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5TH EDITION

ADVENTURE

THE MORTALITY OF GREEN



STEPHEN CHENAULT





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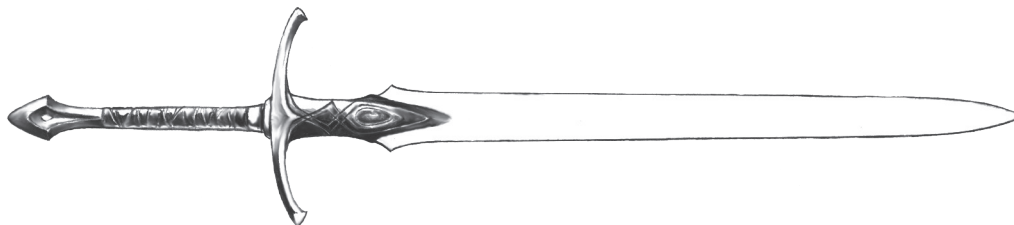
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PREFACE

'Tis said of that ancient forest that even when the world was young, her stems had grown high and her eaves dark and contemplative. If those ancient trees pondered, however, then it was in silent expectancy, brooding no doubt upon their lost glory, upon a time when their kin stretched far across the northern vales that lie between the Rhodope and Bergrucken Mountains. But those days of ancient wonder are long past, and the trees do not speak to common men. Mayhap they ponder simple things, or maybe they wonder of the many creatures which have come from the great valleys and plains beyond, to slip into obscurity underneath the shadowy vale of their darkening fold.'

The Mortality of Green is designed to be a fast-paced adventure wherein the characters are thrown into the immediate pursuit of a brigand troll. The troll, Quagmire, has stolen a young sapling from the druid Cornelius and fled into the forest. The characters must rescue the sapling before it is planted in the ground. Failure to do so results in the sapling's corruption and probable demise.

The action should unfold immediately upon entering the village of Greenbriar. Here, the characters are given the choice of taking up the trail and pursuing the troll or bringing the wounded Cornelius to the safety of the small town of Ends Meet several days journey away. It is preferred that the pursuit begins immediately, and the Castle Keeper should encourage this path. If the characters decide to travel to Ends Meet, the trail grows cold, and the Castle Keeper must adjust the adventure as presented accordingly.

Though set in the official **Castles & Crusades®** world of Aihrde **The Mortality of Green** is easily adapted to any homebrew or previously published campaign setting. Very few adjustments are necessary - perhaps changing the name of the forest or a town or two.

The Morality of Green provides enough information about the region to provide any innovative Castle Keeper with adventure hooks and story lines to keep the players engaged in adventures far beyond this one. Furthermore, there are several small adventures encapsulated within these pages in Gnomish Dreams, The Broken Vale, and The Fisherman to offer the Castle Keeper and players plenty of distraction. Look for more adventures based on the region from the Shelves of the Mist to the Eldwood and the southern seas where the White Order holds sway.

The Mortality of Green is intended for 4-8 characters of levels 3-5. A well-balanced party, though helpful, is not essential. The party, however, should possess a ranger, a druid, barbarian or a character class with specific forestry skills. Since the adventure involves the corruption of a forest, the presence of a druid could make the adventure more meaningful for the party and for the campaign.

MAP: Refer to the enclosed Upplands Map in the center for the adventure.

INTRODUCTION

The Darkenfold marks the beginning of the southern wilderness. It was once part of a greater forest, the Ethvold, which spanned across the entire southern reaches of Ethrum, from the Rhodope Mountains to the Ardeen River, the Shelves of the Mist, and the forests of Ohd, to lap up against the feet of the Bergrucken. But those days were long ago, when the world was occupied by dragons, and the sentients ruled the soils. Now, the Darkenfold is much reduced, stretching only several hundred miles from the Danau River and the plains of Kayomar in the east to the doorsteps of the unexplored Rhodope Mountains in the west. In the south, the Great Soup Marsh hems in the ancient trees, and the forest continues in wild growth from there to the far-off Shelves of the Mist in the distant north. The Eldwood to the east holds the heart of the Ethvold of old, but the Darkenfold holds its dark memories. It is an evil wood, filled with its own wild abandon and creatures of ill intent. Those who live there know that the trees and the soil hold memories of their past glory, and do not forget the axes of men and orcs, of dwarves and goblins that have plundered them of their glory.

The edges of the Darkenfold are hemmed in by long lean oaks. Their young, leafy green branches hang to the ground to mingle with the thickly tangled thorns and bushes growing in the rich black soil. Travel here is not easy due to the thick bramble which oft times overgrows the few existing paths. The tangled growth at the forest edge makes entry to the forest arduous and maintains the dark, deep mysteries within.

Beyond the tangle lies the old wood. Here, giant oaks heavy with foliage mark the heart of the forest. These peculiar trees are native only to the Darkenfold and give it its name. The mature trees are covered in greyish black bark that absorbs light. A campfire's light, for instance, will not flicker off the tree but rather vanishes into the bark, as if the trees drink the light. At night, the bark of these trees has a peculiar effect on those with special vision. In the presence of these trees, darkvision is reduced to one-half its normal ranges.

These great trees tower above the moss-covered ground, their leafy canopies blotting out the light of the sun. However, grassy knolls, open meadows and slow-running brooks pocket the forest deeps and break the sinister visage cast by the old trees. Here, where the sun shines, lilies, and other wild flowers bloom. At night, the light of the moon and stars spill through, and when the evening is still, the fey come out to dance, sing and play. The forest is thick with these creatures. Remnants of the Ethvold, they came here long ago, before the Wall of Worlds girded the earth from the trackless wastes of the Void. Sprites, nymphs, nixies and pixies as well as water lilies, blue bells and the like abound throughout the deep recesses of the forest. But there are darker fey as well. Boggarts, shadows, bullworts and carp snails are often the last creatures unwary folk encounter. Indeed, many believe that the Darkenfold's nature is derived from the Queen of the Unseelie Court who resides in the forest's southern reaches beyond the Downs in the Lilly Fair.

Two main roads cut through the forest. The larger of the two, the Old Post Road, meanders through the upper reaches, suddenly



veers north and emerges in the Broken Steppes. The Southern Way, a spur of the Old Post Road, is overgrown and weeded with small trees and is slowly vanishing back into the depths of the Darkenfold. Both roads are vestiges of the Age of Winter's Dark, when the Empire of the Horned God stretched even to these distant reaches. The Old Post Road in particular rises several meters above the forest through which it cuts, being fashioned of several layers of gravel and topped by cobbles. There is enough slant to provide run off, and two long, shallow ditches run the whole length of either side of the road. In many places, the cobbles have cracked and slid away into the ditch, or the road itself has sunken into the moist ground. There were once Way Posts along the road, which the ungern and orcs used when traveling these dark eves. They were generally one- or two-room stone buildings with wood shingle roofs. But those have fallen into ruin for the most part or vanished into the forest entirely.

The Southern Way was never paved, and its condition reflects that. Its track is still visible in most places, but in some it has vanished into the wood, being covered in young growth trees and brush. The ungern began work on it at one point but gave up when the Winter Dark Wars began. The pile of rubble from the cobbles and equipment lies still where the Post Road and Southern Way join, though much of it is overgrown with weeds and the like.

Few men venture into the Darkenfold. Those who do are a hardy lot with stout axes and stouter wills. Some settle in the few clearings or along the old roads, and build strong wooden houses beneath the dark trees and along the meadow tracks. 'Tis unknown what motivates them. Whether some crime or want of justice has driven them, or whether they desire a piece of earth far away from the civilized world, they find a dangerous home in the Darkenfold.

Where the Old Post Road and Southern Way meet lies the small village of Ends Meet. Once a thriving trade town, it has

since fallen on hard times and has slowly wasted away to the rump of a community it now is. The remnants of an old stone wall surround portions of the village. The wall is in ruins and, in but a few places, seldom rises above three feet. A small inn and trading post, the Cockleburrr Inn and Tavern, encompass the pride and joy of the slightly suspicious but overall friendly villagers, who number about three hundred.

Another village, Greenbriar, resides under the folds of the wood. Smaller than Ends Meet and sporting only a tavern (the Long House), Greenbriar sits astride the Westerling River. The hundred or so hearty souls who inhabit Greenbriar are a friendly, if cautious, bunch. The size of the village makes them far more vulnerable - and thus more watchful - than their neighbors in Ends Meet.

A small band of dedicated rangers have taken on the onerous task of protecting the forest and the folk who reside there. They call themselves the "Rangers of the Knot," for they meet in a glade wherein two ancient trees have wrapped their boles around each other. Only recently has the Druidic Council recognized the rangers. The Council promised to deliver them a sapling offspring of the Great Oak to help heal the Darkenfold.

The rest of the vast forest provides hunting ground for those creatures whose motives and concerns are little bent towards the good of men. Evil goblins band together and roam the forest. The most notorious of these foul goblins have taken up residence in a thicket of bramble and trees to the south called Broken Vale. Their leader, Horntooth, is intelligently wicked and merciless. The Millorian to the south of the Broken Vale is rolling, forested hills and comprises the heart of the ancient wood. It stretches for many miles across the Guarded Hills and beyond to the Elkhorn Deeps and the Silt Bay. The Millorian is peopled by elves and some gnomes, goblins, and other creatures of ill intent. A few hardy humans live in those parts, and they share their world with all manner of beast, animal, and

monstrous creatures. In the Millorian are the hunting grounds of some of the greater and lesser miasmal dragons, the nakal dragons being the most common.

NAKAL DRAGON, YOUNG ADULT (*Neutral Medium Dragon*): HP 57 (HD 10d8+8), AC 15, Spd 30ft/30ft (fly)/20ft (swim). Str 16 Dex 15 Con 18 Int 6 Wis 18 Cha 7. Saves Strength +6, Dex +5, Con +7. Perception 22 (+7/Advantage), Stealth +5, Survival +7, Nature +7. Tail +6 (1d8+3 plus 1d6 poison), Bite +6 (1d6+3), Claws +6 (2d6+3). SA Multiattack (tail, bite and 2 claws), darkvision 60ft, acute senses (advantage on all perception checks), Infec-tion (tail slap requires DC 16 con save or victim paralyzed for 24 hours; success means victim poisoned for 24 hours). Immune to paralyzed, unconscious. Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

FOR THE CASTLE KEEPER

The Druidic Council of the Order of the Oak has recently sent one of their own with a sapling of the Great Tree to the Darkenfold, seeking to deliver the forest from evil and reclaim it, making it whole again. The reclamation of the forest will be a long and arduous task, testing the strength and endurance of the Order. The Council has chosen Cornelius the White to carry a sapling of the Great Tree to the village of Ends Meet. There, he shall deliver it to the Rangers of the Knot. The rangers have, in turn, agreed to plant the tree in a secret grove, which Cornelius shall sanctify, so that he and the rangers may use the power of the Great Tree's sapling to heal the Darkenfold. It is his intention to establish a foothold for the Order in the area as well, so that the Order may bring the wild rangers to heel, and manage the resources of the forest better.

However, good intentions do not always guarantee good results.

Within the forest deeps lives an ancient sentient tree named Gristlebones. Old and corrupt, with roots buried deep in the ground, Gristlebones keeps watch over a forest he claims as his own. News of the sapling's coming has not escaped Gristlebones, as his arm is long. For, soon after the sapling was pulled from the ground, Gristlebones heard its cry for aid. He bent himself to the winds and the soils until at last he understood the far distant noise that came from the eves of the Eldwood. He pondered for some while before at last seeing what he must do.

Gristlebones is old, and in the long span of his years he has made many friends. He uses them from time to time, or calls them to him for company when he longs for those days before, days so very long ago. Those who have traffic with the old tree are a foul brood of evil creatures and monsters of some lineage. Of them all, Quagmire the troll lord is the greatest, and it is he that Gristlebones calls to for aid. He enlists the beast in his employ and sends him to intercept Cornelius and take the sapling. Gristlebones intends to plant this offshoot of the Great Tree amidst his roots, take control of it, and thus corrupt it. He believes that with the sapling he can gain dominance over the Darkenfold.

When the party enters the village of Greenbriar, they find a dying Cornelius who tries to extract an oath from them to

retrieve the sapling from the evil troll. Though Cornelius has no knowledge of Gristlebones, it is obvious to him that the troll has a fell purpose for the tree. For the safety of the forest, the sapling must be rescued. If the characters accept the task, they become embroiled in a rapid paced overland adventure.

GRISTLEBONES

In the Days before Days, the All Father drew substance from the earth and blew into it the power of sun, and from these effort came his greatest creation. Tall-stemmed, broad-beamed with leafy canopies that blanketed the ground in cool shade, the trees were ever the dew of his morning's creation. The trees were young, and they knew his mind. Without greed or avarice, with nothing but curiosity, they moved across the world so that, in time, great forests covered the land. The dwarves and goblins were not yet made, and their long fights under the earth were things of tomorrow. It was thus for many thousands of years, and these sentient trees, these earthly giants, ruled the world without competition. Their seeds were carried to distant shores, and they reveled in the warmth of sun and wind. As they grew old, they rooted and gathered wisdom.

In time though, these sentients found homes, often in deep ravines or along valleys where water was fresh and plentiful. Here and there, they took root and did not wander as before. And their offspring were less likely to wander. In the space of a few generations - as trees count such things - they wandered no more. In later ages, when dwarves and goblins, and even later, men and elves, emerged, the old trees took refuge in the deeps of the younger forests. In time, their revels grew less frequent, and their kind began to die. The forests were left to less sentient trees with roots firmly in the ground.

Of these older trees, some few lived on. Bastions of the Days before Days, they settled in quiet places. Some served as gateways to the land of Faerie, and some, like the Great Tree of the Ethvold, were venerated. But others retreated into the wastes of the world. Gristlebones was one such tree.

Tired from his years of wandering and scarred in some forgotten battle his journey ended in the deeps of the Darkenfold. There, he rooted in a foul nest at the base of a bottomless pool of stagnant water called Thorny Hollow. The pool, his home, lay hidden in the hollow, little more than a cleft of a bramble-covered hill. Within the hollow, his brooding anger soaked into the ground so that the whole area stank of decay. This stench still hangs over the Thorny Hollow like a breath of foul air, and it bears the weight of the sentient's long brooding anger and his evil designs. His roots suck the life from the water and leave only pools of slime and stagnant water that attracts little life.

