

GEO2-04



A FLOWER FOR A GIANT'S GRAVE

A One-Round D&D[®] LIVING GREYHAWK[®]

Geoff Regional Adventure

Version 1

BY DEAN AND DENISE HEAD

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Perhaps you've had one ale too many because what you just overheard simply can't be true. Information this important could change the tide of the war. Yet warriors stouter than you have called it a fool's errand. Are you fools enough to delve deep into the Dim Forest on a rumor? An adventure for characters levels 1 – 8.

Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS[®] rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison.

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This is an RPGA Network scenario for the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. Most sanctioned events delegate a four-hour time block for each round of this scenario, with actual playing time will around three hours. The rest of the time is spent in preparation before game play, and reward distribution and scoring after the game. The following guidelines are here to help you with both the preparation and voting segment of the game. Read this page carefully so that you know and can communicate to your players the special aspects of playing an RPGA scenario.

PREPARATION

First, print this scenario. This scenario was created to support double-sided printing, but printing it single sided works as well. There is enough room along the inside margin to bind the adventure, if you desire.

Read this entire adventure at least once before running the event. Familiarize yourself with any special rules, spells, or equipment presented in the adventure. It may help to highlight particularly important passages.

When you run an RPGA D&D adventure we assume that you have access to the following books: the *Player's Handbook*, the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*. We also assume that you have a set of dice (at least one d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, and d20), some scrap paper, a pencil, an RPGA scoring packet, and your sense of fun. It's also a good idea to have a way to track movement during combat. This can be as simple as a pad of graph paper and a pencil, as handy as a vinyl grid map and chits, or as elaborate as resin dungeon walls and miniatures.

Instruct the players either to prepare their characters now, or wait until you read the introduction, depending on the requirements of the scenario described in the introduction.

Keep in mind that you must have at least three players (not counting the DM), for the game session to be a sanctioned RPGA event. You cannot have more than six players participating in the game.

Once you are ready to play, it is handy to instruct each player to place a nametag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, race, and gender at the top. This makes it easier for both the players and the DM to keep track of who is playing what character.

The players are free to use the game rules to learn about equipment and weapons their characters are carrying. But, as the DM, you can bar the use of even Core Rulebooks during certain times of play. For example, usually the players are not free to consult the *Dungeon Master's Guide* when confronted with a trap or hazard, or the *Monster Manual* when confronted with a monster.

Text that appears in ***bold italics*** is player information, which you may read aloud or paraphrase as appropriate. Text in appendixes contains important DM notes, for you, offering insight to issues particular to the adventure. Monster and nonplayer character (NPC) statistics are provided with each encounter in abbreviated form. Full monster statistics for standard monsters are provided in the *Monster Manual*, while statistics for unusual monster and unique individuals are profiled in the Appendix at the end

of the adventure. You should review all of these statistics before the game starts to refresh your memory of the creatures' abilities.

SCORING

After the players have completed the scenario or the time allotted to run the scenario has run out, the players and DM score the game. The RPGA has three ways to score its games. Consult your convention coordinator to determine which method to use for this scenario:

1-No-vote scoring: The players write their names and RPGA numbers on the scoring packet grid. You fill in the top of the grid. That is all. No one is rated. This method is used for people who are just playing for fun.

2-Partial scoring: The players rate the game master and the scenario on their player voting sheet, and provide personal information, but don't vote for other players. The game master rates the scenario and completes personal and event information, but does not rate the players as a team or vote for players. This method is used when there is no competition, but the event coordinator wants information on how the DMs are performing, or the game master wants feedback on his or her own performance.

3-Voting: Players and game masters complete the entire packet, including voting for best player. If this method is used, be sure to allow about 15-20 minutes for the players to briefly describe their characters to the other players, and about 5-10 minutes for voting. This method is used when the players want to know who played the "best" amongst the group, or when the adventure is run in tournament format with winners and prizes.

When using voting, rank the players in order of your voting choice while they are completing their forms, so that you are not influenced by their comments on your abilities. It's a good idea to have the players vote while you determine treasure and experience awards for the scenario.

After voting, give the Scoring Packet to your event coordinator.

This is a LIVING GREYHAWK adventure. As a LIVING™ adventure it is expected that players bring their own characters with them. If players do not have a LIVING GREYHAWK character generated, get a copy of the current LIVING GREYHAWK character generation guidelines, and a character sheet from your convention coordinator or the RPGA Web site (www.wizards.com/rpga), and then have any players without a character create one. Once all players have a LIVING GREYHAWK character, play can begin.

Along with the other materials that you are assumed to have in order to run a D&D game, it is also recommended that you have a copy of the LIVING GREYHAWK Gazetteer.

LIVING GREYHAWK LEVELS OF PLAY

Because players bring their own characters to LIVING GREYHAWK games, this adventure's challenges are proportioned to the average character level of the character participating in the adventure. To determine the Average Party Level (APL):

1) Determine the character level for each character participating in the adventure.

2) If characters bring animals that have been trained for combat (usually war horses and riding dogs), other than those brought by virtue of a class ability (such as animal companions, familiars, a paladin's mounts, and so forth) use the following chart to determine the number of levels you add to the sum above. Add each character's animals separately. A single character may only bring four or fewer animals of this type, and animals with different CRs are added separately.

CR	1	2	3	4
1/4 and 1/6	0	0	0	1
1/3 and 1/2	0	0	1	1
1	1	1	2	3
2	2	3	4	5
3	3	4	5	6
4	4	5	6	7

3) Sum the results of 1 and 2, and divide by the number of characters playing in the adventure-round up.

4) If you are running a table of six characters, add one to that average.

By following these four steps, you have determined the modified APL. Throughout this adventure, APLs categorize the level of challenge that the characters face. APLs are given in even-numbered increments. If the APL of your group falls on an odd number, ask them before the adventure begins whether they would like to play a harder or easier adventure. Based on their choice, use either the higher or the lower adjacent APL.

APL also affects the amount of experience you may gain at the end of an adventure. If your character is three character levels or more either higher or lower than the APL that this adventure is played at, that character will receive only half of the experience points awarded for the adventure. This simulates the fact that

either your character was not as challenged as normal, or relied on help by higher-level characters to reach the objectives.

Note: LIVING GREYHAWK adventures are designed for APL 2 and higher. Three or four, or sometimes even five 1st-level characters may find difficulty with the challenges in a LIVING GREYHAWK adventure. If your group is APL 1 there are three things that you can do to help even the score.

1) Attempt to create a table of six 1st-level characters, or try to enlist higher-level characters to play at that table.

2) Advise characters to buy riding dogs to help protect them, and fight for them. All riding dogs are considered trained to attack. Characters who want their dog to attack they must succeed at a Handle Animal or Charisma check (DC 10). Failure indicates that the animal will not attack that round. This is usually a free action (see DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide Chapter 2: Characters) that may be attempted each round. If an animal loses half or more hp in a single round it flees, unless another check is successful.

3) A group of APL 1 adventurers who desire an extra hand can "enlist an iconic." The stats for the 1st-level versions of Tordek, Miale, Lidda and Jozan are given at the end of each adventure. The group may pick one of these characters to join them on this adventure. The DM controls that NPC.

TIME UNITS AND UPKEEP

This is a standard one-round Regional adventure set in Geoff. All characters playing in region pay one Time Unit to participate in the adventure. Adventures' Standard Upkeep costs 12 gp. Rich Upkeep costs 50 gp, and Luxury Upkeep costs 100 gp. Characters playing out of region pay double these amounts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ADVENTURE SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

This adventure is set in the summer of CY 592. At this time, the giants still occupy most of Geoff, but the Army of Liberation won a victory at Preston and is preparing to cleanse the Oytwood of the remaining forces of the giants.

Grand Duke Owen has reclaimed direct rulership of liberated Geoff, and has reinvested his nobles with oaths of fealty. During this adventure, Owen is on his way to Niole Dra, where he intends to marry Princess Calisse of Keoland.

The plot of this adventure centers on the town of Hocholve in the Dim Forest. Hocholve is situated along the Olvewater River in Dwyr province, the youngest cantrev in Geoff (adopted circa CY 560). Originally nothing more than scattered hunting lodges and isolated farms, Grand Duke Owen's father (Lluth) ordered a fort built there in CY 538. The fort provided much-needed safety to the region. Hocholve rapidly became a place where rangers, hunters, and trappers could meet in safety. Local wood elves camped near the fort and developed friendships with the residents. The harmonious population of humans, wood elves and half-elves steadily grew to about 500. Hocholve developed a thriving fur market and was renowned for its spider silk.

Hocholve fell during the giant invasion in CY 583. Residents were warned a day in advance, so children and the elderly were withdrawn to the fort for protection. Traps and ambushes were prepared to thwart the giant hordes but it was not enough. Many residents fled to safety through a secret portal located in a magic grove of rare and beautiful trees. Dorindel, the town druid, opened the portal, and druids of his order escorted the residents to safety. Hocholve fell after the enemy breached the fortress wall. The brave few who remained to defend the town were slaughtered. The grove of trees, though not destroyed, was damaged and its treant protector killed.

As the giants and their thralls prepared fires to cook their fallen foes, the giants began noticing a strange rash on exposed parts of their skin. The rash quickly developed into plant-like growths that spread all over their bodies. Within hours, all of the giants became deathly ill and succumbed to the plant infection. This giant-killer plant, "straffern," reduced all of the giants to large piles of fern-like vegetation. The town of Hocholve

was pronounced off-limits to the giant army and they have never returned.

It is now CY 592, nine years after the giant invasion, and Hocholve is virtually abandoned. Its location inside the Dim Forest along the Olvewater River makes it an important strategic site. Apart from the odd boulder-crushed home, the town is in remarkably good shape. Most valuables, however, were ransacked by the thrall complement to the giant invaders. The thralls were unaffected by the straffern.

The primary tenant of Hocholve now is Dorindel, an Old Faith druid of Obad-Hai. Dorindel survived the giant invasion by fleeing in animal form. As the only survivor of the assault, he discovered that the plant straffern was deadly to the giants. He recognized the usefulness of this plant as protection against further giant invasion, and returned soon afterward to reclaim the town as his own. In the intervening years, Dorindel became fanatically protective of the town and especially of the magical grove of trees. He believes that the habitation of Hocholve is detrimental to the health of the trees around which the town has been built. He decided that the town should not be inhabited by anyone. To this end, Dorindel goes to great lengths to frighten away any trespassers and to keep the straffern a secret.

There has been a more recent tenant of the town. About six months ago, a renowned elven botanist, Nenarómë Estélelin, was kidnapped and brought to Hocholve by thugs employed by the giants. Her captors pressed her to find out about the deadly plant. Dorindel eventually killed the thugs but spared Nenarómë out of respect for her reverence for nature. Nenarómë remained in Hocholve, fascinated by the prospect of discovering a new species that could possibly be used as a weapon against the foes of Geoff. Two weeks ago, she made her big breakthrough and recognized its potential to help push the giants out of Geoff. However, the ever-watchful Dorindel immediately took her prisoner to prevent her from passing on her knowledge. Before she was abducted, she sent a note with some trappers to her brother in the Vesve forest. Her secret journal also remains in the town, unknown to Dorindel.

Dorindel remains the greatest obstacle in the recapture of Hocholve. He uses every effort to thwart the characters reaching and investigating the town, reporting information, and especially disclosing the secret of straffern.

The characters embark on a mission to investigate the town of Hocholve in the Dim Forest after overhearing a conversation with the niece of Darlon Lea. Darlon Lea is the former Arglwyth of Ffrwythlon Don. In CY 590, he became upset about the (Gran March) Army of Retribution activity in southern Arweth province. The Army of Retribution got into conflict with the gray elves of the Oytwood. Darlon Lea fed sensitive military information to the gray elves and sponsored saboteurs to destroy the Army of Retribution fortifications. When news of his involvement reached the court, he was branded an outlaw and traitor to Geoff. Darlon fled to the Dim Forest where he remains in hiding.

Since his flight, additional facts have come to light. Apparently, Governor Karl Neumann, who was enchanted by an agent of the giants, encouraged Darlon to flee. Through third parties it is known that Darlon still maintains his innocence, but he refuses to leave the sanctuary of the Dim Forest until he is pardoned.

This adventure sets up a moral conflict for the characters. The conflict pits a promise the characters may have to make against their loyalty to Geoff.

The DM should keep Dorindel's machinations a secret to the party until the final encounter. Try to play off Dorindel's spells as natural effects wherever possible. If the characters raise concerns about the Shadow Dragon, the DM should encourage those suspicions.

Encounter 1: The Price of Honor

At a tavern in Hochoch, the characters overhear that the Dim Forest town of Hocholve is abandoned. The giants were known to have taken the town nine years earlier. Information about why the giants no longer occupy Hocholve could be crucial in the fight against the giants.

This information comes from Kinkaid, the niece of Darlon Lea. She is trying to recruit a group loyal to her uncle to investigate Hocholve. Unfortunately, the adventurers she intends to recruit are not interested.

Encounter 2: Endéryn

The characters follow Kinkaid to Enderyn, a small wood-elven town in the southern Dim Forest. There they learn about the fall of Hocholve, the evacuation of its residents, and the rumors of shadows occupying the town. They also meet Dern, a ranger who has been back to Hocholve. He relates his personal experience with the town. They also meet Kinkaid again. This time she reveals her lineage to the characters and agrees to let them help her.

Encounter 3: Please Don't Feed the Bears

On their way to Hocholve, the characters camp for the night and are confronted by hungry bears. Some of the bears are Dorindel's animal companions in search of an item to aid in *scrying*.

Encounter 4: Foreshadows

After another day of travel the characters encounter two slain woodsmen. Among their gear they find a personal note from Nenarómë. When night falls on their campsite, shadow giant-kin attack them.

Encounter 5: Arrival in Hocholve

When the party arrives in Hocholve, it is almost completely abandoned. Searching through the ransacked buildings they eventually find Nenarómë's temporary residence. Inside are *biospheres* and her magic journal relating her discoveries about straffern

Encounter 6: Defender of the Grove

The players meet Strong Bough, the current treant protector of the sacred grove of trees. Through questioning the treant, the players learn that people still visit Hocholve from time to time.

Encounter 7: Air Is Thicker Than Shadow

Upon leaving Nenarómë's abode, the characters are ushered to the grove to meet Dorindel. He offers them safe passage if they agree not to reveal what they found in Hocholve. If the characters do not agree, he summons air elementals to scare the party into agreeing to his request. Dorindel continues to threaten the party with combat until they agree to his terms, successfully flee, or are subdued and taken captive.

Conclusion

Dorindel escorts the characters through the *Ways of the World* to Enderyn or the players flee through the woods and ultimately arrive in Enderyn. There they meet Kinkaid who pressures them to break their promise in revealing what they learned in Hocholve. They also meet Dern who asks if they've seen his comrades.

Depending on what the characters decide, they may return to Hochoch to report their information. At the conclusion of the adventure, each character earns Influence from Darlon Lea. Those that broke Dorindel's promise earn the Wrath of Dorindel. Those that report the information to the authorities earn Influence of the Brenin, Grand Duke Owen.

GAME PREPARATION

Before beginning, the DM should ask the characters if they have aroused the Attention of the Shadow Dragon. Those who have played *Shadows of a Fallen Star* most likely have. This is important because this scenario encourages character paranoia about shadows and the shadow dragon.

The authors recommend that the DM ask and record the characters bonuses for the following skills before the scenario begins: *Innuendo*, *Listen*, *Scry*, *Sense Motive*, and *Spot*. DM Aid 1 provides a chart for this.

The DM can then make checks for the characters in sensitive situations.

INTRODUCTION: THE PRICE OF HONOR

Darlon and his few companions have learned much about the Dim Forest during their years as outlaws. They recently heard news that Hocholve is devoid of giant activity. Darlon wishes to find out if this is true, and if so why. He intends to share this information with the Grand Duke's court. For obvious reasons, he cannot do so in person. He sends one of his confidants, his niece Kinkaid, to Hochoch to recruit a trustworthy group of adventurers familiar to him to investigate further and report back to Grand Duke Owen. The characters are not the intended recruits, however, they presumably go on the mission for the good of Geoff.

It is late afternoon in the month of Reaping. As you walk through the crowded streets of Hochoch, the summer sun casts a red glow across the cottages and shops of the town. You find

yourself at the Boar's Knuckle Tavern. Looking around you notice the tavern is crowded, loud, and the smell of smoke only slightly pervades the odor of unwashed bodies and stale alcohol. As your eyes adjust to the light, you see some friends and sit down with them. You order a drink and some food from the serving maid and then sit back.

Have the characters make a Listen check (DC 10). The following is for those who make their check:

Your attention is drawn to a table nearby where a spry elven woman is talking to a group of husky warrior types. She has long curling dark hair and bright green eyes. They flash as she talks with the men and her manner is bold and forthright. You overhear her say, "Kearg, you know there would be much honor bestowed on you and your men should you find truth in this rumor and bring it home. Imagine what this could do for the liberation of Gyruuff. Imagine what this could do for my uncle."

"Your uncle knows I've a price, and honor alone don't come near," says the man she called Kearn without looking up from his food. "Besides, can't be true that Hocholve's unoccupied. I reckon such a rumor no more than one of your pretty little elvish fantasies. 'Tis a known fact that town was taken by giants. Lost me some good friends there. And even 'twas true, all knows that area to be overrun with shadows ever since that shadow dragon moved into Derelion."

"But Kearn, you are the only man my uncle trusts to carry this out and do what is right. We need you to do this. Do this for my uncle," and with a flash her eyes, "do this for me."

"Sorry, lassie," Kearn says, "I'd like to do this fer ya and fer your uncle, but I'm not too interested in riskin' me neck fer just a bit o' honor. Honor don't pay fer me dinner."

With that the man pushes back his plate, wipes his mouth with the back of his hand and gets up. He notices you are eavesdropping and says to the woman, "But don't lose hope there, lassie. Hochoch be filled to the brim with those daft enough to chase a goose for a whim of honor." He motions to his companions and they loudly depart leaving the woman looking dejected and frustrated.

What do the characters do? If they approach the woman she does not talk with them saying at first that it's none of their business and then that they don't look cut out for the job. She is courteous to the characters and explains that she was sent to Hochoch to recruit Kearn and his men, a party of adventurers that are known by her and her employer to be trustworthy. Please keep in mind that her "employer" is Darlon Lea. She has no way to know how a party of adventurers, no matter how heroic, may feel about working for an alleged traitor. If they have court influence or are in the military, she seems somewhat interested, but she eventually says she's sorry and gets up and leaves.

If they follow her out they see Kearn and his group of men loitering in the square. Kinkaid approaches Kearn and says (Listen DC 15) that she will be in Endéryn should they change their minds. Kinkaid then departs. At this point the characters have several options all of which are detailed in Encounter 1.

ENCOUNTER 1: FOLLOWING THE LEADS

What happens next depends upon what the characters decide to do.

FOLLOWING KINKAID

The characters may follow Kinkaid. At any time, should they lose her, they may return to Hochoch and find Kearn and his men still loitering in the square. They redirect the characters to Endéryn.

