



Sold

Harper's Tale is a forest-based adventure path of ten connected adventures, taking the party from 1st to 10th level and culminating in a confrontation with the source of the plague within their homeland. The adventure is written with younger players in mind, but I promise players of all ages will find plenty to keep them engaged with the story.

The adventure path starts as the heroes arrive at the seemingly deserted village of Grove. Through exploration and investigation, they learn that a mysterious illness has taken over the town, leaving only two young women, Rose and Grace, to care for the populace.

Harper's Tale:

A Forest Adventure of Hope and Redemption



Saturday Morning Scenarios

file

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Harper's (e)Friend

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Online Game with a Designer

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Version 1.0a

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Thank You

From Friends of Kids

On behalf of everyone at Friends of Kids with Cancer, especially the families we serve, thank you to everyone who helped bring this remarkable project come to life. Harper and Matt have given Friends this ultimate gift by pouring their love and talent into this story to benefit the kids and families we serve for years to come. There is no greater complement to our organization than when a family gives back, especially in such a special way. Friends is a local organization providing Educational, Emotional and Recreational support to children with cancer and their families. *Harper's Tale* will create countless memories and smiles for these amazing kids and families. Thank you for this truly meaningful gift to help kids with cancer... be kids!

—Brandy Bimslager

Executive Director, Friends of Kids with Cancer

From Harper

Thank you for buying *Harper's Tale*! It was a lot of fun to make. My top three favorite things were the art, writing, and finally talking to all different types of writers and artist! My absolute favorite piece of art work is Sir Cheddar drawn by Kayla Cline. I loved writing the story of Rose and when she was a kid. The inspiration for Denton the bad tree guy in my part of the story was from me getting mad at my dad and drawing an evil looking tree. I named it Denton after my dad. Last but not least talking to Kienna during the live stream especially when we funded was super fun!

—Harper Corley, 2020

Matt's Note. Thank you so much to Joshua, the backer who commissioned Sir Cheddar. He was a hit not only with Harper, but with our writers and artists too!

From Matt

On February 2nd, 2019, my youngest daughter, Harper, was diagnosed with leukemia. The next few days were the hardest days of my life, and then we had a visitor. The diagnosis had sunk in, treatments started, and Kelly from Child Services came in to visit us. Friends of Kids with Cancer gave Harp a gift card to use however she wanted (Friends of Kids does this for every newly diagnosed child). Harp immediately perked up, and within 15 minutes she'd sent me out of the hospital to spend that money! Friends of Kids with Cancer gave us our First Good Day. Harp is in remission, doing great, and we wanted to give back some of what they gave us.

Enter *Harper's Tale* (named after its author not the faction by the way) is based on an outline she and I came up with while in the hospital. I'd seen videos of celebrities playing the game for kids in hospitals, thought it would be a great project for us to keep our minds busy, and that we could do the crowdfunding as a donation to Friends of Kids.

Fast forward over a year and here we are. The book is done and there aren't enough pages to thank everyone who helped us. If you pledged, commented, shared, liked, or spread the word you were part of our success, and we couldn't have done it without you. The TTRPG community came together to support *Harper's Tale*, and it was inspiring.

I can't articulate how grateful I am to everyone that shared their stories with me. I vividly remember reading through my emails, DMs, and messages every night and being brought to tears by someone else affected by cancer. I wasn't alone. Harp wasn't alone. They weren't alone. In sharing their stories with me, and sharing our story with others, we gain strength, we heal, and we grow.

Thank you again. We will remember this experience forever, and are better people for it.

—Matt Corley, 2020



Safe file

Rose's Tale

By Harper Corley

Once upon a time there was a little girl named Rose. Rose loved the woods, wandering through the forest, looking for bugs, and just being outdoors. When Rose went to her grandma's house her grandma would let her wander the woods, play in the dirt, and do all the things that little kids do. Every time her grandma would call her inside for something Rose would tell Grandma all kinds of stories about all the magical, whimsical creatures that were her friends.

Rose played with Daisy, Tiger Lily, Bluebell, and Tulip almost every day, they were her best friends. They called themselves the Lilacs and they had purple mermaid hair! The Lilacs always hung out by the pond. They loved to splash around and play with the frogs. They were very adventurous and Rose's best friends. Rose and the Lilacs played with anyone else that came to the pond. They were all great friends.

One day Grandma called Rose into the house for dinner. Rose ran inside quickly. She sat down and started with her stories between bites of food. She wasn't sure what she liked more: her dinner of chicken pot pie, or sharing her adventures? She decided that doing both at the same time would be best. The story today was of saving the fairy's village from Denton the mean dryad.

There was one creature she talked about more than any other — Denton. He was a tree fairy, a dryad. At least half of Rose's stories included Denton. They were mean stories because he was a bad guy. Rose also liked talking about a group of fairies most of all.

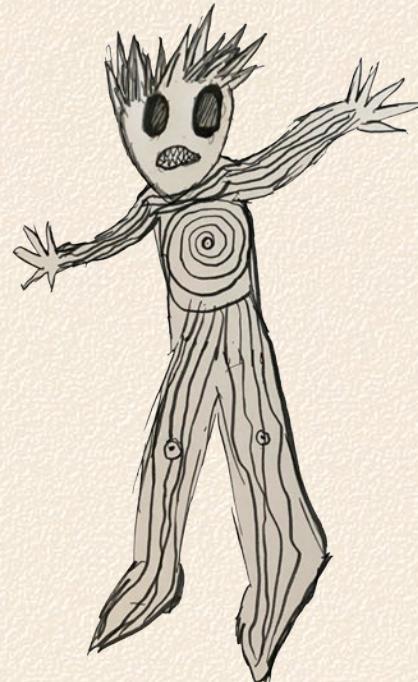
Denton was trying to steal all the gold from the village, and the tiny fairies weren't strong enough to stop him. They were so very small. Even working together, they couldn't slow him down. They tied him up with their ropes, but they were too weak and he broke free! They tried everything, and nothing could stop him.

He walked through the village yelling, "Where is your gold! Tell me or I'll step on you!", but they refused to answer.

When they ran out of ideas, they had a fairy huddle to come up with something new.

"What if we yell and scream really loud? Then someone will come to help."

Their yelling was heard by a friendly troll, who rushed to find Rose. When Rose found out she spirited into action! Rose ran right up to Denton, looked up into his eyes, and said, "STOP!"



Rose's Tale

Denton didn't stop, and Rose got so mad she yelled even louder. And still, Denton carried on. Rose had never been so upset in her life. She went right up to him, kicked him behind the knees, and watched him crash down to the ground. He stood back up so fast he barely touched the ground, and then ran away.

"Hooray! Thank you, thank you, thank you!"

"No problem! It's my job to protect the forest," Rose said with a smile.

"Hooray! Rose, Knight of the Forest, Protector of the Small (and the Big when they really need it)."

and desserts and had Black Forest cake. For Rose's present the fairies gave Rose pixie dust and when she had enough she could take it to the wishing well.

Rose waited and every year they gave her a little more pixie dust. Finally, when she was 13 she had enough to grant her wish. Rose closed her eyes and threw the pixie dust into the well. Suddenly magic was swirling around her like a mini tornado. When it stopped Rose looked AMAZING! The fairies had given Rose the most beautiful fairy hair ever, her hair matched theirs, and it looked STUNNING!

Between bites of food Rose asked Grandma if she wanted to hear another story. This would be a nice one, she promised. "Of course sweetie," Grandma said.

On the day before Rose's 8th birthday the Lilacs and their friends were in a panic because they didn't know what to get Rose. She was their best friend and Knight of the Forest, Protector of the Small (and the Big when they really needed it). After another fairy huddle they decided, and couldn't wait to see Rose tomorrow.

On the morning of her birthday Rose entered the forest skipping, giggling, and singing to herself. When she entered the fairy village everyone shouted, "Happy Birthday!" Rose sat down and everyone rushed towards her to wish happy birthday and to have her best day ever.

They played lots of fun games like Mancala with pebbles. After the games they ate delicious forest berries



Welcome to Grove

An investigative adventure for 4 to 5 characters of 1st level
By Matt and Harper Corley



Adventure Synopsis

The village of Grove has been targeted by a foul creature as the testing ground for experimentations. The heroes find themselves unknowingly drawn into its plot when they stumble across the unnaturally quiet village. Grove is a small settlement—just a handful of homes and shops, really. Even so, there should be some activity: children playing, adults shopping, farmers working in the fields. There is none.

