

THE PLUMBER'S DILEMMA

A ONE SHEET ADVENTURE FOR *HEROES OF TERRA*

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BACKGROUND

For the past five years, the peaceful Mandragoran Kingdom has been occupied by the invading soldiers of the dreaded Dragon Empire. While many villages escape with only a token garrison, the mandragorans live in constant fear of their reptilian overlords due to the kappas' foul tempers and violent impulses.

The village of Fourleaf is no different than most, save in one respect—unknown to the mandragorans or the kappa, a Warp Tunnel lies beneath the village. This jade-and-steel construct, a legacy of the prehistoric civilization of the Forebears, can act as instantaneous transportation from one place to another. The Tunnel is currently malfunctioning, disgorging monsters into Fourleaf, but whoever discovers it first could possibly repair it and use it to benefit their side in the ongoing Mushroom War.

SUMMARY

The heroes arrive in Fourleaf, a small apiary village in the Mandragoran Kingdom. As they try to resupply and gather their strength while avoiding the few kappa soldiers in town, they are witness to an attack by fire beetles and must act quickly to save the townsfolk.

After the battle, the heroes are informed that fire beetles aren't native to this part of Lemuria. One of the village elders suspects an open Warp Tunnel is the cause, which is why they've tried to keep the attacks a secret from the kappa until now. Unless the heroes were extremely efficient, the remnants of the fire beetle attack can't be hidden, putting them in a race against time with the kappa garrison.

When they find the Warp Tunnel, they are confronted with a choice—go through it and try to repair it from the far side in the hope of using it for their allies, or destroy it to keep it out of enemy hands. Either way, they will have to deal with the kappa soldiers all too soon...

SCENE 1: FOURLEAF

The heroes arrive in Fourleaf, a small mandragoran village of perhaps fifty or sixty people. In typical mandragoran fashion, the homes are interwoven with the native flora, grown from living wood and vines whenever possible. The village is centered on a large communal pool fed by a natural underground spring. The streets are cobblestoned and broad. On the edge of the village are the communal apiaries, home to the village's prize giant bees.

If the heroes are part of an ongoing campaign, Fourleaf is just the next village on their travels, a place to purchase food and gear up. Unfortunately, as is all too common in mandragoran villages these days, the heroes can see that a rough stone lodge has been built on the edge of town—a kappa garrison.

The kappa rarely patrol the village, preferring to keep to themselves and stay away from the "weaklings" they have been assigned to manage. Fourleaf has no tactical value or resources beyond its bees, so only eight kappa soldiers have been assigned to keep the populace pacified. The villagers are happy to tweak their noses by offering temporary lodging and trade to travelers, even to humans, who are supposed to be reported to local authorities immediately on sight.

Give the player characters a little bit of time to meet with the locals and see their friendliness firsthand before proceeding to...

SCENE 2: FIRE BEETLES!

The heroes have only been in Fourleaf for a short time when the screaming starts. They can see mandragoran villagers running away from something as well as catching sight of brief flashes of light. If the heroes have to be prodded into checking it out, have the villager they've been speaking to the most so far beg them to help. But really, heroes shouldn't need prodding to help out innocents in need!

On the far end of the town square, a group of mandragorans are helplessly watching a stand of trees burn. Some of them have buckets and there is plenty of water, but they can't get close to the fire because of the beetles. The fire beetles are agitated and hungry, looking to turn as much of Fourleaf into charcoal as possible so they can gorge on it.

Encounter: There is one fire beetle per player character. There is also a matter of putting out the fire. This is a Dramatic Task; see the details below.

Resolution: The encounter ends when the fire beetles are defeated and the blaze is extinguished or runs its course.

Fire Beetles

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Thick shell.
- **Bite:** Str+d6.
- **Fire Breath:** A fire beetle can breathe fire in a Cone Template. Any creature in this template must make an Agility roll opposed by the fire beetle's Shooting; a failure causes the targets to take 2d10 damage and risk catching fire (SWDE 88).
- **Size -1:** Fire beetles are about the size of large dogs
- **Slow:** Giant beetles have a running die of only d4.

Dramatic Task: Put Out the Blaze

Difficulty: -2 (standard)

Skills: Persuasion (to organize a bucket brigade), Repair (to improvise an aqueduct), Throwing (to splash water in precise places)

Duration: Five rounds

Successes Needed: Five

Complications: When a character draws a Clubs, they can either forfeit their action for the round or make an Agility or Vigor roll at -2. On a failed roll, they lose their action; a failed Agility roll causes them to catch fire, while a failed Vigor roll inflicts a level of Fatigue. A failed roll does not end the task, however.

Consequences: On a successful resolution, the heroes are hailed as friends and given free lodgings and food for their stay in Fourleaf. On a failure, the villagers will still grudgingly deal with them, but they suffer -2 Charisma during their stay.

SCENE 3: MEETING WITH ELDER CORK

The night of the blaze, the heroes are approached by an elderly mandragoran woman. She is Cork, one of the village's elders; her vine-hair has turned brownish with age and her skin is deeply

cracked and wrinkled. Cork informs the heroes that fire beetles are not native to this part of Lemuria, and that they must have arrived here through unnatural means. These are not the first strange monster attacks they've suffered lately, so *something* must be causing them.

