

– the cup – of true love

- **When:** The company may undertake this quest anytime from the year 2946 on, but it may work best in the year 2958, when Hartfast son of Hartmut calls for aid from Mountain Hall (see *The Darkening of Mirkwood*, page 50).
- **Where:** The adventure begins at the Anduin River and moves to Mountain Hall in the West Anduin Vales. From there, the heroes turn back eastward through the Wolfwood to Trader's Island and finally south upon the rapids of the Great River to Hag's Island.
- **What:** After rescuing a herd of goats from a Warg attack, the companions are sent to Mountain Hall as heroes. Beranald, the Doorwarden, hires them to go on a quest to retrieve the chieftain's family cup, recently stolen by a traitor in their midst. It is then that they travel through the Wolfwood to Trader's Island where they learn of the tale of the Treasure-eating Hag. To reclaim the cup, they must find and slay the monster.
- **Why:** The cup of Hartfast is made of gold and inscribed with a note from his mother to his father; it holds immeasurable value to the Woodman's family. Returning it to Mountain Hall will bring great joy to the chieftain and earn the companions reward, respect and influence.
- **Who:** Beranald is the one who sends the company on the quest, but they also meet Widuven, a craftsman from Trader's Island, who tells them about the River-hag.

ADVENTURING PHASE

This adventure is made up of five parts and an epilogue. Provided below is an **Adventure Scheme**, an outline ready for an experienced Loremaster to embellish. For tips on running an adventure, see *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*, pages 210-212. See page 151 for using preliminary skill rolls at the beginning of every journey, combat, and encounter; and see pages 160-162 for generating Hazard episodes when needed.

IMPORTANT: Before running this adventure, Loremasters should also study *The Heart of the Wild*, pages 43-47 for information about the West Anduin Vales, along with a review of *Tales from Wilderland*, pages 84-106 for details about Mountain Hall, Hartfast, and Beranald.

PART ONE - A SNACK OF GOATS

While tracking a band of Orcs in the West Anduin Vales, the company stumbles upon a herd of goats under attack by hungry wolves ranging far from the Misty Mountains. Interrupting the killing makes them local heroes to the Woodmen farmers of the valley. They are rewarded with sturdy mountain ponies and sent to Mountain Hall where they can warn the chieftain—Hartfast, son of Hartmut—of the Wargs.

Loremaster Tips

- *Start the adventure in media res. The player-heroes have just crossed the Anduin 80 miles directly east of Mountain Hall and are tracking a band of Orcs headed westward.*
- *There are at least 1-2 Wargs per player-hero and a Wolf Leader (core rules, pages 246-247).*
- *To make things even more sinister, use a Hound of Sauron (page 248) hidden among them that escapes west before it can be killed. "I'll warn the master!" it says before disappearing.*

PART TWO - TALES IN FIRIENSELD

Arriving at Mountain Hall, the company discovers that Hartfast is away mustering allies against a growing threat of Goblins under the mountains; but Beranald the Doorwarden receives them warmly. He is old and filled with many harrowing tales, including the recent tale of the stolen cup. It seems that a bodyguard of the chieftain robbed his personal chest of valuables. Among the items taken was a precious golden cup—a family heirloom that was given as a gift from his loving mother to his father. On the base of the cup was written the following message:

THIS CUP IS MY HEART,
FILLED WITH MY LOVE FOR YOU.
DRINK FREELY MY HARTMUT,
FOR IT SHALL NEVER RUN DRY.
YOUR GELVIRA

Old Hartmut cherished the item dearly, but he gave it to his son when his beloved Gelvira passed of extreme sickness several years ago. Hartfast is greatly distressed that it has been taken, especially by such a close, trusted warrior—a Woodman named Cilderic.

Beranald believes Cilderic fled to Trader's Island where he most likely used it to barter for lesser things; but not before stopping in the Wolfwood at his thieving brother's hideout. The key to finding the cup's whereabouts is to find Cilderic.

Loremaster Tips

- Review the steps for entry into Mountain Hall found in *Tales from Wilderland*, pages 90-91 and *The Heart of the Wild*, page 45 under Beranald, Doorwarden of Mountain Hall.



- When encountering Beranald, set the Tolerance based on Valour and add the highest Standing of any Woodman in the company. If they succeed at Courtesy, the doorkeeper takes them to the Great Hall where the Interaction phase begins around a large fire-pit; otherwise they must give up their weapons and retire to Beranald's quarters for an Interaction phase.
- The purpose of the encounter is to swap stories and ask questions. Therefore, Beranald begins by asking for a story of their recent adventures. Any spokesman can make an appropriate skill roll to tell the tale. If he wishes to make up a wild story, he can use the *Hobbit Tales* card game to help him. Afterward, Beranald tells them the tale of the cup and the companions may continue the conversation. If they offer to go on a quest to retrieve the cup, evaluate the outcome of the encounter as follows:

1: Beranald seems to have little hope in the company, but he mentions that Hartfast will surely reward them if they succeed in the quest. He retires to bed early and does not eat breakfast with them in the morning.

