RAGING SWAN PRESS 20 THINGS #34: FARMING VILLAGE





20 THINGS #34: FARMING VILLAGE

Are you a busy GM? Does session prep take too long? Do you never have time to work on the cool little details that can bring your session to life? Well fear not! That's where the 20 Things line comes in.

Compiled from the free 20 Things posts available at Raging Swan's website, this short, focused compilation gives you, the time-crunched GM, the tools to effortlessly add verisimilitude and detail to your adventure. Use the material herein either before or during play and bask in your players' adulation.

This instalment provides five tables compatible with virtually any fantasy roleplaying game and is designed to help you to flesh out and bring to life the farming villages in your campaign.

CREDITS

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FOREWORD

Welcome to this Raging Swan Press System Neutral Edition supplement. Herein you'll find evocative, inspiring text designed to help you—the busy GM—run better, quicker and easier games.

This book is compatible with most fantasy roleplaying games. It's impossible to create a truly system neutral book, though, and some generic game terms—wizard, fighter, human, elf and so on lurk within. These generic terms are easily modified to the GM's system of choice.

One special note about the NPCs in this supplement. While some are magic-users, fighters, clerics and so on, others are simply normal folk. Because different game systems handle normal folk differently we've made no attempt to note their "class" leaving them simply as "female human" and so on.

USING THIS BOOK

You can use these tables either during session prep or "on the fly" during the actual session. Roll on the desired table and describe the result. Remember:

- Some players may assume because you describe something it is important. This may slow down the party's progress through the adventure. This isn't necessarily a bad thing.
- Modify any result so it fit with your game.
- Ignore or re-roll inappropriate results.
- Have fun!

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Most rural farming villages are a hive of activity during the day. Villagers work in the fields or in their small kitchen gardens while children tear around and visiting traders go about their business.

Use the table below, to add interesting sights and sounds to the PCs' daytime exploration of the village.

- 1. Children clad in dirty shifts run along the road laughing and joking among themselves. They quiet at the sight of the adventurers and give the party a wide berth.
- 2. A villager pushes a handcart along the road piled high with wood freshly cut from a nearby copse. A woodsman's axe balances precariously atop the wood pile. The villager nods in friendly greeting as he passes by.
- 3. Thin streams of smoke drift upwards from several chimneys. From the nearby houses, the laughter of children and the everyday sounds of life softly fill the air.
- 4. Villagers work in the fields, ploughing the earth, weeding and and so on. Here and there, children run up and down waving their arms and shouting to scare away the birds that land to peck at the soil and the seeds therein.
- 5. A trader (see Table 4 for sample NPCs) rumbles into the village on a cart piled high with boxes, barrels and sacks. Several children run alongside the cart laughing and the trader shouts at them to get away.
- 6. A flock of birds nesting in a stand of trees at the end of the village suddenly screech and take flight. Perceptive PCs spot a cat slinking through the trees.
- 7. Villagers-both alone and in small groups-walk the streets going about their daily business. Most greet the PCs with nods or smiles although a few seem scared or awed by the adventurers, their weapons and their relative wealth.

- 8. The clang of metal on metal-the sounds of the village blacksmith at work-fill the air.
- 9. Two villagers carrying baskets, and deep in conversation, stroll toward the PCs.
- 10. A trapper returns to the village, the skinned and gutted bodies of a half-dozen rabbits hanging from a long pole he carries over his shoulder.
- 11. Urgent calls for help, and wild gesticulations, from a pair of villagers working in a field indicate a horrible accident has just occurred. Moments later, one of the villagers collapses.
- 12. A chill wind blows through the village, plucking at the PCs' cloaks and sending the smoke drifting from the villagers' homes wildly cavorting through the air.
- 13. A pack of running, laughing children surround the PCs; they are playing "Catch Me If You Can" and the party are a handy obstacle to be used to avoid capture.
- 14. Three women stand close together deep in conversation; nearby a dog noses through the woods in search of an interesting smell.
- 15. A cat sits atop a high roof, watching people come and go below. At the other end of the roof, two birds are doing much the same.
- 16. As #15 above, but slowly-so slowly-the cat edges down the roof toward the birds.
- 17. Clouds scud across the sky, bringing alternating patches of light and shadow to the village.
- 18. Heavy rain lashes the village. As the day goes on, the roads turn into muddy morasses.
- A horseman, in a fearful rush, gallops through the village. Villagers scatter in his wake.
- 20. A distant roar-perhaps a bear, troll or other wandering predator-echoes through the air.



The villagers work hard during the day and as dusk falls most return to their homes to eat and rest. Others visit the tavern or friends' houses while courting couples sneak away from their families for some privacy. The feel of a rural farming village at night is much different to that of its daytime.