Let the heroes make Common Knowledge rolls to figure out that a Warp Tunnel might be involved. Succeed or fail, Cork can tell them that her grandmother once told her about "old magic" lingering in the caves above Clover Lake, only a few minutes' walk from the village. Clever heroes might decide to backtrack the trail of the fire beetles; let them make Survival rolls at +2 (the beetles leave scorch marks as they walk).

Cork also warns the heroes that word is likely to get back to the kappa soldiers about the fire beetles before too long—and anything the heroes can suss out, they can too. It would be best if they left immediately instead of waiting for morning.

If they follow Cork's advice, go to *Scene 4: Lake Cave*; if they track the beetles, go to *Scene 5: The Crevice*.

SCENE 4: LAKE CAVE

There are many caves lining the shores of Clover Lake. Searching all of them would take days, if not weeks. A Survival or Notice roll at -2 can reveal one of the caves is filled with recent scorch marks and ash. Unfortunately, the cave that the fire beetles emerged in isn't empty; they fled from the cavern to get away from the ghost inhabiting it.

The ghost lingers in the cave invisibly when the heroes arrive, waiting for living things to draw near so it can steal their life force. It makes a Stealth roll against their group Notice when they enter, then makes another one on a single PC as it tries to take the Last Step (SWDE 27). If it succeeds at both of these rolls, it gets the Drop on that PC.

The ghost only fights until it has inflicted two wounds, then it immaterially retreats into the stone walls of the cave and does not come back. After dealing with the ghost—either by defeating it or letting it drain them—the heroes can proceed down the tunnels and eventually arrive at *Scene 5: The Crevice*.

Ghost

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d4

Skills: Fighting d4, Intimidate d8, Notice d8, Stealth d12+4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

- **Disruptive Touch:** Simply being touched by a ghost can cause a living creature's energy pattern to become disrupted. Ghosts feed through this contact, siphoning off life energy to sustain themselves. A touched creature must attempt a Vigor at -2 roll to avoid becoming Shaken.
- **Ethereal:** Ghosts are immaterial and can only take wounds from magical attacks.
- **Fear:** Ghosts cause Fear checks when they let themselves be seen.
- **Size -1:** Ghosts are somewhat smaller than humans, basically large balls of ectoplasm a few feet across.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; no additional damage from called shots.

SCENE 5: THE CREVICE

The heroes arrive at a rocky crack in the earth, leading deep underground. If the heroes come from above, they must make Climbing rolls; if they come from the lake, there is an underwater stretch that requires a Swimming roll. Failure on either roll results in Bumps and Bruises.

At the bottom of the crevice is a cavern whose walls are obviously remnants of some ancient structure. They are covered in inscriptions that Knowledge (History) or Common Knowledge (at -2) can reveal as Forebear hieroglyphs. At the far end of the cavern is a two-meter-tall green cylinder—a Warp Tunnel! Its mouth glows with a flickering light, showing that it is partially active. An artificer or floral sorcerer can make an arcane skill check at -4 to activate it, opening the portal fully.

Before they can open the portal, however, a group of four kappa soldiers manages to catch up to them! They came through the lake caves and lost one of their number to the ghost already. (The kappa actually left out before the heroes did, but they spent several hours searching the caves before they found the right one.) The kappa aren't interested in talking it out either!

If you think your heroes are tough enough to take it, make one of the surviving troopers an officer instead. An officer has the same statistics, except that he is a Wild Card and wields a massive two-handed hammer (Str+d10, Parry 6, Toughness 9).

Kappa Trooper

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d4, Notice d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9 (2) or 11 (4) vs. ranged; **Charisma:** -4

Gear: Spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1), medium shield (+1 Parry, +2 Armor vs. ranged attacks), breastplate (+2 Armor)

Edges: Phalanx Fighter

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Loyal, Weak Willed

Special Abilities:

- **Low Light Vision:** The kappa lands are dim and unpleasant places where the skies are constantly choked with ash. Kappa ignore penalties from Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Size +1:** Kappa stand head and shoulders taller than humans.

AFTERMATH

If the heroes defeat the kappa, they have control of the Warp Tunnel! What lies beyond it is a story for another day, if they decide to keep it intact at all. If they cannot activate it, it might be more tactically to their advantage to destroy it rather than leave it in a place where the enemy might get to take it. After all, it's only a matter of time before more kappa come to the village now. While the villagers will probably escape punishment (they aren't responsible for the actions of a bunch of vagabonds), the area will soon be swarming with soldiers loyal to the Dragon Emperor.

Destroying the Warp Tunnel is just a matter of persistence and time at this point. A fully working Warp Tunnel would resist harm, but this one is half-broken from age and decay anyway.

Either way, the heroes deserve something from all of this mess. Carefully searching the cavern will reveal a *storage block*. The mystic runes on the surface can be broken to spill out its contents: 2d20 gold coins, 1d10 days' worth of preserved food, and a precious green mandrake!

Green Mandrake: These mandrakes are highly sought after for their mystical healing properties. When the root's juice is squeezed onto a creature that has suffered a wound within the last hour, that creature is healed of one wound. Additionally, if used on a creature suffering from a disease, it receives an immediate Vigor check at +2 to overcome that illness.

For further adventures in the Mandragoran Kingdom, keep an eye out for *Heroes of Terra: The Mushroom War!*