Gristlebones's bole has grown hollow and rotten with age. Only a few of his limbs remain strong enough to throttle the life from those who trespass in his den. So great is Gristlebone's pain, and so long his suffering, that he has grown malicious in every thought and sits now in the hollow, brooding on how to deliver unto the world his final evil seed.

In time, Gristlebones came to know Quagmire the troll.

QUAGMIRE

Quagmire's origins are unknown, giant or troll. It is speculated that he is the offspring of a giant and a magical weird, for his mind is quick and agile, unlike his slow-witted ilk. But if he is of some lineage other than that of the trolls, it affects his behavior not a bit, for in all his actions he is as vicious as any troll that ever walked the earth.

Quagmire accidentally stumbled upon Gristlebones. After a harrowing battle with a band of elves, he escaped into the Hollow and fell into Gristlebones's pool. To avoid being killed, he submitted to the old tree. They made a simple alliance. Quagmire feeds and keeps Gristlebones alive, and Gristlebones guards Quagmire's treasure, listens to the forest, and imparts various and sundry tidbits of information to the troll.

Quagmire has gathered together a strong pack of ruffians and thugs in hopes of one day ruling the Darkenfold. This band consists of seven unger, four ogres, eighteen orcs and a pack of worgs. The orcs are captained by Mrodox the Shaman, who led his 'boys' away from the infamous Marauding Butchers and linked up with Quagmire for personal gain. Quagmire's closest friend is a malicious dark faerie named Gilliam.

Quagmire's band is maintained by his strength. The orcs owe their loyalty to their shaman, and Gilliam to Quagmire only. The unger are fiercely loyal to Quagmire and will serve him to the last. They see him for one of the servants of the true Troll Lord, Nulak Kiz Din, mage to their master now long gone. The ogres are indifferent, and so long as the going is not hard, they will stick it through. The Castle Keeper should keep these internal difficulties in mind when counteracting the players' moves or planning further traps. Orc and ogre morale, always shaky, should be rolled regularly; any time combat ensues with the players, roll a d20 and subtract the number of characters at full health. A roll of 5 or less will result in half of the attacking group fleeing immediately.

Quagmire settled his troop in a broken vale outside of Thorny Hollow. This swampy region is a damp, inhospitable place. Thick bramble and old trees mingle in twisting gullies with pools of sludge and rancid water. Insects and reptiles abound, pestering any who become lost there. Quagmire named the vale the Flies Den and built a fortified encampment there. A small cleft, hidden by vines and brush, slices into the rear cliff of the Den. There, Gristlebones resides.

GILLIAM

Gilliam has only recently returned to Quagmire's side. Having learned of the sapling's transportation through the forest, he seeks to garner the aid of the troll lord in capturing the sapling and selling it to the highest bidder. Gilliam is unaware of Gristlebones's designs. Quagmire, however knows Gilliam's motives. Quagmire plans a joint lordship over the Darkenfold between himself and Gristlebones. He will use Gilliam's cunning to achieve it, and then he will turn on Gilliam. For more details on Gilliam, see *The Flies Den* below.

CORRUPTING THE SAPLING

The sapling must grow at the feet of Gristlebones for seven days before it will meld with the old tree. After two weeks, the sapling will die if pulled from the ground. However, the sapling must remain undisturbed for a full month before Gristlebones gains complete control. In order to rescue the sapling after the melding has begun, the characters must destroy Gristlebones and rehabilitate the Hollow.

TRAVEL IN THE DARKENFOLD

The two roads through the Darkenfold offer comparatively easy travel. Leaving the roads, however, invites danger. Numerous animal and brigand paths crisscross the forest. These notorious trails end suddenly or lead travelers into the depths of the forest, where they become lost.

The Castle Keeper should take into account the old- and young-growth forest. Along the Darkenfold's edges, where the tree line meets either the plains, the Rhodope Mountains, the Shelves of the Mist or the Soup Marsh, the forest is a mixed tangle of undergrowth and young trees. Travel there is drastically reduced. Branches and briars inflict numerous cuts and scraps and offer continuous annoyance to those heavily armored.

Once past the forest's edges, the old growth offers easier travel. The large trees are spaced far apart and have long since choked out any undergrowth. Here, the ground is not affected by the sun. Moss grows in abundance, and small pools of water are common. The air is cool and fresh, the ground moist. Even so, the inexperienced can easily become lost. The nature of the forest does not change, offering few land marks and the whole of it seems to stretch on forever with few discernible trails.

The Mortality of Green is an overland adventure. There are several days of travel between encounter areas, and the Castle Keeper should keep this in mind. The time is necessary for the characters to have a chance to recover hit points and spells. To maintain the high pace of the pursuit, however, the Castle Keeper should not hesitate to have Quagmire's minions, or other creatures of the Castle Keeper's choosing, ambush the party. This will keep the party on its toes and help maintain the fever of the chase.

WANDERING MONSTERS

The Darkenfold is deep and wild. There are many creatures, other than those mentioned, that live in the forest. The Castle Keeper should check for wandering monsters whether the characters are off trail or on the road. Only near Ends Meet are encounters unlikely. The Castle Keeper should be careful, however, because the pursuit of Quagmire is no easy task, and the addition of too many wandering monsters could seriously slow or cripple the flow of the game. Encounters should be rolled on a d12 six times during the day and six at night. A one on a d12 signifies an encounter.

TABLE 1: ENCOUNTERS IN THE DARKENFOLD

D10	ENCOUNTER
1	Ungern (see below)
2	Hill Giant
3	Human (see below)
4	Will-O-Wisp
5	Wild animal (see below)
6	Spider, medium 1-4
7	Horntooth's band
8	Orcs
9	Exotic (see below)
10	Dark faerie. See <i>Gilliam</i> , below, for an example of this creature)

A human encounter consists of either a ranger, a villager or evil brigands. A ranger openly offers his aid as a guide. A villager requires a substantial reward and flees at the first sign of trouble. Brigands are always encountered in groups of two to eight and judge the relative strength of the party and attack only if a reasonable chance of success exists. Otherwise, they run away.

RANGER, Human (CG Medium Human): HD1d10 (HP 6), AC 13, Mv 30ft. Str 14 (+2) Dex 12 (+1) Con 16 (+3) Int 10 Wis 12 (+1) Cha 10. Perception 11. Studded Leather armor. Longsword 1d8+2 slashing. Shortbow 1d6+1 piercing. 8sp in pouch.

VILLAGER, Human (NG Medium Human): HD1d4 (HP 5), AC 10, Mv 30ft. Str 12 (+1) Dex 10 Con 14 (+2) Int 10 Wis 12 (+1) Cha 10. Perception 11. Knife 1d4 piercing. 6sp in pouch.

BANDIT, Human (CN Medium Human): HD1d6 (HP 5), AC 13, Mv 30ft. Str 12 (+1) Dex 14 (+2) Con 12 (+1) Int 10 Wis 10 (+1) Cha 10. Perception 10. Leather armor. Shortsword 1d6+1 piercing. Light Crossbow 1d8+2 piercing. 8sp in pouch.

UNGERN (LE Medium humanoids) HP 16 (HD 2d8+6), AC 15, Spd 30ft. Str 18 Dex 11 Con 16 Int 10 Wis 14 Cha 9. Perception 12 (+2). Stealth +8, Claws +6 (1d4+4), Gore +6 (1d8+4), scimitar +6 (1d6+4), longbow +3 (1d8+4, 150/400). SA Able Tactician (advantage on attack rolls if 5' from ally), Multiattack (claws, sword, gore); darkvision 60ft, Spell resistance, camouflage (Advantage on Stealth), master archer (advantage on ranged attacks, add str bonus to damage) Immune to cold.

TABLE 2: WILD ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS

D12	ENCOUNTER
1	Wild boar (1-4)
2	Deer (1-6)
3	Giant Lizard

4	Wolf
5	Bear, brown
6	Giant snake
7	Lynx
8	Wolf
9	Giant Frog
10	Giant Rat (1-10)
11	Mountain Lion (only on the east bank of the Mistbane)
12	Alligator (near river or stream, the bottoms)

EXOTIC ENCOUNTERS

The Castle Keeper can choose from any number of mythical creatures, such as a unicorn, sprite or dryad. Such an encounter can be used by the Castle Keeper to guide the party back onto the trail if they become lost.

UPON THE WESTERLING

GREENBRIAR VILLAGE

The party arrives at Greenbriar from the east, via the Old Post Road. Greenbriar is a well-known town as it is one of the few towns in the Darkenfold. Populated predominately by humans, it is a community that survives through farming, a little animal husbandry and living off the bounty of the forest. Her folk are hardy, stout people. They are generally leery of strangers, but they are welcoming and friendly to those whom they know or whom they believe bring them no harm or foul play. They are religious folk, all adhering to the worship of the Great Tree, and they hold their forest to be one with the Eastern Wood, the Eldwood. They have concourse with the rangers of the Ranger's Knot and the druids in the Order of the Oak.

Greenbriar consists of several dozen close knit houses, an inn, the Long House and a large communal barn. They have cleared the forest for several acres around their town and cultivate potatoes, carrots and other small yield crops. They free range small herds of hogs and a few cattle.

They have no militia to speak of, generally relying on their forestry skills to keep them safe. There are plenty of dogs about the town that give warning should the need arise. Their houses are stout affairs of thick wood, plastered with waddle. They lock their doors at night and rarely open them for anyone. They all have cellars in which they hide in times of danger, or if the threat is overwhelming, they flee into the woods and scatter, hoping that the Great Tree will look after them.

Lately, their herds have been thinned by Quagmire, whose rogue band has begun preying on the town. They have sent messages to the Rangers of the Knot calling for assistance, and though the rangers have come, they have not managed to deter or defeat Quagmire.

THE THICKET

The “Thicket,” as the locals call it, lies to the north and east of Greenbriar and runs the length and breadth of a deep basin, along the west bank of the Westerling River. The Patch is a vast, deep, tall thicket of blackberry bush with accompanying briars and in all comprises about twenty square miles of the forest. This river often spills into the basin, making the ground there soft and spongy, perfect for the interweaving limbs of the native brush. Few animals live here: only birds, mice, shrews and the like, as well as fox, bobcats, rabbits and small deer.

Movement through the Thicket is almost impossible unless one knows the trails. The trails themselves are generally small animal tracks and not passable by humans. Certainly those in heavy armor or carrying large packs are going to find movement tremendously difficult, as the tangled mess of limbs and thorns catch onto almost everything. At best, movement in the Thicket is about two miles a day.

The folk of Greenbriar have prepared the Thicket as a safe haven and flee there when faced with overwhelming danger. They have stored several large caches of food, beer, clothing, weapons and other supplies to meet any needs they may have. These are kept in small beaver-like dwellings built in the heart of the Thicket by weaving the longer branches of the blackberry brush together.

ARRIVING IN GREENBRIAR

When traveling through the Darkenfold, read or paraphrase the following:

The Darkenfold eaves have long blanketed you in a sea of green. The tangles and briars of the forest’s edge have given way to the rough roads of the hinterland. Giant trees with huge boles tower above you, cloaking you in a leafy mantle. The shadows cast by their broad expanse leave the ground beneath dark and moist. The road is rough and little used but affords easy movement through the forest and allows you to keep your direction, for the trees to the left and right grow with marked similarity across rolling broken ground. To leave the road would invite aimless travel and certain danger. You know from tales that these woods are the haunts of the famous Quagmire, a merciless rogue troll lord who, over his long career, has left a trail of death and destruction behind him.

It has been a long journey from the eastern edge of the forest to Greenbriar. As the party approaches the village, they are greeted by the smell of burning wood.

Rounding a bend in the road, you come to a small stone bridge spanning the river Westerling. Your dry mouths water at the thought of the famous Long House Tavern that lies in the little village of Greenbriar. As you cross the bridge however, you see the smoking remains of the village.

The Long House and several small cottages are blackened heaps. Clouds of smoke float lazily about, and an acrid

stench hangs over the smoldering ruins of the once happy village. There are no villagers in sight. What you do see captures your breath and quickens your pulse. Six large worgs are sniffing about in the ruins. Two seem particularly bent on getting under an overturned cart.

Quagmire attacked Greenbriar the previous night. He employed almost his entire band, desperate to capture the tree. Cornelius the druid was staying at the Long House tavern. The townsfolk failed to organize a defense, and so Quagmire’s attack on the town caught them, not unaware, but certainly off guard, and many of the folk were killed, just as others were scattered. They sacked the town, and Quagmire stole the sapling and is already several hours on the trail, headed for the Flies Den. Gilliam and the worgs have remained behind to scrounge for “leftovers.”

The town is not utterly destroyed, for many of the houses are in fact still intact. Their thatch roofs are gone, burnt partially or entirely, but the walls are stout, and largely due to the damp from the fairly wet rainy season the Darkenfold has experienced, they survived the various fires. The fences for crops, too, are still intact, as is the bridge and the one stone building, the Friar’s House.

The town is empty, and the people who escaped, about sixty or so of the inhabitants, have fled into the Thicket north and east of town. Here, they have many hidden trails and stores of food and goods to survive for many days. They are presently, as the characters move into the town, covering their tracks in case the troll lord should pursue them. A ranger may attempt to track the townsfolk, but this should be discouraged by the Castle Keeper as it takes the characters away from the pursuit of the troll. If they insist, a successful DC 19 Wisdom (survival) or Intelligence (investigation) check is needed to follow the carefully hidden tracks. .

WORGs (NE large monstrosity) HP 26 (HD 4d10+4), AC 13, Spd 50ft. Str 16 Dex 13 Con 13 Int 7 Wis 11 Cha 8.



Perception 19(+4/adv.), darkvision 60ft. Bite +5 (2d6+3). Keen senses (Advantage on Perception), trip (on successful bite, victim knocked prone; Str DC 13 neg.)

GILLIAM (CE small fey) HP 24 (HD 4d6+4), AC 13, Spd 30ft. Str 10 Dex 15 (+3) Con 12 (+1) Int 16 (+3) Wis 14 (+2) Cha 8 (-1). Perception 12. Saves: Dex +5, Int +5, Wis +4. Advantage on saves against magic/spells. Darkvision 60ft. No armor. Mace 1d6+3 bludgeoning. Dagger 1d4+3 piercing plus 1d4 poison on failed DC 15 Constitution save. SA: Camouflage (advantage on stealth rolls in natural environment); Spell-like abilities (Int) Save DC 13, Attack +5: (1/day): Dancing Lights, Daylight, Dominate Beast, Entangle, Faerie Fire, Fog Cloud, Hypnotism, Light, Minor Illusion, Obscuring Mist, Pass without Trace, Poison Food/Drink (See **New Spells**), Warp Wood (See **New Spells**). (2/day): Polymorph Self.

