

BABES in the WOOD

by Adam X Vass
World Champ Game Co.

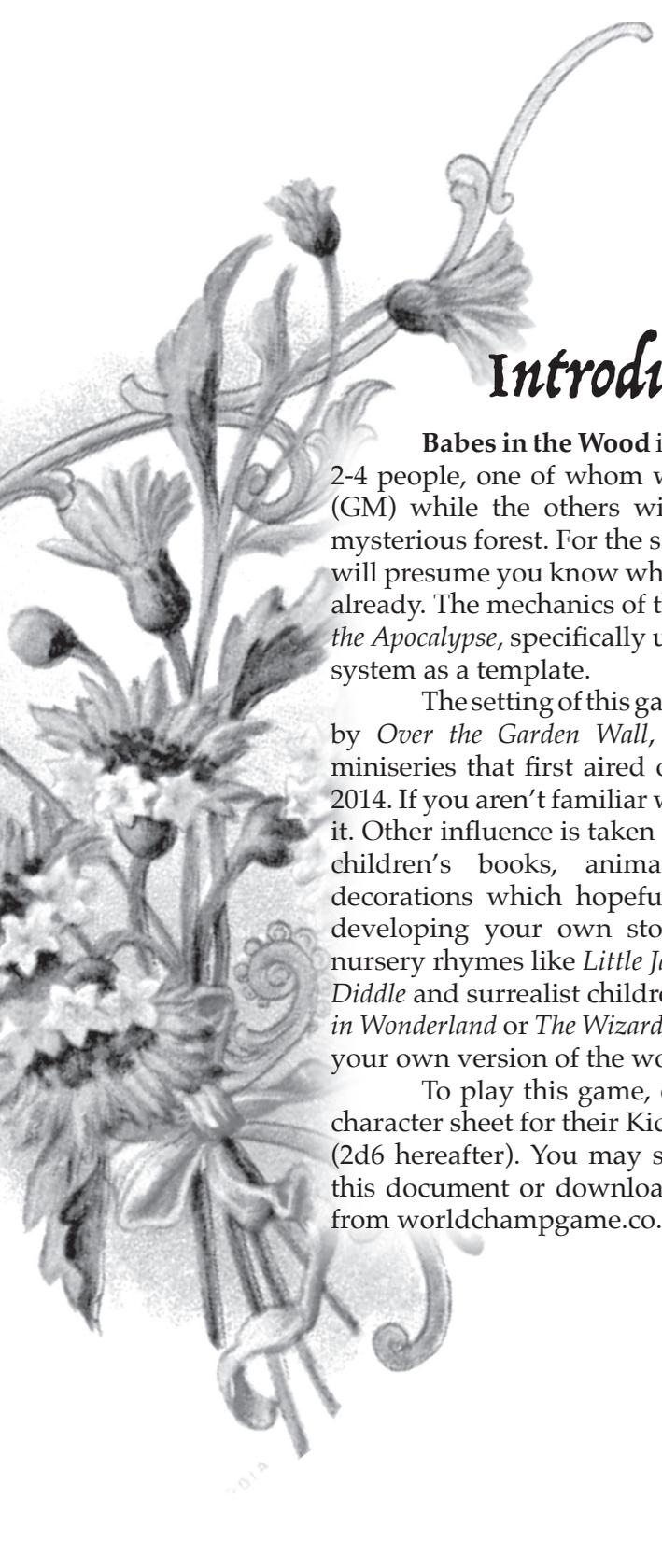
*My dear,
do you know,
How a long
time ago,
Two poor
little children,
Whose names
I don't know,
Were stolen away
On a fine
summer's day,
And left
in a wood,
As I've heard
people say.*

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Introduction

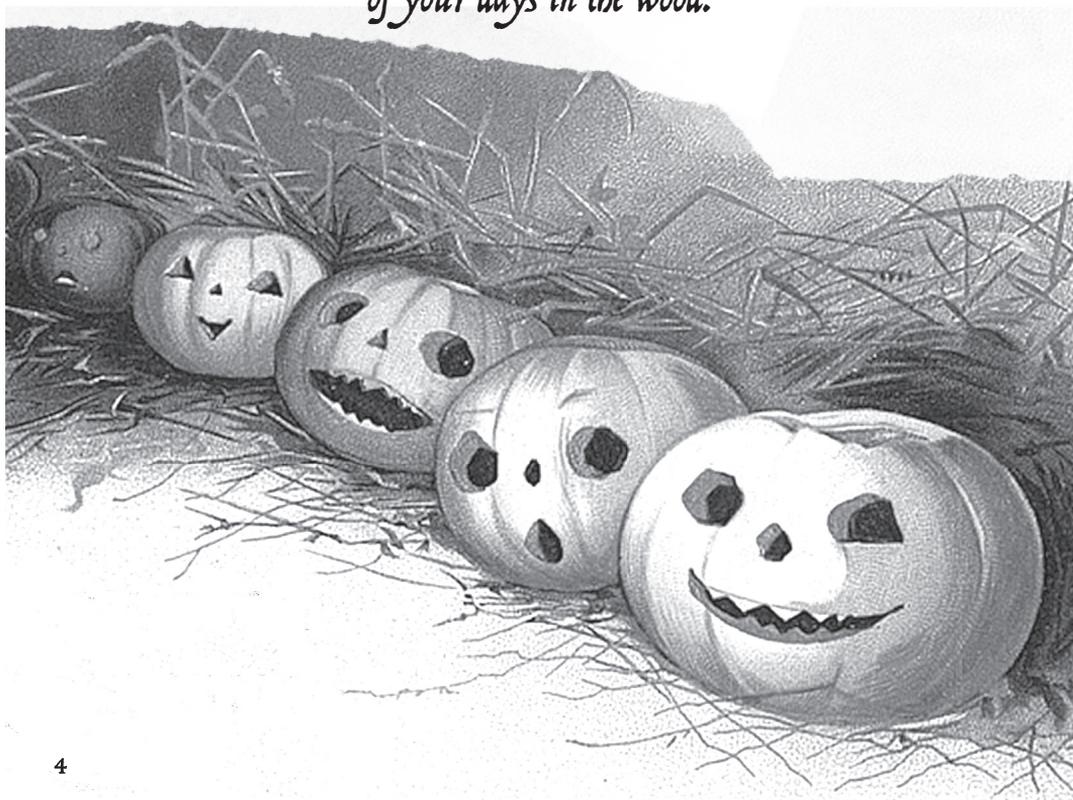
Babes in the Wood is a roleplaying game for 2-4 people, one of whom will be the Gamemaster (GM) while the others will be Kids exploring a mysterious forest. For the sake of brevity, this book will presume you know what a roleplaying game is already. The mechanics of this game are *Powered by the Apocalypse*, specifically using the *Dungeon World* system as a template.