Heroes can explore homes, shops, and buildings of Grove to satisfy their curiosity. Their explorations are interrupted by animals, domestic and wild, behaving peculiarly, but they soon get back on track and are able to fill in the pieces of the tragedy. The old and young were affected first, but all fell prey to the Sleeping Sickness. All save two young women: Rose and Grace.

The sisters have gathered their friends and neighbors in one place to care for them, but they need help. The keen eyes and intellect of the heroes

soon unravel what it is that makes the sisters so special, and the origin of the Sleeping Sickness, too. To make a bad situation worse, a quartet of good-for-nothings have been looting the abandoned town, stalking the women, and when they heroes start poking around, these ne'er-do-wells attack them! The brave adventurers fend off the villains and follow their trail to the town well, further confirming earlier suspicions.

Adventure Hooks

COMING HOME. The heroes are the sons and daughters of Grove. They have been away and come home to find their beloved town in shambles and their friends in dire straits.

A STOP ON THE WAY. The heroes are traveling to their destination and must go through an enormous primeval forest. They come across the town of Grove and are drawn into E'thor's plot.

ANSWERING A CALL. Rose and Grace get word out to a nearby city, asking for help. The heroes answer the call and are shocked by what they find.

Essence of Periwinkle

The gentlefolk of Grove are the subjects of a vile experiment. Their water supply is polluted with a compound that E'thor hopes will cure a magical disease affecting his loved ones. Any humanoid drinking from the polluted water supply must succeed a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or gain 2 levels of exhaustion and be poisoned. If the affected imbibes additional polluted water while poisoned, they automatically fail the save. When the target reaches 6 levels of exhaustion, they are in stasis with 1 hit point.

Grove

The town of Grove is small, apparently abandoned, and free for the characters to explore. The heroes' journey to Grove has been long but blessedly uneventful. Their backs and feet ache from the weeks of travel, and the signs of civilization are most welcome.

A. WELCOME TO GROVE

The forest opens up as the road continues westward. A smaller foot trail leads north. Following the smaller path leads to the river you've been hearing, and—through a break in the forest—a farm.

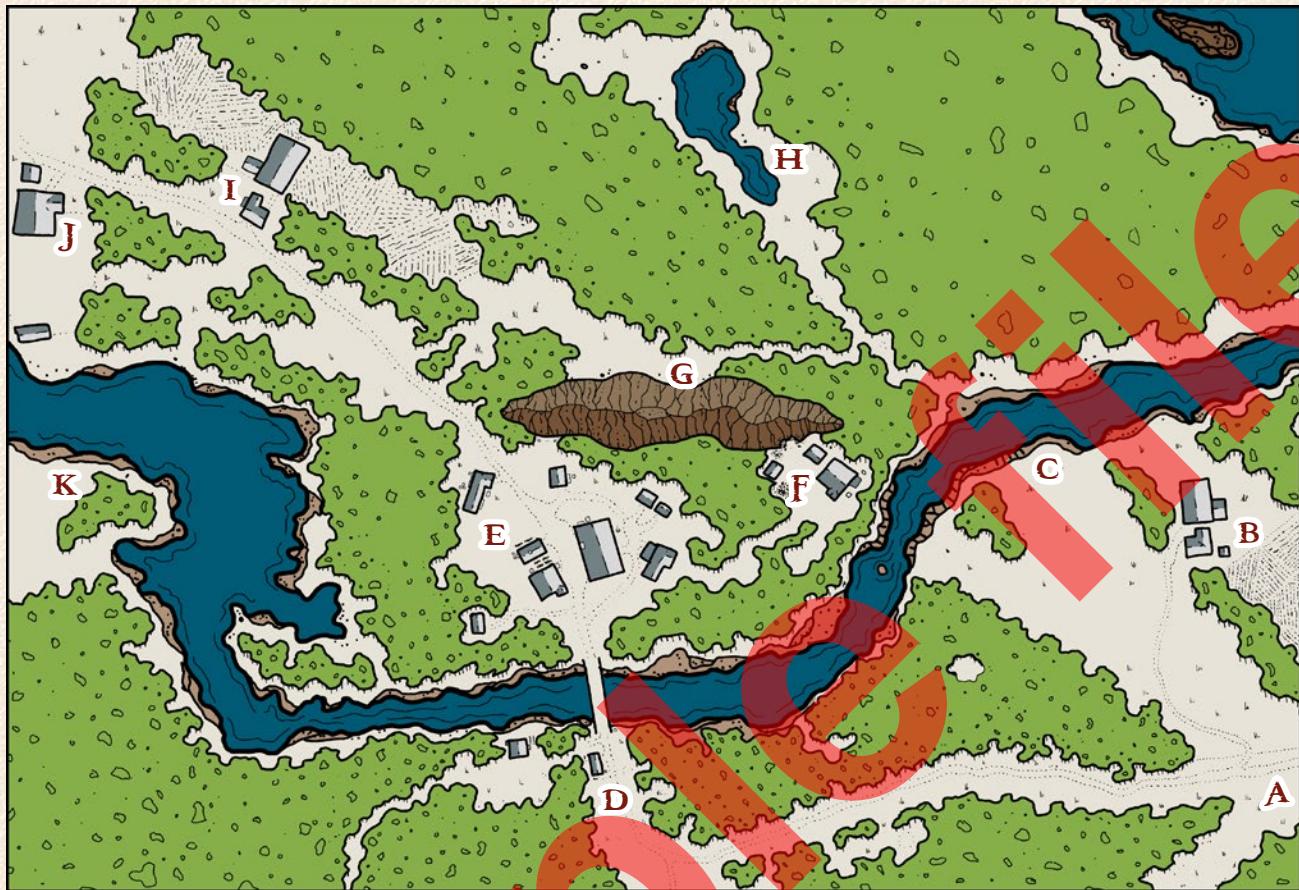
Heroes examining the trails notice the following on a successful Wisdom (Survival) check:

- **DC 12** – The trail leading north sees significantly less traffic than the road the characters traveled.
- **DC 15** – Weeds, grass, and other rapidly-growing plants have sprouted along the trail, showing that it's had little use in the previous two weeks.
- **DC 19** – With the exception of the northern trail, no travelers have used the paths for at least two weeks.

B. BOLKER FAMILY FARM

Nestled in a clearing between the forest and the river are a trio of buildings. A white-washed two-story home, the largest of the structures, is nearest to the river. A pair of swings hang lazily from a large oak in the front yard.

To the south is a stable, and behind it is a small, rickety building, likely an outhouse. There are several acres of tilled farmland beyond that.



THE HOUSE. The first floor is divided into a large parlor and eat-in kitchen. The second floor is taken up by four bedrooms: two of the bedrooms have a pair of straw pallets in them, one bedroom has arrangements for three to sleep on the floor, and the final room—the largest—has a single large bed. The smaller bedrooms housed the family's seven children: four boys and three girls, and the largest room is for Mama Linda and Papa Bob.

Handmade toys of wood and cloth are strewn about the house, and, even empty, a cheerfully chaotic energy suffuses the entire dwelling, making the current silence all the more unsettling.

TREASURE. Characters searching the home find enough food to feed five adults for three days and the **Bolker family journal**. The journal is Mama Linda's record of the family's lives in her small,

precise, pen. Heroes examining the journal learn the following with a successful Intelligence check:

- **DC 10** – The last entry in the journal is from one week ago.
- **DC 14** – The heroes learn that the children took ill over several days, starting almost two weeks ago, until they'd all fallen into a deep sleep from which their parents could not wake them.
- **DC 18** – The heroes learn the exact order in which the family became sick. The youngest and weakest first, later progressing to the parents. The first child affected was 12 days ago, and the final adult succumbed 5 days after that. Two days before the sleeping sickness (as it's called in the journal) manifested, the animals around the farm began acting oddly. The journal does not go into additional details aside from noting the strangeness.

GM's Note: Characters stating that they are looking for specific pieces of information, such as timelines of when the family fell ill, automatically succeed at finding that information.

THE STABLE. There are four empty stalls in need of mucking.

DEVELOPMENT. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check reveals the tracks of the family's ponies leading to the town.

TREASURE. Bit, bridle, reins, and saddles for four ponies sit neatly between the stalls.

THE OUTHOUSE. It stinks like nothing the heroes have ever smelled before. Any character who gets close experiences watering eyes, and their stomachs churn from the noxious fumes. Any character who gets within 5 feet of the outhouse must make a DC 8 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for one round as they retch from the stench.

TREASURE. Characters braving the effluvia find a waterskin filled with 28 cp within the structure with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

THE FIELDS. The fields hold bountiful crops ready for harvesting. A scarecrow in brightly-colored rags, hanging lazily from a pole, stands as the lone guardian of the fields.

