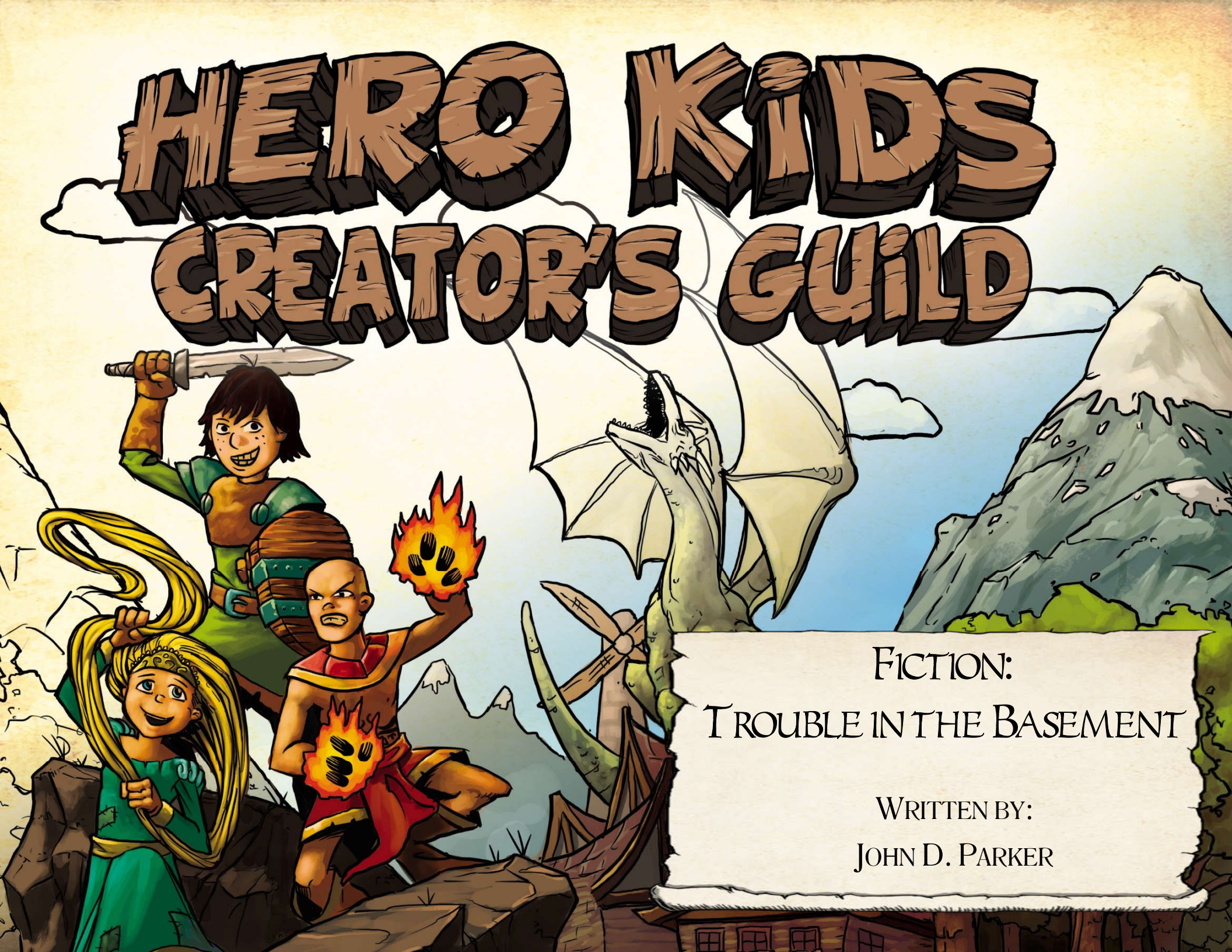


HERO KIDS CREATOR'S GUILD



FICTION:
TROUBLE IN THE BASEMENT

WRITTEN BY:
JOHN D. PARKER



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Hero Kids Fiction

Trouble in the Basement is the first in what we hope to be a series of fictional adventures for *Hero Kids*.

This is not a roleplaying adventure for your young heroes to play, but a story to read (or listen to) and enjoy. The story is in a relatively new genre called LitRPG—a story that includes obvious elements from the roleplaying game on which it is based.

Introduction

This short story introduces the reader to a few of the young heroes in Rivenshore and the types of adventures they have. The adventure takes place in the basement of the Block and Tackle Tavern and the newly discovered caves leading out from it.

Although this story is loosely based on, and is a prelude to, the *Basement O' Rats* adventure available with the *Hero Kids* core system, it should not ruin that adventure for your young heroes. If you read this to them (or they read it themselves) before playing the adventure, it should spark their imagination and desire to find out for themselves what's going on beneath the Block and Tackle Tavern. Reading this story after playing the adventure will provide the excitement of seeing how the bigger story fits together and to compare experiences.

We have tried to give a sample of the *Hero Kids* system and roleplaying, while changing up the story and leaving options to the readers' imaginations (like how they might have used food in their inventory).

It is our intention and hope that this short story encourages young heroes to experience adventures for themselves, turn those adventures into their own stories, and to tell those stories to others.

Reader Level Note

Trouble in the Basement is about 5500 words
(about half the length of a “chapter book”).