Once she has spoken to Kearn, Kinkaid departs. The characters may follow her freely, but if Kinkaid spots them, she attempts to lose them. Characters the make successful Spot and Listen checks against Kinkaid's Hide and Move Silently checks listed below, may follow. If she successfully loses them, she cannot be found again.

- APL 2 – Hide +22, Move Silently +12, Spot +11, Listen +8.
- APL 4 – Hide +24, Move Silently +14, Spot +15, Listen +11.
- APL 6 – Hide +26, Move Silently +16, Spot +15, Listen +11.
- APL 8 – Hide +28, Move Silently +18, Spot +15, Listen +11.

If Kinkaid is unsuccessful at losing the characters, they can follow her out of the town. She strikes out on a northward trailhead into the Dim Forest and disappears into the woods. Only 5 successful Wilderness Lore checks (APL 2 – DC 15, APL 4 – DC 16, APL 6 – DC 18, APL 8 – DC 20) allow them to follow her all the way to Endéryn. At each Wilderness Lore check have Kinkaid make Spot and Listen checks to notice the characters. If she detects them following her, she again attempts to lose them. Each time she is successful, the DC of the Wilderness Lore checks increase by +2 for each remaining check.

Under no circumstances does Kinkaid initiate combat with the party. If she is attacked, she flees as fast as she can. With her Boots of Striding and Springing, she has a Speed of 60. If parties insist on hunting her down and can outpace her, she tries to separate them and engage them one at a time. She is absolutely merciless if things reach that point.

APL 2 (EL 6)

☛ **Kinkaid:** Female Elf Rog4/Rng1/Thief-Acrobat*1; hp 34; see Appendix I.

APL 4 (EL 8)

☛ **Kinkaid:** Female Elf Rog4/Rng1/Thief-Acrobat*2/Deepwood Sniper*1; hp 45; see Appendix I.

APL 6 (EL 10)

✦ **Kinkaid:** Female Elf Rog5/Rng1/Thief-Arobat*2/Deepwood Sniper*2; hp 56; see Appendix I.

APL 8 (EL 12)

✦ **Kinkaid:** Female Elf Rog5/Rng1/Thief-Arobat*4/Deepwood Sniper*2; hp 66; see Appendix I.

Roleplaying Notes

Kinkaid is a playful and rather mischievous. She is also very cocky and takes foolish risks. Her green eyes are extremely expressive, and her long brown hair hangs in ringlets that always seem to get in her face.

She is the niece of Darlon Lea. Characters may know of this fact with a successful Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check (DC 15), a successful Knowledge (local-Geoff) check (DC 20), or a successful Bardic Knowledge check (DC 25).

TALKING WITH KEARG AND HIS MEN

Should the characters talk with the men (Kearg ap Benlach - their leader, Coltagh ap Codh, Cuidin, Derbhan, and Gardon), Kearg does most of the talking, but regards the characters suspiciously at first. The characters must convince him of their sincerity before he talks freely (roleplay this). He relates the following information to the characters:

- Under no circumstances does Kearg reveal who Kinkaid is though he may tell them her name. He does not tell them who her uncle is. If pressed he says that if they want to find out more, she can be found in a wood-elf village named Endéryn near the fork of the Javan and Olvewater Rivers.
- If they ask how they might gain Kinkaid's trust, he tells them that she would be more inclined to trust them if they proved their sincerity in wanting to help her through persistence. One way to do this would be to go to Endéryn and offer her a token of their loyalty to Geoff, a Griffon feather, for instance, or any other creative token they can contrive. He also tells them that although influence with the court impresses her, influence with the former Arglwyth of Ffrwythlon Don will secure the job for them. Characters must make a Knowledge (local) or Knowledge (heraldry) check (DC 20) to know this is Darlon Lea. Characters are, of course, suppose to secure this job and in the event that they have nothing to offer in the way of tokens or influence, their persistence and roleplaying creativity should be enough.
- Kinkaid asked them to look into a rumor that the town of Hocholve was unoccupied, and if so, to find out why and report what they find back to the Grand Duke. They think this a ridiculous

rumor because they know that Hocholve fell to giants 9 years ago.

- Hocholve used to be a fortification that became an outpost for hunters and trappers. The population was comprised primarily of humans and wood elves.
- The location of Hocholve is in the southern Dim Forest on the south bank of the Olvewater River, west of the Javan River. Getting across the Javan River this time of year is impossible because the river is too high. The only two convenient crossings are nearly impassible since the Midwood crossing is shrouded in an impenetrable fog and giants hold Hywist's Crossing. Kearg does say that Kinkaid knows of another crossing, but the characters would have to get that information from her. Kearg doesn't recommend traveling on the road to Midwood, nor on the river since giants patrol both. No, he doesn't have a map, but thinks one can be purchased at the sundry shop for 1 gp.
- The southern Dim Forest is overrun with shadows; every fool knows that. And any fool who sets foot there is a fool! Blasted fools!
- She said their reward would be the honor bestowed on them for the good of Geoff once they reported their findings to the Grand Duke.

Hopefully the characters have decided by this time to undertake this mission. The men, although they openly think the characters are fools and chide them for being so "honorable," recommend they find Kinkaid in Endéryn for more information. If they decide to go to Endéryn, Kearg gives them directions to the town. If the characters decide to skip going to Endéryn and go directly to Hocholve, skip ahead to Encounter 3. See below for what characters encounter should they skip going to Endéryn.

The characters may linger in town trying to gather more information but there is nothing new to learn. No one in the court, government, or even the Midnight Ravens can add anything to the story.

Crossing at Midwood

If the characters decide to risk crossing the Javan at Midwood, they find that giants are patrolling the east road. As they approach the crossing at Midwood they encounter the giant patrol listed below. If the giants spot the characters, they chase them back south and away from Midwood. This should deter the characters from continuing along this route and encourage them to head to Endéryn instead.

ALL APLS (EL 15)

✦ **Hobgoblins (12):** hp 9 each; see *Monster Manual*.

✦ **Gnolls (8):** hp 18 each; see *Monster Manual*.

✦ **Ogres (6):** hp 40 each; see *Monster Manual*.

➤ **Ettins (4):** hp 65 each; see *Monster Manual*.

➤ **Hill Giants (5):** hp 102 each; see *Monster Manual*.

➤ **Fire Giants (2):** hp 142 each; see *Monster Manual*.

If they managed to avoid the patrol or defeat them, they still are unable to get through the fog that surrounds Midwood. If the characters are able to get through the fog, by having a favor owed that allows them to do so, the denizens in Midwood refuse to allow them to cross the river as it would be too perilous. Instead, the denizens send them northeast into the Dim Forest.

Crossing at Hywist's Crossing

If the characters attempt crossing at Hywist's Crossing they encounter massive giant encampments that keeps constant watch over the ford. There are hundreds of goblins and wolves on sentry, making it impossible to cross without extraordinary efforts.

If the characters are spotted, a force of 20 goblins, 12 hobgoblins, 6 ogres, 3 ettins, 6 hill giants, and 2 fire giants attack them. Again, the force tries to drive the characters south and away from the ford. This should deter the characters from continuing along this route and encourage them to head to Endéryn instead.

ALL APLS (EL 14)

➤ **Goblins (20):** hp 8 each; see *Monster Manual*.

➤ **Hobgoblins (12):** hp 9 each; see *Monster Manual*.

➤ **Ogres (6):** hp 40 each; see *Monster Manual*.

➤ **Ettins (3):** hp 65 each; see *Monster Manual*.

➤ **Hill Giants (6):** hp 102 each; see *Monster Manual*.

➤ **Fire Giants (2):** hp 142 each; see *Monster Manual*.

ENCOUNTER 2: ENDÉRYN

Before the characters depart, have them verify whether they are bringing any animals (companions, mounts, beasts of burden, etc) with them. This becomes important later in the scenario (Encounter 3).

Regardless of the path chosen, the characters spend all day traveling in the woods. They need to be somewhere in the forest near where the Javan and Olvewater Rivers meet. Give the characters the opportunity to make Wilderness Lore (DC 15), Knowledge (nature) (DC 15), Spot (DC 20), and Listen (DC 25) checks to notice signs of activity as they approach the refugee settlement of Endéryn. Alert those with successful checks that they have discovered signs of humanoid habitation nearby. Choose something relevant

to the particular skill: tracks, agricultural activity, voices/footfalls, a path, a domesticated animal, or other appropriate signs.

If the characters make successful checks, give them some time to notice a flet built into a tree high above them (Spot DC 15). Continued scrutiny reveals other flets built very naturally into the trees. The characters have walked into the center of Endéryn, a mostly wood-elven community of some fifty residents. If they are following Kinkaid, she is nowhere to be seen.

Suddenly, there is a command shouted in Elven ("attack" for those who speak Elven) and you and your companions find that you are being pelted with acorns, berries that stain your clothes, and even blunted, toy-sized arrows. The projectiles come at a force great enough to sting quite sharply. Almost immediately reprimanding female voices are heard in Elven (Elven names are called out along with commands to decrease immediately) while male voices roar in laughter. The projectiles stop and you hear said by a male voice in common, "Well, brave travelers, I hope your journey encounters foes no more deadly than our children or you are doomed." More laughter is heard. "Tell us what brings you here and who you are or we will set them upon you again."

Characters most likely say they are looking for Kinkaid. The elves want to know who they are and what they want with her, but fetch her for them. A few minutes later she arrives:

"Well, I admire your persistence anyway," says a voice from behind you. As you turn you see Kinkaid sitting easily on a branch about 20 feet above you. She has an impish grin and she brushes a ringlet of dark hair out of her eyes. "I am impressed that you have found me here, but I am not sure why you insist on helping me. Convince me why I should trust you and then, perhaps, I will talk with you."

Let the characters roleplay their way through this encounter. They are expected to convince Kinkaid eventually, unless they don't behave diplomatically. There are many ways the characters may convince Kinkaid they are trustworthy. The following are examples of information that affects Kinkaid favorably:

- Character has influence with Darlon Lea.
- Offering her a token proving their loyalty to Geoff (i.e., the Griffon feather).
- Being an officer in the Army of Liberation
- Character has favor with any Gyrlic court or military official.
- Can prove they are of good alignment.
- Being a follower of the Old Faith.
- Are incredibly persistent and convince her with good roleplaying.

Once the characters satisfy Kinkaid that they are trustworthy she invites them up to the town's community

flet and disappears into the trees, telling them welcome to Endéryn and that she will talk with them later.

A ladder made of sturdy rope descends in front of you. As you climb up into the trees you begin to see a very large and vibrant community that has come alive now that the threat of danger has passed. You eventually come to a branch that appears to be the first step in a staircase that spirals around the trunk of the tree. Using rope handrails, you hoist yourself up and begin up the sturdy steps. You are amazed at what you see: comfortable structures of wood and thatch sitting effortlessly among twisting branches; thin rope bridges connecting the community and elves traversing them as easily as spiders in a web. Finally the stairs open to a large room where a number of people, mostly elves, but some humans and half-elves are gathered to share meals, partake in a bit of wine, listen to the local bard and barter for goods. A group of men hail you and invite you join them. Children descend on you and poke at your gear and weapons. Women smile and bring you refreshments.

Once the party ascends, they find the elves of Endéryn very friendly, inclined to joking, and cooperative. They regard the characters a bit suspiciously at first when asked for information, and some characters are regarded more suspiciously than others. Most of the residents of Endéryn are refugees from Hocholve, though there are also some from Derelion. There are about 50 men, women, and children. Most are wood elves, some are half-elves, and some are human.

What the Refugees Know:

The extent of what the characters learn from the refugees depends on a Diplomacy check and how well they roleplay the conversation. Allow the characters to aid each other and make a single roll for the entire party using the characteristics that affect the elves favorably or unfavorably (see below). Characters add 2 to rolls if they have a favorable quality, and must subtract 2 if they have an unfavorable one.

The following affects the elves favorably:

- Character is a wood elf from the Dim Forest.
- Character has influence with Darlon Lea.
- Being an officer in the Army of Liberation
- Can prove they are of good alignment.
- Character is a bard.
- Being a follower of the Old Faith or of one of the elven deities, especially Ehlonna.
- Character paid for rich or luxury upkeep.
- Are incredibly persistent and convince with good roleplaying.

The following affects the elves unfavorably:

- Character did not pay Standard Adventurers' upkeep and failed the Wilderness Lore for None.
- Character is in the Army of Retribution or is from the Gran March. The wood elves are not

happy with the road that the Marchers are building through the Dim Forest

- Character is a gray elf, dwarf, or half-orc. The animosity is especially keen against gray elves from the Oytwood.

[The DM may subtract 2 from the DC for APL 2 and add 2 to the DCs for APL 8]

- DC 10 – The refugees relate the story of the evacuation of Hocholve. They tell the characters that nearly two-thirds of the population was led to safety through a secret portal in a magical grove of trees within the city walls. They were led on stone bridges that lead out of a dolmen and arched through the mists. They were transported to various locations in the Dim Forest, always near another grove of trees.
- DC 12 – In addition to above, the characters also learn that most of the refugees resettled in small tree communities like this one in the southern Dim Forest. Their commerce involves hunting, trapping, trading, and weaving spider silk; the same trades Hocholve was known for.
- DC 14 – Information above plus: a party of rangers recently returned to the vicinity of Hocholve. They suspect that the town is abandoned but can't verify it.
- DC 16 – Information above plus: the whole forest is infested with shadow creatures. It all emanates from far up north, near Derelion, where the Shadow Dragon resides. Hocholve and its environs are besieged by shadows of all kinds. It is not safe to stay there after dusk.
- DC 18 – Information above plus: the head druid in Hocholve, Dorindel, opened up the secret portal. All of the druids led small groups of residents into the grove and guided them through what they describe as "paths of shadow". Characters that make a Knowledge (the planes) check (DC 5) or a very high Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 25) may recognize this as some type of astral or ethereal travel. The druids returned in waves to rescue as many as possible until the fortress wall was breached and the giants stormed in. Dorindel was killed in the last defense of the town.

Once the characters have learned all that they can from the elves:

"So, I hope your courage matches your persistence for you will need it once you've crossed the Javan." Kinkaid has returned and is looking at you with a friendly expression. She is in the company of a large man who appears to be at perfect ease in the tree community. He is human and in the middling of his years. She introduces him as Dern.

Kinkaid now talks to the characters since they have come this far. Although she says she admires the characters courage, she warns them that they may not be entirely aware of what kind of danger they are in for. She points to some people across the room and says they are from Derelion. She encourages the characters to talk with them before deciding to continue. If characters do talk to the Derelion refugees, they learn horror stories relating to the Shadow Dragon and the shadows produced from the invasion.

In any case, she tells the characters what they need to know to complete the mission. It is the same information that Kearg relates in Hochoch, but she *emphasizes* that if they learn that Hocholve is truly abandoned, it *must* be reported to the Brenin as this could affect the war drastically.

- If the characters ask who her uncle is, she'll avoid answering the question for now.
- If the characters ask why Kinkaid believes Hocholve may be abandoned, she lets Dern speak. Dern shares his experiences in Hocholve freely with the party. The following may be read or it can be related to the characters in the form of conversation.

"I was one of the last residents to escape Hocholve nine years ago. Anyone who was at the fall of Hocholve can be testament to the brutality and mercilessness of the giants. It was enough to keep people away for many years even though the hunting is especially good in that area. It wasn't until a few years ago when resources got scarce on this side of the Javan that me and a few of my comrades risked crossing the river. The game was exceptional which encouraged us. We figured that meant that the giants in Hocholve weren't coming down near the banks of the Javan.

We began scouting missions and the further into the wood we went without any sign of the enemy, the braver, and more intrigued we became. Finally, a few of us rangers decided to risk going up to Hocholve to do some reconnaissance.

It is more than two days journey to get there and we were moving slowly and cautiously. We had encountered no sign of the enemy and the town seemed utterly quiet from what we could observe from outside its walls; this is why I believe that it is not inhabited.

We decided to wait until nightfall to try to enter the town, but before long shadow creatures besieged us. They were in the form of elves and men, ogres and goblins and beyond our skill in combat. We ran. Only I returned alive."

Dern believes that the giants were scared off by an overwhelming shadow presence. He has not been back near the walls of Hocholve since, and knows of no one else who has, although some rangers that ventured out that way a few weeks ago have not returned.

Dern tells the characters that he only goes into the vicinity of Hocholve when it is absolutely necessary; when the game is scarce closer to home, and only during the daytime. He always leaves before dusk to avoid the shadows. He thinks the characters are crazy to go up there at all and won't agree to go with them, as the characters don't look very "woodsy" to him.

- As for crossing the Javan, Kinkaid says she can get them across, and Dern provides them with advice on a safe route to take. He closes the conversation by warning, *"That town is lost to us, though Kinkaid here doesn't seem to agree. I don't believe there's a way to eliminate the shadows... not even if you marched the whole damned army in there."*
- At the end of this encounter Kinkaid explains why she doesn't go to the town herself and report it to the Brenin. She finally reveals her ties to her uncle. *"I am not hardy enough to defy shadows alone and none here will go with me. Even if I did go and learn the truth, who would believe the niece of Darlon Lea? Would you? Would the Brenin? I think not. This is why Gyruff needs you."*

The characters may continue to Gather Information around the community. Keep in mind that aside from this one community flet, most other places are private residences and the elves are not willing to let them roam around without an escort. They do not find out anything more than they have before, but can learn a little about shadows from the refugees of Derelion.

There is a temple in the community where they can meet with a druid of Beory and a priest of Corellon that administer to the spiritual needs of the citizens. Neither of them was in Hocholve when it fell and doesn't know anything more than the townsfolk have told them. They don't know what became of the druids that lived in Hocholve but believe they have dispersed to other places where their services are needed. The druid of Beory does know something about the portal that was used in Hocholve. He knows that the portal opens about a mile from here, but he cannot open the portal. He says only a druid of the Old Faith and of very advanced education can learn the secret of opening the Ways of the World. He takes them to the gate if they wish, but once there, there is nothing more the druid can tell them. If characters ask to go to the gate, there are only two large standing stones on the top of a small hill. There is nothing of importance to the plot here.

It is a drizzly, gray morning as you prepare to depart. The wood elves feed you breakfast and give you some additional rations for your journey. They also present you with a beautiful length of rope that is light, but stronger than you've ever seen. They tell you it is woven from spider silk and that it has special qualities that may be useful in the days ahead. Kinkaid and Dern also return to accompany you to the river crossing.

At the fork of the Javan and Olvewater River, Kinkaid stops and signals, two wood elves step out of the trees and exchange words with Kinkaid. After a few minutes, Kinkaid motions for you to follow and all of you proceed to the riverbank. The river is swift, wide and deep this time of year, impossible to cross by means of wading or swimming. A light ferry that has appeared from the underbrush can take you across.

As you prepare to depart, Dern warns you again to beware after dark, and to use caution in the wood. "At times I feel that

the wood watches me," he says uneasily. "Please keep an eye out for my friends. They should have returned from the Hocholve vicinity by now."

