooded lanterns, 30 gp, the *Heartwood Wand* (see *Appendix 5, page 85*).

T6. SLEEPING AREA

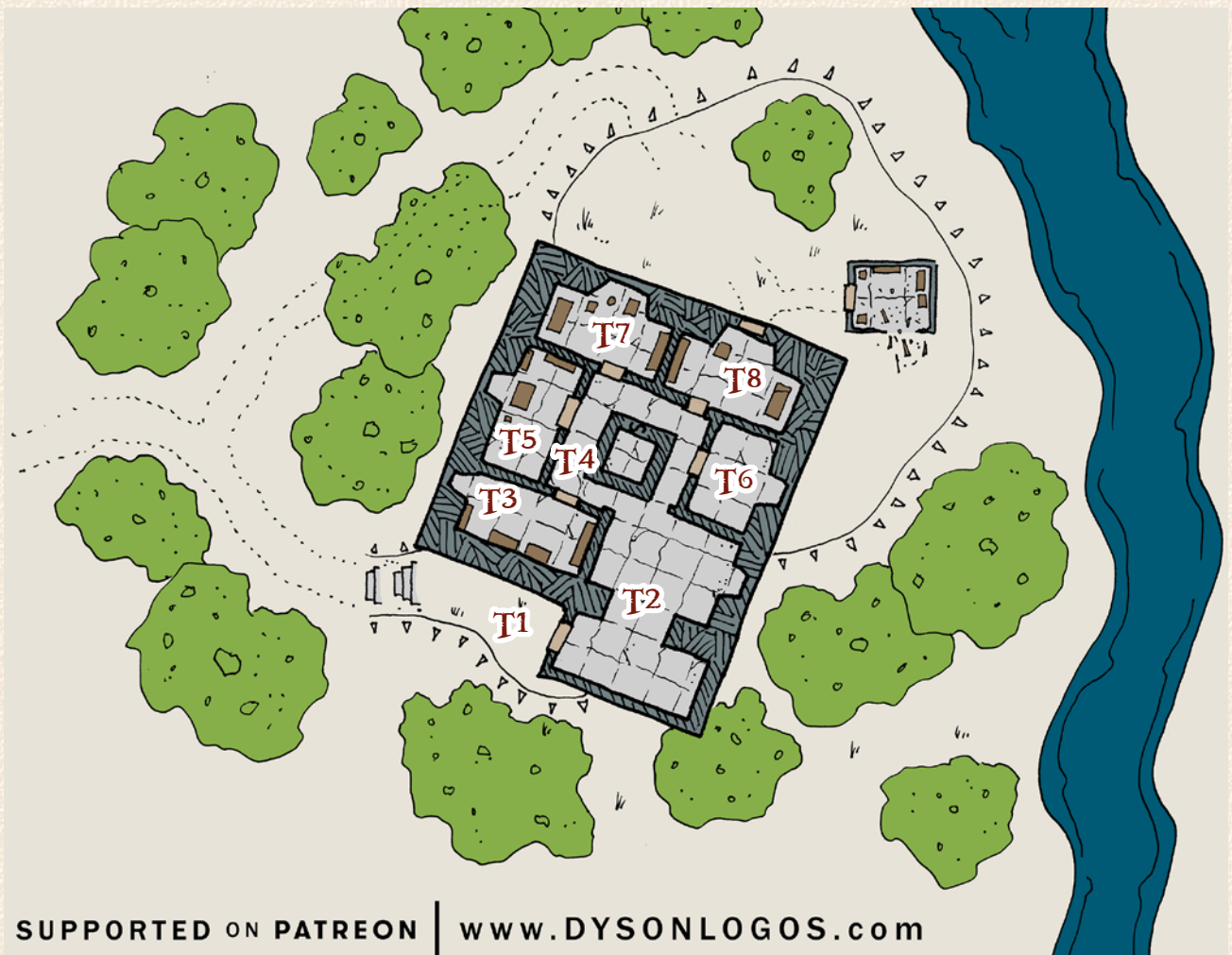
Several young **zoogs** are asleep in this room. A **grove keeper** (see *Appendix 5, page 86*), much older than Vox, keeps watch. Her name is Gurtha and although she is surprised to see the characters, she is more

concerned with ensuring that the young **zoogs** stay asleep and puts a finger to her lips to request silence.

T7. AND T8. EMPTY CHAMBERS

The ceilings of these rooms are entirely caved in, and the floor is littered in rubble.

DEVELOPMENT. Agreeing to help Vox or Delane brings the two groups to a clearing in the Dreamlands, where they await further instruction from the characters. If the party has helped or at least abstained from inflicting harm, the **zoogs** and the **Cats** feel tenuously trustful toward them.



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Scene 3. Negotiation

The zoogs and the Cats of Ulthar have both disliked each other for years. Cats have been caught in zoog traps; zoogs have been injured in the Ultharian storms. This tension has rippled into the Dreamlands and manifested as a chasm that separates them from the rest of the forest. With Fred's help, however, the heroes can restore the balance.

The following suggestions can help settle the score. The players may have other ideas, but each approach likely falls under one of the following categories: Test of Wits, Test of Might, and Test of Diplomacy. You're encouraged to mix-and-match depending on the party's strategy.

TEST OF WITS. The zoogs agree to a truce if the heroes can beat them at a test of wits. This test takes the form of a series of riddles. Use the sample riddles below or create your own. Alternatively, you can play out the riddle exchange without riddles by rolling a contested Intelligence check between Vox and a character. Solving a riddle impresses Vox, who honors whatever the characters request.

How far can a fox run into the woods?

SOLUTION: Only halfway, otherwise it would run out of the woods.

What goes up but never comes down?

SOLUTION: Your age.

I'm tall when I'm young and short when I'm old.

What am I?

SOLUTION: A candle.

TEST OF MIGHT. Delane proposes a challenge: a duel between the two groups. Vox agrees to this challenge and each emissary requests one volunteer from the party to fight beside them, and one party member to serve as the referee. This should be facilitated like a player-versus-player match. Regardless of who wins, Delane is impressed by the characters' abilities and amenable to what the characters request. The general setup of this fight is as follows:



- Delane, accompanied by a character, battles Vox, who is also accompanied by their ally.
- Each character and NPC rolls for initiative. Proceed with combat.
- Characters and NPCs cannot be killed, simply knocked unconscious.

TEST OF DIPLOMACY. Each faction wants peace and territory. Characters can broker this deal by ensuring that both the zoogs and the Cats can achieve this. Vox and Delane serve as the spokespeople for their groups. Getting each side to agree requires the characters to make a compelling argument and succeed on a DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check; this can be made with advantage if the characters duelled or participated in the riddle-off.

Fred's presence warms both the zoogs and the Cats to the characters. Additionally, Vox and Delane must each pledge to keep any traps or environmental threats away from the other so they can coexist in harmony. You may choose to roleplay these two NPCs or roll contested Charisma checks against the characters.

DEVELOPMENT. If armistice is successfully accomplished, the ground rumbles underfoot. The forest floor moves for several minutes as the sides of the forest separated by the chasm reunite. Characters who make a successful DC 14 Dexterity saving throw stay upright; otherwise, they are knocked prone.

IF NONE OF THE PATHS ARE SUCCESSFUL...

Players should feel like the truce between the two factions is earned. Although the zoogs and the Cats are hostile, they are not unreasonable, and the emissaries are open to any route that stops the violence between the two. However, if the rolls or story don't work in the characters' favor, they can still continue through the territory, but a new obstacle arises: hostility from both the zoogs and the Cats who are angered at the character's trespassing and unsuccessful interference.

Conclusion

Negotiation with the warring factions or getting through the territory unscathed brings the characters to the rest of the forest beyond the Dreamlands. From here, they can continue exploring and can proceed to the witch's cottage to learn more about which ingredients they need to collect and where they can get them. The Neblina Forest holds many secrets, some of which the characters have successfully unlocked—but there is much more to discover!

At the end of this adventure, the heroes gain enough experience to progress to level 6.

Appendix 5

Fred



“Uh-oh, watch where you’re putting your feet! City folks, huh? You look a little lost out here. Need a hand? Hoof?”

Fred the alicorn is a friend to everyone. Everyone with a sense of humor, anyway. He’s cheerful, sassy, and loves to tease, but he’s never hurtful. He takes pride in how many people he knows, and how well he knows ‘his’ forest. He’s very happy to share information and play guide, and his favorite thing in the world is to help friendly visitors make connections with other forest denizens.

Fred is a rotund purple alicorn with a rainbow mane and tail, shimmering purple wings, and a curved golden horn. He’s beautiful and he knows it.
Small fey, chaotic good

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 55 (10d6 + 20)

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 14 (+2) | 16 (+3) | 15 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 16 (+3) | 18 (+4) |

Skills Nature +4, Perception +6, Survival +6

Senses passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Sylvan

Challenge 1 (300 XP)

Dream Step. Fred knows the paths into and out of the Dreamlands, and can always find them without an ability check. However, he prefers to let travelers discover the way themselves.

Fey Step. As a bonus action, Fred can teleport up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space he can see. Once he uses this trait, he can’t do so again until he finishes a short or long rest.

Innate Spellcasting. Fred can cast the following spells. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (saving throw DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks)

- At will: *dancing lights*
- Once per day: *color spray, faerie fire, hypnotic pattern*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Fred attacks once with his hooves, and once with his horn.

Hooves. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) bludgeoning damage.

Horn. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage.

Healing Touch (3/day). Fred touches another creature with his horn, and heals 9 (2d8) points of damage.

Heartwood Wand

Wand, rare, requires attunement by a druid or cleric

When you touch this wand, you are carried away by the scent of growing things and the caress of a gentle breeze; perhaps you even hear the wind stirring the leaves of ancient trees. Crafted from a slender bough of birch wood, this wand still sports delicate twigs and even a few pale green leaves.

The wand was a gift from the dryad Betula to a dear friend and companion, though it has passed through many owners since then. She crafted it out of a bough from her own tree and it carries many of the healing properties of birch.

Each time you use the wand, some of its leaves fall away, leaving the branch bare and lifeless when all charges are expended.

The wand has 5 charges, which are used as described below.

- **1 charge:** Remove one level of exhaustion from a creature. Afterwards, leaves sprout amongst the target's hair, though they fall out after an hour.
- **1 charge:** Heal 2d8 hit points of damage. Wounds healed in this way appear to be scabbed over with pale papery tree bark, which falls away after an hour.
- **5 charges:** Cast the revivify spell. A creature returned to life in this way appears to be a dryad, though they regain their usual form after a long rest.



The wand regains 1d4 + 1 expended charges each day at dawn, as long as it has received at least an hour of direct sunlight in the last day. If you expend the wand's last charge, roll a d20. On a 20, magic leaves the wand forever and it becomes an ordinary petrified tree branch. If you used the last charge on a revivify effect, magic leaves the wand on a roll of 16 or higher.

Be Ye Heroes of Worth?

Zoog

Small humanoid, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 10 (3d6)

Speed 25 ft., burrow 10 ft., climb 25 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 9 (-1) | 16 (+3) | 11 (+0) | 14 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 8 (-1) |

Skills: History +4, Investigation +4, Nature +4, Perception +3

Senses: darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages: Common, Zoog

Challenge: 1/4 (50 XP)

Pouches. The zoog has two small pouches, each of which can fit a palm-sized object. It can use the Use an Object action to retrieve an object within as a bonus action using its tail.

Trap Culture. Whenever the zoog makes an ability check with artisan's tools to create a trap or with thieves' tools to disable a trap, it is considered proficient with the tool. Whenever it makes a saving throw against a trap, it is considered proficient in the saving throw.

ACTIONS

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

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

Zoog Grove Keeper

Small humanoid (zoog), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 13 (18 with shield)

Hit Points 38 (7d6 + 14)

Speed 25 ft., burrow 10 ft., climb 25 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 8 (-1) | 16 (+3) | 15 (+2) | 16 (+3) | 12 (+1) | 8 (-1) |

Skills Arcana +5, History +5, Investigation +5, Nature +5, Perception +3

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Zoog

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Pouches. The grove keeper has two small pouches, each of which can fit a palm-sized object. It can use the Use an Object action to retrieve an object within as a bonus action using its tail or facial tentacles.

Spellcasting. The grove keeper is a 7th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +5 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following wizard spells prepared.

- Cantrips (at will): *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*
- 1st level (4 slots): *alarm*, *feather fall*, *shield*
- 2nd level (3 slots): *alter self*, *enlarge/reduce*, *invisibility*, *scorching ray*
- 3rd level (3 slots): *glyph of warding*, *slow*
- 4th level (1 slot): *polymorph*

Trap Culture. Whenever the grove keeper makes an ability check with artisan's tools to create a trap or with thieves' tools to disable a trap, it is considered proficient with the tool. Whenever it makes a saving throw against a trap, it is considered proficient in the saving throw.

ACTIONS

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

Where Flowers Bloom

An investigative adventure for 4 to 5 characters of 6th level
By Kienna Shaw



Adventure Synopsis

On the search for periwinkles, one of the key ingredients required to make a cure for Gwynn, the heroes find themselves navigating the southeast Neblina Forest to find a forest witch. The party will travel through the woods, finding clues and allies who can help guide them to the witch's cottage.

After finding the witch who lives as the keeper of a portal into the Feywild, the heroes will travel into the Feywild and into an area called the Gardens,

which is the only place the periwinkles grow. By navigating the fey oddities and being respectful of the Gardener, the heroes will be able to properly harvest the periwinkles, which act as both a powerful medicine and a powerful poison.

Throughout their journey, the heroes also find hints of sinister influence through the meddling of gremlins, who are also searching for periwinkles so that E'thor may continue his experimentations. The gremlins may even go so far as to attack the heroes and the Gardens, bringing destruction in their wake.

Adventure Hooks

SEARCH FOR A CURE. Following up on previous adventures, the heroes have been tasked to find the three key ingredients that can be used to make the healing potion for Gwynn. Archdruid Deng has advised the party to seek out the forest witch and gather their first ingredient: periwinkles.

SPELL COMPONENTS. The party requires periwinkles as a crucial ingredient to a spell or ritual they need to perform. They had heard rumors of a forest witch that may know more in the southeast Neblina Forest.

ALREADY IN THE FOREST. The adventurers are already navigating the southeastern part of the Neblina Forest, and through a series of chance they become involved in the plot of E'thor and his experiments.

Neblina Forest

As established in the previous adventures, the Neblina Forest is a dense and ancient forest filled with lush foliage and shrouded in mists. With the combination of dense foliage and mists, characters must make a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check to navigate the Neblina Forest without getting lost.

Starting the Adventure

If you're running this adventure after *Be Ye Heroes of Worth*, start at **Exiting the Dreamlands**. If you're running this as a standalone adventure, jump to **Following the Neblina Forest Creek**.

A. EXITING THE DREAMLANDS

The air shifts as you walk southwest. Trees now bear green foliage, and the dark grey fog lightens back to white. There are no strange glowing purple mushrooms, and the colors and light around you return to more mundane tones. It's clear that you're finally out of the Dreamlands and back in the Neblina Woods. As you look through the trees and mist around you, a familiar figure with a colorful topknot kneeling by a tree catches your eye, a large black dog standing guard: Rose and Apollo.

As the adventurers exit out of the Dreamlands and run into Rose, she looks startled and greets them with a drawn sword. When she recognizes the party, she quickly puts away her sword and is happily willing to talk to them.

- **GROVE.** "People started waking up and getting better a few days ago! Dunno what changed, but it's been real nice to see the town alive again." If the adventurers removed the contaminant in the wells in *Below the Grove* and mention it, she will thank them profusely for helping.
- **WHAT IS SHE DOING IN NEBLINA FOREST?** "Now that people are awake and getting better, Grace asked me to go lookin' for some herbs and stuff to strengthen 'em and speed up the healing." She explains that the herbs she's looking for are usually found in this area of the forest.
- **PERIWINKLES.** Rose hasn't seen periwinkles grow in the Neblina Forest, though she notes that some more exotic flowers she doesn't know the name of grow by a small hill farther southeast in the forest. If they follow the small creek in that direction, they'll be sure to spot it.
- **WITCH.** "Never heard of a witch in this area, though I'd be careful..." Rose continues explaining in a hushed voice that the only witch she's heard of is the one that is connected to Witch's Whirl, the strange bottomless pool in Grove.

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- **SEEN ANYTHING UNUSUAL?** “Been hearing a lotta rustling in the bushes and trees...dunno what it is, but every time I go check there isn’t anything there.” With any further questioning, she seems more and more uncertain whether she actually heard anything.
- Rose can be convinced to join the group with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. The roll can be made with advantage if Rose knows the adventurers helped to decontaminate the water in Grove. Otherwise, Rose departs to go back and help her sister in Grove.

DEVELOPMENT. With some new information and a direction (and perhaps a new ally), the heroes start their search. Proceed to **Following the Neblina Forest Creek**.

B. FOLLOWING THE NEBLINA FOREST CREEK

The babbling sound of flowing water fills the air. Lined by trees, low-lying bushes, and clusters of vibrant wildflowers is a small creek no more than a few paces wide. The water is crystal clear, the rocky bed visible even in the low light of the forest.

THE CREEK. The creek in this forest is slow-moving and shallow, easily crossable by the party. The water is fresh, and heroes may take a moment to refill their waterskins and refresh themselves.

FLOWERS. Dotted the soft dirt of the banks are clusters of wildflowers in blues, purples, and yellows that have been grown and cultivated by the witch. Heroes trained in the Nature skill would note the flowers aren’t natural, remaining seemingly untouched even when plucked, stepped on, or otherwise interfered with.

When investigating the flowers, a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that

the clusters of wildflowers are arranged in such a way that it looks like the outline of a pathway. The adventurers can follow this path through the woods and to the small hill that is the witch’s home.

If no character sees the path, they continue onward and stumble upon the gremlins searching for a way across the river.

GREMLINS. While standing at the creek, characters who make a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check notice a bush rustling on the other side of the creek. Emerging from the bush is a group of five gremlins surrounding a patch of wildflowers and squabbling with each other in high-pitched hectic Sylvan.

The Gremlins

The gremlins are small humanoid fey who have been tasked by E’thor to find the witch’s home so they can gather periwinkles for his experiments. They have gray and green mottled skin, yellow eyes with narrow pupils, large pointed ears, and a very wide mouth with many small, sharp teeth. Their limbs are gangly and knobby, covered in moss and scraps of cloth.

Gremlins are lazy and tricky, and if they are presented the opportunity, they’ll let someone else do the hard work before swooping in to pick up the prize.

Heroes that are proficient in Sylvan can understand snippets of the gremlins’ conversation, including:

- “Little pink flowers! Not purple not blue not yellow, pink!”
- “Watch out for bad water, bad bad water!”
- “Shh...quiet quiet! Sneaky special mission must be sneaky!”

A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check also allows the heroes to notice the gremlins are very cautious around the creek, avoiding contact at all cost with it even as they search the banks and try to find ways to cross the water. A successful DC 15

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Intelligence (History) tells adventurers that gremlins are a kind of fey that are averse to running water, as it will burn them like acid.

If the gremlins catch sight of the heroes, or if the heroes attempt to interact with them in any way, the gremlins scatter and disappear into the forest. However, the gremlins later regroup and follow the party to see if they can find the witch's home.

The party may attempt to follow the gremlins deeper into the forest, which requires a DC 17 Wisdom (Survival) roll to track them. If they succeed, they can follow the gremlins' footprints to the base of a tree with branches large enough they span across the creek. From here, the adventurers can follow the direction through the forest towards the witch's home.

FRED. Farther down the creek, the heroes come across Fred, the golden-horned rainbow-maned alicorn, drinking from the waters of the creek. If the party is friendly with Fred, he greets the heroes and talks with them.

- **CREEK.** This is a normal creek, though its waters are very pure. Fred likes refreshing himself here, especially since he can keep an eye on the other creatures that visit the creek.
- **PERIWINKLES.** Fred tells the heroes that the periwinkles they seek are only found in the Feywild or in other areas with a strong fey presence.
- **FLOWERS.** The colorful flowers on the riverbank are the work of the witch, who tends to them and keeps them alive with her magic.
- **GREMLINS.** Fred has noticed some gremlins have been around these parts of the Neblina Forest for the past month or so, and he's suspicious of their activity. He doesn't know what they're doing, and they haven't done anything he knows of other than prank some of the local wildlife. If the heroes mention they've seen the gremlins, Fred asks if they know what direction the fey went and will try to follow them.

- **WITCH.** Fred is familiar with the witch and is friends with her. He tells the party that despite any rumors, she's friendly. He may be convinced to help guide the party to her with a DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Otherwise, he says he has other business to attend to in the forest.

DEVELOPMENT. Whatever information or clue they come across should lead the heroes towards the small hill where the witch's home is.

C. FINDING THE WITCH'S HOME

As you follow the winding curves of the creek and back through the trees and pass through a particularly thorny thicket, you find yourself bathed in sunlight for the first time since stepping into Neblina Forest. Blinking away the sudden bright light, you see in front of you a clearing with a small misshapen hill sitting in the middle of it. The faint and delicate smell of flowers mixed with a hint of smoke is carried in the breeze to where you stand.

THE HILL. The hill is not a natural hill; the witch's cottage sits on top of a portal into the Feywild and has been completely covered with greenery and melds into the forest. Characters who make a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check notice smoke coming from a hidden chimney. If they start to move to the other side of the hill, they notice four green-tinted windows and a door.

- **WINDOWS.** The windows are dark and green-tinted, making it difficult to see into the cottage. There are two by the doorway, and one on each side of the hill. The windows can be opened from the outside but require a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw to avoid triggering one of the magical traps. These traps are mostly benign, designed to deter and temporarily mark any intruders. Effects last for 2d4 hours, and can include:
 - Dyeing the intruder's clothing bright pink

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- Covering the intruder in glitter
- Making the intruder smell like strong floral perfume
- **DOOR.** The door is wooden with a brass doorknob and painted the same green as the grass and moss covering the cottage. If any heroes try the handle, they find that the door is unlocked. If anyone knocks on the door, it magically swings open for them.

DEVELOPMENT. If the heroes are with Fred, he walks up to the front and politely knocks on the door with his hoof. Otherwise, heroes can attempt to let themselves in through the door or the window, or they can knock on the door themselves.

D. THE WITCH'S COTTAGE

The earthy smell of medicinal herbs greets you first as you enter the cottage. The light from the fireplace in the kitchen is bright and warm, illuminating the wooden walls of a small and cozy room. Shelves on all sides hold jars and bottles of varying powders, dried plants, and dark liquids. Leaves and flowers are hung to dry from the ceiling, bathed in the green-tinted light from the windows. The back wall has a closed door, with a gold-framed floor-length mirror sitting next to it. In the center of the room is a small wooden table with a pot of tea and enough teacups for all of you. Sitting in one of two chairs is a middle-aged human woman, who looks at you and smiles warmly.

THE COTTAGE. The cottage is a small two-room building, with the main living space and a bedroom off to the side. The walls are made of paneled wood, with living flowers and vines poking through some of the gaps. Although made for a single occupant, the cottage feels cozy rather than crowded with more people inside.

- **TEAPOT AND TEACUPS.** The teapot and teacups exude the delicate fragrance of chrysanthemum tea. The porcelain of the set is finely crafted, and the teapot is painted with delicate branches and pink flowers. If someone looks at the painting for long enough, the flowers and branches move as if alive and rustled by a small breeze.
- **BOTTLES OF INGREDIENTS.** There are many differently colored and shaped bottles and vials all around the cottage. Some are labeled and include ginseng, phoenix ash, pixie dust, preserved pseudodragon eggs, spirit mushrooms, and powdered dragon turtle scales. Heroes trained in Arcana or Medicine would know that these are spell components and ingredients in herbal medicines. Many of them are rare ingredients, coming from powerful creatures and plants that aren't found in the Neblina Forest or even on the Material Plane. Any spellcasters who use material components that are plant or animal based will likely find something they use here if they state out loud what they are searching for.
- **DRYING PLANTS.** There are bundles of lavender, valerian, and sage that hang from the ceiling to dry around the windows. Once dried, these can be powdered and used in medicine or as healing spell components.
- **CLOSED DOOR.** The closed door leads to Ruiying's bedroom, which is a small and simple room containing a small bed, a bedside table, and a closet. Nothing else of note is in the bedroom.
- **MIRROR.** The mirror is the disguised portal to the Feywild. At first glance, it appears to be a well-made sturdy mirror that has been fixed to the wall. However, with a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, heroes notice that at certain angles, the reflection gives way and they can see a forest and a pathway through the glass. Characters who state they're looking for something odd about the mirror automatically succeed on the check. If someone touches the glass and pushes, they find that the surface feels like liquid and that they can slip their hands through with enough force. Small objects thrown at the mirror bounce off, but larger objects fall through onto the pathway.