Here is the readability information:

Flesch Reading Ease = 89.6

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level = 3.1.

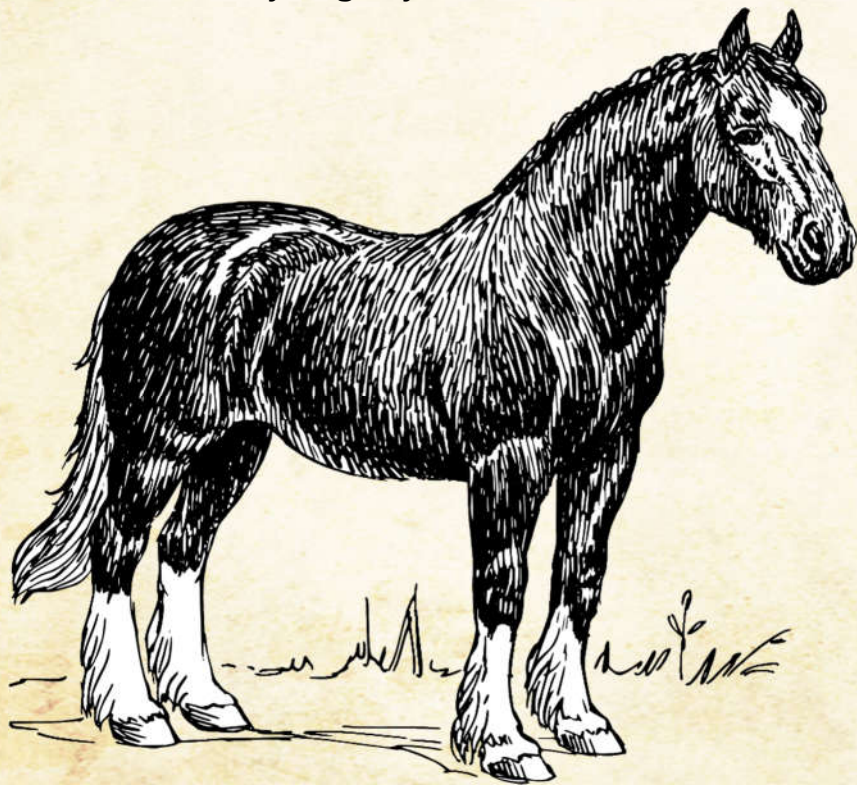
This story is brought to you by John D. Parker and Opie Games. Please let us know your comments in the reviews on DriveThruRPG.com where you purchased this product or in the [Hero Kids Community Facebook Page](#). Your feedback will help us know if you want more of these fictionalized adventures.

If the response is good, we may even be able to hire an illustrator for future projects!

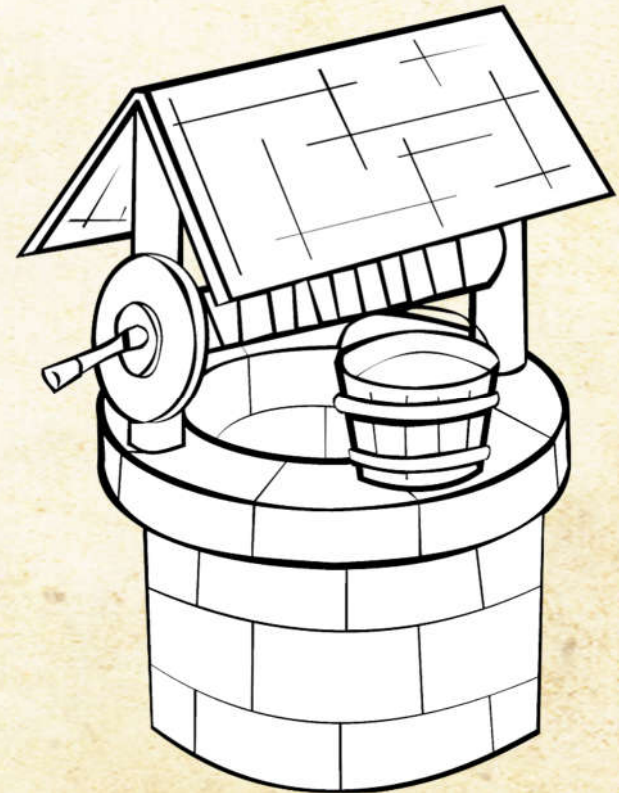
TROUBLE IN THE BASEMENT

Just Another Bump in the Road

You have been riding in the back of the wagon all day. Your whole body aches from bouncing on the hard wooden seat. Worse, you are bored from staring at the endless trees as you go by.



Finally, there is a break in the trees. The road leads into the center of a small village. Your parents stop the wagon in front of a well at the center of the town square. You get down to stretch your cramped muscles and rub your sore rump. Your parents fill the water jugs and a bucket for your thirsty horse.



