

OVER THE NEXT HILL SUMMERWINE CREEK

OVER THE NEXT HILL IS A multi-author series focused on small settlements that can be dropped into a campaign with minimal preparation. Each article in the series presents several detailed NPCs, points of interest, and loose plot hooks that can be developed during play. This installment of the series details Summerwine Creek, a village that has been plunged into endless days and nights of debauchery and hedonism by mischievous fey.

OVERVIEW

The people of Summerwine Creek used to be hardworking country folk. The sweet summer wine that their village was named for was a treat reserved for festivals and weddings. Thanks to Fey Prince Ildwych, it seems that every day since midsummer's eve has become a festival. No one in Summerwine seems to mind—life is one great party now—but the human body was not meant for such revelry. Three weeks have passed and people are dying. Dancers have collapsed from exhaustion and been trampled underfoot, others retch until their final breath, poisoned by overindulging in the wine they loved so much. And what is to happen when the vineyard runs dry?



WRITING JAMES J. HAECK
COLOR ART ELLIS GOODSON
MAPPING MICHAEL MCCARTHY
EDITING JAMES J. HAECK
LAYOUT ERIC LIFE-PUTNAM

GEOGRAPHY

Summerwine Creek is nestled in the sheltering boughs of a deciduous forest, though its farms and vineyards extend beyond the forest by several miles. A wide creek cuts through the town, originating from somewhere deep in the woods. The village appears to be in a perpetual state of early autumn, as its trees' broad leaves create a tapestry of brilliant gold, amber, and crimson.

SIGNIFICANT NPCs

Summerwine Creek is home to about 250 people, mostly human, though most of the population lives outside the village itself, tending to farms, vineyards, or lumber camps, and only come to the village center on market or festival days.

Fey Prince Ildwych. This young fey prince (**noble**) of the Summer Court sees the people of Summerwine as overworked and in need of a long season of revelry. He is genuinely trying to help the townsfolk, and is blissfully unaware that he is doing far more harm than good; his retainers do not permit news of deaths or blight to reach his royal ears. He lives within a tiny castle inside a fairy ring in the town square (Area 3), allowing his subjects to spill unseen from the Feyrealm into the world of the "big folk." His three closest retainers are hard at work in the winery (Area 4), the apiary (Area 6), and Marouf's farm (Area 7).

Buttercup. A mean-spirited taskmaster, this gorgeous **sprite** torments Brewmaster Redderfeld beneath the winery (Area 4), forcing him to continue making enchanted summer wine so that Prince Ildwych's party can continue forever. Buttercup, like her prince, believes that this party is for the humans' benefit, she just doesn't care if "fat, ugly old folk" suffer, as long as young, pretty ones are happy.

Vintner Redderfeld. Before the fey came, this human **commoner** was a husky man nearing middle age. Reddenfeld was brought up as a vintner, making the town's sweet summer wine since he was a boy. Now, the brewmaster is chained up in the cellar of the winery, forced to

keep making enchanted wine for Ildwych's party. He is not under the fey spell, but is nonetheless their slave.

