

# JOURNEY TO THE WAYSIDE SHRINE

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Designed for use with

**ShadowDark RPG**



**LEVEL 2 ADVENTURE**

**A LOW-LEVEL SHADOWDARK ADVENTURE ABOUT ESCORTING DEVOUT HALFLING PILGRIMS**

# ADVENTURE PRIMER

The fey spirits are connected to our history. They predate us and have accompanied us for millennia. We cannot miss the chance to pay our respect.

Galder, Voice of the People



ncared for by most, ignored by the rest, halflings live calm lives and are content to exist in remote, small settlements. Away from prying eyes and unconcerned with the problems of mankind and other races, halflings thrive in the shadows of larger civilizations. Some believe their attitude comes from an ancestral connection with forest fairies hundreds of generations in the past. The theory claims halflings are naturally prone to hide from larger beings, thus enjoying the solitude of forests and hillsides. That connection remains a theory. What is real, however, is that some halfling communities travel to strange places of worship to commune with fey spirits...

## THE PILGRIMAGE

FOR AS LONG as oral tradition remembers, halflings in the Western Reaches perform a yearly pilgrimage north. It is a spiritual voyage mostly undertaken by mid-age halflings. When asked, the participants often claim that they have felt a sort of calling to commune with the fairy-like spirits that congregate by ancient monuments in the forests and countryside. The halfling townsfolk of Everhill Sunset take part in this old tradition. From their small town in the Ochre Forest, the pilgrimage north takes fourteen days. It leads them to an old monolith surrounded by oddly and unnaturally-curving shallow streams. The place is known colloquially as the Wayside Shrine.

In the Western Reaches, humans and other ancestries believe the place is haunted and stay away. The beliefs come from the constant apparitions of fey beings. It also causes insects and vermin in the area to behave in odd ways that make them appear sentient. The halflings, conversely, consider these signs of the place's significance.

Unfortunately, a band of orc brigands took over the region where the Wayside Shrine is located recently. They pose a grave threat to all travelers. Old Pikku, the eldest halfling in Everhill Sunset heard of this and called off this year's pilgrimage. However, Galder, the Voice of the People, a respected spiritual leader, decided otherwise. Despite the warnings, he set out on the pilgrimage, followed by a dozen other like-minded halflings. The townsfolk is divided. Some worry about their safety while a minority, siding with Old Pikku, thinks they are free to meet their untimely demise if the pilgrims so desire.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

### Level 2 Adventure

#### HIRED TO HELP

Galder's daughter, Vaddara, summons the characters and offers a reward for tracing her father's steps. They must find the pilgrims and escort the group back to Everhill Sunset. She is worried about the increased reports of nefarious orcish activity in the region (40 gp, 2 XP).

#### SEEKING THE SPIRITS

For reasons related to the characters' previous quests, they need to contact the immortal spirits of the Woodlands Realm. They know that local halfling communities have yearly pilgrimages into places where such contact can be arranged. Everhill Sunset is the closest (0 XP).

#### AGGRESSIVE RESEARCH

A human scholar, Tarkin, who stays at Everhill Sunset discretely offers a reward for tagging along with the Wayside Shrine expedition, betraying the halflings, and capturing a fey spirit. It is an attack against the halflings and the fey entities. Tarkin's priority is his research, though. He cares not about the implications (60 gp, 3 XP).

## RUMORS

#### d10 Details

- 1 Halflings believe their culture to be connected to fey ancestry and often commune with such spirits.
- 2 Recent reports speak of a band of orcs that slowly moves into the Western Reaches. The roads are no longer safe.
- 3 An ancient fey spirit named Lingu visits the Wayside Shrine once per year and may even grant wishes.
- 4 Galder is a brave halfling and a retired adventurer. He owns a magical ring that gives him amazing powers.
- 5 The halfling pilgrimage to the Wayside Shrine has been canceled this year due to the increased orc activity.
- 6 The orc chieftain owns a magical soul-stealing axe.
- 7 Everhill Sunset is the main provider of smoking leaves and a coveted homemade ale brand in the Ochre Forest.
- 8 Humans believe the Wayside Shrine is haunted or ghost-ridden. The place is shunned by many.
- 9 Old Pikku's open-contact policy with human settlements is frowned upon as many would prefer to remain hidden.
- 10 The Wayside Shrine's monolith is thought to be at least three thousand years old. Made by an unknown ancestry.