Use the table below, to add interesting sights and sounds to the PCs' nighttime exploration of the village.

- 1. A mangy cat emerges from the undergrowth into the soft moonlight holding something in its mouth. It darts across the road and into the shadow of a building.
- 2. From somewhere off in the distance, an owl hoots loudly. A few minutes later, the owl hoots again, but this time from further away. A soft wind blows across the village, rustling the leaves and crops.
- 3. Thick clouds scud across the sky. As they pass in front of the moon, the village is plunged into periods of near darkness.
- 4. Soft laugher emerges from deep shadows clustering about a tree or building. Perceptive PCs–or those with the ability to see in the dark–spot two villagers locked in a passionate embrace. The two are blissfully unaware of the PCs.
- The sounds of drinking, laughter and revelry emerge from the village tavern. Outside the tavern, several people stand about drinking and talking.
- 6. A husband and wife sit outside their house enjoying a quiet conversation and drink. They watch the adventurers as the

party passes by. The man gestures at them, says something and the woman laughs softly.

- Rustling at the side of the road presages the appearance of a mongrel dog-perhaps a stray or a farmer's pet-with a stick in its mouth. It looks at the PCs, drops the stick and wags its tail.
- 8. A fox darts through the village, accompanied by its two pups, looking for prey. It is cautious and avoids any large group of people, but could be coxed out into the open by a druid, ranger or the like.
- 9. A farmer carrying a partially shuttered lantern hurries through the village to his field. The man is absent-minded and left a valuable tool-a hoe-there when he finished work. He is worried someone has stolen the hoe and is barely civil to the PCs if they engage him in conversation.
- Field mice nose about among the weeds and grass growing between buildings in search of food. Only perceptive PCs, spot the tiny creatures.
- 11. Two men-one carrying a blazing torch-march through the village. Both are armed with a spear and wear leather armour; the men are in the militia and tonight is their turn to "do the rounds". They do not expect any trouble-the patrol is a local tradition that stems from bandit attacks long ago.
- 12. A man staggers down the road, singing quietly to himself. He is clearly drunk. As the PCs approach, he totters off in the other direction. Shortly thereafter, the PCs hear a soft thud as he falls over.



A village is nothing without its villagers. Many are merely ordinary folk trying to get by and to provide for their family. Others are traders or perhaps even retired adventurers and the like.

Even ordinary folk can be interesting, however. Use the table below to portray random villagers the PCs encounter on the road, working in the fields or drinking in the local tavern.

- 1. **Albin Kari** (NG middle-aged male human) is a brawny fellow well used to long days spent working in the fields. His clothes are dirty and hands calloused. He is respectful, but wary, of any heavily armed strangers visiting the village.
- 2. Leena IIma (NG female human) carries a full basket of household supplies–a small bag of flour, a selection of vegetables and so on–on her hip. (She is off to barter with the village blacksmith for some urgent repairs).
- 3. **Eljas Kekko** (CN young male human) is the terror of the village. Wild, precocious and utterly out of control he wanders the streets looking for mischief–and the adventurers as newcomers are his new target. His father is a drunk, and his mother is dead. Eljas is big and strong for his age and has distinctively short-cropped brown hair.
- 4. Azakial Vonothvar (NE male half-elf thief 2) came to the village 20 years ago to escape a murder charge in the nearby city. He finds life in the village boring, but safe, and is looking for excitement. He has a wife he doesn't really like and yearns for escape. The PCs' arrival may tempt him to put his old skills to use once more. Azakial has jet black hair and violet eyes.
- 5. Liisa Arpia (CG young female human) is brave and inquisitive, and obsessed with adventurers. If the PCs are obviously adventuring types, she hangs around them trying to overhear their stories and so on. Liisa dreams of becoming a powerful wizard and of wandering the land slaying evil. Her parents– poor peasants–have no way of paying for the education necessary to make her dream come true; she tries to talk any wizard in the group into taking her on as an apprentice. Liisa has startlingly blue eyes and platinum blonde hair.
- 6. Filpus Ilma (CN young male human) never goes anywhere without his beloved mongrel Brak (N dog). Brak has mottled black and white fur and is little more than skin and bone. The two are inseparable and spend much of the their time playing in the fields to keep birds and other pests away from the crops. Filpus is inquisitive and the arrival of adventurers intrigues both Filpus and Brak. Sadly, Filpus has a seemingly inexhaustible supply of questions; if indulged, he asks his questions one after another after another.
- 7. Katri Ano (N old female human) is the oldest human in the village and is a great store of local legends, lore and gossip. Despite her age she has a prodigious memory and her mind remains sharp. She walks with a cane and her eyesight is not good. Katri spends her time visiting friends and chatting, and she can be encountered almost anywhere in the village.