The setting of this game is heavily influenced by *Over the Garden Wall*, an amazing animated miniseries that first aired on Cartoon Network in 2014. If you aren't familiar with this show, go watch it. Other influence is taken from early 20th century children's books, animation, and Halloween decorations which hopefully will inspire you in developing your own stories. Similarly, English nursery rhymes like *Little Jack Horner* or *Hey Diddle Diddle* and surrealist children's fiction such as *Alice in Wonderland* or *The Wizard of Oz* can help populate your own version of the wood.

To play this game, each player will need a character sheet for their Kid and two six-sided dice (2d6 hereafter). You may scan/copy the sheets in this document or download character sheet PDFs from worldchampgame.co.

Our story unfolds in the forest, along endless twisting paths amidst infinite trees. The autumnal wind blows cold through the orange and red leaves and you swear you can hear a soft melody in its breath. Woodland creatures scurry through the shrubbery; you feel their breath and hear their soft steps, but they always seem to avoid your gaze. A dark presence looms in the shadows, an unknown influence on all who wander here, unseen but certainly felt and feared.

It was Halloween, you remember. You and your friends stand still in costume, but the merriment of trick or treat has dwindled and you're left quite confused. How you got here... well you aren't sure. The only thing you know is that you are here in a strange forest with your fellows and you must keep going, lest you spend the rest of your days in the wood.



Abilities & Dice

Each character has three skills:

Steam (STM)

Steam encompasses pretty much anything you do with your body. Your physical strength, speed, dexterity are derivative of how much Steam you have. Climbing a tree, running, throwing a punch, and defending yourself are all actions that will test your Steam.

Noodle (NDL)

Noodle is everything your brain does. This includes tests of your intelligence, wisdom, or general brainpower. Remembering something, forming a plan, and navigating will test your Noodle.

Mush (MSH)

Mush is a measure of your social skills. Befriending strangers, deceiving foes, and persuading other characters will test your Mush.

Certain Kids are inherently better at some skills than others. All of your skills are measured on a scale from -3, the weakest, to +3, the strongest.

When your character is confronted with a challenge by the GM, you will perform a move by rolling two six-sided dice (2d6), then adding the value from a relevant skill.

The outcomes of these dice rolls and added skills are always the same:

On 10+: you succeed.

On 7-9: you succeed but complications arise

On 6-: you do not succeed, the GM explains what happens, and you gain 1 XP.

For example, say your kid wants to climb a tree. You could use the move "Skiddoo," (more on moves later) and the skill you'd use would be Steam since it is a physical task. You would roll 2d6 and add your character's Steam score. This will be written later in the book as "Roll + STM." Add up your total and consult the outcome list to see if you've succeeded.

Harm

Rather than counting hit points and rolling damage dice, attacks in this game simply deal 1 Harm. This game does not distinguish between mental, physical, or emotional harm. As kids, your capacity for each is limited, so your total health accounts for all three. Getting bit by a dog could cause a sting, being scared by a ghost can cause you unease, and being put down by a friend can hurt your feelings; in *BitW*, they each cause equivalent Harm. The same is true of all the characters, critters, and creatures you will encounter in the wood. Unlike many RPGs, players are encouraged to find nonviolent solutions to their problems in *Babes in the Wood* and instead focus on communication, de-escalation, and cleverness.

While mechanically physical and emotional wounds are treated the same, you should narrate them specifically as you tell your story together. Hitting a boar with a stick would do 1 harm, but so would telling the boar their breath stinks and they have no friends, but of course these would create two very different stories.

Health & Loss

Your character's health is the threshold for how much Harm they can handle. This number is generally not very high, you are just Kids after all. Your class will tell you the value of your starting Health, more on that later.

When you take Harm, you will mark it on your character sheet. If ever your accumulated Harm is equal to or exceeds your Health, your character blacks out. Since this game deals with children, they don't outright die, their fate should be something more ambiguous. Being knocked unconscious, throwing a fit and storming off to get lost in the forest, or being immobilized by crying are good examples of non-fatal ways to remove a character from the story.

Characters can remove Harm by using special moves or by resting. Spending some quiet time with a Friend or getting a full night's rest will erase all accumulated harm from a character. It is normal for characters to rest up often between big encounters so they are not in constant fear of blacking out.

Armor & Cover

While it is unlikely the players will find armor in the woods, creative players can still attempt to protect themselves. Improvised armor, hiding, or taking cover will add +1 to their dice roll when they attempt a defensive move.

XP

Over the course of play, characters will gain XP in a few ways. Firstly, whenever they attempt a move and roll 6 or less, they get 1 XP. At the end of each gameplay session, you should ask each player the following questions, and for each positive answer, they gain 1 additional XP:

*Were you good to your friends?
Did you overcome your fears?
Did you learn a lesson?*

A character can level up between gameplay sessions by spending XP equal to 4+their current level. When leveling up, the character's health goes up by 1 point and they may choose one boon from the following:

- Choose one new move from either the basic move list or your kid's special move list.
- Increase any skill by 1 (any skill's maximum is +3).



Creating Your Characters

What kind of kid will you be?

This section details the character creation options for the three available types of kids: Big Kid, Little Kid, and Animal. Each has their own strengths, weaknesses, and unique available special moves. Player groups are encouraged to vary their types of kids to maximize access to the various types of moves they can perform and make a better team of friends.



Big Kid

(age 11-15)



Think before you act.

Think a lot.

Some may say "too much" even.

You are in your early teens, so naturally, you know everything. You'll be leading this expedition, whether or not you are qualified to do so.

Choose a Halloween costume and relevant item you might have with you.