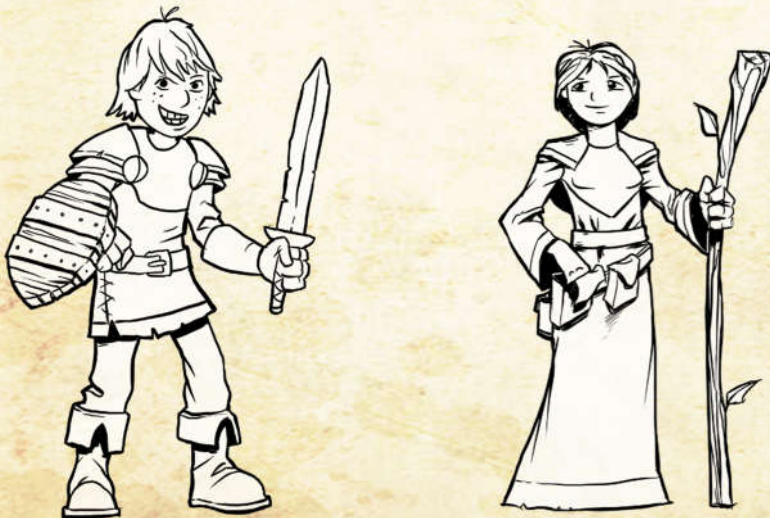
Welcome to Rivenshore

While you are standing there brushing the dust off, a boy and a girl run out of the inn across the square. They are laughing and chatting and talking at the same time, like kids your age often do. When they see you, they stop everything.

They head straight toward you. Their smiles tell you that they are friendly, but you aren't sure what to think. Their faces are smudged with dirt and their clothes are torn. They look worse than you feel.

The boy greets you with a big smile, "Hi, I'm Jordan. This is my friend Alissa."

He might have seen you looking funny at his torn clothes, because he says, "We just had the fight of our lives..."



The girl, Alissa, you think it was, jumps in, "Oh, hey! You must be new around here. We don't get many visitors. Welcome to Rivenshore. I know it looks like a boring little village..."

Jordan cuts her off, "...in the middle of the nowhere..."

Alissa continues, "...but we have a lot of fun here. Fishing in the river. Adventuring in the woods. Practicing our survival skills..."

Jordan says, "But I'm sure that's not what you want to know. You're still thinking about that fight I was talking about..."

And he is right, you barely heard anything they said about the town. They *look* like they were just in a fight for their lives.

Jordan sees the excitement in your eyes. He makes a big wink at Alissa and says, "Seeee. Everyone wants to know about the fighting." He leans his sword against the side of the well... and it is only now that you realize... he has a sword!

Alissa motions for you to sit on a bench there, and when you do, she sits down next to you. Jordan sits down on the edge of the well and says in a hoarse whisper, "This is what happened."

A Friend in Need

Jordan and Alissa finally had a day off from their chores and were going fishing. They stopped by the Block and Tackle Tavern where their young friend Roger lives and works. Mostly works, they think. His parents own the inn, and it is a big place for the three of them to manage.

When they found him, Roger was sitting on the front step with his arms crossed over his knees and his head buried in both.

As they walked up to him, Jordan said, "Hey Roger, do you want to go fishing with us?"

Roger kept his head down and said what sounded like, "I can't." His voice was weak. Maybe it was just muffled in his arms.

Alissa elbowed Jordan, "Hey Roger? Are you OK?" When Roger looked up, they saw where tears had streaked his dirty face.

All thoughts of fishing were washed away. Alissa just asked softly, "Roger?"

Roger made a deep sigh and said, "The inn is going to be full in a few days for a wedding. I'll never get my

chores done. My mom is already mad because I was goofing around yesterday instead of working."

"You never goof around, Roger," said Jordan. "You work all the time."

Roger said, "Not *all* the time."

"Don't worry, Roger," said Alissa. "We can help."

Jordan jumped in, "Yeah. We were just goofing around today anyway." At this, Alissa gave him a parent-look. Jordan mouthed, "What?"

Alissa put her hand on Roger's shoulder, "Just tell us how we can help."

"Thanks," said Roger. "You two are the best. But there's a big problem. Maybe bigger than the three of us."

Something Stinks

Roger explained his trouble as they walked into the inn and toward the basement stairs. "Mom is baking bread and I needed to get a sack of flour from the basement.

When I got down there, I found it in a horrible mess. Someone or something knocked a bunch of the barrels over. I was going to ask my parents for help, but they have a ton of work to do already. Besides, my mom will think I was just goofing around down there again."

Jordan said, "Oh, did you make a mess down there before?"



Roger said, "Well..."

Alissa cut in, with another fierce look at Jordan. "Don't worry about it, Roger. We'll help set things straight."

Jordan got her meaning and lead the way into the stairwell. "Yeah, Roger. Let's get to work."

Roger followed, carrying a lantern, and Alissa was right behind him. After a few steps down, Jordan slowed. The farther down he got, the worse it smelled. "Pee-yew, Roger. What do you keep down here?"

Alissa caught a whiff of what Jordan could smell. "Uh, Roger. Don't take this the wrong way, but does it always smell... like this... down here?"

Roger said, "No! Honest. Just like the barrels getting knocked over. There's something wrong down here."

"It sure smells like something wrong down here," said Jordan.

"Maybe something got spilled and is spoiling on the floor," said Alissa.

Jordan said, "Whatever is rotten down here, was rotten when it came in."

We're Not Alone

As he reached the bottom of the stairs, Jordan heard something in the basement. But they were talking, so he didn't hear it very well. "Ssshhh, there's something moving around down here," he said.

Roger stopped dead in his tracks, half on one step and half in mid-air. Alissa ran into him. Both nearly tumbled down the stairs. The lantern swung wildly in Roger's grasp.

