

THE ELVEN HOME

BY ANNE GRAY MCCREADY

A Basic D&D® Wilderness Scenario

The following Basic D&D® adventure can be inserted into any campaign in which characters travel through wilderness areas. The adventure can also be played as a short session. It is best suited for 1-4 characters of 1st-3rd level, though it can be used as a side trip for most any level to relieve the boredom of a journey through the wilderness.

The adventure starts as the party is traveling off-road through forested hills in the early afternoon. The Dungeon Master should read the boxed text to the players or paraphrase it as desired.

The Elven Home

As your party rounds a bend, you see a strange cluster of unusually large trees on the side of a low hill. Huge, green leaves extend from gnarled, gray branches, and the tree trunks are almost half again as wide and tall as surrounding trees. A bed of fine grass dotted with fallen leaves carpets the hillside, and a wisp of smoke floats on the wind. From somewhere ahead come the sounds of shrill screams and splashing water.

Regardless of what the player characters may think at first, they have actually stumbled across a secluded elven home in the wilderness. Nothing is wrong; the sounds come from a group of young elves playing in a nearby pond. If the party investigates the noises, go to the section below on the bubbling pool. If the party investigates the hill, it first finds a narrow path that circles the base of the hill and leads to the source of the wispy smoke.

Following the rough dirt path that leads around the hill, your party finds a clear, cold stream, shallow and easily fordable. The stream flows from a source within the hill, exiting beneath one huge tree's roots. The smoke among the trees emanates from an hole in the ground up the slope from that particular tree.

The stream does not initially seem unusual, except that it flows from beneath the large tree. However, if the player characters watch the stream for longer than a round, they notice that large bubbles are carried along in the running water. The bubbles constantly pop with a fizzing noise.

The bubbles are filled with a gas

which mixes with the water at its source, deep within the hill. Called "energy gas" by the elves who live in this area, the gas causes anyone who breathes it to instantly feel a surge of cool adrenaline rush through his body. The elves have learned to capture bubbles in tightly woven, cloth sacks kept in the water; they then breathe the air trapped in the sacks. The elves, who live in a hollowed-out section of the hill beneath the characters' feet, also benefit from the gas as the underground stream surfaces in the middle of their home, giving them a constant supply of the gas. The elves cannot control the supply of gas and do not know where it comes from within the hill.

The gas affects anyone who breathes it, giving him extra energy and vitality. One deep breath of gas adds 1-4 hit points to the sniffer's own hit points and one point to his strength. This effect only lasts for five rounds once the character stops breathing the gas. A character can temporarily gain more hit points than his normal amount in this manner, but strength scores cannot exceed 18. Characters can attempt to bag some of the bubbles, as noted above, but the gas becomes dispersed in the air and ineffective after two turns.

Vegetation growing around the source of the stream has also been affected by the gas, which is captured by the roots of the trees and causes them to grow extremely large. As noted below, the tree over the source of the stream is not a true tree at all, but a treant (which is aware of the party and is remaining motionless and quiet).

If the characters investigate the source of the smoke, they find a circular, 1'-diameter opening in the ground. The smoke prevents them from seeing down the hole. Any character with infravision can see a fire burning at the bottom of the shaft. If the characters pour several gallons of water down the hole, read the following:

As the smoke subsides, your party can easily see down the hole to an open area about 5-6' below. Immediately beneath the hole is a pile of half-burned logs and ashes contained in a black pot. Beside the pot is a smaller black pot filled with liquid,

If the party searches the top of the hill for an entrance, read the following:

Your party finds no door on the top of the hill, but you do discover a clear slab of glasslike material embedded in the hill near the smoking hole. The slab is approximately 3' x 6'. Through this substance, you can see that a dwelling of some sort lies beneath, the hillside. The dwelling is lit by natural light (through the ceiling glass). Thick, grayish candles can be seen scattered throughout the room; none of them are lit at present.

On one side of the room is a small, smooth, pale wood table surrounded by three chairs. The chairs are beautifully crafted, apparently made from the same wood as the table. Near the fire pot is a fourth chair. In the southeastern corner of the room, next to the table, is a large, curved cabinet carved of the same pale wood. Both cabinet doors are closed.

The other side of the room is hidden by a heavy blanket that appears to serve as a room divider. The ceiling is covered by a network of exposed roots from the trees above. Near the curtain is a pile of firewood and a table on which rest several bowls of dark liquid, berries, and edible leaves and roots.

A grass mat sits along the wall near the stream. Next to the mat is a pair of small, worn, leather shoes. The floor is covered with a larger, round grass mat that nearly reaches the walls. A strip of the mat is cut away where a spring bubbles up from the earth and runs through a hole in the wall near the shoes. A pile of cloth sacks lies by the spring.