# EVERHILL SUNSET

Yes, yes, yes. The spirits call to us, and we call to them. I've gone there a few times. Each time I learn more about my brethren, my ancestors, and myself.

Old Pikku

**E**verhill Sunset is a small halfling village of almost a hundred inhabitants. The settlement is located within the sprawling, and mostly uncharted, Ochre Forest. They have little contact with human settlements except for the trade of their smoking leaves and ale. Still, the halflings do not travel or transport these goods outside their little community. Instead, a few select humans are allowed into town with their carts to move the goods. These humans are loggers, hunters, and foragers. Their frequent presence in Ochre Forest has gained them the halflings' trust.

In Everhill Sunset, most people are either farmers or livestock carers. Their farms are neatly integrated with the forest and are often difficult to find. It is all part of the halflings' efforts to remain hidden in plain sight.

The town functions like a commune. No figure represents official leadership. However, two people garner the obedience and respect of most others. The first is Old Pikku, the community's eldest member. Despite his old age, he still works in the fields and leads by example. The second is Galder, the Voice of the People. Galder is a priest-like figure that teaches his brethren how to live in communion with the forest and nature. Galder has participated in every yearly pilgrimage to the Wayside Shrine for twenty-five years. A few days ago, due to the current circumstances, Old Pikku recommended all stay home this year. But Galder would have none of it. He preached to others about the importance of traditions and set out with a dozen other valiant halflings.

## Village Features

► **Events.** Check for Random Events each time a new area is visited. There is a 2-in-6 chance for an event.

► **Weather.** Everhill Sunset exists in an idyllic pocket of tropical climate in the Ochre Forest. They enjoy weather that seldom changes throughout the year.

► **Underground.** All houses have trapdoors hidden under the rugs that lead to basement areas with more rooms and living areas. Some are connected by tunnels.

► **Ambiance.** Most townsfolk are worried sick about Galder's pilgrimage but fear leaving the safety of Everhill Sunset. The community's needs allow the characters more leeway when interacting with the halflings.

## RANDOM EVENTS

### d10 Details

- 1 A **bear** barges into town. It can be distracted with 4 or more pounds of food or driven off with violence.
- 2 A halfling elder named Cardul clamors in the streets that Galder is right and traditions must be respected.
- 3 Four **orcs** arrive in town and demand to be paid a tribute of at least 10 gp. They are the first orcs to ever show up.
- 4 Children disguised as faeries parade around town chanting ancient rhymes and gifting people flower garlands.
- 5 A cold air current assails the town. The locals see it as a bad omen as the town enjoys a permanent hot climate.
- 6 A human merchant arrives with his cart looking to buy smoking leaves. The halflings draw blades and make a big show of making the merchant unwelcome.
- 7 A crowd gathers outside Old Pikku's home (area 3), he preaches about the town's safety and begs the others to let Galder meet his fate without interference.
- 8 Two brave halflings (**peasants**) seek the characters and ask them to catch up with Galder and escort him back to town. They are willing to go on this adventure.
- 9 The locals invite the characters to forage in Ochre Forest for berries and almonds. A three-hour affair.
- 10 A human logger known by the locals arrives. He warns everyone that orc scouts have been spotted nearby.

## 1. VADDARA'S WARES

Vaddara, Galder's daughter, is the first to approach the characters. She is desperate to find outsiders willing to catch up with her father's expedition and escort the pilgrims to the shrine and back. She explains that her father left three days ago but expects that the characters may well catch up with them as the pilgrimage is traditionally made at a slow pace. Vaddara stocks all kinds of wares and traveling gear. She offers a discount to the characters if they accept her quest. Vaddara has three little ones, Galder's grandchildren. Thus, she cannot leave town to seek her father's foolhardy pilgrims.

