

Nice Weather for Fish



by Dan Sumption

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an adventure by Daniel Sumption
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Background

It is the day of the Spring fair, on the first day of Spring, in the village of Hope Springs at the top of the Hope Valley. The fairground is laid out in a large field by the river. The well-dressing around the springs feature fantastic beasts made of thousands of small flowers. There are colourful stalls selling trinkets, charms, and snacks—greasy buns, crusty meat pasties, fluffy brown candyfloss, and large mugs of what appears to be mud. Entertainments include puppet shows, cross-dressers, and mummers' plays. There are tests of skill and luck, a fortune teller, a beauty contest, even a stall where folks attempt to knock strange hairy wooden balls called "coconuts" off their stands. In fenced off areas along one side of the field, farmers from the surrounding valley show off their best sheep and cattle. Nearby there are cockfights, pig rides, ram-bothering, and a dancing bear (the latter keeps on eyeing the ram hungrily). Pickpockets weave their way through the crowd, some more obvious than others. Fairground folks' colourful wagons skirt the southern edge of the field, along the Peaksole Water.

Players: read no further!

Overview

Spring brings floods, and this Spring brings flood not quite like any other. Within moments, the happy village of Hope Springs will be transformed into a quagmire.

But this flood is not just made of normal water. Ten miles upstream, an elemental creature called a waterling lurks in a lake deep inside a cave. This 'ling is tens of thousands of years old - an aeonling—and it grows, and sometimes shrinks, over time. Every few thousand years some freak event makes it grow beyond all comprehension, and today is just such a day. Expanding to fill the river many miles downstream, the 'ling grabs eagerly at anything in its watery path, before hauling the flotsam back to its watery lair.

Today it has managed to grab a little girl who was innocently enjoying the pleasures of the fair. The players' task is to make their way up the Peaksole Water to rescue the missing child.

If you require hooks to Who doesn't love a fair? Especially this one, the biggest annual gathering in the valley. You should be able to come up with plenty of reasons why the players want to visit the fair, perhaps they wish to sell something themselves, perhaps they are looking for a former patron/long-lost cousin/person who owes them money, and have come to find them. Perhaps they just like the idea of going to the fair.

GM Notes

My campaign is not like yours. This is not a high fantasy world. It is set within a version of England's Peak District in around 999AD, and so many of the later innovations which populate most RPGs—plate mail, firearms, fancy shops selling exotic potions—play no part here.

There are also no orcs or elves (although there are other species of hominid whose evolution has taken a different path from homo sapiens'—more of them later). There is precious little magic, most of which comes from faeries. All of this is reflected in the adventure.

Perhaps most importantly, money is a rarity. Within a small community, all transactions rely on keeping a mental note of who owes what to whom, with debts being settle up months or perhaps years later. Sales to strangers may take the form of barter or promissory notes. The only coins common folk are ever likely to see or use are Otes, flat discs of beaten copper. Sure, gold sovereigns exist, but only rich folk will ever see one. Ten Otes—or Ø10—is about enough to buy basic food and board for a week.

If you are running this adventure as part of your own campaign, you will almost certainly want to boost the levels of treasure. Turn Otes into Gold Pieces, multiply them by ten, a hundred, a thousand... I don't mind. You do you.

I'm also not sure quite what kind of gaming system I'm writing this for. I'm thinking some sort of D&D/OSRish type of thing but... you decide.

Scene 1: Some of the Fun of the Fair

Read the description given in the background. You may wish to play through the events of the day—allow players to try their chance at a test of skill (archery, perhaps, or arm-wrestling), have them spot and chase a pickpocket, let them browse through some of the more esoteric goods on offer, or just go for a ride on a pig's back.

Towards the end of the day, the sky darkens quite suddenly and the light changes to make the surrounding countryside look unnatural, washed over with an opalescent grey sheen. Some of the revellers notice this, and the background noise changes from one of loud celebration to a fearful, hushed anticipation. Gusts of wind begin to shake the trees and the newly budded leaves. A mineral smell fills the air.

As the players are taking this in, a fish lands on one of them. Sounds of plopping and slapping pop up everywhere, and within seconds there are fish falling all over. Amid fear and confusion, people run in panic or stand rooted to the ground.

After less than a minute, the fish stop falling. They lie all over the fairground, twitching helplessly like... fish out of water.

There is moment of silence. Everyone stands stunned. Then a rumbling background noise begins, growing louder, and louder, and louder. And louder. Anyone looking to the West will see a huge cloud of fog advance rapidly towards the village.

Suddenly the river becomes a tidal wave washing downstream. It bursts its banks, knocking and crushing the tents and caravans pitched along its side. There is panic as the villagers run to get away from it, while some remain standing frozen, staring, at the overwhelming awe of this unprecedented event.

As quickly as the flood appears, it reverses its flow and somehow retreats back upstream, carrying flotsam and jetsam with it. The rumbling heads back where it came from. Waves lap across the fairground, fish lie on the ground and in the trees, along with branches, rocks, uprooted plants, all manner of detritus. The river bed is empty, save for a few black pools of water. The entire river seems to have uprooted itself and marched back up to its source.

The crowd remains largely silent, until a child's heartbreaking sobs erupt from close to the river. A small boy screams "mummy! MUMMY!" A woman rushes towards his crying "Finn! FINN!", and she sweeps him up into her arms. A small crowd gathers around them. The people around rediscover

their voices, there are wails, cries, curses, and shouts of disbelief, as slowly the river begins to trickle and flow back downstream.

If the players investigate, they will discover that little Finn, only four years old, has lost his sister. “I fell in the water mummy, but Minno got me out. Then Minno fell in the water. Then the water went away, and Minno went away with it, and I was scared. I’m very very scared, mummy”. It transpires that Finn’s six year old sister Minno has been swept away upstream along with the flood.

Gradually the river returns to its normal rate of flow. If it weren’t for all of the chaos scattered all around—the rocks and trees, the pools of water, the stranded fish, the tents and wagons lying prone—then it would be almost as though nothing had changed.

Finn and Minno’s mother Dace Sprat turns to the players. “Please. Help me. Find my daughter. Please.”