Start with **+2 Steam, 0 Noodle, -2 Mush, 7 Health.**

Choose **3** from the list of Basic Moves.

Choose **2** from the following Special Moves:

Soothing Song - You sing or perform a gentle melody to calm tensions. *Roll +NDL.*

On 10+: Everyone who can hear your song has -2 to moves that do harm for the next round.

On 7-9: Everyone who can hear your song has -1 to moves that do harm for the next round, and they are aware that you tricked them.

Bottle Up - You can only keep your feelings suppressed for so long before you explode. *Roll +STM.*

On 10+: Add your current Harm value to your next move. Then heal 1 Harm.

On 7-9: Add your current Harm value to your next move.

Console - Your friends are hurt and need your help. *Roll +NDL.*

On 10+: Remove 1 Harm from a friend.

On 7-9: Remove 1 Harm from a friend, but this process takes up to 15 minutes and leaves you both vulnerable.

Step Up - You're a big kid and you have to protect those who can't protect themselves. *Roll +STM.*

On 10+: You deter or block the attack of a foe that would've harmed one of your friends.

On 7-9: You protect your friend but put yourself in imminent danger. 9

Little Kid

(age 10 & under)

*Act before you think. Say
whatever you want.
Thinking is for goofs.*



You are a little kid!
Everything is cool and fun! Everyone
is your friend!

Choose your Halloween
costume! And a toy that you brought
with you!

Start with **-1 Steam, -1 Noodle, +2 Mush, 5 Health.**

Choose **3** from the list of Basic Moves.

Choose **2** from the following Special Moves:

Animal Companion - You make friends with the wildlife of the wood. *Roll +MSH.*

On 10+: You make friends with a critter who will follow you and act on your influence. They can do the same basic moves as your character.

On 7-9: You befriend an unruly animal, it doesn't always do what you say and is prone to causing problems.

Be A Friend - Your good nature warms the heart of another person. *Roll +MSH.*

On 10+: You gain the trust of another character.

On 7-9: The opposing character trusts you but is wary of your friends.

Stumble Upon - What's that shiny thing over there? *Roll +NDL*

On 10+: You mindlessly find a clue.

On 7-9: A clue comes to mind and you wander off to find it unnoticed.

Distraction - You cause a stink that deters a foe. *Roll +MSH.*

On 10+: When a friend uses a defensive move against the distracted foe, they gain +2 to their roll.

On 7-9: Your friend's defensive move gains +1 to their roll, but you put yourself in danger.

Animal

(age 15 & under)



*Think & act in appropriate ratio,
although acting might be hard
with paws or feathers.*

You've been in the wood for a while, likely too long. You were a regular kid when you arrived, but here you are, a forest critter.

Choose your animal form and brainstorm what could have made you this way. You can decide if this information is private or the other players know.

Start with **-1 Steam, +2 Noodle, -1 Mush, 6 Health.**

Choose **3** from the list of Basic Moves.

Choose **2** from the following Special Moves:

Forest Expert - You've been around here too long, but long enough to know where you're going. *Roll +NDL.*

On 10+: You know how to get where you're going and can expedite the journey.

On 7-9: You know where you're going, but it's going to take a detour to get there.

Connected - In your time here, you've met your fair share of forest folk. *Roll +NDL.*

On 10+: You know someone who might be able to help out and you know where they might be.

On 7-9: You might know someone who could help, but they may not be trustworthy.

Give Orders - Your know it all attitude isn't all bad. *Roll +NDL.*

On 10+: The character you order around gets an additional +1 or -2 to their dice roll, your choice.

On 7-9: Same as above but your foe now perceives you as a threat and acts.

Play Possum - Your animal form can come in handy sometimes. *Roll +NDL.*

On 10+: Your foe perceives you as just a simple animal and ignores you.

On 7-9: Same as above but the foe grows suspicious and may investigate further.

Basic Moves

All players have access to the list of basic moves. At the start of the game, each kid will choose 3 of the basic moves to add to their character sheet. This will limit what your character is able to do at first, but you can learn more as you level up in the wood.

In an emergency, a player can attempt to perform a basic move that is not in their move list, but they will have a -2 to their dice roll to represent their lack of expertise. A steam-focused character would be less practiced at investigation, same as a noodle-focused character may not be as prone to hurting an enemy.

Players should work together as a team to diversify their moves and make sure they collectively will be able to handle any situation.



Recite Poetry - The wood is a magical and mysterious place, but you have a limerick, melody, or haiku for every situation. *Roll +NDL*.

On 10+: Your prose contains something important to your world. The GM tells you something useful about your current situation.

On 7-9: You are swept up in your own verse. The GM tells you something poetic about your situation, it is up to you to make it useful.

Cause Mischief - You come up with a scheme. This could be a trap, a deception, or other trick. Describe your plan and *Roll +NDL*.

On 10+: Your plan will work and does 1 harm.

On 7-9: Your scheme works and does 1 harm but any items you used are destroyed in the process.

Gander - You take a long hard look around. Describe what you are looking into and *Roll +NDL*.

On 10+: Ask your GM two of the following questions which they will answer truthfully.

On 7-9: Ask your GM two of the following questions. One answer will be true, the other a lie.

What is going on here? Who can I trust?

What are they thinking? What should I be wary of?

What happened here recently? What here is not what it appears to be?

Brace Yourself - You prepare yourself for incoming harm. Describe how you intend to block the approaching attack and *Roll +STM*.

On 10+: Cancel 1 incoming harm and immediately attempt to cause harm to the attacker.

On 7-9: Cancel 1 incoming harm but garner attention of the attacker(s).

Skiddoo - Time to run! *Roll +STM*.

On 10+: You escape an imminent danger.

On 7-9: You escape but create a complication: you leave something behind, you take something with you, you create tracks, etc.

Hurt - When all else fails, you can hit something. Describe how you attack and *Roll +STM*.

On 10+: Do 1 harm and your foe does not act for another turn.

On 7-9: Do 1 harm but your target immediately retorts.

Grift - You try to convince someone to do something against their self interest. Deception, intimidation, persuasion, etc. Describe what you want them to do and *Roll +MSH*.

On 10+: They trust you and will do what you say so long as it doesn't endanger them directly.

On 7-9: They'll consider it for a price.