If the characters attempt to enter the dwelling by chipping away at the glass, they discover the material is extremely, hard — in fact, it has the consistency of steel and cannot be penetrated by ordinary weapons or strength. In addition, the party will be automatically surprised by a treant who attacks under the assumption that the characters are thieves which may, of course, be true enough). The treant is the "tree" standing over the source of the stream, slightly downslope from the skylight.

As you strike the glass for the first time, the ground rumbles slightly. Before you can react, a flurry of leaves and branches descends upon you.

The treant has exceptional powers from its long exposure to the gas in the stream; if the treant moves away from the area for longer than half an hour, all of its heightened scores drop to the given lower levels. The higher levels are received once the treant returns, plants itself again, and waits for a full day (one treant: AC 2; HD 8; hp 45 (64 with gas); #AT 2 branches; Dmg 2-12/2-12 (3-18/3-18 with gas); MV 60'; Save F8; ML 9; AL L).

The treant first only tries to push characters away from the glass pane, doing 1-6/1-6 hp damage to anyone it strikes. It does this reduced damage only if no one strikes back at it or displays fire. If attacked with weapons, the treant fights back at full power, but it won't leave the area unless attacked with fire.

The treant has no treasure. If the characters manage to escape the creature, it does not pursue them off the hill. The treant is an old friend of the elves and all of them enjoy the benefits of the unusual local gas supply.

The characters may also try to find the door which is on the westside of the hill. A root extends from the dirt to serve as a door handle. The door itself requires a check to locate concealed doors because it is cleverly disguised to blend into the grassy hillside. It is almost invisible from the outside except for a hairline break in the ground's surface surrounding the door.

The sod-covered door slants back with the natural shape of the hill, and, when open, is only 5' high. The ceiling inside is only 5½' high in most places. Roots in the ceiling curl down into the room and snake back into the ground.

If the characters manage to find the door and enter (the door is never locked), they see the same room as was viewed through the skylight.

The air inside the small home is thick with wood smoke and the smell of damp earth. A natural spring bubbles out of the ground into a small pool beside the door, giving off a fresh, misty odor that fills the air. The air also has a peculiar cool tinge to it that is hard to identify; it seems to make one feel better just by breathing it.

Anyone breathing the air in the room for longer than one round receives all the benefits of the gas — but the DM

should not tell the characters this. Instead, he should secretly note any changes to player character attributes and apply them as necessary.

Behind the curtain are two sets of rope hammocks, one pair above the other, on either end of the room. They are supported by knobby wooden poles which are anchored in the ground and the ceiling. A small, folded blanket lies in the center of each hammock, and a silver dagger (worth 20 gp) is hidden within each blanket.

The liquid in the pot by the smoldering fire is about enough to fill a wine skin. The liquid is dark and looks thick. The curved doors of the cabinet are plain except for a small carved border around the edge of each door. Handles are carved into the doors at the center of the piece.

The hammocks are what they appear to be — simply the place where the elves sleep. The liquid in the pot by the fire is a special elf brew. The sweet, dark liquid, no stronger than beer, has no magi-

cal properties. The elves brew small pots of it at a time using various berries from nearby bushes. Although the brew has little effect on human characters, elves are greatly effected by even small amounts (-2 "to hit" for 1-4 hours as a result of drinking a mug of the stuff).

Inside the cabinet, the characters can find the usual array of blankets, eating and writing utensils, and other small personal belongings. Four spell books, containing all spells used by the elves who live here (as given below), are kept beneath the false bottom of the cabinet (a roll to detect secret doors is required to find it). Note that each spell book has the spell *read magic* in addition to all other spells.

Behind a pile of blankets is a vase about 1' high. Its white surface is cracked and aged. Circling the vase are these words etched into its surface.

*When day is night
And night is day
The sun and moon
Shall pass this way.*

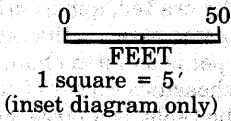
The elves don't know what the writing means. The vase has been passed down through the generations for ages; during that time, the meaning of the words was lost. The elves think that the vase was used in some ancient elven ritual. If the characters take the vase out of the elves' home, it changes color as soon as bright sunlight or moonlight hits it. The elves will trade the vase away, but they'll accept no less than 100 gp or another item of similar value.

If characters trade for the vase or steal it, they discover that it changes color each day in natural light. The light of a fire or magical light causes the vase to become white again. The characters will discover that the vase changes color in regular manner, with a different color each day for seven days (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet, black) before it begins the color rotation again. Intelligent characters soon discover that they can tell the day of the week by the color of the vase. The words engraved into the surface of the vase remain visible through each color change. A typical merchant will buy the vase for 40-240 gp.