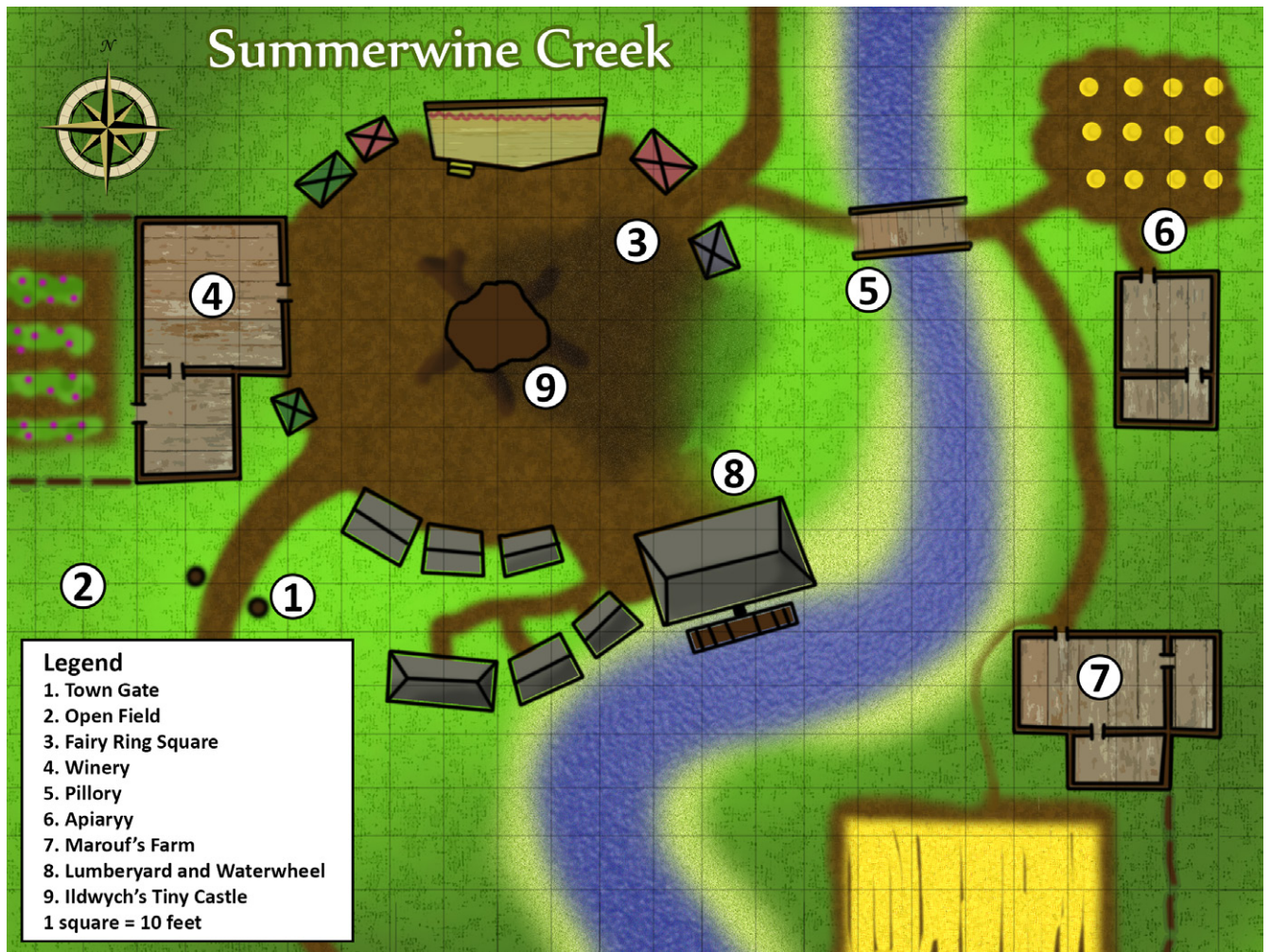
Honeysuckle. This cheerful, plump **pixie** is particularly fond of bees, and was overjoyed to learn that there was an apiary in Summerwine Creek—she just wasn't prepared to run it. The beekeepers haven't returned to tend to their hives since the endless party began, and the bees are dying in droves. Though frantically trying to tend to the needs of the bees, she's just one small fairy.

Old Sir Braunritter. An old ex-**knight** who retired to Summerwine Creek to live out his winter years in peace. Braunritter is the white-whiskered grandfather of the young songster Grenwald and Summerwine's chief beekeeper. He is far from frail, but his old bones are not up to the unending dancing and revelry in the town square.

Grenwald the Songster. A human in the summer of his life (use **acolyte** statistics, using his lyre as a club). He loves to sing and play the lyre and has been training in the big city to sing arias, and is one of the favorite musicians at the endless party (Area 3). He traveled to Summerwine to visit his grandfather, Braunritter, but drank the enchanted wine and fell under Ildwych's spell. He hasn't sent word back to family in the city for nearly a month, and his family is worried sick.

Nahla Marouf. This human **druid** has been a part of Summerwine's farming community since she was a small child, using her magic to bring strong harvests come autumn. Residing here are Nahla, her husband Ammar, and her two daughters Habiba and Najiyah (age 8 and 15, respectively). Since the fey party began, Nahla's unchecked druidic magic has spread chaos across the outlying farms (Area 8).

Barleybloom. The most dutiful of Ildwych's **sprites**, Barleybloom is disappointed that she is stuck in this human village running damage control on the plant monsters rampaging around the village. First, she should be back at the border of the Feyrealm defending her principality against the Shadowlands. Second, if she must be in the human world, she should at least be partying, too.



If she knew that the druid causing chaos in town were the one who *should* be cleaning up this mess, Barleybloom would drag her back and sober her up in a fey heartbeat.