Dark Fairies take many shapes and forms. Generally, they are small, winged creatures with mottled, dark green skin. Frequently, they take the shape of deformed gnomes. They are outcasts from the land of Fairy, and for this reason, they hate beauty of any sort. Dark fairies have a hatred, which borders on fear, of birds. Why this is, no one knows. They work to undo all that is good in the world, and they long for the return of Unklar and the Age of Winter's Dark.

Dark fairies rarely stand and fight unless they feel that they have a better than average chance of overcoming the enemy. They prefer hit-and-run tactics that keep an enemy unbalanced, gradually weakening them until chances of a successful attack improve.

Unless the party takes extraordinary precautions they are spotted by Gilliam, who takes cover as the party crosses the bridge. The worgs are busy trying to root out the wounded Cornelius, who has crawled under a cart for safety.

The party notices Gilliam on a successful DC 18 Wisdom (perception) check. If the party surprises the worgs and attacks them, the remaining worgs flee south after Quagmire (unless the leader is killed). If the worgs are not surprised, they attempt to drive off the party. If they become out-matched, they will flee. The worgs that manage to escape immediately return to Quagmire, and if the wolf leader is alive, it relates the party's existence to him. Gilliam will not fight but instead uses his power to escape into the forest.

Once you scatter the worgs and determine that the village is secure, you are drawn to the cart by a moaning voice. A quick investigation reveals a heavily wounded man lying underneath the overturned cart. His white robes are torn and soiled. His hand futilely clutches a scrap of parchment.

The man is the druid Cornelius the White, messenger of the Order of the Oak, who was entrusted with delivering the sapling to the Rangers of the Knot. He is grievously wounded. He pleads with the party to listen to him:

"Time is pressing," he explains. "A troll has stolen my charge, the sapling, an offspring of the Great Tree. You have no doubt heard of Quagmire - a foul beastly troll who has stalked these woods for many a year. He is evil and powerful and commands a large following of rogue ogres and brigands. Worse still, Quagmire leagues with that vile and nefarious orc Shaman, Mrodox. Together, they shall unmake us all. Their evil knows no bounds, and if they plant the sapling and raise it to their own wicked intent, then the Darkenfold, the whole of this wondrous forest, will, in time, be corrupted. They will turn it into something altogether unspeakable. They will destroy all that is good here."

Coughing a little, he continues, his strength almost spent: "I do most earnestly plead with you to take up the trail of the fiend, recapture the tree, and deliver it to the kind folk of Ends Meet and the noble Rangers of the Knot. Beware of Quagmire, for he is quick-witted and tricky, and he will destroy you if he may." He struggles some, a look of despair in his eyes, and says, "I thought it best to disguise myself as a mendicant, thinking only that the beastly creature would stalk no mere wandering vagabond. But I was found out, discovered by some darker magic I did not think the troll commanded. Take this charge, but be wary!"

Cornelius desperately urges the piece of parchment toward anyone in the party.

Unto Cornelius the White,

Written this first day of the high year. As you know, the Darkenfold is an ancient wood, wondrous deep, which we have long intended to bring into the safe keeping of our order. It is with glad tidings that we announce our successful discovery of a band of rangers who have gathered in those fell woods at the village of Ends Meet. So, we bid you hasten down the Old Post Road, bring yourself and your charge, the young sapling, to the village, and deliver it up to the ranger's safekeeping.

Be wary on the road, for it is known that Quagmire the troll has settled in the southern wood, and his evil deeds are well known to all. If he were to gain the sapling, he could influence the Great Tree itself, and this would be an incomprehensible disaster.

This mission is of great importance, for the forest is in desperate need of our aid. Protect the young sprout with all your power, for the loss of the sapling is unthinkable. It is young yet and unrooted, so it would be easy for any who possess it to turn it to his own designs. We bid you take care and have caution of strangers on the road, for we have not the strength to rescue the sapling should you fail.

*Hradoth Lothian
Lord Protector of the Eldwood
The High Council,
Order of the Oak*

If questioned about why he took the sapling on his own, he explains that his escort left him the previous evening, as the

village seemed safe enough. His escort to Ends Meet will not arrive for some days.

The party, particularly a ranger or druid, should be encouraged to heed Cornelius's plea for aid. Any good character should feel a sense of duty toward the fallen druid and for the captured sapling. They should be made to understand the consequences of the seed of the Great Tree being turned to evil. If, however, the party seems reluctant to pursue the giant, the Castle Keeper should hint that Quagmire's band is rumored to possess a large treasure trove which includes magical items.

If the party heals Cornelius, he will insist on going to Ends Meet to notify the rangers of the knot. He will join the party if they need him and send the rangers news by some other means (*Speak with Animals* for instance). The Castle Keeper should only allow Cornelius to join the party if they party is not very strong and needs the extra body. Otherwise, using Cornelius as an active NPC runs the risk of interfering with the players.

CORNELIUS, *Druid (NG Medium Human)*: HD3d6+9 (HP 21), AC 13, Mv 30ft. Str 14 (+2) Dex 17 (+1) Con 15 (+3) Int 15 Wis 15 (+1) Cha 10. Perception 11. Leather armor +1. Staff 1d6+2 bludgeoning. May cast the following as 3rd level *Druid*: *Mending*, *Thorn Whip*, *Cure Wounds*, *Speak with Animals*, *Locate Animals or Plants*, *Speak with Plants*

At this point, the party has two choices. They can take up the trail left by Quagmire and his band, or they can continue along the Old Post Road to Ends Meet. If the latter is chosen, Quagmire's trail grows cold over the four-day journey from

Greenbriar to Ends Meet. Once in Ends Meet, if the party informs the villagers of their intent to rescue the sapling, they are offered whatever food and supplies they need (within reason, as any attempt to overburden the tiny community will make the inhabitants unruly and not very helpful). The rangers offer a guide, but he will only be able to navigate the center part of the forest, having no knowledge of its southern stretches.

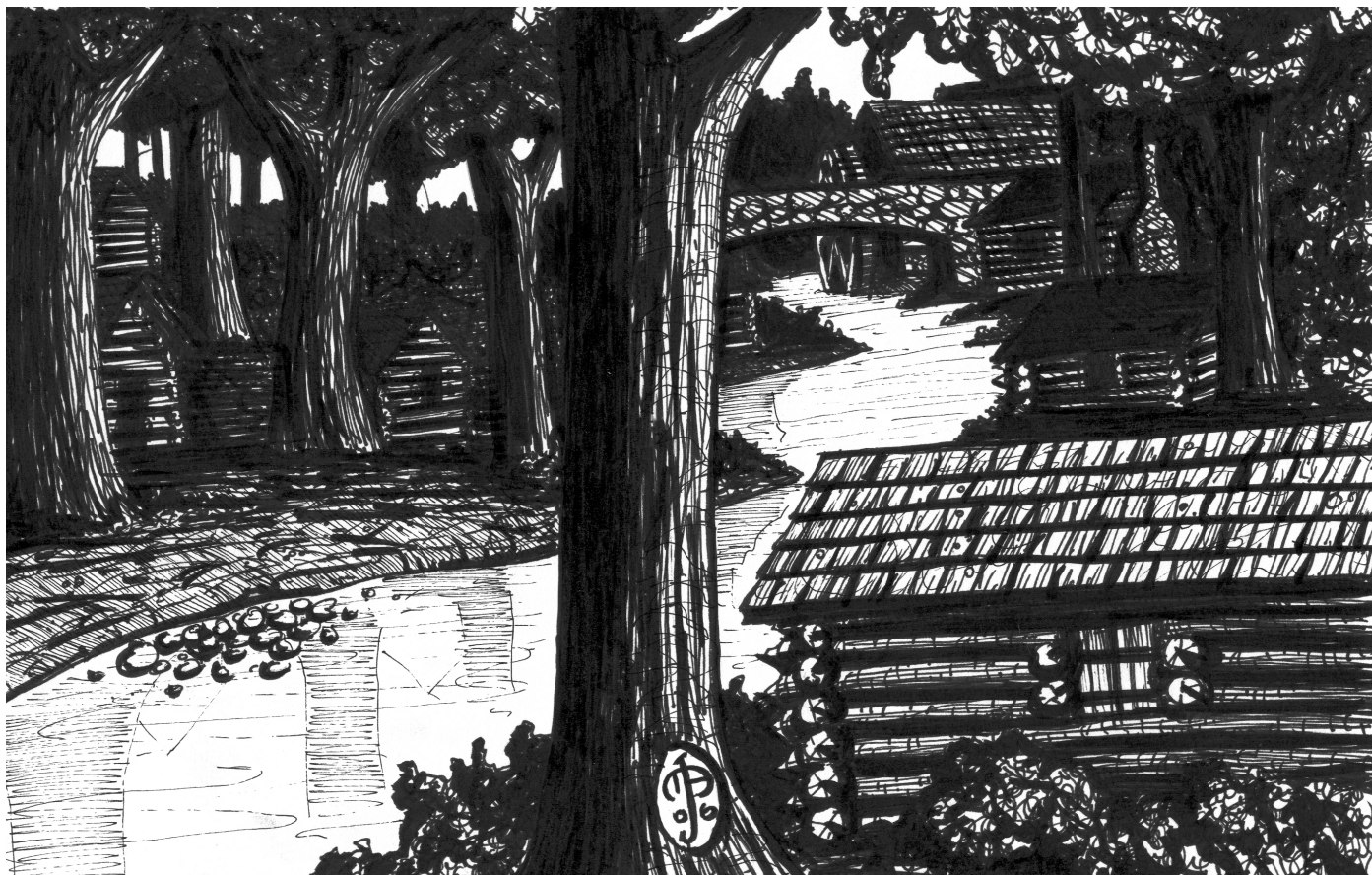
The Castle Keeper should strongly encourage the players to immediately take up the trail and to use Ends Meet as a recuperating area only. If they pick up the trail, skip the section titled "Ends Meet" and go directly to "The Pursuit."

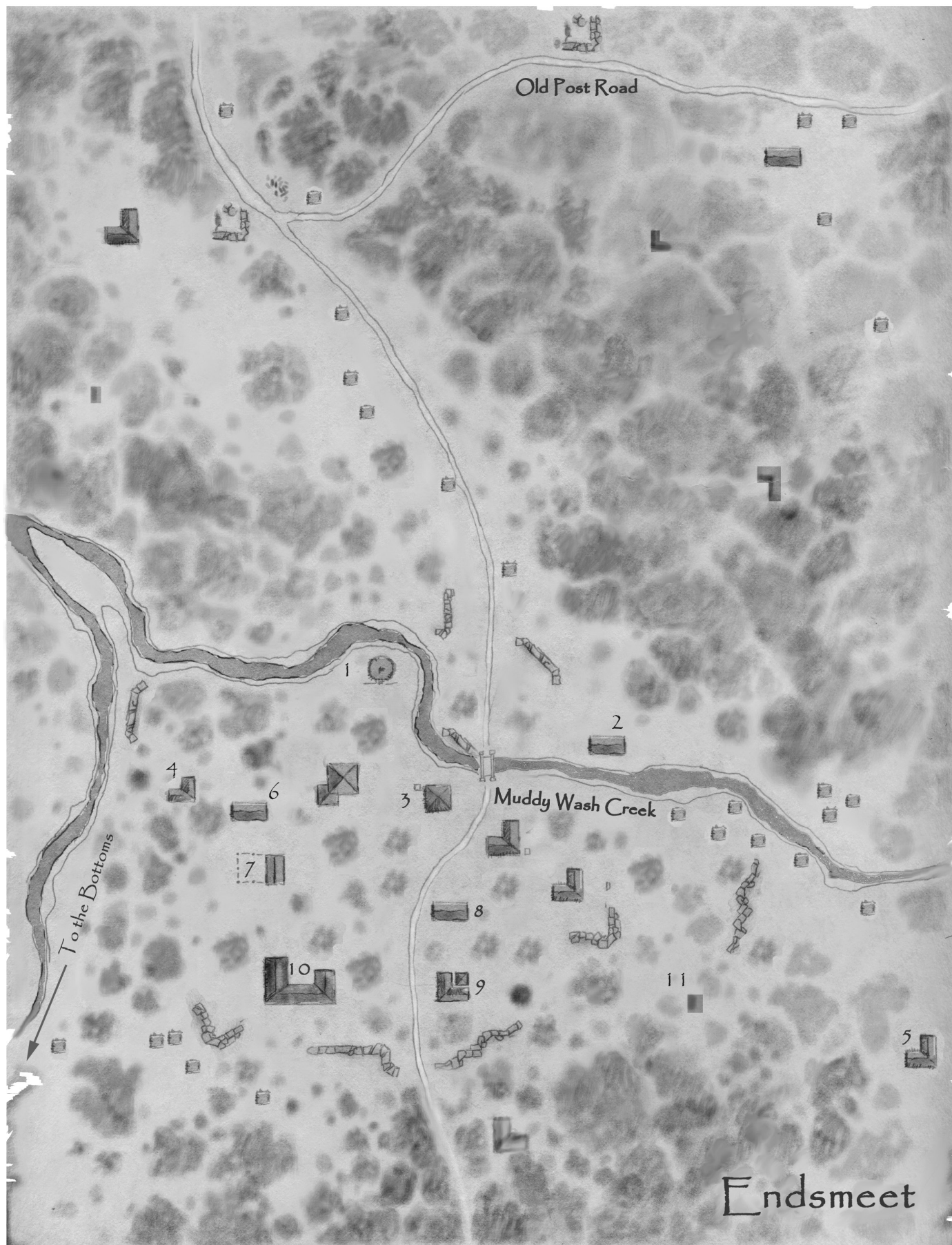
ENDS MEET

It is roughly fifty miles from Greenbriar to Ends Meet. The track is relatively easy to find, saddling the Old Post Road as it does. Given fair weather, a stout party should be able to make about twelve miles a day. In places, the Old Post Road is very visible.

If, by chance, the characters come to Ends Meet from another direction, the description below is roughly the same. In any event, the trip to the village should not be a terribly easy one and should be fraught with danger. At least one encounter, regardless of the roll of the dice, should occur and the paths traveled made to seem alive with 'eyes in the night.' Their arrival at Ends Meet should be one of open relief that they have at last arrived in civilized country.

