

ADVENTURES & INTERLUDES



JAMES M. SPAHN



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A compilation for
the hero's journey, second edition

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Dedication

For the Tea Kettle
We had the greatest adventures,
both at the table and away from it.

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INTRODUCTION

Adventure.

Whether they make one late for dinner or something you crave, at the heart of the great tales and myths that endure through the ages is a memorable adventure. Adventures need not be grand, world spanning affairs. They can be small things that happen right in our own backyards. What makes them worthy of being remembered is that an adventure tells the ones swept up in its wake something meaningful about themselves.

That dragon? That's an insert for our own greedy desires that slumber atop a mountain of imaginary gold. If we gave in to that greed we could be magnificent and powerful. We could earn renown and claim greatness for ourselves. But at what cost? We might not breathe fire and capture maidens, but we would likely spit vile words without thought to the hearts and minds of others. We might not capture maidens, but we would lock away the innocence of our hearts in some dark, dank part of our soul until it died from grief and sorrow.

Those strange fey deep in the heart of the woods? They're the fear of the strange and unknown world that lay just beyond the familiar comforts of the mundane. It's beautiful and magical. It's incomprehensible and enchanting. We could give in to the song of the unknown, but if we go too far into the realms of Fairie, we will inevitably be changed forever. Will that change be for good, or for ill? Well, you don't know until it's already too late.

Adventures and Interludes features eight short tales yet to be told, submitted for Narrators to draw their players into the kinds of stories that will (it is the author's hope) inspire the same sense of wonder and adventure found in classic fairy stories and folklore. Along the way you'll find things both familiar and strange - and by the end of it all you may not be the hero you were before the journey began...

- *James M. Spahn*

June 22nd, 2020

chapter one

USING THIS BOOK

✧ RUNNING ADVENTURES FOR THE HERO'S JOURNEY

Unlike many traditional pregenerated adventures for fantasy role-playing games, adventures for *The Hero's Journey* do not overly rely on formalized and highly detailed encounters or room-by-room dungeon crawls - though a few short maps are included on rare occasion. Instead, each chapter is broken down into a few key scenes that are described in their thematic elements, key supporting characters, and how they drive the adventure forward. This allows the Narrator to easily modify the adventure's content on the fly to suit their own legendarium and the unique strengths and weaknesses of the player characters.

Each adventure begins with a detailed history so Narrators understand how the situation presented to the player characters has come to be and to reinforce that they are part of a living, breathing world that existed before them and will continue on when they have moved on to other adventures. The actions of the player characters will have real consequences on the lives of those around them, rippling through the ages for good or for ill.

The adventure is structured much like a story, with a Prologue, Chapters which contain Scenes, and an Epilogue. The Prologue provides context to the player characters as to why they are involved in the adventure and provides a hook to get them invested in the adventure. Each Chapter is presented in a fairly open ended fashion to the Narrator and provides them with details regarding the action of that chapter, whether it be taken by one of the supporting characters in the adventure, in reaction to actions taken by the player characters, or something that occurs independently of the two. Typically, these story beats within the chapter are called Scenes. Chapters are often centered on a single location which features several scenes, then moving into a

new location in the following chapter. However, the true sign that the adventure has progressed into a new chapter is the Climactic Event.

The Climactic Event serves as both an exciting event which occurs within the context of the adventure and as a bridge between chapters. Each Climactic Event builds upon the last until an adventure reaches its climax and resolution.

The Curse of Cormac's Hollow, The Boggart's Boy, and Goblin Promises are all adventures.

The Difference Between Adventures and Interludes

Several of the chapters in this book are noted as “adventures” and others as “interludes.” Adventures are larger in scale and longer in form than interludes. They include Climactic Events at the end of each chapter and generally take around three four-hour sessions of play to complete. Interludes, on the other hand, are shorter in length and include no Climactic Events. They are also designed to easily be dropped into an existing legendarium to help cover enough information to fill a single session of play.

Troll Knoll, Astride the Beanstalk, Errants of Dunvegan, The Midnight Rider of Loch Dearmad, and Beastspeaker, Birdsinger are interludes.

A NOTE ABOUT SHORTHAND

The only book necessary to make use of the material found in *Adventures and Interludes* is the core rule book for *The Hero's Journey, Second Edition*. Throughout the text of this book many references to that rules set will be abbreviated as *THJ2e*.

The Implied world

Many of the adventures and interludes in this book refer to other locations that do not appear in these pages. For example, several of the more rural villages often have supporting characters make mention of a metropolitan city known as Port Corsai. But Port Corsai's exact location and nature is never detailed in this book. Another example is the in-world board game of Ten Stone, which is mentioned in both *The Boggart's Boy* and *Beastspeaker, Birdsinger*. This is by design in order to create a sense of the greater world within the context of the adventures

themselves. There is an implied greater world outside the scope of adventure, but by creating touchstones with only the tiniest details this allows the Narrator to rename or detail such ancillary locations to suit their own legendarium and they should feel free to do so.

This implied world has only a few firm elements, most of which are already touched on in the core rules of *The Hero's Journey, Second Edition*: Magic (in all its forms) and those who make use of are rare and wondrous, monsters and the fey are strange and dangerous, and most of the world is a wild, untapped wilderness with a few scant villages and kingdoms scattered across the land.

Supporting Characters

Very few supporting characters are given formal stat blocks in an adventure. This is largely because they are meant to serve, first and foremost, as a vehicle to drive the story of the adventure forward. Their statistics within the game are secondary. In most instances, supporting characters are described in the following elements:

- ♦ **Role:** This is a supporting character's role in an adventure. It often includes a brief description of the individual.
- ♦ **Reference:** A description of which entry in Chapter Eight: Menagerie of *The Hero's Journey, Second Edition* is most appropriate for that character. Narrators are always encouraged to modify those entries to suit their own legendarium. In some cases a new reference will be provided for unique beings newly introduced during an adventure that were not previously featured in other products. This new information is detailed in Chapter Ten of this book, beginning on page 179.
- ♦ **Drives:** This section will include a brief description of a supporting character's goals, loyalties, and objectives. This could include other individuals, such as "Protect my Sister Elsa," or more general desires such as "Steal the King's Gold." Drives are always listed in their order of importance to that supporting character.
- ♦ **Notes:** This is a miscellaneous entry that will list any important information (such as dark secrets, or unusual items on their person) not detailed in other sections.

Some supporting characters may not receive a write-up like this at all, as they only serve as background characters, or do not contribute significantly to the adventure. The Narrator should feel free to flesh them out further as necessary to suit their own legendarium or to add

new supporting characters at their leisure. In the rare instance that a full stat block is required for a supporting character, they are featured in Chapter Ten: Bestiary, beginning on page 179.

Maps

Several of the locations detailed in this product do not include corresponding maps - most notably the villages of Loughwood in *The Curse of Cormac's Hollow* and Westwick in *The Boggart's Boy*, as well as the dwarf mines that are explored in *Goblin Promises*. This is intentional and has been done by design. *The Hero's Journey*, while being rooted in classic adventure fantasy games, is not a game that devotes too much time to the details of "dungeon crawling." Instead, where a map is not provided, the Narrator is encouraged to describe the location as it best suits their individual legendarium and use the descriptions featured within each chapter as a guideline. These are your stories in your world, so don't be afraid to make them your own.

Closing an Adventure or Interlude and Rewards

After the adventure ends, the Narrator should review Table 5-1: Experience Point Rewards on page 70 of *THJ2e* and provide them with the appropriate rewards. The Narrator should always look for loose ends at the close of an adventure or interlude, as well as any elements that the players seemed interested in having their characters explore more deeply. This allows the Narrator to continue to use the material in this book to expand and continue the story in a natural manner that helps create narrative flow.



chapter Two

THE CURSE OF CORMAC'S HOLLOW

✧ HISTORY

The village of Loughwood is a rural hamlet far from the civilized parts of the world. This tiny, fiercely independent community makes their living through a combination of sheep herding, fishing from the local river, and most of all from harvesting lumber from the nearby forest of Cormac's Hollow. While some trade is made with larger communities during the spring and summer seasons, the people of Loughwood prefer to keep to themselves.

Loughwood began as nothing more than a homestead for the village's founder Carlilse Loughlin. Indeed, the village is named for its founder. He and his pregnant wife Anna came into the then untamed wilderness and suffered through a long, hard winter. Anna gave birth to twins named Cormac and Cara upon Winter Solstice and the darkness and the frost seemed ready to claim them all. It was then that Carlilse and Anna made a terrible bargain. Going to the edge of the woods with their newborn children swaddled against the frost and wind, they called to the fey they knew to dwell in the woods. The blizzard parted and there came forth a dark and terrible Fey Queen named Cailleach Beare. They begged for her aid against the horrors of winter and Queen Beare agreed, but not before a terrible bargain was struck. She gave one of the children a small kiss upon the forehead and took the other into her arms. The instant she faded into the shadows of the midnight woods with the swaddled newborn, the snowstorm abated, and winter's wrath was slaked. Above the silence of snow the only sound was that of the screaming babe in Anna's arms and the soft weeping of a mother whose soul had been torn asunder by this horrid contract. Before returning home, Carlilse and Anna named the forest Cormac's Hollow in honor of their lost son.

The promise sworn to Queen Beare was that as long as the true mortal blood of Loughlin tended the land and the wood, winter would never wound the surrounding land. Snow would fall and seasons would change, but the cold touch of frost would never be so terrible as to destroy the mortals that dwelt there. And so did Carlilse and Anna begin to welcome new settlers to their region surrounding their homestead in hopes that the sacrifice of their son would purchase peace for several generations.

Settlers did come and soon the village of Loughwood was established, but Carlilse and Anna never again had children. Cara, whether driven to madness by the kiss of Queen Beare or by the loss of the brother she never knew, abandoned her family's homestead soon after their death and took up residence in a crude hut somewhere in Cormac's Hollow. Within a few decades, Cara's name was forgotten, and she was known simply as "The Witch" due to her strange magical experiments and alchemical concoctions.

The truth is that Cara knows that, as told by her parents, when she dies that winter will return to Hallowood and the people who call it home will be destroyed by the promise of Queen Beare. In spite of all her efforts, she is nearly one hundred years old now. And soon death will claim her unless another Loughlin can be found. But there is only one Loughlin who could still be alive in Loughwood, and he now dwells in the fey courts deep within the woods that bear his name...

Adventure Outline

The Curse of Cormac's Hollow is broken into a prologue, three chapters, and an epilogue. An overview of each chapter is detailed below.

Prologue: The Snowy Valley The player characters have a brief opportunity to interact with the traveling merchant and his daughter who have hired them to serve as aids and bodyguards in order to set the stage for the adventure.

Chapter One: Loughwood in Winter After winding their way down a snowy mountain pass while serving as guards for a small trading caravan, the player characters take refuge from the fierce winter storms in the large forested valley of Loughwood where the village of the same name is located. While the snows beyond the wooded valley grow fiercer by the day, locals whisper of The Witch of Cormac's Hollow and say her curse has brought the snows down upon them. They ask the player characters if, in return for lodging for the winter and a small payment, they'd be willing to find the Witch's cottage in Cormac's

Hollow and get her to calm the brutal storms. Enquiring around the village, the player characters are able to learn bits and pieces about the history of Loughwood Village, the Witch, and a few rumors as to the dangers of Cormac's Hollow.

Climactic Event: Just after the sun has set, a pack of wolves come out of the woods and attack Jorn and Rhi as they are returning from their business with Calder. The player characters must rise to their defense. The wolves put up a fierce, but brief fight, before fleeing back into the forest. Astute player characters, and Argyle the lumberjack, will note the wolves are fleeing in the direction of the Witch's Cottage...

Chapter Two: Into the Woods With the winter storms growing worse by the day, the player characters set off into Cormac's Hollow in search of the Witch's Cottage. Along the way they'll encounter many dangers of the wood before realizing the Cottage can only be found by those the Witch permits to do so. After passing her tests they find a strangely warm welcome from the Witch, who reveals to them the truth of what is happening in Loughwood Valley and what must be done to prevent winter from claiming Loughwood Village and the forest forever.

Climactic Event: A Fetch arrives at the cottage and attempts to keep Cara from leaving until she dies to prevent her from finding a way to save Cormac and extending the pact made between her father and Queen Beare. It stalks outside the cottage, bent on keeping her contained but has no gumption about gleefully slaying the player characters who have no place in its agreement with the Fey Queen..

Chapter Three: The Court of Queen Beare With the guidance of Cara the Witch, the player characters arrive at Dùn Geamhradh, Winter's Fortress and home of Queen Beare. As they draw closer, the weather grows more and more brutal before breaking into a strangely eerie and beautiful winter paradise. It is a castle that fell to ruin long ago, but has become covered in thick armor of ice and there the player characters must prove themselves worthy of both attending Queen Beare's court and saving her most beloved Consort from a century of service.

Climatic Event: The characters must pass three tests set before them by Queen Beare: the Test of Etiquette, the Test of Wits, and the Test of Mettle. The final test forces them to face off against Cormac, who they must defeat without killing him, if they hope to save Loughwood Village.

Epilogue: If the player characters prove themselves worthy and are able to free Cormac and return to Loughwood, the brutal winter will subside, and the village is saved. If not (or if Cormac is killed), a terrible winter takes hold of the village and many villagers will starve and freeze. If the village is saved the locals will try to convince the player characters to stay until the spring thaw arrives. This gives them several months to rest and recover from the ordeal of their adventure. On the final day of winter, the Witch Cara will walk from Cormac's Hollow with her brother to integrate him into the community. If the village is saved, she dies that night warm and at peace in her cottage. If it is not, then she goes to Dùn Geamhradh where she freezes, an eternally screaming ice sculpture in the court of Queen Beare. Her spirit will rise as a Banshee and haunt the husk of a frozen village that was once Loughwood.

Prologue: The snowy valley

The adventure begins with the player characters serving as escort and guard to a trader named Jorn Tavish and his young daughter Rhi. Jorn is a middle-aged human man with a bit of a paunch and a jovial disposition. He's easily likeable and a fair businessman. His daughter is barely nine years old, though plucky and eager for tales of adventure. The two share a family resemblance, though Rhi's wild auburn hair comes from her dear, departed mother. Jorn has hired the player characters to aid him in the transport of iron goods that originated in the far-off city of Port Corsai. The cargo is mostly hand tools, along with a few iron ingots. He hopes to trade with the people of Loughwood Village for lumber or wool. To begin the adventure, Narrators are encouraged to read or paraphrase the following text:

It's been a long journey north for you and your companions and along the way the golden hues of autumn have given way to the sharp bite of winter. Crossing the last of the mountain passes, you have guided the merchant Jorn Tavish, his daughter Rhi, and their wagon of iron goods to the Loughwood Valley. Serving as guard to Jorn, his daughter, his cargo, and even his dutiful draft horse Mortimer has proven an uneventful job that has earned you easy coin and a nice tour of the northern wilds. But as you crest the last pass out of the mountains and gaze on the vast, forested valley below you can't help but look forward to sleeping on a mattress and under the roof of an inn for the first time in weeks.

Thick, heavy flakes fall from gray, cloudy skies and the sight of smoke rising from hearth fires burning in the village below hints at the warmth to come. Jorn smiles placing a reassuring hand on his daughter's shoulder

as you descend into the valley. An hour later the bustle of a lively, if small, village surrounds you. Lumberjacks are turning freshly felled trees into timber, while fishermen bring in the day's catch from the nearby river. Log homes with thick thatched roofs are packed closely together and as you wind your way through the village, Jorn finally brings Mortimer and his cart of goods to a stop with a loud "Woah, boy!"

He turns to you and your companions, producing a purse from his pouch. "Payment as promised, my friends. Fifty gold pieces. I'd recommend spending a few of those coins at the Frosted Oak, there. They've fine rooms and an excellent mutton stew. Now, if you'll pardon me I need to make some trade arrangements before settling in at the Oak myself."

After making his brief good-byes, Jorn goes to Loughwood's blacksmith, Calder, to make his trades. Rhi gives the player characters a warm smile and even a hug or two to them before following her father. This leaves the player characters free to explore the village in Chapter One. Some scenes include italicized text that can be read or paraphrased by the Narrator to describe the scene for the players.

Supporting Characters

Jorn Tavish

Role: Human merchant, friendly face in a village of strangers.

Reference: Peasant (see *THJ2e*, page 127)

Drives: Protect Rhi, Drive a Fair Bargain for His Wares

Notes: In spite of being well-traveled, Jorn is no adventurer. He is armed only with a dagger.

Rhi Tavish

Role: Human child, an innocent believer in heroes.

Reference: Peasant (see *THJ2e*, page 127)

Drives: Convince the player characters to do the right thing, make sure her father is safe, hear fun stories.

Notes: Rhi loves new places and strangers, and will approach and talk to almost anyone.

chapter one: Loughwood in winter

With Jorn and Rhi finishing their business, the player characters are free to explore the village. Assume for the sake of simplicity that they have arrived in Loughwood Village around noon and that visiting each location and interacting with the locals takes about an hour of time. The sun will set in about five hours.

Scene One: Exploring the Village

Described below are several locations in Loughwood Village, along with a few key supporting characters. The Narrator should feel free to add new locations and supporting characters as they see fit, but should remember that the village is a small, rustic community and most locals are a bit wary of outsiders - especially non-human outsiders. In fact, many of the people of Loughwood Village are hostile and fearful (though not openly violent) to Elves and Changelings.

Location: The Frosted Oak

The Frosted Oak is one of the few two-story buildings in Loughwood Village. A carved wooden sign hangs above the door featuring the image of a large oak tree covered in snow. It is a cozy inn with a roaring hearth and simply, hearty food and stout ale. Run by the husband and wife team of Sean and Ella MacConmara and their teenage son Alden. It includes a large common room on the first floor and half a dozen cozy rooms for rent on the second floor. A roofed stable is attached to one side of the building for travelers to rest their horses. During the day, the Oak does little business, but when the sun goes down and the chill of winter sets in then most locals gather in the common room to swap stories and share fellowship. If Loughwood Village has a heart, surely it is the Frosted Oak.

Ella offers a warm welcome to the player characters when they arrive, especially if they mention their association with Jorn, while Sean is cool and polite. Alden is almost openly fearful of the strangers - especially if any elves, half-elves, or changelings are among the characters. Ella will gladly chat it up with the player characters if they rent a room or purchase a meal. She mentions that the snows have been getting worse and then makes a warding gesture with her hand, though she will politely refuse to speak why she did so and make an excuse about having other work to do if asked why she did so.

Sean is a bit brusquer, bringing food and drink to the player characters, but never offering more than a pleasantry or acknowledgment of

any requests made of him. Alden, though fearful, can be coaxed to reveal that it's bad luck to be talking with strangers, for fear they might be in league with The Witch. Convincing Alden to reveal even this requires either good roleplaying on the part of the player characters or a Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw. Before Alden can say more, his father growls that he has work to be done and need not bother the customers.

Taking a room upstairs for the night costs a single gold piece, though one room can house up to four people if they squeeze in comfortably. Each room has two feather mattress beds and room on the floor for blankets to be laid out for two more. This price includes breakfast (hard cheese, day old bread, and porridge) and dinner (mutton, fish soup, and fresh bread). All meals are served with a mug of Sean's ale.

During the evening, many of the locals found at other locations, as well as any supporting characters introduced by the Narrator to serve as village residents can be found crowding the tables of the Frosted Oak. How friendly they are depending on previous interactions with the player characters. If the Narrator is unsure of how a local will interact with one of the player characters, have that character attempt a Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw, though changelings, elves, and half-elves will have Disadvantage to this roll. As a rule, locals are nervous about the growing snows and fearful that it is caused by the witch that lives somewhere in the Loughwood who has set a curse upon the people. The Narrator can either paraphrase such information or use Table 2-3: Loughwood Rumors to provide information to the player characters.

Sean MacConmara

Role: Human tavern keeper, distrustful of outsiders.

Reference: Peasant (see *THJ2e*, page 127)

Drives: Keep his family safe, make sure the Frosted Oak is a safe and welcoming place for all the locals, keep outsiders away..

Notes: Keeps a nasty cudgel under the bar that is actually a Balanced Club.

Ella MacConmara

Role: Human matron, a welcoming face to all new arrivals.

Reference: Peasant (see *THJ2e*, page 127)

Drives: Make sure those who come to the Frosted Oak are comfortable, keep Sean from getting too cross, help Alden find a suitable girlfriend.

Notes: Makes a mean roast mutton and fantastic baked bread.

Alden MacConmara

Role: Human young adult, nervous about what's in the forest.

Reference: Peasant (see *THJ2e*, page 127)

Drives: Avoid trouble and stay safe, convince his mother to stay out of his love life..

Notes: Enjoys tending to the stables and helping animals.

Location: The Lumberyard

On the edge of the village is a growing field of stumps filled with the bustle of men in heavy woolen clothes working hard to fell trees. As the player characters approach, the cry of "Timber!" rings out and a great crash fills the field as a freshly cut tree falls to the ground. A dozen men then set to with saws and axes, hacking away in an effort to turn fresh cut wood into timber for construction. Among them, a barrel-chested man with a wild gray beard approaches as the player characters. Unlike most locals, he seems gregarious and friendly. Introducing himself as Argyle and asks the player characters what brings them to Loughwood and to his lumberyard in particular.

Though his eyes will linger on any changelings, elves, or half-elves present among the player characters, he is not rude or cold to any of them. In fact, he's quite friendly. He will gladly chat it up with the group, though only for a few minutes. He is working after all. If asked about the snows, he will tell the player characters that they have gotten worse in the past few days but that doesn't stop him or his crew from working. He is, however, concerned about wolves he's seen watching him and his crew from the edge of the forest. Argyle knows his men are strong, but they're not warriors and more than a few of them are fearful that the wolves are spies for the witch of Cormac's Hollow. If asked for more info about the witch, Argyle makes a warding gesture and politely (but firmly) tells the characters he must get back to his work.

Other lumberjacks all give the characters gruff dismissals and focus on their work.

Argyle

Role: Human lumberjack, self-appointed protector of the village.

Reference: Peasant (see *THJ2e*, page 127)

Drives: Keep everyone in the village safe, make sure his men stick to their job, keep an eye on strangers that come to town.

Notes: Carries an axe handed down from his father, even when he's not working. Doesn't know it's a Valiant Battle Axe.

Location: The Smokey

This squat stone building serves as the smokey (sometimes called a smokehouse) where fish and meat is cured and stored for the winter. It's a single room with a heavy door and no windows. Inside meat of various cuts hang on wooden frames and a large, flameless fire pit covers most of the floor. A bearded man, wearing gloves and covering a shank of mutton with a thick layer of salt is working when the player characters approach. He is brisk and rude, refusing to even speak with the player characters if an elf, half-elf, or changeling is among them. Even if this is not the case, a Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw must be made at Disadvantage to get him to open up. Introducing himself as Liam, he tells the player characters that winter's never come this early to Loughwood in all his years in the village, and that with the noises coming out of Cormac's Hollow, he fears the wolves may come into the village in search of food. He is more concerned about his wife and pragmatic matters than any foolish rumors of witches and fairies.

Liam

Role: Human butcher, doesn't believe in fairies.

Reference: Peasant (see *THJ2e*, page 127)

Drives: Keep his wife and young son safe, make sure the village has food for the winter, keep strange folk from stirring up trouble.

Notes: Always smells vaguely of blood and smoke.

Location: Tanner

This single room is built on the shores of the river near Loughwood Village. The disgusting scent of animal hides being tanned fills the air and several of these skins are stretched across wooden frames outside the house. A visibly pregnant woman is working, dipping a fresh hide in a bucket of reagents to prepare it for tanning and her husband is inside when the characters arrive. She is polite, but cold to the player characters. She nervously introduces herself as Maggie Connelly and says her husband Thomas is inside finishing his meal. Both Thomas and Maggie have little to offer the player characters, other than a few rumors and though they are a bit distant they will give the characters a few minutes of their time -- though never invite them in.

If the player characters remain polite and patient and inquire as to why Maggie seems so worried, she looks to her husband and then back to the player characters. She reluctantly tells the characters that she is fearful that her unborn child will be cursed by the witch that lives in Cormac's Hollow - as they say should snow ever fall on the night of

a full moon, the witch's curse will be released on the children of the village. But Maggie laments, none will dare to brave the Hollow to drive the witch from her cottage.

Thomas Connelly

Role: Human tanner, humble villager.

Reference: Peasant (see *THJ2e*, page 127)

Drives: Keep his wife and unborn child safe, make sure his business does well.

Notes: Is polite and soft-spoken, even to strangers.

Maggie Connelly

Role: Human mother-to-be,, fearful of the witch's curse.

Reference: Peasant (see *THJ2e*, page 127)

Drives: Protect her unborn child, live a simple and happy life with her husband.

Notes: Sings lullabies to her unborn child when she thinks no one is looking.

Location: Smithy

A small smithy is set up beside an equally humble cottage. A heavily muscled human man in his forties is tending the forge, making a saw blade. In spite of the cold, he wears only breeches, boots, and a large leather apron. A crude knife is sheathed at his hip. A well-trimmed black beard covers most of his face. As the characters approach he offers them a surprisingly warm smile which fades if he notices any elves, half-elves, or changelings among their company. He introduces himself as Calder and assumes that because they are not local they must be the ones who helped Jorn and Rhi on their journey.

Calder puts on a friendly front, even if the characters have elven or fey characters among them. Still, his hand often lingers near the knife at his hip, which is actually a Cold Iron dagger. He has little for sale in the way of weapons, save for axes and knives which the town makes use of for their work. He does, however, keep an ample supply of tools and, if paid twice the price listed in *The Hero's Journey, Second Edition* can forge any metal weapons and armor - though this process can take anywhere from a few days to a month depending on the complexity of the job.

If asked about the growing winter storms or the witch, Calder sighs and says that like everyone else in the village he is worried, and he fears that the witch that took his wife last autumn will use these storms to freeze the whole village. A Bearing-based Saving Throw or good role-playing will get the full story out of him: His wife went into the woods early last autumn to pick the last of some wild berries for the winter and never came back. That year the first snows fell in Loughwood, though they were light compared to even this one heavy snow they are receiving now.

If asked about Jorn and Rhi, Calder brightens and says they're good folk for foreigners and have always treated him fairly. He imagines his child, who was never born because Calder's wife Mara was lost, would have had her hopeful spirit.

Calder

Role: Human blacksmith, a businessman most of all.

Reference: Peasant (see *THJ2e*, page 127)

Drives: Always make a fair deal, try to take care of the people in the village since he couldn't save his wife.

Notes: Keeps a Cold Iron dagger in his belt.

Location: Riverbank

As the players approach the riverbank, they see a single long dock jutting from its banks, large enough for up to six large rowboats to moor. The river itself is filled with ice flows as it is beginning to freeze from the cold. Several boats are making their way to shore, angry fishermen cursing the early freeze from preventing them from getting a good catch for the day. Most of them will brush off the player characters as annoying outsiders who have no business in Loughwood Village, though if they persist, the best they will get is a terse request to make themselves useful by unfreezing the river, stopping the damned storms, or killing the cursed witch.

Going into the water is a dangerous affair at best. A single round in the water inflicts a point of damage on character, or twice as much if they are wearing metal armor. Even once out of the water, this damage will not heal until they've managed to get to a place where they can warm themselves.

None of the fishermen will lend their boats and attempting to steal one will result in facing off against a pack of a dozen angry men with fishing spears who are wary of strangers and interlopers.

Fishermen

Role: Human fishermen, rugged and honest workers.

Reference: Peasant (see *THJ2e*, page 127)

Drives: Pull in a good catch, mind their own business.

Notes: All of them are armed with fishing spears, which do damage as a spear.

Location: Villager Homes

The homes in Loughwood Village are mostly single room log cabins with heavy thatched roofs. They are tightly packed together for protection from winds off the nearby river. During the day most are tended to by wives and have children playing and helping with chores (such as pulling root vegetables). Most locals have little to say to strangers such as the player characters.

Players foolish enough to attempt to break into a home or force their way in will find the women and children of the village are quite capable of defending themselves with knives and cudgels. Besides, Loughwood Village is not overly wealthy and nothing of extraordinary value can be found in any of the locals' homes.

Villagers

Role: Human locals, simple peasants.

Reference: Peasant (see *THJ2e*, page 127)

Drives: Tend to their families, mind their own business..

Notes: All villagers carry a dagger, which serves as a tool but can be used as a weapon in a pinch.

Climactic Event: Wolf Attack The Climactic Event of this chapter occurs sometime near sunset on the day the player characters arrive in Loughwood Village. After exploring the village or spending their afternoon relaxing in the Frosted Oak, they hear the scream of a child ring out just after sunset. Rushing out into the snow-blanketed village, they see a horrible sight. The Narrator can read or paraphrase the italicized text below, or simply use it as a guide to set the scene.

A radiant chill has fallen over Loughwood Village accompanied by the hollow song of winter wind moaning through the trees. Nearly a foot of snow has fallen since your arrival and the cold light of a full moon is reflected by the new blanket of white. A terrified cry rings out across the town, the sound of a terrified child. As you and your friends turn towards the sound and trudge

through the icy snow, you see that a pack of wolves has come out of the woodlands which surround the village and are encircling the terrified young girl Rhi. She is kneeling in the snow, eyes filled with tears as she clutches the form of her father who lay bloody and wounded in the snow. One of the wolves' snout steams with hot breath and fresh blood as the pack moves in for the kill.

There are a number of wolves equal to the player characters, plus one additional wolf. If the characters are 4th level or higher, add an additional three wolves to this total. If they are higher than 7th, add an additional five. The wolves are focused on Rhi, though as soon as the player characters reveal themselves to be a threat the wolves change their focus. They fight aggressively, though they are still wild beasts and if half of them are slain, the remainder will flee into the woods.

During the battle, any player characters that take an action to closely examine the wolves or any who examine the slain corpses of those who are defeated notice their eyes are an icy blue and their normally gray or brown fur is beginning to turn white at the tips. Indeed, something unnatural appears to have taken hold of them.

If the battle goes poorly and the player characters do not attempt to protect Jorn and Rhi, both are slain, and their bodies are dragged into the woods. If the player characters rush to their defense, Rhi can be saved as the wolves turn their attention to the newly arrived threat - but Jorn has been fatally wounded and by the time the player characters have arrived on the scene he is already beyond help. He will die one round after the battle is over, but not before making a gurgling, sorrowful apology to his daughter and reaching up to put one bloodstained hand on her cheek.

The townsfolk stand around in sorrowful shock at the situation, while Rhi becomes enraged with grief. She grabs the dagger at her father's belt and storms towards the woods in a weeping rage. If the player characters don't move to stop her, then one of the locals does. In either case, she tells them she's going into the woods to find those beasts and kill them.

She can be calmed through creative roleplaying or if any player character makes a successful Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw. Once calmed her shoulders slump and she asks the player characters if they'll help her bury her father. After hours of digging into the snow and nearly frozen ground, she wordlessly turns towards the Frosted Oak and doesn't touch a morsel of the meal provided by Ella.

The townsfolk present at the Frosted Oak make whispers of the wolves being servants of the witch and after her long silence, just as the player characters are about to retire for the night Rhi pleads with them to go into the forest to find the witch and put an end to this so no one else in Loughwood has to lose a loved one. Once they agree, she nods and simply says "You'll set out at dawn then? Because if not, then I will. Alone, if I have to."

Wolves

Role: Dangerous predators driven from the cold woodlands.

Reference: Wolf (see *THJ2e*, page 190)

Drives: Feast upon fresh flesh, terrify humans, survive the winter.



Chapter Two: Into the Woods

Setting off into the woods the next morning, the player characters must discover the location of the witch's cottage and put an end to her attacks and fear mongering. But no one in the village seems to know the location of her cottage and the snowfall has only worsened overnight. If the player characters do not find their way quickly, the cold may claim them - or something far worse. Before they formally depart into the woods, the Narrator should make sure to inquire if there is anything the player characters want to do before leaving such as bring extra winter clothing, fresh bundles of sticks for firewood, or inquire with the locals about the potential location of the witch's cottage.

Supplies are easy enough to purchase, as long as they are within the means of the town as detailed in Chapter One, but the whereabouts of the witch's cottage are unknown to anyone in the village save that it is "somewhere near the heart of the wood." The player characters will be left to their own cleverness and resolve if they are to find the strange crone that lives in the frozen wilds.

Dawn rises cold and gray. A foot of snow blankets the Village of Loughwood as you and your friends make your final preparations. Several townsfolk look upon you with grim faces as you step out into the biting wind and heavy white flakes that cut through the sky. Only Rhi offers a small smile as she watches from the window of the Frosted Oak.

Reign of Winter

The heavy snow and biting wind take their toll on even the hardest traveler. Characters who travel in the cold without proper winter clothing lose a single point of Endurance each hour in the almost unnatural cold. Moreover, camping at night requires a fire if they are to survive. In fact, camping at night without a fire prevents a character from healing naturally from any Endurance lost and everyone must make a saving throw or suffer 2d4 points of damage from exposure overnight. A fire staves off the cold, but makes Relaxing Around the Campfire a difficult thing, imposing Disadvantage on all attempts to do so.

The snow itself grows heavier each day, reducing visibility. All ranged attacks are made at Disadvantage and ranged weapons cannot be fired beyond their base listed range in *The Hero's Journey, Second Edition*. Moreover, all player characters have a +2 on their chance to be surprised unless they are wearing Winter-Kissed armor or carrying an Heirloom which staves off the effects of cold.

Traversing Cormac's Hollow

Crossing the Hollow and finding the Witch's Cottage is primarily driven by the pace that the Narrator wishes to set for the adventure. It should take no less than a single day, but it is unlikely the player characters are going to survive for more than a week in these harsh conditions. If the Narrator needs a hard and fast timeline for how long it takes for the player characters to locate the Witch's Cottage, simply roll 1d4 and add a number equal to the highest level character in the group to determine the number of days they spend traversing the frozen, snow covered forest.

Each day of travel imposes not only the risks and dangers described in the Reign of Winter section above, but the Narrator should also roll on Table 2-1: Cormac's Hollow Encounters once per day. Column one of this table determines what type of encounter occurs, while column two determines when the encounter occurs.

Cormac's Hollow and The Story

Though rules are presented for running the journey of the player characters through the dangers of Cormac's Hollow, the Narrator should remember that this part of the story is not designed to be a simple series of rolls on a chart and random encounters with a shared theme. Chapter Two of this adventure is designed to show that the wild places of the world are dangerous and rightfully feared. As such, the Narrator should use this journey to show that point during the game without arbitrarily killing player characters or letting things break down into monotony. Once this point has been proven and the players have come to understand that they have left the safety of the village far behind and are now walking into danger, then feel free to let them discover the Witch's Cottage and continue to the next threshold of the adventure.

Characters that make successful use of their Forestry ability each day (if they have it) may choose to avoid having a daily encounter entirely as they are able to locate the dangers of the woods and avoid both beasts and natural dangers. Optionally, Narrators may allow characters with an applicable profession to make an Insight or Resolve-based Attribute Saving Throw to gain a similar benefit, though this Saving Throw is made with Disadvantage.

Table 2-1: Cormac's Hollow Encounters

Roll (1d6)	Event
1	Wolves
2	Frozen Corpse
3	Bear
4	Hidden Barrow
5	Lost in the Snow
6	None

Cormac's Hollow Encounters

Wolves: A pack of wolves stalks through the snow, surrounding the party and moving in for the kill. They fight as a pack, using their abilities to best effect. The number appearing is 1d4, plus a number equal to the highest-level character in the party.

Frozen Corpse: The player characters find the bodies of 1d4 villagers long frozen in the snow. Some appear to have been gnawed upon by predators and there is a 5% chance that each of them has been corrupted by the foul winter of the wood and will rise as a Skeleton and attack the party if disturbed (see *THJ2e*, page 193). The corpses do not carry formal weapons, save for the axes which they use to fell trees and daggers for everyday use. They are poor, typically carrying no more than 1d6-1 silver pieces (minimum 0) each.

Lost in the Snow: The characters become hopelessly lost in the blizzard that has consumed Cormac's Hollow. Overwhelmed by the cold and snow, they are unable to even attempt to Relax Around the Campfire and recover no Endurance during their night's rest.

Hidden Barrow: The characters discover a shallow burial barrow (1-2 on 1d6) or cave (3-6 on 1d6) that provides protection from the elements. They can build a fire in this shallow cave easily enough and rest for the evening without having to worry about the effects of the Reign of Winter. If they rest for more than one evening in the barrow, then a Skeleton (see *THJ2e*, page 193) rises from the barrow to defend its realm or a Bear (see *THJ2e*, page 183) returns to its cave to slumber - depending on which type of barrow was discovered.

Bear: A wandering bear stumbles upon the party's path. It is initially hostile, though it can be calmed through clever roleplaying, use of the Forestry skill or applicable professions, or through simply bribing it with food.

None: No meaningful encounter occurs that day.

Bear

Role: Dangerous predator

Reference: Bear (see *THJ2e*, page 183)

Drives: Find a warm place to sleep and some food.

Skeleton

Role: Corrupted, frozen corpse risen to life

Reference: Skeleton (see *THJ2e*, page 193)

Drives: Destroy the vile warmth of the living

Wolves

Role: Dangerous predator

Reference: Wolf (see *THJ2e*, page 190)

Drives: Find fresh meat, find refuge from the cold.

The Witch's Hut

After their long journey through the Hollow, the characters finally discover a crude hut of wood and mud with a crude hide flap for a door and a chimney from which trickles a thin line of smoke. Outside the hut is a small stack of firewood and a wooden rack which has several animal hides stretched across it. As the characters draw closer a rasping voice rings out from behind the hut and an old crone of a woman wrapped in a cowl and cloak of wolf fur reveals herself. Her hair is cracked and white, like the ice that encases the forest and her eyes are a fierce evergreen. She is strange and her voice cracks when she speaks. She seems as ancient as the forest itself.

Though not hostile towards the player characters, she makes little effort to comfort them. In fact, she agrees readily if accused of being a witch. However, if accused of being the one who has brought winter down upon the people of Loughwood Village, she snaps that she is the one who has spent her life keeping those wretched people safe. She calms almost immediately and after a brief chuckle to herself, she offers the player characters her hospitality and asks if they'd like to come inside her cottage and get out of the damn snow.

The entrance to the cottage is blocked by a line of thick salt, which she warns them not to break. Inside, the cottage is filled with all manner of old tomes, pungent herbs and poultices and every manner of folk remedy imaginable. A tiny straw cot fills one corner and an iron pot full of coney stew bubbles over a surprisingly warm fire. Hanging

on the hearth is a collection of three Cold Iron daggers which Cara has used on occasion to protect herself. It is only after they have sat and accepted her hospitality by sharing a meal that the witch reveals herself to be Cara Loughlin.

She tells the characters the truth of what has happened, as described in the History section of this adventure - though in her own words and with great pain. It is then that characters hear crunching in the snow and an eerie sing-song voice calls out in perfect pitch with the howl of the winter wind: "Cara... Cara... " .

Climatic Event: Fetch's Quest Looking out into the wilderness, the player characters see a creature that, at first appears to look identical to Ella, the matronly hostess at the Frosted Oak. Characters who make a successful Insight-based Saving Throw notice that the tips of her hair are covered in ice and that her eyes are a cold, cold blue. Cara the Witch cowers back in her hut, claiming the thing has come to watch her die and indeed she seems correct. The Fetch stalks before the hut and do not attack unless provoked. Instead it taunts Cara and the player characters, saying that once Cara is dead, she will go with the others and take the village in the name of the Queen. If the player characters move to face the Fetch Cara warns them what the creature is and will let them make use of three Cold Iron daggers she keeps hidden around the house, but reminds them not to cross the salt or else the fey thing can enter.