## 2. ANNA'S HOME

Anna is an elder halfling who mistrusts all outsiders on principle. She stands by her doorstep and hurls insults at the characters and spits in their way. The old woman is a bully and a coward, though. If confronted, she cowers in her home and calls for aid. Anna attempts to frame the characters as aggressive trespassers who do not deserve to be trusted or allowed into Everhill Sunset.



### 3. OLD PIKKU'S HOME

The villager elder's home doubles up as a place of gathering, similar to a tavern. Food and ale are served freely to all. Old Pikku is interested in the characters. He tells them that while he appreciates their intent to help, he believes that Galder's zealotry is self-destructive and may well bring his demise. He advises the characters to stay out of it and go home. Alas, Old Pikku garners the support of a third of Everhill Sunset's populace. The majority disagree with him and think that Galder is right and deserves to be helped. The gathering turns to a grim discussion on this matter. They reach no real agreement.

### 7. THE MAGIC POND

A natural spring feeds into this pond of clear, crystalline water. The locals haul water in buckets to their homes at all times of the day and use it also to water their crops. An army of frogs basks in the sun, on lichens and rocks. The locals claim the frogs can speak and do so from time to time but not when expected or coerced. If the characters interact with them, there is a 2-in-10 chance a speaking frog is present. The frogs are fey beings who enjoy the halflings' company and the spring water pond.

**Quest.** A speaking frog asks to be taken to the Wayside Shrine to finally return to the Woodlands Realm.

### 4. TARKIN'S HOME

The human scholar has stayed in Everhill Sunset for over 2 weeks. He brought medicine for sick halflings to earn their temporary trust and be allowed to stay with the excuse of wanting to gather plant samples. He has ulterior motives (see **Adventure Hooks**). He offers a hefty reward for catching up with the pilgrims and capturing a fey spirit at the Wayside Shrine for his research. Tarkin leaves town after hiring the characters. If successful, the characters are to meet him with the captured specimen in the nearest human town as all would be unwelcome at Everhill Sunset after such disrespect to the halflings' traditions.

### 5. GALDER'S HOME

The spiritual leader's home is empty but many who support or admire Galder have left potted flowers and stuck encouraging letters under the wooden doors and window sills. The house is off-bounds; breaking into it is seen as a terrible crime by the locals. It would eternally earn their enmity.

**Treasure (1 XP).** A wooden chest by the bed contains a pouch with 30 gp, a *potion of healing*, and a dagger.

### 6. THE FARMER'S MARKET

Lenna and Viggo gather the town's produce and foraged products and then distribute them back to the community. It is not a real market as nothing is sold and no money is accepted.

**Quest.** Lenna asks the characters to bring blue flowers from the Wayside Shrine named *Blue Gambits*.

## 8. MARCUS'S HOME

Marcus (halfling **soldier**) is locally known as the best fighter and hunter. He believes in Galder's respect for the ancient traditions but still is too young to have felt the call to the Wayside Shrine. Marcus waits by his door, armor-clad and blade in hand, and salutes the characters as they pass. He approaches and says he would like to come along and help the characters on their way to the Wayside Shrine. He is worried about Galder and explains that the dozen people that come with him are all old and in no way combatants. If they run into orcs or danger, there is little they can do to defend themselves.

If allowed to come, Marcus has a spare shortsword and a set of halfling chain mail he offers to any other halfling.

## 9. EDANNA'S HOME

A halfling farmer with seven children works the camouflaged fields by her round home. Edanna quickly overcomes her prejudice against outsiders and approaches to make a formal request. The farmer claims that her husband Burlo, an elder halfling, left with Galder 3 days ago to visit the Wayside Shrine. Edanna tried to stop him but he would not listen, claiming that the call of the ancients was too strong in her husband to be ignored.