C. SLUDGEWATER

Swiftly flowing, murky, and with muddy banks, the Sludgewater river snakes throughout the forest from the mountains far to the west to its inevitable assimilation with Crystal Lake in the east. The river is swift, deep, and cold enough that crossing it can be a challenge, hence the bridge into town.

D. LORELEI'S BRIDGE

Around the bend, a bridge comes into view, before it a small wooden outbuilding, and immediately after that a tributary of the trail veers west.

A dirt path leads to a bridge of rough, irregular stones. It is wide enough for three to walk abreast, with knee high walls on each side. It curves gently to span the river.

Lorelei's Bridge is so named after a legend of a girl who waited there for hours for her father to return from a journey. It became a local tradition: typically, someone sits there from dawn to dusk waiting for partners, friends, and family to return from trips abroad.

DEVELOPMENT. Local heroes know the tradition and the significance of there being no one at the bridge.

There are symbols on the underside of the bridge. They are not magical, but are thought to protect the town and ensure its prosperity. A DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals the superstition behind the symbols and their mundane nature.

THE BOOTH. A bench, writing desk, and a battered journal. The journal has daily entries of everyone that has come to Grove, with special notes for those coming home. There are no entries within the last week. If the heroes are local and they look far enough back, they find their own names in the journal.

FISHERMAN'S HUT. The remains of a fisherman's hidey hole, complete with fishing tackle and pungent smell.

E. TOWN SQUARE

The town square has several buildings in a central location, but it is defined by three buildings: the townhall, the Boot and Slippers, and a stable. All are deserted.

E1: MILO BELLBOTTOM'S STORE. The front is open and has everything you would expect in a village general store. There is no stock that costs more than 1gp. The majority of the building is one large showroom. Rows of shelving and tables display the goods and wares, and a counter for conducting business runs the length of the back wall. Behind the counter is a door leading to Milo's personal quarters. If the characters search the building they find:

- A sack of 37 copper pieces in the till.
- Produce that has turned and is rotting. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check shows the food has been sitting out for about a week.
- The receipt ledger next to the till. The last entry is from seven days ago.
- Heroes succeeding on a DC 14 Intelligence check note that the sales began to decline twelve days ago, until ceasing seven days ago. If the characters state they are searching for this information they have advantage on the check.

E2: BLACKSMITH. An anvil, bellows, and other tools of the trade are displayed prominently in the open-air workshop. Farming implements in various stages of completion line the walls. There are 1d4 kitchen knives (as daggers), and a pair of unfinished, matching (short) swords.

E3: ROOT CELLAR. Dark, cool, and slightly damp. The village's food supply is stored here.

E4: THE BOOT AND SLIPPER (TAVERN). The first floor is a large room with four scattered tables and a swinging door leading to the kitchen. A staircase

leads up to a hallway that overlooks the dinner room. Off the hallway are three rooms for boarders, and one room for the owners of the Boot and Slipper (a half-elf and half-orc couple). The rooms are unlocked.

- Characters entering the tavern find a ledger near the entryway. Within it are the names and check-in and check-out dates of the patrons of the Boot and Slipper. There have been no entries for a week. There is one name that has a check-in but not a check-out date: Chaz Grysby, who checked in seven days ago.

E5: THE WELL. The well is built of smooth river rock, waist high, and large enough for a full-grown humanoid to crawl into. Regardless of the placement of the sun overhead, the bottom cannot be seen from above. There is a bucket, attached to a winch by a coiled length of rope, on the ground nearby. The ground surrounding the well is well-used, with a clear trail to the town's center. Heroes succeeding on a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check while examining the trail notice that a fresher set of tracks leads from the well to town.

E6: THE O'CONNOR HOME. The home has two stories, a wraparound porch, and white trim around the doors and windows. A pair of rocking chairs and small table sit to the left of the entryway positioned to watch passersby. The first floor is filled with a large common room that opens to a kitchen and is framed by staircases to the upper floor. The second floor has the home's two bedrooms, a linen closet, and privy. A nice, clean, feather-filled bed, a writing table, and a shelf with books on it fills out the larger bedroom. The smaller bedroom has a bed with an empty, unlocked chest at its foot.

- The journal in the master bedroom belongs to Orrin, the sole occupant of the home. Orrin spent her days on the porch watching the goings on of the town and being harmlessly nosy.
- Orrin's diary can be found in her bedroom and is filled with daily entries. Heroes taking time

to read the journal learn the following on a successful Intelligence check.

- DC 10 – The last entry is seven days ago, and there is a clear pattern of fewer folks walking past her porch starting twelve days ago.
- DC 15 – Orrin notes that she's not seen any of the town elders, nor the small children. This entry is dated ten days ago.
- DC 18 – A pair of strangers were seen two days before the last entry. Despite being in town, they were loaded down with rations and provisions.

GM's Note: Characters stating that they are looking for specific pieces of information, such as timelines of when folks fell ill or strange occurrences automatically succeed at finding that information.

E7: STABLES. There are six, mostly clean, stalls. The stalls smell of stale horse droppings and are otherwise completely empty.

E8: TOWNHALL. The twin doors open to a large room, filled with two rows of chairs that all face a podium that rests on a stage raised a few feet from the scuffed, wooden floors. It is eerily silent; motes of dust catch the light from the high windows, and any footsteps echo loudly off the bare walls. An attendance log rests on a table near the door, in a corner. A character succeeding on a DC 12 Intelligence check while reviewing the log realizes that the meeting coincides with every new moon, and that there should have been a meeting last week but there wasn't one.

E9: THE SQUARE. The ground of the square is less traveled than expected, and calls to mind abandoned villages of the frontier. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check (or a passive Perception 14), notes the convergence of at least a dozen trails combining into a single path that leads to area **1F**. Heroes succeeding the check by at least 4 also note drag marks.

F. THE CRANE'S HOME

Three buildings—built of roughly hewn, unpainted wood from the nearby forest—occupy the opening in the forest. The smaller two are nestled close to a monolithic rock rising well above their rooflines. The natural lines of the edifice are marred by a collapsed cave. A pile of rubble, full of weeds and grass, are the remnants of a long-abandoned effort to clear the rubble.

The Crane family farm is nestled against the rock and surrounding forest. The largest structure, notable for a set of oversized double doors, is the barn. The women's home is a short distance from the farm, and the root cellar is near the barn.

THE HOUSE. There are four rooms in the home: the front room, which occupies the bulk of the house and includes a sitting area, the kitchen, an indoor privy, and a bedroom the women share.

ROOT CELLAR. A simple root cellar. It contains their father's breastplate and shield, wrapped in oilcloth for protection.

BARN. The barn is little more than four leaning walls, a roof in obvious need of repair, and a pair of double doors barely hanging by their hinges.

THE ROCK. A collapsed mine shaft mars the otherwise pristine surface of the rock.

DEVELOPMENT. Proceed to Scene 2, Meeting Rose and Grace (*page 18*).

G. MOUNT CANDALINO

A monolith of dun rock rises, stark and unblemished, from the center of the town. Seams line the face of the stone as it rises above the nearby trees.

Heroes getting close enough to examine the rock immediate notice two things: the stone is cool to the touch regardless of the temperature, and there is a pervasive smell of wet minerals despite the stone being dry.

DEVELOPMENT. "Mount" Candalino is 45 feet tall and can be climbed with a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check. A failure indicates no progress was made, and if failed by at least 5, they fall from the sheer surface.

H. WITCH'S WHIRL

Crystal clear, still waters fill the rocky depression, forming a sizeable, languidly swirling pool. The sides are sheer, save two spots on the north and east of the sinkhole. An offshoot of the pool lies to the south. An ancient sign says, "beware" in Common, Elvish, and Sylvan.

Cold radiates from the pool. There are no trails or signs to show it's used as a water source for the inhabitants of Grove or nearby wildlife. Any character with proficiency in the Survival skill immediately recognizes this as unnatural.

The pool has the reputation of being cursed, and the villagers will not under any circumstances drink, fish, or swim in its waters. Characters from the forest have heard these stories, otherwise they need to succeed a DC 13 Intelligence (History) check to recall the details. The exact nature of the pools deadly frigidity is beyond the scope of this adventure, but other than its temperature, it is safe and pure.

DEVELOPMENT. The southern outlet's bottom, 50 feet below, can be seen, but the clarity of the water makes judging the depth impossible. Any character who ends their turn within the water must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or take 1 point of cold damage from the frigid waters. Creatures with resistance to cold damage automatically succeed this saving throw.