Once defeated, Cara says that she has long had an agreement with the predators of the woodland that keeps the peace between them, herself, and the villagers. But now, Queen Beare seems to have made the beasts a new offer via her servants and earned their loyalty in the wake of her inevitable victory. Unless the Queen can be convinced to lift her enchantment upon Cormac - if indeed he still lives - the beasts will swarm out of the woodlands and bring bloody death to those not claimed by an unbound winter or replaced by Fey creations.

If asked why she never bore children to keep Queen Beare's promise, Cara tells them that her mother told her that the queen's kiss upon her forehead rendered her bare and that if she sets foot in the queen's court, she would be counted forever as one of her subjects and unable to defy her. Thus Loughwood Village would surely be damned. It is to the player characters that Cara puts her last hope that in these, her final days, they might rescue her brother who has remained undamaged by age by his time in Fairie, and hold the evil at bay. Before setting out, she offers them solace, a hot meal, and a warm place to sleep in her cottage.

Fetch

Role: Fey taunter and messenger from Queen Beare

Reference: Fetch (see *THJ2e*, page 152)

Drives: Keep Cara in her hut until she dies, terrify mortals

Notes: Is not looking for a fight, but will defend itself

Cara

Role: Kindly old witch

Reference: 3rd Level Human Wizard (see *THJ2e*, page 44)

Drives: Save her brother, protect Loughwood village

Notes: Knows the following spells: Errant Pilgrim, Lingerin Starlight, Simple & Goodly Blessings

Chapter Three: The Court of Queen Beare

Cara provides the characters with directions to the court of Queen Beare, though she warns them that with the Fetch's appearance the Queen likely already knows of their coming. The journey into the heart of the wood to the Queen's court is a strange one.

Armed with little more than the words of a woodland witch and your own courage, you and your companions have set off into the heart of Cormac's Hollow. As you draw closer to the core of the forest the trees grow dense, oppressive, and soon you're walking single file as branches tear and claw at you. Soon the oppressive silence of a snow-choked landscape begins to drown you and the only sound you hear is your own blood pumping through your veins. Just before madness seems about to take you the forest breaks and you see the broken ruins of what may have once been a grand castle in the center of the forest. Now it is little more than a courtyard ringed in broken stones entombed in eyes. Yet somehow, it is beautiful, perhaps even tranquil.

In this perfect silence you hear a voice as pure and cold as a midnight solstice. "Welcome, honored guests, to my court." Though you do not recall looking away from the rubble of a castle long bereft of light or life, suddenly it seems before you stands a great ring of ice that has somehow encased starlight. Blue twinkles dance merrily, framing a blanket of snow stands unbroken save for the throne at its center. Upon this throne sits a creature of unimaginable beauty and terrible apathy. Her features are as sharp and cold as ice and her face is framed by hair that seems as though it were a snowfall caught in time. Her eyes are the foreboding gray of winter, yet twinkle with flecks of starlight. She is clad in the thinnest slip of a dress, her skin all but bare to the hard elements. She stands and turns her gaze to one side.

As invisible before her she acknowledged him, you see a human man wearing armor crafted of frost, elegant and etched. He wears no helm and wild black hair frames a face that seems locked in time. His hand guides her as she rises.

"Welcome, honored guests, to my court. I presume I need no introduction."

The characters should obviously recognize that they have encountered Beare, Fey Queen of Winter. All characters will immediately need to make a Despair Saving Throw or be awestruck by her beauty and majesty, suffering the appropriate penalties for failing such a roll. Queen Beare is polite, cold, and imperious by nature - but she never breaks the etiquette of court, even if it is only a court consisting of her, the knight at her side, and the player characters. As long as the player characters try to treat her with the respect one would grant a queen, she is a polite host. In fact, she even opens by apologizing and then introduces herself as "Queen Beare, Empress of Winter, Lady of Solstice, and Countess of Snow" before bidding the characters welcome and recognizing them as guests. She then asks if they will accept her invitation. Those that do are welcomed, while those that do not are given one warning and if they still refuse, Beare dismisses them with a wave of her hand. This is the casting of a strange Fey magic and the character must make a Saving Throw or suffer 1d4 damage as ice encases their feet and immobilizes them as it creeps up their body. Only after they accept does she end the spell.



Once accepted, the Queen asks the characters why they have come - though truth be told she already knows. If they tell her the truth she bids them welcome, but if they attempt to deceive her she becomes very cross. As decorum demands, she gives them three opportunities to speak the truth. If they continue to deny the truth - that they have come to recover Cormac and save the village - then she bids her knight destroy them. If the truth is revealed she says that such a matter must be discussed as a formal affair of her court and they must pass three tests.

Test of Etiquette

She offers them a seat at her table and suddenly, where there was no table is now a lush banquet laid out on a long oak table. It is all cold food: Ice cream, frozen fruit, and barely thawed but clean and clear water. This is their first test. Characters who make a successful Insight-based Attribute Save or make use of their Lore Ability recall that eating fairy food binds one to the fey that served them. The characters must, through clever roleplaying, find a way to politely decline the queen's offer of food and drink. There is no "correct answer" to pass this test. Instead, player characters must rely on their wits and the Narrator should accept any reasonable attempt to both save face and avoid offending her. Perhaps they state that they are such slovenly mortals that to eat in her presence would be offensive, or that the chilling embrace of her food would freeze them to the bone and thus end their talks before they began. These are but a few examples of what might work. The key here is for the players to attempt to outsmart the Queen.

Those that eat the food must make a Saving Throw with Disadvantage. Failure means they are bound to the Queen's service and she may call upon a boon from them at any time. No specific boon is named immediately, and the Narrator is encouraged to use this complication in future adventures. In addition, those that eat the food are automatically disqualified from further tests by arbitration of the Queen.

Test of Wits

The second test is one of wits and cleverness. The Queen will claim to be intrigued by mortals so brazen coming to her and attempting to convince her to recant on a deal. But boldness alone will not win her favor. They must prove themselves by answering three riddles correctly. They are detailed below. The Queen will give small clues to each riddle before pronouncing it to the player characters.

Table 2-2: The Queen's Riddles

Riddle	Riddle	Riddle
In Spring I look gay Decked in comely array In Summer more clothing I wear When colder it grows I fling off my clothes And in Winter quite naked appear	Until I am measured I am not known Yet how you miss me When you discover I have flown	Glittering points That downward thrust Sparkling spears That never rust
Clue	Clue	Clue
"The lifeblood of the villagers."	"It is at the heart of this entire affair."	"They adorn both the forest and my court."
Answer	Answer	Answer
A Tree (or Trees)	Time	Icicle

The player characters may only provide one answer to each riddle unless a character succeeds on an Insight-based Saving Throw or Lore Ability check. They may then make two guesses as an abstraction of their character's deductive reasoning regarding the riddle in question. If the riddles are answered correctly, the Queen actually seems a bit angered - though she hides it well. Instead, the cold seems to deepen.

Test of Mettle

For the final challenge, the Queen bids the characters "Face her Champion in single combat and you may take him as you wish from my court" and calls forth the knight by her side - a youthful Cormac Loughlin. The enchanted fey knight steps forward, drawing his sword and moves forward to do battle with whomever the player characters elect as their champion. Keep in mind that Cormac benefits from all of the abilities granted to him by the closeness of the Fey Queen. This may make it seem as though the fight is impossible, but here is an opportunity for the players to rely on their wits to truly win the battle. Cormac, because he is her Fey Consort, will fight to the death and offer no mercy without bidding from his queen.

Because the Queen said, "face her champion," and not "defeat her champion" then the only thing necessary for a character to do to hold the queen to her word is for them to agree to enter combat with Cormac

and ready themselves. If they do this, then turn to the queen and remark that they have met her terms, she is bound by her own word and will release Cormac.

After passing the Queen's tests, Beare stands and admits they have bested her. She freely gives Cormac back to them, but warns that should they ever cross paths with her again, she will offer no mercy, no bargains. The full weight of winter shall be upon them.

And then, in a flash, they are standing in a ruined castle of stone with the first hints of winter's thaw about them. Standing near them is a twenty-something human man with long black hair with a confused look on his face. He claims to have memories of a beautiful woman, her strange servants, a snow-covered forest, and a kindly old crone. He knows his name is Cormac, but his memories beyond that are confused and spotty. With the character's guidance, he can be lead back to Cara's cottage.

Failing the Tests

Obviously, in order to progress through this chapter, the player characters will need to solve all the tests set before them. But what if they don't? With the exception of the Test of Mettle, the Narrator can recognize the tests as successfully completely as long as any one of the player characters is able to complete the tasks detailed above. If they are unable to complete the tests, so be it. Not all fairy tales have a happy ending. The consequences of failure should play out as is appropriate to the situation. Insulting the Fey Queen at her table will earn their expulsion from her court. But eating the fairy food would bind a character to the fairy queen in strange ways. They might become susceptible to her spells or she might always know their location or be able to instantly summon them to her side no matter where they are.

Failing the riddle test would draw the queen's ire, but also may render the one who fails dumb (suffering a permanent loss of Insight) or even mute. The key with any consequences of failure in the riddle tests should be thematically appropriate. Narrators are encouraged to remember that the fey are strange and inhuman, but also poetic. The punishment should always fit the crime, even if it's only a crime in the eyes of an inhuman force of nature.

Queen Beare

Role: Fey Queen of Winter

Reference: Fey Queen (see *THJ2e*, page 155)

Drives: Hold mortals to the oaths they have made, remind them of their place in her court

Notes: Is slowly gaining the service of all the natural creatures of the forest

Cormac

Role: Mortal man, enchanted for a century

Reference: Fey Consort (see *THJ2e*, page 154)

Drives: To serve his queen

Notes: Cormac's aging was stopped as a young adult by Queen Beare and once his enchantment is broken his drive changes to "Discover what happened to him and find a new identity."

Epilogue

Returning to Cara's cottage, the characters find the witch waiting for them. She bursts into tears when she sees Cormac and hugs him. Though he finds her actions strange, he awkwardly returns her embrace and claims there is something comforting and familiar about this strange old woman. Cara thanks the characters for saving her brother and tells them that she can die at peace now. She smiles from Cormac to the player characters and says she will spend her last days teaching Cormac and explaining all that has transpired since that fateful day almost a century ago.

As the players return to the village the heavy winter seems to fade back to something more natural and reasonable. Snow melts rapidly, wind dies down, but a chill remains in the air. The residents of Loughwood Village are surprised, but pleased to see the player characters return. Though they have little to offer, but Sean and Ella will offer them free room and board for the winter at the Frosted Oak where they can wait out the winter. If not, then Rhi says she'll hire them (having sold her father's wares) to guard her as she returns home.

If the player characters do stay until spring thaw, the witch Cara comes out of the forest for the first time with Cormac beside her. She gently kisses him on the cheek and tells him "These are your people now, you know them in your heart and though healed - your journey has just begun." She then returns to her cottage and that evening she dies quietly in her bed.

Cormac takes a job in the lumberyard and Argyle takes to the boy quite quickly. Within a few weeks, he is an accepted member of the community. The player characters have saved Loughwood Village and new adventures await them on the horizon.

One Hundred Seasons of Winter

If the player characters failed to pass the Queen's tests or somehow slew Cormac, then Queen Beare will reclaim the land and one hundred years' worth of cold and snow will fall on Loughwood Village in a single season. The villagers will freeze and die within a month and the village will become encased in frost and snow. Once all the mortals are gone, Queen Beare will bring in a cadre of Fetches to replace the frozen mortals who will haunt the village and hope to draw new travelers to this far northern kingdom to bring their Queen fresh mortals for entertainment.

Cara is driven mad by the loss of both the village and her brother and becomes a Banshee (see *THJ2e*, page 191) after her cottage is consumed by frost and snow. She haunts the court of Queen Beare, acting as the Lady of Winter's tortured "minstrel" forever.

Loughwood Rumors

This information is mentioned on pages 38~39 of the adventure and can be used as the player characters inquire around the village of Cormac's Hollow. If the characters are not yet aware of the increasing snows and the villagers' fear of them, read them this rumor:

"It never used to snow like this in the village. Even when there were raging blizzards in the mountains and forests beyond, we would barely feel winter's touch. Now, the snow comes and comes, and with it the bitterest cold. The season last was worse than all those before, and this year even more the worse.

I fear that if this continues, we will be lost to the cold – all of us. Not all the timber, fish, or game in the world will prevent that. And I'll tell you something else: we know the cause. We all do. It's that unholy witch who dwells in Cormac's Hollow. She's always been up to some sort of no good, some sort of trouble, and now she has cursed us! There is no other possible explanation."

Otherwise, roll 1d10 and choose the corresponding rumor from the table below.

Table 2-3: Loughwood Rumors

Roll (1d10)	Rumor	True or False
1	“There’s something very wrong about this place, I tell you, and it’s not just the witch. It goes back a century, to the days when the town was founded. I don’t know, just a feeling.”	True. See History section. The speaker knows nothing more and has just received a garbled version of history. Mainly they are just trying to impress the characters.
2	“I saw Ella MacConmara walking by herself in the woods, in the Hollow, just at the edge of town. There was something strange about her, I couldn’t put my finger on it. She walked for a while, then stopped, then seemed to be watching the town from the woods. When she spotted me looking at her, she fled – back into the Hollow.”	True (partly). The speaker saw the Fetch of Ella MacConmara encountered in the Climactic Event of the Witch’s Hut episode. The Fetch was spying on the village and relaying information to its mistress and creator, Queen Beare.
3	“Go see Calder, the smith. The witch took his wife, Mara!” (If characters have already learned this from Calder, re-roll)	False (mostly). Mara did indeed disappear, but the witch did not take her. The cause of her disappearance and her ultimate fate are left up to the Narrator.
4	“Not all the dead in the woods are sleeping.”	True. This relates to any Skeletons encountered in Table 2-1: Cormac’s Hollow Encounters.
5	“The witch has been living in the Hollow since, well, forever. I don’t understand why she’s bothering us now.”	True (mostly). The witch is not bothering the village.
6	“This killing frost has been affecting even the wild things. Twice whilst foraging, we saw bears that looked thin and hungry. We fled when they found our scent. Looked like they were really wanting for food.”	True. This provides a clue for dealing with any Bear encountered in Table 2-1: Cormac’s Hollow Encounters

Roll (1d10)	Rumor	True or False
7	<p>"I don't know, I'm old enough to remember hearing nice stories about the witch. Healing sickened sheep, making poultices, that sort of thing. She hasn't come round in at least a decade. I think there's folk here what don't like wise women. I say it's something else making these troubles."</p>	True.
8	<p>"It's demons, I tell you. I hear tell that some kind of awful pact with them was made long ago, prevented the snows, made the trees grow and the fish plenty, even. Maybe it's nature herself who's angry now?"</p>	False (mostly). Other than the idea of a pact, none of this is true. Again this is a much-distorted version of the true history.
9	<p>"Years ago, a young man, a strapping lad cutting the trees . . . Told me he was attacked by two little bearded men who came out of the Hollow. Said they had little red hats, that they were like the small folk only with big mouths and sharp teeth.</p> <p>One tried to bite him, he said, one tried to throw a net onto him. Said the net was too small, then they set to arguing with one another and he got free of them and ran for his life. Family moved away not long after that."</p>	<p>True. The two creatures were Redcaps enlisted by Queen Beare to fetch her a handsome new consort, during a brief period when she and Cormac had had a falling out. The kidnapping failed because the Redcaps were poorly equipped and incompetent, and because one became too consumed with Redcap bloodlust. Subsequently, Beare and Cormac reconciled, and no further abductions were attempted.</p>
10	<p>"This is not the first time the witch has caused us harm. Well-nigh a century ago, in the earliest days of the town, the witch came skulking out of the woods and tore a little baby boy right from his mother's breast! Plucked him right from her arms and spirited him away into the woods. Gods only know what she did with him. That's why they call the woods 'Cormac's Hollow,' you know. It was named for that poor lost boy. It's no surprise she's plaguing us again. This time she's come for us all."</p>	<p>False. See History section. Yet another account mangled by decades of retelling, only with a cruelly ironic and unfair twist. If this rumor is relayed to Cara in The Witch's Hut scene, she will forcefully and tearfully deny it, and will relate the true history with even more pain and vehemence in her voice than specified in the scene.</p>

chapter Three

THE BOGGART'S BOY

✧ HISTORY

The village of Westwick is a peaceful community of halfling farmers and shepherds. Living an idyllic rural life of mild winters and long summers filled with ease and plenty has turned the townsfolk into complacent, but kind-hearted folk. Though a minor trade road passes through their village, they pay little heed to the outside world and its affairs. They are content to plant in spring, harvest in fall, and let the affairs of foreigners pass them by. So has it been since Saradoc Westwick, the first reeve of the village for whom she is named, established the settlement some five generations ago. Now, the rolling hills of the Sunflower Fields to the south are dotted with simple and comfortable homes that serve as residences for multiple generations of halflings living under one roof. Smaller homes are clustered on the banks of the Winding River, where fish is caught fresh each day and served piping hot for dinner. The forest simply known as the Thicketwood offers shade from the summer sun to those who live on its border to the north.

Each year at high summer, the halflings of Westwick host a grand festival known (uncreatively) as the High Summer Revels. No one quite knows how the tradition began, but now it is a grand banquet that begins at noon on the first day of the summer solstice and lasts until noon of the last day of that same solstice. For three straight days feasting, drinking, dancing, games, merriment, and all forms of celebration the order of the day. Indeed, very little sleep occurs during what the locals simply call “The Revels,” for it is the rare time when the halflings of Westwick ease their xenophobic tendencies. It has been a tradition since time out of mind that the people of Westwick do everything people to “keep the sun bright” during the evening, and as such each year during the Revels one dwarven craftsman and their associates are invited to attend on the promise that they bring enough



fireworks to keep the sky blazing for each of the three nights of summer solstice.

But this year, a boggart has wandered into the wilds surrounding Westwick and over the past few months, his friendship with a local boy by the name of Jacoby Green. More commonly known by the locals as Coby, Jacoby is barely thirteen years old - still firmly in childhood for a halfling - and he is a precocious but solitary lad who spends most of his days exploring the Thicketwood. But in the past few months his idle walks have turned into regular meetings with a strange new friend that calls himself Trago.

Appearing to Coby as an adolescent halfling on the cusp of adulthood and calling itself Trago, the boggart began by filling the boy's head with stories of adventure and excitement. After the spring frosts came, Trago would fill the boy's head with stories of mischievous and clever heroes who outsmarted giants and flummoxed dragons. Trago then began to encourage Coby to acts of small rebellion against his parents under the guise of being clever like the heroes in the stories and before long, Coby gained a reputation as a truant and a prankster in Westwick. Fostering the boy's growing resentment, Trago convinced Coby to do something more dangerous than the young halfling would ever know.

One of the unique qualities of being a fey was that Trago could not cross into civilized lands where he was not invited. But only a scant few days ago Coby invited Trago to attend the Revels, and the boy's harmless pranks will soon give way to true danger for the people of Westwick, if the truth is not uncovered. Some milk and ale have already begun to sour unexpectedly, and there was even a kitchen fire a few days ago. Soon, Trago will unleash all manner of calamity on the innocent people of Westwick - All under the false promise of friendship to a lonely boy.

Just yesterday, the player characters arrived in Westwick alongside the dwarf firesmith, Nabbi. Nabbi hired the player characters to serve as escorts for his valuable cargo of expensive fireworks bound for Westwick and in return, he will pay them handsomely and speak for them so they can enjoy the Revels. But if things continue as they are, then this may be the last of the High Summer Revels ever celebrated in Westwick.

Adventure Outline

The Boggart's Boy is broken into an introduction, two chapters and an epilogue. An overview of each chapter is detailed below.

Prologue:

The player characters, acting as guides and guards for the dwarf firesmith Nabbi arrive in the halfling village of Westwick just in time to be one of the rare outsiders to witness the annual Revels!

Chapter One: The Revels

Arriving in Westwick with Nabbi's cart of fireworks, the player characters are given the chance to participate in the Revels. They can get to know the locals, participate in many of the events, or simply relax with a fine meal. As the day goes on, several minor mishaps occur. Some of these can be contained or overcome with assistance from the player characters, but when Nabbi's fireworks display explodes and nearly burns Westwick town hall down, the mayor demands that the outsiders take action to prove their innocence or be held responsible for the damage they've inflicted on the village and the dishonor they've done to these sacred tradition of the Revels. Astute characters will recall that the boy Coby Green was present whenever one of these calamities happened, but upon questioning him will learn that he has a new friend and playmate that has convinced him to aid in these dangerous pranks: A strange boggart named Trago that lives in the Thicketwood.

Climactic Event:

Trago and Coby's final prank sets the Westwick town hall aflame using the celebratory fireworks Nabbi brought into town and the player characters must work fast if they are to save Mayor Richfoot and his staff!

Chapter Two: Through the Thicket

Across the river and into the Thicketwood, the players encounter a surprising number of deadly threats. While the locals claim the Thicketwood to be a peaceful wood, the player characters discover that all the local wild beasts have been stirred to anger by something. They encounter a wandering pack of wargs, dangerous giant spiders, and a strange (but friendly) Fir Bolg during their travels before descending down a strange well to confront Trago in his own lair.

Climatic Event:

Beneath the earth in a foul cave of mud and roots, they must face Trago the boggart on his own terms and hope they can outfox him before it is too late.

Epilogue:

After defeating the boggart or forcing it into submission through the use of its true name, the player characters return to the village of Westwick where Mayor Richfoot grudgingly thanks them, but asks to leave as soon as they can. Nabbi is allowed to keep bringing his annual supply of fireworks, though the player characters (still under suspicion of being troublemakers) are asked not to return unless the need is dire.

Prologue

The Narrator can read or paraphrase the italicized text below to begin the adventure. Before the adventure begins, be sure to give the players the opportunity to review their character sheets to assure everything is in order.

After a pleasant journey across the beautiful summer landscape, you and your companions crest the final rolling hill before looking down on the halfling community of Westwick. Small cabins of wood dot the hills -- some tucked up against the side of a flower-covered knoll and others beside well-tended fields. Chimney smoke from cookfires rises into the clear blue sky and the bustle of the little folk preparing for their annual High Summer Revels.

The Revels, as they are locally known, are a festival celebrating the bounty of the season. Food and fellowship are the order of the day, with games and

feasts running for three days and nights that culminates in a grand fireworks show. You have been hired by Nabbi, a dwarfish craftsman who has created and is transporting those fireworks to Westwick, to serve as guards and roustabouts. In addition to your pay, you'll be one of the rare few outsiders to enjoy the Revels!

Nabbi's long silver beard splits in a genuine grin as you cross into the village of Westwick proper to the cheers of excited children running alongside cart to cheers of "Fireworks" and knowing nods from the adults. Pulling into the cobblestone courtyard that serves as the center of the village, you see vendor carts and hastily constructed stands decorated with bright streamers and banners to entice those looking to test their luck and ability at various games. The scene of fresh baked goods, wildflowers, and roasting fowl fills the air. Nabbi hops down from his cart, pats his dutiful draft horse Sugarfoot on the flank and calls to a particularly rotund halfling in a bright yellow waistcoat.

"Mayor Rifflo Richfoot!"

The wooly footed mayor approaches with a hurried smile. "Ah, Nabbi! Just in time! I see you and your workers have arrived just in time!"

Mayor Richfoot politely introduces himself to the player characters, being particularly kind to any halfling player characters. He then informs the player characters that they're guests of the Revels and that they are welcome to enjoy what it has to offer as long as they do not cause a ruckus. He quickly tries to pull Nabbi away to discuss business, after reviewing the contents of Nabbi's cart. The cart contains a gross of Fireworks (as described on page 208 of *The Hero's Journey, Second Edition*), allowing up to 144 uses. However, these are reserved for the Revels.

Before walking away with Mayor Richfoot, Nabbi pays the player characters fifty gold pieces each and informs them that he's made arrangements for them to sleep at the Extra Helping Inn here in Westwick for the duration of the Revels, though their accommodations will be a bit cramped as the rooms are sized to halflings. He will gladly hire them to serve as escort back to his home far from Westwick after the Revels are over.

Nabbi

Role: Dwarf merchant

Reference: Peasant (see *THJ2e*, page 127)

Drives: Complete the sale of his fireworks, enjoy the Revels.

Notes: Has a soft-spot for halfling children.

Mayor Richfoot

Role: Halfling mayor

Reference: Noble (see *THJ2e*, page 127)

Drives: Maintain his reputation among the villagers, make sure the people of Westwick are safe, keep troublesome outsiders from causing problems for the locals.

Notes: Unlike most other Nobles, Mayor Richfoot does not travel with an entourage.

Chapter One: The Revels

While many personal and familial celebrations are occurring across Westwick, the majority of events and locations of interest to the player characters are centered in and around the town square. Detailed below are several locations where they can interact with locals and participate in the celebration. There is no requirement or required order to visit these locations, and Narrators should allow player characters to wander freely. Each location includes a brief italicized description which can be read aloud or paraphrased by the Narrator to set the scene. As the player characters experience the Revels, they may begin to notice that something wicked threatens the entire village.

Whenever the players are playing one of the games offered at various locations around the town square, before they begin playing the Narrator should ask a randomly selected player to make a Weal-based Attribute Saving Throw. If that Saving Throw fails, then the Mishap described at each location occurs.

Regardless of whether a Mishap occurs or not, if any of the player characters state that they are keeping a wary eye out for trouble, the Narrator should allow them to make an Insight-based Attribute Saving Throw each location. Success reveals the information detailed under the “Coby and the Boggart” section of each location.

As the players explore Westwick, they are likely to hear much of the local gossip and plenty of rumors. The Narrator should make use of the Westwick Rumors table found on pages 68~69 throughout this chapter of the adventure.

The Citizens of Westwick

In order to prevent repetition, Narrators should assume that unless otherwise specified all citizens of Westwick are halflings with citizens with statistics identical to the Peasant found on page 127 of *The Hero's Journey, Second Edition*. Narrators should determine the Drives of each individual supporting character based on the descriptions provided below and feel free to customize the statistics of any supporting characters encountered as they see fit to suit their legendarium.

Location: Town Hall

Westwick's Town Hall is one of a pair of two-story buildings in the town square. It is distinguished from the wood and log single story log buildings in Westwick by its steep, gabled roof, a jaunty chimney peeking from its side, windows of frosted glass, and stucco masonry. An embellished set of wooden double doors lead are thrown open on this bright summer day, though anyone taller than a dwarf would still have to dip low for entry. All manner of local celebrants are going into and out of the place, with more than a few having a fine conversation while smoking their long wooden pipes beneath the growing cloud of smoke forming above the balcony that runs along the building's front. In spite of the festive mood and atmosphere, more than a few of the locals cast suspicious glances at you and your friends during pauses in their conversations.

It is at this location the player characters can interact with several of the locals and get an earful of gossip. The three halflings on the balcony (Bilco, Fotho, and Marybell) are particularly keen to talk to outsiders and will gladly swap tales from beyond Westwick for local news. If the players approach them politely and roleplay attempting to treat them with some basic respect, then the three gossip mongers will tell each of the players one of the rumors found on Table 3-2: Westwick Rumors, on pages 68~69.

Inside, the town hall the players will find a bustle of activity as different festival goers attempt to register their scores at many of the games around town in hopes of winning a prize at tonight's Victory Announcements before the evening's Fireworks. One of the halflings among the bustle, Ms. Garnet Granger, will approach the players and after a brief admonishment about crowding the hall will try to usher them off unless they have scores to record for the Victory

Announcement. Otherwise, they're not to return until the Fireworks Show tonight after sunset.

Mishap: As the crowds shout to Ms. Granger and other administrators in the Town Hall, one of the timbers of the balcony outside groans and snaps, causing the entire thing to lilt to one side. Bilco, Fotho, and Marybell all slide down to that side of the balcony any Bilco (the most rotund of the three, tumbles over the side and falls to the ground eight feet below! Quick acting player characters can act if they make an Initiative check that totals ten or more to catch the poor halfling!

Coby and the Boggart: If a Mishap has occurred then player characters who have kept a wary eye and succeeded in their Insight-based Attribute Saving Throw see an impish looking creature with beady yellow eyes and wearing a hood can be seen dipping away from the scene, darting from under the shadow of the balcony to the back of the building. Anyone who follows finds no signs of the fleeing stranger.

Location: The Extra Helping Inn

Opposite the Town Hall stands Westwick's other two-story building: The Extra Helping Inn. It's first level is built of stone and mortar, with small round windows and a large square door permitting light to stream inside. It's second floor is one of heavy wooden logs, like many of the homes in Westwick and it has a roof of wooden shingles, with a squat chimney protruding from each side.

Inside, the first floor is dominated by a large common room filled with tables and stools made from carved tree stumps that seem to be cast about the room rather haphazardly. This is no tavern, though it seems many present here today have brought food and drink from either their homes or the nearby Open Skies Pub. Laughter and merriment fill the air (along with a fair bit of pipe smoke) as patrons swap stories, share meals, or engage in a strange local board game being played at a particularly large table to one corner. A staircase runs along the back wall, leading up to a second story, likely where guests can rent a warm bed for the evening.

Around a dozen or so patrons can be found inside the Extra Helping Inn at any given time (3d6+2). At least four of them will be gathered around the large table playing a board and dice game called Ten Stone. If the players express interest in playing, they're offered a spot at the table, but must ante in a single gold piece to play so that if they win, their victory (or victories) can be recorded for the festival records and their placement in the Victory Announcement.

Ten Stone is an abstract game using dice and small stones played on a 6 x 6 board. Each round of play is abstracted by the player making an Insight-based Attribute Saving Throw. A successful Saving Throw denotes the player has won and may continue playing. If the player fails their Saving Throw they have lost to one of the local players, but may ante another gold piece to play again. Each game takes about ten minutes to play. Narrators looking to create a more immersive experience can find the full rules for playing Ten Stone on page 192 and should feel free to incorporate it into their legendarium as an in-world game played by travelers and soldiers.

When the characters first enter the Inn, a middle aged halfling with impressively large sideburns and wearing a stained apron approaches them. He introduces himself as Tristle Thornbow, owner of the Second Helping. He is stiff, but polite. Because they are obvious outsiders, he assumes they are part of Nabbi's entourage and informs them that a few rooms have already been set aside for them on the second floor.

Like other locations, player characters can inquire with the locals to get more information from Table 3-2: Westwick Rumors if they do so before trouble arises. For every three people present at the Inn, they can make one roll on this table.

Mishap: During one of the games of Ten Stone, one of the pieces is moved when no one is looking. If the player characters are playing in a game, it happens during one of their games. The halfling local they are playing against accuses the other player (or the player character if they are playing against one) of cheating and a general uproar ensues in the tavern until the accused offender is driven out of the Inn.

Coby and the Boggart: If a Mishap has occurred then player characters who have kept a wary eye and succeeded in their Insight-based Attribute Saving Throw see Coby covering his mouth and snickering as the crowd is riled up over the accusations of cheating. He slips out of the Inn and fades into the crowd of celebrants.

Location: The Open Skies Pub (Pie Eating Contest)

A massive semi-permanent tent has been erected here that's so tall, humans and other foreigners could easily stand atop one another's shoulders and still not reach its apex. Beneath the tent are long benches flanking long tables that serve as spokes on a wheel with a circular bar at its center. Behind the bar you see a pair of halflings diligently setting out drinks and calling names as they draw fresh brew from casks balanced precariously on the bar's surface or pull fresh meals from the iron stove at its center.

Laughter, gossip, and general good cheer fill the air -- along with the occasional jaunty tune or sudden song. Above it all, most of the hubbub seems to have sprung up around one particular table over burdened with stacks of freshly baked pies where crowds of halflings are cheering on what is obviously some kind of contest as they watch their compatriots consume cherry, apple, pecan, and sweet potato creations with ravenous enthusiasm.

The bartender and his wife, Alistar and Alison Alderbrook, are busily calling out names as patrons hustle up to the bar to claim their orders and slapping down coins. One of them will occasionally reach into the oven to remove a stack of fresh pies to carry over to the table where the pie-eating contest is going on. Patrons here are wary of outsiders, but warm up quick enough if treated with respect or drink is purchased in their name. In addition to the pie eating contest participants, the Open Skies has 5d6 patrons at any given time. If player characters are polite and patient, they might be able to learn a rumor or two here from Table 3-2: Westwick Rumors.

Characters wanting to participate in the pie-eating contest will be more than welcomed to do so in spite of the “size advantage” of larger characters. The current champion is Buck Bellybolt, an amazingly fat halfling with a deep, friendly laugh and an unending appetite. Competing against Buck in a pie-eating competition is a brave affair. Both men will have a pie of their choice set before them - apple, sweet potato, or mince. Then, it’s simply a matter of who can eat continuously the longest.

To begin, each player character competing against Buck must make a Resole-based Attribute Saving Throw with Advantage. Success means they’ve kept up with the champion eater and may continue. They must then make a second Resolve-based Attribute Saving Throw, this time without Advantage. Again, success allows them to keep up with the amazing Bellybolt as he endlessly devours pie after pie. Finally, to achieve victory, the player character competitors must make a third Resolve-based Attribute Saving Throw - this time with Disadvantage. If they win this third Saving Throw, they’ve beaten Buck Bellybolt and may claim the title of Prince or Princess of Pies by reporting their achievement to Town Hall. Buck is a good sport and hardily congratulates the winner, before bellying to the bar for a fresh drink.

Mishap: If a mishap occurs at this location it happens either soon after the player characters walk away from the bar or during the heat of the pie eating contest if any of the player characters are participating in it. Coby slips up to the bar and pulls one of the stabilizing pegs away

from the bar that's holding an ale cask in place, causing it to roll off the bar, bounce through the air and land on one side of the pie-eating contest table. The table is overturned, launching pies across the whole area. One unlucky player character (who has the lowest Weal Attribute) is struck by a pie and if this happens. In addition, the pie-eating contest is ruined, and Buck accuses one of the player characters of cheating! The crowd then shouts at the player characters until they leave or Alistar asks them to leave his establishment.

Coby and the Boggart: If a Mishap has occurred then player characters who have kept a wary eye and succeeded in their Insight-based Attribute Saving Throw see Coby hidden behind one of the tavern's benches, snickering as pies are launched into the air before disappearing into the crowd.

Location: Goldleaf's Produce and Tobacco (Smoke Rings)

A large cart has been tilted up to display a collection of lettuce, carrots, potatoes, mushrooms, and other fresh produce. On a frame next to the cart hangs long golden leaves, dried and bunched. Beside the cart, is a portly halfling in braces and a shirt with a long-stemmed pipe clenched in his teeth. He shoves out a chubby hand as you approach and puts on a salesman's smile. "Grigory Goldleaf, at yer service! Can I interest you in some find produce fresh from the good earth of Westwick? Or perhaps some smoke leaf? Or... if ye think ye can out smoke the best o' the locals, ye can enter the smoke rings contest coming up later this afternoon. But ye outsiders got no truck with the art of smoke rings, if'n ye ask me. In the meantime, I got the freshest carrots and potatoes this side of Westwick at a fair good price, if'n yer interested in such things."

He shoots a knowing wink at you before blowing a big, round ring of smoke over his cart and flops down on a small stool behind him.

Grigory Goldleaf normally resides on the other side of Westwick, but wanted to be at the heart of the action for the Revels. His cart does indeed have a wide variety of fresh produce and he will sell from his fine stock at very reasonable prices. A single gold piece will net any purchaser five pounds of produce from his collection of potatoes, carrots, lettuce, cabbage, mushrooms, yams, cucumbers, and sweet onions.

For those interested in trying to blow smoke rings, Grigory also sells pouches of smoke leaf for 3 gold pieces, and their choice of a meticulously crafted hardwood pipe for 10 gold pieces or a simple corn cob pipe for a single gold piece. Each pouch of smoke-leaf contains enough

dried leaf for twenty uses and it has no statistical impact on the game - though if a character wished to invest the Myth Points they could turn one of hardwood pipes into a Briarwood Pipe as described on page 213 of *The Hero's Journey*. In fact, the art of the smoke leaf is unique to halfling people and seems strange to most outsiders, save for a few dwarves who have taken up the practice.

If a character wishes to attempt to blow smoke rings for the festival competition, Grigroy eagerly invites them to do so, and will even offer them a free corn cob pipe with the purchase of a pouch of smoke leaf in that instance. The character simply lights their pipe and is given a few minutes to smoke before being told to blow the largest smoke ring possible. The player character may then make a Weal-based Attribute Saving Throw. Halflings receive Advantage on this roll. Success means they have blown a respectable smoke ring, but only if their natural roll, plus their Weal modifier is twenty or higher do they blow the largest ring in the competition.

A championship worthy smoke ring earns a polite, if a bit forced, congratulations from Grigroy. He assures the winner that he will inform the officials at Town Hall of their masterful ring and will indeed do so during his lunch break. If they fail, he reminds them that it is a halfling art and not common to outsiders.

Mishap: If a character purchases a pouch of smoke leaf from Grigroy and a Mishap occurs, they find that within an hour of their purchase the contents of their pouch has turned to soggy, rotten lettuce.

Coby and the Boggart: Hidden in the shadows of Grigroy's cart is a sallow-eyed creature with beady yellow eyes that may be noticed by eagle-eyed player characters if a Mishap occurs at this location and they make a successful Insight-based Attribute Saving Throw. When the boggart is noticed by the player character, he puts a finger to his lips and winks before twirling about and vanishing into thin air.

Location: Siltho's Leathercrafts (Slingshot Target Game)

Slings, slingshots, vests, jerkins, bags, backpacks, and all manner of leather goods are displayed across a large wooden board with a simple wood burnt sign above marking this as "Siltho's Leathers." An aged halfling man with graying hair in a leather vest and wearing an eye patch leans stiffly on a cane as you draw near. "Outsiders, eh? Eh, we don't normally truck with big folk - but it bein' the Revels and all, I'll sell t' ye. B'sides, ain't like yer gonna find the better than my wares, not that y'd know how ta use 'em proper."

Suddenly, the surly old man springs into action, drawing a sling from his vest and plopping a stone into it. He turns without a word and whirls it over his head, launching it into the field behind him. Far in the distance on a half-rotted fence post you see one of several glass bottles shatter to shards with a satisfying sound. Siltho turns back to ye. "If'n ye shoot well, ye could win yerself a prize - or at least a discount. What say ye, strangers? It's tradition, after all..."

Siltho is a cantankerous old halfling who tends to regard outsiders with more than a bit of arrogance. He will, however, gladly take their coin in exchange for some of his wares. However, because the Revels are exclusively a halfling affair, his jerkins, backpacks, and vests are sized appropriately and he has nothing that will fit "fat, lumbering outsiders."

Those interested in taking a shot at one of the glass bottles on the far fence post are free to do so - at the cost of one gold piece for three shots. For each bottle broken, Siltho will offer a one gold piece discount on any item in his stock. He will not, however, reduce any of his prices below a single gold piece. If any character should manage to hit all three shots in a go, Siltho will offer them a fresh deal. If they can hit a clay pigeon he tosses in the air, he'll offer to sell them a specially crafted slingshot made by his own hand from the largest, and oldest tree in the Thicketwood: a Thicketwood Slingshot. But they'll need to wager 25 gold pieces before they take the shot so he can cover the cost of crafting a new one.

To successfully hit one of the bottles, the player character will need to make a ranged attack roll against a Defense of 15, due to the distance. Hitting the clay pigeon Siltho will toss in the air is much harder, and requires the player character to succeed in an attack roll against a Defense of 20.

The information on a Thicketwood Slingshot can be found on page 188 of this book.

Table 3-1: Siltho's Goods

Item	Cost (gp)
Backpack	5
Belt Pouch	1
Jerkin	10
Sling	2
Slingshot	2
Stones (Bag of 20)	2
Vest	5

Mishap: If a Mishap occurs at this location, any time a player character misses an attack at one of the glass bottles, then the stone ricochets and strikes a player character for a single point of damage.