2-4: Beranald tells them that they should be wary while camping in the stone forts at night in the Wolfswood, for they are often occupied by brigands and ghosts. He also recalls the story of Ivina of the Green (see *The Heart of the Wild*, page 46) and swears by invoking her name, she will rescue them from any trouble.

5-6: As above; and he writes and seals a letter to be handed to Widuven the sword-trader on Trader's Island. It should be enough to gain his trust and assistance in any way they need it.

7+: As above; and Beranald also offers a personal reward of 2 Treasure each to be added as a bonus to whatever Hartfast decides to give them if they return the heirloom.

PART THREE - GHOSTS OF THE WOLFSSWOOD

Traveling eastward brings the company to a forest of thick, tangled trees known as the Wolfswood where they come across a crumbling stone fort. If they camp out or explore the structure, they will find leather satchels of gold lying next to dead men. If they take the treasure, they will face the danger of collapsing walls, and the visitation of ghosts! Only Ivina the Green can keep them from harm and chase the spirits away.

Deeper in the wood, they are stalked by a more malevolent and grizzly creature—a Wood-wight made of bone, branches, and leaves. Before the thing can be defeated, hunting horns can be heard in the distance along with the sound of hooves. One hero swears he sees ten elves in shimmering armour of silver and gold riding on beautiful white stallions. The Wight is driven away quickly, vanishing without a trace.

The company continues east 30 miles before reaching the Great River and Trader's Island.

Loremaster Tips

- The ponies will not enter the forest out of fear. The company must send them back to Mountain Hall or release them into the wild. If you are using the Eye of Mordor rules (*Rivendell*, page 111), a revelation episode might

include the death of the ponies in some way.

- It should be sunset or night when the company finally discovers the dead bodies and satchels of gold in the crumbling stone fort. They should not find them until after a great effort of moving rubble and looking thoroughly.
- Discovering the dead may require a Corruption test.
- If you are using the rules for magical treasure (see *Rivendell*, page 85), consider making the bags of gold a hoard rated at Treasure 20*; but you'll need to compile a magical treasures index in advance.
- If the company takes the gold, Spectres (*Rivendell*, page 80) will ambush the company with their Dreadful spells (no ambush if they were warned by Beranald about the ghosts!) and an ill-wind will knock a wall down on top of them.
- There is at least 1 Spectre for every two companions. Unless the player-heroes have weapons that can harm the ghosts, they must invoke the name of Ivina or run out of the fort to escape the haunting spirits.
- Create a background for the Wood-wight (*The Heart of the Wild*, page 119) and consider making it more powerful with an enhancement such as **Formidable** (*Rivendell*, page 67).

PART FOUR - TRADER'S ISLAND

The éafolc's market is found on a sandy spit of land in the middle of the Anduin river. Many river-folk families are traders at the market and they make their camps on the banks of the isle. It is here that the company meets Widuven, a sword trader, who may have rescued them after stumbling into a pit of soft mud.

Widuven listens to the story of the cup and of Cilderic the traitor. He then recalls that the infamous Woodman never sold the cup, but took it south with him on the Anduin river to Hag's Island where he hoped to use it as a lure to kill the treasure-eating creature. He never returned from the island.

Widuven offers to craft each of them a custom sword if they can bring back strands of the hag's golden hair believed to possess magical properties. He wishes to weave them into the hilts of his swords to increase their value.

Loremaster Tips

- To get to Trader's Island, the companions will need to navigate the river and hidden pits of soft mud.
- If anyone gets stuck in a mud pit, Widuven the sword trader

helps to rescue the victim. Otherwise, they encounter him soon after arrival on the island, perhaps among the camps.

- The goal of the encounter is to learn of Cilderic's whereabouts. Set the Tolerance rating based on Wisdom and modify it by the highest Standing of any Woodman in the company. Add +1 because they are on an errand from Mountain Hall; but -1 for every Barding or Man of the Lake present (Widuven does not like northerners; he feels they are snobs and elitists).
- During the Interaction phase, using **Inspire** to tell the tale of the cup may draw curious folk to gather around and listen, prompting Widuven to speak about Cilderic and Hag's Island. The companions can use **Riddle** to ask questions about the Hag or **Persuade** to convince him of the importance of finding the cup. **Song** will bolster Widuven's confidence in them further. Below is a suggested evaluation of the encounter. If the company presented Widuven with the sealed letter from Mountain Hall, increase the results of the encounter by one level:

1: Widuven sends the heroes away to Hag's Island, but they must pay 1 Treasure for some old boats.

2-4: After talking with the companions, Widuven offers them free boats to complete the quest and tells them to avoid the rapids on the eastern side when approaching the island.