Scene 2: Finding Minno

The players will now (hopefully) want to head upriver in search of Minno Sprat.

Every 27 minutes, roll for a random encounter, with a 1 in 4 chance of *something* happening. Use the encounter tables in **Appendix B—Encounters**.

Daylight at this time of year lasts from 6am to 6pm, with an hour of crepuscular light either side. As the players will be setting off around 6pm, and the longer Minno remains unfound, the less hope there can be for her survival, it seems sensible to push on through the darkness.

Travel

Due to the huge wave, there is standing water everywhere. Bridges are down, and roads washed away or falling apart. Large areas are unpassable or extremely boggy. There is also debris everywhere: tangles of wood, rocks carried by the water, and fish. Everywhere there are dead and dying fish.

Road

This is a simple dirt track, but relatively smooth and risk-free. However the road has been completely washed away in places, and the players will have to negotiate marshy ground to continue.

Marsh

The river's flooding has greatly expanded existing marshy areas. Travel through these areas is at 50% of normal speed. If the players try to travel any faster than this, they must make a Strength save every 10 minutes or sink into the bog. Any character sunk in the bog may make a further Strength save, at disadvantage, the next turn, or they are gone for good. Up to two other characters may try to help to pull the person out of the bog, requiring them to make a Strength save to succeed. If they fail, they must make another Strength save or be dragged in themselves.

Bridges

All but one of the bridges have been destroyed by the flood. The players will have to find some other way to cross the river.

River

It is not possible to travel upstream by boat, the water is too fast, shallow, and rocky. The players may be able to cross the river by boat, if they can find or make one—all of the rivers are around 50' wide at bridge locations. Rowing across requires that at least two characters succeed a Strength save to keep the boat on course, otherwise the boat will be swept downstream and broken up on the rocks.

In the water itself there are pike, blood-sucking eels, and giant leeches. These are unlikely to prove fatal, but will sap the players' strength if swimming or wading across.

Further up the smaller tributaries of the river it is possible to wade across, but this entails the same risks as moving too quickly through marsh country, above.

Occasionally the players may spot a scrap of child's clothing, caught on a rock in the River.

Lake

In the centre of the map is a lake. It is possible to row boats across it. Within the waters of the lake lie the same dangers as are in the rivers, but the pike and eels are larger, the leeches hungrier.

Plains/Hills/Woods

Characters can move through these terrains at 75% of normal speed. If they try to move any faster, they must make a Dexterity save every ten minutes, or fall and suffer 1-2 damage.

Cliffs

The cliffs around the edge of the map cannot easily be climbed. Wherever a river meets a cliff, except for the two caves, the river either emerges from a spring or falls down the cliff as a waterfall.



Locations

1: The search party

Stood by the wrecked bridge is another party searching for Minno. They are at a complete loss as to how to cross the water. The search party are initially wary of the players, but they may be persuaded to help or join forces if the party can win them around.

The party consists of:

Bran Bleaklow

Local poultry farmer aged 40, with an elaborate moustache and dressed in a dull yellow guano-stained smock. At 5'5" and 269lbs, Bran is rather overweight. He moves slowly, and constantly complains about chafing. When travelling with him, the party's movement rate will be reduced by 50%. Normal movement is possible for up to 30 minutes, after which Bran will collapse, exhausted, for another to minutes. As the oldest of the group, Bran acts as the natural leader. However, he is very timid, and will hang back from any combat, only fighting if directly attacked.

Str:12 Dex:5 Con:18 Int:11 Wis:7 Cha:13

Armour: none / HD 2 / HP 18 / Attack: Club, 1-4 dmg

Thad Bolsterstone

Labourer aged 19, buff as hell but with an extreme acne problem. Thad is extremely keen to prove himself, and will offer advice (unfailingly wrong or dangerous) whenever possible. Thad is even more timid than Bran, and will flee at the first sign of violence or threat thereof. He also has an allergy to the dark, and will sneeze repeatedly and very loudly when exposed to darkness.

Str:16 Dex:14 Con:13 Int:7 Wis:6 Cha:9

Armour: none / HD 1 / HP 8 / Attack: Club, 1-4 dmg

Kent Ullapool

Brewer aged 32, entirely nondescript. Kent is the butt of Bran and Thad's jokes, and neither takes him seriously. He is, however, the only one of the trio with any nouse. He will engage the players in intelligent conversation, and may even give them useful advice if they are in serious need of it. He is also, despite his lack of combat skills, the only one of the group who will assist the players in a fight (although Kent knows his limitations, and is not suicidal).

Str:9 Dex:9 Con:9 Int:16 Wis:16 Cha:6

Armour: none / HD 2 / HP 5 / Attack: Stick, 1-3 dmg

2: *The mushroom patch*

Mushrooms grow here, about the size of a supermarket button mushroom. They are red on top and green underneath, and funnily enough they smell of bacon and avocado. Even stranger, that's what they taste like.

Anyone eating a mushroom, raw or cooked, will find themselves in a dream like waking state. Roll a d10 and consult the table below to see how it affects them. Effects last for d12 hours. Wherever a saving throw is called for, this is a **DC 11 Wisdom saving throw**.

1. The eater's vision clouds over and is replaced with images of another world. While they may see interesting and perhaps even useful things in this other world, at the GM's discretion, they will suffer a -4 penalty on any tasks which require sight in the "real" world.
2. The eater's vision increases in clarity, and they gain a +4 bonus on any tasks which rely on sight, including attacks. However, the sight of combat pains them, and each round that they witness fighting they must make a saving throw or suffer 1 point of damage.
3. As for 1, but with hearing.
4. As for 2, but with hearing. Sounds of combat do 1 point damage on a failed saving throw.
5. As for 1, but with smell.
6. As for 1, but with smell. Strong bad smells do 1 point damage on a saving throw.
7. As for 1, but with taste.
8. As for 1, but with taste. Bitter tastes do 1 point damage on a failed saving throw.
9. As for 1, but with touch.
10. As for 1, but with touch. The touch of metal does 1 point damage on a failed saving throw.