Wise Elf Gwyn. The village's androgynous guardian **mage** and wise elf was pilloried by Ildwyth's guards for attempting to break the fey enchantment. As an elf, Gwyn's fey ancestry gave them a certain resilience to the enchanted wine's effects. Now, raucous partygoers take great pleasure in throwing rotten food at Gwyn while the elf languishes in the pillory, awaiting Ildwyth's judgment. They have been trapped inside the stockade since just after midsummer; their face has grown gaunt, and their short, silver hair has lost its luster. Gwyn has not been able to properly rest since the party began—they have 3 levels of exhaustion and have only one 1st-level spell slot remaining.

SIGNIFICANT AREAS

1. Main Road and Town Gate

The main gate of the city is a beautifully-carved cedar arch bearing the town's name, but the arch is cracked and dozens of boots, tied together by their straps, have been slung over the top. An unmanned cart bearing two casks of wine has been crashed into the arch. Just beyond is a town square filled with people and bursting with jovial music.

The road to Summerwine Creek is a well-worn dirt path wide enough for two ox-drawn carts side by side. It is about 50 miles from the nearest city, but a DC 10 Intelligence (History) check reveals that it usually bustles with trade, selling produce and its famous summer wine to city folk. Oddly, no traders are passing through today.

2. Open Field

The open fields between farms and vineyards are home to many grazing farm animals, with few fences to contain them. For the past several weeks, these fields have also been home to the dead and the dead drunk. Small fey creatures may also wander these plains while the party is in progress.

3. Fairy Ring Square

A canopy of orange-red leaves covers the town square, fluttering in the wind like flickering flames. Strung from bough to bough are strings of colorful fairy lights, illuminating nearly six dozen villagers dancing a lively, drunken tarantella within the square. To the north is a wooden stage bearing performers on fifes, drums, and lyres. Dozens more revelers guzzle wine, eat honey cakes, and make merry around the dancers. Among the humans are other folk, stout, furry creatures with the upper bodies of men and the legs and hooves of goats.

The village square is center of the party, where about 150 **commoners** cyclically dance, collapse of exhaustion, crawl to the wine tables encircling the town square, drink heavily, and return to dancing. Since the party began, nearly three dozen humans have died—of exhaustion, alcohol poisoning, or trampling.

Satyrs. The 12 **satyrs** mingling with the humans are Prince Ildwych's enforcers. They ensure that no one stops drinking the wine long enough to break the enchantment (about 3 hours), new arrivals drink up, and to keep any humans from dying. They aren't very good at their last duty, but are excellent at forcing their will on the villagers.

Villagers. All the villagers are deeply under the wine's mollifying spell. Even if one is threatened or violence breaks out, they blithely continue the reveling. If spoken to, they sedately obey orders, as if affected by the *suggestion* spell, but adamantly refuse to stop having fun.

Old Sir Braunritter. The old **knight** (see Significant NPCs) is exhausted, but can't seem to stop dancing no matter how hard he tries. If he is

not helped, he must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw each hour or drop to 0 hit points and start dying. Returning his armor to him (from Area 6) invokes such powerful memories of past heroism that he breaks free from Ildwych's magic.

Grenwald the Songster. This young bard is performing with several humans and satyrs on the village stage. He's been playing almost non-stop for weeks, stopping only when the satyrs pull him aside for healing when his voice disappears or his fingers begin to bleed. His grandfather Braunritter knows a lullaby he used to sing when Grenwald was a child; if Braunritter is freed from the enchantment, he can help Grenwald as well.

Fairy Ring. Beneath the tree in the center of the square is a 5-foot diameter fairy circle, in the center of which is a castle of cloudy green glass. Only Tiny fey creatures can enter Ildwych's castle (Area 9).

4. Winery

A sign hanging at the entrance to this building reads: Overcreek Winery and Summerwine Vineyard. Inside, the winery has been thoroughly trashed. Empty wine casks have been thrown haphazardly around the lawn, and a trail of rubbish and smashed furniture leads downstairs into the winery's cellar.

The main floor of the winery has little to offer except for glass bottle shards and crushed tables. Downstairs, the **sprite** Buttercup has imprisoned Vintner Reddenfeld—forcing him to stomp grapes for new wine, not quite understanding how long fermentation takes—and enchanting the few remaining casks.

Plot Seed. Buttercup is on edge. With only ten casks of wine remaining and Reddenfeld's grape-stomping not producing wine at the rate she expected, the sprite worries that the enchanted wine will run out within a day or two, and she is tasked by her prince with keeping the wine flowing no matter the cost. If no recourse is found, the vicious sprite may turn to darker options to keep goblets full.

