

FREE FIELD NOTES FOR GAME MASTERS

Lantern Vale

A small village. Room for your party.

A door has forgotten where it leads. The village can give it a home, but other travelers need it too.

A separate, GM-led variation of The Lantern Door. Use the locations in any order and accept plans the original story never anticipated.

BEFORE THE FIRST KNOCK

- 01 Invite a connection. Ask each player who their character knows in the village and what ordinary object they carry.
- 02 Open at the pear tree. The door asks, "I seem to have forgotten where I lead. Might you spare a moment?" Offer nearby people and places to investigate.
- 03 Follow their ideas. Reveal useful information when they look, listen, or ask. A missed roll should not hide the only way forward.
- 04 Bring the welcome to life. Fen arrives needing somewhere to rest. Ask the party what they have made and who it will welcome.
- 05 Make a choice that lasts. Decide with the group where the door belongs and what changes in the village.

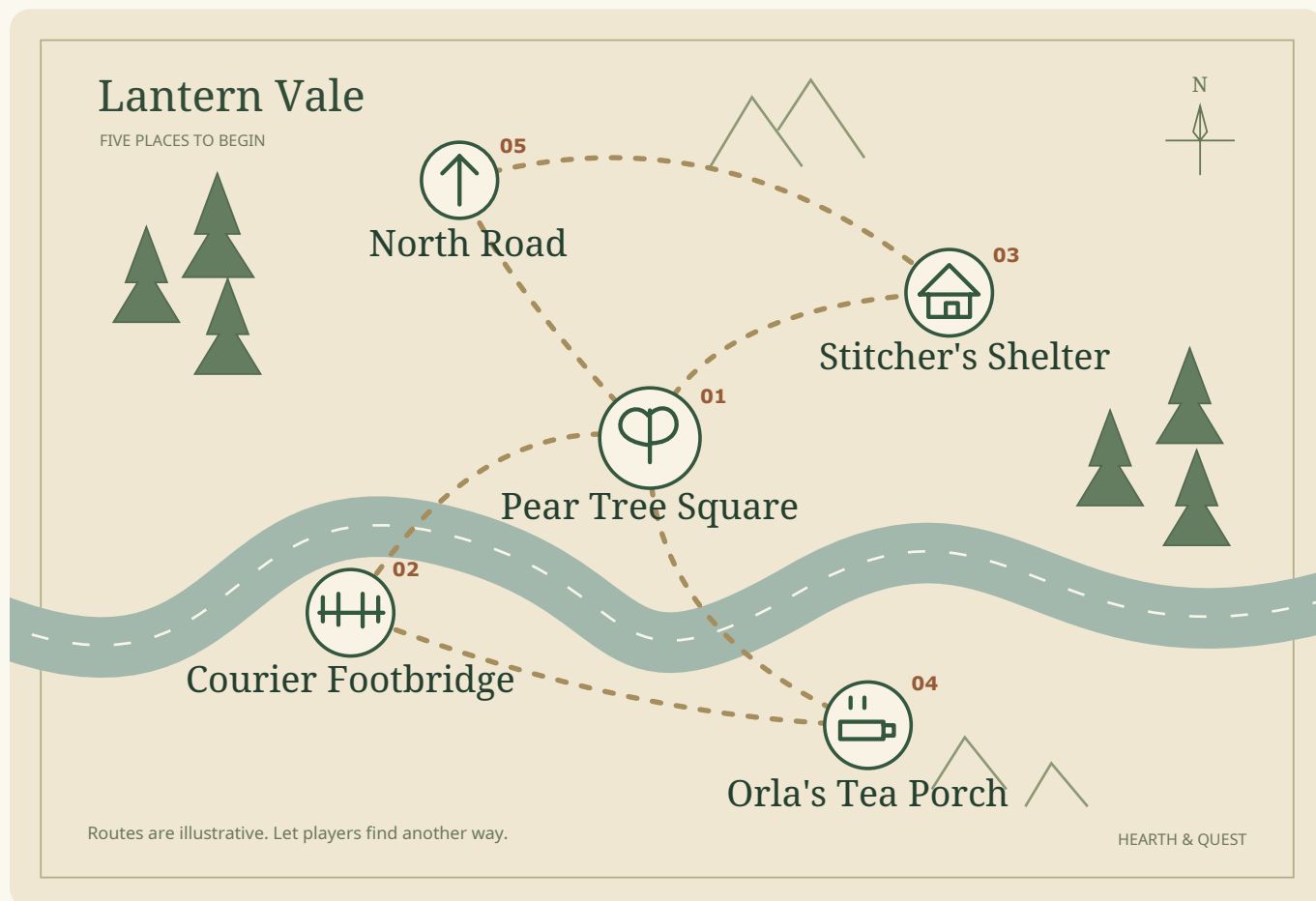
No combat statistics or game-system rules are included. Play through conversation, or use your own familiar rules for uncertain actions.

Original early edition. Needs playtesting. No age suitability or session duration has been established.