- 8. Juho Paaso (CE male human) is a blackguard and villain. Near universally reviled by his neighbours, Juho only cares for himself. Currently embroiled in a number of disputes with other villagers over debts and land boundaries he sees the party as a means to an end. If given the chance, he spreads vile rumours regards his enemies and tries to suggest any woes the village faces are their fault. With big, black bushy eyebrows, a tangled beard and gloriously untended hair he cuts a distinctive figure.
- 9. Hannu Viti (CN middle-aged male human) knows best. Luckily, for almost everyone he meets, Hannu is wise in whatever subject is being discussed. Most people try and get out of a conversation with Hannu as quickly as possible-and he is so wrapped up in himself he doesn't have a clue how others view him. He is stocky, short-haired and has a podgy face riven with acne and scars from a childhood disease.
- 10. Riitta Tornio (NG middle-aged female human) is short and dumpy. She is Hannu's (see #9 above) long-suffering wife and knows exactly how most people view her husband. She hates confrontation, and has long since given up trying to "improve" Hannu. Riita is a popular figure around the village– and would be more popular if it wasn't for her husband!
- 11. Sanni Torio (NG middle-aged female human) is an introvert who isn't that keen on chatting to wandering adventurer types (and anyone else she doesn't know well). Skinny, with short brown hair she loves being outside and is often accompanied by her children and dog. Sadly, her husband died several years ago in a farming accident and she is quite lonely, but hasn't met anyone worth getting to know. Wealthy compared to her neighbours she is tired of fending off ill-suited suitors.
- 12. **Esko Panu** (LG male human cleric 1) is a failed village priest who would rather his past stay in the past. Thrown out of his church in a distant village for inappropriate contact with a woman in his congregation he has fled here to hide and atone for his sins. He has managed to keep his past and spellcasting abilities (mostly) a secret-one neighbouring family knows of his powers after he saved their son from a nasty injured inflicted by a poorly-wielded scythe. He is wary of others from his faith, suspecting any clerics among the party are searching for him so he may be returned to his former church for punishment. In conversation, Esko comes across as surprisingly charismatic and well-read for a "normal" peasant.

Note: Most villagers are normal, mundane folk. If a villager presented above has no class listed assume he or she is a typical commoner of the appropriate race.

It is a rare village indeed that sees no villagers except wandering adventurers. Merchants and traders come to make coin, bards visit to tell tales and other folk are merely passing through on the way to somewhere else.

Use the table below, to portray travellers arriving in the $\ village$ during the PCs' visit.

- Frans Vaito (N male human) is an odd-job man and labourer for hire. Afflicted with an insatiable wanderlust he never stays in any place for long. When the PCs leave, he asks if he can accompany them (as long as they are not off into the wilderness on some "foolish quest").
- 2. Jussi Seppo (NG male human) is a small-time merchant with dreams of the big time. After a few foolish deals, he is down on his luck but is always searching for the one trade or deal that will make him rich. If the PCs seem rich he promises them he has a wide-range of contacts from whom he can get almost anything. This isn't entirely true, but he does his best to meet his clients' needs. He'll need a retainer, though.
- 3. **Miina Kulta** (N female human) is ill–she has contracted the plague and although it has not yet fully manifested itself she is contagious (and feeling a little bit under the weather). Miina is a skilled silversmith looking for somewhere to settle down far away from her controlling husband. She stays at the village inn; unfortunately, her condition rapidly deteriorates.
- 4. Kaapro Miela (NE male human thief 3) has come to the village in search of easy marks. His plan is to travel with such a group, rob them blind one night and then flee. He particularly enjoys travelling with trusting merchants and the like. Kaapro is tall and brawny and looks more like a warrior than a thief. He suggests travelling together for "mutual protection" from bandits and the like.
- 5. Rekiina Salme (LN middle-aged female human) works as an agent for a wealthy merchant dwelling in a nearby city. She wanders the countryside looking for good business opportunities for her master. She is discrete, and keeps her employer's details secret until a deal is done. With greying brown hair and sharp, inquisitive eyes Rekiina dresses well and travels with her trusted manservant, Silas Bramblehill (LN male halfling) who is himself a keen observer of goings on. The two act more like friends than master and servant. Rekiina carries a substantial sum of coin.
- 6. Kurt Vasara (LG male human paladin 2) is a questing knight searching for evil to slay and wrongs to right. While well equipped, Kurt does not carry much coin, trusting in his divine patron and the kindness of the common folk to provide for his daily needs. While serviceable, much of his gear is battered and dirty-he has spent much time on the road of late and is beginning to dream of a comfortable bed and a good cooked meal. Kurt is muscular and tall, but a long scar runs from his forehead over his left eye and down his cheek-it is a memento of a close encounter with orcs raiders a year or so ago.