Friends

Describe your relationship with the other characters. Maybe you are siblings or neighbors, maybe your parents were friends so you're forced to hang out, etc. This doesn't have to be reciprocated either, you could write down that another character is your best friend, but they could write down that you are the annoying kid from the cul de sac that hangs around.

Whatever your relationship, your group of players are friends and you must stick together in the wood to survive. You will likely still have conflict with your friends, no relationship is perfect, and these conflicts can result in Harm. The GM should be privy to each of your friendships and occasionally instigate some interpersonal conflict, but at the end of the day you should remain friends.

By spending downtime with your Friends, you can heal accumulated Harm. Spending at least one hour with your friends and not doing anything will remove all Harm from involved characters.

Fears

The wood you find yourselves in is eerie and strange, full of nightmares. What is your character afraid of? This can be something very physical and literal (dogs, spiders, clowns) or this can be more broad (being alone, getting found out, the dark).

The GM will be putting you in conflict that may insist on you facing your fears. Be prepared for these to come up often and cause clashes between your character, your friends, and the wood around you.





Costume/Items

Since your characters have gone away on Halloween night, you will still be in costume. Decide what you were dressed as, describe it briefly on your character sheet and to the other players. Your costume can be as makeshift or fancy as you wish for it to be. Animal kids can decide if they want to be in costume or not; their animal form is likely enough of a removal of their physical self, but don't exclude them from the opportunity to have some Halloween fun.

Some costumes naturally would involve props. A wizard may have a staff, a soldier could have a helmet, a puppy might have a leash. Big Kids write down on your character sheet an item that you may have that corresponds to your costume. You may use this item over the course of gameplay to add +1 to a relevant dice roll.

For example, you establish that your player dressed as a cowboy and you have a lasso. When your character wants to climb a tree, the GM says you will have to do the **Cause Mischief** move. You can describe how you throw the lasso over a branch and use the rope to climb up, you will now have an additional +1 to your score and be more likely to successfully climb the tree.



The Game Master

The remainder of this book is material meant only for the eyes of your assigned Gamemaster and should not be read by the players.

As Gamemaster in *Babes in the Wood*, you will be describing the settings, acting as characters with whom the players interact, and creating conflicts. This is meant to be a collaborative experience, so don't be afraid to ask for player input. Find out what their characters are afraid of and integrate it into your story. Ask them what sort of trouble they'd like to find themselves caught up in. If the players find themselves stuck in the story, don't be afraid to push them in a particular direction to help facilitate everyone's enjoyment and further development of the story.

In *Babes in the Wood*, the GM never rolls dice. Rather than using moves and rolling dice for your creatures to attack, the players will instead creatively use moves and roll dice to defend themselves. The GM does have access to a special list of moves which will be detailed later in this section. You should use these moves to instigate and develop conflicts, mysteries, and victories for the players.

The Wood



The Wood is a mysterious place where anything goes. It is always fall no matter how long the Kids find themselves adventuring. They may witness a fleeting snowfall or an afternoon of unusual warmth, but the general atmosphere is that of autumn. Leaves have already changed and many have fallen, crunching beneath the feet of the Kids. Sweet smells of pie crusts and cider mills permeate in the wind of the wood.

The denizens of the wood are widely varied. There are people in small towns and settlements but rarely found along trails or in the thick of forests. People in the wood have the look & language of early 20th century America. Citizens are typically dressed in long gowns, tunics, furs, extravagant hats, and suits. As the wood is perpetually autumn, people will often be seen with knee length topcoats, scarves, and other weather appropriate outerwear.

Not all townsfolk in the wood are humans. There are animals that dress in human clothes, go to school and work the fields as if they were people, but communicate in barks & whistles. Similarly, there are animals that can speak clear as day but continue to forage in the wilds and act on their primal desires. Some towns may be populated with witches, black cats walking on their hind legs, dancing skeletons, sentient pumpkin patches,

and more. You should vary the characters that your players interact with, don't let them get too comfortable and make them constantly wonder what is going on around them. If they've played a couple sessions and only interacted with people, have them meet some talking crickets in a jazz band or a parade of summer squash people celebrating the harvest season.

In that vein, not all creatures the players meet will be friendly. Some will be apprehensive and untrusting of anyone not from their village. Others will seek to manipulate strangers for their personal gain or the greater well being of their town. Still others simply act out in chaos, unknowing or uncaring of the victims of their actions. Be sure to vary the personalities of the characters your players will engage with from friendly to aggressive, manipulative to trusting, and confident to fearful. People are rarely truly "evil", if someone is not nice to the players, decide why they would act that way. Maybe they are afraid of outsiders, maybe they are skittish after committing a crime and they've not yet been caught, maybe they are being manipulated by a fiend and not in total control of themselves.

When a creature you control would do Harm to a player, they should always do only 1 harm per move. You can decide the creature's health from 2-9, where 2 would be easy to defeat and 9 would be very difficult. A standard citizen should have 2 Health, but a stronger beast like a possessed farmer, a giant raven, or the ghastly pumpkin rider could have 5. A creature with 9 health should be considered a boss battle and should be deployed very rarely if at all. Encourage your players to find creative solutions to conflict, it would take quite a while to accumulate 9 harm to a villain, but by using special moves and imaginative tactics, they could vanquish their foes in ways that don't involve harm.

The wood is never ending, a place unbound by geography. Any trail can lead to any town, yet no trail seems to be the way out. This is not a map-friendly game, the forest cannot be mapped in any conceivable way. It does not follow the rules of our worldly geometry. Retracing your steps down a familiar trail could take the players to an entirely different part of the wood. Ramp up the confusion and lack of direction, your players should always feel befuddled while in the forest. This isn't to say you should torment the players exactly, but the uncertain nature of the wood is a major theme of the game and your players' growing disorder and desperation will lead to more intense conflicts and story.

The Fiend



The Fiend is evil. The Fiend is a dark energy that permeates through the wood. A manifestation of doubt, hatred, fear. A formless beast that manipulates those in the wood to do wrong.

