

The Girl and the Wolves

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1 Setting

1.1 Overview

The characters are following a travelling group of entertainers through a forested, rural area. On their way they will deal with a runaway girl and a dead monk, and they may have to fight a pack of wolves if they are careless.

This adventure is best suited for a small group of low-experience characters. It can be completed without any combat. Magic is not necessarily useful, though some uses (such as for rapid transportation) may damage the adventure.

The key elements of this adventure are social interaction and diplomatic conflict resolution.

1.2 Environment

Location Leyningen, a small barony in Farrenshire, near the Ouestenreich border. However, virtually any other place is possible, with small adaptations. The adventure begins as the characters enter the village of Karenfang, a small place at the edge of a dense forest.

Time of year It is late summer, just before the main harvest time.

Weather It has been cloudy with occasional rainfalls for the past few days, but it is clearing up and it looks like it will be staying dry for the next few days. The sun will even come through now and then.

1.3 Hooking the Players

The Senechal has to find a reason for the characters to be following the entertainers at all. One of the entertainers may have something (an item, information or a skill) that the characters want. The adventure can be tied into a larger campaign if it is a crucial piece of information, for example. Alternatively, the characters may be pursuing one of the entertainers for a crime (it is important that only one of them is guilty as the characters will have to interact more deeply with the remainder of the troupe).

1.4 Spiritual Attributes

Spiritual Attributes that may come to bear during the course of the adventure include many variations of Conscience as the characters have to take sides between the girl and her father, some Passions or Faith when they discover the dead monk and of course other attributes during the normal course of action.

2 Prolog

The weather is clearing up today, and it is not raining anymore. You can almost see the sun as it is rising over the hills in the east, and judging from the clouds, it may even peek through later in the day. Fortunately, yesterdays rain means that the carts will have left clear marks on the muddy road and will be easy to follow.

The characters have been following the troupe northwards for about a day. They have been following a muddy (due to the rain) but otherwise fair road the entire time. They spent the night in Dolmbar, a medium-sized village, where they picked up a hot trail, as someone their told them the troupe had said they were going to play in Karenfang next.

From Dolmbar, the road leads north-east, through fields and light woods, over short, rolling hills. After a few hours, the road splits, eastwards towards Hallhusen, and northwards to Karenfang. Around noon, a wooden bridge crosses the Talbach, a small river flowing west, towards the sea. A dense forest is visible north, and the road leads towards it, then hugs the edge for a while.

2.1 Karenfang

The road is still running close to the dense forest, and noon is past. Rounding a bend, you finally see houses up ahead, and fields stretching everywhere but east, where the forest is. A small village is up ahead, and if you make speed you can reach it within the hour.

Around mid-afternoon, the characters reach Karenfang, a small village at the edge of the forest. The road leads further north, but there is also a small road leading into the forest eastwards. Both show signs of recent carts passing through, though the road north appears more used. To the east of the village is the forest, while fields and light woods lie to the west.

Karenfang consists of about 40 houses, scattered losely around the village center, an old well and a small gathering place. The houses are mostly wooden, many with stone-reinforced walls. They are clearly the home of simple, rural people, of which there are about 220 living in Karenfang.

The tiny pub of Jonathan Horfel sits right next to the gathering place and serves drinks. On request, he will also have his wife make some snacks.

Other shops in the village are Paul Branks, the shoemaker and Peter Ruhk, who is both tailor and barber. The Klorga brothers (Rudolph and Will) know quite a bit about carpentry and help with any construction projects in the village, but they still tend mostly to their farm.

Muttchen¹ Darnus is familiar with herbs and babies, and serves as the villages midwife as well as unlicensed doctor. Her beautiful daughter Maria follows in her steps and both are openly of the druidic faith.

Pater Onheim presides over a small, wooden church which is also located next to the central gathering place, and has space for about a hundred people. Several boys serve as minstrels and Alfred Horfel, son of the innkeeper, rings the bells on sundays as well as helping out with various other tasks.

