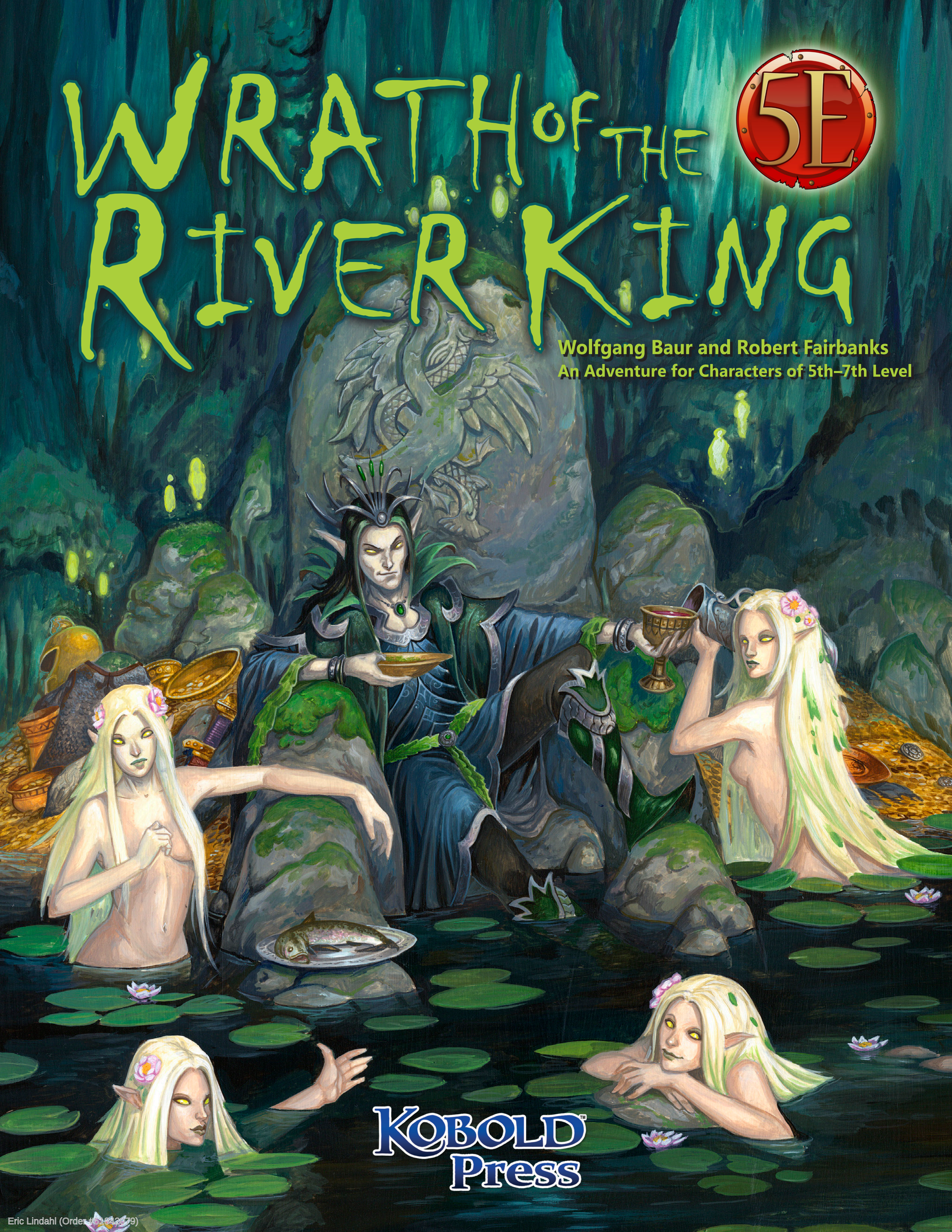
WRATH OF THE RIVER KING

5E

Wolfgang Baur and Robert Fairbanks

An Adventure for Characters of 5th–7th Level



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Wrath of the River King

Design: Wolfgang Baur and Robert Fairbanks
Editor: Thomas Reid
Cover Artist: Florian Stitz
Interior Artists: Bruno Balixa, Ivan Dixon, Felipe Gona, Florian Stitz, Eva Widermann and Kieran Yanner
Cartography: Edward J. Reed and Jonathan Roberts
Art Direction and Graphic Design: Marc Radle
5th Edition Conversion: Robert Fairbanks and Thomas M. Reid
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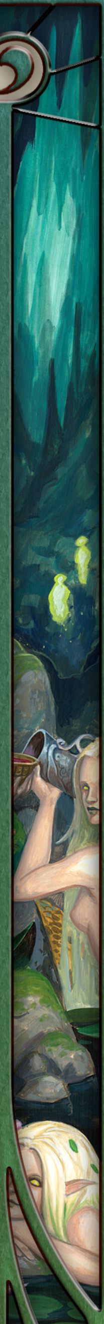

Playtesters

Internal Playtest Crew: Scott Gable, Jeff Grubb, Luis Mejia, John Rateliff, Anne Trent, and Sigfried Trent

Gen Con Playtest Crew: Bill Collins, Clay Fleischer, Benjamin Hayward, Joe Jawson, and Mighty Ben McFarland

Shadowborn Playtest Crew: David Albright, Mildred Cady, Jon Choy, Tersha Choy, B.A. McLean, Mathew Miller, Douglas Reinert, William Salvi, and Kyle Schuttenburg

Contributing Designers

Lost in the Dark Woods: Jesse Butler, Rich Green, Lutz Hofmann, Paul John, Brett McLean, Ben McFarland, Filipe Silva, Joshua Stevens, and Dan Voyce

Members of the River Court: Wolfgang Baur, Ben McFarland, and Joshua Stevens

Regalia of the River King: Jim Clunie and Brett McLean

Special Thanks to the Original Monster Designers

Wolfgang Baur: Ambertan the Warlock, Bugbear Hunters, Dire Crows, Eel Hounds, Eel Hound Pack Leader, Ettercap Axe Guards, Goblin Frog Riders, Greater Eel Hounds, Heartstopper Nixie, Lady Clatterspin, Lord Peppick, Lorelei, Mudflick the Vile Gnome, Mulchmouth the Bugbear Poacher, Redcoat the Bear, River Sprites, River King's Soldiers, His Majesty Ulorian the River King, Wildfire Treant

Benjamin Hayward: Forest Imps, Jenny Greenteeth, Swamp Frog, Spriggans

Ben McFarland: Fangs-in-Shade-and-Rushes, Giant Drones, Lady Budena, Lady Fanderol & Sir Thistledown, Sir Lijon Troutscales, Whillette & Illaud, Wickerbell

John E. Ling and Joshua Stevens: Le Nain Rouge

Dan Voyce: Knurlnap the Water Bearer

Mark Wilkins: Merrow

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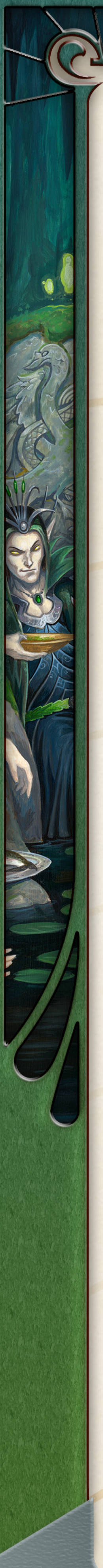

OUR FEUDAL OVERLORDS

I've always enjoyed the fact that adventurers are outsiders. Sure, kings, princes, bishops, and archpriests order them around, but really? Adventurers are modern in their outlook—hired swords who ride into town and take care of the peasantry while extracting gold coins from the lords in their castles.

Call them mercenary consultants, if you like.

The fey lords and ladies, on the other hand, have always struck me as purely Arthurian and feudal, at least in outward form. There are queens like Titania, and kings like Oberon.

If you don't want to wind up with frog legs and a croaking voice, you'd better show them some respect. The fey nobles are cruel and violent and not to be trifled with. You, dear adventurers, are not worthy of their notice, or so they'd say.

This amuses the hell out of me, because the fey have a definite underclass. Talking animals, lesser sprites and gnomes, and maybe the typical sidhe apprentice are all lesser creatures. There's a real class structure in the fey lands, and it is not fluid at all. You are born into it. Because it's not human society, it seems easier for players to accept that class structure (in towns or cities, players tend to assume a pseudo-modern meritocracy or at least some room for social mobility).

This is all a long-winded way of saying, the fey of *Wrath of the River King* are all arrogant bastards who are certain that humans, dwarves, dragonkin, and halflings are really just talking animals with less fur or more scales. This adventure is about wandering around in that alien world, with different laws and customs, and trying not to offend the Really Big Powers that run the place.

It offers lot of exploration, flavor, and places for a party to just wander around. *Wrath* also contains quite a few encounters that, with the right group of players, might turn extremely chatty on you. Even the encounter that I most wanted to run as a playtest combat didn't turn out that way (the story is on page 39). That's a difference in design and in play style. From the playtest comments I got, it was welcome after a string of combat grind adventures. Sometimes it's just timing.

If they do turn out to be too talky… Well, the lords and ladies of the fey are a chatty, gossipy, and ultimately treacherous bunch. Sic some spriggans on the party if they complain, and have the players try to figure out who sent them later.

I hope you enjoy some time in the Summer Lands as much as I did. Just don't forget who really runs the place.

Wolfgang Baur
December 17, 2008

Dedicated to the Patrons Who Made It Possible

Aaron Acevedo
Alan Cannon
Alan Scott
Alex Kanous
Amy Sutedja
Andre Araujo
Andrew Garrett
Andrew Nuxoll
Andrew Shiel
Anthony Jones
Ari Marmell
Bart Hennigan
Ben McFarland
Benjamin Hayward
Benjamin Norest
Benjamin Sennitt
Bradford Ferguson
Brandon Ording
Brett McLean
Bryan Rennekamp
Charles Howell
Charles Powell
Chas Williams
Christian Lindke
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Clay Fleischer
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Craig Shackleton
Daniel Krongaard
Daniel Voyce
Daniel White
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Daryl Gubler
Dean Mitchell
Donald Rhye
Douglas Meserve
Duncan MacPhail
Filipe Silva
Francis Carelli
Frank Reding
Frank Reiss
Geoffrey Hart
Graf Douglass
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Ignacio Blasco López
Jacob Skowronek
James Clunie
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Jan Cornelius Rodewald
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Jarrod Farquhar-Nicol
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Jennifer Wainwright
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Jesse Butler
Jesse Cole Goldberg
John Hofmann
John Marron
John Rateliff
John Sharp
Johnathan Bingham
Jon Michaels
Joseph Crow
Joshua Franklin
Joshua Randall
Joshua Stevens
Karl Smith
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Keaton Bauman
Keith Richmond
Kevin Lawrence
Kevin Reynolds
Kris Kunkel
Laura Teddiman
Leon Powell
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Lutz Hofmann
Magnus Nissel
Marc Wichmann
Mark Bibler
Mark Daymude
Mark Gedak
Mark Shocklee
Mark Wilkins
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Matthew Cutter
Matthew Donle
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Matthew Maranda
Matthew Monteiro
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Michael Baker
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Michael Machado
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Nathan Wormer
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Richard Green
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Robert Harris
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Robert Miller
Robert Palmer
Roland Parnaso
Scott Gable
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Scott Sutherland
Sean Bradley
Sean Donohue
Sean Molley
Shawn Carlsen
Sid Wood
Sigfried Trent
Silas McDermott
Stefen Styrsky
Stephen David Wark
Steve Holder
Steven Schopmeyer
Tad Jones
Tavis Allison
Thomas Carpenter, Jr.
Thor Olavsrud
Tim Nickel
Tim Raeburn
Trent Revis
Troy Larson
Wendy Adamczyk
William Benham
William Fischer
William Maranto
William Vernon
Yuri Pavlotsky

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Advancement Track

5th Level	The PCs should begin the adventure at 5th level.
6th Level	The PCs should be 5th level by the time they begin Chapter 5: The Deeper Woods and the Fey Roads
7th Level	The PCs should be 7th level when they approach the Court of the River King in Chapter 6.

INTRODUCTION

Events in the hamlet of Riverbend stir up the fey, and the village's miller asks the PCs to search for his missing bride, a beautiful elven woman named Ellessandra. Of course, there is always more than meets the eye where fey are concerned. Can the heroes diffuse a potential war between the mortal realms and the summer kingdoms?

BACKSTORY

The small hamlet of Riverbend sits on the periphery of the Vergrace Forest, a place overlapping both Sildendora, the Summer Lands of the fey, and the mortal domains of Lord Reston. That worthy controls the Border Marches and defends the lands of men against fey, giants, and dark forest creatures. The forefathers of Lord Reston attempted to carve a small foothold in the area, but it was never secure.

Elves are cruel by nature, and the elves of the fey lands are crueler still. They look down on humans, dwarves, and others as little more than speaking animals, creatures too foolish to understand the fey and their rulers. When the humans first tried to stake a claim to this territory, the forest kings and queens overran entire villages, put timbers to the torch, stole children away to raise as changelings in the fey lands, and turned roads back into forest overnight. In a few instances, when they were feeling more benevolent, the fey rulers struck bargains with those who lived on the borders of civilization. Even so, they always demanded obedience, and the bargains they offered were always one-sided.

A lonely miller in Riverbend, a stout man named Froderick, took such an offer from Ulrion, the fabled River King. Ulrion mimics the traditions of humans, making his servants swear oaths to him, making his raiders give a portion of their stolen fish, butter, or cloth to the River Court, and making ties to those humans and villages willing to accept the bargains. In exchange for keeping the river warded and the millpond—which functions as a portal between the fey and mortal worlds—safe for the fey to travel through, and for making monthly sacrifices of flour and a few drops of blood in the pond, Froderick received a magical millstone, a magical sifter, and the hand of the fey courtier Ellessandra.

Ellessandra is an elf from the River King's court who angered Ulrion for daring to love a mortal against the king's wishes. The River King decreed her punishment would be to become fettered to the miller. Ulrion placed a powerful magical enchantment upon Ellessandra to cause her to love and marry Froderick, and she was banished from the River King's court and forced to take up residence in Riverbend when the miller made his pact.

As long as Froderick kept Ellessandra whole and healthy, the Riverbend millstone would do the work of three. As long as the millstone ran each day, Ellessandra would love him. So the River King decreed. The millwheel turned even in winter, the sifter doubled the flour placed within it, and marriage to Ellessandra made Froderick's heart leap. He fell in love.

It seemed a good bargain for all concerned.

And yet, the miller could not help skimming from the sacrifices, keeping for himself a portion of what was due to the fey. The collector of sacrifices, a hag named Jenny Greenteeth, knew the portions were short, but no one at the court believed her (she is a notorious liar, even among the fey).

Jenny is the daughter of the Birch Queen, one of the many fey lords beholden to the River King. Jenny had watched the River King's power grow as he bound more fey to him through blood and tribute. Over time, the River King's domain spread beyond the banks of the River Wilt and encroached on the lands of mortals.

That is, until the River King began making pacts instead of war.

Jenny would like to see fey power—and by extension, her own—grow again at the expense of those mortals. Perhaps she might even surpass the River King in stature. So she decided to turn one of Ulrion's peaceful ties to humans into a cause for bloodshed and conquest. She chose the miller Froderick and his fey bride, Ellessandra, and bided her time. Over the years, the miller grew older, his bride stayed young, and the jealous Jenny Greenteeth finally spotted her opportunity to interfere when Ellessandra became pregnant.

A half-fey child belongs to the River King. Ellessandra feared what would become of a changeling unable to disguise itself among humans. She said nothing to Froderick as she contemplated its fate.

The malicious hag spied on the miller's bride from the millpond all summer, counting the grains of monthly tribute. One day, she tricked Ellessandra into coming near the water and almost drowned her, thinking (rightly) that Froderick losing both his love and his child would be the most terrible revenge she could take on the miller.

The miller took his half-drowned wife to the temple for healing. While he was gone, Jenny carried off the magical millwheel and sank it in the pond (where it came to rest against the magic portal into the lands of the fey).

When Jenny tried to drown her, Ellessandra's worries for her child grew unbearable, and she fled the miller's home and returned to the summer kingdoms, saying nothing to her mortal husband. Time flows swiftly in the fey lands, she knew, so she expected to carry the child to term, give birth, and still return within a day.

But Froderick witnessed Ellessandra's departure and, certain she had abandoned him, became mad with grief. He was too distraught to run the mill as he had sworn to do and failed to notice the missing millstone. Instead, confused and panicked by his wife's desertion, Froderick ran into town begging for help, screaming frantically that his wife "was in the pond." The local constable took this the wrong way and arrested the miller, believing he drowned his wife. Her body was not found in the millpond, though. Now the local reeve, or leader, will hold court and sit in judgment in four days' time. Once he is found guilty, the miller will go to the gallows and the reeve will take the mill.

When the millstone didn't run, Ellessandra's love for stout Froderick vanished like any fey enchantment, and she chose to remain in the summer kingdoms rather than return to Riverbend. There, she bore a half-fey child, Flax. Jenny, seeing a new opportunity, found Flax as he nearly reached manhood—as time flows differently there—and sought him for her ally to finish the task at Riverbend.

News of all of this greatly angered the River King. Ulrion feels his bargain has been broken and he is entitled to take land in the mortal realms again as compensation. Jenny and Flax are encouraging him to act—with the two of them at the helm, of course.

The miller sits in jail, inconsolable. He certainly needs to clear his name, but more importantly, he will do anything to get his bride back; through the magic of his marriage and the millstone, he hears her voice calling from the pond, begging for help, imploring him to assuage the River King with blood and promises of more.

Meanwhile, the fey are hungry for mortal flesh, mortal gold, and mortal suffering.

The heroes just happen to be in the way.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The party can be drawn into the adventure as passersby paying a toll to cross the miller's dam, as friends of the miller, or as well-known local heroes called on by the Reeve of Riverbend.

Alternately, the PCs see someone or something drowning in the millpond and must attempt a rescue.

WHEN THE PCS ARRIVE

The first the heroes hear of these events is news of Riverbend having troubles. In particular, the heroes hear there have been goblin raids and a kidnapping. The rumors claim the miller's true love, his young bride Ellessandra, disappeared from the millhouse, perhaps drowned by her husband—or, some whisper, spirited away in the night by a pack of goblins (who also stole flour, buckets, and silver from the miller). The Reeve of Riverbend needs someone to look into the matter.

Complex Skill Checks

There are a number of encounters throughout this adventure where multiple skill checks are made to help resolve encounters; these are referred to as complex skill checks. These are meant to reflect the encompassing story and to make skill-based encounters more dynamic and challenging for players. The complex skill checks in this adventure require a certain number of successes and allow skills appropriate to the situation, as noted in each entry. Complex skill checks may involve one PC or the whole party, and PCs can offer assistance to one another using the Help mechanic, should only one PC participate in a complex skill check. Once one PC has failed three checks, the entire complex skill check has failed. GMs are encouraged to run these encounters as written but should adjust them to their group's tastes.

THE LONG GAME

Wrath of the River King is designed to be played over a long stretch of time. The encounters within are the main plot elements of the story, but much more can and should go on while the heroes are visiting the Summer Lands. You should mix in small side quests, favors for the sidhe for whom the heroes wear badges, and possibly even return trips to the mortal lands in between the main encounters presented here. This both ensures the characters receive enough XP to gain a level at the appropriate points and allows the PCs a chance to explore more of the fey realms.

The encounters do not necessarily need to be played in a strict order, either. Characters may spend less time wandering the woods in Chapter 3 as you choose to maneuver them sooner into the Birch Queen's Fair in Chapter 4—or perhaps have them sidestep the fair initially and instead encounter places and creatures (and flee!) from Chapter 5—only to return to the wilds of Chapter 3 later. You as the DM can customize the adventure however you choose to suit your group's playing style and abilities. Remember, too, that you can use the inconstant flow of time to make events seem to happen far apart or much closer together than would otherwise be the case.

The encounters in here are all ranked as hard or deadly for PCs of the appropriate level. A group with more than four heroes, or a band of PCs at a level or two higher, should still find them challenging. For groups that are particularly robust, adding an additional lower-challenge creature to the mix usually suffices to give them an ample test in combat.

Chapter 1: Riverbend

Though this chapter includes combat elements with several fey, this chapter is mostly meant to make the PCs sympathetic to the harried people of Riverbend.

STORY GOALS

The player characters have three possible goals. They can:

1. Learn that Froderick the Miller is under threat of execution, and his elven wife is missing.
2. Speak with Flax the fey child at the mill.
3. Learn the secret to open the fey door in the millpond.

Additionally, questions asked at the local tavern might make it clear there's something odd about the miller's bride, but that's only half of the early investigation.

Two Stories

Kolya the reeve has his motives for pursuing the miller. The miller worries about his wife's disappearance. Neither of these mortals has a clue about the machinations of the fey or the danger the village might face. That's where the other story comes in, what's going on in the Summer Lands. In future chapters, Flax turns out to be a villain of the deepest dye and the characters become embroiled in a dangerous world of raw wilderness and fey politics.

So please remember that "things are not as they might seem" as you peruse.

HAMLET OF RIVERBEND

This village depends on its location near a river ford and its rich river soil to keep itself together.

The large kingdom of Fellglas, to which Riverbend owes some nominal feudal obligations, ignores the region. The road to the city of Bargrad is often the haunt of bandits, and the elves of the Vergrace Forest are much closer than the petty princes of Bargrad. Most of the village's excess grain and livestock goes to barter with the elves.

The village itself has little to recommend it: one tavern, one mill, and 20 houses, homes to the various families that have lived here for generations untold. The only house that stands apart is the large one belonging to the reeve; he and his two sons are responsible for keeping the village safe and the roads open.

Riverbend has a small shrine to the Forest God, though the village cannot afford a priest. The oldest woman in the village generally performs the rites at spring, midsummer, and fall. The shrine is ignored most of the time, unless the crops are in danger of failing, livestock is missing, or a child has wandered off into the woods.

Golden Knight Tavern

The tavern is called the Golden Knight. To call it a modest peasant inn gives it too much credit. There are few rooms: one serves as the kitchen and owner's bedroom, one functions as the brewery and storage room for casks, and the third, the common room, is filled with a large fireplace and tables. There are no sleeping spaces except for the attic. Getting there involves climbing a ladder to sleep in the same room as any farmers, tinkers, and road patrols who are also guests of the Golden Knight that evening.

On the other hand, the Golden Knight is the only place in Riverbend where the locals drink a pint and freely answer questions from outsiders. They know very few facts. Character assassination, wild rumor, and accusations of bestiality are all part of the blood sport that passes for gossip around here.

Several activities outside the Fey Lands give the characters a chance to explore Riverbend and the mill. As they inquire

Gathering Information in Riverbend

If the PCs use Charisma (Persuasion) to gather information in Riverbend, use the following table to determine what they learn.

Table 1–1: Charisma (Persuasion)

DC	Result
5	**Miller's Wife**: Everyone knows she was an elf and thus a witch or enchantress. She was too fond of giving pastries to the children. No good that one, ever since she wandered up out of the rushes and took the miller in marriage. Depriving a proper human woman of the opportunity! At least they didn't have children, some half-fey abominations.
8	**The Fey are Everywhere**: The goblins, bugbears, elves, and unnaturally large boars are all normal enough, but the fey suddenly began raiding the village and attacking travelers much more than they used to.
12	**Stone in the Millpond**: The smith says he saw a hag roll one of the millstones into the millpond the night before Ellessandra disappeared. It was probably the elf in her true, evil form as a witch.
15	**The Lords and Ladies**: The reason the fey attack the villagers and travelers is because no one has offered the fey lords and ladies their proper due in silver, blood, and ceremonies. The old priestess of the Forest God knew how to do the rites, but the new one doesn't. And Kolya has refused to offer one of his goats at the Spring Planting festival. The fey lords and ladies will take a life to make up the loss.

about the miller and Ellessandra, they may also meet local fey in the mill and its surroundings. Indeed, a group of fey raiders comes and attacks the party at the mill. This early encounter ensures the PCs know where the mill entranceways and strong points are.

The Reeve Kolya

The feudal presence, hand of justice, and defender of the weak in these parts is Kolya Oxbow.

The first time the PCs visit the reeve, they find him sitting at a large oak table just inside his large, well-kept house. Two men with swords, his sons, stand by the only door. The reeve says, "I am Kolya. I hear you have questions about my village. How can you help us against these terrible fey?"

Kolya is a large man of perhaps 40 years with enormous sideburns and the small eyes of a boar. His fat fingers twitch a bit, but otherwise he seems calm and even unnaturally steady in the face of several attacks on the village.

Despite his calm, Kolya is quite suspicious of outsiders. He has already made up his mind Froderick is guilty of his wife's murder, and he wants the PCs to help him out by chasing off as many "worthless fey" as they can. He's not keen on investigating Ellessandra's disappearance or the lack of a body. He believes her corpse washed downstream and it's a waste of time to search for it. Besides, he stands to inherit the rights to the mill if both Froderick and Ellessandra are nowhere to be found. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check makes it clear he is not all sincere in any conversation about the miller.

Speaking with Kolya is not a matter of speaking with a dishonest man. He is crooked, but he thinks he has brought honor to the village. He is beholden to his own greed, though he speaks often of "my beloved villagers" with something approximating sincerity. His sense of honor can be used against him to gain permission to investigate the case; a successful DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check wins the party two days to investigate, a DC 15 gains them three days, and a DC 20 result wins them a week to find the truth.

Rutyer Mill and the Millpond

The mill has an enormous wooden wheel in the millrace, though the black and muddy thing is not turning. The millhouse itself has a slate roof, shuttered windows, and wooden floors throughout, though its exterior walls are made of large limestone blocks and a few pale yellow bricks.

The mill is named after the family that built it. Danolf Rutyer was Froderick's grandfather.

Entrance Doors and Windows

A rickety set of wooden stairs leads up to a locked, iron-studded door of black walnut (DC 20 Dexterity check with thieves' tools to pick the lock). There are no windows at the half-cellar level, arrow loops at the main floor, and shuttered windows at the top (DC 25 Dexterity [Acrobatics] check to enter through an arrow slit).

Cellar

This locked area (DC 15 Dexterity check with thieves' tools to pick) has a ramp up to ground level for carrying flour out. Many chests hold ground barley, rye, and wheat. A small wooden beam can be pulled out to make the stairs to the front door collapse. The gears of the millstones here connect to the wheel (and are well smeared with grease, darkening the wood and making the whole quite flammable). A successful DC 10 Intelligence check reveals how to release the brake on the millwheel; the millrun must also be shifted outside to make the millstone turn.

There are two setups for mill stones here, one large and one small. Both bedstones are still in place and operational. The smaller set still has a grinding stone, but the larger grinding stone is missing (currently in the pond).

Ground Floor

The chambers here are full of bins of unmilled grain, hoppers for feeding grain to the millstone, and carpenter's tools to repair the millwheel and the wooden gears. Near the door, a set of account books records the grain brought in, flour dispersed, milled grain retained for the miller or silver paid for milling, tithe retained, and tolls paid for crossing the dam. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) check lets the PC realize paying a tithe to a feudal lord is very peculiar for a "free mill" (if the party has already spoken to Reeve Kolya or the miller).

Anyone who makes a successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) check recognizes the four fine oil lanterns in the mill are not human work but rather half-silvered gnomish lanterns. They are worth 25 gp each.

Upper Floor

These living quarters include a well-appointed room and a counting room (DC 25 Dexterity check with theives' tools to pick the lock). The counting room is warded with a *magic mouth* spell that screams, "Thief!" if the walls or door are breached by force. Within are two silver chests holding 780 sp each and a set of fine silver serving plates worth 200 gp total.

The Pond

The green, opaque waters of the pond are home to some carp and trout and buzz with dragonflies in summer. The water's deepest point is about 20 feet below the surface. Diving in the pond and making a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a large millstone carved with elven runes resting at that point. The stone is 53 inches in diameter and weighs 1,650 pounds.

THE HUNTING BUGBEARS (CR 7)

XP Threshold: 3,750

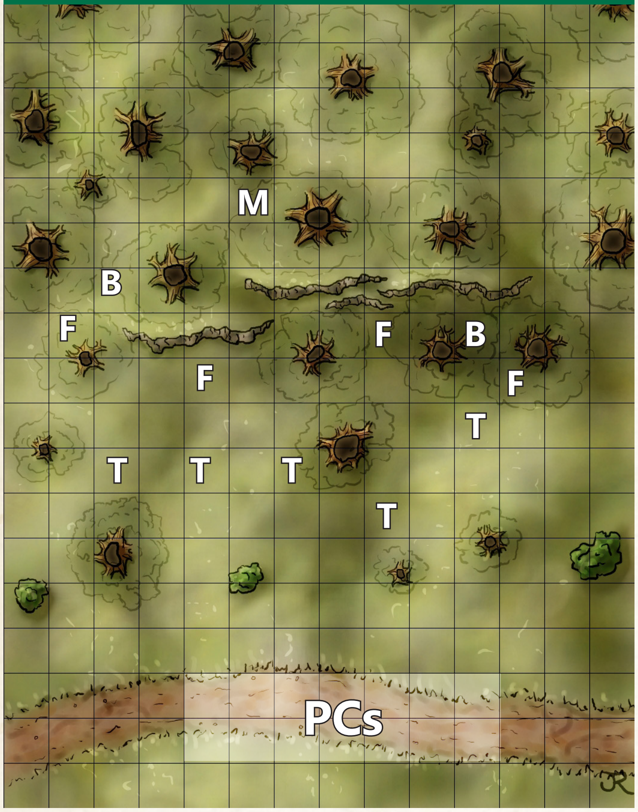
Three bugbears and four forest imps scout the forests around the mill, seeking to capture one or more non-fey creatures to take back with them for questioning in the Summer Lands. They may ambush the party on the way to the mill or (at the DM's option) attack the mill when the PCs arrive, testing its defenses and seeking to carry someone away into the Summer Lands.

The forest has normal daylight mixed with areas of shadow that are treated as dim light.

The woods on the edge of the forest offers half cover to anyone in it. There are several areas of undergrowth here that are difficult terrain. The deeper forest provides three-quarters cover.

Traps: There are several traps here triggered by anyone entering their squares.

THE HUNTER BUGBEARS



Weighted Net Traps

Mechanical trap

The tripwire for each trap is positioned three inches from the ground, stretched between two trees, and the net itself is hidden among the foliage. A DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check is necessary to spot the trap, and a DC 15 Dexterity check successfully disarms it. Any creature caught in the square when the trap is triggered becomes restrained, and those that fail a DC 10 Strength saving throw are also knocked prone. A creature can use its action to make a DC 10 Strength check to free itself or another creature within its reach on a success. The net has AC 11 and 10 hit points.

Creatures: When this encounter happens, read:

> A small, mossy creature with bat-like wings watches you from a tall tree. Its eyes are enormous, and it seems to have arms and legs. It shrieks and caws and flaps around the tree.

Anyone who speaks Goblin understands the creature to say, "Here! Here! Intruders here!"

Draw Both Sides of the Road

It may seem silly, but when setting up this encounter, remember to draw the opposite side of the road. Otherwise, the players will have much too easy a time finding the bad guys. For extra sneakiness, place a few of the forest imps on the "empty" side. Place miniatures on the battle map after the party sees the bugbears in the leafy woods.

A successful DC 11 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals at least two more of these creatures up in the trees. These are forest imps, and they are cruel, vicious little creatures with pointy teeth and oversized ears that resemble tiny winged goblins. They hunt in packs, appearing from the trees to hack at creatures caught in the undergrowth.

After one round of skirmishing with the imps, three bugbear hunters hidden nearby let fly with their longbows. The squares indicating the front of the small stone rise behind which the bugbears stand counts as difficult terrain, is lightly obscured, and provides three-quarters cover.

When the PCs notice the bugbears, they see huge hairy goblins of some kind, with animal-hide armor, bows, and clubs. Even at this distance, it's clear their huge mouths are filled with teeth as long as a human thumb.

MULCHMOUTH, BUGBEAR LEADER

Medium humanoid (goblinoid), chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 16 or 14 (studded leather armor, shield)

HIT POINTS 65 (10d8 + 20)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

SKILLS Intimidation +2, Stealth +6, Survival +3

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

LANGUAGES Common, Goblin

CHALLENGE 3 (700 XP)

Brute. A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when the bugbear hits with it (included in the attack).

Heart of the Huntsman. The bugbear has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, stunned, or put to sleep.

Surprise Attack. If the bugbear surprises a creature and hits it with an attack during the first round of combat, the target takes an extra 5 (2d4) damage from the attack.

Actions

Multiattack. The bugbear makes two melee attacks.

Club. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

BUGBEAR HUNTSMEN (2)

Medium humanoid (goblinoid), chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 16 or 14 (hide armor, shield)

HIT POINTS 27 (5d8 + 5)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	8 (–1)	11 (+0)	9 (–1)

SKILLS Stealth +6, Survival +2

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

LANGUAGES Common, Goblin

CHALLENGE 1 (200 XP)

Brute. A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when the bugbear hits with it (included in the attack).

Surprise Attack. If the bugbear surprises a creature and hits it with an attack during the first round of combat, the target takes an extra 5 (2d4) damage from the attack.

ACTIONS

Club. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

FOREST IMPS (4)

Tiny fey, chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 13

HIT POINTS 11 (3d4 + 3)

SPEED 20 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (–2)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

SKILLS Acrobatics +6, Perception +3, Stealth +6

SENSES darkvision 90 ft., passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES Common, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 1/2 (100 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The forest imps' spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12). The forest imp can cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *dancing lights, see invisibility*

3/day: *invisibility* (self only)

1/day: *entangle*

Beast Whisper. The forest imp can communicate with beasts as if sharing a language.

Magic Resistance. The forest imp has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Natural Camouflage. The forest imp has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in natural surroundings.

ACTIONS

Glaive-Guisarme. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) slashing damage, and the target must make a DC 13 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or be tripped and knocked prone.

DURING COMBAT: The imps use *entangle* to keep targets from moving, allowing the bugbears to fire their bows while the imps fly and use melee attacks.

TREASURE: The bugbears carry valuable pelts, including mink, fox, and wolf pelts, worth 125 gp total, and one *potion of greater healing* each.