5-6: As above; but he also promises to craft them each a sword if they return with strands of the hag's golden hair.

7+: As above; additionally, he introduces the company to the craftsmen of the market and each of them may immediately get one free use of the undertaking: **Visit the Market at Trader's Island** (*The Heart of the Wild*, page 46).

PART FIVE - LAIR OF THE RIVER-HAG

Boating south on the Anduin, the company fights a series of rapids to reach the small island of the River-hag, which is surrounded by thick river-mists. Once ashore, they begin searching for the creature, but the island is riddled with snares of various types: large spiked contraptions, needle-shooting vines, and falling nets!

If they survive the dangers, they eventually find a path leading down under the roots of an old gnarly tree that opens into a dark and musty chamber. A small pile of half-eaten treasure is discovered there, but it is nothing more than a clever trap. The River-hag, hidden under a pool of mud on the surface, emerges to follow the heroes down into her lair, attempting to ambush them unexpectedly. After defeating the legendary creature, they uncover a hoard of stolen gold, retrieve the cup of Hartfast from her belt, and take her golden hair back to Trader's Island.

Loremaster Tips

- The rapids of the east channel are extremely dangerous. The company must make a choice to continue east or make for the western passage. If Widuven warned them, they will know to paddle west, but it won't be easy to fight the current without being overturned. If they cannot avoid the east channel, things become even more difficult and their lives are in grave peril as they face the possibility of drowning or being battered against their own boat or obstacles in the river, such as tree branches and rocks.
- Create a map of the island with the largest tree in the centre (the lair of the River-hag). All around it, place trap locations.
- For a description and stats on the River-hag, see below.
- If all the companions enter the River-hag's lair, she will attempt to ambush them, cornering them inside the chamber. If they keep any look-outs on the surface, however, only the look-outs can be ambushed.
- Consider making the cup a wondrous artefact possessing a magical Blessing of Healing for anyone who drinks from it. See page 93 of Rivendell about how the heroes might discover this enchantment before returning it to Mountain Hall. Of course, if the cup also produces a Magical result, using it may qualify as an open display of magical power and increase the Eye Awareness score of the company. Revealing the enchantment to Hartfast would double each hero's reward from the chieftain.
- Some Loremasters may prefer that the cup of Hartfast be recently eaten by the River-hag and the only way to find it is if she spews it up, or they cut her open when she's dead.
- Evidence in the chamber suggests that the River-hag gave birth not so long ago, meaning she is not the only hag on the island...

- It is recommended the hoard has a value of Treasure 50**.
- Widuven makes each companion a custom sword, braiding the River-hag's golden hair into the hilts. While the hair possesses no Magical qualities as hoped, it does increase the value of each sword to 5 Treasure (more than the cost of a fine war horse in Lake-town). The wielder also gains the Éafolc-friend Trait for the life of the weapon.

THE RIVER-HAG

Long ago this lonely creature of violence and lust, clawed its way out of the muddy bed of the Anduin from the deep places of the world and chose for itself a small island on which to dig its lair. At first, the hag would feed on shipwrecked wanderers and the gold they carried; but soon brave adventurers came to slay it, hoping to avenge their friends and recover their gold.

Hunched over at eight feet tall, the gangly monster is a wicked sight to behold; its long strands of golden hair partially cover its cold black eyes, pointed nose and spiked teeth; its osseous limbs end in iron-hard claws.



THE RIVER HAG

Attribute Level: 6


Endurance: 42; **Hate:** 6

Parry: 12*; **Armour:** 3d

Skills: Personality 2; Survival 2; Movement 3; Custom 2;

Perception 3; Vocation 1

Weapon Skills:

- Slash ♦♦♦; Damage: 7; Edge: ; Injury: 16;
Called Shot: -
- Golden Regurgitation** ♦♦♦; Damage: 6; Edge: 8;
Injury: 16; Called Shot: -

Special Abilities:

- Seize Victim
- Snake-like Speed

Notes:

**The creature's high Parry rating reflects a Battle-hardened enhancement. It has survived many years on the island killing numerous opponents attempting to slay it.*

****Golden Regurgitation:** On the round after seizing a victim, the creature may attempt to spew several gallons of a burning mixture of water, sand, bile, and gold into the victim's face and mouth. If it is successful, the target will continue to suffer damage automatically each round as it suffocates in the muck and must make a TN 16 Protection test to keep from being Wounded. This continues as long as the victim is seized.

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EPILOGUE - RETURN TO MOUNTAIN HALL

If the companions have found the cup of Hartfast, they return it to Mountain Hall and are rewarded with 5 Treasure each from the chieftain's personal chest. They are also granted sanctuary (for as long as Hartfast is alive) without the requirement of spending a Fellowship phase in the fortress and choosing Open New Sanctuary as an undertaking.

– Credits –

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