

# ADVENTURERS LEAGUE

## THE TAINTED GROVE by Richard Green



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A Four-Hour Adventure for Tier 1 Characters. Optimized for APL 3.

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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *The Tainted Grove*, a D&D Adventurers League™ adventure, part of the official D&D Adventurers League™ organized play system and the UK Games Expo Convention-Created Content (CCC).

This module is staged in the Elvenflow Estuary: a remote community of villages and homesteads scattered around the mouth of the Duathamper (or “Elvenflow”) River, on the shore of the Moonsea. *The Tainted Grove* is set on the western bank of the river, in the remote village of Moonfern Ford. To further explore this area, check out the other modules in the CCC-UK series.

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 1st-4th level characters** and is optimized for **five characters with an average party level (APL) of 3**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.

## ADJUSTING THIS ADVENTURE

This adventure provides suggestions in making adjustments for smaller or larger groups, characters of higher or lower levels, and characters that are otherwise a bit more powerful than the adventure is optimized for. You’re not bound to these adjustments; they’re here for your convenience.

To figure out whether you should consider adjusting the adventure, add up the total levels of all the characters and divide the total by the number of characters (rounding .5 or greater up; .4 or less down). This is the group’s APL. To approximate the **party strength** for the adventure, consult the following table.

### DETERMINING PARTY STRENGTH

Party Composition	Party Strength
3-4 characters, APL less than 3	Very weak
3-4 characters, APL equivalent 3	Weak
5 characters, APL less than 4	Weak
5 characters, APL equivalent 4	Average
6-7 characters, APL less than 5	Average
6-7 characters, APL equivalent 5	Strong

Some encounters may include a sidebar that offers suggestions for certain party strengths. If a particular recommendation is not offered or appropriate for your group, you don’t have to make adjustments.

## BEFORE PLAY AT THE TABLE

Before you start play, consider the following:

- Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you’d like to highlight or remind yourself of while running the adventure, such as a way you’d like to portray an NPC or a tactic you’d like to

use in a combat. Familiarize yourself with the adventure’s appendices and handouts.

- Gather any resources you’d like to use to aid you in running this adventure—such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battlemaps.
- Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information, such as name, race, class, and level; passive Wisdom (Perception), and anything specified as notable by the adventure (such as backgrounds, traits, flaws, etc.)

## PLAYING THE DUNGEON MASTER

You have the most important role—facilitating the enjoyment of the game for the players. You provide the narrative and bring the words on these pages to life.

To facilitate this, keep in mind the following:

**You’re Empowered.** Make decisions about how the group interacts with the adventure; adjusting or improvising is encouraged, so long as you maintain the adventure’s spirit. This doesn’t allow you to implement house rules or change those of the Adventurers League, however; they should be consistent in this regard.

**Challenge Your Players.** Gauge the experience level of your **players** (not the characters), try to feel out (or ask) what they like in a game, and attempt to deliver the experience they’re after. Everyone should have the opportunity to shine.

**Keep the Adventure Moving.** When the game starts to get bogged down, feel free to provide hints and clues to your players so they can attempt to solve puzzles, engage in combat, and roleplay interactions without getting too frustrated over a lack of information. This gives players “little victories” for figuring out good choices from clues. Watch for stalling—play loses momentum when this happens. At the same time, make sure that the players don’t finish too early; provide them with a full play experience.

## ADVENTURE PRIMER

*"Stepping inside the great oak tree, I crossed into the Feywild. The secrets of the Gloaming Court were within my grasp."*

— Ghaunklyr Tsarath

*The Tainted Grove* is an adventure for three to seven 1st- to 4th-level characters, optimized for five 3rd-level characters.

## BACKGROUND

Over a century ago, in the years following the Elven Retreat, **GHAUNKLYR TSARATH** (GORN-kleer ZAR-ath), an ambitious drow warlock living in the forest of Cormanthor, made a pact with the Queen of Air and Darkness, the unseelie ruler of the Gloaming Court. Ghaunklyr performed his dark rituals in a forest grove not far from the banks of the **ELVENFLOW RIVER**, in a place where the boundary between the Material Plane and the Feywild blurred. Over time, unseelie influences corrupted the grove, transforming it from a place of sylvan beauty to one of darkness and evil. Today, Tsarath is long dead, slain by adventurers, but the **TAINTED GROVE** remains somewhere best avoided.

A tenday ago, a young boy named **OSGAR** from the village of **MOONFERN FORD** ventured into the woods on a hunting expedition. Spotting a magnificent stag, he gave chase through the forest. Unfortunately, dense mist rolled in from the Elvenflow as he pursued the beast, and Osgar lost both the stag and his bearings. Worse still, he had blundered into a stand of gnarled and twisted trees and sickly vegetation – the Tainted Grove. Realizing his mistake, Osgar frantically tried to retrace his steps, only to find himself surrounded by a pack of stealthy worgs with glowing green eyes who floated unnaturally a fraction of an inch above the forest floor.

As the pack closed in for the kill, Osgar's shrieks of utter terror were magnified by the corrupted influence of the Feywild on the grove, giving rise to a band of meenlocks, warped evil fey that manifest when true fear is experienced. The meenlocks took up residence in the narrow tunnels that spontaneously appeared beneath the Tainted Grove. These foul creatures soon turned their attention on the nearby village.

Last night, the meenlocks crept into Moonfern Ford and kidnapped **MOTHER AEDWEN**, the village priest, dragging her off to their lair where they plan to torture her until she transforms into a meenlock herself. The only witness to the raid was **GLOOMSKELF**, a boggle, who amuses himself by playing annoying – but mostly harmless – pranks on Moonfern Ford's inhabitants. The rest of the villagers are none the wiser and only realize Mother Aedwen

has disappeared when she fails to appear at the village shrine on the following day. This second disappearance unnerves the village – they are used to fey mischief but not folk vanishing overnight.

Meanwhile, the meenlocks do not intend to stop with just one victim, planning to return again tonight to seize another villager. As the characters arrive in Moonfern Ford, things are about to take an even darker turn....

## EPISODES

The adventure's story is spread over **four episodes** that take approximately 4 hours to play. The characters investigate the mystery of the disappearing villagers, before heading into the woods to confront the meenlocks in the Tainted Grove.

- **Episode 1: Moonfern Ford.** The characters arrive in Moonfern Ford and discover a village in turmoil. First, a young hunter went missing a tenday ago. Now, the village priest has also disappeared. The frightened villagers ask the group to investigate.
- **Episode 2: The Bogeyman.** Talking to the villagers, the characters uncover a series of clues that lead to Gloomskelf, the "bogeyman" who has been playing tricks on the villagers. The boggle isn't responsible for Mother Aedwen's disappearance but did witness the real villains – a pair of meenlocks – kidnapping the priest. While the characters are looking the wrong way, a new victim, Fergus the baker, is dragged off to the meenlock lair.
- **Episode 3: Through the Misty Woods.** The characters make their way into the forest on the trail of the missing baker. Heading west towards the Tainted Grove, their journey is complicated by an encounter with unseelie fey.
- **Episode 4: Beneath the Twisted Oak.** Arriving at the Tainted Grove, the characters must drive off a pack of evil worgs, and overcome their own worst fears to enter the meenlock lair – a series of tunnels beneath a gnarled and ancient oak tree. Here, they can battle the meenlocks, rescue Fergus, and hopefully prevent the transformation of Mother Aedwen into a meenlock.

## HOW WILL YOU PLAY?

Depending on your time constraints, play style and environment, this adventure takes approximately four hours to play. If you have less time, you can shorten the adventure by skipping Episode 3 and having the group travel from Moonfern Ford to the Tainted Grove without incident.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

Use one of the following hooks to draw the characters into the adventure.

- **A Disappointing Birthday.** Thora Goodfellow, a sweet old lady living in the hamlet of Buttergroves, was expecting a visit on her birthday from her grandson Osgar, a young huntsman who lives upriver in the village of Moonfern Ford. When he fails to arrive, Thora becomes worried something untoward has happened to him. Will you travel to Moonfern Ford to check on Osgar, and to deliver him a wedge of Thora's delicious butternut birthday cake?
- **Faerie Shenanigans.** Word has reached your ears of irritating pranks and other acts of mischief being perpetrated by "the little people" in the village of Moonfern Ford upriver. The weary villagers are growing increasingly annoyed and are looking for help in putting a stop to these pests. Will you answer their call?
- **Warlock's Legacy (Zhentarim Faction Assignment).** You have heard stories of a powerful drow warlock named Ghaunklyr Tsarath who made his home in the woods near the village of Moonfern Ford a hundred years ago, and entered into a dark pact with the fey of the Gloaming Court. Although Tsarath is long dead, rumors persist that a cache of his valuable artifacts can yet be found in the forest. Your superiors have instructed you to recover these items.

### BEFORE YOU START

When the characters reach the Tainted Grove in Episode 4, the warped magic of the Feywild means they must face their worst fears head on before they can enter the meenlock tunnels. Before you ask everyone to introduce their characters and begin Episode 1, give each player a copy of **Player Handout #1** and ask them to quickly write down their character's worst fear and how it came about, then hand it back to you. This gives you a few hours to think up cool ways in which these fears could manifest when the characters arrive at the grove.



## EPISODE FLOWCHART

This section provides a basic understanding of not only the flow of the adventure, but also the outline of the different paths that your players may take in reaching their stated objective.





## EPISODE 1: MOONFERN FORD

**Estimated Duration:** 30 minutes.

The characters arrive in Moonfern Ford and discover a village in turmoil. First, a young hunter went missing a tenday ago. Now, the village priest has also disappeared. The frightened villagers ask the group to investigate.

### ARRIVING IN MOONFERN FORD

See **Appendix 3** for a map of the local area. If the players have played one or both of the first two UK-CCC adventures, they will probably arrive at Moonfern Ford from one of the small villages further downriver – either Buttergroves on the western bank of the Elvenflow, or Wayward on the eastern side.

As the characters approach the village, read the following:

It is been a peaceful and uneventful walk along the banks of the meandering Elvenflow River to the tiny village of Moonfern Ford. Although the river is fast-flowing and deep in places, as you near the hamlet the water becomes shallow enough for wagons and horses to cross, and a narrow wooden footbridge allows pedestrians to make their way to the other side without getting their feet wet.

Roughly twenty houses stand on the western bank of the river, clustered around a small market square. Lush ferns with attractive silver-green leaves grow everywhere – between the houses, in pots, or hanging in baskets from the eaves of the buildings. Beyond the village, you can make out the tops of the tall pine trees of the Cormanthor Forest, shrouded in a faint mist.

A small group of human villagers has gathered around a stone arch overgrown with ivy that stands in the center of the square. They are engaged in a heated discussion, but as they become aware of your presence, their voices grow quieter. A grey-bearded man steps forward to greet you, saying “*Well met, travelers! You’ve come to our village on a dark day indeed.*”

The grey-bearded man introduces himself as Gerold, the reeve, and explains that Mother Aedwen, the village priest, has gone missing.