If characters ask to know more about his friends, they may learn that one is a human and one is a wood elf. Both are male and are up in the area trapping. Dern says that they were planning on staying up there a few days, which he told them was foolish. He hopes his friends are okay, but he is worried.

If the characters ask how they are supposed to cross the river when they return, Dern tells them someone is always on duty during daylight hours.

Right after they leave, have the characters make a d20 roll, but don't let them know what it's for. Instead, add the Scry modifier collected from each of the players at the beginning of the game and listed on DM's Aid 1. This is a Scry check against Dorindel, who is already on the lookout. Dorindel scries regularly on Dern and other residents of Enderyn. He noticed the characters in the village and is now aware that they intend to travel to Hocholve.

If they make the check DC 20, they notice a scrying sensor. Only through a *detect scrying* spell does the character have a chance to know who is scrying. Have the character make an opposed scry check against Dorindel's (DC 36). Characters may not take 20. The DM is encouraged to further any suspicions that the creature scrying is the Shadow Dragon.

Proceed to Encounter 3

ENCOUNTER 3: PLEASE DON'T FEED THE BEARS

It is a hard day of traveling through the damp forest. The rain lifts around noon, but the forest is quiet, dark and damp. Your day is uneventful with only the occasional sighting of a large woodland creature. As the day wears on and you enter deeper and deeper into the woods Dern's departing words come back to your mind. Try as you might to shake it, you get the feeling that the wood truly is watching you.

This day of traveling brings the characters to a comfortable camping site. Regardless of how well the characters try to maintain stealth, they attract a pack of five bears several hours into the evening.

These are no ordinary hungry bears. Two of the bears are animal companions of Dorindel. They have "recruited" others of their kind to pick through the characters gear in search of food. Dorindel is also present, but he is in animal form. He has wild shaped into an owl and is observing the scene 50 feet above in a tree. Only give the characters a Spot check if they state they are looking up in the tree and they are at -5 because of the distance. Even if they see Dorindel, all they notice is an owl observing the fracas.

The bears lumber up to the party from all directions. They move slowly, but in a determined fashion toward any packs that smell of food.

APL 2 AND 4 (EL 7)

🐾 **Black Bears (5):** hp 19 each; see *Monster Manual*.

APL6 AND 8 (EL 9)

🐾 **Brown Bears (5):** hp 51 each; see *Monster Manual*.

This is not a time for the characters to get trigger-happy. The three wild bears are perfectly content to be fed and they amble off again. Dorindel's two animal companions, however, have been instructed to try to take some of the characters gear.

Dorindel desires a personal item so he may more effectively scry on the characters later on. Dorindel uses this "hungry bear" trick on any new travelers close to Hocholve. Dorindel's network of animal friends and scrying is what Dern unwittingly referred to earlier as that "feeling of being watched".

As the characters engage the three wild bears with offers of food, have the other two bears continue walking into camp. The bears try to grab any item that is not held by a character. They first try to get an item from any pack animal that is present. Otherwise, they look for bedrolls, lanterns, flasks, or other items likely to be lying on the ground. In extreme circumstances, the bears even try to snag a backpack if it is their only option. Once Dorindel's animal companions have secured an item, they hurry back into the woods. After the commotion, the characters can find any carried off equipment after an hour, with a successful Search check (DC 15). Only one mundane item is missing from all the party's gear.

All of the bears are subject to Animal Empathy. The wild bears begin the encounter Indifferent to the characters, while the animal companions begin Unfriendly. If the characters are able to cast *speak with animals* or otherwise communicate, the wild bears honestly say they are looking for food. Dorindel's animal companions also claim food as their motivation.

If the characters get too curious, or if they charm or otherwise befriend one of his bears, Dorindel is ready to cast spells, he casts while in wild shape and has prepared silent and still versions of *animal friendship* (4) Will Save (DC 19), *charm animal* (4) Will Save (DC 20), and *dominate animal* (3) Will Save (DC 21). He is within range from his high perch to protect his bear companions from unwanted interrogation.

If any of the characters is a druid/ranger with an animal companion of their own and they use that animal companion to unduly interfere with his bears, Dorindel attempts to set the animal companion free by casting *dominate animal* with the instruction to "run away". (Roll the Will save for the animal secretly). If the animal fails its save, it runs away. See "Finding Lost Animals" below.

If the characters cause any physical harm to a bear during this encounter it tries to run away. Dorindel exacts revenge upon the characters by casting spells on any

animals in the party (animal companions, riding mounts, beasts of burden, etc.) and instructing them to flee to freedom. He does not cast against familiars (they are magical beasts).

If the bears manage to get an item from the characters, Dorindel gets an extra +8 bonus on his future Scry checks.

Keep in mind that if all the characters rations are used up in distracting the bears, then they need to come up with a reasonable way of replacing their provisions (DM discretion).

FINDING LOST ANIMALS (LITTLE BO PEEP)

Each liberated animal runs off in a different direction. An animal with a speed of 30 ft. or less can be found after a fifteen minute Search (DC 20). A separate search must be conducted for each animal.

An animal with a speed greater than 30 ft. is far gone at the end of the encounter. It is nighttime and tracks are too hard to follow without the Track feat. It takes an hour and a successful Wilderness Lore check (DC 17) to find each animal.

The characters can Track Dorindel's bears all the way back to Hocholve. It would take 2 days and 5 successful Wilderness Lore checks (DC 18).

Proceed to Encounter 4

ENCOUNTER 4: FORESHADOWS

During the night it began to rain again and you wake up wet and cold. You gather your gear and head out. You spend the day trudging down the muddy trail keeping an eye open for local creatures, especially bears.

Have the characters make a d20 check, but don't let them know what it's for. This is another Scry check against Dorindel. If they make DC 20, they notice a scrying sensor. This time, if the characters *detect* scrying they have to beat DC 44 to learn who is scrying on them (DC 36 if the bears were unable to get a character item in Encounter 3). Again, the DM is encouraged to further any suspicions that the creature scrying is the Shadow Dragon.

As the day lengthens toward evening the road opens into a clearing. The clouds have broken and the sun dipping behind the trees casts long shadows along the wet grass. This seems like a good place to stop for at least a brief rest, but wait. Is that a body?

About 100 feet off the road you see the bodies of a human male and an elf male who came to a violent end. The human is dressed in hunting gear and the elf is dressed in the garb typical of a wood elf. A successful Heal check (DC 10) reveals that they seem to be a few weeks dead.

Characters who investigate find the following:

- Scroll case with note (See Player's Handouts 2-4)
- Several hides and furs
- Additional gear according to the APL. See *Treasure Summary* at the end of the adventure.

These unfortunate souls are the two hunter/rangers that Dern spoke of.

THE NOTE

Give the characters Player's Handout 2 when they open the scroll case. Written entirely in Elven, the note is actually a letter with *secret page* cast upon it. The letter detects as magical. Refer to the *secret page* spell for more information. There is also a paragraph written in an undecipherable script at the bottom of the note. Any spellcaster recognizes this to be magical writing and knows that it can only be read with a *read magic* spell or with a successful Decipher Script check (DC 20). With the spell successfully cast, the lines read (Player's Handout 3:

*I never was, am always to be.
All walk toward me, but none can see.
No one ever knows me, nor ever will,
Yet hopes and fears I can fulfill.*

This, of course, is a riddle. The answer is "the future," and it must be spoken aloud to transform the secret page. When the characters speak the answer aloud, the text changes into Player's Handout 4.

Characters may ask for more details on the handouts. Nenarómë is a renowned botanist within her field of knowledge. She is a gray elf of the Timeless Tree. Characters with professions in herbalist, apothecary, botany or any other plant-related professions, should have heard of her (DC 10). The Timeless Tree is a region in the Vesse Forest of Highfolk populated exclusively by gray elves. It is not only a community but also a shrine centered on a giant oak. This is the center for the worship of Labelas Enoreth and is home to his High Priestess Calandryen. Characters that make a successful Knowledge (geography), Knowledge (history), or Bardic Knowledge check (DC 15) to know this.

The real note (Player's Handout 4) says it was written on the 3rd day of Reaping. Today is 18th day of Reaping. The last day of Goodmonth is about 5 weeks away.

By the time the characters prepare to leave the clearing or set up camp it has become dusk. Have them make Spot checks (DC 20) and Listen checks (DC 25) to know that something is approaching. Those making a successful Spot are able to take a partial action as a shadow giant besieges the party. Those making a successful Listen do not get a partial action, but are not flat-footed when attacked. All others are caught flat-footed. Note that shadow creatures are magical beasts, not giants, so favored enemy and racial bonuses do not apply. As magical beasts, they are not undead and cannot be turned by clerics.

APL 2 (EL 4)

➤ **Shadow Ogre:** Male shadow ogre Bbn1; hp 35; see Appendix I.

Tactics: The shadow ogre charges into combat, attacking the largest opponent on the first round. If it falls below 10 hp, it takes a standard action to *shadow blend* to gain nine-tenths concealment (40% miss chance). It then moves as far as possible to gain a tactical advantage and continues fighting next round. The *shadow blend* concealment is maintained until the ogre attacks again.

APL 4 (EL 6)

➤ **Shadow Ettin:** hp 65; see Appendix I.

Tactics: On the first round, the shadow ettin walks its full move toward the characters and uses its *mirror image*. If it falls below 20 hp, it takes a standard action to *shadow blend* to gain nine-tenths concealment (40% miss chance). It then moves as far as possible to gain a tactical advantage and continues fighting next round. The *shadow blend* concealment is maintained until the ettin attacks again.

APL 6 (EL 8)

➤ **Shadow Hill Giant:** hp 102; see Appendix I.

Tactics: On the first round, the shadow hill giant throws two rocks and walks its full move toward the characters. It then uses its mirror image, draws its club and begins melee. If it falls below 30 hp, it takes a standard action to *shadow blend* to gain nine-tenths concealment (40% miss chance). It then moves as far as possible to gain a tactical advantage and continues fighting next round. The *shadow blend* concealment is maintained until the hill giant attacks again.

APL 8 (EL 10)

➤ **Shadow Frost Giant:** hp 133; see Appendix I.

Tactics: On the first round, the shadow frost giant throws three rocks and walks its full move toward the characters. It then uses its mirror image, draws its sword and begins melee. It attempts to *sunder* an opponent's weapon or shield once per round (in place of one of its melee attacks). If it falls below 40 hp, it takes a standard action to *shadow blend* to gain nine-tenths concealment (40% miss chance). It then moves as far as possible to gain a tactical advantage and continues fighting next round. The *shadow blend* concealment is maintained until the frost giant attacks again.

On Dern's Friends' Bodies

APL 2 – two suits of studded leather armor, shortbow, longbow, short sword, longsword, buckler, two daggers, and 20 arrows.

APL 4 – masterwork chain shirt, masterwork studded leather armor, mighty composite longbow (+2),

masterwork longbow, short sword, greatsword, masterwork buckler, large steel shield, two daggers, and 20 arrows.

APL 6 – +1 chain shirt, masterwork mighty composite longbow (+3), masterwork studded leather armor, composite longbow, short sword, longsword, masterwork large steel shield, buckler, two daggers, and 20 arrows.

APL 8 – +1 studded leather armor, +1 chain shirt, +1 mighty composite longbow (+4), +1 buckler, masterwork mighty composite longbow (+4), masterwork short sword, masterwork longsword, masterwork large steel shield, two masterwork daggers, and 20 arrows.

Proceed to Encounter 5

ENCOUNTER 5: ARRIVAL IN HOCHOLVE

Last evening's attack by shadow creatures should have forced the party to rest and recover. They are about three hours from Hocholve.

After an uneventful journey, the party reaches Hocholve. The Olvewater River runs roughly west/east at this point. The town is situated on the southern shore about 100 hundred yards from the river. A twenty-foot high stockade wall encloses the entire town in a roughly oval shape. It is made from flat planks of wood. A small part of the western stockade wall was partially collapsed by giant boulders during the invasion leaving a 40 ft. wide gap.

A THORNY SITUATION

A five-foot high, ten-foot deep thicket of natural briars grows around most of the circumference of the town. Characters may only take a partial action inside the briars and movement inside this area is reduced by 1/2. The briars can be cleared out by fire, but there is a chance the fire spreads (DM discretion). The characters may elect to clear the brambles out manually, but it takes one hour for every ten-foot section of thicket.

Two entry points are free of briars: the forty-foot long collapsed section of wall (west) and the closed town gate (northwest). A variety of animal tracks cross into and out of the town. Two-week-old humanoid tracks are also evident, but require a successful Track check (DC 20).

Scaling the wall unassisted requires a Climb check (DC 18). The characters may "take 10" if they are not under duress. If a rope is secured at the top of the wall to assist climbing, the DC is 5. It is possible to lasso the top of one of the planks in the stockade wall. This would require a successful Use Rope check (DC 15) to tie the slipknot and a successful ranged attack (AC 18) to lasso a plank.

EXPLORATION

Once inside, the characters find the town of Hocholve abandoned with only a few buildings destroyed.

There are several dozen structures within the city walls but most are totally empty. The specific buildings in

the town are not designated on the map. The DM should essentially assign buildings at random. There are only two important landmarks for the characters in Hocholve: the sacred grove (Encounter 6) and Nenarómë's temporary abode (see Nenarómë's Place below). Whenever the characters decide to investigate the grove, go to Encounter 6. The only thing that reveals Nenarómë's temporary abode is time spent searching the town.

There are two basic ways for the characters to explore buildings: purposefully or at random. It takes approximately 30 minutes to thoroughly search ("take 20") each building and find any interesting items remaining. This encounter tends to take a lot of time. The adventure authors recommend that the DM allow the characters to explore a maximum of three buildings in total. After the third building they spot a footpath that takes them to Nenarómë's abode. Both search techniques follow the same timeline:

1st building Search, summarize descriptive text, and allow the characters a Spot check (DC 20) to notice a black bear in town.

2nd building Search and summarize descriptive text. The characters have found a very old bottle of elven wine.

3rd building Search, summarize descriptive text, and allow the characters a Spot check (DC 18) to notice a brown bear in town.

On their way to the 4th building, the characters notice a footpath with humanoid tracks roughly two weeks old leading to Nenarómë's abode.

At any time prior to entering the 4th building, the characters may investigate the grove (Encounter 6).

4th building Nenarómë's temporary abode, see *Nenarómë's Place* below.

If the characters try to ascertain which kind of buildings existed and explore them methodically, refer to the list below to give them choices. If they elect to search randomly, roll 1d8 to determine which building they come upon.

1. **Inn:** Turned over chairs, dusty tables, scattered dishware and broken tankards are all you find here. All the ale has been consumed, but you find numerous bottles of wine that were never touched.
2. **Small Temple of Obad Hai:** This temple is in perfect shape. There is not a hint of damage from the battle. A beautifully tended garden with a small natural spring that spills into a quiet pool surrounds the temple. Inside the temple, the effigies and altar are unscathed, the offerings are fresh, and other items of worship look cared for and clean.
3. **Town Fort:** You remember from what the elves told you in Endéryn that this is where the town

made its last stand. The fort is badly damaged from a long battle, but all signs of carnage are gone. You find little of interest here except ghostly reminders of war, anguish and defeat.

4. **Tailor:** This shop seems to have been left exactly as it was the day of the invasion. Half finished, though out-dated, wardrobes, yarn on the spinning wheel, and carding brushes left on a chair. Some of the material and thread is very fine and reminds you of the silk rope that was given to you in Endéryn. The characters have found some spider silk linen (APL2 – 100 gp, APL4 – 200 gp, APL6 – 400 gp, APL8 – 800 gp).
5. **Blacksmith/Armory:** There is little left in this building, as it was probably a prime target for looting during the invasion. There is a large forge that has a bird's nest in it and a stack of rotting wood behind it, lots of scrap metal, nails, iron tools, wrought iron décor, and other mundane items but little else.
6. **Fletcher:** Here you find all the implements needed for crafting bows and arrows of all kinds. There are only a few weapons here mostly bows intended for children and common hunting bows. You can see that the craftsmanship is exceptional, however. You find broken bows and the unfinished hafts of a fine quality arrow, but no usable arrows.
7. **Temple of Ehlonna:** This temple was badly damaged and defiled during the invasion. There is nothing here of interest.

Nenarómë's Place

On their way to the fourth building, the characters notice a footpath. A successful Track check (DC 15) reveals that this path was last used about two weeks ago. The path leads straight to the door of a private residence (the fourth building). It does not appear to go any particular direction, as it quickly joins the main thoroughfares.

The doorstep to this building is neatly swept and clean of cobwebs and dust. There is a stack of firewood and kindling on the porch, and two dry water buckets turned upside-down next to the door.

Successful Wilderness Lore or Knowledge (nature) checks (DC 10) only reveal that the firewood is dry timber about a year dead probably collected off the ground, not chopped. Nothing can be ascertained from the buckets except that they are completely dry. The door and windows to this abode are locked with the spell *arcane lock*. A *detect magic* spell reveals a faint aura, and a successful Spellcraft check (DC 17) indicates Abjuration school. It can be opened by a successful *dispel magic* or *knock* spell or it can be broken open with a successful Strength check (DC 20). Spot and Listen checks reveal

nothing. Looking in the window or opening the door prompts a description of the main room:

Among the mundane pieces of household goods and furnishings, stacks of books, paper and writing implements are several hovering spheres that look like glass balls filled with darkness.

The characters find the following in the room:

- Several tables, most topped with books, paper, wood planters holding soil, mulch, and other types of organic material. There is a chair facing a cold fireplace with a small end table next to it.
- Four hovering spheres, all are 2 feet in diameter, are dark inside (low-light) and close investigation reveals that they contain a plant of some kind.
- There is a bedroom off the main room where, besides the usual bedroom furnishings, personal items can also be found, including several changes of women's clothing, a women's heavy cloak and light shoes, a hair brush and hand mirror. Characters may recognize the garb to be common gear for wood elves, but about 10 years out of date. One of the dresses is different in style and very tattered, but a bard or gray elf in the party (DC 15) may recognize it to resemble gray elf garb, though it is very foreign, unless the character is from Highfolk. The hairbrush contains bright gold hair. Also on the table next to the bed is a brooch that is of fine quality and contains a single green stone set in silver.
- Foodstuffs and other clues of habitation seem to be a few weeks old.

The following detect as magical:

The Spheres

These are the effect of the *biosphere* spell (see DM Aid 2). These spheres look like hovering terrariums. They are two feet in diameter and contain a plant in a dark, damp soil. Inside the light is very low. The characters can move the spheres and explore them. *Detect magic* reveals a moderate aura. A Spellcraft check (DC 19) indicates the Evocation school.

The characters may even take the spheres with them; however, they expire in 2 hours time. If the spell is dispelled, or if the characters are present when the spheres expire, the spheres disappear but the plant remains. Almost immediately it wilts and dies.