The scent of fresh baked bread becomes heavy in the air as you tramp along. The dark overhang and the gloomy





forest give way to the quiet houses of Ends Meet. Nestled in the forest, behind an old moss-covered wall, the town seems to blend with the trees in comforting shades of green and brown. Solid wooden cabins with high roofs, open windows and open doors promise a comfort you have not felt in days. The village is clean and orderly. Deep green grass grows along the road and footpaths which lead to various doorsteps. The hedges are thick and lush and, in places, mingle with the overhanging branches of oak trees. Where the forest ends and village begins is confusing. A small bridge crosses a creek which flows through the town, and as you cross it, a few inhabitants come out and watch. On the other side of the creek stands a very large building, the Cockleburrr Inn and Tavern.

The small village of Ends Meet is located a few hundred yards south of where the Old Post Road crosses the Southern Way. Not so very long ago, the village sprawled along the road, north to the crossing and even beyond. But recent years have seen the village shrink in size so that it is technically no longer where 'ends meet' but rather where ends once met. The village now consists of several dozen houses built close together along the road and others nestled deeper in the forest. The remains of an old stone wall mark the southern edge of town, but the wall is so disused that many of the rocks have gone into local chimneys. The houses are low, thick-beamed structures with wooden shingle roofs. Heavy shutters and doors help keep out creatures of the night. Ends Meet is a clean and simple town where the people live in relative peace with the forest. There is a mill house, not really usable anymore, and though the old water wheel still turns, there is little now left to grind. There is a small general store, a tanner's shop, blacksmith and the well-known inn and tavern. A small creek, the Muddy Wash, crosses the road and runs through the town. A small bridge arcs over it.

The inhabitants of Ends Meet are a peculiar bunch. The town is far from any beaten path. No caravans, no armies, no patrols, wandering knights or wizards make their way to western eaves of the Darkenfold. There is nothing there, or so all are led to believe. But what does attract the few visitors and those who choose to stay is the quiet. Ends Meet is the end of the road. It is where a weary traveler can find repose, where none would think to look for him or her and where none would ask questions. Consequently, several of the inhabitants are very powerful and known adventurers (not known in Ends Meet, obviously). They are retired, of course, and have little intent to rouse themselves from their retirement unless the village itself comes under direct attack. Beyond these few, most of the folk here are stout, sturdy hands who have long grown accustomed to the harsh world within which they live. Like the folk of Greenbriar, they are friendly but cautious. They help travelers, but only after they have learned their quality.

AREA 1 THE OLD MILL

The Old Mill is built in a crook of the Muddy Wash. It once housed the good family Olthorp, Willep, Windy and their six children. They ground rock to gravel for the engineers who worked so hard on the Old Post Road. When that business dried

up, it was used to grind meal, but this did not last long as the arable land in and around Ends Meet is scant. Eventually, the Olthorp's six children left Ends Meet for greener pastures to the north, and after Windy Olthorp was killed by wolves, Willep went mad.

Old Man Olthorp lived in the Mill for many years, mad as a hatter, until a beam from the collapsing top floor fell and crushed him. He lay there for several days before he was discovered. And by that time, the crows had eaten a goodly portion of him. He was buried in the cemetery by his friend Otto Wagner. To this day, his grave is easily discerned by the number of black-hearted birds that gather in and around his marker.

The Mill itself is still in fair condition. The top floor has collapsed, the ruins of which lay all about the Mill and in the Muddy Wash. But the remaining two floors are in good shape. They have not been occupied since Willep Olthorp's death. It is largely empty, a few sacks of gravel, old barrels and whatnot occupy the main grinding room, and the second floor has a few odd and end tools on it. The adjoining one room house is empty, given that Old Man Willep burned most of what he owned after Windy was killed.

If the characters were to occupy the Mill, no one would question it nor really care. Some, like Otto, would encourage them to restart the Mill and perhaps bring a little bit of life back to the little village on the Wash.

AREA 2 THE TANNER

Closer to the bridge, a tanner and his family live. The Merridoos, Luth and Olivia, are an elderly couple who make a fair living off the rangers who come in to have all manner of leather garments made or repaired. They are friendly people and welcome strangers who appear honest. Olivia is quite a drinker and was no doubt a looker in her day. She is forever at the Cockleburrr, drinking the brew of the master and flirting with travelers. Luth is far more serious and rarely drinks much, and as soon as he sees his wife heading 'down river' (as he calls it), he meanders on home.

AREA 3 THE WEAVER

The weaver's clan is the largest family in Ends Meet. Sporting fourteen children, Igrus is forever bragging about his oldest daughter, who went away as a soldier to the wars in the east. She never returned. They make a good living trading their skills in repairing clothes or spinning new material for the town and the rangers.

AREA 4 THE STUMP

This squalid hole is located in the bottom floor of a split level house, built on the side of a hill on the west side of town. Entering from the front, one feels as if he is entering a one story home, but the rickety steps lead him down to the bottom floor where the tavern is. The tavern room is a foul place and reeks of stale urine and rotten food. It is dark and dingy with all manner of scraps of garbage lying about. Bones, broken barrels, glass and other junk lie about in no discernible order. The bar is a few

planks of wood held up by rocks on either end. The whole affair is a nasty, dank, disgusting hole in the ground.

The owner is Asey "Pick Axe" Ficke. Asey is squirrely-looking man who always wears loose shirts and knickers. He is always barefoot. An unassuming dagger hangs at his side. He sports an old wound on his leg, which forces him to hobble around on a terrible limp. If asked, he'll call himself 'gimped' by an orc's cleaver: "Not so many years ago, that rummage sale of a brigand gimped me with a meat cleaver. Took all the muscle from my bone and left me for the crows. But no Mill Right am I, I dragged myself back here, and El and Ut sewed me back up!"

El and Ut are his two employees. El is a lanky man with no remarkable visage, being plain in all respects. He is quiet and never talks as his tongue was cut out by goblins some years before. His wife, Ut, is a brutish woman about 6' 4" weighing in at about 260 lbs. She is not fat but is rather large, her hands are massive, as are her arms and legs, waist and hips. She is hairy as well, having the hairiest knuckles in town. She is always wearing a bloodstained smock. The bloodstains range from the old rusty colored to the fresh. Asey owns a number of pigs, and she slaughters them for meat to sell to the villagers.

Asey is a murderous cutthroat and is in league with most of the tribes of humanoids in the region. He has little truck with Quagmire or Horntooth, but he is good friends with the evil faerie Coalen Ferril, a barghest of unusually mean and nasty temperament.

ASEY (CE Human Rogue 5) HP 32 (HD 5d8+5), AC 15, Spd 30ft. Str 8 Dex 15 Con 12 Int 10 Wis 13 Cha 10. Perception 13(+3). Acrobatics +6, Sleight of Hand +4, Stealth +6. Sv: Dex +4, Int +2. Pickaxe +8 (1d6+2). SA Sneak Attack +1d6, Cant, Cunning Action, Fast Hands, Second-Story Work. He wears +1 leather armor and wields a +3 pick axe in battle. Asey has a pile of gold, silver and other coin hidden beneath the rocky column of the bar counter. Within are 642sp, 384gp, 31pp and a bag of 5 10gp gems He also has a wand of color spray and a +2 battle axe.)

UT, Female Ogre (CE Large Giant) HP 59 (HD 7d10+21), AC 11, Spd 40. Str 19 Dex 8 Con 16 Int 5 Wis 7 Cha 7. Perception 8 (-2). Great club +6 (2d8+4). SA darkvision 60ft.

EL (N Medium Human): HD1d8 (HP 4), AC 10, Mv 30ft. Str 10 Dex 10 Con 10 Int 10 Wis 10 Cha 10. Perception 10. Knife or hand axe +2 (1d4). SA None.

Asey has only recently met with Omas, and he knows of the party's imminent arrival. The two of them have hatched a plot to trap the party and kill and rob them. This adventure is a sideshow to the main adventure, and the Castle Keeper should only use it to flesh out an evening's play or after the party has rescued or failed to rescue the sapling. For further information on the trap, see Gnome Berries below.

AREA 5 MANOR HOUSE

A small path leads off the main road, heading east. It is lined with old willow trees, the branches of which sway

gently to and fro, casting about in their struggle to reach the ground. A goal both close yet so very far away. The lane ends in a wide clearing dominated by a small hill and two giant chestnut trees, beneath the broad leaves of which stands an old, three-story, stone building. It has a wide veranda, though the porch roof has fallen in, and most of the one-time pillars lie in ruin in the deep green grass. Dark, hollow apertures serve the building as windows. Two each flank the front door, and five run the length of the second, though there are only two on the third. They are broad, with sills, but for the middle second floor window, which has a balcony. The whole facade of the building is covered with vines, and brush grows along the length of the building's foundation.

This is a manor once owned by a prosperous trader and his family, the Craddocks. Thom and his wife, Loretta, had two beautiful daughters, Jill and Karen. The whole family was well liked in Ends Meet and known to many in the areas about, humans, elves, gnomes and the like. They had business in both Greenbriar to the east and Alice to the south. Tragedy struck when the elder girl, Jill, reached maturity at sixteen. While traveling with her father to Alice they were waylaid on the road by a small band of wood elves, whose chief had long been enamored of the girl. In the ensuing argument, Thom was slain and Jill carried off into the woods, never to be seen again. Karen, fourteen at the time, took up her father's arms and set off into the wood to find her sister's kidnappers. For many months, she wandered the forest path, so long that most thought she was lost. But she returned with no news of her sister and in time only to bury her mother. For, after Karen's departure, Loretta lost her mind and ran the length of the road from Ends Meet to Alice in her evening gown. Once there, she threw herself off the rocky bluffs south of that place and died.

Karen is seen in town from time to time. She is twenty-four now and is well known for her fiery red hair, beautiful form and fierce visage. She hates wood elves with a passion, is well versed in all the lore of the forest and will offer some aid to the party if they request it. There is a one in twenty chance that she will be in town, and if so, she is always at the Manor House.

The Manor House itself is filled with beautiful, if old, furniture that is largely undisturbed. It is locked though easily accessed as the windows are long since broken, shutters rotted away and whatnot. The roof is intact but leaks horribly. Where it does leak, the floors are rotted and furniture ruined. No one plunders the house nor occupies it in fear of rousing the animosity of Karen.

KAREN (CG Human Ranger 6) HP 61 (HD 8d10+16), AC 17, Spd 30ft. Str 16 Dex 17 Con 15 Int 13 Wis 12 Cha 9. Perception 15(+4). Athletics +6, Nature +4, Stealth +7, Survival +7. Sv: Str +6, Dex +7. Longsword +8 (1d10+7), Longbow +7 (1d8+4; 150ft/600ft). SA Favored Enemy (Orcs, Ungern), Natural Explorer, Dueling, Colossus Slayer (+1d8 if enemy below hp max; 1/turn), Primeval Awareness, Extra Attack, Multiattack Defense (+4 AC vs. creatures with multiattack), land's stride (pass difficult terrain effortlessly, ad-

vantage vs. enchanted snares). Spellcasting: 1-level (4 slots) – Cure Wounds, Ensnaring Strike, Hunter's Mark; 2-level (3 slots) – Cordon of Arrows, Spike Growth. She wears +1 chain mail and wields a +1 longsword or a +3 elven bow. Karen has little wealth, leaving wealth where she finds it. Aside from her magical weapons, she has a pair of boots of elven kind, 12 +1 arrows, 24 normal arrows, long dirk and a small harp.

AREA 6 GENERAL STORE

This is a long, narrow building. It is Ends Meet's only general store and grocer. Owned and operated by Charl Sands, it has most of the supplies adventurers need: food, flasks, rope, spikes, poles, packs, clothes, boots, etc. He has some weapons, though not many, and very little armor, though he does have a few iron and wooden shields. Sands is a reasonable man and will take trade goods for payment. His prices are fair and are the same as the listed prices.

He has lived his whole life in Ends Meet and is well acquainted with all the town's history, gossip and the like. He is talkative and will join anyone for a drink at the Cocklebur, and he isn't shy about inviting people to his table to share in his goodwill. If, by chance, one of the characters should query him about the town of Alice, he'll remark, "Ah, thrice-cursed Alice - now that's a town of ghosts and weirds." For more on Alice, see The Magic of Alice below.

AREA 7 A FRIAR'S HOUSE AND CHURCH

This small stone building is much like the one found in Greenbriar. It is dedicated to the worship of St. Luther and was built sometime during the latter years of the Winter Dark Wars. It is now occupied by three acolytes and one priest of that religion. They offer the party what help they can, in the guise of healing, food, holy water, etc., so long as the party is good and can bring them some outside news of the Kingdom of Kayomar or the lands to the east.

AREA 8 HERBALIST

This small, one-room shack is owned by Ennith. She is a young woman of some passing beauty who trades in herbs, spices, ointments and the like. She is a morose woman and is often in Gaitlun the dwarf's company, drinking or eating with him. She is well versed in all the forest's growth and its ability to hurt or help someone, and the shack is filled to overflowing with jars, bags and boxes filled with her concoctions. She will sell items for a fair price to strangers who are of a good alignment or who at least seem to be helping the forest. A salve, able to heal 1-2 hit points generally costs 10gp. Other requests should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis by the Castle Keeper.

Ennith is, in fact, a dryad whose tree was killed by Mrodex and his band of orcs some years before they joined Quagmire. She was found and nursed back to health by the dwarf Gaitlun. She found some solace in Ends Meet, where no questions were asked of her, nor demands made. Few, if any, know what she really is, but some, like Otto, suspect. If she learns the party is hunting Quagmire and his orcs, she will offer any aid she may without charge.

AREA 9 GAITLUN'S HOUSE

By the southern wall, along its eastern edges lies a low, long stone house with a shingled roof. The shingles are peculiar to Ends Meet as they are green, slate and imported from the town of Frieberg many hundreds of miles to the east. There is almost always a smoke rising from the building's centrally located chimney, and the grounds about the house are filled with all manner of broken, half-repaired equipment from plows to wagon wheels, hammers to hoes, axes and so on.

This is the home of the dwarf Gaitlun, a smith by trade, but one who only sets his skills to items beyond repair. Gaitlun is an unassuming though stout dwarf whose most distinguished features lie in his blackened fingers, for he is ever at the forge.

His is friendly and welcomes company. He brews his own beer, though he is often at the Cocklebur to enjoy pint after pint of his good friend's "masterful brew," as he calls it. He regales any who will lend an ear with all manner of stories about the days of his youth when he adventured across the wide world and fought in the long wars of the Winter Dark. His tales are outlandish and involve all manner of magical items, treasures, and wild monsters, as well as kings, princes and wizards of immense reputation.