The Fiend, in less broad terms, is the villain of the wood. They can appear anywhere in various forms. The Fiend does not act out, they are wiser than that, they instead manipulate citizens of the wood to do bad things on their behalf. Using blackmail, emotional manipulation, exploitation, and dirty deals, the Fiend convinces otherwise decent people to do their bidding. Some of the folks your players interact with, especially those who would do harm to the players, are likely unwilling agents of the Fiend. If an old woman tries to take the kids and boil them in her Sunday stew, it may be revealed that the Fiend told her the special stew of forest children could save her dying husband.

As mentioned earlier in the book, people are not truly evil, and people doing wrong usually have a reason to do so. Use the Fiend in your story as a true villain when necessary to explain the sinful actions of otherwise righteous people. The Fiend will not engage the players in combat, they instead will encourage others to do it.

The Fiend cannot be harmed by the players, but that does not mean the players cannot defeat the Fiend. If the Fiend is powered by evil, the players must aim to do good. If the Fiend is Fear, the kids must be brave. The Fiend will likely be involved in the finale of your story, revealed to have been pulling puppet strings the entire time to create problems for the players. Be sure to introduce the Fiend early in play, as rumors or shallow breaths on the wind, and ramp up the fear and unease that the Fiend can elicit over the course of the game. The final showdown with the Fiend, in whatever form and location it takes place, should be a true test of the kids' ability to be strong and remain friends.

Black Turtles

Black turtles can often be found amidst the wood and are considered bad omens. These tiny turts are often harbingers of larger corruption nearby. Use them sparingly, but sprinkle them in as warnings or clues to your players of looming evil forces. When the kids are investigating the closet of a suspected horse thief, a couple black turtles wriggling in a coat pocket can let them know they are on the right path. Similarly, if the players are stumped, a trotting black turtle approaching the mayor's manor could let them know that the local government could be up to no good. Using these can help push along a story that seems to have gotten stuck.



Telling Tales

Your story will involve connecting several shorter tales in varied settings. The connections between these shorter tales does not need to be strong or even explained, the players may go to sleep in one place and wake up in another with a new story unfolding around them. This isn't meant to torment players, but it can disorient them and mess up some of their plans. They should never grow TOO comfortable in the wood and they should remember that the ultimate goal is to get home, however impossible that may seem in the moment.

Because of the disconnected nature of these tales, your overall story will range in length. You can decide early on how long you want your story to last and plan accordingly, or you can wing it and decide along the way when the story is nearing its end. A typical story will contain 3-6 tales, with each tale lasting 1-2 gaming sessions. There is a collection of sample tales later in this book that you can adapt or integrate into your own story.

GM Moves

The GM can use their moves at any time to create or develop problems for the characters that will help develop your world and progress your story. When kids fail their moves, when the action is dying down, or when the players are starting to feel a bit too comfortable, try using some of the following moves to keep things interesting.

Danger - Deploy a new creature or character, change the environment, or present the kids with potential harm. This will be a staple in your move list as it will be the most likely to put the players in situations where they must act. *Ex: A cloaked stranger wanders out of the wood and follows the players. Night falls over the sunny forest clearing and strange howls are heard in the distance. The roots of the pumpkin plant spring up from the earth and reach for a kid's ankles.*

Omen - Point to a threat, a clue, or an approaching action. When your story slows down, you can use this to build momentum again. You can decide how obvious or subtle these omens are. *Ex: The driver of the horse carriage ahead has suddenly stopped. Smoke rises from the chimney of a cabin just beyond the tree line. The parade of geese approaches the players and the music halts.*

Take Away - Remove something from a player to change the circumstance, an item, armor, or cover. Shaking up their status quo will likely lead them to act in dramatic ways. Don't do this move to be petty, there should always be a story-minded reason for taking something from a character. *Ex: When throwing their lasso, the kid dressed as a cowboy gets the rope caught in a tree. The lightning strikes a kid's frying pan shield and they're forced to drop it. The aging tree the players were hiding behind starts to creak in the wind and sounds like it might collapse.*

Stir The Pot - Encourage conflict between two characters. This could be a stranger or critter instigating conflict with a player or players coming to conflict with one another. *Ex: The dog on the porch shouts insults at the kid who is notoriously afraid of dogs. The witch offers protection to a kid if they leave their friends behind. The GM reminds a player of a time that another kid abused their trust.*

Bait - Implement an item, character, or event that will entice the players. Use this move to push players around, push them towards a mystery, reward them for good play, or exploit their selfishness. *Ex: The sweet smell of fresh pecan pie comes from the window of a nearby cabin. Light glimmers off a metal trophy floating in the middle of the lake. Soft trumpet music resounds from deeper in the swamp.*

Refresh Setting - Abruptly change time, location, or circumstance. This move can help keep players on their toes, expedite slower times, or introduce new mysteries when others are solved. *Ex: The sun quickly sets and the kids need to find shelter before bedtime. The kids fall asleep and wake up locked in a birdcage in someone's home. The court jester is abruptly removed from the dining hall and the levity of the dinner is suddenly lost.*

Call Back - Bring back a past omen, a lost character, or issues thought resolved. Using this can tie together your shorter tales to a more cohesive story. *Ex: The kids see a familiar cabin up the road, one they swear they burned down. The friendly dog they rescued earlier comes back to repay the kids for their heroism. While the witch was defeated, the kids can't forget what she made them see about one another.*

Fiend - Deploy the Fiend. **Limit one use per session.** Have the Fiend of the Wood approach the characters in isolation and attempt to exploit someone by offering one of the kids a difficult choice, a hard bargain, an impossible task, or a dangerous threat. *Ex: The Fiend appears in the cabin window while the others sleep and orders a kid to follow them or the cabin burns. The Fiend demands remittance for allowing the children to wander the wood which can be paid in rare bird feathers. The fiend asks the kids to choose one of them to be an ambassador in a battle of wits, failing to mention that those not chosen will be used as collateral.*

Improvise - Change the game per your own best judgment. The listed moves obviously do not cover every possible choice you have to develop your story with your players. Don't be afraid to make your own rules, come up with your own moves, or find your own methods of developing your story; these listed moves are meant as a jumping off point for you to create and explore your own world.



Sample Tales

In this section, there are 6 example tales that you can integrate into your story in any order. They each contain some setting and set up and a few affiliated characters.

Resolution for any tale should be fluid; don't write your tale such that only one ending is possible. The creativity of your players will surprise you and your story should adapt to them.