DEVELOPMENT: If Mulchmouth or a forest imp survives the encounter, it carries a warning to Jenny Greenteeth about the heroes. She sends the sidhe riders or visits the party herself to try to get them to abandon their "meddling in the affairs of the forest lords and ladies." (For Jenny's statistics, see page 61)

THE TALKING BEAR AND THE SATYRS

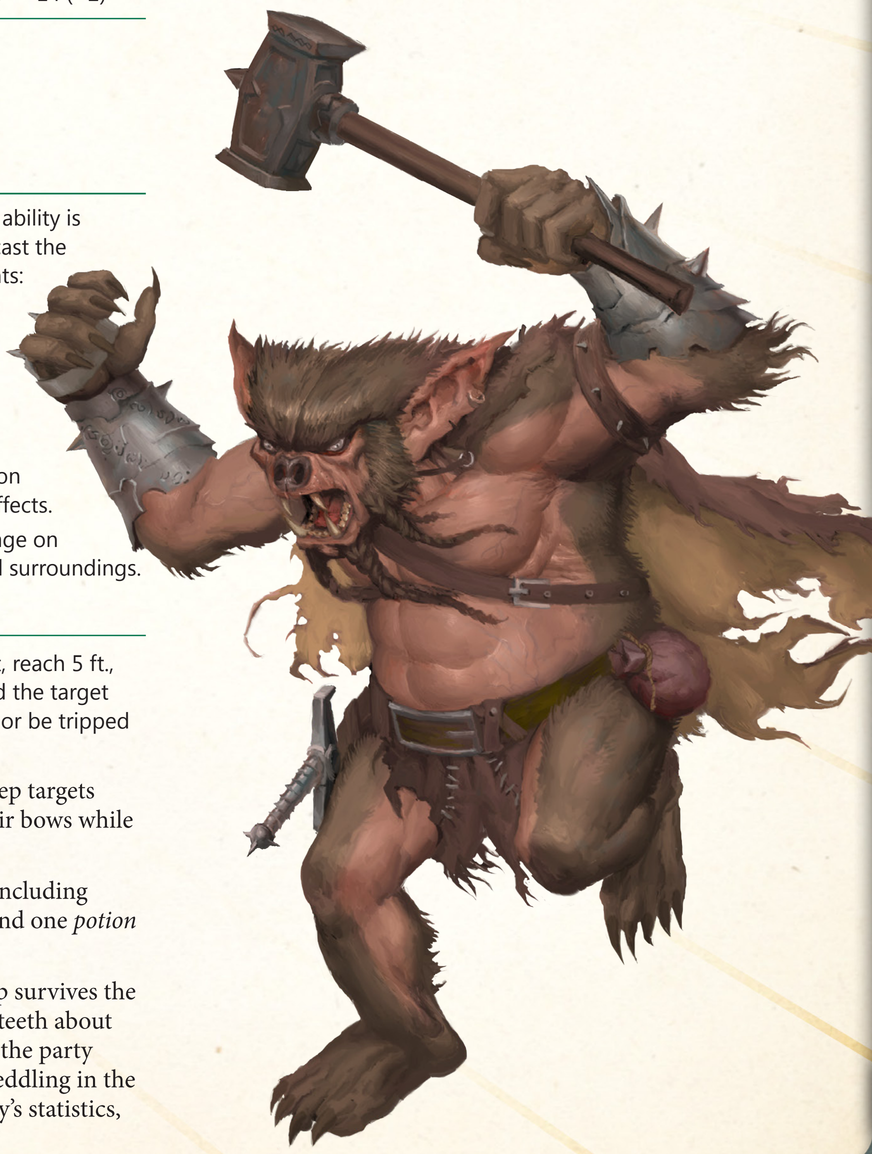
XP Threshold: 1,400 or 2,000

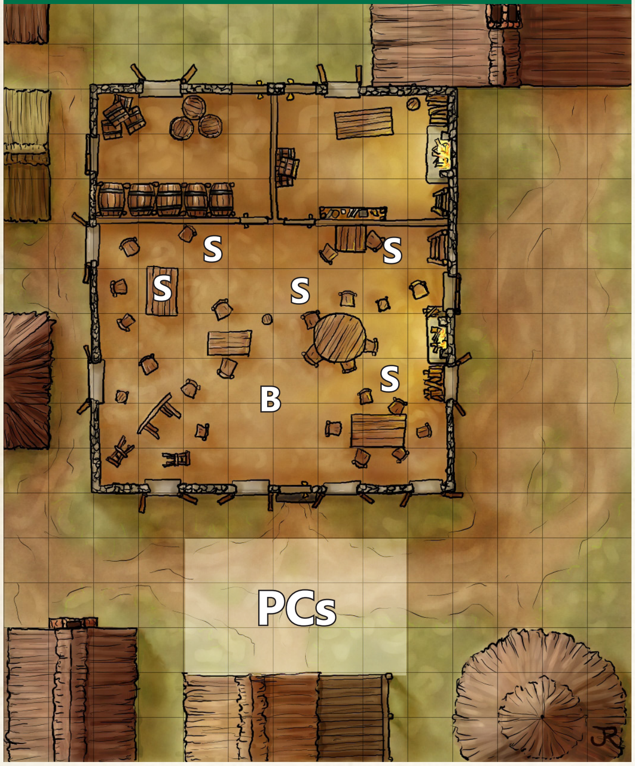
At some point while the PCs explore Riverbend, they should confront the following encounter: several satyrs have brought their servant, a talking bear named Redcoat, to the Golden Knight Tavern. All the customers have fled into the street in a panic. The satyrs are now drinking every drop of booze and eating every scrap of food in the place. The bear keeps telling them it is a bad idea. The PCs may try to drive the satyrs out by force, or they might choose to speak to the satyrs and convince them to leave peacefully.

Regardless, when this encounter happens, read the following:

> A dozen men and women of Riverbend stand in the street, speaking worriedly among themselves. A clay beer mug flies out a window from the Golden Knight, and a noise that might be described as singing comes from inside the building. Several voices echo from within, one much deeper than the others.

A successful DC 9 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces the locals gathered outside to tell the PCs the deeper voice




THE TALKING BEAR AND THE SATYRS

coming from the tavern belongs to a bear the satyrs brought with them. The bear is not just any creature, however; it is an enormous talking bear with a ruff of red fur and a mournful manner. The people all expect the bear to start tearing the tavern apart any minute.

If the PCs face this encounter during the day, the lighting is bright both outside and inside the tavern because the shutters are open. If they face this encounter at twilight or at night, the lighting outside is dim or dark respectively, and inside the tavern it is dim, as only a few lanterns are lit.

Inside the tavern, squares with tables and barrels in them are difficult terrain. The kitchen hearth fire causes 2d6 fire damage to anyone standing in it on their turn.

COMPLEX SKILL CHECK: YOU CAN'T STAY HERE

This encounter can be resolved by a complex skill check. The satyrs are fairly drunk and might listen to reason, being convinced to leave without a fight or destroying the inn. These checks can be made by one or more PCs, but the party needs 6 successes before 3 failures to convince the satyrs to leave.

CHARISMA (DECEPTION) DC 10 OR 16: Satyrs are used to trickery, fast talk, and too-good-to-be-true deals, but the bear is easy to bluff. Especially where mead and honey are concerned. A successful deception about honey allows the party access to search the kitchen/cellars. Use the higher DC for trying to fool satyrs.

CHARISMA (PERSUASION) DC 13 OR 8: A success here means the satyrs turn less belligerent in their tone and may even offer the PCs a free drink. The first success makes future Diplomacy checks easier; use the lower DC for subsequent checks after the first success.

CHARISMA (INTIMIDATION) DC 14 OR 9: A success can turn the satyrs fearful of a confrontation. However, the DC is 14 unless a Charisma (Persuasion) check succeeds first. A second attempt at intimidation is an automatic failure, as the satyrs quickly resent bullying and respond violently.

CONSTITUTION DC 15: A sheer display of drinking bravado counts as two successes, but the PC must out-drink a single satyr to succeed (and this is quite difficult). A failure counts only as one failure, as normal, and the character gains the Poisoned condition for 1 hour.

DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) DC 10: Satyrs and the bear love juggling and spins, cartwheels, flips, and so forth. Each attempt must be a new trick; repeating the same trick increases the DC to 15.

DEXTERITY (SLEIGHT OF HAND) DC 25: Attempts to steal booze or drinking vessels are very difficult. Satyrs are mean drunks.

INTELLIGENCE (NATURE) DC 8: Only one success is possible here. Talking bears are morose animals by nature but have a boundless capacity for violence. Once they start fighting, they won't quit, but they love the taste of mead in particular. There's no mead here, but the first success here grants advantage to a subsequent Charisma (Deception) check if the PC attempts to convince the bear mead is somewhere else.

STRENGTH DC 5: Satyrs are impressed by feats of strength and skill, such as lifting a heavy oak table or half-full barrel of ale. An easy success. Only one such success with a Strength check is possible.

WISDOM (PERCEPTION) DC 8: A success using Wisdom (Perception) is only possible after at least one successful Charisma (Persuasion) check or a honey-related Charisma (Deception) check; the bear growls until that point. A success means the PC notices there is barley wine here, a much stronger drink than mere ale. Also, the PC notices the kitchen has a yellow pot of honey—but it is very close to empty.

WISDOM (INSIGHT) DC 8: Success means the PC realizes the satyrs are going to take the tavern's food anyway, so the party might consider using it as a gift or bribery (satyrs love strong drink). The PCs could bribe them to leave with barley wine (this grants advantage to a follow-up Charisma [Persuasion] check).

SUCCESS

The satyrs and bear stagger off, leaving a stinking mess, broken chairs, and empty barrels of ale (and possibly barley wine). The townsfolk are relieved. Award experience as if the creatures were defeated in combat.

FAILURE

The satyrs attack and the bear immediately backs them up. They seek to smash barrels, set the thatch roof alight, and generally cause as much mayhem as possible. The townsfolk are displeased the PCs made a bad situation worse.

CREATURES: If the party consists of more than five PCs, add one satyr to this encounter and use the higher XP threshold to measure encounter difficulty.

REDCOAT THE TALKING BEAR

Large magical beast, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 11 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 34 (4d10 + 12)

SPEED 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)

SKILLS Perception +3

SENSES passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES Common, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 1 (200 XP)

Keen Smell. Redcoat has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Actions

Multiattack. The bear makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

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

SATYRS (5 or 6)

Medium fey, chaotic neutral

ARMOR CLASS 14 (leather armor)

HIT POINTS 31 (7d8)

SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)

SKILLS Perception +2, Performance +6, Stealth +5

SENSES passive Perception 12

LANGUAGES Common, Elvish, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 1/2 (100 XP)

Magic Resistance. The satyr has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Actions

Ram. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (2d4 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

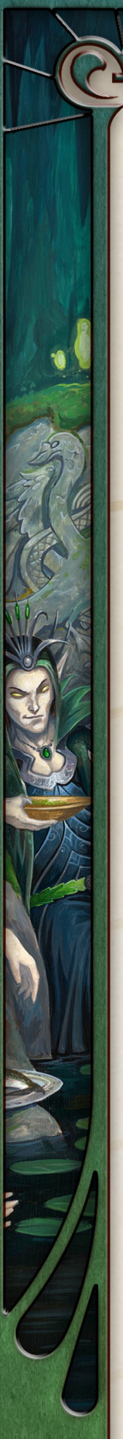
Treasure: The bear has no treasure other than his astounding black, red, and golden pelt (worth 400 gp in good condition). The satyrs have 68 cp between them, plus three enormous sacks of plunder from the inn. The first bag contains goblets, knives, spoons, spices, and a keg of ale, worth about 100 gp total. The second bag contains a crock of lard, fragrant herbs, a salted side of bacon, and a haunch of venison, worth about 10 gp total. The third bag contains a carpet, two embroidered pillows, dish towels, and a copper kettle, worth about 5 gp total. If a sixth satyr was involved in the encounter, he did not carry a bag. The only valuable piece of equipment the satyrs brought from the Summer Lands is a *circlet of persuasion* taken from a sidhe knight and hidden in a pocket of one of the satyrs (it requires a successful DC 13 Wisdom [Perception] check to find).

Development: Redcoat may be encountered again in the Summer Lands, seeking to talk the ettercaps into fighting the PCs. He may also warn the green dragon Tatzel of the PCs, turning the dragon's attitude hostile.

Circlet of Persuasion

Wondrous item, uncommon

While wearing this circlet, you have advantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks.



THE MILLER'S STORY

The party may decide to question the miller. Kolya, the Reeve of Riverbend, tells them Froderick is held in the hamlet's strong room, a chamber where they store harvested grain in autumn and gather the offerings to the fertility goddess in spring—and where they detain miscreants before a court sits to hear cases. The building itself is stone with two narrow window slits barely an inch wide, just large enough to let in a little air and light.

A single peasant named Pellham guards the storehouse with a haying fork in hand. He does not allow anyone to see the miller without a sign or token from the reeve (or with a successful DC 12 Charisma [Persuasion] check). He carries the only key to the locked cell door (DC 8 Dexterity check with thieves' tools to pick), but he can be bribed with a bit of food or drink to allow PCs to speak to Froderick.

If the party speaks to Pellham about "the prisoner," he happily tells them the man is surely guilty. The blacksmith Dargo accused Froderick of murder. Dargo saw the fey approach the mill and leave and knew Ellessandra would have some business with the "lords and ladies," who frankly terrify Pellham. Dargo thinks Froderick knows his wife was leaving him for a fey lover, or that he had accused her of infidelity; at any rate, the two were arguing that night over something. However, a successful DC 9 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals Pellham has long been an admirer of Ellessandra's and might even want her husband dead.

Once they speak to him, the PCs learn Froderick wants them to believe him. He conveys the following information if he trusts them (DC 15 Charisma [Diplomacy] if the party is threatening or entirely non-human). He is very suspicious of dragonborn and tieflings and very friendly toward elves and half-elves (elfmarked in games set in Midgard).

INFORMATION FREELY GIVEN

Froderick is a man of stature in Riverbend who expected a certain amount of jealousy, even hatred, as a man of property and wealth. His mill is a free mill, taking grain from all the hamlets up- and downriver and shipping it to towns and villages downriver. The upriver farms and smallholdings have little choice but to bring their grain to him, since he forbids reloading shipments from upriver without grinding them. He always gave fair measure and took only a small amount of each farmer's crop for himself. His wife has always been kind to the children of the hamlet, making small elven breadballs for them and allowing all villagers to fish from the millpond one day each month.

The Medieval Miller

In medieval times, the miller was often disliked by his neighbors. The mills were all owned as monopolies by the lords, with few free mills operating in border districts. Most of the time, the miller ran the mill on the lord's behalf.

The peasants were required by law to bring their flour to the mill designated by their lord. They then had to pay the miller (with a percentage of the flour) to mill their grain. The miller also took a toll (usually a sixteenth of the flour), which was the lord's fee. The miller was a middleman and taxman all in one! It's no wonder the peasants thought poorly of them.

The couple has no children. Froderick has a sister in a distant city but no other living family. Ellessandra has many sisters in the Summer Lands but has never gone to visit them. She comes from the Oak King's court (this is a lie, but Froderick does not know it). As Froderick understands it, the fey clans are called "courts" and there are at least six of them in the woods and streams in the Summer Lands.

Froderick is certain something terrible has happened to his wife, though his suspicions change moment by moment, as he is so distraught at losing her. First, he believes the drowning effort was attempted murder by one of the townsfolk (who have never really warmed to her, as she is a beautiful woman and apparently ageless). Now that she's missing, he thinks she's been kidnapped, perhaps by goblins. There's certainly a lot of fey active near Riverbend lately. Then he shifts back to blaming the locals; maybe she was slain and her body hidden by a jealous peasant.

If the party can prove Ellessandra is alive, an extremely grateful Froderick will give them 100 gp each.

INFORMATION RELUCTANTLY GIVEN

If pressed (DC 12 Charisma [Persuasion] or DC 20 Charisma [Intimidation] check), Froderick admits he and his wife had a fight before her disappearance. He is the last person who saw her alive, walking on the shore of the millpond.

A successful DC 22 Charisma (Persuasion) check and roleplaying that shows a great deal of sympathy for the miller's plight (or an oath to find the truth, sworn to the gods) causes Froderick to confess this information. He had a magical fey millstone at the mill that he had to grind with each day to keep his wife's love. In his heart, he fears his failure to run the mill the day after her disappearance made a bad situation worse.

If asked about the millpond, Froderick mentions it is the "way" to the Summer Lands. The fey just swim up from the pond and swim back down into it when they leave.

INFORMATION NOT GIVEN

Froderick does not mention the required tithe to the River King at all unless the party confronts him with the discrepancy in his account books (see the description given in the mill's Ground Floor section on page 7).

He doesn't know the elven millstone is missing. If told, he's quite upset, as this means his pact with the River King has been broken.

THE MILLER'S CHILD

If the PCs investigate Froderick's mill, they may encounter a terrified "child." This is Flax, Ellesandra's son, returned from the Summer Lands, where years have passed. He is here to scout Riverbend in anticipation of seizing it. He has used his *disguise self* ability to appear much younger (his full statistics are on page 62).

When the party enters the mill, they spot Flax with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check (DC 13 if they leave the shutters closed and the mill dark). Flax does nothing to draw attention to himself unless the party interferes with the mill's operation and goods, in which case he shows himself (to stop them from damaging his "inheritance"). Flax claims he is the miller's son. However, the PCs may have been told Froderick does not have a son; if confronted with this, Flax says his father doesn't know about him.

When the party encounters Flax, read the following:

> A young boy steps out of the shadows, and a breeze rushes through the mill, banging the shutters. “What are you doing in my house?” says the boy. He can’t be much more than 12 years old, unless he’s an especially tall halfling. His eyes are as blue as cornflowers or flax.

Flax flees at the first sign of combat. Unless the party murders him in a single round, there’s no easy way to have a fight, as he uses fey leap to get outside and swim down and through the fey door.

Getting Flax to talk with the PCs can be a difficult endeavor. He enjoys toying with mortals and sewing chaos, so he plays the “frightened child” role to the hilt. DMs are encouraged to reward creative approaches to befriending him, but below are some suggestions for the PCs’ likely strategies.

CHARISMA (INTIMIDATION) DC 10: Flax pretends to be easily intimidated. He gives the party one piece of information when they try this, and then all additional attempts at Charisma (Deception) and Charisma (Intimidation) fail until the party makes a successful DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check to convince him he is not threatened. Otherwise, Flax flees and offers no additional information.

DIPLOMACY (PERSUASION) DC 12: A successful roll “wins” Flax over toward trusting the party, at least long enough to talk to him for a minute or two. Tip: Consider using an hourglass, stopwatch, or other timer; when time runs out, the party must make another check to keep the nervous "child" talking.

WISDOM (INSIGHT) DC 10: Despite his efforts at subterfuge, Flax acts much older than his apparent age and speaks with an antiquated vocabulary. Whatever he is, he’s not human and more likely enchanted or fey. The check does not affect Flax’s likelihood of talking with the PCs, but it reveals information that might help inform the party’s strategy with respect to him.

SPEAKING WITH FLAX

If the party spots and then bribes, wheedles, or convinces him to speak to them, Flax tells them one or two items of important information, some true, some false: how to move about in the Summer Lands (the existence of the fey roads, but not the ritual needed or where to perform it), who took Ellessandra (a hag and some bugbears), and the secret of the millpond (it has a fey door at the bottom).

Flax behaves extremely suspiciously and does not want to answer any questions until the party offers good answers to the following (some of which he hopes will cause the PCs to blunder into missteps with the fey, later fortifying his justifications of invasion):

1. *“What are you doing in my house?”*
2. *“Where is my father?”*
3. *“Can you protect me from the fey? The River King’s servants are goblins and ogres and much, much worse.”*
4. *“Will you go help my mother? She is lost in the Summer Lands.”*
5. *“Why are so many fey coming to Riverbend? Are they trying to hurt my mother?”*
6. *“Why do you carry so many weapons? Are you soldiers?”*
7. *“Are you the new owners of the Rutyer Mill?”*
8. (To elves, half-elves, or elfmarked) *“Which court do you belong to?”*
9. (To heavily armored PCs) *“Can you swim in that armor?”*

Once Flax begins answering their questions, the PCs may learn the following pieces of information:

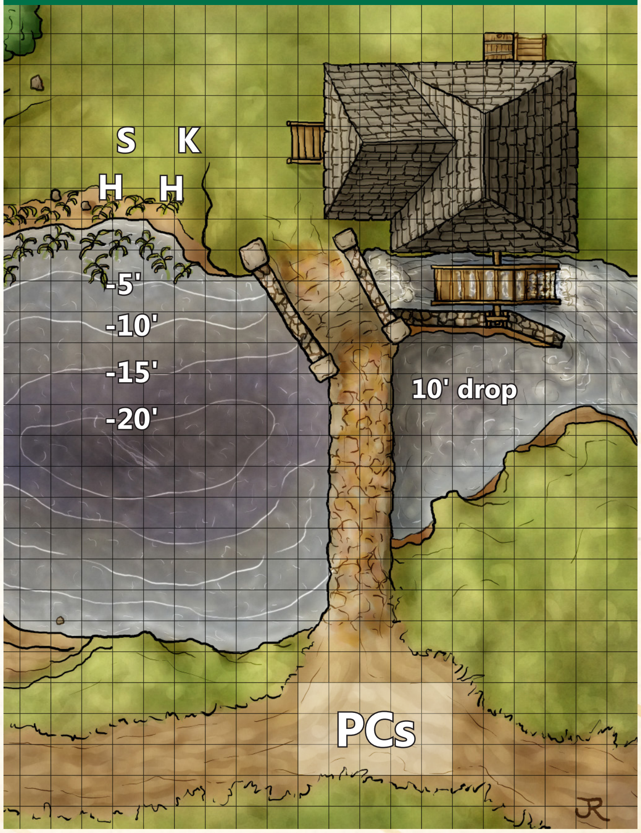
1. Getting to the Summer Lands requires swimming in the millpond.
2. Ellessandra wrote a lot in some large books in the mill but would never let him see them (see page 7).
3. Froderick struck a bargain with the River King but broke that bargain somehow. That’s what brought the fey back here; they think the land is theirs again.
4. An old river woman took his mother (Flax is trying to undermine Jenny Greenteeth a bit). She was here with some big goblins. Flax hid in a grain bin until she went away. When he stepped out, he saw the last of the goblins disappearing into the millpond.

THE POND AND THE KNIGHT

XP Threshold: 4,000

The millpond at Riverbend is a portal between the Summer Lands and the mortal world for the fey. The shore is muddy and quickly becomes deep, and a shove attack could push a creature over into the water. The stream counts as difficult terrain because of its depth. Getting out requires a DC 10

THE GREEN KNIGHT OF THE WOODS



Strength (Athletics) check; those wearing heavy armor have disadvantage on the check and sink into the pond on a failure and may begin to suffocate.

The millpond is created by a mill dam, which is quite narrow at the top and muddy along its entire length. Water spills over the top if the river is running high. Moving quickly along it requires a successful DC 8 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check for dashing. If the check fails, the runner falls into the stream below the millpond, taking 1d6 damage from the fall and requiring a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check to climb to shore.

CREATURES: When the PCs approach the pond seeking a way into the Summer Lands, they see that it has visitors—two beautiful horses with glossy black coats and copper manes and tails drink from the pond. Next to them stand a knight in green armor and a squire wearing a green tabard. The knight's verdant "armor" seems alive and is covered in bright green leaves and vines, his helmet is crowned with withies, and his lance is made of a living, leafy branch tipped with a terrible thorn. This sidhe knight and his squire have come through the gateway, seeking a challenge.

A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals the fey in general and their knights in particular believe in single combat as a worthy fight and dislike those who interfere. They sometimes cheat because they dislike losing.

If one of the creatures escaped the hunting bugbears encounter and warned Jenny Greenteeth, the knight and squire are already mounted. The knight issues his challenge as the PCs approach the mill.

If the party attempts to use stealth to approach the pond unnoticed, they may gain a surprise round against the fey. However, if the green knight spots them, read or paraphrase the following:

> The knight leaps into his saddle and shouts, "Which of you dares cross water guarded by the servants of the River King? None shall pass the river without defeating me first." He then spurs his horse and rides onto the dam, lance at the ready. His squire stays a bit behind.

SIR OBEREST THE GREEN (SIDHE KNIGHT)

Medium fey, neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 16 (natural armor, *briarthorn bracers*)

HIT POINTS 32 (7d6 + 7)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	19 (+4)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)

SKILLS Acrobatics +6, Animal Handling +3, Intimidation +5

SENSES darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11

LANGUAGES Common, Elven, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 4 (1,100 XP)

Special Equipment. Sir Oberest wears *briarthorn bracers* and carries two *potions of greater healing*.

Fey Ancestry. Sir Oberest has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put him to sleep.

Umbral Frailty. A sidhe in dim illumination or worse rolls all saving throws, skill-checks, and attack rolls at disadvantage.

Innate Spellcasting. Sir Oberest's primary spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13). The sidhe can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *disguise self*

3/day each: *entangle, hunter's mark*

1/day: *glibness* (self only), *haste* (self only)

ACTIONS

Heavy Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +6 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) piercing damage.

Lance. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +3 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d12 + 1) piercing damage. After his first successful pass, Sir Oberest returns his lance to his squire and dismounts to engage his opponent.

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +6 to hit, range 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Fey Leap. As an action, the sidhe may jump between spaces as if by *dimension door*. This magical transport must begin and end within 20 ft. of some illumination. A sidhe can "jump" up to 20 ft. per day in 10 ft. increments (*i.e.*, two 10-ft. leaps or one 20-ft. leap per day). Using this ability with a mount brings the mount along as part of the movement.

Green Rebirth (1/Long rest). If reduced to 0 hit points, Sir Oberest's head is severed. He immediately regains 19 hit points as he magically reattaches his severed head, which sprouts vines and green leaves and re-knits itself to his neck.

ILLISFAN (SIDHE SQUIRE)

Medium fey, neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 16 (leather)

HIT POINTS 32 (7d6 + 7)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

SKILLS Acrobatics +6, Animal Handling +3, Athletics +3

SENSES darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11

LANGUAGES Common, Elven, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 3 (700 XP)

Special Equipment. Illisfan has a *hunter's horn*.

Fey Ancestry. Illisfan has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put him to sleep.

Umbral Frailty. A sidhe in dim illumination or worse rolls all saving throws, skill-checks, and attack rolls at disadvantage.

Innate Spellcasting. Illisfan's primary spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12). The sidhe can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *disguise self*

3/day: *entangle, hunter's mark*

1/day: *haste*

ACTIONS

Fey Leap. As an action, the sidhe may jump between spaces as if by *dimension door*. This magical transport must begin and end within 20 ft. of some illumination. A sidhe can "jump" up to 20 ft. per day in 10 ft. increments (*i.e.*, two 10-ft. leaps or one 20-ft. leap per day). Using this ability with a mount brings the mount along as part of the movement.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +6 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage.

FEY-TOUCHED WARHORSES (2)

Large magical beast, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 11

HIT POINTS 19 (3d10 + 3)

SPEED 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	3 (+1)	9 (−1)	12 (+1)	11 (+1)

SKILLS Perception +3, Stealth +3

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES understands Sylvan

CHALLENGE 1/2 (100 XP)

Keen Hearing. A fey-touched warhorse has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing.

Trampling Charge. If the fey-touched warhorse moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a hooves attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the horse can make another attack with its hooves against it as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

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

TREASURE: Sir Oberest carries two *potions of greater healing*, and and his squire holds a large pouch with 490 gp of fey coin (which disappear 1 day after they leave the Summer Lands). They also carry and use the following magical items during the combat:

BRIARTHORN BRACERS

Wondrous item, uncommon

These magically inscribed leather bracers afford the wearer a +1 bonus to AC. Undergrowth and forested conditions are not considered difficult terrain for the wearer.

HUNTER'S HORN

Wondrous item, uncommon

Blowing this horn summons 3 (1d4 + 1) eel hounds (effective only in the Summer Lands). Once you use the horn, it can't be used again until 1 day has passed.

DEVELOPMENT: The most likely outcome is the party slays either the squire or a mount and the Green Knight retreats, taking word of this insult into the Summer Lands and to the River King. He makes a big stink about it as he goes, along the lines of, "These humans have violated the fey rights of combat."

If the party is defeated (or if they have the sense to all lie still when knocked prone), the squire loots their shields and weapons as tokens of victory but does not attempt to kill unconscious characters unless anyone in the party attacks. Appeals to a fey knight's courtesy and honor may win the party some mercy (DC 20 Charisma [Persuasion] check), in which case he takes only shields and one weapon, but the knight is not especially prone to pity or kindness.

If he survives, the Green Knight informs Tatzel (see page 44) of the PCs. The dragon will know a little about their appearance and tactics. The Green Knight may be encountered again with the Enchantress (see page 28) and at the River Court (see Chapter 6).

Chapter 2: Through the Millpond

Traveling from the mortal realm to the Summer Lands is dangerous. The entrance to the Summer Lands opens when a PC touches the millstone/fey door at the bottom of the millpond; the PCs may learn this from "young" Flax, from the Reeve Kolya, or from Froderick the Miller, whose wife told him the secret long ago. Once the PCs touch the millstone/fey door, they immediately find themselves in the Summer Lands' river.

When the PCs dive in and touch the hidden millstone at the bottom of the millpond, they are suddenly swimming up, caught in a swift current. A huge rush of water pulls them along. It isn't pretty. Read or paraphrase the following:

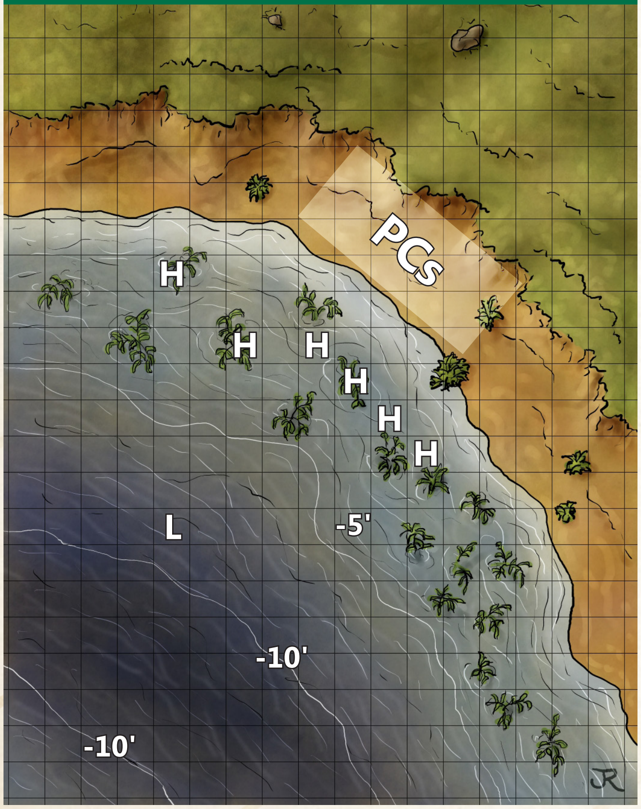
> The dark, murky water of the millpond suddenly jolts into motion. Everything around you moves and the current carries you downstream with force you cannot resist. You crash and tumble into rocks and stones in the water.

Each character passing through the portal regains hit points as if she had a long rest, plus she may reclaim two spell slots, if applicable.

DM'S NOTE

The Rushing River can be handled as a mini-game or as a complex skill check (though the playtests made it clear few players try anything other than Strength [Athletics] checks to swim toward the shore). Both options appear here. See the Swim-to-Shore Mini-Game and Complex Skill Check: The Rushing Door sections below.

THE EEL HOUNDS



Regardless of how the DM chooses to structure this encounter, there are some optional hazards below that could affect the PCs at the DM's discretion. Also, regardless of the encounter's details, the requirements for getting out of the water remain the same, as described below.

HAZARDS

Numerous hazards are possible as the PCs navigate the Rushing River using either the mini-game or complex skill check described in the sections on the next page.

LOGS: A floating log is available to hang onto: the log is 1d6 squares long and supports the weight of one character per square of length. The character need not make a Strength (Athletics) check to stay above water. Logs move in the current as the GM chooses, 1d3 squares per round.

A group of PCs working together can move a log 2 squares with a successful DC 19 Strength (Athletics) check. Failing with at least one natural 1 means the log jams in river rocks, and a DC 15 Strength check is required to remove the log against the force of the current. At the DM's option, a whirlpool may form near the log, dragging characters under (see Whirlpool, below).

RAPIDS: PCs in difficult water have disadvantage on Strength (Athletics) checks for movement.

RIVER SNAGS: An underwater tree, sharp stones, or stumps grab a PC's foot. This causes 1d6 slashing damage and the PC can't move for 1 round.

SMALL WATERFALL: The river drops by 10 feet onto rocks and churning water. Characters with proficiency in Dexterity (Acrobatics) avoid this damage; all others take 1d6 falling damage.

SURFACE ROCKS: The character hits a large rock, suffers 2d10 bludgeoning damage, and is stunned next round.

WHIRLPOOL: An eddy drags the character down below the surface. Escaping requires a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check. Each round the PC fails a check, that PC remains underwater and must hold her breath or begin suffocating. It takes 1 round for an affected PC who has broken free from the eddy to swim back to the surface.

WATERFALL: After 4 rounds, ask for a DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check from any PCs still in the river. On a success, the character hears the thundering crash of a waterfall not far away. The next round, the waters hurl him over the waterfall onto rocks below. This is a 40-foot drop for 4d6 bludgeoning damage. On the plus side, swimming out of the quiet pool past the waterfall requires only a DC 5 Strength (Athletics) check.

GETTING OUT OF THE RIVER

The riverbank is muddy and difficult terrain. When a character is adjacent to a shore square, getting out of the water requires a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check as a move action.

SWIM-TO-SHORE MINI-GAME

Should the GM elect to run the swim-to-shore mini-game, the characters begin in the middle of a 65-foot-wide river in a single line that starts with the first character to touch the millstone and ends with the last one through the gateway. Characters who enter 1 round after the rest of the party are added to the board after the first round of current has moved the earlier characters.

Each player moves in the order he appears in the river. The DM takes the last turn.

SWIMMING MOVEMENT

The river water is fast, cold, and powerful. PCs must succeed on a DC 8 Strength (Athletics) check to swim to the surface in the first round; after that, all move actions require a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check. Failing a check means a PC does not swim successfully on that action, and he loses an item to the rushing waters (see Table 2–1).

Failing a Strength (Athletics) check by 5 or more means the character sinks under the surface and takes 1d4 nonlethal damage due to suffocation and battering by the river. After failing one check by 5 or more, the PC may use her next check either to move up to the surface or to move against the current.

Characters can work together if they are adjacent at some point in a move. The results apply to all characters involved.

GMs should keep track of how many times each PC fails to make a check to swim, as this determines the number of items that PC loses (see the Success and Failure sections below).

CURRENT AND SHORE

At the end of each round, the GM moves each character 1d4 squares to reflect the strength of the current. Only moves in the direction of the current or diagonal moves are possible; the GM cannot move a PC at right angles/perpendicular to the current. Typically, the current pushes a character back into the faster central portion of the river.

Within 10 feet of shore, the GM may only move the PC 1d3 squares.

Within 5 feet of shore, the character only moves 1d2 squares. The GM can move a PC into a hazard; this ends movement for that character.

After one successful Strength (Athletics) check, a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a branch overhead or a quiet pool where the water is calmer, and that PC can direct others toward that location. All PCs make their next attempts to swim at DC 8.

SUCCESS

Once a PC reaches the shore, he drags himself onto dry land, more or less, using the rules laid out in Getting Out of the River, above. Each PC loses a number of items of equipment equal to his number of Strength (Athletics) check failures in the mini-game. Have each player choose a single item to which he held tight (that item cannot be lost). Then either choose an item you feel is appropriate or roll on Table 2–1.

DESIGN NOTE: PLAYER CHARACTER ITEMS

One gentlemen's agreement in RPG design is that you can kill the PCs, but you don't take their stuff. This implies some disturbing things about how players think about their characters, but let's set that aside. This encounter clearly violates that unwritten rule, but it also provides an option to return that gear later in the adventure. Make 'em suffer, sez I.

COLD: All characters must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or suffer 2d6 cold damage from exposure to the frosty waters.

REWARD: Once a PC reaches the shore, award her 50 XP.

FAILURE

If 5 rounds pass and a PC hasn't reached the shore, the PC is thrown onto dry land, half-drowned and aching. Then, two bad things happen at roughly the same time.

COLD: All characters who did not reach the shore on their own must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or suffer 2d6 cold damage from exposure to the frosty waters.

LOST GEAR: Worse still, all such characters gain a level of the exhausted condition for 1 hour and each character loses one item of equipment, in addition to a number equal to the number of Strength (Athletics) checks she failed trying to swim during the mini-game. Have each player choose an item to which she held tight (that item cannot be lost). Then either choose an item you feel is appropriate or roll on Table 2–1.

Loss of boots in the wilderness requires a DC 15 Constitution saving throw each day or suffer 1d6 damage. These items may be recovered at the Birch Queen's Fair (see Chapter 4).

TABLE 2–1: LOST ITEMS

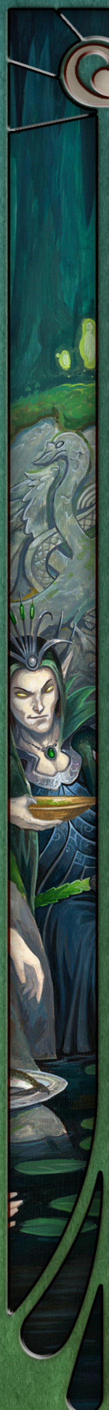
1d20	ITEM LOST
1–4	Shield
5–6	Weapon, focus, wand, rod, or staff
7–8	Amulet, potion, or holy symbol
9–13	Backpack, bag, quiver, scroll case, or wineskin
14–15	Cloak, rope, or hat
17–20	Boots

COMPLEX SKILL CHECK: THE RUSHING RIVER

If you choose to adjudicate this encounter as a complex skill check instead of a mini-game, this check requires 8 successes before 3 failures. Each PC must attempt this complex skill check individually, although some checks allow PCs to help each other, as described below.

Track who fails and how often; this determines how many items each PC loses (see the Success section, above).

PRIMARY SKILLS: Dexterity (Acrobatics), Wisdom (Perception), and Strength (Athletics).



Designer's Note

Many years ago, I took a canoeing trip in Ithaca, New York that wound up on the local news. Or rather, the canoes going over a waterfall wound up on the news.

It was a beautiful spring day. The river was slow and meandering where we set in, but I was the only experienced canoeist (and clearly not experienced enough). My friends and I wound up in an active, churning section of river where the spring runoff made navigation difficult. Everyone got a little concerned when one canoe was pushed against a bank and the (inexperienced) folks at the oars tried to lever them free. Both canoes overturned.

That's when things got scary.

The water pushed us downriver fast, and the muddy banks were much too steep to climb. The worst off was Emily, a small woman and not a strong swimmer, who was near complete panic. Eventually we grabbed a branch and made our way up a very steep slope in soaked clothes, missing a shoe, and very much worse for wear. I'm not exactly afraid of the water ever since, but I've learned that it can be deceptively dangerous. And thus may have been planted a seed that later grew into part of the River King.

DEXERITY (ACROBATICS) DC 10: A successful check allows a character to hold onto one of the slippery river stones or grab onto a floating log.