The Witch, Ruiying “Raven” Mystruen

Ruiying is a human forest witch who has lived in the Neblina Forest for centuries. Her extensive knowledge of herbs, flowers, anatomy, and the natural flow of magic and life in creatures has made her a very adept healer.

Her main duty is as the keeper of a portal into the Feywild, and she’s had this duty for almost as long as she’s lived in the forest. She is familiar with fey creatures and magic, as well as the workings of portals between planes. Because of her continual exposure to fey magic and travels to the Feywild, she is aging at a much slower rate than a normal human. With the slowed aging, while she looks around 40, she is closer to 200 years old.

Ruiying has warm features framed by white-streaked black hair. She wears a floor-length white, pink, and green robe with a cream-colored apron.

Due to her duties as the portal keeper, Ruiying is friendly but cautious around visitors, and more willing to talk and help if she’s sure the visitors aren’t there to harm anyone or misuse the portal and access to the Feywild. Her demeanor is generally calm and thoughtful, and she’s inclined to take long moments to think through her words and actions.

Ruiying uses **mage** stats in combat.

No matter how the heroes entered her home, the witch Ruiying greets them warmly, though with a touch of scolding if they broke in through her window or otherwise entered uninvited. She asks why they have sought her out, and if the heroes or their allies tell her about Deng or their search for the ingredients, she invites them in and offers them tea while they talk.

- **WHO IS SHE?** “My name is Ruiying, and I’m the witch of this part of the forest. Some know me as The Raven.” Ruiying explains that she acts as a healer and a guardian for those who live in the forest.
- **RELATIONSHIP WITH DENG.** “Deng and I have known each other for a very long time...in fact, he helped me build this home.” She goes on to explain that though the two of them haven’t seen each other in some time, both busy in their respective areas of the Neblina Forest, they still hold each other in high regard.
- **BOTTLES OF INGREDIENTS.** “As part of my healing practices, I gather many ingredients. Some of them are very rare, and can only be found in specific environments, planes, and times. I only take as much as I need, but if there is something here you would need, you are welcome to take some with you.” Ruiying explains that she sources all of her ingredients in a way that respects the creatures and plants, opting for any option that doesn’t harm them or is otherwise sustainable.
- **GREMLINS.** “I’ve heard about them from Fred and other creatures around here. It is odd for them to be in this part of the forest. I hope that they do not have any ill intentions.” She explains that the gremlins are chaotic and destructive fey creatures who like to play tricks on people and steal things. If the heroes ask, she tells them that if they ever get in trouble with the gremlins, they do not like iron, salt, or running water, and can be chased off using those.

- **PORTAL.** “This home is built on top of a portal to the Feywild, specifically to an area called The Gardens. It is my job to make sure that the portal is kept safe, and that only those who will respect the grounds enter.” If asked, she tells them that she had been doing this for a very long time, and it’s her one true duty in the forest.
- **PERIWINKLES.** “The periwinkles you seek can only be grown in the Feywild, or in fey-touched grounds. They are unique: while they have powerful medicinal potential, they can also be very poisonous if used incorrectly.” She explains that she’s never personally worked with periwinkles before, but she knows they grow in the Gardens. “I have a friend in the Gardens who may be able to help you gather the periwinkles you need. But remember to be respectful of the plants and the other beings there, and to listen to those who have knowledge.”

DEVELOPMENT. After the heroes receive the important information but before they can do anything, there is a great crashing sound as the windows break. Ten gremlins break through the windows, wreaking havoc as they attempt to find the periwinkles and the portal. The characters may choose to stay and help Ruiying defend her home and the mirror portal. If they do so and manage to drive the gremlins away, Ruiying thanks the heroes and gives them a bottle of lavender essence oil, a gift they can give to her friend the Gardener. This gift makes the Gardener automatically friendly to the party.

Otherwise, the heroes may take the opportunity to slip through the mirror portal and enter into the Gardens.

E. INTO THE GARDENS

The cold glass of the mirror gives way under your fingers like liquid metal, engulfing you completely until you step through. As you regain your senses, you find yourself standing on a path surrounded by trees that scrape an impossibly high ceiling. Stone walls glitter as minerals and crystals reflect balls of pulsing light that hover in the air. Hedges are trimmed into ornate archways and fantastical shapes, framing bushes of flowers and fruits that smell fragrantly sweet. The ceiling shines with a faint light that bathes the garden in a light lavender hue. Every bit of plant life feels vibrant and alive, shifting with movement even without a noticeable breeze.

THE GARDENS. The Gardens is a large enclosed garden filled with plants, trees, and flowers from across many different planes. The walls are crystalline stone, and the ceiling provides a magical sun-like light source. While the plants are seeded and cared for by fey hands, the Gardens is more like a greenhouse, where the flora grows directly and wild from the ground rather than in pots or planters.

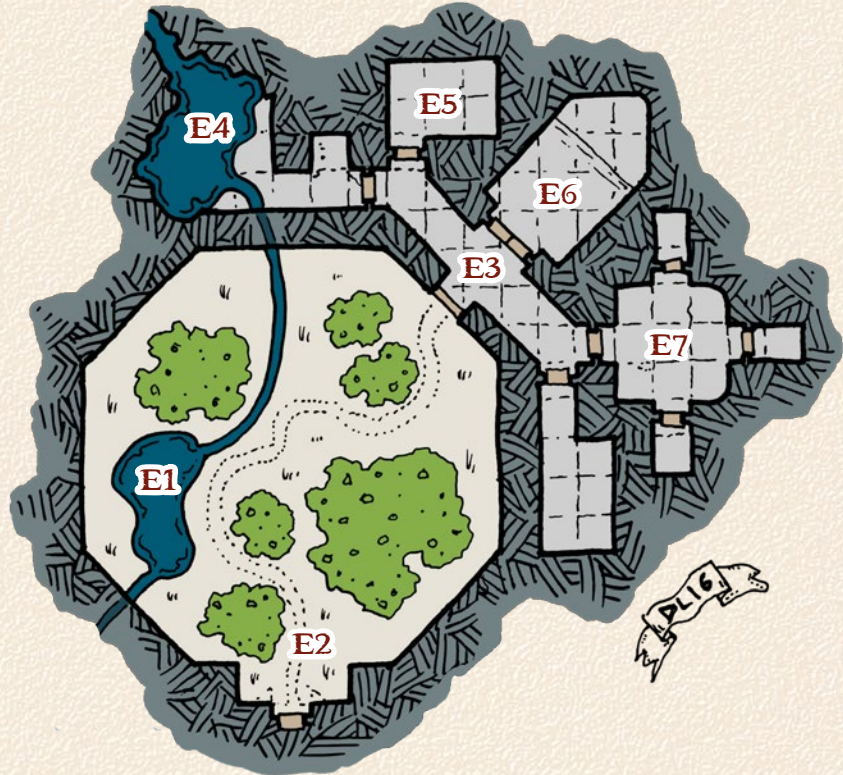
- **PLANTS.** The plant life in the Gardens varies tremendously, but the majority of the flora is native to the Feywild. Many of them require specific levels of light, water, soil acidity, and magic to flourish here.
- **WILL-O’-WISPS.** Will-o’-wisps float in the air, lazily moving across the Gardens and acting as lookouts for the Gardener. Heroes must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity (Stealth) check to avoid being spotted by the will-o’-wisps. If the creatures spot them, they dart off and away to find the Gardener and warn them.
- **E1: POND AND STREAM.** A small pond and stream flows in and out of the Gardens, providing the main source of water. Connected to it is a complex watering system, where a series of small hand-dug trenches run through the entirety of the Gardens, sending water to the plants that aren’t

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close to the pond or stream. The watering system can be activated in one of the side chambers.

- **E2: PATHWAY.** There is one major dirt path that winds its way through the Gardens. Characters who make a DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check notice one set of Medium-sized humanoid footprints traveling on and off the path into the greenery. Hedge walls form the border of this path, though there are many breaks in the shrubbery allowing people to freely walk off the path. On one end of the path is the portal they just came through to Ruiying's cottage. The other ends at a set of wooden doors that lead to side chambers.

- **E3: SIDE CHAMBERS.** The doors to the side chambers are unlocked, leading to a stone hallway that's still lit with the same purple light of the Gardens. The hallway leads to four different doors, all of which are also unlocked.
- **E4: RESERVOIR CHAMBER.** This chamber has a small reservoir from where the stream comes from the outside. This reservoir has a filtering system, which catches any potential litter while still allowing fish and other wildlife to go through and into the main part of the Gardens. This chamber also has a series of five large iron levers: one closes the filtering system so that no new water enters into the Gardens. The other four control different parts of the watering system connected to the pond and stream.
- **E5: STORAGE.** The room is filled with gardening tools such as shears and shovels, as well as fertilizer and soil. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) reveals some of the same vials of ingredients that Ruiying has in her cottage buried in the back of a shelf.



- **E6: THE GARDENER'S LIVING QUARTERS.** The Gardener has a simple room, complete with a bed, a small kitchen with utensils and dishes for one, a closet, and a bathroom. There is a leather-bound book sitting on the bed, which is a log detailing plant growth and incidents in the Gardens in neat Sylvan script. While flipping through the pages, a character who can read Sylvan and succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check learns that around a month ago, intruders entered the Gardens without permission and destroyed a section of the field, and the Gardener has been working to try to restore the damaged plants as best they can since then.
- **E7: PORTAL ROOM.** This room contains three other portals that lead to other locations. While the portals are labeled as leading to the Elemental Plane of Earth, the Material Plane, and the Celestial Plane, each of these portals are empty golden frames on the wall.

DEVELOPMENT. At any point while wandering the Gardens proper, they may come across the Gardener tending to the periwinkles.

F. FINDING THE PERIWINKLES

Turning a bend through the hedges and trees, you spot a figure surrounded by the golden glow of will-o'-wisps. Long brown hair is braided over their shoulder, with the rest of their hair covered by a wide-brimmed straw hat decorated with flowers. They wear practical clothing, with tan breeches, a white shirt, and a green coat. Around them, the dirt is dark and blackened, while other bushes and vines are a paler green and appear damaged. The figure is bent down as they gently and lovingly tend to the sole bush thriving here, which is filled with many pink flowers: periwinkles.

Harvesting Periwinkles

Periwinkles are a very particular plant which require a very specific way of harvesting in order for them to be healing rather than poisonous. The steps include finding a periwinkle in full bloom, cutting the stem right above the first set of leaves under the flower, and uttering a short magic phrase in Sylvan.

Periwinkles that are harvested properly glow a bright golden color before fading to mundane bright pink. Any periwinkles that aren't harvested properly fade from a bright pink to a dull purplish color, indicating that the flower is now poisonous.

The heroes can learn how to harvest periwinkles from the Gardener, either by watching them or by being taught by them directly.

THE DAMAGED PLANTS. The plants in this area have been damaged by E'thor's minions the last time they were able to sneak in and steal some periwinkles. Not knowing how to harvest the plant and trying to do it as quickly as possible, the gremlins left a trail

of destruction before escaping through one of the portals.

With a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check, adventurers note the signs of damage by the gremlins to the plants. There are claw marks on the trees, as well as scorch marks on the ground. Many of these plants are missing leaves, flowers, or fruits in a haphazard fashion, as if something had ripped them off. Most of the damage has been done no more than two off the ground, which is the perfect eye-height for gremlins.

THE GARDENER. The Gardener is the elven keeper of the Gardens, and they carefully tend to each plant under their care. They make their regular rounds of the Gardens, making sure everything is growing properly and each section is receiving the care it needs. They are soft-spoken and prefer speaking in Sylvan, though they can also communicate in Common. The Gardener is also non-binary and gently corrects anyone who refers to them with any pronouns other than "they," "them," and "their."

Heroes who wish to spy on the Gardener must make a DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) roll to avoid being spotted by them or the will-o'-wisps around them. From there, they can watch the Gardener properly harvest one of the periwinkles, though hearing the magic phrase spoken by the Gardener requires a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check.

The characters may also try to talk to the Gardener. The Gardener will be *suspicious* of the heroes—especially if they caught the party spying—unless they are able to prove they have come here for altruistic purposes with a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) roll. If the heroes offer the Gardener the bottle of lavender essence oil Ruiying gave them, the Gardener warm ups and immediately becomes *friendly*.

• **DAMAGE TO THE GARDENS.** "Two months ago, I was tending to the pond when I heard some laughing and screeching. The will-o'-wisps told me there were intruders, and I came here as

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fast as I could. By the time I made it here, the damage was already done, and the gremlins had already started retreating with some periwinkles.” The Gardener is sad as they speak about this destruction of the plants they care for. “I don’t know why they would destroy so much for so little...nor do I know why they needed the periwinkles in the first place.”

- **PERIWINKLES.** “Ah, periwinkles. They seem to be in oddly high demand.” They laugh to themselves as if telling a joke, even if no one else joins. “The trick with periwinkles, if you are trying to use them in medicine, is to harvest them correctly. This is knowledge that was passed down to me from my ancestors.” If the Gardener is friendly to the party, they offer to teach them how to harvest periwinkles for their mission. Otherwise, it will require a successful DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) roll.

DEVELOPMENT. At some point after the party is able to learn how to harvest periwinkles, they are interrupted with the arrival of the gremlins and their friend.

G. PROTECTING THE GARDENS

The serene quiet of the Gardens is pierced with a loud roar that emanates from the side chambers. Bursting through the doors is a swarm of twenty gremlins flanking the large hulking mass of a giant ape. The ape roars once more before charging forward, right to the periwinkles.

The gremlins have returned to gather the last of the periwinkles, and have brought along help in the form of a **giant ape**. While the ape rampages across the Gardens, tearing up plants and trees along the way, the gremlins scatter and attempt to hone in on the periwinkles from different angles.

DEFEATING THE GREMLINS. The gremlins can be thwarted in a variety of different ways. When thwarted, the gremlins retreat rather than fighting to the death.

- **FLOWING WATER.** Due to their aversion of fresh running water, they avoid crossing any streams or trenches with water at all cost. Heroes can activate the watering system in the Gardens to trap the gremlins in place or to put a boundary around the periwinkle bush.
- **SALT AND IRON.** Gremlins are also averse to salt and iron, which adventurers can use to manipulate and chase the gremlins out without needing to directly fight them.
- **COMBAT.** The gremlins fight together as a swarm, making them more powerful and agile. If the heroes manage to cut them down to five gremlins, the survivors lose morale and retreat to the portal they came through.

SOOTHING THE GIANT APE. The giant ape has been charmed by E’thor and is under the control of the gremlins. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) or Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals to the heroes that the ape is not under its own control. There are different ways to calm the beast.

- **BREAKING THE SPELL.** If the adventurers have a way to counterspell the enchantment or lift a magic effect, they can attempt to. The DC is 15, where applicable.
- **FEEDING ITS APPETITE.** There are many fruits growing in the Gardens, and heroes may try to sate its aggression by tricking it into eating different foods with useful side effects. Characters can identify fruits and their effects with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check. Possible fruits and their effects include:
 - **Drowzeeberry**
 - Black-blue fuzzy berry that smells like chamomile
 - Causes the consumer to become sleepy; requires a Constitution saving throw every

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turn that starts at DC 10 and grows by one with each drowzeeberry

- **Winefruit**

- Dark red apple-like fruits that smell sweetly fermented and stain the fingers
- Causes inebriation in the consumer, and causes them to have disadvantage on any attack roll or saving throw for 1d4 rounds

- **Puffpeach**

- Orange fruits that smell sharp and rattle as though hollow with something small inside
- Explodes on contact into a cloud of smoke and causes the target to be blinded for one round

- **COMBAT.** The giant ape is more intent on destroying the Gardens than it is in fighting the heroes. However, it attacks if they catch its attention. The enchantment on it starts to wear off after the ape becomes bloodied, and the ape can make DC 15 Charisma saving throws each time it receives damage to break the enchantment.

Conclusion

Once the gremlins have been thwarted and the Gardens are safe, the Gardener thanks the heroes for helping to protect the plants. In return, the heroes will be able to harvest the periwinkles under the guidance of the Gardener. Once the heroes have gathered enough periwinkles, the Gardener escorts the heroes through the portal and back into Ruiying's cottage, where they may rest and recuperate before moving on to find the next ingredient in their mission.

At the end of this adventure, the heroes gain enough experience to progress to level 7.

Appendix 6

Gremlins

The gremlins are small, nasty fey with a penchant for destruction and tricking others to do their dirty work. They have brown and green mottled skin, yellow eyes with narrow pupils, large pointed ears, and a very wide mouth with many small sharp teeth. Their limbs are gangly and knobby, covered in moss and scraps of cloth.

Small fey, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 32 (8d6+4)

Speed 20 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|
| 10 (+0) | 12 (+1) | 10 (+0) | 14 (+2) | 8 (-1) | 8 (-1) |

Saving Throws Dex +4, Int +3

Senses passive Perception 9

Languages Common

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Stack. If a gremlin is within 5 feet of at least five other gremlins, the group of gremlins can take an action to form a stack. When the gremlins stack, they are the size of Medium creatures, and are able to double any damage they deal.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The gremlin makes two attacks with its claws.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (2d4) piercing damage.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) piercing damage.

The Problem with Prattle Creek

An investigative adventure for 4 to 5 characters of 7th level
By Bill Barnett



Adventure Synopsis

Having acquired the first ingredient, the heroes learn that another sickness has gripped a nearby halfling community. Suspecting E'thor's involvement, they make haste for the village only to find bizarre happenings in addition to the recent sickness. Cats and kittens are disappearing, and crops are being ransacked. And then there's the suspicious

appearance of the enigmatic Professor Piewright and his traveling medicine show.

As the heroes explore the surrounding countryside, helping out and investigating the strange occurrences, their suspicions turn to Professor Piewright, his peculiar assistants, and his Moonlight elixir. In the end, the heroes manage to rid Burrow Wood of evil while recovering the second ingredient, *Ee-tope*.

Adventure Hooks

This adventure occurs after Chapter 6, *Where Flowers Bloom*. Additionally, it can be played as a standalone, linked with *Where Flowers Bloom* and *Vale of the Mavka*, or inserted into an existing campaign using the following hooks:

HEROES TO THE RESCUE. Burrow Wood, a nearby halfling village, is beset by a series of increasingly bizarre events, including an illness that has taken a deadly turn. Word has been sent to the nearest city, and the heroes have answered the call for aid.

RETURNING HOME. An adventurer hails from Burrow Wood and is something of a folk hero to the villagers. When trouble came, the villagers knew exactly who to contact!

A Word About Zoogs

The zoogs in *Harper's Tale* are unique. Some have had their appearance altered—they no longer possess facial tentacles or pouches or prehensile tails, the details of whatever dark pact or fiendish experiment altered them is beyond the scope of *Harper's Tale* (for now, at least). What is known is that unscrupulous folk saw the opportunity to exploit the altered zoogs' ability to blend in with smaller humanoid races. As different as they look, Dreamlands Cats are not so easily fooled.

All zoogs—except the grove keeper—should use the **zoog** statblock (see *Appendix 5, page 86*).

Running the Adventure

The Problem with Prattle Creek is a freeform investigative adventure. Except for the town hall meeting, the events and encounters can occur in any order. The heroes are free to explore the surrounding countryside, discover clues, and glean as much information as they can from the NPCs they encounter.

Prattle Creek Poisoning

The emerging sickness will eventually come to be known as Prattle Creek Poisoning. It is the result of eating fish that have been contaminated by the inoculated otyugh. A humanoid eating the contaminated fish must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or become infected. Within 1d12 hours, the following symptoms appear: abdominal pain, nausea, fatigue, and fever. These symptoms last for 2d6 days.

The infected creature suffers one level of exhaustion, and it regains only half the normal number of hit points from spending Hit Dice and no hit points from finishing a long rest. At the end of each long rest, an infected creature must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the character gains one level of exhaustion. On a successful save, the character's exhaustion level decreases by one level. If a successful saving throw reduces the infected creature's level of exhaustion below 1, the creature recovers from the disease.

Unscheduled Encounters

The heroes are free to explore the village in any order they wish. The GM is encouraged to choose an encounter(s) as pacing, time, and the interest of the players allow.

Dramatis Personae

The NPCs present at the town hall meeting:

SHERIFF GORDO BOLGER (male halfling **scout**) can to convey the following information:

- He was sick for a couple of days but he's better now.
- There are strangers in town: Professor Piewright and his traveling medicine show. Piewright and his two assistants showed up just before people started getting sick. Bolger has been keeping his eye on Piewright, but seen nothing suspicious.

The Problem with Prattle Creek

d8 Encounters

- 1 A **goblin**, Klog, is lost. He's one of three goblins that stumbled upon the zoogs' hollow log two days ago, and the only one to survive. When the heroes come upon him, he babbles incoherently about the "strange halfling" that attacked them.
- 2 A group of halfling **commoners** are building an outhouse. They're friendly to the heroes because they appreciate the distraction from work.
- 3 The heroes encounter a **centaur** passing through the area. He is wary, but not to the point of being rude. Before running off, the centaur mysteriously says, "The evils of night descend upon this place."
- 4 The heroes stumble upon a long-abandoned building. There is no one around.
- 5 1d6 **halfling** boys harass poor Tolan Belbin, the **gnome** peddler. (See *Tolan sidebar*.)
- 6 A hostile **owlbear**, sick from eating contaminated fish, can be heard nearby. If it notices the heroes, it attacks.
- 7 A despondent **treant** stands alone in the woods. He is very upset that an old tree friend has been turned into a fermentation vat. As distraught as the treant is, the only thing he says is: "I've never seen such nasty little creatures in all my days." He is too heartbroken to be of more help.
- 8 An injured **pony** is grazing in the grass, and she can be befriended with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check while examining the wounds reveals that a giant spider attacked the pony. (The Leng Spider has been hunting.)

- A gnome peddler, Tolan Belbin, came to town two days ago.
- Other strange things are going on: barn cats are disappearing, crops are missing, and some claim to have seen shadowy figures sneaking about.

DOC TOSSCOBBLE (female halfling **commoner**) is one of the oldest residents of the community. She still makes house calls.

- As a precaution, the villagers have temporarily stopped consuming fish, pork, and dairy.
- At the doctor's urging, many of the locals have built new outhouses and privies.
- "One thing has me baffled," Doc says. "Two of the three people who've died had no symptoms—except for fatigue. They both looked like they hadn't been sleeping well."
- If asked about Professor Piewright: "That elixir's hogwash! But try telling that to the lunkheads around here. Half the town can't get enough of his snake oil."

OLO ASHWORTH (female halfling **commoner**) owns the Inn of the Tarnished Tankard.

- The heroes can stay at her inn for free.
- She's had no direct dealings with Professor Piewright.
- She can confirm that Tolan Belbin is staying at her inn.

LUTHO FAIRHOLE (male halfling **commoner**) is a plump halfling that overdresses for every occasion. His signature accessories are a silk cravat and an ostentatious signet ring.

- Lutho makes a point of letting the characters know that he owns the town's only general store. "Whatever you need, come see me. I'll give you a nice discount. The least I can do."
- "Professor Piewright? I don't believe I've had any dealings with him." (This is a lie.)
- "Tolan Belbin...He's no peddler. More a traveling junk merchant! The sooner he's gone, the better!"

The Problem with Prattle Creek

MOLLY GRUB (female halfling **commoner**) is a farmer and a gossip.

- Molly thanks the heroes for coming, tells them that her son Garrett is home with the sickness, adding, “If you could do anything to help, we’d truly appreciate it.”
- Three nights ago, someone tried to steal their plums, but she ran them off.
- “Piewright? He seems decent enough. Not too hard on the eyes, either. But the two with him give me the creeps.”
- Her husband thinks Piewright’s elixir is a bunch of malarkey, but she swears by it.
- She’s heard of the gnome peddler. “He better watch out. Lutho hates peddlers.”
- “Lutho thinks he’s better than everyone else. Rumors about town is that he’s taking advantage of the new young widow. I surely hope not!”
- All of their cats have gone missing.

NELLIE NIGHTJAR is a **night hag** masquerading as a young halfling widow, serving as Piewright’s eyes and ears. She’s charmed Lutho Fairhole into giving her the use of his vacant lake house while targeting those who drink Professor Piewright’s elixir. Using *etherealness* and *nightmare haunting*, Nellie wears her victims down over multiple nights.

