

Mouse Guard PbP



Chapter 1: A New Beginning (Spring, 1148)

[link to current location](#)

Formatting Guide

- We'll be making our rolls in the #pickup_mouse_guard Slack channel.
- **Important actions/decisions should be bolded.**
- *Inner monologues, flashbacks, histories/texts should be italicized.*
- ((Questions, comments, notes, and die roll results should be in double parenthesis))

Players

- lupinelegend / Nick (GM)
- forlasanto/ Jim (Rupert the Guard Mouse)
- Voivoed / Mauro (Eidan the Patrol leader)
- duneaght / Dune (Ariella the tenderpaw)

Characters

Rupert

Rupert is a somewhat scatter-minded but nevertheless clever mouse. He often over-engineers projects. He is prone to using gadgets when elbow grease would get the job done more easily.

Name: Rupert **Rank:** Guardmouse **Age:** 20 **Fur Color:** Brown **Cloak:** Orange
Will: 3(1p,1f) **Health:** 5 **Nature:** 5(max 6)(1p,0f) **Resources:** 1(max 2)(0p,1f) **Circles:** 2 **Fate:** 1 **Persona:** 0

Belief: A clever solution serves the Guard, but rash actions harm us.

Goal: Sprucetuck is the center of scientific progress in the Territories. Glean new knowledge from Sprucetuck! (Viewing/reading/acquiring a book, treatise, or perhaps a map containing some scientific data is what I am thinking, but it's open for interpretation.)

Instinct: Record new data for scientific analysis!

Home: Sprucetuck

Parents: Garfunkel and Indria (Archivist)

Senior Artisan: Alain (Carpenter)

Mentor: Marcas (Instructor)

Friend: Jason (Weaver)

Enemy: Jan (Baker)

Skills: Fighter: 2, Hagglar: 2(0p,2f), Pathfinder: 3 (2p,1f), Scout: 2(1p,1f), Survivalist: 2 (0p,1f), Scientist: 3(3p,1f), Archivist: 2, Persuader: 2, Carpenter: 2, Instructor: 3

Wises: Trap-wise

Traits: Rational: 1 (1 for, 0 against), Clever: 1 (1 for, 1 against)

Gear: Axe, some string, small spool of wire, chalk, a map compass.

Conditions: Angry, Hungry & Thirsty

Ariella

Ariella is a quiet and-sentimental tenderpaw, with a strong instinctive connection with nature and animals-confident-in-her-book-smarts, but apprehension about demanding physical tasks.

Name: Ariella **Rank:** Tenderpaw **Age:** 14 **Fur Color:** Dusty Brown **Cloak:** none
Will: 3 (1f) **Health:** 6 **Nature:** 5/5 **Resources:** 1 **Circles:** 1 **Fate:** 1 **Persona:** 0

Belief: All injured creatures deserve to be helped.

Goal: Demonstrate physical bravery and aptitude by following Eidan's lead.

Instinct: Never expose yourself in a clearing without specific reason.

Home: Sprucetuck

Parents: Stewart & Patricia (Insectrist)

Senior Artisan: Earl (Insectrist)

Mentor: Dale (Healer)

Friend: Marcus (Glazier)

Enemy: Peter (Musician)

Skills: Pathfinder: 2, Scout: 2(0p, 2f), Laborer: 2, Loremouse: 3, Healer: 3 (1p, 1f), Persuader: 2, Insectrist: 3

Wises: Legends of the Guard-wise **Traits:** Inquisitive: 1, Farsighted: 1, Quiet: 1

Gear: Knife, Light Armor, waist Pouch containing hand-held Lenses for farsightedness

Conditions:

Beginner's Luck: Fighter (1)

Checks: 0

Eidan

Eidan is an old mouse, a veteran of the Guard. Growing up in a working family in Port Sumac, he always enjoyed working with all the craftsman around town and learning how to do all sorts of things. Hardy but good-hearted, always willing to share what he has with others, he believes that good character shows through actions and hard work.

Name: Eidan **Rank:** Patrol Leader **Age:** 53 **Fuolor:** Brown/Grey **Cloak:** Dark Grey
Will: 5 **Health:** 4 (1p, 0f) **Nature:** 3 2 (0p, 1f) **Resources:** 4 (0p, 1f) **Circles:** 3 **Fate:** 1 **Persona:** 0

Belief: If something doesn't come as a result of honest work, it has no real value.

Goal: Make sure Ariella learns at least one meaningful lesson about what it is to be a Guardmouse during the mission.

Instinct: No point in delaying if something needs to be done.

Home: Port Sumac

Parents: Siemon and Ivy (Boatcrafter)

Senior Artisan: Kay (Laborer)

Mentor: Geralt, retired guardmouse (Fighter)

Friend: Roderick (Bartender)

Enemy: Mathias (Money Lender)

Skills: Fighter: 4, Hunter: 4 (0p, 1f), Instructor: 2, Loremouse: 2, Persuader: 3, Pathfinder: 2 (1p, 0f), Scout: 2, Survivalist: 3, Weather Watcher: 3 (0p, 1f), Laborer: 3, Boatcrafter: 2

Wises: Coast-wise, Predator-wise, Patrol leader-wise

Traits: Tough: 2, Generous: 1, Brave: 4, Oldfur: 4

Gear: Spear, belt, small utility knife, small leather pouch with a lucky charm inside

Conditions:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hungry/Thirsty | -1 to disposition to any conflict. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Angry (Ob 2 Will) | -1 to disposition for any Will-based conflict |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tired (Ob 3 Health) | -1 to disposition for all conflicts. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Injured (Ob 4 Health) | -1D to skills, Nature, Will and Health (but not recovery). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sick (Ob 4 Will) | -1D to skills, Nature, Will and Health (but not recovery). |

Parents: Siemon and Ivy, owners of the Turtlesell Boatcrafter's Shop, both deceased

Friend: Roderick, a bartender at the Golden Grape in Lockhaven

Enemy: Mathias, a money lender in Port Sumac. Tried to scam Eidan's aging parents years ago.

Cloak: Dark gray, like a stone to symbolize his toughness.

Mission 1 Start: GM's Turn 1

After a long winter sheltered in Lockhaven, spring has finally arrived. The city is abuzz with activity - apiarists attending to the bees, carpenters preparing to begin repairs, archivists preparing the mail, and guardmice eager to resume their patrols. After completing your daily rituals, the three of you find yourselves summoned to the map room by Gwendolyn. You arrive to find the matriarch of the guard pouring over a map of the Mouse Territories, placing and shifting wooden tokens that you know represent patrols. She looks up from the table to greet you and ushers you closer to stand around the map.

"Spring is here," Gwendolyn says smiling, looking at each of you in turn, "And with it, our most important work." Her paw moves across the map and stops at Sprucetuck. "I've received word that the sciencemice at Sprucetuck have completed their work on this season's scent brew.

Eidan - you and your patrol must retrieve the brew and reinforce the scent border west of the city. Other patrols will be doing the same west of Barkstone, Elmooss, and Dorigift. Be careful out there, guardmice!"