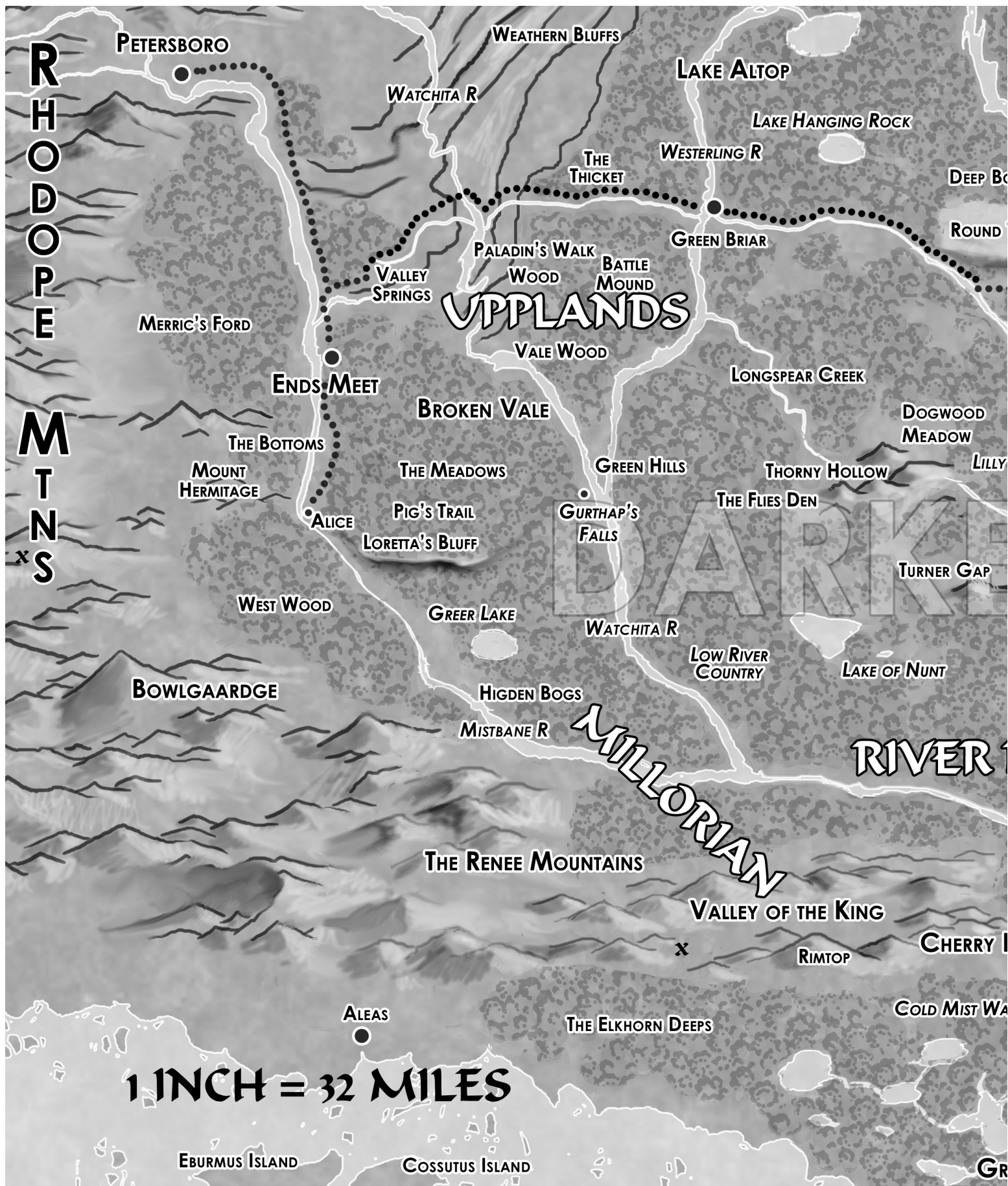
Whether true or not only Gaitlun will tell, but any who spend any amount of time with him cannot help but to recognize in him an unknown quality and a bearing that makes him seem fearless and powerful beyond measure. He is a masterful smith, and there is no item, magical or mundane that he cannot repair.

NOTE FOR THE WORLD OF AIHRDE: Gaitlun is the Val Tulumph (lesser god) Dolgan. For more on Dolgan see The Codex of Aihilde.

AREA 10 THE COCKLEBURR INN AND TAVERN

Ends Meet's most famous inhabitant, known even in the plains of Kayomar, is Otto Wagner, owner and proprietor of the Cocklebur Inn and Tavern. He is a jolly fellow who came to Ends Meet years ago, or so the locals say, after quitting a mercenary troop which served in the far off lands of Aachen. His beer is famous for its stout taste and flavor. "I never liked a Beer I couldn't chew!" he has been known to say. He welcomes any and all to his tavern, charging a fair price for room and board. He has outbuildings for rent, but the tavern floor serves for most folk, who pay three silver to curl up in front of the great fire.

OTTO (LG Human Fighter 10) HP 76 (HD 10d10+20), AC 18, Spd 30ft. Str 18 Dex 10 Con 15 Int 10 Wis 11 Cha 10. Perception 12 (+2). Athletics +5. Sv: Str, Con. Broadsword +11 (1d8 +6). Multiattack (2 sword attacks), second wind, action surge, indomitable, protection, improved critical, remarkable athlete, dueling. He wears +1 splint mail and wields a +2 broadsword. Otto has a stash of gold, ranging anywhere from 220gp to 300gp that he keeps hidden in the brick facing behind the main hall's fire place. He uses this money to help those in need. Otto serves as the de facto mayor of Ends Meet.





The tavern is a large, open affair able to sit a good hundred souls, though it is never so full. A small host of pillars are ranged evenly about the great hall, holding up a large wooden ceiling. The walls are stone and crafted well so that the room is warm in the winter and cool in the summer. Several large fire pits are in the room's center, and several fireplaces line the walls. Food is always being cooked in one, several or all of the fireplaces, and patrons partake of a communal board that is some of the best in the lands. Meats, breads, cheese, fruits, nuts and the like abound. It is a warm and friendly place.

The tavern is mostly frequented by settlers and travelers, or adventurers out to earn a name. Occasionally, a wood elf comes in to sing and dance and enjoy the more mundane company of humans. The Rangers of the Knot occasionally stop by.

Presently, two rangers are at the tavern, Athryn and his brother Andace.

ATHRYN (CG Human Ranger 5) HP 38 (HD 5d10+10), AC 14, Spd 30ft. Str 16 Dex 14 Con 15 Int 14 Wis 13 Cha 9. Perception 15(+4). Athletics +6, Nature +4, Stealth +7, Survival +7. Sv: Str +6, Dex +7. Batrile axe +6 (1d8+3), Longbow +8 (1d8+4; 150ft/600ft). SA Favored Enemy (Orcs, Ungern), Natural Explorer, Dueling, Colossus Slayer (+1d8 if enemy below hp max; 1/turn), Primeval Awareness, Extra Attack. Spellcasting: 1-level (4 slots) – Cure Wounds, Ensnaring Strike, Hunter's Mark; 2-level (2 slots) – Spike Growth. He wears +1 leather and wields a +2 longbow and a normal battleaxe. He has 14gp he keeps in a belt pouch.

ANDACE (Andace has the same stats as Athryn, but wears leather armor for AC 13, and an enchanted ring of speed for Move of 40ft. He has a +2 short sword (+8 to hit; 1d6+5), a horned bow (+6 to hit; 1d8) with 12 arrows and a belt pouch with 5gp.)

They are anxiously awaiting the arrival of Cornelius and the sapling. Because the druid is late, the brothers are very nervous.

AREA 11 THE SMITHY

Ends Meet sports a blacksmith shop owned by Benjamin and his wife, Katrina. They live and work about a half mile beyond the southern wall. They are kindly people and work most jobs brought to them. Benjamin is a good smith for armor and weapons. He does not compete with Gaitlun because the dwarf, obviously a vastly superior smith, does not take common jobs but only those that Benjamin cannot fix.

BENJAMIN (NG Human Fighter 8) HP 62 (HD 8d10+16), AC 19, Spd 30ft. Str 17 Dex 10 Con 15 Int 10 Wis 11 Cha 10. Perception 12 (+2). Athletics +5. Sv: Str, Con. Longsword +9 (1d8 +4). Multiattack (2 sword attacks), second wind, action surge, indomitable, protection, improved critical, remarkable athlete. He wears +1 chain mail and carries a +1 shield. In combat he wields a +1 longsword. Benjamin serves as the sheriff of Ends Meet.

THE VILLAGE

The remaining villagers make their living from the forest. There are about fifty or so occupied houses, and the folk are, like most folk, of varying quality. Some are kind and helpful, others unassuming, while some still are gullible and others mean-spirited folk. In all there are about 300-350 people living in and around Ends Meet.

HARBINGERS OF DOOM

When the party arrives with news of the burning of Greenbriar, word spreads quickly, and the folk of Ends Meet gather in the tavern. Everyone is anxious to hear about the town. When the party speaks of the brutal attack, the townsfolk are stunned.

Athryn immediately dispatches Andace to gather the other rangers for an attack on the troll. He also turns to the party for aid and tries to convince them to return to Greenbriar and pick up the trail. If the party is reluctant, he drops hints of Quagmire's treasure and, if needed, offers them 100 golden crowns apiece.

If the party unselfishly offers aid, the villagers of Ends Meet help to the best of their ability. They offer to provide free room and board at the tavern, to repair any damaged equipment and to aid them with guides. But if the party demands ransom in exchange for aid, there will be little forthcoming from the villagers.

If the party continues the adventure, the Castle Keeper should proceed to *The Pursuit* below. The only alteration is the passage of the time it takes to travel to and from Ends Meet.

GNOME BERRIES

Asey "Pick Axe" has plotted with the evil faerie Coalen Ferril, a barghest, to trap, kill and devour any interlopers in the area, in this case, the party. If any of the characters wander into the stump, Asey offers them a round, charging them the necessary copper. He lets them talk a bit but, after a spell, inquires about their purpose. He really doesn't care why they are in town. It is probably obvious that they are wandering adventurers. As soon as there is an opportunity, he pitches them his line:

"I figured you as the type who'd bold the dangers of the forest for wealth and fame. And it seems only the blessing of the great druid have brought you here to me, 'cause I'm privy to a bit of information that we all might use and benefit from."

If the party is interested, he continues.

"You see, these hills used to be crawling with gnomes. They had villages all about these woods, and they mined various and sundries for the horned one's folks and had quite a bit of traffic with them. 'Course, they're all gone now, scattered to gods know what winds, some's kilt and others drug off to the horned one's pits and what have you. Folks hereabouts have always said those little fellers left behind them all manner of hidden gems of treasure, buried here and there and hidden under whatever guise they could lay on it."

"Well, it just so happens that Ut over there," he says, jutting his thumb at the large woman, *"found herself a piece of mapping, half*

eaten by one of her pigs. You see, they get out from time to time and wander about, and being pigs, they eat almost anything. Well, as she was tramping about looking for them, she heard some barking, and being a bit concerned, she followed the noise until she found its source. Seems one of her sows had found an old gnome's body in the grass and was chomping away at it - the poor fellow's dog was just a barking away and biting at the pig's ear! Ut clubbed the dog and sent it into the woods and knocked the pig off the little guy. She tells me that she saw some paper hanging out the pig's mouth, and she snatched it up as it might give the pig the squirts, and when I found her, she was still clutching it - the map that is, not the pig. Well, long story short, it was a map to a well wherein it seems was hidden a box of coin and some type of magical gem. Leastwise, that's what I made of it.

"Here's my proposition! I'll give you directions to this well, and you can have all the coin, but I want that gem. What do you say?"

If the party agrees, Asey gives them very simple directions:

"Exit out the back door here and head down the slope until you get to the creek. When you find the creek, hang a left, going south, and follow it until you get to the Bottoms... a swampy, wet country. There, you'll find an old pile of bones, and next to the bones lies the foundation of an old stone building, a gnome building. In the center is a dry well. Crawl down the well, and you'll find a tunnel that leads to the treasure."

If pressed about the map he'll confess that he doesn't know if it's true or not, only that the characters would have to find out. If asked why he doesn't go himself, he goes on about his being gimped by the orc (see above). If asked about the map, he'll say the following: "That old sow Ut got mad at my ogling that map day after day and snatched it up and ate it herself!"

The story is not entirely false. Ut had found a map on a dead gnome, and Asey took it from her, but later she took it back and she ate it. Asey figured out the directions and where it led, as he knows the country well. He took Ut and another mercenary thief like himself and went down to the Bottoms only to be set upon by the barghest, Ferril. Asey managed to save his life by sacrificing the mercenary and striking a bargain with the barghest. In exchange for his life, he would send unwary souls down to the creature to be killed and eaten. In turn, Ferril offered him whatever treasure such victims might have. Asey never found out about the map or the gnome treasure, as he doesn't read gnome in the least. He has no idea what, if anything, is at the bottom of that well. He suspects that it's nothing, as the gnome was poor, and there is nothing to indicate that he had any wealth. He believes the gnome was returning home and never made it. Any kind of *Detect Thoughts* spell, Wisdom (insight) check, or other means of lie detection reveal no deception.

The directions he gives the party are valid and do lead, after a two-day journey, to the well. A simple two-hour walk down the back hill leads the party out of Ends Meet to Fair Weather Creek, a small foot-wide affair. Heading south through rather difficult country brings the party, after a good twelve-mile hike, to an open glade about four acres wide and long. The glade is

open and grassy, but the ground is soggy, and passage through it, though not impossible, is difficult. These are the Bottoms, and in the middle of them, stark and gleaming white, is a large pile of bones. These are the bones of Ferril's victims, some hundred lost souls - humans, gnomes, orcs, goblins and the like. Next to the bone pile lie the ruins of an old building, almost all gone but for the large foundation stones.

Ferril begins stalking the party as soon as they leave the Stump. He keeps a good distance between himself and the party. He endeavors to force them to arrive at the Bottoms at around dusk. He will use his *Hallucinatory Terrain*, if need be, to affect this.

Ferril lives in a nest he's built himself in one of the nearby trees, a particularly large elm tree with broad leaves. He watches the glade constantly, waiting for victims that his ally sends him. He is an old barghest and hungry, as his meals are few and far between. Once the party gets within a mile of the Bottoms, he moves in a wide arc around them, arriving at the bone pile long before the party. He takes the shape of a wounded dog.