Characters venturing into the depths of the main pull feel the soft tug of underwater currents, and can resist as long as they stay within 30 feet of the surface. At 40 feet the current requires a successful DC 8 Strength saving throw to resist. The check is made at the end of each round and increases by 1 for each 15 feet deeper the character swims. The pool is hundreds of feet deep, and is for all intents and purposes bottomless.

I. HODGE FAMILY FARM

The path out of town leads you to an open-air produce stand, behind which sits near a home similar in style to the others you've encountered in the village. A haze of flies can be seen from a distance, and, closing in, the sickly-sweet smells of over-ripe fruit reach your nostrils. Fields of fruit and vegetables flank a single-story log home with low-pitched roofs.

The Hodges' produce stall has been abandoned and left to the animals and elements since they succumbed to the tainted water of the well. An elderly couple living on their own, Tom and Lilly were among the first to be affected.

The Hodges' log home was built decades ago from the very wood harvested to clear the land for the fields on either side of it. A simple lock, which can be opened with a successful DC 10 Dexterity (with thieves' tools) check is all that bars the characters from entering the home, which is a single expansive room. Colorful curtains and partitions have been placed strategically to give the impression of rooms, including a kitchen, sitting area, and sleeping quarters.

DEVELOPMENT. The fields are overgrown, but not so much that they show clear neglect. The produce stand is another matter altogether—here, fruits and veggies have been left to the elements. Characters succeeding on a DC 12 Wisdom (Nature) check realize that the fruit has been sitting out for nearly two weeks.

TREASURE. A thorough search of the home takes 1d4 hours and with a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds a small sack of 17 cp, 13 sp, and 7 gp that was hidden in the hearth.

J. TANNER'S TAN TANNERY

The trail leads to a tannery, and further on is an outhouse; in the day's heat, it's hard to say what smells worse. The combination of the two is enough to bring tears to the eyes of all but the most hardened adventurer.

Animal skins, barrels, a lime pit, and other tools of the tanning trade are scattered throughout the room. There are glassless windows and vents throughout. There is a closed door in the northwest corner of the room that leads to a storage room. A handmade wooden sign proclaims the business to be "Tanner's Tan Tannery."

DEVELOPMENT. The storage room in the building is locked and can be opened with a successful DC 12 Dexterity (using thieves' tools) check. Alternatively, the rickety door can be forced open with a successful DC 10 Strength check. Characters checking the windows find they are all unlocked, and offer easy ingress to the structure.

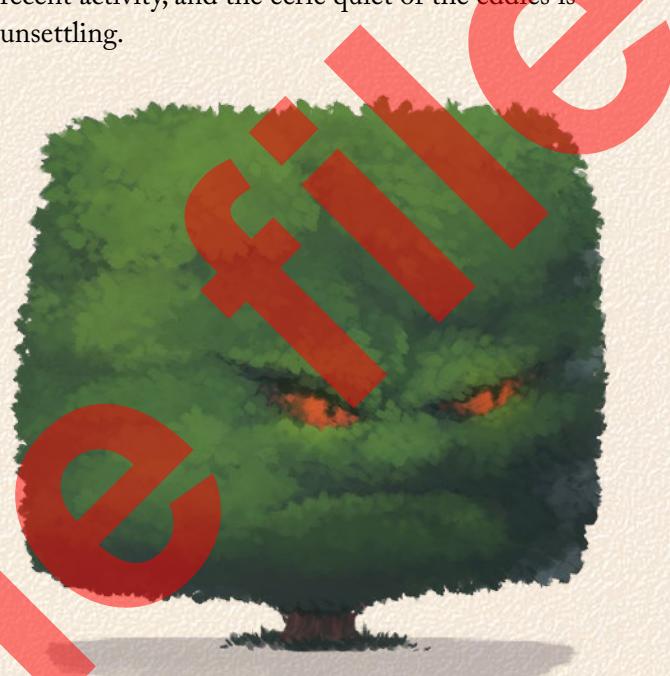
TREASURE(s). An array of leather goods hangs on the walls and drying racks in varying stages of completion. Characters who search the tannery find: one suit of studded leather, three slings, and with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check, leatherworker's tools and a sack containing 38 cp and 12 sp.

K. THE EDDIES

A sharp bend in the river has created an expansive, slow-moving eddy in the Sludgewater. The river widens considerably, and the still, deep waters are held in by steep rocky banks. A wooden ramada looks out over

the river. The stale, pungent scent of fish permeates its floors removing any question of its purpose.

The villagers use the eddies for swimming, fishing, and other activities. There are no signs of recent activity, and the eerie quiet of the eddies is unsettling.



Investigating Grove

The order of the scenes below is left to the GM's discretion and the activities of the players. The GM is encouraged to insert *A Chance Encounter* and/or *Eyes are on You* as pacing allows to break up long periods of investigation.

Scene 1 - A Chance Encounter

This scene can occur at a time and place of the GM's choosing. Many animals have escaped their pins and roam the town. This encounter can be repeated as needed at the GM's discretion.

The GM can roll or choose from the following table to determine what the heroes find.

d8 Encounter

- 1 A frothing bull (uses **elk** stats) bellows and charges forward, horns down. Characters within 30 feet of the bull must succeed on a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or have disadvantage on their initiative roll from surprise.
- 2 Untended livestock have drawn a pack of $1d4 + 1$ **wolves** from the forest. They are more interested in food than the characters, but will fight if cornered or provoked.
- 3 A gods' awful racket pierces the eerie quiet of the town. If they investigate, the characters see a brood of chickens being attacked by a mated pair of **blood hawks**. The hawks are in a frenzy and will attack any creature that gets within 30 feet of their prey.
- 4 A **giant boar** has freed a passel of swine from their pen, and is herding them towards the forest. If it's interfered with, it defends its new litter.
- 5 The characters see a **brown bear** feasting on the remains of an unidentifiable animal. It doesn't notice the characters unless provoked.
- 6 Three **ponies** have found a batch of sweet grass, and are feasting, blissfully unaware of their surrounds. They can be befriended with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check.
- 7 A murderous **swarm of ravens** make their presence known via their cacophonous caws and screeches. They remain at a distance, watching with disturbingly intelligent eyes. Do they attract other predators?
- 8 A character with passive Perception 18 notices a familiar shrub. An **awakened shrub** lives in Grove and entertains itself by watching the town folk.

Scene 2 - Meeting Rose and Grace

There is only a one in four chance that the women will notice the heroes as they approach due to their focus on tasks around the farm and caring for their neighbors. Parties that succeed on a group DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth) check evade notice by **Grace** (see *Appendix 1, page 22*) or **Rose** (see *Appendix 1, page 23*). The women, either alone or the pair, will be at one of the locations below, as determined by the GM, when dramatically appropriate. Whenever Rose is accompanied, her faithful dog **Apollo** (see *Appendix 1, page 24*) is by her side.

THE HOUSE.

The front door opens with the barest touch, opening to a long hallway. There is a room a few paces down on the left with chairs and a hearth. Further down on the right are two closed doors. The hallway ends at the large kitchen.

Entering the kitchen, the characters see a wood-burning stove, a wash basin, a table, and chairs. Two plates, three cups, and several eating utensils are carefully placed on a drying rack.

Characters with a passive Perception of 14, or those asking about the cups, notice that two are upside down, and one is not. They are all handmade, each is different, and none have distinguishing marks. The cup that is not upside down is robin's egg blue. The blue cup is an everfull cup (see *Appendix 1, page 24*).

ROOT CELLAR. A locked and heavily reinforced door bars passage to an underground cellar. It can be opened with a successful DC 10 Dexterity (with thieves' tools) check or a successful DC 11 Strength check. The cellar contains the Cranes' food stores and their father's breastplate and shield wrapped within an oilcloth.

BARN.

Loose doors on rusty hinges open, revealing the expanse of the barn. The faint smell of cut grass reaches you, and streaks of light shining through the gaps and knot holes in the wall illuminate floating dust.

Three rows of six pallets are neatly arranged, catching the light when possible. Upon the pallets are nine adults and seven children sleeping peacefully, their soft snores barely perceptible in the quiet.

If Rose or Grace were found in the barn, they are leaning over one of their neighbors, fussing with a blanket or administering a thin broth to the sleeping figure. She is completely focused on her patient. Her loving care and attentiveness are clear to any observing her.

THE ROCK. Characters examining the rubble of the cave soon realize that there is no easy way to move the rubble or explore the tunnels. A dwarf, a character proficient with mason's tools, or an adventurer with a suitable background knows that to clear the collapsed mine would take an enormous investment in time and resources. A character succeeding on a DC 22 Wisdom (Perception) check at the entrance of the sealed mine notices the faintest of breezes.