((Early spring is usually peppered by brief snows, but Lockhaven's weather watchers inform you that the current conditions are unseasonably warm. Spring weather can be harsh and unpredictable though, so prepare accordingly!))

Mission Beliefs/Goals

- **Rupert:**
 - **Belief:** A clever solution serves the Guard, but rash actions harm us.
 - **Goal:** Sprucetuck is the center of scientific progress in the Territories. Glean new knowledge from Sprucetuck! (Viewing/reading/acquiring a book, treatise, or perhaps a map containing some scientific data is what I am thinking, but it's open for interpretation.)
- **Ariella:**
 - **Belief:** All injured creatures deserve to be helped.
 - **Goal:** Demonstrate physical bravery and aptitude by following Eidan's lead.
- **Eidan:**
 - **Belief:** If something doesn't come as a result of honest work, it has no real value.
 - **Goal:** Make sure Ariella learns at least one meaningful lesson about what it is to be a Guardmouse during the mission.

"As you wish, Lady Gwendolyn," replies Eidan, with a short bow of his head. "We'll set out as soon as we get our things."

He looks at the other members of his patrol. He doesn't know the one called Rupert, who seems a little distracted, looking inquisitively at some trinket sitting on a shelf. The other one, the young

mouse Ariella, who has just been assigned to him for field-training, is just standing quietly, barely moving.

I might have my work cut out for me, to get these two to do some good old-fashioned hard labor. Fixing the scent border is tough work... he thinks. But this is not his first patrol and Eidan is sure he can bring out whatever potential those two have in them.

"If you two don't have any other matters, I think we're done here. Lady Gwendolyn is a busy mouse, let's leave her to her work," Eidan says out loud to his Patrol mates.

With a grin, Rupert's ears perk slightly. "Ah, Sprucetuck, how I have missed ye! I am ready when you are, Eidan."

Ariella stood completely still during the briefing, taking care to remember every request and detail of the assignment. Certain she has all the details memorized. Ariella turns to face the Patrol Leader with quiet confidence. "Yes, Eidan. Ready to report to Sprucetuck."

"Very well, then." The patrol leader turns after another slight bow to the matriarch, and leaves the room followed by his companions.

"Get your things and meet me down at the main courtyard in 15 minutes, and we'll go get some supplies with the Quartermaster. I think Ceres is on duty there today, she'll make sure we get what we need," Eidan says as they head down the stairs towards the barracks. They each then head out to their quarters.

Eidan doesn't need much time to get ready. He picks up his spear, makes sure the blade is oiled and the scabbard is tight. He then picks up a small pouch from his side table and hangs it from his neck on a leather cord. With a last look at his comfortable bed, he smiles -- *good bye, my friend, it may be a little while until I sleep on you again* -- then heads out to meet his patrol.

Ariella scans her room for useful supplies. She finds a few things, laying them out on her bed - her guard training knife, a belt pouch, a glass jar, bandages, and a pair of lenses to help her examine things up close. The jar and lenses were a gift from her friend, Marcus the glazier. When she looks at them, she is reminded of how much she misses her family and friends in Sprucetuck.

Eager to get going, Ariella stuffs the lenses and bandages in her pouch. The jar frustratingly doesn't fit in the pouch, so she chooses to leave it behind. Then, she squeezes into her awkward armor, secures the pouch to her waist, and she's out the door, ready for action!

Rupert's home looks more like a workshop than a house. Beakers, boilers, and other chemistry implementation coexist uneasily with drawings, stacks of books, papers, crafting tools, and unfinished projects. Rupert walks through the domicile, tending to experiments that will keep (*how long does it take for a jar of mud to fully settle?*) and securing experiments that won't (*is*

Jan's bread really so high-quality? Does it mold faster than Ellie's bread?) Then he grabs his satchel, drops in a travelling journal, a drawing compass, a pencil, some wire, and a few odds and ends that catch his eye. He throws it over a shoulder and picks up his axe on his way out.

Once packed and ready for your journey, you all meet at Lockhaven's front gate. A guardmouse looks you over and calls for the gate to be raised. You hear his order echoed up to the parapets by other mice tasked with the defense of the city. Moments later, the portcullis begins to rise with a clanking so loud you can feel it in your bones. The gates open and you're bathed in the morning's sunshine. While the frigid winds of winter have blown their last, the remnants of winter - ice and snow - still remain.

Running his paw along the stones of the gatehouse, Rupert once more utters the oath of the Guard.

Stepping outside, you see carpenters and laborers already working to repair the damage winter has caused to the city's walls. The main trail leading from Lockhaven has been cleared, but it quickly devolves into gnarled and tangled woods. The warm weather has melted much of the remaining snow leaving the earth muddy and puddled. Plants - trees, roots, shoots, bushes, and grasses - have grown explosively in the short time since winter's end, completely masking last season's trails. **Forging a new trail to Sprucetuck will require an Ob 6 Pathfinder test.**



"You're both from Sprucetuck, so you should know the way," says Eidan, smiling at his companions. "Care to figure out the best way to navigate us through this mess?"

He picks up a stick and draws a rough map on the ground. "I can tell you that these," He says while drawing some lines, "are probably not the best ways to go at this time of the year".

With a gring and a wink, Rupert replies, "Right. I know a few shortcuts!" **He'll point out the routes and solicit some input from Eidan and Ariella, and then get the party moving.** However, Rupert's clever shortcuts did not make the journey easier...

Rupert's chosen route is a good one that would have gotten the patrol to Sprucetuck a few hours early if it weren't for the warm weather. Your progress is halted by a large body of water blocking your path. The quickly melting ice and snow have swollen a nearby creek and this area has completely flooded. As you stand at the water's edge, the wind picks up from the north and whips through the trees above you setting the entire canopy asway. The sky has slowly turned grey over the last hour or so and it is beginning to drizzle. **What do you do?**

Rupert's ears droop upon spotting the swollen creek. "We should record the water level rise. Another guardmouse may need to know next year." He jots down some notes in his travel book. "Say, we should find a tree that spans the creek. Maybe we could just climb over it."

Ariella feels some drops of water on her fur and imagines getting washed away by a roaring river. Her guardmouse swim training went miserably and she does not want to relive *that* struggle. "Sudden rain might make this creek even more dangerous," she reminds Eidan and Rupert (who don't need reminding at all). "We should either get across quickly or move to higher ground." Ariella looks around urgently for nearby trees that might be climbable in case of emergency flooding.

"Perhaps." Rupert looks for some way to cross--a fallen log, maybe. There's got to be something that will help. Surveying the flooded land, he wonders how deep the creek itself is... "Maybe we should find a safe place to weather the storm, but when the storm is over, we will still have a flooded field and a creek to deal with."

"Hmm," Eidan scratches his chin, thinking. "If it's going to rain, I wouldn't risk trying to cross... we should wait until it clears. But we could in the meantime look for shelter and a way to get across."

He looks at the clouds, trying to decide.

Rupert sees that Eidan is gauging the weather, and offers some observations about windspeed, wind direction, and whether leaves are turning over.