- Every day at midday Mother Aedwen can be found at the village shrine, the Elven Arch, offering the blessings of the Sacred Hexad, herbal remedies, and sound advice to those who need it, but today she has not appeared. Worried, Gerold went to her home in case she had fallen ill, but she was not there either, nor is she elsewhere in the village. The priest has seemingly vanished overnight.

- Mother Aedwen is not the first villager to go missing recently. A tenday ago, a young huntsman named Osgar headed into the forest on a hunting trip and did not return. A search party was mounted but found no sign of him. As Osgar was planning on visiting his grandmother in Buttergroves, the villagers thought perhaps he might have gone straight there. Now they are not so sure.
- The villagers are used to strange happenings given their proximity to the forest. Things sometimes go missing, milk turns sour, and the village children whisper of a “bogeyman” who hides under their beds or in the wardrobes and gives them a scare. This kind of annoying (but fairly harmless) mischief is thought to be the work of “the little people”, fairy folk that live in the woods. Could they be to blame for the disappearances?

### AREA INFORMATION: MOONFERN FORD

Moonfern Ford stands on the banks of the Elvenflow River (also known as the Duathamper), just over fifteen miles south of where the estuary meets the Moonsea. The village is deep within the forest of Cormanthor. Around ninety folk live here, growing vegetables, hunting in the woods, and catching bass and catfish in the river. See **Appendix 4** for a map of the village. Key locations are described in Episode 2.

**Dimensions & Terrain.** Located at a fordable point in the river, Moonfern Ford occupies the western side of the Elvenflow and consists of around twenty homes clustered around a small, muddy village square. The silver-green moonferns from which the village takes its name grow everywhere. Fields planted with cabbages and turnips lie between the village and the edge of the dark woods beyond.

**Structures.** The villagers make their homes in simple wooden huts with thatched roofs. An ivy-covered ancient stone archway, known as the Elven Arch, stands in the center of the village square and serves as a shrine to the Hexad. A wooden footbridge crosses the river close to the ford.

**Governance.** Like all settlements in the Elvenflow estuary region, Moonfern Ford pays tithes to Bourne of Candles, a reclusive lord whose estate lies on the coast of the Moonsea.

**Weather.** The Moonsea region is wracked by bitter winds sweeping in from the badlands of Thar. Winters here are harsh, and the summers cool and showery. Moonfern Ford is a damp, misty place – bright sunny days without drizzle or fog drifting in from the river are a cause for celebration.

## NPCs

Gerold is the village reeve, appointed to his position by the local lord Bourne of Candles. Although he means well, he comes across as rather pompous, and has an inflated sense of his own importance. Four other villagers are present, including Fergus the stout, ruddy-cheeked baker and a gaunt, dark-haired widow named Bea. All of the villagers are **commoners**. See **Appendix 1** for tips on roleplaying these NPCs.

**Objectives/Goals.** The villagers are confused and concerned by the disappearances and know that the reclusive Bourne of Candles is unlikely to offer any assistance. Gerold hopes that he can persuade the group to help the village find the missing villagers.

**What Do They Know?** Mother Aedwen's disappearance has the villagers very worried. The much-loved priest would come to the shrine every day at midday without fail, and they are convinced something bad must have happened to her.

Osgar is considered somewhat foolhardy and may have run into trouble in the forest, so his disappearance is less unusual. If pressed, the villagers admit they didn't venture far into the woods to look for him – there are dark, evil places in the forest that are best avoided.

All of the villagers have had things stolen or spoiled by "the little people". They ruined a batch of Fergus' buns by adding extra salt, soured the milk from Bea's goats, and stole Gerold's much-prized chain of office.

## CALL TO ACTION

Gerold asks the group to find out what has happened to both Mother Aedwen and Osgar, and if possible, bring them safely back to the village. The village isn't wealthy by any means, but the reeve promises a reward if the characters are willing to help (as represented by the treasure checkpoints received for completing the quest). There isn't an inn, but the characters are welcome to stay in the empty hut next to Gerold's home.

The villagers suggest that the characters search Mother Aedwen's and Osgar's huts for clues. Although Gerold is skeptical, Bea suggests the characters also speak with two village children, Eloise and Dunn, who claim to have been visited at night by the bogeyman.



## EPISODE 2: THE BOGEYMAN

**Estimated Duration:** 90 minutes

Exploring Moonfern Ford and talking to the villagers, the characters uncover a series of clues that lead to Gloomskelf, the “bogeyman” who has been playing tricks on the inhabitants. The boggle isn’t responsible for Mother Aedwen’s disappearance but did witness the real villains – a pair of meenlocks – kidnapping the priest. While the characters are looking the wrong way, a new victim, Fergus the baker, is dragged off to the meenlock lair.

### INVESTIGATING THE DISAPPEARANCES

Use the map of the village in **Appendix 4** in conjunction with the descriptions below as the players explore Moonfern Ford and look for clues. The villagers usually leave their front doors unlocked.

#### V1. THE ELVEN ARCH

An ivy-covered stone archway, a handful of broken columns, and an area of mossy flagstones in the centre of the village square are all that remain of an ancient structure built by the elves of Cormanthyr who lived here over 1,000 years ago. Today, the site serves as an open air shrine to the Sacred Hexad – the gods Rillifane Rallathil, Chauntea, Silvanus, Mielikki, Eldath and Aerdrie Faenya – presided over by the missing Mother Aedwen.

#### V2. MOTHER AEDWEN’S HOME

The village priest’s modest home is located close to the Elven Arch, allowing her to invite members of her congregation inside her house when it rains. Wooden shelves line the walls of the living area, filled with a variety of dried herbs and medicinal plants, as well as a pestle and mortar and the other components of a herbalism kit.

**Books.** A pair of leather-bound books sit on one shelf. The first is marked with a snowflake formed of thorns, the symbol of the Hexad. This is Mother Aedwen’s journal and is filled with prayers to the gods, herbal remedies, pressed woodland flowers and sketches of trees and plants. The other is called **A Short History of the Cormanthor Woods** and contains background information on Ghaunklyr Tsarath and the Tainted Grove – see **Player Handout #2**.

**Bedroom.** Mother Aedwen was grabbed by the meenlocks while she slept and fell victim to their paralyzing claws. Her bedcovers are in disarray, and a clay drinking cup lies smashed on the floor by her

bedside table – the meenlocks knocked it over when they dragged her out.

#### V3. OSGAR’S HOME

The missing huntsman lived alone in this simple wooden hut which is divided into a living area and a bedroom. A small knife and an unfinished wooden carving of a deer lie on the table, a birthday gift for his grandmother Thora. Osgar’s bed is unmade and the half loaf of bread in the cupboard is covered in green mold.

**Game Larder.** Fat black flies buzz around the small wooden shed behind the cottage which emits a powerful stench. Osgar used it for hanging game and left half a dozen pheasants in here to ripen before leaving for the woods. The birds have started to decompose and have attracted a **swarm of rot grubs**. If the door is opened, characters within 10 feet of the doorway must succeed at a DC 10 Constitution saving throw to avoid vomiting, which incapacitates them until the end of their next turn. This also disturbs the rot grubs which swarm forward to attack the nearest living creature. Apart from the rotting birds, there is nothing to find here.

#### V4. ELOISE’S HOME

Eloise, one of the children who is being visited at night by the “bogeyman”, lives in this hut with her parents and her little brother Tobias. Both love being outdoors and can usually be found nearby, jumping in puddles or playing catch.

Eloise is seven years old, and has tangled blond hair and a face smeared with mud. She is bold and inquisitive, asking the characters their names, where they are from, what their favorite animals are, and so on. Tobias is four, very shy, and hides behind his sister. See **Appendix 1** for tips on roleplaying Eloise.

If the bogeyman is mentioned, Eloise becomes subdued. She whispers that he hides in her wardrobe and appears in the middle of the night to frighten her and Tobias. Sometimes they just see his arm push open the wardrobe doors; other times it’s his horrible grinning face. If they are asleep, the bogeyman calls to them until they wake up, threatening to kill their parents and eat the children for his tea. Tobias is so scared of him he wets the bed. The bogeyman doesn’t always visit and didn’t appear last night (Gloomskelf was on his way to Eloise’s home when he saw the meenlocks sneaking into Mother Aedwen’s house).

Eloise describes the bogeyman as having glowing yellow eyes, a big nose, and pointy ears. She thinks he has blue or grey skin, but it’s hard to tell in the dark. So far, he’s not come fully out of the wardrobe so she doesn’t know what the rest of him looks like.

When the bogeyman appears, both children scream and their parents come running, but each time he has disappeared by the time they get there, leaving a puddle of slime behind in the wardrobe. The slime is gone too by morning.

**Development.** If the characters ask to see inside the house and inspect the wardrobe, Eloise says they must ask her mother and father for permission. The characters must succeed on a DC 11 group Charisma (Persuasion) check to convince Eloise's parents Gytha and Bernan to let them look around. The worried pair assumed the children were just having nightmares at first. Now, they are beginning to wonder if there really might be a bogeyman after all.

The well-kept cottage consists of a living area and two bedrooms. Eloise and Tobias sleep in bunk beds opposite an imposing wardrobe made from oak stained dark brown. Inside are children's clothes, spare blankets, and a few wooden toys. There are no secret doors or panels to find.

See **"The Stake Out"** below if the players choose to lie in wait for the bogeyman.

### V5. DUNN'S HOME

Dunn, another child who has been visited by the bogeyman, lives here with his father, Irden. During the daytime while Irden is out working in the fields, Dunn can be found fishing off the footbridge (V10).

### V6. BEA'S HOME

Bea, the lonely widow the characters met when they first arrived, lives in this cottage and keeps goats. Unbeknownst to her, this hut is also home to the "bogeyman", Gloomskelf the boggle. Bea's husband died a few months ago – he was gored by a wild boar while out hunting in the forest. Bea's profound grief and the village's proximity to the Feywild led to the boggle's manifestation. Gloomskelf took up residence in the empty room where the couple's grown-up children used to sleep and began his campaign of mischief.

See **"The Stake Out"** below for information on Gloomskelf's lair.

### V7. GEROLD'S HOME

The village reeve lives in this well-kept wooden hut. Gerold's kindly wife Zetta brings the characters steaming bowls of cabbage soup and a loaf of bread on their first evening in the village.

### V8. EMPTY HOUSE

This hut belonged to a family that moved to Elventree a few months ago. It smells musty and is unfurnished, but offers the characters a (leaky) roof over their heads while they are in Moonfern Ford.

### V9. FERGUS'S BAKERY

This building doubles as Fergus' place of business and his home. A hemispherical clay oven stands on a brick platform outside the hut which gives off a considerable amount of heat when it's in use. The front part of the cottage serves as a shop; bread freshly baked that morning sits on shelves behind the counter. Moonfern Ford's damp climate is not conducive to growing wheat so Fergus buys in the flour which he uses to bake his bread; several sacks stand in one corner.

### V10. FOOTBRIDGE

The river is around two to three feet deep at the ford, so the villagers built a sturdy wooden bridge for anyone wanting to cross on foot. Dunn can often be found here during the daytime, fishing for bass with his rod, using wriggling earthworms for bait.