These samples include a short list of potential solutions, but be willing to roll with alternative ideas your players come up with.

The Forever Train

The howl of a steam whistle awakens the slumbering kids in their sleeper car of a shaky train. A tall woman in a long yellow dress paces the aisles handing out pastries & sweets from a cart to fellow passengers. A small red bird flutters about, occasionally landing on the woman's shoulder and tweeting gently in her ear. This train car seems longer than normal and could go on forever, there are no doors to be seen to the connected cabins. The train slogs along the tracks at a constant pace, never seeming to accelerate or brake, its destination unknown.

The kids are effectively stuck, they need to find a way off a train that never seems to stop. There will be a handful of characters to interact with on the train, but they will all likely encourage players to stay on the train until they get to their destination. Of course, that destination is never clear, and the characters they talk to never really say where it is. Observant kids might notice a small town or familiar tree pass by in the window. The train tracks form a figure eight, an infinite loop with no start or stop in sight.

Gladys Moore - The woman in the yellow dress handing out pastries. She is an employee of the train, tasked with serving the passengers snacks and making sure people are happy. She will likely be the one the kids interrogate for a way off the train, but she simply tells them to stay put and they'll be at the destination in no time.

Ethel - The small red bird flying around the cabin. She can speak with humans fine, she surveys the people on the train and whispers updates to Gladys. She is sort of the security force, making sure things are in order and tattling to Gladys when someone needs specific attention. Ethel aspires to leave the train as well and can side with the kids if they are willing to help her.

The Conductor - While not seen, the strong voice of the train's conductor occasionally echoes down the chamber of the train cars, making ambiguous announcements about the train's estimated time of arrival and destination.

Possible Resolutions: The kids befriend Ethel, who agrees to not alert Gladys to their mischief in exchange for her freedom. She makes them privy to an emergency exit hatch in the ceiling. / The kids take an umbrella from a fellow passenger and hang it out a window, causing them to drift away like Mary Poppins in the wind. / The kids find a way to meet the Conductor and convince him somehow that he needs to stop the train. The Conductor fully believes the train must stay on schedule so the kids will have to excel at persuasion or manipulation here.

Bobbing for Apples

Following the sound of laughter and cheers, the kids breach the tree line of the wood and approach a small clearing with a pond. Dozens of apples float in the murky water, presumably fallen from an aged tree nearby, but the source of the sounds is not immediately clear. The kids now enticed by the snacks approach the floating apples.

Beneath the surface are a handful of childish fish folk, nipping at the apples floating above them, laughing in merriment. Kids who choose to approach the water may have their toes or fingers chomped by the fish by accident, not in malice but caught up in the play. A player chomping an apple from above water might lead to a tug of war with a sub-aquatic child. The fish kids want to play, but of course the players need to stay above water to breath. Once the fish kids start to play, they will never want to cease and they will do whatever they can to make the players stick around, including pulling the kids further into the water or swarming around them to prevent swimming away. For an extra challenge, make the fish unable to speak directly with the kids and simply communicate in bubbles, silent agape mouths, or flapping flippers.

Possible Resolutions: The kids can shake, knock over, or otherwise disrupt the old apple tree causing more apples to fall into the lake for the fish to bob. / They could find other nearby surface animals or children to bob for apples in their place, giving the fish some friendly competition. / An amphibious animal player could speak with the fish underwater and learn more about how to make them happy. / The fish are neglecting their school work because of all the apples and the kids have to clean up the pond so they'll return to their studies.



Piece of cake

“The perfect ingredient!” barrels the deep voice of a rotund mustached man, “and just in time for the bake! Serendipity! Now get back to whipping the cream!”

Puffs of flour and powdered sugar cloud the air, the sweet aroma of vanilla and lemon fills the room. All that’s left is to throw these kids in the oven with the batter...

The kids are close to becoming cake and will have to act on their feet. While not restrained, they are in some sticky batter in an enormous pan getting ready to be placed into a giant oven. A few portly chefs wander between related tasks in the kitchen, preparing frosting, beating eggs, measuring out and adding other ingredients.

The easiest way to integrate this story is simply have the kids fall asleep somewhere and wake up in the batter. You can instead have them be tricked or trapped in their travels. A particularly spiteful GM might have the kids’ items taken away when they’re added to the batter.

Obadiah - Head Chef, barking orders in a burly voice to the other chefs. Quick to anger and clearly working at a high level of stress. Will often mention needing to impress Sir Poppy at the “big day. (see the tale Not a Stitch to Wear on the next page)” Unwilling to speak with the kids directly, they are merely ingredients in his dish.

Hezekiah, Lydia, Reuben - other chefs of varying degrees of friendliness. More willing to speak with the kids, but will stress their importance in the flavor profile of the cake.

Elizabeth - the apprentice, most likely to help the kids. She has not yet realized or been taught the importance of their presence in the cake’s composition. Helping them will certainly cost her career, so it will be no easy feat.

Possible Resolutions: Befriend Elizabeth who creates an escape. Pit the other chefs against one another as a distraction and escape on foot. Fight Obadiah. Come up with substitute ingredients for the cake. Create a deception for why they must be at the wedding.



Not a Stitch to Wear

*“Such a merry day today, the day Sir takes his love away
The lovely couple here be wed, “a perfect pair” as it’s been said
And o’er the sun the two shall go to lands euphoric without woe
Such a merry day today, the day Sir takes his love away”*

Today is the “big day,” the wedding of Sir Poppy to Madame Princess. An enormous occasion for all the feline citizens of Toffinghelm, everyone is in their finest threads... except our kids, dressed in Halloween costumes. The town has spared no expense in the celebration: parades, music, dancing, and merriment. The kids can easily join in on the party, but no one is willing to stand for such a disgraceful wardrobe on such a holiday.

Most citizens are too refined to take matters in their own hands, they will simply scoff, throw an insult, or look away. Some more quickly offended may shriek and alert the Kingsguard of the kid’s infraction. Such crime on a ceremony day is punishable by imprisonment and labor.

Sir Poppy - The leader of Toffinghelm and the groom-to-be. Very regal and poised, too busy on his own wedding day to be bothered with such matters as yours.