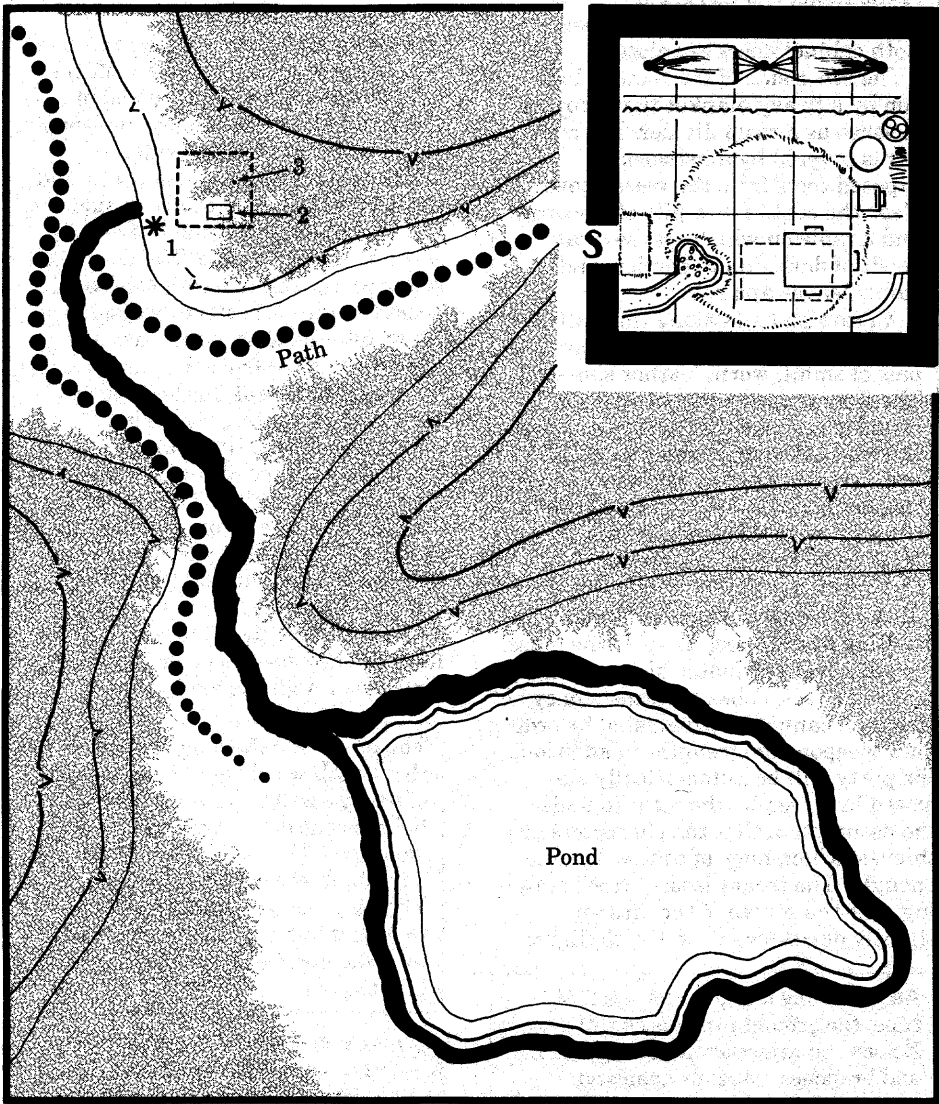
Buried in the earth beneath the small square mat is a leather pouch with 39 gp, 115 sp, and six gems, each worth 20 gp. No other coins or gems are in the elven home.

THE ELVENHOME

- 1. Treant
- 2. Window
- 3. Chimney



Contour lines are 10' apart



The Bubbling Pool

Characters who head for the source of the shrieks and splashing water soon come across the following scene:

The stream winds its way around a low tree-covered hill for about 80 yards. The shrieks grow louder with every step, when suddenly you find yourselves upon a clear pool of water about 80' across. Splashing about the water are two young elves. Suddenly, from a tree by the pond, another young elf jumps in the water, almost on top of the other two.

If the characters have not yet observed the bubbles in the stream, they do so as they watch the elves. The bubbles which have not surfaced now burst in the pond with a soft popping sound.

The elves are surprised on a roll of 1-4, unless the characters have made a great deal of noise around the underground home or while approaching the pond. If not surprised and if the party hasn't yet arrived at the pond, the elves flee into the woods, heading for a friend's home a mile away.