3: *The shrine*

An unfeasibly large rowan tree grows here, a larger-than-life-sized woman carved into its trunk, circles of Spring flowers arranged on the ground around it. This is a shrine to Rheđa, goddess of Life and War.

Anyone praying at this shrine for 11 minutes or more will gain a blessing, granting them +3 on one roll in the next 23 hours. Anyone laying another ring of flowers around the tree will gain +1 hit point for the next 23 hours, but there is also a 1 in 20 chance that they will become pregnant (this can

happen whether they are male or female). It will take 27 minutes to find enough flowers to make a ring.

4: The bandits

Camped in a hollow set back from the road are Arthur Bleaklow and his three followers. If the party has been talking or making any other noise on the road, the bandits will be hiding ready to spring out and attack. If not, there is a chance that the players may spot the glow of the bandits' campfire on the surrounding slopes.



Arthur is actually the brother of Bran Bleaklow, above, but physically they could not be any more different. Arthur is wiry, muscular and tall. And mean. There is no love lost between Arthur and Bran, although if Bran is with the party then the bandits will not actually attack unless provoked. Instead, the two will trade insults, Arthur calling Bran “sweat-slug” and Bran calling Arthur “slime-bone”, until one or the other backs down, while the bandits walk between the players threateningly, ordering them to hand over any weapons, coins and jewellery. Whether this results in conflict depends on whether the party can appear more intimidating than the bandits.

Arthur Bleaklow: Armour: chain / HD 2 / HP 9 / Attack: +1 Sword, 2-7 dmg, Bow, 1-6 dmg.

3 Bandits: Armour: leather / HD 1 / HP 5 / Attack: Sword, 1-6 dmg, Bow, 1-6 dmg.

5: Pecherel

This tiny mining settlement nests near the top of the valley. A baker's dozen people live here, and they are short, and suspicious. Anyone able to win them over might be able to prise out of them the

information that on the evening of the great wave, they heard a child's cries disappearing further upstream.

6: The slag heap

A spoil heap out the back of the settlement. Anyone searching through it for more than half-an-hour will find a Fae Ring in amongst all of the discarded aggregates.

The Fae Ring is a featureless, smooth, mid-grey ring, cold to the touch. It would fit a slim woman's ring finger. Beneath the surface, clouds of a darker grey blend and split behind the glossy facade.

Anything which passes through the ring passes to Faerie Land. It does not hurt to put a finger through the ring, the part that has passed through the ring simply ceases to feel, until the ring is removed. The ring is rather hard to keep on, because the wearer will have no finger-end to keep it on with.

Anything smaller than the diameter of the ring—approximately 1 cm—is lost in Faerie Land when it is passed through. If a character could shrink that small then they could conceivably pass through to look for the object on the other side. But how would they get back?

7: The oak tree



A huge oak tree stands here, over one thousand years old. Hung from its branches are treasures, trinkets and prayers. Any player who spends 17 minutes searching through these will find precious metals and gems worth 097—but what kind of monster would do such a thing? Living between the roots of the tree is a boglin, who will emerge and attack anyone disrespecting the tree.

Boglin: Armour: none / HD 3 / HP 17 / Attack: Claws, 1-5 dmg

Anyone hanging their own offering on the tree, provided it is of some real or personal value to them, has a 1% chance of being granted a wish.

8: The Hermit

On top of a column of stones sits the hermit Cornelius Rugwelder, meditating. Cornelius has a small shelter close to here, made of sticks and leaves, but it is so well hidden as to be practically invisible, and anyway the players will always find him sat on this stone column.

If treated in a friendly manner, Cornelius will be friendly himself, and will be happy to answer any questions the players may have. He knows just about everything worth knowing about the valley and the surrounding lands. Crucially, he also knows the cave that Minno was swept into, and can direct the players there. He is friendly with the fisher-folk who live in the cave, and will advise the



players to treat them with respect and friendship.

If, on the other hand, the players are unfriendly, Cornelius will simply continue meditating as though there was nobody there. If lunged at, a gyrfalcon will appear as if from nowhere, and savage the attacker's face. Both falcon and hermit are invincible.

Cornelius Rugwelder: Armour: cannot be hit / HD 5 / HP 20 / Attack: none

Gyrfalcon: Armour: cannot be hit / HD 2 / HP 8 / Attack: 2 claws 1-2 damage each, beak 1-4 damage.

9: The fairy ring

A circle of 7 ancient hawthorn trees. The grass inside is lush green and manicured. It smells of mint and bubblegum. Fairies live here. Players entering here must make a Charisma save at disadvantage or fall asleep for d12 hours. While asleep, the fairies will come out and tinker with them. On waking, the players may find that their hair has been braided, their shoelaces tied together, their bags emptied, or their waistcoats threaded with flowers.

10: The stone circle

There is a cromlech here: a ring of 13 grit sarsens varying in size and shape and colour and gnarliness. The stone to the West is the largest of them all. Buried in front of stones 3 & 9 (counting

clockwise from the left clockwise) are buried wristwatches of various 21st century designs. Who knows why?

Touching any of the stones makes the sky visibly darken and the wind increase, but has no other effect.

11: The mineral deposits

The cliffs here sparkle with crystal. Anyone stupid enough to waste time chipping away at them has a 7% chance per hour of extracting a gem of Ø9d12 value.

12: The sundial

On a smooth rock around four feet high is a brass disc with a triangular sail emerging from it, decorated with runes. During the daytime (ie. from 6am to 6pm) this acts as a sundial. The disc may be turned, which will move time backwards or forwards (it can be moved no further than sunrise or sunset), potentially allowing the party more time to rescue Minno.