Dunn is a quiet and nervy nine-year-old boy with tousled red hair, green eyes and freckles. See **Appendix 1** for tips on roleplaying him.

The characters must succeed on a DC 10 group Charisma (Persuasion) check to get Dunn to tell his story. The bogeyman has been frightening the lad at night, appearing beneath his bed and either grabbing hold of his feet with his sticky fingers, or stealing Dunn's things. Dunn is particularly upset at losing Mister Claws – the stuffed owlbear toy his mother made for him shortly before she died from a fever – and becomes tearful when talking about him.

The bogeyman last appeared under Dunn's bed the night before last. If the players also talk to Eloise (V4), they can work out that he doesn't visit both houses on the same nights, and sometimes doesn't visit either of them. Characters who succeed on a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check can figure this out for themselves if the players miss it.

**Development.** Irden is very worried about his son but thinks he's probably imagining things. He allows the PCs to examine Dunn's room and check under his bed: there is nothing there apart from a couple of odd unwashed socks. Irden confirms that a puddle of slime is left behind after a visit by the bogeyman; this disappears by morning.

See **"The Stake Out"** below if the players choose to lie in wait here for the bogeyman.



## THE STAKE OUT

That night, Gloomskelf the **boggle** returns to Eloise's home to scare her and Tobias. If the characters stake out one or both of the children's houses, they have a chance to catch the fey pest red-handed.

The parents won't allow armed adventurers inside their children's bedrooms while they're sleeping. If the characters want to hide in the bedrooms, the parents insist on moving the youngsters into their own bedrooms first.

In the early hours of the morning, Gloomskelf climbs out of the window of Bea's hut (area V6) and sneaks through the village to the elm trees behind Eloise's home (area V4). If the characters are patrolling this part of the village or watching the outside of the house, they have a chance to detect him – compare Gloomskelf's Dexterity (Stealth) check with the PCs' passive Perception scores. The boggle has advantage on his check if no characters in the group have darkvision.

If Gloomskelf is spotted, he flees back to his lair, heading for the nearest thing forming an opening or frame (like a door or window in one of the huts) so he can use his Dimensional Rift to gain an extra 30 feet on his pursuers, before using the Dash action or creating a slippery or sticky oil puddle to slow pursuit.

If Gloomskelf makes it to the trees undetected, he climbs 15 feet up the trunk of the largest elm and uses the frame formed by its intersecting branches to open a Dimensional Rift to bridge the distance between the tree and the wardrobe in Eloise and Tobias's bedroom. Then, the boggle steps through the rift, arriving inside the wardrobe.

## CONFRONTING THE BOGEYMAN

If the characters wait for the bogeyman in the children's room, they spot Gloomskelf's glowing yellow eyes when he sticks his head out of the wardrobe, and hear him call out in a creepy, hissing whisper. Roll initiative!

**Screams in the Night.** If Eloise and Tobias are asleep in their beds, they start screaming when Gloomskelf appears. Their cries are loud enough to be heard by any characters outside who are within 100 feet of the house.

If the characters are staking out Dunn's home instead, they can hear the screams if they succeed on a DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check, and reach the scene in 1d4 + 2 rounds. The children's screams also wake up Gytha and Bernan who are asleep in the next room; they arrive in 1d4 rounds.

## AREA INFORMATION: THE BEDROOM

Eloise and Tobias's bedroom has the following features:

**Dimensions & Terrain.** The children's room is in the northeast corner of the house, and measures 15 feet by 10 feet. A single door in the southern wall leads into the main room of the hut, and there is a shuttered window in the north wall. Eloise and Tobias sleep in bunk beds along the longer west wall opposite the large wardrobe. There is not much room to swing a sword in the children's bedroom so attacks with anything bigger than a light weapon are made at disadvantage.

**Lighting.** The bedroom is dark unless the characters bring their own light source.

**The Wardrobe.** The wardrobe is 7 feet wide by 7 feet tall by 2 feet deep, and is made from sturdy oak. It grants three-quarters cover to Gloomskelf (+5 to AC and Dexterity saving throws) while he remains inside with the doors ajar. Gloomskelf's Dimensional Rift stays open until the end of his next turn, and only he can use it.

## CREATURES/NPCs

Gloomskelf is a **boggle**. Ugly and unclothed, he stands around 3 feet tall and has oily blue-grey skin and glowing yellow eyes. A few hairs sprout from his pointy ears and the nostrils of his bulbous nose; otherwise he is hairless.

Gloomskelf's first reaction upon seeing the characters is to try and escape through the Dimensional Rift and then flee back to his lair once he's in the trees outside. The characters can give chase on foot, either running through the hut and out of the front door or climbing out of the bedroom window by succeeding on a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check.

**Objectives/Goals.** Gloomskelf takes delight in scaring the village children and causing mayhem in the village but he is a coward at heart. If Gloomskelf is cornered in his lair or suffers more than 8 points of damage in combat, he starts to beg for his life.

Most boggles only speak Sylvan but Gloomskelf has picked up enough Common to make himself understood, crying out "*Don't kills me! Don't kills me! Gloomskelf be good! He promises!*" and cowering pathetically. See **Appendix 1** for tips on roleplaying the boggle.

**What Does He Know?** Between sobs and pitiful pleas for mercy, Gloomskelf can be coaxed into revealing the following information through intelligent roleplaying or a successful DC 11 Charisma (Intimidation) or (Persuasion) check.





- He has been visiting Eloise, Tobias, and Dunn at night and scaring them by hiding in their bedrooms and popping out from the wardrobe or under the bed.
- He has also been playing other tricks on the villagers and admits to souring Bea's goats milk, salting Fergus' buns and stealing "*shiny things*" and "*other stuffs*" from the villagers.
- He has never played any tricks on the "*holy lady*" or stolen from her house. "*It wasn't me that drags her from her bed and into the woods.*"
- Gloomskelf says he lives in the "*lonely woman's*" house. He appeared there because she was very sad after her husband died, but he soon got bored breaking her dishes and souring her milk. "*Gloomskelf makes funnier jokes now.*"

### DEVELOPMENT

The commotion draws the attention of the other villagers, and a small crowd soon gathers carrying burning torches and farm implements. The characters can persuade the mob to disperse with a successful DC 11 Charisma (Persuasion) check, so they can interrogate the boggle without interruption. If they fail, Gerold persuades the villagers to go home but insists on being present while the characters question the boggle..

The characters can press Gloomskelf into revealing additional useful information with a successful DC 13 Charisma (Intimidation) or (Persuasion) check:

- Last night, the boggle was on his way to the little girl and her brother's house so he could scare them by appearing from inside the wardrobe.
- As he tip-toed around the edge of the village square, he saw a pair of hunched, insect-like creatures dragging the priest out of her house. He followed them, watching them carry her between them up the road and into the woods. "*I did not likes them. Creepsy and scary things with big sharp claws.*"

### STOLEN PROPERTY

Gloomskelf makes his lair in the room in Bea's home which belonged to her now grown-up children. If the PCs don't end up confronting the boggle here, Bea will unlock the room for them. Inside, hidden under the bed, are several items stolen from the villagers, including Dunn's favourite owlbear toy Mister Claws, Gerold's silver chain of office, and a copper torc belonging to Bernan.

The PCs can earn the villagers' gratitude by returning these things to their rightful owners. Dunn cries with joy being reunited with his beloved toy, earning inspiration for the characters who returned it.

## PLAYING THE PILLARS: THE STAKE OUT

### COMBAT

If the characters drop Gloomskelf to 0 hit points or below in combat, the boggle can fall unconscious rather than die to give the characters the chance to stabilize him so he can be questioned. Gloomskelf must make a death saving throw each round until he dies or becomes stable (see "Dropping to 0 Hit Points" in chapter 9 of the *Player's Handbook*).

### EXPLORATION

The players have the full run of the village and could post look-outs in a number of locations to try and catch the bogeyman. Use the village map in **Appendix 4** and the descriptions above to run this scene if they decide to split up or end up chasing Gloomskelf through the village.

### SOCIAL

Gloomskelf begs the group to let him go, promising never to trouble the village again. If the characters forgive him, they must win over Gerold. This requires a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check, made with advantage if they return his chain of office. Otherwise, the reeve will insist the creature is turned over to Bourne of Candles for punishment.

## THE KIDNAPPING

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While the attentions of the characters and the villagers are focused on Gloomskelf, the real villains of the adventure, the meenlocks, sneak into the village that same night through the fields to the north of Fergus' house (area V9). Slipping inside the baker's home, they attack Fergus in his bed, paralyzing him, and drag him off to the woods.

Unless the characters seek out the baker for some reason that night, his disappearance is not discovered until the following morning when he fails to start up his oven and begin baking that day's bread at dawn.

News soon reaches the characters that another villager has disappeared. At Fergus' home, there are signs of a struggle: his nightstand has been knocked over, and there are strange footprints and other marks in the flour that dusts the floor of the shop. Characters succeeding at a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Survival) check can determine that a body – presumably Fergus – was dragged from his bedroom through the shop and out of the front door.

If the characters search the fields behind the cottage, they soon pick up the meenlocks' trail. The creatures dragged the paralyzed Fergus through a cabbage field, leaving a trail of damaged vegetables that can be followed to the edge of the woods.

Gerold urges the characters to head into the forest as soon as possible to confront the kidnappers and rescue the missing villagers.

## EPISODE 3: THROUGH THE MISTY WOODS

**Estimated Duration:** 30 minutes.

The characters head into the Cormanthor Woods in search of the missing villagers, following the trail of the meenlocks towards the Tainted Grove. En route, they encounter a gang of malicious quicklings: unseelie fey who delight in causing trouble. The quicklings have trapped an angry centaur who can provide useful information if rescued.

### INTO THE FOREST

The Cormanthor woods lie to the west of the village, just behind the fields. The characters can step into the forest anywhere along its edge, but their most likely entry points are the end of the path from the village square, or the spot where the tracks from Fergus's house reach the trees.

Inside the woods, a network of deer trails crisscrosses the ground beneath the tall pines. No check is needed for the character to spot the large number of footprints in the soft earth made by the meenlocks and their captives over the last two nights. These tracks follow a trail from deeper in the woods towards the village and back again.

The characters can learn extra information by examining the footprints more closely:

- **DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Survival):** The footprints were made by a small group of humanoid creatures with triple-clawed feet. Two pairs of prints go to and from the northernmost fields; another set of prints heads to and from the path to the village square.
- **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Survival):** The footprints going to and from the village square are a day older than the other set. The footprints heading away from the village have made a deeper impression in the earth, as if the creatures were carrying a heavy load.

Read the following when the players take the trail:

A light drizzle is in the air as you follow the trail beneath the towering needleleaf and blueridge pines. The forest floor is carpeted with needles, and dense clusters of silver-green moonferns growing alongside the path glisten with morning dew. Occasionally you pass through a cloud of biting midges, or watch as an army of ants or beetles marches across the trail in front of you.