"Now I know that smell, said Jordan. "It's the same smell as the rat's nest I found in the barn."

Roger said quietly, "Uh. Jordan. Let's go back up and get my parents."

"Come on Roger. Don't be scared. You're bigger than any dumb rat."

"I don't know about that," said Roger. "Whatever is down here, it moved some heavy barrels."

"You're just scared."

"Maybe a little," said Roger. "I don't practice fighting like you do. I have to work here at the inn all the time."

Alissa wished she were close enough to give Jordan a sharp elbow in the side. "It's OK, Roger. There's three

of us. We can see what's wrong and make sure it's safe." She carefully stepped around Roger, holding his arm steady so he didn't drop the lantern.

"Thanks, Alissa. But maybe I should get my parents."

"They're too busy. Remember?" she said. "We don't need to bother them over a few rats."

"Yeah. We can handle this," said Jordan, as he drew out his sword.



Rats in the Basement

Roger saw the flash of the blade in the lantern light.
"Why do you need your sword? ...If it's just rats..."

"We just need to be prepared. Right Alissa?"

Jordan and Alissa sneaked the rest of the way down the stairs. Roger stayed where he was. He was not going to move another inch. The lantern light shone in a rectangular column across the basement floor. Shielded by the stairwell, it didn't do much to light the rest of the room. Especially since there was a tall stack of barrels right at the bottom of the stairs.

Jordan and Alissa planned their next moves with hand signals. Jordan went to the far end of the stack of barrels. Alissa stepped sideways to the edge of the stack by the stairs. From their new positions they could hear squeaking and chewing. It was rats, all right.

Alissa whispered, "Sounds like you at the supper table, Jordan."

"Ssshhh," he said. "Be quiet. They'll hear you."

"It's just rats, right?" she said.

Jordan said, "OK, Roger. Walk slowly down the stairs. Alissa, when we see the rats..."

And just then the lantern was clear of the stairwell, lighting up the room.

"Get 'em," said Jordan. He leaped around the barrels. Alissa did the same from her end. They faced each other just ten feet apart. Between them was a rat almost as big as Jordan, eating the contents spilled from a toppled barrel. It stopped chewing to look up at Jordan. It bared its nasty, yellow teeth and screeched.

Jordan had never seen anything like this before, but his daily training helped him stay calm. He lunged at it with a slashing strike of his sword. The rat tried to duck away from the shining flash of steel but was too slow. Jordan knocked it out in one quick move.

Jordan grinned at Alissa, ready to brag. "How 'bout..." but he saw something move in the shadows behind her, near the ceiling. "Behind you!" he yelped.

A giant rat leaped down on Alissa from on top a stack of barrels. Alissa turned to block the attack with her staff, but the rat was already on her. It gave her a horrid bite on the shoulder as it tumbled over her.

While the rat was on the floor, Jordan attacked it with a slashing strike and knocked it out, too.

"That's two for you," she said, "but don't count me out yet."

"Don't worry, I know better than that," he said. "I got that one because of our teamwork. More important, though, are you OK?"

"Yeah, thanks," she said. "It hurts, but I'm just bruised."

"I'm sure there's more where those came from," he said.

"Yeah. Let's go get them." Alissa pointed for Jordan to go around the next stack of barrels one way. She would go around the other. They timed their jump together again. This time they looked all around to make sure they weren't going to get ambushed. Alissa spotted another giant rat. It ran out of a side door from another storage area and right at her.



That's Where They Came In

Alissa was quick with her defense. She pointed her staff at it and said, "Sear." The rat only had an instant to see a bright light before being knocked out.

"Nice," said Jordan. "That was too easy."

"Yeah, easy for you to say," she said, pointing at her injured shoulder. "Good thing we caught them snacking."

They listened for more noise for a few seconds. It was quiet except for Roger's heavy breathing. "Are you OK over there, Roger?" Alissa asked. "Why don't you come over here. We need to find where they're getting in."

Roger started walking across the room. "I'm fine." Then he saw Alissa's torn shoulder and got a little wilted in his legs.

She grabbed his arm to steady him. "I'm fine, Roger." He looked around at the rats on the floor. "What do we do with them?"