A PLACE TO EXPLORE TOGETHER

Lantern Vale

Five places. Plenty of possibility.



A player-safe route map, not a battle grid. Distances are flexible. The people and places can fit into your own setting. Let players find another way.

PLACES ON THE MAP

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|----|--------------------|----|------------------|
| 01 | Pear Tree Square | 04 | Orla's Tea Porch |
| 02 | Courier Footbridge | 05 | North Road |
| 03 | Stitcher's Shelter | | |

LOCATION KEY

01 Pear Tree Square

A weathered blue door stands beneath the pear tree, with neither house nor wall behind it. An unlit lantern hangs above the frame. Three patient knocks sound from the other side.

SOMEONE WANTS

The door wants to belong somewhere, but worries that choosing a home means turning other travelers away.

AT THE TABLE

Start here. Ask each player why their character is crossing the square tonight. The door answers questions honestly and cannot remember its old destination.

A USEFUL DISCOVERY

A carving under the lantern shows a book, a star, and an open hand. These stand for memory, discovery, and welcome. None is a required password.

WHAT CAN CHANGE

A kind gesture creates a warm light. An interesting question creates a silver light. Describe the response so players can follow their own ideas.

AT YOUR TABLE

What do the characters carry, and what purpose do they imagine for the door?

LOCATION KEY

02 Courier Footbridge

Beside the footbridge, a moth in a knitted scarf studies a puddle far wider than her wings. She holds a satchel close to her chest. Her wings are soaked, but she looks determined to finish her delivery.

SOMEONE WANTS

Pip wants to deliver the brass key in her satchel and prove a small courier can finish a difficult route.

AT THE TABLE

Let the party invent a crossing, carry Pip, wait for the water to settle, or try something else. A thoughtful plan works. The problem should invite ideas, not demand a specific answer.

A USEFUL DISCOVERY

Pip remembers the door once offering travelers stories, a quiet garden, and somewhere to rest. She gives them the key after meeting them, even if they cannot solve the crossing.

WHAT CAN CHANGE

If they help, Pip becomes a returning friend. If they leave, she finds a leaf boat and delivers the key to the square later.

AT YOUR TABLE

How does the party approach the water? Where might Pip appear again?

LOCATION KEY

03 Stitcher's Shelter

Rain drums on the shelter's awning. Beneath it, a torn book and a faded star chart lie open on a wooden bench. A length of golden thread catches the light beside them.

SOMEONE WANTS

Mara, the village mender, wants these forgotten things used again rather than locked away for safekeeping.

AT THE TABLE

Repair the book, restore the chart, combine them, or bring another meaningful object. Ask the players what they add. The place beyond the door takes a detail from their answer.

A USEFUL DISCOVERY

Mara remembers helping a visitor mend a lantern years ago. It grew brighter when that visitor invited a stranger inside. She shares this memory freely.

WHAT CAN CHANGE

A repaired book suggests a story room. A restored chart suggests a star garden. An unexpected gift gives the GM permission to invent another kind of refuge.

AT YOUR TABLE

What gift do the characters make, and what detail will their refuge borrow?

LOCATION KEY

04 Orla's Tea Porch

A hedgehog polishes a tin kettle on her porch. The air smells of warm pear tea. Across the table, an empty cup stands ready beside a chair she has pulled close to the hearth.

SOMEONE WANTS

Orla wants to visit the new place, but would rather be asked what makes her comfortable than be given a grand welcome.

AT THE TABLE

Offer tea, a tour, quiet company, or a useful task. Let the party ask what Orla likes. She enjoys listening first and sharing a story when she is ready.

A USEFUL DISCOVERY

Orla knows the door can settle near the square or travel from village to village. Its old journeys are marked by tiny door symbols in her travel diary.

WHAT CAN CHANGE

Orla favors a regular home for the door. Pip favors reaching faraway travelers. Neither is an enemy, and both can accept a thoughtful compromise.

AT YOUR TABLE

What makes Orla comfortable? What compromise could she and Pip accept?

LOCATION KEY

05 North Road

Glowing jars mark the lane, their light reflected in the wet road. Beyond the last house, a signpost points towards the wooded hills. Someone has tied a fresh lantern cord beneath the names of distant villages.

SOMEONE WANTS

A late traveler named Fen hopes to find a dry place to rest before continuing home.

AT THE TABLE

Fen arrives when the group needs a reason to make its welcome real. Ask where the traveler can rest, and what the characters would like their new place to offer.

A USEFUL DISCOVERY

Fen recalls seeing the same blue door years ago in another village. It stayed for a season, then returned at the first frost. Staying and traveling need not be permanent opposites.

WHAT CAN CHANGE

Use Fen to bring the closing choice to the party. They can invite the door to stay, send it onward, arrange regular visits, or suggest another plan.

AT YOUR TABLE

Where does Fen rest, and what promise will the party make about the door?

KEEP THE STORY MOVING

Clues should open doors.

Use the source that fits the party's path. These are opportunities, not required stops. A missed roll should never hide the only way forward.