After a few miles, the tall pines begin to give way to ancient oaks, elms and maples. As the ground vegetation becomes thicker and more plentiful, the trees above grow closer together, forming an impenetrable forest canopy. The woods become darker and a thin mist permeates the air, making it hard to see further than the next thirty feet or so.

### AREA INFORMATION: THE CORMANTHOR WOODS

Most people believe that Cormanthor stretches from Harrowdale in the east to Shadowdale in the west, and from Hillsfar in the north to Essembra in the south. In fact, it's made up of four forests, with Moonfern Ford situated on the edge of the northeastern one: The Elven Court.

**Terrain.** Tangles of brambles and waist-high ferns create swathes of dense undergrowth between the trees. Anywhere off the trails counts as difficult terrain.

**Light.** Little sunlight penetrates the leaf canopy overhead, making the days grey and gloomy. Nights are pitch black.

**Sounds and Smells.** Rustling noises as forest creatures move unseen through the undergrowth. A raven croaks, a woodpecker hammers on a tree trunk, a blackbird sings sweetly. Damp smells of moss, rotting wood and moldering leaves are in the air.

**Weather.** Mist swirls through the woods, granting disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.



## THE TORMENTED CENTAUR

As long as the adventurers follow the meenlock tracks and ignore the dozens of other paths branching off from the trail, they can stay on the correct route and avoid getting lost.

Around two hours into the journey, after they've traveled for six miles or so, the characters encounter a band of unseelie fey who are torturing an ensnared centaur.

Read the following:

As you trudge along the path following the tracks of the kidnappers, you hear a screech from high in a maple tree ahead of you. A small falcon with blue-gray wings and a speckled breast sitting on a branch is calling out as if to attract your attention.

This falcon is Swiftstrike, a trained **hawk** belonging to a centaur named Erevos Shadowmane. If a character casts *Speak with Animals*, they can communicate with Swiftstrike and learn that her master is in trouble and needs their help. Otherwise, the falcon screeches twice more, before flying down the trail in the hope that the group follows.

Two hundred yards further on, the trail enters a clearing. Read the following:

A strange sight awaits you in the forest clearing ahead. Swinging upside down in the air beneath the branches of a broad oak, as if hanging from an invisible rope tied around its hind legs, is a large creature, half man, half horse – a centaur. He is bleeding from several wounds and clutches a long spear in his human hands as he rotates slowly in the air.

Suddenly, there is a blur of movement! The centaur jabs his spear into the ground, then cries out in pain as blood begins to pour from two fresh wounds in his bare torso. Something moving through the clearing very fast has stabbed him!

The **centaur**, Erevos Shadowmane, has been caught in a *snare* spell (see **Appendix 2**) and is magically restrained. While he remains ensnared, a gang of **quicklings** play a cruel game, rushing from the undergrowth on one side of the clearing to the other, stabbing him with their sharp daggers as they go past. Roll initiative!

### AREA INFORMATION: FOREST CLEARING

Use the Forest Clearing map in **Appendix 5** for this encounter.

**Dimensions & Terrain.** The clearing is roughly 70 feet across at its widest point; the forest floor is covered in dried leaves and other detritus, making it hard to move across it quietly – Stealth checks are at disadvantage.

**Undergrowth.** Tall ferns and other dense foliage surround the edges of the clearing. These areas

count as difficult terrain, and are heavily obscured, blocking vision entirely for Tiny or Small creatures (like the quicklings) or crouching Medium creatures.

**Boulder.** A moss-covered boulder, around 5 feet high and 10 feet across, stands close to the southern edge of the clearing. The moss partly conceals a faded elven inscription – see “**Development**” below.

**Oak Tree.** The large oak tree in the center of the clearing provides from three-quarters cover to anyone hiding behind it.

### CREATURES/NPCs

Two **quicklings** [Q] and a **quickling trickster** [T] are persecuting the ensnared **centaur** Erevos [C] with hit and run attacks made with advantage. Erevos' **hawk** [H] defends her master by distracting the quicklings, cancelling out advantage on the first attack made against him each round.

If the characters can slow down a quickling enough, they can see that they are small, slender fey with blue-tinged skin, sharp feral features, and cold, cruel eyes.

The quickling trickster has the statistics of a standard quickling with the following modifications:

- The quickling trickster has a Wisdom score of 14 (+2)
- **Innate Spellcasting:** The quickling's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12). The quickling can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:  
At will: *minor illusion*, *vicious mockery*  
3/day: *snare*

Erevos has 30 hp remaining and is restrained until he succeeds on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw. He makes this check with disadvantage at the end of each of his turns. Alternatively, the centaur or a character within 5 feet of him can use their action to make DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check, breaking the spell and ending the restrained effect on a success. Erevos readies an attack each round to stab the first quickling to come within his 10 foot reach, and uses his reaction to make an attack as it runs past. He is at disadvantage on attack rolls while restrained.

**Objectives/Goals.** Quicklings aren't normally murderous but this group are out for revenge on Erevos who shot one of their band dead after they stole his amulet. They turn their attentions on the characters if attacked, employing the same hit and run tactics. The quicklings flee once the centaur escapes if the fight starts to go badly for them.

**What Does He Know?** If rescued, the grateful Erevos can provide the group with useful information about the Tainted Grove, but he can only

speak Elven and Sylvan. If the characters can communicate with him, Erevos warns them that the grove is a place of evil and those that enter it should expect to face their worst fears. This warning grants each character advantage on Wisdom saving throws to avoid becoming frightened when confronting their fears in Episode 4.

### TREASURE

Each quickling carries a pouch of gold coins. Unfortunately, these are faerie gold – when removed from the Cormanthor woods, the coins turn to dried leaves. The quickling trickster also has a bronze amulet shaped like a stag in his tiny knapsack. This belongs to Erevos – if the PCs return it to him, he offers it to them as thanks for saving his life.

### DEVELOPMENT

Quicklings that escape can return to annoy the party as they travel the last few miles to the Tainted Grove, stealing their gear, piercing their waterskins, or tying their shoelaces together. If the trickster survives, he uses his spells to torment the characters, perhaps casting *snare* again just before they are attacked by the worgs in Episode 4.

The faded elvish inscription on the boulder can be discovered and deciphered with a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check. The writing warns travelers to keep away from the “fell grove of the twisted oak, a corrupt fey crossing place leading to the dark halls of the Gloaming Court.”

### ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak:** Remove one **quickling**. The centaur escapes at the end of the first round.
- **Weak:** Remove one **quickling**.
- **Strong:** Add a **quickling**.
- **Very Strong:** Add a **quickling** and a second **quickling** trickster.



## EPISODE 4: BENEATH THE TWISTED OAK

**Estimated Duration:** 90 minutes.

Reaching the Tainted Grove, the characters must first face a pack of worgs, and then overcome their darkest fears to enter the meenlock lair – a series of tunnels beneath an evil-looking oak tree. Inside, they can confront the twisted fey creatures and rescue the villagers, hopefully before Mother Aedwen is transformed into a meenlock herself.

### SILENT KILLERS

Four miles after leaving the forest clearing, as the group reaches the Tainted Grove, the foliage around them starts to change. Read the following:

So far, the forest vegetation has been thick and lush, but here the plants appear brown and withered, as bright green ferns give way to tangled thorns and sickly yellow toadstools. The trees have shed early, coating the forest floor in a sea of fallen leaves.

The path you've been following peters out in a wide clearing; the ruins of a stone cottage lie to your left. Ahead, through the ever-present mist, you can make out the twisted and gnarled shapes of a stand of bare trees. In the center of the group is a huge, ancient oak, its malformed branches seemingly formed into sinister, grasping talons. You have reached the Tainted Grove.

The Tainted Grove is home to the pack of **worgs** that killed the young hunter Osgar a tenday or so ago, triggering the manifestation of the meenlocks. The hungry monstrosities attempt to sneak up on the characters as soon as they detect their presence.

### AREA INFORMATION: THE TAINTED GROVE

Use the Tainted Grove map in **Appendix 6** for this scene.

**Terrain.** The forest floor is covered in dried leaves and other detritus, making it hard to move quietly – Stealth checks are at disadvantage for the characters (but not the worgs – see below). Tangles of brambles grow between the trees. Anywhere other than the path or the clearing counts as difficult terrain.

**Vision.** Mist swirls through the clearing, granting disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

**Trees.** The leafless trees around the edge of the clearing and the stand in the center provide three-quarters cover or full cover to anyone hiding behind them. The entrance to the meenlocks' lair is in the roots of the ancient oak – see below.

**Ruined Cottage.** The walls of this stone cottage have partly collapsed but it can provide cover and a place to hide. See below for more information.

**Touched by the Feywild.** The boundaries between the Feywild and the material plane are thinner in the grove. Enchantment spells and all spells cast by warlocks with an Archfey patron have their save DC increased by 1.

### CREATURES

The five **worgs** who make their lair in the grove are spread out around the edge of the clearing and close in to attack from several directions, hoping to surprise the PCs. The foul creatures fight to the death to defend their territory, snarling dire threats at the party in their guttural tongue.

Cormanthor Forest worgs have adapted to an environment where fallen leaves make it hard for them to sneak up on their prey. Either as a gift from the Hexad, residual magic from Myth Drannor, or the influence of the Feywild, they have learned how to walk silently across fallen leaves, hovering a fraction of an inch above the surface. This ability grants them advantage on Stealth checks. The worgs can use this ability at will – a worg can roll around or bury itself in a pile of leaves whenever it likes.

### ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak:** Remove two worgs.
- **Weak:** Remove one **worg**.
- **Strong:** Add an **alpha worg** (use **dire wolf** statistics).
- **Very Strong:** Replace the worgs with **dire wolves**.

### THE RUINED COTTAGE

Over a century ago, this stone cottage was home to the drow warlock Ghaunklyr Tsarath and his boggle servant Whisperfoot. Today, the roof is gone, and only part of the walls remain. Inside, the largest worg and his mate sleep inside the ruin on a bed of dried leaves.

**Bones.** The remains of the worgs' meals are strewn on the ground. If the characters poke around amongst the debris, they can identify several human bones mixed in with those of elk, wild boar, and deer with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check. These belong to Osgar.

**Treasure.** If the characters search the pile of leaves, they find Osgar's longbow with a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check. If the roll exceeds DC 15, they also find a silver locket. Inside is a tiny painting of an attractive woman. This is Osgar's mother – anyone who has met his grandmother Thora Goodfellow identifies the family resemblance.



The northern part of the structure is choked with brambles and hawthorns which cause 1 hit point of damage to anyone searching this area in no or light armor. With a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check, a character can find a loose stone in the northeast corner wall.

Hidden behind the stone is a small wooden coffer containing a *potion of healing* and Tsarath's cache of artifacts – these include an obsidian pestle and mortar, a birch wand carved with tiny fey creatures and a leather component pouch decorated with gold leaf and filled with strange (and rather shriveled) ingredients. Recovering this cache fulfils the Zhentarim faction assignment.