Your feet sink into the soggy muck as you come up to the building's foundations. But even as you spot the well, you see a dog stumble out from around the bones, covered in muck. Its staggering about. It seems quite wounded. The old hound limps and hobbles over to you.

Ferril attempts to maintain the deception as long as possible, even staying with the party for several hours if need be; however, at the first real opportunity, Ferril uses *Polymorph* to change back to his original form and attempts to grab one of the party members and *Tree Stride* back to his nest. The nest is actually easy enough to find, particularly if there is a character in the nest being devoured! Any determined search is successful on a successful DC 10 Wisdom (survival) check.

FERRIL, BARGHEST (LE Medium Fiend): HD6d8+6 (HP 37), AC 15, Mv 30ft. Str 17 (+3) Dex 15 (+2) Con 13 (+1) Int 15 (+3) Wis 14 (+2) Cha 14 (+2). Saves: Str +6, Dex +5, Wis +6. Perception 15 (+5), Stealth +5, Survival +5. Multiattack: Bite 2d6+3 piercing and Claw 1d8+3 slashing. Multiattack (2 claws and bite), Change Shape (goblin or wolf), Consume soul (those killed can't be raised), feed (gain 1 HD/3 victims killed), Pass without trace (wolf form), Spell-like abilities (Save DC 15). At will—change self, levitate, minor illusion, misdirection; 1/day—charm monster, dimension door, fear.

He has no treasure, as he allows Asey to take whatever of value there is, so long as Asey continues to send him victims. See *Area 4 The Stump* above for Asey's treasure.

Ironically, there is a treasure in the bottom of the well. If the party explores the dry well, a successful DC 10 Wisdom (perception) check reveals a small stone lined alcove with an iron lock box in it. The box is locked but not trapped and contains three horns. Two are normal hunting horns, well crafted and worth about 15gp apiece. The third is a *Horn of Fog* (see **Appendix C: New Magic Items**).

THE MAGIC OF ALICE

The town of Alice lies on the Southern Way, where that rough road crosses the Pigs Trail, built on some low-lying bluffs. A small town on the edge of the world, Alice was founded by woodsmen who migrated from Ends Meet with the purpose of removing themselves even further from civilization. The town thrived for some years, boasting an inn, a store, and other shops and a population of over a hundred souls. But it was not meant to be, for a series of tragic events robbed it of any future.

The first curse that befell the town came in the guise of Loretta Craddock, who upon the loss of her husband and daughters went mad. Early one morning, the folk of Alice were brought from their cozy beds by a wild-pitched screaming. They soon discovered Loretta standing in the middle of the town, singing in a high tone songs of the Winter Dark Wars. Before anyone could do anything, she fled to the bluffs and threw herself over. Soon thereafter, the town's main well dried up. Folk had to go down to the creek at the foot of "Loretta's Bluff" to gather their water, and many tales were told of encountering the ghost of that poor woman.

The second curse arrived some years later, after many folk had already left. An old, foul-smelling, evil-tempered harpy nested in the forest nearby. Too old to do anything but crone her curses at the villagers, and too clever to be easily caught, she harassed the folk of Alice for months. She was at last dispensed with by a well-placed can of nails, thrown by Charl Sands (see *Area 6 The General Store* above), that clocked her in the head and knocked her from her perch. She fell dead as a doornail into the town's communal cow pen. But her stink and disease caused all the cows to die within a fortnight. The ground all about was forever after a haven to a foul breed of huge blood worms.

The third curse that sent the last remaining folk to greener pastures occurred on a late winter's eve. An unusually harsh winter brought uncommon amounts of snow to Alice and the surrounding forest, and the village suffered for the want of ready water and stores of food. In the midst of this suffering, a sleigh came to town, arriving from the south. It was seemingly laden with all manner of good food and drink. In truth, it was sent from Lilly Fair, where the Unseelie Court ruled. These dark fey drew forth the folk from Alice and ensorcelled them so that they fled into the winter's wilderness and died or came to the doors of Ends Meet, half frozen and out of their minds (Charl Sands was one of the latter).

That last stroke proved the fatal blow to Alice, and it stood a ghost town ever after. There are some three dozen houses, cottages and barns still standing, though many of these are in ruins. Few go to Alice, for the belief that the land is held by the folk of Lilly Fair is strong, and all put credence to the ghost of Loretta's bluff, the blood worms and all the other myriad haunts that remain.

For a full treatment of Alice see *Shades of Mist*.

THE PURSUIT

If the group immediately pursues Quagmire, the Castle Keeper should remember that Gilliam is listening not far off. He

will linger in the vicinity long enough to discover the party's intentions and then, as soon as opportunity allows, move off to warn Quagmire. He knows this part of the forest, as well as the troll's plan of flight.

Gilliam's knowledge and his thieving skills give him an increased chance to circumvent the party and thereby warn the giant. If the party is actively searching the battlefield, they can spot him on a successful DC 15 Wisdom (perception) check. If Gilliam is discovered, he will attempt to escape by plying his thieving abilities and minor magic as best he can.

In any event, Quagmire has a half-day lead on the party. From Greenbriar the trip to the Flies Den takes five days overland or three days by canoe on the Westerling River and Longspear Creek. Quagmire leads his troop south along the banks of the Westerling. He makes little attempt to disguise his trail. Any one with minor tracking skills can follow the troll lord and his band on a successful DC 10 Wisdom (survival) check.

You pick up the trail just south of town. It hints of a large party, roughly 20 or so, some larger than others. It dips beneath the forest eves and leads you deeper into the Darkenfold.

Quagmire pushes his troop hard. By midnight of the first day, he reaches the Mound (see map). If Gilliam and the worgs fail to return by early morning, Quagmire becomes suspicious. If they do escape the party, they meet up with the troll at the Battle Mound. Whether alerted by Gilliam and the worgs or not, Quagmire becomes nervous and lays a trap for any pursuers.

Once the trap is set (see *The Battle Mound* below), Quagmire heads south to the Westerling. There, he retrieves canoes and sets off downstream. He takes the Longspear Creek, going upriver. It is a day-long journey by canoe to Mauser's Ridge. There, he rests his troop. At dawn, he leads his troop on the short half-day journey to the Flies Den. It should take the troll three days to arrive at his lair.

The travel through the forest is hard, with twisting roots, tangling branches, and no clear path, only that stamped out by Quagmire. There are innumerable insects to plague the party and the overall darkness that lies beneath the trees to dampen their spirits.

THE BATTLE MOUND

The Westerling River, widened to thirty yards, spills into a broad valley filled with bramble and a thick copse of maple trees. The river coils to the south and west. The trail turns from the river bank to the valley's center. As you approach, the trees give way to a wide clearing dominated by a hill sized mound of earth, no doubt some long forgotten battle mound. The tracks lead to the mound's crest. Once there, you see the expanse of the valley as it cuts through the forest. A meadow of gentle grass and wild flowers stands in stark contrast to the forested valley to the left and right. The open sun is warm and bright, lifting spirits dampened by the

forest's dark. The Westerling River continues in a south westerly direction but then forks. The smaller fork, still twenty yards wide, flows into a gully and turns off to the southeast.

At the Mound, Quagmire divided his force. The main group, under his leadership, took canoes and continued down the Longspear Creek. Three canoes are left hidden between the forks of the two rivers assuming the character go south along the river. They are not well hidden (discoverable on a successful DC 10 Intelligence (investigation) or Wisdom (perception) check). The smaller force, consisting of ungern and any remaining worgs, hid the signs of Quagmire's exit by canoe. They then took cover beneath the trees on the southern edge of the clearing.

Quagmire has directed them to lead any pursuit into the central forest near the Broken Vale. There, an old adversary of Quagmire's, Horntooth the goblin, resides with a large band of miscreant goblins. The ungern are to lead the party into Horntooth's lair and hopefully either the party, Horntooth's band, or both will be slain.

The mound itself is actually a mass grave dug at the height of the Winter Dark Wars. Here, the Holy Defenders of the Flame fought a troop of giants, orcs and ungern. In the battle's aftermath, the knights buried the fallen beneath the mound. A great deal of wealth was left behind. If the battle mound is searched, old equipment, arms and armor will be found. In addition, roll a d8; on a roll of 1, the characters will stumble across some type of treasure. If this occurs, roll on the following table:

TABLE 7: ITEMS FOUND

D10	ITEM
1	luck stone pendent (See New Magic Items)
2	flask with orc skrun (revitalizes and adds 1hp when fully consumed)
3	a potion of healing (2d4+2)
4	a pouch with 2-20 gold
5	a gold ring, worth 25 gold
6	a silver dagger
7	a silver long sword
8	a chalice worth 75 gold
9	+1 spear
10	+1 crowbill, mace, hammer or morningstar

While any character can find the canoes described above, a skilled ranger finding the canoes may attempt to make a successful DC 15 Wisdom (survival) or Intelligence (investigation) check to discover signs of travel on the creek, revealing Quagmire's ruse as well as the troll's route.

NOTE: If the party was successful on the earlier check, the party can follow Quagmire instead of the Ungern. They lose the trail, however, as soon as they get on the southern end of the Battle

Mound, as the trail ends in the water. The raiders mounted canoes and set off downstream, and Quagmire did not follow the Westerling River south, but instead followed the Longspear Creek.

Upon spying the party, the hidden ungern move south along the banks of the Westerling in an attempt to lead the party to Broken Vale, Horntooth's lair. They make an obvious trail to draw the party after them. It is a two-day journey to the Vale, and the ungern will use the worgs to bait the party into following them.

South of the battle mound, you spy a worg lurking in the brush. Upon seeing you, it howls and barks and gnashes its teeth but suddenly turns and dashes into the forest. Following the beast, you find an obvious trail and you head along the banks of the Westerling River once again. As before, the troll has made little attempt at hiding his tracks. The forest becomes thicker and more tangled as you leave the old growth and journey into marshy land. Briars and bramble catch at your clothes and tangle in your equipment. Insects begin to hound you. The trail wanders into the depths of the Darkenfold.

Upon the trail, less than a mile from the Battle Mound, the party comes across a crude sign nailed to a tree. It reads:

Cowards

abandan yu chase of us

yu cannot have the tree

try and yu die

With a DC 10 Wisdom (survival) Check, a PC may notices that the number of the band has changed. They can of course back track and attempt to discover the other, real trail.

In any event the ungern move ahead of them and the worgs flank the party at all times, though keeping a good distance.

THE FISHERMAN

The trail leads deeper into the forest. With darkness approaching, the party is becoming exhausted.

As the party moves further south, the forest becomes more inhospitable. The bramble grows thick and the trail hard to follow. Though they rarely see them, they know the worgs dog their every step. They weave in and out of the brush, following trails unseen and bark to one another. As evening comes, the dark trees become darker still, and the forest seems to crowd them, herding them along to an uncertain doom. Eerie howls echo from the gloom. Stumbling along the trail, they see little that would serve as a suitable camp site. The bramble is too thick, the briars too plentiful. Clouds of mosquitoes join them and hound them mercilessly.

As your frustration grows, you are stricken by the smell of fire and cooking fish. A moment later, you spy a small flickering light just off the path. Peering into the gloom, you see an ancient, gnarled oak leaning over the mouth

of a small burbling creek; its bark, blackened with age, is chipped and hangs loosely upon its bole. The light, that of a small campfire, is at its feet. The smell of burnt fish fills the air.

This is the home of Ian the gnome, the Fisherman. Ian is old beyond reckoning; he claims to have been born in the Days before Days. He is mad beyond his years.

Ian lives in the Darkenfold beneath an oak which was once a sentient but has long since settled into that state of dormancy which comes to those creatures before death. Ian has burrowed a hole beneath the tree, the entrance to which lies underneath the creek. He does not invite anyone into his home, as that is where he hordes his prized treasure - bits of spice stolen from the elves. If he is threatened, he dives into the creek immediately and swims to the underwater entrance. It is impossible to pass through and survive, as there are too many twists and narrows to cross through before one emerges into the actual den.

But few would know that he has a home other than that around the mouth of the creek and the old oak, for there, all manner of equipment lay scattered about. Most of it is useless, and that which has any value is somehow related to cooking. For Ian loves cooking almost as much as he loves fish, and Ian loves fish. He is even now cooking a skillet full of his day's catch. There are bags of half-eaten fish all around his tree, hanging in the tree, piled on the ground at the foot of the tree and otherwise thrown haphazardly about.

As you approach the fire, you spy a tiny man, a gnome, crouched over the flickering flames. He is sallow with a broad face, wide deep eyes and thin lips. He is naked but for a long orange hat placed haphazardly upon his head. He holds a skillet over the fire, and the fish within are swimming in butter and sizzle and pop, emitting a mouth-watering smell. He looks up at you and beckons you over with a wave of his hand. "Come, come," his gravely voice shouts to you. "Come in to join me! Would ye be wantin' some fish to eats?"

Ian welcomes the party and offers them all manner of fish: cooked, half cooked or raw. He talks incessantly, only pausing long enough to breathe. He is constantly talking, the stream of babble having little of value to it, unless one were inclined to come to terms with three dozen ways to cook a wide-mouthed bass caught on a maple sprig with bear gut for string. If the characters interject, then he waits for a moment and starts speaking again. He will not stop talking so long as there is fish to eat. Only when the last of his intended meal is devoured will he cease his inane babble.

Any mention of the sapling will bring him up short. Once the tree is mentioned, however, his demeanor changes, and he becomes serious. He stops his babble then and remarks:

"Nie, 'tis not my business what ye do with your time, but ye've taken up a goodly quest indeed. Loss of the stripling tree would be dire. The frost of the Winter's Dark would return to the forest, and all would be frozen in time, as it was under the horned one. For ye see that the

troll has darker allies than some fool orcs. He's bound himself to the service of an ancient and altogether evil tree, called in your tongue Gristlebones. This malevolent creature has sat in the forest deeps for untold years, brooding on the evil that was and the evil he will be. With the sapling, he'll be able to rule over the forest whole and maybe even beyond.

"But I say you're headed in the wrong but right direction. The troll lord and Gristlebones dwell to the east. Where you're bound is to the lair of Horntooth the goblin. A crafty fellow this one, but he hates the troll more than all other things and would see the troll killed and the Gristlebones cut to the root! So follow these fool worgs and their black masters to the lair of the Horntooth and see what right you can make of this wrong!"

Ian gives little more in the ways of information. He's grown tired and wishes to eat more fish. Besides, he is mad and cannot keep his mind focused on any one subject for very long. So he commences to babble about his fish - catching his fish, cooking his fish and eating his fish. He offers the party use of the glade as a campsite. After eating, he will dive into the creek, go beneath the bank and into his lair. He will not come out until the party leaves.