- Nelly thanks the heroes for being there.
- She’s only been in town for a couple of weeks, but everyone has made her and her son Gleb feel welcome.
- If the heroes should ask, she tells them that she’s a seamstress.
- She’s heard about the missing cats. She thinks it’s a prank. “Kids will be kids, I guess.”

The NPCs not present at the town hall meeting but likely to be encountered during the adventure:

PROFESSOR PIEWRIGHT (male human, *see Appendix 7, page 113*) is a Dreamlander and a grifter. But he is far more than the sleazy snake oil salesman he appears to be—he is one of E’thor’s minions. Exceptionally handsome and charismatic, Piewright cuts a dashing figure in his immaculate black suit complete with top hat, walking stick, and gloves. When encountered by the heroes, Professor Piewright will pretend to be helpful and upfront, but he will do his best to mislead and misdirect. It should be noted that Piewright is protected by a *Ring of Mind Shielding*. (Refer to the **Area 1** section for more information on Piewright.)

GNASHER GRUB (male halfling **commoner**) is a very well-to-do farmer whose home is located north of town. While his wife Molly attended the town meeting, Gnasher was home with their sick child, Garrett. Grub is thankful for any help the heroes might be able to offer. Even though Garrett is Gnasher’s biggest concern, he’s also becoming concerned about Molly’s state of mind. (Refer to the **Area 2** section for more information on Gnasher.)

TOLAN BELBIN (male gnome **commoner**) is a harmless peddler. Although Tolan is not at the town hall meeting, he is a topic of conversation because he’s new in town. He showed up in town two days ago, with a prodigious peddler’s backpack, carrying an assortment of soaps, spices, tobaccos, pots, pans, candles, scissors, and trinkets. It is no secret that Lutho Fairhole dislikes peddlers, and that is certainly the case with Tolan Belbin. The two have had at least one very public shouting match. Fairhole has even hired some halfling boys to harass Belbin. Whenever the heroes encounter Belbin, they find him a very affable fellow.

Locations of Interest

AREA 1: MEDICINE SHOW WAGON. The heroes will find Professor Piewright's encampment in a clearing near Prattle Creek Lake.

AREA 2: THE GRUB FARM. The Grub Farm is one of the largest farms in the village.

AREA 3: FAIRHOLE'S GENERAL STORE. This is the kind of general store you'd expect to find in a village this size.

AREA 4: LAKE HOUSE. Lutho Fairhole has been letting Nelly Nightjar stay at his lake house rent-free.

AREA 5: HOLLOW LOG. This is where the zoogs have their elixir making operation. They chose the location because it possessed the perfect hollow tree trunk for their needs.

AREA 6: THE STINKY CAVE. This is where the otyugh is chained up on the far eastern side of the cave. The Leng Spider is there to guard the otyugh.

AREA 7: BROWN'S DAIRY FARM. Here is where the first encounter of the adventure takes place.

AREA 8: TOWNHALL. The townsfolk are happy and grateful to receive help from the outside world.

AREA 9: INN OF THE TARNISHED TANKARD. While most of the buildings in Burrow Wood would be considered cramped for many humanoids, the inn and tavern were built with "big folk" in mind.

Event 1. Commotion Beyond the Hedgerow

The heroes exit the forest at the edge of cultivated farmland (Area 7). Beyond the lush hedgerow that borders the road on its northern side, the characters can make out a picturesque farmhouse, barn, and a half dozen grazing cows.

Without warning, a loud and drawn-out yowl comes from behind a nearby hedgerow. This is quickly followed by a violent shaking of shrubs and a cacophony of catlike snarls and growls.

Investigating the commotion, the heroes discover a large black cat pulling desperately at a piece of brown cloth. The cloth is sticking up out of a hole one foot in diameter, slightly larger than a badger hole.

There's a loud ripping sound as the black cat goes tumbling backward from the hole, a piece of fabric held firmly between its teeth. After a moment, he sits up, spits out the brown fabric, and then casually grooms itself. The cat then casts his yellow, judging eyes upon you.

The large cat walks to a nearby burlap bag and tugs it open to reveal six mewling kittens. After a moment, a calico mother cat comes limping after her kittens.

DEVELOPMENT. The calico cat has obvious scratches and cuts, and a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Medicine) check informs the heroes that the calico has also suffered a broken leg. The black cat approaches the mother cat and gives her a comforting lick on the side of her face. He then looks up at the heroes expectantly.

A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check informs the heroes that there is something odd about the tracks that disappear down the hole. They resemble halfling footprints but possess strange claws. Continuing their trek into the village, they soon find themselves invited to a special town hall meeting.

CREATURE. The large black cat is a **Dreamlands cat** (see *Appendix 7, page 114*), and he has come to aid the felines of Burrow Wood. If the heroes show kindness to the mother cat, the Dreamlands cat could come to their aid later in the adventure.

Event 2. Welcome To Burrow Wood

Burrow Wood is a tiny community of fifty-three simple folk. As the heroes approach the center of town, a group of youngsters can be seen hanging out in front of a large building (Area 8).

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In front of one of the larger buildings in town, a group of halfling children is standing around. When they see you, one of the boys rushes inside. Seconds later, the double doors of the townhall open wide as several halflings pour out, talking all at once, welcoming you. After a moment, a halfling male steps to the front of the group and motions for everyone to be quiet.

“My name is Gordo Bolger. I’m the sheriff here in Burrow Wood. Have you come to help us?”

If the heroes claim that they are there to help, they’re invited inside for food and drink. There are thirty villagers at the meeting, and they share the following regarding the sickness:

- The sickness started six days ago, and thirty-four people have come down with the sickness. Some have gotten better; most have not.
- There is no clear source, but they suspect it may be tainted food or water. (It’s the fish.)
- The sick folk don’t seem to be contagious.
- The village has been without a magical healer since the previous one passed away of old age last winter.

Event 3. Murder Most Foul

This event is designed to take place in the early morning hours of the heroes’ second full day in Burrow Wood. However, GMs should feel free to use this planned encounter whenever they see fit—if the investigation slows, for example. Tolan Belbin is murdered outside of the Inn of the Tarnished Tankard (Area 9).

The killer is Gleb, the youngest of Professor Piewright’s **zoogs** (see *Appendix 5, page 86*). When Gleb murders the peddler under Piewright’s direction, he is polymorphed into the form of a young halfling. Before fleeing the scene, Gleb drops a signet ring belonging to Lutho Fairhole in an attempt to frame him. Gleb recently stole this ring from Lutho’s private quarters.



DEVELOPMENT. Olo Ashworth discovers poor Belbin’s Body around down. Olo will send her daughter into town to fetch Sheriff Bolger while she wakes up the heroes. If the heroes wish to investigate the crime scene before Bolger arrives, there is no one to stop them. If the heroes wish to search for clues at the crime scene, a character that succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check discovers Lutho’s signet ring.

Interrogating Lutho Fairhole

Depending on when the heroes go looking for Lutho Fairhole, they will most likely find him either in his private quarters or minding the store. Burrow Wood does not have a separate jailhouse, but there is a small jail cell built onto the back of Sheriff Bolger’s house.

When accused of the crime of murder, Lutho claims he has no idea what the heroes (and Sheriff Bolger) are talking about; he professes his innocence. When confronted with the ring, Fairhole claims that the ring disappeared from his home two days ago. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that Lutho is truthful, but that he is also very frightened and not being completely forthcoming.

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Heroes interrogating Lutho Fairhole learn the following on a successful Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check:

- **DC 15** – Lutho admits to paying local boys to intimidate and harass Belbin, but he didn't want to see the gnome dead.
- **DC 20** – Lutho purchased the plums from Grub on behalf of Professor Piewright. Piewright paid him in gold coins with markings he doesn't recognize. And he's pretty sure there's something in the elixir. Professor Piewright even warned Lutho not to drink it. Despite that, Lutho plans to start selling the elixir when Piewright leaves town—which is supposed to be soon.
- **DC 25** – The halflings with Professor Piewright are not halflings. He doesn't know what they are, but he's pretty sure they're not from around here. Piewright had them move the plums from his store to the lake house under cover of night.
- **DC 30** – Lutho suspects that Nelly Nightjar is not who she claims to be. He also thinks she is in league with Professor Piewright.

AREA 1. MEDICINE SHOW WAGON

Professor Piewright (*see Appendix 7, page 113*) makes his camp in a little clearing off the side of the road near Prattle Creek (**Area 1**).

A bright green wagon sits on one side of the road. Along its side, written in bold gilded letters, it reads PROF. PIEWRIGHT'S MOONLIGHT ELIXIR. Three excited halflings gaze up at a small window surrounded by bright red shutters. In the window can be seen the handsome face of a man with a pointed, dark beard and a dazzling smile.

Once their business is concluded, the happy halflings make their way home, each of them carrying at least one bottle of the Professor's elixir.

"Greetings, my friends!" Professor Piewright says to the heroes. "Perhaps I can interest you in

a bottle of my miraculous Moonlight Elixir. It's a surefire remedy for colds, persistent coughs, headaches, painful itches, and more!"

When he realizes the heroes mean business, Piewright exits the wagon in a fine black suit complete with top hat and walking cane. His demeanor becomes serious, and he assures the characters that he would like to help them in their investigation. The GM should be aware that Piewright is wearing an *Ring of Mind Shielding*.

As Piewright converses with the heroes, the older of his zoogs appears from behind the wagon. His name is M'lut, and he is a **zoog grove keeper** (*see Appendix 5, page 86*). He's been instructed by Piewright not to speak. If the heroes try to engage the zoog in conversation, Professor Piewright explains that he is mute.

Piewright offers each of the heroes a complimentary bottle of his elixir as a friendly gesture. (Characters who drink the elixir are targeted by Nelly Nightjar when they next sleep using her *nightmare haunting* ability.) When they leave, Piewright puts a plan in motion to eliminate the heroes.

THE WAGON. On the rare occasion that Professor Piewright leaves his wagon unattended, he locks the door and casts *arcane lock* on it. To bypass the ensorcelled lock requires a successful DC 25 Dexterity check with thieves' tools or a DC 25 Strength check to break it.

Inside the wagon is a bed against the far rear wall, a built-in chest of drawers on the right, and on the left is a small woodstove. A threadbare carpet covers the floor with several crates of Moonlight Elixir resting on it.

DEVELOPMENT. The bottom drawer holds a locked chest (DC 20 Dexterity check with thieves' tools to open) that is trapped with a poisoned needle—a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check allows heroes to find it and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check with thieves' tools allows them to neutralize it. If the trap is triggered, the creature opening it takes 1 piercing damage, 11

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(2d10) poison damage, and must also succeed on a DC 15 Constitution check or be poisoned for 1 hour.

TREASURE. The following is a list of the items found in Professor Piewright's chest:

- A *cloak of protection*
- A *wand of secrets*
- A purse with 500 gp (the markings on the coins are unfamiliar)
- 3 *potions of extra healing*
- A 6-inch-tall ivory figurine of a bizarre beast with too many arms, a tentacled snout, and blob-

like body (75 gp); the creature can be identified as a moon beast with a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check

- A letter to Professor Piewright from E'thor detailing his plans for Burrow Wood

AREA 2. THE GRUB FARM

Gnasher Grub comes out from his barn to greet visitors.

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"Hello there!" Gnasher says, extending his hand. "Molly's had nothing but good things to say about you folks! Come on in."

FARMHOUSE. The house features a great room with a stone fireplace and cathedral ceilings high enough to accommodate even the tallest of the heroes. Molly greets the heroes when they step inside. If it's been a day since the heroes have seen Molly, characters with a passive Perception of 11 or higher notice that she looks extremely haggard. If they ask how she feels, she replies with:

"Fine. Just tired's all. I'm not sleeping well, you know, worrying about Garrett. But I'm taking my elixir, and that'll do the trick."

Molly has indeed been drinking Moonlight elixir regularly and has been targeted by the night hag. If pressed, Molly admits she had some disturbing dreams last night.

"I remember having this dream where someone was calling my name. I turned around to find this little old woman standing there. She smiled at me and reached for my hand, but when I took it, pain surged through my entire body. And then Gnasher was there with an ax and..." Molly goes pale. "I'd rather not talk about it."

Molly excuses herself but not before again asking the heroes to help her son.

GARRET'S ROOM. Upon entering Garret's room, the heroes get a good look at Prattle Creek Poisoning firsthand. The boy is running a fever and suffering from abdominal pain and nausea. Garrett is having trouble keeping any food down and is very weak. When his eyes manage to focus on the heroes, he says:

"Are you the people Mamma said were coming to help?"

Garrett can be cured with a *lesser restoration* spell. Within moments of the spell being cast, the boy's nausea and pain subside. He smiles up at the heroes, amazed at how much better he feels. Within half an hour, Garrett's temperature will fall to normal, and his fever will be gone.

ORCHARD. If asked, Gnasher Grub eagerly shows the adventurers where he chased off the would-be plum thieves. Once in the orchard, they notice that almost all of Grub's plum trees are bare. If they should mention this to him, he says:

"It's the funniest thing. The day after I caught somebody going after my plums, Fairhole offers to buy all my plums for twice what he paid last year." Gnasher points to the ground. "Now look here. Don't these look like goblin tracks to you?"

DEVELOPMENT. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check tells the heroes that goblins did not make these tracks. They are the same footprints that disappeared down the hole at the beginning of the adventure.

AREA 3. LUTHO FAIRHOLE'S GENERAL STORE

This is a typical general store, the kind you'd expect to find in a village this size.

MAIN FLOOR. Merchandise is displayed on tables, counters, and from the rafters. A long L-shaped counter runs the length of the rear wall. There are closed doors on either side of it, one on the right and one on the left.

STOREROOM. The right door leads to the storeroom and is locked (requiring a successful DC 14 Dexterity check with thieves' tools to open). Inside the room are small casks of salted pork, several bags of beans and flour, gardening tools, and the like.

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There are also two cases of Professor Piewright's Moonlight Elixir. Characters that know of Lutho's purchase of the plums make note they are not here with a successful DC 12 Intelligence check. (The plums have been taken to Lutho's lake house.)

PRIVATE QUARTERS. The left door is locked (DC 16 Dexterity check with thieves' tools to open). Behind the door is a set of stairs leading to Lutho's quarters. The space is plush, with the bedroom and parlor taking up most of the space.

TREASURE. There is a locked chest under Lutho's bed (DC 15 Dexterity check with thieves' tools to open). Inside the chest is a *bag of holding* containing 450 gp, 1,400 sp, 500gp (they have the same markings as Piewright's gold), and a flask of perfumed oil (7sp).

AREA 4. THE LAKE HOUSE

Lutho Fairhole has had little use for his family's lake home—too many bad memories—and when Nelly Nightjar arrived in town as a young widow, she easily charmed her way into using the vacant property.

The lake house sits invitingly near the edge of Prattle Creek Lake. The weather is clear, so clear that you can see across the lake to the other side.

If the heroes knock on the front door, there's no answer, though it is unlocked and trap free. There is no other entrance into the house. The home's windows are small, and the curtains have been drawn.

PARLOR. A large portion of the front of the house is taken up by the parlor. The room is uncluttered but very dusty. If someone calls out once they're inside the house, a faint noise is heard.

A faint sound comes from somewhere in the back of the house. It is the weak cough of a child.

There is a short hallway that leads further into the house. At the end of the hallway is a closed door. It is unlocked.

Beyond the door, you hear another weak cough followed by a frail sounding voice. "Momma? Is that you, Momma?"

This door leads to the rear bedroom where Nelly and Gleb are waiting to ambush the heroes.

BACK BEDROOM. A full-sized bed dominates the left side of the bedroom, while the space on the right side is taken up by a large area rug and chair. Immediately left of the door is a large armoire.

Nelly Nightjar is in hag form and perched on top of the armoire when the heroes enter the room. Unless the heroes specifically declare they are checking the top of the armoire or the ceiling, the only way to notice Nelly is with a successful Wisdom (Perception) check of 15.

Gleb is beneath the covers, pretending to cough and call for his mother. His instructions are simple: play the role of a sick halfling child until Nelly attacks. At this point, he jumps up and bites the nearest hero. Gleb also has a *dagger of venom*.

CREATURE. Nelly is a **night hag**, and Gleb is a **zoog grove keeper** (see *Appendix 5, page 86*). If they appear to be losing the fight, Nelly escapes via Ethereal Plane or plane shift abandoning Gleb. Without the hag, Gleb surrenders to the heroes if given a chance.

DEVELOPMENT. If Gleb is allowed to surrender, he admits to the crimes that Piewright forced him to commit—including the murder of Tolan Belbin. He also tells the heroes everything he knows, including where to find the otyugh's cave. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of DC 12 notice Gleb's ripped cloak.

TREASURE. The following can be looted from Gleb: a *dagger of venom*, pouch with 42 sp and 6 gemstones (worth 50 gp each), and a silver moon pendant (worth 2 gp)

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GM's Note: If the battle is not going well for the heroes, the Dreamlands cat from the beginning of the adventure joins the fight.

SHED. There is a storage shed on the property between the lake and the house. The shed is filled with unused elixir ingredients: plums, three bags of sugar, and one bag of yeast.

AREA 5. THE HOLLOW LOG

The most direct route to the otyugh cave will take them through the clearing where the hollow log is. On their way there, the heroes notice that Piewright's wagon is missing.

Not far ahead, the trail intersects a lush, green clearing. In the center of the clearing is a very old oak tree that toppled over many years ago.

If Gleb is with them, he has no idea where the wagon is.

"M'lut?" Gleb calls. "Come out, M'lut! These people are going to stop Professor Piewright. We can be free of him!" There's no reply.

"I'm worried. M'lut refused to kill the gnome, so I had to do it. That angered the Professor terribly."

HOLLOW TREE. The hollow within the fallen tree has been filled with all the ingredients to make more elixir. They are merely waiting on the full moon to make their next batch.

DEVELOPMENT. The hero with the highest passive Wisdom (Perception) is the first to hear the muffled sounds of cats meowing. Following the sound, the heroes discover a square piece of canvas on the ground with a rock holding down each corner. The sound is coming from the pit underneath.

CAT PIT. Removing the canvas reveals a small square pit approximately five feet deep, too deep for the adult cats to leap out of in their weakened condition.

Within the pit are five adult cats and fourteen kittens. Despite how thirsty and hungry they are, they all plead loudly for help.

If the Dreamlands cat is present, he glares at the zoog with rage and undisguised hatred. For Gleb's part, he looks equal parts afraid and ashamed.

DEVELOPMENT. If the Dreamlands cat is not present already, he appears suddenly from behind a tree, much too small to have hidden him. He leads the rescued cats out of the clearing and back to their homes. Before leaving the clearing, he turns, winks, and bows to the heroes. His part in this tale is over. The heroes are free to continue toward the cave.

TREASURE. For their part in freeing the cats from Piewright, each player is given a boon. The boon, which can be used only once, gives each hero a sliver of the magic that gives cats nine lives. A hero with this boon who fails a death saving throw may instead choose to succeed.

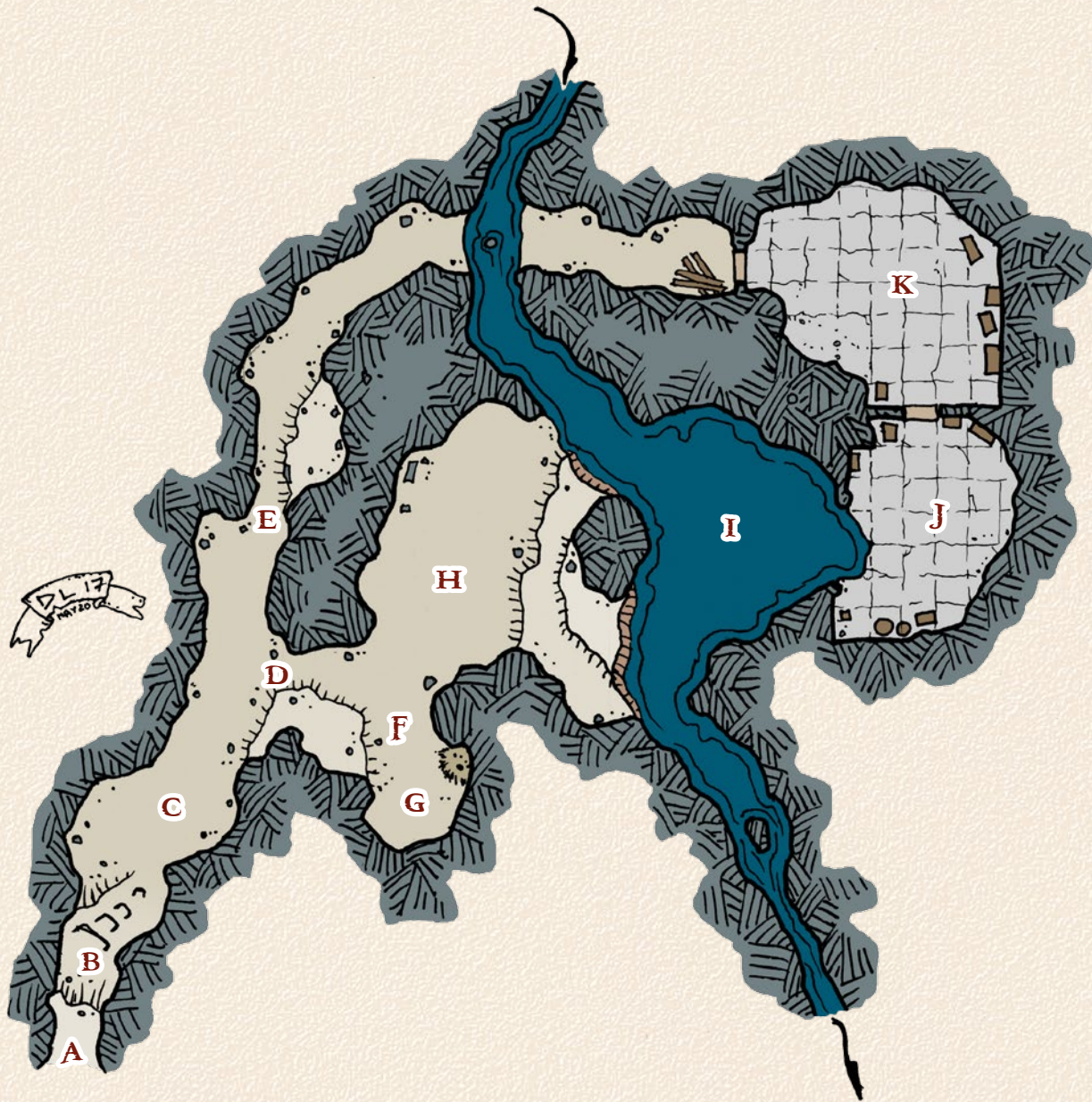
AREA 6. THE STINKY CAVE

Standing before the cave's west-facing entrance, you detect the faint scent of garbage wafting up from deep within the cave.

A. CAVE ENTRANCE. Stepping inside the cave entrance, the light from the outside illuminates a small series of stone steps that descend into darkness.

B. DESCENDING STEPS. As the heroes descend the roughhewn steps into the cave, the light begins to diminish. If the heroes proceed with torches, they notice something suspended in midair at the far edge of their torchlight.

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C. WRAPPED UP. The cavern widens slightly as you approach a small humanoid shape wrapped in spider silk and suspended from the ceiling of the cave. If they unwrap the figure, they discover M'lut; the zoog has been drained of blood. An envelope is pinned to

the body. It contains a piece of parchment that reads: *"Turn back now. This is your last chance."*

As the heroes continue further into the cave, the passages are roughly 15 feet wide and 30 feet high, and the floors are smooth, natural stone.

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D. VOICES. It is at this point that the heroes come within range of the starving and telepathic otyugh.

Without warning, an alien voice shouts at you from within your mind: “Hungry! Food! Need food!”

The otyugh continues to broadcast its desire for food every so often.

E. WALL OF WEBBING. The heroes come to a wall of thick, impassable webbing that blocks them from going farther north.

DEVELOPMENT. Characters succeeding on a DC 20 Intelligence (Nature) check while examining the webs note the subtle differences between this web and the type giant spiders typically weave. If they cut or burn the webbing, the spider comes from behind and attacks. Within two rounds, Professor Piewright joins the battle from the north, flanking the heroes.