Coby and the Boggart: Hiding a nearby line of shrubbery, Coby is concealed with his own slingshot. If he is noticed, the player characters will see the bushes rustle as a little halfling boy darts off over a nearby hillcrest, giggling impishly to himself.

Location: Camilla's Eggs and Poultry (Chicken Chase)

A small table and a large pen have been set up here and the sounds of clucking and warbling fill the air, as does the occasional feather. The table is laden with fresh eggs of many different sizes and a cherubic halfling matron with smile lines around her eyes grins at your approach. "Lookin' for some farm fresh eggs likes the kind y' can't get in Port Corsai or some other big city? Perhaps ye need a fresh hen for dinner tonight? C'mon and talk to ol' Camilla Scratchfoot. Or maybe if'n yer feelin' quick, ye wanna try a chicken chase and be declared Bantam of the Revels..."

Camilla will sell a dozen of her farm fresh eggs for a single gold piece, or one of her roasting hens (live) for three gold pieces. She's polite, but firm on her prices, which are clearly inflated because the player characters are outsiders. If they're interested in participating in the Chicken Chase, she tells them it costs a gold piece to play,

The character will be given three chances to catch chickens. Three successful catches will earn them the title of Bantam of the Revels, which Camilla will report to Town Hall for recording. Catching a chicken requires two rolls from a participant. Upon entering the massive chicken run, the participant must make an Initiative roll vs the chicken's Initiative roll of 1d12+4. If the participant scores higher than the chicken, they will have the opportunity to grab one of the birds. Grabbing a chicken requires an attack roll (modified by the participant's Finesse modifier), against the chicken's Defense of 16. Success means the participant has successfully nabbed a chicken! Each participant is given three opportunities to nab chickens, no more and no less.

Mishap: Oh no! During one of the chicken chases, an angry rooster seems to have gotten into the chicken run! It will attack the current participant and though Camilla will cry for the participant not to kill the angry cock, it attacks aggressively and will even break down one of the wicker barricades of the chicken run to pursue the unlucky participant. After it is either driven away or killed, Camilla will have to go

about rounding up her remaining chickens and cleaning up the mess that's been created from all this chaos. She angrily dismisses the participant and their friends.

Coby and the Boggart: If a Mishap has occurred then player characters who have kept a wary eye and succeeded in their Insight-based Attribute Saving Throw then during the chaos of the escaping chickens, they notice a sallow-eyed creature with a wicked grin. Similar in size to a halfling, its features are obscured by a cloak and a hood. It dives into a densely packed part of the rampaging chickens and vanishes in a puff of white feathers

Location: Saradoc's Statue of Founding (Conkers)

Little halfling children and adolescents intermingle with a throng of adults surrounding a massive statue of a halfling woman raising a walking stick triumphantly as she looks to the sky. But the crowds aren't here to celebrate the founder of their little village. Instead, they're gathered in small groups, facing off against one another. You hear cries of "Strings!" and "No Stamps!" as competitors swing leather strings at one another, each one ending with a large brown nut. It appears to be some kind of game, though more than a bit of a chaotic one.

Navigating through the chaotic horde of halfling children is no easy task and any character attempting to figure out just what the heck is going on will need to inquire with the mass of eager kids and piece together the truth. This requires a Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw, though it is made with Advantage as the children are eager to talk to exotic outsiders, unlike older halflings.

The children are engaged in a strange game known as "conkers" that involves stringing a large nut or acorn and then swinging it at another child's strung acorn in an attempt to break it. Non-halfling characters that wish to participate are generally refused unless they are able to convince the halfling children that their large size and greater strength will not give them an unfair advantage during a game of conkers. The game itself is a strange amalgam of rules, and in order to win a single round of conkers, a character will need to make an Insight-based Attribute Saving Throw to navigate the byzantine rules. Only after this can they then attempt a melee attack roll against a Defense of 14 or higher. Success means they have struck and cracked their opponent's nut. If a player character can win three rounds of conkers, they will be begrudgingly named "Conkers King" and may go to the town hall to

claim their prize for winning the competition - though the children will be sullen and pouty about the whole affair after having been beaten by a full grown adult typically of a lineage twice their size.

The statue at the center of this chaos depicts the founder of the village, Saradoc Westwick. Saradoc was a young halfling ranger who founded the village as a farming community as a refuge for her formerly nomadic people. She set down her sword and took up the plow in the rolling hills outside the Thicketwood, then invited her extended family to come take up residence here to live in harmony some five hundred years ago. Since that time, the people of Westwick have lived here peacefully, tilling the land, fishing from nearby streams, and harvesting lumber from the forest. Save for the occasional incursion from aggressive wolves or a rare harsh winter, the community has never known anything other than peace.

Mishap: If the player characters attempt to move through the crowd or stop amongst them to participate in a game of Conkers they must make a Finesse-based Attribute Saving Throw or fall over when in the middle of a match or into the middle of another participants' match, knocking several halflings over in the process and dropping their own conker, which is promptly stamped by an competitor. Several halflings comment on the clumsy outsiders and are very brusque for them causing a problem.

Coby and the Boggart: The halfling boy Coby can be seen ducking into the chaos of the crowd if a successful Insight-based Saving Throw is made, giggling to himself. Given the density of the crowd he is all but impossible to catch and quickly becomes lost in the chaos.

Location: Horseshoe Pit (Horseshoe Toss)

A long track of freshly tilled earth is here, running twenty feet in length with a large metal stake sticking up just before it ends. To each side you see a small group of halflings collected around a table full of half-empty mugs. One of the more rotund fellows stands up, downs his mug, and then lifts an iron horseshoe from a pile near the table. "Err we go!" he slurs drunkenly before heaving the metal towards the far stake. It strikes with a satisfying clang to the cheers of those around him and groans from those at the other table.

A group of middle-aged and elderly halflings are gathered to play a game of horseshoes. They're a bit tipsy and more than a bit grumpy towards outsiders. They'll shoe the player characters away unless they are convinced through clever roleplaying to allow the player characters

to join in the game. If the player characters show any disrespect or act dismissive, the elderly men shoe them away with surly insults and cross words.

Participating in the horseshoe toss is easy enough. It's simply a matter of making a range attack roll against a Defense of 17. If the attack roll hits this Defense hits the iron post and scores the thrower three points. If the attack roll hits a Defense of 15, they land close to the post and earn two points. If the attack roll hits a Defense of 13, only a single point is earned. If any player character participating earns more than seven total points, they are the victor. If multiple characters score seven or more, then the victor is simply the one that scores the highest.

The old halflings will grumble and complain about "beginner's luck," but will still see to it that the winner is reported to the Town Hall. In addition, those given a chance to play

Mishap: Just as one of the player characters is about to make their toss, they will feel a sudden jerk of the arm and must make a Weal-based Attribute Saving Throw or hurl their horseshoe so hard that it lands in the crowd of halfling competitors on the opposite end of the horse shoe pit! This inflicts a single point of damage (plus the thrower's Might modifier) and makes the elderly sportsmen very cross and they promptly drive the player characters away.

Coby and the Boggart: Keen-eyed characters will spot a sallow yellow-eyed creature hiding behind a nearby copse of bushes if they make an Insight-based Saving Throw. It seems to slip away as they approach, tittering with gleeful malice to itself.

Location: Thicketwood Park

On the southern edge of the town square you see several tables have been set up to form a kind of small park. Mostly elderly halflings are sitting around these tables idly talking, smoking, or sipping on their drinks. One halfling seems to be feeding a curious squirrel. Most of them cast you and your friends suspicious looks and hush up their talk as you draw within earshot.

The halflings gathered here are mostly men and women who are simply relaxing over a pint and a pipe, trading gossip, and playing the occasional game of tenstone. No mishap will occur at this location, and if the characters haven't caused too much of a disruption here, a few of the locals will open up to the player characters in spite of their initially frosty demeanor if the player characters roleplay appropriately or make a Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw. This Saving Throw is made

with Disadvantage if they've experienced two or more Mishaps and is made with Advantage if none have yet occurred.

Success allows the characters to learn three rumors from the Westwick Rumor Table on pages 68~69.

Mishap: Mishaps do not occur at this location.

Coby and the Boggart: Characters that specifically state they are looking for anything strange or unusual they automatically spot the boggart slinking in the shadows, though the instant they look away he is gone again.

To the Victor Go the Spoils

Throughout the first chapter of this adventure, the player characters have the opportunity to win several of the many games and events going on during the Revels. They can return to Town Hall after any victory and receive the following prizes:

Ten Stone: The winner receives an exquisitely crafted Ten Stone set with a wood burn and stained board of black walnut. The stones for the board are crafted from scrimshaw for one side and carved amber for the other. If it were sold, it could easily fetch 250 gold pieces or more if the right buyer is founded.

Pie Eating Contest: The winner of the pie eating contest receives a brand new, handcrafted pie plate that cannot be bent and will never break. If the character actually attaches a strap and attempts to use it as a shield, it functions as a Dwarf-Forged Buckler.

Smoke Rings: The winner of the Smoke Rings event receives a Briarwood Pipe (see *THJ2e*, page 213)

Chicken Chase: The Bantam of the Revels will receive the Wattle Whistle, a wooden animal call that, when blown, sounds like the loud warble of a chicken and can easily be heard half a mile off. Its fine craftsmanship means that if sold it can fetch up to 50 gold pieces.

Conkers: The winner of the Conkers contest will reach the Hoary Chestnut, a massive white horse chestnut. Unlike most other conkers it has been strung on a loop of leather and can be worn as a necklace. See pg. 186 for more information on the Hoary Chestnut.

Horseshoes: The winner of the horseshoes tournament is given a free donkey named Gimpy! Gimpy, in spite of her name, is surefooted, even-tempered, and friendly.

Climatic Event: The Collapse of Town Hall

The Climactic Event for this chapter begins near sundown as most of the Westwick community has gathered around town hall for the evening's fireworks display. Set up upon the balcony of town hall so they can launch into the sky above town square, things go wrong and suddenly the player characters find themselves at the center of the trouble that's been plaguing the entire festival. Trago is about to make his final move and draw poor Coby into his nefarious plot from which he will never be able to escape without the help of a few heroes.

The sun slips just beyond the horizon and within an hour stars make their appearance in what will undoubtedly be a magnificent summer evening as is befitting the Revels. Every man, woman, and child has gathered in the town square of Westwick. Packed shoulder to shoulder, many adults with lads and lasses perched on their shoulders, these goodly folk have gathered to witness the culminating event of the Revels The Summer Fireworks. Surrounding the statue of Saradoc, the village's original founder, the throngs have gathered as the mayor steps out onto the Town Hall Balcony where a line of dwarfish fireworks has been set to launch out over the crowd in a rainbow of celebratory explosions.

He raises a small torch as the crowd cheers and in the light cast behind him you see in the flickering shadows a sallow-eyed, feral looking creature with a malicious grin. This strange beastie waves a hand and the mayor lets out a yelp, dropping the torch. The torch's flame flares to life and suddenly the fireworks are lit. The mayor dives for cover, knocking the rack upon which they have been set tips, turning towards the Town Hall instead of over the crowd!

An instant passes, and then the fireworks let fly in a flash and a scream. Seconds later, the mayor cries for help as the town hall bursts into flames.

The halfling crowd will immediately panic and the entire situation will erupt into chaos. In ten rounds, the entire Town Hall will collapse due to fire damage. In addition to the Mayor who is on the balcony, there are two of his assistants inside who will perish if they are not rescued. Getting to the mayor is easy enough, given that the balcony is on the second story of a building sized for halflings and is only about ten feet in the air. Any character with the Acrobatics ability can use it to leap, while those with the Thievery ability can climb up. In short, if the player characters provide a creative method to free the mayor that

seems reasonable, the Narrator should permit it - though they should feel free to call for an appropriate Attribute-based Saving Throw, depending on the nature of the player character's plan.

Rescuing the assistants still inside is a bit more difficult. Human-sized or larger player characters will have a hard time navigating through a flame-engulfed building built for someone half their size. Rushing into the Town Hall and searching through the debris and flames is a dangerous affair. Each round that a character spends inside the building searching they must make a Finesse-based Attribute Saving Throw or suffer 1d6 points of fire damage. Human-sized or larger characters suffer Disadvantage on this roll. In addition, for every round a character spends searching for the assistants, the Referee should roll 1d6 and add that character's Insight modifier. If the total is 5 or higher, the player character has successfully located one of the Mayor's assistants and will be able to pull them to safety on the next round. Each round of searching after the first adds +1 to this roll.

If any player characters or halflings are still in the Town Hall when it collapses, they suffer 3d4+3 points of damage. A successful Finesse-based Attribute Saving Throw reduces this damage by one-half (rounded down).

During this chaos, if any player character specifically states they are looking for the strange, sallow-eyed creature during the first round of the scene *only*, they can make an Insight-based Saving Throw to notice the creature slipping away into the Thicketwood.

After the Town Hall has collapsed, the mayor (or old Siltho, if the mayor died in the collapse of the Town Hall) cries out that Coby, a local boy has run off in the chaos. The townsfolk of Westwick suddenly seem to turn on the player characters, blaming outsiders for causing all the trouble and ruining the Revels. The only ones who seem unswayed by the growing ire of the crowd is the mayor and Siltho. The player characters can attempt to calm the crowd, but this requires a Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw, which is made at Disadvantage by anyone who is not a halfling. If they can't manage to calm the crowd, the mayor (or Siltho) orders calm and then tells the player characters if they want to make it right, they best find the boy. If not, his death, the destruction of Town Hall (and any deaths associated with it) will be on them, and they'll never contract with any outsiders again. Nabbi, the dwarf who initially hired the player characters, begs them to go find the boy. He tells them that this job makes almost a quarter of his yearly revenue and if he loses it he'll be ruined.

As for the halfling boy Coby, searching for him only turns up a few clues. Characters who make a successful Insight-based Attribute Saving Throw or Forestry ability check find halfling-sized footprints fleeing off into the woods alongside strange, not quite halfling tracks. In addition, Coby's bag of sling stones (containing eight stones) can be found hanging from a tree along the edge of the Thicketwood. It's clear Coby has either been taken into the woods with the strange creature or gone willingly. Either way, he is in grave danger.

So now with a village of riotous halflings at their back and an estranged little boy who has fled into the woods, the players must plunge into the Thicketwood and find out what nefarious plans Trago has set forth, and clear their name with the halflings of Westwick.

Chapter Two: Through the Thicket

With the Town Hall in ruins, Coby missing, and Trago having fled into the Thicketwood, the player characters set off to rescue the boy and put an end to the boggart's machinations. All just after the sun has set and the Thicketwood transforms from an inviting forest into a deadly wilderness. This chapter includes several encounters, though only the Climactic Event is mandatory. The rest can be included or removed as the Narrator requires to maintain an appropriate challenge level for the player characters.

With a horde of angry halflings behind you and your companions at your side it's not long before the light and life of Westwick Village seems far off. The fully bloomed forest, infused with life at the height of summer, blocks out whatever meager light might be offered by the moon and stars. The ground is covered by a thick layer of lichen and brush that is intermingled with thick, ropy vines that pull and tug at your ankles. The natural beauty of the Thicketwood is something lost when one steps from the safety of Westwick and dares to venture into the forest itself. Before long it is only you, your friends, and the strange and foreboding sounds of the wilderness echoing out from the darkness.

Traveling through the Thicketwood in the dark is not without its own inherent dangers. If the player characters light a torch or lantern, then they are unable to surprise any foes they encounter. In addition, any character without the ability to see in low light has their chances of being surprised increased by +1.

Finding Coby

Coby's exact location is determined by the Narrator before the chapter begins. This is done to keep the adventure dynamic and allow for some replayability. Each of the encounters below has a listing for if Coby is found during that encounter.

Encounter One: Chosen Prey

This encounter can be played between and through other encounters in the chapter. One or more Wargs has caught the scent of the player characters and is tracking them. The number of Wargs tracking the party depends on the level of the characters. If the party is third level or less, then two Wargs are stalking them. If the characters are four to sixth level, then four Wargs are stalking them and if they are higher than sixth level, then seven Wargs are stalking them.

The Wargs remain undetected unless the player characters actively state that they are looking for signs of predators and the like. Characters with the Forestry ability can make successful use of that ability to notice they are being followed and even identify the creatures stalking the player characters. Other characters with an appropriate profession (like Hunter or Forester) can make an Insight-based Attribute Saving Throw to figure out the party is being tracked - though they cannot determine what is following the party.

The Wargs will stalk and attack the party and then flee. They use pack tactics, combined with ambush to perform hit and fade strikes over the course of several hours or even days. The Narrator is encouraged to use this encounter to keep the tension high over the course of the entire chapter.

Finding Coby: If the Narrator has decided Coby is discovered in this encounter, then the ambush of the Wargs is ruined by the boy screaming in terror as one of the wargs has broken away and chased the boy up a tree. The wargs then end their attempts to ambush the party and move towards easier prey. If the player characters do not pursue them, it is only a matter of time before Coby falls and is devoured by the evil beasts.

Wargs

Role: Flesh-craving hunters

Reference: Warg (see *THJ2e*, page 189)

Drives: Feed, feed, feed. Inflict pain on their chosen prey.

Notes: Will make use of pack tactics whenever the opportunity presents itself.

Encounter Two: Fir Bolg's Footsteps

Once deep in the woods, the characters feel the ground shake as if heavy footsteps are passing, followed by a booming echo of a voice, singing a song. Suddenly, through the brush they see a Fir Bolg crossing their path. If they hide, it looks at them and raises a bushy, moss-covered eyebrow and moves on. But if the player characters approach the giant it greets them kindly as if they were lost children. If the player characters react with generosity and politeness, the Fir Bolg introduces himself as Mossfoot and offers to lead them to its massive home deeper into the woods. This is a giant-sized house of thatch and brush that could easily be mistaken for a hill in the woods. Inside the Fir Bolg's home, the player characters can rest safely and if they tell Mossfoot they're searching for Coby or the Boggart, it informs them that it has seen the Boggart scampering into and out of the woods and that it's



a foul mischief-making creature. He tells the player characters that he sees the boggart most often near a strange well deeper in the woods. If the Wargs or Spiders are mentioned, Mossfoot tells them that such beasts are foolish enough to avoid his home or run when he comes by.

If they choose to rest overnight in Mossfoot's house, they awaken to discover Mossfoot has left, though he does leave behind three doses of his strange healing poultice. Mossfoot returns that night near sundown and if the player characters are not gone, he tells them they may stay and rest a second night - but after that they must move on.

Aggression will be returned in kind if the player characters are foolish enough to attack Mossfoot and he will fight aggressively to defend his domain. He has no qualms about using lethal force to protect his home.

Finding Coby: If the Narrator has decided Coby is with Mossfoot, then the player characters discover Coby relaxing and enjoying himself at Mossfoot's home, though he grows nervous and forlorn at their arrival. He is, fortunately, perfectly safe.

Mossfoot

Role: Fir Bolg hermit

Reference: Fir Bolg (see *THJ2e*, page 161)

Drives: Stay out of the business of the foul creatures of the wood, protect travelers who stumble too deeply into the Thicketwood..

Notes: Keeps several doses of his poultice in his home.

Encounter Three: Spiders!

As they progress deeper into the woods, the player characters find what first appears to be thick, ropy vines hanging in the trees. These ropes, upon close examination, are revealed to be the webs of massive, dangerous spiders that strike from a position of ambush if the webs are disturbed in any way. The number of spiders appearing is determined by the player characters. Two giant spiders are present if the characters are 3rd level or lower, with three present if they are between 4th and 6th level, and five if they are 7th level or higher.

The spiders attempt to poison and entrap the player characters in an effort to use them for food later, but will flee if the player characters slay more than half of them by skittering high into the webbed trees. If, after

they are slain, the player characters state they are investigating the webbed trees and make a successful Insight-based Saving Throw or Forestry check, they discover the long-slain corpse of a traveler still entwined in webs high in the trees. Cutting down the traveler and searching his person reveals that he is carrying a long blade that is still serviceable, wearing a leather jerkin, and careful examination reveals a Balanced dagger stuffed into his left boot along with a pouch containing 1d10 gold pieces per level of the character who makes the discovery.



Finding Coby: If the Narrator has decided to place Coby here, then the boy is cocooned up the trees near the dead traveler. He is unconscious and has suffered only minor injuries. Once cut free and awakened, he is absolutely terrified and will need to be calmed before anything comprehensible can be gotten from him.

Giant Spiders

Role: Ambushing predators.

Reference: Giant Spider (see *THJ2e*, page 175)

Drives: Entrap their prey for later feeding, inspire fear in any prey they encounter..

Notes: Has a dead traveler cocooned high up in the trees.

Coby Rescued

Regardless of how he is discovered, Coby is wracked with guilt and sobbing as soon as he is confronted with his misdeeds. If the player characters confront him and do so gently he apologizes profusely for his mischief and says that his friend promised that no one would get hurt by their pranks. Coby reveals that the boggart lives in a sinkhole near the center of the Thicketwood and though he told Coby his name was Trago, the young halfling once heard him singing after a particularly successful prank “Mi-Mhodhail.” Coby says the only time he ever saw Trago get angry at him was when Coby once tried to ask Trago “What does Mi-Mho-” and that Trago cut him off and told him if he ever said that word that Trago would leave forever and Coby would never have a friend ever again.

Coby tried to bring that word up again as they were fleeing into the Thicketwood, as Trago began sing-songing the word as some kind of victory chant, and that’s when Trago abandoned him in the woods. Alone in the forest, Coby tried to make his way home but became lost. He tells the player characters that he is going to try to be better now, and will go with them to help stop the chaos he helped to create. He even refuses to return home in spite of the danger until things have been set right.



Climactic Event: The Hidden Well

Arriving at the heart of the Thicketwood, the player characters discover a hole in the ground both narrow and deep. The forest around it is wild and thick, for the boggart's presence has empowered the natural strength of the wilderness. They will need to face off with Trago and either slay him through clever means or gain power over him by revealing they know his true name.

You come to a clearing surrounded by a blanket of half-rotted leaves and fallen logs. At its center is a deep, wet hole in the ground barely wide enough for a human to squeeze down. It descends twenty feet into darkness and as you peer down it, you see glittering yellow eyes and a wickedly familiar smile gazing back up at you. The boggart flashes a quick wink at Coby before disappearing down some passage at the bottom of this natural well.

Coby is visibly afraid, though he will swallow his fear and join the player characters if encouraged to do so. If asked to remain at the top of the well, he reluctantly agrees - but asks if one of the player characters will stay with him. If they refuse, he scrambles up one of the trees near the well and tries to hide.

Crawling down the well is difficult, requiring the use of the Thievery ability, an appropriate Profession, or a Might-based Saving Throw. These rolls can be made at Advantage if the player characters have appropriate climbing equipment. Once down in the hole, they see Trago scampering away down a winding side passage at the bottom of the hole. Following him reveals an open sinkhole with ankle deep water and ceilings high enough to accommodate a human - if they're not too tall. Several tunnels run off in all directions along each wall, looping back to another entry into the chamber.

Trago will fight quickly and brutally, using his speed and chicanery, combined with the narrow tunnels and his small size, to pick off the player characters off one by one. However, if Coby is still with the player characters then Trago targets the boy with particular malice and receives +2 to all his attack and damage rolls against the boy. He fights with murderous glee and has no mercy for mortals who dare interfere with his plans. If the players call out his true name, Mi-Mhodhail, he screeches in pain and suffers all the penalties described in the Boggart entry on page 179.

Trago, or Mi-Mhodhail as his true name is, will beg and plead with the player characters not to reveal his name if they use it against him. He will even thrice promise not to trouble the people of Westwick,

including the boy Coby, if they will also thrice promise not to reveal his true name to anyone. Because he is fey, Trago is bound by this promise. Otherwise, he will not stop fighting until he is slain, or he can escape from the player characters.

Trago the Boggart (aka Mi-Mhodhail)

Role: Trouble-making fey

Reference: Boggart (see page 179)

Drives: Sew trouble for the people of Westwick, keep his true name secret, avoid confrontation with anyone who challenges his power.

Notes: Is bound by any promise he makes three times.

Epilogue

The player characters return to Westwick to find a less than warm welcome. Most of the locals are a bit rude to them and give them the cold shoulder. Mayor Richfoot (if he is still alive) can be found in his home, discussing what to do about the town hall with Nabbi and other elder halflings in the village. He gruffly asks the player characters if they've dealt with the problem, and once they inform him that Trago will no longer be a problem (and possibly inform them of Trago's true name!), he tersely thanks them and politely, but firmly, asks them to leave town tomorrow at sunrise. He pays Nabbi his promised fee for delivering the fireworks, and Nabbi in turn pays the player characters their promised fee.

As they prepare to depart in the morning, a young and penitent Coby comes traveling after them. He tells them that he doesn't really feel at home in Westwick anymore after all the terrible things he's done. Reluctantly, he asks to join the characters on their adventures in hopes that he can find a new life somewhere else. If he is accepted into their fellowship, the Narrator is encouraged to use Coby as a meaningful member of the group. He can easily become a Knight's Squire, or some other loyal ally and his stats should be modified to suit whatever best suits the current legendarium.

Nabbi is a bit upset by events at the Revels, but does not blame the player characters or even Coby. If the characters do not take Coby as an ally, Nabbi agrees to take him as an apprentice and the two will forge a father-son relationship in the years to come.

Trago keeps his thrice promised word and never troubles the people of Westwick again if he is still alive, though after one year he will choose to abandon the area entirely and find new mischief to make.

Narrators are encouraged to perhaps have Trago appear in future adventures as an untrustworthy emissary to the courts of Fairie or even a strange ally, since he has no power over the player characters since they know his true name.

Table 3-2: Westwick Rumors

Roll (1d10)	Rumor	True or False
1	"That Coby Green boy, he lives in his own head. Always wandering the edges of the Thicketwood, not takin' much interest in the affairs of the town, much less the Revels. But this year I feel better for him – he seems to be quite excited about the festival, says he can't wait for the 'big things' to happen. Not sure what he means – maybe the fireworks? – but least he's gettin' more involved in matters. Even looks happy, for a change."	True. May direct players' suspicions towards the boy.
2	"Last few times I've walked the Thicketwood, I felt like I was bein' followed. Heard animal noises too, snufflin' and growlin' and the like. Sure enough, I check the path a few yards behind and there's tracks – wolf tracks, and those big kinds too, by the look of 'em. Got out of there right quick – glad I had my wits about me!"	True. Encourages the players to watch for predators tracking them in the woods and improve their odds in Encounter One: Chosen Prey.
3	"I assume you've been hearin' then about all the mishaps preceding the Revels this year. Rudigon the Chef's kitchen catchin' fire when there was no one in it. Locelia Clayhanger's famous flower displays wiltin' overnight. Kegs of ale turnin' into water an' barley seed. Even funny dancin' lights on the edge of the Thicket!"	False (mostly). The accounts of the mishaps are true. The wild, bizarre explanation is not. It is up to the Narrator whether this theory is in the mind of a single barley wine-addled speaker or more commonly held, and what sorts of trouble the players may get into if they mention it to others, especially if combined with rumor 9.
4	"There's a bunch of the older folk like to set out by the park near the Thicketwood during the Revels. They also like to talk." (Re-roll if the players are already in Thicketwood Park.)	True. Directs the players to Thickethollow Park, where they can learn three additional rumors.
5	"Three of the ladies – Alexa Mudfoot, June Spiffly, and Sarka Hillmont – been actin' mighty strange lately. Always talkin' amongst themselves and to no others, lookin' at flowers funny and making 'em wilt, sayin' the Revels is 'a joke,' claimin' they know what the weather will be and then it happens as they foretell, lookin' at people funny and making them trip, and – I tell no lies – traipsing off to the Thicketwood at night! I seen 'em myself! Tell you what I think: I says there's witches in Westwick, and the witches are those three! You want to know why there's been troubles with this year's Revels? Go ask them!"	False. Other than the women having no interest in the Revels, this is patently untrue and pure malicious gossip designed to mislead the players. Questioning any of the women will enrage them and possibly others, and lead to consequences determined by the Narrator.

Roll (1d10)

Rumor

True or False

6

"Every year, Old Siltho crafts one and only one slingshot from a great oak in the Thicketwood. Says it's so simple any idiot can use it, even those what can't usually wield such a thing. Not that you big 'uns have the eye or hand for it, but if you actually did, he might just let you have a chance at it."

True. Encourages players to visit Siltho's Leathercrafts and win the Thicketwood Slingshot.

7

"That young Coby Green's been actin' stranger than ever lately, talkin' non-stop about these tales of adventuresome folk like you, pretending he's living in some kind of hero world. Fer example a week ago one of the tall thin pointy-eared folk comes through, all full of himself like they all are, not talkin' to no one. On one of their strange, pointless missions no doubt. Well, Coby comes a-boundin' up to him and says (imitating high-pitched and forced formal accent) 'Oh wise and ageless walker of the woods, I beseech your aid. Can you tell me what "Mee Modale" means?' Well that got pointy's attention, all right! Never seen one of them get mad before but this one is plenty chafed! Says something like 'odious little gremlin' and leaves right back the way he came! Guess he meant Coby. Ha ha, 'Mee Modale!'"

True. The Elf was a victim of one or more of the Boggart's pranks. Gives players a clue about the Boggart's true name, as well as the Boggart's connection to Coby.

8

"So Buck Bellybolt - he's the top pie-eater, well, everything-eater, really, in town - he shows me this plate he won last year's Revels for the pie eatin' contest. Drops it on his stone floor, it don't break! 'Watch this,' he says. Puts it against a fence post, gets his bow, and shoots an arrow into it - the arrow bounces off, like it's a shield! Would love to win me one of them but I ain't got the stomach for takin' on old Bucky there - no pun intended."

True. Encourages the players to enter the pie-eating contest and to convert the trophy into a Dwarf-Forged Buckler.

9

"Let me let you in on a little secret, but don't tell no one I told you. All's not what it seems here. The Revels is really about celebratin' somethin' else . . . somethin' what lives in the Thicket. The food and drink are a way of sacrifice for Him, mind; the contests are amusements for Him to watch. And the fireworks . . . ohh, that's the worst of it . . . what those are meant for! All of it folly, I tell ye . . . folly to please . . . (voice drops to a whisper) . . . The Horned One. But it's not too late, not too late for you! You could leave town now and be free of it!"

False. The "Horned One" tale is actually an elaborate joke that a small group of the Halflings routinely enjoy playing on outsiders. The Narrator can decide the consequences of following this false lead, especially if combined with rumor 3.

10

"Was a fellow name of Charles Treble, came through here round a month ago. A tall one, like you folk. Handsome and smooth-tongued too - not like you folk!"

Said he knew of riches hidden by fey ones in the Thicket, said he was searchin' for 'em. He shows me this dagger he had tucked in his boot. I held it and it felt like no blade I ever did hold before . . . it was, well, perfect.

True. Charles Treble is the corpse found in Encounter Three: Spiders! The rumor should clue players in to checking his boot and finding the Balanced dagger hidden there. It also encourages them to seek the Hoary Chestnut in the conkers game.

Or maybe not so perfect, seein' as he set off into the Thicket and ain't been seen since. I 'spect old Lob and Cob got to him - should've brought a chestnut in his pockets instead!"

The speaker will not elaborate further about Lob, Cob, or chestnuts.

chapter Four

GOBLIN PROMISES

✠ HISTORY

The mining camp of Iarainn Beinn has been prosperous for many generations. Rugged and reclusive dwarves live in hilltop homesteads, coming down to the camp after winter's frost has passed to harvest iron ore from the depths of the earth. They then trade this ore with traveling merchants for other supplies or make the yearly trek to the grand city of Port Corsai where ample coin is available for such an in-demand commodity. The mountain miners and prospectors are savvier than most "civilized" folks that ignore their efforts realize. Iarainn Beinn is protected by earth spirits known as kobolds, who have their own city deep within the mountain. The first dwarves to draw ore from the mine made sure to pay proper homage to these strange, diminutive sprites and for generations their descendants have continued to do the same.

Under a promise that neither those who mine the depths of Iarainn Beinn or the kobolds that call those depths home would inquire as news from the other's world, the miners agreed to leave the caverns untouched during the winter. In return, the kobolds would see that the miners remained safe from the dangers of the depths. This would become known as the Ironclad Accords as the years went on.

But as spring faded to summer this year, the mine experienced its first tragedy since the Accords were reached. The mountain shook and an entire mineshaft collapsed. Twenty-two miners were lost in the affair and as rescuers went into the darkness to search for survivors and recover the bodies of their friends, they saw the twinkling lights of kobold lanterns fading into stone. The prospectors of Iarainn Beinn had been betrayed.

Fearing that any attempt to learn the truth of what the kobolds were doing would further break the Accords, a senior miner by the name of Thordan is hoping to hire a group of outsiders to delve into the mines and find out why the kobolds have broken their own promise. Without the ore from Iarainn Beinn, iron may become scarce across the region from as far south as Port Corsai to the northern reaches of Loughwood Valley.



What the Thordan and the miners do not realize is that the kobolds and their leader, Burgomaster Heinzelmänn are destroying the mine to protect the dwarves of Iarainn Beinn. Because of the promise, they cannot speak of it. Heinzelmänn and his people have discovered a tribe of goblins that have entered the depths of the mountain through a deep passage and have taken the first steps necessary to set up a Goblin Town in hopes that hundreds of these brutal imps will follow in their wake. So important is this goblin expedition that it is led by none other than the great Goblin King Kallikantzaros. But King Kallikantzaros knows something that neither the miners nor even the kobolds know: Deeper still, in the heart of the mountain there lay a long forgotten Elder Wyrms named Scatarrax sleeping upon a mountain of treasure and wealth. Most importantly of all, in the hoard of Scatarrax is the Skull Chalice, ancestral artifact of the Kallikantzaros bloodline. With it, Kallikantzaros can draw thousands of goblins to his future kingdom and lay siege to the realm.

Now the player characters must enter the mountain caverns of Iarainn Beinn and find a way to bring peace between miners, kobolds, and goblins -- all without awakening an ancient evil that could destroy them all.

Adventure Outline

Goblin Promises is broken into a prologue, three chapters, and an epilogue. An overview of each chapter is detailed below.

Prologue: The Dwarven Camp While traveling through a rocky pass high in the mountains, the player characters come upon a dwarven mining camp. Thordan, the leader of the miners, offers them a place by his fire alongside his kinsmen. He tells them the story of his lost kinsmen, their oath with the kobolds and offers to hire the player characters to delve into the mines and discover why the oath has been broken.

Chapter One: Exploring the Mines While winding their way through the dwarven mines, the characters find the sight of the cave in and see the bodies of several dwarves caught in the collapse. As they investigate, the kobolds of the deep reveal themselves. These diminutive earthen creatures explain why the collapse occurred and apologize. Though they did not want to endanger the dwarves, they fear that if the sleeping dragon deep in the heart of the mountain is awakened he will kill all the dwarven miners and then ravage the land. But like the

dwarves before them, they seek the help of the player characters to find out why goblins have recently come into the region and somehow get them to depart before the Elder Wyrms are awakened..

Climactic Event: Just as an agreement is reached between the kobolds and the player characters, a group of goblin scouts stumbles upon them and springs an ambush! One of these scouts flee back towards King Kallikantzaros's camp! If the characters are quick, they can follow the creature back to where the goblins are laired.

Chapter Two: The Goblin King Encamped Whether they were provided with directions by the kobolds or followed the goblins back to their encampment, the characters must now confront King Kallikantzaros and his servants. The King will ask the characters to prove themselves by facing off against his bodyguard in battle. After defeating the Goblin Brute, the King will agree to leave the caverns and never return on one condition: The player characters must recover the Skull Chalice from the lair of the Elder Wyrms that sleeps in the depths of the mountain!

Climactic Event: The brutal final test is a battle with the Goblin Brute Tak, empowered by the Goblin King's singing, serves as this chapter's Climactic Event.

Chapter Three: Deception of the Elder Wyrms Now deep beneath the mountain, the player characters must sneak through a massive treasure horde where Scatarrax slumbers and somehow find the Skull Chalice without awakening the dragon. If they fail, the Elder Wyrms will awaken and all will be lost. The characters must be stealthy and clever - and if the Elder Wyrms awaken they will need to be clever and quick-witted if they hope to escape with their lives!

Climatic Event: Upon returning to the goblin encampment, King Kallikantzaros passes the Skull Chalice to one of his cadre and then betrays the player characters who must now face off against the Goblin King and his fearsome brute.

Epilogue: How this adventure ends will depend greatly on the actions of the player characters. If they successfully recovered the Skull Chalice without awakening Scatarrax and slew King Kallikantzaros and his Goblin Brute, then the evil heirloom is still in the hands of malicious goblins, though the Thordan and his dwarves can safely return to the mines with the blessings of the kobolds. If Scatarrax was awakened, then likely all hell has broken loose as the Elder Wyrms will undoubtedly ravage the land and leave slaughter in its wake. The kobolds will abandon the mines and while this means Thordan and his kin can

return, the mine will become a dangerous place that gives up little ore in the time to come. In either case, the player characters are left with a loose end that the Narrator can expand into a new adventure.

PROLOGUE: The Dwarven Camp

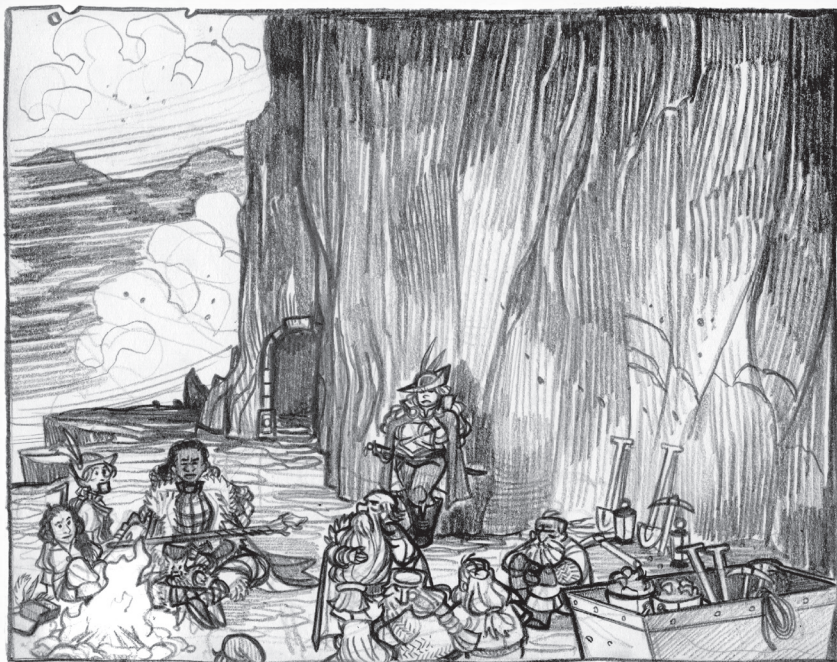
The Narrator can begin the adventure by reading or paraphrasing the following italicized text:

For many long days and nights you and your companions have been winding the treacherous paths that wind through the Northern Pass Mountains. Narrow cliffside paths, dead end canyons, and precarious climbs up sheer rock have been only a few of the dangers you face on your long trek across this trackless land. Each night cold wind chills you to the bone and you hear the distant howls of goblins that have crawled forth from their cavernous lairs. During the day, you've spotted stone giants on distant mountaintops, tossing boulders for fun. And through it all a chilling wind cuts through your clothing and straight to the bone as you ascend higher and higher in search of some way back onto the road to civilization.

As yet another sunset slips behind the snowy peaks, you spot a flickering orange glow on the rocky path ahead and hear the sound of deep, rumbling voices echo against the stones of the Northern Pass. That is neither the sound of goblin nor giant, but something both strange and welcoming. You recognize, whether from what you've learned from tales of the past or from your own experience, the language of dwarves and as you draw close to the edge of the firelight you see the truth of it: A small camp of no more than half a dozen dwarves have gathered in a small canyon around a campfire where they are roasting a spitted goat and nibbling on hardtack. One of them looks up from his meal, wipes grease from his beard and stands, planting himself between you and their campfire.