Meeting Grace and Rose

When the characters encounter the women, they are *indifferent* to the party, and can be swayed to *friendly* via roleplaying or appropriate ability checks. The girls want and need help. Heroes offering sympathy, a helping hand, or who are empathetic to their plight have advantage on their Charisma checks. Attempts to threaten them are not well received and the canny women have advantage on opposed checks to resist Charisma (Intimidation) checks.

Grace and Rose realized that something was wrong 10 days ago. Their small community grew quiet and the sounds of the Bolker children, always underfoot, were notably absent. Within days, everyone save the sisters, had been affected by the Sleep. Grace suggested bringing everyone to their barn to care for, and that's exactly what they've done.

The women have been caring for the villagers as best they can—feeding them a thin broth, keeping them warm, and protecting the sleepers from the elements. When the sisters become *friendly*, they are eager to discuss the situation in Grove, and have the following information which they share freely. The ladies take turns answering questions, sometimes finishing the other's sentences and speaking with the soft drawl common to folk from the area.

THE CAVE. "Fell in on itself when we were little. Papa and the others tried to unbury it, but couldn't." The girls admit to not knowing much about it as it was well before their time.

CHAZ GRYNSBY. "Who?" The girls have never heard of anyone by that name.

THE CUP. "A gift from our aunt. She was an adventurer, like y'all. Not good for much, other than saving us trips to the well." The girls are so accustomed to the cup, they take it for granted and do not appreciate it for the wonder it is.

WHY AREN'T YOU AFFECTED? "I don't rightly know." The ladies haven't had time to investigate the town or think too much on what's going on. They've been busy gathering and taking care of the townsfolk.

THE WELL. "Everyone uses that well." They go on to explain that for as long as they can remember everyone avoids Witch's Whirl because it's haunted and the Sludgewater is only used for fishing, watering animals, and irrigation. The well has never run dry, and the water is also cool and crisp.

WITCH'S WHIRL. "So cold it'll take ya toes off!" The other sister immediately adds, "They say it's bottomless," in a hushed whisper. They find the place unsettling, and have not been there in years. Their only visit was on a dare as children, and the visit unsettled them deeply.

THE SLUDGEWATER. The river winds throughout the forest with villages, outposts, and other settlements near its shores. Silty water and muddy bottom make its water murky on even the clearest day. This is part of the reason the folks of Grove do not drink from it.

LOOSE ANIMALS. "I've seen 'em all over. Stayin' close, but acting real odd sometimes. Somethin's gotten into 'em. Only one acting sensible is our Apollo."

STRANGERS. "None for a while. They come sometimes, but never stay long." If the characters mention the entry from Orrin's journal (area E6) or the fresh tracks leading away from the well, they trigger a comment from Rose, "Grace doesn't believe me, but I think someone was watching us last night. Apollo was really jumpy." The girls argue

briefly, as siblings often do. A character succeeding on a DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check notice that Grace is disturbed by these comments.

THE SLEEP. "They just sleep. Can't wake them no matter what. We make 'em comfortable, and feed 'em soup to keep their strength up." The sisters have placed their neighbors in the only room large enough for all of them, the barn, and care for them day and night. Heroes examining the bodies learn the following on a Wisdom (Medicine) check; if the character has proficiency in the Nature skill and/or a Poison Kit, she has advantage on the check.

- **DC 10** — The victims are living and under no clear distress.
- **DC 15** — They respond subtly to light, and they drink in small quantities.
- **DC 20** — The effects are eerily similar to poisoning by periwinkle, though more intense.

Scene 3 - Investigations

Rose and Grace are not willing to leave their charges to assist. When they have filled the heroes in on the situation to the best of their ability, they suggest investigating the town further. If the characters are not sure of their next steps, or if the GM wishes to move the story along quickly, proceed to the next scene.

Scene 4 - Eyes Are On You

The unnatural quiet of the village is broken by the snap of a nearby twig. The hairs on your neck stand and your heart races in anticipation.

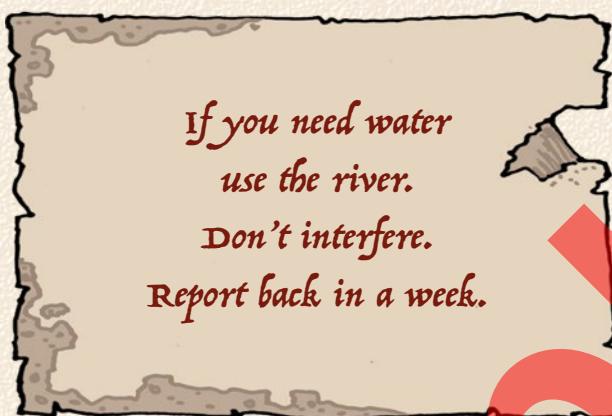
This encounter can happen at the time and location of the GM's choosing to maintain pacing and tension.

DEVELOPMENT. The characters are ambushed by a scouting party sent from the depths of the well to

observe the effects of the treatment. They have taken it upon themselves to take advantage of the town's predicament and make some easy coin.

CREATURE(s). Tomi, Kimi, and Didi (commoners) are led by Chaz (bandit) and follow his instructions. They are cowards, and any time one is defeated, the remaining members of the band must make a DC 10 Wisdom save or retreat as quickly as possible to the well.

TREASURE. Tomi, Kimi, and Didi have 2d10 sp each, Chaz has 2d4 gp and an unsigned note:



Scene 5 - A Temporary Fix

The simplest solution is for the villagers to stop using the well's contaminated water. Witch's Whirl, the Eddies, or any inlet to the Sludgewater can be used. No villager willingly or knowingly drinks the water from Witch's Whirl. If the Cranes believe that the well is contaminated, they grudgingly agree to use the Sludgewater for water.

DEVELOPMENT. Convincing the sisters that the water is the source of the sickness can be accomplished via roleplaying or appropriate group skill checks with a DC 12. Heroes that mention that the sisters have not drunk from the well and are the only ones not effected have advantage on the check. If the characters present the note from the bandits as proof, they succeed without a check.

If the heroes investigate the well without convincing Grace and Rose, they continue their tasks

and care for their friends. The villagers recover on their own a week after the source of contamination has been removed, or in three weeks when it has run its course.

The Well

*Welcome to Grove ends when the heroes, through careful planning or the pursuit of their cowardly enemies, descend into the depths of the well. Their adventure continues in *Below the Grove*.*

Conclusion

The heroes have learned that the machinations of someone, or something, bigger than the bandits is behind the Sleeping Sickness. The only hope the town has of returning to its former prosperity is for the characters to descend through the depths of the well while Grace and Rose remain behind to care for the villagers. What challenges and beasts lie under the town? Can the brave heroes remove the source of the sickness and return Grove to its former way of life?

At the end of this adventure, the heroes gain enough experience to progress to level 2.

Appendix 1

Crane, Grace



"There are many paths. Many ways to get lost.

Sometimes you just keep going until you find a new way."

Quick to anger, never at a loss for words, and with an opinion on everything, Grace makes a strong impression on everyone she meets. Whether or not that impression is good is a different matter entirely. Despite her brash nature, Grace has a heart of gold, a compassionate streak a mile wide, and is always the first to help a friend in need.

Grace is a young woman with sharp features, a lithe frame, and is just beginning to outgrow the awkwardness of her youth. Her preferred method of dress is a loose tunic, tight breeches, and with her mane of strawberry blonde hair pulled into a loose ponytail or bun.

Medium humanoid (human), neutral good

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 39 (6d8 + 12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+3)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Cha +5, Con +5

Skills Arcana +3, Deception +5, Medicine +2, Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Sister's Bond. Grace has advantage on ability checks when she is within 5 feet of her sister, Rose, as long as Rose isn't incapacitated.

Draw Strength. Grace regains one 2nd-level or two 1st-level spell slots. She regains her use of this ability after completing a long rest.

Spellcasting. Grace is a 3rd-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). She knows the following spells:

- Cantrips (at will): *mending, vicious mockery*
- 1st level (4 slots): *charm person, healing word, speak with animals, unseen servant*
- 2nd level (2 slots): *calm emotions, hold person*

ACTIONS

Dagger. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage

Crane, Rose



"I won't stop, give up, or quit fighting...ever."

Where her sister is boisterous, Rose is quiet, contemplative, and always smiling as if she's just remembered a joke. Rose is content to spend her time with her animals and sketchpad or practicing her marksmanship. A fast friend to most, Rose's ire is a terrible thing to witness indeed, and her temper has gotten her into more than a few scraps.

Rose is most easily identified by her topknot. Her hair, a panoply of blues, greens, and reds, is

a gift from a fey she encountered as a child that, to her delight, has never faded. While she has the stature of her sister, her muscles are more toned and conditioned from long hours of hiking, hunting, and sport. Though she rarely wears it, Rose has her father's breastplate and shield hidden away in the root cellar.