F. MORE WEBBING. As **Area E**.

G. LENG SPIDER’S CHAMBER

The cavern would be wholly unremarkable were it not for the bulbous spider, as large as a horse, staring at you from a nest of gems and jewelry.

The spider has been instructed to wait here unless disturbed. If the heroes pass it by and move into **Area H** or **Area I**, the spider positions itself to sneak up behind them and attack.

CREATURE. This is no ordinary giant spider; this is an intelligent **Leng Spider** (see *Appendix 7, page 115*) from the Dreamlands.

TREASURE. In the spider’s nest is a small stash of treasure: a jewel-encrusted gold bracelet (worth 500 gp), a silver necklace with diamond pendant (the diamond is worth 1,000 gp), and a green glass jar containing thirteen amethyst gems (25 gp each).

H. LARGE CHAMBER.

The pervasive scent of rotting garbage increases to such an extent that retching becomes a concern.

The smell of garbage is stronger here. In this large, open chamber, the ground on the eastern side slopes up toward the ceiling, leaving a 5-foot opening at the top. Through this opening, the heroes can see the faint flickering of firelight.

If the heroes choose to climb up this incline and have a look, they see a dark pool of rushing water below, and beyond that, a stone platform. A chained beast—its head is little more than a huge, toothy mouth and three ropy tentacles sprout from its back—is trapped on the platform.

I. POOL. This dark pool is part of Prattle Creek that flows swiftly through the cave. At its widest point, the pool is 35 feet across. The west side of the pool is over 5 feet deep, about chest high, but becomes shallower toward the eastern bank.

The murky pool of water before you swiftly moves through the cavern. On the side of the pool farthest from you, surrounded and illuminated by torchlight, is the source of the stench that assaults you—a large creature with a toothy maw and three ropy tentacles sprouting from its back. It is chained in place.

DEVELOPMENT. Due to the rapid speed of the water, a successful DC 15 Strength check is required to wade across the pool without losing footing or being swept away by the current. If a character fails their check, they may attempt another Strength check to catch themselves. This requires a DC 20 Strength check and is a full-round action.

J. OTYUGH. The platform the otyugh is chained to is made of crumbling stone that has been eaten away over time by the flowing water. By the flickering

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torch sconces on the far east wall, the heroes can see that the platform is roughly 20 feet by 30 feet. The otyugh is chained in the center of this space and has very little freedom of movement.

Chained to the crumbling stone platform is a grotesque yet pitiable creature. It has three elephantine legs, a bloated body and head, and tentacles that end in leaf-like appendages. As it bellows angrily, the voice in your head persists: “Free! Must go free! So hungry!”

TACTICS. Once the heroes begin to cross the water, Professor Piewright emerges from a door that connects **Area J** with **Area K**. He attacks the characters from a distance. Piewright uses the otyugh to provide half cover. This gives him +2 to his AC and Dexterity saving throws. Additionally, the spider will attack the heroes from behind (**Area H**).

CREATURE. This strange and miserable creature is an **otyugh**. The characters have been hearing its rudimentary thoughts projected into their heads. Because they have almost finished their mission in Burrow Wood, Piewright and his lackeys have neglected to feed the otyugh in a few days.

The otyugh is not devoid of intelligence, and it truly hates Professor Piewright. Should the beast realize that the heroes are here to confront Piewright, the otyugh won’t attack them. Given the opportunity, however, it will try to kill Piewright.

K. PROFESSOR PIEWRIGHT’S CHAMBER. Should the heroes overpower him, Professor Piewright makes his escape. He wants nothing more than to see the heroes defeated, but he withdraws before being captured or killed by the characters. He attempts to flee into **Area K** and then out a back entrance.

Piewright is in too big a hurry to gather all his belongings, and so the heroes will discover two potions, a scroll, and a jar of the second ingredient they seek left behind in **Area K**. Like the night hag, the Leng Spider does not fight to the death

for Professor Piewright. Once the spider becomes severely wounded, it also retreats.

TREASURE. Here is a list of the items of value Professor Piewright has with him in the cave:

- A rapier, *sword of sharpness*
- A coin purse with 120 gp, 12 pp
- A *potion of gaseous form*
- A *scroll of black tentacles*
- A *potion of mage armor*
- A large jar of the second ingredient, *Ee-tope*

Conclusion

If the heroes manage to capture or otherwise defeat Professor Piewright, they likely discover his wagon parked in the woods nearby. If so, they can gain access to its contents. Refer to the **Area 1** section of the adventure for a complete list of the magic show wagon’s contents.

Although everything about the creature suggests that it is a vile and malevolent monster, the otyugh is not evil. It has been brought here against its will to serve E’thor’s dark purpose. Now that Professor Piewright and his minions have been stopped, what are the heroes to do with the otyugh?

If it is still alive at the end of the battle, it certainly cannot be left in the cave, but are the heroes willing to relocate it to a place where it cannot harm others, or will they be inclined to kill the poor beast for the sake of convenience? This should make for an interesting dilemma.

If the characters retrieve the jar of Ee-tope, they should advance to 8th level. Proceed to the following chapter, *Vale of the Mavka*, if you are playing the *Harper’s Tale* campaign.

Appendix 7

Professor Piewright



Medium humanoid (human Dreamlander), chaotic evil

Armor Class 10 (13 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 11 (+0) | 11 (+0) | 15 (+2) | 19 (+4) | 13 (+1) | 17 (+3) |

Saving Throws Intelligence +8, Charisma +7

Skills Arcana +8, History +8, Investigate +8, Perception +7

Languages Aklo, Common, Draconic, Zoog

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Spellcasting. The Professor is a 9th-level wizard. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). He knows the following wizard spells:

- Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *minor illusion*, *fire bolt*, *blade ward*
- 1st level (4 slots): *comprehend languages*, *expeditious retreat*, *identify*, *false life*, *mage armor*
- 2nd level (3 slots): *scorching ray*, *invisibility*
- 3rd level (3 slots): *feign death*, *lightning bolt*, *bestow curse*
- 4th level (3 slots): *dimension door*
- 5th level (1 slot): *cone of cold*, *modify memory*, *telekinesis*

Arcane Recovery. You have learned to regain some of your magical energy by studying your spell book. Once per day, when you finish a short rest, you can choose expended spell slots to recover. The spell slots can have a combined level that is equal to or less than half your wizard level (rounded up), and none of the slots can be 6th or higher.

Spellbook. Your spellbook is the repository of the wizard spells you know, except your cantrips, which are fixed in your mind.

ACTIONS

Sword Cane. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage with the cane, or 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage with the blade.

Dreamlands Cat, Ulthar Champion

Tiny beast, any alignment

Armor Class 13 (16 with mage armor)

Hit Points 24 (7d4 +7)

Speed 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 2 (-4) | 16 (+3) | 12 (+1) | 10 (+0) | 13 (+1) | 16 (+3) |

Saving Throws Con +4, Cha +6

Skills Arcana +3, Perception +4, Stealth +6

Languages Cat, Common

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

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

Low-Light Vision. The cat can see in dim light within 60 feet of it as if it were bright light.

Nine Lives. When killed, the cat's mind and consciousness shift reflexively back into a dream form, creating a new dream body if necessary. It must be at rest for 1d3 days in the Dreamlands, at which point it can return to the waking world. It can revive itself in this manner up to eight times, giving it nine lives in all. Resurrections from other methods (such as via a raise dead spell or other powerful magic) do not count against this limit.

Spellcasting. The cat is a 7th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). It knows the following sorcerer spells:

- Cantrips (at will): *dancing lights, mage hand, minor illusion, prestidigitation*
- 1st level (4 slots): *jump, mage armor, magic missile*
- 2nd level (3 slots): *mirror image, scorching ray*
- 3rd level (3 slots): *fly, lightning bolt*
- 4th level (1 slot): *greater invisibility*

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 slashing damage.

Moon Jump (2/Day). If the cat is in the Dreamlands, it can jump from a planet to its moon or other satellites (or vice versa). This movement provokes opportunity attacks normally, but the flight is supernaturally fast. En route, the cat is protected within a small demiplane. A group of four Dreamlands cats can bring a single Small creature with them when they Moon Jump, while a group of eight Dreamlands cats can bring a single Medium creature. When the cat uses Moon Jump to return to a planet or moon it left via Moon Jump, it returns to within 1 mile of where it departed that body.

REACTIONS

Land on Your Feet. When the cat falls, it can use its reaction to right itself before it lands. If it fell less than 60 feet, it treats the fall as 10 feet shorter for purposes of damage (reducing damage by 1d6). If it fell at least 60 feet, it has time to better maneuver and relax, instead negating all fall damage beyond the first 10 feet (for a total of 1d6 bludgeoning damage). If it takes damage from a fall, it nevertheless lands on its feet if it succeeds on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw.

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Leng Spider

Large monstrosity, lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 104 (11d10 +44)

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 17 (+3) | 20 (+5) | 18 (+4) | 16 (+3) | 16 (+3) | 17 (+3) |

Skills: Investigation +6, Stealth +8

Damage Immunities: poison

Condition Immunities: poisoned

Senses: darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages: —

Challenge: 6 (2,300 XP)

Magic Resistance. The Leng spider has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Spider Climb. The spider can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Web Sense. While in contact with a web, the spider knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

Web Walker. The spider ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Leng spider makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its talons.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 5) piercing damage plus 7 (3d4) poison damage. If the target is a creature, it is poisoned. At the end of the creature's next turn, it must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, ending the poisoned condition on a success. At the end of every 30 days thereafter, the creature must make another saving throw to end the poisoned condition. This is a curse. Casting any spell that removes the poisoned condition or that removes curses on the creature ends the poisoned condition.

Talon. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Toxic Web (Recharge 5–6). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target is restrained by webbing. Whenever a creature starts its turn restrained by the webbing, it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned. At the end of each of the poisoned creature's turns, it makes a new saving throw, ending this poisoned condition on itself on a success. As an action, the restrained target or another creature that can reach it can make a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check, bursting the webbing on a success. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 13; hp 10; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage).

Vale of the Mavka

An adventure for 4 to 5 characters of 8th level
By M.T. Black



Adventure Synopsis

The adventurers head to the Vale of the Mavka, a scorched and withered part of the forest with an evil reputation. As they seek the elusive substance known as *red vitriol*, they encounter all manner of bizarre and deadly creatures, including the malevolent Iron Thane and the infamous Mavka herself. Quick wits are as useful as a quick blade in the Vale, and enemies may become allies before the adventure is over.

Adventure Hooks

This adventure follows Chapter 7, *The Problem with Prattle Creek*, in the *Harper's Tale* campaign. The characters are seeking *red vitriol*, a rare substance which can be found beneath the Ring of Iron Pillars in the Vale of the Mavka. This adventure can also be played as a stand-alone, using one of the following hooks:

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SECRET WEAPON. A general named Qistina Ka is constructing a war machine to assist her in battle. *Red vitriol* is the final ingredient she requires.

FOREVER YOUNG. An ancient enchanter named Chiamaka Strange-cast requires *red vitriol* to brew his specialized longevity potion.

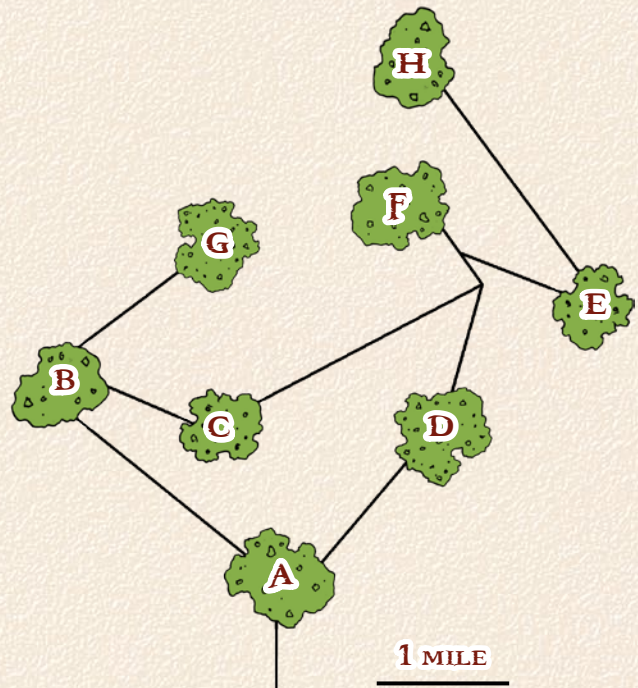
The Vale

The Vale once contained a flourishing and untamed forest, one that was thick with fey magic. Its caretaker was the Mavka, a powerful dryad and sister to Arpistis. When the disease was first unleashed, Arpistis came to the Mavka and begged her to help contain it. The Mavka did so but became infected in the process. Her skin became dry and burnt, her hands were twisted into grasping claws, and her heart became filled with malevolence and hate. The forest in the Vale changed along with its mistress, with the trees becoming twisted and withered and horrible monstrosities coming to dwell there.

Off the Track

The characters may decide to leave the trail they may encounter monstrous creatures making their home in the Vale. Roll, or choose, on the following encounter table for every hour the characters travel through the wilderness.

| d12 | Encounter |
|-----|-------------------------------|
| 1–4 | No encounter |
| 5 | 1d4 cyclops |
| 6 | 1d3 night hags |
| 7 | 1 hydra |
| 8 | 1 young green dragon |
| 9 | 1d6+1 hill giants |
| 10 | 1d6+1 forest marauders |
| 11 | 1 bukavac |
| 12 | 1 troll |



The characters enter the Vale of the Mavka from the south, following an old trail. They know only that the Ring of Iron Pillars is somewhere in the northern end of the Vale.

A. CHOICE OF WAYS

The trees on either side of this wet, rocky forest path have withered branches, ashen bark, and are twisted into unnatural shapes. A cold, gray mist hangs just behind the tree line, obscuring your view, and there is a low, hideous buzzing in the air. The path forks ahead of you.

The right-hand path seems more sodden and neglected than the left-hand path.

FIGURINES. The characters notice a set of wooden figurines on the left-hand path, each one 4 inches tall. There is one figurine for each member of the party, and each one has been carved into an exact

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resemblance of a character. The Mavka is aware that the characters have entered her Vale, and has placed these carvings here to lure them into her lair (area G), where she is most powerful.

B. WIDOW WILLOW

The path opens onto a dry, rocky clearing with a jagged and scorched tree stump in the middle of it. It is very quiet and the air smells faintly of smoke and ashes. Beyond the stump, the path continues to the north.

When the characters enter the clearing, a gentle, rustling voice whispers the word “Beware...” Anyone attempting to determine where the voice came from must make a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. On a success, they determine it came from the stump.

THE STUMP. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Nature) check identifies the stump as a willow. Anyone touching the stump hears these words clearly in their mind: “Beware the easy path lest you meet she who, though once my friend, made me as I am. Behind my weeping widow lies a safer way.”

WILLOW WAY. Anyone looking for another willow tree finds one on the eastern side of the clearing with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check. Behind the willow’s wasted trunk is an overgrown path.

DEVELOPMENT. If the characters linger in the clearing for more than a few minutes, they hear several large creatures moving through the forest, speaking in a rasping language. The creatures are distant but getting closer. A few minutes later, a pair of **cyclops** (see *Appendix 8, page 126*) burst through the western tree line, and attack anyone they find. The heroes have one round to prepare, and can avoid violence by running, or successfully hiding with a successful DC 11 Dexterity (Stealth) check.

TREASURE. One of the cyclops wears a gold chain worth 200 gp, looted from a previous victim.

C. HOP FROG

A narrow path follows the edge of a murky, green pond, where an ugly horned frog squats serenely on a lily pad.

The pond is very large, about 150 feet across. The frog carefully watches anyone who walks along the path.

DEVELOPMENT. When the characters come near the frog, it speaks, telling them in a croaky voice that the god of frogs demands all who pass by show their respect by frog hopping rather than walking. If the players accede to this request, and provided there are no mobility or space issues, have all of them frog hop around the table. Once the players complete this task, the frog speaks again. It says that the frog god is pleased, but also demands they compose and sing a short song celebrating all that is good about frogs. If space or mobility doesn’t allow for frog hopping, the frog only demands the celebratory song.

If the characters refuse either of these requests, a **bukavac** (see *Appendix 8, page 126*) emerges from the pond and attacks driving them away. They may repeat the encounter in an hour; frogs have notoriously poor memories.

D. A TROLL AND A TOLL

A spidery wooden bridge, ancient and unstable, spans a foul-smelling bog.

The bridge is 3 feet wide, 40 feet across, and 5 feet above the bog. Despite appearances, it’s very strong, but it’s so narrow that those crossing it must do so in single file.

DEVELOPMENT. Crouching in the bog near the southern bank is a **troll** called Binguni. If anyone steps on the bridge, he calls out, “Pay the toll or feed the troll!” His demanded toll is a bag of diamond dust worth at least 500 gp. Alternatively, the troll is not particularly smart and can be tricked with a

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successful DC 12 Charisma (Deception) check into accepting other payment as long as it believes the tribute is worthy.

If the characters are unable or unwilling to pay the toll, he offers a deal— solve his riddle and they may pass, otherwise one of them must “stay for supper!” If they agree, he chuckles and asks this riddle:

A box without lock or key or hinge,
Yet golden treasure lies within.

If the players are older, use this riddle instead:

In marble walls as white as milk,
Lined with skin as soft as silk,
Within a fountain crystal clear,
A golden apple does appear.
No doors are there to this stronghold,
Yet thieves break in and steal the gold.

In both cases, the answer is “egg.”

If the characters do not pay the toll, or if they cannot answer the riddle and don't sacrifice one of their number to the troll, the troll attacks the party.

TREASURE. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check locates the troll's hole amongst the reeds. Inside is 1000 sp, 400 gp, 4 garnets (100 gp each), a *bag of holding*, and a *spell scroll (ethereality)* in a bone scroll case.

E. BONES AND CRONES

This wide, flat clearing is covered in coarse, yellow weeds. There is a pile of slick, fresh bones near the northern tree line.

A few moments after the characters arrive, a fresh bone appears from thin air and drops onto the pile. Every minute or two, another bone appears and is added to the pile.

INVISIBLE CABIN. There is an invisible cabin on the northern edge of the clearing, housing a group of 3 **night hags**. The foul creatures are feasting on the remains of an intruder they caught and tossing the bones out the door as they lick them clean.

The interior of the cabin is paneled with rough, charred slabs of wood, 20-foot square, and has a single room. An enormous though decrepit four-poster bed leans against one wall, with a quilt made from oddly shaped, brightly colored leather. A shelf on one wall is covered with the skulls of various creatures, while another contains a collection of jars, each with a unique herb. There is a table, chairs, a small iron stove, and other basic furnishings.

TREASURE. An unlocked chest, beneath the bed, contains 1500 sp, 300 gp, a half-dozen garnets (50 gp each), a *potion of greater healing*, a *potion of growth*, and *boots of speed*.

DEVELOPMENT. The characters can sneak past the hut with a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check. On a failure, the hags become aware of the characters and one of them polymorphs into the form of a female halfling and heads out to greet the party. She claims her name is Philomena Swiftwhistle, says her grandma is dying, and asks if someone can come inside to help. She tries to split the party by claiming her grandma will be frightened if too many people enter at once. The hags ambush anyone entering their hut.

F. FOUNTAIN OF BLESSED HARMONY

This broad, green lawn contrasts sharply with the withered vegetation everywhere else in the Vale. A fountain of veined white marble stands in the middle of the clearing, ornamented by a headless statue holding a large acorn.

A swarm of brightly colored butterflies flit around the fountain. This is a **greater death butterfly swarm** and it attacks and pursues anyone coming near. A

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fleet-footed person might be able to draw the swarm away from the clearing.

FOUNTAIN. A creature drinking from the fountain gains one of the following beneficial effects:

d6 Effect

- 1 Your steps make no sound, regardless of the surface you are moving across. You also have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks that rely on moving silently.
- 2 You have advantage on all initiative rolls.
- 3 You gain 5d6 temporary hit points.
- 4 You gain a fly speed equal to your walking speed.
- 5 Your Strength score changes to 23.
- 6 You gain a +1 bonus to AC and saving throws.

The effect lasts until nightfall. If anyone takes a subsequent drink from the fountain, they lose the benefit and suffer 17 (5d6) psychic damage.

STATUE. The statue depicts a female humanoid holding an acorn. The head has been knocked off and lies a few yards behind the fountain. An inscription across the base of the statue says, “Beloved Arpistis.”

G. THE PAVILLION OF TEARS

A curtain of dry, yellow leaves hangs down from this enormous willow tree.

This is the tree of the **Mavka**. Those passing through the leafy curtain see the scorched and blackened trunk, part of which has been shaped into a throne-like chair. Dry, gray leaves blanket the ground. To one side of the throne is a terrarium, which the Mavka is dropping small pieces of dried meat into.

TERRARIUM. The terrarium is made of black iron and sheets of clear crystal. It is 7 feet wide, 3 feet high, and 3 feet deep. It holds 5 small figures, each 6 inches high,

who were trapped by the Mavka. The group of would-be adventurers includes 3 **guards**, an **acolyte**, and a **spy**. Any humanoid or beast dropped into the terrarium immediately shrinks to one-twelfth its original size, along with anything it is wearing. Anything removed from the terrarium is restored to its regular size. The terrarium has AC 15 and 40 hit points. Destroying it restores all the inhabitants to their regular size.



DEVELOPMENT. The Mavka is aware of the character's approach, having been informed by the trees. Speaking in an imperious tone, she offers them a deal. They can leave unharmed if they agree to destroy everything that lurks beneath the Ring of Iron Pillars—otherwise she will add them to her collection of “pets” in the terrarium. If the characters refuse this deal, the Mavka attacks.

Showing the head of the statue from area F causes the Mavka to screech and flee for 3d6 rounds. She broke the statue in a fit of rage and now feels intense anger and guilt when reminded of her sister. If, while she is away, the adventurers begin attacking her tree (AC 15, 150 hit points), she returns 1d3 rounds later, flanked by 2 **cyclops** (see *Appendix 8*, page 126). Destroying her tree also destroys the Mavka.

TREASURE. Examining the tree and succeeding a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a *portable hole* hidden in a hollow. It contains *potions* of: *animal friendship*, *climbing*, and *fire resistance*, each in a long-necked yellow gourd.

Tomb of the Iron Thane

GM's Notes: This section of the adventure is primarily a dungeon crawl. As written the encounters assume combat for resolution but stealth, trickery, or subterfuge may be equally effective with minor adjustments.

Before the Mavka came this area was ruled over by a clan of fierce human warriors known as the Cruel Iron Tribe, and their leader, the Iron Thane. The Thane died and was buried here, preserved in undeath by powerful necromancy, while his people above ground dwindled and finally disappeared. The warping of magic caused by the disease has made the

Iron Thane more powerful than before, and now he seeks to dominate the Vale once more. Access to the tomb is via the Ring of Iron Pillars.

TOMB FEATURES. Except where noted, the walls and floor of the tomb are made of huge, granular blocks of limestone. The ceiling is 12 feet high and made of packed earth, reinforced by ancient timber beams, while the floor is covered in limestone sand. Relief carvings on the walls depict ranks of armored warriors wielding swords or spears, as well as the occasional large, animal-headed humanoid.

H. THE RING OF IRON PILLARS

A ring of eight worn iron pillars, each one 12 feet high, surround a dirt mound covered in yellow grass. Strange runes are engraved on the pillars.

The iron pillars are trapped. Anyone passing between them who is not undead must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. A creature takes 8d8 (36) lightning damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much damage on a successful one. Casting *dispel magic* on the pillars disables the trap.

RUNES. The runes are written in the tongue of the ancient Cruel Iron tribe and can be read using the comprehend languages spell. There is one word engraved on each pillar, the runes of which glow slightly when the pillar is touched.

Starting at the northern pillar and moving clockwise, the following phrase is written out, “The Iron Thane ruled over all this Vale.” If a single character touches the pillars in that order, the dirt mound disappears, and a set of limestone stairs is revealed heading down. The dirt mound also disappears every night at midnight and reappears the following dawn.

DIGGING. If the characters decide to dig out the mound by hand, it takes 12 hours of work, and everyone digging must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw at the end of the work or suffer 1 level of exhaustion.

Vale of the Mavka

I. CHAMBER OF SHADOWS

A green flame burns in a wide iron brazier sitting atop a pile of calcified humanoid skulls. Flanking the brazier are a pair of life-sized statues made of limestone. Each statue depicts a stern warrior and casts a flickering shadow on the chamber walls behind.