"Aye! Who'n be comin' t' arr camp on this night most dark and foul?" His voice is gruff and cautious, with the hint of an underlying threat. Sharp green eyes twinkle behind a great silver beard and a hand hovers near the battle axe he has slung across his back.

This dwarf is Thordan, the leader of this small company which includes five of his kinfolk. As long as the player characters are friendly enough and show no obvious signs of being aggressive or threatening. He'll even allow them to share in their food and camp with them overnight. Once he gets a sense that they are trustworthy or of a good sort - or if there is a dwarf in the party - he will ask them if they'd be willing to take on a job for him in return for a small payment. Thordan offers the player characters 100 gold pieces each, though they can



negotiate for a higher reward if they say they are doing so and make a successful Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw.

After the meal, but before everyone beds down in the canyon for the night, Thordan explains that he and his kin have been mining these caves for years. The mines have been prosperous and quite safe for years due to an agreement his forebears made with kobolds that dwell deep in the mines. In return for agreeing not to mine too deeply, the kobolds agreed to ensure the dwarves would find rich veins of ore in the upper tunnels and that they'd be safe in their efforts to retrieve these resources.

A few days ago there was a collapse of a new tunnel the dwarves had opened up and three of his kinfolk were killed. Thordan was there and he heard the gentle tapping of metal on stone, a sure sign of a kobold nearby, just before the collapse. He's certain the kobolds are responsible, but has been unable to contact them. In return for their payment (half up front and half upon completion), Thordan asks that the player characters attempt to find the kobolds and ask why they collapsed the mine.

If the player characters refuse or continue to press for a greater reward, Thordan tells them he will make one weapon, suit of armor, or

shield for the party to do with as they will that is *Dwarf-Forged* (see *The Hero's Journey, Second Edition*, page 203). Also, if there are any dwarf player characters then they are likely to feel some honor bound to help Thordan to some degree or another, though this is not something the Narrator should force on any dwarf player characters.

Once they have agreed to help Thordan and his then he will offer to outfit the players with what little spelunking supplies they have. The player characters will be given a dozen torches, two sets of flint and steel, a lantern, three pints of oil, and three coils of rope fifty feet in length. He also provides them with a map of the man to help prevent them from getting lost.

Before bedding down for the evening, the players can try to talk to the other dwarves for information. This can be done through sheer roleplaying or the Narrator may opt to require a successful Bearing-based Saving Throw to learn anything from the dwarves. However, dwarf player characters should receive Advantage on this roll. There are five other dwarves and engaging with them successfully in this manner allows each character to roll once on the Dwarven Camp Rumors table, detailed below.

Table 4-1 Dwarven Camp Rumors

Roll (1d6)	Rumors	True or False
1	<p>"I'll tell ye what's gone wrong with them kobolds, and why they don't like us digging certain places. They was protectin' us from something, and then they done dug it up themselves. And it changed them, as forbidden things of the deeps will often do to a soul.</p> <p>It's like the legend of King Burundbur and that damned Blood Gem – they all told him not to dig for it, and once he had it, it took him over, made him all bad and jealous, till he became obsessed with evil magic and turned his people into living dead guards for his riches! I bet it's something like that done happened to the kobolds."</p>	<p>False. Though the story is an allusion to the <i>THJ2e</i>, page 115.</p>
2	<p>"So here's how the Ironclad Accords work. We agree to leave the stone alone in winter; they keep us safe from dangers in the depths. But there's another kind of digging what's regulated, see: they can't ask us no questions about our world, nor we of theirs. Which means that even if there was a bad lot among some of them, there's none amongst the good who could tell us. And that's why Thordan himself can't just ask 'em why they done what they done."</p>	<p>True. Explains the accords and adds some ambiguity around the kobolds' motivation and situation.</p>

Roll (1d6)

Rumors

True or False

3

"Just a few weeks before the disaster, I seen one of 'em kobolds walking down a passage in the dark. I call out 'ho!' to him in greeting, and he ignores me, just start walkin' faster. I call again; this time, he turns to look at me and that's when I learned what a kobold looks like without no beard, 'cos he had none! Big large toothy mouth and lips all twisted like. Noticed too how pointed their noses really are when the beard's gone. I caught only a glimpse, see, and then he was gone.

I dunno – there was something didn't feel right about all this. Maybe what's gone wrong with 'em – they lost their beards! You know it would not go well with us folk if'n we lost ours – maybe they're like us that way too?"

4

"I think on death more often than usual since that disaster.

Bet you didn't know this about us: while our bodies sleep in the earth when we pass, our spirits crave the sky just like those of other folk. That's because what you call 'the sky' is really the roof of the larger cave of . . . ah, don't get me started! Anyways, yes, a dwarven spirit does crave the open air after passin'."

5

"Now, Thordan's gonna tell ye there's no danger what's down there save the spiders, and then he's gonna tell ye we got rid of 'em all. Well . . . let's just say I ain't as sanguine about this matter as our Thordan. See, the fellow in charge of that operation was always a bit of a talker. As in, talking things not always true, 'specially when it came to him gettin' his jobs done. Now the poor wretch sleeps forever in the deep with the others we lost, so I guess we'll never know."

6

"Please don't ask Thordan about those we lost. See, one of 'em was his own son, Thraindar. Damn tragic, that; a fine boy, and a promising leader, like his da. Thraindar grieves private-like as any real dwarf, so don't you ask him nothing about this! He must continue to lead even as he bears that stone"

True (partly). The dwarf saw a goblin who had gotten lost. While dwarves' hatred of goblins is legendary, this dwarf did not recognize the goblin on sight because the encounter happened too quickly, and perhaps because he was expecting to see a kobold. The kobolds later killed the goblin before it could return to the goblin town. The dwarf's conjecture about kobold beards is, of course, false.

True (partly). While the ultimate nature of dwarven cosmology is up to the Narrator, it is true that at least some dwarven spirits pass into the sky, and this should help clue the players into leading Thraindar's specter to the mine entrance (see Encounter Three: Thraindar's Ghost).

True. Not all the spiders were destroyed, and this rumor serves as a warning of the upcoming encounter with them (see Encounter One: Spiders Disturbed).

True. Thraindar was slain in the mines.

Thordan

Role: Dwarven Miner Leader

Reference: Peasant (see *THJ2e*, page 127)

Drives: Protect his kinfolk, return to the mines

Notes: Has all the Heritage abilities of a dwarf

chapter one: Exploring the Mines

The Narrator can begin this chapter by reading or paraphrasing the italicized text below:

Thordan leads you and your friends to the canyon wall at the edge of the camp. What appears to be a sheer wall of rock reveals itself to be the entrance to the Mines of Iarainn Beinn as the dwarf sets his bare hand to the stone and sings a low song in his native tongue. A portion of rock large enough for three humans to walk through slides out and away from the stone to reveal a long, dark passage into the mines.

When the player characters are ready, Thordan leads them to the entrance to the mine at the end of the canyon and bids them good luck. He tells them that he's closing the door behind them, but will keep someone on watch so if they need to exit, they can just knock from the inside. The inside of the mine is expertly cared with flat floors, ceilings, and walls. Several walls and doors have been reinforced with stone beams. Just inside the entrance to the mine is a collection of mining tools which includes several pickaxes and two wheelbarrows. Thordan has marked on the map where the collapse occurred and tells the players they should make for that location. He tells them that there are no traps or monsters in the mine. The only threat they ever encountered was a nest of spiders that was dealt with long ago. Ever since the pact was made with the kobolds, the mine has been perfectly safe.

Detailed below are three encounters the Narrator can use as the players make their way to the site of the collapse. The Narrator does not need to use any of them if they do not want to, but they are provided to extend the length of the adventure and should be used to challenge the characters as the Narrator sees fit. Each encounter includes a brief description in italicized text that the Narrator can read or paraphrase to set it up.

What, No Map?

Unlike many traditional dungeon crawls, there is no map provided to the Narrator for this portion of the adventure. This is because with the map and lack of threats in the mine it is not dangerous, and the players can return to the entrance with ease. Thus the need to track specific locations and encounters is unnecessary. Instead, a few encounters are detailed below to be used as the Narrator deems appropriate.

Encounter One: Spiders Disturbed

As you make your way down the long dark of a slowly descending passageway, you notice a large fissure in the ceiling that must have been torn open when the mine collapsed. A cluster of eye red eyes peers out at you as a massive spider slips forth,, skittering quickly from the ceiling to the nearby wall. It eyes you and your companions hungrily.

While the encounter opens with only one giant spider, the Narrator should have another spider come out of the fissure in the ceiling each round until the number of spiders present is equal to the level of the most powerful player character. The spiders are ravenously hungry and attack on sight with little effort to surprise their targets, but will flee if reduced to 4 or fewer Endurance.

Giant Spiders

Role: Predatory Arachnids

Reference: Giant Spider (see THJ2e, page 175)

Drives: Feed, feed, feed..

Encounter Two: Kobold Sabotage

A strange blue flame flashes to life further down the passage and you see one of the support beams against the wall is burning! Much to your surprise you see a small, aged hand holding a lantern which radiates the same blue light beside the burning beam poking through the perfectly whole stone wall as if the wall weren't even there. An instant later the lantern and the hand pull back into the stone wall, but the beam continues to burn. Dust begins to fall from the ceiling above and you realize that if the flames aren't put out the enter chamber could collapse!

Though they are blue fire, the flames can be snuffed just like any other fire. The player characters have four rounds to put out the fire in whatever manner they see fit. This can include snuffing it with a blanket, throwing at least five gallons of water on it, or the creative use of a magic spell. If the flame is not put out a partial collapse occurs and any character within ten feet of the now ruined beam suffers 2d6 damage as rocks tumble from the wall and onto them. This is still not enough to seal the chamber, but does narrow the actually passage itself by one half its normal length.

Encounter Three: Thraindar's Ghost

A low moan echoes through the silent tunnel. A soft masculine voice calls out from the darkness: "Faaaather.... Faaaather....." You see on the edge of your light the ghostly form of a young dwarf, translucent and carrying a mining pick reaching towards you with one incorporeal hand. "Home," it cries as it drifts towards you.

This is the ghost of Thraindar, Thordan's son. He has not yet been driven mad like other specters, but is not far from it. If the player characters do not react with hostility, the specter continues to repeat "Father" and "Home" over and over. After ten rounds, if the player characters have not attempted to communicate with the specter or become hostile, Thraindar attacks them. If, however, the player characters lead the spirit to the entrance to the mine then as soon as Thraindar sees the entrance he floats towards it rapidly and fades from existence once he sees the mine's entrance.

Helping Thraindar find the entrance is a heroic act and earns the characters an extra 250 Experience Points.

Specter

Role: Wayward Dwarven Spirit

Reference: Specter (see *THJ2e*, page 194)

Drives: Return to the camp and reunite with his father

Notes: Is less aggressive towards the living than the typical specter.

Climactic Event: Diplomacy and Deception

The player characters arrive at the site of the collapse and now confront the kobolds responsible for it. The Narrator can read or paraphrase the following text to begin the scene:

At the end of a perfectly carved passageway you and your friends see a great pile of rubble sealing the chamber. Tons of rock have fallen from the ceiling preventing anyone from crossing. In a horrible revelation you see the hand of a dwarf sticking out from the pile, an apparent victim of the collapse. Slowly the pile of rubble takes on a soft blue glow and stepping out of the stone you see a wizened old man no more than two feet tall. His coal-gray beard hangs to his knees and he leans upon a gnarled wooden staff topped with a tiny lantern from which the glow emanates.

The kobold holds a hand up to the player characters and bows in an attempt to show he is not aggressive. He then offers a polite bow and introduces himself as Artio and then immediately apologizes for the collapse. He is a gentle, soft-spoken kobold. He offers to explain what happened to the player characters and promises “upon the light of my azure lantern” that no harm will come to them by his hand or that of his kin.

If the player characters agree to listen to him he asks them to walk with him and holds out a hand. He asks all the player characters to link hands in a line and then leads them *through* the collapse, which they are able to walk through as if it were not even there. Once on the other side, he sits down on a rock with a sigh and explains the situation to them.



“My kin have lived here for as long as there has been stone. When Thindar, Thordan’s grandfather came to these mines he spoke to the stone as is a long tradition still practiced by but a scant few of his kind. He bid us a promise that he would mine the stone with the tenderness of a shepherd to his flock. He would never delve too deeply, nor would he disturb our kind - the kobolds. We honored that promise and both sides have kept to their accords, even to this day. But what Thindar never knew, nor none of his kin now know, is that Scatarrax, an Elder Wyrm, sleeps deep beneath his mines and has for since the time before Thindar’s father’s father’s father. We protected the dwarves to keep them from awakening the beast and now we hope to drive them out.”

"Not for malice nor any crime, but because a tribe of goblins came into the region and has begun setting camp dangerously close to Scatarrax's lair. If they awaken the dragon, then Scatarrax will destroy the goblins, my kind, the dwarves, and ravage the region. Unfortunately, we could not tell Thordan this ourselves as the accord's power is bound to a silent promise. That is why we sabotaged the mine - in an effort to drive Thordan and his kin away before Scatarrax awakens. But as you are not part of this accord, will you not aide Thordan and my own kin by driving these goblins from under the mountain so the Elder Wyrn might slumber yet for another thousand years?"

If the players agree to help Artio, he thanks them profusely and tells them that once the goblins are driven out, he will gift them with a blessing from the kobolds. As he is telling his story, have each of the player characters make an Insight or Weal-based Attribute Saving Throw. Those with the Thievery ability may also make use of it if they so choose.



Those who succeed hear the approach of footsteps and are prepared as a group of goblins comes around the corner. Those who fail are surprised. A group of goblins equal to twice the number of player characters was preparing to ambush them and either attack with surprise or immediately after being noticed.

During the fight, Artio cries for one of the player characters to attempt to capture one of the goblins so it can show them the way to its camp. He then fades into the stone for the duration of the battle. Once half the goblins are defeated, the survivors attempt to flee.

If the player characters manage to capture one of the goblins, he tells them his name is Gash but refuses to lead them to his camp due to his fear of "the King and his brute." A successful Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw will convince him to help the player characters and he will lead them to the camp.

If any goblins escape the battle, they return to their camp and inform the Goblin King and his brute that intruders are likely on their way. If all the goblins are slain, then Artio will tell them where the camp is located but will not serve as a physical guide.

Artio the Kobold

Role: Reluctant Kobold Protector

Reference: Kobold (see *THJ2e*, page 143)

Drives: To protect his kin deep in the stone, to uphold the ancient accord with the dwarves

Notes: Speaks in a raspy whisper

Gash the Goblin

Role: Goblin scout

Reference: Goblin (see *THJ2e*, page 168)

Drives: Don't die, stay on the goblin king's good side.

Notes: Has a Thievery ability of 2.

Chapter Two: The Goblin King Encamped

This chapter begins with the player characters making their way through the natural caverns beyond the dwarfish mine and meeting for a dangerous parlay with the Goblin King Kallikantzaros. The Narrator can read or paraphrase the following italicized text to open the scene.

With aid from the strange dwellers beneath the dwarven mine, you have descended deeper into the mountain. The caverns are now natural and as you descend deeper and deeper a strange, foul odor finds its way to your nostrils. Before long, the winding passages open up into a large cavernous chamber. Goblins fill the chamber by the dozen, and they are scattered about in small groups arguing, fist fighting, and generally performing all manner of wretched past times. At the center of the chamber is a massive goblin, bloated and corpulent with a crown of bones upon his head. You recognize him instantly as a Goblin King. Beside him stands an equally massive goblin, though this one has scars crisscrossing its massive muscular body and has a long-hafted bearded axe casually resting on one shoulder as he stands at the flank of his king. The axe carrying brute notices your arrival and grunts something to his lord, who turns and looks in your direction.

"My lowly subjects," booms the king, "we have guests!"

The total number of goblins present is equal to ten times the number of player characters, plus King Kallikantzaros and his Goblin Brute, Tak. If they do not immediately act violently, the goblins do not attack them - though they do let their hands rest of their weapons and make threatening gestures and remarks. If Gash lead the player characters to the goblin encampment, he tells the king that these folks are here to speak to him. If he did not, Kallikantzaros demands offerings for the pleasure of his company. If the player characters give him either 100 gold pieces or items totaling the value of 100 gold pieces, he permits them an "audience." If they are unable to pay then he begins demanding pieces of their personal equipment until a suitable sum has been reached.

King Kallikantzaros is haughty, boisterous, and loud. He is in complete control of this goblin horde and he knows it. If the player characters ask him about Scatarrax, he waves his hand dismissively and tells them he's well aware of the slumbering dragon and it is of no concern to him. He feels the same about the kobolds, though if the dwarves are mentioned to him this is a surprise. He casually remarks that his tribe will slaughter them if necessary, should the time come.

If the player characters show "proper respect" to Kallikantzaros and tell him that he needs to leave, he will agree to do so on two conditions. First they must pass a few tests to prove their worthiness and second they must recover the Skull Chalice from the lair of Scatarrax and bring it to him. If they can do that, he and his goblins will depart and never return.

Test One: Goblin's Dice

The first test King Kallikantzaros puts to the players is a game of Goblin's Dice against his advisor, the Goblin Merchant known as Clatter. This game is played identically to the real-world game Liar's Dice. Enterprising Narrators could actually play the game out using those rules, but alternatively, the Narrator should have each player make a Weal-based Saving Throw. To represent their actual dice rolls within the context of the game. If this Saving Throw is successful, the player character then makes a Bearing-based Saving Throw to reflect them bluffing. If they succeed in the Weal-based Attribute Saving Throw, they receive Advantage on the Bearing-based Saving Throw.

Alternately, a player character can forgo these Saving Throws and make a Thievery check if they have that ability to represent cheating. Cheating characters may be noticed if anyone states they are looking for cheating and make a successful Insight-based Attribute Saving Throw. Clatter cheats immediately, attempting to gamble with the player characters by betting ten gold on each roll.

To “win” the test to King Kallikantzaros’s satisfaction, the player characters must either win against Clatter three times (whether by cheating or not), or if they catch Clatter cheating and kill him that is also a satisfactory victory in the king’s opinion.

Clatter the Goblin Merchant

Role: Goblin Merchant gambler

Reference: Goblin Merchant (see THJ2e, page 171)

Drives: Pull a fast one on as many people as possible and get away with it.

Notes: Carries several sets of loaded dice

Test Two: Knife Throw

The goblins have set up a target of wood with a crude humanoid outline drawn on it in red-brown ink. The characters are invited to participate, but the game is a bit more dangerous than a simple test of skill. The leader of the knife-throwers, Cutter, tells the player characters that one of them must volunteer to be the target. The target then goes and stands against the wooden board and the thrower receives three knives to throw. The thrower who inflicts the most injury is the winner.

The player characters must make a ranged attack using a thrown dagger against the chosen target. The thrower that inflicts the most damage over three attacks wins. However, this does mean it’s possible to kill the target. A player character who is *not* hit by a knife may make a Bearing or Weal-based Saving Throw to feign being hit. If the false “attack” is successful, the thrower rolls damage like normal and it is counted towards the tally - though not actually inflicted.

Cutter is a normal goblin and the player doing the throwing rolls against a Defense of 10 since the target is not moving or attempting to defend itself. King Kallikantzaros is particularly pleased if either a goblin or player character is killed in the contest.

Cutter the Goblin

Role: Goblin Knife-Thrower

Reference: Goblin Merchant (see THJ2e, page 168)

Drives: Use the knife-throwing contests to assassinate his rivals..

Notes: Receives a +2 bonus on all ranged attacks made with a thrown weapon

Test Three: The King's Song

The third test demands that the player characters attempt to out-sing the Goblin King himself. King Kallikantzaros is an expert performer and if the player characters can hope to perform better than him they will need to make a Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw. Bards may add their level to this Saving Throw. King Kallikantzaros sings the most brutal, bawdy song he can think of that tells of goblins cutting, slashing, and eating their victims. If player characters do not say that they are attempting to sing an equally horrid ballad, they receive Disadvantage on their Saving Throw.

If the characters are successful, King Kallikantzaros is actually displeased for being “shown up” in his own court. A player character can choose to willingly fail the Saving Throw, but must state they are doing so and must come to their own conclusion regarding their performance and the King's ego.

If they fail, then the King laughs heartily and exclaims that “Of course no one could match the power and might of his glorious singing voice.” He tells them it is good that they recognize the superiority of goblin minstrelry and in an effort to show what a generous king he is, Kallikantzaros gives them a gift he calls a “Goblin Viol.” It is a strange and wicked musical instrument made from human bones and literal cat guts. It seems almost impossible to play, though goblins seem able to work a horrid (if consistent) tune from it. It could possibly be sold as an oddity to a rare antiquities dealer for 25 gold pieces, at most.

Climactic Event: The Final Test

Having completed all of King Kallikantzaros's tests, the characters have one final task to complete before he will agree to depart.

King Kallikantzaros lets out a mirthless laugh as you stand before him after having completed all his strange tests to prove your worth and convince him to leave the caverns. “You fools have served as wonderful entertainment, but the time has come for one final test before I will show you the way to Scatarrax's lair. Entertain me one last time.” He claps his massive hands and a boom rings through the cavern. “Tak come forward. These fools are boring me. I think it is time for this farce to end.”

Tak, the Goblin Brute steps forward as the goblins form a great circle. He fights with brutal efficiency, eager to slay the player characters and prove his prowess to the king. If the player characters passed both the Goblin's Dice and Knife Throwing test, then the Goblin King offers no assistance during the battle. If the player characters completed either the Goblin Dice or the Knife Throwing test, but failed the King's Song, then the Goblin King begins to use his Goblin Song to empower Tak. If the

characters failed all the tests except for the King's Song, the King and all the goblins in the cavern sing as well. See the Goblin King's "Goblin Song" on page 169 of *The Hero's Journey, Second Edition* for more information on this ability.

Tak fights until he is reduced to 5 Endurance, at which point he surrenders. Once defeated, he slinks back behind King Kallikantzaros who is outraged by the outcome. However, he keeps his word and orders Clatter the Goblin Merchant further down the mountain depths to the lair of Scatarrax.



King Kallikantzaros

Role: Arrogant Goblin King

Reference: Goblin King (see THJ2e, page 169)

Drives: Recover the Skull Chalice at any cost.

Notes: Leads a horde of over 100 goblins.

Tak the Bloody

Role: Savage Goblin Brute

Reference: Goblin Brute (see page 182)

Drives: Slay anyone and everyone as requested by King Kallikantzaros

Notes: Constantly has a massive bearded axe on his shoulder and is covered in scars

Chapter Three: Deception of the Elder Wyrn

This chapter opens with Clatter leading the player characters to the entrance to the lair where Scatarrax slumbers, but he refuses to enter. After several hours of descending, Clatter leads the player characters to a blind corner and tells them that the hall opens into a larger chamber where the Elder Wyrn still sleeps. He then slips away into the nearby shadows, clearly terrified. The Narrator can read or paraphrase the following italicized text when the player characters first enter the chamber of Scatarrax.

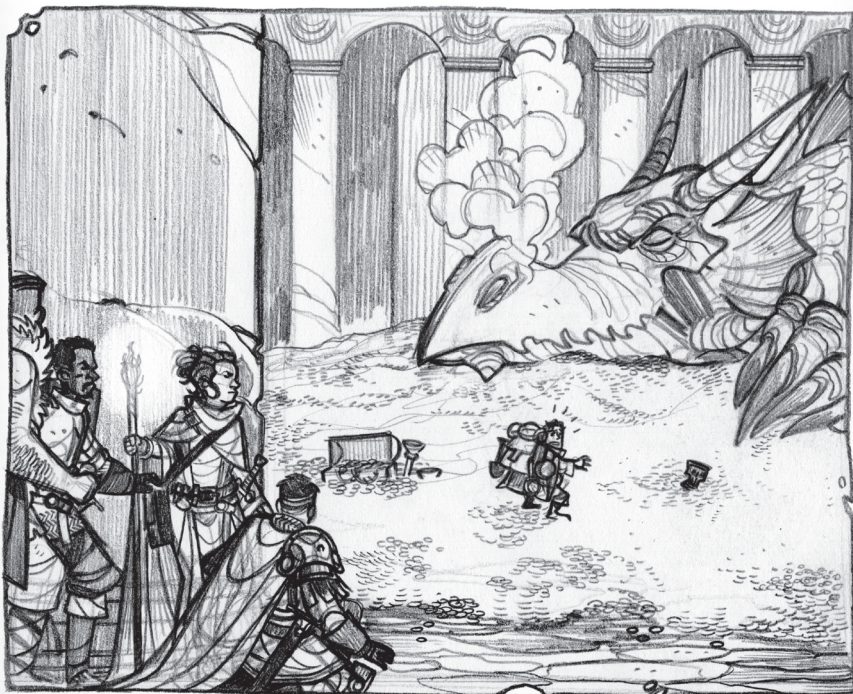
The narrow, winding cavern takes a sharp turn and suddenly opens into a vast cavern that stretches beyond the light of your torches and lanterns. Thousands upon thousands of gold pieces have turned the floor into a liquid sunrise set off by a rainbow of jewels randomly cast about like stars. Resting in the center of this wealth of nations is a great and terrible beast. A form of slumbering destruction and carnage curled and slumbering atop this golden mountain. Each of its scales is the size of a shield and its closed eyes are as large as a standing mirror. A deep rumble bellows through the chamber with each breath it takes in its deep slumber. Should this thing awaken, it could destroy you and your companions in an instant with no more thought than a man stepping upon an ant.

The lair of Scatarrax is absolutely massive, easily one hundred feet across in all directions with a ceiling that rises beyond the light of any torches or lanterns. Fortunately, for the characters, the Elder Wyrn is a deep sleeper.

Searching for Skull Chalice is a long and difficult task. In addition, the characters are likely trying to do so while remaining as silent as possible. Attempting to search an area no larger than ten square feet requires a successful Insight-based Attribute Saving Throw. This Saving Throw is made with Disadvantage if a character is attempting to do so while remaining as quiet as possible. If this Saving Throw is failed, then the Elder Wyrms rumbles and stirs as it moves one step closer to awakening. Any character with the Thievery ability can make use of this and if it is successful, they do not suffer Disadvantage on their Insight-based Saving Throw.

Each time this Saving Throw is failed the Narrator should roll 1d10. If the number rolled is equal to or lower than the number of failed Saving Throws, the Elder Wyrms awakens. In addition, if the players make any blatant or obvious loud noises, or attack the Elder Wyrms, Scatarrax awakens immediately.

The exact location of the Skull Chalice is not predetermined. One character must succeed in a total of three of the above-mentioned Insight-based Saving Throws before they discover the Skull Chalice. After retrieving the Chalice, the characters can slip away and leave Scatarrax to his long sleep.



Characters attempting to pilfer a fist full of the Elder Wyrms' treasure must make a Finesse-based Attribute Saving Throw or Thievery check to do so successfully do so without waking Scatarrax. Additional attempts may be made after the first, but are done so with Disadvantage. Each successful attempt at theft nets a character 5d6 gold pieces. Unfortunately, if the Saving Throw or Thievery check fails, Scatarrax is immediately awakened and attempts to destroy the thieves.

Waking the Dragon

It is a very real possibility that Scatarrax will wake up. While Elder Wyrms are terrible foes, if Scatarrax does awaken all is not lost. Clever characters can attempt to flatter or distract the Elder Wym while other party members distract or socially engage the dragon. This is an opportunity for roleplaying to shine over dice rolls and Narrators should encourage the players to think on their feet. Scatarrax is horrible, yes, but not immediately driven to violence. The only way to absolutely ensure the Elder Wym will attack the player characters is if they threaten the beast, attack him, or get caught red handed with the Skull Chalice. If this happens, the player characters will face Scatarrax's full wrath.

While facing a full-blown Elder Wym may seem difficult for many characters, overwhelming danger and risk is a part of being a hero and players will need to rely on their wits and a bit of luck to survive.

The Skull Chalice lives up to its name. It appears to be a goblet of goblin bones that have been burnt black. It is obviously magical to any character able to detect such things. Evil enchantment radiates from it and clearly the Goblin King has foul purposes for it. See page 187 for more information on the properties of the Skull Chalice.

Once they've left the lair of the Elder Wym, Clatter is hiding in a darkened nook just outside the cave. He's genuinely shocked at their return and keeps to his end of the bargain, leading them back to the King Kallikantzaros. The Goblin King is shocked to silence at their return, but quickly recovers and asks them to keep up their end of the deal. He informs the character that to confirm it is the real Skull Chalice, he must test it first...

Scatarrax

Role: Slumbering Elder Wyrn

Reference: Elder Wyrn (see THJ2e, page 135)

Drives: Sew fear and terror in anyone he encounters, destroy those who would steal his treasure

Notes: Has the Skull Chalice hidden in his horde

Climactic Event: *Blood Rage of Tak the Brute*

The Narrator is encouraged to read or paraphrase the following italicized text when King Kallikantzaros takes possession of the cup.

With surprising delicacy, the Goblin King takes the chalice into his massive hand. With unexpected speed, he produces a dagger from a sheath at his hip and cuts his own arm. He then drips the blood into a cup and holds it out to Tak the Goblin Brute. Practically snatching the cup from his master, Tak drinks down the blood eagerly. A long silent second passes and then a terrible roar of bloodlust escapes the Brute's mouth. A smile creeps over King Kallikantzaros's face. "It is indeed the true Skull Chalice." He takes it back from Tak and casts a casual glance at you and your companions. "Destroy them, Tak."

Tak attacks the player characters empowered by the Skull Chalice. Any wounds he suffered in Chapter Two have been healed since the player characters left. In addition to the bonuses in combat provided by drinking from the Skull Chalice, King Kallikantzaros begins to sing which grants Tak additional benefits per the Goblin Song ability. Kallikantzaros will continue to sing until he is attacked, at which point he will order his cadre of goblins to retreat into the caverns with the Skull Chalice. He leaves Tak behind to cover his escape.

While the player characters are attempting to deal with Tak's onslaught, Kallikantzaros will flee the camp through passage in the back of the cavern, his cadre of goblins in tow. In the end, though he betrayed the player characters, Kallikantzaros kept up his end of the bargain. Now that he has the Chalice, he has no interest in being in such close proximity to an Elder Wyrn.

With Tak defeated and the goblins having left the caverns, the player characters can return to Artio the kobold and inform him of they have successfully convinced the goblins to leave the caverns.

They're Getting Away!

This adventure is written with the presumption that King Kallikantzaros and his horde will escape into the vast labyrinth of tunnels inside the mountain. If the player characters come up with a clever way to prevent his escape, the Narrator should not hesitate to award them for creative thinking. Though King Kallikantzaros is written in this adventure to escape and perhaps later serve as a recurring villain, it is not required that he survive the adventure.

Epilogue

The events of the epilogue depend greatly on the events of the adventure. Each is detailed below.

If King Kallikantzaros got the Skull Chalice and Scatarrax Remains Asleep: When the player characters return to Artio and tell him what transpired, he will guide them back through the stone and into the dwarven mine. He will thank them for their aid, but bid them to be careful as a Goblin King now has the Skull Chalice and that may pose a great threat to the region in the coming days. He bids the player characters return to Thordan and inform him that they are free to return to the mines, and to offer his apologies. He does, however, ask the player characters to inform Thordan of the Elder Wyrms slumbering beneath the mountain and that the dwarves may want to reconsider their continued mining efforts.

If King Kallikantzaros and Tak Were Slain and Scatarrax Remains Asleep: When the player characters return to Artio and tell him that the goblins deep in the caverns have been slain and they've recovered the Skull Chalice, he is very pleased by that but tells them they should find a way to destroy the heirloom before other goblins begin seeking them out to take it. The Elder Wyrms still concerns him, though he tells the player characters to inform Thordan and his kin they are free to mine again as long as they do not delve too deeply. The old accord is still upheld, though Artio tells them he fears that eventually the Elder Wyrms will awaken and the dwarves may want to consider abandoning the mine entirely.

If Scatarrax was Awakened: Assuming they survived their encounter with the Elder Wyrms, when the characters return to Artio and tell him Scatarrax has awakened he grimly informs him that he knows. The

stones told him of the dragon's return. He tells them that they must depart the mines and caverns and never return, lest they face the wrath of Artio's entire clan. He will lead them back to the surface where they see Thordan, his kin, and their entire camp has been charred to dust and bones. Scatarrax has been released on the world and the player characters will have to find a way to set right the terror they have released upon the world.

As long as Thordan lives, he will honor his promise to pay the character's their promised reward. If he previously agreed to craft a *Dwarf-Forged* item he informs them that it will be made for them when he returns to Port Corsai (or the nearest major city in the Narrator's setting), where it will await them and can be picked up at their leisure.



Chapter Five

TROLL KNOLL

A few months ago Bowler Stonebridge decided to take his earnings from his time as an adventurer and build an inn. But not just any inn. He wanted to build a place of comfort for weary travelers far from home in the wild places of the world. He found the perfect location in the rolling forested hills on the edge of the Northern Wilds and within a few months, the Nestled Knoll was open for business. With hard work and a little coin, he'd accomplished his dream. So fine was his little inn that he even earned the service of a brownie who appreciated the comforts he was bringing to the dangerous places of the world.

Bumpkin the brownie began to take care of the Nestled Knoll the day construction was complete and Bowler's experience as an adventurer gave him the insight to realize he'd earned the service of such a strange creature. But curiosity got the best of the tavern keeper and eventually he committed the cardinal sin of actually catching sight of the brownie. Knowing he couldn't run the Nestled Knoll without the aid of the diminutive fairie, he begged the brownie to stay. Reluctantly, Bumpkin agreed, but on one condition: When his wife Balderdash returned he would leave the inn forever. With no other options, Bowler accepted.

But Bowler had a secret that even his new partner didn't know about. The Nestled Knoll was built atop the lair of a troll Bowler had bested in combat years ago during his time as an adventurer and the beastie he left for dead recently returned home to reclaim its underground home from the human usurper. Moreover, the troll was cunning and knew Bowler had taken a brownie into his service to aid his fortunes. The clever troll learned that Bumpkin was awaiting the return of his wife and when she came upon the two hills, he snatched up the brownie wife and tricked her into his service. Now Balderdash is bound to the service of a troll and each night, the troll comes to bash down the door of the Nestled Knoll to extract its revenge.



While it is true the troll could live peacefully in its new cave beneath the large gnarled tree, it craves revenge and will keep Balderdash imprisoned until his vengeance is slaked. Bumpkin cannot free himself from his oath until his wife is freed. Bowler does not wish to see his dream destroyed and is wracked with guilt over the entire situation. While slaying the troll would certainly set the entire business to an end, Bowler isn't the adventurer he once was and fears that Balderdash will have somehow betrayed her promise to the troll if it is slain. Somehow, the troll must be convinced to leave, or Bowler convinced to abandon his dream.

In the wake of all this, Bowler has taken to hiring adventurers in hopes they will slay the troll without Bumpkin knowing and hoping for the best. But even this betrayal does not break the oath between Bowler and Bumpkin, as Bumpkin's wife has no part in that save for his release being contingent on her return. Without her rescue, Bumpkin is bound forever and each night the troll grows angrier and angrier. It is only a matter of time before the innocent Balderdash becomes a victim of a foolish inn keeper's mistakes...

Interlude outline

Troll Knoll is broken into two chapters and an epilogue. An overview of each chapter is detailed below.

Chapter One: The Nestled Knoll After arriving at a warm and welcoming roadside inn, the player characters find themselves drawn into a plot involving fairies, trolls, and the shoddy business practices of a seemingly honest innkeeper.

Chapter Two: The Troll's Lair With the troll driven away from its attack on the Nestled Knoll, the players must follow it into its lair and find a way to bring peace to the inn, its owner, and the fairie creatures caught in the middle of a muddled bargain.

Epilogue: Promise and Parlay With the truth revealed, the player characters must mediate negotiation between the innkeeper of the Nestled Knoll and the marauding troll that will determine the fate of everyone involved.

Troll Knoll map



chapter one: The Nestled Knoll

To begin the interlude, the Narrator can read or paraphrase the following italicized text:

After a long, wearisome trek through the wild places of the world, you and your companions see a welcome sight on the horizon. A pair of grassy hills break the horizon. Atop one sits a large, gnarled tree while the other some distance away there sits a small and homey looking inn. Smoke trickles from a stone chimney and the warm light of a hearth fire can be seen refracted from frosted glass windows. Your climb up the grassy hill towards the inn reveals a heavy oaken door with a wood burnt sign hanging above that identifies it as the Nestled Knoll.

The door opens to reveal a reprieve from the troubles of adventure filled with the scent of cooking fires and baked bread, the sound of laughing patrons and merry music, and all the comforts of home. The large common room is speckled with haphazardly cast round wooden tables ringed with small stools. A long bar runs the length of the wall opposite the entrance and behind it there is a red-bearded human man laughing heartily with several patrons gathered around their drinks. In addition to other thirsty travelers, a minstrel is strumming a merry tune on a small lute next to a roaring fire that blazes in the common room's large hearth.

The Nestled Knoll is as welcoming an inn as could possibly be imagined. The bartender and proprietor behind the bar is a boisterous human man named Bowler. He offers several rooms for travelers which can be reached by ascending the stairs on the back side of the tavern to the second floor. There are a total of six rooms available, each capable of housing four guests. Each can be rented for one gold piece per patron per night. All tenants receive one meal of their choice for the day and can purchase additional meals for an extra three silver pieces. Bowler is glad to have guests and is particularly fond of their stories. Because this is a traveler's inn and not located in a town or village, he makes sure to treat his patrons well - though he's not opposed to knocking a few heads if necessary with the cudgel he keeps beneath the bar.

Other patrons in the Nestled Knoll tonight include three groups of travelers. The first, the three human men gathered at the bar, are sellswords. They boast that Bowler has hired them a few hours ago to serve as security for the Nestled Knoll and then remark the player characters best watch their step. They call themselves The Bladed Company and are eager to tell any manner of outrageous tales regarding their previous experiences. From defeating goblins to rescuing damsels to slaying dragons, the Bladed Company claims to have done it all.



Anyone who makes a successful Insight-based Attribute Saving Throw can tell from the fact that their equipment and armor are in pristine condition that they've likely never seen battle in their lives. If this is pointed out to them, the Bladed Company becomes cross but don't brag quite so loud.

A second group of travelers are sitting at a table and seem to be keeping to themselves. They're talking among themselves. One is wearing a travel stained cloak with a raised hood to conceal their face. The second is a halfling with his feet propped on the table and blowing large smoke rings after long puffs on a long wooden pipe. The third is a human woman standing by the table, leaning on a staff. They're civil and polite to the player characters, but clearly wish to be left alone.

The other patron is the flamboyantly dressed minstrel playing by the fire. He calls out to any of the player characters if he catches their eye and asks them if they'd trade a silver for a song. He'll shamelessly flirt with any female player character, though his advances are purely theatrical. He introduces himself as Flynn the Fabulous, and offers a sweeping bow.

Characters that state they're taking a careful look around the common room and make a successful Insight-based Saving Throw find it to be as warm and homey as it appears, but notice the door to the Nestled Knoll is made of especially heavy wood and has been reinforced with iron bands. It also appears newer than the rest of the furniture of the inn. In addition, there is a massive wooden beam set by the door and though it cannot be locked, there are slots to bar the door from the inside. Inquiring with the patrons about this, even the Bladed Company, is only met with shrugs. The proprietor Bowler knows the truth, and changes the subject if it is brought up by attempting to offer the characters a drink on the house or calling for Flynn to strike up a fresh song.