As predicted, the weather takes a turn for the worse. A deafening thunderclap sends a shudder through trees and rain begins to pour from the sky. With the swollen creek threatening to flood further, you'll have to take action quickly in order to seek shelter or get across the water.

"In inclimate weather like this, a flash flood is possible. We risk our lives as Guard Mice without hesitation, but only when necessity demands it. We should seek shelter on higher ground. Snow melt is one thing. A dangeous storm is another. Let us ride out the storm before pressing on. I

agree with Eidan. We should not try to cross. Sprucetuck will have to wait.” Rupert's face says resolve, but his ears and whiskers indicate that his heart and his mind have different ideas about what to do. Ration wins... this time.

((His desire is to get to Sprucetuck quickly, but his Rational trait works against those desires. It's maybe a *bit* weak as far as working against a trait. No roll was needed, but rp-wise, i think it works. I bid for the 'work against' point, but it is up to you to weigh it. ;) Additionally, trap-wise might come into play because the flash flooding scenario would definitely leave us trapped. That is also a stretch, but maybe. Just putting that use-of-wise on the radar.))

((I think you'd have to use your Trait against yourself during a test in order to earn a Check. I like your use of Rational, though. Why don't you make a Survivalist (or Nature) test at Ob 3 to seek shelter - you can use your Rational trait against yourself (-1D) to earn a check.))

((Other options: to find and climb a tree to get over the creek will be an Ob 4 Survivalist (or Nature) test. To make your way across the water by leafboat, make a Boatcrafter test at Ob 5.))

The pouring rain and swelling waters settle whatever doubts Eidan might have as far as which course of action to take.

“We need to find shelter quickly and wait this out,” he shouts over the noise of the storm. “We can't risk trying to cross, if someone falls in it would be certain death!”

He looks around, then points to some of the elevated areas nearby among the trees. “Maybe somewhere over there?”

As soon as she recognizes Eidan and Rupert's intent to find shelter, Ariella's mousey nature takes over. All she wants to do is hide. She dashes up towards the trees and as fast as her mouse paws can take her, she scurries around, looking for any possible place to hide.

((This helps Rupert cover more ground in the search for suitable shelter.))

Our intrepid guard mice hurriedly look for shelter but the forest is overgrown and difficult to traverse. You decide to keep looking after coming across raised roots that might shelter one or two of you, and you wisely continue your search after you encounter a burrow that looks occupied. At long last, you find an overturned bird's nest that appears to be above the floodplain. Climbing inside, you're all relieved to be out of the pouring rain. You're safe for now, but your search has left you exhausted. **You each gain the Tired condition.**

As they settle to wait out the storm, Eidan turns to the Tenderpaw. “Ariella, I know this is your first mission and all this is new to you. Mice don't deal well with danger. Our own nature is timid and we're easy to scare. But you should try to keep yourself in check. Losing our heads in a moment of danger can easily mean our collective doom, and your patrol depends on you as much as you depend on them.”

He places his paw on her shoulder and gives it a light squeeze. "I'm not admonishing you. You'll make a fine guard one day, I'm sure. But this is part of your learning."

Ariella hopes the loud pattering of rain will mask her still-heavy breathing. Panicked running around the forest helped the group find shelter, but really drained her physically.

Hoping to demonstrate she has learned from the experience, she responds to Eidan's lecture with effortful confidence. "I won't lose focus. I won't let you down, Eidan and Rupert." Just saying those words aloud helps Ariella regain her composure and calms her from her previously frantic state.

Once the rain stops, Rupert drags out his journey-book and records details. The details are a bit scattered, because Rupert is tired and lets his mind wander a bit. Nevertheless, he tries to make an account of the events. "Sometimes the most insignificant detail later proves to be the most valuable. Even if you don't keep notes about scientific information, a good log can make a huge difference in the quality of your mission reports." He nods, and almost seems to be agreeing with himself.

"Ariella, can you write?" He looks at Ariella hopefully, ears perked despite the tired look around his eyes.

"Well, I did a bit of writing for Dale when he was teaching me the different ways to dress a wound. But I had a hard time reading my notes later, so I ended up just reciting future lessons in my head until I memorized them..." Ariella's voice trails off as her thoughts evolve into embarrassment.

What might my patrol think of me if I appear incompetent? Don't let them down!

"I mean... I can write! What would you like me to record?" This time, speaking confidently doesn't really make her feel any better about the imminent assignment.

"I merely meant that if you could not, I will be happy to teach you. I believe everymouse should be taught to read and write." Rupert groans a little as he stands; "I can't wait to get to someplace where we can rest." *Her eagerness to prove herself may get her into trouble. Let's hope not. I remember what that feels like. Heh; the eagerness, not the trouble. Though I guess there was a bit of both.*

The minutes turn into hours, leading into the night, without the rain stopping. Realizing they're going to spend the night in their makeshift shelter, the mice do the best they can to get comfortable and go to sleep.

It's not quite dawn yet when Eidan shakes his companions awake. "Rise and shine... we have a lot of ground to cover."

He pulls a small package from a pouch on his belt. "Here, have some gabcroon. I was going to save it for later, but we wasted enough time already, no sense in taking more to forage. This should hold us for a while."

They eat the rations quietly, gather their few belongings and crawl out of the nest.

The rain has passed and morning has arrived. You hear songbirds chirping as the sun begins to burn away the morning mist. Leaving your improvised shelter, you can see that the area looks unchanged save for a slightly higher water level.

((In order to reach Sprucetuck, you'll still need to cross the flooded creek. To find a suitable tree to climb and cross over the creek will be an Ob 3 Survivalist (or Nature) test. To make your way across the water by leafboat, make a Boatcrafter test at Ob 4.))

"I think we should try to find a way to cross over the water using the trees," Eidan says, looking at the creek between them and their destination. "I know a little about boat-making and **could** try to build us a boat, but I was never very good at it. Not sure this is the best time to test that out."

"Do any of you have any better suggestions? If not, I'd suggest going that way," he points to their right, up the current. "It shouldn't take us too much off course if we have to walk for long before finding a way to cross."

Rupert nods. "Finding a path over the water sounds good to me. The waters might still be swift, and we don't want to have a boating accident."

Flashbacks of near drowning rush through Ariella's mind as she eyes the surging water and listens to Eidan and Rupert plan. *Over. They must find a way **over** the water.* Her escape instincts take over again as she scurries upstream along the shore of the creek. There must be a safe crossing somewhere! "Aha! This will do perfectly." Ariella returns to the troop.

Having located a tree with sturdy-looking branches that stretch over the creek, Ariella finds her companions and leads them back to her find. Carefully finding hand and footholds in the tree's bark, the patrol slowly makes their way up to a limb that will lead them over the water. Linking hands, the guardmice walk forward along the ever-narrowing branch. Ariella's breathes grow rapid and shallow as she hears the creek's flooded waters rushing by below, but reassuring words from Eidan and Rupert seem to steady her nerves. Before long, the patrol finds themselves clear of the creek and one step closer to completing their mission. ((Having completed your "shortcut", Sprucetuck is only a short journey away. A Pathfinder test at Ob 3 will get you there.))