## THE TWISTED OAK

Once the worgs have been dealt with, the PCs can approach the ancient oak at the center of the grove. This evil-looking tree served as a fey crossing place in Ghaunklyr Tsarath's time. Stepping inside the oak, the warlock traveled the fey backroads to the Gloaming Court where he entered into his warlock's pact with the Queen of Air and Darkness.

The means of journeying to the darker parts of the Feywild from the grove have since been lost to the mists of time, but a strong connection persists. This, coupled with Osgar's terror at being chased down by the worgs, led to the manifestation of the meenlocks. As the young man was torn to pieces by the jaws of

the beasts, the ground beneath the grove shifted and warped, forming a network of tunnels, their walls lined with a spongy black moss.

This is the meenlock lair – the place where they drag their captives and seek to transform them into their kind.

## AN OMINOUS ENTRANCE

If the characters examine the huge oak, they find an opening in the earth between the roots of the tree, just large enough for a Medium character.

Read the following:

The hairs on the back of your neck stand up and goose pimples break out on your skin as you approach the opening. This is a place of menacing evil.

There is only room for one character to enter the tunnel at a time and Medium characters need to stoop. The tunnel descends steeply downwards for 60 feet, before opening out into a chamber. Both the tunnel and chamber are unlit.

Inside the tunnel each character must face their worst fears – alone. Powerful emanations from the darker parts of the Feywild create a phantasmal image of whatever each character's fears the most, as their companions disappear from view.

Refer back to what the players wrote down on **Player Handout #1** at the start of the session and play through each character's fears in turn, using their descriptions to come up with a suitably scary situation.

Here are a couple of examples:

- You feel the tunnel closing in on you, becoming narrower and narrower, until you can't go forward anymore. There's no room to turn around so you try to shuffle backwards, but now the passage behind you is too tight. You are trapped beneath the earth with nowhere to go and are finding it harder and harder to breathe...
- Thousands and thousands of fist-sized spiders pour from holes in the walls and ceiling of the tunnel. They are everywhere – all around your feet, in your hair and on your back, your arms and your legs. They crawl inside your shirt, into your boots, and up your trousers; the hairy filaments on their limbs tickle your skin as they prepare to sink their venomous mandibles into your flesh....

Once you've gone around the table and described what each character experiences, everyone must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. If they received Erevos's warning about the Tainted Grove, they make their saving throws with advantage.

Characters who succeed on the saving throw have overcome their worst fears and gain inspiration. They can continue down the tunnel to area M1 – see **The Meenlock Tunnels** below.



Characters that fail must drop whatever they are holding and become frightened for one minute. While frightened, the character must take the Dash action to flee back up the tunnel and out of the Tainted Grove. Once they are outside the clearing, they can make another Wisdom saving throw at the end of each of their turns to end the effect.

Once the fear effect has been shaken off or a minute has passed, a character can attempt to face their fears again, but the saving throw DC increases by 1 each time. Overcoming your fears on the second or third attempt does not earn inspiration. If a character fails their saving throw three times, the fourth time they return to the tunnel they do not have to face their fears again. Instead, the PC's ongoing anxiety means they have disadvantage on ability checks and attack rolls until they regain confidence by succeeding on a meaningful ability check or attack roll.

## THE MEENLOCK TUNNELS

Use the map of the meenlock lair in **Appendix 7** in conjunction with the descriptions below as the PCs explore the tunnels.

### AREA INFORMATION

**Dimensions & Terrain.** The tunnels connecting the chambers of the lair are between 3 feet and 4 feet wide and have low ceilings around 5 feet high, meaning taller characters will need to stoop. Medium sized creatures have disadvantage on attack rolls and Dexterity saving throws in the cramped tunnels and must spend 1 extra foot of movement for every foot they move. The chambers have taller ceilings – around 8 to 10 feet high – so Medium characters can act normally.

**Black Moss.** The floors, walls, and ceilings of the tunnels and chambers are covered with a dank, spongy black moss. The meenlocks eat this moss and also feed it to their victims. Consuming the moss causes short-term madness (Chapter 8, *Dungeon Master's Guide*) lasting 1d10 minutes if the person eating it fails a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw.

**Lighting.** The chambers and tunnels of the lair are unlit.

**Sounds and Smells.** The moss muffles sound in the lair, and gives off a sickly-sweet smell, like rotting fruit.

### M1. ENTRANCE CHAMBER

The roots of the ancient oak tree poke through the 10-foot-high ceiling in this chamber. The walls and floor are covered in black moss. Two narrow tunnels

exit this chamber in the southeast corner; one heads east, the other goes south.

**Creatures.** Two **meenlocks** are lurking in the tunnels leading out of this chamber.

Read the following the first time the PCs see a meenlock:

Before you stands a deformed creature that looks like something from your nightmares. About three feet tall, it has a squat torso, partly covered in thick black hairs, atop a pair of spindly legs, and bent arms ending in vicious claws. Worse still is its hideous insectoid face. The unearthly creature stares at you with disturbingly expressionless yellow eyes, devoid of pupils.

The meenlocks prefer to fight the group in the tunnels where the cramped conditions mean they have advantage on attacks against larger foes and the characters have disadvantage to attack them. They use hit and run tactics whenever possible, ambushing isolated or vulnerable targets with shadow teleport (a bonus action), then attacking with their claws, hoping to paralyze their victim and drag them away. See “**Playing the Pillars: Combat**” below for additional notes on fighting the meenlocks.

The meenlocks flee if reduced to 15 hp or less, returning to strike again when the PCs reach area M3.

### ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak:** Remove one **meenlock**.
- **Weak:** The **meenlocks** have 21 hp each.
- **Strong:** Add an extra **meenlock** to the tunnels.
- **Very Strong:** Add two **meenlocks** to the tunnels.

### M2. THE BROKEN BAKER

The badly beaten form of the baker Fergus lies on the floor by the north wall of this chamber, pinned in place by gnarled tree roots. Clad only in a filthy, ripped nightshirt, Fergus has swallowed a handful of black moss in an attempt to quench his thirst and has succumbed to short term madness. He is experiencing vivid hallucinations. Fergus imagines that the characters are meenlocks here to torture him, and he starts screaming as soon as he sees them.

The baker can be calmed down with a successful DC 11 Charisma (Persuasion) or (Deception) check. Pulling him free from the grasping roots requires a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check.

Fergus has **commoner** statistics but has only 1 hp remaining.

**Aedwen's ring.** Mother Aedwen slipped the ring from her finger as she was dragged to the Torture Chamber. A character can spot it glinting among the moss with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. The worn silver ring is engraved with the symbol of the Hexad – a snowflake formed of thorns.

### M3. TORTURE CHAMBER

Three nightmarish creatures stand in a semi-circle in front of the southern wall of this chamber, making unearthly and unnerving clicking sounds. A middle-aged human woman with tangled red hair is held upright against the earthen wall by grasping tree roots; a look of sheer terror is on her face.

This is Mother Aedwen, the village **priest**, who was captured by the meenlocks two nights ago. For the last three hours, she has been subjected to telepathic torture by the unseelie fey and has been reduced to 7 hp and has no spell slots remaining.

The three **meenlocks** turn their attentions on the party as soon as they spot them, but continue to torture Mother Aedwen telepathically during the battle as long as she can see them. If any meenlocks survived the earlier encounter, this is the ideal time for them to reappear and attack the group from the rear!

At the end of the third round of combat, Mother Aedwen must make a Wisdom saving throw with her +3 bonus. The DC is 10 + the number of torturing meenlocks who are still present and not incapacitated. If she succeeds, she takes 5 psychic damage and survives. If she fails, she takes 10 psychic damage, which drops her to 0 hit points, instantly transforming into a meenlock at full health. As her body shrinks and warps into her new form, she slips out of the restraining roots, attacking the group on the following round.

**Development.** If Mother Aedwen survives her ordeal, the characters can free her from the roots with a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check. Clearly shaken, she thanks the adventurers and asks them to escort her and Fergus back to Moonfern Ford.

#### ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak:** Remove one **meenlock**.
- **Weak:** The **meenlocks** have 21 hp each.
- **Strong:** Add a **meenlock**.
- **Very Strong:** Add a **meenlock**. Mother Aedwen must make her Wisdom saving throw at the end of the second round

## PLAYING THE PILLARS

### COMBAT

Meenlocks hate bright light. If cornered, they gang up on a torch- or lantern-bearing character, seeking to paralyze them so they can extinguish the light source.

Medium characters fighting in the narrow tunnels provide three-quarters cover (+5 to AC and Dexterity saving throws) to targets behind them.

### EXPLORATION

The characters might decide to send a rogue, familiar, or wild-shaped character to scout ahead. Stealth checks relying on hearing are at advantage due to the moss, but characters are easily detected if they use a light source.

Lone characters risk being ambushed by the meenlocks and dragged to area M3, but meenlocks can only use their shadow teleport in dim light and darkness. It is worth familiarizing yourself with the radius of bright light shed by lamps (15 ft.), torches (20 ft.) and lanterns (30 ft.).

### SOCIAL

Any attempt to negotiate with the meenlocks is doomed to failure. The unseelie fey respond to any conversation by bombarding the characters telepathically with nightmarish visions and unsettling thoughts.



## CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

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With the meenlocks defeated and the villagers rescued, the characters can return to Moonfern Ford. The villagers are overjoyed to get their priest back and Fergus is so happy to be home safe he lets his secret feelings for Bea show by hugging her, leading to embarrassed blushes on both sides.

Gerold gives the group their promised reward – the villagers have scraped together a few coins from their life savings, while Fergus offers his thanks by baking them a splendid cake.

Mother Aedwen expresses her gratitude to the heroes by giving them a small packet of seeds. Made from the moonferns growing in the village, these seeds act as *dust of disappearance*. She tells the characters that the creatures that dragged her and Fergus off to the Tainted Grove were meenlocks – unseelie fey that manifest when someone is overwhelmed by fear in a place where the Feywild's influence is strong. It seems likely that Osgar's tragic death from the worgs triggered their appearance.

Rather pompously, Gerold tells the characters that their bravery has earned them an audience with the local lord, Bourne of Candles. A rare privilege indeed. If Gloomskelf is a prisoner in the village, the reeve asks the characters to take him to Bourne of Candles to face the lord's justice.

## LOOSE ENDS

If the characters found Osgar's bow in the ruined cottage, any of the villagers can confirm that it belonged to the young hunter. If they also recovered the silver locket, they may wish to return this and the unfinished carving from Osgar's hut to his grandmother Thora in Buttergroves.

## ADVENTURE REWARDS

At the end of the session, the characters each receive rewards based upon their accomplishments. These rewards include advancement and treasure, and may include player rewards—magic item unlocks, story awards, or new downtime activities, as follows:

### ADVANCEMENT AND TREASURE CHECKPOINTS

The characters receive one advancement checkpoint and one treasure checkpoint(s) for each story objective that they complete, as follows:

- **Story Objective A:** Stop the Bogeyman from frightening the village children.
- **Story Objective B:** Rescue Erevos the centaur from the quicklings.
- **Story Objective C:** Discover the Tainted Grove and defeat the worgs.
- **Story Objective D:** Defeat the meenlocks and rescue the missing villagers.