Ian will use a *Misty Step* spell - the only magical power left to him - if attacked. He has nothing of value but for the fish about his hole.

IAN THE FISHERMAN (CN Gnome): HD1d8+1 (HP 5), AC 10, Mv 30ft. Str 10 (+0) Dex 12 (+1) Con 12 (+1) Int 8 (-1) Wis 10 (+0) Cha 8 (-1). Perception 10. Survival +2. No armor. Multiattack: Bite 1d4+1 pierce and Claw 1d4+1 slashing. Spell-like abilities (Wis) Save DC 10, Attack +2: (1/day): *Misty Step*

BROKEN VALE

The ungern are well acquainted with Horntooth and are familiar with the surrounding area. After leading the party through the forest for two days, they hide a short distance from Horntooth's lair and wait for the party's arrival. Once the party moves into sight, they rush the party in a false attack before turning and fleeing. As they run, they spread out to make themselves difficult targets. They flee toward Horntooth with the party hot on their heels. Even if the party does not follow, the ungern warn Horntooth of the danger.

Horntooth is no fool, and he prizes his life above everything. He has been at odds with Quagmire on a number of occasions and hates the troll. He immediately suspects the ungern's motives. This does not, however, remove the threat which the party poses. So he will raise his band for battle.

If the opportunity presents itself, Horntooth tries to make a deal with the party.

The fleeing ungern and worgs lead you into a dense part of the forest. The tangled underbrush slows your movement. The ground begins to slope, and the briars become even thicker. As your frustration mounts,

you break into a large clearing where a warren of small, interconnected mud and grass huts greets your astonished gaze. The ungern are plain to see, conversing with a small humanoid carrying a short horn bow. His skin, as green as the leaves around him, is covered in blue tattoos. He wears a dark red hat, a shirt of mesh chain and curled boots. A black crow flaps around him, cawing at your presence. Slowly, the creature turns to you, peering at you with pale yellow eyes. Obviously, you have been led into a trap, a goblin warren!

Horntooth's clan consists of thirty-one goblins and five wild boars. All thirty-one goblins will not be at the lair. A dozen goblins and two boars are out raiding or hunting. Horntooth and his goblins will flee into the surrounding woods to regroup. Due to their small size and knowledge of the area, the brush does not impede their movement. Once regrouped, the goblins watch the party to see what they do and if it comes to battle they harass the party under the cover of night and attempt to steal from them or overtake them. Three of the wild boars always stay with Horntooth.

Horntooth should be played carefully. He speaks the Vulgate, or common tongue of men, and if given the opportunity, he will parlay. He instantly suspected that the ungern were leading the party to him on purpose, and this has roused his anger. He is intelligent and does not want to lose his band.

Horntooth can be bought off and will offer his assistance against the troll. He knows about the Hollow where Gristlebones is rooted. He also knows a secret way into the Hollow which circumvents the Flies Den. Horntooth will supply guides or give directions to the secret entrance for a substantial reward or for part of the troll's treasure.

Passage through Broken Vale is difficult. The undergrowth is thick and entangling. Unless a druid is able to help the party through the tangle, their movement will be halved (except for elves) and the goblins will receive a +1 on their surprise roles.

The ungern do not remain to learn the outcome of the encounter. They head to the Pigs Trail, which leads to the Flies Den. It is a two-day journey along the Pigs Trail to Quagmire's lair.

HORNTTOOTH *Goblin (LE small humanoid):* HP 18 (HD 3d6+6), AC 16, Spd 30ft. Str 12 (+1) Dex 16 (+3) Con 14 (+2) Int 8 (-1) Wis 10 Cha 8 (-1). Perception 10. Darkvision 60ft. Leather Armor and Shield. Stealth +6. +2 Longbow 1d8+3 piercing. Handaxe 1d6+1 slashing. +1 Dagger 1d4+1 piercing. Treasure: 350gp, 5x gems 25gp each, 600sp, +2 Longbow, 3 scrolls (Cure Wounds (2nd level), Lightning Bolt (3rd level; Save DC 15), Spiritual Weapon (2nd level; Save DC 13)).

Goblins (71) *(LE small humanoid):* HP 7 (HD 2d6), AC 15, Spd 30ft. Str 8 Dex 14 Con 10 Int 10 Wis 8 Cha 8. Perception 9. Stealth +6. Scimitar +4 (1d6+2) or shortbow +4 (1d6+2). SA: disengage or hide.



In battle, the goblins use darts, small crossbows and blowguns to harass an enemy. At close quarters, they use knives, axes and short swords. They will harass an enemy until they overcome them or drive them out of the Vale. At no time will the goblins stand and suffer losses. If some become bottled up, their comrades desert them. If Horntooth is killed, the goblins scatter. They fight using hit-and-run tactics and prefer to catch their victims in the open. There is nothing in the village they will die to defend.

WILD BOAR (5) *(NE medium beast):* HP 11 (HD 2d8+2), AC 11 (natural armor), Spd 40ft. Str 13 (+1) Dex 11 Con 12 (+1) Int 2 (-4) Wis 9 (-1) Cha 5 (-3). Perception 9. Tusk 1d6+1 slashing.

THE PIGS TRAIL

Regardless of the outcome of the encounter with Horntooth, the tracks of the ungern lead to the Pigs Trail. Any ranger can pick up the trail on a successful DC 10 Wisdom (survival) check if need be, or Horntooth may have told them where to go.

Having dealt with the goblins, you pick up the trail south of the goblin lair. Here, a narrow foot path leads you into the dense undergrowth to which you have become accustomed. You follow the path as it winds along the edge of a broken cliff. Trees have grown up around the cliff, from crevices, and along the edge. Bravely, you follow the easily discernible tracks before you.

The Pigs Trail is an east-west trail in the southern part of the Darkenfold. The path is narrow and skirts the edge of a broken cliff. The party must travel single file. It stretches from the Southern Way near Alice, through the Broken Vale, crosses both rivers north of Gurthap Falls, and on to the Flies Den (see map for details). In the Vale, the Pigs Trail offers many places for an ambush, because the thick undergrowth crowds the path enough to allow even a large creature to hide almost completely unnoticed.

Once the trail winds into Green Hill, the forest becomes old growth, and the underbrush almost completely disappears. Travel is much easier, and the party can spread out as they wish.

If still alive, the ugnern take less than two days to reach the Flies Den. They rest only a few hours during the height of the day, and they make no effort to disguise their trail. Any remaining worgs lag behind and watch for signs of pursuit. Upon sighting the party, the worgs slip back to Quagmire. To keep the party on their toes, the Castle Keeper should allow one of the party members to spot a worg as it flees into the woods. Due to their speed and agility in the difficult terrain, pursuit and capture of the worgs is impossible.

The party, however, will take four days, three if they force march, to arrive at the Flies Den. Unless forewarned, or they are cautious, they unknowingly enter Quagmire's lair. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (survival) check will reveal an increased amount of foot traffic and refuse and should alert the party.

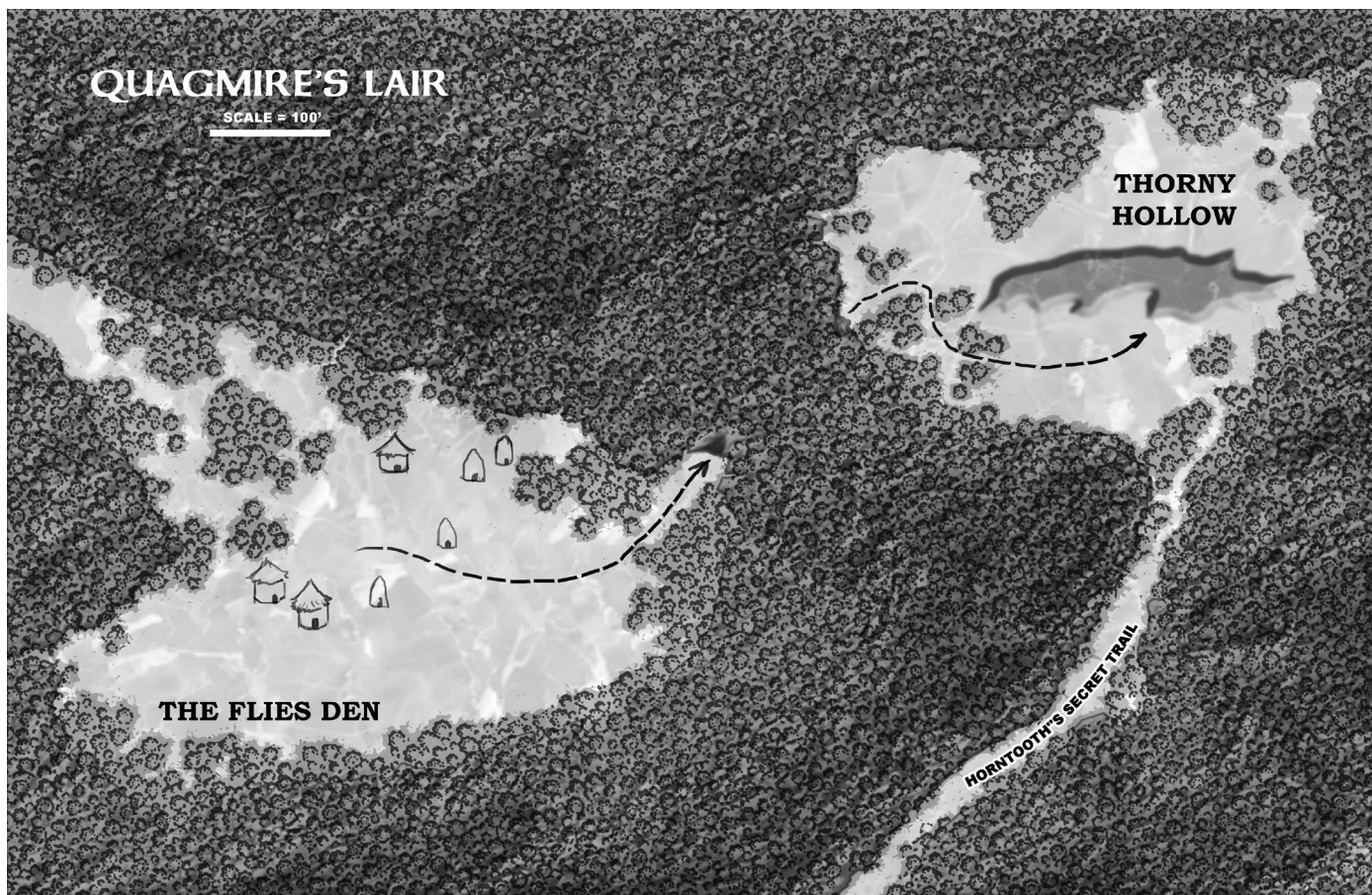
NOTE: If the Players take Horntooth's secret trail, skip over to "The Hollow" below.

FLIES DEN

The trail curves into a valley of broken cliffs, thick with gnarled black-jack oak trees. The twisted, rigid branches snatch at you, grabbing your clothing as you pass down the trail. Soon, you are greeted with the foul stench of rotting meat, something beyond a simple animal carcass, and an unpleasant flutter takes hold of your gut. Footprints, garbage, discarded bones, and trees hewed by wickedly notched blades evidence obvious signs of passage. A pasty yellow light trickles through the overhanging branches. The sunlight does little to break the gloom. The valley stretches on into the distance, which is noticeable only as a dip in the forest. Thick growth and high bluffs belie any effort at finding another entrance. Everything is quiet.

Quagmire chose his den well. The valley has only two entrances—one in the west, where the party enters, and one in the east. The valley walls consist of steep cliffs and a thick tangle of trees and brush cultivated to keep out wandering monsters. These effectively bar the players from entering outside of magical means. A creek bubbles up in the valley's center, giving Quagmire fresh water. Though no traps are placed at the valley's door, Quagmire always keeps the entrance watched.

The Valley is about two miles long and ends in the Flies Den and Thorny Hollow.



Unless all the unger and worgs were killed, Quagmire is forewarned and has increased his watch. Gilliam lies under some rocks with four ogres hidden in the trees a hundred yards behind him at the entrance of the valley. The worgs, if any remain, have been placed outside the valley, to come at the dark faerie's call. If the party enters the valley, Gilliam will spring upon them at its entrance. At his call, the ogres and worgs emerge and rush into the fray. The worgs reach Gilliam in two rounds and the ogres in three.

Gilliam is a foul-looking faerie, gnome-like in appearance. A plague scarred his already ugly face when he was a child. He covers his unkempt armor in a mangy, once white, goatskin vest, the dirt and smell of which match the dirt and smell of Gilliam himself. His hair is orange and hangs about him in greasy curls, and his beard is spiked into two forks. Gilliam is a rogue but very skilled in combat. His great speed allows him to use two weapons without penalty. He wields a mace and poisoned dagger.

Gilliam, next to the unger, is Quagmire's most loyal follower. He serves the troll lord without question, and unless he is in some manner ensorcelled, he cannot be convinced to turn on the troll.

Gilliam possesses a general knowledge of the forest, in addition to an intimate knowledge of the Flies Den and Quagmire's band. He has no love for Mrodox or the orcs and little compassion for the ogres. He respects the unger only for the sake of Quagmire. He cares little what happens to the sapling. Gilliam will attack elves, gnomes, and halflings first because, like all dark faeries, he possesses a passionate hatred of these races.

Gilliam fights to the death out of loyalty to Quagmire. The ogres and worgs, however, will break and run if the fight seems to be going against them.

The entrance to the Valley is too far away from the Flies Den and any sounds of battle are lost on Quagmire.

OGRE (4) (CE large giant): HP 59 (HD 7d10+21), AC 11 (hide armor), Spd 40ft. Str 19 (+4) Dex 8 (-1) Con 16 (+3) Int 5 (-3) Wis 7 (-2) Cha 7 (-2). Perception 8. Darkvision 60ft. Club 2d8+4 bludgeoning. Boulders (range 100ft) 2d8 bludgeoning. Treasure: 120gp, 300sp, necklace 150gp,

QUAGMIRE'S LAST STAND

If the characters defeat Gilliam and the guards, they can move unwatched across the Valley floor to the thick copse of trees that house Quagmire's lair, the Flies Den. Quagmire is both confident his henchmen will hold the pass and quite enamored with his new charge, the sapling. Gristlebones has also turned himself away from the forest by bending his mind upon the little tree recently planted at his feet.