The shadows are actually 2 **shadow beasts** (see *Appendix 8, page 131*). They attack anyone who interferes with the brazier or statues or who tries to leave the chamber.

GREEN FLAME. The green flame is magical and cannot be extinguished except using *dispel magic*. If this happens, or if the flame is completely covered by an opaque barrier, the shadow beasts disappear. If the flame is later uncovered, the shadow beasts reappear.

STATUES. Destroying a statue destroys the corresponding shadow beast. The statues have AC 20 and 70 hit points. They have resistance to fire, lightning, cold, slashing, and piercing damage from non-magical weapons. Engraved on the chest of the statues is an inverted triangle containing a vulture head; pressing this symbol causes it to glow for a moment before the attached shadow beast is drawn into the statue and becomes harmless. Pressing the symbol again causes the shadow beast to re-emerge from the statue.

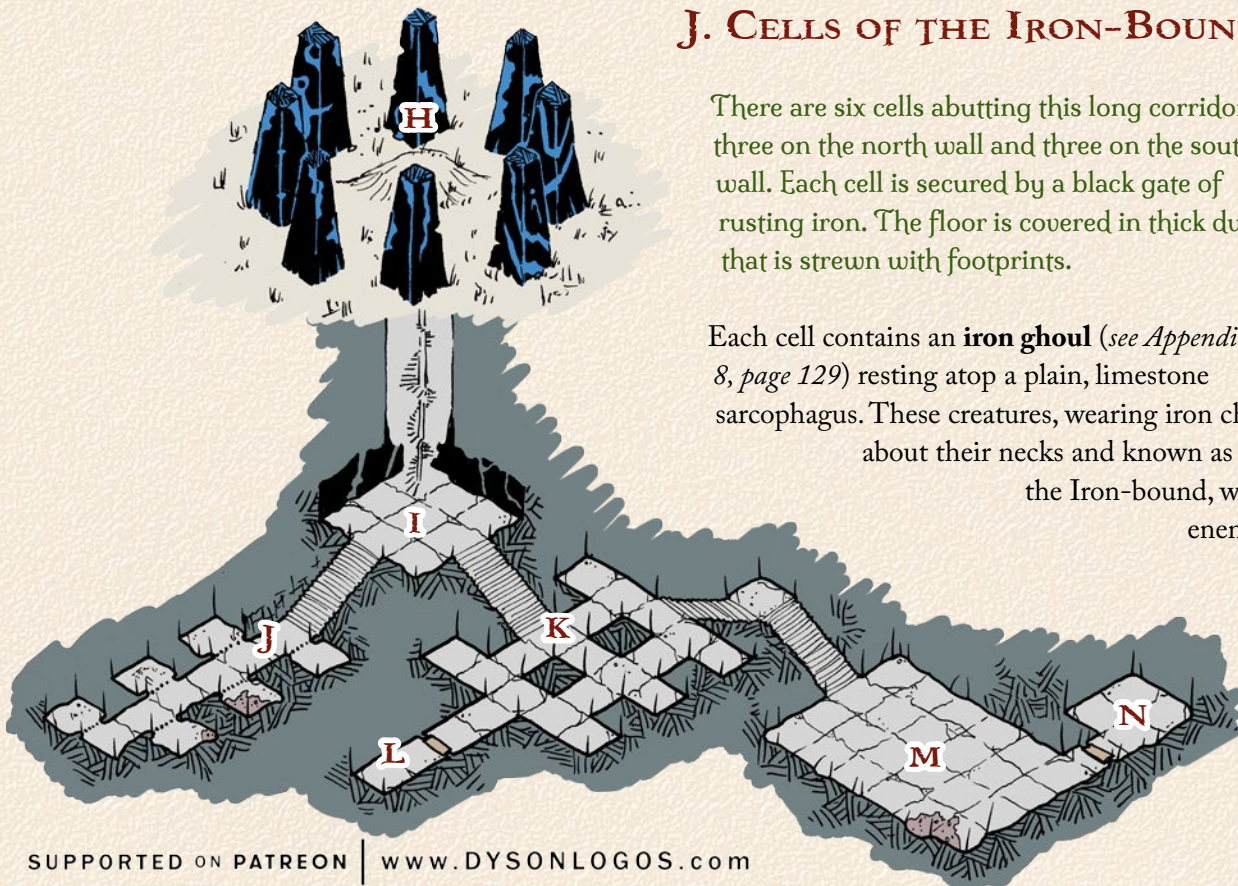
FOOTPRINTS. Anyone examining the dusty floor and succeeding on a DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check notices tracks leading down the western staircase, but comparatively few leading down the southern staircase.

TREASURE. Beneath the pile of calcified skulls are 5 emeralds (150 gp each) set into the limestone floor. They can be easily removed.

J. CELLS OF THE IRON-BOUND

There are six cells abutting this long corridor, three on the north wall and three on the south wall. Each cell is secured by a black gate of rusting iron. The floor is covered in thick dust that is strewn with footprints.

Each cell contains an **iron ghoul** (see *Appendix 8, page 129*) resting atop a plain, limestone sarcophagus. These creatures, wearing iron chains about their necks and known as the Iron-bound, were enemies



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of the Iron Thane in life but have now been compelled to serve him in undeath. The gates are unlocked but can be tied shut with rope or iron. If any of the ghouls are disturbed, all rise alike to attack the intruders.

TREASURE. Each sarcophagus contains a unique treasure, listed here in order, starting from the eastern-most cell:

- An iron goblet encrusted with small sapphires (200 gp).
- A small, iron statue of an amorphous, tentacled god (150 gp).
- A tortoise-shell shield, reinforced with alternating bands of iron and electrum (150 gp).
- A great axe with a polished iron blade and an ash wood shaft, inlaid with electrum (200 gp).
- A polished iron flask, engraved with a unicorn, and containing a *potion of heroism*.
- A human-sized skull made of electrum (500 gp). The skull is animated, can roll (Speed 30 ft.) of its own volition, and talk. It says its name is “Sharba”. If released, it follows the characters around chattering inanely about everything it sees.

K. SACRIFICIAL COLUMNS

Two hefty square columns of stone dominate this chamber. The area between them is covered in a mess of reeking, putrid flesh.

The arched ceiling is 18 feet high here. There are chains and manacles attached to the facing walls of the columns. In ancient times, human sacrifices were brought here and chained between the columns. The Iron-bound (see above) have recently revived this vile practice, abducting marauders and the occasional cyclops for sacrifice.

DEVELOPMENT. If the characters spend more than five rounds in the chamber, the Stone Reaver emerges from area L, with the door to its pen opening and closing with a crash. If the characters are attempting to be quiet, everyone in the chamber



must attempt a DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth) check. If they are all successful, the Stone Reaver does not emerge.

TREASURE. Anyone searching the mangled remains between the pillars and succeeding on a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check finds a gold armband embedded with sapphires (250 gp).

L. PEN OF THE STONE REAVER

The walls of this plain chamber are unadorned by decoration.

This room houses the Stone Reaver, a **stone golem** with a jackal-shaped head, wielding an enormous iron flail. If the creature hears any noise in area K, it investigates smashing anything it finds chained up there, attacking anyone in the chamber, and pursuing

Vale of the Mavka

those that flee. It does not, however, enter area **M**, nor does it climb the stairs to area **I**.

DOOR. The stone door to this area is 12 feet tall, and engraved on each side with an inverted triangle containing a cat's head. The door is hinged at the top and swings both ways. Pressing the cat's head causes it to swing open for 2 rounds before crashing back in place. It can be forced with a successful DC 18 Strength check.

M. MAUSOLEUM OF THE IRON THANE

An enormous iron canopy consisting of long, intricately woven iron rods has been erected in the center of this large chamber. A pair of glowing orange lights in the canopy ceiling shine down upon a large iron sarcophagus, adorned with a relief sculpture of a warrior on the lid. There is a small stone door in the south-eastern corner, and a strange, glowing engraving on the southern wall.

The arched ceiling is 24 feet high. The north, east, and west walls are full of relief engravings that show a leader in various powerful and glorious situations, such as leading an army, sitting on a throne, or pronouncing judgement over chained enemies.

IRON CANOPY. The canopy is 20 feet wide, 20 feet long and stands on iron rods that are 20 feet high. It is actually a magical construct that now holds the spirit of the Iron Thane. The orange lights are the eyes of the construct, and they start following the party soon after they enter the mausoleum. The canopy animates and attacks if the characters try to open the sarcophagus or enter the door to area **N**. It has the statistics of an **iron golem** with the following changes:

- Armor Class 18
- Hit Points 180
- No Poison Breath or Sword actions

SARCOPHAGUS. The sarcophagus is 4 feet high, 3 feet wide, and 8 feet long. The lid can be opened with a successful DC 15 Strength check. Inside lie the emaciated remains of a human warrior, clad in rusty armor. A gold torc about the head of the corpse is worth 200 gp.

There are three engravings on the side of the sarcophagus, each one composed of an inverted triangle containing an animal head. Pressing a symbol causes it to glow briefly before having the following effect:

| Symbol | Effect |
|---------|--|
| Cat | Opens the door to area N . |
| Vulture | Causes the spirit of the Iron Thane to be drained out of the iron canopy and appear before the characters as a deathwisp (120 hp). In this form, it speaks to the characters in archaic common, demanding to know what they want. It is willing to give them <i>red vitriol</i> provided they promise to destroy the Mavka. If no deal is reached, the deathwisp attacks. |
| Rooster | Causes a silvery disintegration beam to strike the presser. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or take 45 (10d8) force damage. If this damage reduces the creature to 0 hit points, its body becomes a pile of fine gray dust. |

WALL ENGRAVING. On the south wall, a 3-foot-by-3-foot area of limestone is covered by wavy lines and full of small, glowing dots, some of which are slowly moving. There is one especially bright dot on the left side of the engraving, and a tiny cluster of very bright dots near the top.

Anyone making a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check realizes that this is a contour map of the Vale. The dots represent the various creatures in the Vale, with the brightness proportionate to

the power of the creature. The dot on the left is the Mavka (assuming she still lives), and the cluster of dots at the top are the Iron Thane and the characters.

DOOR. The door to area N is reinforced with iron and has AC 18 and 100 hit points. It is secured by an *arcane lock* spell and further protected by a *glyph of warding*. The glyph triggers a *cloudkill* spell (save DC 15) when any creature other than the Iron Thane touches the door. The spell's cloud lasts for 10 minutes.

N. TREASURY

A pair of long shelves line one side of this chamber. The walls are otherwise unadorned by decoration.

TREASURE. The shelves hold various treasures:

- An iron tub holding 2,000 iron coins stamped with a jackal head (100 gp).
- 2 smaller iron tubs, holding 400 gp 400 sp respectively.
- A large mirror with an ornate frame of black iron and a sheet of polished silver (100 gp).
- A 2-foot high silver statue of a jackal-headed humanoid (100 gp).
- A iron jar holding 20 bloodstones (10 gp each).
- A *wand of secrets*.
- 4 *potions of healing* in lacquered green gourds.
- A *potion of gaseous form* in a silver test tube.
- A *spear +2* with electrum inlays on the shaft.
- 8 small clay jars, each containing 1 pint of *red vitriol*, which is an oily, crimson liquid. As an action, you can splash the contents of this pot onto a creature within 5 feet of you or throw the pot up to 20 feet, shattering it on impact. In either case, make a ranged attack against a creature or object, treating the vitriol as an improvised weapon. On a hit, the target takes 6d6 acid damage.

Conclusion

If the characters made a deal with the Mavka but did not destroy the Iron Thane, they are confronted by her as they attempt to leave the Vale. The same is true of the Iron Thane, who meets the party in **deathwisp** form. If the party betrays both the Mavka and the Iron Thane, the Mavka alone confronts them, with the Iron Thane having no desire to meet her above ground.

At the end of this adventure, with the successful procurement of *red vitriol*, the heroes gain enough experience to progress to level 9.

Appendix 8

Bukavac

Ill-tempered and malicious, the bukavac is a six-legged toad the size of a draft horse. Well known for its bellow, the monstrosity hops along its territory looking for easy prey.

Large monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 199 (21d10 + 84)

Speed 40 ft., swim 20 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| 20 (+5) | 17 (+3) | 18 (+4) | 7 (-2) | 15 (+2) | 12 (+1) |

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +8

Skills Perception +10, Stealth +11

Damage Immunities thunder

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 20

Languages Sylvan

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Hold Breath. The bukavac can hold its breath for up to 20 minutes.

Hop. A bukavac can move its enormous bulk with remarkably quick hops of up to 20 feet, leaping over obstacles and foes. It may also use the hop as part of a withdraw action.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The bukavac makes four claw attacks, or two claw attacks and one bite attack, or two claw attacks and one gore attack, or one bite and one gore attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d10 + 5) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (1d12 + 5) slashing damage and grapples (escape DC 15). A bukavac can grapple up to 2 Medium size foes.

Gore. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d10 + 5) piercing damage.

Croaking Blast (Recharge 5-6). A bukavac can emit a howling thunderclap that deafens and damages those nearby. Creatures within 15 feet who fail a DC 17 Constitution saving throw take 36 (8d8) thunder damage and are permanently deafened. Those succeeding on the saving throw take half damage and are not deafened.

Cyclops

Large giant, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 14 (hide armor)

Hit Points 126 (12d10 + 60)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| 22 (+6) | 15 (+2) | 20 (+5) | 8 (-1) | 11 (+0) | 10 (+0) |

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Giant

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Cyclopean Perspective. The cyclops has disadvantage on ranged weapon attacks.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The cyclops makes two greatclub attacks.

Greatclub. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (3d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

Rock. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 28 (4d10 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

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Deathwisp

With eyes of glowing blue, the wispy frame of the fey, and a non-corporeal form of wispy shadows, the creature's malevolence is palpable.

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 82 (11d8 + 33)

Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 6 (-2) | 20 (+5) | 16 (+3) | 18 (+4) | 16 (+3) | 20 (+5) |

Saving Throws Dex +8, Con +6, Wis +6

Skills Perception +6, Stealth +8

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages the languages it knew in life

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Flicker. The deathwisp flickers in and out of sight, and ranged weapon attacks against it are made with disadvantage.

Incorporeal Movement. The deathwisp can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside a solid object.

Shadow Jump. A deathwisp can travel between shadows as if by means of *dimension door*. This magical transport must begin and end in an area with at least some shadow. A deathwisp can jump up to a total of 40 feet per day; this may be a single jump of 40 feet, four jumps of 10 feet each, etc. This ability must be used in 10-foot increments.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the deathwisp has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Unnatural Aura. Animals do not willingly approach within 30 feet of a deathwisp, unless their master makes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check.

ACTIONS

Life Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 36 (7d8 + 5) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Create Wraith. The deathwisp targets a humanoid within 10 feet of it that died violently less than 1 minute ago. The target's spirit rises as a **wraith** in the space of its corpse or in the nearest unoccupied space. This wraith is under the deathwisp's control. The deathwisp can keep no more than five wraiths under its control at one time.

Forest Marauders

Primitive, brutish, and possessing the worst traits of their giant cousins, forest marauders lay claim to the most remote areas, and defend them with gleeful violence.

Large giant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 114 (12d10 +48)

Speed 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 21 (+5) | 10 (+0) | 18 (+4) | 6 (-2) | 10 (+0) | 7 (-2) |

Vale of the Mavka

Saving Throws Con +6

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Giant, Orcish, Sylvan

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the forest marauder has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The forest marauder makes two boar spear attacks.

Boar Spear. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) piercing damage, and the forest marauder can choose to push the target 10 feet away if it fails a DC 16 Strength saving throw.

Rock. Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (3d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Greater Death Butterfly Swarm

The sickly, sweet scent of rot permeates the air occupied by the brightly colored butterflies whose flapping wings stir the air.

Huge swarm of tiny beasts, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 84 (13d12)

Speed 5 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| 1 (-5) | 16 (+3) | 10 (+0) | 1 (-5) | 15 (+2) | 12 (+1) |

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing

Damage Vulnerabilities cold, fire

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Potent Poison. The death butterfly swarm's poison affects corporeal undead who are otherwise immune to poison.

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny insect. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Weight of Wings. A creature in a space occupied by the death butterfly swarm has its speed reduced by half, and must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or become blinded. Both effects end when the creature doesn't share a space with the swarm at the end of the creature's turn. If a creature succeeds on the saving throw, it is immune to the swarm's blindness (but not the speed reduction) for 24 hours.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The swarm makes a Bite attack against every target in its spaces.

Bites. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 0 ft., every target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 24 (6d6 + 3) piercing damage, or 13 (3d6 + 3) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer. The target also takes 17 (5d6) poison damage and becomes poisoned for 1d4 rounds; a successful DC 15 Constitution saving throw reduces poison damage by half and prevents the poisoned condition.

Vale of the Mavka

Iron Ghoul



Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (breastplate)

Hit Points 143 (22d8 + 44)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 20 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 18 (+4) | 16 (+3) | 14 (+2) | 14 (+2) | 14 (+2) | 14 (+2) |

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Darakhul, Undercommon

Challenge 5 (2,900 XP)

Turning Defiance. The iron ghoul and any ghouls within 30 feet of it have advantage on saving throws against effects that turn undead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The iron ghoul makes one bite attack and one claw attack, or three glaive attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (3d8 + 4) piercing damage. If the target is a creature other than an elf or undead, it must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target repeats the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (4d6 + 4) slashing damage. If the target is a creature other than an elf or undead, it must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target repeats the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Glaive. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage.

Heavy Bone Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) piercing damage.

Vale of the Mavka

Mavka



Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 170 (20d8 + 80)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 20 (+5) | 15 (+2) | 18 (+4) | 13 (+1) | 13 (+1) | 18 (+4) |

Saving Throws Str +9, Dex +6, Con +8, Cha +8

Skills Athletics +9, Nature +5, Perception +5

Damage Resistances acid, fire, necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities cold, lightning

Senses darkvision 90 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Infernal, Sylvan

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The mavka's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

- Constant: *protection from evil and good*
- At will: *create or destroy water, dancing lights, ray of frost, resistance, witch bolt*
- 3/day each: *darkness, hold person, inflict wounds, invisibility, silence*
- 1/day each: *animate dead, bestow curse, blindness/deafness, contagion, dispel magic, vampiric touch*

Nightmare Mount. A mavka is bonded to a nightmare when it is created. Mavkas are encountered with their mounts 95% of the time.

Sunlight Hypersensitivity. The mavka takes 20 radiant damage when she starts her turn in sunlight. While in sunlight, she has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The mavka makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 23 (4d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage plus 11 (2d10) necrotic damage.

Vale of the Mavka

LAIR ACTION

When fighting inside the Pavilion of Tears, the mavka can take lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the mavka causes willow branches to wrap around a creature within the pavilion. The target must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw. On a failure, the willow branches hoist the target aloft and drop them into the mavka's terrarium.

Shadow Beast

Before making itself known these fey may be mistaken for an oddly shaped shadow. That is until they reveal their maws of serrated teeth, and taloned claws.

Medium fey, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 135 (18d8 + 54)

Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 20 (+5) | 18 (+4) | 17 (+3) | 14 (+2) | 14 (+2) | 19 (+4) |

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +6

Skills Stealth +7

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Elvish, Umbral, Void Speech

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Amorphous. The shadow beast can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Incorporeal Movement. The shadow beast can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Innate Spellcasting. The shadow beast's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15). It

can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

• 3/day each: *fear*, *telekinesis*

Magic Resistance. The beast has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the shadow beast has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The shadow beast makes one bite attack and two claw attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) slashing damage.

Shadow Push (Recharge 5–6). The shadow beast buffets opponents with a gale of animated shadows in a 15-foot cone. Any creatures in the area of effect must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be pushed back 10 feet and knocked prone.

Rotten to the Core

An exploration adventure for 4 to 5 characters of 9th level
By Celeste Conowitch



Adventure Background

In Chapter 4, *A Forest Strangely*, the characters explored Neblina Forest and its secrets to reach the home of High Druid Deng. Now that they've gathered the ingredients necessary to brew a cure for Chranc, they must return to the forest to bring the ingredients to Deng. However, the Neblina is under attack by malevolent forces—the forces of E'thor are laying siege to Deng's tower, and corruption is spreading throughout the forest.

Adventure Synopsis

With the necessary ingredients in hand, the heroes return to find the Neblina forest under attack. Corruption is spreading through the land, and the group must once again locate the three keys to unlock passage to the Great Druid's tower. While battling treacherous new villains, the heroes can help the forest citizens to gain allies in the final fight. With three keys collected, the party arrives just in time to turn the tides of a siege against Deng's tower.

Adventure Hooks

A CURE AT LAST. If the characters have completed the previous adventures in *Harper's Tale* and acquired the ingredients Deng requested, they've already been instructed to return to the druid's home in Neblina Forest.

A DRUID BESIEGED. To create a greater sense of urgency, the characters could receive an animal messenger from Deng himself, urging them to hurry since E'thor's minions have invaded the forest.

A CAW FOR HELP. If using this adventure separately from the Harper's Tale storyline, the previous adventure hook can be modified for a standalone adventure: have the characters receive an urgent message via animal messenger asking for help protecting Neblina Forest from corruption.

Neblina Forest

The ancient and vast Neblina Forest is a primeval woodland full of old-growth oaks, firs, and pines, many of which are over a hundred feet tall. The fey magic suffusing the forest has given the local creatures unusual intelligence and the ability to speak Common.

Though the forest is usually suffused with a heavy mist designed to confuse outsiders, now there are only wisps of fog clinging to the undergrowth; the High Druid Deng is devoting all his energy to holding off the small army besieging his home.

Running the Adventure

Once inside Neblina Forest, the adventure is presented in a sandbox-style using three types of encounters:

- **RANDOM ENCOUNTERS** – Small confrontations

- **SANDBOX LOCATION** – Areas where the heroes can interact with the denizens of the forest
- **KEY LOCATION** – Areas holding one of the three keys needed to reach Deng's Tower

While there is no strict order to the progression of the adventure, one suggested progression is Random Encounter – Sandbox Location – Random Encounter – Key Location, and then repeat.

If playing this module as a standalone adventure, you may need to modify some of the boxed text that references the characters' previous visit to the forest.

Event 1. Corrupted Committee

At first glance, the forest appears majestic and peaceful, the boughs of the towering trees sheltering fallen logs covered with moss and bushes laden with berries. But all is not well within the once-harmonious woods:

The stillness of the forest feels disquieting and ominous. As you enter the shade of the trees, you hear a rustle in the undergrowth, and a large cat with golden eyes emerges from the trees. His once-pristine vest is tattered and stained and his fur speckled with mud.

Old Tom the Hermit (see *Appendix 4, page 71*) is a servant of Deng who the characters encountered before if they played through Chapter 4, *A Forest Strangely*. The cat's attitude has shifted from playfulness to desperation.

"If you seek the Great Druid Deng, I'll do my best to guide you, but the forest is now quite a mess. You'll still have to get the keys to reach the tower, but the forest has become corrupted..." Tom hesitates as he lets out a mighty sneeze then continues, "Many of the creatures here are infected, so make sure not to hurt anyone, it isn't

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their fault.” After a long string of sneezing, Tom looks at you with watery eyes. He says, “Oh dear, I’m so sorry, but I think I might be...” then he lets out a mighty yowl as his body begins to transform. In an instant, a massive veined form covered in pus-filled boils stares down at you.

Forest corruption has infected Tom and he needs the heroes to help bring him back to himself. While transformed, he uses the **corrupted Tom the Hermit** stat block (see *Appendix 9, page 142*) and begins to attack the party. To help Tom, the heroes must pop three corruption boils on Tom’s back. Each boil has 15 hp and an AC of 13.

Non-Lethal Attacks

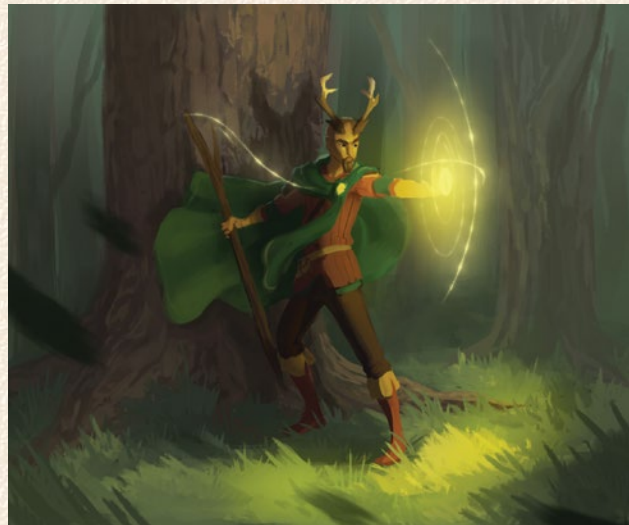
Tom warns the characters not to kill the inhabitants of the forest. The “Great Druid” would not take kindly to such actions. They can, however, defend themselves as long as they avoid inflicting permanent injury or death. Generally, this means restraining or knocking a target out instead of striking a deathblow.