Nenarómë's Journal

Nenarómë's journal is located on a table in the back of the room near a pile of paper, non-magic scrolls, and books, and requires a successful Search check (DC 22) to locate. It is distinguishable from other books because it is thin and has no title on the cover. To most observers the book appears to be an empty diary, though each page of the journal has an *arcane mark* on it that can be read with *read*

magic. On the title page, the *arcane mark* is a large Elven letter "E". On each other page, the *arcane mark* is simply the page number written very small in Elven.

Every page of Nenarómë's journal is also a *secret page*. The *arcane mark* is a clue to the password needed to convert the *secret pages*. The password for converting the book is "Estélelin" (first initial of Nenarómë's last name from the original note). When converted, the title page reads "Field Journal of Nenarómë Estélelin, CY592" and all of the other pages are revealed. There are no clues other than the *arcane mark*. If the characters are having trouble let them make Decipher Script, Knowledge, Sense Motive, or Wisdom checks to steer them in the right direction. A successful *dispel magic* (DC 19) only converts a single page (select a random journal entry).

Detect magic reveals numerous dim and faint auras. A Spellcraft check (DC 15) indicates the Universal school for the dim aura. Spellcraft (DC 18) reveals Transmutation on the faint auras.

Once converted give the characters *Player's Handout 5* for journal excerpts.

If the players did not discover the journal, they may proceed to Encounter 6. Otherwise, as soon as they leave Nenarómë's house, proceed to Encounter 7.

ENCOUNTER 6: DEFENDER OF THE GROVE

The grove is located at the southern most point of the town up on a small hill. The trees are very beautiful and unusual. They encircle the hilltop like a crown, their branches reaching up and intertwining so that one tree is no longer distinguishable from another. The trunks of the trees are smooth and white and the leaves are a mild green and shimmer. In the center of the grove you see a dolmen – two upright standing stones supporting a lintel. You also see a very knobby, ancient-looking tree that somehow seems out of place.

When the characters step within the circle of the trees they see a large tree in the middle that looks like an oak. It suddenly animates and they see that it is actually a treant. The treant at first is defensive, but becomes friendlier when he sees that the characters mean no harm to the grove. The treant only speaks Flan. He discourages them from touching the trees while talking very slowly. He only freely tells them that he is the grove's protector and his name is Strong Bough. He tells them all about the trees.

The trees are called Serencolvi in Flan which translates to "star trees" in the common tongue. They are very rare and were planted by the ancient Flan druids long before men can remember. He knows of no magical properties that the trees may possess.

A successful Diplomacy check (DC 10) gets Strong Bough to reveal the following information.

"Yes, there is quite a problem with shadow creatures around the town, but they seldom come within the town walls and they only come out at night. Beware."

A successful Diplomacy check (DC 15) gets Strong Bough to reveal the following information.

No one else inhabits the town except an elf woman who I have not seen for a few weeks. She is very pleasant, and very knowledgeable about plants. She lives somewhere down in the town. Two bad men came here with her, but thankfully, they seem to have departed.

Strong Bough has only been in Hocholve for five years, so he knows nothing of the straffern or what became of the giants. He doesn't know where Nenarómë is because he almost never leaves the grove. If asked about Dorindel or a druid he says he doesn't know about that, but come to think of it, there is a man who comes a couple times a year to worship at the stones. That's all he knows, however.

If the characters speak with the grove trees directly either through a *Speak with Plants* spell or through Strong Bough, the trees relate as truthful a history as possible concerning the defeat of Hocholve including that the new tenants of the town died shortly after the battle (trees aren't too intelligent and can't make strong distinctions or map out details). They actually focus on the damage taken by a couple of the trees in the grove and on their fear during the assault on the town. If the trees are asked about Dorindel, they only know that there is a "person" who has been around since the fall of Hocholve. Before the fall of Hocholve there were many humanoids here but they can't distinguish one from another.

Proceed to Encounter 7

ENCOUNTER 7: AIR IS THICKER THAN SHADOW

This encounter occurs just after the characters leave Nenarómë's temporary abode. Dorindel has been observing the characters during their entire exploration of Hocholve. He has attempted to prevent their exploration without causing too much physical harm. Having just witnessed the characters spend a long time exploring Nenarómë's abode, he concludes they must have learned the secret of straffern. He feels his only choice is to try to convince the characters that Hocholve is uninhabitable.

Two brown bears await the characters outside of Nenarómë's place. These are two of Dorindel's animal companions. They do not act in a hostile manner but they are intent on directing the characters to walk toward the grove. The bears line up on one side of the party and encourage them to move. They are about as aggressive as prison guards in their efforts to steer the characters toward the grove. If the brown bears have a hard time convincing the characters to follow, have more of the animal companions arrive to help.

As the party walks toward the grove, the rest of Dorindel's animal companions join them: 2 black bears, 3 wolves, 1 boar, 1 dog, and 2 hawks. The animals usher the

party to the old market place near the bottom of the small hill at the base of the grove. Dorindel waits for them at the foot of the path leading up to the grove. He has precast *barkskin*, *anti-life shell*, *protection from elements* (electricity and fire), *resist elements* (cold and acid), and *endure elements* (sonic). He has also already consumed a *protection from arrows* (10th level) potion. The walking animals take up positions in a circle just outside the 10-ft radius of the *anti-life shell*. The hawks circle overhead. Dorindel speaks to the party:

"You are in great danger here. It is turning dusk and the shadows are coming. Even as we speak, they muster around the perimeter of the town. You will never escape. I hope your reason for coming here was worth forfeiting your lives."

"The shadows come every evening at dusk. Sometimes there are dozens of them, even hundreds. They do not bother the animals. But the town is not safe to repopulate."

Let the characters have a brief dialogue with Dorindel. He does not tell the characters his name, but he tells them that he considers himself the protector of the town. He is also, very clearly, a high level druid. Druid characters or other followers of the Old Faith instantly recognize him as a druid of Obad-Hai. Other characters may make a Knowledge (religion) check (DC 10) to determine this.

Characters can make a Spot check to see if any shadows are approaching, but no matter how high the check, they spot nothing (because no shadows ARE coming). Characters may make a Sense Motive check (DC 20) to learn that Dorindel is not telling the truth about the shadows. Sense Motive (DC 15) reveals that Dorindel is not being entirely truthful in general and that he is behaving in a somewhat hostile manner toward the party.

Dorindel tries to get the characters to admit to him why they came to Hocholve. He is already aware what they were up to, but he wants to see the extent of what they learned and whether they have found out anything he didn't know.

Dorindel continues:

"There is a way out and I could help you. But I would ask for something in return... a promise."

"You must promise to return from where you came without revealing what you found here. If you make me this promise, I will see that you depart safely. On this you have my word, in the name of Obad-Hai."

If the characters are unwise and reveal that they found Nenarómë's journal, he also asks that it be handed over. If they are openly carrying a biosphere, he requires that it be handed over as well. If they refuse to hand over the sphere, he dispels it saying the plant's death was necessary to preserve the greater good of the land.

It is unlikely the characters accept this offer without any imminent threat. Dorindel seems very suspicious. He isn't being honest about the shadows. He is unwilling to discuss anything about straffern. He won't discuss what happened to Nenarómë. He is unwilling to engage in

bargaining about the future of Hocholve. He claims ignorance about what happened to the giants.

Dorindel is trying his best to persuade the characters to leave his town. He knows very well that the presence of straffern makes Hocholve a safe refuge from the giants. But he fears that if the humans and men occupied the town again, it would again become a war zone against the giants. His primary motivation is to see the sacred grove protected at all costs. He is a fanatic nature lover. He admits nothing of his true motivations. At this point, he sticks to his "shadows are besieging the town" story.

Allow the characters some time to debate with Dorindel, but not too much. He grows impatient shortly and says:

"I am sorry that you do not wish to be saved. All I ask is for you to keep a secret... to keep this town safe... to protect this grove..."

"If you change your mind and agree to keep the promises then I ask you to put your hands on your head and walk into the grove, and then I will see that no harm comes to you."

After he says this, his form changes into a hawk and he flies off. His two hawk companions accompany him.

What Is Really Going On

Dorindel relies on the rumors of shadow creatures in the Dim Forest to scare off curious visitors to Hocholve. There are no shadow creatures plaguing the town. Dorindel plays on the myth by summoning air elementals that, at dusk, seem to be shadows. Many rangers, trappers, and even Nenarómë have witnessed these elementals, but all have mistaken them for shadow creatures, effectively perpetuating the myth. The characters are the first to actually meet Dorindel and only because they are the first to learn about straffern. When Nenarómë learned about the straffern, Dorindel took her hostage.

Give the characters some time to decide what to do. Dorindel's animals maintain their positions. Dorindel only permits a few more minutes of exploring before he summons air elementals against the party. If the characters try to immediately leave town, see the section on "Fleeing" below.

As the air elementals arrive, the DM should describe them as "shadowy forms". Because it is dusk, it is hard to discern the exact nature of the creatures, and the DM should play on the suspicion that they are shadows. After the fighting begins, give anyone with Knowledge (the planes) a skill check (DC 10) or Knowledge (arcana) (DC 20) to recognize the creatures as air elementals. Characters' past experience with shadows may lead to the conclusion that these are not shadows, but does not reveal what they truly are.

APL 2 (EL 3)

🔥 **Small Air Elementals (3):** hp 9, 9, 9; see *Monster Manual*.

Tactics: The small air elementals stay aloft about 15 feet off the ground and 35 feet from the characters. Each

round, they "dive-bomb" the party with flyby attacks and take position in the air again. They do this until they are slain or the summon spell ends (15 rounds). Because of the flyby attack, only ranged weapons or readied melee attack actions are possible. The attacks occur from above so attacks of opportunity are only possible from the "dive-bombed" character. They typically do not whirlwind because of their size. If a blow would cause a character to drop below zero hit points, convert the damage to subdual (Dorindel does not want to kill the characters).

APL 4 (EL 5)

🔥 **Medium-size Air Elementals (2):** hp 26, 26; see *Monster Manual*.

Tactics: The medium-size air elementals stay aloft about 15 feet off the ground and 35 feet from the characters. Each round, they "dive-bomb" the party with flyby attacks and take position in the air again. They do this until they are slain or the summon spell ends (15 rounds). Because of the flyby attack, only ranged weapons or readied melee attack actions are possible. The attacks occur from above so attacks of opportunity are only possible from the "dive-bombed" character. They typically do not whirlwind because of their size. If a blow would cause a character to drop below zero hit points, convert the damage to subdual (Dorindel does not want to kill the characters).

APL 6 (EL 7)

🔥 **Large Air Elementals (2):** hp 60, 60; see *Monster Manual*.

Tactics: The large air elementals stay aloft about 15 feet off the ground and 35 feet from the characters. Each round, they "dive-bomb" the party with 10 ft. reach flyby attacks and take position in the air again. They do this until they are slain or the summon spell ends (15 rounds). Because of the flyby attack, only ranged weapons or readied melee attack actions are possible. The attacks occur from above so attacks of opportunity are only possible from the "dive-bombed" character. They do not whirlwind in the first encounter with the characters. If a blow would cause a character to drop below zero hit points, convert the damage to subdual (Dorindel does not want to kill the characters).

APL 8 (EL 9)

🔥 **Huge Air Elementals (2):** hp 136, 136; see *Monster Manual*.

Tactics: The huge air elementals stay aloft about 15 feet off the ground and 35 feet from the characters. Each round, they "dive-bomb" the party with 15 ft. reach flyby attacks and take position in the air again. They do this until they are slain or the summon spell ends (15 rounds). Because of the flyby attack, only ranged weapons or readied melee attack actions are possible. The attacks occur from above so attacks of opportunity are only possible from the "dive-bombed" character. They do not whirlwind in the first encounter with the characters. If a

blow would cause a character to drop below zero hit points, convert the damage to subdual (Dorindel does not want to kill the characters).

THE CAPTIVE ESCAPES

The chaos of the combat prevents Dorindel from paying close attention to his captive, Nenarómë. At some point during the fighting, she runs out from the grove toward the characters. Don't have this happen for the first couple of rounds. Nenarómë tries to get in the center of the party or near to the strongest character. Obviously disoriented, she calls out feebly in Common "help... help".

She does not get far before Dorindel casts *sunbeam* on her. She immediately drops to her knees and lies prone. She is not dead, but she is blinded. She lies prone until the combat ends.

☞ **Nenarómë Estélelin:** Female elf Adp16; hp 34; see Appendix I.

AGREEING TO TERMS

Throughout the conflict, whenever possible, Dorindel reminds the characters that safe passage is possible if they agree to his terms. If they agree, he reminds them to put their hands on their heads and move into the grove. He does not wish to kill the characters and makes every effort to allow them to live, provided they make the promise. He prefers to use subdual versions of his fire descriptor spells (*flame strike*, *wall of fire*, *firestorm*, *flaming sphere*, *produce flame*) to avoid killing characters.

Dorindel does not accept one character promising on another's behalf (in the case of unconscious characters). All characters must make a personal choice whether to agree or not. He may even revive a character using a cure spell for this purpose.

FLEEING

It is very likely that at least someone tries to flee the combat and escape Hocholve. Recall that Dorindel is in hawk form flying overhead with his two hawk animal companions. The hawks have a Spot +6 and Dorindel has Spot +8. Dorindel and his animal companions pursue any fleeing characters in an effort to force them into making the promise.

Dorindel has a readied action to cast *entangle* the moment any character tries to flee. Note that Dorindel can cast while in *wild shape* due to the Natural Spell feat. Through scrying and other observation, Dorindel already knows exactly how many characters traveled to Hocholve and explored the town. He casts *entangle* on the last known location of any character that hides or turns invisible (he tries to avoid his animal companions if at all possible). That same round, using his Boots of Speed, he moves to hover over the site and casts *soften earth and stone* on the area immediately outside the 40 ft. *entangle* zone. He softens the earth on the side opposite his animal companions.

The next round, Dorindel monitors the softened earth area for the appearance of footprints. He has a readied action to swoop down and use his *dust of appearance* wherever the footprints appear. Characters can only move at half their normal movement rate through this area (no save). Running or charging is also impossible in the softened earth.

At the same time, his three wolf animal companions move forward to search for the missing characters using scent. Depending on the number of missing characters (and their APL) his dog, boar, and two black bears may also come along to help.

If located, the animals surround the character and attack if he attempts to escape again. If the character cannot be located the animal companions continue to track using scent. The character leaves a scent trail unless they cast *pass without trace*. Each animal gets a Wisdom check (+1) to follow the track at half its normal speed.

If a character has evaded all of these methods and is on foot, Dorindel casts *wall of thorns* (up to 15, ten ft. squares) along the collapsed section of the western wall. He then casts *spike growth* inside the perimeter of Hocholve along the obvious escape routes: the entry point the characters used, the hole in the western wall, and the old town gate. He can fill fifteen 20-ft squares with *spike growth*. Again using his *boots of speed*, he can also cast *wall of fire* in the same round either to prevent escape through other areas or to reinforce the chosen escape route.

If the character is able to circumvent or avoid these obstacles and intends to escape by going over the wall or through the briars, recall the information from Encounter 5.

Scaling the wall unassisted requires a Climb check (DC 18). If a rope is secured at the top of the wall to assist climbing, the DC is 5. A character can no longer take 10 on any climb checks as they are under duress.

A five-foot high, ten-foot deep thicket of natural briars grows around the entire circumference of the town. Characters may only take a partial action inside the briars, and movement inside this area is reduced by 1/2.

A character attempting to climb the wall or escape through the thicket almost certainly spends enough time to allow one of the animal companions or air elementals to catch up.

If a character tries to flee immediately, Dorindel casts *entangle and soften earth and stone*. He then instructs his animal companions to find and subdue the character. He summons the elementals appropriate to the APL to attack the rest of the party. Dorindel returns to keep tabs on the fleeing character and prevent escape through the techniques described above.

If a character flees during or after the first encounter, follow the escape prevention techniques described above. The previously summoned air elementals continue to fight the rest of the party.

If a character is flying, Dorindel sends in his hawks and also diverts one air elemental to fight that character. Dorindel also follows the character and reminds him that safe passage will be granted if he agrees to the promise. If

the character refuses, Dorindel tells him he has one more round to make up his mind. The hawks and elemental continue to fight. After the round ends Dorindel casts a *subdual flame strike* on the flying character. He does not wish to kill the character.

If a character turns invisible, refer to the above fleeing procedures. The animal companions attempt to track the character while Dorindel tries to use his *dust of appearance*.

If the whole party tries to flee Dorindel casts *transmute rock to mud* followed immediately by *transmute mud to rock*. He can do this because of his *boots of speed*. He can transmute up to thirty 10 ft. cubes, so he can probably get everyone. Characters are allowed a Reflex save (DC 23) to avoid being trapped immobile in the rock. Once trapped, the characters are in a much better position to surrender.

AFTER THE ELEMENTALS

After the combat, the characters should have a good idea that these were not shadow creatures. They probably suspect that Dorindel is behind the elementals. He appears before the party again and takes up a position inside the ring of his animal companions. If any characters have “surrendered” yet, he instructs them to stand in the grove (they can’t penetrate the anti-life barrier).

This time Dorindel *wild shapes* back into a half-elf and is visibly annoyed. He uses the *many faces* ability to appear with different facial features:

“I did not enjoy causing you harm. It is your own fault you are so bold. I do not wish to kill you, but I will if I have to. The town must be protected from the giants and the humans alike.

I ask you once again to swear not to reveal what you found here. If you make the promise, I will not harm you, and will grant you safe passage. If you don’t you will never leave this place, it is the will of Obad-Hai.”

Dorindel remains in half-elf form if the characters want to question him. At the first sign of danger, he has readied an action to change form into a hawk and fly off again with his animal companions.

He is more willing to answer character questions at this point. He does not volunteer information, but speaks honestly if asked. He acknowledges that there isn’t really a shadow problem around Hocholve, that he scares visitors away with air elementals. He relates the story of the fall of Hocholve: how the giants invaded, caused harm to the grove, and subsequently died from the straffern. He is not concerned with Geoff or the Brenin and answers any appeals to loyalty with “I don’t want this town to become a war zone again”.

Nenarömé, who has regained consciousness on her own if no one revives her, does not need much convincing. Almost immediately, she agrees to the promise uttering “anything.... just let me go home”. She puts her hands on her head and asks someone to help her into the grove.

Dorindel now tries his best to persuade the characters to make the promise. Give the party enough time to wrestle with the moral conflict. It is perfectly acceptable for some characters to agree while some try to flee or fight. This moral struggle can take characters a long time to resolve, if you let them. Do not permit debate for more than ten minutes. After that, Dorindel summons another round of elementals. He stands by ready to end the encounter if the characters finally agree.

CONTINUING THE FIGHT

It is rare for characters to back out of a fight, and they are not required to. If they want to continue the conflict, Dorindel summons even stronger air elementals. Use the next higher APL for the next fight (for APL2, use the APL4 combat; for APL 8, use the EL 10 encounter below). In this conflict, the large (APL 6) and huge (APL 8) elementals whirlwind and attempt to pick up a character. If successful, the elemental then flies up 100 ft. in the air. Dorindel tells the characters to surrender or their comrade will be dropped to his death.