INTELLIGENCE (NATURE) DC 7: The rapids and the logs floating in the stream are huge and dangerous, but the character knows river waters are slowest inside a curve in the river. And there's just such a curve coming up, with lower riverbanks. A successful Strength (Athletics) check (see below) is required before an Intelligence (Nature) check can be attempted, and a PC can only make one successful check that counts toward the skill check's total required successes.

STRENGTH (ATHLETICS) DC 5 OR DC 10: Each character who succeeds at a check swims successfully to the surface and grabs a log or at least avoids the rocks. Once he has made any success, a character can attempt Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Nature) checks. A second success on a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check means the character can help another.

STRENGTH (ATHLETICS) DC 15: The character toughs it out underwater, her head striking rocks and hair catching in branches, to pull up a comrade who cannot swim.

See Success, Failure, and Getting Out of the River as described in the sections above.

THE EEL HOUNDS

XP Threshold: 2,625

After the PCs have emerged from the river but while all or most members of the party are still within 30 feet of shore, a horn sounds deep in the woods—ten quick, muffled notes. The water of the river begins to boil and bubble.

The riverbanks here are all slippery, slimy terrain. Creatures entering the mud squares along the riverbank or the reed squares enter slippery terrain and must make a successful DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or end their movement in that square. (Creatures must only make the check the first time they enter such squares, not each time they move in the area.) An eel hound striking a foe in such a square may also shove them 5 feet in any direction.

Creatures: A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals, based on the water's ripples, about a dozen creatures gathering beneath the water. These are eel hounds, and they should be feared. Slithering from the reeds, they are pure hunters and as cruel as their sidhe masters. They hunt and track for the lords and ladies of the Summer Lands, and their prey is human or dwarf more often than it is boar or deer.

For this encounter, DMs should begin with the eel hound pack leader and six lesser eel hounds. If the pack leader or six lesser eel hounds are killed by the party before the end of the third round, have the group reinforced with an additional six lesser eel hounds. If your group requires additional challenge, then add the other six hounds as necessary. If the group is being overwhelmed, keep the number of foes at the initial six and the pack leader.

A successful Intelligence (Nature) check reveals the following information about eel hounds:

TABLE 2–2: EEL HOUND LORE

DC	RESULT
10	Eel hounds are fey river hounds that attack in massive packs of wriggling, darting forms. They move quickly both on land and in the water. They prefer to bring aquatic prey up onto dry land and vice versa to kill by suffocation when they can. Eel hounds like marshes, rivers, and beds of sea grass and reeds. They mate in spring, a time when the female protects a litter of small, almost legless young.
20	The leaders of a group of eel hounds can use their spit to create a slick area and push foes into the water. They are vulnerable to cold iron, and their baying can generate a killing frenzy among the fey. Their stealth and ambush attacks are often in the service of a powerful river troll, lorelei, or sidhe.

EEL HOUND LEADER

Medium fey, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 14 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 77 (14d8 + 14)

SPEED 30 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	6 (–2)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)

SKILLS Perception +3, Stealth +5

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES Sylvan

CHALLENGE 2 (450 XP)

Amphibious. The eel hound can breathe air and water.

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

Slick Spittle. By spending 2 rounds dribbling spittle on an area, an eel hound can cover a 5-foot square with its slippery saliva. This area is treated as if under the effects of a *grease* spell, but it lasts for 1 hour.

Slithering Bite. A creature an eel hound attacks can't make opportunity attacks against it until the start of the creature's next turn.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 14).

LESSER EEL HOUNDS (6)

Small fey, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 14 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 18 (4d6 + 4)

SPEED 30 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	6 (–2)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)

SKILLS Perception +3, Stealth +5

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES Sylvan

CHALLENGE 1/2 (100 XP)

Amphibious. The eel hound can breathe air and water.

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

Slick Spittle. By spending 2 rounds dribbling spittle on an area, an eel hound can cover a 5-foot square with its slippery saliva. This area is treated as if under the effects of a *grease* spell, but it lasts for 1 hour.

Slithering Bite. A creature an eel hound attacks can't make opportunity attacks against it until the start of the creature's next turn.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Chapter 3: Into the Summer Lands

Time and distance in the fey lands never flow at a constant rate. The region the PCs enter is called the Summer Lands, a place ruled by three lesser nobles and one powerful sidhe, the River King. The lesser rulers are the Rowan King, the Birch Queen, and the Oak King.

LOCATIONS

The ever-changing Summer Lands have no map. The sidhe know the way. During the timeframe of this adventure, the following locales and directions (probably) hold. The primary sites of the summer kingdoms are the dragon Tatzel's clearing (east), the river and its waterfalls (meandering throughout), the Rumbling Ford (north), the Oak King's Court (north), the Rowan King's circle (southeast), the False Mill (south), the Frog Marsh (southwest), and the Birch Queens' Fair (center).

The Cedar Mountains bound the south, and the forest's edge, the north. This section of forest extends roughly 100 miles in every direction and is entirely difficult terrain filled with large animals and scattered fey courts of sidhe and (to a lesser degree) elves, gnomes, goblins, and bugbears.

Most areas have associated encounters, but the remaining locations are described briefly here.

THE SHADOW FEY LANDS

The darkest portion of the forest are those where toadstools take the place of undergrowth, where fierce boars and relentless fey patrol in the shadows, and where the ettercap are given the titles of fey lords and ladies.

THE CEDAR MOUNTAINS

Dark woods cover the foothills of these snow-capped peaks, which rise to heights of around 15,000 feet. The tree line sits at around 9,000 feet, and above that are only alpine meadows, mountain goats, enormous rocs, glaciers, and shaggy, white-furred bugbear tribes.

THE CREEK

After swimming ashore and possibly fighting the eel hounds, the party has no real direction. Tell the players about a creek (which leads them to the next encounter you want them to see) and use some of the elements in the Lost in the Dark Woods section (see page 21) to spook them a little.

THE OAK KING'S COURT

The Oak King is an enormous treant who rules over sidhe, satyrs, talking animals, birds, and many other fey creatures. His court is a clearing of oaks mixed with shelters grown from woven brambles and houses built into the largest trees. The Oak King has no interest in non-fey affairs and offers little to humans and other iron-bearing creatures. Visitors meet with some hostility if they carry axes and iron but may stay in the smallest, wettest, draftiest hut in the court for a mere 20 gp a night. Food costs extra, around 5 gp per meal. A successful DC 8 Charisma (Persuasion) check to gather information or a DC 8 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals Ellessandra is not his daughter.

THE RIVER FALLS

As the river tumbles down from the mountains, it leaps through a series of spectacular waterfalls. The highest of these have 400-foot drops. The ones through the foothills are in the 25- to 50-foot range, and the last set of falls drops just 10 feet.

THE ROWAN KING'S CIRCLE

The Rowan King is a powerful centaur who is the master of many of the larger creatures in this section of the Summer Lands, including most bugbears, ogres, and even a handful of giants. Each year, he seeks the Birch Queen's hand as her consort in order to unite the two kingdoms against the River King, but always unsuccessfully.

If the PCs approach the Rowan King's court, he may offer them advice or even a token as his servants. They must swear to destroy the River King and grant his title to someone other than the elves: a nixie, a lorelei, ideally a woman who (presumably) will be impressed with the Rowan King and consent to marriage.

THE RUMBLING FORD

In times of high water, as it is now, this ford is impassable. In the dry late summer and in winter, the water is low enough that a human or sidhe can wade across.

No check is required. Sometimes a knight will attempt to hold the ford against all comers who cannot defeat him in a joust. Only elves, half-elves, elfmarked, or sidhe are considered worthy foes, though he may stoop to fight a human if he must.

If the PCs did not kill the Green Knight at the mill, this may be an excellent place for a rematch, in dangerous currents (use the river hazard from the Where the Lorelei Sing encounter on page 51).

THE STRAIGHT ROAD

The only road in the entire region is a perfectly straight, tree-lined and sometimes cobbled strip leading from the edge of the forest, across the Rumbling Ford, and ending at the Oak King's Court in the west.

There's no goal or destination at the eastern end; the road simply runs out where the fey tired of it and returned the forest to its normal state.

TIME, DAYLIGHT, AND NIGHT

It's night when you, the DM, say it is. Daylight lasts for one or two encounters. Night lasts for one encounter. When the party returns to Riverbend, a day or two has passed but Froderick still lives. If the PCs hop back and forth more than once, the time between the realms becomes months, seasons, and then years and decades. Even in the fey lands, time is fluid, like the river, and may curl upon itself in places.

CUSTOMS AND CURRENCY

Fey work their relationships on trust, oaths, and barter. A fey oathbreaker is the vilest sort. The finest is one who honors his word strictly but with a twist when required.

Fey currency is generally worthless outside the Summer Lands, and illusory gold is very common. For this reason, every coin the PCs attempt to offer in any transaction must be touched to an item made from cold iron before a fey will accept it. This can slow things down considerably.

SUMMER LANDS LORE

Characters trained in Intelligence (Arcana), Intelligence (History), or Intelligence (Nature) may know a little about the fey and their customs, as indicated on Tables 3–1, 3–2, and 3–3.

TABLE 3–1: INTELLIGENCE (ARCANA) CHECKS

DC	RESULT
8 or less	The PC has no special knowledge of the Summer Lands, its magic, or its creatures.
9–13	The fey are semi-civilized creatures who place great value on personal honor and settle many disputes by dueling physically or magically.
14–18	The fey may travel by fey roads, magical portals that connect different sections of the Summer Lands. A ritual is required to open such roads.
19+	Time flows differently in the Summer Lands; sometimes years pass there when only moments pass in the mortal lands. At other times, different sections of the Summer Lands seem to reflect different times or seasons.

TABLE 3–2: INTELLIGENCE (HISTORY) CHECKS

DC	RESULT
7 or less	The PC has no special knowledge of fey nobles or customs.
8–13	The Summer Lands are ruled by the sidhe and the fey and filled with talking animals, powerful magic, and many small, independent kingdoms or courts. Their customs include formal dueling and yearly market fairs and feasts, some of which take place in both the mortal world and the Summer Lands.
14–19	The people of the Summer Lands include the Shadow Fey and the Light Fey (comprised of the Star Fey, Sun Fey, and Bright Fey); the Shadow Fey are treacherous, though they can be trusted to keep whatever bargains they make. Indeed, swearing service to a fey is a serious matter; one can only swear fealty to a single fey at a time and must renounce such service before taking arms against that fey lord or lady.
20+	The fey are a stratified society, with talking animals, goblins, ogres, and gnomes near the bottom of the ladder, centaurs, ettercaps, and satyrs in the middle, and sidhe, nixies, and elves at the top.

TABLE 3–3: INTELLIGENCE (NATURE) CHECKS

DC	RESULT
5 or less	The PC has no special knowledge of the fey.
6–10	The fey enjoy hunting, feasting, and song. Entertaining them with Dexterity (Acrobatics), Charisma (Performance), or Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) may win their favor. They consider most non-fey either buffoons or bumpkins.
11–15	The fey enjoy gifts; indeed, they feel so superior that they often expect bribes from non-fey. These bribes are often magical (which is preferred) or physical (food, drink, jewelry, and gemstones are typical). Gifts of weapons are considered rude or even a threat or sign of aggressive intentions.
16–20	A bribe of poetry, song, or story may be accepted, or even the gift of a memory or skill can be traded among the fey.
21+	The trading of skills, memories, and physical prowess always comes at a price. Most such bargains require one give up just as much as one gains.

LOST IN THE DARK WOODS

The party may spend a lot of time wandering from place to place until (or even after) they find the fey roads. As a result, you may want to have them find various dark, disturbing, or otherwise fey elements. Here are more than a dozen suggestions.

ANIMATED PREY

A deer, boar, or other kill shifts position when the hunter turns away. Its head lies prone, then its head rests on a rock staring vacantly—a fly on one eye—without a sound.

A BIT OF RIVERBEND

The PCs see a small hut in the forest. Food sits on the table, a shirt lies on a trunk for clothes—the place seems lived in but empty. One of the PCs recognizes the yellow shutters and thatch roof as very much like a house they saw in Riverbend.

THE BLEEDING STONE

An ancient menhir stands in the PCs' path, worn with age and covered in moss and lichen. A spiral design is carved into one side; the spiral is stained with dried blood.

BOAR CARCASS

An enormous boar carcass sits among the trees, covered in flies and maggots. PCs who make a successful DC 16 Constitution save don't vomit from the stench as they approach. A DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the spear used to kill the animal broke and is still in it. The spearhead belongs to one of the hunting courtiers (Sir Yngress the Red; see page 29), who would be glad for its recovery.

DEATH BUTTERFLIES

A swarm of bright blue, green, and orange butterflies perches on the carcass of a monstrous owlbear. The fey believe these butterflies tear apart the souls of the dead and carry them to the sky so the creature may be reborn. The carcass shows signs of being stripped; the butterflies have left little more than feathers, bones, and fur.

THE DANCE OF MOTHS

Moths gather in the fading dusk, drawn to the PCs' lights. Flocking in the hundreds, they form vague humanoid figures, which dance alluringly and coquettishly in the half-light, trying to persuade the characters to join their fluttering ballet.

THE DEAD DRYAD

Large swaths of trees are dry and dead. Eventually the party discovers the corpse of a dryad, slain by a cold iron stake through her chest.

FLOCK OF OWLS

Dozens of owls spend the night near the PCs' campsite, hooting, calling, and hunting small game. A successful DC 5 Intelligence (Nature) makes it clear owls do not normally travel in flocks. These are servants of the shadow fey, watching intruders. PCs cannot sleep (and do not gain the benefits of a long rest) unless they make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw.

THE FOOTPRINT

Forging ahead through the woods, one character stumbles into a deep depression. Those following behind find themselves looking into an enormous footprint, large enough for the whole party to stand in.

GIANT TREES

The party finds a region where the trees are 40 feet around and 250 feet high. There seem to be pale lights up in the canopy, though they slip away if anyone investigates.

IN THE FIRELIGHT

The nightly fire pops and bursts from the sparks, burning brightly and comforting everyone. Then the PCs hear screams between the pops and crackles. Peering closer, they see the twigs are writhing in agony, like tiny burning people. Looking deep within the blaze, a cruelly grinning goblin made of flame repeatedly cuts down a cowering dryad.

JUST A SUGGESTION

A neatly folded square of parchment lies in the middle of the path in front of the characters. Written in an angry scrawl of tiny letters is a single Elven word: Leave.

THE LOVERS AND LEFTOVERS

Two tiny sprites flit through the trees; every so often they embrace and kiss. As soon as they spot the PCs, they giggle and vanish. If the party pursues them, the group finds the leftover remnants of a drunken picnic of satyrs and nymphs, including empty barrels and blankets.

THE MAN OF LEAVES

A humanoid shape made of leaves and twigs walks slowly through the woods. As the PCs approach, it dissolves into reddish brown leaves that the wind carries away.

THE MUMMY OAK

Small links of rusty chain mail occasionally drop out of the canopy. Upon closer inspection, they are coated in dried blood. Mummified heads and limbs of various humanoid creatures hang from a large tree above. Occasionally a limb seems to twitch, or a mouth opens and closes.

QUICKLING COWARDS

A blatant rustling sound bursts from the bushes, and then three quicklings dart from the undergrowth in terror. Completely ignoring the PCs, they flee from something that may or may not ever materialize to the party. This is a great time to follow up with the dragon (see page 44) or the Le Nain Rouge encounter (see page 24).

TRADING GIFTS

The PCs wake up after camping and something has been taken from one of the packs. Food has been replaced by a gift of flowers, and a small item is gone, replaced with a dead mouse. This happens on a second night, but the item left behind is something that a PC lost in the Rushing River (see page 17).

THE VANISHING WAGON

The party finds a strange wagon; it has food and is big enough for some characters to sleep in. However, when the characters wake up, the wagon is gone, even if some characters slept in it (they are at the Birch Queen's Fair; see Chapter 4).

THE WEEPING TREE

A once-beautiful elven boy's head rests at the base of a large oak tree with the word "Winterborn" in Elven carved into his forehead. The tree's bark is smeared with blood, and inspection reveals the boy's intestines and flesh hang from the boughs. For miles after seeing the head, the PCs hear a faint weeping in the wind.

THE FROG MARSH

XP Threshold: 3,200

The marsh area is swampy and difficult to traverse. The large lily pads are normal terrain, but the marsh between the lily pads is difficult terrain, choked with reeds, sticks, half-submerged logs, and sucking mire. Darker, deeper squares on the map are open water (not marsh) and require a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check to cross at normal swimming speeds.

Alternately, a creature with a swim speed can move through the marsh (treat as difficult terrain) on a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check. Failure indicates the swimmer's movement halts after one square of movement.

Any PC who attempts to jump as part of her movement makes a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. If she fails the check, divide the check result by 10. She jumps that number of squares and lands in the square the result dictates. If she ends up in the marsh, she falls into the muck and loses her remaining movement.

Once the PCs have made it to the northern shore of the marsh area, read or paraphrase the following:

> The river flows slowly here. The shore is full of cattails mixed with boggy stretches of open water with lily pads as large as dinner tables. A powerful croak, as of the father of all frogs, echoes across the marsh.

Creature: A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals an enormous frog sitting in the marsh ahead. Saddle straps wrap around its pale yellow belly. The frog rests on one of those huge lily pads, and the frog's rider pokes its head around the side.

The large lily pads support the weight of a goblin frog rider and its mount, or a Medium creature in light or medium armor, but not someone in heavy armor. Halflings (and other size Small or smaller creatures) in heavy armor can balance successfully on a lily pad with a successful DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check.

GOBLIN FROG RIDERS (8)

Small humanoid (goblinoid), neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 15 (leather armor, shield)

HIT POINTS 7 (2d6)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (−1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	8 (−1)	8 (−1)

SKILLS Stealth +6

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

LANGUAGES Common, Goblin

CHALLENGE 1/4 (50 XP)

Nimble Escape. The goblin can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

ACTIONS

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

GIANT FEY FROGS (8)

Medium beast, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 11

HIT POINTS 18 (4d8)

SPEED 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	7 (−2)	10 (+0)	3 (−4)

SKILLS Perception +2, Stealth +3

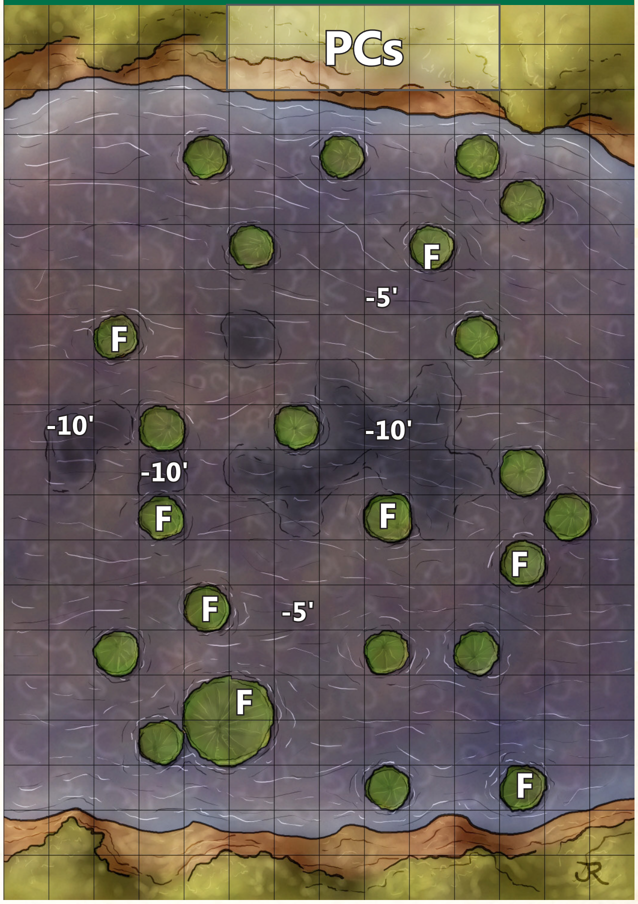
SENSES darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 12

LANGUAGES Sylvan

CHALLENGE 1/4 (50 XP)

Amphibious. The frog can breathe air and water.

THE FROG MARSH



Standing Leap. The frog's long jump is up to 20 feet and its high jump is up to 10 feet, with or without a running start.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 11). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the frog can't bite another target.

Swallow. The frog makes one bite attack against a Small or smaller target it is grappling. If the attack hits, the target is swallowed, and the grapple ends. The swallowed target is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the frog, and it takes 5 (2d4) acid damage at the start of each of the frog's turns. The frog can have only one target swallowed at a time. If the frog dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse using 5 feet of movement, exiting prone.

Development: The goblins work for Jenny Greenteeth and kill mortals coming into the Summer Lands for sport. If the party successfully intimidates a captured goblin, it gives up Jenny's name and that she serves at the River Court (see page 52). Frogs flee if reduced to 10 or fewer hp or if half their number die and may appear in the River Court later to testify against the party as villainous killers.

Treasure: The goblins carry glass jars containing 15 especially large and juicy fireflies. These provide light as a bullseye lantern for the next 7 days (they weigh 3 lbs. each). They also carry 50 gp and 400 sp each in their saddle bags.

One rider also carries a sealed scroll case containing a passport or invitation written in Elven. The text reads:

> Admit the two goblins bearing this letter and their mounts into the Birch Queen's Fair without hindrance or delay.

LE NAIN ROUGE

XP Threshold: 2,300

The players might get a lead here from Ambertan the Shadow Fey Warlock (see page 38), or they might just stumble upon Le Nain Rouge. A bandit and highwayman, Le Nain Rouge captured Ellessandra and offered her to Ambertan and the Shadow Fey. They have no interest in her since she holds no power over the River King. Now Le Nain Rouge ponders what to do with her.

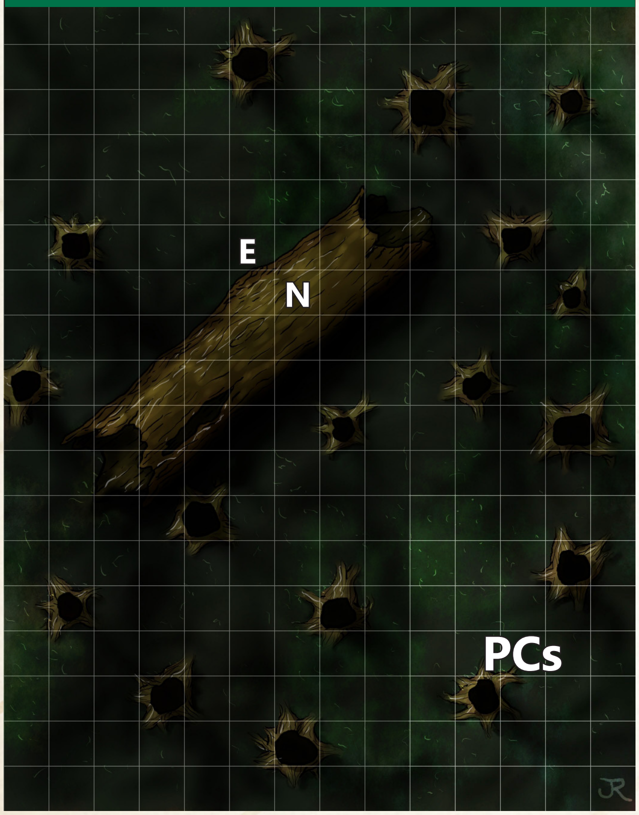
When the PCs face this encounter, read the following:

> The wind blows stronger and stronger, and then a pouring rain comes down like a wall. Lightning flashes and strikes among you.

A successful DC 19 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a dwarf or gnome in the trees wearing a red or black cap; the lightning came from its fingers. It is standing on a huge fallen tree trunk and laughing in the rain. The weather has become a thunderstorm.

Because of the poor light and weather, a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check is needed to see that Le Nain Rouge has cornered a victim—a sidhe woman who seems to be slumped unconscious against the log Le Nain Rouge stands upon. This is Ellessandra.

NAIN ROUGE



Le Nain Rouge gains a surprise round because of the weather and uses it to make his electric ray attack.

LE NAIN ROUGE (REDCAP)

Medium fey, neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 15 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 105 (14d8 + 42)

SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	8 (–1)

SAVING THROWS Con +6

SKILLS Athletics +8, Intimidation +5

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, frightened

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

LANGUAGES Common, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 6 (2,300 XP)

Clomping Boots. A redcap has disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks.

Red Cap. A redcap must soak its cap in the blood of a humanoid killed no more than an hour ago at least once every three days. If it goes more than 72 hours without doing so, the blood on its cap dries and the redcap gains one level of exhaustion every 24 hours. While the cap is dry, the redcap can't remove exhaustion by any means. All levels of exhaustion are removed immediately when the redcap soaks its cap in fresh blood. A redcap that dies as a result of this exhaustion crumbles to dust.

Solid Kick. A redcap can kick a creature within 5 feet as a bonus action. The kicked creature must make a successful DC 15 Strength saving throw or fall prone.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The redcap makes two pike attacks and one bite attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) piercing damage and the creature is bleeding profusely. A bleeding creature must make a successful DC 15 Constitution saving throw at the start of its turn or take 10 (3d6) necrotic damage and continue bleeding. On a successful save the creature takes no necrotic damage and the effect ends. A creature takes only 10 (3d6) necrotic damage per turn from this effect no matter how many times it's been bitten, and a single successful saving throw ends all bleeding. Spending an action to make a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check or any amount of magical healing also stops the bleeding. Constructs and undead are immune to the bleeding effect.

Pike. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 5) piercing damage.

DEVELOPMENT: When the PCs drive Le Nain Rouge away, the sidhe woman regains consciousness and introduces herself as Ellessandra. She thanks them for rescuing her from the creature and tells them she is grateful for their help. She is on her way to meet her son, Flax, a young half-human boy. He is a difficult child, always running off and always trying to impress his sidhe and fey playmates. (Perhaps this is a point in time when Flax is still young—due to odd way time flows in the Summer Lands—or perhaps Ellessandra has lost track of time and doesn't realize Flax has grown into a bitter adult.)

Ellessandra expresses no great desire to return to Riverbend. If asked about it, she says she was forced into an arranged marriage, and the king's sisters helped her get out of it just a few years ago when she was with child. She wanted Flax to grow up in the Summer Lands.

A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that sometimes Ellessandra regrets this decision. Her memory has changed with time; she has forgotten Jenny Greenteeth's maneuverings right after she conceived.

If told her husband has been held for her murder, she is surprised and saddened. She offers them her wedding ring and a note explaining she was not murdered, she has returned to the Summer Lands, and she has come to no harm. The note does not mention her son.

THE BOAR PATROL

XP Threshold: 4,300

A shadow fey huntress, her footmen, and their boars patrol the forest. Mortals are not welcome here.

When the PCs face this encounter, read the following:

> This patch of forest is filled with ancient oaks and little undergrowth; it is too dark on the forest floor for much to grow, though large trunks, stumps, and thick leaves are everywhere. Several times you hear loud snuffling nearby, probably boars rooting around for acorns.

The illumination here is poor, with dim light. The area is lightly obscured. The indicated terrain is difficult undergrowth. The fallen log counts as difficult terrain. It also provides three-quarters cover to the huntress Balenna.

Let the party make what preparations they like for 1 round. Then read the following:

> This time, the snuffling is much deeper and louder. Two enormous razor-tusked boars come into sight, with fey wearing black chasing behind them. They laugh among themselves when they see you and say, "This forest is forbidden to your kind. Surrender your weapons now and come swear fealty to the Shadow Fey."

A successful DC 19 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a female fey standing behind a fallen log. She carries a skull-topped wand; the male fey carry enormous swords.

BALENNA OF CLAN STARLIGHT, SHADOW FEY HUNTRESS

Medium humanoid (elf), lawful evil

ARMOR CLASS 14 (leather)

HIT POINTS 104 (19d8 + 19)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Dex +5, Con +3, Cha +5

SKILLS Arcana +2, Perception +3, Stealth +5, Survival +3

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES Common, Elvish, Umbral

CHALLENGE 4 (1,100 XP)

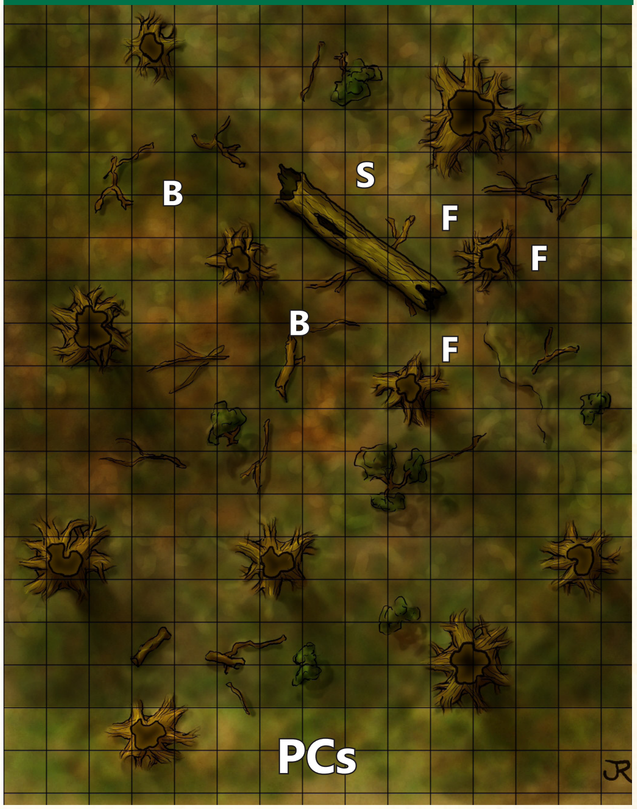
Special Equipment. Balenna carries one *potion of greater healing* and a *wand of paralysis*.

Fey Ancestry. Balenna has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put her to sleep.

Innate Spellcasting. Balenna's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma. She can cast the following spells innately, requiring no material components.

3/day: *misty step* (in shadows, dim light, or darkness only)

BOAR PATROL



DESIGNER'S NOTE

Originally, this was going to be another set of mounted foes, but the internal playtest group rebelled against how many mounts they saw so I dropped it. To my mind, if you want to be at an advantage in a fight, you sit 6 feet up on a 1,200 pound animal with four sharp hooves.

In d20 games, though, that adds another set of actions and another foe for the PCs to dispatch. I think that level of complication is best reserved for the sidhe knights, who truly deserve to trample and terrify. So in this encounter, the deep forest boars are war animals, or a bit like hunting hounds. They have a terrific sense of smell and can easily track enemies.

An alternate setup would be to have the shadow fey in pursuit of the party.

Sneak Attack (1/turn). Balenna does an extra 7 (2d6) damage when she hits a target with a weapon attack that had advantage, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of her that isn't incapacitated and she doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, Balenna has disadvantage on attack rolls and on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Traveler in Darkness. Balenna has advantage on Intelligence (Arcana) checks made to know about shadow roads and shadow magic spells or items.

Actions

Multiattack. Balenna makes two ranged attacks.

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

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage.

SHADOW FEY BRIGANDS (3)

Medium humanoid (elf), lawful evil

ARMOR CLASS 15 (chain shirt)

HIT POINTS 31 (7d8)

SPEED 30 ft.

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

SKILLS Arcana +2, Perception +2

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

LANGUAGES Common, Elvish, Umbral

CHALLENGE 1/4 (50 XP)

Fey Ancestry. The shadow fey has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put it to sleep.

Innate Spellcasting. The shadow fey's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma. It can cast the following spells innately, requiring no material components.

1/day: *misty step* (in shadows, dim light, or darkness only)

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the shadow fey has disadvantage on attack rolls and on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Traveler in Darkness. The shadow fey has advantage on Intelligence (Arcana) checks made to know about shadow roads and shadow magic spells or items.

Actions

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

GIANT FOREST BOARS (2)

Large beast, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 12 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 42 (5d10 + 15)

SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	2 (−4)	7 (−2)	5 (−3)

SENSES passive Perception 8

LANGUAGES —

CHALLENGE 2 (450 XP)

Charge. If the boar moves at least 20 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a tusk attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) slashing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Relentless (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). If the boar takes 10 damage or less that would reduce it to 0 hit points, it is reduced to 1 hit point instead.

Actions

Tusk. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Development: The PCs may choose to swear fealty to the Shadow Fey. See the Crow's Feather sidebar on page 27.

Treasure: The boars' ornamental harnesses are made of silver and the leatherwork is good; they are worth 20 gp each. Two of the brigands wear a silver armband set with lapis worth 120 gp each. Balenna also may still have her *potion of greater healing* (assuming she didn't use it during the combat). The real treasure is the shadow fey huntress's *wand of paralysis*.

THE CUTTING QUICKLINGS

XP Threshold: 4,125

The quicklings are outlaws even among the fey; they happily murder travelers while holding a seemingly normal conversation with them.

The woods here are dark but not impenetrable; light is normal. The cliffs are 40 feet high; creatures falling that distance take 14 (4d6) falling damage when they strike the rocks below. The inside of the hollow tree is a fey door (see the Fey Roads, page 39).

Creatures: When the PCs face this encounter, read:

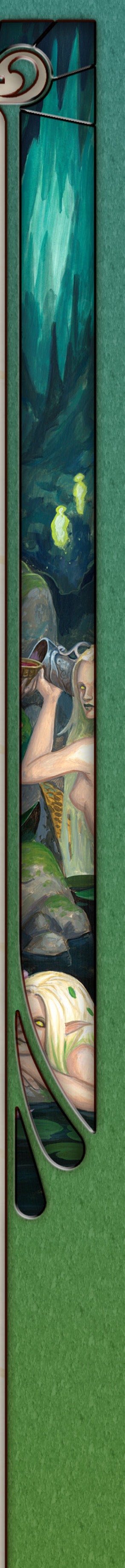
> A flock of crows perches in a bare-branch tree up ahead, cawing loudly; the tree stands at the edge of a sharp drop. Something rushes by your feet with incredible speed, some creature with a knife. Its voice is clear: "Foolish, stupid humans! I could tell you all the secrets of the Summer Lands. But you are not worthy."

If a PC asks how he may prove his worth, the quickling says:

> "Bah, you would need to show elven wisdom, knowledge, and wit. I will cut you down and tell you the sad truth of your worthless, wasted lives."

And then the mass of crows explodes from the trees and rushes down to surround the PCs.

A successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the fast thing is a small fey creature in gray clothes carrying a small sword.



The quicklings speak to opponents each round. They enjoy killing learned, wise, and otherwise interesting people more than just brutes. However, their conversational standards are high, and their own manners are nothing but taunting cruelty.

During combat, the quicklings frequently say, "You know nothing; why should I waste my breath on you? Prove your worth, silent fools!"

Each round, a quickling engaging a PC in melee taunts its foe and demands that she respond. Any PC who does not reply enrages the quickling, ensuring she draws down the crow attacks next round, as well as the quickling's further attacks and taunts. ("Speak, you mute, dumb, worthless ox!" the quicklings are fond of saying.)

PCs may wish to engage the quicklings more with words than weapons. If that is the case, see the Complex Skill Check: Sharp Weapons, Shaper Words section.

QUICKLINGS (3)

Small fey, chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 15

HIT POINTS 22 (5d6 + 5)

SPEED 120 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (–1)	20 (+5)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)

SKILLS Acrobatics +7, Perception +4, Stealth +7, Survival +4

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

LANGUAGES Common, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 2 (450 XP)

Natural Invisibility. A quickling is invisible when motionless. It loses this invisibility and remains visible for 1 round in any round which it takes an action.

Supernatural Speed. A quickling moves with incredible speed. Save for when it remains motionless (at which point it is invisible), the quickling's shape blurs and shimmers with this speed, granting it light obscurement.

Slow Susceptibility. A quickling under the effects of a *slow* spell or similar loses its supernatural speed and is treated as poisoned as long as the effect persists. This poisoned condition persists for 1 round after the *slow* effect ends.

ACTIONS

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d6 + 5) piercing damage.

SWARM OF CROWS (6)

Medium swarm of Tiny beasts, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 12

HIT POINTS 24 (7d8 − 7)

SPEED 10 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (−2)	14 (+2)	8 (−1)	3 (−4)	12 (+1)	6 (−2)

SKILLS Perception +5

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

SENSES passive Perception 15

LANGUAGES —

CHALLENGE 1/4 (50 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 crow. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

ACTIONS

Beaks. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) piercing damage, or 3 (1d6) piercing damage if the swarm has half its hit points or fewer.

COMPLEX SKILL CHECK: SHARP WEAPONS, SHARPER WORDS

Any PC attempting to banter words with a quickling partakes in a complex skill challenge; to gain the most information while fighting the quickling, the party must achieve 6 successes before 3 failures. If the quicklings are defeated verbally, they disengage and flee. This complex skill check can be made during combat or outside of combat; if made during combat,

The Crow's Feather: Loyalty to the Shadow Fey

Of all the fey a PC could swear some loyalty to, the Shadow Fey are by far the worst. Any PC who wishes may take up their badge (a crow's feather) and swear to serve them. Doing so in the Summer Lands has magical repercussions, just as swearing fealty to Lord Flax might (see page 43) or taking the Birch Queen's badge would (see page 42).