When an attacker reduces a creature to 0 hit points with a melee attack, the attacker may choose to render the target unconscious (and stable) instead of killing it. The attacker can make this choice the instant the damage is dealt.

DEVELOPMENT. Once the heroes return Tom to his old self or defeat him, they are free to move on. If Tom survives this encounter, he mutters something about heading to a safe place in case his transformation happens again.

Random Encounters

As the characters make their way towards Deng’s arboreal tower, they encounter denizens of the forest battling off invaders or struggling against the growing forest corruption.



Take note of every forest creature the party saves, as they show up to help the party later in this chapter.

Sandbox Locations

The following sandbox locations can be encountered in any order.

BEARS IN DISTRESS

As the heroes navigate through the forest, they hear furious roars and wailing coming from a nearby clearing.

MAMMA BEAR’S CAVE. A small cave set into a rocky hill was the scene of an emergency in chapter 4 and has become riddled with trouble once again.

A large brown bear careens around the clearing chasing after her terrified cub. The cub cries, “Mother, please stop, don’t you recognize me?” as she dodges Mamma Bear’s swiping claws. Mamma Bear’s eyes drip with yellow film, and she lurches as if she isn’t in her right mind.

Encounters in the Corrupted Neblina Forest (IdI2)

d12 Random Encounter

1-6 No Encounter occurs.

- 7 **TIMBER.** A cacophony of noises reaches you from a section of the forest just beyond. A **treant** sick with corruption is stumbling around, shattering healthy trees as it moves along. A group of woodland creatures trails behind the treant, trying to catch its roots with ropes. They spot you and call out, "Help! We've got to get them tied down before they hurt themselves!"

A successful DC 17 group Strength (Athletics) check is required to trip then safely tie-down the raging treant. If the party knocks the treant unconscious first, this is an automatic success.

- 8 **FAMILIAR FACES.** There is a sudden crashing of branches as a gleaming white creature leaps onto the path. It is an alicorn named **Fred** (see *Appendix 5, page 84*) and a large black **Dreamlands cat** (see *Appendix 7, page 114*) named Coal. If the players have gone through the chapters sequentially, they recognize both these characters.

Fred calls out, "Lovely to see you, but I'm afraid Coal and I don't have much time to chat. Here come the trolls!"

Two **trolls** then burst from the foliage to attack the group.

- 9 **TRAPPED.** Panicked whines come from around the next bend. Around the corner is a pond whose water has transformed into foul-smelling green ooze. A terrified **giant badger** is stuck on a tiny island at the center of the pool.

The distance from the shore to the island is 15 feet. To rescue the badger, the heroes can build a bridge, try to jump the gap, or use another creative solution.

- 10 **POLLUTED.** As you pass a nearby section of the river, you hear a sudden splashing. A **water elemental** thrashes on the lake's surface, a bundle of rusty trash appears stuck in its middle.

The elemental has become polluted by the tainted forest water, and a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check is required to pull the trash free from its heart. Creatures without a swim speed must roll this check with Disadvantage unless they somehow coax the elemental onto dry land.

- 11 **HEADACHE.** Echoing groans draw your attention upwards towards a **stone giant** turned away from your group. The giant scratches feebly at a series of yellow-orange crystals that have sprouted on the back of his head.

These crystals are a product of forest corruption and are inflicting a massive headache on the giant. There are five crystals in total; each has 30 HP and an AC of 15. Destroying all the crystals cures the giant of his affliction.

- 12 **HIDE AND SEEK.** The ground shudders beneath you as large objects shift up ahead. A family of **weasels** is trapped in their hiding place underneath a log, while six oversized corrupted mushrooms (use **awakened tree** stat block) hunt for them.

If the mushrooms are defeated, the four hidden weasels can escape.

Mamma Bear has fallen to the spreading forest corruption, and she is mindlessly attacking her cub, which she does not recognize in her state. The heroes must figure out how to save the cub and contain Mamma Bear until her corruption ends.

A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a few helpful pieces of information about the scene: the rocky den entrance seems crumbly enough to create a rockslide, and the fallen tree that previously blocked the cave entrance is still lying

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nearby. If the characters start attacking Mamma Bear, the cub pleads with them not to harm her.

DEVELOPMENT. If the heroes successfully rescue the cub, she asks the party to take her to Papa Bear.

“Papa’s gone to the big mushrooms to help fight the war.”

If Mamma Bear is alive and sealed in the cave, she stays put for the rest of this adventure. If the heroes succeed in driving off the forest siege, Mamma Bear recovers naturally from the effects of forest corruption.

CRUMBLING RUINS

Around a bend in the trail, the forest parts to reveals a squat, ruined structure, now covered with swollen flowers and vines, pulsing with corruption.

This ruined tower is where E’thor and Arpistis unknowingly contracted Chranc disease years before.

Disease Backstory

Twenty years ago, teenage E’thor (then apprentice to Deng) and Arpistis explored this ruin. When they opened a hidden coffer, they were showered with gray dust that infected them with Chranc disease. Recently both E’thor and Arpistis began to show symptoms of the devastating disease. E’thor suspected the cause and returned to the original scene to confirm his suspicions. E’thor feels personally responsible for the fate that has befallen Arpistis and has sworn to find a cure for the disease no matter the cost.

If the heroes enter this ruin, they trigger a memory spell leftover from when Deng himself investigated the events that occurred here.

As soon as the heroes enter the ruin, they experience a vision:

As if experiencing a waking dream, you see a man searching through the ruins. He does not look well; his face is pale, and he seems exhausted.

Even so, he searches the rubble until he finds an old metal coffer. He picks up the object, whispers some magic words, then tears start to fall from his eyes.

He puts the box into his bag and whispers, “I’m so sorry, Arpistis, I’m going to fix this, no matter what.”

As the man continues to search through the rubble, the vision fades away.

A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check discerns that the vision was the side effect of a powerful *legend lore* spell cast on the ruins.

DEVELOPMENT. If the heroes search the ruins with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check or search for E’thor’s tracks with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check, they discover a collapsed section of the wall hastily re-covered in fresh dirt. Brushing away the soil reveals a tiled mosaic of **Blackspire Mountain**. The mosaic is a clue to where E’thor is currently working on his cure for Chranc disease.

DRYAD'S TREEHOUSE

The tree line parts on the edge of a large clearing. At its center is the towering oak tree that once belonged to the dryad Arpistis.

Arpistis’s towering oak is now the center of a military camp. Empty tents and bedrolls are scattered about the ground, left behind by a small army that is off fighting somewhere else. A group of gremlins is left behind, and they guard a series of wooden cages that hold a miserable mass of azeban.

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The dryad's treehouse is now a home base for E'thor's forces. The majority of the troops are currently away sieging the Druid Deng's tower. A small group is left behind to guard the azeban (the abducted citizens of Nanta-Romba) destined to become test subjects for E'thor's cure. Characters observing the scene spot twelve **gremlins** guarding the camp. The gremlins are not the only threat left behind. Currently hidden inside the treehouse is a **night hag** named Nanny Skinner.

FREEING THE CAPTIVES. To release the captured azeban, the heroes must deal with the gremlin guards. If the heroes attack the gremlins outright, one of them calls for Nanny, and the night hag immediately joins the fight. If the characters are clever, the bored gremlins can easily be lured away by a distraction. Here are some proposed examples, but reward any other creative solutions:

- A loud noise made somewhere in the tree line causes all the gremlins to leave and investigate.
- Bribing the gremlins with a large amount of food or gold convinces them to take a break.
- Illusion magic or deception used to order the gremlins to head elsewhere in the forest causes them to leave immediately.

The wooden cage locks open with a successful DC 14 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. If she has not already been alerted, freeing the azeban attracts Nanny's attention, and she emerges from the treehouse to battle the heroes.

DEVELOPMENT. The azeban villagers thank the heroes for rescuing them, and they promise to head to the mushroom grove to help defend the forest. The villagers are present at the final siege.

MUSHROOM GROVE

This area of the forest seems less dark than the others. The tree-like mushrooms now glow with a gentle lavender light. Before the heroes can step into

the grove proper, they hear a shrill voice call to them from above.

A blue jay perched atop the nearest mushroom calls to your party, "Halt travelers! Be you friend or foe of the high druid Deng? Speak truly, for these mushrooms are charmed to harm any creatures who wish us ill!"

This blue jay named Blue has been tasked by Papa Bear to keep a lookout at the mushroom grove border. Blue speaks the truth, Baba Griba, the **green hag** who tends this grove has cast protective magic over the mushrooms. Any evil creatures, or creatures touched by corruption who enter the grove, fall into a magical slumber from which they cannot wake (except through powerful magical healing).

If the heroes tell Blue they are here to aid the forest, she leads them to Papa Bear at the grove's center.

Baba Griba's cozy house is now the center of a military camp. Wounded animals and other forest residents rest in clusters on the ground. Able-bodied creatures run about the camp, filling mossy nets with multi-colored mushrooms. A gigantic brown bear stands at the center of the scene, directing the chaos.

This gigantic **brown bear** is Papa Bear, and he has taken up the role of leading the creatures of the forest to help drive off the forest invaders. After Blue introduces the heroes, Papa Bear is glad to hear the heroes are willing to help, but the creatures have minimal resources to offer them.

THE MUSHROOMS. All of Baba Griba's magical mushrooms are being harvested and sent to the front to aid with the siege. Papa Bear is not willing to part with any unless the characters prove they are actively helping the forest citizens. Papa Bear parts with a sack of mushrooms only in the following circumstances:

- The heroes report that the stream's fish are dying and need the fungi to live.
- If the heroes successfully rescue and reunite him with his cub.

RACCOON VILLAGE

An attack has devastated the once burgeoning village of Nanta-Romba. Burnt remnants of the treehouses now lay shattered on the forest floor, and the rope bridges connecting the treetops have cut apart. Searching the village confirms that there are no longer any azeban left. If the heroes search for clues as to what happened, they find a great many confusing patterns of footprints. Examining the footprints with successful DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check reveals that a large group of creatures arrived at the village and then eventually departed, dragging many large things (likely bodies) with them. The footprints disappear into the forest mists.

TALKATIVE STREAM

A fallen log spans a 30-foot-wide streambed that crosses the trail. The stream has dried up, and you spot dull-colored fish feebly flopping in the mud. When the heroes reach the log, they hear the fish gasping out words.

A greying fish gasps out a plea as you approach. "Please help. Help, please. Our water is gone. We need Griba mushrooms to survive. Please."

After this warning, the fish do not have enough energy to speak further. There is no longer any magic affecting the stream, and the heroes can cross the log without issue.

HEALING THE FISH. The fish (use **quipper**) can survive a little while longer, but if they don't eat some of Baba Griba's mushrooms soon, they will die. If the

heroes return and feed some fungi to the fish, they transform. The fish gain the ability to breathe and swim through the air!

DEVELOPMENT. The school of fish thanks the characters and promises to head to the mushroom grove to help defend the forest. The fish are present at the final siege.

Key Locations

These locations each contain one of the three keys the heroes need to open the path to Deng's Tower. Once they have acquired all three, continue to Part 5 of this adventure.

A WORLD TREE STUMP

As the heroes approach the world tree stump, a horrible sight awaits them.

A pit of thick black sludge has swallowed up the stump at the center of this clearing. The corrupting sludge smells like decay and seems to be expanding as it erodes the earth it touches.

The sprites that once lived here have since fled or been gobbled up by the corrupting sludge. The sludge destroys any living matter that touches it, so the heroes must find a way to retrieve the golden acorn key from the stump buried in the muck. When the heroes approach the edge of the sludge, its new occupant appears.

The center of the sludge pit begins to bubble, then rises to form the rough shape of a sprite. The sludge sprite lets out a gigantic belch then says, "Maybe it's just those fairies I ate earlier, but I feel inclined to offer you a hand. If you answer my riddles, I'll let you get to this acorn stuck in my heart."

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THE RIDDLES. The corrupted sludge asks the heroes a total of three “riddles.” If the heroes answer a riddle incorrectly, a **black pudding** crawls from the sludge mass and attacks the party. After the pudding is defeated, the sludge laughs delightedly moves onto the next riddle. With this in mind, the party doesn’t have to answer any of the “riddles” correctly; they can accomplish the same results by defeating three black puddings.

Here are the “riddles” the sludge asks the heroes, feel free to switch them out for any equally cringe-worthy jokes:

Why don't crabs give to charity?

Answer: Because they're shellfish

What do you call a fake noodle?

Answer: An impasta

Why did the scarecrow win an award?

Answer: Because he was outstanding in his field

DEVELOPMENT. With the last riddle answered or the last pudding is defeated, the sludge lets out a laugh.

“Well, that was fun! Thanks for the show! Now lets play ‘go fish.’” The sludge then lets out another burp and spits out a fishing pole that lands at your feet. The sprite shape collapses back into the pool.

Using the fishing pole to recover the acorn requires a successful DC 14 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check.

PANTANO SWAMP

The heroes enter an area of swampland. The mists hang heavily in this area, obscuring everything in a grey veil. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that there is a complete lack of sound in the area as if all the swamp creatures are gone. Wooden bridges that once spanned the marsh to connect to the central island lie smashed. To reach

the center island that holds the key, the heroes must cross the fetid water.

REVENGE OF THE DRAKE. The corpse of the Dread Lizard previously fought in *Chapter 4* was suffused with the growing forest corruption and has risen from the dead as an **undead swamp drake** (see *Appendix 9, page 142*). The undead drake makes a surprise attack against the first character to wade into the water. If the heroes fly over the water or otherwise bypass it, the drake waits until they reach the island, then rises from the water to attack with its breath weapon.

The drake has once again eaten the silver egg that serves as a key to Deng’s tower. To retrieve the egg, the heroes must defeat the undead monster and recover the key from its stomach.

THE FLOWER FIELD

The heroes come upon a vast meadow filled with a variety of gigantic flowers. The plants now stand tall as corn stalks and seem to shift threateningly. As the heroes approach, they spot the meadows frustrated guardian at the edge of the field.

You hear a frustrated grunt as you see a bulette get pushed out of the field of gigantic flowers. The flowers are bending down to slap at the frustrated creature as it retreats from their reach. The bulette lets out a sad gurgle, then turns towards you all, a look of pleading in its gaze.

This **bulette** is Blind Sharky, the meadow’s guardian. Since corruption transformed the field of flowers, Sharky hasn’t been able to enter the meadow without being attacked. Working with Sharky is the only way to retrieve the copper rose key hidden in the corrupted field.

RETRIEVING THE KEY. If given enough time, Blind Sharky can smell where the copper rose is in the field of corrupted flowers. If the heroes can protect the bulette from damage for three

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consecutive turns, Blind Sharky successfully locates the copper rose.

When the heroes are ready to enter the field, have them roll initiative. At the start of each round, Blind Sharky moves 30 feet into the area and uses his action to smell out the copper rose. Immediately after, three corrupted flowers (which use the **awakened shrub** stat block) appear next to Blind Sharky. The characters now take their turns in initiative order. If any corrupted flowers are remaining, they immediately attack the bulette. If Blind Sharky takes any damage, the heroes lose the round, and they must start again until they have three successful rounds in a row.

CONFUSION FLOWERS. Creatures entering the meadow must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw each turn they remain in the meadow or be affected by a *confusion* spell. Creatures who do not breathe are not affected by the confusion flowers.

DEVELOPMENT. Once three successful rounds have passed, Blind Sharky locates the key.

The bulette bows its head, and you hear a tiny snap as he plucks something from the ground. Blind Sharky turns to you with the copper rose delicately held between his teeth. The fitful flowers around you suddenly shiver and close up one by one.

Picking the copper rose causes all the flowers to close up, ending the *confusion* effect. The characters are free to leave the field safely with the copper rose in hand.

5. TOWER UNDER SIEGE

Once the heroes have all three keys, the mists in front of them part.

The three keys glow, and the mists around you suddenly part, revealing Deng's tree-like stone tower. A flickering green shield barely holds off



repeated blows by animated trees twisted by corruption. At the tower's base, forest creatures do battle with an army of gremlins, dreamlanders, and other minions of E'thor. As you take in the scene below, a tall horned figure suddenly appears and addresses you through filed pointed teeth, "Ah, E'thor said you might interfere. Well, heroes, your journey stops here."

This frightening figure addressing the characters is E'thor's chief lieutenant, an **oni** named Render. Render attacks the heroes, determined to put an end to their meddling once and for all.

SIEGE IN PROGRESS. While the heroes fight Render, the battle below is in full swing. The actions of the heroes throughout this adventure determine the results of the fight. Use the following table to score the siege results.

DEVELOPMENT. The heroes' siege score determines how the battle ends.

A SCORE OF 2 OR LESS. The siege of Deng's tower is successful. The corrupted trees destroy Deng's magic defenses, and the high druid teleports far away from the Neblina forest. The forest creatures see the battle is lost, and they scatter into the trees. Until E'thor is stopped, corruption continues to affect the forest.

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| Siege Factor | Points Possible | Points Earned |
|---|--------------------------------|---------------|
| The healed fish are present at the battle. | 1 | |
| The rescued azeban are present at the battle. | 1 | |
| A forest creature aided during a random encounter is present at the battle. | 1 (One point per encounter) | |
| Render is defeated in three rounds or less. | 2 | |
| | | Total: |

A SCORE OF 3 OR MORE. The forces invading Deng's tower lose! When Render is defeated, the corrupted trees fall lifeless, leaving Deng's magic shield intact. The day is saved as citizens of the forest quickly scatter the leaderless forces of E'thor. From this point forward, the Neblina forest begins to heal itself of the spreading corruption.

Conclusion

If the GM is running this outside of the campaign arc of *Harper's Tale*, Deng summons the heroes to an audience in his tower and rewards them for saving the forest.

For those GMs running *Rotten to the Core* as part of *Harper's Tale*, the heroes are summoned into the tower to speak with Deng, the great druid. With the ingredients delivered, he can work on a cure for the disease afflicting Grove and Prince's Harbour. With one problem solved however, the problem of E'thor and his missing daughter must now be addressed.

But that is a tale for another adventure.

At the end of this adventure, the heroes gain enough experience to progress to level 10.

Appendix 9

Corrupted Tom the Hermit

Large beast, chaotic evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 76 (8d12 + 24)

Speed 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| 18 (+4) | 14 (+2) | 17 (+3) | 8 (-1) | 16 (+3) | 10 (+0) |

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Sylvan

Challenge 3 (200 XP)

Keen Smell. Old Tom has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Pounce. If Tom moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a claw attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, Tom can make one bite attack against it as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Tom makes one bite attack and one claw attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 5) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Teleport (Recharge 4–6). Old Tom magically teleports, along with any equipment he is wearing

or carrying, up to 40 feet to an unoccupied space he can see. Before or after teleporting, the cat can make one bite attack.

Undead Swamp Drake

Large undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 127 (15d10 + 45)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| 19 (+4) | 14 (+2) | 16 (+3) | 6 (-2) | 14 (+2) | 10 (+0) |

Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +5

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, paralyzed, or poisoned

Damage Immunities acid, poison

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +4

Senses darkvision 90 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Spiky Hide. A creature that touches the swamp drake or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 9 (2d8) piercing damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The swamp drake makes a bite or tail attack and a ranged barb attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) acid damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage.

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Barb. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 20/80 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (3d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Breath Weapon (Recharge 5-6). The swamp drake uses the following breath weapon:

Acid Breath. The drake exhales acid in a 30-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 49 (11d8) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

The Fires of Blackspire Mountain

An adventure for 4 to 5 characters of 10th level
By Jessica Ross with Matt Corley and Donathin Frye



Adventure Synopsis

The trials and tribulations of the heroes are nearly at an end. They have traveled throughout the forest, under the cities, and to the ends of their realm to find the ingredients necessary to cure the affliction plaguing the land. At long last they have the skills, knowledge, and goods to stop E'thor once and for all.

Newly awoken Blackspire Volcano is their destination. In climbing the slopes of the volcano, they navigate not only the natural obstacles of an active volcano, but also the creatures attracted to such a fiery and inhospitable environment. Salamanders, fire elementals, and firegeists enjoy

the conflagration, and amuse themselves with all manner of games and activities. The behavior of the creatures is odd to say the least; after navigating their shenanigans the heroes find the trail ending at Wyvernseeker rock.

The heroes encounter more oddities, hostile creatures, and challenges as they delve into the volcanic environs of the mountain. As usual they persevere and overcome all obstacles in their path until reaching the source of the plague, E'thor, in his lair.

The fate of the forest, their friends, and E'thor are laid before the heroes as they make their final choice. How will they react? Who will be saved? Is redemption possible as part of recovery?

DESIGNER'S NOTE. Throughout the adventure the PCs encounter beings that have been affected by E'thor's failed experiments. It is recommended that the players, especially younger ones, know that the experiments will be reversed by completing their quest. If E'thor is redeemed he works tirelessly to undo the damage he's done, or the effects resolve on their own when E'thor is defeated.

Adventure Hooks

This adventure follows Chapter 9, *Rotten to the Core*, and is the culmination of the *Harper's Tale* campaign. E'thor has finally been found and confronted with his actions. The following hooks can be used to facilitate play as a stand-alone adventure:

A CALL FROM A FRIEND. The heroes have been hired by Trinity Arya, a sage and herbalist, who worries for her friend, Sir Telynor. Trinity hasn't heard from Sir Telynor in a long time, but knows he fell ill many years ago. After so long she wants to know what became of her friend and, if there was foul play, bring the person responsible to justice. Trinity has prepared a potion of rare ingredients she believes can heal any affliction. If Sir Telynor still lives she pleads for the heroes to use it to save him, and if not they may keep the powerful concoction as payment for giving her peace of mind.

A VOLCANIC ERROR. The town of Kirk's Wood sprouted up near the great Blackspire Mountain. The folks of the town fear the strange happenings and activity they've recently noticed in the nearby volcano. After generations of inactivity a great plume of black smoke began to rise from the mountain in an endless stream, and quakes shake their feet at all hours. The town cannot easily move, not without losing everything they've built, and they implore the brave adventurers to take a closer look. They fear something unnatural is at work, and their time is running short.

The Maw of Blackspire Mountain

A long, winding path leads up the face of Mount Blackspire to the only known entrance, the Maw of Blackspire Mountain.

A Fiery Welcome

The activity in the volcano has attracted **firegeists** (see *Appendix 10, page 154*), many of which set fires indiscriminately. The fires have caused thick, warm air to settle over the mountain and mix with rock to create pools of molten lava. For every hour the heroes spend on the mountain, they must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) fire damage on a fail. If a PC's hit points are reduced by one quarter or more from this damage they also gain 1 level of exhaustion.

Scene 1. The Winding Path

The air is thick and red with heat. Even as you approach, you know this is no ordinary volcanic activity, and you watch as fires dance across the side of the mountain and then snuff out, as if controlled by an unseen force.

DEVELOPMENT. Heroes notice the one path leading to the Maw of Blackspire Mountain as soon as they approach the volcano. With a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, they note other paths that head in the same direction. A successful DC 17 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals the paths lead into the unpredictable fires sprouting up across the mountain instead of the entrance. If the heroes attempt to follow any path except the main one, they encounter two **salamanders** reveling in the fires of the mountain who see the characters as they approach and attack immediately.

The Fires of Blackspire Mountain

If the heroes follow the obvious trail, a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals the paths of the fires are unusual, suggesting an elemental creature is likely present here. With a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check, they notice two **fire elementals** up ahead early enough that a successful group DC 14 Dexterity (Stealth) check allows them to sneak past.

This initial encounter serves as a warning—the heroes aren't alone on this mountain, and they should tread carefully.

TACTICS. The creatures fight to the death. The fire elementals, however, can be distracted if they have not been attacked. They are more interested in enjoying the fires of Mount Blackspire than engaging in battle, and if the characters can convince the elementals they aren't here to douse or steal the fires, or better yet that they'll add to the conflagration, the elementals back off.