"Rupert, your shortcut didn't work so well as we expected," Eidan winks at the other mouse, "but it did get us closer. Do you know which way we should go now?"

The two mice talk for a few minutes, comparing opinions and reference points, trying to figure out which is the best way to get to Sprucetuck. Eidan has chased some animals through this part of the woods so he remembers a little about the layout general area, including possible game trails they can use to speed up their pace.

Ariella pipes in here and there, sharing whatever tidbits of information she knows, even climbing on a high tree to overlook the surrounding area and confirm her companions' ideas. Even though she's just a young Tenderpaw, both senior mice listen and gladly incorporate her contributions in their discussion.

((Eidan helps with Hunter and Ariella helps with Scout))

With Eidan hunting for food, and Ariella scouting the way, Rupert uses his wits to check the direction to Sprucetuck, by observing the moss growing on the trees. He consults his travel-book, jots some notes, and leads the way onward to Sprucetuck. Wearily, the intrepid guardmice finally catch sight of the towering tree-city. Familiar smells waft through the air; Ariella and Rupert are home once more.

Player's Turn 1

After confirming to meet up on the morrow morning, Rupert makes his way to his parent's house for some rest. ((removing Tired condition, no test since it is my hometown))

After a few knocks, Rupert lets himself into his parent's abode. A musty smell hangs in the air, and strewn about the place are tons of books, contraptions, experiments, and so on--such that there's only a few walkways. Once this had been a house. Now it was more of a warehouse for odds and ends. But it definitely was a home. Rupert's home. Well, his parent's home, anyway. Rupert makes his way to his old room (considerably less floorspace, but otherwise as he left it) and crashes on his bed.

"Well, Ariella," Eidan says to the Tenderpaw, "we have until tomorrow to rest. Go see your folks, I'm sure they'll be happy you're here, even if it's just for a night. I'll walk you there, I'd like to meet them."

Ariella leads Eidan to her parents' pet store. The store is closed for the evening, but Ariella knocks on the door with a *rap-a-tap-tap-tap*. A moment later, the sounds of excitement and scurrying are audible from within the store. The door swings open and Ariella is immediately enveloped by the warm embrace of her mother and father. They look at her with love and amazement at what Ariella has become. In reality, she's only been gone for a few seasons, but her parents have never before seen her so disheveled from rough travels or so decked out in awkward precautionary leather armor.

“This is our patrol leader, Eidan. I’m going to become a Guardmouse with his help and guidance!”

“In due time, Ariella, let’s not put the cart in front of the beetles,” Eidan says with a smile and a wink to the young Tenderpaw. Then turning to her parents, he bows his head slightly. “It’s a pleasure to meet you. Your daughter is helping us in this mission... it’s her first.”

((Through a small pet store with crickets, beetles, and worms, the back door leads to a small comfortable home where Ariella’s parents, Stewart and Patricia, live. I assume they would offer Eidan a place to rest.))

They head into the living quarters, where Patricia and Stewart quickly set up a table for their meal. “We were getting ready for supper, please join us”, they tell Eidan.

Dinner is simple fare but very nice. Ariella talks about life in the Guard and the incidents during the trip to Sprucetuck, her parents talk about the latest happening in town, and they all have a great time. It’s clear to Eidan that the couple love their daughter and are very relieved to see her in good health and spirits.

After the meal, Eidan gets up. “Thank you very much for the food. Unfortunately, it’s getting late and I still need to find an inn for the night.”

“Absolutely not,” Stewart says. “There’s the alcove over there, a couple of blankets and a pillow and you’ll be much more comfortable than at an inn. I can’t thank you enough for looking after Ariella, I’m not about to let you wander around looking for a place to stay.”

“Well,” Eidan scratches the back of his neck, somewhat embarrassed. “I already abused your hospitality enough. I should leave you to enjoy Ariella’s company.”

“Nonsense!” Patricia replies. “We’ll all sit by the fire and talk for a little while, and then we’ll get you both to bed. You have a long journey ahead of you.”

Ariella rushes to move some chairs next to the small fireplace, and they sit down. The small room is cozy and warm, and the flames project dancing shadows on the walls. The fire crackles and pops, and for a few minutes they’re content to just look at the light.

“The least I can do to repay your hospitality is to offer a story,” says Eidan. “It was told to me by my father, and I haven’t really told it to many people.”

“It was many years ago, in Port Sumac. There was a young mouse there, the son of a local boatwright, who spent his days on the docs or on the shore, playing and exploring, like all kids do.

One day, the kid was seating at the end of an old, unused pier, eating some sunflower seeds,

when out of the corner of his eye, he saw movement under the water. Startled, he jumped up. Swimming just a few feet away was a very small, young char. Relieved, the mouse broke a piece of a seed and threw it on the water. The fish immediately gobbled it up. "Oh, you're hungry, huh?" the kid asked, and threw in the rest of the seed. The fish ate it.

The next day, when the kid walked to the end of the pier, the fish joined him again and ate some bread the young mouse had brought. After that, it became a routine. The young mouse would go down to the pier and feed the fish a seed, a little bread, or whatever scrap of food he could get. As the days passed, both the kid and the fish grew up, and as the mouse got older, he saw less and less of his friend, as he started working on his dad's boatyard and didn't have a lot of free time anymore.

One day, the mouse, now a young lad, was fixing the rigging on a boat on the water when a shadow passed over him. Raising his head and using his hand to protect his eyes against the sun, he looked up and immediately his blood went cold. From the town, the alarm bells started ringing as the hawk circled around and dove straight towards the boat, so fast the eyes could barely follow. The mouse threw his hands up in front of his face in a futile effort to defend himself...

And then the water next to the boat exploded as a big char jumped out of the water, colliding against the hawk. Feathers flew as the raptor hit the boat's mast, breaking it and throwing the mouse hard against the deck, where he fainted.

When he came to his senses again, the townsfolk were running down the piers, along with the towns archers. The bird, they informed him later, had flown away after almost falling into the water, apparently dazed. As for the fish, nobody knew."

Eidan takes the small pouch hanging from his neck and tosses it to Ariella. "Open it." She unfastens the pouch opening and pulls out a fish scale, old and dried out.

"My dad found it on the deck of that boat after he woke up. He gave it to me on the day I joined the Guard as a reminder that friendship can come from the most unexpected of places, and that simple acts of generosity can build bridges that span distances one would not think could be crossed. That is something we should always remember as we perform our duties as Guardmice."

Ariella holds the scale with a sense of awe. This scale represents the power of benevolence and good habits. I must remember to uphold these values and good things will surely come.

"Thank you for sharing, Eidan!" She hands the memento back to her leader.

After thinking for a moment, she realizes she wants to impress Eidan. She gets to work crafting a poultice using ingredients from her parents' pantry and some miscellaneous insect byproducts from the pet store.

((Ariella - Making a poultice to help relieve the Angry condition is hard work! It'll take an Ob 5 Healer test, according to the book.))