The elves eventually notice the characters watching them if the party simply stands there. They are momentarily frightened, but if the party takes no threatening actions, the elves smile and wave shyly, crouching down in the water so only their heads show. If the party contains elves and seems friendly enough, the swimming elves can be talked out of the water and will introduce themselves as Derrim (male), Atlee (female), and Yanna (female). Though the elves won't mention this, a fourth, Repo (male), is off retrieving a digging tool that other elves have borrowed. Their statistics (heightened by exposure to "energy gas" in the pool) are:

Derrim: AC 7; MV 120' (40'); E2; hp 8 (12 from gas); #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (dagger) + 2 (from gas); S 15 (16), I 10, W 11, D 17, C 12, CH 12; AL L; dagger; *detect magic, magic missile*

Atlee: AC 8; MV 120' (40'); E3; hp 12 (15 from gas); #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (dagger) + 1 (from gas); S 12 (13), I 15, W 6, D 14, C 11, CH 14; AL L; dagger; *charm person, sleep, ESP*

Yanna: AC 6; MV 120' (40'); E1; hp 4 (7 from gas); #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (dagger); S 9 (10), I 19, W 16, D 18, C 13, CH 10; AL N; dagger; *shield, sleep*

Repo (not present): AC 6; MV 120' (40'); E3; hp 14; #AT; Dmg 1-8 (long-sword) + 3; S 18, I 13, W 11, D 14, C 13, CH 12; AL L; long sword, leather armor; *light, magic missile, invisibility*

As few monsters have ever been seen in this part of the country, few weapons are carried or used. Repo carries his sword to impress his friends, but he knows how to use it, too. Repo will return to the elven home at sunset, using his *invisibility* spell to surprise his friends (and the player characters — if they are still around).

If the player character party appears hostile, the elves are not as vulnerable as they may appear. Aside from their spells, a number of sharp metal daggers (8) have been left on the bottom of the clear pond, and these may be retrieved, two at a time, in a single round by each elf. The daggers are balanced for throwing. The elves can also dive underwater for a full round each. A small underwater cave exists, only 10' square with a 4' ceiling, near the southern edge of the pond; the elves will flee to the cave, which has a large air pocket continually freshened by the oxygenated gas in the water, and will remain there for as long as necessary to escape attackers.

If the elves are treated well, they offer to take their guests to their underground home, of which they are quite proud. If the characters decline the elves' offer, the small beings become rather offended, saying, "See if we are nice to the likes of your kind again! We get so few visitors as it is, and they have to be so haughty!" If the characters accept the offer, the elves talk almost continuously. The characters can hardly squeeze in a single word. The elves are so pleased to have visitors, they forget their manners and monopolize the conversation.

The elves explain that years ago, their ancestors settled here because of the great beauty of the setting. Through the years, however, it has become slightly less attractive to the elves (the trees have grown gnarled, the stream has become smaller — aesthetic concerns that are of great importance to these beings). They have sent out expeditions of elves to search for a more suitable place to live, but have found nothing to their liking so far. The elves reveal that there are several other elf dwellings in the area, but decline to identify the others' homes in order to preserve their privacy.

If the characters try to cut the conversation off before an hour has passed, the elves again become upset at the characters' rudeness. Only after an hour are the characters able to politely excuse themselves. The elves offer to let them spend the night with them but are not offended if the character refuse.

If the party has previously ransacked the elven home, the elves will be greatly angered and will demand the return of all stolen items (and are willing to fight to get them back, unless the party is obviously too dangerous to deal with). If the party has entered the elven home but has not harmed anything, the elves won't mind at all ("Everyone drops in.").

About two hours after the party arrives on the scene, a number of stirges fly past the area in search of nourishment — *i.e.*, live beings like elves and humans. The stirges attack at once, but may be detected (with a surprise roll) before they are upon the party (three stirges: AC 7; HD 1; hp 7, 7; 6; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; MV 30' (10')/ 180' (60'); Save F2; ML 9; AL N).

If the party helps the elves fight off the stirges, the elves will be the party's friends for years to come. The elves are not crass enough to actually offer material rewards for their safety, but may be more than willing to offer free room and board for several days as a result.

Future events

Depending upon the party's conduct in this brief encounter, a number of future adventures and scenarios may be constructed. The theft of materials or the destruction of the elves' property may bring retribution as the elves (including the absent Repo) track down the guilty parties involved. Player character elves may, at some future date, wish to settle down in this area and construct homes of their own. The mystery of the colorful vase's origins and purpose remain to be resolved — which could lead to a higher-level task later in the campaign.