If they survive the second combat and still refuse to agree to terms, use the next higher APL combat (for APL 8, have Dorindel’s animal companions attack). This sequence of increasingly difficult encounters continues until the characters agree to terms, successfully flee, or are subdued and taken captive.

If a character absolutely refuses to make the promise, Dorindel renders him unconscious through a combination of normal and subdual damage. He then leaves the character in Hocholve, ushers the rest of the party through the Ways of the World, and returns to keep the character as a captive.

At the end of the adventure, the captured character must spend an additional TU as a captive. Upon learning this, he may change his mind and elect to make the promise. Dorindel permits this and returns the character to Hochoch. If the character refuses, he is charged a second TU after which he may again elect to make the promise. Allow the character four tries and four TUs before taking the character away. The character should be handed over to the Triad for resolution in the future.

EL 10

🔥 **Huge Air Elementals (3):** hp 136, 136, 136; see *Monster Manual*.

FIGHTING DORINDEL

Some characters may attempt to attack Dorindel directly. Recall he is in an *anti-life* shell (10 ft. radius) so virtually no melee combat is possible. When he addresses the characters, he does so inside his ring of animal companions, so he has one-half cover from ranged combat (+4 cover bonus to AC) and spellcasting (+2 cover bonus to Reflex save). After he speaks with the characters, he *wild shapes* into hawk form and flies 60 ft. overhead. A character is only allowed an action against him at this time if he previously stated that he had a readied action.

His hawk companions fly with him. In hawk form, Dorindel is virtually indistinguishable from his companions, so characters must succeed at a Spot check (DC 15) to target him correctly. Otherwise roll randomly to decide which hawk they actually target.

Dorindel flies above the combat scene and lets the air elementals and animal companions do the fighting. Dorindel's main goal during the combat is to prevent characters from fleeing. He only attacks if a character successfully deals damage to him. Recall that he is under a *protection from arrows* spell that absorbs 100 pts of ranged weapon damage. His *brooch of shielding* absorbs 101 hp of magic missile damage. His *protection from elements* can absorb up to 180 pts each of fire or electrical damage. His *resist elements* spell absorbs 12 pts per round of both cold and acid damage. His *endure elements* absorbs 5 pts per round of sonic damage.

Dorindel's *boots of speed* permit him an extra partial action each round. He can only use this for 10 rounds (they don't have to be consecutive). He usually uses his extra action to cast a spell.

If Dorindel takes weapon damage, he lands on the ground and *wild shapes* back into half-elf form (he recovers 15 hp when he wild shapes). He yells at the character and tells him not to do it again or "I will hurt you". If the character tries again, Dorindel casts a subdual *flame strike* on him and says, "I warned you". If Dorindel receives damage through a spell, he readies an action to use his *ioun stone*. It absorbs up to 15 spell levels of up to 4th level spells. He lands on the ground and *wild shapes* back into half-elf form (he recovers 15 hp when he wild shapes). Dorindel yells at the character and warns him not to try anything again or "I will hurt you". If the character tries again, the ioun stone absorbs the spell and Dorindel immediately responds by casting *sunbeam* against the character. Once activated, Dorindel has four more *sunbeams* he can use against other characters that threaten him. *Sunbeam* lasts 15 rounds.

If Dorindel fails a saving throw against a character spell he casts *dispel magic* or *freedom of movement* (depending on the spell) to break free. He has prepared silent and stilled versions of each of these spells if he is unable to move or speak.

Dorindel does not really want to kill the characters, but he is prepared to if they do not submit. He prefers to use *sunbeam* on spellcasters (and weaker looking characters) and subdual versions of *flame strike*, *flaming sphere*, and *produce flame* on stronger looking characters. Dorindel uses direct damage only in response to taking damage or if the party shows no sign of backing off.

If three or more characters attack Dorindel, or if he has lost more than 30 hit points, he casts *transmute rock to mud* immediately followed by *transmute mud to rock*. Characters are allowed a Reflex save (DC 23) to avoid being trapped immobile in the rock. If a character escapes, Dorindel uses the techniques in the *Fleeing* section to subdue him. He then summons a *creeping doom* that advances on each character. If they agree to terms, they are spared. If not, they are slain by the *creeping doom*.

In the worst case scenario, when Dorindel's animal companions and air elementals have been unable to break the characters spirit and he has taken more than 50 hp of damage, he announces that he intends to kill everyone. He casts a subdual *fire storm* from his staff on the entire area (thirty 10 ft. cubes). He includes his animal companions in the target area if necessary, but wisely avoids his own 10ft radius shell.

The characters are not supposed to be able to defeat Dorindel; they should surrender, try to flee, or be subdued and captured. This happens when characters are in over their head. Characters must learn to recognize a fight they cannot win.

Dorindel: Male half-elf Drd15; hp 108; see Appendix I.

DORINDEL'S ANIMAL COMPANIONS (30HD)

🐾 **Brown Bears (2):** hp 51, 51; see *Monster Manual*.

Note: Bite attacks subject to *greater magic fang*. Acts as +5 weapon, duration: 15 hrs.

🐾 **Black Bears (2):** hp 19, 19; see *Monster Manual*.

🐾 **Boar:** hp 22; see *Monster Manual*.

🐾 **Wolves (3):** hp 13, 13, 13; see *Monster Manual*.

🐾 **Dog:** hp 6; see *Monster Manual*.

🦅 **Hawks (2):** hp 4; see *Monster Manual*.

CONCLUSION

There are two possible resolutions to the encounter with Dorindel. Some characters may have successfully fled while others have agreed to Dorindel's terms. For those that flee, use "The Flight to Endéryn". For those that make the promises to Dorindel use "The Ways of the World".

If the characters bring a biosphere with them, the spell expires just as they leave Hocholve. The straffern plant dies and withers immediately.

THE WAYS OF THE WORLD

After the combat, Dorindel leads the characters to the sacred grove and the dolmen. He stands between the stones of the dolmen and performs an ancient ritual in the secret Druidic language. This is an Old Faith ritual that they do not share with anyone outside of the Old Faith. The characters can overhear what he is saying if they can speak Druidic and make a Listen Check (DC 30). Even then, all they know is that he gave thanks to the Old Faith gods. Spellcraft checks reveal nothing, as this is not a spell effect. Read the following.

In the space between the two massive stones, a creature appears out of nothing as it turns to face you. The creature is about the

height of an elf but has light green skin, and the antlers of a young buck sprouts from its head.

"Dorindel. It has been," it pauses as if thinking, "some time," the creature adds.

"Yes, and I am in haste. I need you to open the gateway."

"Passage is a gift," the creature responds.

"One paid centuries ago," Dorindel says, "In the name of Obad-hai, I insist that you open the gateway."

"No need to be rude," the creature snorts. "The Ways of the World are open to you."

The creature reaches out and touches the stones on each side. Almost immediately, the space between the upright stones fills with swirling mists. Dorindel directs you to enter.

Assuming that the characters enter the Ways of the World, they find themselves standing on an island of stone that floats in a sea of mist. The mist is so thick that it is impossible to see more than 20 feet off the island. Behind them is the dolmen, and between the stones they can still see the druid's grove, but it is distorted and out of focus. There is a single bridge of stone that leads off the island away from the dolmen. Dorindel leads the characters across this bridge that slowly arches up into the mists. The characters seem to be traveling in a dream. It is like time is simultaneously slowed down for some senses and sped up for others.

Telling time is impossible in the Ways. The bridge reaches the top of its arch through the mists and begins to angle down. The bridge has no railings or markings.

Eventually, the bridge comes to another island. This one has no dolmens on it. Instead, there is an obelisk covered in markings in the center of the island. There are four bridges, including the one the characters were on, that lead off the island.

Dorindel looks at the obelisk in the center for a moment. He then goes to the bridge to the left of the bridge the characters were on first. The writing on the Obelisk is Ogham, the written form of Druidic. It is also in code and impossible for the characters to understand unless they are instructed in it.

While the characters are walking on the second bridge, they hear screams far off in the mists. The screams are chilling and echo strangely through the mists. Dorindel pays the screams no mind. If asked what they are, he shakes his head and doesn't answer.

The bridge ends in an island with two standing stones on it, but there is only mist in between the stones. As soon as Dorindel steps onto the island, the mists swirl and reveal a distorted image of a forest. Dorindel tells them to pass between the stones and go back into the world. He reminds them to keep their promise and that he is watching them.

Nenaröme leaves the Ways with the characters. However, she does not remain with them long. Instead, she leaves Geoff as soon as possible and departs for Highfolk and the Vesve. She offers the party a blessing of long life in the name of Labelas Enorath.

When the characters step through the dolmen, they find themselves in the ringstones near the village of

Endéryn. The druid of Beory in Endéryn tends these standing stones. The druid is not here at this time.

THE FLIGHT TO ENDÉRYN

Escaping from Dorindel should only be possible in the most creative of circumstances (see "Fleeing" above). Dorindel and his animal companions have many resources and know the area very well. Possible methods of flight are: invisibility, a character who can hide exceptionally well and who has wilderness skills, a character who can teleport or otherwise move away very quickly, or a character who can out fly the air elementals, Dorindel, or his hawks. If a character manages to get outside the town wall, he is pursued for ten rounds.

Any character that successfully flees earns the Wrath of Dorindel.

It takes several days to get back to Endéryn, more if the fleeing character is moving slowly to maintain stealth.

ENDÉRYN AGAIN

Kinkaid and Dern both greet the characters when they return to Endéryn. Dern asks the characters if they saw any sign of his companions. If the characters tell Dern that they were killed, he accepts it well. He explains that he suspected they were dead but it is good to know their fate for sure.

If the characters offer Dern the gear they found with the bodies, he informs them that those men had no families and they should keep the equipment for themselves.

Kinkaid is happy to see that the characters have returned and tells them that she is very impressed that they came back alive. She knows now that they are indeed trustworthy adventurers and vows to tell Darlon of their bravery. She asks them what they learned in Hocholve and whether it was true that the town was abandoned. She also wants to know if they learned what happened to the giants.

Give the characters another Scry check (DC 20) to notice that they are being scryed upon. The scrying continues as long as the characters remain in Enderyn. There is no way to avoid the scrying in Enderyn.

If the characters don't reveal what they learned in Hocholve, Kinkaid is unmoved but still appreciates their effort. She urges them, nevertheless, to report the news to the Brenin even if they won't tell her. It is the good of Geoff that she is most concerned with. If the characters tell her the truth, she is elated and urges them to report the news to an official in Hochoch. Any character that breaks Dorindel's promise earns the Wrath of Dorindel. All characters that return to Endéryn and present themselves to Kinkaid receive Influence with Darlon Lea.

RETURN TO HOCHOUCH

The characters have learned information that could be a great help to the war effort. However, they likely have also made a promise not to reveal it. This personal moral conflict is something each character has to deal with.

Ideally, someone will bring the information (and Nenarómë's journal) to some important figure in Hochoch. Suitable NPCs are Cadofyth Parn, Lady Sierra Blackblade, anyone in the Grand Duke's Court (Brialen, Colwyn, Abinar, etc.), or perhaps the Grand Duke himself.

When the characters leave him, Dorindel uses *greater scrying* to see if they keep the promise they made. Within the first two days of their return to Hochoch, there is a 90% chance they are being scryed upon, regardless of what time of day it is. Give every character a Scry check (DC 20) to detect the scrying sensor. Characters may also request a Scry check, but make the roll secretly so they don't know their result. The only way to reduce the percentage chance of being scryed is to spend more TUs. For each TU a character elects to spend, reduce the chance of being scryed by 15% (1TU = 75%, 2TUs = 60%, etc.). The percentage never drops below 30%, regardless of how many TUs spent.

If they share the news about Hocholve and the secret of straffern, the NPC they tell are amazed and excited. The characters that actually REPORT the information receive influence with Owen the Brenin. No matter who the characters tell, it is assumed that the information finds its way to the Duke. The influence is awarded to all characters in the presence of the reporting official.

At the same time, the characters earn the Wrath of Dorindel unless the character wins the scrying percentage. In only that case can the character reveal the secret of Hocholve and not earn the Wrath of Dorindel. It is possible to earn Dorindel's Wrath without earning the influence of Owen the Brenin, as in the case of passively revealing the information by leaving the journal where someone will find it or something similar.

If none of the characters do anything to reveal the information, the entire party is punished by not being rewarded full XP for the encounter. See the Experience Point Summary.

BREAKING THE PROMISE

Since the penalties for breaking the promise to Dorindel stem entirely from the druid, whether or not the characters broke the promise is entirely up to his interpretation. If the characters do anything that informs other people of the situation in Hocholve, Dorindel considers that breaking the promise. It does not matter if the characters leave notes, leave the book out for others to find it, have their familiars tell people, or other sneaky ways. As long as Dorindel notices their actions through his scrying, he considers the promise broken.

Gyric law does not consider breaking Dorindel's promise to be an evil or unlawful act. The promise to Dorindel was done so under duress, and a promise that is sworn under duress is not binding. A Knowledge (local-Geoff) check (DC 15), a Knowledge (law) check (DC 10), or a Bardic Lore check (DC 15) reveals this information. The characters can also find this out by asking a priest of Allitur. Character priests of Allitur automatically know this information.

Dorindel is an enemy of the Brenin because he stands in the way of the recapture of Hocholve. If a character is willing to take up arms against and/or kill an enemy of Geoff and does not consider it evil then lying hardly qualifies as evil. Paladins or other lawful good characters should not be punished for breaking this promise OR lying to Dorindel.

A number of wizards in Geoff have a special item called the Book of Common Sense and Truth. If a character with this item tells a *willful* lie, his book crumbles to dust. If a character makes the promise to Dorindel and subsequently breaks it, this constitutes a lie and his book is void.

The End

EXPERIENCE POINT SUMMARY

To award experience for this adventure, add up the values for the objectives accomplished. Then assign the experience award. Award the total value to each character.

Encounter 2: Endéryn

Successfully negotiate with Kinkaid.

APL 2	30 XP
APL 4	60 XP
APL 6	90 XP
APL 8	120 XP

Encounter 4: Foreshadows

Defeat the shadow giant.

APL 2	120 XP
APL 4	180 XP
APL 6	240 XP
APL 8	300 XP

Encounter 5: Arrival in Hocholve

Discovering the spheres and the journal.

APL 2	30 XP
APL 4	60 XP
APL 6	90 XP
APL 8	120 XP

Encounter 7: Air is Thicker than Shadow

Defeat the air elementals.

APL 2	90 XP
APL 4	150 XP
APL 6	210 XP
APL 8	270 XP

Conclusion

Successfully get back to Hochoch, one way or the other, and report their findings.

APL 2	30 XP
APL 4	60 XP
APL 6	90 XP

APL 8

120 XP

Total Possible Experience

APL 2	300 XP
APL 4	510 XP
APL 6	720 XP
APL 8	930 XP

TREASURE SUMMARY

During an adventure, characters encounter treasure, usually finding it in the possession of their foes. Every encounter that features treasure has a "treasure" section within the encounter description, giving information about the loot, coins, and magic items that make up the encounter's treasurer.

The loot total is the number of gold pieces each character gains if the foes are plundered of all their earthly possessions. Looting the bodies takes at least 10 minute per every 5 enemies, and if the characters cannot take the time to loot the bodies, they do not gain this gold. If you feel it is reasonable that characters can go back to loot the bodies, and those bodies are there (that is., not carted off by dungeon scavengers, removed from the scene by the local watch, and so on), characters may return to retrieve loot. If the characters do not loot the body, the gold piece value for the loot is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

The coin total is the number of gold piece each character gains if they take the coin available. A normal adventuring party can usually gather this wealth in a round or so. If for some reason they pass up this treasure, the coin total is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

Next, the magic items are listed. Magic item treasure is the hardest to adjudicate, because they are varied and because characters may want to use them during the adventure. Many times characters must cast *identify*, *analyze dweomer*, or similar spell to determine what the item does, and how to activate it. Other times they may attempt to use the item blindly. If the magic item is consumable (a potion, scroll, magic bolts, etc.) and the item is used before the end of the adventure, its total is subtracted from the adventure totals below.

Once you have subtracted the value for unclaimed treasures from each encounter add it up and that is number of gold pieces a characters total and coin value increase at the end of the adventure. Write the total in the Gp Gained field of the adventure certificate.

TREASURE KEY:

L = Looted gear from enemy; C = Coin, Gems, Jewelry, and other valuables; M = Magic Items.

Encounter 2: Endéryn

Getting the spider silk rop as a gift from the village residents.

APL 2: L: 0 gp; C: 10 gp; M: 0
APL 4: L: 0 gp; C: 10 gp; M: 0

APL 6: L: 0 gp; C: 10 gp; M: 0

APL 8: L: 0 gp; C: 10 gp; M: 0

Encounter 4: Foreshadows

Defeat the shadow giant and loot Dern's friend's bodies.

APL 2: L: 20 gp; C: 0 gp; M: 0

APL 4: L: 135 gp; C: 0 gp; M: 0

APL 6: L: 118 gp; C: 0 gp; M: +1 *chain shirt* (Value 188 gp per character).

APL 8: L: 220 gp; C: 0 gp; M: +1 *chain shirt* (Value 188 gp per character); +1 *studded leather armor* (Value 176 gp per character); +1 *mighty composite longbow* (+4) (Value 420 gp per character); +1 *buckler* (Value 175 gp per character).

Encounter 5: Arrival in Hochol ve

Find and take the spider silk and elven wine.

APL 2: L: 35 gp; C: 0 gp; M: 0

APL 4: L: 45 gp; C: 0 gp; M: 0

APL 6: L: 65 gp; C: 0 gp; M: 0

APL 8: L: 105 gp; C: 0 gp; M: 0

Total Possible Treasure

APL 2: 65 gp

APL 4: 190 gp

APL 6: 381 gp

APL 8: 1294 gp

The Wrath of Dorindel

Dorindel, an Old Faith druid in the Dim Forest, knows that this character has broken a promise or angered him. At the beginning of every Geoff regional scenario, at the DM's discretion, the character suffers:

Any time this character ventures into the Dim Forest an animal attacks at a time and place of the judge's choosing.

Character Level Animal

1-2	dog or hawk
3-4	wolf
5-6	boar or black bear
7-8	brown bear
9-10	dire lion
11+	dire bear

The animal does not attack any other character and attacks until slain. If multiple characters possess this curse, multiple animals attack.

This remains in effect until the character dies.

Influence with Grand Duke Owen

While venturing in the Dim Forest the player character learned vital tactical information on how to kill giants. For passing this information to the appropriate authorities, the character has gained influence from the Brenin of Gyruff, Grand Duke Owen.

Influence with Darlon Lea

The player character has ventured deep into the Dim Forest at the request of Kinkaid. For doing this and

reporting back in spite of the notoriety of her uncle, the character has earned influence with Darlon Lea.

APPENDIX I: NPCS

*See Appendix 2: New Rules for additional information.