Rupert awakes to the smell of fritters.

"Good morning dear, did you sleep well?"

"Yes, Mum." He pushes a few things aside on the table to make room for his plate, and enjoys a homecooked meal.

"Your father will be sorry he missed you. He's off to Blackrock. Apparently the monks there discovered a rare tome, and he is there copying it."

The news disheartens Rupert a bit, but still, it is nice to be home.

"Mum, we are headed out to renew the Scent Border."

"Of course Dear. Why else would you be here in the Spring?" More fritters appear on his plate.

"I was thinking, a map of the Scent Border would aid us in navigating and in laying the scent. Do you know where I might find such a map?"

"No Dear, that's more of your father's area of expertise. Mine is Law. And sometimes bean-counting, but mostly law. But you might look up some of your father's associates. I'm sure they would be able to sell you such a thing."

After chatting with Mum for a while, Rupert sets off in search of information that might prove useful by visiting shops he knows and talking with old friends.

Rupert wanders up the winding ramp leading to Sprucetuck's merchant quarter. He asks after a map of the scent border at store after store before he's directed to *Archibald's Almanacs* - a shop so small you'd miss it if you weren't looking for it. The walls of Archie's shop are lined with shelves stacked floor to ceiling with scrolls and charts. The a slightly musty smell hangs in the shop's warm, still air as you approach the slight, bespectacled mouse drawing at a desk in the back.

((Rupert - The merchants of Sprucetuck are hard bargainers! Make a Haggler test against Archie's Will 5 in order to lower the Ob of the Resource test.))

Archie snatches up his cane and uneasily stands up out of his chair. "I nearly lost my leg making this map! I just can't let it go for the price you ask." After some back and forth, you're able to purchase the map though it cost more than you'd like. ((Please deplete your Resources by 1.))

But alas, despite his best haggling efforts, the map cost him dearly. *Let's hope it is worth it!* Rupert sulks.

Eidan gets up a little before dawn, after a good night's sleep. He folds the blankets and tidies up the alcove, then goes to knock softly at Ariella's door. "Ariella, let's get ready to leave, we have a long way ahead of us."

((Eidan's Tired condition goes away because of a good night's rest))

Ariella nearly doesn't awaken at the sound of the soft knock at her door, but she hears it in her dreams and knows it's time to get out of bed. Nestled in the comfort of her own bed at home, she slowly pulls herself from bed and glances at the clunky leather armor. *Time to put that bulk back on and get out there.* She takes a deep breath and suits up.

Just a few short minutes later, Ariella emerges from the door, eager to impress Eidan. "Ready for action, Eidan! I apologize for not being up and ready to go earlier. I stayed up late making this." She holds up a pasty web of herbs and insect excretions, neatly packaged in a bundle of bandages and webbing. "This poultice can relieve our symptoms if we get sick!"

"Just one moment to say goodbye." Ariella disappears briefly to her parents' room where Stewart and Patricia are still asleep. When she emerges, she has a look of resolve and determination to fulfill her duty to the Guard.

The two head out, munching on some bread and fruit Ariella grabbed before leaving her parent's house. It's still very early and the town is just waking up.

"We still have time before meeting Rupert. I wanted to get a head-start and have everything ready to go, and I figured he might stop and get supplies before we left. We're going to pick up the scent concoction, should be all ready for us."

They head out to square by the town's main gate, and quickly locate the small building where the representative of Sprucetuck's mayor oversees the distribution of the scent concoction. Outside is a small cart loaded with barrels.

"Good morning," Eidan says to the bored-looking mouse sitting behind a desk, inside. "We're here to pick up the scent concoction for the border west of Sprucetuck."

"Yes, yes, I was expecting you," says the mouse. "It's the cart outside. I already had it loaded. Just sign... here... and here." He produces two sheets of paper with receipts written on them. Eidan picks up the quill and signs them.

The townmouse examines the papers and hums in agreement. "Excellent. Everything should be in order, then. Have a good day."

"I think we should get a beetle to pull this cart for us," Eidan says as they step outside. "It seems a little heavy and I wouldn't mind saving some strength for the actual work, later. Let's go meet Rupert at the market and see if we can find a beetle trader."

Suddenly remembering his arrangement to meet up with Ariella and Aiden, Rupert scurries to the marketplace square, the agreed meeting place. He sits down and starts studying the map.

Eidan and Ariella walk to the market Square and find their patrol mate sitting on a bench studying a large scroll.

"Ready to go, Rupert?" Eidan asks. "We already secured the concoction, but I'm going to try and get us a beetle to pull the cart."

The patrol walks around the market until they find a small beetle corral. They approach the mouse sitting on a stool by the gate.

"Good morning, friend," says Eidan, "we're looking for a beetle to pull a cart for us... we're reinforcing the scent barrier west of here. It's Guard business but we're paying out of our own pockets, so it has to be affordable. Maybe a lease?"

Ariella approaches one of the beetles and caresses its mandible and underside, causing it to scuttle with joy. Upon hearing Eidan's request the beetler peers over at Ariella and his stock. He is impressed with how well she treats the creature and seems just a bit more willing to cut the group a deal now that he feels the beetle will be treated well.

"Hmm. Do you have some less scrawny beetles? Oh, I suppose this one will do, if the price is right..."

The beetler strokes the fur on his chin as he muses, "Guardmice, eh? I usually only have traders interested in my beasties - to pull caravans and all that. I suppose we could make a deal..." As Eidan and the beetler talk business, it becomes clear that a beetle is a luxury the mice can't afford. Ariella begins to think that the only way merchants can even afford one is to borrow against their perceived earnings once they get their wares to their destination.

Ariella is drawn from her thoughts by the approach of two mice. One must be a caravan driver - he flashes some paperwork at the beetler, mentions something about being bound for Dorigift, and proceeds to fit a harness to the beetle Ariella was petting. The other mouse she recognizes as **Peter**. Noticing her, he smirks and gives an over-exaggerated bow. "Ariella, how *wonderful* to see you again. Life on the road is treating you well I presume?" As the caravan driver begins to pull away with the beetle, Peter flashes a smile that absolutely drips with disdain. "How proud you must feel! The life of a Guardmouse is *ever* so glamorous. Enjoy lugging your barrels through the mud!" He lithely hops up and grabs on to the beetle's harness and is carried away toward the marketplace.

Ariella is fuming as her rival picks at old wounds and Eidan is likewise frustrated at the beetler's inflexibility. ((You all incur the Angry condition.))

The encounter with Peter really disrupts Ariella's focus and mood. She stomps away from the beetles, over to the cart with the scent barrier and readies to pull it by herself (likely an impossible physical feat for the young tenderpaw). All she can think of is how annoyed she is by Peter, and how she wants to get out of Sprucetuck and just get to work.

Why does Peter always have to pick on me?! Yes, I know I got stuck in the mud that one time. It was horribly embarrassing, but I don't need to be reminded of it all the time! He thinks he's so much better than everyone else. And he's probably mistreating that poor beetle. And he has no respect for the Guard who keep him safe. And he stinks like raw dough and rotting wood!