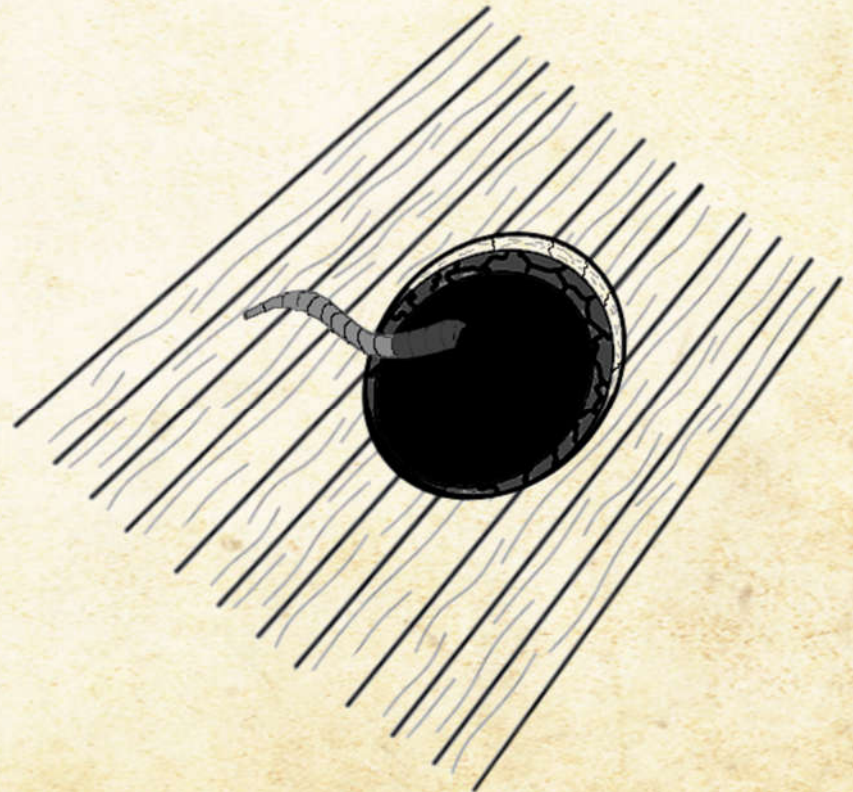
"They'll be out a while," said Jordan.

"Yeah, we better keep looking," added Alissa. "From the looks of this mess, there are more down here."

They searched around a while and then noticed another rat, hiding behind a barrel. Just as they ran after it, it dashed... right into the floor. The light from the lantern reached the spot just in time to see a gray, ringed tail disappeared through a ragged hole chewed in the floor.

"You were right, Alissa," said Jordan. "There are more down here. And they know we're coming."

"I think that rat was hiding out and watching," she said. "It was spying on us."



"Don't be silly," said Jordan. "These are just big rats. Big rats are as dumb as little rats."

"Maybe," she said. "But we better be careful."

With that, Roger whined something that sounded like he agreed.

Jordan leaned over the hole and looked down. "Should we drop down after them?"

"I guess we better," said Alissa. With a nod of her head toward her injured shoulder, she said, "But first, I need to take care of this." She closed her eyes and concentrated for half a minute. Then she touched her shoulder with her other hand. The gash closed and the purple of the bruise started to fade. "OK," she said. "Let's go after them. Are you ready, Roger?"

They couldn't tell if Roger was trying to say yes or no. He mumbled something as he stared at Alissa's healed shoulder.

A Not So Dark Tunnel

Jordan listened carefully at the mouth of the hole. "I hear scurrying, but nothing directly below."

"But how do we get down there," asked Alissa.

"I have some rope," said Roger. He handed a long piece of rope to Alissa.

"Perfect, Roger," she said. "You'll be an adventurer yet."

She handed one end to Jordan, who lowered it through the hole. She tied her end to a post and gave it a firm tug. "This will hold," she said. "Let's go."

Jordan climbed slowly down the rope a bit. And then some more. Good thing it was a long rope. He was about forty feet down before his feet finally found the bottom.

The floor beneath him felt firm, but he stomped once just to make sure. He looked around quickly and didn't see anything coming at him. He didn't see much of anything, though. His eyes were still used to the bright lantern light, which streamed down in a column around him.

"Great," he thought, the only thing down here that is perfectly visible is me. He cupped his hands to his mouth and called up in a hushed yell, "OK. Next."

Roger looked at Alissa. "I'll follow you," he said.

"You'll have to climb with the lantern," she said. "Unless you want to be left up here in the dark."

"I can do that," he said.

It was the first time since they had started this adventure that Roger sounded confident. So, Alissa didn't argue. She grabbed the rope. "See you in a flash," she said as she eased down the rope. When she reached the bottom, she called up like Jordan had, "Your turn, Roger."

He glided down with one hand on the lantern and one on the rope. He squeezed the rope tightly between his feet to carry his slight weight. Alissa was surprised at how easy he made it look.

Jordan was watching for movement down a big tunnel. As the lantern light edged past the hole in the ceiling, it filled the cave with bright yellow light. "The tunnel turns to the left," he said. "It looks like there might be a room ahead."

When Roger's feet were firmly on the floor, Alissa said to him, "Let's dim the light and let our eyes get used to the dark."

Roger lowered the wick until the lantern just barely stayed lit.

"Just when I thought I was used to the stink," said Jordan. "It smells horrible down here. Like we just dropped into the rat's..."

Alissa cut him off, "Yes, Jordan. We all smell it."

As their eyes adjusted, Jordan said, "It's weird down here. It isn't as dark as it should be farther down the tunnel. Past where the lantern is shining."

Alissa walked a little ahead down the tunnel, which sloped downward. "Yeah, there's a blue light coming from the walls."

Jordan rubbed the wall with his hand, then pulled it back quickly, "Yugh. It must be coming from this weird goo." He wiped his hand on his pant leg.

Alissa looked at the wall carefully. "It's not goo, Jordan. I think it's a fungus. Some fungi glow like this, you know."

Under his breath, Roger said, "Great. First giant rats and now glowing fungus goo..." He didn't think he said it loudly enough to be heard, but the closeness of the rock-hard cave walls made the tiniest sounds seem loud.