Hans Malborn, a freeman, is the local administrative body. He takes care of the villages central grain store and is the only man in Karenfang authorized to own a weapon, though it's been two years since he had to use it and his fighting skills are not as good as they used to be (short sword, CP 7).

Grain is the main product of Karenfang, though there are also about 150 ducks and chicken as well as a dozen or so pigs. Timo Franzis is the local shephard and owns around 30 sheep. There are also individual oxens and donkeys as work animals.

3 Adventure

The afternoon sun shines through the cloud cover here and there, painting the edge of the wood in almost autumnly colours as you pass it on the still treacherous road. Up ahead, smoke rises from chimneys in a small village, which must be Karenfang. With dense forest to the east, the village has its fields mostly to the west, along the hills and stretched along the road which is now running almost straight north. There are still a few hours of daylight left as you enter the settlement. A good dozen wooden huts are clustered around a small central place where a single well and a tiny pub supply drinks while a small church across the village place serves the more spiritual needs.

The entertainers were in Karenfang yesterday and left this morning, northwards. Nobody knows for sure where to, but the village of Dornhagen, a place of over 500 people, lies to the north-west along the road and can be reached in a few hours, even with carts. On foot or riding a horse at normal pace (more being difficult due on the muddy road anyways) the characters could reach Dornhagen around nightfall. However, the road leads through the forest further north and if asked, the villagers will remark that they would not recommend travelling through the forest at dusk.

3.1 The missing girl

The characters will likely ask about the entertainers in Karenfang, and probably stop to rest for a moment. It also is mid-afternoon and experiences travellers should know better than to travel onwards if they do not know whether they can reach the next settlement before nightfall.

If they ask near the village center and stop to rest, Jacques Marlon will find them there, otherwise he will follow them on his donkey and reach them about half an hour after they left the village.

¹a local, friendly term for «old woman»

Jacques is looking for his daughter Elaine. She has been missing since the prior evening and he is afraid that she ran away and is with the entertainers. He would have followed them himself, but with the harvest coming up and his wife being ill, he can leave neither the farm nor his other two children behind. Jacques has heard from another villager that the characters asked for the entertainers and asks them to see if his daughter is with them, and please return her. She is barely 14, good looking with long blonde hair, though somewhat slim.

3.2 The road goes on

Northwards, the road does indeed enter the forest about half an hour beyond Karenfang and will not emerge from it again for several hours of way, when it opens to the fields of Dornhagen. However, just before that (the road runs north-westwards now) another, smaller road meets, leading north-east. A weathered roadsign reads «Alsbach», though the road will lead past Selmwald and the Saint Heinrich Convent on its way, a fact the sign does not tell, but characters with area knowledge will be aware of. More importantly, the mud clearly shows that the carts have taken this road, and not the main road towards Dornhagen.

The small road leads even deeper into the forest, with undergrowth getting ever thicker. If the characters pressed on from Karenfang, and it is evening now, the forest ahead will be dark and uninviting. At day, it is still a thick forest with a small road winding through.

Resolution

The entertainers have indeed travelled north-east. Though Dornhagen is a larger village and closer as well, they went to Selmwald for the night because they intend to travel onwards to Alsbach and further north. The trip from Karenfang to Selmwald is a days worth of travel for a few hand-drawn carts.

3.3 Wolves

At night, the forest is the home of a pack of wolves, who are aggressive enough to attack lone travellers or small groups of humans. They are afraid of fire and a few torches will keep them away, though they will stay close and wait for their prey to lower its guard.

During the day, the characters are safe, though the forest does not inspire much feeling thereof.

You should size the pack so that it is a challenge, but no major danger for your group. It should be dangerous enough that they learn the lesson of not travelling through a dark forest at night.

3.4 The dead monk

About two hours of careful march along the small road, the group will find a bloodied and ripped monk robe near the way. It is unclear whether the damage was done by bandits or wild animals². There is no sign of the owner.