- 7. Aleksi Tiera (N male human) deals in scrap metal and travels the land with his horse and cart collecting up broken items and the like to sell to blacksmiths and other craftsmen in nearby towns and city. He is a skilled woodworker, mason and general builder who barters his expertise for the scrap in which he deals. In truth, Aleksi is a spy for a powerful lord; being a scrap merchant is a cover for his real job–keeping an eye out for threats and opportunities his lord can exploit.
- 8. Orkas Kilak (LG male dwarf fighter 2) is on the way to a nearby castle to oversee some urgent repairs caused by a nasty case of subsidence. Orkas is a smidgeon racist, and when deep in his cups at the local tavern derides all human stonemasons and builders as shoddy workmen. He also complains about the weak ale and generally annoys the locals with his boorish behaviour.

Note: Most travellers are normal, mundane folk. If a traveller presented above has no class listed assume he or she is a typical commoner of the appropriate race.



Villages have many minor points of interest and flavour; they are not boring, sterile places. Each settlement has its own style and character which the GM can use to bring the place alive in the players' minds.

Use the table below, to add minor points of interest to further bring the village to life.

- 1. Deep wheel ruts scar the road leading through the village. In autumn or winter rainwater fills the ruts while in summer the sun bakes them hard. Incautious travellers could trip and fall if they do not take care.
- 2. A tall, wide-girthed tree throws its thick leafy boughs high out over the road. Graffiti, cut into the tree's bark, decorates its trunk and a swing rope hangs from one stout branch. The tree is a popular meeting place for courting couples and the like.
- 3. A crumbling, dilapidated barn stands amid a stand of dense weeds and saplings. Birds perch atop the barn's sagging roof, cawing loudly.
- 4. Weeds, brambles and other bushes grow along the road, providing many places for wildlife-and perhaps mischievous children-to hide.
- 5. Wide hedges of carefully tended bushes and trees separate the village fields.
- 6. A small, partially overgrown shrine dedicated to the god of travellers stands back from the main road leading into the village. The shrine looks little visited. Clearly the villagers do not maintain it.



- 7. Many small holes dot the ground in and around the village. Most are only a few feet deep and have clearly been hurriedly excavated. If they PCs ask around, they learn a party of adventurers passed through recently and were overheard discussing burying their treasure for safe keeping in the locality. The villagers are trying to find it!
- 8. A small, weather-beaten sign partially hidden by weeds, directs visitors to the village inn.
- 9. A half-full stone water trough and hitching post stands next to the road.
- 10. A small spring bubbles up from the ground, creating a small pond in a shallow depression. Bull rushes and the like surround the pond; children come here to swim and play in warm weather.
- 11. Neatly placed stones bound the major roads passing through the village. In the spring, wild flowers grow between the stones and the villagers take great care over the display.
- 12. A cart–one wheel broken–stands by the road; tools for repair lie nearby, but of the carter (or wheelwright) there is no sign.
- Some sections of the village streets are cobbled, but in most places the cobbles--if they ever existed-have sunk deep into the mud.
- 14. Thick man-high hedges bound this section of the road from the villagers' homes and kitchen gardens. The hedges effectively channel traffic; in the wet months, this section of road is a notorious quagmire; locals avoid it, if possible.
- 15. Over the years the passage of so many wagons, cattle and people has eroded the road which is now a sunken lane. Steps cut into its banks reinforced with wooden risers provide access to the nearby houses.
- 16. Three elm trees growing in an almost straight line stand a few feet back from the road; their boughs create an area of shadow and shelter. Weary travellers often rest here, before continuing their journey. Sometimes, children gather under the trees to sell knick knacks and refreshments, or to simple have fun.
- 17. Wind chimes hang from various trees scattered throughout the village's bounds and tinkle quietly in the breeze.
- 18. A small pond stands where three fields converge. A weeping willow's bough hangs low over the water; perceptive PCs can hear the faint quacking of ducks emanating from the pool.
- 19. Stone menhirs flank the roads entering the village. The menhirs are ancient boundary posts and predate the village; no one knows who raised them or why, but several have unreadable weathered sigils carved into their surfaces. Strangely, the village has not grown beyond the markers.
- 20. A large tree recently fell onto a farmer's home. Luckily, no one was inside at the time, but the house was wrecked. When the PCs arrive, the villagers are just organising themselves to remove the tree and start repairs. The farmer's family are staying with friends; if the PCs offer any help, the villagers are delighted to accept.

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