Scene 2. Warm Up by the Fire

The mountain face is marred by long tracks of scorched rock amid the still-blazing fires. Along the path, you come across a lava pool surrounded by fire elementals. Near the pool are scorched plants, uprooted from the ground and burned to ash.

THE POOL. The five **fire elementals** here pay the characters no mind. They're fascinated with the lava pool, and unless the characters attack first, the elementals are content to ignore them. If a character approaches the lava pool, they must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw to dodge the fiery geyser that bursts forth, taking 16 (4d8) fire damage on a failed save.

With a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check, a character recognizes that these elementals are acting strangely, and with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, the characters notice bits of joyfruit around the lava pool. Heroes who

played *How Does Your Garden Grow*, an earlier adventure in *Harper's Tale*, have advantage on this check, as they recognize the behavior and the magical fruit causing it. The elementals do not react to characters interacting with the joyfruit, but if the characters attempt to destroy the joyfruit they grumble and disappear into the lava pool.

Scene 3. Wyvernseeker Rock

The trail continues onward and upward, becoming increasingly treacherous until it becomes virtually impassable. An enormous boulder blocks the way, fires blanket the mountainside, and rocks of all sizes tumble from higher up.

Climbing the boulder does not require a check, as handholds are plentiful, and it is the simplest way to continue their journey. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (History) check allows a character to recognize the outcropping as Wyvernseeker Rock and recall stories that adventurers seeking wyverns would climb this rock. The stories are frustratingly vague on if wyverns nest atop the rock or are simply visible from there.

DEVELOPMENT. Five **firegeists** are playing a game on top of the rock which involves spreading fires and moving rocks and large stones, causing them to tumble down around the edges. If characters climb the rock, the firegeists invite them into their match. If the characters attack, they fight back.

The game requires players to create elaborate shapes out of fire. One firegeist creates a shape, and the next one mimics it, and adds to the fire sculpture. This continues until the shapes become too convoluted to be recreated, and then they start anew. If the heroes wish to participate, the game lasts five rounds. In the first round, they must come up with a way to cause fire to form the shapes they need (either through a spell or creating elaborate shapes out of flammable materials) and succeed on a DC

The Fires of Blackspire Mountain

12 Charisma (Performance) or Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. With each round, the DC goes up by 1. If the heroes succeed at least three times, the firegeists celebrate the heroes' victory. If the heroes don't want to play, the firegeists simply dismiss them and return to their game. Casters able to sculpt evocation magic or those with affinity for fire-based effects have advantage on these checks.

TREASURE. If the heroes play the game and succeed at least three times, the firegeists reward them with 200 gp of gems. If the heroes succeed on all five rounds, the firegeists give them a garnet *Ring of Fire Resistance*. The heroes may also find these items if they defeat all five firegeists, which isn't likely, since they try to escape instead of fighting to the death.

Scene 4. The Maw

At the end of the path is the Maw. The entrance resembles nothing so much as a titanic skull, the mouth serving as the entrance. An involuntary shiver runs through you at the thought of entering the cave.

When they reach the maw, characters see a plume of black smoke, as though the large skull is exhaling it. Nothing blocks their path, and they can enter Blackspire Mountain through the maw.



Unfortunately to get there they must avoid erratic eruptions of magma.

DEVELOPMENT. Volcanic activity is reaching a crescendo, and prior to gaining entry the heroes must travel 100 feet. At the end of each turn they must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw to avoid being knocked prone and taking 10 (4d4) fire damage from a burst of magma. On a successful saving throw they take half damage and keep their footing.

Mount Blackspire

The winding paths within the mountain are stiflingly hot and disorienting. Luckily, they all lead to the same place, and getting lost is not a concern as the heroes continue their descent.

Scene 5. Into the Mountain

Veins of magma run throughout the interior, providing dim but sufficient light. With the entrance well behind you the tunnel splits into three, each leading into the depths.

There are no tracks indicating which is the most likely path to the heart of the volcano; in actuality all eventually lead to the center and the choice has little impact on their encounters along the way.

DEVELOPMENT. Regardless of the path chosen, the characters encounter a **fire elemental** after a few minutes of walking. The elemental doesn't attack; instead, it seems sluggish, subdued, and periodically reaches out to the cavern's walls to steady itself. The elemental is infected with an early experiment of E'thor's which reacted poorly to the elemental's biology.

A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check confirms the creature is not acting normally; it seems distant and distracted. It will not attack the PCs under any circumstances, even to defend itself, and

The Fires of Blackspire Mountain

will not acknowledge them unless they are able to offer it succor.

Heroes helping the creature by offering it wood to burn or magically healing it are rewarded with a brief moment of lucidity and it will do its best to answer 1d4 questions before it again succumbs to E'thor's experiment. It has been trapped in the caverns for weeks, and can provide any details the GM deems useful to the party.

Encounters in Blackspire

The GM is encouraged to use the table below as needed to maintain tension and pacing while the heroes are exploring lava tubes. The GM may roll or choose from the following when they deem it appropriate. When the party is ready for the final confrontation proceed to **Vulcan's Temple**.

d8 Encounter

- 1 Four **fire elementals** are fighting each other. They are as likely to attack a hero as another elemental. (Roll a die on each elemental's turn. On an odd number, they attack the heroes; on an even, they attack another elemental.)
- 2 A trio of poisoned **firegeists** are gathered in a large cavern filled with weak flames. They do not immediately attack, as they're all ill from E'thor's experiments.
- 3 A cluster of angry **firegeists** (one per character) hide in the tunnel. When the characters enter the tunnel the firegeists attack, surprising any PC with passive Perception 14 or less.
- 4 The heroes come across a large cavern, seemingly empty save for a ring of large, iron pillars. If the characters played the earlier adventure from *Harper's Tale, Vale of the Mavka*, they recognize the setup as similar to the iron pillars where they found the *red vitriol*.
If the heroes attempt to investigate the pool of red liquid at the base of the pillars, vitriol wyrds attack (per the stats for **water elemental**, but Whelm does psychic damage and only recharges on a 6). There is one per character.
- 5 The magma veins are pale and weak along this hall, lowering visibility. All along the path are burned bits of flowers and small pools of dark, viscous liquid.
- 6 Six **salamanders** are sleeping on outcroppings along the hallway. Characters must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth) check to sneak through the hall without waking the salamanders. If anyone in the party fails, three of the salamanders wake and attack immediately; the other three wake and attack after the first round.
- 7 The tunnel opens into an expansive cavern with a massive tree, covered in burn marks and gray streaks of ash, at its center. A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check confirms this is no ordinary tree. It is a dryad trapped in its form by E'thor's failed experiments. The dryad can only be restored by defeating E'thor.
- 8 This grotto is lined with unrecognizable bright orange flowers. The flowers were created by E'thor to ease Telynor's pain and help him rest. Upon entering the grotto the PCs must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, they are *slowed* (per the spell) while in the grotto. After leaving the PCs may repeat the save every minute, ending the effect on a success.

Vulcan's Temple

When the GM and the players are prepared for the final confrontation, they find Vulcan's Temple which E'thor uses as his base of operations and laboratory.

THE TEMPLE PATH

The tunnel ends in a cavern large enough for a small village. Looking back, you see dozens of other tubes all emptying into the same area. Black sand and pea-sized gravel crunch underfoot, and in the distance, you see a lake of lava.

Connected to the shore by a rickety bridge strung between pillars is a crumbling temple.

The path leading to the temple is old and treacherous. Molten magma rages below, and heroes must take care to navigate the path as quickly and carefully as possible.

DEVELOPMENT. Bursting bubbles of lava spray the pathway with superheated jets of air and drops of molten rock. Characters crossing the pathway may choose to cross quickly or to cross carefully.

Prior to making the decision, players should understand that if they cross quickly they will have the chance to avoid injury from the environmental hazards, but they also have a chance of falling to certain doom in the lava. Conversely, crossing carefully insures they will get the other side without falling, but leaves them vulnerable in other ways.

The heroes must navigate three bridges to get to E'thor's lair. The first bridge is 100 feet long, and the other two bridges are each 30 feet long. Any PC that ends their turn on a bridge must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or fall prone from the swaying bridge. Additionally, they must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 18 (4d8) fire damage from a geyser of superheated air.



CROSSING QUICKLY. PCs using the Dash action to cross have disadvantage on their check to avoid falling prone, and advantage on their saving throw to avoid the geysers.

CROSSING CAREFULLY. PCs moving at half speed (or slower) have advantage on their check to avoid falling prone, and disadvantage on their saving throw to avoid the geysers.

FALLING. At the GM's discretion PCs that fail their Acrobatics check by 5 or more fall. If a character falls it is recommended to handle the scene narratively and have the heroes rescue their ally (or rescue themselves).

The Fires of Blackspire Mountain



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FACING E'THOR

As you enter the temple, the air cools, your lungs loosen, and you let out a sigh of relief. The sigh is lost in the echoes of a scream—a scream of what sounds like frustration. And then, a chorus of cruel chuckles and whispers begins. You follow the sound to find E'thor—his countenance is unmistakable—covered in ragged clothing, hunched over the table in front of him and an insectile creature, bathed in living flames, standing over his shoulder.

E'thor looks at the sleeping elven man in front of him. The beautiful elf is unnaturally still, and he's in some sort of stasis. The creature, too

humanoid to be an elemental, is whispering in his ear. It places a clawed hand on the druid's shoulder, and he lets out a heavy sigh. He appears to be considering a deal.

When the characters enter the inner temple, they find **E'thor** (see *Appendix 4*, page 153) about to make a deal with a fire devil (use the **ice devil** stat block but uses *wall of fire* instead of *wall of ice*). If the characters wish to intercede, they can choose to either attempt to fight the fire devil or convince E'thor not to make the deal. If they reveal they have the ingredients for a cure, he demands to see this so-called “cure” before sending the devil away, and will insist on seeing the heroes test it on

The Fires of Blackspire Mountain



someone else who is infected before trying it on his husband.

CONVINCING E'THOR. E'thor's only concern is to help his husband, Sir Telynor, and he will never put Telynor at risk. The heroes have the cure in their possession, and now must convince E'thor of its efficacy before he will let them use it on his husband. To convince E'thor that their cure will work they must succeed on a DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check, a DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check, and a DC 16 Wisdom (Medicine) check. The checks can be made in any order, and by different PCs. If the PCs succeed three times before failing three times, they are successful, at which time the fire devil immediately attacks in a fit of rage at its lost prize.

At the GM's discretion any of the following modifiers can be applied to the ability checks. The modifiers, positive and negative, are cumulative.

- The DC decreases by one for each prior successful ability check.
- The DC decreases by one for PCs mentioning that the method of collection was the key in preserving the potency of the ingredients.
- The DC decreases by one for PCs who describe how the cure worked on Gwynn.

- PCs that can provide proof that Gwynn was cured have advantage on their checks to convince E'thor.
- Players whose roleplaying focuses on appealing to E'thor with empathy and understanding have advantage on their checks.

Alternatively, the GM can run this encounter narratively via roleplaying.

FIGHTING THE DEVIL. PCs that specifically attack the devil find that E'thor will not interfere as long as the PCs do not involve him or Telynor. E'thor tells the creature, "If you have the power you say you have, dealing with these so-called heroes should be easy."

If at any point E'thor or Telynor are affected by collateral damage E'thor immediately joins the fray against whomever caused the injury.

FIGHTING E'THOR. If the heroes try to fight E'thor, or harm Telynor instead of reasoning with him, they find that he will not surrender under any circumstances. He uses the environment to his advantage, and enlists the fire devil for aid, saying, "Rid me of these interlopers, and I'll agree to your deal," at which point the fire devil enthusiastically joins the fray.

TREASURE. A search of the temple reveals a satchel of *dust of sneezing and choking*, a *red corundum elemental gem*, and 500 gp worth of gems.

Conclusion

The final fate of E'thor is in the hands of the adventurers. A redeemed E'thor reunites with his former friends and teacher to work tirelessly to undo the damage he's caused. Telynor is at his side throughout it all, and the two of them take their responsibilities to heart. Nebliss becomes a haven for good creatures of all kinds, and is renowned for the healing available within its borders.

The Fires of Blackspire Mountain

A defeated E'thor finds that his experiments slowly revert to their natural state from the efforts of Rose, Grace, Deng, and others. Rose and Grace assume the roles of guardian and healer respectively, and become known throughout the realm for their unflagging dedication to righting the wrongs of others.

And so the tale of E'thor and the plague he created ends. The heroes have met a cast of characters, visited exotic locales, and truly become the heroes of the forest. Their path is their own, and they travel it with the confidence of the kind, the just, and the brave.

At the end of this adventure, the heroes gain enough experience to progress to level 11.

Appendix 10

E'thor

"I'm begging you. Leave me to work."



E'thor is meticulous, methodical, and able to distance himself from the consequences of his actions. Without his husband at his side his grief has magnified these traits to the extreme. He has one task, and one task only: to cure Telynore.

E'thor's early experiments on himself have intermingled with his metamorphic abilities as a

druid and wrought permanent changes that have made him more and less than he was before. He has lost his wildshape ability and in its place his claws are as wood, his skin has the resilience of the toughest oak, and he regenerates all but the most grievous wound.

Medium humanoid, neutral

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 150 (20d8 + 60)

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 14 (+2) | 15 (+2) | 16 (+3) | 11 (+0) | 20 (+5) | 8 (-1) |

Saving Throws Con +7, Int +4, Wis +9

Skills Arcana +4, Medicine +9, Perception +9

Senses darkvision 90 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages Common, Druidic, Sylvan

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Nature's Talon. E'thor's claws are a viable target for shillelagh due to their transformation.

Rampant Healing. E'thor regains 10 hit points at the start of his turn.

Spellcasting. E'thor is a 12th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). He knows the following spells:

- Cantrips (at will): *druidcraft, poison spray, produce flame, shillelagh*
- 1st level (4 slots): *charm person, detect poison and disease, entangle, thunderwave*
- 2nd level (3 slots): *heat metal, hold person, moonbeam*
- 3rd level (3 slots): *conjure animals, dispel magic, sleet storm*
- 4th level (3 slots): *blight, confusion, polymorph*
- 5th level (2 slots): *conjure elemental, contagion*
- 6th level (1 slot): *conjure fey, sunbeam*

The Fires of Blackspire Mountain

ACTIONS

Multiattack. E'thor makes two claw attacks.

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack. +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

Firegeist



Small elemental, neutral evil

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 87 (25d6)

Speed 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 7 (-2) | 18 (+4) | 10 (+0) | 4 (-3) | 16 (+3) | 6 (-2) |

Skills Perception +5

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Primordial

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Hide By Firelight. In an area lit only by nonmagical flame, a firegeist gains a +2 bonus on Stealth checks. This becomes +4 when hiding within the fire.

Illumination. The firegeist sheds dim light in a 30-foot radius.

Magical Light Sensitivity. While in magical light, the firegeist has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

Water Susceptibility. For every 5 feet the firegeist moves in water, or for every gallon of water splashed on it, it takes 3 cold damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The firegeist makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Combustion Touch (Recharge 5–6). The firegeist may ignite a target when making a slam attack. The target must immediately succeed at a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or catch fire, taking an additional 5 (1d10) fire damage at the beginning of its next turn. Until someone takes an action to douse the fire, the creature takes 5 (1d10) fire damage at the start of each of its turns.

HARPER'S TALE

Name _____ Race _____ Size _____

Class _____ Level _____ XP _____ Align _____

Background _____ Languages _____

Description _____

ARMOR CLASS



10+DEX+ARMOR

PASSIVE PERCEPTION



10+WIS

INITIATIVE



DEX

SPEED

FEET

HIT POINTS

MAXIMUM

HIT DIE

TEMPORARY HIT POINTS



DEATH SAVES

Successes



Failures



| | | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|---|---|
| <p>STRENGTH</p> <p>STR</p> <p>◇ STR Save</p> <p>◇ Athletics</p> | <p>DEXTERITY</p> <p>DEX</p> <p>◇ DEX Save</p> <p>◇ Acrobatics</p> <p>◇ Sleight of Hand</p> <p>◇ Stealth</p> | <p>CONSTITUTION</p> <p>CON</p> <p>◇ CON Save</p> | <p>INTELLIGENCE</p> <p>INT</p> <p>◇ INT Save</p> <p>◇ Arcana</p> <p>◇ History</p> <p>◇ Investigation</p> <p>◇ Nature</p> <p>◇ Religion</p> | <p>WISDOM</p> <p>WIS</p> <p>◇ WIS Save</p> <p>◇ Animal Handling</p> <p>◇ Insight</p> <p>◇ Medicine</p> <p>◇ Perception</p> <p>◇ Survival</p> | <p>CHARISMA</p> <p>CHA</p> <p>◇ CHA Save</p> <p>◇ Deception</p> <p>◇ Intimidation</p> <p>◇ Performance</p> <p>◇ Persuasion</p> |
|--|--|---|---|---|---|

PROFICIENCY BONUS



| Level | Bonus |
|-------|-------|
| 1-4 | +2 |
| 5-8 | +3 |
| 9-12 | +4 |
| 13-16 | +5 |
| 17-20 | +6 |

Personality Traits

Ideals

Bonds

Flaws

INSPIRATION



EQUIPMENT

ARMOR

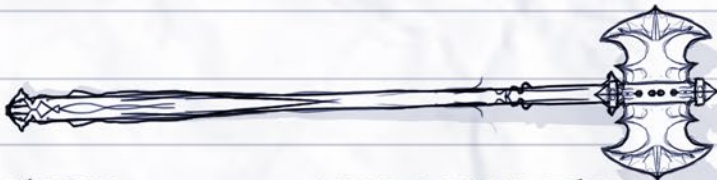
Coinage



WEAPON

BONUS DAMAGE TYPE

TOOLS



Appendix 11 - Pre-Gens

Aspen



Farmers and foresters. Revelers and artisans. At best, maybe hunters and even a druid or two. This is what is expected of faunkind, and of Aspen Hornbeam. But Aspen's never been content to sit on their haunches, watching as others fight their battles while they're forced to whittle pan flutes or stomp grapes for wine. Always quick with a fist to the face or a hoof to the gut, Aspen's a fighter through and through, and they plan on showing the world—and their friends and family—what fauns are made of. Their ultimate goal? To become the first knighted faun in the land!

More eager to answer the call to adventure than most, Aspen jumped at the chance to save Grove. They just didn't expect their first adventure to involve something as subtle and un-punchable as illness. Playing as Aspen means playing as someone with a fast temper and a quick headbutt; someone who can be headstrong and self-centered, but also someone with a huge heart and a massive amount of loyalty to their friends. Take this little faun's fate into your hands, and weave a story of bravery to surpass their wildest dreams!

HARPER'S TALE

Name Aspen Hornbeam Race Faunkind Size Medium

Class Fighter Level 1 XP Align CG

Background Folk Hero Languages Common, Celestial

Description Headstrong and strong-headed, Aspen is a grey-speckled faun ready to tackle any challenge!

ARMOR CLASS

16

10+DEX+ARMOR

PASSIVE PERCEPTION

10

10+WIS

INITIATIVE

+2

DEX

SPEED

30

FEET

HIT POINTS

13

MAXIMUM

1d10

HIT DIE

TEMPORARY HIT POINTS

Successes

Failures

DEATH SAVES

| | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|---|---|
| <p>STRENGTH</p> <p>+1</p> <p>13</p> <p>STR</p> <p>◆ STR Save</p> <p>◆ Athletics</p> | <p>DEXTERITY</p> <p>+2</p> <p>15</p> <p>DEX</p> <p>◇ DEX Save</p> <p>◆ Acrobatics</p> <p>◇ Sleight of Hand</p> <p>◇ Stealth</p> | <p>CONSTITUTION</p> <p>+3</p> <p>17</p> <p>CON</p> <p>◆ CON Save</p> | <p>INTELLIGENCE</p> <p>-1</p> <p>8</p> <p>INT</p> <p>◇ INT Save</p> <p>◇ Arcana</p> <p>◇ History</p> <p>◇ Investigation</p> <p>◇ Nature</p> <p>◇ Religion</p> | <p>WISDOM</p> <p>+0</p> <p>10</p> <p>WIS</p> <p>◇ WIS Save</p> <p>◇ Animal Handling</p> <p>◇ Insight</p> <p>◇ Medicine</p> <p>◇ Perception</p> <p>◇ Survival</p> | <p>CHARISMA</p> <p>+1</p> <p>12</p> <p>CHA</p> <p>◇ CHA Save</p> <p>◇ Deception</p> <p>◆ Intimidation</p> <p>◆ Performance</p> <p>◇ Persuasion</p> |
|--|--|---|--|---|---|

PROFICIENCY BONUS

+2

| Level | Bonus |
|-------|-------|
| 1-4 | +2 |
| 5-8 | +3 |
| 9-12 | +4 |
| 13-16 | +5 |
| 17-20 | +6 |

Personality Traits

Ideals

Bonds

Flaws

INSPIRATION

X

EQUIPMENT

ARMOR

Coinage

Backpack - Bedroll - Trinket

Clothes, Costume - Crowbar

Crossbow Bolts x20 - Hammer - Pan Flute

Piton x10 - Rations x10 - Rope, Hempen (Soft)

Tinderbox - Torch x10 - waterskin

◆ Chain Mail

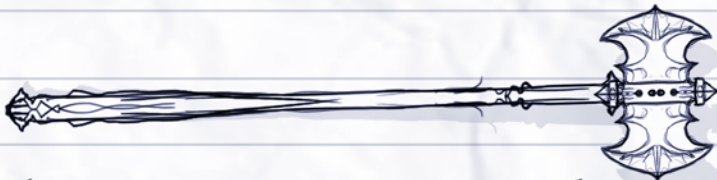
PP

GP 15

EP

SP

CP



WEAPON

BONUS DAMAGE TYPE

TOOLS

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----|-------|-------------|----------------|
| ◆ Rapier | +4 | 1d8+2 | Piercing | ◆ Disguise Kit |
| ◆ Crossbow, Light | +4 | 1d8+2 | Piercing | ◇ |
| ◆ Shortsword | +4 | 1d6+2 | Piercing | ◇ |
| ◆ Unarmed | +3 | 2 | Bludgeoning | ◇ |

DEATH SAVES

Successes

Failures

Azreal



Azreal isn't sure how he came to be in this world. His memory is fragmented. He knows that he's not from here, he remembers only his name, that he is a warrior for good, and that he feels compelled to crush evil wherever he finds it. His last memory was of an old wizard casting him into a black void and finding himself in this world.

Azreal is a protector through and through. He holds himself to the highest of standards, and expects the same of his allies. That said, he understands and accepts the beliefs of his friends and comrades. Selfless in thought, Azreal is the first to volunteer and the last to retreat.

HARPER'S TALE

Name Azreal Everwyn Race Lion Size Medium

Class Paladin Level 1 XP Align LG

Background Folk Hero Languages Common, Celestial

Description Brave and just, Azreal is a white lion with a heart of gold, eager to help those in need.

ARMOR CLASS

16

10+DEX+ARMOR

PASSIVE PERCEPTION

11

INITIATIVE

+1

SPEED

35 FEET

HIT POINTS

11 MAXIMUM

1d10 HIT DIE

TEMPORARY HIT POINTS

Successes

Failures

DEATH SAVES

| STRENGTH | DEXTERITY | CONSTITUTION | INTELLIGENCE | WISDOM | CHARISMA |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| +2 15 STR | +1 13 DEX | +1 12 CON | -1 8 INT | +1 12 WIS | +2 15 CHA |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> STR Save Athletics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DEX Save Acrobatics Sleight of Hand Stealth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CON Save | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> INT Save Arcana History Investigation Nature Religion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WIS Save Animal Handling Insight Medicine Perception Survival | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHA Save Deception Intimidation Performance Persuasion |

PROFICIENCY BONUS

+2

| Level | Bonus |
|-------|-------|
| 1-4 | +2 |
| 5-8 | +3 |
| 9-12 | +4 |
| 13-16 | +5 |
| 17-20 | +6 |

Personality Traits

Ideals

Bonds

Flaws

INSPIRATION

X

EQUIPMENT

ARMOR

Coinage

Backpack - Bedroll - Emblem

Clothes, Common - Mess Kit

Pot, Iron - Rations x10

Hempen Rope (50ft) - Shovel

Tinderbox - Torch x10 - waterskin



WEAPON

BONUS DAMAGE TYPE

TOOLS

◆ Greatsword +4 2d6+2 Slashing

◆ Crossbow, Heavy +3 1d10+1 Piercing

◆ Dagger +4 1d4+2 Piercing

◆ Unarmed +4 3 Bludgeoning

◆ woodcarver's Tools

◇ Smith's Tools

◇

◇



Criella



Criella is a short Tiefling with coral-colored skin always admiring the flowers and wildlife she encounters. Her rather serious expression gives way to a smile revealing pearly white teeth with a small set of fangs hidden behind her lips. Criella is thought to be shy, and in truth there are times when she prefers the company of the creatures of the forest over the loud folks in the villages.