13: Odin Mine

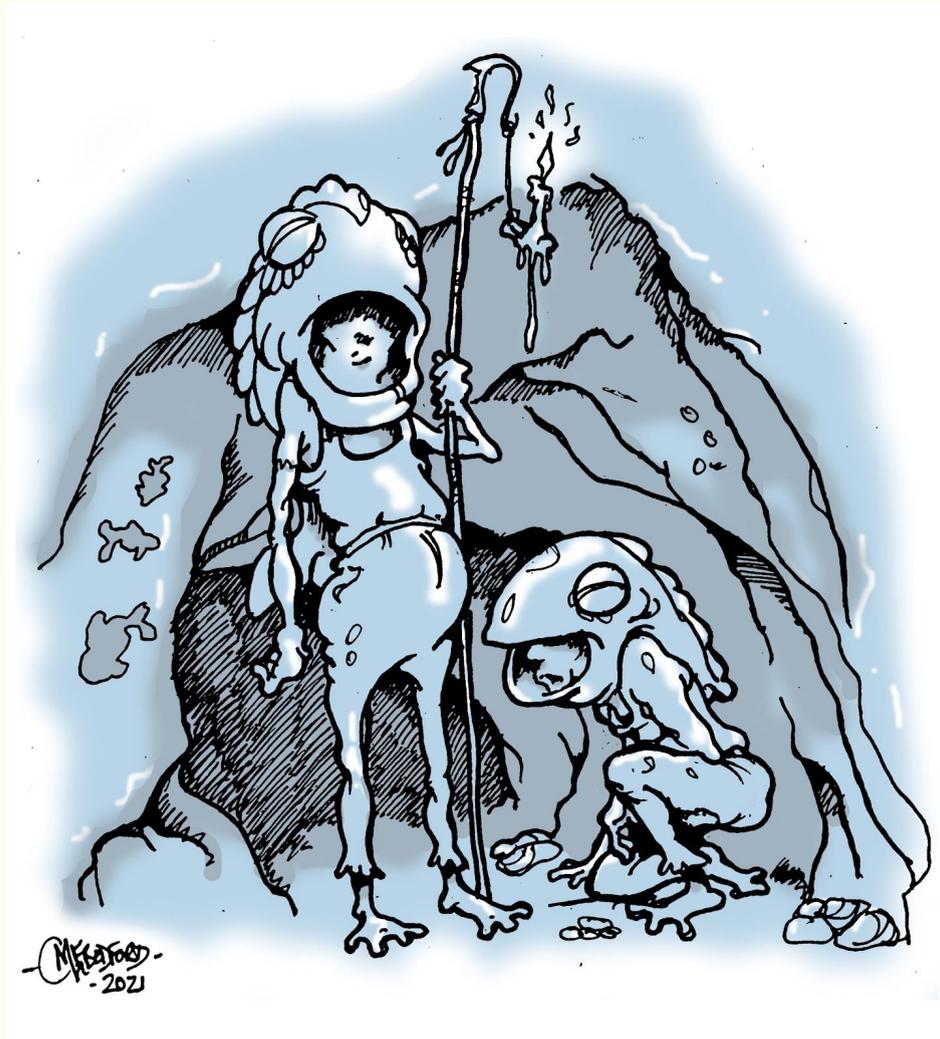
We do not speak of Odin Mine.

14: The source of the Peak Water

The stream emanates from a cave via a small waterfall (2'2" high). The stream fills the entrance, but the waterfall can be easily climbed (unless you're a small child) and inside there are ledges on either side of the water.



Scene 3: Fishier and Fishier



The fisher-folk Tribe

Living in the cave are a tribe of fisher-folk—or PShhrSsha in their own language. See **Appendix A—Creatures** for more information on the biology and ethology of this race of hominids.

Altogether there are 13 adult fisher-folk, 9 smolt and 11 fry living here. They will move around the caves and can be found at various locations, although being largely nocturnal, most of them will be in their sleeping quarters during the daytime.

The players may wish to massacre the tribe without a second thought, in the way that most players, monsters that they are, like to do with orcs and goblins. However, these are living, breathing, feeling hominids, real people with their own hopes and fears. Besides, without their help the players will find it a good deal harder to defeat the end-of-level boss.

Although they don't speak English, apart from one or two poorly formed words that they have learned from the hermit Cornelius, they are as intelligent as the players, possibly more so, and can communicate basic concepts using sign-language.

When they first encounter intruders in their home, they will be naturally fearful and on their guard: two or more adults will form a protective line, spears out, while the rest of the tribe retreat and hide. However they will not attack unless attacked first, and the players can slowly win their trust through appropriate sign-language and calming gestures.

If the players can prove their friendship to the fisher-folk they will become trusting allies, and could be a source of future adventures. They are familiar with miles and miles of underground passages and waterways. The players might even be able to help reconcile the differences between the shamanic leaders and their firstborn SShsp. SShsp may even leave the tribe and join the adventurers' party, although how the other fisher-folk will take this is another matter.

Fisher-folk adult: Armour: as leather / HD 2 / HP 10 / Attack: fishing spear, 2-7 dmg, net: on a hit, the target must make a Dexterity saving throw or become entangled.

Fisher-folk smolt: Armour: as leather / HD 1 / HP5 / Attack: fishing spear, 1-4 dmg.

Fisher-folk fry: Armour: none / HD 1 / HP2 / Attack: none.

The tribe is led by the Fssh family:

SvyrySshp Fssh, ♀ 31 years old

SvyrySshp is the female shaman, and de facto leader of the tribe. She is married to Tshf.

SvyrySshp: Armour: as leather / HD 3 / HP 17 / Attack: trident, 4-9 dmg, net: on a hit, the target must make a Dexterity saving throw or become entangled.

Tshf Fssh, ♂ 31 years old.