Madame Princess - The beautiful bride, a southern belle marrying into wealth and power. Genuinely happy to be with Poppy, but the status upgrade is certainly a factor. Has fond memories of a childhood love named Oreo, but is certainly not thinking of them today.

Samantha - The town seamstress, backed up with orders for the wedding. Some friendlier citizens may point the kids in her direction. The coup de grace is Princess’ wedding gown, stitched with glittery thread and adorned with shiny fish scales. Clothes and materials are scattered about her shop.

The Kingsguard - The royal security force who will be patrolling the grounds and preventing mischief on the big day. Consider themselves infallible and rule in a very swift and extreme way, ignoring prisoner’s pleas and often expediting justice without due process.

Oreo - A fellow prisoner, a childhood suitor Madame Princess who is protesting the ceremony as they are still in love with Princess.

Smokey & Angel - two prison guards, not officially members of Kingsguard, but hired security during the big event. Not as invested in their responsibility as official guards would have been. Generally negligent, distracted, or easily deceived.

Possible resolutions: Break out of jail to spoil the wedding, buy/find/make suitable clothing to attend the wedding, befriend Oreo to hatch a plan to interfere in the nuptials, manipulate Smokey & Angel into escape. 29

Charms of the Witching Hour

Eye of newt: check. Wool of bat: check.

The brew is nearly complete, but I'm afraid I need your help, lest this pot boil over and burn my house down!

Pungent smells bring our kids to the woodland cabin of Fidelia, one of many “Witches of the Wood,” she explains. While some witches may wish to do harm to the wandering children, Fidelia explains she crafts spells and potions to keep darker forces at bay. She occasionally mentions spells that create distance between herself and the Fiend of the forest. She lives about half an hour walk from a town called Dawnhaven, a sizable lighthouse can be seen at the edge of town as a beacon to wary travelers.

Unfortunately, Fidelia lives alone with her pet piglet, Carter. She explains that Carter was once a wandering young boy in the wood, transformed by a rival witch and fostered by Fidelia. Her ability to venture out in the wild to collect ingredients is extremely limited and her usual courier, young Abner Green, has not been back from Dawnhaven to visit in weeks. Her potion will fail without the following missing ingredients: graveyard dust, a buttercup, and live crickets. She can't exactly afford to pay the kids, but offers wishes and potions in exchange for their help.

Fidelia - Very friendly and boisterous, appears quite old but doesn't reveal her age. Doesn't seem to be menacing as many preconceived notions of a witch. Limited mobility and will never be seen leaving her cabin by the kids, whether this is a guise or not is up to you.

Carter - A piglet that was once a boy. Acts a lot like a very friendly dog, cuddles up to the kids and oinks/squeals when spoken to, but can no longer communicate as a human. No way to tell if Fidelia is telling the truth about the piglet's origins.

Young Abner Green - a courier from Dawnhaven that would make trips to Fidelia's cabin and has gone missing. Townsfolk all know Abner but no one has seen him in a few weeks. Many are judgmental of his visits with a Witch of the Wood. Abner has been kidnapped by a rival witch from the graveyard outside of town, a small satchel or cap might be planted as a clue.

Possible Resolutions: Kids don't trust Fidelia and ruin her brewing potion, the kids liberate Carter and try to return him to a human form, the kids agree to help Fidelia, they hunt the ingredients in the wild, they try to purchase ingredients from townsfolk, they see clues and try to find the missing Abner, they get kidnapped by an evil witch, they find another friendly piglet and assume it's Abner.

The Shadow

For ways that are dark and tricks that are vain, lookout!

Citizens of Dawnhaven whisper hushed rumors of a Shadowman, one who exists only in the dark and torments the town with trickery and thievery. They've built a sizable lighthouse to minimize dark spots in the area and keep the Shadowman at bay, but many recent reports have him reappearing in alleys and homes between the cycles of the lighthouse. While many lower class citizens believe it to be just a fairytale, the wealthy tremble at the mention of the Shadowman.

The kids will have to be detectives and figure out who or what the Shadowman is if he is even real at all. Reports from various townsfolk will be conflicted, scattered, and often outright false, the exaggerations of a growing tall tale.

Unlike in other scenarios with a pretty brief list of characters, you will be dealing with more of a sandbox style in this tale. You can choose to populate your version of Dawnhaven with as few or as many people as you'd like and have them be whatever personality suits your story. Here is a short list of appropriate names if you wish to use any of them: **Columbus, Harris, Sophia, Ebenezer, Dinah, Martha, Charley, Newton, Price, Ellis, Marion, Olive, Chauncey, Isabella.**

Possible Resolutions: the Shadowman is a small gang of raccoons clamoring through trash and feeding on food scraps, the Shadowman is a recently-fired court jester exacting revenge on the town's upper class, the Shadowman is a tall tale grown from increased presence of black turtles in people's homes, the Shadowman is a form of the Fiend, the Shadowman is Young Abner Green robbed of his human form and trying to find help, the Shadowman is a myth perpetrated by the government to get funding for their dream lighthouse.



Nappome'en



The End

When your story is over, your players will find their way away from the wood.

Was the wood a place lost in space and time? A purgatory for children slipping away in our world? A lengthy dream? No one can be sure and you should leave these questions unanswered. Keep the wood and the kids' time spent there a mystery.

At the conclusion of your final tale, offer a way for the kids to travel that will lead them out of the wood. Where that leads is up to you. Have the kids each describe their feelings on their experience in the wood and what they hope to do tomorrow. Give them a chance to interact with one another; will they see each other at school tomorrow or never again? Are their friendships closer than ever or damaged beyond repair? When the players are satisfied or conversation has reached a lull, close the book, this story is over.

*The wood will always be there waiting
should you ever decide to return.*

Resources

feel free to photocopy, scan, distribute, amend, tear out, or do anything else you'd like with the following pages to make your game play easier.

Included are character sheets for each of the 3 kid types as well as reference pages for the basic moves and gamemaster moves.

PDFs of these pages are also available for free download from worldchampgame.co.