Medium humanoid (human), neutral good

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 39 (6d8+12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Con +4, Str +3

Skills Athletics +3, Animal Handling +2, Insight +2, Nature +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Sister's Bond. Rose has advantage on ability checks when she is within 5 feet of her sister, Grace, as long as Grace isn't incapacitated.

Deadeye. Rose has a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls with her longbow.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Rose makes two attacks with her longbow.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) piercing damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, ranged 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8+5) piercing damage.

Welcome to Grove

Apollo



Protective growling.

Apollo is Rose Crane's dog. He's loyal and true, and he never leaves her side. He's concerned for her wellbeing now that she's caring for all of her neighbors, and it pains him that he can do so little to help. Not even Rose knows how intelligent Apollo is, believing he's just unusually clever for a dog. Apollo is aware that he's smarter than other dogs, but he has no idea that he was a gift from the same fey who magically re-colored Rose's hair, bestowed on her to provide a truly exceptional guardian for young Rose whatever scrapes she got into.

Apollo is a big, smooth-coated sheepdog with wise brown eyes and a tail that curls into a question-mark shape when he's alert. He's extremely proud to wear the blue bandana Rose usually ties around his neck.

Medium beast (dog), lawful good

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 19 (3d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	8 (-1)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)

Skills Perception +3

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages Understands Common, but cannot speak

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Keen Hearing and Smell. Apollo has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6+1) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 11 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

REACTIONS

Protect. When an attack hits a creature within 5 feet of Apollo, Apollo can use his reaction to push them out of the way, adding +2 to their armor class against that attack.

Augusta Goodmead's Everfull Cup

Wondrous item, uncommon

When tipped as if to drink from, cool, clear water flows from the chalice. When used in this manner, the chalice can create up to 2 gallons of water daily. It recharges daily at dawn.

Below the Grove

An exploration adventure for 4 to 5 characters of 2nd level
By Jeff C. Stevens



Adventure Synopsis

Having learned that the well water was tampered with, the heroes enter the well and explore the dark caverns below Grove. During their journey through the dark, damp, and eerie caverns and tunnels, they face natural hazards, meet creatures from below, discover what's tainting the water, and come closer to discovering the reason for the contaminated water supply.

Adventure Hooks

A STOP ON THE WAY. During an overland journey between missions, a side-quest during an existing adventure, or in a stop in a town or city, the adventurers come across a well for a quick drink of freshwater. A grappling hook has been affixed to the side of the well and they can't help but notice it as out of place. The rope leads into the waiting darkness, thrusting the heroes into the machinations of E'thor.

ANSWERING A CALL. In a previous adventure, the heroes heard a rumor of a village having fallen under the sway of a fell sickness to which virtually everyone has succumbed. One of the rumors in particular mentions the current theory circulating the land: that the well has been poisoned or ensorcelled in some manner and is the cause of the calamity.

WHILE WE'RE DOWN HERE. The heroes have just completed a subterranean adventure and through luck, happenstance, or divine intervention, they come across the chamber at the base of the well. It doesn't take long before they're drawn into the mystery of Grove.

The Well

The well is waist high, built of smooth river rock, and large enough for a full-grown humanoid to crawl into. Regardless of the placement of the sun overhead, the bottom is not visible from above. Nearby, a bucket attached to a winch by a coiled length of rope, sits on the ground. The ground surrounding the well is well-used, with a clear trail to the town's center. Characters succeeding on a DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check while examining the trail notice that a fresher set of tracks leads from the well to town. These tracks start at the well, as if someone came out of it.

A. ENTERING THE WELL

A creaking winch, frayed rope, and ancient bucket suggest the well has been in use for generations. The bottom cannot be seen from above and a cool breeze emanates from it, suggesting a much larger cavern below.

The well is 90 feet deep and can be entered by using the following:

- **USING THE ROPE, WINCH, AND BUCKET** – The rope and winch can lower or raise a character 30 feet per minute. A character succeeding on a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check notices both the rope and winch look old. When in use, roll 1d20. On a result of 18+, as the character nears the bottom of the well, the rope breaks and the winch seizes up, dropping the character 30 feet to the bottom of the well, landing in the 10-foot-deep lake, and suffering 1d6 bludgeoning damage from the cushioned fall. The winch can be repaired with a successful DC 12 Intelligence check, but the rope must be mended (by spell or successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check) or replaced.
- **USING THEIR OWN ROPE** – The characters may use their own rope, securing it to a cart or nearby tree.
- **MAGIC** – A spell such as *feather fall* allows a character to jump into the well and safely reach the bottom.

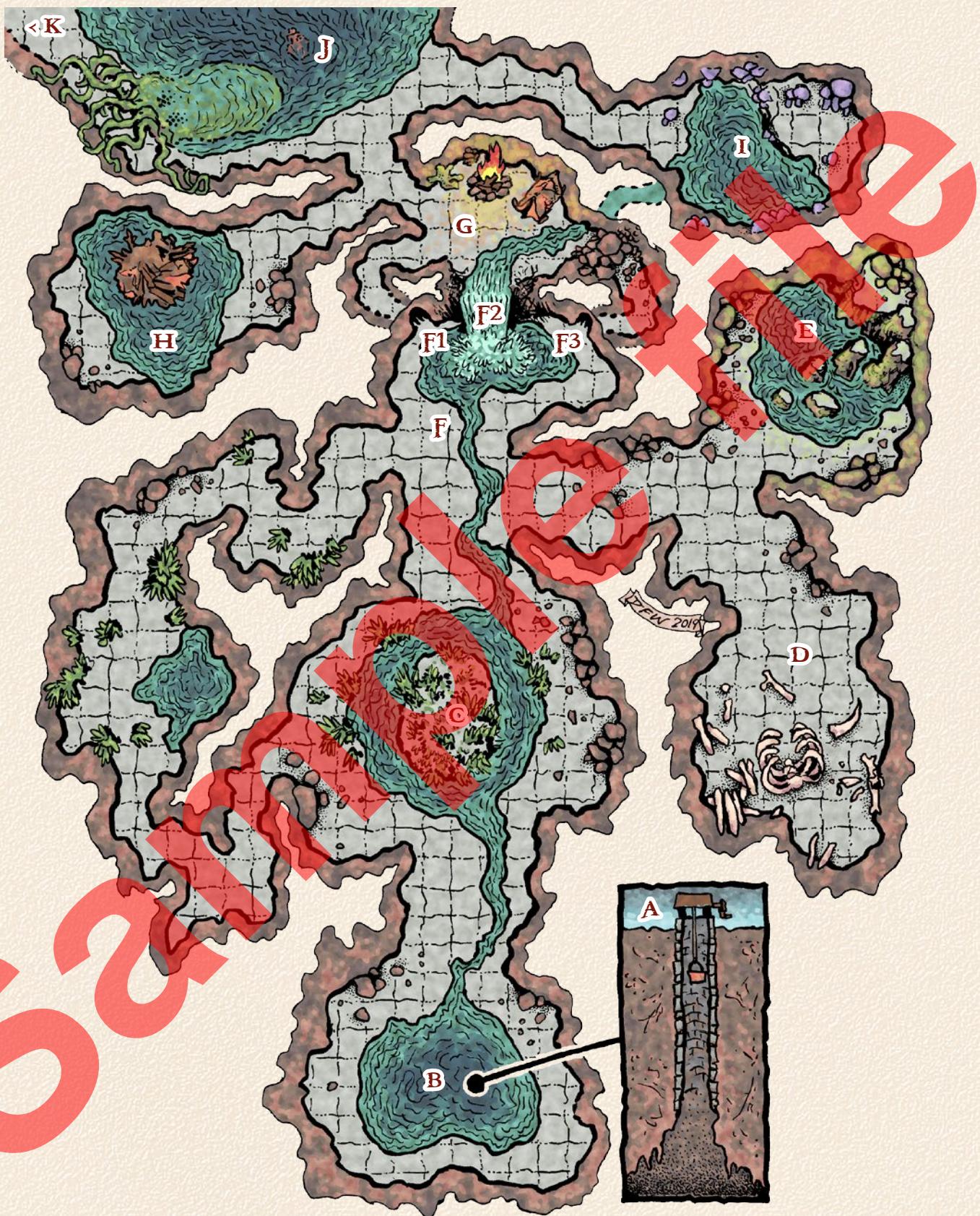
After descending 60 feet, the well opens to a large, cathedral-like domed cavern with a large pond below. Unless the character swings themselves to the rocky banks of the pond, they end up in the center of the 10-foot-deep water. Reaching the banks in this manner requires a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check if the character does not have a swim speed.