SvyrySshp's husband Tshf is the male shaman of the tribe.`

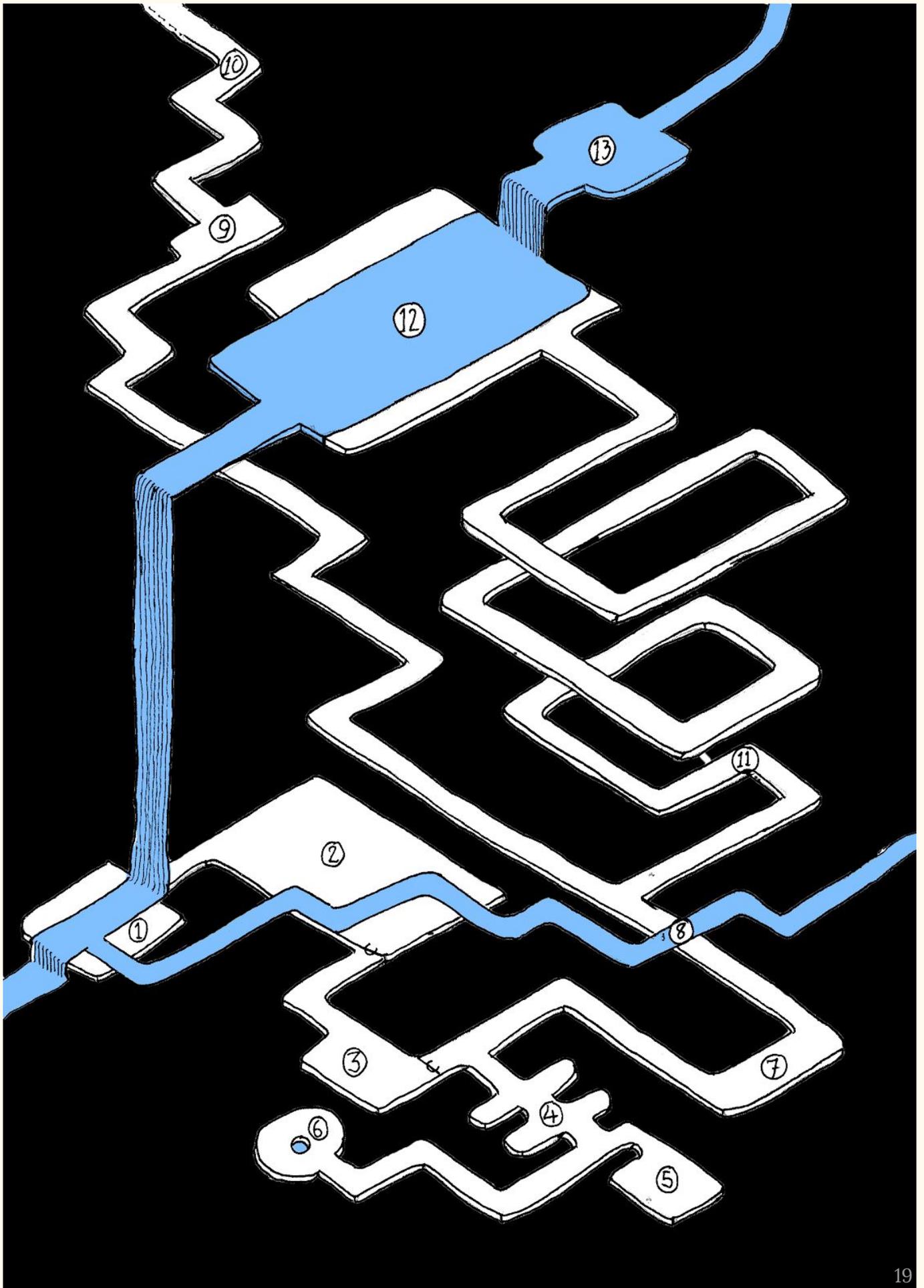
Tshf: Armour: as studded leather / HD 3 / HP 15 / Attack: trident, 3-8 dmg, net: on a hit, the target must make a Dexterity saving throw or become entangled.

SSshsp Fssh, ♀ 15 years old

SSshsp is the eldest child of Tshf and SvyrySshp. As such, they are the most eligible female in the tribe. But they doesn't feel at home in their female body, and they doesn't like the tribe's strict gender roles.

Having spent much time with the hermit Cornelius, SSshsp speaks some rudimentary, but strongly accented, English.

SSshsp: *Armour: as leather / HD 3 / HP 12 / Attack: trident, 2-7 dmg, net: on a hit, the target must make a Dexterity saving throw or become entangled.*



Locations

1: Entrance cave

As soon as anyone puts their head inside the cave they will be overwhelmed by the smell. It stinks of fish, of long-dead fish, mixed with other noxious odours. Getting into the cave requires a short wade through the stream. Inside the stream runs through a channel in the centre of the cave. It is fed by an enormous waterfall at the far end, some 110' high.

On either side of the stream are rocky banks strewn with fish. Some of these are still alive, just, but most are dead, and there are also a vast number of fish skeletons. On the right hand side of the cave a small tributary joins the stream from the right. Sat in this tributary is one of the fisher-folk. It is SShsp. As soon as the players enter, SShsp crawls up the tributary, through a tunnel, and disappears.

Any character trying to walk in the cave must make a successful Dexterity save, due to the rockiness and slipperiness of the floor, failure results in 0-2 damage. Running doesn't even require a Dexterity check, you will slip and fall instantly. Crawling is possible without having to make a save, but would you really want to crawl through all of those rotten fish?

Close inspection of the cave floor will reveal that most of the fish bones are around the smaller stream entering from the right. These fish do not appear to have decomposed naturally—they seem to have been eaten by something. There are also traces of faeces, apparently human, around the smaller stream.

Climbing to the top of the waterfall is almost impossible, and anyway the water at the top emerges through a small gap, too small for anyone other than a child to squeeze through. Close inspection of the hole will reveal threads of Minno's dress caught around the hole where the water emerges.

Behind the waterfall is a hidden entrance into the cave complex.

It is also possible to follow SShsp up the smaller stream, but it involves crawling through the water as the tunnel is only two to three feet wide.

There are nine rats in here. They are happily feeding on fish, and will only attack if provoked.

Rat: Armour: none / HD 2 / HP 1 / Attack: bite, 1 damage

2: Living quarters

The smell of fish is a little less intense here, but still noticeable, and mixed with a smell like wet dog. Wooden racks against the Eastern wall hold fishing nets and harpoons. During the night time, most

of the fisher-folk adults children will be in here cooking, mending nets, making harpoons, and just hanging out socialising. If warned by SShsp then they will have retreated further into the caves. During the day time, there will be two fisher-folk on guard in here.