Bowler himself is jovial enough and extremely proud of his little inn. He is particularly pleased with the massive wine cellar located inside the hill upon which the tavern sits and claims he almost never needs to restock. He's always eager to hear tales from travelers and is proud of the fact that he can maintain such a fine establishment by himself so far out in the wild. He impishly claims that he keeps the cellar private as a "trade secret" if anyone asks to see it.

The Nestled Knoll remains a lively place until around an hour before midnight when Bowler becomes rather insistent that guests retire for the evening. He won't take no for an answer and bribes guests who

seem disinclined to end their revels with a beer and crust of bread to take to their room.

Crashing the Party

At midnight, the previously merry inn and tavern becomes a battleground when a fearsome troll attempts to pound down the door and begins a direct assault on the tavern! The player characters are awakened by the noise and the Narrator should read or paraphrase the following text when they come out of their rooms and round the side of the Nestled Knoll to investigate the disturbance.

The inn-shaking, thunderous pounding that awoke you and your companions reveals itself to be a great, grey-skinned troll that has stormed up the hill and is now pounding on the door of the Nestled Knoll with its meaty fists. It snarls viciously as it raises its arms again for another strike. From around the other side of the inn you see the Bladed Company come upon the same sight. Selwyn holds an arming sword in one hand and a torch in the other while the other two are fumbling to draw their weapons. The ferocious beast immediately turns its attention to the light source and charges towards them with a bellowing cry!

If the player characters do nothing, the Bladed Company will be easily slain. Joining the battle against the monstrous troll leads to a brutal fight and the troll fights with all bonuses as if it were standing upon a crossroads (see page 167 of THJ2e). During the battle, the player characters will likely notice the absence of the other adventuring company they encountered, the minstrel Flynn, and Bowler himself. The troll fights until it is reduced to one-half of its Endurance and then makes every effort to flee the battle, escaping into the night.

The door to the Nestled Knoll remains barred during the entire conflict.

The Secret of the Cellar

After the battle is over, the door to the tavern is opened and to the characters surprise Bowler, the minstrel, and the adventuring company are there. The halfling and the hooded traveler are holding swords on a beleaguered looking Bowler, while Evelyn the wizard is standing near the kitchen door.

Evelyn bids everyone outside enter and as soon as they do she and the hooded figure reset the bar to the door. Then, a high-pitched voice from a previously unseen patron makes itself known. The Narrator can read or paraphrase the text below.

"Tell them, Bowler!" comes a piping shrill voice from the back of the common room. Suddenly, a tiny humanoid creature covered in coarse brown hair from head to toe hops upon the bar. Standing no more than a foot tall with angry chestnut eyes, it cries out. "Tell them the mess you've caused Bowler! There's no hiding it now!"

It's a brownie! One of the fey - and it seems very irritated.

With a sigh, Bowler walks behind the bar and pours several mugs of ale. He then retrieves a small bowl of honey from beneath the bar and sets it beside the brownie. It is then that he tells the players of the convoluted circumstances in which he, Bumpkin, and Balderdash are entwined. Once explained, Bumpkin snaps at Bowler to shut up and turns to the player characters. He asks if they'd be willing to sneak into the troll's lair and rescue his wife. He clearly feels the Bladed Company are nothing more than fools and more a danger to themselves than an aid and the other adventurers can stay behind and guard the inn just in case the troll returns.

If they agree to aid him, Bumpkin offers them a favor from a brownie - no small thing. Bowler also reluctantly offers them free lodging and food at his establishment for as long as they like. This offer he extends to everyone, even the Bladed Company, in return for their help. He's not a bad man - just a bit short sighted and prone to overextending himself.



Assuming they agree, Bumpkin tells the player characters that she is still bound to the troll's service and must be freed before she can escape his new lair. To do this they must offer her a gift greater than milk and honey. He bids either a Changeling player character or the character with the highest Bearing step forward. He gives that character a kiss on the cheek and gingerly tells them to give that to Balderdash and she will be free.

Bowler

Role: Human innkeeper

Reference: Peasant (see *THJ2e*, page 127)

Drives: Maintain a prosperous inn, keep Bumpkin in his service.

Notes: Keeps a club under the bar for protection, doesn't like to leave the inn.

Bumpkin

Role: Irritated brownie

Reference: Brownie (see *THJ2e*, page 150)

Drives: Reunite with his wife, keep the Nestled Knoll in tip-top shape.

Notes: Loves taking care of the inn, but dislikes Bowler.

The Bladed Company

Role: Inexperienced, but arrogant sell swords

Reference: Guards (3) (see *THJ2e*, page 126)

Drives: Build up their reputation, get as much free food and drink out of Bowler as possible, protect the inn while avoiding danger as much as possible.

Notes: The three members of the Bladed Company are named Tom, Will, and Bert.

The Mysterious Adventurers

Role: Traveling adventurers in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Reference: Tesh (3rd level Changeling Warrior), Evelyn (3rd level Human Wizard, Bandoras (4th level Halfling Burglar) (see *THJ2e*, Chapter Three)

Drives: Help those in need while avoiding getting into trouble over their head, help the downtrodden (Tesh), discover lost arcane artifacts (Evelyn), always have a full belly (Bandoras).

Notes: Includes Tesh the 3rd level Changeling Warrior, Evelyn the 3rd level Human Wizard, and Bandoras the 4th level Halfling Burglar.

Flynn the Minstrel

Role: Traveling minstrel

Reference: 4th level Half-Elf Bard (see *THJ2e*, page 30)

Drives: Make friends wherever he goes, travel while living a comfortable life, charm every lady he meets, learn as many songs and tales as possible.

Notes: Will offer to join the player characters when interlude ends if they've shown themselves to be kindhearted.

Stonebone the Troll

Role: Displaced and disgruntled troll.

Reference: Troll (see *THJ2e*, page 167)

Drives: Destroy the Nestled Knoll, protect Balderdash, drive out any invaders from his lair.

Notes: Understands common and giant languages, but rarely speaks beyond grunts and snarls. Loves poetry and playing tenstone.

Chapter Two: The Troll's Lair

Now bent on rescuing the brownie wife Balderdash, the players begin their exploration of the cavern beneath the hillock beside the Nestled Knoll. The hill itself is, as noted above, within sight of the Nestled Knoll and easily reached with a short walk. On the far side of the hill from the inn, beneath the roots of a large tree is a low, muddy entrance into a shallow cave.

It is dark inside the troll's lair and unless otherwise stated the characters will need to have a light source. The walls are of packed dirt and stones and the floor is earthen. The tunnel is low, barely six feet.

Unfortunately, Balderdash has grown rather fond of the troll and has set several annoying traps in several locations throughout the knoll to vex any intruders. If a trap is present it is detailed in each location's description. Fortunately, there is no one else lurking in the hollow except for Balderdash and the troll.

Location One: Beneath the Tree

Crude stairs made of large stone stuffed into the muddy slope allow entrance into the knoll beneath the tree. A tangle of roots from the tree above keep the area stable, though it is muddy and dank. Light from the outside streams into the entrance way.

Balderdash has loosened the top step, which the troll often steps over when he enters. Anyone who steps on the slicks tone will find it tumbles loose beneath them and ends them tumbling to the ground for 1d6 points of falling damage as they bound off the other hard stones. Any character with the Acrobatics ability that makes a successful check can avoid this damage.

Location Two: Skull Display

On a large earthen ledge about four feet up along this wall is a display of several skulls. This includes quite a few human skulls and several wolf skulls and even a bear skull mixed in. It's a rather gruesome display.

These skulls, the troll's "trophy display" remains untrapped out of Balderdash's respect for the troll.

Location Three Balderdash's Perch

A bit of light slips into this area from the entrance way and casts long shadows across an alcove where a small bed made of wood has been put gingerly on display. It has a tiny mattress of chicken feathers and even a comforter made from squirrel hide. It is clearly well kept and cared for.

Anyone who decides to rummage about the brownie's perch is in for a nasty surprise. There is a large mouse trap hidden beneath the feathers which will snap shut if anyone messes with the bed. The victim must make a Finesse-based Saving Throw to avoid taking 1d4 points of damage and breaking a finger. A broken finger causes the victim to suffer a -2 on all melee attacks and attempts at skills which require fine motor skills until the damage is healed.

Location Four: Large Cavern

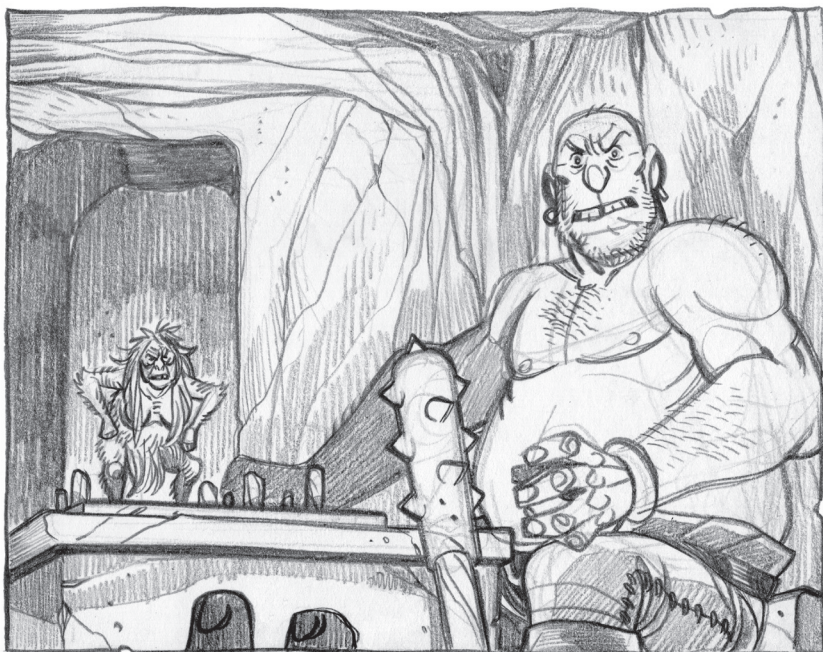
This large, low-ceiled cavern is divided into two chambers and has a shallow stream running along its far side. The largest chamber, in spite of being dark and dank, has a large table cobbled together from tree bark and twigs upon which sits a fine tea set. There's even a water-logged book of poetry on the table and a slightly bent pewter candlestick (with a half-burnt candle) on the table, along with two chairs.

The smaller chamber contains a wooden bucket, a simple fishing rod, and a small cage made of twigs in it. In addition, a small and shallow

hole has been dug here and ringed in stones. Obviously, a cook fire. Remnants of cooked fish can be found by sifting through the ashes. No traps are hidden in this room.

Location Five: The Troll's Room

The door to this room is of woven twigs and wood. It can easily be opened and more hangs in place as a screen than as any kind of protection. Beyond the door a crude attempt at a stone floor has been made with rocks being forced into the earth ground. A large bed made of sticks wrapped together with vines has been constructed - large enough for a troll. It is covered with a mattress that's a mixture of straw and loose feathers, and a massive canvas sheet that may have once been part of a sail serves as a blanket. Beneath the bed is a wooden chest that is partially waterlogged with a rusted lock that no longer functions. The chest contains several glass baubles, and a few crude charcoal sketches on parchment depicting a furry, elfin creature. Beneath all this are several spoils the troll has collected since taking up residence. They include a *Dabbler's Trinket* (see *The Hero's Journey, Second Edition* page 211), 22 gold pieces, and a silver and topaz ring worth 65 gold pieces.



Unfortunately, Balderdash has coated the rim of the chest with an enchanted reagent. Anyone who touches the chest once it is open must make a Saving Throw or immediately fall into an enchanted sleep from which they cannot be awakened for 1d6 hours. This is considered Fey magic.

Location Six: The Shallow Waters

The water running through the knoll cavern is shallow, save for a large two-foot deep pool in the center. In spite of the murky water, it is teeming with fish and any character with the Fisherman profession can easily catch 1d4 fish if they spend an hour attempting to do so. Other characters require an Insight-based Attribute Saving Throw with Disadvantage to do so.

There are no traps here.

Location Seven: The Parlor

Like Location Five: The Troll's Room, an attempt to civilize this location has been made. The floor is almost completely covered with a cobblestone floor and the walls have been covered with what were once undoubtedly magnificent tapestries that have long been worn by age and waterlogged. Slightly warped bookcases have been brought in and there is a scattering of books set about them. Most of these are waterlogged, torn, tattered and illegible, but careful examination and successful Insight-based Attribute Saving Throw reveals that one of the battered tomes is actually a black leather-bound *Book of Nightmares* (see page 206 of *THJ2e*).

The centerpiece of the room is a large oaken table that was once worthy of royalty. A marble tenstone board and pieces are set up, as are a tiny stool which sits on the table itself and a troll-sized chair on its opposite side.

Balderdash and the Troll

Once the players enter the troll's lair, the Narrator should roll 1d6+1. The number rolled is where the Stonebone and Balderdash can be found. If the player characters are loud in their exploration, the two of them will move to intercept the characters. When he is discovered or encountered, the Narrator should read or paraphrase the following text:

Much to your shock you see the great grey beast of a troll you saw banging on the doors of the Nestled Knoll standing before you. Even more surprising is the irritated brownie perched on his shoulder eyeing you menacingly, almost identical to the one previously encountered. The troll lumbers forward, rage in his eyes and eager to splatter anyone who would dare invade its lair.

The Narrator should immediately roll initiative for both the troll and for Balderdash the brownie. The troll will attack, though Balderdash will cry for the characters to lower their weapons and bid the troll calm himself. If the players do so, Balderdash is able to halt the troll's assault. But if the players engage in combat for three or more rounds, the troll's rage cannot be contained, and he will fight until slain.

If Balderdash manages to convince all parties to stop fighting, she seems quite cross with everyone. She informs the characters of the following:

The troll has a name and she would appreciate it if they called him by it: Stonebone.

She is indeed Balderdash and would love to see her husband Bumpkin again, but she's bound to Stonebone's service.

Stonebone isn't all bad. He's angry at Bowler for building an inn on his old home, but she's come to know him and is trying to help him control his bloody impulses by being his friend.

Stonebone could probably be convinced to stop attacking the inn if she and Bumpkin could mediate an apology between Stonebone and Bowler.

If the characters attacked Stonebone, Balderdash would ask them to make a sincere apology.

If an apology is given, Stonebone accepts it with a gruff "S'all right." However, he won't release Bumpkin from her service until the matter with Bowler and the inn are dealt with. If the player characters promise to help facilitate a meeting between Bowler and Stonebone in the valley between the hills with Bumpkin and Balderdash present, then Stonebone will reluctantly agree to talk to the former adventurer. Otherwise, he will order the characters to leave his hole and never return on the pain of death.

Balderdash

Role: Irritated brownie

Reference: Brownie (see *THJ2e*, page 158)

Drives: Reunite with her husband, protect Stonebone and help him curb his anger to find peace.

Notes: Loves Stonebone as if he were a (huge) child in need of a mother's protection.

Epilogue: Promise and Parlay

The closing scene of this adventure will depend on how the player characters dealt with their encounter with Stonebone and Balderdash.

If the Player Characters Killed Stonebone

If the player characters have killed the troll, Bowler is initially overjoyed. Unfortunately, Balderdash is outraged by their violence. She will join her husband at the Nestled Knoll, but the two of them will no longer take care of the inn. Within a few weeks, the Nestled Knoll will become a dilapidated mess and Bowler will abandon the inn. The brownies will return to Fairie and Balderdash will tell tales of how violent and foul the player characters are and soon all of Fairie will regard them with ill repute. They will have Disadvantage on any Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throws for a year and a day in regard to any social interactions with any fey beings they encounter.

If the Player Characters left Stonebone alive without a meeting between him and Bowler

Balderdash is unable to reign in Stonebone's violence in spite of her best efforts. The troll will continue to attack the inn, with his first attack coming 2d6 days after the player characters have left his lair. In his first attack the Bladed Company are all slain. After another 2d6 days the troll will attack again. This time his efforts will lead to the inn's destruction and the death of both Bowler and Bumpkin. Enraged by the death of her husband, Balderdash will lay a curse on the player characters. Any inns they visit in the future will refuse to serve them for some circumstantial reason and if they somehow force service, their sleep will be restless and any food and drink they consume while at an inn or tavern will turn to ash in their mouth. This curse can be lifted by a Fey Queen, but only at the cost of a great favor to be determined by the Narrator.

If the Player Characters mediate between Bowler and Stonebone

The negotiations are tense between the two and should be driven by roleplaying instead of dice rolls. If the player characters are patient

with both the stubborn inn keeper and the violent troll, Bowler will apologize. Stonebone reluctantly accepts the apology, then in a surprising show of acumen he demands that Bowler make recompense by cutting him in for a portion of the Nestled Knoll's profits. Bowler is initially adamantly against it, but if he can be convinced then this will actually forge a mystical bond between the troll's lair and the Nestled Knoll, allowing Bumpkin and Balderdash to be together.

Should this agreement be reached, Balderdash will continue to improve the troll's lair and slowly ease his brutish tendencies. In the coming seasons, Stonebone will grow protective over the inn and actually help keep the dangers of the wilderness at bay. The brownies will help the Nestled Knoll flourish and the inn will become renowned across the realm as being under the protection of a strange troll scholar that made a deal with the fey. Bowler will capitalize on these myths and soon Nestled Knoll will become the most famous inn for generations to come.

The Narrator could expand the material featured in this interlude. Here are a few hooks that can be developed into future adventures.

- ♦ *Beneath the Nestled Knoll:* Bowler has made mention of his fine stores beneath the inn and Stonebone once dwelt beneath the Nestled Knoll. What's down there? What troubles, dangers, and treasures are secreted away there?
- ♦ *Bladed Company Blues:* If the Bladed Company has survived the interlude, perhaps new trouble comes searching for these rapscale lions. Given their constant boasting combined with their lack of experience, they'll turn to the player characters for help.
- ♦ *Stonebone Joins Society:* After several months, a more and more civilized Stonebone wishes to present himself to the local noble. He asks the player characters to serve as his emissaries and guides as he takes up the unlikely role of a troll-turned-gentleman.



chapter six

ASTRIDE THE BEANSTALK

✧ HISTORY

Cornelius isn't quite like other sky giants. Like others of his kind he values luxury, fine music, and riddles. But since the death of his wife Ophelia he has never been able to escape the sorrow of her absence. Left alone to raise their three sons in a floating castle high in the sky, Cornelius was overwhelmed by the responsibilities and obligations of raising his boys alone. The three boys, Marius, Marcus, and Morgan have taken to brutish activities and defying their father's wishes. They know he cannot keep up with them when they work together and so they've taken to ruling the castle. Defeated, he retreated to his castle parlor to ruminate and lament with his beloved pet, the golden goose named Lalia.

Unfortunately, the rabble rousing of the three juvenile sky giants eventually went too far and when one of the boys accidentally undid the enchantment that kept their castle afloat, the floor of the castle fell through the clouds and crashed to the earth. The great estate fell from the sky, crashing in a great track of rocky badlands and ravines far beyond the borders of the civilized world. Cornelius came to when a great root was growing into his back at an alarming rate, shoving him into the waking world. The magic pocket had fallen out and taken root and a new beanstalk was already beginning to grow!

Searching around the grounds for his sons and beloved pet Lalia, he found signs that they too had survived. He found massive footprints the size of his boys. He began to search the badlands for his family, but as days turned into weeks he found nothing. As the time passed, the beanstalk continued to grow until it was over one hundred feet in height! That was when, as the sun was setting that night, the roots gave way and the stalk came crashing down. The beans had only landed in shallow soil on the edge of a large ravine and eventually tore themselves free.

With a resounding crash, the stalk tore itself from the roots under the strain of its own weight. It fell to the ground and actually served as a makeshift bridge large enough for two men to walk across abreast. Utter defeated, Cornelius sat down on the stalk turned bridge and began to weep. As the last vestiges of daylight slipped away he saw a campfire far off, down in the ravine and could have sworn he heard the honk of his beloved Lalia echo across the canyon walls. But he fears to go after his pet and his sons himself, terrified they might betray him again or someone might get hurt. Fortunately, it is in these darkest moments that a troupe of heroes cross his path and fate may offer a new course that could save his family...

Interlude outline

Astride the Beanstalk is broken into a prologue, two chapters, and an epilogue. An overview of each chapter is detailed below.

Prologue: The Weeping Giant The player characters come upon a sorrowful sky giant, lamenting the loss of his beloved golden goose Lalia. She has been stolen by his three sons and he asks if they'd be willing to travel into the ravine far below and recover her for him.

Chapter One: The Descent Making their way down a narrow cliffside path, the player characters must contend with all manner of dangers ranging from a proud High Hawk, to a broken pathway, to being used as target practice!

Chapter Two: The Brothers Three Having reached where the three giant brothers have made their camp, the player characters will need to decide how they are going to confront three massive brutes while making sure the fragile golden goose is not slain in the confrontation!

Epilogue: Returning to Cornelius, their actions and how successful they were at recovering Lalia the golden goose and reuniting him with his sons will determine the fate of the woeful titan.

Prologue: The Weeping Giant

This interlude can take place in any rocky or mountainous region in the Narrator's legendarium. To begin the interlude, the Narrator can read or paraphrase the following italicized text:

You and your companions crest a winding rocky path up the side to stand atop a great plateau you've been slowly ascending for several hours to see a shocking sight before you. A giant, fully fifteen feet tall sits some distance away from you on the far side of the plateau, in fact beyond the plateau. What first appears to be a great tree covered in vines and lichen has been torn from its roots and fallen between this plateau and another mountain, spanning a ravine at least two hundred feet across. Even more strange is the fact that sitting in the center of this strange bridge of natural decay is a giant weeping deep, wracking sobs. As you draw near you see him reach inside his well-trimmed (if now tattered and travel worn tunic) and produce a blanket-sized handkerchief. The blowing of his nose echoes like a trumpet against the walls of the nearby cliff sides and it sounds as though a thousand minstrels just blew a thousand horns all at once. The giant looks sheepishly in your direction with tear-filled blue eyes "Pardon me. I didn't mean to disturb you. I suppose you'll be wanting to be crossing and will need ol' Cornelius to be moving now, won't you?"

Assuming the player characters are not immediately hostile, Cornelius remains polite. He does indeed get up and move, balancing on what is to him a thin log, back towards the player characters where the stalk snapped. Player characters that say they are examining the plateau can either make an Insight-based Saving Throw (with Advantage if



they have an appropriate profession) or make use of the Forestry ability to notice several massive cut stones are actually half imbedded in the sides of the ravine and scattered across the top of the plateau itself.

If the players do not inquire with the giant and move to go about their business without engaging him, then as soon as the first one moves to step up onto the makeshift bridge, Cornelius asks them if they'd like to camp with him tonight. He could use the company and it's getting dark. He promises that he won't harm them, and that in fact, he'd be glad to take a watch himself to ensure no harm comes to them. He tells them he doesn't have much food, but he will gladly share what he's got in his pocket with them. He proves this by producing a strip of jerky three feet long from his pocket and offering some of it to the player characters.

Cornelius is eager to tell the player characters his sorrows, but will only do so if asked why he is so troubled. After all, that's only polite. However, once they inquire he tells them a summation of the whole sordid affair. He then reluctantly, almost shyly, asks the player characters if they'd be willing to go down into the ravine and take a look for his boys and his beloved pet tomorrow after sunup. He tells them he's got little to offer them in the way of reward or payment, except for a few *Magic Beans* (see page 186) he's got left over that he now realizes shouldn't be planted in the rocky soil of this region. Moreover, he awkwardly says he was hoping the player characters might help an old widowed giant out of the kindness of their heart.

Once they've agreed to help him, Cornelius tells the characters that there is a way to the bottom of the ravine. He is quite sure he saw a narrow pathway down the cliffside near the base of where the beanstalk first took root, but the path is too small for him and the distance to the bottom is too much for him because he has a terrible fear of heights.

Cornelius the Sky Giant

Role: Beleaguered sky giant

Reference: Sky Giant (see *THJ2e*, page 166)

Drives: Rebuild his relationship with his sons, save Lalia

Notes: Avoids combat, hates to fight, and is soft-hearted.

chapter one: The Descent

Whether sympathetic to Cornelius or for some other reason, the characters have begun descending the narrow path to the bottom of the ravine to rescue Lalia. Unfortunately, the tiny winding path down the ravine that is too small and treacherous for a giant scared of heights isn't much better for a group of intrepid, if smaller, heroes. Narrators can read or paraphrase the following italicized text to begin the chapter.

As you leave the woeful Cornelius lamenting his situation, you and your friends discover the narrow path along the lip of the ravine that descends down several hundred feet to its bottom. Off in the distance at that bottom, you can see the distant firelight of what you only assume is where his troublesome sons have made camp.

Descending down the side of the ravine is as difficult or easy as the Narrator wishes it to be. Characters with appropriate professions to traversing mountainous terrain, rangers making use of their Forestry ability, and Burglars making use of their Thievery ability shouldn't have too hard a time. However, the trip down is not without dangers. The cliffside pathway is narrow, and the player characters will need to walk single file, with one shoulder out in the open air to make their way to the bottom. Along the way, the Narrator can use as many of the following encounters as they like to add an element of danger or tension to the interlude

Generally speaking, if the characters attempt anything dangerous or that may lead to them slipping and falling, the Narrator should have that character make a Finesse-based Attribute Saving Throw or use an appropriate Archetype ability to prevent them from falling. If they fail, any adjacent character can attempt a Weal-based Attribute Saving Throw to catch them in time. If they do catch their stumble-footed companion, that character can attempt a new Finesse-based Attribute Saving Throw or Might-based Attribute Saving Throw (their choice) with Advantage to regain their footing. Failure results in a terrible fall which inflicts 10d6 points of damage, which cannot be mitigated by the character's Reduction Value.

Encounter One: Cliffside Eyrie

The characters come across a curious, if slightly hungry High Hawk, and if they aren't clever and courteous they might find themselves serving as a surprise snack for the noble bird of prey. The Narrator can read or paraphrase the following italicized text to open this encounter.

As you and your friends slip slowly down the narrow cliffside path, you are halfway past a large fissure when a sudden rumble causes you to press yourselves against the wall to keep from slipping. To your shock and surprise, the head of a massive bird of prey sprouts forth, letting out a piercing cry as its eyes dart to and fro. Through ringing ears, it blusters out an indignant admonishment. "Who disturbs my beauty sleep? Oh? What's this? Little hairless morsels? Well, if this isn't a fine delivery come to my door. What brings such a delicacy to the nest of Swiftwing the Grand?"

If the characters react violently or threaten the High Hawk, he springs forth from his crevasse lair and takes flight, swooping and attacking the player characters mercilessly. However, if any of the player characters take the time to try to parlay with Swiftwing, have them make an Insight or Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw. Rangers may make a Forestry check instead. Success means they recognize that the High Hawk is being playful with them and testing their courage and courteousness.

However, attempting to be courteous in the face of a massive bird of prey that could devour one of the player characters in a single bite is no easy task. Bards, Knights, and any character with the Noble profession can make a Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw in order to provide the proper greeting to the High Hawk. Doing so causes him to laugh (a strange sound coming from a massive beast such as Swiftwing), but does endear the player characters a bit to him. Other characters may attempt to do the same, but have Disadvantage to their Saving Throw. If the characters are able to remain courteous to the High Hawk, other interactions are easier.

Swiftwing is hungry and was only half-kidding about eating the player characters. He will ask them if they know of any other morsels in the area that might be serviceable. Swiftwing lets it be known that he's been eyeing a group of giants that seem to have taken up in the area and they'd be an acceptable morsel. Cornelius and his sons would certainly be suitable, but offering to feed the giant they agreed to help to a High Hawk would most certainly be a betrayal of their promise to aid the poor, beleaguered giant. In addition, his sons are still his sons and even if they are ungrateful and rude, they are still his children. Convincing Swiftwing to not eat any (or all) of the giants can be done, but requires extensive roleplaying. The Narrator may permit Bearing-based Saving Throws in lieu of this, but it is encouraged that this endeavor be the sole purview of roleplay if the characters attempt to do so. Clever characters might suggest that such humble, landlocked

creatures as themselves could offer no reasonable advice regarding a meal for as magnificent an avian as Swiftwing.

Alternately, if the characters attempt to engage Swiftwing's wit, he asks them to answer a riddle for his amusement: "If a bird is sitting on a twig, how would you retrieve the twig without disturbing the bird?" The answer is of course to be patient and wait for the bird to fly away, thus respecting the will of the creature. If the characters answer appropriately, Swiftwing is pleased to no end and asks them to tell him a riddle in return. This is, again, purely a roleplaying exercise and the players are free to come up with any riddle of their choosing and the Narrator must rely on their own wits to answer it as Swiftwing. If the players stump Swiftwing, he regards the player characters as clever little creatures and is pleased.

Finally, Swiftwing asks the player characters to tell him a story of their previous adventures. Here the player characters have the opportunity to speak on their previous exploits and if their story is well-told and truthful, either through good roleplaying or a successful Bearing-based Saving Throw, Swiftwing will later repeat the tale to other High Hawks and all player characters will have a +2 to their Renown with any intelligent Avians they meet for the next year.

If the player characters have treated Swiftwing with the respect he believes he deserves during these three encounters not only will he let them pass without harassment, he will also reward them with a *Tailfeather of the High Hawk* (see page 188 below). If they have passed two of the three tests, he will let them pass, but with no reward. If they have passed only one of the tests, he tells them they had best get out of his sight and be wary of any of his kin they encounter in the future. The next encounter they have with a High Hawk will be difficult and tense, as Swiftwing will have told his kin of the rudeness and foolishness of the player characters. If none of the tests have been passed, Swiftwing demands they be gone from his sight and if they have not left the area in the next twenty-four hours, he will track them down and attack them.

Swiftwing, the High Hawk

Role: Sanctimonious bird of prey

Reference: High Hawk (see *THJ2e*, page 123)

Drives: To enjoy a fine meal and relax

Notes: Is not combative by nature, but will fight if insulted or shown aggression.

Encounter Two: The Broken Path

The pathway down to the ravine's surface is not entirely safe, and the player characters must find a way to cross a rather wide chasm. The Narrator can read or paraphrase the following italicized text.

The narrow path down the side of the ravine comes to a sudden end and after a moment you realize the only way down, this narrow stone walkway, has ended! It resumes fifteen feet later with a massive drop severing the way! You and your companions will have to find a way to cross this wide gap if you hope to continue the trail down unless you want to take your chances with a drop well over one hundred feet to the rocky surface of the ravine.

There is no single solution to this problem. The player characters are left to their own ingenuity here, and the Narrator should reward reasonable and creative solutions to the problem at hand. Any character with the Acrobatics ability can make a successful Acrobatics check to literally leap from one side to the other - but doing so would leave their companions behind.

Solutions can range from creative use of spells, attempting to sheer climb the cliffside, or creative use of whatever equipment the characters have at hand. The point here is for the player characters to have the opportunity to practice open-ended problem solving. Depending on what plans the player characters put forward, the Narrator should have them make Might or Finesse-based Attribute Saving Throws

The fall itself is deadly, and characters that manage to fall during the attempted crossing suffer 10d6 points of falling damage from which armor offers no protection.

Encounter Three: Target Practice

As the player characters draw close, a mere hundred feet from the bottom, a new danger falls upon them! The sons of Cornelius have finally taken notice of the player characters, and not taking their presence as any kind of threat, they have decided to make sport of their arrival with a little target practice.

You and your companions have come near to the end of your descent! Little more than one hundred feet down the narrow cliffside path separates you from the ground and in the distance you can see far off on the ravine floor three large figures encircling a wisp of smoke rising between them. They appear to have already taken notice of your descent and are keenly watching. After a sharp movement from one of them, the side of the ravine just above you and your companions suddenly explodes outward as it is struck by a massive

boulder hurled by the onlooker! What's more, it looks like one of his companions is reaching into a pouch at their belt, likely to retrieve their own stones!

The characters are under attack from the giants, who are a great distance off and hurling boulders from over three hundred feet away. This distance puts them well out of range of any ranged weapons the player characters are likely to be carrying, not to mention that firing any ranged weapons from their precarious position would already be done at Disadvantage due to their inability to maneuver and aim properly in these confines.

Only two of the young giants are throwing stones. The third is holding on to Lalia, the golden goose to ensure she does not escape. They take turns with their tosses, with a single stone thrown each every 1d4 rounds. Fortunately, these throws are made at Disadvantage due to the distance. Unfortunately, anyone struck by one of the stones suffers 3d6 points of damage and must make a Finesse or Weal-based Attribute Saving Throw to avoid falling (player character's choice). Those who fall suffer an additional 10d6 from the fall.

Fortunately, once they reach the bottom of the ravine there is a shallow, but narrow, crevice in the ravine's rocky wall that prevents the giants from taking aim at the heroes. But, with any chance of surprise ruined, the characters will now have to face Cornelius's sons without the element of surprise.

Aware of his crevice, the giant brothers turn back to their camp when the players reach the bottom and prepare for their arrival.

Chapter Two: The Brothers Three

Now that the player characters have made the dangerous trek to the bottom of the ravine, they will now have to confront Cornelius's three sons and either out-fight or outwit the brutes if they hope to rescue Lalia and ease the sorrow of the despondent sky giant far above.

Whether the player characters decide to approach the giant's camp by day or by night will have a great impact on their efforts. Crossing the ravine in broad daylight prevents a stealthy approach. This means the giants will be ready and aware of their arrival. Approaching at night is far easier, as the brothers spend their days lounging, drinking, and feasting on goats they catch in the ravine. Even at night, though, the golden goose Lalia is always being carried by one of them. Even in the darkest of nights, there would be no way to steal the goose out of the grasp of the brothers.



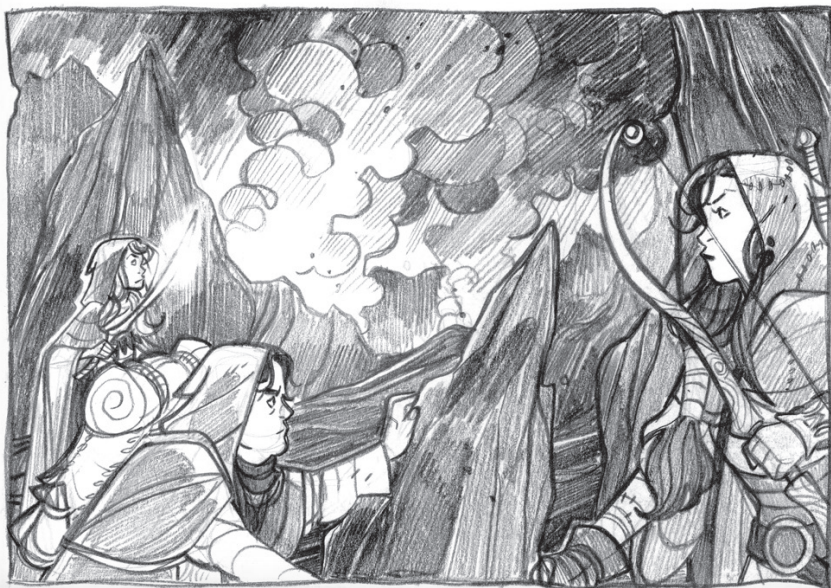
Approaching by night and ambushing the giants immediately degenerates to combat, with Marius, Marcus, and Morgan all fighting with a surprising ferocity. However, if the characters decide to approach and attempt to parley, then the Narrator can choose to read the following italicized text to set the scene.

The three raucous giants are making quite a racket of cursing, swearing, and laughing at as you approach. Several goats have been spitted and are roasting over a large cookfire which they encircle. One of them takes note of your approach and calls out, "Eh? What have we here? If'n it ain't our little targets? Made it down from da wall did ye? Come'n back fer seconds? Or hopin' ta sneak up on ol' Marius?"

The other two giants stand to their full height, towering over you and your friends as the one called Marius continues. "Look what we gots here Morgan, Marcus. Best be off with ye, lest ye like t' join the goat on the spit - or worse."

Marius lets a wicked smile slither across his face, and you notice that one of his brothers has a beautiful bird of golden feathers held in one meaty fist. In spite of that giant's fearsome grip, the swan-like bird quivers with fear. That is undoubtedly Lalia, the golden goose so beloved by Cornelius.

The characters will have to tread lightly if they hope to somehow get out of this situation alive and with Lalia in the same condition. All three of the juvenile sky giants are brutish and violent, but they're not total morons. They know that Lalia is a literal walking (or waddling or flying) fortune and are loathe to give her up.



The player characters can attempt any number of methods in an effort to take Lalia into their custody, whether it be trickery, bribery, or even flattery. If they resort to combat then Morgan (who is holding Lalia) uses the poor golden goose in combat as a weapon. He swings about by its neck like a flail and the poor creature lets out a terrible honk until stricken dead from Morgan's first attack - whether or not that attack is successful.

Marcus, Marius, and Morgan - Sky Giant Brothers

Role: Sky Giant Brothers

Reference: Sky Giant (see *THJ2e*, page 166)

Drives: Have fun causing trouble, make money, eat and drink - a lot

Notes: Raucous, juvenile, but not inherently evil.

Bribing the Giants

Convincing the giant brothers to part with Lalia via trade is no easy task, and unless they have some extraordinarily powerful or truly unique magical items, this is unlikely to succeed. However, if the characters do have something suitably strange and wonderful that might interest them and roleplay very well the Narrator might permit them a slight chance to trade such an item for Lalia. This would require both extraordinary roleplaying and a successful Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw, made at Disadvantage.

Morgan is most interested in keeping Lalia as a pet and has a genuine affection for the little bird, though his temper can inadvertently put the poor little goose in danger. He could be convinced to surrender her if the player characters promise to take care of her and can convince him of a more suitable pet, then he would release the bird - but only if his brothers also agree to let Lalia go. If any of the player characters is of the rover or goblin lineage, then Morgan is extremely interested in taking that player character as a replacement pet.

Marius is most interested in acquiring a powerful weapon that he can use to crack skulls and prove how manly he is. If the player characters have any magical or exceptionally crafted two-handed melee weapons, Marius would give up their custody of the goose in return.

Marcus wants neither companionship nor weapons of war. He loves a good song and a good story. Moreover, he wants to be in a song or tale. If one of the player characters agrees to spend the next few hours

sitting with him and listening to his adventures and then recounting them to the world as “Handsome Marcus, Hero of the Seven Skies” then he will agree to let the players take Lalia.

Unfortunately, each of the three brothers thinks the other two are idiots they will argue between themselves over what is worth trading Lalia away. The players will need to, through roleplaying, delicately negotiate their sibling rivalry. If things get too heated it could come to blows between the three of them - which again would inadvertently endanger Lalia.

Tricking the Giants

A more dangerous and nefarious route would be for the player characters to attempt to steal Lalia out from under the giants. This is no easy task. First the player characters would need to somehow get Morgan to set the poor little goose down and then draw the attention of all three giants away from her. Fortunately, the giants do not have her secured in any fashion beyond Morgan holding her in his fist. However, even if they do - through stealth and deception, manage to get them to take their attention off the bird,

Methods to distract the giants might include a flashy display of magical power, drawing them away by challenging them to a fight, or even convincing them of a greater threat in the area. There is no single solution to convince them to focus their attention on something other than Lalia, but whatever they choose is likely to require clever use of their abilities and more than a few successful Attribute-based Saving Throws. That being said, the Narrator should encourage and reward creativity in this matter and give unorthodox but plausible plans some margin of success.

Pleading Cornelius's Case

There is more at stake than just Lalia the Golden Goose. A family has been broken. Sons have left a well-meaning, but broken, father behind. Though the three giant brothers seem to have little interest in returning to their father, convincing the family to reunite is not impossible. If the player characters are patient and sit and talk respectfully with the brothers, they each express a grievance about their father that is the key reason why they left.

Morgan is bitter because he feels as though their father loves Lalia more than he loves his own sons and doesn't want to return home because he feels that they're already abandoned because of his

affection and obsession with the golden goose. He feels this is particularly so since their mother died some time ago.