B. THE BOTTOM OF THE WELL

A clear pond, smaller than expected, with rocky banks lies at the bottom of the well. A thin stream emerging from the darkness beyond replenishes the reservoir. The stillness on the surface suggests great depths below the mirrored surface of the well's reservoir.

THE POND. The pond is deceptively deep, the bottom lies 30 feet below, with a sheer slope, and wide enough that jumping across it would be

Below the Grove



difficult. A hero wearing medium or heavy armor finding themselves in the pond must succeed on DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check each time they attempt to move while in the pond. Failure means they are unable to move their heavy body while they tread water.

TREASURE. Characters who search the bottom of the pond find 10 gp worth of various coins. In addition, characters succeeding on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check or Intelligence (Investigation) check find 8 gp worth of various coins within the rocky banks – wishes from above.

CREATURES. Four juvenile **rock toads** (*see Appendix 2, page 36*) sit on the bank, blending in with the rocky shore, their natural camouflage ability keeping them hidden. The toads attack the characters if they attempt to pick up any of the coins from the rocky bank. They attack with their sticky tongue attack first, then ram the character they're stuck to.

C. THE LONELY ISLAND

A damp, rocky, and plant-covered island rises from the middle of a small pool. A thin layer of peat moss, algae, and lichen provide a fur-like coating to the jagged ground. From the center of the island, there is a glint of something shiny and sparkling that pierces the damp moss partially obscuring it.

THE ISLAND. A 10-foot-wide, 6-foot-deep moat-like stream surrounds the 20-foot radius island, which is the moss-covered back of a giant snapping turtle. Characters with a passive Perception of 15 notice an irregularity to the ground suggesting it's not merely an island.

TREASURE. A scimitar with a blue topaz encrusted hilt rests in the moss. The scimitar is known as Rime – a magical shortsword inflicting an additional +1 cold damage on a successful hit.

CREATURE. A giant **snapping turtle** (*see Appendix 2, page 36*) named Frood lives in the caves. She wanders from cave to cave searching for places to rest, hide and feed. The bandits managed to avoid her notice through luck and happenstance. Frood is *indifferent* to the heroes unless provoked, or treated aggressively in which case she will become *hostile*. Offers of food have the same effect as a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check and change her attitude to *friendly*.



D. TRAPPER'S CAVE

A high-pitched snarl catches your attention, followed quickly by a burst of chittering and hissing... and then a very human cry.

Up a short passageway to the north, you find the source of the noise. An old trapper's hideout, out of place underground. It's crammed with dusty, musky, furs and hides, and rotting furniture. At present it's also host to a cowering, yelling, human wearing a cloak of writhing

furs, and a tartan-clad corgi the size of a mastiff playfully yapping and snarling at the man's cloak of living... weasels? Muskrats? The dog's teeth catch one of the beasts' tails, and the cloak - and its wearer - explode into a cloud of mustelids.

A few seconds later and a few feet away, they reform into a disheveled young man in a pointed blue hat.

TRAPPER'S CAVE. Long ago, a trapper used this cave as a base to hunt, skin, and process weasels, badgers, giant toads, and the Mystic Muskrats who live further into the cave. The *Cloak of the Mustelidae* was his greatest creation and proudest possession. His skeletal remains still rest in the bedroll in one corner of the cave, and patterns for the cloak, drawn on tanned toad hides, and in an unlocked chest nearby.

CREATURES. Cal, a Diviner from a small town near Grove, took it upon himself to investigate the poison of the town's water source when the residents started acting strangely. He, his rat familiar Wizzywig, and his brave canine adventuring companion Sir Cheddar descended into the well, began exploring... and got distracted here, when Cal found and donned the *Cloak of the Mustelidae*. No corgi in his right mind, even one as sophisticated as Sir Cheddar, can resist playing with a cloak entirely made of muskrats.

Cal (see Appendix 2, page 39) is a scatterbrained, easily distracted young man with a tendency to say exactly the wrong thing. Right now, he's also disoriented from briefly turning into muskrats.

Sir Cheddar (see Appendix 2, page 37) is an awakened corgi sorcerer. He's brave – fearless in fact – and enthusiastic about everything. Everyone who's not an enemy is his friend, and he gladly throws himself into danger for his friends.

DEVELOPMENT. Sir Cheddar offers to accompany the party on their expedition. Cal is distracted by the new mystery of why a magic cloak was lying unused in a fur trapper's lodge.

TREASURE. The *Cloak of the Mustelidae* (see Appendix 2, page 40) is a thick, warm, cloak made

from the skins of assorted weasels, ferrets, a couple of badgers and even a couple of mystic muskrats. Cal is fascinated by it, but never wants to wear it again and gladly lets the characters take it.

E. STAIRWAY TO THE STARS

An opening filled with a glowing green light beckons you closer. Five natural stone pillars, each a different height, creates a hazardous stairwell ending at an outcropping near the top of the cave. A precarious overhang just before the ledge makes scaling the walls a daunting feat. A human hand, wearing a sparkling ring, dangles over the ledge.

THE FIGURE. The form is the unconscious body of Conrad McLeod, a human apprentice wizard traveling with the bandits who entered the village. Bringing up the rear, he was caught in falling debris from a collapsing tunnel. His companions didn't go back to help him, and he remains unconscious and dangling from above. The adventurers lack the means to clear the debris completely from the tunnel but they can free Conrad.

THE LIGHT. Conrad wears a *headband of light* which is currently activated and emitting a green light. Once donned, the wearer can utter a command word ("eyes") and cast *light* once per day. The spell remains until the wearer says a command word ("closed") which extinguishes the light. The command words are engraved on the interior of the circlet in Common. If the characters save him, Conrad gives the *headband of light* to the party as a way of saying thanks and states, "My life of adventure is over. I'm going home."

Conrad is grateful to the heroes and answers questions to the best of his ability, but knows frustratingly little about the situation. He has surmised that the bandits were hired through an intermediary to observe the people of Grove over a period of weeks. He strongly suspects that the effects

Below the Grove

Pillar	Height in feet	Falling Damage	Jump Distance	Strength Required to Make Jump without a check	Strength (Athletics) DC
A	10	0	0	NA	NA
B	12	1	7	14	10
C	15	2	8	16	12
D	25	3 (1d6)	10	NA	NA
E	27	4 (1d6 + 1)	7	14	10
F	32	5 (1d6 + 2)	10	16	12

of the contaminant will naturally dilute within the reservoir over the course of time and that the effects will diminish as a result. He knows other details about the cavern system at the GM's discretion.

THE CAVE. The cave is 40 feet wide, 45 feet deep, and 60 feet tall, with a 5-foot-deep lake. The stone pillars vary in height, with the first pillar being 10 feet tall. An odd overhang makes climbing the walls of the cave nearly impossible.

CROSSING THE PILLARS. Creatures are limited to standing jumps (a number of feet equal to half their strength score) due to limitations of space.

FALLING. The bludgeoning damage inflicted from the impact of falling is reduced by the water per the table above.

SCALING THE WALLS. A creature attempting to scale the walls to the overhead ledge finds itself stuck as it reaches an overhang just before the ledge. To successfully maneuver the overhang, it must succeed on a DC 16 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Failure results in the creature slipping, falling into the lake, and suffering 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning.

TREASURE. The explorer wears a diamond ring worth 100 gp. In addition, she wears a chain shirt, carries a shortsword, a dagger, a *potion of healing*, and a leather pouch containing 12 gp and 15 sp.

F. THE THREE WAYS

A rumbling crash, faint mist, and soft cool breeze fill the tunnel as the creek is followed upstream to a rushing waterfall, 30 feet high, into the reservoir at its base. Light flickers from the ledge above, throwing shadows over the craggy walls and floor. Flanking the cascade are a pair of small cave entrances.

F1. CAVE ENTRANCE #1. The cave leads up to the landing above the waterfall which is inhabited by three sleeping **stirges**. Characters with a passive Perception of 12, or a character looking around the cavern who succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check notice them hanging from the tunnel ceiling. The party can sneak past them by succeeding on a DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth) check. If awakened, the stirges attack immediately and without warning.

TREASURE. A creature succeeding on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) sees the glint of two filthy +1 arrows (or bolts) buried in the stirge dung.

F2. THE WATERFALL. The waterfall spills into a 10-foot-radius, 15-foot-deep pool which overflows, creating the stream. Hand and footholds are cut into the rock, allowing a creature to climb along the side of the waterfall to reach the ledge above. Creatures not using a rope and grappling hook to climb must

succeed on a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check to climb the 30-foot-tall slippery cave wall. Those using a rope and grappling hook succeed automatically.