The stream weaves across the floor of this cave. It is possible again to crawl through the far side, but at one point it passes through a “font” where characters must completely submerge themselves to proceed. It is also even narrower here: characters of above normal size must make a Dexterity saving throw or become stuck. Once stuck, another character must make a Strength saving throw to free them, doing 0-2 damage in the process.

In one corner, a pile of wood, furs, and fish-leathers obscures a passageway to the store cave.

Fisher-folk: Armour: as leather / HD2 / HP 7 / Attacks: harpoon or club, 1-6 damage

3: Store cave

This cave is piled with dozens of fish-leather bundles tied with fishgut cord. Most of them contain dried fish, although some have other meats, insects, and root vegetables. These piles again obscure an exit leading to the sleeping quarters.

Also in here, stacked against a wall, are 23 straight sticks and a pile of flints, to be used in the making of harpoons, and fish bones to be used as fish-hooks. A large spool of fish-gut twine, 3' high x 2' diameter, is alongside them, and behind are a pile of 7 blue glass jars with lids of marble seamed with precious metals, all containing a pinkish-brown paste with purple blotches. This is *fish maggot paste*. The jars themselves are worth Ø21 each to the right buyer.

Anyone who eats the paste within must make a Wisdom saving throw or become insectivorous. Once insectivorous, the meat of a vertebrates (beef, pork, lamb, fish, etc) will no longer be filling, and will require a Constitution saving throw to avoid being violently sick. Invertebrates however (insects, spiders, crabs, centipedes) become irresistibly tempting. The sight of one, living or dead, provokes a feeding frenzy in any insectivore who fails a Wisdom saving throw. Becoming insectivorous also means that finding sufficient food will take a lot longer (unless you are lucky enough to stumble on a giant spider, crab, centipede or somesuch. What a feast!) The effects of the paste last for 5 to 500 days.

4: *Sleeping quarters*

The wet dog smell intensifies in here. During the night the quarters will be empty save one-or-two guards catching up on their sleep. In day time most of the tribe will be sleeping in the chambers to the side, wrapped in furs and fish-skin.

5: *Shaman's quarters*

SvyrySshp and Tshf will be in here most of the time. Each wall is hung with a huge fish skin painted in red ochre, telling the fisher-folk's origin story. The floor is thickly carpeted with furs, which are alive with tiny parasites. Anyone stepping on them must make a Constitution saving throw or become infested, suffering -1 from all rolls until they can find a way to rid themselves of the things.

At the back of the cave is a box, 3' x 2x 1', made of ancient yew wood, gnarled and whorled. it smells of dead rat. On the side is a hatch.

This is the Deadwood Box. Opening the hatch releases a zombie rat, which attacks the first thing it sees. If killed, with the last of its energy the rat's body drags itself back into the box, and the hatch closes. If anyone reopens the box, a skeleton rat comes out and attacks. Killing this banishes The undead rat for good.

Zombie rat: Armour: as leather / HD3 / HP 9 / Attack: Bite, 1-4 damage

Skeleton rat: Armour: none / HD2 / HP 6 / Attack: Bite, 1-4 damage

If another animal is subsequently placed inside the box, the hatch will close and the animal will wither and die over d3 days. The day after dying, the animal reanimates as a zombie. If killed, the zombie reanimates again as a skeleton, exactly as above.

6: *Shrine*

This cave, unlike the others in the complex, is smooth and circular—the walls have been extensively worked to give it this finish. Opposite the entrance, a leaping salmon is carved into the wall. A pool bubbles up in the centre, and a narrow vent in the roof brings in fresh air, making the room less smelly than the others around it. The floors are also smooth and well swept, and there is nothing else of interest here.



7: Bat roost

Hanging from the ceiling here are a flock of 24 bloodsucker bats. They are blind, but will smell the blood of any approaching character, and will attack (they ignore the fisher-folk). If more than four attack the same character, that character will suffer a -2 penalty to hit.

Bat: Armour: as leather / HD1 / HP 1 / Attacks: bite, 1 damage

8: Crayfish stream

The stream here widens across the passage, requiring a Dexterity saving throw to jump across. Inside the stream are a colony of cave crayfish. They will attack anyone who falls in the stream, as well as anyone who has crawled here from the fisher-folk's living quarters.

Upstream from here, it soon becomes too narrow for anyone even to crawl. It is also full of crayfish.

9: Badger-wolf lair

The tunnel approaching this area smells increasingly musky. A pair of badger-wolves (see **Appendix A—Creatures**) live here, nesting in soil, dust and twigs.

Badger-wolf: Armour: as studded-leather / HD 4 / HP 17 / Attack: bite, 2-7 damage, 2 x claws, 1-4 damage.

10: Exit tunnel

This tunnel winds upwards for the best part of the mile, before emerging into the open air at the top of the cliffs.

11: Tunnel upwards

This tunnel winds rises steeply to the right, heading up and up towards the underground lake.

12: The underground lake

A large, deep lake fills this cave, with narrow walkways on either side, worn smooth with the passage of feet. There will usually be 3 or 4 fisher-folk of all ages fishing here, on the opposite side

to the entrance. Also on this side of the lake are five barrels all containing a fine greyish-white powder. This is fishmeal. It is highly nutritious.

The lake is home to all manner of underwater creatures including blind white devil fish, giant pike, bloodsucking eels and car-sized carp. In the depth are things far worse. Anyone swimming in the lake is taking a great risk.

At the head of the lake is a waterfall some ten feet high. This can be fairly easily climbed, if it can be reached, as there are rocks protruding all the way up it which can be used as hand- and footholds.

At the foot of the lake, the water disappears into a crack in the rocks, from where it flows down to the waterfall at the entrance of the cave complex.

13: The waterling's lair

This lake is clogged up with a tangle of broken sticks. Characters will need to cut their way through it to get to the top end of the cave. Doing so, they will hear a pathetic moan. This is the child Minno, caught in the clutches of a size 5 waterling (see **Appendix A—Creatures**). Due to its recent exertions, the ling is currently only 2' in diameter, but it retains all of the other features on an aeonling. If it manages to enter a host's body, the ling will begin to recharge its energies, growing by 6" per round.