Marius feels that their father is a disgrace and doesn't show the strength and nobility of the giant-kin. Instead, Cornelius focuses on raising a "glorified chicken" instead of restoring family honor in battle. If his father was willing to take up arms again, then Marius would be willing to come home.

Marcus simply wants to travel, to see the world. He misses the days when his mother was still alive and they would use their castle in the sky to float across vast seas, or visit the tops of mountain peaks. Since his mother has died, all Cornelius has done is stay home, attending to Lalia. If he could be convinced that Cornelius might be willing to travel again he'd be willing to return to his father and talk to him.

If the player characters, through roleplaying or other clever means are able to convince the brothers to talk once more to their father, then the three giants will show the heroes a nearby cavern in the opposite side of the ravine wall that is large enough for them all to ascend and return to where Cornelius still sits sullenly on his log.

Convincing the Giants to Turn on Each Other

By far the most nefarious method of recovering Lalia would be to convince the three brothers to turn on one another. In order to accomplish this safely, the player characters would need to convince Morgan to set Lalia down first - no easy task in and of itself as he is not likely to trust the player characters. Still, through misdirection, praying on the already foul moods of the giants, or even clever use of magic, the player characters could potentially get the three brothers to begin fighting one another and then slip away with Lalia while they're busy brawling with one another.

Again, clever roleplaying is the key here - though the Narrator might also require a Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw here or there at certain times. Once the first punch is thrown, the characters will have 3d4 rounds before the giants notice that Lalia is gone, and if they're within range, all three of the brothers will begin hurling rocks at the player characters if they are in range. Once out of range, the brothers will then slip away from their camp and use the nearby cavern they discovered to slip up the mountain in hopes of ambushing the player characters later.

Once the player characters have Lalia in custody, they can begin their ascent back up the side of the ravine and return her to Cornelius.

After being under the brutish care of Morgan, Marius, and Marcus, Lalia is surprisingly calm and unless she is treated poorly, she will not spook or run away from them.

Epilogue

When the player characters reach the top of the ravine where Cornelius sits on the fallen stalk, the Narrator can read or paraphrase the following italicized text.

Cornelius looks up as you reach the top of the ravine, a hopeful look daring to appear on his massive, woeful face. "Did you find my boys? Did you find Lalia? Are they alright?" With surprising agility he rises to his feet and walks the length of the stalk towards you and your friends.

If They Returned Empty Handed

If neither Lalia nor his sons are with them, Cornelius begins to openly weep. He tells the player characters to leave his sorrows. Any attempts to comfort him fall on deaf ears as his cries ring through the ravine and echo for miles around. If the player characters push the issue or ask for any kind of reward, he becomes aggressive, offering them one final warning to depart before attacking if they continue to persist.


If They Returned With Lalia

As soon as Lalia sees Cornelius, she trundles towards him with her wings fluttering. He scoops up the bird in a warm embrace and then pauses. Almost reluctantly, he asks about his sons and then nods in sad acceptance that they have not returned. He gives the promised bag of *Magic Beans* (which contains six beans) and departs with a sincere thank you, though it is obvious that he is sad that his sons did not return as well.

If They Returned with Lalia and the Brothers Three

When Cornelius sees the player characters arrive he smiles softly when he first notices Lalia, but upon sight of his boys, he stands up and runs straight towards them and scoops them into a hug. He's so elated that he nearly knocks the tiny player characters over! Lalia leaps from the arms of the player character carrying her and lands on his shoulders, joining in the family hug.

Morgan looks at his father after this long hug, then to his brothers and back to his father before saying that they have a lot to talk about. The



four giants thank the player characters and even Lalia hops down into the arms of one of the player characters and chirps happily. Cornelius gives the player characters their promised bag of *Magic Beans* before they depart.

It is only after the reunited family has departed that the player character who last held Lalia notices something in their hand, a tiny *Golden Egg* (see page 185).



chapter seven

ERRANTS OF DENVEGAN

✠ HISTORY

The tiny realm of Dunvegan has long dwelt deep in the wilderness and away from the world. It is little more than an ancient stone keep, a small village, and endless miles of forest. In spite of its remote location, Dunvegan has always remained peaceful and prosperous. In ancient days, the first Lord of Dunvegan, a young knight, drove forth an ancient Lindworm from the realm as a favor to his lady love, the Fey Queen. Though they loved one another the Lord of Dunvegan and the Fey Queen knew they could not be together, for romances between the Fair Folk and Goodly Folk always ended in tragedy.

But as a parting gift, the Fey Queen gave the young knight parting gifts. She blessed the lands that would be the knight's kingdom and gave him a magical sword to protect the realm so long as he should remain true: The Dunvegan Blade. Taking this sword and a parting kiss, he promised never to raise it and that so long as those of his bloodline remained true, the land would flourish. Then the Dunvegan Blade would be set into the stump of a great tree where the young knight and the Fey Queen had their only kiss. When the heir came of age, he would draw forth the blade to prove he was true of heart and worthy to continue the line.

So, the knight became the Lord of Dunvegan. He married, though in his heart he held only true love for his Fey Queen. He grew cold and distant from his lady wife and she became bitter, for her genuine love for him was rebuked. She was soon with child and a hard labor was upon her. As she gave birth to twins, she spat a curse upon her lord and even her own children. She bid that the elder son, destined to be strong and fierce of spirit, would have a foul heart and would never know peace. The younger son would be lesser, weaker, and feeble - most unworthy of lordship and incapable of its burdens.

On that moonless night, the Lord of Dunvegan made a terrible choice. He set his eldest son upon the edge of the woodlands and abandoned him to the wild in hopes that they would claim him. Better his younger, weaker son rule for a brief time than his kingdom fall to darkness that lay in the elder boy's heart.

Time passed, and though the villagers of Dunvegan lived simple, humble lives, rumors of the forest growing darker and more dangerous began to persist. The Lord of Dunvegan has fallen ill and is dying. The day has come for the son of Dunvegan to go forth into the woodlands and claim his father's sword. But with his last act, he has called together a group of protectors to guide his son to the ancient blade and protect him from the evils he himself set forth in that once peaceful forest.

Interlude outline

Errants of Dunvegan is a short interlude broken into a prologue and two chapters, and an epilogue. It can easily be inserted into any existing legendarium and is particularly suited to be used when the player characters are exploring dense, untamed forests.

Prologue: The Lord's Request The player characters respond to Lord Skye of Dunvegan's plea for aid and meet the ruler and his sickly son Aldarin before setting out to recover the Dunvegan Blade.

Chapter One: The Forest Path As the pliers and the young Aldarin set off into the wilderness. Their journey is fraught by dangers set in their path by the foul Lindworm that stalks their path.

Chapter Two: Blade and Kin Reaching the glade where the Dunvegan Blade is set, they must face off against the Lindworm and help a young boy find the courage to reconcile the sins of his father.

Epilogue: After defeating the Lindworm, whether by force or through compassion, the player characters return home to attend the funeral of Lord Skye who has died while young Aldarin was recovering the sword. They are given the opportunity to join the realm of Dunvegan as errants if they so choose.

Prologue: The Lord's Request

The adventure begins with the player character receiving a summons from Lord Skye of Dunvegan, who is either a noble lord they have aided in the past or a stranger who has heard of their previous heroic deeds. The Narrator can read or paraphrase the following text to begin the adventure:

The tiny realm of Dunvegan is barely more than an aged keep and a village of lumberjacks, farmers, and shepherds. So far from the civilized world, it survives alone and by the bounty of the surrounding land without involving itself in worldly affairs. You and your friends have come to Castle Dunvegan at the bidding of Lord Skye, the ruler of the region. He has heard of your previous deeds and bid you come and aid him in his time of dire need.

Castle Dunvegan runs right up to the edges of a flourishing woodland that crosses rolling hills for as far as the eye can see. Lord Skye himself is an elderly man, clearly in his last days, though a hint of his dignity and grace still remain. Beside him walks a thin wisp of a lad who bears a faint resemblance to Lord Skye. He is the lord's son and though he is younger, he too looks to be of ill health, with a sallown face and lean limbs.

"Thank you for coming so quickly," Lord Skye says through a fit of coughing. He pauses to catch his breath, leaning on a wooden shillelagh. He smiles to you and then to the young man "There's a good lad, Aldarin. I'm fine. Aldarin here, my son, will be lord of this realm. Let's not mince words: I am dying." Aldarin's face darkens at this statement, but he does not deny the truth of it.

"Before Aldarin can take his place as Lord Skye II, he must journey into Drumchapel Wood and prove himself a worthy heir. For it is by that proof that our realms have flourished, and peace has endured because of a promise I made when I was his age so long ago. He is a good lad, but I fear the journey is too much for him to travel alone and I keep no warriors or heroes in my kingdom. Will you not serve as his escort into the heart of Drumchapel where he can take up the Dunvegan Blade I set to rest so long ago? He knows the path, but his frailty prevents him from walking alone."

Aldarin looks indignant for a moment, "Father, I can-!"

"Quiet, boy! I'll not have the future of my people - your people! - give way to your foolish pride. These are seasoned warriors and their service now might save this kingdom for another generation. Now, as I was saying. Aldarin knows the way. It is but three days journey into the heart of Drumchapel. If you guide him and he returns with the sword, I have already made sure that you will be compensated with the thanks of the people of Dunvegan and a small monetary gift. Won't you help an old man fulfill his dying wish?"

Assuming the characters accept, Lord Skye agrees to help them prepare for the journey and provides accommodations in Castle Dunvegan for the night before departing.

Skye, Lord of Dunvegan

Role: Sickly Lord of Dunvegan

Reference: Noble (see THJ2e, page 127)

Drives: See his son become a good king, keep the secret of the Lindworm

Notes: Is sickly and elderly, carries no weapons.

Prince Aldarin of Dunvegan

Role: Adolescent Prince of Dunvegan

Reference: Guard (see THJ2e, page 126)

Drives: Prove himself worthy of the throne of Dunvegan

Notes: Is armed with a long blade, a dagger, a small shield, and wears a hauberk

Chapter One: The Forest Path

In this chapter the player characters will travel through Drumchapel after learning Lord Skye's condition has turned for the worse. Along the way they will encounter fey guides, sudden threats, and must guide young Aldarin as his mettle is tested.

Encounter One: A Grim Departure

This encounter begins as the players are outside the castle preparing for their final departure. The Narrator can read or paraphrase the following text to open the scene:

The sun has barely passed over the horizon. You and your friends are checking the last of your traveling gear as you stand upon the edge of Drumchapel Wood when the one you've been waiting for, young Aldarin, comes running from the castle towards you. "It's my father! Come quickly!"

As you take up behind him, Aldarin leads you and your friends through the narrow halls of Castle Dunvegan to the lord's bedchamber. A humble servant stands next to the lord's bed, where he lay. He expels a deep, wracking cough as you draw close. "Yess... good. Depart... I fear my time may come sooner than I thought. Help the boy! Help him be the man I know I can be! The man she promised he would be! Not like the other one."

A sudden fire fills Lord Skye's eyes and he grabs his son by the wrist. "Not like the other one!" He gasps and goes silent, his eyes shutting. A moment of silent panic fills the room as everyone fears the worst, but the soft, hissing sound of snoring can be heard from the exhausted Lord Skye as he sleeps.

Aldarin is distraught with panic and if questioned about what his father said, he claims to have no knowledge of who this other one may be. The servant, whose name is Martin, will claim that decorum prevents him from commenting if he is questioned. However, characters making a successful Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw can convince Martin to reveal some tidbits of information. In addition, clever players can convince Aldarin to order the servant to talk.

Martin reveals that when Lady Jessa, Lord Skye's wife and Aldarin's mother, was with child it was said she was with twins. But when the birth was upon her, only Aldarin came. Jessa died during Aldarin's birth and Lord Skye was so wracked with grief at her death that he spent the entire evening wandering Drumchapel until dawn. Martin remarks that he found this odd, because Lord Skye was not given to overly emotional displays in regard to his wife.

In reaction to this, Aldarin grows angry and barks at the player characters that it is time to go and find his father's sword - his sword. He storms from the room and waits for them on the edge of the woods in hopes of departing immediately.

Martin the Servant

Role: Loyal manservant

Reference: Peasant (see THJ2e, page 127)

Drives: Protect King Skye's good name, remain loyal to Dunvegan

Notes: Is awkward and stiff, very tightly wound

Encounter Two: The Predator's Gaze

You've been making your way down the narrow, overgrown path that seems familiar to young Aldarin, but is little more than a deer trail to you. As step over roots, vines and small pits in the dirt track, something in this otherwise beautiful and tranquil forest feels unnatural. Over the soft sound of leaves rustling in the wind and the song of the bird, it is as though someone or something is watching you and your friends as you plunge deeper into the Drumchapel.

Several hours after setting out for the heart of Drumchapel, any player characters that have mentioned they are keeping a wary eye for any signs of danger may make a Forestry check or Insight-based Saving Throw. If successful, the character realizes that the party is being stalked by a natural predator of some sort. If this success was achieved through use of Forestry, then the character discovers signs

of a bear following the party. If asked, Aldarin confirms that there are bears native to Drumchapel, but they rarely come close to those passing through it and there haven't been unprovoked attacks by one in his memory. The bear, when noticed, growls at Aldarin, then stalks into the woods.

Later that night, as the player characters are at camp, the bear strikes from the shadows. It targets Aldarin specifically and receives all characters' chance of being surprised is increased by +2. The bear fights with surprising ferocity as if driven by some unnatural malice and targeting only the boy, regardless of any other threats.

During this battle, Aldarin is fearful and reluctant to fight, but if the player characters encourage him to face the beast then he will draw his sword and aid them in battle. Afterwards, even if wounded, he thanks them for helping him find his courage.

After it is defeated, characters looking out into the darkness for other threats see a pair of predatory red eyes and hear a strange rumbling growl, followed by the sound of rushing and disturbance along the forest floor. Then, nothing.

Wild Bear

Role: Agitated predator

Reference: Bear (see *THJ2e*, page 183)

Drives: Hungry

Notes: Has been driven mad by strange enchantment from the Lindworm to target Aldarin

Encounter Two: Fear and the Fair Folk

A scream rings out over the natural sounds of the forest somewhere far from the path through the thick of the woods. It is the voice of a woman, crying out for help. Turning in the direction of the sound, you and your friends see a young woman with her back to the party some distance off. She has her back partially obscured by a tree against which she is backed, and you hear the low growl of beasts rising as her cry thins.

While moving through the forest, the player characters hear a female voice cry out for help several yards off the path. There they see a dryad, being harassed by a pack of wild wolves. The wolves have surrounded a tree, the dryad's home, and her connection to Fairie. Upon seeing the player characters, she grows frightful until she spots Aldarin. Characters first meeting the dryad and seeing this may make

an Insight-based Attribute Saving Throw and if successful they notice a brief look of recognition on her face.

The dryad calls for help, crying out for “the prince and his retinue” to aid her. The wolves then move in to strike her, leaving only a scant instant for the player characters to make their choice. Aldarin will follow their lead and their command. If at any point the player characters order him to protect the dryad, he draws his sword and does so, striking at any wolves who dare get close enough. The dryad cries out that they must not damage the tree as they move in to battle.

The number of wolves appearing is equal to three more than the total number of player characters. At least one of these wolves attempts to attack the dryad, moving to dispatch any protectors (including Aldarin) that may be in her way.

After the battle is over, the dryad introduces herself as Lily. She thanks the player character for their intervention and tells them that in the passing weeks “the serpent” seems to have sewn a kind of madness in the once peaceful creatures here. She doesn’t know why or how, but she has seen the serpent slithering through the night. Before departing into her beloved tree, Lily leans over and gives him a kiss on the cheek and tell him “The blessings of the Fair Folk go with you and all your protect Dunvegan.”

Wolves

Role: Hunters about to strike

Reference: Wolf (see *THJ2e*, page 190)

Drives: Eager to end the hunt

Notes: Unlike most wolves, these will fight to the last and do not seem afraid.

Dryad

Role: Fey turned prey

Reference: Dryad (see *THJ2e*, page 142)

Drives: To protect her tree

Notes: Has no malice towards mortals and if asked why not she will say it is by the will of her queen.

Encounter Three

As the sun reaches its apex on your second day of travel through the Drumchapel woods, Aldarin becomes visibly more excited. "We're getting closer! We're almost there!" He's as giddy as a child. "I'll get the sword and finally make my father proud of me for once!" In his excitement, a wracking cough suddenly grabs ahold of the boy and he doubles over. As he comes back to a standing height, such as it is, you see his eyes glaze over with fear as he raises a hand to point behind you and your companions. Turning to follow his point, you see a massive slithering wyrm covered in hard black scales with burning red eyes. It slips through the woods, seeming endless in length before it rears up between you and the boy and moves in for the kill. "Al.... darin..." it hisses.

The Lindworm attempts to dart between or past the player characters, hoping to wound Aldarin. It is a long creature, nearly twenty feet in length, and very agile. It fights for three rounds, or until it has successfully wounded Aldarin. Once the boy has been bitten by the serpent, it uses its Shed Skin ability to flee combat quickly, leaving no explanation of why it attacked, nor how it knew Aldarin's name.

If asked about the attack, Aldarin is wracked with fear. To get so much as a coherent sentence out of him, one of the player characters will need to speak to him gently and kindly and succeed in a Bearing-based Saving Throw. If Aldarin has been successfully injured by the Lindworm, then this Saving Throw is made at a Disadvantage. Alternately, any spell which removes Despair helps bring him from his stupor.

Lindworm

Role: Twisted serpent of Dunvegan

Reference: Lindworm (see *THJ2e*, page 139)

Drives: Extract revenge of King Skye and Prince Aldarin, destroy Dunvegan

Notes: Enjoys toying with his chosen prey and likes to make them suffer.

Chapter Two: Blade and Kin

Having reached the glade where the Dunvegan Blade rests, the player characters guide Aldarin as he takes up his father's sword and learns a terrible truth. They must flee back to Dunvegan Castle with the terrible Lindworm on their heels before the entire realm is destroyed by the malice of this terrible serpent.

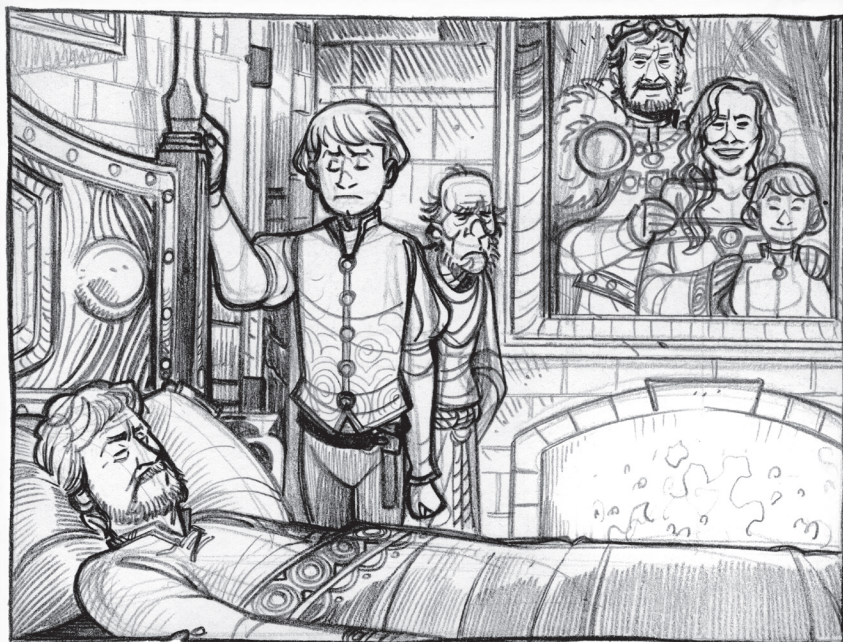
Encounter One: The Beauty and the Blade

The thick overgrowth of the Drumchapel Woods gives way to a small, beautiful grove. At its center you see what was one a mighty oak that is now cut to its stump. Thrust into its top is a beautiful sword wrapped ever so gently in flourishing ivy, as if held in the loving embrace of the forest itself. A beam of summer sun shines down upon nature's dais, illuminating the blade. A voice whispers upon the wind, rising clear and beautiful. "I knew you'd come." A hint of sadness is evident. "You have your mother's eyes."

Stepping from the far edge of the woods you see a beautiful fey woman, clad in a gown of gossamer and blooming flowers. She is beautiful beyond belief, with strange emerald eyes, wild golden hair, and pointed ears: One of the Queens of Fairie. "I am Tatiana and I have long expected your coming, though it saddens me so, for it means your father is not long for this world."

Tatiana assures the party that she means them no harm and in fact, it is she who has tended the forest and kept it flourishing for all these years. She says to the player characters that her blessing upon this woodland has meant that only one Skye's blood could ever corrupt this realm, but she fears such a thing has come to pass. She says that she once knew Lord Skye when he was young and there was great love between them. Knowing they could not be together, the two of them agreed to remain apart. She offered him her blessing to marry and





love, but her secret bitterness at not having him as her own took hold when Lord Skye took a wife and she gave birth to children. She tells Aldarin that he has a twin brother who still lives; an older brother. It was her bitterness that destroyed him and sowed the seed of darkness that eventually transformed him into the terrible Lindworm that now plagues the woods. She has tried to drive the evil from his heart, but to no avail, for only his own kin can do that. Instead, she has tended the forest and tried to protect its creatures. If the realization has not yet come to the player characters as she tells her story, it is then that she reveals that the Lindworm is Lord Skye's eldest son and first child cast into the forest because of the prophecy without so much as a name.

Tatiana then says that in its malice and rage at abandonment, the nameless Lindworm has sought for Aldarin's destruction for an awfully long time. On the dawn after Aldarin takes up the Dunvegan Blade the Lindworm will sense his exact location and will seek him out to destroy him.

Aldarin becomes fearful and turns to the player characters, saying that if this is the case he will not take the sword. He'll simply return to the castle without it to avoid the beast. Unfortunately, if Aldarin is mastered by his fear and the heir of Dunvegan does not take up the sword then the land and its people will wither to ruin. The player

characters must convince him to accept the sword through good roleplaying, or if the Narrator requires, a successful Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw. If the characters threaten Aldarin, he simply tells them to go ahead and do their worst, calling their bluff.

Once convinced, Aldarin walks up to the stump and as soon as he puts his hand upon the sword, the leaves and ivy covering it gently fall away. The sword slips free as easily as if from a scabbard. Tatiana smiles briefly, saying that there is hope now for Dunvegan. She will attempt to keep the Lindworm from finding them again for as long as she can, but they must return to the castle as fast as possible.

Tatiana of Drumchapel

Role: Fey Protector of the Woodlands

Reference: Fey Queen (see *THJ2e*, page 155)

Drives: Ensure that King Skye finds peace before dying, uphold her oath of to protect Drumchapel

Notes: By her promise, she cannot raise arms nor spell nor act against any of the Dunvegan noble bloodline.

Encounter Two: The Wyrms' Pursuit

Your flight through Drumchapel Wood has been a furious one, with little rest and watchful eyes. To your surprise the young Aldarin, with the Dunvegan Blade now at his side, has complained less and seems to be showing signs of finding his courage. You and your companions have taken a brief rest in the dark of night, but little joy or peace can be found in the evening's reprieve as every strange sound or snapping twig makes you fearful that the terrible Lindworm has found you.

Any characters attempting to Relax Around the Campfire that night have Disadvantage to their Saving Throw due to the fear and tension permeating the scene. At midnight exactly, the Lindworm ambushes the party, bursting forth from the darkness in hopes of catching them by surprise. If the player characters do not have a watch set up, then its first attack is automatically successful, though the chaos awakens everyone in their camp. If there is someone on watch, they may make a Surprise check to see if they are able to react before its attack.

Perhaps to the surprise of the player characters, Aldarin reacts decisively, attempting to take a kind of leadership role. He draws the Dunvegan Blade, which is glowing with a golden light for the first time. He calls for everyone to retreat back to the castle and turns to leave.

What follows is a protracted chase as the Lindworm takes off in hot pursuit of the prince. The Lindworm attempts to use hit and fade tactics, slipping away from the path and striking out from the foliage with uncanny speed using its Shed Skin ability. The Narrator should play up this battle for tension and drama, giving player characters opportunities to strike at the beast before it retreats again, and highlighting the frantic pace of their escape. The Narrator's goal here is not to kill the player characters or even kill Aldarin, but to keep the stakes high and make the players feel that at any moment, the Lindworm may achieve victory. The Narrator should also keep track of how many times the Lindworm makes use of its Shed Skin ability, as this is important to the events of Encounter Three.

As the players make their escape through the woods, remember the forest itself can serve as both aid and obstacle. Perhaps they trip over a root, or make use of a vine to swing into action. Encourage these kinds of actions in them and play up the heroism. Allow them to make use of skills like Forestry or Might-based and Agility-based Saving Throws to accomplish these things. The goal here is to keep the action fast and tense as they race for Castle Dunvegan. Just as the action seems to begin to die down or when the players seem to have lost the tension of the chase, move on to Encounter Three.

Encounter Three: The Brothers in Battle

You and your friends break free from the edge of the Drumchapel wood and see the walls of Dunvegan Castle just a few yards off. Aldarin races towards the castle, his father's sword blazing in his hand. He cries out, "It wants me! Get behind me!" and turns just as the horrifying Lindworm breaks free from the edge of the woods and coils. Rising up, its eyes blaze with red fire and its black scales glisten in the light of the Dunvegan Blade. Again, its hisses seem to form rasping words. "Brrrrother... before you diiiiie.... You will ssssay my name as you plead for mercccccyy...."

The players and Aldarin must now face off against the Lindworm. The terrible serpent uses all of its abilities against the prince and the player characters, hoping to kill them swiftly and painfully. The battle is terrible and brutal, but there is one way to end it swiftly. If at any point in the battle one of the player characters calls for Aldarin to apologize to his brother for the deeds of their father, the serpent pauses in his attacks and is taken aback. In this instant, one of the layers of his skin falls away if any remain and the otherwise predatory eyes of the beast soften to almost become human. "It.... issss.... too late, for me.

I am nothing noooooow... I have... no... name. None ssshall remember me and now none ssshalll remember you brother...."

If one of the player characters calls out for Aldarin to give the serpent a name, Aldarin balks at first, but if the player characters push and tell him to do it Aldarin raises the sword high and yells, "Then I name you, Skye II, Lord of Dunvegan!" Without prompting for the player characters, Aldarin will not think to do this and the Lindworm will continue its assault.

If Aldarin does name the serpent, then its remaining skins begin to molt away and cries out in pain and anguish, coiling into a twisted and writhing form. A few moments later, just as the sun comes over the horizon scales and blood fall away to reveal a naked human man who appears remarkably similar in appearance to Aldarin...

Aldarin runs to his newly named brother, who lets out a moan of pain. Taking Skye II in his arms, the younger looks upon the elder and back to the player characters. He tells his newly transformed sibling that he is sorry for what their father did, and that Skye II should be king. In a moment of inspiration, he puts the sword in Skye's hand and says, "So it is... you, the eldest son of Skye of Dunvegan shall be king."

Skye replies that he let hate and malice creep into his heart and that it is too late because he is dying. Aldarin simply says, "Then history shall remember your name my king." And with that Skye II dies.

A soft light comes from Drumchapel Wood, and Tatiana is seen on its edges. She comes forth, smiling. Offering gentle greetings to all present, she tells them she shall set Skye to rest in a place of honor in Drumchapel, a place Aldarin knows well. Aldarin nods grimly and lets her take his brother's body into the woodlands.

Epilogue

In the aftermath of the recovery of the Dunvegan Blade, the player characters discover that Lord Skye, Aldarin's father, died while they were recovering the sword. Aldarin is now king of Dunvegan. Mournful at the loss of both his father and brother, Aldarin is nevertheless resolute and thankful. He tells the player characters that it is by their lessons he has learned to rule as a good king must - not by strength of body, but by strength of spirit.

He honors his father's promise to pay them for their service, paying them a number of gold pieces equal to 100 times their level, but asks if they would do him the honor of becoming Errants of Dunvegan. He

asks them if they accept, they shall be able to call upon his realm for hospitality whenever they visit. In return, should his kingdom ever be in danger, he hopes to be able to call upon them for aid. If they do not accept then he is saddened, but understands.

Any player characters that accept his offer have a permanent +2 bonus to their Renown while in the region of Dunvegan and its surrounding area and may make use of the Knight's Hospitality ability (see *THJ2e*, page 37) as if they were Knights while within the borders of Dunvegan and any of its territories. As a final kindness, he asks them to attend the funeral of the two previous kings of Dunvegan, Skye and his eldest son.

The next time the player characters return to Dunvegan if they should ever find their way back to the grove that once housed the Dunvegan Blade, they find a statue has been erected on the tree where the blade once rested. It is of Skye II, looking kingly and noble, his empty hands ready to hold the Dunvegan Blade for the next true king of the realm.



chapter Eight

BEASTSPEAKER, BIRDSINGER

✧ HISTORY

Baldorthan was always a strange fellow. A wizard, who though kindly of heart, preferred to keep the company of birds and beasts over civilized creatures. His fascination with natural beasts grew so that he eventually took up residence deep in the wilderness to be closer to furred and feathered friends. Over countless years he gained their friendship and was regarded as a steward and protector by most woodland creatures. Seasons became years and years became decades.

Legends began to grow around Baldorthan: Some say that he took a peacock as a wife, learned to transform into a squirrel, and even took to shaping the forest to the will of his woodland friends. These strange tales eventually drew the attention of a young boy named Cartan Traquair, whose father had recently constructed a lodge deep in the woods for use by peasant hunters and noble sportsmen. As time passed Cartan became “the boy who vanished into the wizard’s wood” and Baldorthan himself became little more than a merry myth told to alternately terrify and delight children. But humanity drew closer and closer to his beloved woodlands and his dear friends, Baldorthan was distraught. He and Cartan had become student and mentor, but also dear friends. Though distant from the civilized world, Baldorthan had a deep love for humanity and had taken to protecting his beloved woodland to keep monsters from plaguing humanity as much as to help his animal friends. He did not want to sacrifice one side’s wellbeing at the cost of the other’s.

Cartan disagreed with his master, finding the civilized world to be one full of contradiction, hypocrisy, and needless slaughter. In secret midnight readings, Cartan studied his master’s tome of arcane rituals and began to research a spell that would turn the woods into

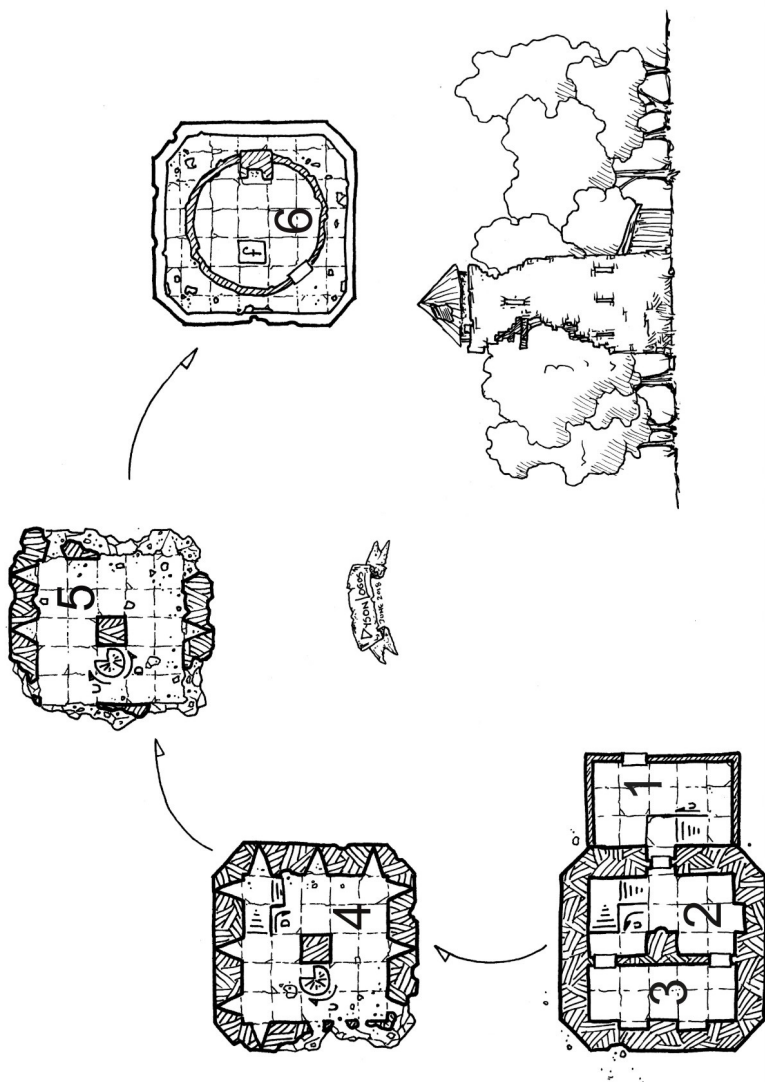
a wilderness overwhelmed with monsters and predatory beasts that would prey on mankind as the fox does the hare. Mankind deserved little forgiveness in the eyes of the young apprentice. Baldorthan, sensing the growing darkness in the heart of his apprentice confronted the young man. But harnessing the secret spells he had learned, Cartan tore the very voice from his master and shattered it. In twisted mockery, Cartan set that voice into creatures that could not speak for themselves: The very beasts in Baldorthan's care.

Before going to confront his apprentice, Baldorthan bid his loyal canine companion Pip, a clever little dog, hide so that should the worst happen then the dog could travel to the nearby hunting lodge of Traquair and get aid from the local villagers, or at least warn them of Cartan's dark plans. Pip is as intelligent as any human and understands their tongue, but cannot speak the language himself. Still, duty bound and steadfast, the tiny terrier has made his way to the Traquair Lodge several miles from Baldorthan's tower.

Unfortunately, Pip has been ignored or even driven away by suspicious villagers and after days of searching, he is desperate to help find someone to his master. Because Pip cannot speak the language of humans, the combination of his intellect and determination have caused most villagers to look upon him with suspicion that he is some kind of fey or cursed creature. Meanwhile, Baldorthan himself has had his own difficulties.

The many animals of his woodland realm he keeps within the confines of his tower have become unwitting allies of Cartan. The evil apprentice has sealed the tower with a ward that prevents any human from exiting the tower once they enter, unless they know secret enchantment found in Baldorthan's Tome. The animals in the tower that now serve as vessels for Baldorthan's voice prevent the poor wizard from casting that spell and escaping. So, with his master defeated, Cartan has set out into the heart of the woodlands to perform the final ritual that will turn the great forest into a corrupt den filled with terrible, bloodthirsty monsters. If Pip cannot find someone to aid his master soon, the once lush woodlands will be set with a spell which will kill anyone who dares enter and hundreds - even thousands - of humans may be killed!

Beastspeaker, Birdspeaker Map



Interlude outline

Beastspeaker, Birdsong is broken into a prologue, two chapters and an epilogue. An overview of each chapter is detailed below.

Prologue: The Loyal Friend As the player characters are departing from the small village of Traquair, they encounter a small dog who follows them and keeps attempting to get their attention.

Chapter One: Baldorthan's Tower Following the small dog to the ruined tower of Baldorthan, the players must explore the tower and unravel the mystery of what the strange little dog is trying to accomplish. Along the way they encounter many strange beasts that have somehow learned to speak the languages of the Goodly Folk.

Chapter Two: Cartan's Trail After freeing Baldorthan and discovering Cartan's terrible scheme, the players must chase after the betrayer apprentice and stop him from completing the ritual to darken the forest forever.

Epilogue: With Cartan defeated and Baldorthan's voice restored, the natural order of the forest is restored. If the fey Nionel was slain before the vile apprentice could be stopped a greater darkness may linger or even flourish in spite putting an end to Cartan's machinations.



Prologue

The adventure opens with the player characters departing from Traquair, which is little more than a hunting lodge and inn for nobles seeking sport in the nearby Whispering Wood surrounded by a few small farms and a smithy. As the adventure opens, the clever players may ask if they heard any news or rumors during their stay in Traquair. If they ask, the Narrator should request that they make either a Bearing or Weal-based Attribute Saving Throw (player's choice) and if that Saving Throw is successful, then they can roll on Table 8-1: Traquair Rumors.

The village itself has little in the way of resources for the player characters and any attempts to buy equipment from the hunting lodge is going to result in the discovery of limited supplies. They do have a small collection of hunting weapons like spears, bows, arrows, and the like - but these are not for sale and are held for use by visiting nobles. The hunting lodge, the largest building in the tiny village, sells only basic food and traveling supplies as deemed appropriate by the Narrator and all such items have a 25% mark-up based on the prices found in *The Hero's Journey, Second Edition*.

Just as the player characters are leaving Traquair behind and setting off into the wilderness surrounding the nearby Whispering Wood, the Narrator should read or paraphrase the following text.

"An get, ye mangy beast!" cries ones of the lodge-goers as he walks to the edge of the tiny community of Traquair carrying a small brown-furred terrier and tosses the little scamp into a small rut beside the road leading away from the village and into the wild. Unfettered, the tiny dog pops up and shakes the shock of the throw off before taking notice of you and your friends watching it all happen.

The dog bounds over to you with a wagging tail and tilted head, eyeing you with a curious precociousness. For an instant, it's almost as if the little guy smiles a tiny doggy smile. Suddenly he lets out a single high-pitched bark, circles at your feet and then runs off away from the village before turning back to look at you and your friends and letting out another eager yap.

Pip is trying to get someone, anyone, to follow him back to Baldorthan's tower and help his master. The precocious little terrier will attempt to endear himself to the player characters and though

he cannot speak the languages of Goodly Folk, it can understand the language of humans and elves and if the player characters figure that out, they can question Pip. The tiny dog answers those questions to the best of its ability with nods, head shakes, and pawing on the ground.

Pip

Role: Steadfastly loyal little terrier

Reference: Dog (see page 181)

Drives: Help Baldorthran, be a good dog

Notes: Remarkably intelligent and can understand common and elvish, but cannot speak them.

The Dog Pip, and Rovers

Pip's heritage is a truly remarkable canine. He is as intelligent as any sentient being and is capable of all the intellectual and emotional nuances of being self-aware. In the event that the player characters somehow manage to speak the language of canines, then Pip is a young, excited, loyal little dog who will tell the player characters that they must come with him back to his master's tower on the edge of the Whispering Wood. He will even name Baldorthan and tell the player characters that his master is in trouble by some doings in the Whispering Wood and is looking for skilled heroes to aid him in a new endeavor.

Narrators that allow material from *The Hero's Companion* could choose to make Pip a Rover whose Archetype is Yeoman of whatever level they deem appropriate.

Table 8-1: Traquair Rumors

Roll (1d6)	Rumor	True or False
1	"I heard from one of the travelers through these parts that the heart of the Whispering Wood is guarded by an evil fey that'll steal yer soul with a wink and a kiss and drown ye in yer own blood if ye so much as look at her!"	Mostly False. This is a twisted reference to Nionel who lives in a pool of water deep in the Whispering Wood, though she is not malicious towards those she meets.
2	"Tis a good and fruitful place, that forest. Fine hunting and quite beautiful if'n ye ask me. They say that old coot Baldorthan is tryin' to command all the beasts in the forest to do his bidding, but I got no mind to be believing such things."	Mostly False. Baldorthan commands no creatures, but does try to help them in their own pursuits and their wellbeing. They are friends, not servants.
3	"I heard Aldarin, Prince of Dunvegan, is plannin' to try to claim the woods for his own and all the creatures in it as 'The Lord's Own.' Dunno what's gonna happen when his father died, and that boy is ruling that place."	Special. This rumor may be true, or false at the Narrator's discretion and can be used as a bridge to the <i>Errants of Dunvegan</i> interlude.
4	"They say Baldorthan stole a whelp of a boy from this very lodge some ten seasons ago! Snatched him in the night to raise as his own and twist him with strange sorceries in that forsaken tower of his on the edge of the Whispering Wood."	Partially True. This is a reference to Cartan, who willingly came to Baldorthan to be his apprentice. He was not stolen.
5	"T'was a chicken I tells ya! A walkin' talkin' bantam as big as ye please! Chased me right off from the edge of the forest, screaming at me like I was some philandering galavant lookin' fer a lady! No, I ain't had a second pint and I ain't too deep in me cups! Now bring me another dram of that there ale!"	True. This outlandish tale is absolutely true, though the teller is quite drunk.
6	"Ah say that strange wizard in that there tower gets a bad rap. Found me out in the forest one day, he did. As kind as ye please, he gave me a drink and lead me out of the woods where I'd gotten myself lost as a boy. Was nigh on thirty years ago it was, and I'll hear no cross words about Baldorthan. He done nothin' to nobody in this lodge or that forest that wasn't a kindness."	True. Baldorthan is a kindly wizard who tries to maintain piece with both the lodge hunters and the creatures of the forest.