TREASURE. A creature diving to the bottom of the pool and succeeding on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check or Intelligence (Investigation) check finds an old, rusty shovel, a small leather pouch containing three small, uncut emeralds (10 gp each), and a white turtle shell with a smiling face painted on it. **NOTE:** The turtle shell belongs to the hermit Gibber. It was his most prized possession.

F3. CAVE ENTRANCE #2. The cave leads up to a platform above the waterfall, but the exit is blocked by a cave-in of loose stones, small boulders, and detritus. Creatures succeeding on three DC 10 Strength checks successfully clear the opening of debris. With each failed attempt, a portion of the cavern collapses, dealing 1d6 bludgeoning damage to any creature within 5 feet of the blocked passage. If the characters fail these checks three times, the cavern collapses completely and becomes unpassable.

G. ABOVE THE WATERFALL

Along the far wall, a small, smoldering fire flickers, throwing shadows of strange shapes on the wall and onto a small tent made from scraps of leather, burlap, and cloth set up nearby. Twigs, leaves, and dried cow patties are piled next to the fire, along with a petite, human-looking ragdoll dyed an uneven green.

THE FIREPIT. The ragdoll is called Ewo and she is Gibber's constant companion and best friend. Having no other goblins to speak with, she stole the doll from a nearby village and painted it green using algae and fungus she found in the tunnels.

GIBBER & THE DOLL. Gibber cherishes her doll. If she returns and finds Ewo missing, she goes mad as she tears through her tent, bedroll, and firepit while yelling "Old Goot! She did this!" As she does,

have Gibber make a DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check. On a success, she notices the adventurers' footprints, stops, and speaks in Common:

"I know you here! I see you footy steps. Come out!"

Unless the doll is returned, Gibber does not share any information with the adventurers.



THE TENT. The tent belongs to Gibber, a hermit goblin. Inside is a straw bed, several small wooden bowls containing berries (fresh and dried), a broken wood fish trap, and a handful of shiny rocks she's found in the cave.

GIBBER. Gibber is currently out hunting for food (berries, small frogs, birds). She is alone as her goblin tribe left many years ago. She has a bad leg from a misadventure years ago, which causes her to limp and slows her movement. After leaving her tribe she wandered for some time, eventually finding this cave to live in.

TREASURE. A small piece of polished quartz (10 gp) hides under Gibber's straw bed.

GIBBER RETURNS. Shortly after the characters reach Gibber's area, she returns, whistling as she approaches. A character succeeding on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check hears the whistling 2 rounds before Gibber reaches the area.

As she walks into her grotto, the whistling stops and she can be heard mumbling to herself in a mix of Goblin and Common. Characters who understand both common and goblin hear:

That Old Goot. She's always messing with me. Got worse since the water change. She's even more evil now.

Characters only speaking Common hear:

....Goot. Got worse... water change... evil now...

SPEAKING WITH GIBBER. At first, Gibber is indifferent. She is standoffish and afraid of the adventurers. If they are nice to Gibber, she quickly warms to them and asks them to sit and have a meal with her. She's had a successful day hunting and gathering (a large lizard, a few yams, and a small bird) and would like to share her bounty; she's very proud of what she's found. She's also excited to have company, it's lonely living in a cave. In addition to her own story, Gibber has the following information to share:

- **OLD GOOT:** "Be careful of Old Goot. She a mean one. Likes to play tricks and hurt things. She's always been mean, but she's gotten meaner. The water. It's because she lives in the bad water."
- **THE BANDITS:** "Noisy humanoids entered the caves. Go up well. Use rope. One hurt in caves. Not moving. I watch—they not see me. They came from behind Old Goot's nest."
- **THE WATER:** "The water is still bad. Wicked creature came into the cave. Dropped a sack into lake. It makes water taste bad. Yuck! I sneak my water. Get it from the cold well in the forest."

- **THE FOREST VILLAGE:** "Keep going through tunnel. Past big lake where container dropped. Them getting sick now, too."
- **THE SACK:** "Don't know. At bottom, I guess."
- **MUSHROOMS:** "Wicked creature took mushrooms from cave. I show you where they are. I not eat. Taste funny. Old Goot live with mushrooms. Old Goot mean."

H. MUSKRAT CAVE

As written, much of this encounter assumes that the heroes have encountered Old Groot, and understand the value of the muskrats. If that is not the case the GM may need to make minor adjustments.

Water fills the center of this cave, which is currently occupied by three muskrats—two brown and one white—who swim about. Walking in, you catch a glimpse of their backsides as they dive out of sight and presumably into their den. The den, a makeshift island cobbled together of twigs, branches, mud, and detritus, rises a few feet above the surface of the pond. The ripples fade in moments, and all that's left to indicate their presence is a strong scent of musk and wet fur.

THE CAVE. An underground stream feeds the pool. Three **mystic muskrats** (*see Appendix 2, page 37*) are playing in the water, but they dive and retreat to their den when the adventurers enter the cave. The adventurers must formulate a plan to get the muskrats for Old Goot.

- **WAIT IT OUT:** After 5 minutes of being quiet, a muskrat leaves the lair and begins swimming in the pool, only surfacing if the party succeeds on a DC 13 group Dexterity (Stealth) check. If they fail, the muskrat does not surface and returns to the safety of its lair. Repeat this process as needed.

- **ENTER THE DEN:** The den is constructed of mud, clay, and grass. In addition, the mud and clay has mixed with the loose gravel in the cave, giving it an AC 15 with 50 HP. The den can be entered from the water, though the entrance is submerged 2 feet. An adventurer encounters three muskrats if they enter the den.
- **WHATEVER ELSE THEY THINK UP:** Reward the players for creative thinking. If the idea is a good one, go with it.

TREASURE. The gnawed ends of a leather sack protrude from the floor of the den, buried in the gravel and mud mixture. A successful DC 12 Strength check allows a character to pull the sack from the ground. The sack contains an old piece of dried elk, a moldy piece of rye bread, and a dagger.

Each muskrat pelt could be sold to a tanner. The brown pelts are worth 5 gp and the white pelt is worth 25 gp. To skin a muskrat and save the pelt requires a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Survival) check. On a failed check, the pelt is too damaged to be of any value.

I. OLD GOOT AND THE MUSHROOMS

Wet, thick air tinged with the loamy smell of mushrooms greets you as you enter a grotto at the end of the tunnel. Another pool of water, this one with a rocky ledge dotted with mushrooms, dominates the area. There is a single figure in the room: a giant toad! It sits on the opposite shore watching, glaring, in silence. Something about its skin is unnatural...

OLD GOOT. Old Goot (a **giant toad**, AC 16), is the mother rock toad. She's large, has a beard made of roots and vines, and her back is covered in ten small pockets, each containing a nesting baby as it grows to maturity. She's ill-tempered and transformed by the tainted water she lives in, which caused her

skin and that of her babies to become stone-like. She normally doesn't accept strangers into her lair, though she may listen to them if a druid or someone using speak with animals tries to communicate with her. The entire brood defend themselves if attacked.

For a more challenging encounter, the GM may add a **juvenile rock toad** (see *Appendix 2, page 36*) for every adventurer in the party.

Old Goot doesn't recall anything about anyone entering her lair or taking mushrooms. She only knows that she took a nap and when she woke up, many of her precious mushrooms were gone. She blames Gibber, thinking the goblin stole them while she slept.

GIBBER AND OLD GOOT. If Gibber is leading the party to Old Goot's den, she stops at the entrance, holds a finger to her lips and says, "Old Goot in there. Sshhh..."

Gibber has the knack of learning languages quickly. She's learned to speak to Old Goot and can translate for the party if needed. When they speak, they exchange ribbits, croaks, and groans.

THE MUSHROOMS. Old Goot loves the mushrooms. Others may find that they taste funny and make their tongue tingle. A creature eating the mushrooms must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a fail, the creature's tongue goes numb for 1d4 hours and they find it difficult to talk. Additionally, if a creature attempts to cast a spell requiring verbal components, roll a d20. On a 14 or higher the spell is not cast due to fumbling the words, the spell slot is not expended.

Goot is not willing to give away any of the mushrooms, but she will trade for them. She loves the taste of muskrat and gladly offers 10 mushrooms in exchange for a muskrat. Muskrats can be found in another area of the cave system and Gibber can guide them there. Her babies have told her of a shiny thing in the green cave. She would happily trade 10 mushrooms for the shiny thing (the *sparkling ring*) if the adventurers can retrieve it for her.