Water aeonling: Armour: worse than none, but resistant to all attacks except piercing / HD: 5 / HP: 29 / Attack: Throw, damage d12 + special (see description) / Spells: Ice, Mist

The waterling can be slowed by mixing it with something that absorbs water—such as the fishmeal in the previous room. The fisher-folk are well aware of this, and so keep the barrels on hand for times when the waterling expands and starts to trouble them.

For each barrel of fishmeal emptied into the waterling, its attack speed is reduced by 1 round. So with one barrel absorbed, it can attack only every 2 rounds. With 2 barrels absorbed, every 3 rounds, etc.

If the aeonling is defeated, and the players can face spending hours rummaging around through water, sticks, matted vegetation and dead fish, they will be able to find 05-500 worth of "treasure" and a heavily damaged erotic painting.

Scene 4—Back Downriver

Returning to Hope Springs should be relatively easy, although Minno will need to be warm, fed and rested before she is well enough to travel.

On arrival in the village, the locals are jubilant, and Dace Sprat will be in floods of tears, eternally grateful to the characters.

The people of this area are not rich, and they do not have much to offer the characters other than their gratitude. However, they will scrape together a handful of low-denomination coins and, as well as this, they will offer the party a choice of animals: either a pony, a goat, two medium dogs, one large dog, or 5 chickens. In addition the local chieftain will give the characters freedom of the county, and may be able to offer pointers towards further adventure...

Appendix A—Creatures

Badger-wolf

Width & height: d12 + 12”

Length: height multiplied by 2

Appears as a smallish wolf, with badger features from the chest and upper arms upwards, which become more and more pronounced towards its snarling snout. Badger wolves move noisily, with a slightly heavy gait. They nuzzle everything they pass, snuffing loudly. They will eat just about anything.

What a badger-wolf lacks in size, it more than makes up for in aggression.

Badger-wolf: Armour: as studded-leather / HD 4 / HP 17 / Attack: bite, 2-7 damage, 2 x claws, 1-4 damage.

The fisher-folk

Fisher-folk (or PShhrsha in their own language) are a race of hominids which followed a separate evolutionary path from homo sapiens around 80,000 years ago. They appear very much like small, lightly-built humans, apart from their wet, pale skin and their almost skeletal legs, which end in feet like those of a coot. Blood-flow to their legs is greatly reduced compared to a human's, which lets them retain more body heat, and their feet allow them to walk easily across boggy services and even to run very short distances across the surface of water. They are excellent swimmers, as comfortable in water as out of it, and their fishing spears and tridents are also just as effective below the water's surface.

Every fisher-folk wears a helmet made from some giant species of fish. Details of these helmets, and how they are worn, appear below.

Fisher-folk society is rigidly ordered and ethologically unique. There are very regular patterns in their ages and genders, with couples breeding every five years producing then a daughter, then a son, another daughter, and another son, before becoming infertile elders. Prior to breeding, fisher-folk abandon their pescatarian diet for three months, eating maggot paté and becoming insectivorous for the duration. At the end of the three months the female becomes pregnant, and

their is a six-month incubation period. For the first five years of their life the children are referred to as fry, then as smolt for the next ten years, before becoming adults at 16 years old.

Fisher-folk speak in a bird-like sussurating language. Their names, impossible for a human to pronounce, appear to relate to their gender and rank, and perhaps hold a clue to the structure of their tribe, although nobody has ever taken the time to figure out how this system works. A fit topic for a future PhD, no doubt.

Helmets

Blobfish

These are worn by fry and smolt fisher-folk. The youngest fry will be snuggled inside the body of the thing, while elder fry and smolts wear them with their head looking out of the mouth, the fish's tail hanging down their back, ending anywhere between the shoulders and the waist.

Pike

These are worn only by the male shaman. The head alone is worn, vertical, with holes in the throat for the wearer's eyes. This fearful visage causes fear in any viewers who fail to make an Intelligence saving throw.

Devil fish

These are worn only by the female shaman. They look somewhat like an angler fish, and are worn whole, with the wearer's face looking out of the fish's cavernous mouth. The fishes pulsing lure dangles before the wearer's eyes, and distracts any onlookers who fail to make a Charisma saving throw.

Perch

The whole fish is worn as a hat, facing forwards.

Crayfish

The crayfish's head is worn vertically, with eyeholes at the front.

Eel

The head is worn stretched thin over the skull, with the long tail hanging down behind, often to the floor.

Lings

A ling is a type of elemental being or golem, formed from a non-organic substance with a tiny organic heart. They can control their own shape within a fixed diameter sphere (only waterlings are ever likely to be precisely spherical). The tiniest, size 1 lings—or cutelings—are adorable things an inch or two across, something like a blob of sentient water from a studio Ghibli movie, or those cute long-legged smuts in *Spirited Away*. These smallest of lings are always friendly, and will often attach themselves to a player character, burbling away at them for hours on end.

Larger lings are something else entirely. Often hostile, they range in size from a few inches to hundreds of feet across, the largest being the size 6 godling, with a size and presence similar to that of the Forest Spirit in *Princess Mononoke*.

Most lings are resistant to all except one type of attack (see *Ling Types* for details of which types). Attacks by any other weapons or spells does only half damage, but attacks of the type a ling is vulnerable to will do double damage.

A ling attacks by throwing itself at a foe. On a hit, they become automatically attached to the victim. On the next round they will crawl towards the nearest orifice (usually an ear, nose or throat, but could be... somewhere else) unless someone attacks them and causes damage (50% chance to damage the person that the ling is clinging to). On the third round the ling will enter the victim's body unless a Constitution saving throw is made.

Each round that the ling remains inside, they will cause their normal damage without needing to roll to hit. The host may make another Constitution saving throw each round—success means that the body has rejected the ling, which flies out and lands nearby. Failure means that the ling has control over a part of the body. The amount of a body which a ling can control is roughly equivalent to the ling's diameter. Different lings target different systems of the host's body, as described in *Ling Types*.