"Are we ready to go yet?"

Eidan looks at the two mice walking away, irritated, then he and Rupert follow Ariella as she stomps away.

Is that too much to ask? He thinks. I took my vow willingly and don't expect special treatment or reward for my services, but these mice! It's for their own benefit that we do our jobs faster and better... they won't even help us!

Shaking his head to clear out the sudden flare of anger, he turns to Ariella. "Yes. We are. Let's go."

They draw lots to decide who's going to pull the cart, and the first shift falls to Eidan and Rupert. Both mice get behind the cart's pull bar and, with Ariella walking in front of them, head out of Sprucetuck and into the Wilderness.

GM's Turn 2

As you pull away from Sprucetuck, the thrum of the town is replaced by the sounds of nature; gentle chirping, the wind through the trees, and the crunch of leaves and twigs beneath the wheels of the cart. Rupert knows from studying the map that the portion of the scent border you are responsible for is nearby. ((To reach the scent border, please make a Pathfinder test at Ob 4. The map counts as supplies and grants +1D to the roll.))

Ariella, still angry, hopes that getting away from Sprucetuck and unhappy memories will make her feel better. She scouts ahead and relays back directions to the others, guiding the cart on the most favorable path past plant debris and other obstructions.

"Yes, I know the symbol normally means outcropping. The mapmaker said it means 'bluff' on this map."

The patrol slowly make its way through the rough terrain, having left the roads and paths a while ago, since the paths commonly used by the mice keep well away from the border of the Territories. They stop frequently to consult the map, and to wait for Ariella to scout ahead and confirm whether their reference points are correct. Rupert and Eidan try their best to decipher the notes on the map and match them to their surroundings, but it's not always as easy as it may seem. The lush foliage and ground cover obstruct much of their vision and it's hard to be certain if they're heading towards the next waypoint on the map.

((testing Ob4 Pathfinder with Eidan's 2D, plus 3D from the others' help and map, ... success!))

After finding their way around a fallen log blocking their path, the Guardmice reach a long ditch. On the other side, a dead tree, burned by lighting, looms over them.

"Here! This is it, right?" Eidan points to the map, showing the drawing of a dead tree along a contour line indicating a channel or ditch. "The scent border should run along this side of the ditch, judging by this dotted line here."

He gives the map back to Rupert, steps out from behind the cart's bar and examines the ground close to the edge of the ditch. The smell of last year's concoction is weak, but still there, and he can still see the oily, sticky residue of the formula. He turns to the others.

"Let's get ready, we have a lot of work to do."

It is midday and the sun is at its zenith by the time you identify the remnants of the scent border. Following the border's imaginary line north and south, you steel yourselves for the task at hand. ((Pouring the border mixture requires an Ob 4 Scientist test helped by Loremouse or Hunter.))

*This. This is it. This is why I joined the Guard. This is why I was chosen for the mission. Rupert is on full alert, concentrating hard, and using all his knowledge. I'll revolutionize the effectiveness of the scent border. He calms himself down. Baby steps, Rupert. You are too **clever** for your own good. Be **rational**. Get the mission done. Remember this is your first time pouring it. There will be plenty of chances to innovate in years to come. Focus. But true to his **nature**, Rupert cannot help himself from experimenting with techniques.*

Luckily, Eidan and Ariella are present to keep him on track. Everyone has been **angry** and on edge since Sprucetuck, and maybe the tension will be enough to keep the task on track. Though tensions are high, only teamwork will save the day, and this mice know it. Rupert double-checks his observations against the **map** as the team lays the scent border.

As preparation for the work, Eidan spends some time analysing the animal tracks around the scent border. Sometimes the existence of the border drives changes in the movement patterns of the animals in the area, and also sometimes changes in the terrain -- a fallen tree, or a

channel carved by a flood -- may create a weak spot where predators can get across. When he is sufficiently satisfied, he heads back to the cart.

“Rupert, as we pour the scent concoction, I’ll probably make some changes on where the line goes... some things have changed since last year. I imagine you’ll want to update your map, Gwendolyn will probably appreciate if you add that to our report.”

Ariella tails Eidan as he examines the environment, following his movements closely and noting the types of things he points out. At times, she pulls out her lenses from her pouch to get a focused look at tracks or patterns on the ground.

She uses her knowledge of animal habits to point out spots that will likely need more scent attention - clearings where large animals are likely to disrupt the soil and shady paths that might be appealing to sneaky animals.

Feeling really good about providing helpful advice, Ariella eyes the cart full of barrels. “*The thinking part is easy. I can figure out how to best spread the scent, but actually lifting the barrels and pulling the cart?*” she thinks to herself. Part determination of spirit, part channeling of the residual foul mood from meeting Peter, she trudges forward with the group, trying her best to help with the physically strenuous tasks.

With hard work and careful planning, the patrol pours the scent border. At times, they get on each other’s nerves. But over the course of several days, they get the scent border spread--and it looks to be effectively done! The scent border is quieter than most of the territories. Which goes to show that it is effective.

“Well done, I think. Do you have follow-on orders from Gwendolyn, Eidan? If not, I think we should head back to town to resupply and rest. Not to mention, return the cart and barrels.”

“No, no follow-up orders,” Eidan replies, as he finishes pushing the last empty barrel back on the cart. He turns around, rubbing his pawns against each other to clear the dirt and concoction residue from them. “We’re expected to return to Lockhaven for debriefing, but I agree, we should return these to Sprucetuck first.”

He takes a last look at their handiwork. “Good job, you two. Let’s just make a small cairn with some rocks here so the next patrol knows where we stopped, and we can head back.”

Ariella leaps up eagerly to grab rocks for Eidan.

Ariella spends some time picking over rocks of varying sizes, trying to find specimens that will work well for the cairn. She’s ranged about ten minutes from camp when she hears rustling coming from behind a nearby tree. Tensing and ready to leap for cover, Ariella sees a beetle charge out from behind the tree and begin to run past her. It’s harness drags on the ground behind it as it scuttles by leaving a slight trail in the dirt. **What do you do?**

Whoah. Whoah. Calm down there, Beautiful. Ariella tries to speak confidently to calm the beetle, but all that comes out is a barely audible squeak. She knows that rubbing a certain part of the beetle will calm it, so she grabs a blade of grass or other useful nearby plant and gets close in an attempt to rub the soft underbelly of the beetle in a way that would sedate it.

Trying to placate the beetle, Ariella becomes entangled in the creature's harness as it charges past. She is dragged a short distance before the leathers tear at one of the clasps and slide off the beetle as it flees into the loamy soil at the base of a nearby tree. Ariella is dirtied and bruised, but no worse for wear besides realizing how **hungry and thirsty** she is. As she steadies herself she recognizes the harness, and in retrospect the beetle, from back in Sprucetuck. The beetle peeks at her curiously from beneath a leaf, chittering nervously. **What do you do?**

Ariella swallows dryly and struggles to call out despite her parched throat. "Eidan, Rupert! Come here! It appears our beetle friend has found us!" She brushes herself off and slowly begins to approach the beetle, hoping it will recognize her and allow her to gently touch it.