Chapter One: Baldorthan's Tower

This chapter deals primarily with the exploration of Baldorthan's tower. The approach and each location are detailed below, with brief italicized descriptions which the Narrator may read or paraphrase to establish the scene.

Talking Animals

It is important to remember that though the animals that have taken over Baldorthan's tower can understand what is said to them, they are limited in their ability to return communication. Because the spell to steal Baldorthan's voice then scattered that voice in "fragments" across all animals in the tower, each of them is only capable of communicating back to the player characters in a unique way detailed within their own individual descriptions.

Exterior

On the edge of the Whispering Wood you and your companions see a tall stone tower capped with a strange wooden hut on its crown. A wooden front room has been added at the base of the tower with a heavy oak door, aged by time and the elements, is set into that addition, and marks the entrance to the tower. Three stories high, this place might better be described as a ruin than a true tower. The entire western wall of the third floor has been torn open and its eastern side is half-collapsed with the second and third floors partially exposed to the elements while the central second floor is laid bare to wind and rain. The tower itself is built right upon the edges of the thick and foreboding Whispering Wood, which is in full bloom with robust sounds of life spilling forth from its greenery.

Exploring the grounds around the tower reveals a small garden of root vegetables has been planted against the eastern wall. It flourishes with onions, carrots, potatoes, rhubarb, and a smattering of tomatoes growing up the side of the tower. These are all fresh and can be eaten freely.

Any character using spells such as *Insight of the Wise* or a wizard's Magical Awareness ability senses that the tower itself has been enchanted with a powerful warding magic and this incantation was laid within the past few days.

Entrance into the tower can be achieved by going through the front door, or casting a rope with a grappling hook and attempting to scale it to one of the large holes in the tower wall on either side. Scaling on the eastern wall will allow entry at the third floor, while the western opening leads into the second floor. Characters could also attempt to throw a rope to the top of the tower and ascend right to the roof, but such a great through would require a Might-based Attribute Saving Throw.

Location 1: The Coop

The door to the tower opens to reveal the sights and smells more at home on a farm. The floor of this large room is covered in a thick bed of straw. The right side is gated off with a waist high wooden fence behind which you see a pair of shaggy, idle goats, while the left side of the room is dominated by a multi-tiered chicken coop from which you can hear gentle clucking. The far end of the room has a tight stone staircase that leads up and into the tower proper and light streams in through a few small windows set into the wooden walls.

There are four chickens and a rooster in and around the coop. As soon as the player characters enter, they hear a voice come from within the coop, speaking dwarfish of all things! Suddenly, prancing brazenly towards the player characters and spewing a stream of the worst kind of insults. If none of the player characters speak dwarfish, the rooster (whose name is Combsworth) attempts to charge at them until they leave, stopping just short of attacking them. Combsworth will attack, but only if threatened with physical violence. Combsworth understands common, the avian language of birds, and dwarfish - but he cannot speak common.

Meanwhile, the pair of goats named Mertle and Mindy, seem very nonplussed. Both speak what seems to be perfect common, but only when talking to Combsworth. Mertle (the more vocal of the two) tells the rooster to calm the heck down and that these fools aren't interested in taking away his ladies. He then lets out a nonplussed bleat at the player characters. If the player characters attack Combsworth, then Mindy becomes very agitated and yells for the rooster to kick their collective tails and bleats in goatish for Mertle to help the rooster fight off the intruders.

In the event that one of the player characters speaks dwarfish, they can attempt to calm Combsworth down with a successful Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw and creative roleplaying. If questioned about why he understands dwarfish, Combsworth seems confused and asks the players why they think he's speaking dwarfish and is more interested in why they know how to speak rooster and what their interest is in the ladies inside. If the players are unable to calm Combsworth, he does not ever actually attack them - but if they move deeper into the tower he lets out a loud cock's crow and alerts every creature in the tower of an intruder.

Combsworth knows little of the conflict between Baldorthan and Cartan, and will only casually remark that a few nights ago Cartan stormed out of the tower and that Baldorthan hasn't bothered to come down and tend to him or his ladies since Cartan left. Mindy and Mertle, if somehow communicated with, will confirm Combsworth's story and will ask the player characters if they'd be willing to retrieve some carrots from the garden for them to nibble upon.

Combsworth

Role: Brazen rooster

Reference: Fowl (see page 181)

Drives: Protect his chicken ladies

Notes: Acts like he wants to fight, but secretly hates it.

Mindy and Mertle

Role: Paired goats

Reference: Goat (see *THJ2e*, page 184)

Drives: Get fed on a regular basis, be left alone, convince Combsworth to calm down.

Notes: If driven to fight, they become very, very aggressive.

Location 2: Bedroom

The lingering scent of farm animals lingers from the eastern room as you step into a large, but simply furnished bedroom. The northern wall is dominated by a winding staircase which leads up, while the southern wall has a simple cot of wood, straw, and a horse blanket to serve as a bed. A simple wooden chest and a chamber pot are the only other features of the room, save for a door and a central support column with a door to either side of the column leading into the western corridors of the tower. A second, smaller cot of a similar nature has been stuffed between the staircase and the western wall.

This is Baldorthan's bedroom and there's not too much here to be found. The larger bed is just what it says, a simple straw cot. The chamber pot is empty, though still has a lingering scent from regular use. The wooden chest is unlocked and not trapped. It contains a spare robe that is patched and well-worn, a half-full tobacco pouch, a wooden pipe, and a small piece of parchment. The parchment has scrawled on it a checklist with the following written on it:

- ◆ Make sure my friends are well-fed and safe.
- ◆ Cook breakfast for Cartan and I. (Should I make pancakes?).
- ◆ Send Zephyr to do a glance over the hunting lodge and keep an eye on the folk.
- ◆ Send Pip out to find some help.
- ◆ Talk to Cartan about our recent disagreements.

Items one through four have been crossed off the list.

The second, smaller bed was Cartan's. It is similar to Baldorthan's, but has no matching chest.

Location 3: Kitchen

This large, long chamber has two small fireplaces set into the western wall, obviously to serve as cookfires. The north and south walls have long wooden tables set against them laden with cabinets, cooking implements, and even the board and pieces from a half-finished of Ten Stone. Between the pair of large wooden doors leading into the chamber is a massive wooden cask set on a table, tapped and ready for dispensing. Strangely enough, lounging atop the cask is a gnarled, one-eyed cat with dirty gray fur, and a single cut ear. It yawns at your entry and slowly stands to life.

The cat, named Puck, watches the players casually and speaks perfect elvish. He always speaks with an imperious tone and talks down to the player characters, expecting to be addressed as “my lord” and “sir.” Puck has a habit of calling the characters peasants or commoners. He seems to look past them, instead of at them. If they bother him or attempt to disturb him, he politely, but firmly bids them to depart from his presence. If they ask how they can serve his highness, then he orders them to retrieve the mouse hiding in the cupboard to serve as a snack for him. If they do this, he may grant them a small royal boon. Puck understands common perfectly well, but refuses to speak a lowly language such as that.

If the players start rooting through the cabinets of the kitchen, they accidentally disturb a tiny field mouse cowering behind a large ceramic mug. This white-haired little guy is named Leon. He speaks common, but only at the faintest whisper. Unfortunately, because of his small size he can only use single-syllable words. He doesn't quite know how he learned to talk, only that it happened a few days ago. He came in here looking for some food and to hide from Baldorthan's dog and has been trapped here since. He's not even aware of Puck, though Puck knows about him. In spite of his small size and smaller words, Leon has a recklessly brave heart and if told about Puck, he will charge out and plan to attack the cat. This will result in a very quick, very brutal death.

The only way to save the little mouse's life is for one of the characters to somehow get Leon out of the cupboard without Puck noticing. This could be done through a Finesse-based Attribute Saving Throw or a successful Thievery check, by quickly stuffing the mouse into one's pocket. If the mouse gets out of the cupboard on his own, Puck pounces on him in an instant. The players would then need to convince Puck that the mouse is gone and plead his aid by placating the cat's ego. This can be done with a successful Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw and good roleplaying.

If Puck is suitably placated, whether through devouring little Leon or by placating his ego, he will reveal through meandering and self-aggrandizing tales that it was he who drove out the wizard Cartan by single-handedly using the magician's own tricks against him and then he blessed his subjects (the other animals) with the gift of speech because he is a benevolent ruler. Puck, of course, only speaks of this in elvish and often goes off on tangents regarding his own grand adventures and exploits during this meandering tale.

Leon, on the other hand, tells a different story. If he survives and escapes, he tells the player characters that the "big ones" had a fight on the top of the tower and the young one left. Since then, he has not seen the elder one.

The cupboards themselves are fairly bare, containing only a moldy half-wheel of cheese and a strange smelling poultice of herbs that can serve as a single-use healer's kit. The beer in the barrel that Puck is lounging upon is, of course, quite good.

Puck

Role: Arrogant mouser cat

Reference: Cat (small) (see page 180)

Drives: Prove his superiority to everyone he meets with as little effort as possible, eat Leon.

Notes: Dislikes Pip and will hiss at him if the dog is with the party..

Leon

Role: Reckless little mouse

Reference: Rat (see *THJ2e*, page 185, no Disease ability).

Drives: Escape the kitchen, defeat Puck in single combat

Notes: Is absolutely fearless, often to his own detriment.

Location 4: Library

Half of the western wall of this room has crumbled, exposing the large chamber to both the sun and natural elements. Floor to ceiling bookshelves packed to overflowing cover the remaining walls and the floor is spackled with stone detritus and bird droppings. Half broken, beside the ripped away wall is an old writing desk with a large book upon it, its pages warped from moisture. A large flock of ravens flitters about from bookcase to bookcase. A few of them eye you suspiciously and let out discordant, meandering caws.

The ravens, like other creatures in the tower, are capable of speaking. Unfortunately, this proverbial murder of crows are more interested in arguing with and insulting one another than interacting with the player characters. The ravens get caught up in their own insults so thoroughly, that the only way for a player character to insert themselves into a conversation is to throw out a truly clever or stinging slight. The Narrator is encouraged to play this scene out using role-playing, but if they prefer they can request a player attempting to draw the attention of the ravens that character can make a Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw.

Once the player characters have managed to get the attention of one of the ravens, they can ask that bird one question before the avian antagonist is distracted by a fresh insult from one of their murder-mates. In spite of their cantankerous nature, the ravens are quite knowledgeable. They will truthfully inform the player characters that the animals have been given Baldorthan's voice and distributed it among themselves through some strange magic. They also know that Baldorthan is hidden away in his hut at the top of the tower, but do not know about the wards set there by Cartan.

The ravens are not particularly interested in the library itself and if asked about its contents, they tell the player characters they're a bunch of foolish, hairless morons and if they can't bother to read the books themselves to find out what's in them, then the birds certainly won't do the job for them. The ravens even accuse the characters of being as rude and stupid as Baldorthan's apprentice, Cartan, who spent a few nights last week here studying the massive tome on the table.

If the players examine the ruined tome, now water damaged and with a splattering of bird droppings across its cover it at first appears indecipherable. A successful Insight-based Attribute Saving Throw or use of the Lore ability will reveal it was some kind of magical spellbook with strange incantations. Wizards of at least 4th level given a week of time to study the book can learn the *Friend to Birch and Beast* spell as described on page 99 of *The Hero's Journey, Second Edition*. Several pages have been deliberately torn from the book and much of it is indecipherable.

Ravens

Role: Argumentative talking birds

Reference: Raven (see *THJ2e*, page 125)

Drives: Irritate other ravens, point out to the featherless just how stupid they really are

Notes: Will fly away if attacked, instead of fighting back.

Location 5: Indoor Garden

Both the eastern and western walls of this chamber have been completely destroyed, filling the room with a surprisingly cool breeze and beams of warm sunlight. Lichen and ivy covers the remaining walls and the floor is covered with countless potted plants, sapling trees, and flower boxes. The greenery of this room seems about to embrace the entire chamber, with vines running up the remaining walls and intertwining across the ceiling. There are even a few vibrantly colored butterflies flitting from petal to petal, branch to branch across the room.

None of the plants in this room are poisonous or dangerous. In fact, many of the saplings are fruit bearing trees, though still too young to begin doing so. Many of the smaller potted plants are herbs suitable for cooking or for medicinal use. The flowers are bright and vibrant, in full bloom. The hatch leading up to Baldorthan's hut is covered with ropey ivy and not easily visible. Any character that states they are searching the ceiling can make an Insight-based Saving Throw or Forestry ability check. If successful, they detect a heavy wooden hatch overgrown with ivy.



If any of the player characters tries to talk to or draw the attention of the butterflies in this room, they swarm out of their hiding places in a great and beautiful cloud and hover before the group in a group. Though they cannot “speak” the cloud can communicate by forming crude images or waving side to side for “no” or up and down for “yes.” The butterflies are very smart and insightful, aware of all that has transpired between Cartan and Baldorthan. They can make a kind of crude and vague puppet show to answer any questions the player characters may have - but are best at answering simple binary questions.

If the players show pathos towards the plants growing here and are reluctant to cut away the vegetation over the hatch leading up the vines will pull away willingly if the players politely ask the butterflies to talk to the vines on their behalf.

Butterflies

Role: Beautiful kaleidoscope of insects.

Reference: Insect Swarm (see *THJ2e*, page 184)

Drives: Live peacefully among the plants.

Notes: Is very curious about any newcomers who enter the room, like to tease Pip.

Location 6: Baldorthan's Hut

The wooden hatch in the ceiling opens into a surprisingly cozy cottage of wood and thatch that sits atop the roof of this tower. Huddled inside you see an elderly human sitting against one wall wearing a tattered brown robe, with his arms wrapped around a gnarled tree branch to serve as a kind of walking stick. His long brown beard is unkempt and streaked with gray. He looks at you with sharp, piercing eyes and opens his mouth to speak only to shut it again and sigh suddenly. He simply gazes at you, defeated, and lets out a sigh and taps on the floor in front of him with the staff, motioning to the floor.

This is Baldorthan and he has been trapped in the hut by a ward set about room by Cartan. In addition, the apprentice has stolen the wizard's voice and scattered it - thus granting the many beasts about the tower the ability to speak. The ward in the room prevents anyone from getting within ten feet of Baldorthan. Those attempting to do so are struck with a nasty shock, suffering 1d4 points of damage that ignores their Reduction Value and launches them back ten feet. Pip, if brought

up here (he can't get up on his own) will run excitedly to his master only to be shocked and thrown back as a demonstration of this.

Baldorthan is sullen and a bit defeated. If the player characters ask him what happened, he tries to use a combination of pantomimes and knocks of his staff to explain. He also gestures out to the forest urgently. Because of the size of the room, clever players might think to set a piece of parchment, ink, and quill near Baldorthan and then back up so he can retrieve them. This will work fine - in which case Baldorthan will write a note telling the player characters his apprentice Cartan has trapped him here and has gone into the woodlands to perform a dark ritual flooding the forest with predatory beasts. In particular he writes "Save Nionel! Save the forest!" and underlines it to show its importance.

He urges the player characters to go and stop Cartan, or else the hunters of the Traquair Lodge will be devoured the next time they go upon a hunt. If there is a ranger in the group, Baldorthan points out they should be able to track him, as he fled in haste. If not, then Baldorthan motions to Pip and makes deep sniffing motions, indicating that the dog should be able to track his wayward apprentice.

Baldorthan

Role: Imprisoned Wizard

Reference: Wizard (see THJ2e, page 44)

Drives: Protect the forest and all its creatures, save Cartan from himself.

Notes: Is mute and bound behind a ward until Cartan's staff is broken. Equivalent of 8th level.

Chapter Two: The Darkening Forest

Having learned of Cartan's terrible plan, the players set off from Baldorthan's tower to stop the evil wizard from completing his dark ritual and plunge into the growing shadows of the Whispering Wood. To begin this chapter, the Narrator can read or paraphrase the following italicized text.

Having learned of Baldorthan's betrayal at the hands of his own apprentice, you have set out into the woodlands in hopes of stopping Cartan from completing the terrible ritual which will infest the forest with blood-thirsty predators. As the last rays of the sun sink into the western horizon, the Whispering Wood seems darker than did the night before.

Detailed below are three encounters, with only the last one being mandatory. The Narrator can use them or not as they seem fit.

Encounter One: A Treacherous Wood

As you make your way down the narrow deer trail of a path towards the center of the woodlands in pursuit of Cartan, roots seem to trip your feet and branches claw at the edge of your cloak. Moving with as much haste as possible, you continue to step and sidestep the overgrown forest until you come to the realization that the forest itself is moving! The trees seem to twist and bend, closing off the narrow pathway you now traverse on both sides. A moment later you see thorny, ropy vines slither from the branches towards you and your friends, whipping and lashing about aggressively.

The twisting ropy vines attempt to entangle the player characters. Each round, the player characters must make a successful Finesse-based Attribute Saving Throw, or they become bound up by these thorny ropes. Once they've wrapped a character, the vines automatically inflict 1d4 points of damage and ignore a character's Reduction Value as they slip beneath the plates and folds of armor. Attacking the vines seems to have little effect and does not deter the strange botanical attackers. There are simply too many to be effectively dealt with by hand weapons. However, should one of the characters manage to light a fire, whether that be via a torch, an *Enflamed* weapon, or some magical means, then the vines retreat and recoil as they are easily set ablaze.

Encounter Two: Midnight Pack

As the last rays of twilight fade and full darkness claims the forest you feel the hair on the back of your neck stand up. Something, or someone is watching you from the forest growth. You spot a pair of sickly, glowing green eyes staring out of the darkness at you. A low, unnatural howl is carried on the evening wind, and a long chill runs down your spine. As if summoned by the terrible sound, you hear something moving through the woods from the opposite direction as it draws towards you with a chorus of predatory growls.

The mysterious black eyes are that of a Black Dog, which flees into the woods immediately after letting out its Howling Portent (see *THJ2e*, page 186). Working closely with the wargs that have been drawn into the forest by Cartan's spell, it hopes to join them in the feasting after the player characters are dead, but has no desire to fight. The wargs move in for the kill. The number of wargs in this hunting pack is equal to the number of player characters, plus one additional warg. They are hungry for human flesh, but do not fight to the death. They will attempt to flee if reduced to six or fewer Endurance.

Black Dog

Role: Stalking predator

Reference: Black Dog (see *THJ2e*, page 186)

Drives: Sow fear among those who invade the woodlands

Notes: Does not actively participate in battle, letting the wargs do the dirty work.

Wargs

Role: Hungry hunters moving in for the kill

Reference: Warg (see *THJ2e*, page 189)

Drives: Devour living flesh

Notes: Will retreat from battle if too grievously injured.

Encounter Three: Darkened Heart of the Woodland

The narrow through the forest opens to a small grove that would be beautiful were it not for the long shadows of the night that seem to consume it. At the center of the grove is a large pool of water, somehow frozen over with a thin and clear sheet of ice, which throws darkness and starlight across the land. You see, rising from a kneeling position in front of the pool is a human man who may have been once been thought of as comely, but his face is twisted with rage. He draws up the blackwood staff in his right and speaks in a hiss. "You. Did that old fool send you? He doesn't see, does he? The folk at the lodge, they're just the beginning. They're cruel, corrupt, and they deserve to die for what they'll do to this forest, for what they did to me! I've already set in motion the spell that will protect these woods forever. My magic began this and only my magic can end it! This is the only way, and you won't stop me! I'll show you one moment of mercy. Leave now and never return, and you can live. Reject my offer, and you'll end up like her..."

He steps aside and you see an impossibly beautiful woman with elfin features, banging on the sheet of ice and trying desperately to free herself.

This is indeed Cartan, Baldorthan's wayward apprentice. He is a powerful and talented wizard who has come to the grove and pool that serve as the heart of the forest. The pool is shallow, never more than five feet deep, but is filled with clear, pure water. While the early pieces of Cartan's ritual have already begun to corrupt the forest, the final step in the spell is to drown a Nymph in her own pool to forever correct the earth and water that feeds the woodlands. He has already sealed her beneath the water in a sheet of unbreakable magical ice. The only way to free her, as Cartan foolishly hinted at, is to smash the sheet of

ice with Cartan's own staff. If, during their confrontation with Cartan, one of the player characters wrestles the staff from the wizard's hand and slams it forcefully against the sheet of ice, then the whole thing shatters, freeing Nionel the Nymph.

If Nionel is not freed in five rounds, she dies. One round after her death the ice melts and she rises as a Drowning Spout, attacking everyone present - including Cartan. She starts with whomever is closest.

Assuming the player characters do not take Cartan up on his "offer of mercy," he fights against them with brutal efficiency. His level is always one higher than that of the highest-level player character. He has access to whatever spells the Narrator deems appropriate, except for *Fire Both Bright and Sacred*, which he will not use for fear of setting the forest ablaze.

At the Narrator's discretion, Cartan can also be defeated if any character manages to get ahold of his magical staff and destroy it by snapping it in two with a forceful blow from any edge melee weapon which has the *Blessed Aspect*. Such an attack can be made against the staff directly, but requires an attack roll against a Defense of 18. The staff has a Reduction Value of 2 and can suffer 10 points of damage before being destroyed. Unfortunately, if the staff is destroyed before Nionel the Nymph, then Cartan's final spell cannot be undone and though he is defeated, the woodlands will still become corrupted.

Cartan, the Corrupted Apprentice

Role: Power hungry wizard

Reference: Wizard (see *THJ2e*, page 44)

Drives: Destroy the Traquair hunters who mocked him as a boy, show Baldorthan he is more powerful than him.

Notes: Cartan's level as a Wizard is equal to one level higher than the highest-level player character. His magic is bound up in his staff and if it is destroyed, he becomes a Peasant (see *THJ2e*, page 127)

Nionel, The Trapped Nymph

Role: Protector of the woodland pool

Reference: Nymph (see *THJ2e*, page 142)

Drives: Escape her icy prison, protect the forest and its creatures

Notes: Is secretly the lover of Baldorthan

Epilogue

The aftermath of this interlude depends greatly on how the player characters fared in the final conflict with Cartan. Depending on how well they did, the events of the epilogue are detailed below.

Cartan is defeated, Nionel freed: If Cartan is defeated but his staff is not broken, he will flee the region and may return as a recurring villain if the Narrator likes. With Nionel saved, the forest will return to its flourishing, natural state. Baldorthan is saddened to hear of his apprentice's dark deeds, and hopes one day that the boy can find some sense of peace. If Cartan was slain, Baldorthan genuinely mourns his death and blames himself. In either instance, the elder wizard becomes even more reclusive, but still genuinely cares about the well-being of both the forest and the people of the hunting lodge. During his walks in the woods, he and Nionel build a slow budding romance in the years to come. If Cartan's staff is unbroken, he offers to give it to the player characters as a gift hoping the gladness in their hearts might wash away its dark legacy. It functions as a Gnarled Walking Stick (see *THJ2e*, page 214) in the hands of its new bearer.

Cartan is defeated, Nionel has died: Even if he is slain, it is possible for his terrible spell to still take hold of the woods. If this is the case, then the great forest becomes corrupted over the next year and becomes a Blighted Land. Baldorthan abandons his tower in one last desperate effort to plunge into the woods and cleanse the forest - but fails. Within three years, the Traquair Lodge is attacked by beasts from the forest and destroyed. Whether or not any survive is up to the Narrator, but a great darkness has now taken hold in the world.

Chapter Nine

THE MIDNIGHT RIDER OF LOCH DEARMAD

Unlike most other adventures or interludes, *The Midnight Rider of Loch Dearmad* is not to be run as an independent adventure or interlude. Instead, each chapter in the adventure occurs whenever the Narrator deems it appropriate in order to create a tense and engaging subplot that runs through an existing legendarium. At the end of the prologue the Narrator will find notes on how and when to place the events that will begin the events of this interlude within the context of their own game. In fact, the prologue of *The Midnight Rider of Loch Dearmad* can actually occur without the player characters realizing it has happened, since it occurs when they first discover the *Rider's Blade* and only later do the player characters realize that they are now bound to the fate of the damned horseman who once bore the blade. In addition, because the first and second chapter occur entirely within a dream, they can happen at any point in which the player characters have all settled down to rest - regardless of when or where that rest occurs!

Chapter Three of *The Midnight Rider of Loch Dearmad* is the only chapter that occurs in a physical location: the village of Loch Dearmad. The exact location of this village is not provided, and the Narrator should place it in whatever location best suits their individual legendarium.

While these elements within the interlude do require a bit more creativity on the part of the Narrator, they also offer the opportunity to insert a flexible, ongoing subplot into an existing legendarium with ease and thus can be easily adapted to any game regardless of the number or level of characters in the group.

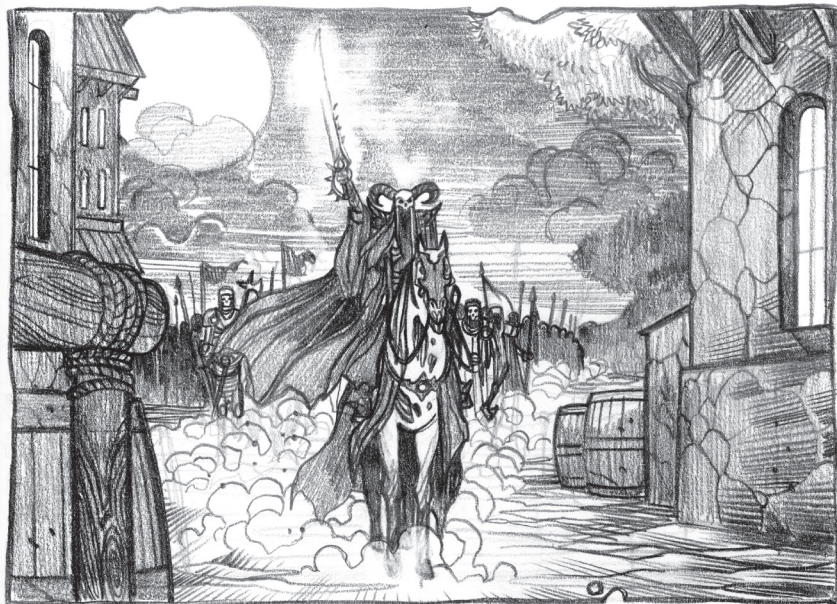
✠ HISTORY

The once prosperous village of Loch Dearmad was once ruled by a tyrannical warlord who drew heavy taxes from the peasants he was sworn to protect and performed unspeakable brutalities on those who

dared to defy him. Though the Lord of Loch Dearmad was a merciless ruler, he was also a weak and feeble man. His enforcer, known simply as the Rider, what the lord's brutal right hand. To ensure that his subjects remained loyal, each night the lord would send the Midnight Rider forth from his keep. Astride a terrifying black war horse and wielding a wicked cavalry saber, the Midnight Rider would claim each night when a full moon was in the sky. Leaving the body to rot in the streets, the Midnight Rider returned the decapitated head to his master.

For years this continued, and the people of Loch Dearmad lived in mortal terror of their dark lord and his horrific horseman. But after one hundred full moons, the people finally rose up. Tearing the Midnight Rider from his steed, the villagers of Loh Dearmad tore him from his horse and decapitated him with his own sword. To their horror, the severed head uttered a terrible curse saying it would return to destroy them and their children's children's children. The villagers, horrified but undeterred by this curse, were empowered by their victory and took the Midnight Rider's sword and stormed the lord of Loch Dearmad's keep.

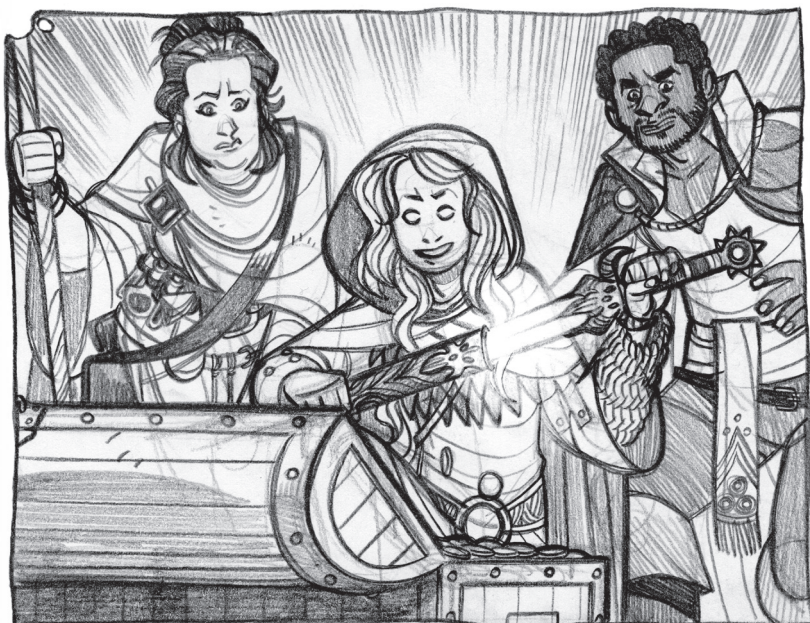
The mad lord, with his warrior dead and his death eminent, ordered his servants to seal the castle once the villagers entered his keep. Soon after that the entire keep was set ablaze and everyone inside was killed. The lord, his servants, and the villagers were killed to the last



man. As the castle burned, those villagers who remained behind on the shores of Loch Dearmad cast the head of the Midnight Rider into the lake for which their town was named and burnt his corpse. His great black war horse Malice fled into the night and was never seen again.

For a brief time, Loch Dearmad was a village of quiet peace with farmers and fishermen living simple and peaceful lives. But exactly one year after the lord was deposed and the Midnight Rider slain, Malice returned and astride him was a terrible headless warrior. He rode down those who were unfortunate enough to find themselves in the Midnight Rider's path. Again, the Rider returned with each full moon, and again he sought to slay the villagers who he had brutalized. At dawn each morning, the Midnight Rider and Malice would turn and ride into the fog which rolled in off of Loch Dearmad, vanishing.

Eventually, the villagers abandoned these cursed grounds, but one of them took the Midnight Rider's sword with them as a twisted trophy. In the generations since the sword has been traded, sold, lost, and stolen. Its exact location is known to none. But the Rider's curse takes hold of any who dare wield it. First he comes to them in their dreams. Then he guides them to commit acts of horrible brutality. Finally, he draws the wielder home to Loch Dearmad so he can reclaim the sword and claim the first of many new heads.



After years of laying dormant and forgotten, the Rider's Blade has fallen into the hands of one of the player characters, though they know not what they carry.

Interlude outline

The Midnight Rider of Loch Dearmad is broken into a prologue, three chapters, and an epilogue. An overview of each chapter is detailed below.

Prologue: One of the player characters discovers a mysterious and powerful sword with dangerous enchantments that hint at the terrible deeds done by the previous owner and leave lingering dread in its new owner.

Chapter One: To Ride Forth Out of Dreams The Midnight Rider comes to plague the sword bearer and their companions in the realm of dreams, desperate to draw them out and reclaim what is his.

Chapter Two: Nightmare Crossroads As the nightmares grow worse, the player characters find a new and unfamiliar landscape in their dreams that is plagued by more than the Midnight Rider and offers a vital clue to his past and how to defeat him.

Chapter Three: Ghosts of Loch Dearmad Finally locating the village of Loch Dearmad, the player characters use the Rider's Blade to draw the Midnight Rider from his watery grave and force him into a final confrontation.

Epilogue: With the curse of Loch Dearmad broken, the player characters have the opportunity to restore peace and balance to a long-blighted land, or to confront other evils that still linger in this land.

Prologue

The prologue begins when the Narrator has decided when and how they will include the Rider's Blade in their legendarium. Perhaps it was discovered in a treasure hoard, a forgotten tomb, or even purchased from a merchant who didn't realize what they were selling. When the player characters first discover the Midnight Blade the Narrator can read or paraphrase the following italicized text.

Examining your new discovery, you find a single-edged blade of perfectly polished steel that runs just shy of three feet in length. That blade gleams in the light, as sharp as the day it was crafted, save for a few flecks of brown on the blade - strange touches of rust on an otherwise perfect line of steel. Its disk hilt is made of perfectly polished silver, etched with images of fire and

carnage which dips into a knuckle bow that is cast in the image of a great drop of blood that sweeps back in to touch the heavy iron pommel. Framed in this is a grip of black leather, old and cracked. A matching baldric and scabbard complete the weapon,

The first player character to claim the weapon as their own (not necessarily touch it) hears the sound of horse hooves across the ground, the sound of a sword unsheathed, and a terrible scream. This is only heard in their mind, and no other player characters hear it.

Once a player character has claimed the Rider's Blade as their own, they immediately know it has the *Bane* and *Grievous* Aspects, but do not know the other details concerning the weapon as described on page 186.

Possible Locations for the Prologue

Described below are just a few locations or encounters where the Narrator can introduce the events of the prologue into their own legendarium and easily integrate this interlude.

- ◆ The Rider's Blade is acquired in a trade with a Goblin Merchant
- ◆ The weapon is taken as a spoil of war after slaying a powerful humanoid adversary that was previously wielding the sword, like an ogre, a death knight, or a troll.
- ◆ It is found in the burnt-out husk of an abandoned roadside stable.
- ◆ A player character inherits the weapon from a dead relative or as a gift from a patron.

Chapter One: To Ride Forth Out of Dreams

The events of Chapter Two can occur on any evening when the player characters have set down to rest for the evening after one of them has taken up ownership of the Rider's Blade. This encounter is best used after a character has bedded down for the evening while traveling in the wilderness. To begin this chapter two, the Narrator can read or paraphrase the following italicized text:

Your sleep was fitful and offered no refreshment. Awakening, you feel your bones ache and muscles rebel as you attempt to move. The campfire around which you and your companions warmed yourselves is now a dead heap of coal and ashes. Apparently you are the only one unable to find reprieve this evening. Your companions are still buried deep in slumber. Stranger still is a thick fog that has rolled in and blanketed the entire area, blocking out the light of moon and stars as well as muffling the nocturnal sounds of nature.

The strange silence begins to break as you hear a familiar noise echoing out of the mist. After a few seconds of listening you recognize it as the sound of hooves galloping towards you. An instant later, a terrible sight breaks free of the fog and charges into your camp! Clad in black plate armor that seems to absorb the meager light of your campfire and astride a steed of the same color, he is wielding an iron mace that is more suited to a troll than a man. His tattered crimson cloak billows out behind him as his mount rears up at the edge of the campfire. It is in that flicking, diminished light that you realize this terrifying rider has no head.

The Midnight Rider has invaded the dreams of the one who carries his sword and drawn the bearer's allies into the dream with them! Strangely, other player characters do not awaken unless the bearer of the Midnight Blade specifically states that they are trying to awaken them. The Rider himself spends one round dismounting and stalks towards the one who would dare carry his blade.

In combat, the Midnight Rider attacks only the one who wields the Rider's Blade, ignoring all other foes unless they directly inhibit his efforts to get to the wielder through obstruction or clever use of magic items. In short, nothing comes between the Rider and his prey. In addition, the Midnight Rider suffers *no damage* from any attacks or spells except when struck by the Rider's blade. The Midnight Rider uses the first set of statistics detailed on page 183 for this encounter and for any subsequent appearances that occur before the events of Chapter Two.

Anyone who is slain in battle will remain dead until the end of the scene. If the bearer of the Rider's Blade is slain, the scene ends immediately. If the Rider is defeated, the scene ends. At the close of the scene, all of the player characters (including those who were "killed" in their battle with the Rider) wake up from the dream state. All of the characters are uninjured and unharmed, but recall all the details of the dream vividly.

Unfortunately, anyone who was slain in the dream does suffer one rather dire consequence: Because of the vivid and disturbing nature of the dream, for the duration of the day after any character that was slain in the dream suffers Disadvantage on all Despair Saving Throws.

The Narrator is encouraged to use this encounter (or slight variants on it, depending on where the player characters rest for the evening) multiple times over several sessions of play. That is not to say it should be used every time the player character bed down for the night - but fear that the Rider may return to haunt their dreams should be a valid concern.

The Midnight Rider

Role: Nightmare Cavalier

Reference: See page 183

Drives: Get his sword back, terrorize the one who carries his blade

Notes: Use the first set of statistics for this encounter.

Chapter Two: Nightmare Crossroads

This encounter can be used any time the characters have bedded down for the evening, for the Black Rider has returned to haunt their dreams. Narrators can read or paraphrase the following text to begin the encounter.

You awaken and see your companions similarly stirring from slumber. But you are not where you bedded down for the evening. Surrounding you is the skeleton of what must've once been a town square. You see shops and homes now collapsed in on themselves, slowly torn apart by time and neglect, and more than a few look as though they were set to the torch.

A thick fog rolls across the scene and as it slips away to the west, you see a signpost, the only undamaged thing in what must've once been a bustling town, seem to appear out of the fog. The words "Loch Dearmad" have been burnt into it in a beautiful, flowing script. Unfortunately, this only serves as a stark contrast to the collection of six severed heads which hang from half-rotted ropes dangling from it. The heads are in a decayed state, eyes eaten away by carrion birds and the skin corpulent and gray.

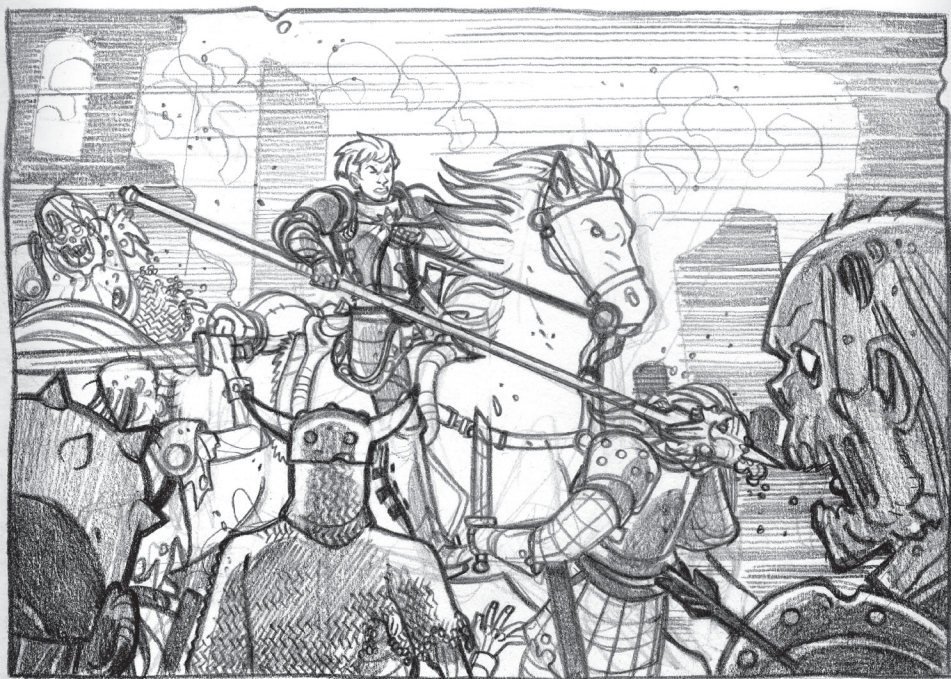
You hear the gentle lap of a shoreline through the fog to the west, followed by the all too familiar echo of a horse's hooves on the earthen ground. As the sound of a charging steed grows, a new chorus hisses across the air from the opposite direction, carrying a fresh voice with them. Out of the eastern fog you see a horde of shambling humans, bodies half rotted. Flesh falls from bone, open wounds fester, and more than a few of these undead abominations are shuffling towards you with no head on their shoulders.