Multiple lings can inhabit the same body. in this case, they may control multiple body parts. The host has to make a separate saving throw for each ling to see if it can be rejected. All lings inside a host can also be ejected by casting a purify spell on the host's body.

Each type of ling may cast spells. For each individual ling, roll a D3 to select one of the 3 spells listed in *Ling Types*. They cast this spell at a level equivalent to their size, but when they inhabit a body

along with other lings they may combine their levels together to cast a spell belonging to one or more of those lings.

If a ling engulfs a character's entire body (usually the case when dealing with size 4 to 6 lings, or multiple size 3 lings) they control it entirely. They will usually direct the host to jump into the nearest large body of water and drown. However, some lings, especially size 6 ones, may have other uses for the host.

The heart of a ling is a wonderful thing. A ling heart may be eaten, and most of them have healing properties, according to the ling's size—these are detailed below under Ling Sizes. A character may eat multiple ling hearts, but there is a limit on how many hearts will be effective in one day, again listed under Ling Sizes.

There is evidence that lings are created due to the presence of strong magic. Indeed, powerful wizards have reported witnessing the creation of lings when casting high-power spells. However, lings are also known to appear alongside extreme events such as earthquakes, tsunamis, avalanches, severe storms and flooding.

Humans being humans, there are reports of lings being used as a kind of sex toy. Most healers have at least one amusing tale about removing one or more lings from some orifice or other. There is even rumoured to be a sex cult trying to birth a new type of ling using from the fluids produced during intercourse between humans and lings.

Ling types

Waterling

Heart: algae

Weapon vulnerability: piercing

Spell: 1: Mist, 2: Rain, 3: Ice

Body system controlled: blood

Stoneling

Heart: lichen

Weapon vulnerability: bludgeoning

Spell: 1: Slow, 2: Hold Person, 3: Petrify

Body system controlled: bone

Earthling

Heart: moss

Weapon vulnerability: slashing

Spell: 1: Mud, 2: Hold Person, 3: Polymorph

Body system controlled: flesh

Otherlings

Lings are to be found everywhere. In the home, there are dustlings and hairlings. Graveyards harbour bonelings. Sightings, often very localised, of sandlings, tarlings, oillings, saltlings, sootlings, ironlings, copperlings, lavalings, and snowlings have been reported. In large treasure hordes there may be silverlings, and goldlings. Perhaps even gemlings?

The existence of firelings, cloudlings, skylings, and aetherlings has been postulated, but no trustworthy evidence ever produced.

Ling sizes

Size 1—Cuteling: Armour: as magic plate / Diameter: d6" / HD 0 / HP 1 / Attack: 1 dmg / Spells: 0 / Heart effect: none

Size 2—Littleling: Armour: as plate / Diameter: d12" / HD ½ / HP 2 / Attack: d4 dmg / Spells: 1 / Heart effect: heals 1hp

Size 3—Growling: Armour: as chain / Diameter: d6' / HD 1 / HP 4 / Attack: d6 dmg / Spells: 1 / Heart effect: heals d4hp

Size 4—Oldling: Armour: as studded leather / Diameter: 3d6' / HD 3 / HP 13 / Attack: d8 / Spells: 2 / Heart effect: heal d8hp

Size 5—Aeonling: Armour: as leather / Diameter: 6d6' / HD 5 / HP 21 / Attack: d12 dmg / Spells: 2 / Heart effect: heal d20hp

Size 6—Godling: Armour: none / Diameter: 100d100' / HD 100 / HP 501 / Attack: 100d100 dmg / Spells: 3 / Heart effect: heal all wounds, add d20 temporary hp

Appendix B—Encounters

Outdoor, daytime

1	Roll on Small Birds table (Use day or nighttime table, as appropriate)
2	Roll on Small Beasts table
3	Roll on Large Beasts table
4	Roll on Large Birds table (Use day or nighttime table, as appropriate)
5	Roll on Fish table
6	GM's choice
7	Flood refugees
8	Creepy happening 1 to 4 hours into the night, roll for three encounters from the creepy night encounters table. Play these encounters like one of those spooky handheld camera horror films in a wood. the adventurers will see no foes, but the constantly hear sounds and see movements out of the corner of their eyes.
9	Vampire midges
10	Roll on Natural Disasters table
11	Roll on Special encounters table
12	Roll on Special encounters table

Special encounters

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	Fisher Folk
7	Things dormant since the last flood

8	Scrap of child's clothing
9	Vampire midges
10	The Hermit
11	
12	Roll on Natural Disasters table

Natural Disasters

1	Rockfall
2	Debris
3	Bridge down
4	Flood
5	Fallen tree
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	

Fish

1	Minnows
2	Perch
3	Carp
4	Eels
5	Newts
6	
7	Giant carp
8	Giant newts
9	Bloodsucking eels

10	Giant eel
11	Pike
12	Devil fish

Small Beasts

1	Rats
2	Frogs
3	Insects
4	Voles
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	

Large Beasts

1	Bears
2	
3	Wolves
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	

9	
10	
11	
12	Badger-wolves

Daytime large birds

1	Crows, 5 to 50
2	Crows, 5 to 50
3	
4	Ravens, 1 to 12
5	Rooks, 13 to 24
6	Magpies, 1 to 10
7	Flightless birds, 2 to 5
8	Giant grouse, 1 to 6
9	Giant pheasant, 1 to 12
10	Gia falcons, 2 to 3
11	Red kites, 1 to 4
12	Lammergeier, 1 to 2

Daytime small birds

1	skylark, 1
2	Woodpecker, 1 to 2
3	Treecreeper, 122
4	Nuthatch, 1 to 2
5	Pheasant, 1 to 12
6	Grouse, 1 to 6
7	Blackbird, 128
8	Finches, 2 to 12
9	Tits, 2 to 13
10	Sparrows, 2 to 24

11	Jackdaws, 2 to 24
12	Magpies, 1 to 10

Night time birds

1	Bats, 3 to 18
2	
3	
4	Owls, 2 to 8
5	
6	Bloodsucking bats, 1 to 8
7	
8	
9	Nightingale, 1 to 2
10	
11	
12	Nightjar, 1 to 2