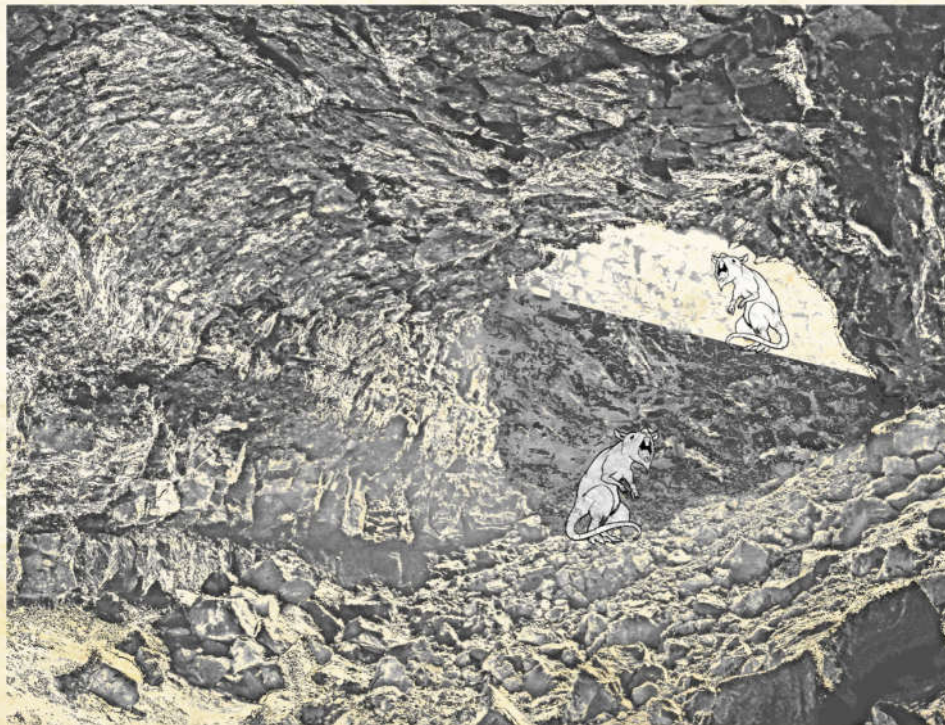
Jordan looked back and said, "Yeah, isn't it great!?" Alissa put one finger to her lips and motioned with the other hand for them to catch up to her.

Jordan whispered to Roger, "They know we're down here, but we don't want to let them know exactly where." He then motioned for Roger to leave the lantern and to follow along.

Since Jordan was the one with the sword, he took the lead as they sneaked down the tunnel.

Where the tunnel turned, it opened wider. Eventually, it opened into a cavern about twenty five feet wide.

Across the cavern, Jordan could see a giant rat climbing up a ten foot cliff to a ledge. There was another tunnel past the ledge. He started to charge at that rat with his sword ready. Just then another rat leaped from behind the wall on the left and bit him on the arm. Hard.



Rats and More Rats

The rat that was climbing the cliff turned around and jumped on Jordan. He was still fighting off the rat that ambushed him. The bite from the first rat bruised him. After the attack from the second, he was really hurt.

Alissa could see the first rat easily. She pointed her staff at it and whispered, "Sear." The bright light that shot from her staff struck the rat right in the head. When the shower of sparks settled, she saw the rat was knocked out cold.

The searing light beam had surprised Roger in the basement. Down here in the dark cave, it was absolutely amazing. The wall fungus glowed even brighter, as if in agreement. The extra light showed more trouble to come.

"There's two more rats at the top of the ledge," Roger yelled.

"Thanks, said Alissa. "I see them now." She moved to where she could get a good shot at either them or the one still on Jordan.

"They'll have to wait," said Jordan, wrestling with the rat on top of him. "Until... I'm... Done." He knocked it off, slashed with his sword, and knocked it out. "With this one."

One of the rats on the ledge jumped down and raced at Alissa. She was still getting ready for her second attack. It lunged at her before she could swing her staff around, and bit her on the leg. This was the second time she had been bit, but she wasn't getting used to it. It hurt.

Alissa pointed her staff at the rat that still had its teeth sunk into her leg. She gave it a good look at the blinding light from her staff. Sparks showered, the fungus glowed, and another rat lay on the hard floor.

The other rat on the ledge scurried back and forth, like it wasn't sure what to do. Alissa shot her searing light at it but struck the edge of the ledge instead. The shower of sparks must have helped the rat make up its mind, because it instantly disappeared down the tunnel.

Jordan stared at the blue glow that now filled the tunnel at the top of the ledge. "Nothing like letting them know we're coming."

"I don't think we'll be giving them much of a surprise," she said.

Roger, who had been mostly quiet through all this, said, "Quite the opposite, I'm afraid."

If You Can't Be Quiet, Be Quick

As Roger looked at his two friends, his amazement quickly turned to concern. "You two don't look so good," he said. "Alissa, can you do that healing trick again?"

"You're right, Roger," she said. "We better heal up before we try to take on anymore. But I can only heal so much."

Jordan was popping a cork out of a little vial. "Don't worry, Alissa," he said. "I have one of those healing potions you made for us." He drank it down and started looking much better right away.

Alissa touched her leg like she had her shoulder earlier. Like before, the gash closed, and the purple swelling disappeared.

"Now, to get up that cliff," said Jordan.

Alissa looked Roger in the eyes while speaking to Jordan, "Maybe you can boost Roger up. He's the lightest."