Any character who does so is expected to help other Shadow Fey and never to strike any of their leaders (such as the Warlock Ambertan; see page 38). If a PC who has sworn loyalty to the Shadow Fey wishes to renounce this, he or she must take an action to make a DC 18 Charisma check. If the check succeeds, the character is weakened for 2 rounds, suffering disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks. If the check fails, the character is dominated (as per the *dominate person* spell, no saving throw permitted) by the next Shadow Fey he meets. Rolling a critical failure when denouncing a sworn oath of service (a roll of 1) means the oath-breaker is dominated and becomes a Shadow Fey at the next nightfall.

Breaking an oath to the Shadow Fey is not viewed with quite the suspicion as breaking an oath to more honorable fey, but it does mark the PC as a gullible fool, ripe for fey mockery and humiliation. All that character's Charisma (Deception), Charisma (Persuasion), and Charisma (Intimidation) checks suffer disadvantage while the character is in the Summer Lands.

allow each PC to make one skill check per round in place of either an action or a move. If the quicklings flee, whatever swarms of crows remain harry foes to cover their retreat.

Speaking Elven grants advantage to all checks in this challenge.

CHARISMA (DECEPTION) DC 15: This successful check counts as two successes, but failure means the quickling's has advantage on its next attack.

CHARISMA (INTIMIDATION) DC 17: This works normally and counts as a single success, but the fey are hostile, thus the high DC.

CHARISMA (PERSUASION) DC 12: Successful checks work as single successes.

INTELLIGENCE (ARCANA) DC 15: This successful check counts as two successes, but may only be used one time.

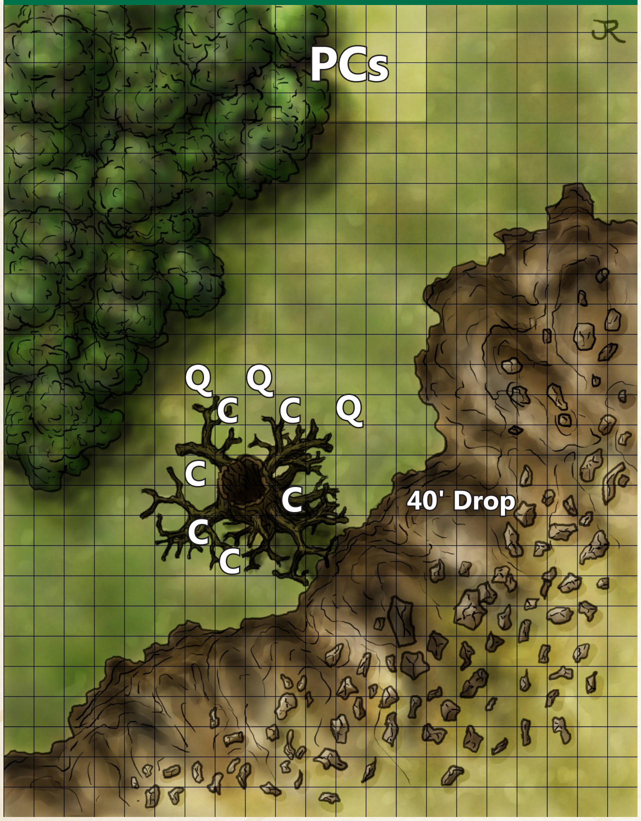
INTELLIGENCE (HISTORY) DC 10: This successful check makes it clear single combat is the ideal here, as it was with the Green Knight. It counts as one success and may be used once only.

INTELLIGENCE (NATURE) DC 7: This successful check counts as a single success, showing knowledge of the Summer Lands.

INTELLIGENCE (RELIGION): These are always a failure; the quicklings despise religious talk as quackery.

WISDOM (INSIGHT) DC 12: This successful check reveals the quicklings are not nobles among the fey and are overcompensating by humiliating those they consider inferior. All future skill checks gain advantage.

THE CUTTING QUICKLINGS



Each player character who gains a success learns the following, in order:

1. "Tatzel the Green is a mighty wyrm, the friend of fey and the bane of men. He knows the Summer Lands and the roads between realms. And he will find your bones here."
2. "The Birch Queen's Fair stands but two leagues away, full of weapons yet peaceful. What a pity you do not stand within the bounds of its hospitality."
3. "The River King has nine sisters and no brothers and long has been a friend to men. Now mortals stir him to make war, and we answer the call to hunt mortal flesh. Starting with yours, of course."
4. "You will meet the River King's sisters at least once, perhaps twice. They can turn his mind from wrath to peaceful flowing, but their prices are set high: vision, song, and souls are their meat and drink."
5. "Your mortal friends would do well to bow and speak quietly to Jenny Greenteeth, for she is a dangerous schemer."
6. "I have a sister's husband's cousin's friend, a child of hag and field, who knows the secrets of the incantation that will return you to the mortal world before the seasons turns again and again, and you are lost to the river of time. Let me depart and I will tell you his name." (Rhorlief, at the Birch Queen's Fair.)

FOR EACH FAILURE

The quicklings humiliate the PC, who has disadvantage on skill checks next round.

SUCCESS

The PC wins the quicklings' respect. The utter a few mocking words: "You are not as foolish as most of your kind, but do not try such tricks at the River Court, where words flow faster than water from the hills!"

The quicklings use their next action to retreat from the area entirely, and the crows take to the skies.

TREASURE: The quicklings' treasures are hidden within a lightning-blasted hollow in the dire crow's tree. It includes gold and gem-encrusted trinkets worth a total of 3,000 gp. The trio also wear rings of silver set with opals (240 gp each).

THE ENCHANTRESS AND HER COURTIERS

A few elves and sidhe courtiers are out for a day's hunt, seeking dire boar, deer, or other worthy prey. If you like, one of them may be the Green Knight out of his regular armor. The courtiers are in a good mood, having eaten a rich meal and enjoyed a ride through the woods on fey steeds—this means they do not immediately attack.

If there is an elf in the party, they are treated courteously, offered wine and spiced nuts, and asked to tell a tale. The group will not, however, reveal much about directions, their plans, or other useful information.

When the PCs encounter this party, read the following:

> A tent of gold and scarlet silk stands on a low hill along a small road. In front of the tent are a handful of knights and ladies speaking and sitting on small but comfortable chairs. They share plates and goblets carried by at least a dozen small, almost invisible, gray servants.

A successful DC 11 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the small gray servants are about the same size as a human child but are very hard to focus on. The successful check also allows the PC to notice a couple of them are feeding acorns to three enormous boars, each of which has a bit and bridle. If the Green Knight is here, two beautiful copper-coated horses also crop the grass not far away.

A successful DC 11 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals the servants seem to be a variant of the *unseen servant* spell, perhaps tied to the tent or an item. They appear harmless.

Creatures: The picnic is winding down, but the fey are always ready to be amused—or to humiliate fools. Their initial attitude is indifferent. You can treat this as a complex skill check (see below) or simply roleplay it out. The challenge is to show one's knowledge and mastery of Intelligence (Arcana), Intelligence (History), and Intelligence (Nature)—that is, to hold a witty and entertaining conversation. The audience is Lady Sorreminx, an elven lady of some standing and a notorious enchantress.

The menfolk attending her are Sir Yngress the Red and Lord Chelessfield, Lord of the Alpine Marches, plus (if they survived from the mill) Sir Oberest and his squire Illisfan. None wear battlefield armor. Rather, they sport hunting jacks of studded leather and carry spears and bows.

LADY SORREMINX

An exotic black-haired elf who enjoys learning and history, Sorreminx carries an ebony wand set with two diamonds, one at each end. She prefers to hear discussions related to the Intelligence (Arcana) and Intelligence (History) skills, and attempts to win her over with those skills gain advantage. She is quick to point out the flaws in any failed roll. Indeed, she delivers her putdowns with a cruel smile; "Where did you attend school, in a pigsty? Any apprentice knows better, madam, for shame!"

She enjoys insulting those whose Charisma (Deception) or Intelligence checks are clearly failing. "Come now, sir, that is not worthy of a man of action. Are you a dull blade or a pasty scholar?"

SIR YNGRESS THE RED

The youngest, most eager, and most ignorant of the sidhe, Yngress pretty much agrees with whatever was said last. Gullible enough that he doesn't quite realize he was brought along to be the entertainment, Yngress is the best hunter here. He is eager to challenge someone to a duel of honor. He keeps a longsword and dagger tied neatly to his saddle, which he uses to fight any duel as needed. His fey warhorse Estoile occasionally whispers some advice in his ear. The horse is by far the smarter of the pair.

LORD CHELESSFIELD, MASTER OF THE ALPINE MARCHES

An elderly elf with golden hair and purple eyes, Lord Chelessfield wears a tabard of white marked with blue diamonds. He has a set of mithral bracers as well as a circlet of pure gold worked into a dragon shape (the symbol of his title as ruler of the highlands). Lord Chelessfield carries a boar spear and a hand crossbow on his off days. He is the most dangerous foe in the skill challenge, because he is interested in what the PCs might do in the Summer Lands, rather than hoping to score points with the ladies. He asks the party many pointed questions about their goals here, what acts of murder they may have committed against sidhe interests, what other lords they may have visited, and generally how the party is getting along with the fey.

COMPLEX SKILL CHECK: A PLEASANT CONVERSATION

Those who wish to learn information from this cultured party may want to participate in this complex skill check. This check requires 6 successes before 3 failures; PCs can attempt this complex skill check individually or as a group.

PRIMARY SKILLS: Charisma (Persuasion), Intelligence (Arcana), Intelligence (History), Intelligence (Nature). Characters who speak Elven double their proficiency bonus to checks made with these four skills.

CHARISMA (DECEPTION) DC 12: The sidhe enjoy a bit of joking, bragging, and puffery. If a PC wants to talk big, that's great. The second attempt, though, is an automatic failure. Their patience for this approach is thin.

CHARISMA (PERSUASION) DC 10: A way with words, manners, and courtesy is vital. This is the basic route to success. A failure here indicates a failure with language that insults someone, and a critical failure (a natural 1) means a challenge is issued to duel. This counts as 1 success.

DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) DC 15: A character may tumble, juggle, or engage in other tomfoolery to amuse the ladies, even without a language in common. This counts as 1 success.

INTELLIGENCE (ARCANA) DC 15: Arcane matters are very, very difficult to impress the enchantress with, but a success with this skill counts as 2 successes in the challenge. A second success adds just 1 to the total number of successes.

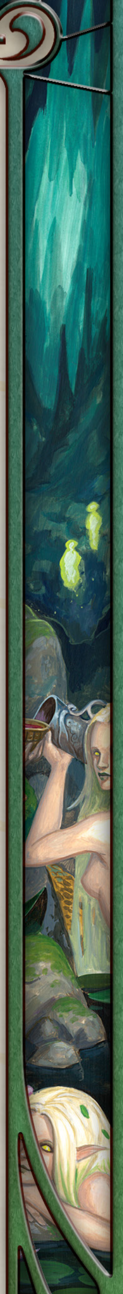
INTELLIGENCE (HISTORY) DC 10: The character knows enough sidhe history, heraldry, or lore to keep up a civilized discussion of the past. This counts as 1 success.

INTELLIGENCE (NATURE) OR WISDOM (SURVIVAL) DC 12: The picnickers are also bloodthirsty hunters who happily discuss how to track, kill, and butcher their prey, from boar to stag (and from goblin to human, if necessary). They are keen fans of falconry and the best way to lure a dragon from its den. Their standards of knowledge here are higher than Intelligence (History), but not quite so high as Intelligence (Arcana). A certain willingness to let loose the hounds is required here; the courtiers are not the least bit squeamish and seem suspicious of those who are. This counts as 1 success.

WISDOM (INSIGHT) DC 12: The character realizes Lord Chelessfield is probing them for information and seems to regard them as a threat. The character also realizes Charisma (Deception) has limited use for this audience. This counts as 1 success; further attempts bring no success or failure result and are merely wasted effort.

SUCCESS

The hunters are charmed by these bumpkins and tell them a little about the Summer Lands, such as locations and sights. In particular, they provide directions to the Straight Road and to any two locations the PCs may already have heard of (the Birch Queen's Fairground from the frog riders, the dragon, or the like). They do not bring up the River King, the mill, or



related topics; Sir Oberest is the only sidhe knight who knows about the raiding and Lord Flax's plans to seize Riverbend.

If a PC or the party succeeds at this complex skill check, grant each member of the group 600 XP.

FAILURE

The group laughs and gives the party completely false directions to the Birch Queen's Fair, sending them instead into the jaws of the dire boar riders or into the green dragon Tatzel's clearing.

In addition, Lady Sorreminx casts *mass suggestion*. Those she enchants willingly give her a gift of some kind, chosen from the following list: a potion, all the PC's remaining food or drink, or (from the affected PC with the highest Charisma) an oath to serve her and wear her token.

WHAT IF THE PARTY ATTACKS?

If the PCs are dumb enough to attack three or four knights, an elven enchantress, dire boars, and a host of minion servants, there's really not much hope for them. If the PCs don't all attack in a rush, one of the knights challenges a PC to a duel of magic or blades (the first foe brought below half hp concedes).

If they really want to fight everyone, use Sir Oberest's statistics for Yngress, dropping the AC by 2 points (see page 14). Statistics for Lady Sorreminx and Lord Chelessfield follow. If the mounts are included, use the fey-touched horse from page 15 and the deep forest boars from page 26. Make it quick, but it need not be fatal. A *fear, confusion*, or *hypnotic pattern* followed by *hold person* might knock down enough foes that the rest can be convinced to surrender honorably. These individuals may remember the party and this encounter if you later play *Courts of the Shadow Fey*, another adventure from Kobold Press.

LADY SORREMINX

Medium humanoid (elf), lawful evil

ARMOR CLASS 14 (studded leather)

HIT POINTS 123 (19d8 + 38)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	18 (+4)

SAVING THROWS Dex +5, Wis +6, Cha +7

SKILLS Arcana +4, Deception +7, Perception +6, Persuasion +7, Stealth +5

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

LANGUAGES Common, Elvish, Umbral

CHALLENGE 7 (2,900 XP)

Fey Ancestry. Lady Sorreminx has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put her to sleep.

Innate Spellcasting. Lady Sorreminx's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15). She can cast the following spells innately, requiring no material components:

4/day: *misty step* (in shadows, dim light, or darkness only)

Spellcasting. Lady Sorreminx is an 11th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). She knows the following spells:

Cantrips (at will): *blade ward, friends, message, vicious mockery*

1st level (4 slots): *bane, charm person, faerie fire*

2nd level (3 slots): *enthrall, hold person*

3rd level (3 slots): *conjure fey, fear, hypnotic pattern*

4th level (3 slots): *confusion, greater invisibility, phantasmal killer*

5th level (2 slots): *animate objects, dominate person, hold monster*

6th level (1 slot): *mass suggestion, true seeing*

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, Lady Sorreminx has disadvantage on attack rolls and on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Traveler in Darkness. Lady Sorreminx has advantage on Intelligence (Arcana) checks made to know about shadow roads and shadow magic spells or items.

LORD CHELESSFIELD, SIDHE-LORD OF THE HIGHLAND MARCHES

Medium fey, chaotic neutral

ARMOR CLASS 17 (*+1 breastplate*)

Hit points 117 (18d8 + 36)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	19 (+4)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

SKILLS Perception +4, Acrobatics +6

SENSES darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14

LANGUAGES Common, Elven, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 6 (2,300 XP)

Special Equipment. Sir Chelessfield carries a *+2 rapier* and *+1 hand crossbow*. He wears a *cloak of protection* and a silver-filigree *+1 breastplate*.

Fey Ancestry. Lord Chelessfield has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put him to sleep.

Umbral Frailty. A sidhe in dim illumination or worse rolls all saving throws, skill-checks, and attack rolls at disadvantage.

Innate Spellcasting. Lord Chelessfield's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12). He can cast the following spells innately, requiring no material components:

At will: *disguise self*

3/day: *entangle, hunter's mark*

1/day: *haste*

ACTIONS

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack*: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage, or 9 (1d8 + 4) if used with both hands to make a melee attack.

+2 Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack*. +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (1d8 + 6) piercing damage.

Hand Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +7 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target, *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.

Chapter 4: The Birch Queen's Fair

The entire fair is extremely well hidden, and yet most people of the Summer Lands know where to find it. The fair takes place inside a large fairy ring and requires an ettin's permission to enter.

The "oak trees" around the ring are really mushrooms—black, woody, and tall as oaks. When the PCs are outside the ring, they can see and hear absolutely nothing of the fair. Inside the ring, there are sounds and vibrant colors everywhere. The fair itself takes place in a hollow, a flat meadow that fills a small valley surrounded by forest.

Characters who enter the fair find themselves refreshed, regaining hit points and removing conditions as if they had enjoyed a long rest. Spellcasters regain two spell slots of their choice.

STORY GOALS

The player characters have four possible goals for this chapter:

1. Learn from Rhorlief or Ambertan the particulars of using the fey road portals that permit travel on the fey roads
2. Learn of Lord Flax's warmongering
3. Accept the badge of the Shadow Fey or the Birch Queen
4. Recover items lost to the Rushing River

None of these goals are required to complete the adventure but may be great fun for players excited about the adventure's theme.

ENTERING THE FAIR

The easiest path into the fair is between two enormous birch trees, guarded day and night (see The Ettin at the Gate section on page 36). It's also possible to enter via the fey road, in which case the entrance is in the middle of the fireplace in the Hall of Revels.

The market is a strange place. Sidhe rub shoulders with quicklings, gnomes, goblins, and centaurs, and everything seems to move to the beat of music that can be heard everywhere: pipes, drums, and harps.

The merchants here sell hunting imps, offer bottled passion, the services of house goblins, cold iron exorcisms to banish mortals, incantations for hibernation, incantations for baking, debauchery, and waterproof roofing, all at the top of their lungs.

LEAVING THE FAIR

Getting out is just as hard as getting in, though the fey road in the Hall of Revels is always open. Exiting while the queen's music plays is almost impossible; the fair goes on and on, and the Ettin's Gate is always on the opposite side of wherever the PCs meet the edge of the forest.

THE ENDLESS FAIR

If the party annoys the queen or the ettin at the gate, for instance, the Birch Queen's Fair may become impossible to leave. In this case, when the party leaves one side, they enter it again on the opposite site. Alternately, the fair just continues endlessly unless the party ends the music and merriment, passes by the ettin, or leaves by the fey road upon Lords and Ladies Mount. To depart, they may complete one of the following two complex skill checks.

COMPLEX SKILL CHECK: FEY ROAD EXIT

To undo the enchantment, the party must complete a complex skill challenge. If they try to open/manipulate a fey portal, see below. This check requires 6 successes before 3 failures.

DEXTERITY DC 17: This is a difficult attempt to succeed at without knowing anything about magic.

INTELLIGENCE (ARCANA) DC 12: Stones must be set in a specific order, words must be chanted in a certain tone, or whatever other steps might be necessary to activate the portal.

INTELLIGENCE (HISTORY) DC 17: A recollection of other portals and stories of fey travel come to mind, granting advantage or disadvantage to the next skill check. This does not count as a success or failure.

INTELLIGENCE (NATURE) DC 12: This check determines the location the PCs want the portal to take them. A failed check could result in either arriving a short distance from their intended target or somewhere else altogether.

If quicklings are about, perhaps they try to sabotage the portal while the PCs work on it. Characters' passive perception scores (opposed by the quicklings' Dexterity [Stealth] checks each round) may allow them to notice what the quicklings are doing. Three rounds of failed checks before noticing the quicklings result in disadvantage on the skill checks for the rest of the challenge.

This skill check covers an attempt to leave the fair and bypass the wards set up by the Birch Queen and her servants to prevent people from leaving without her permission.

SUCCESS

The PCs piece together enough information to learn what is required to manipulate the fey portal on Lords and Ladies Mount and can use it to escape the Birch Queen's Fair. They still must pay the gift in order to use the fey road. See the entries for Rhorlief and Ambertan (page 38) for more information.

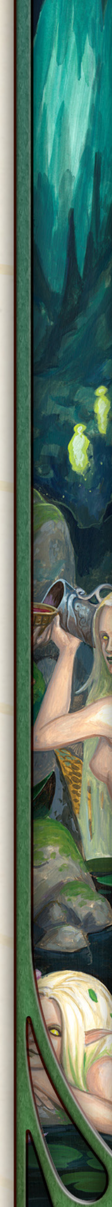
FAILURE

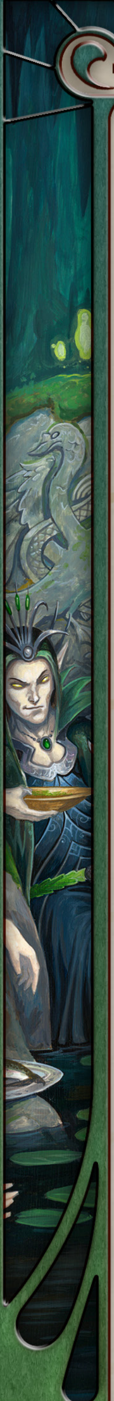
The characters cannot suss out the arcane steps needed to activate the portal. They must seek help (Rhorlief or Ambertan) in order to use the fey portal and the road beyond if they wish to escape the fair in this manner.

COMPLEX SKILL CHECK: LEAVING THE FAIR

When the party members realize they cannot leave the fair, they may search for ways to bypass the enchantments that bind them within the fair.

This check requires 6 successes before 3 failures. After 3 successes, the party can see the way out through the streets





and notes the fey road from the Lords and Ladies Mount as well, though they still cannot actually reach the exit.

An elf, half-elf, elfmarked, or gnome may receive advantage on checks in this challenge, at the GM's discretion.

PRIMARY SKILLS: Dexterity (Sleight of Hand), Intelligence (Arcana), Intelligence (Nature).

CHARISMA (DECEPTION) OR CHARISMA (INTIMIDATE) DC 12: This is only usable after a successful Wisdom (Perception) check, and it tricks one musician into stopping her music, weakening the enchantment. This counts as 1 success.

DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) DC 20: Attempts to use sheer speed to get out of the fair are usually futile. This counts as 2 successes if a PC finds a way to outrun or leap over the wards.

DEXTERITY (SLEIGHT OF HAND) DC 12: The wardings have physical aspects: small wreathes are the most common. This check allows a PC to attempt to take down such a wreath in a public place without being noticed.

INTELLIGENCE (ARCANA) DC 15: This skill allows a character to manipulate the ley lines and see the weak points in the enchantment, possibly finding a way around the warding. This counts as 1 success.

INTELLIGENCE (HISTORY) OR WISDOM (PERSUASION) DC 10: With Intelligence (History), the PC remembers that such "closed fairs" and "closed courts" are a tradition of the fey, who hold their revels in a sealed space outside normal lands, under hills or the like. Leaving before the event is over is considered quite rude. It is possible to petition the lord or lady for permission to leave. Only 1 success is possible with Intelligence (History).

After Intelligence (History) is used successfully, a PC may attempt Wisdom (Persuasion) with the queen. Convincing the Birch Queen to let the party go early is quite a feat (and is done with disadvantage if they have murdered any fey while at the fair). A successful Wisdom (Persuasion) check counts as 2 successes.

INTELLIGENCE (NATURE) DC 10: The wards are made of woven mistletoe, entwined with briar rose, willow withes, and juniper branches. Taking down the wreaths weakens the wards but is certainly against the fey's traditions and wishes. This counts as 1 success.

WISDOM (PERCEPTION) DC 7: It's quite easy to notice the fair's enchantments seem related to the music that makes many visitors dance. If the music were stopped somehow, this would weaken the enchantment. This successful skill check allows trying Charisma (Deception) or Charisma (Intimidation) on a fey musician. It counts for 1 success, but then no more.

SUCCESS

The music is quiet enough and the arcane wreath bindings are momentarily reduced sufficiently to allow the party to walk free from the fair into the woods. If the party doesn't depart within two minutes, the wards are restored.

FAILURE

The wards are sealed tightly. A knight of the Queen's Court (or perhaps the centaur Oiglas the Healer from the Queen's Consort challenge below) duels with the PCs to restore the queen's good name from such meddling, iron-mongering mortals. Use statistics for a centaur or Sir Oberest from page 14. The PCs must fight, as they cannot flee. The only ways to leave the fair now are by the fey road or by waiting it out until the fair ends in three days' time.

PLACES IN THE FAIR

The Birch Queen's Fair is a bit of neutral ground where the fey conduct their business without the day-to-day feuds and sniping. The entire open clearing is filled with tents, merchants, wagons, animals, giants, gnomes, elves, sidhe, and monsters of a hundred kinds all seeking to buy, cheat, steal, and sell their various goods. The fair consists of several main areas:

THE MERCHANT STALLS

These consist of canvas and silken tents, flimsy huts, and temporary shelters under mushroom caps or stone pavilions.

LORDS AND LADIES MOUNT

Atop one hillside stands the Queen's cloth-of-gold tent. Below it stand the many-hued tents of her nobles and lesser lords. To one side are makeshift tables, springs of enchanted water and wine, and many servants and guards. Her enormous stone table and woven wooden throne are at the top of the hill. No lesser fey are allowed up there without express invitation.

The fey door out of the fair opens directly beneath the queen's seat at the stone table, in a set of stairs that go directly into the hill. The queen forbids travel on her road during her nightly revels while the fair is in session. When the fair concludes and she moves her court elsewhere, she ignores the door entirely.

Her guards are the centaur Oiglas by day and three bugbears by night. Seeking to travel during her feasts (or arriving at a nighttime hour) without a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check immediately earns the queen's disfavor. The queen's disfavor may involve losing her badge (see the Queen's Consort, page 41) or being exiled from the fair for a season.

THE HALL AND HILL OF REVELS

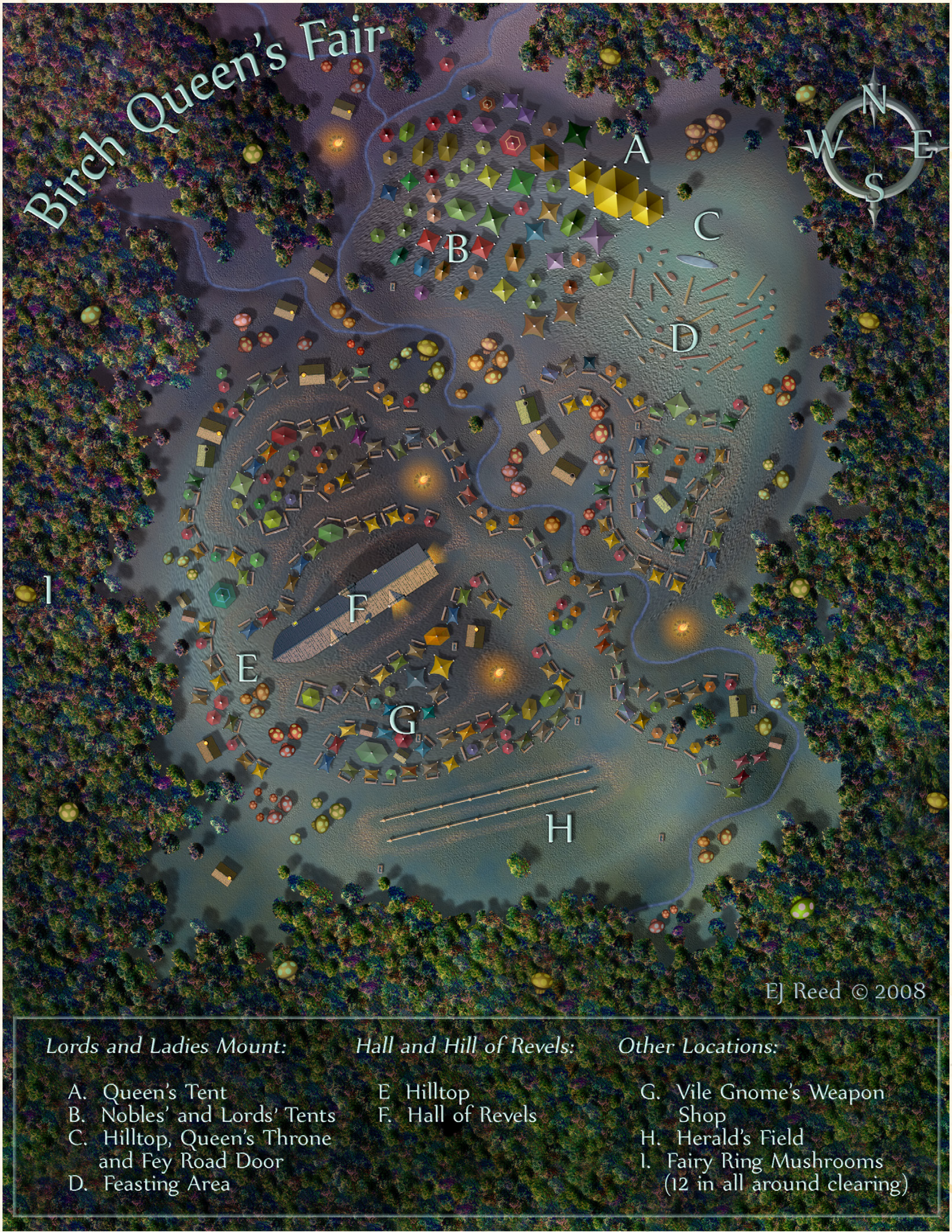
A single long wooden hall with a slate roof projects out from the hillside opposite the Lords and Ladies Mount. It has entrances directly into the halls of the lesser fey. No matter how many giants, ogres, ettins, goblins, and other creatures are seated here, the high table of the queen always has room. The enchanted hall can accommodate any number of dancers, drinkers, and diners.

THE HERALD'S FIELD

This open field includes the archery grounds, the tilting ground, and the dancers' maypole. Fey challenge one another to contests of wit and skill here and challenge strangers to contests of poetry, archery, silence, jousting, and courtesy. These are opposed tests of Dexterity (Acrobatics)/Strength/Dexterity, melee and ranged attacks, Charisma (Deception)/Wisdom (Insight), and Dexterity (Stealth)/Wisdom (Perception).

THE GOBLIN WARRENS

Under the Lords and Ladies Mount are the dark homes of many goblin, bugbear, shadow servants, and other lesser fey servants. This is where the kitchens are, full of goblins peeling potatoes, stirring cauldrons, and slicing mushrooms into various dishes.



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Lords and Ladies Mount:

A. Queen's Tent
B. Nobles' and Lords' Tents
C. Hilltop, Queen's Throne and Fey Road Door
D. Feasting Area

Hall and Hill of Revels:

E Hilltop
F. Hall of Revels

Other Locations:

G. Vile Gnome's Weapon Shop
H. Herald's Field
I. Fairy Ring Mushrooms (12 in all around clearing)

FEY TRADE AND BARTER: BODY, SOUL, MEMORIES

Among the fey, it is not uncommon to trade in the abstract and to make the arcane and the spiritual concrete and mercantile. Indeed, that is a large part of the fair's trade.

Haggling can be done as opposed Charisma (Deception)/Wisdom (Insight) skill checks. You are probably better off just roleplaying most barter. The fey consider five traditional categories of goods:

GIFTS OF THE MIND AND BODY

A fey may trade his speed, fortitude, and so forth to another. These must be given willingly and are usually exchanged in pairs. A maximum of a –2 penalty to any one ability score while another rises by up to +2 may be made. In some rare cases, one party trades a gift of mind and body in exchange for crucial memories or learning.

GIFTS OF LEARNING

These are skills, traded permanently or temporarily, for a specific purpose. A character trading for a skill becomes proficient or loses proficiency. Among the fey, they often trade a few other "skills" as well: poetry, song, and crafting arts. Loaning a poet's gift of inspiration to another fey is considered a wildly romantic gesture.

GIFTS OF THE ARCANE, PRIMAL, AND DIVINE

Divine magics granted by gods are not widely available among the fey and are valued as a result. Arcane gifts, or those divine gifts of druids or those who worship an ideal rather than a deity, are relatively common, and are traded permanently or sometimes loaned. Failure to return a loan may cause a fey to wither and die, or merely to twist to evil. It is considered a horrible sign to renege on such a bargain.

MEMORIES OF TIMES PAST

Some fey trade memories of important days, such as weddings, battles, or a kiss. These memories have whatever price one cares to name for them. In most cases, the memory of another such event is required in exchange.

MEMORIES OF GREAT PROWESS

A PC can trade away (or gain) a critical hit. For instance, a hero might forget the critical hit that slew a dragon and gain a future success (his next attack roll of natural 19 becomes a 20). The loss of that memory is expensive, as the PC loses 100 XP. The reverse is also possible, though the DM should permit it only once: a character can gain 100 XP from a fey's memory of wooing the queen, winning a duel, or what have you. In exchange, his next natural 20 on an attack roll is automatically a failure of 1.

Note that memories may also have other effects for the fey, such as enabling change to the fey roads (see page 39).

FUTURE MOMENT OF SUCCESS

A character can trade away a future saving throw for a future critical success (it's never clear what one has traded with the fey). By agreeing to fail a future saving throw, the hero gains an extra potent critical hit to use in the future (maximize the damage dice). Or vice versa; the PC gives up her critical hits (the foe is still hit, just not critically) until such time as she changes her next failed saving throw to a success (when she makes the save, she regains the ability to inflict critical hits). The fey making the trade gains the "lost" critical hit or successful save.

THE TRADE: MEMORY IN, MEMORY OUT

Extracting memories requires a few herbs and a 10-minute magical ceremony. The character losing a memory, skill, or attribute also makes a DC 15 Constitution save.

If the save succeeds, there's no adverse effect as the ceremony proceeds normally. If the saving throw fails, the character gains a level of exhaustion. The memory may be swapped with the recipient immediately (the most common practice) or it may be stored in a vial of semi-precious stone (carved crystal, jade, and even glass) for later use. Opening or receiving a memory requires a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. If it succeeds, the transfer goes smoothly and the recipient is stunned for 1 round as the memory, skill, or attribute floods his consciousness. Afterward, the ability gained can be drawn on normally, though memories are always clearly those of someone else. If the Wisdom saving throw fails, the character gains a level of exhaustion and is stunned for 1 minute. The transfer still succeeds.

EVENTS AT THE FAIR

As the PCs stroll around the market fair, they may notice some of the following events. Some are side treks and all are at the DM's discretion.

THE CAGED CHILD

A human child is kept among a group of ogres. Any PCs local to Riverbend recognize the child as Miko, a missing boy last seen swimming in the millpond. He was believed to have drowned, but the body was never recovered. If the party haggles for his freedom or fights to free him, they have a friend. Miko could either have seen Ellessandra a few days ago and could direct them to the River King's court, or he could direct the PCs to some of their missing items.

THE BOXER

An ogre boxer challenges a PC to a fistfight. No matter how hard a PC hits, he can never wound the boxer, though the PC takes damage as normal. A PC who persists, even in the face of sure defeat, is granted a boon, perhaps an amulet that allows him a +2 bonus on saving throws against fey powers for as long as he is in the River King's realm.

THE JEALOUS HUSBAND

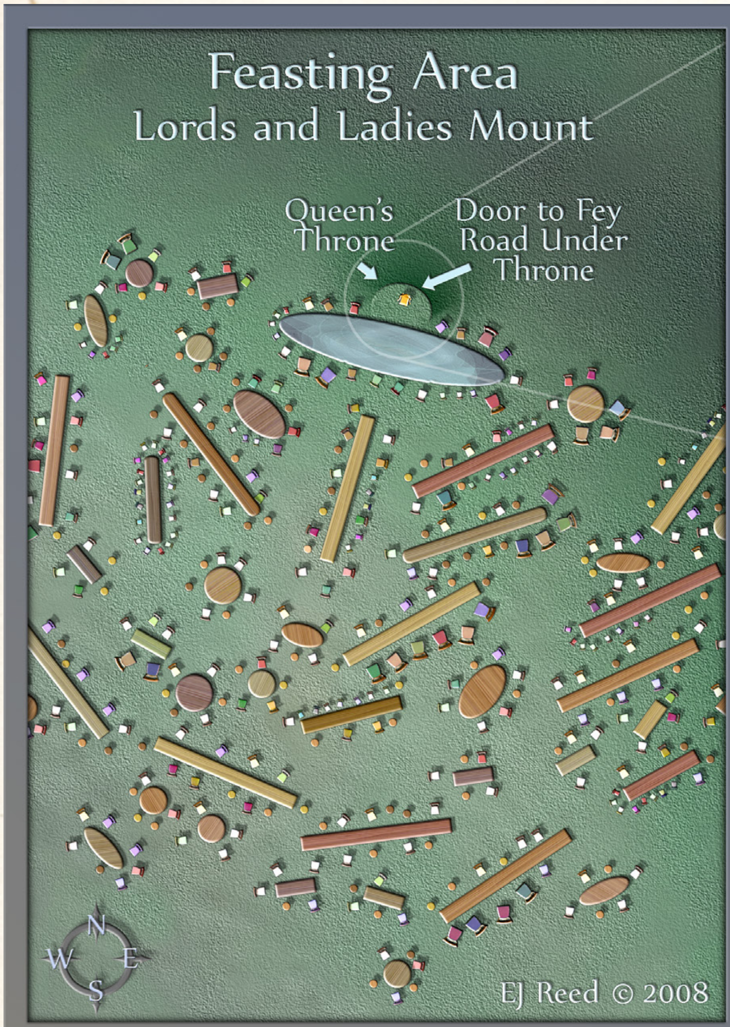
A sidhe maiden asks a good-looking PC to dance with her, or walk with her through the market, to make her spouse jealous. Let the PCs beware if they get in the middle of the intrigues of this high-spirited couple; it never ends well.