²though if the characters are travelling at night, they will have had their encounter with the wolves at this point

A closer inspection of the robe will reveal that a letter has been sewn into the inside. It is not hidden or concealed, it was merely sewn in due to lack of pockets. The letter is in Xanar and is addressed to Father Perlos at the St. Heinrich Convent. Characters able to read will be able to decipher the address, even if they speak no Xanar. If anyone can read Xanar, he will learn that the letter is from some high-ranking priest southwards who complains that the forest and its surroundings are a stronghold of the druidic faith which is a thorn in his side.

Resolution

The monk travelled through the forest at night, not knowing the area or its dangers. He was attacked and killed by the wolves, and what remains of his body can be found deeper into the forest, about a hundred meters away from the remains of his robe.

3.5 Selmwald

Another hour past the dead monk, the road splits again, with a branch going east into Selmwald. The edge of the village is visible from the crossing, in fact.

Selmwald is a tiny village in the heart of the forest, with only 6 huts and about 40 inhabitants. Of the 9 men, 8 are woodcutters, though the women take care of some chicken and a few pigs as well as harvesting from the gardens. There are also half a dozen oxens, used mostly as work animals.

Markus Schwarzmoor, the carpenter and cart builder, is the total of the local infrastructure. Since he can't survive on this small business alone, he is also the villages only hunter.

Roland Jurich, the only villager able to read and write³, sometimes reads passage from the scriptures on sundays, though he definitely doesn't consider himself a member of the clergy. Anyways, the villagers are not particularly faithful, except when monks from the convent stop by. On normal days, the local religion is a pragmatic mixture of the druidic and the xanaric faith.

3.6 The Entertainers

In Selmwald, the characters will only meet half of the entertainer troupe - two small carts, 3 men, 2 women and 2 children⁴. The large cart with the others (including whatever person, item or information the characters are looking for) never stopped in Selmwald, going past the village to reach the nearby city of Alsbach. The entertainers in Selmwald plan to meet up with them there in the evening. To do that, they must leave at noon. If the characters start out from Karenfang in the morning, they will arrive in Selmwald as the entertainers pack up to leave.

Elaine, the missing girl, is with the troupe in Selmwald. More specifically, she is with Harald, one of the entertainers. Harald is 17, but looks slightly older due to his rough life on the street. He is especially skilled in juggling, but like

³he was raised as an orphan at the convent

⁴and Elaine - see further below

the others he does whatever entertains the crowd. He is handsome and soft-spoken, and despite the manly attitude he displays, too much of a coward to mess with people who are armed - a fact that will certainly work to the benefit of the characters should they decide to solve the problem the rough way.

The problem being this: Elaine and Harald have fallen in love. Elaine does not wish to return to her father, and if questioned or taken by force, will claim that he hit and abused her. Harald will take her side, but as mentioned will not use force if doing so clearly puts him in danger.

Resolution

The characters will have to decide between bringing Elaine home against her will or letting her go. There is no clear right choice. In fact, Elaine is exaggerating - her father didn't hit her, though he did grab her a bit roughly when telling her in no uncertain terms that he won't tolerate her hanging out with that guy. He is sorry and ashamed that he did that, the main reason he didn't mention the argument with his daughter to the characters. Elaine, on the other hand, is in love and not open for rational arguments about family vs. life on the road.

The characters will have to decide based on their beliefs in right and wrong. The conservative view of society at large is clearly that until married, Elaine has to obey the word of her father. If the characters base their decision on religion, the Xanaric Church is quite conservative and will recommend the same. The druidic faith is not much direct help, but will likely tend to leaving a girl in her home turf instead of tearing her out. Thayrism may favour the romantic side, if only because the Xanars say the opposite.

Harald and Elaine have nothing they can give the characters to bribe or thank them. Her father Jacques will be very glad if Elaine is returned, and while he can not give much, either, he will gladly part with some food and even a chicken or two.

3.7 The Saint Heinrich Convent

This old convent lies halfway between Selmwald and Alsbach, about two hours from each. The monks are said to make a good wine here, though the official main business of the convent is the copying of books.