"That should work," said Jordan. He was ready to start convincing Roger that it was a good idea. Before he said a word, Roger already had his hand on Jordan's

shoulder. He raised his foot in the air, waiting for the boost.

Jordan and Alissa shared smiles as Jordan lifted Roger up the cliff. Roger couldn't quite reach the top, but he scrambled up anyway. In a flash he was leaning over the edge with his hand lowered, ready to help the next one climb up.

Jordan held out a short section of rope and said, "I'm the heavy one, so you get to decide. Do you want to boost or haul me up?"

"Let's go with haul," said Alissa. Then quietly, "I think Roger is stronger than we gave him credit for."

Jordan handed her the rope then boosted her up to Roger's waiting hand. Between the two of them, Alissa was on top of the ledge before she knew it. She and Roger then lowered the rope down to Jordan and pulled him up. He didn't dangle in mid-air for long.

"Gee, Roger," he said, "For a little guy, you're a brute." Grinning, Roger said, "Those barrels don't get in and out of the basement on their own." But then, even in the weird blue glow, they could see that he turned a little red.

"All that hard work is paying off, Roger," said Alissa. Roger kicked at the dirt a bit and Alissa turned away.

Looking down what was another long tunnel, she said, "Wow. How deep do these tunnels go!?"

Roger replied, "More like, how deep do these rats go?" But this time, the worry in his voice was almost buried beneath the excitement.

Jordan faced down the tunnel like he was starting a race. "Well, if you can't be quiet, be quick," he said.

"Ready," said Alissa.

"Set," said Jordan.

And Roger said, "Go!"

They charged down the tunnel with their sword and staff... and brute strength, ready to attack.

Tracks and More Tracks

The three heroes spilled out of the tunnel into another large cavern. They spread out, ready for attacks from all sides... Nothing happened. Except for three panting kids, the room was empty.

Roger quickly looked at a tunnel to the left, then at another to the right, and then back at the one on the left. "Where did they go?"

Jordan was already searching the floor for tracks in the dirt. "They've been in and out of here a ton," he said. "This is really hard to figure out. Aha! Here. This one set of tracks are from a rat that was running. Like, to save his life, running. It came out of that tunnel," he pointed to the tunnel they had just run out of. "Then it went into that tunnel." He pointed to the tunnel on the right.

Alissa started toward the second tunnel. "Let's get 'em," she said. "I won't miss this time."

Jordan gestured with his palm up. "Just a sec." He cupped his hand behind his ear and walked slowly up to the tunnel entrance. After a few seconds, he said, "It's really quiet in there... That's weird. All I hear is something that sounds like water splashing."

Alissa and Roger copied Jordan and nodded at the same time. It sounded like splashing.

"What do you make of that splashing sound?" asked Jordan.

"Hmmm. From the way that sound is echoing through this tunnel, I think this is a zig-zaggy tunnel that leads to a dead end," Alissa said. "They're waiting for us in there."

Jordan listened harder. "Wow, that's brilliant. I think you're right."

Roger nodded.

With a few hand gestures they made their plan. Jordan would lead and attack the closest rat. Alissa would follow close behind and cover his back. Roger would bring up the rear and block the tunnel, so no rats escaped.



Rat's Bathroom

A rat was hiding around the first blind corner and attacked Jordan with a loud squeak. Jordan was prepared and struck it down instantly.

"Good timing," said Alissa.

The kids made their way slowly through the zigs and zags that Alissa said would be there. As they came around a long corner to the right, they could see where it opened into another large cavern.

There were two rats near the left end of the room. They were hiding behind some stalagmites, but not very well at all. Another rat was splashing in a pool of water at the back of the cavern.

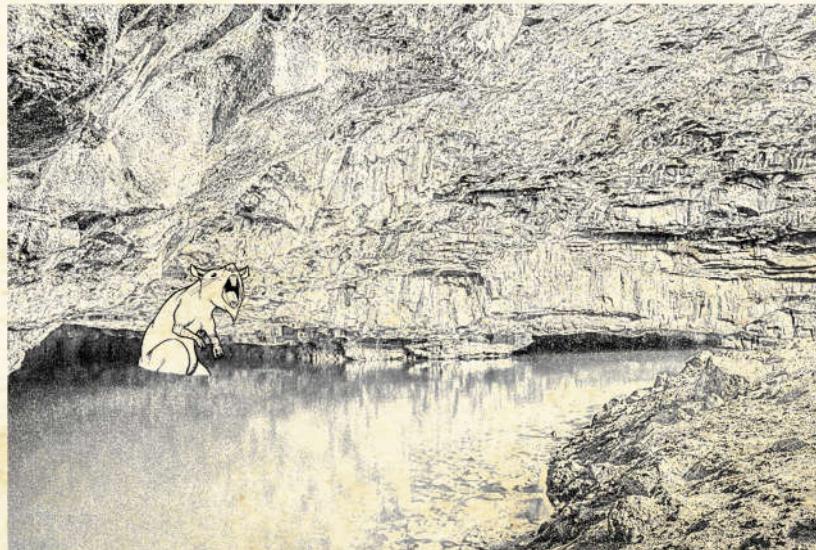
Alissa whispered, "Too bad more of them don't do that."

Jordan wanted to shush her, but couldn't resist saying, "At least their toilet has a bathtub."