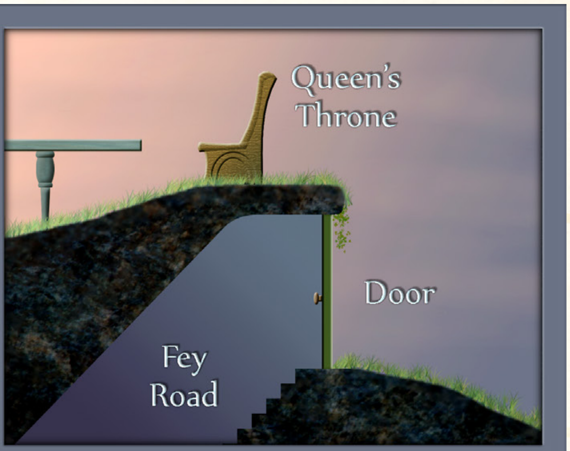
THE GIFT

A small, gray-robed servant goblin offers a tray of delicious sugared plums or cherry tarts. If the PCs eat any (perhaps only if they do so without paying), the treats cause strange transformations or delusions: the PC speaks only in poetry or rhyme, for instance, or he sees his friends as all resembling enormous field mice and the fey as cats.

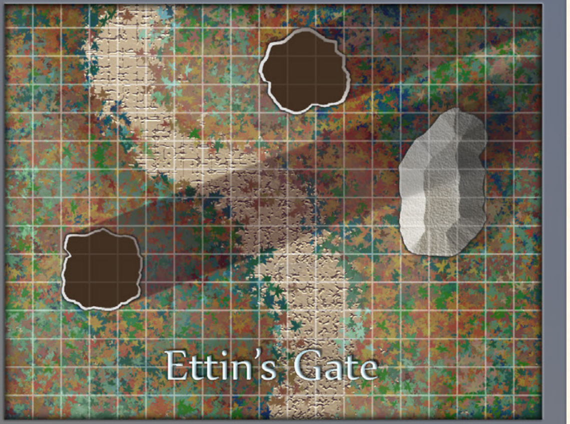
DANCE OF MADNESS

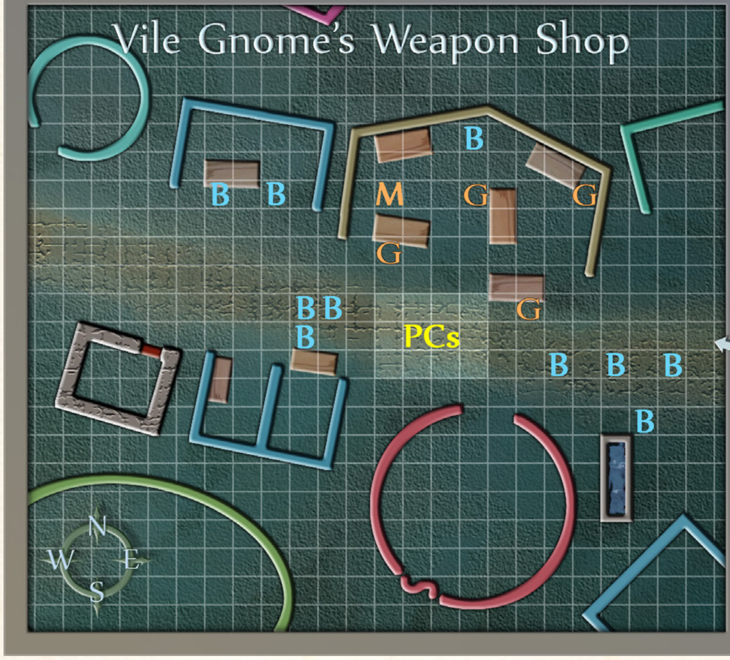
After the Birch Queen's Contest, music permeates the fair, audible throughout the area from morning until night. Ambertan the Shadow Fey Warlock enchanted the queen's





Hill Top
The Hall
The Hall and Hill of Revels





Vile Gnome's Weapon Shop

M = Mudflick
G = Gnome
B = Bystander
Horse Water Trough ➡ ▯

One Square = 5 Feet

DESIGNER'S NOTE: MEASURING SUCCESS

The temptation may be to add a small element of mystery by recording skill challenge successes and failures behind the DM screen. However, you may have better results by making it clear how the party is doing. Consider marking their successes somewhere in plain view with tally marks.

musicians, and those who hear them are subject to the effects of a *suggestion* spell (DC 15), which lasts until the fair ends in three days, encouraging them to dance. Elves, gnomes, and half-elves gain advantage to their Wisdom saving throw for this effect.

Those who are hit are compelled to dance, cannot sit, and cannot take either a short or long rest until the music stops. And the music stops only when Ambertan says it stops or when the Birch Queen's revels end. After two hours, and every additional two hours thereafter, a dancer must succeed on a Constitution saving throw. The DC begins at 15 and increases by 2 with every subsequent check. Each time a character fails the check, she gains a level of exhaustion, which cannot be removed by normal rest; only a *lesser restoration* spell removes the condition.

THE DWARF TOSS

How about a dwarf toss? The fey offer a competition: One contestant among the PCs tries to toss a fey dwarf into the circle and win a prize. Afterward, the dwarf gets to return the favor to the PC contestant. That's it—until the local dwarf-tossing champion shows up.

The fey "dwarf" is Urdan the Runt, an unnaturally short stone giant (he is a mere 12 feet tall). Throwing him takes a DC 25 Strength (Athletics) check. Once the PC contestant tries to toss Urdan, the giant gets to take a turn with that character, tossing the PC for a distance equal to three times the result of his DC 5 Strength (Athletics) check and doing 1d6 damage for every ten feet tossed. The fey find this quite amusing.

THE GNOMISH ACROBATS

Three sisters named Froggy, Flopsy, and Jumper work together as an acrobatic and balancing act, with a bit of thievery on the side. They attempt to entertain for a few coins. One usually climbs up the tallest member of the party to stand on his shoulders for the "leap of death!" finale. This is a distraction for a pickpocket attempt (+5 Dexterity [Sleight of Hand] to steal something, opposed by Wisdom (Perception) to notice). If they are caught, they can attack individually (as 3rd-level rogues) or jump on each other's shoulders to form one larger creature (as a bugbear). They might also choose to run, darting in three directions shouting for their brothers.

LOST DOG

A small elf child is looking for his pup, Bouncer. The PCs must search around to find it. When they locate it, it isn't what they expect; it is a three-headed basilisk. It doesn't want to go along quietly (maybe it found a nice snack) and the party has to subdue it first. They'll be in big trouble with the child's mother (a lady-in-waiting for the Birch Queen) if they accidentally kill it.

THE PIG WITH WINGS

At the edge of the fair, a few sprites are working magic on a winged pig, striving to break a spell. The pig is Vilaine, a sprite who played a prank on the time-mage Orelliar, and the prank did not go over well. She is now trapped in the form of a pig with wings.

To complicate matters, Vilaine cannot move far from where she has been bewitched. Cruel goblins have turned the site to mud and thrown scraps and garbage around.

Vilaine's friends are wasting their time. The wording of the spell is such that only a non-fey could break it; sidhe, elves, and gnomes are all forbidden from interfering, and bugbears and goblins all seem to find it too amusing to see a sprite so humbled. Any PC who makes a DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check knows that touching the sprite/pig with cold iron returns her to her normal shape.

Vilaine tries to make sure anyone doing so expects nothing in return. If the PCs haggle a bit, she confesses that she owes someone who broke the spell a debt. Vilaine offers to guide the party around the fair for a day, answering six questions starting with either "who," "where," or "what." She's a remarkably shallow and flighty creature, and there are limits to what she knows.

THE PUPPET SHOW

A group of gnomes puts on a puppet show telling a tale of entering another world through a non-descript lake—a world of round-eared creatures that live like mayflies.

THE RETURNING STONE

The gnomish jeweler Glirrim asks the PCs to deliver a seemingly worthless green stone to another local jeweler, Tidril. After delivering the stone they find they still have it and can't get rid of it. Both Glirrim and the jeweler want to be paid for their loss. They ask for services they know the party cannot perform, such as defeating the Boxer or leaving the fair.

THE ETTIN AT THE GATE

XP Threshold: 3,900

The ettin's two heads are named Garag and Nagan.

An ettin lounges on an enormous stone, and the stink of sweat, blood, and wet dirt hangs heavy in the air around him. A filthy bag made from a whole shaggy ox hide sits at his feet. He holds a leg of beef in one hand and a tree-trunk club in the other. At least a dozen swords, axes, and spearheads hammered into the wood give it wicked spikes. If the party approaches, read the following:

……

The head on the left tears a rough bite from the leg of beef, chewing it slowly as the right head squints at you.

"Nagan," the right head says, "these whelps think they can just walk into the Lady's Fair."

The head on the left digs a piece of gristle from between two big fangs. "No one just walks into the Birch Queen's Fair, Garag."

The head on the right spits on the dusty path leading into the clearing, "You hear him, meat? No one just walks in; you pay or you leave." A small crowd starts to gather at a safe distance around you.

……

COMPLEX SKILL CHALLENGE: THROUGH THE GATE

This skill challenge covers an attempt to enter the largest fey market in this region. It may take a short period of time as the ettin and characters banter, or it may require a small expedition for some item to secure safe passage from Garag-Nagan.

For the ettin to allow the party through, they need to convince him or trick him into allowing them to pass. Alternatively, they could simply purchase their entrance for 100 gp per character. The odds of a successful fight are possible, but success imposes disadvantage to Charisma (Persuasion) checks with the Birch Queen later, as they have killed her gate guard.

If the PCs elect to try to talk with Garag-Nagan, this check requires 6 successes before 3 failures. After 3 successes, one of the ettin's heads begins to argue with the other head to let the party in. Giving the ettin the invitation from the Frog Riders provides one success without a roll.

OPTIONAL BONUSES:

The PCs can gain advantage on one skill check for any of the following:

Talking to the ettin in Giant

A successful DC 7 Intelligence (Gather Information) check to ask the crowd about the ettin before starting

Offering the ettin wine when they begin to negotiate

PRIMARY SKILLS: Charisma (Deception), Charisma (Intimidation), Charisma (Persuasion)

CHARISMA (DECEPTION) DC 12: Party members can try to encourage the ettin to allow entry using false pretenses. A second character can help, granting advantage on this skill.

CHARISMA (INTIMIDATION) DC 12: The heroes can attempt to bully the ettin with bravado and force him to allow them entry. The first success with this skill grants advantage on the next Charisma (Persuasion) or Charisma (Deception) check and reveals that any further use of the Intimidate skill earns a failure.

CHARISMA (PERSUASION) DC 7: The PCs can simply ask the ettin to allow them into the fair.

CONSTITUTION SAVING THROW DC 17: No success or failure in the challenge. However, if a PC challenges the ettin to drink some more and makes a successful saving throw to keep up, all characters gain advantage on future Charisma (Deception) attempts.

DEXTERITY (STEALTH) DC 12: The ettin has four excellent eyes, and he simply places his tree trunk to stop anyone sneaking past him. A success means that PC slips through, but that PC can no longer make checks to help the rest of the party. Failure means the ettin raps the PC on the head for 17 damage with his club and pushes the PC 3 squares away from the gate. This counts as a failure and annoys the ettin.

INTELLIGENCE (ARCANA) DC 12: This check allows a character to remember proper fey and giant customs to haggle for entry. The ettin has basic tastes for food, sweets, and drink.

WISDOM (PERCEPTION) DC 7: This check grants no success or failure in the challenge, but the first success means the PC notices a feywine amphora beneath the oxhide sack and gains advantage on future Charisma (Deception) attempts.

SUCCESS

The ettin agrees to allow the characters entry. If Charisma (Deception) and Charisma (Persuasion) were used more than four times, the ettin insists they bring him back an amphora of feywine from Ambertan the Warlock. (Until they do, he doesn't let them out of the fair.) As they pass, Garag-Nagan mutters something about "freeloaders."

If the PCs succeed at this complex skill check, grant them each 600 XP.

FAILURE

Nothing the PCs do allows them through without a price. The characters are forced to pay 100 gp per character, go elsewhere, or find someone to sponsor them (for a price not paid in coin). The ettin marks them as rubes and fair game for future harassment.

GARAG-NAGAN

Large giant, neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 15 (patchwork armor)

HIT POINTS 138 (12d12 + 60)

SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	9 (−1)	21 (+5)	9 (−1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

SAVING THROWS Con +8, Wis +3, Cha +4

SKILLS Athletics +9, Perception +3

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES Giant, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 8 (3,900 XP)

Actions

Multiattack. Garag-Nagan makes two club attacks.

Greatclub. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 25 (3d12 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

THE MAGES AND MERCHANTS

This is a pure roleplaying encounter that may result in one or more quests. The sidhe at the fair are the majority, but other merchants—mostly gnomes, goblins, and Shadow Fey—sell their wares here as well.

VOYLAND THE SMITH

A set of four iron posts holds up a roof of slate shingles, and in the center of this shop is a blazing forge. Standing over it is a silver-haired sidhe stripped to the waist and singing to the sword he works while swinging a glowing blue hammer.

Always covered in soot and sweat, Voyland is not a typical sidhe but instead a hard-working smith capable of the finest metalwork. His patterns and magic have won him many noble customers. He also has friends at the River Court who often give him gifts of items that fall into the river. He doesn't ask where they come from.

If the party wants one of his items, he is happy to haggle. Use opposed Charisma (Persuasion) for haggling, but note that coin is not useful here. Voyland wants items in exchange or help running off his sleazy rival, the gnome enchanter Mudflick. He quite openly asks the party to lean on the

gnomes, threaten them, or chase them off. If the party gets the gnomes out of the fair, he cuts them a deal on the trade.

If the PCs chase the gnomes out of the fair, award each member of the party 500 XP.

AMBERTAN, SHADOW FEY WARLOCK

The tent ahead is shadowy and made of black silk shot through with silver. At the door, a spiral-bearded gnome with curly shoes says the following:

> "Enter my master's tent and learn things that only the ancient forests whisper. Enter and hear the gnarled voices of the Summer Lands answer all your questions, honored heroes." The tent smells of earth and mushrooms, of the forest after rain. A chill fog seems to drift from the walls of black silk.

The Shadow Fey warlock Ambertan is a rotten apple, but he possesses knowledge the party needs. To learn it, the party must accept his badge of service to the Wicked Queen Nimurae. If they refuse, he strikes some other bargain (see Memories of Times Past, page 34), though he demands a great deal for his information. He can learn four main things of interest from the dark, gnarled, earthen voices of deep-rooted trees that speak to him through his fey pact, as follows:

- The whereabouts of Ellessandra (with Le Nain Rouge or the dragon Tatzel)
- The intentions of Lord Flax (on a road, coming to the fair soon)
- The current situation at the River Court (agitated and warlike)
- Where to learn how to return to the mortal world (from the dragon Tatzel, though the fey roads might lead back to the mortal world as well if a mage were clever enough)

Ambertan wants to make sure the efforts of the River King to gather an army and march on Riverbend are not derailed by these mortals. As a result, he seeks to trick the party members into accepting his badge of service in exchange for a magical item or an audience with their own souls (see below). Ambertan's full stats are on page 63.

AUDIENCE WITH ONE'S OWN SOUL

Ambertan offers each PC "a few minutes alone with your soul." He says, "You will meet your true self . . . but will you like what you see?"

Treat this experience like a *contact other plane* spell. The soul can only know things the character has actually experienced but may make connections she hasn't or remind her of things forgotten. It may also have other opinions to share.

MAGIC ITEMS

He offers several things, including *boots of elvenkind*, a *+1 mithral chain shirt* or *+1 breastplate*, and an invitation to the River Court. Once two or more PCs accept his badge and swear loyalty, he is content.

OTHER ITEMS

Even if the party does not accept his badge, Ambertan has a few things to sell. In particular, he's keen to unload a small wooden box. If they ask to see what it contains, he lifts the lid just a crack and whispers, "darkness." The true contents is an enchanted shadow that functions like the spell *darkness*, centered on the box, except the area affected is a 60-foot-radius sphere. This is a one-use item worth 500 gp.

THE WOLF RHORLIEF AND HIS WARES

A 9-foot-tall wolf-like humanoid named Rhorlief sits cross-legged on the grass beneath a maple tree, with many scrolls laid out before him on a roughly-woven cloth. Rhorlief is always looking for arcane components and knows many strange fireside tales. But he's not entirely friendly.

The half-wolf has a scraggly goat-like beard hanging from his chin; he wears a battered brown vest with a hood that covers his pointy ears. Charms and fetishes made of feathers and the skulls of tiny woodland creatures hang from his clothes. A ragged, gnarly staff lies across his lap.

If the party approaches him, the wolf speaks in Elven and Common and asks to exchange one scroll for another. The difficulty of bargaining with Rhorlief is that he's driven by a need to come out ahead. He offers a number of useful spells (pick a few to suit the needs of the party), but his most useful asset is a scroll that describes how to activate the portals and use the fey roads. For the party to gain any of these, though—and especially for the fey roads—Rhorlief wants flesh and memories and bones.

Rhorlief drives an extremely hard, sly bargain. He'll say that he would like all the food the party is carrying (and if they agree, he takes it but offers nothing in return—he did only say that he would like it, not trade for it). He mentions that he will give the party a commodity in exchange for their wisest priest's curing touch, and then if they agree, take that ability away from the character as the price of the magic (rather than, say, him being the recipient of a curing touch, as some might assume—the character loses all spell slots for the remainder of the day, for example, or perhaps the knowledge of any curative magic until some kind of atonement is made to the character's deity; be creative in how this transpires).

If the party grows suspicious, he offers another deal. In exchange for the wizard's memories of his master (or the fighter's instincts, the paladin's courage, the cleric's patience, or the rogue's trickery—use an abstraction that works for the character he is bargaining with), he will give the PCs what they want: the secret to activating the fey portals and traveling the fey roads. If a PC agrees to these terms, he does lose those memories and suffers disadvantage to all attack rolls, skill checks, saving throws, and ability checks. This fey penalty fades after the PC completes the equivalent of two hard encounters.

Finally, Rhorlief asks for their archer's eyesight and promises to return it (if asked when, he says after the Birch Queen's consort is chosen). The archer gains the blinded condition, but the wolf does not return. Healing the archer requires a standard *cure wounds* spell and the archer suffers disadvantage to ranged attacks until he completes two long rests.

ORELLIAR, THE MAGE OF TIME

When the characters approach this vendor tent, read:

> "Buy a moment!" the sidhe mage in his purple robe cries. "A trice, an instant, all for sale! A lucky break, sir? A pivotal hour? I have six fateful seconds on special offer! Or perhaps sir would be interested in a happily-ever-after at the River Court, a wedding like no other . . . I've just one left in stock."

If a PC expresses an interest in buying his wares, the mage says the following:

> "Gold, sir? Oh no, I don't accept gold; only barter, moment for moment. What do you have to offer me? A past glory, a dragonslaying, perhaps? Impress me, mortal heroes!"

This is the sidhe wizard Orelliar, and he claims to sell time. Not extra time, but memorable and worthwhile moments. The cost is simple: a moment to come the buyer gives up. (The mechanics of this are explained in the Fey Trade and Barter section on page 34.) He especially favors Memories of Times Past and Future Moment of Success trades.

WICKERBELL'S WEDDING DAY

Orelliar has one moment in particular the party may later wish to purchase: the wedding of Lady Wickerbell and the Lord Apicus in the Great Rippling Hall at the River Court. The memory itself is nice enough: a set of vows in Elven, overseen by the River King and attended by a wide range of

TRODDING THE FEY ROADS

In order to travel the fey roads, the heroes must create a shortcut through the fey planes, linking fey portals—the origin and destination points—with one another. These are always teleportation sites, typically a hollow tree, a door in a hillside, or standing stones on a hilltop. Most of them are well-known among the fey. Sidhe, elves and other creatures with fey blood gain advantage to their Intelligence (Arcana) checks when opening the fey roads. The magic is a part of the portals themselves, so the ceremony must be conducted there.

As part of the magical process, the characters wishing to use the fey roads must offer the proper gifts to the fey lords and ladies who own the road; this toll must come in the form of items of worked silver and gold and must be worth at least 500 gp. The magic needed to actually activate the portal requires an hour to complete, needs pinches of mandrake, aconite, and other herbs that must be burnt, and a silver dagger that serves as a focus.

At the completion of the hour-long ceremony, the character attempting to activate the portal makes an Intelligence (Arcana) check (those with fey blood, including elves, gnomes, half-elves, and elfmarked, may substitute Intelligence [Nature]). The result determines the duration the fey road remains open, as indicated on Table 4–1.

BACKLASH

After the ceremony, the character activating the portal suffers a level of exhaustion.

FAILURE

Failing two consecutive attempts in a single day disturbs the planar boundary. The PC attempting to open the portal suffers 7 (2d6) damage and the veil between worlds becomes turbulent and cannot be reopened until a day has passed or a fey creature opens the portal from the other side.

TABLE 4–1: DURATION

INTELLIGENCE (ARCANA) CHECK

RESULT	PORTAL DURATION
10 or lower	Failure
11–15	1 Minute
16–20	2 Minutes
21+	3 Minutes

While the portal is open, any creature that enters the fey door appears at the other location 1d4 hours later, along with anything the creature holds or carries. If the creature travels with several others, they all arrive in the same round and in the same sequence that they entered the road.

The destination of a fey road is always set when the ceremony to open the portal is begun; the destination can be changed en route only with effort. Those with fey blood can choose to change the destination of a fey road; attempting to do so requires a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check made with disadvantage. The fey creature must have visited the new fey door before, not merely heard of it (a bartered memory is also sufficient). Any number of creatures of any size can use an open road; the only limitation is the number that can reach the door before it disappears again. Certain fey roads are guarded; others lead in only one direction. Often, anyone standing in the vicinity of either end of the portal sees a foggy road through a forest but no hints of the destination; this may be different depending on the location of the door. Environmental effects at one end of the road don't affect the other end.

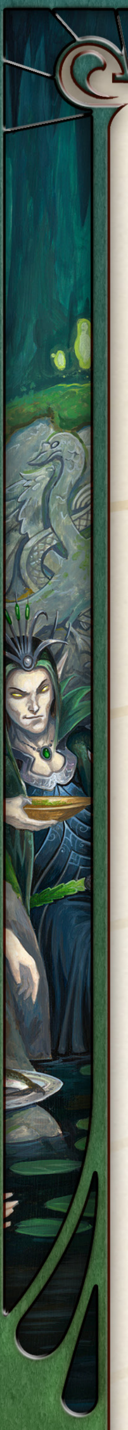
THE FEY ROADS

PCs can make Intelligence (Arcana) checks to determine how much they might already know about fey roads, as indicated on Table 4–2.

TABLE 4–2: FEY ROAD LORE

INTELLIGENCE (ARCANA) CHECK

DC	RESULT
5 or lower	You really don't know how fey roads work.
6–10	Fey roads connect two points through magical travel. The two points are always set in advance, and the doors to them are never open long.
11–15	The entrances to fey roads are usually portals: doors in a hillside, hollow trees, standing stones, caves, hedge mazes, or the like.
26–20	The destination of a fey road can be changed, most often by the fey themselves, but also by anyone who has visited the destination and has some mastery of the arcane.
21+	Some fey roads are guarded, and others lead only in one direction.



sidhe knights and ladies, tricksy gnomes in loud clothes and ludicrous hats, a somber delegation of Shadow Fey, an ogre huntsman, talking frogs and bears, and a dozen beautiful singing lorelei leading the processional music. The bride, a bee fey clearly loved by the courtiers around her, arrives through the fey road under the Queen's table at the fair (see page 32).

That vision of the fey road is enough for an arcanist to establish a link through the fey roads to the River Court and use the fey river road. Orelliar is rather fond of this particular memory, as it is courtly, full of the arcane, and exactly what uninvited lesser fey pay top dollar for. He asks for three temporary Gifts of Mind and Body or three other memories for this one. He has no use for Gifts of Learning, as he is quite content with his own skills.

THE VILE GNOMES

XP Threshold: 1,200

This gang of gnomes bothers the weak and preys on the helpless because of the evil streak of its leader, the vile gnome enchanter Mudflick. He and his four brothers run a "resale" weapons shop where they sell items lost and found in the Rushing River, items stolen from mugging victims, items confiscated by the gate ettin, and items being fenced for various thieves and scoundrels.

While the party may find the brothers in their tent, the gnomes also roam the fair, assaulting the weak and defending others. For instance, they may lean on the party to tip the gnomish acrobats more heavily (see the Events at the Fair section on page 34).

If the PCs come across the gnomes in their tent, read or paraphrase the following:

> The canvas tent is full of weapons and gnomes: their leader seems to be a fellow with a triple-curled mustache and a salesman's patter. "We have it all! Magical greatswords, bastard swords, giant swords, longspears, mithral elven arrows, and even fire-charmed poleaxes and halberds. You'll never see a collection of quality cutlery like this anywhere else. All for sale, for trade, for you to take home! The finest gnomish quality. What can I interest you in?"

If the party expresses no interest in buying, the gnome says,

> "Well, move along, before I ask my four brothers to move you! You're taking up valuable space in our tent."

Mudflick harasses the party to leave his shop, complaining that his four brothers won't let people "finger the merchandise" and "clog up the aisle for paying customers."

A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the weapons here all shimmer strangely, and a *detect magic* spell reveals all manners and strengths of magic auras. Some of the weapons are mithral, others are clearly alloys of adamantine or strange greenish metals. The PCs have never seen quite so many all in one place. A further successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check indicates the enchantments on these weapons all seem . . . temporary. The "magical" swords here trade for a lot less than Voyland's goods and most of them are junk. Their magic fades in a few days, typically after a single encounter.

Mudflick always uses his aura plus natural stealth to escape notice at the start of combat.

MUDFLICK "THE FOUL"

Small humanoid (fey, gnome), chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 14 (padded leather)

HIT POINTS 33 (6d6 +12)

SPEED 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

SKILLS Deception +5, Perception +2, Sleight of Hand +4

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

LANGUAGES Common, Elven, Gnomish, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 1 (200 XP)

Special Equipment. Mudflick's personal valuables consist of a *mithral-tipped spear +1, bracers of defense*, a *potion of hill giant strength*, 2 scrolls of *cure wounds*, a collection of exotic, mummified pixie-heads, and 28 gp in random coin.

Gnome Cunning. Mudflick has advantage on all Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma saving throws against magic.

Innate Spellcasting. Mudflick's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma. He can cast the following spells innately, requiring no material components:

At will: *mage hand, speak with animals*

3/day: *hideous laughter, magic missile, shield*

1/day: *entangle, invisibility*

ACTIONS

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, or 7 (1d8 + 2) if used with both hands in a melee attack.

MUDFLICK'S BROTHERS (4)

Small humanoid (gnome), chaotic neutral

ARMOR CLASS 15 (chain shirt)

HIT POINTS 16 (3d6 + 6)

SPEED 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	8 (–1)	8 (–1)	8 (–1)

SKILLS Athletics +4, Perception +2, Stealth +4

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

LANGUAGES Sylvan, Gnomish

CHALLENGE 1/2 (100 XP)

Gnome Cunning. Mudflick's four "enforcers" have advantage on all Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma saving throws against magic.

ACTIONS

Thicker than Water. Any time one of the brothers is killed or incapacitated within sight of another, all remaining siblings converge in a berserk rage upon the responsible individual, making all attack rolls against that target with advantage for 3 (1d4 + 1) rounds.

+1 Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage. Like all the "enchanted" weapons here, the magic fades after 1–2 days.

Treasure: The gnomes' goods include all types of +1 magical weapons: daggers, swords, axes, etc. These are all temporary enchantments that fade in a few days.

If the party attempts to loot the shop, the Birch Queen herself stops by and asks what they are doing, exactly. "If mayhem is the order of the day, then you should join my army as mercenaries. In the meantime, I am commandeering this armory."

Any PC may retain one or more weapons they find with a successful DC 17 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check.

Development: The gnomes pursue the party around the fair and report any suspicious activity to the queen, Sir Arnovar, or the centaur archer.

DM NOTE

Mudflick sells everything here as if it's a permanent magic item unless a player figures out his ruse, either with the successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check described above or a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check. Then he haggles.

THE QUEEN'S CONSORT

In a large open field, archers are stringing their bows and heralds are taking down the names of contestants. One herald nearby is a young bugbear who cries out, "The Birch Queen's consort will be chosen from among the challengers! Enter your name now for a shot at fame and glory!" A crowd gathers on a grassy hillside to watch. The contest is indeed to win the Birch Queen's favor and a title in her court for the coming year.

If the PCs inquire for details, a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Gather Information) roll reveals the information. The contest begins immediately, and all contestants must show skill in archery. Those who do well may then amuse the queen in their preferred fashion (riddling, declaiming poetry, storytelling, acrobatics, even throwing logs or expounding on Intelligence [Arcana], Intelligence [History], or Intelligence [Nature]). The two or three best of the entertainers may then meet the queen at the High Table at the top of Lords and Ladies Mount and prove themselves worthy in discussion with other finalists and the queen herself.

This represents a ritual for abundant crops and general prosperity. The law of the land states anybody can participate. If a corrupted or power-mad creature wins, the queen need not grant him more than the honorary title. However, if an evil or ambitious creature can hide its evil, her kingdom may suffer at the consort's whims.

THE CONTESTANTS

Fully 41 competitors attempt to win the title, not including the PCs. They include 12 elves, 12 sidhe, 2 goblins, 6 bugbears, 4 quicklings, 3 gnomes, 1 centaur, and 1 ettercap. The majority are just out for a lark, but several are experts. If one of the hunting bugbears survived early on, he is here as an expert shot. Likewise, the Green Knight Oberest may be here, and certainly the Eagle Knight, Sir Arnovar, is here.

ROUND 1: ARCHERY

The archery contest is straightforward; competitors must make three ranged attack rolls (use of any magic is not allowed, although bonuses from feats and other nonmagical abilities are acceptable). Any total over 55 automatically moves that PC into the next round. Any total over 45 is pretty good but does not impress the crowd at this level of competition. Any roll of 1 means the PC missed a shot completely, disqualifying her from the remainder of the contest. This is why elves do so well in this contest.

The archery rolls can be stretched out a little by rolling them one at a time for each round, and describe whose shots hit. The rolls for the rivals are listed below, and the top six advance.

OIGLAS THE HEALER: The centaur's bow is fully 7 feet tall and shoots through the target and the hut behind it. He shoots a 27, 23, and 18, for a total of 68.

SIR YNGRESS THE RED: The young sidhe in red shoots a 17, 24, and 21, for a total of 62.

HARROWDIN THE SHADOW FEY: A black-bearded, black-garbed hunter, Harrowdin shoots a 20, 20, and 21, for a total of 61.

STUMBLEGRIN THE POACHER: A leafy bugbear with a ragged cloak, Stumblegrin shoots a 19, 28, and 13, for a total of 60.

SIR ARNOVAR: The knight in the blue cloak shoots white-feathered arrows and scores a 22, 16, and 19, for a total of 57.

MUDFLICK THE GNOME: The vile gnome uses a heavily enchanted bow to shoot an 18, 17, and 17, for a total of 52.

The items the PCs lost to the Rushing River or the enchantress and her courtiers may be given out among the prizes.

SABOTAGING YOUR RIVALS

At the DM's discretion, the party members can cheer on their companion, or offer reminders to stay calm and focused, and give assistance in the contest, granting advantage on the PC's archery shots. They may also similarly attempt to affect the other competitors through heckling. The heralds of the Birch Queen frown on this sort of behavior, so doing it once gets the PCs a warning. Doing it twice gets them thrown out of the contest. A third infraction results in the contestants being exiled from the fair, spending a year as a statue, or even being mute for a month.

On the other hand, cheering and jeering during the entertainment portion is expected and acceptable. Other champions have a cheering section. Anyone using Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Nature) can make an opposed roll when a fey champion strives to impress. If the PC rolls higher than the champion, he notices a flaw and may point it out in whatever terms he likes (or keep it to himself). Doing so reduces the champion's result by 2.

Calling a fey champion on his mistake makes the interrupting PC that champion's nemesis; he stares the character down and makes it clear there will be a reckoning later.

ROUND 2: ENTERTAINMENT

The six competitors who advance from the prior round must show their skill as entertainers before the crowd. The PCs should be encouraged to roleplay this encounter heavily, and the GM should reward particularly creative ideas. Each participating PC must roll one of the following skills:

AVAILABLE SKILLS: Charisma (Deception), Charisma (Perform), Dexterity (Acrobatics), Intelligence (Arcana), Intelligence (History), or Intelligence (Nature). The queen favors Intelligence (Nature) and Intelligence (Arcana) in particular, and those choosing that route gain advantage on their roll.

SUCCESS: The highest three rolls win. The centaur Oiglas has a result of 20 for Intelligence (Nature), Sir Arnovar has a 25 in Charisma (Perform) for his poetry, and even little Mudflick the gnome has a 21 for Intelligence (Arcana). Harrowdin the Shadow Fey manages a set of rather grim anecdotes for a 14 in Intelligence (History). Stumblegrin tries Dexterity (Acrobatics) and fails to impress with a 7. Young Yngress attempts a Charisma (Perform) check to speak of nature and the hunt in a bit of storytelling and the whole thing falls completely flat (he rolled a 1).

ROUND 3: AN AUDIENCE

The queen summons two or three contestants to her table. If the PCs flubbed out, Sir Arnovar wins the day and the title.

THE CONSORT: The Birch Queen's consort is expected to sit with her at that night's revel and to keep the queen amused, safe, and happy during the remainder of the fair. The consort then attends her morning and night and brings her such gifts as he or she can. Annoying or ignoring the queen is a bad idea, and may quickly lead to the consort's dismissal. A PC who becomes the queen's consort earns 2,000 XP for the party and can take the title of Birch Queen's Consort and Champion of the Summer Fair.

Consummation of the marriage is optional and involves its own complications. The Queen may not want her new lover to leave the fair, in which case she uses the dancing music to seal the exit. If this happens, the only way out is by using the fey road door at the top of Lords and Ladies Mount. The consort is free to come and go (unless the queen bars his or her travel), as are those who wear a token of the Lords and Ladies, such as the badge from the wizard Ambertan (see page 38) or Lady Sorreminx (page 29). For those using *Midgard Campaign Setting* rules for Status, the consort gains a +9 to Status among the Fey Courts, the Shadow Fey Court, the Duchy of Bourgund, the Grand Duchy of Dornig, and any other locale with close ties to the court of the Beloved Imperatrix. In other places, this equates to a +4 bonus in Status; no one wants to be the person who killed a fey queen's consort.

THE QUEEN'S TOKEN: Made of red and yellow gold in the shape of a birch leaf, this broach for a cloak is equivalent to a *periapt of health* for anyone who wins it.

EXILED: Those who gain an audience with the Queen but cannot manage a DC 5 Charisma (Persuasion) check are asked to leave the Birch Queen's lands until next year.

THE MILLER'S BRIDE VISITS

This encounter with Ellessandra is entirely a roleplaying affair. If the party attacks Ellessandra, her first action is to take a fey leap and run.

Run this encounter at night, perhaps after one of the Queen's Revels, when darkness and mystery make it easier for Ellessandra to approach the party. It may also begin in Riverbend itself after a great success with the complex skill check described in the Miller's Child section (see page 12).

NAIN ROUGE CHANGES

If the PCs have not met Ellessandra with Le Nain Rouge, do not run that encounter in the future and leave out the reference to that encounter below. Begin by reading the following:

> It is a starry night, with a gentle breeze and the sound of leaves rustling in the woods. Someone speaks in lightly accented Common, saying: "I come as a messenger from the Summer Lands. Can you swear that I will have safe passage and hospitality among you?"