**Quest (1 XP).** Edanna wants to see her husband back home safely. She offers a family heirloom, a necklace with three rubies, as a reward. It is worth 30 gp.

## DEVELOPMENT

**THE CHARACTERS HEAR** the halfling townsfolk's plights and requests and are ready to set out to catch up with Galder and the other brave halfling pilgrims. The characters may have clean motives if they wish to help the locals such as Vaddara, Edanna, or the speaking frog from area 7. Conversely, the characters could care not for the halflings and choose to side with the evil scholar, Tarkin. In such a case, they would do well to keep their intentions hidden as the locals are hard to give their trust.

The characters are informed that the usual route to the Wayside Shrine requires them to double back to the southwest to circle around Ochre Forest and find the way north. If they move fast, they should be able to find Galder and the others in about 8 days.



This adventure belongs to a series of collaborative projects that involve other Patreon creators. This one-shot adventure features work by [Elven Tower](#) and cartographer [Misjay Maps](#). Check out her [Patreon page](#) for great cartography and inspiration!



# CAMPSITE GATHERING

I would not presume to impose our safety on you. However, your presence is welcome and a clear sign that our pilgrimage is avowed by the ancient spirits.

Galder, Voice of the People

**T**he road north shows signs of recent passage. A dozen people passed a few days ago. The boot-print sizes are too small to be made by human feet. The way north is calm and uneventful. At a normal traveling pace, the characters catch up with Galder's group a week after leaving Everhill Sunset. The characters encounter Galder in the afternoon at a common camping spot by the Sapphire River.

Galder and company are taking things slow. They pretend to stay at the campsite for at least two more days, greetings travelers and merchants, and trading smoking leaves for any trinkets that catch their eyes. Galder ignores the characters' intent and takes them for regular trekkers. As the characters approach, the halflings welcome them to their camp and offer to share dinner.

## Campsite Features

► **Events.** Roll on the Random Events every 3 hours during the night spent at the riverside campsite.

► **Weather.** The temperate climate around the Sapphire River makes the night cold and difficult to endure without tents or proper cold climate gear and clothing.

► **Light.** The night is dark and the moon provides little light this week. The campfire is the only source of light. Any creature that approaches is **dark-adapted**.

► **Wind.** It blows eastward. The orc scouts in the area come from the west. Creatures with fine smell may profit from this and detect them early (DC 15 WIS check).

## RANDOM EVENTS

d6	Details
1	2d6 <b>kobolds</b> approach cautiously. They return to their home in the western marshes. Two are injured.
2	Three <b>orc</b> scouts approach the camp silently and attempt to infiltrate Galder's tent (DC 15 WIS).
3	The swarm of bees emerges from the beehives by the river. They calm down if ignored, they are just scared.
4	1d6 human merchants ( <b>peasants</b> ) approach and wish to dine with the halflings. They sell common wares.
5	The moon and stars disappear for 1d8 hours making it the darkest of nights. It is a common occurrence in the Western Reaches; attributed to mischievous faeries.
6	A territorial <b>boar</b> barges into camp in the company of four cubs. It feels threatened and resorts to violence.

## 1. THE BEEHIVES

There is a farm a quarter mile southwest of the gathering place. The farmers there own the two beehive boxes here and come often to care for the bees and collect the honey. A character can open the boxes to collect up to 3 pounds of honey (DC 14 DEX check). On a fail, the bees emerge and sting them, dealing 2d6 damage. It is nutrient-dense and can also be used to craft healing salves.

## 2. SAPPHIRE RIVER

The average depth is 20 feet but there is a 2-foot deep ford by the camping site. It can be crossed by walking or on horseback. This is the only point in miles where the halflings may cross even if they still get drenched.

## 3. THE CAMPFIRE

Galder and the others gather to roast recently hunted rabbits and share stories from their past. The characters are welcome to share their anecdotes too. If inquired about the pilgrimage, Galder freely shares the following:

► **The Trip.** They have not seen any orcs or anything that would pose a danger to their spiritual journey.