5. Pillory

A trio of stockades stand by the edge of the creek. Two are empty, but the third holds a thin figure with an angular, sunburnt face and short, silver hair. They are being pelted with rotten vegetables and clumps of mud by a cluster of laughing villagers. The prisoner raises their head, revealing two pointed ears, and silently mouths: “Help me.”

Wise Elf Gwyn was imprisoned by the townspeople—urged on by Ildwych’s satyrs—for trying to stop the party. As far as the elf knows, they are the only person in Summerwine free from the spell.

Plot Seed. Gwyn thinks that they know a way to end Ildwych’s enchantment without confronting the fey prince. First, Gwyn must be freed from the stockade, and an **ochokochi*** named Garglespit prowling the outlying farms has the key. Once the elf is freed, they can accompany the party into the forest north of Summerwine to find Iele, a **samovila*** and fey princess that lives at the mouth of the creek, who might be able to break the spell if she is appeased. If the PCs are set on confronting Ildwych, Iele may instead be able to transform them into Tiny fey for a few hours so that they can enter the castle.

6. Apiary

Rows of white beehives stand near a quaint cottage on a rolling green field. No light shines from inside the cottage, but the beehives are in chaos. Swarms of bees buzz furiously around the beehives, but are losing bees every second, falling like rain from the cloud of insects. Amid the buzzing, you can hear tiny squeaks of “Ouch, quit it! I mean it!” from a pixie flitting around the swarms.

The pixie Honeysuckle loves bees and pleaded with Ildwych to let her take care of them. Honeysuckle has the best intentions, but she is just terrible at taking care of bees. They are dying rapidly; unless the bees are saved, Summerwine’s

crops may never grow again. The nearby cottage belongs to Old Sir Braunritter and contains his old armor. Returning the armor to him—and the memories of his heroic spirit that it carries—snaps him out of Ildwych’s curse.

Plot Seed. This apiary is falling into chaos because their queen bee has been stolen by one of the revelers as a gift for their prince. The queen bee, now infused with fey magic, lives inside Ildwych’s Tiny Castle (Area 9). Only returning her to the apiary calms the swarms of bees.

7. Marouf’s Farm

Dozens of small farms and homesteads sprawl across the southeastern fields; all are choked by huge, grasping vines. Grape vines and rows of wheat have grown to absurd proportions and are tearing apart the tilled fields. One farmhouse is the epicenter of it all, and a beleaguered fairy is flitting back and forth, shooting tiny arrows at shambling heaps of vegetation.

The druid Nahla Marouf lives here with her husband and two children. The farm has produced incredible harvests for generations, even in years of blight, thanks to her family’s druidic magic. With Nahla under the fey enchantment and perpetually drunk (she is among the revelers in Area 3), her unchecked magic has caused the plants to grow out of control. Huge vines have torn up the fields and two dozen shambling mounds and countless awakened shrubs made of corn stalks are ravaging the surrounding farms.

Plot Seed. The sprite Barleybloom has been ordered by Ildwych to keep Nahla’s untamed magic in check by slaying the shambling mounds and awakened shrubs running amok. Barleybloom demands that the owner of the farm be brought to her so that the human can return to her usual activity, releasing her from this miserable occupation.

* Check next week’s exclusive ENSIDER article with four new fey monsters from Eastern European folklore: *From Stranger Woods* by Artem Serebrennikov!



8. Lumberyard and Waterwheel

Five tree trunks float in the stream beside this lumber mill, turned sideways against the waterwheel. They seem to have floated downriver from the forest. A water-powered rotating saw blade spins dangerously close to the head of a passed-out young man.

The young man is a mill worker named Runner, and he collapsed here after wandering drunkenly away from the party in the town square. If he were to roll in his sleep just a little bit to the left—into the sawblade—this scene would be a lot bloodier. A gang of 1d6 satyrs patrol here every few hours to drag exhausted revelers back to the party; the fun can't stop until Ildwych says so!

9. Ildwych's Tiny Castle

The fey prince's crystal castle is in the boughs of the central oak tree in the town square. Only Tiny-sized fey can enter; if the PCs want to gain access, they'll need to come up with a creative solution—though finding Iele (see plot seed, Area 5) is a good fallback plan.

The interior of the castle is detailed in an upcoming EN5IDER adventure. 