Big Kid

Name: _____
 Costume: _____
 Items (+1): _____



Start with +2 Steam, 0 Noodle, -2 Mush, 7 Health

Steam

Noodle

Mush



XP

to level up:
 spend (4+lvl) XP
 gain 1 health
 then choose a new move or gain +1 skill point

choose 3 basic moves & 2 special moves

then choose a new move or gain +1 skill point

Basic Moves

Fears

Special Moves

- Soothing Song** - Roll +NDL.
On 10+: Everyone who can hear your song has -2 to moves that do harm for the next round.
On 7-9: Everyone who can hear your song has -1 to moves that do harm for the next round, and they are aware that you tricked them.
- Bottle Up** - Roll +STM.
On 10+: Add your current Harm value to your next move. Then heal 1 Harm.
On 7-9: Add your current Harm value to your next move.
- Console** - Roll +NDL.
On 10+: Remove 1 Harm from a friend.
On 7-9: Remove 1 Harm from a friend, but this process takes up to 15 minutes and leaves you both vulnerable.
- Step Up** - Roll +STM.
On 10+: You deter or block the attack of a foe that would've harmed one of your friends.
On 7-9: You protect your friend but put yourself in imminent danger.

Friends

Player A: _____
 Player B: _____
 Player C: _____

 NPC A: _____
 NPC B: _____
 NPC C: _____

Little Kid

Name: _____
 Costume: _____
 Toys (+1): _____



Start with -1 Steam, -1 Noodle, +2 Mush, 5 Health

Steam

Noodle

Mush



XP

to level up:
 spend (4+lvl) XP
 gain 1 health
 +1 skill point

choose 3 basic moves & 2 special moves

then choose a new move or gain +1 skill point

Basic Moves

Fears

Special Moves

Animal Companion - Roll +MSH.
On 10+: You make friends with a critter who will follow you and act on your influence. They can do the same basic moves as your character.
On 7-9: You befriend an unruly animal, it doesn't always do what you say and is prone to causing problems.

Be A Friend - Roll +MSH.
On 10+: You gain the trust of another character.
On 7-9: The opposing character trusts you but is wary of your friends.

Stumble Upon - Roll +NDL
On 10+: You mindlessly find a clue.
On 7-9: A clue comes to mind and you wander off to find it unnoticed.

Distraction -Roll +MSH.
On 10+: When a friend uses a defensive move against the distracted foe, they gain +2 to their roll.
On 7-9: Your friend's defensive move gains +1 to their roll, but you put yourself in danger.

Friends

Player A: _____
 Player B: _____
 Player C: _____

 NPC A: _____
 NPC B: _____
 NPC C: _____

Animal

Name: _____
 Animal Form: _____
 Reason: _____



Start with -1 Steam, +2 Noodle, -1 Mush, 6 Health

Steam

Noodle

Mush



XP

to level up:
 spend (4+lvl) XP
 gain 1 health
 then choose a new move or gain +1 skill point

choose 3 basic moves & 2 special moves

Basic Moves

Special Moves

Forest Expert - Roll +NDL.
On 10+: You know how to get where you're going and can expedite the journey.
On 7-9: You know where you're going, but it's going to take a detour to get there.

Connected - Roll +NDL.
On 10+: You know someone who might be able to help out and you know where they might be.
On 7-9: You might know someone who could help, but they may not be trustworthy.

Give Orders - Roll +NDL.
On 10+: The character you order around gets an additional +1 or -2 to their dice roll, your choice.
On 7-9: Same as above but your foe now perceives you as a threat and acts.

Play Possum - Roll +NDL.
On 10+: Your foe perceives you as just a simple animal and ignores you.
On 7-9: Same as above but the foe grows suspicious and may investigate further.

Fears

Friends

Player A: _____
 Player B: _____
 Player C: _____

NPC A: _____
 NPC B: _____
 NPC C: _____

Basic Moves

Recite Poetry

Roll +NDL.

On 10+: Your prose contains something important to your world. The GM tells you something useful about your current situation.

On 7-9: You are swept up in your own verse. The GM tells you something poetic about your situation, it is up to you to make it useful.

Cause Mischieif

Describe your plan and *Roll +NDL.*

On 10+: Your plan will work and does 1 harm.

On 7-9: Your scheme works and does 1 harm but any items you used are destroyed in the process.

Gander

Describe what you are looking into and *Roll +NDL.*

On 10+: Ask your GM two of the following questions which they will answer truthfully.

On 7-9: Ask your GM two of the following questions. One answer will be true, the other a lie.

What is going on here?

Who can I trust?

What are they thinking?

What should I be wary of?

What happened here recently?

What here isn't as it appears to be?

Brace Yourself

Describe how you intend to block the approaching attack and *Roll +STM.*

On 10+: Cancel 1 incoming harm and immediately attempt to cause harm to the attacker.

On 7-9: Cancel 1 incoming harm but garner attention of the attacker(s).

Skiddoo

Roll +STM.

On 10+: You escape an imminent danger.

On 7-9: You escape but create a complication: you leave something behind, you take something with you, you create tracks, etc.

Hurt

Describe how you attack and *Roll +STM.*

On 10+: Do 1 harm and your foe does not act for another turn.

On 7-9: Do 1 harm but your target immediately retorts.

Griff

Describe what you want them to do and *Roll +MSH.*

On 10+: They trust you and will do what you say so long as it doesn't endanger them directly.

On 7-9: They'll consider it for a price.

GM Moves

When kids fail their moves, when the action is dying down, or when the players are starting to feel a bit too comfortable, use the following moves.

Danger

Deploy a new creature or character, change the environment, or present the kids with potential harm.

Omen

Point to a threat, a clue, or an approaching action.

Take Away

Remove something from a player to change the circumstance, an item, armor, or cover.

Stir The Pot

Encourage conflict between two characters. This could be a stranger or critter instigating conflict with a player or players coming to conflict with one another.

Bait

Implement an item, character, or event that will entice the players.

Refresh Setting

Abruptly change time, location, or circumstance.

Call Back

Bring back a past omen, a lost character, or issues thought resolved.

Fiend - Deploy the Fiend.

Limit one use per session. Have the Fiend of the Wood approach the characters in isolation and attempt to exploit someone by offering one of the kids a difficult choice, a hard bargain, an impossible task, or a dangerous threat.

Improvised - Change the game per your own best judgment.

Among the trees high
Beneath the blue sky
They plucked
the bright flowers
And watched
the birds fly;
Then on blackberries fed,
And strawberries red,
And when
they were weary
'We'll go home,'
they said.