► **The Shrine.** Galder believes the ancient fey shrine is a way-point for fey spirits in the Woodlands Realm. He thinks the spirits are pilgrims too but that language differences impede them to talk or understand each other.

► **Flower Quest.** The pilgrims know the blue gambits but claim they do not grow in Ochre Forest as they have brought them many times but they don't root well.

► **The Frog.** If the frog is present, Galder recognizes it as he gave it a ride from the shrine to Everhill Sunset nine years ago. The frog considers Galder a friend.

► **Communing.** Galder says that non-halflings do not visit the Wayside Shrine often, much less during pilgrimages. He believes the spirits may ignore them altogether.

## 4. BURLO'S TENT

Burlo, Edanna's husband, and another halfling named Vard share this tent. Both halflings (**peasants**) are glad to see the characters come along. They are aware of the risk they have taken and are glad to have some help. If Burlo hears that his wife sent the characters he dismisses her worries claiming he has a good hunch that no harm shall come to any of them on this pilgrimage.



### 5. GALDER'S TENT

The largest, most spacious tent belongs to the halfling spiritual leader. If Galder learns that his daughter, supported by more than half of Everhill Sunset's population, sponsored the characters' expedition to the shrine, he expresses his gratitude. Galder promises to speed up the pace to inconvenience them as little as possible.

Galder believes that everything happens for a reason and that the characters' appearance is all part of a grander plan. Galder wears a magical gold ring that he can tap to become invisible for 1 minute at will.

### THE WAY FORWARD

**IN THE MORNING**, the characters and pilgrims wake up to a pestilence from the west. A band of eight **orc** scouts march down the road and quickly reach the campsite. The orcs order everyone present to drop their weapons and surrender any valuables unless they wish to be gutted. The orcs fight if confronted but flee in a panic if half of them are defeated in combat. Cowards at heart.

After the orcs are dealt with, the group can resume the journey north. The Wayside Shrine is a week away. The trip there is uneventful even if the orcish threat remains.

# PRAYER BY THE SHRINE

These are sacred grounds. A place of communion between worlds. Few can understand the significance of the spirits that wander these moorlands...

Lingu, the Fey Spirit



Week of traveling goes by without complications. The halflings are grateful to the characters for their presence. Galder, Burlo, and the others share their experiences and tell the characters tales of past pilgrimages and their contact with the fey spirits that gather by the Wayside Shrine. From the halfling's tales, the spirits are as tall as them, some are made of twigs and greenery, others are elf-like, and some carry musical instruments.

A stream, a tributary of the Sapphire River, flows southward and converges with the monolith. The water flows unnaturally and circles around the shrine as if pulled by the monolith. Then it flows south to meet the river.

## Shrine Features

- ▶ **Danger.** Unsafe. Check for encounters every 3 **crawl rounds** and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).
- ▶ **Magic Aura.** A *detect magic* spell reveals a faint wave of magical force coming from the monolith.
- ▶ **Immutability.** The monolith's stones exist in the Material Plane and the Woodlands Realm. If moved or destroyed, they reform in 1 hour and the monolith remains.

## ORC LEADER

*A tusked, tall humanoid with gray skin, and pointed ears, and a horned, blood-stained helmet.*

**AC** 13 (chainmail), **HP** 14, **ATK** 1 greataxe +3 (1d8), **MV** near, **S** +3, **D** +0, **C** +1, **I** +0, **W** +0, **Ch** -1, **AL** C, **LV** 3

**Rage.** 1/day, immune to morale checks, +1d4 damage (3 rounds).

## FEY SPIRIT

*Miniature fey folk made from twigs, leaves, and roots. Their large eyes produce a wizened gaze.*

**AC** 13, **HP** 5, **ATK** 1 needle +3 (1 + poison), **MV** near, **S** -2, **D** +3, **C** +0, **I** +1, **W** +0, **Ch** +1, **AL** N, **LV** 1

**Poison.** DC 12 CON or fall into deep sleep for 1d4 hours.

## 1. REACHING THE SHRINE

The pilgrims and the characters reach the shrine on time for what Galder refers to as the yearly *Prayer of Communion*. From afar, the monolith looks unremarkable except for the strange behavior of the shallow streams that surround it. Burlo claims that the reason for the pilgrimage at this time of the year is the position of some astral body or another. They don't really know why, exactly. The halflings of Everhill Sunset are not scholars or stargazers; they simply follow a deeply ingrained tradition.