Ellessandra is deeply worried. Her son's ambition and cold calculation disturb her. Assuming the PCs are not complete bloodthirsty fools, read the following:

> A sidhe woman with silver hair and wearing a purple cloak steps out of the darkness and says, "My name is Ellessandra and I was Froderick's wife; you and I met when Le Nain Rouge's storms battered the land. Since then, things have gotten worse. I will not return to Froderick, and it would be best if he stopped looking for me."

Let the PCs react and then continue:

> "The River King is angry that Froderick fails to make his offerings. He will steal away a few human children into the Summer Lands, but they will be cared for here. Do not interfere, or things will grow worse."

She thinks the party are diplomats sent to sue for peace. In any case, she wants the party to take a message of caution back to the human villagers and offers to explain the price and methods of the sacrifices required.

If the party asks Ellessandra how things could get worse, she mentions the River King could raid the village of Riverbend and burn it down unless blood offerings are made and the ancient miller's pact is restored. She seems genuinely surprised if the party finds this unacceptable, as it is the way things are done among the fey. The price might be exacted soon or in years to come.

The lands of Riverbend, she says, will become new lands of the Summer Lands if the River King's price is not paid. Surely Froderick knows this and has told the reeve of the danger? She doesn't know that Froderick has continued to keep this secret.

Froderick, doomed to die in a few days' time, has warned the Reeve Koyla of nothing. Though as the day approaches, he might do so in desperation. Right now, he does not want to admit to the pact he has sworn with the fey, for that would only make him guiltier in the eyes of the villagers.

THE RAID RECRUITER

This roleplaying encounter can either occur at the fair to wrap up this chapter of the adventure, or it can happen after the PCs adventure some in the woods and on the fey roads.

Years have passed in the Summer Lands for young Flax, who has grown into a half-elf and a man. Jenny Greenteeth convinced the young half-breed that he can earn respect from the fey. When the PCs face this encounter, read or paraphrase the following:

> A rider in pale blue armor on a gray steed clatters through the gates of the fair with two bugbear hunters running behind him. He pulls up when he sees creatures that are not of the Summer Lands. "You do not belong here!" he says. "I am done with your kind, and your mud huts will soon be carried downstream. Your lives are nothing but pebbles in the water. Do not try to stop me."

Lord Flax clearly commands the PCs not to interfere, but he also counts on the fair's protection. He doesn't want a fight or duel at this point. The PCs are not a worry since he has won the sympathy of many of the fey and the patronage of their lords and ladies. If the party attacks, he simply fey leaps away. The Birch Queen's guards ask the PCs to leave (the charge is "assault on a lord or lady"). If the party members are smart, they will challenge Flax to a duel, which he declines out of fear (reducing his status in the eyes of the fey).

If the PCs don't chase Lord Flax off with violence, things are worse in some ways. The half-elf speaks to the gathered elves, sidhe, gnomes, and goblins:

> "Those who wish new lands for themselves and glory for their names should follow me! I am rightful lord of Riverbend," Flax says. "Those who follow me shall have land, titles, and slaves from among the mortal folk, and they shall no longer drive us into the forest shadows. Take service in my raiders and ride to glory!"

His bugbears pick up the offer, shouting the following:

> "Land and flour and the blessings of the River King on anyone who signs on with Lord Flax! We seek strong arms and stout hearts to seize his rightful claim to Riverbend! Sign up tonight and ride with us for the King's Blessing tomorrow."

A mercenary company of Shadow Fey steps forward to take Flax's coin, and the warlock Ambertan stands at the head of the company. Unless the party outwitted Lord Flax by offering a challenge that he declined, the young lord's offer is the talk of the fair.

The word goes out to the goblins, ogres, and quicklings that there's money to be had and blood to spill in the service of Lord Flax. The drums beat through the night. Come morning, the Birch Queen declares the fair closed for the season. The fey prepare for war, and Lord Flax goes to press his case as rightful lord of Riverbend. If the PCs ask, it's quite clear: the young lord goes to King Ulorian, the River King, who can grant him permission to raid Riverbend and burn it down.

PCS AS MERCENARIES

The PCs are welcome to take Lord Flax's offer and sign their swords to his service, so long as they have not already taken service with anyone else (such as Ambertan the Warlock, as consort to the Birch Queen, a favor from Lady Sorreminx, or even a scale from the Dragon Tatzel).

Taking service means the character gets a blue flower badge to wear (flax, of course), and the promise of land and gold if the raid against Riverbend goes well. The character is expected to march with Lord Flax's company in the morning to the River Court.

A character who has sworn service to a fey may not attack that fey lord or lady unless he or she makes a successful Wisdom saving throw (DC = 10 + the creature's CR + creature's Charisma bonus). Breaking an oath of service in the Summer Lands is a free action that means the PC verbally denounces her sworn word. The character is then stunned for 2 rounds. Rolling a critical failure when denouncing a sworn oath (a natural roll of 1) means the oathbreaker is incapacitated for 1 day per character level or until she receives a *lesser restoration*.

Breaking an oath like this means other fey view the character as shifty and suspect; all Charisma (Deception) and Charisma (Persuasion) checks suffer disadvantage while the character is in the Summer Lands. He gains the epithet "Oathbreaker" and suffers a –4 penalty to Status among the Fey and Shadow Fey Courts.

CHAPTER 5: THE DEEPER WOODS AND THE FEY ROADS

After the party has had some time to wander (or has been to the Birch Queen's Fair), they may seek out the dragon Tatzel, who knows the secret to returning to the mortal world. The dragon may also be a fierce encounter if the party displays a lot of wealth.

These encounters should not be used before the party reaches 6th level and ideally not before at least one character reaches 7th level. One easy way to make this work is to hide these locations off the straight road or to manipulate the path. The PCs get there when you say they get there or when they get the help of some fey creature (likely a sidhe or Ambertan at the Birch Queen's Fair).

THE DRAGON'S CLEARING

XP Threshold: 4,800

The green dragon Tatzel lives in this roughly oval clearing, using it both as running room to take flight and as a landing area when heavily burdened with cattle or other prey.

The dragon is in the hollow oak during the night and chews bones during the day. It wakes up each morning ravenous and tends to eat PCs who linger nearby.

The clearing is dappled with sunlight, but all around it the woods are still, deep, and dark. A rising fog obscures sight (see below). Not a single bird sings. The wind has stopped.

The following are features of this area.

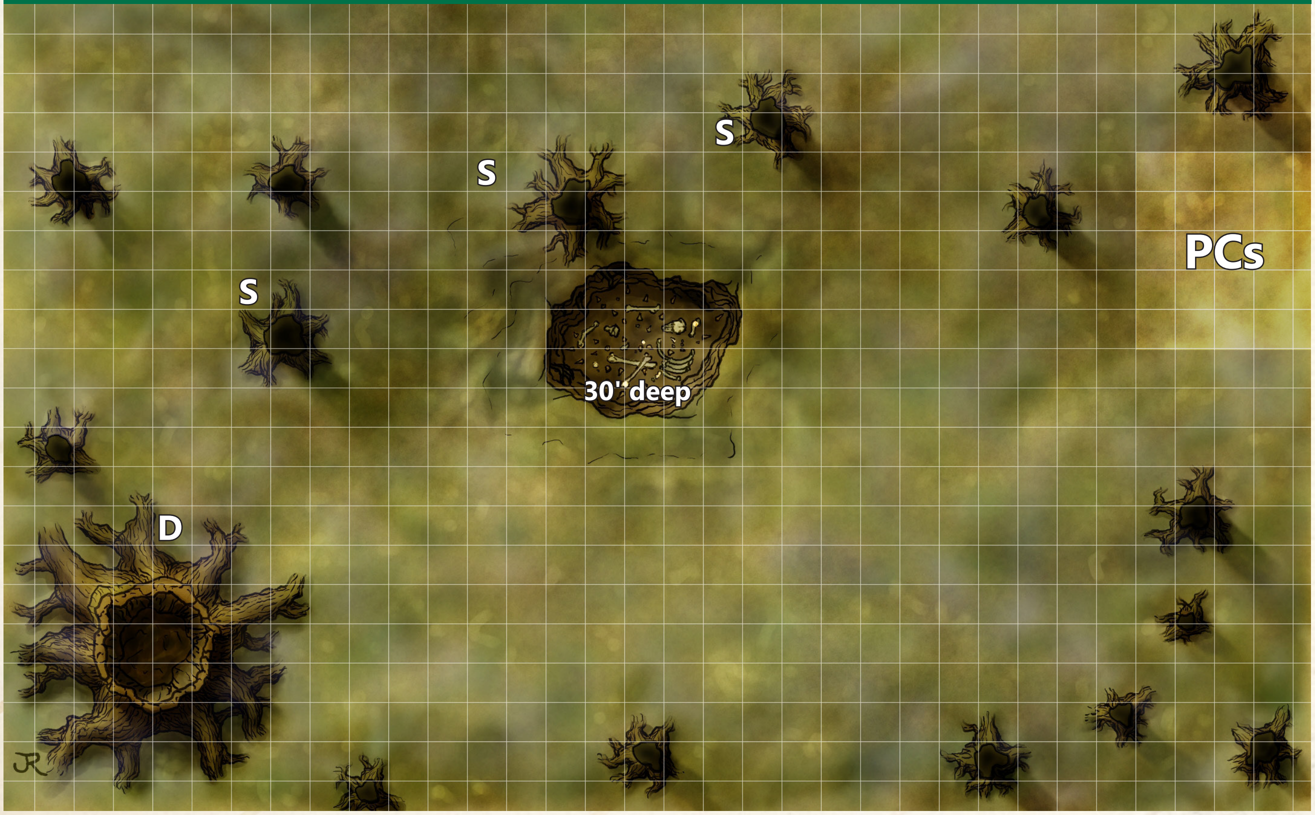
BONE PIT: This 30-foot-deep pit has bones and wooden spikes at the bottom. Those falling in take 17 (3d10) damage. Climbing out requires a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check.

TREES OF MIST: The trees shown on the map vanish into the fog when the dragon or dragonborn need to move through them and do not block their movement.

SHROUDS OF FOG TERRAIN: The woods in Tatzel's clearing are perpetually shrouded in heavy mist and are treated as lightly obscured.

Fire spells can remove this restriction: all fire effects push back the fog in a 10-foot radius from the effect's center in addition to their normal effects.

THE DRAGON'S CLEARING



ENTERING FROM THE FEY ROAD

The trees and streams of light vanish, and the road opens into a pit or tunnel of some kind. The floor of the pit is covered with bones. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check outside the bone pit reveals claw marks on the branches above. A successful DC 23 Wisdom (Perception) check outside the bone pit reveals human-sized footprints among the leaves. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check anywhere in the area reveals the clearing ahead is hung with moss and scattered with bones.

A single enormous oak tree, scarred by lightning and claw marks, stands at the north end of the clearing.

Creatures: The party won't see Tatzel right away but may hear him or his dragonborn followers. If the heroes disperse the fog, read or paraphrase the following:

……

An enormous dragon curls around a tree trunk, its skin glowing with a sickly greenish light like phosphorescent fungus. The fog seems to roll off it as it spreads its wings.

……

If the party chooses to talk, ask for an immediate DC 15 Charisma (Deception) or DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check. If the party succeeds, Tatzel is happy to talk to them for a round or two while his dragonborn servants use the fog to get behind the party.

Tatzel knows the secret to returning through the river to the millpond but is not eager to give that up without a substantial bribe. He taunts the party with the lie that time runs slower in the Summer Lands, hinting that months and years are passing in the mortal world while they are here. And he won't sell the secret cheaply, either: he wants at least 500 gp, or gems worth half that, or two horses, or a rare or rarer magical item.

The secret itself is simple, Tatzel says: to return from the Summer Lands, the party needs to touch the millstone of the False Mill (see page 62). Diving in to touch that stone pulls them down and spits them out in the millpond on the same day they first entered it—time actually flows much faster in the Summer Lands than in the mortal world.

TATZEL (THE FOREST DRAGON)

Large dragon, lawful evil

ARMOR CLASS 16 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 128 (15d10 + 45)

SPEED 40 ft., fly 80 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

SAVING THROWS Str +7, Dex +5, Con +6, Wis +4

SKILLS Perception +4, Stealth +7

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhausted, paralyzed, sleep

SENSES Blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 5 (1,800 XP)

Fog Vision. Tatzel sees normally through light or heavy obscurement caused by foliage or branches, fog, mist, clouds, or flying debris.

Amphibious. Tatzel can breathe both air and water, and being underwater imposes no penalties on his movements or attacks.

Woodland Stride. Tatzel can move through any sort of normal foliage at full speed without taking damage or suffering impairment. Areas of foliage that have been magically manipulated affect him normally.

Actions

Multiattack. Tatzel makes three attacks, one with his bite and two with his claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 4) piercing damage plus 3 acid damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d4 + 4) slashing damage.

Acid Breath (Recharge 5–6). Tatzel exhales acid in a 30-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 27 (6d8) acid damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

Bone Storm (1/Day). While within his clearing, Tatzel can use his wings to create a 60-ft. (centered on him) swirling vortex of flying bones, branches, and other forest debris for 3 (1d6) rounds. Any Medium or smaller creature caught in the bone storm must succeed at a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw each round the maelstrom persists to avoid 5 (1d4 + 2) slashing damage and the blinded condition caused by flying bone-shards and debris.

CAUSTRIX, PHOSPHOR, AND GALLOGARD, DRAGONBORN PROTECTORS (3)

Medium humanoid, no alignment

ARMOR CLASS 16 (chain mail)

HIT POINTS 30 (4d10 + 8)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

SAVING THROWS Str +5, Con +4

SKILLS Athletics +5, Perception +3

DAMAGE RESISTANCES acid

SENSES passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic

CHALLENGE 1 (200 XP)

Special Equipment. *potion of healing*

Actions

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Treasure: Tatzelhas buried his treasure in the leaf litter and loose dirt of the forest floor, much like an enormous squirrel burying nuts. These treasures the dragon can find by smell and instinct, but for anyone else digging them up, it requires a major effort. One item is found per hour of hunting, but only if a DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check is made by one of the searchers.

The items the dragon has collected are:

- Ironbound chest with 500 gp
- Three 100-gp moonstones
- One *potion of greater healing*
- *+2 mithral chain shirt*
- A *wand of lightning bolts*
- *+2 magical weapon* (tailored to the party)

THE ETTERCAP GROVE

XP Threshold: 4,000

When the PCs enter the ettercap grove, read the following:

> The woods around you have grown very quiet; no birds sing. You see spider webs ahead and hear raspy voices arguing in Elven.

A successful DC 19 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the voices clearly come from up in the trees, not from ground level. The ettercaps are 15 to 20 feet up in the trees, on platforms of webbing and branches.

Designer's Note: Tatzel's Friendlier Brother

I really wanted my internal playtesters to fight the dragon Tatzel, but they wanted nothing to do with it. This might be party composition: two kobolds and one dragonborn made them an extremely draco-friendly bunch.

But it wasn't just that. They didn't want to tangle with the dragon. They wanted to talk to it. And talk. And talk some more. I was fine with this, to a point. They had been grinding through combats.

I tend to run a roleplay-heavy table some nights, for the players who are industry vets and couldn't give a rat's ass about another slugfest. But my inner GM was not happy: A dragon! Itching to be slain! What was wrong with these folks?

At first, I made the dragon a barrier. They were told at the Birch Queen's Fair that only the dragon knew the way for mortals to leave the Summer Lands. "Nah," said the oldest player, who is also a novelist. "There's bound to be another way back to Riverbend. Probably connected to the finale or something." Dammit, he was right.

Next, I made it clear that to visit the dragon was dangerous. "Night is falling," I said. "And the dragon always wakes up very, very hungry."

"Oh," said the party. "There's no way we're burning more cash on the fey road ritual again. We're going broke already. We'll hunt some game. Our new ranger friend has awesome nature skills for hunting and foraging."

I made them do the rolls, but it was hopeless. The kobolds sucked up to Tatzel and begged for badges to show their allegiance. In the morning, the dragon found that his visitors had killed a magnificent Summer Lands stag and hooked an enormous river carp. He let them live. In the end, this was never the combat encounter I wanted it to be. Looking back on it, it's still a highlight of the adventure.

The use of a tracker or prop to show vertical elements (such as the tree platforms from Fat Dragon Games' Forest Adventure Pack or the Wizard Elevation Indicators) is recommended for this encounter.

The dark forest is treated as dim light. The trees are tall and their bark is gnarled and easily climbed. The main platforms where the ettercaps live are about 15 to 25 feet above the forest floor.

The spider webs are difficult terrain. Heroes who enter a spider web square must make a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or become immobilized. To escape, a hero must spend an action shaking off the webs. The spider webs provide light obscurity.

LADY ARIABELINA CLATTERSPIN

Medium monstrosity, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 18 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 65 (10d10 + 10)

SPEED 50 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)

SKILLS Perception +5, Stealth +7

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES poison

LANGUAGES Common, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 4 (1,100 XP)

Shapeshifter. Lady Clatterspin can take the form of a Small or Medium humanoid or a spider-humanoid hybrid. In humanoid form she cannot use her bite, web, or poison abilities but may cast spells, wield weapons and wear armor. Her speed in humanoid form is 30 ft.

Spider Climb. Lady Clatterspin can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Web-Walker. Lady Clatterspin ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

Innate Spellcasting. Lady Clatterspin's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

3/day: *faerie fire, poison spray, spider climb*

2/day: *jump, ray of sickness*

1/day: *insect plague* (spiders)

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (2d4) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking 9 (2d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

Web (Recharge 5–6). *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target is restrained by webbing. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 15 Strength check, bursting the webbing on a success. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; hp 5; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage).

ETTERCAPS (2)

Medium monstrosity, neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 13 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 44 (8d8 + 8)

SPEED 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)	7 (−2)	12 (+1)	8 (−1)

SKILLS Perception +3, Stealth +4, Survival +3

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES Sylvan

CHALLENGE 2 (450 XP)

Spider Climb. The ettercap can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Web Sense. While in contact with a web, the ettercap knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

Web Walker. The ettercap ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

Actions

Multiattack. The ettercap makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) poison damage. The target must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

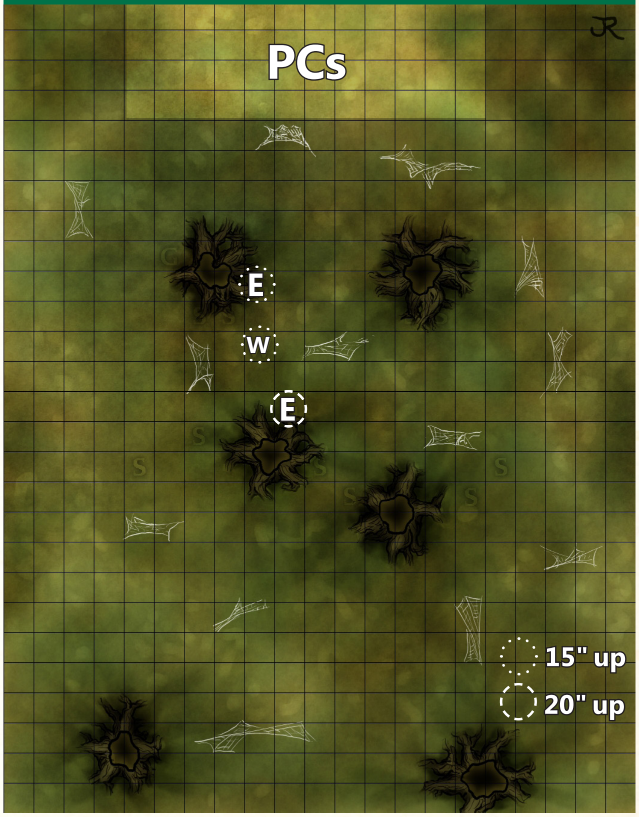
Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) slashing damage.

Web (Recharge 5–6). *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one Large or smaller creature. *Hit:* The creature is restrained by webbing. As an action, the restrained creature can make a DC 11 Strength check, escaping from the webbing on a success. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; hp 5; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage).

Treasure: The rich treasures of the Lady of Spiders are kept guarded in a locked cocoon-chest of black spider silk (DC 15 Dexterity check with thieves' tools to pick the lock). If anyone attempts to break the chest open by force, a swarm of spiders is released.

The treasures within include three *cloaks of elvenkind* and a crown of mithral (the *Regalia of the Crawling Fey*; see below). The crown is worth possibly more to a fey who understands its significance, but selling it also means selling the title of Lord/Lady of the Crawling Fey and giving up the spider-related abilities that come with it.

ETTERCAP GROVE



SPIDERS (12)

Tiny beast, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 12

HIT POINTS 1 (1d4 − 1)

SPEED 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (−4)	14 (+2)	8 (−1)	1 (−5)	10 (+0)	2 (−4)

SKILLS Stealth +4

SENSES darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 10

LANGUAGES —

CHALLENGE 0 (10 XP)

Spider Climb. The spider can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Web Sense. While in contact with a web, the spider knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

Web Walker. The spider ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 1 piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 9 Constitution saving throw or take 2 (1d4) poison damage.

Lady Clatterspin's Title

Anyone who kills Lady Clatterspin may claim her title; when she dies, her guards expect the party to do so. This does not stop them from attacking the PCs until the title is claimed. If a PC does claim her title and takes her crown (see Treasure), the PC gains abilities granted by the Fey Regalia item and gains a friendly reception from most spiders, ettercaps, drow, driders, and related arachnid creatures. At the same time, the PC loses 2 points of Intelligence (regained if the title is renounced).

After Lady Clatterspin dies, the PCs can learn about her crown using Intelligence (Nature), as indicated in Table 5–1.

TABLE 5–1: FEY REGALIA

INTELLIGENCE (NATURE)	RESULT
10 or less	You know nothing about fey nobility and their titles.
11–15	The powers of some fey are kept in their regalia, typically a crown, orb, or scepter, but sometimes a ring, staff, or amulet.
16–20	Taking and wearing a fey noble's regalia means you claim her title and powers.
21+	A claim to a fey noble's title can be challenged by other fey; this usually results in a duel or brawl.

Regalia of the Crawling Fey

This mithral crown acts as a *cloak of arachnida* and grants advantage to Charisma (Persuasion) checks with spiders, ettercaps, and similar creatures. Additionally, such creatures always initially have a favorable attitude when interacting with the wearer and address the wearer as "your Majesty." The wearer can converse with such creatures, even if not normally able. The wearer loses 2 points of Intelligence when the regalia is worn. For those games using Status, the wearer gains the title "Lord or Lady of the Crawling Fey" and gains +3 Status among Fey Courts and +4 Status among Shadow Fey Courts.

THE FLUTTERING BRIDGE

XP Threshold: 9,400

This is encounter is nearly impossible for the characters to win through combat. When the PCs reach the fluttering bridge, read the following:

> The woods open onto a gorge cut by a fast-moving stream 50 feet below. A tree bridge spans the chasm, the hollow tree trunk charred by fire. The trunk is covered in an array of brilliant green and orange moss.

A successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the green and orange masses aren't moss; they're a swarm of butterflies.

Creatures: The swarm pulls itself into a humanoid form and flies toward the PCs in a slow, fluttering mass.

The tree bridge is also warded by a powerful but deranged treant calling itself Ashbark. It is badly charred along one side and it keeps strange company. If the party seeks to cross the bridge and leave the deepest forest, Ashbark demands healing (a potion or three will do). If that's not forthcoming, it wants the party to provide food and meat for its allies: the Lord Peppick and his swarms of death butterflies.

If the party wishes to parley, Ashbark is happy to talk while Lord Peppick slowly gathers himself and prepares for a fight, always staying over the chasm to avoid melee combat. Lord Peppick demands fealty from one or more PCs as the price to cross the bridge. Failure to swear allegiance and wear one of his blue and white butterfly badges makes him angry.

PCs may choose to go around rather than across the bridge. This takes them into thick undergrowth (perhaps inhabited by ettercaps) and certainly takes a day's march and rations.

The light near the chasm is normal daylight. The chasm is steeply sloped and difficult because of the crumbly earthen side and undergrowth. A successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check is required to ascend it. Falling into it means a 50-foot fall for 18 (5d6) bludgeoning damage.

The bridge's hollow log provides total cover and is dark within. Only one Medium creature can squeeze through per round. Walking on top of the log is much faster (normal movement) but requires a DC 13 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Failure means a 50-foot fall and 18 (5d6) bludgeoning damage.

DEATH BUTTERFLY SWARM

Large swarm of tiny beasts, chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 15 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 60 (11d10)

SPEED 5 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (–5)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	1 (–5)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES cold, fire

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

CHALLENGE 4 (1,100 XP)

Potent Poison. The death butterfly swarm's poison affects corporeal undead who are otherwise immune to poison.

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 insect. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Weight of Wings. A creature in a space occupied by the death butterfly swarm has its speed reduced by half and must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or become blinded. Both effects end when the creature doesn't share a space with the swarm at the end of the creature's turn. If a creature succeeds on the saving throw, it is immune to the swarm's blindness (but not the speed reduction) for 24 hours.

Actions

Multiattack: The swarm makes a Bite attack against every target in its spaces.

Bites. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +3 to hit, reach 0 ft., every target in the swarm's spaces. *Hit:* 22 (6d6 + 1) piercing damage, or 11 (3d6 + 1) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer. The target also takes 10 (3d6) poison damage and becomes poisoned for 3 (1d4) rounds; a successful DC 13 Constitution saving throw reduces poison damage by half and prevents the poisoned condition.

ASHBARK, THE FIRESCARRED TREANT

Huge plant, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 15 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 73 (7d12 + 28)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	8 (–1)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, piercing

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES fire

SENSES passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES Common, Druidic, Elvish, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 5 (2,300 XP)

False Appearance. While the treant remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal tree.

Siege Monster. The treant deals double damage to objects and structures.

Actions

Multiattack. The treant makes three slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., single target. *Hit:* 15 (3d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Rock. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +8 to hit, range 60/180 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

LORD PEPPICK, THE BUTTERFLY LORD

Huge swarm of tiny beasts, chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 15 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 84 (13d12)

SPEED 5 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (–5)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	1 (–5)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, force, piercing, and slashing

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES cold, fire

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

CHALLENGE 6 (2,300 XP)

Special Equipment. A glass orb that acts as a *brooch of shielding*.

Potent Poison. Lord Peppick's poison affects corporeal undead who are otherwise immune to poison.

Swarm. Lord Peppick can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and he can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny insect.

Weight of Wings. A creature in a space occupied by Lord Peppick has its speed reduced by half and must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or become blinded. Both effects end when the creature doesn't share a space with Lord Peppick at the end of the creature's turn. If a creature succeeds on the saving throw, it is immune to Lord Peppick's blindness effect (but not the speed reduction) for 24 hours.

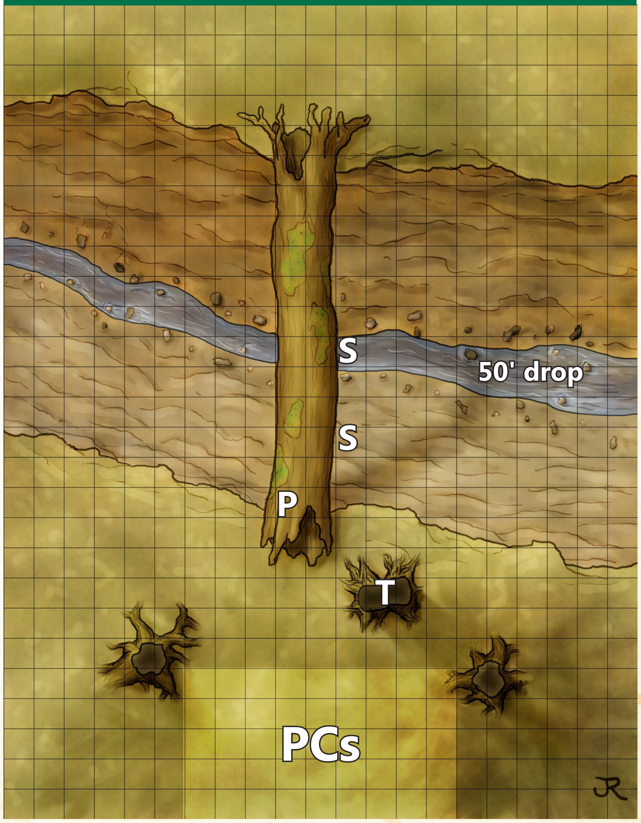
Actions

Multiattack. Lord Peppick makes a Bite attack against every target in his spaces.

Bites. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +6 to hit, reach 0 ft., every target in Lord Peppick's spaces. *Hit:* 24 (6d6 + 3) piercing damage, or 13 (3d6 + 3) piercing damage if he has half his hit points or fewer. The target also takes 17 (5d6) poison damage and becomes poisoned for 3 (1d4) rounds; a successful DC 15 Constitution saving throw reduces poison damage by half and prevents the poisoned condition.

Treasure: The Butterfly Lord "wears" a collection of gemstones in orange, red, and green worth 500 gp total. He also holds a glass orb which acts as a *brooch of shielding*.

THE FLUTTERING BRIDGE



Chapter 6: Source of the River

The final chapter takes the party to the River Court and to the false mill, which leads them back to Riverbend, hopefully unharmed. The PCs should have an opportunity to rest and recover spells prior to arriving at the castle.

The characters can approach the River King's castle in a couple of different ways. If they travel by means of the fey roads, then they are ambushed by a group of nixies as they near the end (but before they exit at the arrival portal). If they travel overland, they are attacked by a band of lorelei and their merrow companion while trying to ford a dangerous river. Feel free to employ the unused encounter at a later time (perhaps when they are trying to get to the False Mill).

TRAVELING THE FEY RIVER ROAD

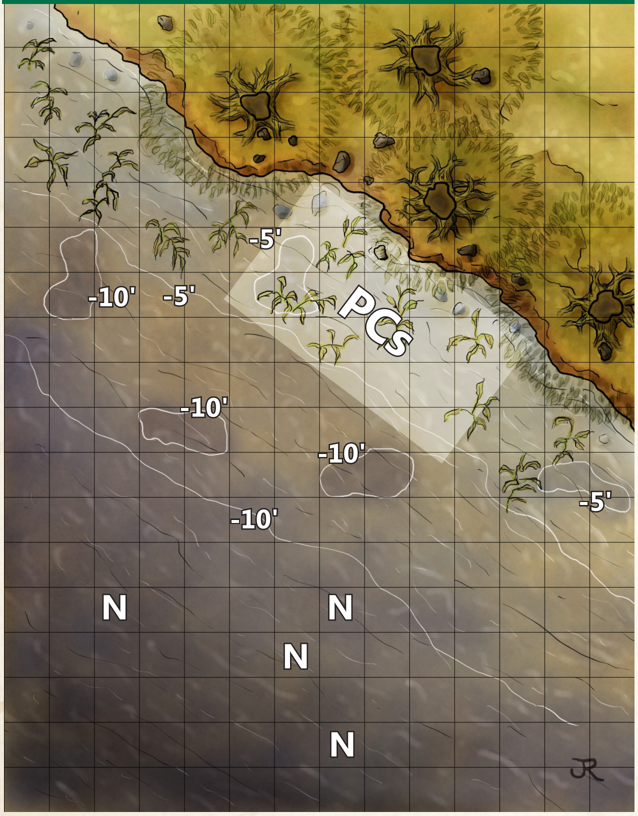
XP Threshold: 5,600

If the PCs travel from the Birch Queen's Fair to the River King's Court via the fey river road (see Orelliar, the Mage of Time, on page 38), nixies attack them along the way. Sidhe and other fey-blooded creatures gain advantage on all initiative checks made on the fey road.

To begin this encounter with the nixies, read the following:

> The fey river road rushes by, with fewer half-seen trees and more half-seen stretches of rippling water, riverbanks, and reeds. Suddenly, the scenery slows down until you stand in a marsh along a riverbank, with willow trees all around and the trickle of water over stone. A creature rises up out of the water—a fey woman of terrible beauty, completely naked, her skin blue from the cold water. Behind her are creatures who could be her sisters, each carrying wicked-looking shortswords.

FEY RIVER ROAD



The area's reeds and muddy ground have pockets of deeper water and channels, which are difficult terrain. The willow trees provide light obscurity for anyone among their branches.

A successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check to swim is required as part of any move action. Additionally, the river current is strong here, and any creatures that fail the check move 10 feet downstream at the start of their next turn.

Creatures: A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals the women are not sidhe made blue from cold; their skin is naturally blue because they are nixies.

A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the current seems to help the women move; they glide through it like fish.

NIXIES (4)

Small fey, neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 15

HIT POINTS 26 (4d6 + 12)

SPEED 10 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	20 (+5)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)	22 (+6)

SKILLS Perception +5, Stealth +7

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks not made with cold-iron weapons

SENSES passive Perception 15

LANGUAGES Common, Elvish, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 3 (450 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. A nixie's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *animal friendship*

3/day: *charm person*

1/day: *water breathing*

Magic Resistance. The nixie has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Actions

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +7 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d8 + 5) piercing damage.

Luring Song. The nixie sings a magical melody. Every humanoid and giant within 300 feet of the nixie that can hear the song must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or be charmed until the song ends. The nixie must take a bonus action on its subsequent turns to continue singing. It can stop singing at any time. The song ends if the nixie is incapacitated.

While charmed by the nixie, a target is incapacitated and ignores the songs of other nixies. If the charmed target is more than 5 feet away from the nixie, the target must move on its turn toward the nixie by the most direct route, trying to get within 5 feet. It doesn't avoid opportunity attacks, but before moving into damaging terrain, such as lava or a pit, and whenever it takes damage from a source other than the nixie, the target can repeat the saving throw. A charmed target can also repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns. If the saving throw is successful, the effect ends on it.

A target that successfully saves is immune to this nixie's song for the next 24 hours.

Change Shape. The nixie magically polymorphs into a Medium or smaller sized aquatic beast, or back into its true form. It reverts to its true form if it dies. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form (the nixie's choice).

In the new form, the nixie retains its alignment, hit points, Hit Dice, proficiencies, and Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores, as well as this action. Its statistics and capabilities are otherwise replaced by those of the new form.

WHERE THE LORELEI SING

XP Threshold: 3.600

If the heroes travel to the River King's Court by normal means (rather than via the fey river road), a river cutting through the middle of the Summer Lands blocks their way. There is a spot where the river can be forded, but it is strewn with rocks and the rushing water is deceptively deep. During the crossing, things go horribly wrong when the sisters of the River King sing to draw mortals to their deaths in the churning waters.

THE RIVER CROSSING

When the PCs approach the river crossing, read or paraphrase the following:

> You see a river crossing ahead; you might be able to cross by leaping from stone to stone, but it will be tricky.

Hazard: The powerful current and slick stones create a hazardous obstacle. A successful DC 17 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check allows a PC to recognize the dangers of the rushing water and how best to move without getting swept away.

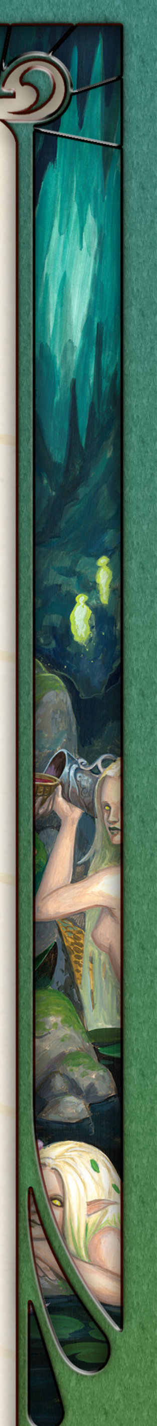
Jumping from stone to stone is possible, but it requires a DC 17 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check with each jump to avoid missing or slipping and falling into the water. Any character who falls into the water is subject to the strong current (see below). Characters who rope themselves together must all move at the same rate of speed, but they can cross without slipping and falling if at least half of them succeed on the Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. If fewer than half succeed, the entire group falls into the water and each character is carried by the current and buffeted against rocks.

Any creature that falls into the water or attempts to swim across at full speed must succeed on a DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check to avoid being swept downriver. Failure means the character suffers 6 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage and is carried 10 feet downstream by the current. That PC must make a new check each round to regain a foothold and avoid being swept farther along.

Only by making a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check and using his total movement to move 1 square (5 feet) can a character navigate the treacherous waters without risk of being carried downstream. For every additional square beyond the first the character attempts to travel on his turn, the DC increases by 2. Thus, if a character attempts to move 3 squares (15 feet), he must succeed on a DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check.

If the PCs rope themselves together, they must all move at the same rate, but they can make progress through the water with no one losing their footing and being swept away if at least half of them succeed on the Strength (Athletics) check each turn. If fewer than half succeed, the current carries the whole group 10 feet downriver and each member of the party suffers the bludgeoning damage mentioned above.