ENCOUNTER 1: FOLLOWING THE LEADS

APL 2 (EL 6)

➤ **Kinkaid:** Female Elf Rog4/Rng1/Thief-Acrobat*1; CR 6; Medium-size humanoid (elf); HD 1d10+5d6+6; hp 34; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (touch 13, flat-footed 13); Atk +5 melee (1d8+2/19-20, longsword) and +5 (1d4+2/19-20, dagger) or +9 ranged (1d8+2/x3, composite longbow); SA Sneak attack, favored enemy (goblinoids); SQ Immunity to magic sleep spells and effects; +2 racial saving throw bonus against Enchantment spells or effects, Low-light vision, evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC), kip up, unbounded leap; AL CG; SV Fort +4, Ref +9, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Chr 12.

Skills and Feats: Balance +12, Bluff +6, Climb +11, Hide +22, Intuit Direction +1, Jump +11, Knowledge (nature) +2, Listen +8, Move Silently +11, Sense Motive +2, Spot +7, Tumble +12, Wilderness Lore +3; Far Shot, Point Blank Shot, Track, Weapon Focus (composite longbow).

Possessions: cloak of elvenkind, ring of jumping, 2 potions of cure light wounds, potion of hiding, masterwork mighty composite longbow (+2), masterwork longsword, masterwork dagger, masterwork studded leather armor, 20 arrows, 13 gp.

*See Appendix 2: New Rules for additional information.

APL 4 (EL 8)

➤ **Kinkaid:** Female Elf Rog4/Rng1/Thief-Acrobat*2/Deepwood Sniper*1; CR 8; Medium-size humanoid (elf); HD 1d10+1d8+6d6+8; hp 45; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (touch 14, flat-footed 13); Atk +7/+2 melee (1d8+2/19-20, longsword) and +7 (1d4+2/19-20, dagger) or +12/+7 ranged (1d8+2/19-20/x3, composite longbow); SA Sneak attack, favored enemy (goblinoids), keen arrows, range increment bonus (+10 ft./level); SQ Immunity to magic sleep spells and effects; +2 racial saving throw bonus against Enchantment spells or effects, Low-light vision, evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC), kip up, unbounded leap, fast balance; AL CG; SV Fort +4, Ref +13, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Chr 12.

Skills and Feats: Balance +14, Bluff +6, Climb +12, Hide +23, Intuit Direction +1, Jump +12, Knowledge (nature) +2, Listen +8, Move Silently +14, Sense Motive +3, Spot +7, Tumble +14, Use Rope +6, Wilderness Lore +5; Far Shot, Improved Trip, Point Blank Shot, Track, Weapon Focus (composite longbow).

Possessions: cloak of elvenkind, boots of striding and springing, 2 potions of cure light wounds, potion of hiding, masterwork mighty composite longbow (+2), masterwork longsword, masterwork dagger, masterwork studded leather armor, 20 arrows, 13 gp.

APL 6 (EL 10)

➤ **Kinkaid:** Female Elf Rog5/Rng1/Thief-Acrobat*2/Deepwood Sniper*2; CR 10; Medium-size humanoid (elf); HD 1d10+2d8+7d6+10; hp 56; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (touch 14, flat-footed 14); Atk +8/+3 melee (1d8+2/19-20, longsword) and +8 (1d4+2/19-20, dagger) or +13/+8 ranged (1d8+3/19-20/x4, composite longbow); SA Sneak attack, favored enemy (goblinoids), keen arrows, range increment bonus (+10 ft./level), concealment reduction 10%, magic weapon, projectile improved critical +1; SQ Immunity to magic sleep spells and effects; +2 racial saving throw bonus against Enchantment spells or effects, Low-light vision, evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC), kip up, unbounded leap, fast balance; AL CG; SV Fort +4, Ref +14, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Chr 12.

Skills and Feats: Balance +14, Bluff +6, Climb +15, Hide +26, Intuit Direction +1, Jump +15, Knowledge (nature) +2, Listen +8, Move Silently +16, Sense Motive +3, Spot +8, Tumble +14, Use Rope +8, Wilderness Lore +7; Far Shot, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Point Blank Shot, Track, Weapon Focus (composite longbow).

Possessions: cloak of elvenkind, boots of striding and springing, 4 potions of cure light wounds, potion of cat's grace, potion of invisibility, potion of gaseous form, potion of bull's strength, +1 mighty composite longbow (+4), +1 studded leather armor, masterwork longsword, masterwork dagger, 20 arrows, 155 gp.

*See Appendix 2: New Rules for additional information.

APL 8 (EL 12)

➤ **Kinkaid:** Female Elf Rog5/Rng1/Thief-Acrobat*4/Deepwood Sniper*2; CR 12; Medium-size humanoid (elf); HD 1d10+2d8+9d6+12; hp 66; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (touch 15, flat-footed 16); Atk +10/+5 melee (1d8+2/19-20, longsword) and +10 (1d4+2/19-20, dagger) or +16/+11 ranged (1d8+4/19-20/x4, composite longbow); SA Sneak attack, favored enemy (goblinoids), keen arrows, range increment bonus (+10 ft./level), concealment reduction 10%, magic weapon, projectile improved critical +1; SQ Immunity to magic sleep spells and effects; +2 racial saving throw bonus against Enchantment spells or effects, low-light vision, evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC), kip up, unbounded leap, fast balance, improved evasion, slow fall 20 ft., defensive fighting bonus; AL CG; SV Fort +5, Ref +15, Will +2; Str 14, Dex 19, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Chr 12.

Skills and Feats: Balance +15, Bluff +6, Climb +16, Hide +28, Intuit Direction +1, Jump +16, Knowledge (nature) +2, Listen +11, Move Silently +18, Search +6, Sense Motive +3, Spot +10, Tumble +14, Use Rope +8,

Wilderness Lore +7; Far Shot, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Track, Weapon Focus (composite longbow).

Possessions: cloak of elvenkind, boots of striding and springing, 4 potions of cure light wounds, potion of cat's grace, potion of bull's strength, +2 mighty composite longbow (+4), +2 studded leather armor, ring of protection +1, dust of disappearance, masterwork longsword, masterwork dagger, 20 arrows, 155 gp.

*See Appendix 2: New Rules for additional information.

ENCOUNTER 4: FORESHADOWS

APL 2 (EL 4)

➤ **Shadow Ogre:** Male shadow ogre Bbn1; CR 4; Large magical Beast; HD 4d8+1d12+10; hp 35; Init -1; Spd 60 ft.; AC 16 (touch 8, flat-footed 17); Atk +9 melee (2d6+7, huge greatclub); Face/Reach 5ft. by 5ft./10ft.; SA Rage; SQ Cold resistance 9, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, *shadow blend*, damage reduction 5/+1, fast movement; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 21, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 7.

Skills and Feats: Climb +6, Listen +4, Move Silently +7, Spot +3; Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatclub).

Possessions: hide armor, greatclub.

SQ: *Shadow Blend* (Su) – In any conditions other than full daylight, a shadow creature can disappear into the shadows, giving it nine-tenths concealment. Artificial illumination, even a *light* or *continual flame* spell, does not negate this ability, a *daylight* spell, however, will.

APL 4 (EL 6)

➤ **Shadow Ettin:** CR 6; Large magical beast; HD 10d8+20; hp 65; Init +3; Spd 60 ft.; AC 18 (touch 8, flat-footed 18); Atk +12/+7 melee (1d10+6, 2 greatclubs); Face/Reach 5ft. by 5ft./10ft.; SA Superior two-weapon fighting; SQ Darkvision 90 ft., cold resistance 15, low-light vision, *shadow blend*, damage reduction 5/+1, *mirror image*; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +2, Will +3; Str 23, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Listen +10, Move Silently +6, Search +0, Spot +10; Alertness, Improved Initiative, Power Attack.

Possessions: hide armor, 2 greatclubs.

SQ: *Shadow Blend* (Su) – In any conditions other than full daylight, a shadow creature can disappear into the shadows, giving it nine-tenths concealment. Artificial illumination, even a *light* or *continual flame* spell, does not negate this ability, a *daylight* spell, however, will.

Mirror Image (Su) – Once per day as a 10th level sorcerer (1d4+3 images).

APL 6 (EL 8)

➤ **Shadow Hill Giant:** CR 8; Large magical beast; HD 12d8+48; hp 102; Init -1; Spd 60 ft.; AC 20 (touch 8, flat-footed 20); Atk +16/+11 melee (2d6+10, huge greatclub) or +8/+3 ranged (2d6+7, rock); Face/Reach 5ft. by

5ft./10ft.; SA Rock throwing; SQ Rock catching, cold resistance 17, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, *shadow blend*, damage reduction 5/+1, regenerate (2 hp per round), *mirror image*; AL CE; SV Fort +12, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 25, Dex 8, Con 19, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 17.

Skills and Feats: Climb +9, Jump +9, Move Silently +6, Spot +4; Cleave, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatclub).

Possessions: hide armor, greatclub.

SQ: *Shadow Blend* (Su) – In any conditions other than full daylight, a shadow creature can disappear into the shadows, giving it nine-tenths concealment. Artificial illumination, even a *light* or *continual flame* spell, does not negate this ability, a *daylight* spell, however, will.

Mirror Image (Su) – Once per day as a 12th level sorcerer (1d4+4 images).

Regeneration (Su) – 2 hp per round. Slain if brought to 0 hp. Fire and acid deal normal damage.

APL 8 (EL 10)

➤ **Shadow Frost Giant:** CR 10; Large magical beast; HD 14d8+70; hp 133; Init -1; Spd 60 ft.; AC 21 (touch 8, flat-footed 21); Atk +18/+13 melee (2d8+13, huge greataxe) or +9/+4 ranged (2d6+9, rock); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.; SA Rock throwing; SQ Rock catching, cold subtype, cold resistance 19, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, *shadow blend*, damage reduction 5/+1, *mirror image*, regenerate (2 hit points per round); AL CE; SV Fort +14, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 29, Dex 9, Con 21, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Climb +13, Jump +13, Move Silently +6, Spot +6; Cleave, Great Cleave, Power Attack, Sunder.

Possessions: chain shirt, huge greataxe.

SQ: *Shadow Blend* (Su) – In any conditions other than full daylight, a shadow creature can disappear into the shadows, giving it nine-tenths concealment. Artificial illumination, even a *light* or *continual flame* spell, does not negate this ability, a *daylight* spell, however, will.

Mirror Image (Su) – Once per day as a 14th level sorcerer (1d4+4 images).

Regeneration (Su) – 2 hp per round. Slain if brought to 0 hp. Fire and acid deal normal damage.

ENCOUNTER 7: AIR IS THICKER THAN SHADOW

➤ **Dorindel:** Male half-elf Drd15; Medium-size humanoid (elf); HD 15d8+30; hp 108; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (touch 10, flat-footed 17); Atk +10/+5/+0 melee (1d6-1, quarterstaff) or +11/+6/+1 ranged (1d4-1, sling); SA Spells; SQ Nature sense, animal companion, woodland stride, trackless step, resist nature's lure, wild shape (5/day, large, tiny, dire, huge), venom immunity, a thousand faces, timeless body; AL N; SV Fort +14, Ref +8, Will +20; Str 8, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 26, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Animal Empathy +20, Concentration +20, Handle Animal +7, Knowledge (nature) +8, Listen +8, Scry +16, Spot +8, Wilderness Lore +12; Combat Casting, Subdual Substitution (fire)*, Natural Spell*, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Still Spell.

Possessions: *pale lavender ioun stone* (partially spent, absorbs 15 spell levels of up to 4th level spells), *periapt of wisdom* +4, *brooch of shielding*, *cloak of resistance* +3, +2 *hide armor*, *potion of protection from arrows* (10th), *boots of speed*.

Spells Prepared (6/7/7/6/6/5/4/3/2; base DC = 18 + spell level): 0 – *cure minor wounds* (6); 1st – *cure light wounds* (2), ~~*endure elements*~~, *entangle* (3), *obscuring mist*; 2nd – ~~*barkskin*~~, ~~*resist elements*~~ (2), *flaming sphere* (2), *produce flame*, *soften earth and stone*; 3rd – ~~*greater magic fang*~~ (2), ~~*protection from elements*~~ (2), *spike growth* (2); 4th – *cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic*, *flamestrike* (subdual) (2), *screaming*, *summon nature's ally* IV; 5th – *transmute mud to rock*, *transmute rock to mud*, *tree stride*, *wall of fire*, *wall of thorns*; 6th lvl – ~~*antilife shell*~~, *dispel magic* (silent, still), *freedom of movement* (silent, still), *summon nature's ally* VI; 7th – *creeping doom*, *summon nature's ally* VII, *sunbeam*. 8th lvl – *summon nature's ally* VIII (2).

Note: Using the new spell *druid grove*, he has stored *screaming* in one of the trees in the grove. Using *spellstaff*, he has stored *firestorm* in his staff.

*See Appendix 2: New Rules for additional information.

🔮 **Nenarómë Estélelin:** Female elf Adp16; Medium-size humanoid (elf); HD 16d6-32; hp 34; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (touch 11, flat-footed 10); Atk +6/+1 (1d3-2 subdual, unarmed strike); SA Spells; AL CG; SV Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +17; Str 6, Dex 12, Con 6, Int 18, Wis 20, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Gather Information +13, Heal +10, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (geography) +22, Knowledge (nature) +24, Profession (botanist) +26, Search +13, Spellcraft +9, Swim +5, Wilderness Lore +24; Extend Spell, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Profession - botanist), Skill Focus (Knowledge – nature), Skill Focus (Wilderness Lore).

Spells Prepared (3/5/4/4/3/1; base DC = 15 + spell level): 0 – *create water*, *detect magic*, *purify food and drink*; 1st – *bless*, *comprehend languages*, *cure light wounds*, *endure elements*, *sleep*; 2nd – *delay poison*, *endurance*, *invisibility*, *resist elements*; 3rd – *daylight*, *neutralize poison*, *remove curse*, *remove disease*; 4th – *biosphere**, *minor creation*, *restoration*; 5th – *commune*.

*See Appendix 2: New Rules for additional information.

🔮 **Nenarómë Estélelin** is a renowned botanist within her field of knowledge. She is a gray elf of the Timeless Tree, a region in the Vesve Forest of Highfolk populated exclusively by gray elves. It is not only a community, but also a shrine centered on a giant oak. This is the center for the worship of Labelas Enoreth and is home to his High Priestess Calandryen.

Two human thugs employed by the giants kidnapped Nenarómë. The thugs were tasked to bring

her to Hocholve and force her to discover what it is in the environment that lethally infects giants and turns them into plants. After four months of grueling abuse and research, she finally made her discovery. Although she tried to keep her research a secret, her captors became aware of her discovery and attempted to relay the information to their employers. They did not get a chance as the druid Dorindel who is the self-appointed guardian of the town killed them while departing from Hocholve. Dorindel had been observing Nenarómë and knew that she had discovered the straffern - the plant lethal to giants. Because his main objective in guarding the town is making sure it is not re-inhabited, he does not want the secret of straffern divulged. To this end, killing her and her captors was his most logical recourse although taking any life is repulsive to his nature. For that reason, he could not bring himself to kill Nenarómë and took her hostage instead.

In the meantime, her ranger brother set out to find her almost immediately after she disappeared. He was able to track her to the region of Geoff, but lost her trail there and now searches desperately for any sign of her.

Should the characters free Nenarómë after their confrontation with Dorindel, she returns to Highfolk and the Vesve.

APPENDIX 2: NEW RULES

SUBDUAL SUBSTITUTION [METAMAGIC] AS PRESENTED IN *TOME AND BLOOD*

You can modify a spell that uses energy to deal damage to deal subdual damage instead.

Prerequisite: Any other metamagic feat, 5 ranks in Knowledge (arcana)

Benefit: Choose one type of energy: acid, cold, electricity, fire, or sonic. You can modify a spell with the chosen designator to inflict subdual damage instead of energy damage. The subdual spell works normally in all respects except the type of damage dealt. For example, a subdual *fireball* spell works in the usual way, but the subdual *fireball* deals subdual damage instead of fire damage.

A subdual spell uses a spell slot of the spell's normal level, modified by any other metamagic feats.

NATURAL SPELL [WILD] AS PRESENTED IN *MASTERS OF THE WILD*

You cast spells while in a wild shape.

Prerequisite: Ability to use *wild shape*, Wis 13.

Benefit: You complete the verbal and somatic components of spells while in a *wild shape*. For example, while in the form of a hawk, you could substitute screeches and gestures with your talons for the normal verbal and somatic components of a spell. You can use any material components or focuses that you can hold with an appendage of your current form, but you cannot make use of any such items that are melded within that form. This feat does not permit the use of magic items while in a form that could not ordinarily use them, and you do not gain the ability to speak while in a *wild shape*.

SHADOW CREATURES AS PRESENTED IN *MANUAL OF THE PLANES*

Shadow creatures dwell on the Plane of Shadow, sometimes crossing into other planes where the barriers between dimensions are weak. Just as parts of the Plane of Shadow resemble a strange, distorted version of the Material Plane, shadow creatures superficially resemble creatures from the Material Plane. Shadow creatures are darker, more elusive, and spookier than their material counterparts. Grays and blacks are their most common colors, with white and yellow rarely seen. They are not to be confused with shadows (undead creatures that often dwell on the Plane of Shadow). Other creatures native to the Plane of Shadow exist that have stronger or weaker connections to the energies of that place (such as the shadow mastiff) and do not follow this template.

Creating a Shadow Creature

"Shadow" is a template that can be added to any corporeal creature (referred to hereafter as the "base creature"). The creature's type changes to "magical beast." It otherwise uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted below.

Speed: As base creature $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$

Special Qualities: A shadow creature retains all the special qualities of the base creature and also gains the following ones:

- Cold resistance of $5 + 1$ per HD, to a maximum of 20
- Darkvision with a range of 60 feet
- Low-light vision
- *Shadow Blend (Su):* In any conditions other than full daylight, a shadow creature can disappear into the shadows, giving it nine-tenths concealment. Artificial illumination, even a *light* or *continual flame* spell, does not negate this ability, a *daylight* spell, however, will.

Shadow creatures also have one additional supernatural ability for every 4 HD they possess (minimum of one) choose from the following list:

- +2 luck bonus on all saving throws
- *Cause fear* once per day
- Damage reduction $5/+1$
- Evasion
- *Mirror image* once per day
- *Plane shift* self to or from the Plane of Shadow once per day.
- Regenerate 2 hit points per round (slain if brought to 0 hit points).

If the base creature already has one or more of these special qualities, use the better value.

Skills: Same as the base creature, plus Move Silently +6.

Feats: Same as the base creature.
Climate/Terrain: Same as the base creature.
Organization: Same as the base creature.
Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature +1.
Treasure: Same as the base creature.
Alignment: Same as the base creature, although rarely good.
Advancement: Same as the base creature.