The decrepit village square is about one hundred and twenty feet across with ruined buildings scattered haphazardly about and the ominous sign in the very center. It is ringed on all sides by the same thick fog the player characters encountered during their previous dream-encounters with the Midnight Rider.

The player characters have one full round to prepare before dozens of undead villages break through the fog. If they do not make aggressive moves, the zombies will not attack them and instead continue to move

past them towards the west. Unfortunately, one round after the zombie villagers break free of the fog, the Midnight Rider bursts forth from the western fogbank. As in previous dreams, he attempts to move directly towards the player character that is carrying his sword.

If the player characters manage to avoid damaging any of the zombie villagers, then the zombies will actually begin to attack the Midnight Rider! If, at any point during the battle, the player characters attack any of the zombies, the entire horde turns on the player characters.



The Midnight Rider attempts to avoid the zombies. His focus is on the player character that has his sword. He will only attack them if they become an obstruction towards his goal of attacking the sword bearer. When he first appears, his voice fills the fog-ringed town square, echoing from everywhere and nowhere. "It belongs to me and I shall have it again! Bring it to me or die!"

During the great melee, the Midnight Rider uses the second set of statistics listed on page 183 below and as before he can only be damaged by the Midnight Blade. Whenever one of the zombies is

slain, whether by a player character or by the Midnight Rider, one of the severed heads lets out a strange phrase. The Narrator should roll on Table 9-1: Last Words to determine what each head says when a zombie falls.

If the characters defeat the Midnight Rider, the fog begins to roll in, filling the village square and just as the player characters are blinded and consumed by it the severed heads echo out in one voice, together. "The loch... the sword must return home to face its master." If the player characters are defeated in the dream, they wake up as described in Chapter One, but suffer *all* Saving Throws the following day.

Table 9-1: Last Words

Roll (1d6)	Last Words
1	"His head... we took... his... head."
2	"The loch... he lives still... in the loch."
3	"The sword... it must be returned to his watery grave."
4	"It he made... was his unmaking."
5	"You are not the rider... why do you bear his blade?"
6	"It cannot be unmade until he is destroyed."

The Midnight Rider

Role: Nightmare Cavalier

Reference: See page 183

Drives: Get his sword back, terrorize the one who carries his blade

Notes: Use the second set of statistics for this encounter.

Headless Zombie Villagers

Role: Nightmare Horrors Made Manifest

Reference: Zombie (see *THJ2e*, page 198)

Drives: Destroy the Midnight Rider once and for all, kill anything that gets in their way

Notes: They have no head. They do not attack player characters unless obstructed or attacked.

The Truth of the Midnight Rider

The primary purpose of Chapter Two of this adventure is to get a few clues as to what exactly is going on with the Midnight Rider and his blade. Hopefully, by the end of the second encounter the player characters have figured out that the Midnight Rider and his sword are bound together and that is why he's haunting the dreams of the sword's current owner and even drawing the sword bearer's companions into the dream realm to plague them. During this encounter they'll also learn the name of the village of Loch Dearmad and receive several hints that the sword must be taken there if they hope to break the curse and free themselves of the sword's nightmarish curse.

But sometimes what seems obvious to the Narrator eludes players. If they haven't put the clues together the Narrator can help nudge them in the right direction. Perhaps the Narrator asks a bard in the party to make a Lore check and if successful, then new clues are revealed.

More interestingly, if the players haven't figured out that they need to take the sword to Loch Dearmad but still want to break the curse, then the Narrator should use that as a hook for expanding the adventure. Maybe there's an ancient library far off and across a dangerous forest that holds a book full of strange and awful stories which can tell them how to destroy the sword. Perhaps one of the survivors of the village knows the truth, has gone into hiding since the village was destroyed and the player characters have to find where the strange hermit lives. This is a golden opportunity for the Narrator to build on and customize existing material to expand this interlude into a full-fledged adventure!

Chapter Three: Ghosts of Loch Dearmad

Now that the player characters have figured out that they must take the Rider's Blade to Loch Dearmad to break its curse, they've traveled to its location (as determined by the Narrator to suit their individual legendarium), but what they find is a hollow husk of once vibrant town that has long since met its doom. The Narrator can read or paraphrase the following italicized text to begin the adventure.

As you crest the last hillock and look down on the remnants of a lakeside village, you and your companions realize that you are quite literally walking into a waking nightmare. As you walk past fallow farms, crumbled homes,

and blackened buildings your worst fears are confirmed when you enter what was once the town square. There, in the center of the village is a once warm and welcoming sign that says “Loch Dearmad.” Rotted ropes hang like vines and at the base of the signpost you see mud caked skulls that were undoubtedly once severed heads that have rotted away over time. The silence that suffocates this scarred ruin is broken only by the sound of water rapping against the shore of a lake off to the west.

There is no peace or solace to be found in Loch Dearmad. In fact, it is a Blighted Land (see *The Hero's Journey, Second Edition*, page 88) and all who cross it suffer all the consequences of being in such a befouled place. Players are free to roam through the ruins of the village as they wish. Every ten minutes they spend exploring the ruins of Loch Dearmad, the Narrator should roll on Table 9-2: Loch Dearmad Ruins and tell them what they find or encounter.

Table 9-2: Loch Dearmad Ruins

Roll (1d20)	Discovery
1	As the player character is rooting through the ruins of a large house, 2d4 headless zombies shuffle from under the rubble and attack.
2	A small iron lockbox. It is locked, but contains 5d6 gold pieces.
3	Two burnt skeletal hands clasping one another wearing matching silver rings, each worth 10 gold pieces.
4	A half-burnt book of children's fairy tales.
5	While rifling through some rubble, the characters disturb a nest of 3d4 giant rats, which immediately attack.
6	The laughter of children at play fills the air, but as the players draw close they turn to screams of terror and the faint sound of hooves at a gallop.
7	A well-crafted fishing rod is discovered in a collapsed shack near the shore.
8	A set of keys to an unknown lock is found trampled in the mud.
9	A map to an unknown or far away location (to be determined by the Narrator).

Roll (1d20)	Discovery
10	A pile of burnt bones in front of a ruined home stirs and rises to life in the form of 2d6 skeletons. They have no head, but immediately attack with makeshift clubs.
11	Among the broken crockery of a destroyed kitchen, 1d4 healing poultices are found. They each function as a Healer's Kit.
12	A remarkably well-preserved sword, save for its broken blade, is held by a skeletal hand.
13	A small music box is sticking up out of the dirt. If cleaned it will work again and plays a twinkling rendition of "Carrickfergus" and is worth about 25 gold pieces.
14	Rubble conceals a tiny wine cellar. Inside is a long dead villager. A successful search for secret doors will reveal one of the bottles of wine is a bottle of <i>Elvish Cordial</i> (see <i>THJ2e</i> pg. 210).
15	The noise the characters have made disturbs a group of 3d6 previously undisturbed headless zombies who shamble towards them and attack.
16	A battered, but still functional small shield that was once a dinner plate.
17	A pile of blackened bones and skulls is piled in a macabre cairn. If disturbed it rises to life as 1d6 Skeletons.
18	A piece of parchment half-burnt, the remnant of a love letter to a girl named Cora.
19	A remarkably well-crafted arming sword found in the ruins of a smithy. It is a <i>Balanced</i> long blade.
20	A goblin merchant is casually rooting through the rubble and tries to cut a deal with the party members when they stumble upon him.

Eventually the player characters are likely to want to explore the shores of Loch Dearmad at the edge of the village. If they spend more than an hour exploring the village ruins, a fog rolls in off the lake, seeming only to part when they draw towards its shores. Once the entire party is within sight of the shores of Loch Dearmad, they hear the sound of galloping hooves out over the water - though it sounds as though it is hitting stone.

If at any point, the one who carries the Rider's Blade draws the sword, they feel the blade pulling towards the water - though not enough to yank itself free of their grip or to drag them into the water. But if at any point the Rider's Blade touches the waters of Loch Dearmad, the sword is yanked from the wielder's hand by an unseen force and drawn into the depths of the lake. After this happens, or if the player characters choose to throw the sword into the lake, the galloping suddenly grows louder, and the water begins to churn.

Suddenly up from the waters springs the Midnight Rider, full and in the flesh in the waking world, his blade in his hand! He attacks mercilessly, choosing first to strike the one who was previously carrying his sword, but not hesitating to attack anyone he can get within range of striking. He is a ferocious warrior, attacking without mercy and taking advantage of the speed and leverage being mounted grants him. This is a desperate battle, because even though he has been restored to full power and taken physical form, the Midnight Rider can now be slain by mortal foes in the waking realm - and if that happens, he dies forever. During the battle, his primary method of attack is to charge astride his terrible steed Malice at a player character and make his attack without ever staying in range of a melee attack and then turning about to make a second charge.

Fortunately because he has been restored to his fully physical form, that means that if the Midnight Rider is slain then he remains forever dead and the miasma that hangs over Loch Dearmad will fade away. Unfortunately, he is also at his most powerful now that he has regained his full power.

If the player characters are able to defeat him, the evil blade falls from his hand and degenerates until it is nothing but flakes of rust. The player characters are now free of the nightmares that plagued them, and the village of Loch Dearmad is no longer a Blighted Land.

The Midnight Rider

Role: Nightmare Cavalier

Reference: Midnight Rider (See page 183)

Drives: Get his sword back, terrorize the one who carries his blade

Notes: Use the third set of statistics for this encounter.

Malice

Role: Vicious Warhorse of the Midnight Rider

Reference: Nightsteed (see *THJ2e*, page 148)

Drives: Terrorize any living being foolish enough to trouble their master.

Notes: Though Malice appears in the dream realm, he is a physical creature and can only perform deeds in the physical world.

Headless Zombies

Role: Reanimated Victims of the Midnight Rider

Reference: Zombies (see *THJ2e*, page 198)

Drives: Destroy any living thing that dares trespass on their village.

Notes: Unlike the nightmare zombies, these have been corrupted to pure evil by the Blighted Land

Burnt Skeletons

Role: Restless Undead Waiting to be Awakened

Reference: Skeleton (see *THJ2e*, page 193)

Drives: Destroy the living

Notes: They are burnt black, and attack with makeshift cudgels and debris for 1d6 damage.

Mort the Goblin Merchant

Role: Merry Scavenger

Reference: Goblin Merchant (see *THJ2e*, page 171)

Drives: Find useful trinkets to trade at the next goblin market, get out of these blighted lands safely.

Notes: Is personable and friendly, but will attempt to pull a fast one on the player characters as soon as the danger has passed.

Epilogue

With the Midnight Rider defeated and his sword destroyed, Loch Dearmad's status as a Blighted Land immediately fades away. When the sun rises again over its shores, the fog burns away forever and within a few days signs of new life can be seen growing. What becomes of the village and how quickly it recovers will depend entirely on the player characters. If they leave Loch Dearmad and never return it will be another decade before new settlers arrive and rebuild on the lake's shoreline. However, if the player character actively encourage people

in the region, whether they be homesteaders looking for land to call their own, enterprising fishermen, or anyone else who might find a worthwhile living in this strange place, then within a year a new village has sprung up and it will be christened "Rider's Hollow."

Narrators looking to expand this material into a larger adventure could have the player characters discover the ruins of the nearby castle from which the nameless dark lord who was master of the Midnight Rider once ruled Loch Dearmad. Perhaps his malign spirit still resides there, or an evil necromancer has secretly taken up residence, or there are great treasures taken from goodly folk that must be liberated and cleansed of corruption as the Rider's Blade before them. The Narrator is encouraged to expand this short interlude into grander adventures to suit their own legendarium.



chapter Ten

BESTIARY

✧ BOGGART (FEY)

Defense: 15

Endurance: 20

Reduction Value: 4

Attack Modifier: +6

Attacks: Bite (1d8)

Special: Infuriating Curse, Mercurial Movement, Vanish in the Blink of an Eye

Move: 6

Saving Throw: 12

Despair Rating: 3

Boggarts are malicious little fey beasties that sow trouble, discord, and pain wherever they go. They appear as spindle limbed humanoids with sallow yellow eyes, wicked grins, and sharp features. They almost always wear tattered cloaks to hide their appearance and typically stand no taller than two feet. Boggarts revel in infuriating mortal households and communities. They sneak into villages and homesteads to cause endless problems and enact dangerous pranks.

Boggarts make their home in wild places within a day's walk of rural communities. In the heart of this wilderness, they find some canny hiding spot where they lair. Boggarts are extraordinarily stealthy and can turn invisible whenever they wish as long as they are not being gazed upon by mortal eyes, however other fey can still see them. In addition, Boggarts are able to move with amazing alacrity and swiftness. They are never hindered by difficult terrain, obstacles, or obstructions and as long as they have moved a distance equal to their base movement, they receive a +4 bonus to their Defense against all attacks. Finally, a Boggart can lay a minor curse on any being dwelling in a home or community - including their own home. This curse is always minor and temporary, such as causing a horse to suddenly rear up and toss the rider, breaking a wagon axle with a wave of their hand, or souring a cask of wine. However, Boggarts are clever in their application of this curse and often use its minor effects to cause greater consequences. They can lay one curse per hour, though no person can be under the effect of more than a single curse at any given time. The

target is unaware that they are cursed, though they do receive a Saving Throw to if the curse is directly applied to them or any object on their person.

If forced into combat, Boggarts attack with a surprisingly wicked bite from their broad mouth full of razor-sharp teeth. These nasty creatures are not without their weaknesses, though. If a mortal somehow learns a Boggart's true name (as determined by the Narrator to suit their individual legendarium) and calls the Boggart by that name, then the Boggart cannot make use of any of their special abilities while within sight of the mortal. Boggarts also have the traditional fey immunity to any weapons without the Blessed or Cold Iron Aspects, though if an individual has called the Boggart by their True Name then the creature can be injured by any weapon wielded by the namer.

Boggarts are always solitary, though legend says that they sometimes convince children to secretly join them in their pranks and any child who does so for too long will eventually turn into a Boggart themselves.

✠ CAT (SMALL) (WILD BEAST)

Defense: 16

Endurance: 3

Reduction Value: 0

Attack Modifier: +1

Attacks: Bite and Claws (1d4)

Special: Keen Senses, Peer through the Veil

Move: 4

Saving Throw: 14

Despair Rating: 0

House cats (and their feral cousins) are a common sight all across the land. Kept as a pet, or used as a mouser, cats can be found in the houses of lords and peasants alike. A cat's keen senses grant them Advantage on Initiative rolls and on any roll that tests their senses of sight and hearing. It also allows them to target vulnerable areas such as the face and hands, and thus ignore up to 1 point worth of Reduction provided to the defender by their armor.

Cats are innately magical creatures that live simultaneously in both the Mortal Realm and the supernatural world of spirits and monsters. As a result, they can sense and see those creatures as clearly as if such a creature were an ordinary person or animal, even when they are invisible to others.

❖ DOG (WILD BEAST)

Defense: 14

Endurance: 5

Reduction Value: 1

Attack Modifier: +1

Attacks: Bite (1d6)

Special: Keen Senses, Pack Tactics (Hunting dogs only), Steadfast and Loyal

Move: 4

Saving Throw: 17

Despair Rating: 0

Man's best friend can be found wherever their masters are settled. Sitting beside kings in their courts, hunting with the nobles, or shepherding in the pastures, dogs are everywhere, performing their duties loyally and tirelessly. When encountered, the number of dogs varies greatly depending on their function: shepherd dogs are usually solitary, while most households keep 1 to 4 dogs (1d4), and hunting packs can be as small as 4 and as large as 10 (2d4+2).

The dogs' keen senses grant them Advantage on Initiative rolls and on any roll that tests their senses of smell and hearing. Trained attack dogs are taught to target vulnerable areas such as the face, throat, and hands, and thus ignore up to 1 point worth of Reduction provided to the defender by their armor. Hunting dogs are trained to attack their prey from all angles, as a pack, and as a result, when 2 or more hunting dogs attack the same target in the same combat round, all these attackers receive a +1 bonus on both their attack and damage rolls. When defending their homes or masters against aggressors, steadfast and loyal dogs receive a +2 bonus to their Defense, and +2 on all attack rolls, damage rolls, and Despair Saving Throws.

❖ FOWL (AVIAN)

Defense: 17

Endurance: 2 to 4 (see below)

Reduction Value: 0

Attack Modifier: +0

Attacks: Peck (1 point)

Special: Cowardly (except geese, turkeys, and swans)

Move: 1 (fly 4)

Saving Throw: 18

Despair Rating: 0

The statistics presented here for the fowl can be used for all small and medium-sized game birds and domesticated poultry, such as chicken, ducks, geese, turkeys, pheasants, partridges, grouses, swans, and peacocks. These birds are often omnivores, feeding off whatever they can find by scratching the soil or digging in the silt of ponds and rivers. They are gregarious, and often found in large flocks of 6 to 36 individuals (6d6). All fowl have 2 points of Endurance, except the turkeys and peacocks which have 3, and the geese and swans which have 4.

Easily startled, fowl have Advantage on all initiative rolls. Their cowardly nature serves them well in protecting them from predators, but it makes them very reluctant to fight. If they are cornered, fowl will defend themselves, but will suffer Disadvantage on all their attack rolls (except the notoriously aggressive geese, turkeys, and swans which suffer no such penalty).

✠ GOBLIN BRUTE (GOBLIN)

Defense: 10

Endurance: 25

Reduction Value: 3

Attack Modifier: +5

Attacks: By Weapon

Special: Blood Lust, Brutal Strike

Move: 4

Saving Throw: 15

Despair Rating: 6

A rare few goblins grow stronger and more bloodthirsty than their smaller kin. Standing upwards of seven feet tall with leanly muscled bodies and eyes that reflect a low cunning, Goblin Brutes have no desire to become Kings or Merchants. They want only to fight in the vanguard of war and any war will suffice.

Goblin Brutes favor large two-handed weapons in combat, like battle axes and flails. Due to their lust for carnage, after a Goblin Brute has inflicted damage on a target, they receive a +2 bonus on all further damage rolls against that target. If a Goblin Brute inflicts five or more points of damage in a single attack, that attack is considered to be a Brutal Strike and the victim of the attack must make a successful Saving Throw or suffer Disadvantage on both their next Initiative check and attack roll.

Fortunately, Goblin Brutes are extraordinarily rare and almost always solitary. They are most often found serving as enforcers and bodyguards to a Goblin King or, in rare cases, anywhere from two to eight (2d4) can be found as part of a large goblin horde of one hundred or more.

✧ GOLDEN GOOSE (AVIAN)

Defense: -16

Endurance: 12

Reduction Value: 1

Attack Modifier: +2

Attacks: Bite (1 point)

Special: Imprinted, Laid the Golden Egg

Move: 3 (Fly 4)

Saving Throw: 12

Despair Rating: 1

Golden Geese appear, in spite of the name, as beautiful swans with gold feathers that shimmer and sparkle. In spite of their apparent majesty, they are fickle, fearful creatures and avoid most civilized beings. In almost all cases they are found in the castle lairs of Sky Giants, though in rare instances they can be kept by Fey Queens and other powerful creatures of Fairie to serve as displays of power. They do not fight unless cornered and provoked, instead using whatever means necessary to flee danger.

When a Golden Goose is born, it hatches from a Golden Egg already in full adulthood and imprints on the first creature of its own size or larger whom it regards as its parent. As long as it is within sight of its parent, it receives a +2 bonus to all Saving Throws. Golden Geese can lay Golden Eggs, though this is a rare occurrence. Only when a Golden Goose is perfectly happy and feels completely safe will it lay a Golden Egg - even then, it will never lay more than one Golden Egg each year. Unlike most creatures, a Golden Goose has no instinct to protect the Egg and will usually amble away after laying the thing to go on about its business.

Golden Geese are no smarter than their mundane counterparts and are always solitary.

✧ MIDNIGHT RIDER (DEMON)

Defense: -14/16/18 **Endurance:** 35/45/55 **Reduction Value:** 4/4/4

Attack Modifier: +4/+6/+8

Attacks: *Balanced Mace* (1d6+2/1d6+4) or
Midnight Blade (1d8+2)

Special: Dream-Rider, Mounted Warrior

Move: 4/5/6 (Mounted: 6/10/12) **Saving Throw:** 12/11/10 **Despair Rating:** 5/6/7

The Midnight Rider was once a fearsome warrior in the service of an evil nobleman. His name was lost to the ages and has been buried so deep in the sands of time that not even he remembers it. Ripped from him from his steed and decapitated by his own blade, so deep was

his hate that he could not remain dead. The sword he used to slay a thousand innocent people was raised against him and used to sever his head from his shoulders. But his own blood mingled with the innocent blood upon that sword and he lived on in the world between worlds.

Now he can only manifest in the realm of dreams, and even then only in the dreams of the one who carries his sword. Until his sword is cast into the waters of Loch Dearmad to rest in the same watery grave as his decapitated corpse, then the Midnight Rider will plague the dreams of the one who carries this sword. One that sword has been set beneath the waters of Loch Dearmad, it will awaken the Rider and he will rise to his full strength. When the Rider first appears a sword bearer's dreams, Narrators should use the first set of statistics detailed above. As he appears more and more, his presence becomes stronger and the Narrator should use the second set of statistics. It is only when he is fully physically manifested that he loses his Dream-Rider ability, but uses the third and most powerful set of statistics.

Because he is a mounted warrior, the Midnight Rider receives a +2 bonus on all attack rolls and damage rolls when fighting from horseback. In addition, if he is wielding the Rider's Blade he can use the weapon and all its abilities without suffering any of the weapon's drawbacks and he is unaffected by its Accursed Aspect.

The Midnight Rider, regardless of whether he appears in the dream realm or the land of the living is always astride his black steed Malice. Due to their unholy body, Malice has all the statistics of a normal horse, but never takes any damage in combat. However, if the Midnight Rider is permanently slain in the physical world, Malice immediately drops dead.

chapter Eleven

HEIRLOOMS

Heirlooms

Dunvegan Blade: This beautifully crafted long blade has a hilt of silver forged to appear as bands of twisted ivy and a handle that is shaped to appear as mercurial wood. It is a *Feycraft*, *Renowned*, and *Valiant* weapon. However these magical properties only manifest when in the hands of one who is of the bloodline of the King of Dunvegan. In addition, it can be placed in the enchanted stump in the center of Drumchapel Woods and while resting there it is indestructible for as long as the Fey Queen Tatiana who guards the forest holds to her oath. *Cost:* 9 Myth Points.

Golden Egg: Laid only when a golden goose experiences a moment of pure joy, these eggs are made of enchanted gold. Rare and extremely valuable, they can be sold for several hundred gold pieces to any merchant rich enough to purchase them, and are highly prized by wizards for their strange nature. They typically fetch between 200 and 800 gold pieces (2d4 x 100) when sold. However, while a character carries a Golden Egg, they are blessed with an uncanny luck and receive a +2 bonus to all Weal-based Attribute Saving Throws and Grievous Wound Saving Throws. Once the Egg hatches, this bonus ends. Each day that a character owns a Golden Egg there is a cumulative 1% chance that the Egg will hatch into a fully adult Golden Goose. This means that after one hundred days the Egg will always hatch. The Golden Goose is born fully adult, though it imprints on the first person it sees as its “mother” and will follow that character around, expecting food and care from them. In return, it will act as a friend and companion, though it is not magically bound to its surrogate parent. *Cost:* 5 Myth Points.

Hoary Chestnut: This large white horse chestnut is prized by halfling children who play a strange game known as conkers. Legend holds that horse chestnuts can drive back spiders and it is said that once per year a single large white chestnut falls from a single tree in the Thicketwood which has a powerful protection set upon it. Anyone who carries the Hoary Chestnut in their pocket receives Advantage on all Saving Throws made to resist the effects of any spider's poison and that any spider attacking this character has Disadvantage on their attack roll. *Cost:* 1 Myth Point.

Magic Beans: The secret to creating Magic Beans is known only to Sky Giants, and they do not reveal the process to any outsiders. When a Magic Bean is planted in the soil overnight, at the stroke of midnight, a great stalk shoots into the air. It is several hundred feet in the air and the vines that wrap around it are large enough to serve as narrow walkways for human-sized characters. If planted beneath any obstruction, the Magic Bean loses its power and does not grow. Magic Beans can also be used in soups. If a single Magic Bean is used in a container of soup then that container, whether it be a simple cup or a massive cauldron, will not become empty until enough soup has been taken from it to feed three hundred people. However, if the container is spilled then only an appropriate amount spills out and the enchantment upon the bean is lost. *Cost:* 2 Myth Points.

Rider's Blade: This cavalry saber was once wielded by the nameless horseman simply known as the Midnight Rider. In service to his dark master, he patrolled the village of Loch Dearmad astride his black war steed Malice and took heads with a single swing of his terrible blade. Powerful and terrible, as the Black Rider's reputation grew so too did the blade grow in power. The Black Rider infused his very essence into the sword and with each kill, its power grew. When the Black Rider was finally decapitated with the very sword he carried during an uprising of the villagers of Loch Dearmad. His head was cast into the lake and the Rider's Blade was lost to time.

The Rider's Blade is a long blade with the *Accursed*, *Bane*, and *Grievous* Aspects. Its Bane is against humans and in addition to this horrible enchantment if the wielder Rider's Blade is attacking from horseback and inflicts 8 or more points of damage in a single attack against any humanoid creature no larger than a troll or ogre, the

victim of the attack must make a Resolve-based Attribute Saving Throw or be decapitated and die instantly.

It has many other unique traits. It is always found with a scabbard and a baldric. Once the blade has been taken up by a new owner, if it is lost, it returns to the scabbard at sundown each day and the owner finds themselves wearing the baldric and scabbard if they are not already doing so.

Because of its Accursed Aspect, the owner of the Rider's Blade will become plagued by terrible dreams of a brutal horseman hunting them on an endless, fog enshrouded road. The dream always ends with this horseman running them down and decapitating them. At the Narrator's discretion, this may be a collective dream and a player character who bears the Rider's Blade may find their companions appearing in the dream as well. The day after having these dreams, the wielder and anyone slain in the dream will suffer Disadvantage on all Saving Throws until they have defeated a single foe in combat.

After a no more than a month of these horrid dreams, the bearer of the Rider's Blade will find the dream altered. They will see themselves as the horrible, headless rider and witness their own decapitation (and possibly that of their companions!) from his point of view. The character will feel the overwhelming desire to do battle using the Rider's Blade and must now commit an act of murder against an innocent person or easily defeated foe to avoid suffering Disadvantage on all Saving Throws each day. Worse, the wielder will find themselves *wanting* to commit such horrible acts. They will feel an inescapable draw to act as the Midnight Rider did when he bore the blade.

To break the curse, the Rider's Blade must be taken back to Loch Dearmad where the Midnight Rider's corpse rots in a watery grave and cast into it to the lake. The Midnight Rider will then rise from the water, his blade in hand. If he is defeated in combat after having his sword returned to him, then the Rider's Blade and the Midnight Rider are both permanently destroyed, and the curse is broken. *Cost: 6 Myth Points.*

Skull Chalice of the First Goblin King: This goblin heirloom is said to be made from the skull of the first goblin to declare himself to be a king. He enforced his will by a previously unfathomable level of violence and brutality, previously unseen by any goblin. For his mercilessness, he was promptly murdered in his sleep by a horde

of his own followers. To celebrate their victory, the goblins roasted the bones of their first king and crafted them into a chalice. Goblins and Goblin Kings still seek the Skull Chalice because it is said that goblins that fill the Chalice with the blood of one of their kings can be empowered with an unnatural fury, though this empowerment comes through at a terrible cost.

Any goblin who fills the chalice with a scant few drops of blood from a Goblin King becomes an unimaginably powerful warrior. They gain Advantage on all initiative rolls, attack rolls and damage rolls in combat for the next ten combat rounds. Unfortunately, after these effects wear off the goblin who drank from the Chalice permanently loses 1d4 Endurance. If this causes a goblin's Endurance to be reduced to zero, they are instantly slain when the effects of the Chalice wears off.

Non-goblins who drink from the Skull Chalice are able to speak, read, and write the language of goblins for the next 24 hours and can benefit from a Goblin King's Goblin Song ability as if they themselves were a goblin. *Cost:* 3 Myth Points.

Tailfeather of the High Hawk: Though not truly a tailfeather, these Feathers are gifts given by High Hawks to those who have shown themselves to be respectful to that noble avian heritage. Appearing as a great white feather akin to that of an eagle, if they are presented to a High Hawk in a respectful manner then that creature will treat the presenter as a friend. The presenter is entitled to ask the High Hawk who received the Tailfeather for one favor so long as it does not endanger the High Hawk's life and takes no more than one season to accomplish. Once this favor is granted, the High Hawk tasks possession of the Tailfeather so that it may be given to another at a later time. In addition, the High Hawk will provide news and rumors it has heard that may be of interest to lesser, landlocked creatures to anyone bearing a Tailfeather, even if they do not ask a favor. *Cost:* 1 Myth Point.

Thicketwood Slingshot: Each year Siltho of Westwick crafts one perfect slingshot from the branches of a great oak in the Thicketwood. He has claimed for as long as anyone can remember that it's so simple any idiot could use it - and he's right. Any character can use this weapon without penalty, even if they are not otherwise proficient with the slingshot. Any characters that are proficient with the

slingshot find the weapon light and easy to use and it functions as though it had the Balanced Aspect for such a wielder. When carried by a halfling, that halfling somehow always stumbles on 1d4 stones each day that are perfectly suited for use with the weapon and thus they are almost never without some ammunition for this simple, but trusty weapon. Cost: 2 Myth Points.

New Aspect

Accursed: Weapons, armor, and shields with this aspect have had a terrible curse set upon them and any who dares to carry an item with the Accursed Aspect suffers any one of the following effects. While it is unlikely that a player would actually *choose* to apply the Accursed Aspect to an item, this is an option with Narrator permission. Any item created when a player character spends their Myth Points to imbue an item with an Aspect, they may choose to add the Accursed Aspect. Doing so grants that player 1d4 additional Myth Points to invest in creating that item. However, the player character must declare that they are adding the Accursed Aspect to a weapon *before* rolling. All the Myth Points earned from the applying the Accursed Aspect must be spent.

For example, a player character wants to imbue their sword with the Bane Aspect, which normally costs 4 Myth Points. The player character only has 2 Myth Points available, so they choose to also add the Accursed Aspect to the weapon in return for receiving an additional 1d4 Myth Points. If the player character only rolls a 1, then that Myth Points *must* be spent empowering the item with an Aspect, even though the character does not still have enough to purchase the desired Bane Aspect. If, on the other hand, the player character rolled a 3 or 4, then they'd have one or two excess Myth Points that must be spent. This may seem like a terrible risk, and it is, but impatience and lust for power have terrible consequences for heroes willing to give in to such temptation.

Some effects can only be applied to a specific type of item, as detailed in each curse's description. The Narrator should design a specific curse associated with the Accursed heirloom's background and creation. Listed below are six examples.

- ♦ *Blood Lust:* This Accursed Aspect causes the wielder to long to spill the blood of their enemies to the point of obsession. Once the wielder inflicts damage using a weapon with the Blood Lust curse

they will refuse to leave combat until they have slain a number of foes equal to twice their level. If there are not enough enemies to slake their thirst, they will turn the blade upon their allies until satisfaction has been found. Each time this curse is about to take effect the wielder may make a Resolve-based Attribute Saving Throw at Disadvantage to avoid its effects. This curse may only be applied to weapons.

- ♦ *First Foe*: This Accursed Aspect causes the wielder or wearer of an item to be the first target selected in combat by the most fearsome foe on the battlefield. The wielder or wearer is singled out and targeted above all others by the deadliest enemy engaged in combat.
- ♦ *See Only Sin*: This Accursed Aspect invades the victim's mind. Whenever the victim gazes upon another sentient being, they are instantly consumed with a full sensory vision of the most deplorable act or darkest desire that person has ever committed or considered. They cannot help but see the worst in everyone they meet. No one can be trusted and the myth of the "Goodly Folk" is a lie that people tell themselves to sleep at night.
- ♦ *Plague Bearer*: The bearer of an item with this Accursed Aspect is immediately afflicted with a highly contagious plague. They carry the disease, show all visible symptoms of it, yet suffer no actual affliction. Instead, any who come into close contact with them must make a Resolve-based Attribute Saving Throw or contract this disease. Moreover, whenever the bearer of this item comes in contact with a new disease, they *automatically* contract it. Before long, they become a walking nexus of infestation that spreads plague and disease wherever they go.
- ♦ *Shameless Coward*: This Accursed Aspect causes the bearer of the item to become overwhelmed by fear. The bearer makes all Despair Saving Throws at Disadvantage and can never benefit from any bonuses or magical benefits that would empower them to resist fear and Despair. This includes magical spells, heirlooms, and Lineage and Archetype abilities.
- ♦ *Visage of Villainy*: This Accursed Aspect causes any character carrying the item to always seem unnatural and untrustworthy to all they encounter. Natural animals hiss, bray, and bark when within thirty feet of the character, fleeing whenever possible. Any time the character must roll dice in an attempt to convince sentient beings to trust them or regard them in a positive light, they must

make a Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw at Disadvantage before even attempting to do so.. However, the bearer of such an Accursed item receives Advantage whenever they are attempting to intimidate or scare any natural beast or sentient being.

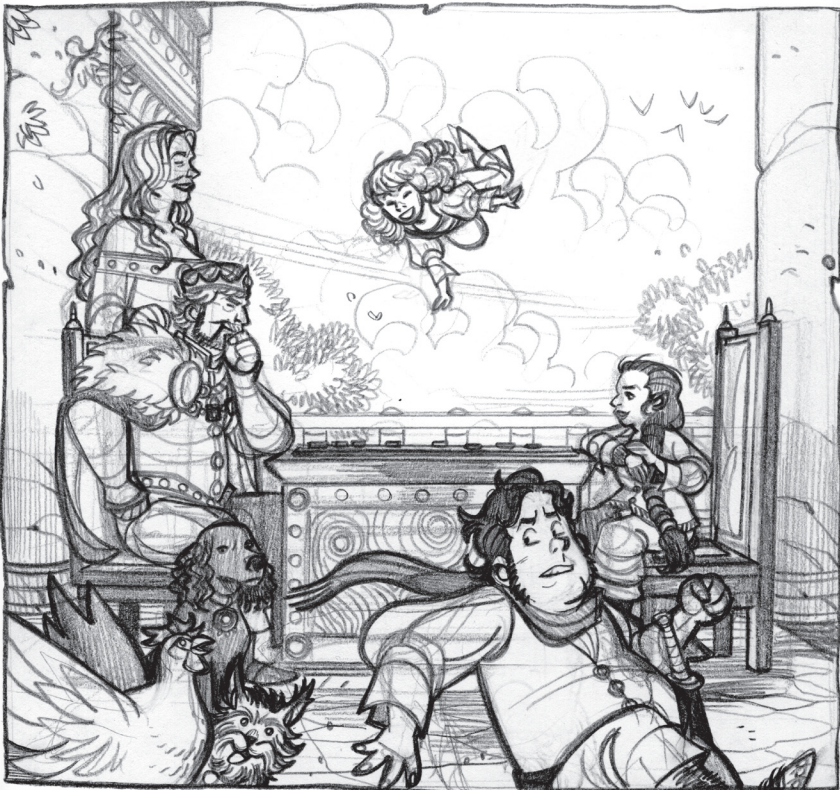
- ♦ *Withering Form*: This Accursed Aspect slowly consumes the bearer's arms until they become a blackened and withered husks. It begins with the right arm, then the left. Each week that the character carries an item with this curse they lose a single point of Might. Once their Might has been reduced to one-half its original value the right arm is completely withered and all but useless. The left arm then begins to wither and when the character's Might reaches 1, the left arm is also a twisted husk. Each withered arm is capable of only lifting no more than three pounds of weight and does so haltingly and with great difficulty. Melee attacks can only be done with small weapons, such as daggers and are made with Disadvantage. Ranged attacks are all but impossible, as the character no longer has the strength to draw a bow, whirl a sling, or even hurl a stone.

Finally, all items with the Accursed Aspect cannot be willingly abandoned by their owner. The owner feels a covetous obsession for the item and will not willingly surrender it even if under an enchantment. Items with the Accursed Aspect can, however, be destroyed - though doing so requires a specific quest be undertaken to do so. This quest will take an exceedingly long time and always extraordinarily dangerous. The specifics of this quest is determined by the Narrator and customized to their legendarium.

Appendix

TENSTONE

No one knows the origins of the game now called Ten Stone. Aptly named, it is easily learned and difficult to master. It is found across the Mortal Realm, as it requires only a pair of dice and twenty stones to play. A board can be drawn in the dirt with a stick by travelers and peasants, while nobles are known to commission lavish Ten Stone sets with carved hardwood boards and stones set with priceless gems.



Using the rules below, Narrators can introduce Ten Stone to their *The Hero's Journey, Second Edition* legendariums as a complete game until itself to further roleplaying or to simply pass the time while waiting for friends to arrive before the adventure starts!

Components: Two groups of ten stones, each group of differing color. Two six-sided dice.

Goal: Complete an unbroken vertical, horizontal, or diagonal line across the length of the board.

Play Area: The game is played on a 6x6 grid of squares.

To Begin Play: Each player rolls one die, with the highest roller going first. Ties are re-rolled.

Example Ten Stone Board

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						

Rules of Play

On their turn, each player must place two stones on the board unless otherwise stated below. Before placing stones, the player rolls two dice. The number on each die determines where the player may place one of their stones on the vertical and horizontal access. Which number applies to each axis is determined by the player making the roll. This means that if two different numbers are rolled the player has two possible locations to choose from, but if both numbers on the dice match then only one location is possible.

If this roll provides the option for or obligates the player to place their stone on a square already occupied by an opponent's stone, they may replace their opponent's stone with their own. The opponent's stone returns to the opponent's pool of unplayed stones. If the roll would cause the player to place their stone in a space already occupied by one of their own stones, they may instead place it on any empty space (having being occupied by neither one of their own pieces, nor one of their opponent's pieces) that is adjacent to the selected location determined by the roll. If not adjacent space is available, a new roll is made.

The other stone to be placed during a player's turn may be placed on any unoccupied space on the board.

A player can place either of their stones in any order, but must roll before any stone is placed.

If a player is reduced to a single stone, they may roll the dice and choose to either place it based on the roll or place it on any unoccupied space on the board.

If a player is out of stones they roll two dice. If the total of the two dice is seven, or if the numbers on both dice match then the player may reclaim one of their stones from the board, but must then immediately place it on a new location. If they do not roll a seven or if the numbers on both dice do not match, they forfeit their turn.

Victory: The first player to achieve an unbroken horizontal, vertical, or diagonal line of six stones across the board is the winner.

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Adventures and Interludes is a compilation of eight adventures for use with *The Hero's Journey, Second Edition*. Whether you're trying to break *The Curse of Cormac's Hollow*, save a clan of stalwart dwarves from strange *Goblin Promises*, or facing the dreaded *Midnight Rider of Loch Dearmad*, this supplement provides endless hours of play, as well as new creatures, heirlooms, and aspects for use in any legendarium!

This product requires *The Hero's Journey, Second Edition* core rulebook, but can be easily adapted to other traditional fantasy adventure games.