Criella's connection with nature and reverence for all living things serves her well as a Nature cleric. She abhors pollution and the poisons that careless humanoid leave behind in the name of progress.

HARPER'S TALE

Name Criella Race Fierna Tiefling Size Medium

Class Cleric (Nature) Level 1 XP Align NG

Background Acolyte Languages Common, Infernal

Description A short Tiefling with coral skin, white horns, and no tail who is strong and loves flowers.

ARMOR CLASS

18

10+DEX+ARMOR

PASSIVE PERCEPTION

12

10+WIS

INITIATIVE

+0

DEX

SPEED

30 FEET

HIT POINTS

9

MAXIMUM

1d8

HIT DIE

TEMPORARY HIT POINTS

DEATH SAVES

Successes

Failures

| | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|---|---|
| <p>STRENGTH</p> <p>+2</p> <p>15</p> <p>STR</p> <p>◇ STR Save</p> <p>◆ Athletics</p> | <p>DEXTERITY</p> <p>+0</p> <p>10</p> <p>DEX</p> <p>◇ DEX Save</p> <p>◇ Acrobatics</p> <p>◇ Sleight of Hand</p> <p>◇ Stealth</p> | <p>CONSTITUTION</p> <p>+1</p> <p>12</p> <p>CON</p> <p>◇ CON Save</p> | <p>INTELLIGENCE</p> <p>-1</p> <p>8</p> <p>INT</p> <p>◇ INT Save</p> <p>◇ Arcana</p> <p>◇ History</p> <p>◇ Investigation</p> <p>◇ Nature</p> <p>◇ Religion</p> | <p>WISDOM</p> <p>+2</p> <p>15</p> <p>WIS</p> <p>◆ WIS Save</p> <p>◆ Animal Handling</p> <p>◆ Insight</p> <p>◇ Medicine</p> <p>◇ Perception</p> <p>◆ Survival</p> | <p>CHARISMA</p> <p>+2</p> <p>15</p> <p>CHA</p> <p>◆ CHA Save</p> <p>◇ Deception</p> <p>◇ Intimidation</p> <p>◇ Performance</p> <p>◆ Persuasion</p> |
|--|--|---|--|---|---|

PROFICIENCY BONUS

+2

| Level | Bonus |
|-------|-------|
| 1-4 | +2 |
| 5-8 | +3 |
| 9-12 | +4 |
| 13-16 | +5 |
| 17-20 | +6 |

Personality Traits

Ideals

Bonds

Flaws

INSPIRATION

X

EQUIPMENT

ARMOR

Coinage

Amulet - Backpack - Bedroll

Clothes, Common - Mess Kit

Pot, Iron - Rations x10

Hempen Rope (50ft) - Shovel

Tinderbox - Torch x10 - waterskin



WEAPON

BONUS DAMAGE TYPE

TOOLS

◆ Mace +4 1d6+2 Bludgeoning

◆ Quarterstaff +4 1d6+2 1d8+2 (v) Bludgeoning

◆ Unarmed +4 3 Bludgeoning

◇

◆ Leatherworker's Tools

◇

◇

◇



DEATH SAVES

Successes

Failures

Hedge



Hedge grew up in a small village of non-firbolgs. Nobody in the town really remembers where Hedge came from; he was just there one day wandering around the perimeter of the village trilling to the birds and chattering to the squirrels and other small animals. He was a very quiet boy who rarely spoke, but seemed to understand the villagers, and he quickly became a fixture around the village.

Hedge had a natural affinity with all the domesticated and wild animals in and around the village and became the de-facto veterinarian for them, caring for the sick or injured, and always present during a foaling, lambing, or calving. Hedge will refuse to kill or eat any animal, including eggs, but his favorite foods are the soft cheeses the villagers make and fresh bread with a thick pat of butter. He will only wear clothing spun from wool or woven from plants and his calloused feet have never seen shoes. Hedge also avoids metal, preferring to use fallen branches or dead timber as makeshift clubs or staves.

HARPER'S TALE

Name Hedge Race Firbolg Size Medium

Class Druid Level 1 XP Align LN

Background Hermit Languages Common, Druidic, Elvish, Giant, Sylvan

Description A soft-spoken and gentle giant, Hedge stands 10' tall with large, floppy ears and long braided hair smelling of sweet wildflowers.

ARMOR CLASS

13

10+DEX+ARMOR

PASSIVE PERCEPTION

13

INITIATIVE

+2

SPEED

30 FEET

HIT POINTS

8 MAXIMUM

1d8 HIT DIE

TEMPORARY HIT POINTS

Successes

Failures

STRENGTH

+2

14

STR

◇ STR Save

◇ Athletics



DEXTERITY

+2

15

DEX

◇ DEX Save

◇ Acrobatics

◇ Sleight of Hand

◇ Stealth

CONSTITUTION

+0

10

CON

◇ CON Save

INTELLIGENCE

-1

8

INT

◆ INT Save

◇ Arcana

◇ History

◇ Investigation

◆ Nature

◇ Religion

WISDOM

+3

16

WIS

◆ WIS Save

◆ Animal Handling

◇ Insight

◆ Medicine

◇ Perception

◆ Survival

CHARISMA

+1

12

CHA

◇ CHA Save

◇ Deception

◇ Intimidation

◇ Performance

◇ Persuasion

PROFICIENCY BONUS

+2

| Level | Bonus |
|-------|-------|
| 1-4 | +2 |
| 5-8 | +3 |
| 9-12 | +4 |
| 13-16 | +5 |
| 17-20 | +6 |

Personality Traits

Ideals

Bonds

Flaws

INSPIRATION

X

EQUIPMENT

ARMOR

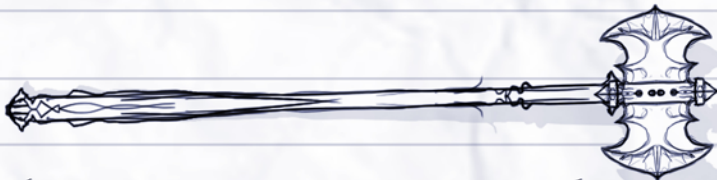
Coinage

Backpack - Bedroll - Blanket ◆ Leather

Clothes, Costume - Druidic Focus ◇

Mess Kit - Rations x10 - Rope, Hempen (50ft)

Tinderbox - Torch x10 - waterskin

WEAPON

BONUS DAMAGE TYPE

TOOLS

◆ Quarterstaff +4 1d6+2 1d8+2 (v) Bludgeoning ◆ Herbalism Kit

◆ Sickle +4 1d4+2 Slashing ◆ weaver's Tools

◆ Unarmed +4 3 Bludgeoning ◇

◇ ◇



DEATH SAVES

Successes

Failures

Kethe



Quietly menacing and always an outsider, Kethe prefers to watch, listen, and learn. Her needs are few, and her trust is hard won. Kethe's patience is legendary, but when the time for action comes few are quicker. Despite her demeanor Kethe sees her allies and friends as family, often assuming the role of matriarch. She deflects questions about herself and her past, instead asking others to share their stories.

HARPER'S TALE

Name **Kethe** Race **Panthaka** Size **Medium**

Class **Monk** Level **1** XP Align **CG**

Background **outlander** Languages **Common, Draconic**

Description **A crimson panther with ornate markings on her body, Kethe uses her sharp mind and claws to defend her friends.**

ARMOR CLASS

16

10+DEX+ARMOR

PASSIVE PERCEPTION

15

10+WIS

INITIATIVE

+3

DEX

SPEED

30

FEET

HIT POINTS

9

MAXIMUM

1d8

HIT DIE

TEMPORARY HIT POINTS

Successes

Failures

DEATH SAVES

| STRENGTH | DEXTERITY | CONSTITUTION | INTELLIGENCE | WISDOM | CHARISMA |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| +0 | +3 | +1 | +1 | +3 | -1 |
| 10 | 16 | 13 | 12 | 16 | 8 |
| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> STR Save Athletics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DEX Save Acrobatics Sleight of Hand Stealth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CON Save | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> INT Save Arcana History Investigation Nature Religion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WIS Save Animal Handling Insight Medicine Perception Survival | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHA Save Deception Intimidation Performance Persuasion |

PROFICIENCY BONUS

+2

| Level | Bonus |
|-------|-------|
| 1-4 | +2 |
| 5-8 | +3 |
| 9-12 | +4 |
| 13-16 | +5 |
| 17-20 | +6 |

Personality Traits

Ideals

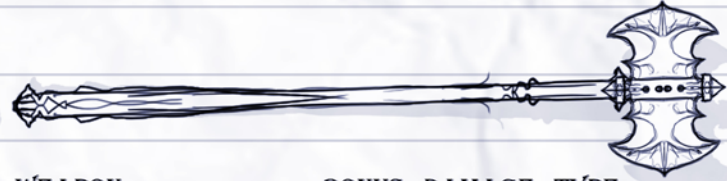
Bonds

Flaws

INSPIRATION

X

| EQUIPMENT | ARMOR | Coinage |
|--|-------|---------|
| Backpack - Clothes, Traveler's | ◊ | PP |
| Crowbar - Hammer - Hunting Trap | ◊ | GP 10 |
| Piton x10 - Rations x10 - Rope, Hempen (50') | | EP |
| Triton - Torch x10 - waterskin | | SP |
| Trinket - Throwing Darts x20 | | CP |



| WEAPON | BONUS | DAMAGE | TYPE | TOOLS |
|----------------|-------|--------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| unarmed strike | +5 | 1d4+3 | Bludgeoning | Painter's Supplies |
| Quarterstaff | +5 | 1d6+3 1d8+3 (v) | Bludgeoning | Shawm |
| Darts | +5 | 1d4+3 | Piercing | ◊ |
| Handaxe | +5 | 1d6+3 | Slashing | ◊ |

Luca



Luca is known for two things: his infectious laugh, the scar he proudly wears under his left collarbone, and the maul that he wields with ease. That's three, isn't it? Oh well, such is the life of a roaming barbarian. Luca's scar is a constant reminder of a battle he went through as a child. One he smashed! Now he uses his strength and good spirits to fight for those who cannot fight for themselves.

HARPER'S TALE

Name "Laughing" Luca Lookinglass Race Human Size Medium

Class Barbarian Level 1 XP Align CG

Background Knight Languages Common, Halfling, orc

Description with a friendly smile and infectious laughter, Luca stands tall and ready to fight for his friends with his trusty hammer.

ARMOR CLASS

14

10+DEX+ARMOR

PASSIVE PERCEPTION

10

10+WIS

INITIATIVE

+2

DEX

SPEED

30 FEET

HIT POINTS

14 MAXIMUM

1d12 HIT DIE

TEMPORARY HIT POINTS

Successes
○○○
Failures
○○○

DEATH SAVES



| | | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|--|--|
| <p>STRENGTH</p> <p>+3</p> <p>16 STR</p> <p>◆ STR Save</p> <p>◆ Athletics</p> | <p>DEXTERITY</p> <p>+2</p> <p>15 DEX</p> <p>◇ DEX Save</p> <p>◇ Acrobatics</p> <p>◇ Sleight of Hand</p> <p>◇ Stealth</p> | <p>CONSTITUTION</p> <p>+2</p> <p>14 CON</p> <p>◆ CON Save</p> | <p>INTELLIGENCE</p> <p>-1</p> <p>8 INT</p> <p>◇ INT Save</p> <p>◇ Arcana</p> <p>◇ History</p> <p>◇ Investigation</p> <p>◇ Nature</p> <p>◇ Religion</p> | <p>WISDOM</p> <p>+0</p> <p>11 WIS</p> <p>◇ WIS Save</p> <p>◇ Animal Handling</p> <p>◇ Insight</p> <p>◇ Medicine</p> <p>◇ Perception</p> <p>◆ Survival</p> | <p>CHARISMA</p> <p>+1</p> <p>13 CHA</p> <p>◇ CHA Save</p> <p>◇ Deception</p> <p>◇ Intimidation</p> <p>◆ Performance</p> <p>◇ Persuasion</p> |
|---|---|--|---|--|--|

PROFICIENCY BONUS

+2

| Level | Bonus |
|-------|-------|
| 1-4 | +2 |
| 5-8 | +3 |
| 9-12 | +4 |
| 13-16 | +5 |
| 17-20 | +6 |

Personality Traits

Ideals

Bonds

Flaws

INSPIRATION

X

EQUIPMENT

ARMOR

Coinage

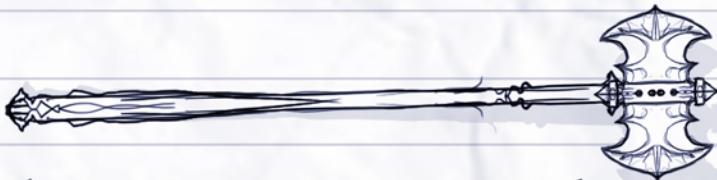
Backpack - Bedroll - Signet Ring ◇

Clothes, Fine - Mess Kit ◇

Rations x10 - Rope, Hempen (50ft)

Scroll of Pedigree - Tinderbox - Torch x10

waterskin



WEAPON

BONUS DAMAGE TYPE

TOOLS

◆ Greathammer +5 1d12+3 Bludgeoning ◆ Dice Set

◆ Javelin +5 1d6+3 Piercing ◇

◆ Unarmed +5 4 Bludgeoning ◇

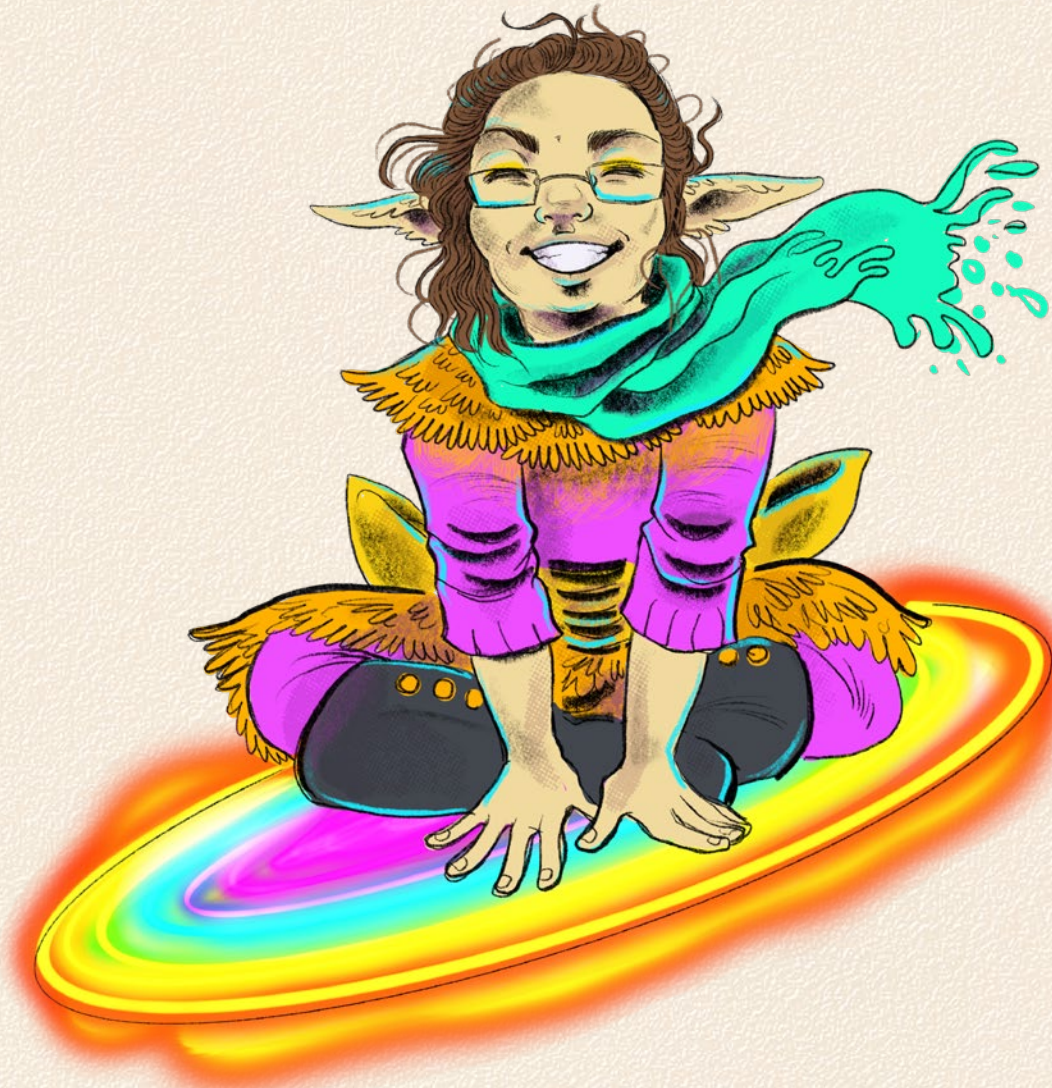
◇ ◇



DEATH SAVES

Successes
○○○
Failures
○○○

Minziber



Good things come in small packages. And there aren't too many smaller than Minziber. Despite her childlike appearance she holds a wealth of knowledge and arcane powers that few can match. After spending her formative years in a gnomish village, she decided that the time to explore the world was now. Minziber's zeal and natural curiosity sometimes get the better of her judgment, but that's what traveling companions are for, right?

HARPER'S TALE

Name Minziber Pagemoor Race Gnome (Rock) Size Small

Class Wizard Level 1 XP Align LG

Background Sage Languages Common, Celestial, Elvish, Gnomish

Description Sticking out from underneath a pointy hat are the equally pointy ears of Minziber whose nose is always in an adventure book.

| | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|
| STRENGTH -1 8 STR ◇ STR Save ◇ Athletics | DEXTERITY +0 10 DEX ◇ DEX Save ◇ Acrobatics ◇ Sleight of Hand ◇ Stealth | CONSTITUTION +2 14 CON ◇ CON Save | INTELLIGENCE +3 16 INT ◆ INT Save ◆ Arcana ◆ History ◆ Investigation ◇ Nature ◆ Religion | WISDOM +2 15 WIS ◆ WIS Save ◇ Animal Handling ◇ Insight ◇ Medicine ◇ Perception ◇ Survival | CHARISMA +1 12 CHA ◇ CHA Save ◇ Deception ◇ Intimidation ◇ Performance ◇ Persuasion |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|

PROFICIENCY BONUS

◆ +2

| Level | Bonus |
|-------|-------|
| 1-4 | +2 |
| 5-8 | +3 |
| 9-12 | +4 |
| 13-16 | +5 |
| 17-20 | +6 |

ARMOR CLASS

10

10+DEX+ARMOR

PASSIVE PERCEPTION

◆ 11

10+WIS

INITIATIVE

◆ +0

DEX

SPEED

25

FEET

HIT POINTS

8

MAXIMUM

1d6

HIT DIE

Personality Traits

Ideals

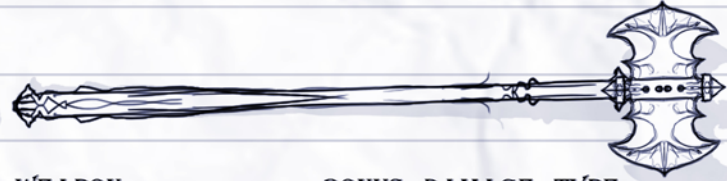
Bonds

Flaws

INSPIRATION

X

| EQUIPMENT | ARMOR | Coinage |
|--|-------|---------|
| Arcane Focus - Backpack - Book | | PP |
| Clothes, Common - Ink (1 oz.) | | GP 10 |
| Ink Pen - Little Bag of Sand - Parchment x10 | | EP |
| Small Knife - Spellbook | | SP |
| | | CP |



| WEAPON | BONUS | DAMAGE | TYPE | TOOLS |
|----------------|-------|--------|-------------|------------------|
| ◆ Quarterstaff | +1 | 1d6-1 | Bludgeoning | ◆ Tinker's Tools |
| ◆ Unarmed | +1 | 1 | Bludgeoning | ◇ |
| ◇ | | | | ◇ |
| ◇ | | | | ◇ |

TEMPORARY HIT POINTS

DEATH SAVES

Successes

○○○

Failures

○○○

Quinn



“Always be prepared with a kind heart, a strong back, and a helping hand”, that’s the motto of “Mighty” Quinn Quickfoot. The young halfling’s smile never falters in the face of challenges or adversity, and when the going gets tough Quinn’s the first in line to get down to business. As a bard he’s equally adept at mending wounds, singing songs, and defending his friends. The young halfling’s boundless energy and upbeat attitude are a constant source of inspiration to all he meets.

HARPER'S TALE

Name "Mighty" Quinn Quickfoot Race Halfling (Lightfoot) Size Small

Class Bard Level 1 XP Align NG

Background Entertainer Languages Common, Halfling

Description Tousled blond hair crowns over pointed ears and a warm smile. Small yet mighty, Quinn's fighting spirit is unrivaled!

ARMOR CLASS

14

10+DEX+ARMOR

10+DEX+ARMOR

PASSIVE PERCEPTION

11

10+WIS

INITIATIVE

+3

DEX

SPEED

25

FEET

HIT POINTS

9

MAXIMUM

1d8

HIT DIE

TEMPORARY HIT POINTS

DEATH SAVES

Successes

○○○

Failures

○○○

| STRENGTH | DEXTERITY | CONSTITUTION | INTELLIGENCE | WISDOM | CHARISMA |
|---------------------------|--|-----------------|--|--|--|
| -1 8 STR | +3 16 DEX | +1 13 CON | +0 10 INT | +1 12 WIS | +3 16 CHA |
| ◇ STR Save ◇ Athletics | ◆ DEX Save ◆ Acrobatics ◆ Sleight of Hand ◆ Stealth | ◇ CON Save | ◇ INT Save ◆ Arcana ◇ History ◇ Investigation ◇ Nature ◇ Religion | ◇ WIS Save ◇ Animal Handling ◇ Insight ◇ Medicine ◇ Perception ◇ Survival | ◆ CHA Save ◇ Deception ◇ Intimidation ◆ Performance ◇ Persuasion |

PROFICIENCY BONUS

+2

| Level | Bonus |
|-------|-------|
| 1-4 | +2 |
| 5-8 | +3 |
| 9-12 | +4 |
| 13-16 | +5 |
| 17-20 | +6 |

Personality Traits

Ideals

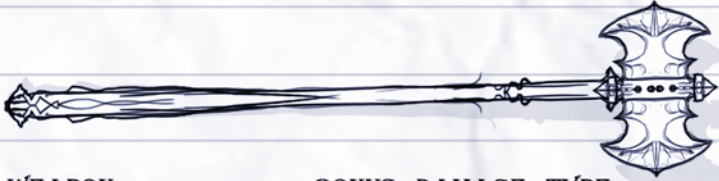
Bonds

Flaws

INSPIRATION

X

| EQUIPMENT | ARMOR | Coinage |
|--|-----------|---------|
| Backpack - Case, Map or Scroll | ◆ Leather | PP |
| Clothes, Costume and Fine | ◇ | GP 15 |
| Ink (1 oz.) - Ink Pen - Lamp - Oil - Paper | | EP |
| Paper x5 - Perfume vial - Sealing wax - Soap | | SP |
| Lute - Horn | | CP |



| WEAPON | BONUS | DAMAGE | TYPE | TOOLS |
|-----------|-------|--------|-------------|----------------|
| ◆ Rapier | +5 | 1d8+3 | Piercing | ◆ Disguise Kit |
| ◆ Dagger | +5 | 1d4+3 | Piercing | ◆ Drums |
| ◆ Unarmed | +1 | 1 | Bludgeoning | ◆ Horn |
| ◇ | | | | ◆ Lute |



Harper's Tale is a forest-based adventure path of ten connected adventures, taking the party from 1st to 10th level and culminating in a confrontation with the source of the plague within their homeland. The adventure is written with younger players in mind, but I promise players of all ages will find plenty to keep them engaged with the story.

The adventure path starts as the heroes arrive at the seemingly deserted village of Grove. Through exploration and investigation, they learn that a mysterious illness has taken over the town, leaving only two young women, Rose and Grace, to care for the populace.