It seems your long hunted quarry has at last grown overconfident. You peer out of the brush and broken rock into a clearing of broken slate. Stagnant pools of cess emit a rancid odor which hangs in the air. A few

ramshackle huts dot the clearing, and a fire pit smolders in its center. A dozen orcs lay about indifferently, counting their treasures, eating and gambling. The unger are hanging about the far side of the clearing against a cliff face, covered by a tapestry of dried brush and briars. The area smells of ancient decay, and the earth seems tired and broken, corrupted by evil memories.

The Players must now decide how to tackle the lair and recover the sapling. Twelve of the orcs are within a twenty-yard area, bickering amongst one another. Their chieftain, Mrodox, is with Quagmire just beyond the tapestry of dried brush and briars. Mrodox's three personal orc guards, left behind, have returned to their huts. The whole encampment can be easily surprised.

If the party makes a determined show of force or uses an area of affect spell, the orcs, leaderless for the moment, scramble for the cliffs, trying to climb out. If left alone, they will eventually scramble out; if not, they turn and fight until they are overcome. The three orc guards rush for their master in the Hollow. They will only return to the fight if Mrodox leads them (see below). As soon as Mrodox returns, any orcs remaining in the Hollow rally around him. They fight until he is killed or a third of their number falls, at which time they flee.

The remaining unger rush the party and call for Quagmire. If any orc guards happen in the way, the unger set upon them until they run or perish. The unger will neither give ground nor flee until told to do so by Quagmire.

UNGER (7) (LE Medium humanoids) HP 16 (HD 2d8+6), AC 15, Spd 30ft. Str 18 (+4) Dex 11 (+1) Con 16 (+3) Int 10 Wis 14 (+2) Cha 9 (-1). Perception 12. Stealth +8, Claws +6 (1d4+4) slashing, Gore +6 (1d8+4) piercing, scimitar +6 (1d6+4) slashing, longbow +3 (1d8+4) piercing, 150/400. SA Able Tactician (advantage on attack rolls if 5' from ally), Multiattack (claws, sword, gore); darkvision 60ft, Spell resistance, camouflage (Advantage on Stealth), master archer (advantage on ranged attacks, add str bonus to damage) Immune to cold. Challenge 1 (200 XP)

ORCS (15) (CE Medium Humanoid) HP 15 (HD 2d8+6), AC 13, Spd 30. Str 16 (+3) Dex 12 (+1) Con 16 (+3) Int 7 (-2) Wis 11 Cha 10. Perception 10. Intimidation +2. Studded Leather. Scimitar +5 (1d8+2 slashing) or Heavy crossbow +5 (1d10 piercing; 100ft/400ft). SA Darkvision 60ft; Double move as bonus action.

QUAGMIRE (LE Giant) HP 15 (HD 8d10+8), AC 13, Spd 30. Str 16 (+3) Dex 18 (+4) Con 12 (+1) Int 10 Wis 8 (-1) Cha 7 (-2). Perception 9. Studded Leather and shield. Bear Hug (3d6+9 bludgeoning and DC 15 Strength save or Restrained. Restrained characters are subject to an additional 3d6+9 damage each round. A restrained character may repeat the saving throw at the end of each turn, ending the effect on a success. If Quagmire bear hugs, he cannot make any other attacks without releasing his victim). Giant Great Club (2d8+4 bludgeoning).



Once alerted, Quagmire hefts his huge club and rushes out of the Hollow to join the battle. In a ferocious attack, he attempts to drive off the characters to keep his treasure and the sapling safe. He fights to the death. He possesses three magical boulders which explode upon impact for 1d8 points damage each. However, he does not want to use them because he is saving them for Gristlebones when the time is right. Quagmire's treasure is kept in Gristlebones' lair.

Mrodox, the orc shaman, waits before attacking. Peering out of the canopy of vines, he assesses the melee and calculates his actions. If the battle goes well for the troll, he throws his considerable weight into the fight. If things fair badly, he turns and rushes along the path to the Hollow to take the sapling for his own. There is a fifty percent chance that Gristlebones will attack him, having already grown attached to the little seedling. If this happens, the shaman flees. If Gristlebones allows the digging, it will take Mrodox at least twenty minutes to extract the sapling, roots and all. Mrodox hopes to flee with the sapling, but he will fight if cornered. His three orc guards stay with him at all times.

MRODOX, ORC SHAMAN (CE Medium Humanoid) HP 26 (HD 4d8+8), AC 12, Spd 30. Str 10 Dex 14 (+2) Con 14 (+2) Int 14 (+2) Wis 14 (+2) Cha 10. Perception 12. Darkvision 60ft. Spellcasting (Wis) Save DC = 12, attack +4. Cantrips: Chill Touch, Poison Spray, Light; 1-level (4): Burning Hands, Detect Magic, Faerie Fire, Fog Cloud; 2-level (3): Darkness, Hold Person, Invisibility. Treasure: 300gp and 400sp.

ORCS (3) (CE Medium Humanoid) HP 15 (HD 2d8+6), AC 15, Spd 30. Str 18 (+4) Dex 14 (+2) Con 16 (+3) Int 10 Wis 12 (+1) Cha 7 (-2). Perception 11. Intimidation +2.

Studded Leather and Shield. Scimitar +5 (1d8+2 slashing) or Heavy crossbow +5 (1d10 piercing; 100ft/400ft). SA Darkvision 60ft; Double move.

THE HOLLOW

Once the party has overcome Quagmire and Mrodox, they easily locate the path which leads to Thorny Hollow from the many tracks leading under the canopy of hanging brush and briars. The path cuts through a thin valley of broken slate and rock for about a mile. Horntooth's secret trail leads into this path (*see map*). It ends in an enclosed box canyon filled with refuse. Gristlebones will be inattentive at first, so his cloud of gas will not be expelled prior to the party seeing him.

Entering the wide hollow, you see the sapling, its tiny stem thrusting up toward the light which shines into the canyon. The sapling stands about two feet high, its budding green leaves sprouting from small branches. It nestles at the foot of an old, leafless tree which twists above you, thirty feet high. Long vines hang limp from its high canopy. A great split at its summit looks sinister and emits a small cloud of steam. The foul smell which permeates the whole valley and vale originates here at the tree.

Gristlebones is not a strong sentient. He will be easy to surprise (suffering disadvantage to his Wisdom (perception) checks) for his attention is on the little sapling. His fighting abilities are greatly reduced due to extreme age. He will fight to keep the sapling however. If he feels that he cannot win alone, he emits a loud shrill shriek as if calling for aid. None will be forthcoming because Quagmire was the last of his allies.

Though sentients can normally move, Gristlebones is so old and decrepit that he cannot. He would have fallen over, doomed to a life of slow rot, had Quagmire not saved him. He has sat in Thorny Hollow for so long that his shallow roots have dug into the muck beneath the small pool of stagnant water.

His age has also affected his defense. His normally thick bark has rotted away, and only a pulpy shell remains.

GRISTLEBONES (CE Giant Sentient Tree) HP 121 (HD 18d12), AC 13 (Natural Bark Armor), Spd 0. Str 14 (+2) Dex 12 (+1) Con 10 Int 16 (+3) Wis 18 (+4) Cha 10. Perception 14. Multiattack. Limbs (4x attacks) 1d8+2 slashing and DC 12 Dexterity save or Grappled and Bite attack (+1) for 1d12 piercing. Immunities: Charm, Illusionary magic. Vulnerabilities: Cold, fire, lightning, Purification magic cast on self or pool where rooted.

CONCLUSION

You have proven yourselves foresters of great skill and have bested some of the Darkenfold's most evil inhabitants. The rescued sapling can at last be delivered to the rangers at Ends Meet or, at the very least, allowed to grow here in the Hollow. And if that is not reward enough, amidst the tangled webs of the old tree's roots, you find Quagmire's horde.

TREASURE: Quagmire's hoard rests in heavy sacks stuffed beneath the tree's roots. Within the sacks are 6,000gp, 12,000sp, a +2 longsword, +1 spear, +3 chainmail, boots of speed, and Rachel's Mystic Tome (a spellbook that contains four 1st-level spells, one 2nd-level and one 3rd-level spell of Castle Keeper's choice.)

The Castle Keeper should take note of the amount of time which has passed, as mentioned in "Corrupting the Sapling" in the Synopsis.

CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

After the defeat of Quagmire and the rescue of the sapling, the party may wish to further explore the Darkenfold. The forest offers many opportunities for adventure. These include: delivering the sapling to the rangers and assisting them in planting it, complicated by the machinations of Mrodox (if he escaped); tracking down and driving Horntooth's band out of the forest; and an exploration of the Broken Steppes, the Downs, and the whole of the Pigs Trail region.

APPENDIX A: NEW MONSTER

BARGHEST

A barghest is an evil faerie. They are vaguely human in shape, but can alter their size to very small or very large, appearing as if they are looming over any who face them. Upon closer inspection, their ragged, dull-colored flesh is revealed, and a stench pervades them like the smell of rotten fruit.

BARGHEST

MEDIUM FIEND, CHAOTIC EVIL

ARMOR CLASS: 15 (Natural armor)

HIT POINTS: 37 (6d8+6)

SPEED: 30ft.

STR:	DEX:	CON:	INT:	WIS:	CHA:
17 (+3)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES: Fire, Poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES: Poisoned

DAMAGE RESISTANCE: Cold; necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing and slashing from nonmagical weapons

SENSES: Darkvision 120ft., passive Perception 15

SKILLS: Perception +5, Stealth +5, Survival +5

SAVES: Str +6, Dex +5, Wis +6

LANGUAGES: Infernal, Vulgate

CHALLENGE: 4 (1,100 XP)

SPECIAL QUALITIES

CHANGE SHAPE. The barghest can assume the shape of a goblin or a normal wolf. It can keep this form indefinitely, reverting to its natural form upon death. It retains its natural weapons while in alternate shape.

CONSUME THE SOUL. When a barghest slays an opponent, it feeds upon the victim's soul as well as its corpse, using a bonus action to do so. Victims whose soul is consumed by a barghest in this manner cannot be raised or resurrected through anything short of *wish* or *true resurrection*, which have only a 50% chance of success. *Reincarnate* may also be attempted, with only a 25% chance of success.

FEED. A barghest who slays an opponent and consumes their soul gains hit dice. For every three opponents slain, the barghest gains one hit die, to a maximum of 12 HD. For each HD it gains, it also increases its Strength, Dexterity and Constitution by 1, and its AC increases by 1. For every 3 HD thus gained, the damage for its natural attacks increase by one die type (d8, d10, d12), and its effective Challenge Level increases by 1, with commensurate increase in Proficiency bonus. At 10 HD, its size increases to Large, and its shapechange allows for shifting to hobgoblin or worg forms instead of goblin and wolf.

PASS WITHOUT TRACE. A barghest in wolf form can use *pass without trace*, at will, as a spell-like ability. This ability does not require an action, nor does it require components.

SPELL-LIKE ABILITIES (SAVE DC 15). *At will—change self, levitate, minor illusion, misdirection; 1/day—charm monster, dimension door, fear.*

ACTIONS

MULTIATTACK. The barghest attacks 3 times; twice with its claws and once with its bite.

CLAWS. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5ft, one target.
Hit: 9 (2d6+3) slashing damage.

BITE. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5ft, one target.
Hit: 7 (1d8+3) piercing damage.

DESPISERS OF LIFE. Barghests reside on the outskirts of civilization, lurking in abandoned buildings, alleys and the like. Barghests require the souls of living victims to sustain themselves, growing more powerful with each unfortunate devoured. These foul-minded fey stalk the living in the mortal realms, hoping to gain for themselves power and immortality, and driven by a violent hatred of all living things.

DEADLY TRICKSTERS. The Barghest will always attempt to lead a victim astray through the use of spell-like abilities. They will take the shape of someone in distress, to call upon their intended victims and lure them into the dark. They then pounce upon them and devour them, body and soul.

APPENDIX B: NEW SPELLS

WARP WOOD

2nd-level transmutation (ritual)

Casting Time: 1 action

Components: V, S

Range: Touch

Duration: Instantaneous

You cause wood to bend and warp, permanently destroying its straightness, form, and strength. A warped door springs open (or becomes stuck, requiring a Strength check to open, at your option). A boat or ship springs a leak. Warped ranged weapons are useless. A warped melee weapon causes a -4 penalty on attack rolls.

You may warp one object of no more than 5 cubic feet. Alternatively, you can unwarped wood (effectively warping it back to normal) with this spell, straightening wood that has been warped by this spell or by other means. Make whole, on the other hand, does no good in repairing a warped item. You can combine multiple consecutive warp wood spells to warp (or unwarped) an object that is too large for you to warp with a single

spell. Until the object is completely warped, however, it suffers no ill effects.

AT HIGHER LEVELS: When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, the volume of wood you may warp increases by 5 cubic feet per spell level.

POISON FOOD OR WATER

1st-level transmutation (ritual)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 10 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

All nonmagical food and drink within a 5-foot-radius sphere centered on a point of your choice within range is poisoned; all who consume the substance must succeed at a Constitution save or become Poisoned until they complete a short or long rest.

APPENDIX C: NEW MAGIC ITEMS

HORN OF FOG

Wondrous Item, rare

This item has 7 charges. It regains 1d6+1 charges every day at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a result of 1, the horn explodes, dealing 3d8 cold damage to all within a 20ft. radius sphere. This horn resembles a small bugle. When blown it emits a deep, foghorn-like sound. Expending a single charge allows the caster to cast *fog cloud*. Each additional charge expended increases the effective spell slot by 1.

LUCK STONE

Wondrous Item, rare (requires attunement)

Luck Stones are often found set in pendants, periapts, brooches or other wearable kinds of jewelry. They appear as deep opaque stones which are polished to a smooth shine. When attuned to a wearer, the luck stone grants advantage on one type of saving throw. The type of saving throw bolstered with a luck stone is determined by the stone's color:

Strength - Red

Dexterity - Blue

Constitution - Green

Intelligence - Black

Wisdom - Clear

Charisma - Purple

OGL

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The Mortality of Green is designed to be a fast-paced adventure wherein the characters are thrown into the immediate pursuit of a brigand troll. The troll, Quagmire, has stolen a young sapling from the druid Cornelius and fled into the forest. The characters must rescue the sapling before it is planted in the ground. Failure to do so results in the sapling's corruption and probable demise.

The Morality of Green offers enough introductory material to the Darkenfold to keep the players engaged in adventures far beyond this written adventure.

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