Not to be outdone, Roger said, "I'm afraid those might be the same thing."

All their faces turned red as they swallowed their laughs.

Figuring that the rat in the bath would be slow to get out, Alissa focused on the other two. She fired her searing light at one while Jordan rushed at the other. Roger was aching to run in too, but held his ground by the entrance, just out of view. Then things got even weirder.



A Gianter Giant Rat

While Jordan and Alissa tangled with the two rats on the left, an even bigger rat ran out from a hiding spot on the right. It dashed along the wall and into the tunnel. The rat in the bath jumped out and scurried closely behind it.

The big rat in the lead ran straight into Roger and then straight over Roger. Its fierce snarl and rancid breath flooded Roger's senses as he was knocked backward to the hard floor. Before Roger could figure out what happened, the wet rat was running over the top of him, too.

Roger had enough of being run over and grabbed the wet rat by the hind leg. He was getting soaked with stinky water, but held on tight. Its slick, wet leg almost slipped free. With a yank, Roger pulled the rat back and punched it, knocking it out.

It all happened very quickly, but Jordan and Alissa were already back by his side. Each offered a hand to help him up.

"Are you OK?" asked Jordan.

"I'm alright," said Roger. "Just gross." He wanted to brush the smelly water off himself. At the same time, he didn't want to get any more of the filth on his hands.

So, he stood there just waving his hands up and down in front of his clothes.

Alissa could tell that it wasn't just the stinky water bothering him. "What's wrong, Roger?" She pointed at the knocked-out rat in the tunnel. "You did great!"

Looking down at the at the wet rat sprawled out on the floor, Roger wanted to be proud, but said, "Thanks, but the big one got away."

Jordan and Alissa quickly looked at each other, then at Roger. "The BIG ONE!?"

"Yeah," he said. He pointed at the rats on the floor.

"These rats are giant, but that other one was giant...er."

Jordan and Alissa both replayed the events in their heads quickly.

"That rat that attacked you in the tunnel was the alarm..." said Alissa.

Jordan added, "and the rats in here were the decoys..." Together they said, "so the 'gianter' rat could get away."

"You were right, Alissa," said Jordan. "These giant rats *are* smart."

"And the giant...er rat is even smart...er," she said.

"And the gianter rat wants to get me," said Roger.

"You were just in the way, Roger," said Jordan.

"It's nothing personal," added Alissa.

"Maybe," said Roger, but he didn't sound so sure.

Just as they had pieced it all together, a big "whoomp!" came from the other room and the floor shook beneath their feet.

Along with his body, Roger's new-found confidence was shaken. "Cave in! We'll be buried alive!"

Cave In

The three of them raced back through the tunnel, running into a wave of dust coming the other way. Through the heavy curtain of dust in the cavern, Alissa could see a fresh pile of rubble on the other side. "There was a tunnel off that way when we came through here before," she said.

Jordan walked to the base of the pile. "Yeah. And look..." He pointed at some boards sticking out of the of crushed rock. "I bet those boards were holding up the wall."

They were choked with dust and started to cough. "We survived this long," said Jordan. "Let's get out of here before we choke to death."

They all ran back down the entrance tunnel to the ledge. As they helped each other down the cliff, the dust was starting to settle. Looking back, Jordan said, "I hope that big rat can't get back through."

"They got through before," said Alissa. "That big rat isn't trapped. It just blocked us from chasing it."

Roger said, "Something tells me this isn't over."

Alissa was certain that beneath the dread in Roger's voice, there was also some excitement.

Where Did They Go?

When the three of them were back up the hole, they went to find Roger's parents. All three of them talked over each other as they explained what had happened.

Rogers parents listened, and nodded, but doubt showed in their faces. Still with that parent-look on their faces, they eventually followed the kids to the basement stairs.

As Roger's dad, Yarrick, walked down the stairs, he said, "Oh, yes. I do smell a rat."

"I smell a rat, alright," said Roger's mom, Maeve, from the top of the stairs.

Roger was explaining everything that happened as they reached the bottom of the stairs. His voice rose with excitement as he walked around the stack of barrels where the first two rats had been knocked out. But there was nothing there to see. The rats were gone.

"They must have woken up and skedaddled," said Jordan.

Yarrick looked around at the mess. Even without the rats as proof, he was starting to believe their story. "I hope they don't come back..."

Maeve said from the top of the stairs, "Do you hear that, Roger. Those rats better not make another mess."

When he saw the hole in the floor, Yarrick was convinced. "Let's board up that hole and clean up what we can," he said. "Thanks kids. You were really brave today."



The Rest of the Story

Jordan is standing there in the town square in front of you. "So," he says, giving you a big grin, "*That* was the fight of our lives." He hadn't been sitting on the well since he started telling about the first fight. He and Alissa both couldn't sit still as they showed all their fighting moves and where they got hurt.

You found it hard to sit still, too. You imagined yourself being down there in the cave with them. What would you have done?

Alissa says, "Those giant rats are still down there..."
"...the gianter one, too," said Jordan.

"Hi kids." You hear your father's voice, as if out of nowhere.

You had completely forgotten about him and mom fetching water. How long have you been sitting here?

"Your weary bones get a break," your father said. "We're staying the night here in Rivenshore, so you can get a good night's rest. I got us a room over there... at the Block and Tackle Tavern."