### PLAYER REWARDS

The characters earn the following player rewards for **completing the adventure**:

#### MAGIC ITEM UNLOCK

Characters completing the adventure unlock:

**Dust of Disappearance.** Found in a small packet, this powder resembles very fine sand. There is enough of it for one use. When you use an action to throw the dust into the air, you and each creature and object within 10 feet of you become invisible for 2d4 minutes. The duration is the same for all subjects, and the dust is consumed when its magic takes effect. If a creature affected by the dust attacks or casts a spell, the invisibility ends for that creature. This item can be found in **Appendix 11**.

#### STORY AWARDS

Characters playing the adventure may earn:

**Local Hero.** If the characters save Mother Aedwen, they are asked to report their success to the Bourne of Candles, who appears in the next CCC adventure: CCC-UK4: Bourne of Candles. This award can be found in **Appendix 10**.

### DUNGEON MASTER REWARDS

In exchange for running this adventure, you earn **advancement and treasure checkpoints** and downtime as though you played the adventure, but none of the adventure's **player rewards**.

However, this adventure may qualify for rewards earned by completing DM Quests. See the ALDMG (*Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide*) for more information about DM Quests.

## APPENDIX 1: NPCs

The following NPCs feature in this adventure.

**Gerold (GAIR-old).** Gerold is the village reeve, appointed to his position by the local lord Bourne of Candles. He is worried the disappearances will reflect badly on him and is eager for the group to help.

**Personality:** *I mean well but I can be rather pompous at times.*

**Ideal:** *The villagers of Moonfern Ford are my responsibility.*

**Bond:** *I am a loyal servant to my lord.*

**Flaw:** *I have an inflated sense of my own importance.*

**Bea (Bee).** Bea is a lonely widow who keeps goats. After she lost her husband Tyler, her grief led to the appearance of Gloomskelf. Mother Aedwen has been helping Bea with the grieving process.

**Personality:** *I haven't got over Tyler's death. I know I need to move on but I can't yet.*

**Ideal:** *I yearn to find happiness again.*

**Bond:** *My family is the most important thing in the world to me, even though my children are far away.*

**Flaw:** *I blame myself when things go wrong.*

**Fergus.** The village baker, Fergus, is abducted by the meenlocks on the group's first night in the village.

**Personality:** *I am caring and kind, but prefer to keep my true feelings hidden away for fear of rejection.*

**Ideal:** *I take pride in my craft and love it when people compliment my bread and cakes.*

**Bond:** *I am falling in love with Bea. Perhaps I could make her happy again.*

**Flaw:** *I overindulge in my own baked goods.*

**Eloise (ELL-o-EEZE).** Eloise is seven years old and lives in the village with her parents and her little brother Tobias. She is visited at night by "the bogeyman".

**Personality:** *I like to ask a LOT of questions.*

**Ideal:** *I'm going to become an adventurer and rid the world of bogeymen.*

**Bond:** *It's my job to keep Tobias safe.*

**Flaw:** *My curiosity often gets me into trouble.*

**Dunn.** Dunn is nine years old and lives in Moonfern Ford with his father Irden. He is being visited at night by the "bogeyman."

**Personality:** *The bogeyman terrifies me!*

**Ideal:** *When I grow up I'm going to become the best fisherman on the river.*

**Bond:** *Mister Claws is the most precious thing I own in all the world.*

**Flaw:** *I've bitten my nails down to the quick.*

**Gloomskelf.** Bea's grief at the loss of her husband triggered the village bogeyman's appearance from the Feywild. Gloomskelf wants to cause as much mayhem as possible in Moonfern Ford but is a coward at heart.

**Personality:** *I loves making the little ones scream!*

**Ideal:** *I live to makes plenty jokes and trouble.*

**Bond:** *I serves the Queen and her Court.*

**Flaw:** *I will be a good boggle if I'm scared enough.*

**Mother Aedwen (EED-when).** Loved by the villagers of Moonfern Ford, the priest is kidnapped by the meenlocks before the adventure begins. Her safe return is a cause of much celebration in the village.

**Personality:** *I am a good listener and offer wise counsel to those who need it.*

**Ideal:** *The Sacred Hexad guide my actions and ensure I am doing the best for the village.*

**Bond:** *I watch over my flock like a good shepherd.*

**Flaw:** *I am strangely drawn to the woods and the faerie realms.*



## APPENDIX 2: CREATURE STATISTICS

### BOGGLE

*Small fey, chaotic neutral*

**Armor Class** 14

**Hit Points** 18 (4d6 + 4)

**Speed** 30 ft. climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	6 (-2)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

**Skills** Perception +3, Sleight of Hand +6, Stealth +6

**Damage Resistances** fire

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

**Languages** Sylvan

**Challenge** 1/8 (25 XP)

**Boggle Oil.** The boggle excretes nonflammable oil from its pores. The boggle chooses whether the oil is slippery or sticky and can change the oil on its skin from one consistency to another as a bonus action.

**Slippery Oil:** While coated in slippery oil, the boggle gains advantage on Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks made to escape bonds, squeeze through narrow spaces, and end grapples.

**Sticky Oil:** While coated in sticky oil, the boggle gains advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks made to grapple and any ability check made to maintain a hold on another creature, a surface, or an object. The boggle can also climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

**Dimensional Rift.** As a bonus action, the boggle can create an invisible and immobile rift within an opening or frame it can see within 5 feet of it, provided that the space is no bigger than 10 feet on any side. The dimensional rift bridges the distance between that space and any point within 30 feet of it that the boggle can see or specify by distance and direction (such as “30 feet straight up”). While next to the rift, the boggle can see through it and is considered to be next to the destination as well, and anything the boggle puts through the rift (including a portion of its body) emerges at the destination. Only the boggle can use the rift, and it lasts until the end of the boggle’s next turn.

**Uncanny Smell.** The boggle has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

### ACTIONS

**Pummel.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d6-1) bludgeoning damage.

**Oil Puddle.** The boggle creates a puddle of oil that is either slippery or sticky (boggle’s choice). The puddle is 1 inch deep and covers the ground in the boggle’s space. The puddle is difficult terrain for all creatures except boggles and lasts for 1 hour.

If the oil is slippery, any creature that enters the puddle’s area or starts its turn there must succeed on a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone.

If the oil is sticky, any creature that enters the puddle’s area or starts its turn there must succeed on a DC 11 Strength saving throw or be restrained. On its turn, a creature can use an action to try to extricate itself from the sticky puddle, ending the effect and moving into the nearest safe unoccupied space with a successful DC 11 Strength check.

## CENTAUR

*Large monstrosity, neutral good*

**Armor Class** 12

**Hit Points** 45 (6d10 + 12)

**Speed** 50 ft.

<b>STR</b>	<b>DEX</b>	<b>CON</b>	<b>INT</b>	<b>WIS</b>	<b>CHA</b>
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)

**Skills** Athletics +6, Perception +3, Survival +3

**Senses** Passive Perception 13

**Languages** Elvish, Sylvan

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Charge.** If the centaur moves at least 30 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a pike attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 10 (3d6) piercing damage.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The centaur makes two attacks: one with its pike and one with its hooves or two with its longbow.

**Pike.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) piercing damage.

**Hooves.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

**Longbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

## DIRE WOLF

*Large beast, unaligned*

**Armor Class** 14 (Natural Armor)

**Hit Points** 37 (5d10 + 10)

**Speed** 50 ft.

<b>STR</b>	<b>DEX</b>	<b>CON</b>	<b>INT</b>	<b>WIS</b>	<b>CHA</b>
17 (+3)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

**Skills** Perception +3, Stealth +4

**Senses** Passive Perception 13

**Languages** --

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

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

**Pack Tactics.** The wolf has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the wolf's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

### ACTIONS

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

## HAWK

*Tiny beast, unaligned*

**Armor Class** 13

**Hit Points** 1 (1d4 - 1)

**Speed** 10 ft., fly 60 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
5 (-3)	16 (+3)	8 (-1)	2 (-4)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)

---

**Skills** Perception +4

**Senses** Passive Perception 14

**Languages** --

**Challenge** 0 (10 XP)

**Keen Sight.** The hawk has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

### ACTIONS

**Talons.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 slashing damage.

## MEENLOCK

*Small fey, neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 31 (7d6+7)

**Speed** 30 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (0)	10 (0)	8 (-1)

---

**Skills** Perception +4, Stealth +6, Survival +2

**Condition Immunities** frightened

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft.

**Languages** telepathy 120 ft.

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Fear Aura.** Any beast or humanoid that starts its turn within 10 feet of the meenlock must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the start of the creature's next turn.

**Light Sensitivity.** While in bright light, the meenlock has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

**Shadow Teleport (Recharge 5-6).** As a bonus action, the meenlock can teleport to an unoccupied space within 30 feet of it, provided that both the space it's teleporting from and its destination are in dim light or darkness. The destination need not be within line of sight.

### ACTIONS

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4+2) slashing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.



## QUICKLING

*Tiny fey, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class 16**

**Hit Points 10** (3d4 + 3)

**Speed 120 ft.**

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
4 (-3)	23 (+6)	13 (+1)	10 (0)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

**Skills** Acrobatics +8, Perception +5, Sleight of Hand +8, Stealth +8

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft.

**Languages** Common, Sylvan

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Blurred Movement.** Attack rolls against the quickling have disadvantage unless the quickling is incapacitated or restrained.

**Evasion.** If the quickling is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, it instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** *The* quickling makes three dagger attacks.

**Dagger.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d4+6) piercing damage.

## SNARE

*1st-level abjuration*

**Casting Time:** 1 minute

**Range:** Touch

**Components:** S M (25ft of rope; consumed)

**Duration:** 8 hours

As you cast this spell, you use the rope to create a circle with a 5-foot radius on the ground or the floor. When you finish casting, the rope disappears and the circle becomes a magic trap.

This trap is nearly invisible, requiring a successful Intelligence (Investigation) check against your spell save DC to be discerned.

The trap triggers when a Small, Medium, or Large creature moves onto the ground or the floor in the spell's radius. That creature must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or be magically hoisted into the air, leaving it hanging upside down 3 feet above the ground or the floor. The creature is restrained there until the spell ends.

A restrained creature can make a Dexterity saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. Alternatively, the creature or someone else who can reach it can use an action to make an Intelligence (Arcana) check against your spell save DC. On a success, the restrained effect ends.

After the trap is triggered, the spell ends when no creature is restrained by it.