Creatures with swim speeds treat the water as normal difficult terrain.



THE LORELEI

While the characters are attempting to cross the ford, a group of lorelei appear and try to draw them to their doom. They appear when the lead character is about halfway across.

When the PCs face these creatures, read the following:

> The river crossing is going well when you hear several female voices singing a clear harmony. You also hear a deeper voice that sounds more like croaking than singing.

Creatures: This encounter involves three lesser lorelei and one merrow, which only enters the battlefield after one or more lorelei perish.

LESSER LORELEI (3)

Medium fey (aquatic), chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 13 (16 *mage armor*)

HIT POINTS 30 (4d8 + 12)

SPEED 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	17 (+3)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	23 (+6)

SAVING THROWS Dex +5, Cha +8

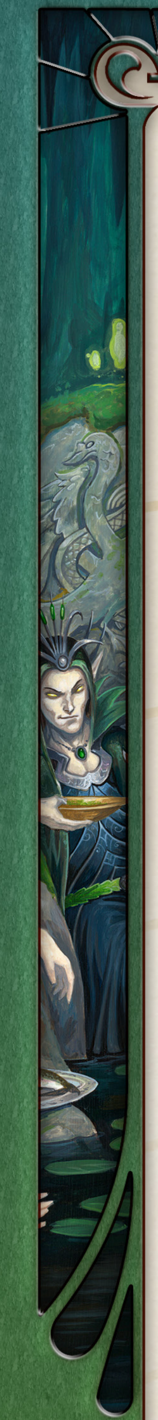
SKILLS Deception +8, Performance +8, Persuasion +8

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES Common, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 2 (450 XP)

Alluring Presence. All humanoids within 30 feet of a lorelei who look directly at her must succeed on a DC 16 Charisma saving throw or be drawn to her in the most direct path, regardless of the danger. This compulsion fades once the person gets within 5 feet of the lorelei. A creature can avoid this effect for one full round by choosing to avert its eyes at the start of its turn, but it then has disadvantage on any attacks or other rolls directed



against the lorelei until the start of its next turn. A lorelei can suppress or resume this ability as a bonus action. Anyone who successfully saves against this effect cannot be affected by it from the same lorelei for 24 hours.

Unearthly Grace. A lorelei applies her Charisma modifier to all her saving throws in place of the normal ability modifier.

Water Spirit. The lorelei is under the effect of *freedom of movement* whenever she is in contact with a body of water.

Spellcasting. The lorelei is a 6th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). She requires no material components to cast her spells. The lorelei has the following sorcerer spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *detect magic, guidance, light, mending, poison spray, prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *comprehend languages, fog cloud, mage armor, ray of sickness*

2nd level (3 slots): *hold person, misty step, suggestion*

3rd level (3 slots): *hypnotic pattern, gaseous form, water walk*

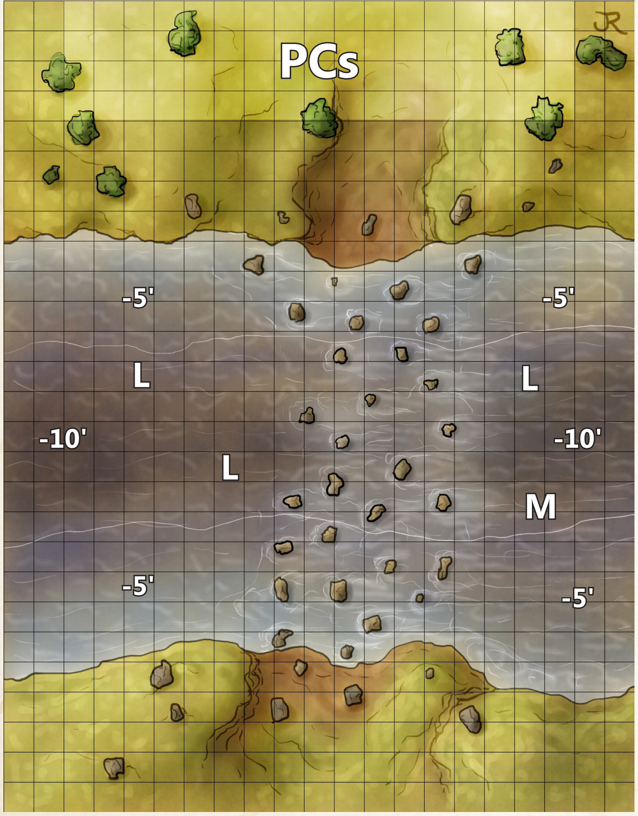
ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Charm. The lorelei targets one humanoid she can see within 30 feet of her. If the target can see or hear the lorelei, it must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or be charmed by the lorelei. The charmed target regards the lorelei as its one true love, to be heeded and protected. Although the target isn't under the lorelei's control, it takes the lorelei's requests or actions in the most favorable way it can.

Each time the lorelei or her companions cause the target to take damage, directly or indirectly, it repeats the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. Otherwise, the effect lasts 24 hours or until the lorelei is killed, is on a different plane of existence than the target, or takes a bonus action to end the effect.

WHERE THE LORELEI SING



Stunning Glance. The lorelei mentally disrupts a creature within 30 feet with a look. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or be stunned for 2 rounds. Anyone who successfully saves against this effect cannot be affected by it from the same lorelei for 24 hours.

MERROW

Large monstrosity, chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 13 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 45 (6d10 + 12)

SPEED 10 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	8 (−1)	10 (+0)	9 (−1)

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

LANGUAGES Abyssal, Aquan

CHALLENGE 2 (450 XP)

Amphibious. The merrow can breathe air and water.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The merrow makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claws or harpoon.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d4 + 4) slashing damage.

Harpoon. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack*: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage. If the target is a Huge or smaller creature, it must succeed on a Strength contest against the merrow or be pulled up to 20 feet toward the merrow.

TREASURE: One lorelei carries a beautiful silver hand mirror with a golden frame worth 340 gp.

THE COURT OF THE RIVER KING

The River Court resides within a castle made of smooth white stone that sits upon an island. A single white-feathered eagle (belonging to Sir Arnovar) perches in a nest on the highest tower. It cries out loudly when visitors approach by the road or the river.

The characters should be 7th level by the time they reach the Court of the River King.

ARRIVING BY ROAD

If the PCs approach the River Court by road, read:

> A castle stands in the middle of the foaming river, built of pure white stone with six tall towers. A narrow passage leading in is not accessible from the riverbank; it seems to be flooded or perhaps made for boats.

The party can find a small brownie with a ferry raft to carry them out to the castle for a modest fee (bread or a song). Otherwise, they must swim, making a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check in the process. Success means arrival at the Sluice Gate (see below). Failure means the river current carries the PC downriver and drops him or her in the mud and reeds. This is a fine time to unleash the eel hound, nixie, or goblin frog rider encounters if they have not appeared previously.

ARRIVING BY FEY RIVER ROAD

If the PCs approach the River Court by fey road, read:

> The treacherous and cold waters fall behind you and the cry of the fey women stops haunting you. Up ahead, sunlight sparkles on water, and suddenly the air around you echoes with splashing. A castle built of white stone, ice, and foam stands in the middle of the river. A narrow water path—a stream, really—leads into the castle, but a gate between two high walls guards the entrance.

Arriving by the fey river road drops the party at the entrance of the Sluice Gate. A successful DC 7 Strength (Athletics) check avoids having the current sweep a PC away and toward the shore. As above, the PCs might meet a lorelei, merrow, goblin frog riders, or eel hounds if they are swept away.

LOCATIONS IN THE RIVER COURT

The River Court is best divided into three sections: two main courtyards and a Great Rippling Hall with an audience chamber. There are two entrances other than the simple expedient of flying into the River Court. Swimming underwater against the river current takes a visitor more or less directly past a merrow guardian into the Great Rippling Hall, or one can pass through the narrow Sluice Gate, which leads through two courtyards and then into the Great Hall. For more information about how to enter the River Court via Charisma (Persuasion) or Dexterity (Stealth), see the complex skill checks on page 57.

THE SLUICE GATE

The gateway into the River Court is a narrow one, just wide enough for creatures to pass through one at a time. There is no drawbridge; wading, boating, or swimming seems to be required.

On the far side stands a fat black bear wearing a bright green vest over scale armor. He commands a small group of sidhe archers to hurry up to the battlements, then shouts in your direction: "Who are you, and what business do you have at the River Court?"

The bear is Rumpkin the Porter. If Redcoat the bear survived his encounter at the Golden Knight Tavern, he is also here, and he vouches against the party if they were violent or if the party fails the diplomatic complex skill check (see page 57). Rumpkin has only a single satyr friend here, the wine steward Caius Gruffkin.

If the PCs engage in combat, use the stats for Redcoat for both Rumpkin and Redcoat (see page 11). Additionally, there are four sidhe archers here; use the stats for king's soldiers on page 54.

OUTER COURTYARD

This outer area is where lesser nobles and servants live. A lively place similar to the Birch Queen's Fair, there are more sidhe here and a much higher standard in clothing and courtesies.

Walking through the Outer Courtyard without giving offense is straightforward: it is a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check for those who seek conversation, or simply walking without speaking for those who do not.

The people here are mostly ogres, talking animals, and a few of the lesser sidhe soldiers. Two of the chattier folk are Silverwing the Herald and Knurlnap the Water Bearer, who seeks someone to take his burden (see Appendix A).

His Excellency Silverwing, Herald of the Spring Melt, Knight of the Gilded Scroll is also here. The Margrave of Ravens, feathers dusted with gold, stands three feet tall with a beak and talons of obsidian. While playing the loyal vassal, the margrave schemes to be free of his feudal obligations and become King of Lost Battlefields and Master of Carrion. He collects titles the way some noblemen collect swords or horses.

Fangs-in-Shade-and-Rushes, the King's Huntsman, is a lanky and grim ogre with a belt of severed hands. No quarry demanded by his lord eludes this ravenous predator. Fangs harbors an openly secret love for the king's youngest daughter, Ripple, who toys with him by asking for exotic and near-impossible prey. See his full stats on page 67.

Caias Gruffkin, a satyr noble, is the sly, beloved Royal Vintner, known for his music and rich red wares. His well coiffed goatee, perfect smile, and rich accent make him a court favorite. He's exceedingly smooth. Never without a good song or better bottle, he lusts especially for Lady Budena, who finds him crass and disgusting. He offers the party wine, the better to manipulate them.

LEAVING THE OUTER COURTYARD

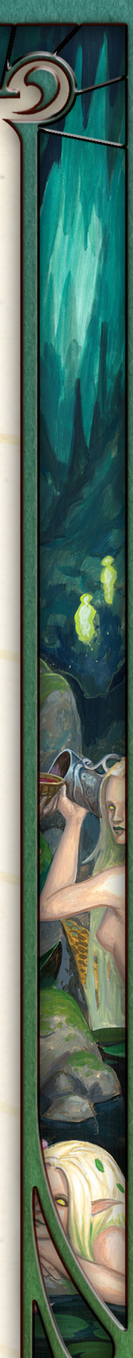
XP Threshold: 4,650

The Outer Courtyard connects to the Inner Courtyard by a raised drawbridge, which only lowers when Gumphollow, the Major Domo, says it should be lowered. The Inner Courtyard and the drawbridge are covered in mithral runes inlaid into dark wood.

The runes are part of a warding to keep dragons out. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies the runes as a warding, and if the result is at least an 18, it is clear to the PC that it specifically wards against dragons. Dragonborn and other reptilian creatures feel vaguely ill at ease walking over the bridge but suffer no other negative effects. Dragonborn who attempt to climb the walls or sneak over the drawbridge suffer disadvantage on any skill checks to do so.

Creatures: The dapper talking frog, Gumphollow, is obsessed with etiquette and courtesies. He proudly serves as the King's Major Domo, largely because of his invaluable ability to coordinate business above and below the river's surface.

An enemy of tricksters, malcontents, and spies, Gumphollow strives for the safe and proper operation of the River King's realm. He questions visitors closely (Wisdom [Insight] checks against their Charisma [Persuasion]; see page 54), and it is ultimately his decision whether to allow visitors



over the drawbridge to the Inner Courtyard. Gumphollow is accompanied by four king's soldiers and a merrow that lurks nearby underwater.

If the party met him at the fair, **Sir Arnovar, the Eagle Knight**, may be here as well at the DM's discretion. Best known for having tamed a white eagle as his mount (though he does not fly it today), Sir Arnovar carries a spear and a longbow. He wears outrageous plumes in his helmet and displays great command of courtesy, titles, heraldry, and arcane lore as it applies to the Summer Lands. Though outwardly courteous, he is not especially helpful or friendly unless discussing birds of prey or archery (DC 15 Intelligence [Nature] or Wisdom [Survival]).

For more information about how to approach gaining entrance to the Inner Courtyard via diplomacy, see page 57.

GUMPHOLLOW

Medium humanoid (aquatic), chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 13 (16 *mage armor*)

HIT POINTS 52 (8d8 +16)

SPEED 20 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

SAVING THROWS Dex +5, Cha +8

SKILLS Deception +8, Performance +8, Persuasion +8

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

LANGUAGES Common, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 1/2 (100 XP)

Amphibious. Gumphollow can breathe air and water.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Gumphollow makes two attacks, one with his morningstar and one with his sticky tongue.

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

Sticky Tongue. *Melee Weapon Attack*. +3 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* A creature hit by Gumphollow's tongue cannot move more than 10 feet away and takes a –2 penalty to AC as long as the tongue is attached. The tongue can be removed by succeeding on an opposed Strength check as an action, or by dealing 2 slashing damage to the tongue (AC 11, damage does not deplete Gumphollow's actual hit points). Gumphollow cannot move more than 10 feet away from the target, but he can release his tongue as a free action. Unlike a giant frog, Gumphollow cannot pull a target toward him with his tongue.

Terrifying Croak (Recharge 6). Gumphollow can emit a loud and horrifying croak. Any creature within 30 feet must make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 3 (1d4) rounds. Creatures that succeed at this saving throw cannot be affected again by Gumphollow's croak for 24 hours.

KING'S SOLDIERS (10)

Medium fey (sidhe), neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 15 (leather armor)

HIT POINTS 13 (3d8)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)

SKILLS Perception +3, Stealth +5

SENSES darkvision 60 ft. passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES Common, Elven, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 1/2 (100 XP)

ACTIONS

Fey Leap. As an action a sidhe may "leap" between spaces as if by *dimension door.* This magical transport must begin and end within 20 ft. of some illumination. A sidhe can "jump" up to a total of 20 ft. per day in 10 ft. increments (*i.e.*, 2 10-ft. leaps or 1 20-ft. leap per day). Using this ability with a Fey-touched mount brings the mount along as part of the movement.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 3)

MERROW

CHALLENGE 2 (450 XP)

See page 52.

INNER COURTYARD

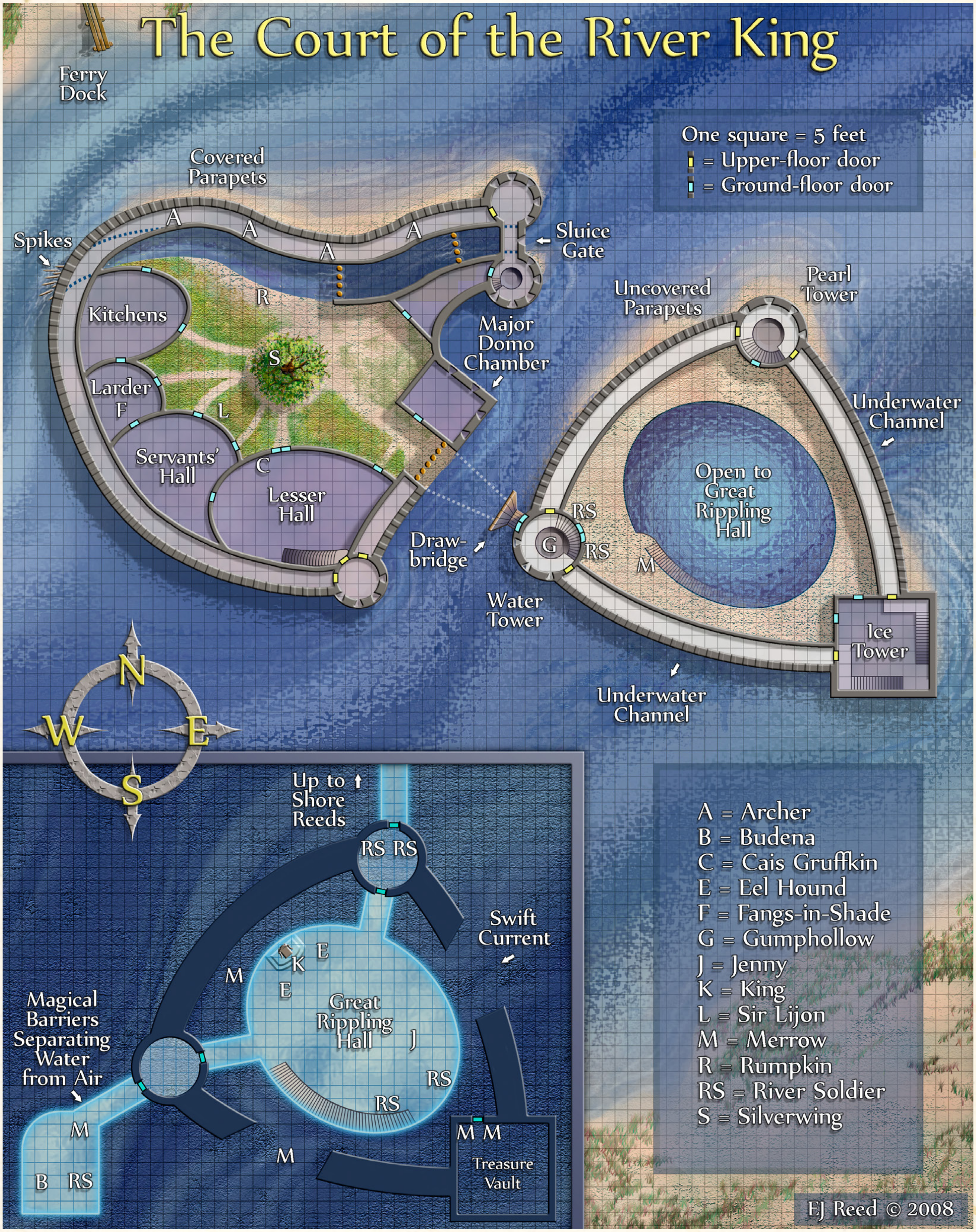
This is a much quieter region, with many gray-liveried servants and a single large hall built of silvery driftwood. The people here are primarily sidhe, Shadow Fey, and elves, along with some favored brownies and gnomes rather than talking animals or satyrs. A few nobles the PCs should recognize live in the inner courtyard or its towers: **Lady Sorreminx**, the **Shadow Fey Warlock Ambertan**, and **Sir Oberest, The Green Knight**. The general rule is that elves, Shadow Fey, and sidhe live in the Inner Courtyard. All others live in the Outer Courtyard, sharing space in the Lesser Hall and working on Gumphollow to win their way to an audience with the king.

GREAT RIPPLING HALL

Ripples in the water overhead form a roof, as the main audience chamber of the court itself is below the waters. The river water forms some of the walls, but the space of the chamber itself is an enormous air pocket. Entering it requires stepping though a membrane of scintillating water, which wets everything it touches and extinguishes all fires carried. A PC must make a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to see the tunnels of air leading into and out of the Rippling Hall.

DIVING DOWN

If anyone tries to go straight from the Inner Courtyard to the Great Rippling Hall, a successful DC 7 Strength (Athletics) check allows the PC to pass through. They must then make a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to stay in the water and swim, or they fall 25 feet into the hall's center, taking 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage. They land prone and muddy.


The Court of the River King
Ferry Dock
Covered Parapets
Spikes
Sluice Gate
Kitchens
Larder
Servants' Hall
Lesser Hall
Major Domo Chamber
Draw-bridge
Water Tower
Uncovered Parapets
Pearl Tower
Underwater Channel
Open to Great Rippling Hall
Ice Tower
Underwater Channel
One square = 5 feet
= Upper-floor door
= Ground-floor door
N
E
S
W
Up to Shore Reeds
Swift Current
Magical Barriers Separating Water from Air
Great Rippling Hall
Treasure Vault
A = Archer
B = Budena
C = Cais Gruffkin
E = Eel Hound
F = Fangs-in-Shade
G = Gumphollow
J = Jenny
K = King
L = Sir Lijon
M = Merrow
R = Rumpkin
RS = River Soldier
S = Silverwing
EJ Reed © 2008

THE WATER TOWER

This is a tower of water held up by pure enchantment (DC 25 Strength [Athletics] check to climb). A dozen elves and sidhe nobles and guards live here, above the gate, on three floors: these include Sir Lijon Troutscales, six river soldiers, Sir Oberest, and Sir Arnovar.

THE ICE TOWER

This is a tower made of ice (DC 20 Strength [Athletics] check to climb). The three lorelei sisters of the River King occasionally live here, as do the soldiers and witches of the Shadow Fey who recently came to court. Unlike the other two, this tower's smooth walls are very chill. At the moment, the two hags, Omurtha and Jenny, share the uppermost floor, while Ambertan, his six Shadow Fey guards, and Marshfox the quickling share the lower two floors.

THE PEARL TOWER

A tower made of pearly white force (DC 25 Strength [Athletics] check to climb), this place serves as the home to the brownies and gnomes, and Sir Arnovar's giant eagle perches on top. The brownie Wickerbell lives here with her new husband, Sir Apicus.

THE GREAT RIPPLING HALL

Lady Sorreminx lives in the castle's underwater chambers, as does the king himself, his two favorite eel hounds, six river soldiers, six merrow guards, Thimblescarves, and the lovely Budena. The hallways are yielding, and any character who makes a successful DC 8 Strength (Athletics) check can push through them from the river side into air, or vice versa.

The floor of the hall is watery, with pebbles along the floor and mud and weeds underfoot. Drops of water frequently fall from the ceiling, and the air is distinctly chill. The sidhe avoid the Rippling Hall; the guards on duty here shiver and complain of the cold by the end of their watch.

MEMBERS OF THE RIVER COURT

Almost a hundred fey and twice that number of servants serve at the River King's court. Here are some of the most notable.

RUMPKIN THE PORTER, a rather fat bear who watches the entryway to the Outer Courtyard and advises polite visitors about the dangers of an audience: the chill waters, the ettercaps and soldiers, the River King's dour manner and his greed for land and a proper mill of his own—the better to show his dukes and nobles his power over the water. If he fails to scare them off, Rumpkin happily offers to protect the party with a *water breathing* spell in exchange for a large amount of honey or a similar mass of berries from the woods. Due to Rumpkin's appetite and frequent visitors to the River Court, the nearest hives and berries are all a day's march into the woods.

The following NPCs are at the River Court.

LADY BUDENA, the Lorelei of Summer Twilight and secret consort of the River King, is draped in a gown of bronze willow boughs, trailing a constellation of fireflies. She wanders the lower chambers of the Rippling Hall. See full stats on page 65.

SIR LIJON TROUTSCALES, a silver-maned sidhe and king's knight, is a veteran duelist with a penchant for provoking foes. His impeccable green-and-gold livery and blue-scale armor contrast with his stark and utilitarian weapons. See full stats on page 67.

He loves finding unintended insults in the words of those who address the king, then demanding satisfaction by blade.

OMURTHA, a one-eyed foul hag of incredible vanity, sees herself as Lady Budena's physical equal. She attempts to seduce beings at the River King's court. Those in the know quickly learn to appease her.

Omurtha has the ear of many of the ladies-in-waiting. Misfortune tends to befall those who hurt Omurtha's feelings. Omurtha also has a terrible temper and has been known to crush men's skulls with her bare hands.

WICKERBELL, Keeper of the Royal Apiaries, is a demure brownie with a myriad of braids and a love for luxurious fabrics. Seemingly trustworthy and pleasant, she keeps many courtiers' counsel. Secretly the King's Surface Spymaster, her bees roam the realm and report back with the plots of more nefarious subjects. See full stats on page 66.

THIMBLESCARVES, the nixie jester, wears a brilliant-colored jacket with a peacock-feathered back. He is a silver-tongued fool known for puns and verbal acrobatics. A keen observer of personalities and foibles, he takes great delight in catching speakers in double entendres and unintentional meanings.

MARSHFOX, the quickling Bandit Lord's ambassador, is never without his crimson fur tippet and a cattail bundle carried as an official symbol. Cruel and avaricious, he prefers talking animal meat.

While primarily an envoy, he sends word back to his master of outgoing caravans and poorly armed travelers.

THE ENEMY POINT OF VIEW

Here's where all the chickens come home to roost. Every courtier the PCs have met, every badge of service they ever accepted, every fight they failed to finish: those NPCs are at the River Court. They remember the bar brawls, the archery contest, whatever occasions where the PCs bested them. And they want a bit of petty revenge.

Worse than that, Ellessandra's son recently spread a very different version of history around here. As far as the fey are concerned, the facts are:

- The miller used their gift of the millstone to enrich only himself rather than profit all the people of his village
- He used the millstone's magic to mistreat his bride
- Mortals have killed many fey in Riverbend (goblins, ettercaps, sidhe merchants) and may be guilty of not just murder but foul blood magic

The River King fears being carried along by events and desires the resumption of his tribute or more territory. When Lord Flax gathered a band of mercenaries and set out to petition King Ulorian (see page 43) to permit him to retake Riverbend, the king agreed to his harsh countermeasures. The fey now plan to invade and attack Riverbend in force.

If the party does not visit the River Court, in a few days or weeks the king says, “Gather my vassals at the millpond and we will return their false friendship!” And so the fey will arrive in force in Riverbend shortly after the PCs return from the Summer Lands.

STREETWISE IN THE OUTER COURT

The party may decide not to charge in past the Outer Court but instead peacefully seek to ingratiate themselves with the locals and learn more about current events. This can be handled with some to-and-fro roleplaying with particular fey creatures and animals described above, or it can be done with Intelligence (Gather Information) or Charisma (Persuasion) checks. Not all the information is entirely accurate.

If the party does choose to make a check, only a single character may make the check, unless the party splits up and questions people in separate conversations. In that case, the PCs may find themselves challenged by the lesser courtiers, offered secret back ways to the Inner Courtyard (a scam most of the time), or even made the victims of fey pranks, enchantments, and lust magic that keeps them apart.

Any PC gains advantage for speaking Elven when making a check. Consult Table 6–1 when the PCs make an Intelligence (Gather Information) or Charisma (Persuasion) check to discover more.

COMPLEX SKILL CHECK: APPROACH BY DIPLOMACY

The party can attempt to enter the River Court entirely on charm and a good dose of luck, winning their way past the porter at the Sluice gate, the creatures at the drawbridge, and the guards and soldiers outside the Great Rippling Hall.

This encounter can be resolved by a complex skill check if the party is willing to risk possible capture by the fey guards within the castle. The party can attempt this challenge collectively.

This check requires 10 successes before 3 failures.

PRIMARY SKILLS: Charisma (Deception), Charisma (Persuasion), Intelligence (Nature). PCs gain advantage for speaking Elven or Sylvan when making a check.

CHARISMA (DECEPTION) DC 10: The fey appreciate a good lie, but that doesn't mean they appreciate being lied to. Any failure with deception leads to the subject of the failed subterfuge calling a few guards. These would be another talking bear, a satyr, or ettercap in the Outer Courtyard, a lorelei or river soldiers at the drawbridge, and more merrow at the barrier into the Great Rippling Hall.

CHARISMA (INTIMIDATION) DC 7 OR 16: Any lesser fey (brownies, gnomes, talking animals, satyrs) are all relatively easily cowed. The sidhe, ettercaps, and others are not.

CHARISMA (PERSUASION) DC 10: Smooth words and diplomatic courtesies will get the party far. A failure means the party is asked to wait while the guardian "consults with the master bailiff" or "consults with the chamberlain" or the like. This delay can last for hours or even another day. The skill challenge continues despite the lag in time.

INTELLIGENCE (ARCANA) DC 10: The Intelligence (Arcana) check shows the successful use of magic of some kind or clever discussion of magic, which impresses the fey gate guardian enough to allow the PCs some leeway. The check counts as 1 success and is only possible once per gate.

INTELLIGENCE (HISTORY) DC 8: The PC remembers the tradition of gates and fey roads being owned and guarded by the fey and the need to placate those forces with clever conversation. A successful check opens up the Intelligence (Arcana) check but does not count as either a success or failure for the challenge.

INTELLIGENCE (NATURE) DC 12: The fey have rules, customs, and traditions that go back to the founding of the summer kingdoms. Knowing those rules and customs makes it much easier to convince the door wardens that one is trustworthy.

WISDOM (INSIGHT) DC 7: The PCs realize what the porter or chamberlain guards want, namely a sign of authority, a small bribe, and a declaration of fealty to the fey and some sign of service (any badge of fealty).

WISDOM (PERCEPTION) DC 8: The fey all seem to think a battle or war is coming, and many of the smallest are playing at war with wooden swords and turtle shell shields. Mercenaries seem to wander in and out of the castle freely. Taking a military tone might be a good approach. A successful check does not count as a success or failure, but it grants advantage on the next check.

SUCCESS

After 3 successes, the party is past the Sluice Gate and into the Outer Courtyard. After 6 successes, they are over the drawbridge. After 10 successes, they are on the stairs and granted an audience with the king. See the River King's Judgment (page 59).

If the PCs succeed at this challenge, grant them 600 XP each.

FAILURE

The party is denied entry to the Great Hall and they are not granted an audience with the king before he gives his blessing to Lord Flax's venture. The fey ask the party to leave the castle and toss them in the river if their departure is not swift enough.

COMPLEX SKILL CHECK: APPROACH BY STEALTH

The party can attempt to enter the River Court by sealing lips, treading softly, and getting a good dose of luck. This is a complex skill check.

This encounter can be resolved by a skill challenge if the party wants to put themselves at risk of capture by the fey guards within the castle or anyone who shouts an alarm.

This check requires 10 successes before 3 failures.

PRIMARY SKILLS: Dexterity (Acrobatics), Dexterity (Stealth), Strength (Athletics), Wisdom (Perception).

CHARISMA (DECEPTION) DC 17: Showing up uninvited through windows and walking around in dark clothes with muffled armor makes it difficult to be convincing.

CHARISMA (INTIMIDATION) DC 7 OR FAILURE: The lesser fey (brownies, gnomes, talking animals, satyrs) are relatively easily cowed, as are the servants, such as gray fey and goblins. Once intimidated, they generally stay quiet. Sidhe, elves, ogres, Shadow Fey, ettercaps, hags, merrow, and lorelei simply can't be intimidated by an intruder; in this case, a Charisma (Intimidation) check results in an automatic failure.

DEXTERITY AND THIEVES' TOOLS DC 16: It's possible to pick locks and open doors and windows of the fey, but many are magically warded.

DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) DC 13: A party member can leap ahead and squeeze through bars or narrow openings to unlock the path or scout out trouble ahead or simply leap up out of sight to avoid detection.

Table 6–1: Talking to NPCs at the River Court

Charisma (Persuasion)	NPCs Reactions
Natural 1	The fey are offended and refuse to speak with the murderers, iron-bearers, or spies, whom they watch with suspicion. No one trusts them or helps them. The PCs may be challenged to a duel if they have split up or if the speaker is considered especially disagreeable to the fey (such as a dragonborn, dwarf, or tiefling).
2–7	The fey speak of trivialities, the progress of the seasons and the growth of acorns, the lovely wedding of Lady Wickerbell and Lord Apicus not long ago, the coursing of the eel hound packs against the Oak King's river crossing some days ago. They mention the fine trout and delicious nuts coming into season, but nothing related to the mill or politics. Some may ask for gold, gems, or other bribes, which they pocket without providing any information or gifts in return.
8–11	It is interesting to see mortals at the River Court. Perhaps the party members are changelings, like Lord Flax? Or they seek some boon from the king? What gifts and memories have they brought? You do know that the River King has nine sisters, and they are always asking him for gifts. Three are the lorelei, three are nixies, and three are hags. His brothers were done away with when King Ulorian ascended the throne.
12–15	The Lady Ellessandra was shamed at court long ago, for she loved a mortal she saw through a scrying glass. The king exiled her for that forbidden love, married her to a miller, and declared her barren. Some say the hags are the only ones who kept her close to their hearts, and they cast the enchantment that let her bear a half-breed child. That one has always been warlike, trying to prove he is more fey than the fey themselves.
16–19	Lord Flax has gathered his full army and has gained the River King's blessing for his enterprise. Lady Ellessandra has not returned to court (she is still exiled), but rumor has it if the young lord burns out the humans and seizes their land for the Summer Lands, his mother will be forgiven and received at court once more. The nixies claim she weeps bitter tears for her son's ambition and the king's wrath and wishes she had not returned to give birth long years ago.
20+	The River King has been treated to a steady diet of bad advice from a river hag named Jenny Greenteeth, the Shadow Fey led by Ambertan, and the young changeling Lord Flax. Those three are the source of the River King's rage against Riverbend. Ambertan is a coward and the changeling is a warmonger. The hag seems to believe the fey must spill blood to retain their strength. Many corpses now float within the eddying waters of the Court, with more surely to come.

DEXTERITY (STEALTH) DC 10: The easiest way to be stealthy is with quiet, hidden movement.

STRENGTH (ATHLETICS) OR DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) DC 10: The party can swim, climb, and scramble to avoid detection, or use ropes and swing from walls and towers. Swimming is difficult in cold water. The party members must each make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw after any swimming attempt or become incapacitated for 1 minute.

WISDOM (PERCEPTION) DC 10: The River Court is full of illusions and echoes in multiple layers above and below the water. A Perception check makes it easier to figure out how to get from point A to point B.

SUCCESS

After 3 successes, the party is through the river water (by boat or swimming) and on the walls. After 6 successes, they are in the correct section of the castle, unseen and approaching the Inner Courtyard. After 10 successes, they have found a way past the merrow to the audience chamber of King Ulorian, who may or may not be happy to see them. See the River King's Judgment encounter (page 59).

If the PCs succeed at this challenge, grant them each 600 XP.

FAILURE

The party is caught sneaking around the castle by four river soldiers on patrol. They may make an immediate Charisma (Deception) or other check to avoid being taken under guard to the River King, or they may attempt to flee.

Either way, the word spreads about the outsiders, and the PCs suffer disadvantage to all further Charisma (Deception) and Charisma (Persuasion) checks they might make in the castle.

CRITICAL FAILURE: DIPLOMACY OR STEALTH CHALLENGE

If the third and final failure roll is a natural 1, the fey capture and hold the PCs in the Prisoner's Tower for Ambertan to question using a *zone of truth* spell scroll.

The party can fight—almost certainly hopeless, given the numbers involved. When the fey drop characters to 0 hit points, they choose to knock the PCs out and imprison them. If the heroes attempt to escape but are caught, they are imprisoned again, but this time without food or rest. The fey use *irresistible dance*, drenching buckets of ice water, or other methods to keep the PCs awake and miserable.

Either way, they are delayed long enough for Jenny and Lord Flax to begin the ritual that opens the way for a raid on Riverbend; when the castle is largely deserted, a servant or friendly fey (such as Wickerbell, the satyr Caius, or even Lady Sorreminx) lets them go free.

CHANGING CHALLENGES

If the party wants to switch from a Stealth challenge to a Diplomacy challenge, they must make at least one successful Charisma (Deception) check (which, should they fail, counts as two failures). If they wish to switch from Diplomacy to Stealth, they must get out of sight by making one additional Dexterity (Stealth) success (counts as two on a failure). Retain the party's existing successes, but continue using the Diplomacy or Stealth checks and successes to 10 (or failure with 3).

THE RIVER KING'S JUDGMENT

XP Threshold: 49,750

If the party succeeds in the Stealth or Diplomacy challenge, they may enter the Rippling Hall safely. However, the River King is a force of nature and occasionally forgets his promises; there's no reason to believe they'll leave safely.

The hall beneath the castle is purely magical; some warding holds back the river, but the walls themselves are nothing but dark, streaming water. A single corpse floats in the water above a driftwood throne, its arms stuck through to the air bubble below.

The River King enjoys the cool, damp environs of the Great Rippling Hall. Other fey are less keen on the wet floor and permeable walls and ceiling. The lighting here is normal, with moonstones glowing with silver light scattered throughout.

The walls of the Rippling Hall are made of cold river water but are not solid. Creatures may step through them with a successful DC 7 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) check. Moving from air to water requires a Strength (Athletics) check to swim back into the hall or up to the surface. The current carries creatures 15 feet per round downstream on the River King's turn, as determined by the DM.