DEEPWOOD SNIPER AS PRESENTED IN *MASTERS OF THE WILD*

An arrow flies from a high mountain aerie, unerringly striking a paladin's mount. Expecting only a flesh wound, the paladin is stunned to watch his companion of many adventures crumple to the earth. This unfortunate knight has trespassed into the domain of the deepwood sniper, and he may not make it out alive.

A deepwood sniper is patient, careful, quiet, and deadly accurate. She is a stealthy, long-range terminator whose arrows sail accurately from much longer ranges than those of other archers. In addition, she has magical abilities to help her shafts fly true.

Because of their alertness, dexterity, patience, and affinity for the bow, elves of almost any character class make excellent deepwood snipers. For a long time, elves would train only those of their own race in these techniques, but more recently some half-elves, halflings, and humans have joined the ranks of the deepwood sniper.

Hit Die: d8.

Requirements

To qualify as a deepwood sniper, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +5

Skills: Hide 4 ranks, Move Silently 4 ranks, Spot 4 ranks.

Feats: Far Shot, Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (any bow or crossbow).

Class Skills

The deepwood sniper's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Craft (bowmaking) (Int), Escape Artist (Dex), Intuit Direction (Wis), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Profession (Wis), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), and Wilderness Lore (Wis). See Chapter 4 of the *Player's Handbook* for skill descriptions.

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1 st	+1	+0	+2	+0	Keen arrows, range increment bonus +10 ft./level
2 nd	+2	+0	+3	+0	Concealment reduction 10%, <i>magic weapon</i> , projectile improved critical +1
3 rd	+3	+1	+3	+1	Safe poison use
4 th	+4	+1	+4	+1	Take aim +2
5 th	+5	+1	+4	+1	Consistent aim 1/day
6 th	+6	+2	+5	+2	Concealment reduction 20%, <i>keen edge</i>
7 th	+7	+2	+5	+2	Consistent aim 2/day, projectile improved critical +2
8 th	+8	+2	+6	+2	Take aim +4
9 th	+9	+3	+6	+3	Consistent aim 3/day
10 th	+10	+3	+7	+3	Concealment reduction 30%, <i>true strike</i>

Class Features

The following are class features of the deepwood sniper prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Deepwood snipers gain no weapon or armor proficiencies. All weapon-related abilities of this prestige class apply only to projectile ranged weapons with which the character is proficient.

Keen Arrows (Ex): At 1st level, all projectiles the deepwood sniper fires behave as if they were keen weapons in addition to any other properties they might possess. Thus, a normal arrow fired by a deepwood sniper has a threat range of 19–20 instead of 20. This effect does not stack with any other keen effect.

Range Increment Bonus (Ex): With each level the deepwood sniper gains, the range increments of her projectile weapons increase by +10 feet (added after all multipliers). Thus, a 10th-level deepwood sniper who has the Far Shot feat would have a 280-foot range increment with a heavy crossbow (120 feet [TS] 1.5 + 100 feet).

Concealment Reduction (Ex): When the deepwood sniper reaches 2nd level, her miss chance against opponents with concealment drops by 10%. Thus, she has a miss chance of 10% rather than 20% against an opponent with one-half

concealment. Her miss chance drops by an additional 10% per four deepwood sniper levels she gains thereafter, but this ability never reduces her miss chance against any opponent below 0%.

Magic Weapon (Sp): At 2nd level, the character can produce an effect identical to that of a *magic weapon* spell cast by a cleric of her deepwood sniper level. This ability is usable once per day on projectile weapons only.

Projectile Improved Critical (Ex): When the deepwood sniper reaches 2nd level, the critical damage multipliers of all her projectile weapons increase by +1. Thus, an arrow that normally deals damage x3 on a critical hit instead does damage x4 in her hands. When she reaches 7th level, these critical multipliers increase by an additional +1.

Safe Poison Use (Ex): At 3rd level, a deepwood sniper can use poison without any chance of poisoning herself (see *Perils of Using Poison* in Chapter 3 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*).

Take Aim (Ex): A 4th-level deepwood sniper can gain a +2 bonus on her attack rolls against a stationary target by aiming carefully. Taking aim is a full-round action, and if the target moves more than 5 feet during that period, the bonus is lost. No additional benefit exists for spending more than 1 round aiming. This bonus increases to +4 at 8th level.

Consistent Aim (Su): Once per day, a 5th-level deepwood sniper can reroll one attack roll that she has just made with a projectile weapon. She must keep that result, even if it is worse than the original roll. She can use this ability twice per day at 7th level and three times per day at 10th level, though each use must relate to a different attack roll.

True Strike (Sp): At 10th level, the deepwood sniper can produce an effect identical to that of a *true strike* spell cast by a cleric of her deepwood sniper level. This ability is usable once per day on projectile weapons only.

THIEF-ACROBAT AS PRESENTED IN *SONG AND SILENCE*

Like any large guild, a thieves' guild has many specialists within its ranks – pickpockets, burglars, swindlers, and even highway robbers. None of these, however, have the prestige of a thief-acrobat – the superlative second-story burglar who is infamous for daring escapades across the city's rooftops.

The thief-acrobat excels at getting into and out of places no one else can. If every street-level entrance to the Jeweler's Guildhouse is locked and well guarded, the thief-acrobat simply jumps atop the building from the roof of a nearby inn, throws a grappling hook to the highest minaret, runs up the attached rope to a shuttered window, and quickly picks the lock. Should her escape go awry once she has the goods, her gymnastic combat style keeps her out of harm's way.

Most thief-acrobats began as rogues and worked their way up through the guild's ranks. Members of other classes – particularly the barbarian and illusionist – often find the acrobatics and climbing skills of the thief-acrobat prestige class quite attractive as well.

Adventuring parties often encounter an NPC thief-acrobat in the midst of some crime. Sometimes, however, a thief-acrobat hires adventurers to help with particularly dangerous capers, or even to create diversions while she works.

Hit Die: d6.

Requirements

To become a thief-acrobat, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment: Any nonlawful

Skills: Balance 8 ranks, Climb 8 ranks, Jump 8 ranks, Tumble 8 ranks.

Special: The character must have the evasion ability and be a member in good standing of the local thieves' guild.

Class Skills

The thief-acrobat's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Disable Device (Int), Escape Artist (Dex), Hide (Dex), Innuendo (Wis), Jump (Str), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Perform (Cha), Search (Int), Tumble (Dex), and Use Rope (Dex). See Chapter 4 of the *Player's Handbook* for skill descriptions.

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier.

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1 st	+0	+0	+2	+0	Kip up, unbounded leap
2 nd	+1	+0	+3	+0	Fast balance, Improved Trip
3 rd	+2	+1	+3	+1	Improved evasion, slow fall (20 ft.)
4 th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Defensive fighting bonus, sneak attack +1d6
5 th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Cartwheel charge, fast climb
6 th	+4	+2	+5	+2	Prone defense, slow fall (30 ft.)
7 th	+5	+2	+5	+2	Defensive roll
8 th	+6	+2	+6	+2	Move anywhere
9 th	+6	+3	+6	+3	Slow fall (40 ft.), sneak attack +2d6
10 th	+7	+3	+7	+3	Fight anywhere

Class Features

All the following are class features of the thief-acrobat prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Thief-acrobats are proficient with all simple weapons. With the exception of sneak attacks, the thief-acrobat cannot use any of her class features while wearing armor bulkier than light.

Kip Up: A thief-acrobat can stand up from a prone position as a free action.

Unbounded Leap: A thief-acrobat's jumping distance (horizontal or vertical) is not limited according to her height.

Fast Balance: When on a precarious surface, a successful Balance check (see the Balance skill description in the *Player's Handbook* for DCs) allows the thief-acrobat to move her speed as a move-equivalent action, not half her speed.

Improved Evasion: At this level, thief-acrobats take no damage on a successful Reflex saving throw against attacks such as dragon's breath, and only half damage if the save attempt fails.

Improved Trip: The thief-acrobat gains Improved Trip as a bonus feat, even if she does not have the Expertise feat prerequisite.

Slow Fall: If within arm's reach of a wall, the thief-acrobat can slow her descent with a series of tumbles and kicks. The thief-acrobat takes damage as if the fall were shortened by the listed distance.

Sneak Attack: If a thief-acrobat can catch an opponent off-guard, she can strike a vital organ for extra damage. Whenever the target is flanked by the thief-acrobat or would be denied his Dexterity bonus to AC, the thief-acrobat's damage is increased by the listed amount. If the thief-acrobat gets sneak attack damage from a previous class, the damage bonuses stack.

Defensive Fighting Bonus: The thief-acrobat is perpetually in motion, making her a difficult target to hit. When fighting defensively, she gains a +4 dodge bonus to AC (not the normal +2 bonus or the +3 bonus for good tumblers). When taking a total defense action, she gains a +8 dodge bonus (not the usual +4 bonus or +6 from Tumble).

Fast Climb: When climbing, a successful Climb check allows the thief-acrobat to move her speed as a miscellaneous full-round action, not half her speed.

Cartwheel Charge: By somersaulting and cartwheeling toward a foe (a DC 20 Tumble check), the thief-acrobat can make an unusual charge attack. If she hits, she can deal sneak attack damage to the defender.

Prone Defense: The thief-acrobat is accustomed to rolling and spinning on the ground. Opponents who attack the thief-acrobat while prone don't get the +4 attack bonus they ordinarily would.

Defensive Roll: The thief-acrobat can roll with a potentially lethal blow. Once per day, the thief-acrobat can try to avoid a single blow that would reduce her to 0 hit points or less. To avoid the damage, the thief-acrobat must make a Reflex saving throw with a DC equal to the damage dealt, and if the saving throw is successful, she takes only half damage. The thief-acrobat must be aware of the attack to attempt a defensive roll, and the thief-acrobat's improved evasion ability doesn't apply.

Move Anywhere: At this level, thief-acrobats can move normally even if climbing or balancing. Whether climbing or balancing, the thief-acrobat moves her speed with each move-equivalent action. The thief-acrobat can even run while climbing or balancing, as long as she does so in a straight line. Furthermore, the thief-acrobat can take 10 on any Climb or Balance checks unless she's engaged in melee combat.

Fight Anywhere: The thief-acrobat can fight normally even if climbing or balancing on something. This means, for example, that a thief-acrobat in combat could climb a few steps up a nearby wall to earn the attack bonus for higher ground. If you're climbing, you must keep at least one hand free, however.

BIOSPHERE

Evocation

Level: Drd 4, Rgr 4

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Close (25ft + 5ft/2 levels).

Effect: Maximum one-foot diameter per every two caster levels centered on organism.

Target: Any creature or plant (see text).

Duration: One day per caster level.

Saving Throw: Reflex negates.

Spell Resistance: No

You enclose an organism into a protective sphere that magically provides the environment necessary to keep the organism alive. The sphere protects, feeds, and provides the proper climate for whichever organism it contains. The sphere levitates and can be easily moved by placing a hand on it. Only the spellcaster can adjust the environment, reach into the sphere to remove or replace its contents, or end the spell. The sphere is indestructible except by a *dispel magic* spell whereupon the sphere disappears leaving its contents exposed and unprotected. You can enclose as many organisms as would comfortably fit in the area of the sphere that you can create. For example, 100 flies easily fit into a

one-foot diameter sphere, however, such a sphere would be too small for two rabbits. Because this is meant as a protective environment and not a prison, you cannot fit any creature into the sphere that cannot stand up and move about easily.

STRAFFERN

Tiny Fey (plant)

Hit Dice: 1/4d4 (1 hp)

Initiative: -5 (Dex)

Speed: 0 ft.

AC: 8 (+3 size, -5 Dex)

Attacks: –

Damage: –

Face/Reach: 2 1/2 ft. by 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.

Special Attacks: Poison gas

Special Qualities: Plant

Saves: Fort -4, Ref –, Will -2

Abilities: Str –, Dex –, Con 2, Int 1, Wis 6, Cha 1

Climate/Terrain: Any temperate

Organization: none

Challenge Rating: 1/10th

Treasure: none

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: none

Straffern is a stationary plant-like creature that is similar in appearance to a common fern with dark green leaves. It also produces tiny purple flowers that resemble buttercups. Straffern is very fragile and cannot be exposed to sunlight, cannot be transplanted and cannot reproduce without a giant host. It is immune to all plant spells.

SA: Poison Gas – A living straffern constantly emits a colorless, lightly pungent gas from bi-chambered stomata located on the underside of the leaves. If a creature of type “giant” passes within 100 feet, the gas emitted by the plant interacts with the perspiration of giant causing it to produce more gas and deadly spores from the anther of the flower. A giant in the area of effect must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 20) or be infected by the spores. Once the spores enter the lungs, they interact with the giant’s blood, adhere to the tissue, and then implant and grow, turning its host into a new plant. This is how the plant reproduces. Because the gas in conjunction with the spores is necessary for a new plant to grow, only a living plant is deadly to giants.

A giant must make the same Reflex save every round it remains within 100 ft. of a living straffern plant. Once infected, a giant must succeed a Fortitude save (DC 35) every 1d4 minutes or take 2d8 Con damage.

SQ: Exposure to bright light begins to kill the straffern immediately resulting in total death in 4d4 minutes.

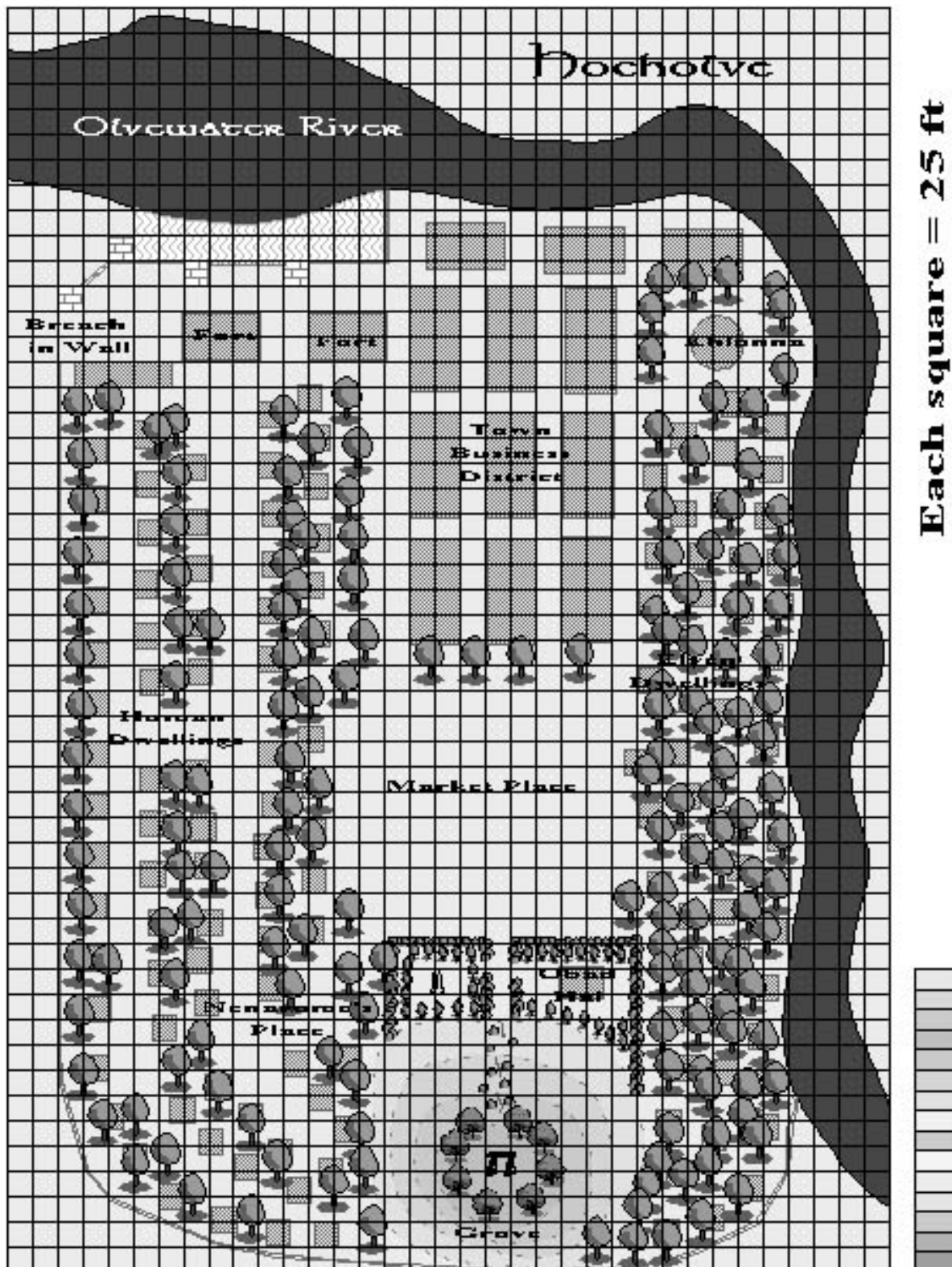
DM AID 1: HIDDEN ROLLS FROM CHARACTERS WORKSHEET

Use this chart to record characters bonus for certain skill checks. Later during the adventure, you can refer to the bonus when you need to make hidden rolls for the characters. Alternately, you could have them roll in the open and you can add their bonus. It is entirely up to you.