The monks at the convent will be very interested in hearing about the dead monk in the forest. While he was none of their own, he did belong to the same church, after all.

The characters will also be asked if they could retrieve the body so that he can be properly buried.

Resolution

For delivering the letter, the characters will receive a free meal and stay for the night, if they wish, as well as some bread, meat and wine - enough food to last them all a few days.

If the characters return the body of the dead monk, they will receive either 10 silver pieces or wine worth slightly more (~12s), whichever they prefer.

3.8 Alsbach

In Alsbach, the characters will find the remainder of the entertainer troupe, including whatever they were originally after. If they treated the entertainers in Selmwald well (or arrive before them), then the others in Alsbach will be cooperative. Otherwise, the characters will have to resort to bribery or force - the later not necessarily being a wise choice given that Alsbach is a small town of 1200 souls, including an armed guard of eight men⁵.

Shops that the characters may be interested in include 1 Blacksmith, 1 licensed Doctor (although there are 4 other unlicensed «men of healing»), 1 Pursemaker and Leatherworker, 1 merchant of exotic goods (mostly spices) and 1 Inn, 3 Taverns (see below on these).

Other shops in Alsbach are 2 Bakers, 3 Barbers, 2 Butchers (one of them doing mostly chicken and other fowl), 2 Carpenters, 2 Coopers, 2 Fishmongers, 4 Furriers, 3 Jewelers, 2 Masons, 3 Mercers (one selling old clothes⁶ as well), 2 Pastrycooks, 1 Plasterer, 1 Roofer, 1 Ropemaker, 8 Shoemakers, 5 Tailors, 2 Weavers, 1 Wine-Seller, 2 Woodcarver, 3 Woodseller.

Other services and persons of note include 30 Clergy, 1 Priest, 2 Lawyers and Advocates, 5 Maidservants. There are 3 churches of Three-become-One in Alsbach, with the main church sitting just south of the market square.

There are 6 noble households in Alsbach, and the aforementioned 8 guardsmen, who split up between city and gate guard, with the gates being manned by only one guard during the off hours.

3.8.1 The Inn and Taverns

The White Hand Alsbach's Inn lies at the corner of the market place, at the main street leading towards the southern gate. It features a small front porch and a small garden in the back, as well as a comfortable lobby and good food. It is a 2 floor building, with the bar/restaurant (9 tables), kitchen, washing room, etc. on the ground floor. The first floor has a large common room with 12 beds towards the street, as well as 4 double and 2 single rooms towards the garden, one of each being more luxurious (and expensive) than the others.

Ales'n Chicken A veritable restaurant one street away from the market place. The food is average, but plenty. Most of the menu is chicken, though there are some soups as well. The drinks are cheap, but not very good. There are 8 tables and a fireplace, and the overall impression is fair to average.

The Wolf's Den A small and comfortable pub serving average beer and cheap rum. On some days, there is some simple food on the menu as well, but the quality is fairly bad. The Wolf's Den is a few streets from the market place and is frequented mostly by workers and other low class but honest men. It has 7 tables scattered between the fireplace and the tap.

⁵Each has a short sword and leather armour, CP 9. There are 2 short bows in the guardhouse, MP 8

⁶what today would be called «second hand»

The Lonely Wanderer Located near the eastern gate, the Lonely Wanderer serves fair food at good prices, and offers good and fast service. It is split into two rooms, the main tap room having 5 tables, the smaller cellar room sporting 4 tables. Both wine and beer are good, if slightly more expensive than they deserve.

4 Epilog

The adventure may be over for the characters, but one way or the other, they can never be sure about Elaine. Whatever they did to her, it may have saved or doomed her. Would her life been better had the characters decided differently? What about her father or Harald?

Possible adventures from here can revolve around the druids in the forest, or the town of Alsbach which given its size surely has one or two opportunities to offer. In fact, there is a nasty story developing right now, and it involves the church...