Whirlpool currents form in the floor wherever the River King wishes; these are all fey doors to the fey river road where the nixies live. They can move creatures around the throne room as well. Any creature entering a whirlpool square slides 10 feet in a direction chosen by the River King, including out into the fey river road. The creature may struggle against the current by spending movement to reduce the distance the current carries it. A creature can be affected by more than one whirlpool on a turn. If the River King attempts to send an affected creature out of the castle and to the fey river road, that creature may attempt a DC 22 Wisdom saving throw to resist.

Creatures: Those present include Ulorian, the River King; Jenny Greenteeth; two greater eel hounds; two river soldiers; and two merrow (hidden in the water walls and not immediately obvious; see the map on page 55).

The hall itself has two sidhe guards in it, but the ruler here is clear. When the PCs approach the River King, read or paraphrase the following:

> A powerful elf wears a cloak of foam-trimmed dark blue and a vest of woven green reeds and willow branches. His crown shines like the sun on a lake, and his flowing hair curls and moves, though there is no wind. Two enormous eel hounds stand silent near him, and an orb of rippling blue light circles his right hand. "I am King Ulorian, the Master of the River," he says. "Why do you trouble my people?"

To stop the destruction of Riverbend, the PCs must first convince the River King that Lord Flax's claim is spurious. Then they must gain his consent to visit the false mill and stop Flax in person, either by duel or by mass combat. The Shadow Fey and the hag Jenny Greenteeth lied to King Ulorian, so he is under the false impression Lord Flax has a legitimate title to the lands of Riverbend.

As Lord Flax tells the story, his mother was the miller's wife, and the fey believe the miller is a figure who rules the river—and thus is clearly the king of Riverbend. It's quite obvious, and the River King sees the sense of it. After all, he had a treaty with the miller Froderick before the treaty was broken and Ellessandra returned some years ago. All this might become obvious to the party in conversation, or it might not.

The River King's Title and Regalia

Only a sidhe or elf may take the River King's title if he is defeated, and odds are extremely good that defeating him means an immediate challenge from Jenny, Sir Arnovar, and others who wish to make sure that no intruder moves in. Taking his regalia out of the Summer Lands weakens anyone who takes the title; both the Crown and the Orb are required for the holder of the River King's title.

ORB OF THE RUSHING FLOOD

When worn, this encapsulates the wearer's hand in a sphere of pulsating blue light.

Effect: This item acts as a *ring of the ram*.

CROWN OF THE RIVER KING

When sat upon the brow, this circlet of sterling silver appears to sway and ripple, like sunlight on a stream.

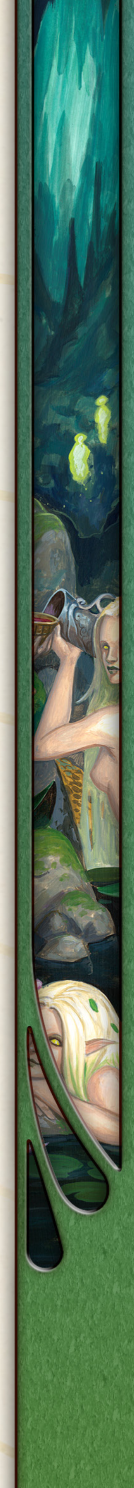
Effect: This crown acts as a *cloak of displacement* and grants the wearer the continuous effects of a *water breathing* spell. It grants advantage to Charisma (Persuasion) checks with sidhe and fey creatures in the Summer Lands. If worn along with the *Orb of the Rushing Flood*, its bearer is the River King and gains Innate Spellcasting abilities as described in his statistics. The character becomes an NPC under the DM's control if both are worn for more than 7 days. Sidhe within the Summer Lands pursue its bearer until it is surrendered.

The PCs can try to talk things around, but if they arrived diplomatically, various other figures will show up who may oppose them. These should be the recurring fey antagonists who have caused the party the most trouble in the adventure, such as:

- Redcoat the Talking Bear
- Oberest the Green Knight, and Illisfan, his squire
- Lady Sorreminx and Sir Ygresse
- The vile gnome Mudflick
- The lorelei or nixies

Any of these NPCs may denounce the PCs as liars, or they may declare the PCs are honorable and fought valiantly against the green dragon Tatzel or against other fey such as Le Nain Rouge. If the PCs fail to correct the king's impression of things, the River King demands they obey Lord Flax's "rightful authority." If they refuse to swear some fealty or at least an oath of non-interference, he throws the party out of the River Court using his whirlpools and sends soldiers to support Lord Flax's assault on Riverbend.

The party must return to the mortal world via the fey roads (most likely through the dragon Tatzel's road, or perhaps by convincing the Birch Queen or Oak King to aid them).



ULORIAN, THE RIVER KING

Medium fey, chaotic neutral

ARMOR CLASS 18 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 152 (16d8 + 80)

SPEED 30 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	17 (+3)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Dex +8, Con +10, Wis +6

SKILLS Intimidation +8, Nature +7, Perception +6, Stealth +8

DAMAGE RESISTANCES fire, cold, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from weapons that aren't cold iron

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES lightning

CONDITION IMMUNITIES exhaustion

SENSES blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

LANGUAGES Common, Elemental, Elvish, Giant

CHALLENGE 16 (15,000 XP)

Amphibious. The River King can breathe air and water.

Innate Spellcasting. The River King's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). The River King can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

At will: *create or destroy water, shocking grasp, water breathing*

3/day: *freedom of movement, control water*

1/day: *chain lightning*

Legendary Resistance (3/day). If the River King fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Weapons. The River King's weapon attacks are magical and do an extra 11 (3d6) lightning damage (included below).

Actions

Multiattack. The River King makes three attacks with his longsword and/or flood blast, in any combination.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) slashing damage or 11 (1d10 + 5) slashing damage if used with two hands, plus 11 (3d6) lightning damage.

Flood Blast. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +8 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (4d8) bludgeoning damage. A target creature must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone and pushed up to 60 feet at the River King's choosing.

Grasping Whirlpool (Recharge 5–6). The River King magically creates a swirling vortex of water centered on a point he can see within 60 feet. The vortex fills a cylinder with a 10-foot radius and 15 feet high. Creatures in the area must make a successful DC 16 Strength saving throw or take 11 (2d10) bludgeoning damage and be restrained and unable to breathe. On a successful save, the creature is pushed to the edge of the area. A restrained creature can escape from the whirlpool by using an action to make a successful DC 16 Strength check. A creature that's in the whirlpool at the end of its turn takes 11 (2d10) bludgeoning damage in addition to any effects from being unable to breathe. Creatures with a swim speed have advantage on the saving throw and the Strength check to escape. The whirlpool lasts for 1 minute or until the River King uses this ability again.

Reactions

Blade Current. When a creature within the River King's melee reach stands up from prone, the River King can make a longsword attack on that creature with advantage.

Legendary Actions

The River King can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The River King regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Longsword. The River King makes a longsword attack.

Flow. The River King moves half his speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Ripple (2 Actions). The River King magically ripples like sunlight on the surface of water. Until the start of his next turn, all attacks against him have disadvantage.

JENNY GREENTEETH (ELDER MARSH HAG)

Medium fey, chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 17 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 136 (16d8 + 64)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)

SKILLS Arcana +5, Deception +6, Perception +5, Stealth +4

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, frightened, poisoned

LANGUAGES Common, Elven, Giant, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 7 (2,900 XP)

Amphibious. Jenny can breathe both air and water.

Immutable Form. Jenny is immune to any power, other than her own, that would change her shape or alter her form.

Innate Spellcasting. Jenny Greenteeth's innate Spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *chill touch, command, friends, invisibility, minor illusion, poison spray*

3/day: *arms of Hadar, charm person, detect thoughts, ray of sickness, suggestion*

1/day: *bestow curse, conjure woodland beings, counterspell*

Magic Resistance. Jenny has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects

Mimicry. Jenny can mimic animal sounds and humanoid voices. A creature that can hear these sounds can tell they are imitations on a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) check.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Jenny makes 2 claw attacks.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage and 7 (2d6) poison damage.

Bogwater (Recharge 5–6). Jenny can spew regurgitated swamp-water, algae and mud in a 10 ft. vomitous cone. Each creature in that area must succeed at a DC 15 Dexterity check to avoid being spattered with the leech-infested bile and acquiring the blinded condition for 1 round. Any affected target creature that does not spend 1 additional turn to remove the leeches must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw each turn to avoid acquiring 1 level of exhaustion.

Swamp Fever. If both Jenny's claw attacks damage the same target creature, the target must succeed at a DC 16 Constitution saving throw to avoid acquiring the poisoned condition.

EEL HOUND PACK LEADERS (2)

CHALLENGE 2 (450 XP)

See page 19.

KING'S SOLDIERS (2)

CHALLENGE 1/2 (100 XP)

See page 54.

MERROW (2)

CHALLENGE 2 (450 XP)

See page 52.

TREASURE: The River Court is full of treasure rooms filled with silver and gold, halls decorated with tapestries woven with mithral and pure light, and foes that carry weapons of elf silver and wear sidhe chain shirts. Play up the wealth of the court but also how many elements are illusion and glamour.

Parties making their stealthy way through the court may find one such tower room to loot. Most of these treasures fade into ice and melt when removed from the Summer Lands. The DM should choose one item per PC that remains whole, ideally one of the following options:

- A Treasure from the River Court (worth 1,800 gp).
- A mithral necklace with an enchanted, pulsing star-emerald pendant that has 3 charges and regains 1d3 charges daily at dawn. Each charge expended allows the wearer to cast *water walk*.
- A suit of *+2 mithral armor* (tailored to the group)
- A *wand of web*
- A *+2 vicious sword* (tailored to the group) fashioned of magical, unmelting ice (treat as a silvered or cold iron weapon).

DUEL IN THE COURT

If the party convinces King Ulorian that Lord Flax is mad and that there is no rightful claim on mortal lands by a miller or by a half-elf, he is content to call off the attack.

However, others are not so quick to give up their schemes, in particular Mistress Greenteeth.

CREATURE: Jenny Greenteeth challenges the party to a duel—or rather, she challenges one of their number. She prefers to pick on a creature that seems weak: a halfling rather than a dragonborn, or an unarmored wizard rather than a fully girded paladin.

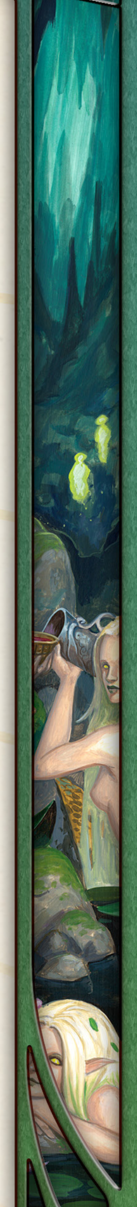
If the PCs trigger this duel, read or paraphrase the following:

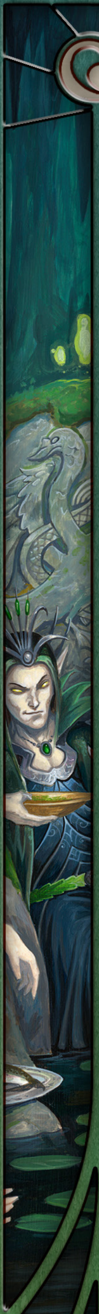
> A beautiful sidhe woman who could be Ellesandra's sister steps forward from near the king's throne and points at you. "They are not fey! They are no servants of yours, Your Majesty. I challenge the little one to defend his friends in combat, with the loser to serve the victor for a week and a day. It is only right they prove themselves worthy of speech with royal blood."

A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the sidhe challenger is not what she appears; her voice is deeper than a sidhe's normal voice. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals the fey around the courtroom are a little more eager than they should be to witness this duel. There's real anticipation in the court.

If the challenge is accepted, she chooses Sir Oberest (if he still lives), Sir Yngress (if Oberest has been defeated), or a merrow named Bloodeye as her second to step forward if her foe should engage in trickery or she is slain. When the fight begins, read or paraphrase the following:

> Your challenger smiles and her shape shifts: she now has wild puffball hair, long arms ending in clawed hands, and a set of green, snaggly teeth glistening like pond scum.





If possible, she wants the fight to be in the watery section of the room; she knows the River King's whirlpools will prevent others from interfering in the fight.

The River King stays out of the fight directly, unless one of his soldiers is killed. At that point, he attacks the person who attacked his feudal vassal (to exact revenge), and begins throwing people out, using whirlpools to push them out to the fey river road.

Whirlpool currents form in the floor wherever the River King wishes; these are all fey doors to the fey river road where the nixies live. They can move creatures around the throne room as well. Any creature entering a whirlpool square slides 10 feet in a direction chosen by the River King, including out into the fey river road.

The creature may struggle against the current by spending movement to reduce the distance the current carries it. A creature can be affected by more than one whirlpool on a turn. If the River King attempts to send an affected creature out of the castle and to the fey river road, that creature may make a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw to resist this transportation.

Development: If the party defeats Jenny Greenteeth, the River King asks the party to bring word to Lord Flax and his army at the mill that the attack on Riverbend is off.

THE SIEGE OF THE FALSE MILL

XP Threshold: 8,250

The last threats the party must face are Lord Flax's forces gathered at a fey version of the real mill. It should prove to be a very challenging combat for the characters. The false mill is really an empty engine of industry that imitates human conventions. The River King grinds wood to sawdust and is surprised when his bakers cannot give him proper bread.

The young Lord Flax uses the false mill as a staging ground to leave the Summer Lands and run rampant in Riverbend. The connection through the millpond is a fey road leading directly to Riverbend.

Creatures: When the PCs approach the false mill, read:

> There's a large shape in the dark woods, illuminated by the flickering light of fireflies and fey lanterns. It is a stone-and-timber building right up against the river. A rough wooden dam of logs and mud holds back the water, and a huge millwheel turns slowly. This mill looks remarkably like the one in Riverbend, though the dam is different, and so is the raiding party gathered near the shore of the millpond. A couple ettercaps are the tallest, but you also see Shadow Fey with their tall swords, several sidhe with bows, plus a single mounted rider: a young half-elf with golden hair. That rider's eyes burn a cold blue, the color of cornflowers. Eight blue-fletched arrows shoot from the windows of the mill and land near your feet. He shouts: "That's a warning shot. Trouble us no further."

If the party tries to negotiate, a successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check may make Flax listen, briefly, while he and his troops cross over the dam to a better tactical position.

If the PCs draw steel and ready spells, Flax says the following:

> "We have waited long years! Now, we burn the humans out of their huts and take their land! We will spill their blood for the River King!"

A successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the young Lord looks a lot like a grown-up version of the "child" the PCs saw at the mill in Riverbend. A successful DC 21 Intelligence (Nature) check makes a PC realize the fey the party has already met seem very keen on single combat. So, it stands to reason, perhaps the leader could be convinced to stand in for his whole army.

Lord Flax is delighted to duel a single foe. If he is defeated, the remaining fey retreat, reluctantly abandoning the idea of conquering Riverbend.

LORD FLAX (SIDHE NOBLE)

Medium fey, neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 15

HIT POINTS 91 (14d8 + 28)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	15(+2)	13 (+1)	18 (+4)

SKILLS Animal Handling +4, Deception +7, Perception +4, Stealth +8

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

LANGUAGES Common, Elven, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 5 (1,800 XP)

Umbral Frailty. A sidhe in dim illumination or worse rolls all attack, skill-check and saving throws at disadvantage.

Innate Spellcasting. Flax's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

At will: *blade ward, disguise self*

3/day: *entangle, faerie fire, hunter's mark*

1/day: *haste*

Actions

Multiattack. Lord Flax makes 2 melee attacks.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d8 + 2) slashing damage and 6 (1d10) poison damage. Flax's greatsword is coated with enough toxin for 5 successful attacks.

Pommel Strike. On a successful greatsword attack, Lord Flax's current target must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to avoid being knocked prone.

Whirling Multiattack. When Flax succeeds at a greatsword attack that does not include a pommel strike, half the damage delivered to the target is also applied to all enemies within 5 feet of the target.

Fey Leap. As an action, Flax may "leap" between spaces as if by *dimension door*. This magical transport must begin and end within 20 ft. of some illumination. He can "jump" up to a total of 20 ft. per day in 10 ft. increments (*i.e.*, 2 10-ft. leaps or 1 20-ft. leap per day). Using this ability with a mount brings the mount along as part of the movement.

LIONHEART, FEY-TOUCHED WARHORSE

CHALLENGE 1/2 (100 XP)

See page 15.

ETTERCAPS (2)

CHALLENGE 2 (450 XP)

See page 47.

SIDHE ARCHERS (KING'S SOLDIERS) (10)

CHALLENGE 1/2 (100 XP)

See page 54.

SHADOW FEY BRIGANDS (5)

CHALLENGE 1/4 (50 XP)

See page 26.

THE SECOND WAVE AT THE MILL

XP Threshold: 7,800

If Lord Flax is not defeated in a single-combat duel during the initial siege, he rides away the moment any member of the party enters the mill or if the party defeats all minions outside the mill; he may also retreat into the mill by stepping onto the waterwheel and letting it lift him up to the second floor. This is a perfect opportunity for the party to catch their breath, cast some healing magic, and possibly even take a short rest.

The millpond shore is muddy and quickly becomes deep. Any shove attack can push a creature over into the water.

In the mill itself, the shuttered embrasures provide three-quarters cover to archers. The stream in the millpond counts as difficult terrain because of its depth. Getting out requires a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check; those wearing heavy armor who fail this check sink into the pond and may begin to drown.

The millpond is created by a mill dam, which is a rough mass of sticks and logs at the top and muddy along its entire length. Water spills over the top if the river is running high. The top is difficult terrain. Creatures struck while standing on the dam must make a DC 13 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. If the check fails, the creature falls into the stream below the millpond, taking 1d6 damage from the fall and requiring a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check to swim to shore.

Creatures: Lord Flax returns with a second wave of attackers. When he does so, read or paraphrase the following:

> You hear the fey knight's shout and the river roars in answer. The water rises up, foaming and boiling with bubbles—and the central 10-foot section of the dam gives way. As the water rushes through, a sidhe, a couple of Shadow Fey, and two merrow come out of the water, howling for your blood.

The party may try to negotiate if they are badly wounded and did not get a short rest. Flax allows this but does not offer a lot of concessions. His father must acknowledge his claim to the land and all competing claims (that is, the Reeve Kolya) must be exiled or killed.

A reconciliation with his father might convince him to avoid a bloody slaughter, but that sort of negotiation is best left to the DM's discretion. Froderick probably has no idea that he has a son (much less a half-fey raider with an inferiority complex), and he will be somewhat terrified by the army. Let the PCs do the talking for him; they're the heroes.

If Lord Flax still lives, he returns from the forest on his horse, urging his followers on. If he was pretending to have been slain, or if he was captured, he uses a fey leap to gain some distance and attempts to remount his warhorse (or a new one made of river foam).

If the party retreats, Ambertan will surely track them down.

AMBERTAN THE WARLOCK

Medium humanoid (shadow fey), neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 15

HIT POINTS 72 (11d8 +22)

SPEED 30 ft.

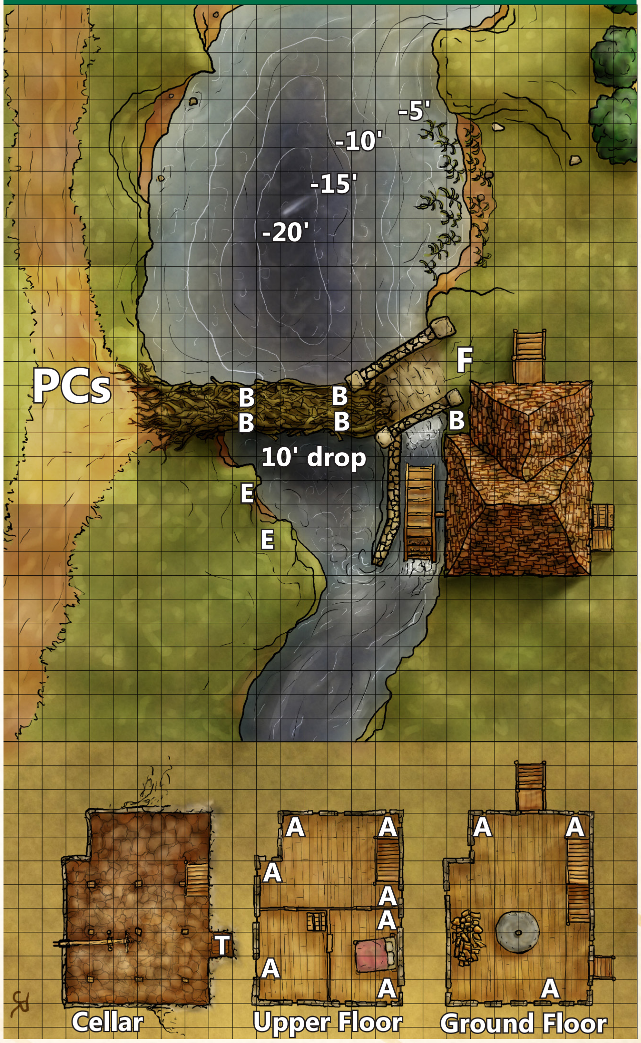
STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)

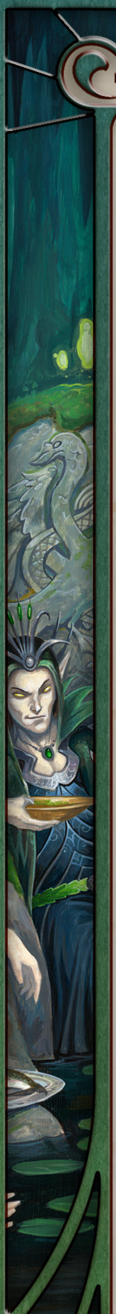
SAVING THROWS Dex +7, Wis +3, Cha +6

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic, Elven, Umbral

CHALLENGE 4 (1,100 XP)

SIEGE OF THE FALSE MILL





Fey Ancestry. Ambertan has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put him to sleep.

Innate Spellcasting. Ambertan's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma. He can cast the following spells innately, requiring no material components.

1/day: *misty step* (when in shadows, dim light, or darkness only)

Spellcasting. Ambertan is a 6th-level spellcaster. his spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). He has two 4th-level slots which he regains after a short rest, and knows the following warlock spells:

Cantrips (at will): *eldritch blast, poison spray, true strike*

1st level: *armor of Agathys, arms of Hadar, protection from evil and good*

2nd level: *cloud of daggers, crown of madness*

3rd level: *fly*

4th level: *blight*

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, Ambertan has disadvantage on attack rolls and on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Traveler in Darkness. Ambertan has advantage on Intelligence (Arcana) checks made to know about shadow roads and shadow magic spells or items.

MERROW (2)

CHALLENGE 2 (450 XP)

See page 52.

SHADOW FEY BRIGANDS (2)

CHALLENGE 1/4 (50 XP)

See page 26.

Treasure: The party finds little at the false mill unless they look very, very carefully indeed. The millstone seems to grind acorns into acorn flour and wood into sawdust; chests are filled with both. The sawdust, however, is really gold dust obscured by illusion. A DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check sees through that illusion. The gold is worth 270 gp, but taking it certainly makes an enemy of the River King.

If the party did not steal a treasure from the River Court (see page 61), Lord Flax's blade turns into the magical sword Iceriver. The sword is a *+2 vicious greatsword* made of unmelting ice (treat as a silvered or cold-iron weapon).

Designer's Note

It's anticlimactic to initiate this twist/duel by a die roll; it would be much better if the players came up with it themselves. However, I think it's heavy-handed to have Lord Flax mention it; he's not the type who fights fair, really. Why should he give up his numerical advantage? If a player does come up with it, award that character a story award of 500 XP, regardless of the duel's outcome, and award the total XP for all the creatures at the mill to the party, even though they were not all defeated by conventional means.

Development: If the party cannot defeat Lord Flax (or is too cowardly to fight him), the raiders wade into the millpond and disappear, going to burn Riverbend. The party can return the same way by swimming into the millpond and touching the millstone. Even if they do defeat the fey lord and his troops, the whole area is bound by Flax's ritual. With the dawn, the false mill becomes the real mill, and the party is transported to Riverbend. The villagers come out of their huts and go to the fields, ready for another day of toil and sweat. Froderick and Kolya are excited to see the PCs back; only a night has passed since they disappeared, after all.

If Ellessandra gave the PCs her ring and note, the Reeve Kolya accepts it as proof she is not dead, on the PCs' sworn oath. Froderick is set free; see the Conclusion section.

CONCLUSION

If the party dissuades the River King from sending his army (or defeats Jenny in single combat) and then defeats or kills young Lord Flax, they may step through any fey door to find themselves back at the peaceful millpond. Alternately, they may arrive there from the false mill, if they pursued Lord Flax to the mercenary camp. Ellessandra stands on the shore by the reeds, weeping. "My son is dead [dishonored], and you are the cause. You have my child's blood on your hands. Yet it would have been worse if he had come to claim his title here. Leave Riverbend. Leave, and never return."

QUEST REWARDS

If the PCs proved to Kolya that Froderick did not kill his wife and saved him from execution, award each of them 500 XP. If they stopped the invasion and turned aside the wrath of the River King, award them each an additional 1,000 XP. Froderick himself is true to his word and gives the party 100 gp each and a miller's blessing. They also each gain a single fey boon, which takes the form of a small pouch of silvery flour and can be used once to teleport a creature up to 25 feet away to a place with line of effect and line of sight as a bonus action. He cannot truly grieve for a son he never knew, but he is profoundly grateful the PCs brought Ellessandra back to him.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

The PCs now have friends and enemies in Riverbend and in the Summer Lands.

The fey, in particular, have long memories. They carry grudges and debts with them for decades, much longer than most human lives. The party might meet up with Jenny Greenteeth again and might meet Ellessandra's relatives, bitter about the loss of her half-elven son. Other fey-oriented adventures include *Courts of the Shadow Fey*, available from Kobold Press.

Appendix A: Courtiers of the River Court

The following NPCs will be found in attendance at the River King's Court.

LADY BUDENA

Draped in a gown of bronze willow boughs and trailing a constellation of fireflies, this sultry brunette feeds the King's jealousy with her regular attempts to seduce newcomers to his court; each conquest is justification for another tryst.

THE LADY BUDENA

Medium humanoid (lorelei), chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 16 (19 *mage armor*)

HIT POINTS 94 (11d8 + 44)

SPEED 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (–1)	22 (+6)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	24 (+7)

SAVING THROWS Dex +9, Wis +7, Cha +10

SKILLS Arcana +6, Deception +10, Insight +7, Perception +7, Persuasion +10

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

LANGUAGES Common, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 7 (2,900 XP)

Special Equipment. Lady Budena carries a *+2 silver dagger.*

Alluring Presence. All humanoids within 30 feet of Lady Budena who look directly at her must succeed on a DC 18 Charisma saving throw or be drawn to her in the most direct path, regardless of the danger. This compulsion fades once the person gets within 5 feet of her. A creature can avoid this effect for one full round by choosing to avert its eyes at the start of its turn, but it then has disadvantage on any attacks or other rolls directed against Lady Budena until the start of its next turn. Lady Budena can suppress or resume this ability as a bonus action. Anyone who successfully saves against this effect cannot be affe by it from Lady Budena for 24 hours.

Unearthly Grace. Lady Budena applies her Charisma modifier to all her saving throws in place of the normal ability modifier.

Water Spirit. Lady Budena is under the effect of *freedom of movement* whenever she is in contact with a body of water.

Spellcasting. Lady Budena is a 9th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (Spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). Lady Budena has the following sorcerer spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, mage hand, poison spray, ray of frost, true strike*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, ray of sickness, shield, witch bolt*

2nd level (3 slots): *invisibility*

3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic, protection from energy*

4th level (3 slots): *confusion, dominate beast, polymorph*

5th level (1 slot): *insect plague*

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d4 + 6) piercing damage.

Charm. Lady Budena targets one humanoid she can see within 30 feet of her. If the target can see or hear her, it must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or be charmed by Lady Budena. The charmed target regards her as its one, true love, to be heeded and protected. Although the target isn't under the Lady Budena's control, it takes her requests or actions in the most favorable way it can.

Each time Lady Budena or her companions cause the target to take damage, directly or indirectly, it repeats the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. Otherwise, the effect lasts 24 hours or until Lady Budena is killed, is on a different plane of existence than the target, or takes a bonus action to end the effect.

Stunning Glance. Lady Budena mentally disrupts a creature within 30 feet with a look. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or be stunned for 2 rounds. Anyone who successfully saves against this effect cannot be affected by it from Lady Budena for 24 hours.

Firefly Storm. The scintillating cloud of fireflies and fairy-lights that delicately mantle Lady Budena's presence are not for adornment alone. She can mentally command her "cloud" to instantly occupy any 20-ft. cube within 60 feet of her that she can see. Any creature caught inside the cloud's radius is affected by *faerie fire* and takes 5 (1d8) piercing damage. Targets must then succeed at a DC 14 Constitution saving throw to avoid the blinded condition (50%) or the poisoned condition (50%). Lady Budena can mentally move the cloud up to 30 ft. to another space she can see for a second attack. Afterwards, the cloud dissipates and Lady Budena must complete a short rest before using this ability again.

WICKERBELL

A demure brownie with myriad braids and a love for luxurious fabrics, she seems trustworthy and pleasant, keeping many courtiers' counsel.

WICKERBELL

Tiny fey, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 15 (18 *mage armor*)

HIT POINTS 72 (13d4 + 39)

SPEED 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)	18 (+4)

SAVING THROWS Dex +8, Wis +6, Cha +7

SKILLS Acrobatics +8, Perception +6, Stealth +8

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

LANGUAGES Common, Elven, Gnome, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 6 (2,300)

Special Equipment. Wickerbell always has her *+1 shortsword* and a *wand of wonder* in her possession. Wickerbell is never without her escort of 1–2 giant honeybees and can nearly always be found mounted on the back of one of them.

Innate Spellcasting. Wickerbell's natural spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15). She casts the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *alter self, prestidigitation*

3/day: *mage armor, shillelagh*

1/ day: *haste* (self only), *invisibility* (self only)

Spellcasting. Wickerbell is a 7th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). Wickerbell has the following druid spells prepared, requiring no material components:

Cantrips (at will): *poison spray, resistance, thorn whip*

1st level: *cure wounds, entangle, faerie fire, speak with animals*

2nd level: *heat metal, flame blade, hold person*

3rd level: *conjure animals, dispel magic, speak with plants*

4th level: *giant insect* (bees only)

Child of the Summer Lands. Wickerbell has advantage on all saving throws versus sleep and charm and to any immobilizing spells or magical effects.

Inconspicuous. Wikerbell has advantage on all Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide.

ACTIONS

+1 Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d6 + 6) piercing damage.

Fey Leap. As an action, Wickerbell may jump between spaces as if by *dimension door*. This magical transport must begin and end within 20 ft. of some illumination. She can "jump" up to 20 ft. per day in 10-ft. increments (*i.e.*, two 10-ft. leaps or one 20-ft. leap per day). Using this ability with a mount brings the mount along as part of the movement.

SUMMER LANDS HONEYBEE

Medium beast, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 13 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 28 (5d8 + 5)

SPEED 10 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	7(–2)	10 (+0)	7 (–2)

SENSES passive Perception 10

LANGUAGES understands Sylvan but does not speak

CHALLENGE 1/2 (100 XP)

ACTIONS

Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

FANGS-IN-SHADE-AND-RUSHES

A lanky and grim ogre with a belt of severed hands, This consummate hunter can always track down any quarry demanded by his lord. Fangs harbors an openly secret love for the King's youngest daughter, Ripple, who toys with his emotions by asking for exotic and near impossible prey.

FANGS-IN-SHADE-AND-RUSHES

Large giant (ogre), chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 15 (breastplate)

HIT POINTS 112 (12d10 + 46)

SPEED 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	7(–2)

SAVING THROWS Str +9, Dex +4, Con +7

SKILLS Athletics +9, Nature +6, Perception +6, Stealth +7, Survival +6

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

LANGUAGES Common, Giant

CHALLENGE 5 (1,800 XP)

Special Equipment. Fangs wears a *cloak of elvenkind* and a mithral breastplate (250 gp) and carries a *+1 greatclub* and a *potion of speed*.

Schooled in the Summer Lands. Fangs doubles his proficiency bonus and makes all rolls at advantage for any Nature, Perception, Stealth or Survival related checks made while in the wilds of the Summer Lands.

Actions

+1 Greatclub. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d8 + 7) bludgeoning damage.

Javelins (6). *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack*: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., or range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6 + 6) piercing damage.

KNURLNAP, THE WATER BEARER

This old but brawny human is bowed down by the weight of an enormous silver tea-urn strapped to his back. Cast in silver, this ornate vessel is awash with filigree and elegant reliefs. Spigots are set into its circumference and flagons dangle from silver chains.

KNURLAPP THE WATER BEARER

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic neutral

ARMOR CLASS 11

HIT POINTS 52 (8d8 + 16)

SPEED 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

SAVING THROWS Str +4, Con +4

SKILLS Athletics +4, Perception +2

SENSES passive Perception 12

LANGUAGES Common, Elven, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 2 (450 XP)

Cursed Silver Urn. This silver tea urn is always full and produces any non-magical beverage on command of its wearer, from spring water to wine to piping hot tea. It weighs 300 lbs. and always counts as a heavy load. The urn can only be removed if someone honestly agrees to carry it instead of the current wearer. It produces magical effects and attacks and operates outside the Summer Lands only by the express will of the River King.

Actions

Gushing Geyser (Cursed Urn). *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +3 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (3d4 + 1) bludgeoning damage and 12 (3d6 + 1) fire damage (scalding tea). Target must succeed at a DC 14 Dexterity check to avoid being knocked prone. A 20-foot-long, 1-foot-wide stream at 50 gallons per round sprays forth from the urn.

Silver Chalice. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

SIR LIJON TROUTSCALES

Sir Lijon Troutscales, the silver-maned sidhe and king's knight, is a veteran duelist with a penchant for provoking foes. His impeccable scarlet and silver livery is woven with mithral fish-scales and contrasts sharply with his stark and utilitarian rapiers. Sir Lijon loves finding the unintended insults in the words of those who address him or his king, and demands satisfaction by blade. He has been cast out of the Inner Court for excessive dueling many times, but a few courtiers and rakes consider him a hero.

SIR LIJON TROUTSCALES

Medium fey (sidhe), neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 16 (scale mail)

HIT POINTS 66 (12d8 + 12)

SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

SAVING THROWS Dex +7, Int +3, Cha +6

SKILLS Arcana +3, Athletics +4, Deception +6, Perception +4, Persuasion +6

DAMAGE RESISTANCE piercing

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

LANGUAGES Common, Elven, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 3 (700 XP)

Special Equipment. Sir Lijon wears magical scarlet and silver scale mail that provides damage resistance against nonmagical piercing damage, and he wields a *dagger of venom*. He also carries an ornamental mithral, silver, and moonstone dueling-dirk worth 200 gp.

Umbral Frailty. In dim illumination or worse, Sir Lijon rolls all saving throws, skill checks, and attack rolls at disadvantage.

Innate Spellcasting. Sir Lijon's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14). He may cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *disguise self*

3/day: *entangle, hunter's mark*

1/day: *glibness* (self only), *haste* (self only)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Sir Lijon makes two melee attacks, one with his rapier and one with his dagger.

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +7 to hit, range 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d8 + 5) piercing damage.

Dagger of Venom. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +7 to hit, range 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d4 + 5) piercing damage. Sir Lijon can use an action to cause poison to coat the blade. The poison remains for 1 minute or until Sir Lijon hits a creature with it. That creature must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 11 (2d10) poison damage and become poisoned for 1 minute. The dagger can't be used this way again until the next dawn.

Fey Leap. As an action, Sir Lijon may jump between spaces as if by *dimension door*. This magical transport must begin and end within 20 ft. of some illumination. He can "jump" up to 20 ft. per day in 10-ft. increments (*i.e.*, two 10-ft. leaps or one 20-ft. leap per day). Using this ability with a mount brings the mount along as part of the movement.

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FACE the RIVER'S FURY!

In the small hamlet of Riverbend, the miller's wife is missing, and the locals suspect the husband himself was involved. But all is far from what it seems. Ellessandra, the missing woman, is actually an elf from the Summer Lands. She came to live in the human settlement when the miller made a dangerous pact with the River King, the lands' powerful sidhe ruler.

Now, the player characters must unravel the truth behind Ellessandra's disappearance, piece together the involvement of a young fey lord, and dive into the fey courts of the Summer Lands to stop a raid that would surely spell Riverbend's doom. All the while, Arthurian intrigue and mischief runs high among the fey lords and ladies in this mercurial, open-format adventure from acclaimed adventure designer Wolfgang Baur!

This 5th Edition adventure for 5th- through 7th-level characters is full of hijinks and trickery, and fits nicely into any campaign setting in which fey are regal. Their courtly plots are dangerous and will test bold adventurers' skills to the limit!

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