Hearing Ariella's urgent calls, Rupert moves quickly in that direction. "Where is your master, little beetle?" To Ariella and Eidan: "Whoever brought this beetle out here is likely in trouble."

"Is that the beetle from town? Looks like an animal did that," he points to the torn harness. "The merchants might need our help."

"Ariella, see if you can calm it enough to either stay put or follow us, but we don't have much time. We need to find out where the mice are. Rupert, while she's doing that, let's see if we can backtrack where the beetle came from?"

"This is certainly the beetle from town. I remember his face." Ariella has now reached the beetle and is petting it and soothing its panic.

"Hey, Buddy. It's good to see you again! What happened?" Ariella inspects the insect's body for signs of injury, but finds nothing. As she holds up the shredded harness, she reports back to Eidan and Rupert. "He doesn't appear to be hurt, but I fear his traveling companions may not have been so lucky."

Why did you have to go and get yourself into trouble, Peter? The last time the Guard had to save you, you weren't even grateful! If anything happens to Eidan or Rupert when we come for you, I'll never forgive you. I just hope you're not hurt. If you're hurt, we'll help you!

((You can tie up the beetle for free or get it to stay with another Loremouse test. Following the beetle's trail back to its source will require an Ob 4 Scout test.))

Knowing that the trained beetle will be familiar with mouse-made carts, Ariella guides the beetle back to the cart with the scent concoction. She has always had a way with insects, understanding that a gentle, **quiet** voice is best for keeping them comforted. She speaks softly to it, "I'm going to need you to stay here by the cart while we go find Peter. You're safe now."

The beetle seems to be more relaxed and open to Arellia's guidance. Having reached the cart, she pat's the creature's side and begins to walk back towards Eidan and Rupert. Before she's even halfway there, the ground rumbles as a thunderclap shatters the silence of the forest. Misty rain begins to fall softly from the sky as Arellia reaches her comrades.

"Let's go quickly. The rain will destroy the trail back to the merchants! Leave the beetle tied to the cart. We will come back for him. Injured mice logically must be considered before scared beetles. Quickly now, let's hurry!" Rupert says a bit **angrily**. He is still upset from Sprucetuck, and has been in a mood since then. Everyone has. "Let's **hunt** for the merchants. I think I see a **path** through over there."

The three mice quickly follow the beetle trail as best as they can. Eidan uses his experience as a **hunter** to suggest the most likely routes the beetle would have used as it escaped whatever attacked it, and both him and Rupert try to find any tracks, broken blades of grass, or anything that would point them in the right direction.

After a while, Rupert, in his **frustration**, decides to climb up a tree to try and gain sight of the caravan, or perhaps catch the sound of conflict if that is the case. **Cleverly**, he rolls the map up into a cone and listens through it, in various directions, but to no avail. "Well, that was a waste of time!" **Angrily**, Rupert climbs back down and reports what he did not find. He then searches for the trail again. It is pretty clear that Rupert has lost his cool, and his way. "Do either of you see the trail? It seems to have misplaced itself." Too upset to admit his fault in losing the trail, he **rationalizes** the blame to the beetle. "If that stupid beetle would just run in a straight line, this would be much *easier!*"

As you meanders through the dense undergrowth in search of the beetle's path, the misting rain continues to fall turning the soil muddy and difficult to traverse. Rupert leads the patrol through a briar patch to avoid the mud but the going is just as tough. The effort taken to blaze a trail makes you all **hungry and thirsty**. Eventually, you emerge from the thorns into a small clearing that abuts a riverbed.

You hear their cries for help before you see them. A number of mice are cowering inside broken and overturned wagons. Stalking among the wreckage is a fox, its sable fur slicked back by the rain. Beyond this scene, it seems a lone mouse tried to escape across the river only to be caught in an eddy and stranded upon a rock.

Conflict!

Eidan freezes for a split second, horrified. This is a Guard's worst nightmare. In as bad shape as they are now, they might not even be able to handle a fox, much less split forces to save the mouse stuck on the rock. He curses under his breath and signal the rest of the patrol to back off and lay low.

"We need to drive that fox away," he whispers to the others. "We could attack it and hope to scare it off, or try to lure it away while we rescue the others." He sighs and shakes his head, **angrily**. "That mouse on the rock will have to hold on until we deal with the fox. Suggestions?"

I need to prove to my team that I can help. Ariella looks to Eidan nervously. "I have an idea. I can lure the fox away and buy you some time. I may not be the strongest or most coordinated, but I'm decently quick. If I catch its attention from the far side of the clearing, I'll have a good head start on the fox."

Eidan pauses momentarily to consider the offer, his brow frowned deeply. Finally he says, "I can't allow that, Ariella, if the fox catches you, you're dead... I would take the offer from a full Guard, someone who has made their vows, but you're still a Tenderpaw."

This is something Eidan would let a Guardmouse do, so I know this is a good plan. Being a Tenderpaw shouldn't make me useless to the patrol. And it shouldn't stop me from being able to help those merchants.

Ariella looks at Eidan more confidently now. "I can do this. You and Rupert have time to scout a path and rig traps to slow the fox down. It's the only way to get the fox away from the others."

Rupert fishes around for a second, and produces a spool of wire and some string. "I could rig up a snare. Or several. We might even catch it."

"Hmmm," the patrol leader scratches his chin. "That changes things. Ariella, if you can get a headstart and make the fox chase you over the snares, we can wait there to protect you too... that might work."

He looks at the others. "Let's do it. We don't have much time. Rupert, I'll help with the traps, I know a trick or two about **hunting**. Ariella, as soon as we get the fox, double back and get the mice out of there, back to the cart. Rupert and I will handle the one on the river."

"Got it, Eidan! For now, the fox doesn't seem to have found the merchants. I'll wait until the last possible moment, to give you two as much time as possible. Then, I'll hail the fox's attention on the far side and run straight towards the sun."

I wonder what foxmeat tastes like... Rupert ponders as he goes about setting the traps.

Ariella **quietly** takes off to get in position, letting her mousy **nature** take over as she scurries through the brush. As she moves through the foliage, her **farsighted** eyes make her path veer a

bit from to the edge of the clearing. This makes the repositioning take a bit longer, but consequently also helps a tiny bit in hiding her movements as she's a bit further from the clearing.

Arellia arrives at her desired starting point. She's struggling to keep her heavy breathing quiet and her heartbeat sounds deafening in her ears. **"Oh no..."** The fox heard her and has been creeping closer, eliminating any chance Arellia had for a head start. She stands frozen, lost in the fox's glassy, black eyes as it slinks closer and gets ready to pounce.

As Rupert sets the last trap, the trigger branch snaps under the pressure, snaring him and hoisting him up in the air! Swinging wildly, he struggles not to swoon with all the blood rushing to his head. For a brief instant, the undulations of the snare-caught mouse come to a halt, time standing still, with Rupert high up in the air. "Oh no..." He sees the fox slinking toward Arellia, and Arellia frozen with fear. "RuuUUUUUNNNN!!!" he screams, as that frozen second ends and time begins rushing forward once more.