## SWARM OF ROT GRUBS

*Medium swarm, unaligned*

**Armor Class** 8

**Hit Points** 22 (5d8)

**Speed** 5 ft., climb 5 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (-4)	7 (-2)	10 (0)	1 (-5)	2 (-4)	1 (-5)

---

**Damage Resistances** piercing, slashing

**Condition Immunities** charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained

**Senses** blindsight 10 ft., passive Perception 6

**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

**Swarm.** The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny maggot. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

### ACTIONS

**Bites.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the swarm's space. *Hit:* The target is infested by 1d4 rot grubs. At the start of each of the target's turns, the target takes 1d6 piercing damage per rot grub infesting it. Applying fire to the bite wound before the end of the target's next turn deals 1 fire damage to the target and kills these rot grubs. After this time, these rot grubs are too far under the skin to be burned. If a target infested by rot grubs ends its turn with 0 hit points, it dies as the rot grubs burrow into its heart and kill it. Any effect that cures disease kills all rot grubs infesting the target.

## WORG

*Large monstrosity, neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 13 (Natural Armor)

**Hit Points** 26 (4d10 + 4)

**Speed** 50 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	7 (-2)	11 (+0)	8 (-1)

---

**Skills** Perception +4

**Senses** Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 14

**Languages** Goblin, Worg

**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

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

### ACTIONS

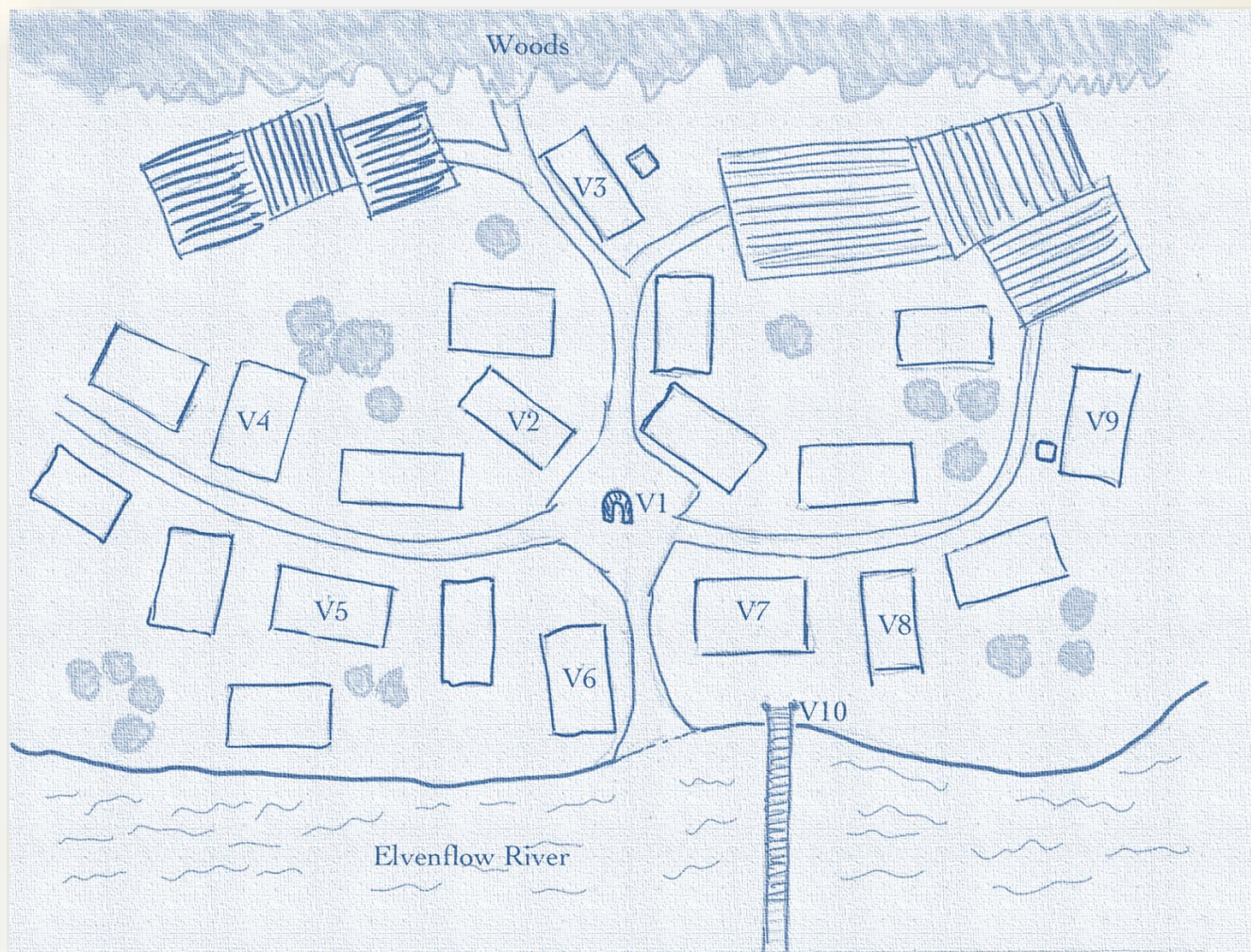
**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