## 2. THE WOODEN BRIDGES

Four simple bridges cross over the strangely behaving streams. Galder claims they were not always there as a group of elf journeymen built them five years ago. Elves come from nearby forested regions too, to commune with the fey spirits. The bridges are stable but creak and bend under the weight of those who cross them. In battle, there is a 1-in-6 chance that any of the bridges collapses, dropping creatures standing on them into the cold water below and leaving them half submerged.

## 3. THE SHRINE MONOLITH

Blue gambit flowers surround the monolith. Under close inspection, the unremarkable monolith boulders are revealed to feature minuscule scripture in the Primordial language. If the characters are able to translate it, it states that the monolith exists in numerous planes of existence, not just the Woodlands Realm. It is a lighthouse across the planes, connected to many realities. After the area is safe (see **The Prayer** below), Galder and the pilgrims may proceed with the *Prayer of Communion*.

## 4. THE NORTHERN ROAD

The orcs brigands in the area have heard from travelers and their victims that a yearly pilgrimage of halflings comes to this shrine this time of the year. Someone told the orcs that the halflings bring valuable offerings for the spirits as a way to distract them and lead them elsewhere; despite the danger this would bring to the pilgrims. The **orc leader** and six **orcs** brigands make their appearance when the pilgrims reach the shrine.

The orcs order the halflings to surrender their valuable offerings. They grow angry when the halflings show that they came empty-handed. A terrible combat ensues.





## ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

**THE CHARACTERS REACH** the end of this adventure and face the consequences of their deeds.

### A SUCCESSFUL PILGRIMAGE

During the *Prayer of Communion*, the characters may inquire Lingu about any information they require for their overarching quest. If the frog was present, it jumps on Lingu's shoulder and bids the characters farewell.

### HELPING THE HALFLINGS

Upon returning to Everhill Sunset, the locals are happy and grateful for the return of the pilgrims. If any of them did not survive the adventure, the locals announce that a death ceremony shall occur in a week. Vaddara and Edanna pay the characters their respective bounties if Galder and Burlo make a safe return to Everhill Sunset.

If the characters bring Lenna the blue gambit flowers she requested, she attempts to plant them on her window sill and gifts them an embroidered seal for their garments. She offers to customize each of the seals.

### LIFETIME ENEMIES

If the characters followed Tarkin's commands and managed to capture a spirit. They meet the nefarious scholar at the appointed place. The scholar pays the reward and walks away with his quarry. Such action earns the characters the fey creatures' enmity. They shall exact their revenge. That is an adventure for another day...

## THE PRAYER

Galder and the other halflings sit in a circle, surrounding the ancient monolith. They say a prayer and chant a song older than most civilizations to begin the *Prayer of Communion*. Half an hour later, four **fey spirits** materialize and sit with the halfling pilgrims. They all chant, smoke leaves, and the spirits play eerie tunes on their small musical instruments. The gathering lasts 4 hours. During this time, the characters may converse with the fey spirit Lingu, the only one of them who speaks the Common tongue (much to Galder's surprise and dismay).

### THE BETRAYAL

If the characters attempt to fulfill Tarkin's quest and try to capture a fey spirit, the four **fey spirits**, the twelve pilgrims (**peasants**), and Marcus (**soldier**, if present) antagonize the characters and attempt to stop them. The halflings fight fiercely after such blatant disrespect to their traditions and try to save the fey spirits.