The door needs a new purpose.

The door admits its memory is fading. Pip recalls its old refuge. Mara remembers the lantern responding to an invitation.

A gift can shape the place beyond it.

Symbols beneath the lantern suggest a book or a star. The repaired objects begin to glow. The door describes what an object makes it imagine.

It can settle, travel, or return.

Orla's diary records its journeys. Fen remembers a seasonal visit. Ask the door directly and it suggests keeping a promise to come back.

LET THE ENDING FOLLOW THEIR CHOICE

If it stays: A home worth returning to.

The village gains a story room, star garden, or another place the party imagined. Ask who visits first and what the heroes leave behind.

If it travels: A promise beyond the hills.

Pip takes the door to the next village. A letter brings news of the welcome it offered. Ask when the party expects to see it again.

If they find another way: Let their idea matter.

A traveling refuge with a regular home, a new keeper, a seasonal route. Agree on one benefit and one promise the party will need to keep.

A REWARD WITH A STORY ATTACHED

Offer each character a lantern cord that warms when they remember someone they welcomed. It grants no automatic rule bonus, but can become a familiar keepsake in later adventures.

A WIDER WORLD, READY FOR YOUR TABLE

The Lantern Roads

Before the mileposts fell, the Lantern Roads joined market towns, hill keeps, and woodland villages. Their wayhouses offered shelter under a shared vow. Some roads have slipped from maps, but old doors still remember the hands that tended them.

THE WAYHOUSE VOW

While ember lives and roads run wide,
no weary soul shall wait outside.

A CUSTOM TO REMEMBER

Set a spare cup beside the hearth. Offer a name before asking for a tale. A guest may share a story, help mend a roof, or simply rest. These are customs of welcome, never a password or a price for shelter.

These are optional starting situations for a game master, with no encounter statistics or full adventure paths. For families, bring out the wonder, helpful deeds, and unusual customs. For adult groups, give more weight to loyalty, competing duties, and the cost of keeping a promise.

PEOPLE WITH A DUTY

The Hearthkeepers

Wants: Keep a refuge rooted where people can find it again. Orla speaks for the villagers who need a dependable home through the winter.

Let them follow the road. I will keep the fire, so there is a home to return to.

Offers: Orla can tend the hearth, introduce a new keeper, and find willing hands for repairs. Ask what the village can promise the travelers who return.

The Roadwardens

Wants: Carry letters, news, and aid between settlements. Pip speaks for the travelers who have no refuge nearby. A welcome should reach them, too.

Beyond that hill, someone is still waiting for a welcome. We ought to take one to them.

Offers: Pip knows the next village and can carry a message ahead. Ask how a traveling door could keep its promise to the people who gave it a home.

OPTIONAL ADVENTURE SEEDS

Three roads onward

Optional adventure seeds for the GM. Follow the party's interest; none is a required scene.

The Bell Beneath the Briar

A bell rings beneath a tangle of briar roots. The watchtower that once held it is long gone, and no one has heard its call for fifty years. An old bargain has begun to stir.

Situation: The bell has rung for the first time in fifty years. Two villages each believe the other promised to mend their shared bridge. Mara holds half the written bargain. A road courier carries the rest. One village has timber; the other has stone.

A choice to offer: Let the party investigate both accounts and broker a new agreement, arrange a crossing with the door, or invent another way to join the villages. Neither account needs to be a lie.

What may echo onward: On a later visit, show a bridge marker bearing the names the party brought together, or travelers using the new route they chose.

The Crown of Applewood

A crown of living apple leaves settles on the quiet apprentice's head. Gold glints between its stems. Around the harvest table, the elders rise to greet a host none of them expected.

Situation: Each harvest, the orchard grows a living crown for the coming feast's host. This year it chooses a quiet apprentice. The expected host has already promised much of the fruit to neighboring farms, and fears those people will be forgotten.

A choice to offer: Give both hosts a voice. Let the party decide how the feast will honor its new host and the promises already made. They may share duties, change the celebration, or find another agreement.

What may echo onward: At the next feast, a new custom recalls their decision. Invite the players to name it and describe who now has a place at the table.

OPTIONAL ADVENTURE SEEDS

More roads onward

The Inn Beyond the Mileposts

Yesterday, there was nothing between these mileposts. Tonight, an inn stands in the rain, with a lamp burning in an upper window. Its keeper has been waiting for a guest since before anyone here was born.

Situation: An inn appears at dusk along a road the party knows. Its keeper has saved a room for a guest who never arrived. The room holds a letter and an untouched supper. The keeper wants company, but fears that welcoming someone new would break an old promise.

A choice to offer: Reveal the letter when the party asks to look. It asks the keeper to save a welcome, with no named guest or date. Let the party and keeper decide how to honor that intention. A new guest, a memorial supper, or another thoughtful plan can work.

What may echo onward: When the party returns, the keeper remembers their advice. A place is set for them, and a letter from a traveler tells what their welcome made possible.