## APPENDIX 3: ELVENFLOW MAP

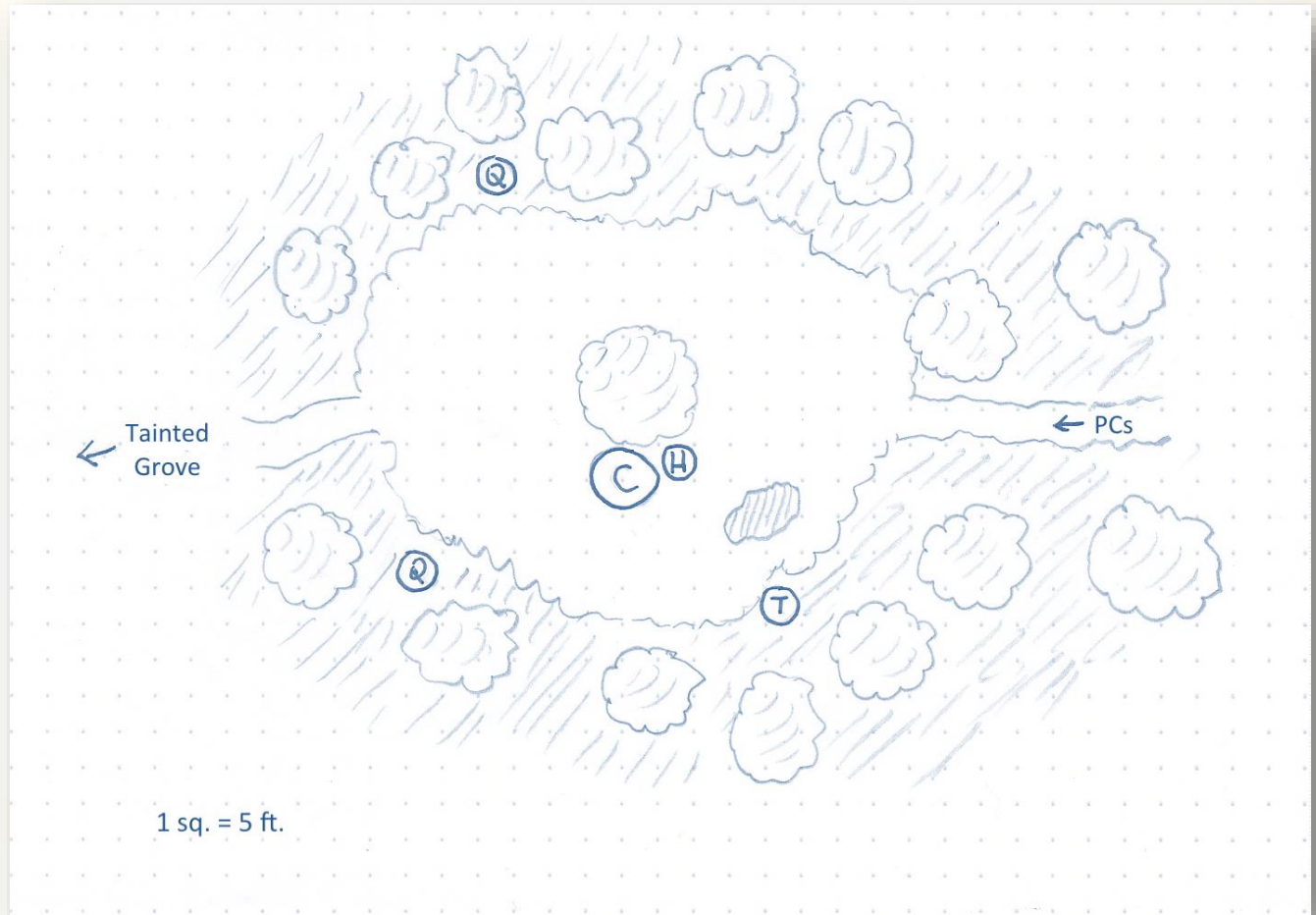




## APPENDIX 4: MOONFERN FORD MAP

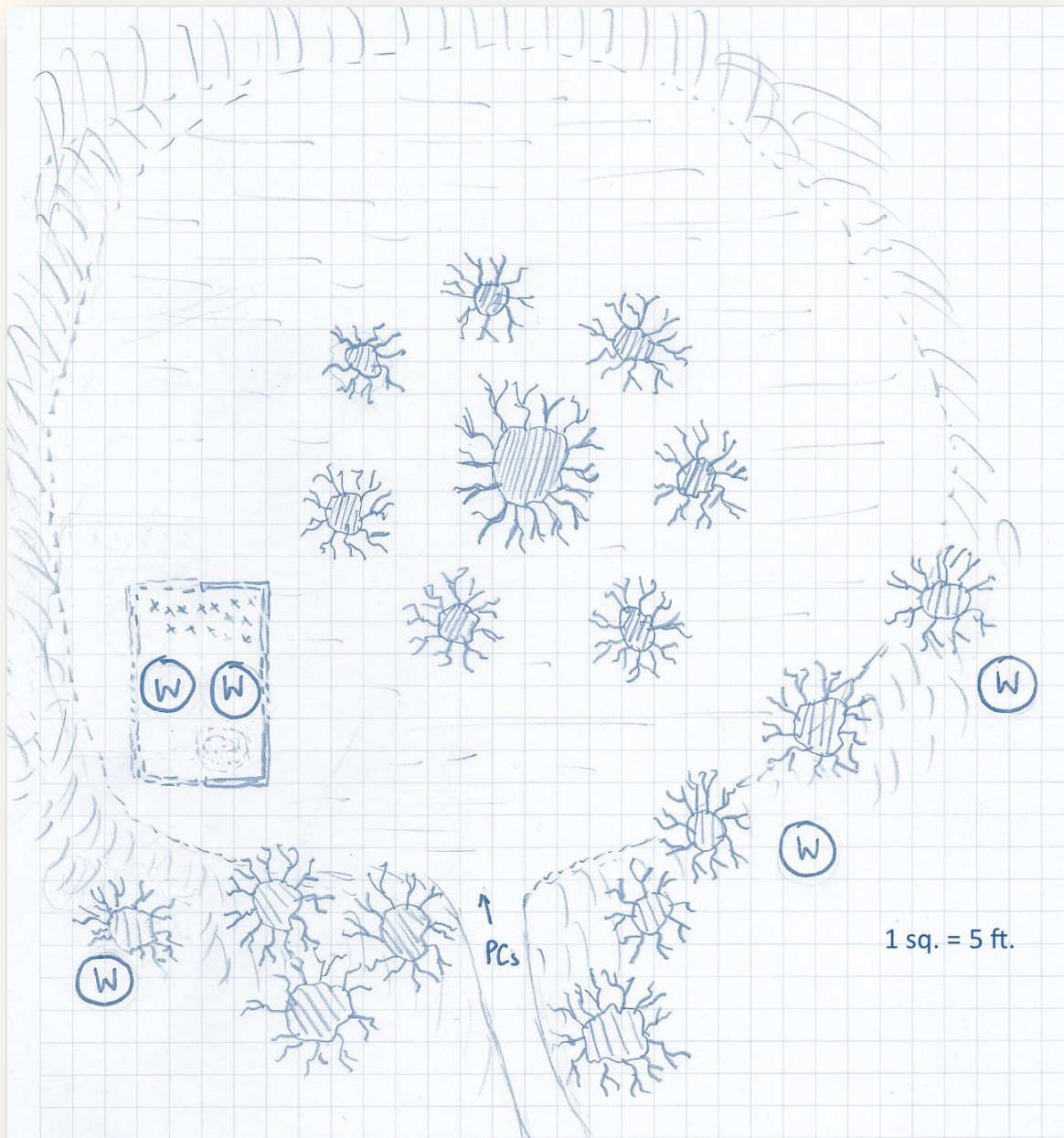


## APPENDIX 5: FOREST CLEARING MAP



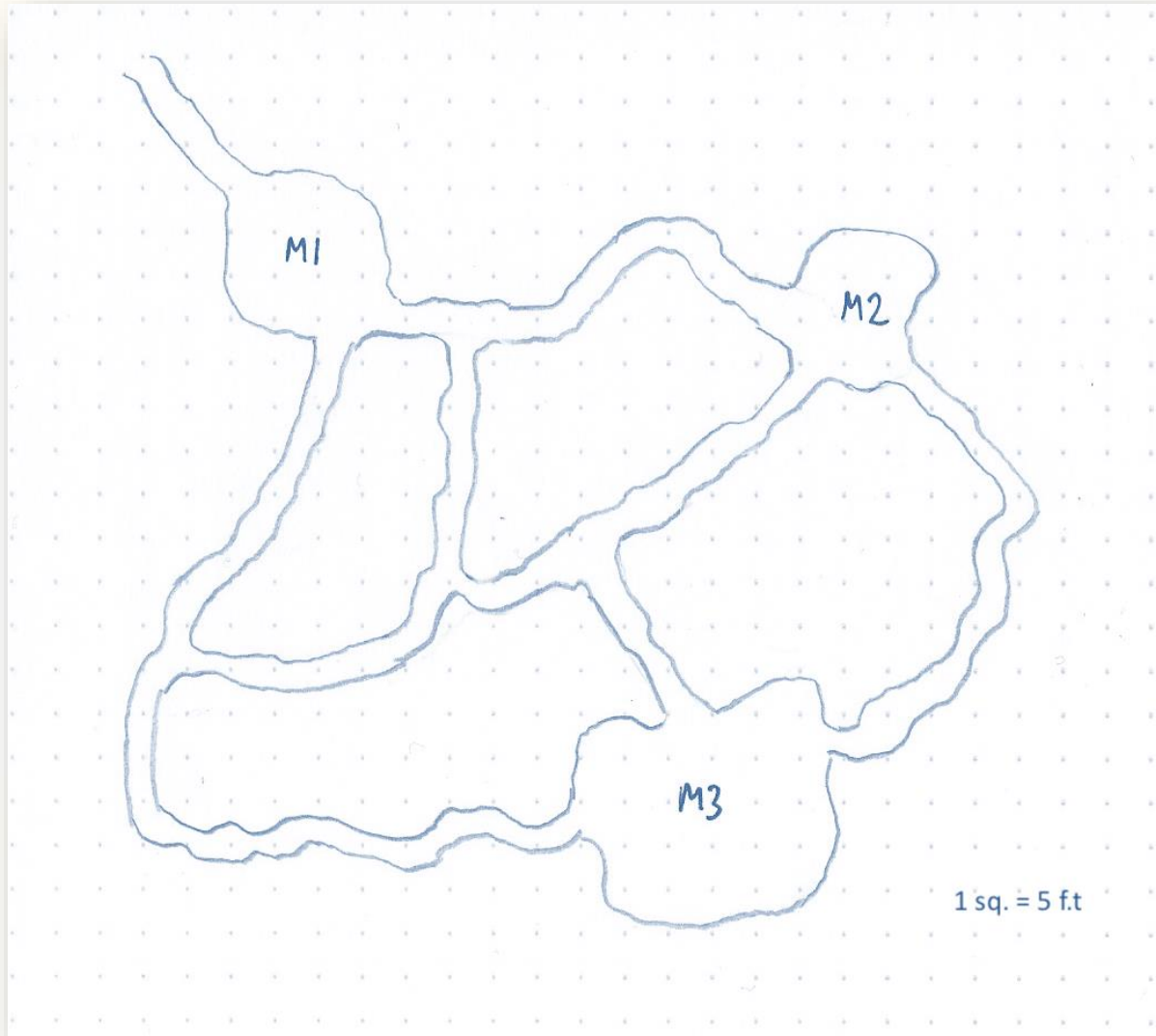


## APPENDIX 6: TAINTED GROVE MAP





## APPENDIX 7: MEENLOCK TUNNELS MAP



## APPENDIX 8: PLAYER HANDOUT #1

Hand out a slip to each player at the beginning of the session.

**Character Name**

My worst fear is....

because....

**Character Name**

My worst fear is....

because....

**Character Name**

My worst fear is....

because....

**Character Name**

My worst fear is....

because....

**Character Name**

My worst fear is....

because....

**Character Name**

My worst fear is....

because....



## APPENDIX 9: PLAYER HANDOUT #2

*Excerpt from  
A Short History of the Cormanthor Woods*

In the Year of the Bent Blade (1376 Dalereckoning), the warlock Ghaunklyr T̄sarath, one of many drow elves who had emerged from the subterranean realms below to live in Cormanthor following the Retreat, forged a dark pact with the Queen of Air and Darkness, the unseelie ruler of the Gloaming Court.

T̄sarath took up residence in a forest grove some ten miles west of the Elvenflow, in a place where the boundary between Faerun and the lands of the fey was blurred. The Queen sent one of her lowliest servants – a boggle named Whisperfoot – to aid the warlock in his dark rituals. T̄sarath would send Whisperfoot out to filch the eldritch and mundane components he needed to work his magic.

Over time, unseelie influences and T̄sarath's magic corrupted the grove, transforming it into a place of darkness and evil amidst the sylvan beauty of the woods. The drow's power and notoriety grew until he drew the attention of the Company of the Golden Stag, a band of adventurers – some noble and altruistic, some less so – who brought his activities to a premature end. But even with the warlock dead, the corruption in the grove remains.

## APPENDIX 10: STORY AWARD

### LOCAL HERO

---

You saved Mother Aedwen, priest of the Sacred Hexad in Moonfern Ford, from the clutches of the unseelie fey. You must report this success to the local lord of the Elvenflow Estuary, the reclusive Bourne of Candles.

## APPENDIX 11: MAGIC ITEM

Characters completing this adventure's objective unlock this magic item.

### DUST OF DISAPPEARANCE

---

*Wondrous item, uncommon*

Found in a small packet, this powder resembles very fine sand. There is enough of it for one use. When you use an action to throw the dust into the air, you and each creature and object within 10 feet of you become invisible for 2d4 minutes. The duration is the same for all subjects, and the dust is consumed when its magic takes effect. If a creature affected by the dust attacks or casts a spell, the invisibility ends for that creature.

This item is found on **Magic Item Table B** in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.



## APPENDIX 12: DUNGEON MASTER TIPS

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 1st-4th level characters** and is optimized for **five characters with an average party level (APL) of 3**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.

### NEW TO D&D ADVENTURERS LEAGUE?

<http://dnd.wizards.com/playevents/organized-play>

### NEW TO THE ANNUAL STORYLINE?

<http://dnd.wizards.com/story/waterdeep>

<http://dndadventurersleague.org/storyline-seasons/waterdeep-adventures/>

To DM an adventure, you **must** have 3 to 7 players—each with their own character whose level is within the adventure’s level range. Characters playing in a **hardcover** adventure may continue to play to but if they play a different hardcover adventure, they **can’t return** to the first one if they’re outside its level range.

## PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

Before you start play, consider the following:

- Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you’d like to highlight or remind yourself of while running the adventure, such as a way you’d like to portray an NPC or a tactic you’d like to use in a combat. Familiar yourself with the adventure’s appendices and handouts.
- Gather any resources you’d like to use to aid you in running this adventure—such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battlemaps.
- Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information, such as name, race, class, and level; passive Wisdom (Perception), and anything specified as notable by the adventure (such as backgrounds, traits, flaws, etc.)

Players can play an adventure they previously played as a Player or Dungeon Master, but may only play it once with a given character. Ensure each player has their character’s adventure logsheet (if not, get one from the organizer). The players fill out the adventure name, session number, date, and your name and DCI number. In addition, the player also fills in the starting values for advancement and treasure checkpoints, downtime days, and renown. These values are updated at the conclusion of the session.

Each player is responsible for maintaining an accurate logsheet. If you have time, you can do a quick scan of a player’s character sheet to ensure that nothing looks out of order. If you see magic items of very high rarities or strange arrays of ability scores, you can ask players to provide documentation for the irregularities. If they cannot, feel free to restrict item use or ask them to use a standard ability score array.

Point players to the D&D Adventurers League Players Guide for reference. If players wish to spend downtime days and it’s the beginning of an adventure or episode, they can declare their activity and spend the days now, or they can do so at the end of the adventure or episode. Players should select their characters’ spells and other daily options prior to the start of the adventure, unless the adventure specifies otherwise. Feel free to reread the adventure description to help give players hints about what they might face.

## ADJUSTING THIS ADVENTURE

When combat is a possibility, the adventure will provide a sidebar that helps you to determine the best mix/number of opponents to provide them with to create an appropriate challenge. While you’re not bound to these adjustments; they’re here for your convenience and consideration.

To determine whether you should consider adjusting the adventure, add up the total levels of all the characters and divide the result by the number of characters (rounding .5 or greater up; .4 or less down). This is the group’s average party level (APL). To approximate the **party strength** for the adventure, consult the table below.

### DETERMINING PARTY STRENGTH

Party Composition	Party	Strength
3-4 characters,	APL less than	Very weak
3-4 characters,	APL equivalent	Weak
3-4 characters,	APL greater than	Average
5 characters,	APL less than	Weak
5 characters,	APL equivalent	Average
5 characters,	APL greater than	Strong
6-7 characters,	APL less than	Average
6-7 characters,	APL equivalent	Strong
6-7 characters,	APL greater than	Very strong