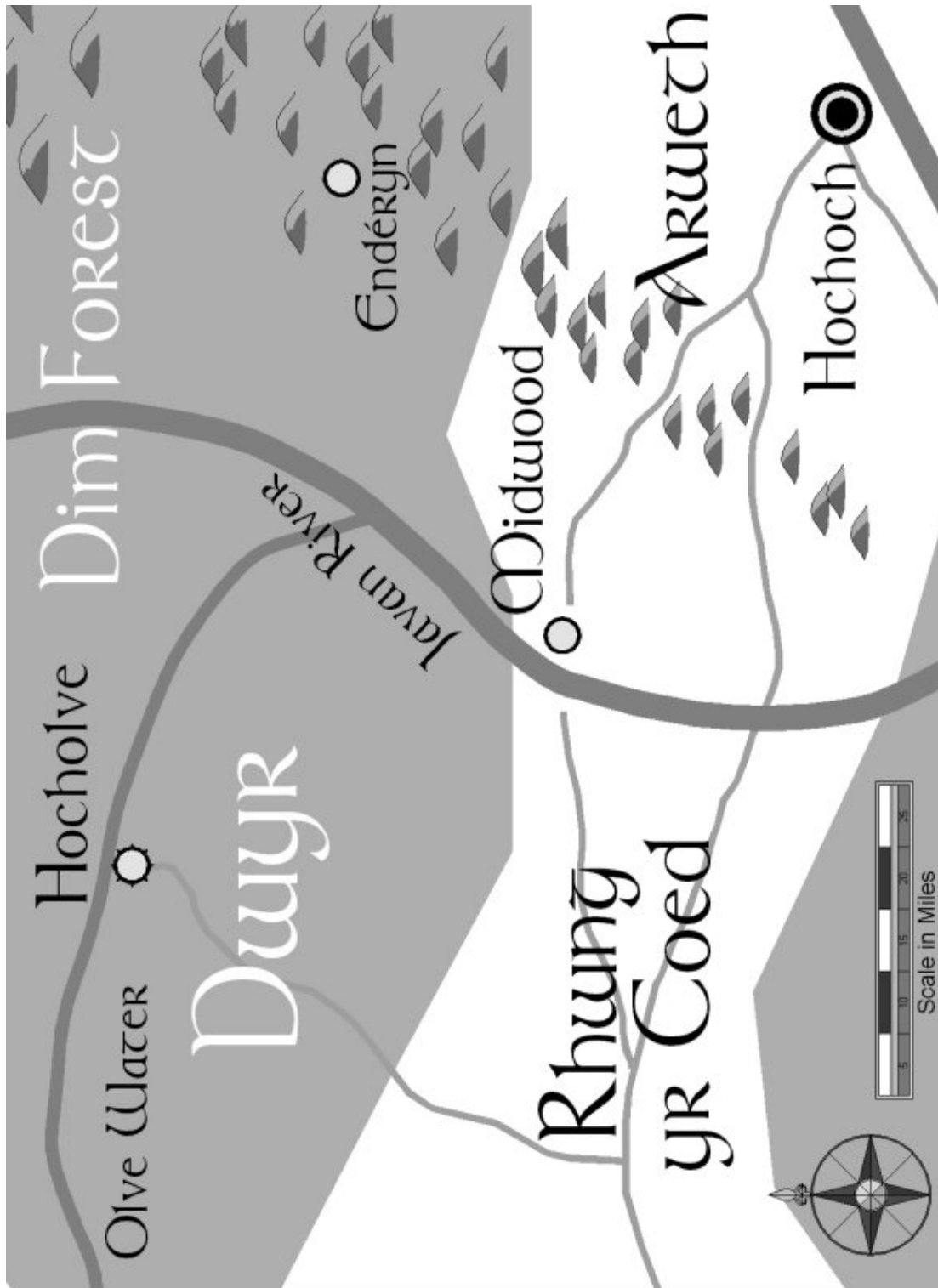
	<u>character Name</u>					
Innuendo						
Listen						
Scry						
Sense Motive						
Spot						

Innuendo is trained only. characters with no ranks in Scry can use their Int bonus, but only if they have Int 12 or greater.

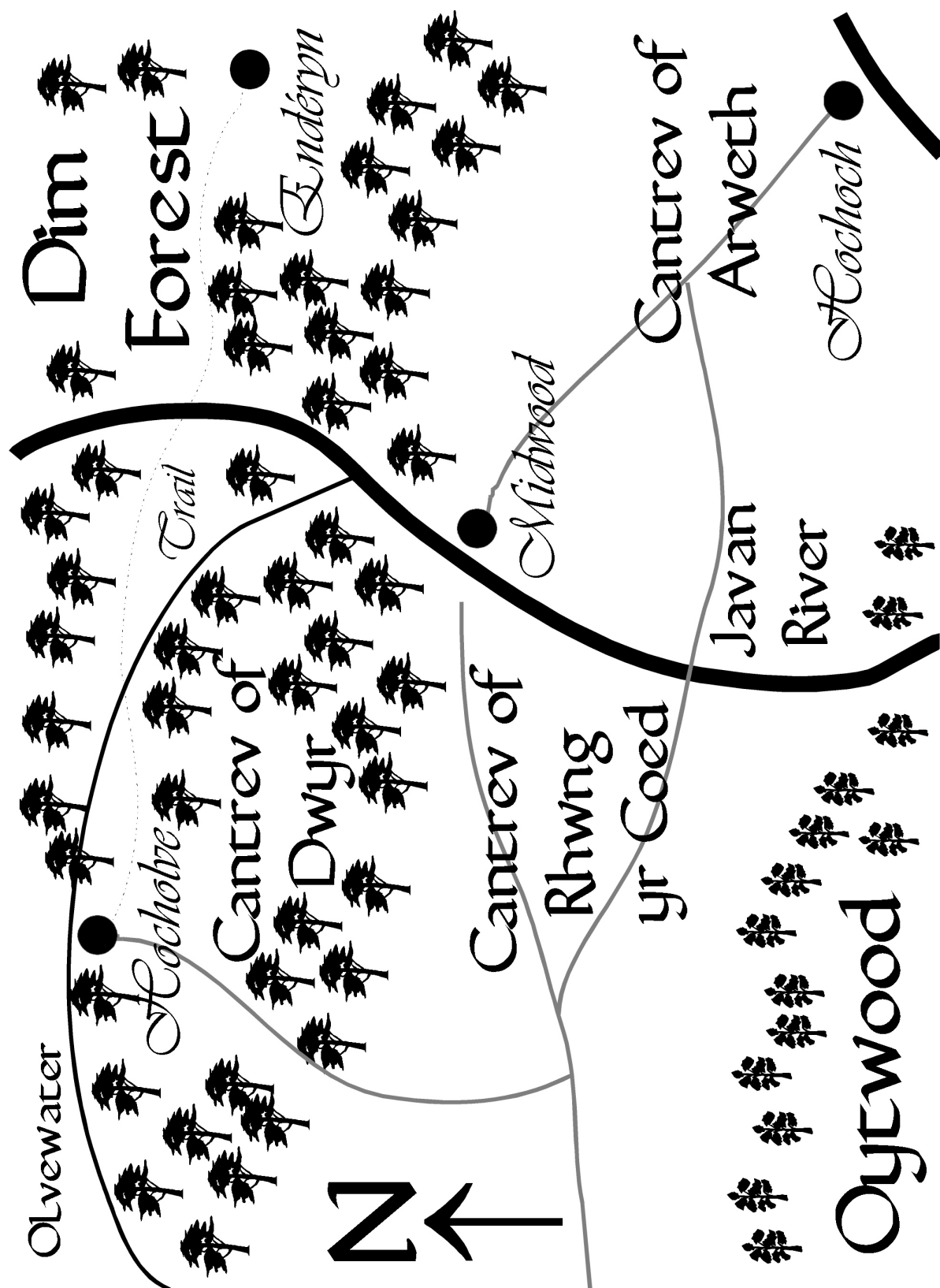
DM AID 4: MAP OF HOCHOLVE



DM AID 5: REGIONAL MAP



PLAYER HANDOUT 1



PLAYER HANDOUT 2

The scroll case reads in common “Please courier this to T. Estélelin of the Timeless Tree in the Vesve Forest, Highfolk”.

[The rest is written in Elven]

Dear Brother -

I know you have been concerned about me these many months and I have longed to speak with you. However, until very recently, my circumstances have not left me at liberty to do so. Most surely you are wondering what became of me, and I am most anxious to see you and tell you all that has happened. In the meantime, I wish only to assure you that I am well and that I will be departing for home very soon.

May you go in Corellon's name, and may Labelas Enoreth bless your years.

Most affectionately,
Nenarómë Estélelin.

Յ սեւեւեւ քայլէջ զՏ Գրքերայ տժ տեօ
զլա քաջ տփրպեւմ Տեջ այւ սճտե ժբա աբեօ
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եւ աճեայ զսժ աբեւեայ Յ ժբա ալաւթալաօ

PLAYER HANDOUT 3

The riddle:

*I never was, am always to be.
All walk toward me, but none can see.
No one ever knows me, nor ever will,
Yet hopes and fears I can fulfill.*

Player Handout 4

Brother –

I have hidden this note for fear that it would fall into the wrong hands. My tribulations over the past long months have paid off, as I am on the verge of an important discovery, too delicate to write of here, but of the greatest importance to the region of Geoff. I am anxious to see you and to get word to the leaders of this land.

I am in haste as the men who have promised to get this note on its way to you are eager to be going. I had little gold to give them and don't want to overstretch their goodwill. Let me, however, tell you briefly of the horrors I have endured. While gathering specimens in the Vesve, two men abducted me. After weeks of hard and toilsome travel, they brought me to a small ghost town that is in the Dim Forest. Immediately they set me to a task ordered by giants, enemies to this region. I spent many long months at my task, ill used by these horrid men to say the least, until at last, they came to a bitter end.

When my captors were killed I was alone here. Strange things go on around here at night, and I was too fearful to risk a journey through these forests when I was not sure of the way. I was also very close to completing the task my captors had set me to, and I wished to continue to help Geoff achieve its goal. As fate would have it, I came across two rangers in the wood just after I made great advances in my work.

So, I put my hope into their hands that I may see you again very soon. The rangers tell me they will be coming back this way in a month's time and can escort me back through the Dim Forest. I cannot come now, as I must finish my research. However, when these men return, I will be departing for the town of Hochoch. The rangers have told me there is an inn there called the Boar's Knuckle. Please meet me there on the last day of Goodmonth.

In haste and hope,

Nenarómë E.

Moonday the 3rd, Reaping, CY 592

Player Handout 5 - Excerpts from the Journal of Nenarómë Estélelin

Entry One - Judging by the turn of the moons, it has been nigh on four months since my abduction. I have convinced my captors to allow me to keep a journal arguing that I need to record my research. These cruel men are getting impatient and abuse me. I hate them as I have never hated in my life. And yet, even if I wanted to help them I'm completely without answers. The only clue they give me is that something here killed the giants, ettins, and ogres and turned them into plants within a few hours. I have not found any plant here that is unfamiliar to me, and I have never heard of a plant that kills selectively. Whatever it is, however, may it thrive to kill again!

Entry Two - Today, while investigating near a mushroom patch, I found a plant that I have never before seen nor heard of. It resembles a fern, but does not fit with any known species. I do not know if this is the plant the giants seek, as I have no way to test it. I have not informed my captors that I may have found something as I hope beyond hope that I may be rescued. In any case, I can do little without a test subject.

Entry Three - This is a curious plant. I have tried plant spells on it, but it seems to defy all of them. I have examined it closely and have found that the stomata on the leaves are exceedingly large and bi-chambered. One chamber seems to behave normally allowing for the exchange of air, but the other seems to omit a strange, lightly pungent gas. The plant has tiny purple flowers that seem normal, but what's unusual is that the anthers do not appear to produce pollen. How does this plant reproduce? I have named it straffern. The plant is very fragile and dies immediately when uprooted or exposed to direct sunlight.

Entry Four - My captors became suspicious that I learned something and beat me until I told them where to find my samples. They departed taking two of the *biospheres* with them. I am distraught. I have aided a fearful enemy. When the giants learn about the Straffern, they will know how to destroy it.

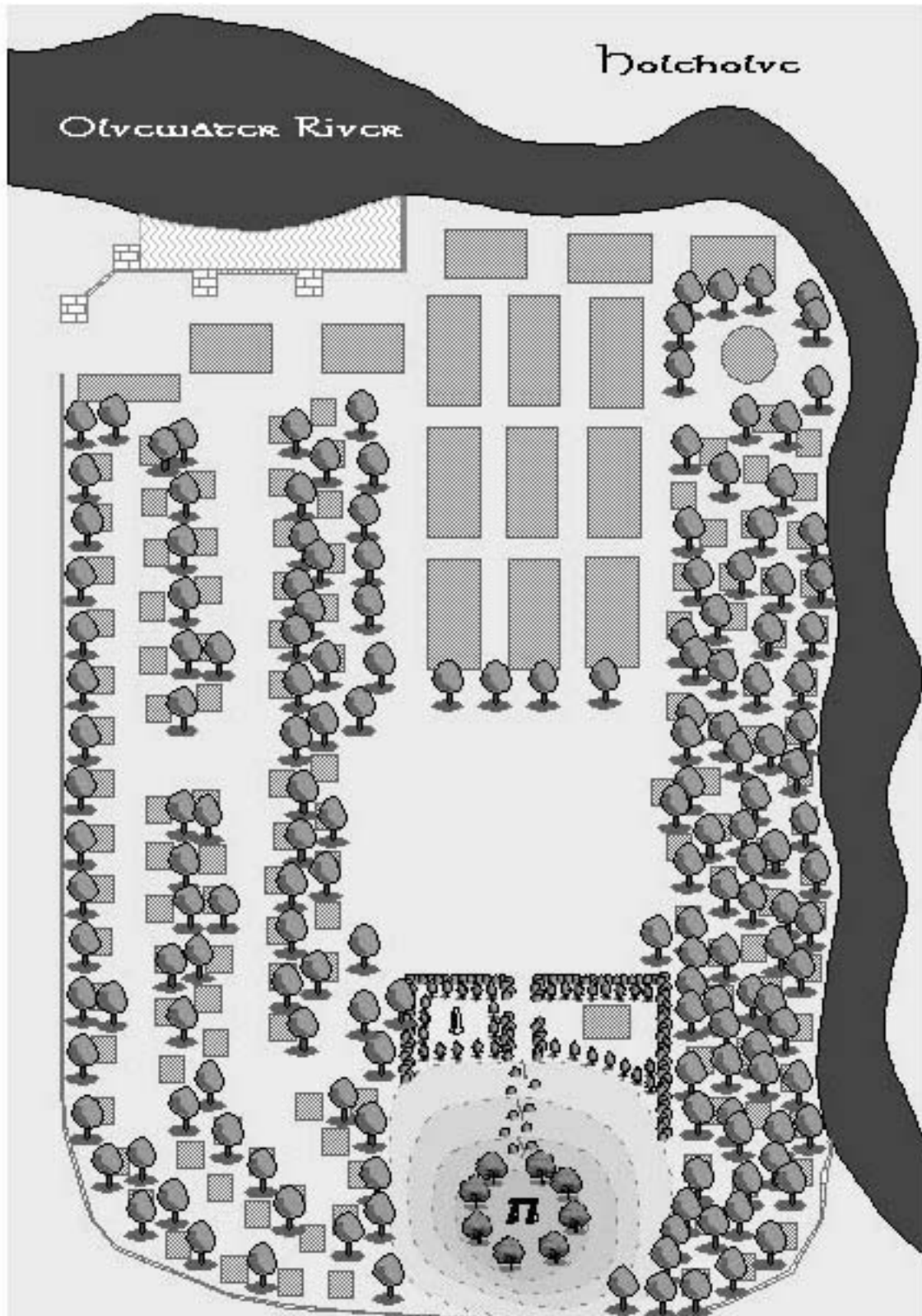
Entry Five – I found my stolen samples today next to the mauled bodies of my captors. Judging by the tracks, it looks as if a bear killed them. I was somewhat horrified, but I cannot say that I am sorry. I am now more determined to continue my research as my experience has fueled a dire hatred for giants. I just need to learn if this is the plant, and if it is, how does it kill giants?

Entry Six – I came across two rangers hunting in the area. I have hope again! They agreed to take a note for courier to my brother at home and to come back for me in a month's time. Corellon be praised!

Last Entry of her journal – Corellon has blessed me! Indeed this is the plant that kills giants. I came across a pixie today near the mushroom patch – of course it was a fey gate! I pried from her some cryptic information regarding the plant and have surmised from her riddles and by piecing my research together that the gas emitted by the plant interacts with the perspiration of giants causing it to produce more gas and spores from the flower's anther. The spores enter the lungs and something in the giant's blood combined with the gas allows the spores to implant and grow. This is how the plant reproduces!

Now, how can it be used as a weapon? Because this gas is the catalyst, only a living plant is deadly to giants. The plant is very fragile and cannot be exposed to sunlight, cannot be transplanted and cannot reproduce without a giant host. I can perhaps think of one way to *[the diary ends suddenly at this point]*.

Player Handout 6 – Map of Hocholve



ENLISTING THE ICONIC

☛ **Tordek, male dwarf Ftr1:** CR 1; Medium-size humanoid (dwarf); HD 1d10+3; hp 13; Init +1; Spd 15 ft.; AC 17 (touch 11, flat-footed 16); Atks +4 melee (1d10+2/x3, dwarven waraxe), or +2 ranged (1d6/x3, shortbow); SQ Dwarven traits; AL LN; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Climb +0, Jump +0; Exotic Weapon Proficiency (dwarven waraxe), Weapon Focus (dwarven waraxe).

Possessions: Traveler's outfit, scale mail, large wooden shield, dwarven waraxe, shortbow, quiver with 20 arrows, backpack with waterskin, 1 day trail rations, bedroll, sack and flint and steel.

☛ **Miale, female elf Wizr:** CR 1; Medium-size humanoid (elf); HD 1d4+3; hp 7; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (touch 13, flat-footed 10); Atks +0 melee (1d6, quarterstaff), or –6 melee (1d6, quarterstaff) and –10 melee (1d6, quarterstaff), or +3 ranged (1d6/x3, shortbow); SQ Elven traits; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +4, Knowledge (arcane) +6, Listen +3, Search +6, Spellcraft +6, Spot +3; Scribe Scroll (virtual), Toughness.

Spells Prepared (3/2; base DC = 12 + spell level): 0—daze, ray of frost, read magic; 1st—mage armor, sleep.

Spellbook: 0—all of them; 1st—charm person, mage armor, magic missile, sleep, summon monster I.

Possessions: Traveler's outfit, quarterstaff, shortbow, quiver of 20 arrows, backpack with waterskin, 1 day trail rations, bedroll, sack, flint and steel, 10 candles, map case, 3 pages parchment, ink and pen, spell pouch, spellbook.

☛ **Lidda, female halfling Rogr:** CR 1; Small humanoid (halfling); HD 1d6+1; hp 7; Init +7; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16 (touch 14, flat-footed 13); Atks +1 melee (1d6/19-20, short sword) or +4 ranged (1d8/19-20, light crossbow), or +1 melee (1d4/19-20, dagger) or +5 ranged (1d4/19-20, dagger); SA Sneak attack +1d6; SQ Halfling traits; AL CG; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +6, Disable Device +6, Gather Information +1, Hide +11, Jump +6, Listen +6, Move Silently +9, Open Locks +7, Search +6, Spot +4, Tumble +7, Use Magic Device +1; Improved Initiative.

Possessions: Explorer's outfit, leather armor, shortsword, light crossbow, 10 crossbow bolts, dagger, Backpack with waterskin, 1 day trail rations, bedroll, sack, flint and steel, thieves' tools hooded lantern, 3 pints of lantern oil.

☛ **Jozan, male human Clr1:** CR 1; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 1d8+2; hp 10; Init –1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 15 (touch 9, flat-footed 15); Atk +1 melee (1d8+1, heavy mace), or –1 ranged (1d8/19-20, light crossbow); SA Turn Undead 4/day 2d6+2; AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref –1; Will +4; Str 12, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +6, Heal +6, Listen +4, Knowledge (religion) +0, Spellcraft +4, Spot +4; Alertness, Scribe Scroll.

Spells Prepared (3/2+1; base DC 12 + spell level); 0—detect poison, guidance, read magic; 1st—bless, protection from evil*, shield of faith.

* Domain spell; Deity: Pelor; Domains: Good (good spells cast at +1 caster level) and Healing (healing spells cast at +1 caster level).

Possessions: Cleric's vestments, scale mail, large wooden shield, heavy mace, light crossbow, 10 crossbow bolts, backpack with waterskin, 1 day of trail rations, bedroll, sack, flint and steel, wooden holy symbol (sun disk of Pelor), 3 torches.