Through a glazed and petrified fear, Ariella hears the distant cry. Rupert's squeaking scream, like a dream, hazy at first, then crystal clear jolts her back to her senses as she remembers where she is and what she needs to do.

Don't get eaten. Don't get eaten!... Gotta go... ...NOW!

No, no, no! Eidan sees their plans start to unravel. He grabs his spear and runs towards Ariella without a second thought. *If I can cross their path and provoke it, the fox will chase me to the traps!*

"Ariella!" he shouts as he runs, using his **knowledge about predators** to advise the Tenderpaw, "this way! Zig-zag and use plant cover, try to confuse it so it can't catch you!"

Ariella takes off as fast as her legs can carry her running directly for one of the traps. The fox darts into the briar patch, planning to head her off and catch her by surprise. Arellia spots the fox coming at the last moment and darts deeper into the trapped area. Arellia puts as much cover as she can between herself and the fox, hoping to keep it off its guard.

Ariella assesses the situation. Her understanding of animals (**loremouse**) lets her determine how to best lure the fox into a vulnerable position. She runs and positions herself in the perfect spot, allowing Eidan to get close enough for an attack.

Eidan cuts to the right as he gets near Ariella, then back, crossing right in front of the fox and **bravely** throwing himself right against its face, as the fox tries to snap at Ariella, throwing the beast's attack off. He rolls as he hits the ground, ready to run towards the snares, as the fox attention shifts to him...

Rupert, still swinging but not as wildly, points to where the fox is, hoping Eidan sees him. Meanwhile, he's thinking about how best to get out of the snare.

All the years in the Guard, training to face his enemies makes running away difficult for Eidan, his mouse instincts replaced by trained responses. *I'm still a mouse*, he thinks as he runs towards the snares, jumping side to side as Rupert points the fox position, *and running is in our nature. I'll show this fox!*

The fox's head turns, looking back and forth between Ariella and Eidan. It growls at Eidan, snapping its jaws, before leaping over him and disappearing into the nearby bushes. The fox moves slowly preparing for its next attack out of your view. ((The fox chooses to **impede** your next action with a -1D.))

Rupert finally collects his wits enough to make an escape from the trap. Seeing a branch he can swing to, he does; now stable, he removes the noose from his leg and looks for the fox.

Ariella, still winded from all this running around and terrified from her close call with the fox's snapping jaw, looks around and **scouts** for signs of the now concealed fox. A rustle of leaves catches her attention, and she shouts over to Rupert. "Over there! She's by that big boulder!"

Eidan's mind races, trying to come up with ways to **lead the patrol** so they act cohesive. He sprints forward and points to Ariella, "Run across that branch and join us over there! Rupert, I'll run over on your right! Let's converge so the fox doesn't change direction!"

Ah, there it is. It won't fall for too many more tricks. Better make this one count! Knowing the locations of the traps, Rupert sprints down the tree, right across the fox's path toward a trap. Leaping over the trigger, he comes rolling to a stop just on the other side. *Oh, if I misjudged this, it is going to hurt a lot.*

Just as the fox lunges, the trap snaps! It sends the fox into a spin, crashing over Rupert but failing to snare him. Rupert takes off again.

We can't survive much longer... need to end this, thinks an increasingly tired Eidan. *The fox wouldn't resist chasing a wounded prey, no predator would.*

"I'm going to distract it," he shouts to the others, "try to position yourselves to push it into the snares!"

Eidan then runs straight into a tree, hitting it with a big crashing sound, trying to get the fox to notice him. *I'm tough, I can handle this... need to make it convincing!* He makes a big show of tripping and tumbling backwards, shouting in pain, hobbling and moving slower.

Ariella captures the fox's gaze and runs directly past Eidan to ensure that the fox would spot the injury-feigning leader of the group. Then, as instructed, she positions to hopefully direct the fox into the snares.

The fox stops on its tracks at the sound of the crash, and sees the apparently crippled mouse hopping away. It immediately loses interest in pursuing Rupert and darts towards Eidan.

As the fox lunges at him, Eidan suddenly spins and brings his spear around, the metal tip flashing in an upward arc. It slashes deeply into the fox's snout, causing the beast to howl in pain and sidestep blindly... right into the waiting snares!

The fox steps in one of the loops and trips it, the wire pulling and closing around its leg. Startled, the animal tries to get away, and steps into another trap. The fox barks and throws itself against the bindings, to no avail.

Breathing hard from all the exertion and danger, the Guardmice walk towards each other. Eidan is still hobbling, blood running down his leg. He was fast in that last surprise attack with the lance... but not fast enough. The fox must have gotten him with a claw, he isn't sure.

"We need to get back to those merchants," Eidan says as the three mice meet near the trapped fox.

You three make your way back to the merchant caravan to find three trademice cowering beneath their overturned wagon. As you approach, one of the mice peeks out from cover to ask, "Is it safe?" before looking around furtively for danger. At the same time, Peter calls for help from where he sits marooned on the river. **What do you do?**

"We captured it, but we should leave and find shelter quickly. First we need to rescue Peter. If he stays there, he'll be swept away!" says Rupert.

"Do you have some rope?" Eidan asks the merchant mice.

One of the the mice seems to be outfitted as a hunter - he reaches into a sack slung over his shoulder and produces some rope.

Ariella scurries over toward the water to get a better look at Peter's situation. Hesitation and fear envelop her spirit as she imagines the rushing water carrying her away. Then **anger** returns as she starts to blame Peter for their troubles.

Why did Peter have to lead the caravan into a fox?! And how in the world did he get stuck over there?! He's always causing me trouble and never grateful for the help of the Guard! I do hope he's not seriously hurt!

Eidan grabs the rope. "Gather what you can carry and get ready to leave while we deal with your comrade over there. We should move fast, I don't know how long the trap is going to hold that fox." He tells the mice, then heads to the edge of the water.

"Hey! You!" He shouts to the stranded mouse. "We're going to try and get you out of there."

The patrol leader looks at the water, trying gauge the distance and decide whether they can just throw the rope across, if one of them is going to have to swim over to get to that mouse or if they'll need a boat to do that...

((Peter seems to be right at the range of the rope--you can throw it to him but it's going to be close! Make an **Ob 4 Health test** to throw the rope to Peter and reel him in. I would guess that Eidan doesn't want to risk any of his patrol in the strong river current without exhausting other options first.))

Ariella, seeing an opportunity to help, accepts the hand-off from Eidan. She looks down at the rope in her arms before making sure the end is secured. *If I toss it upstream a bit, there's a chance that Peter will be able to grab it, even if I miss.*

"Tie a weight to the end. That gives the rope some mass at the end to help pull it through the air," says Rupert. (In a whisper only Ariella can hear, "And just maybe, you'll bean the cad in the noggin in the process..." (helping with Scientist))

Arellia heaves the rope's weighted end into the water upriver of Peter. After a moment, the current carries the rope near enough for him to grab. Steeling himself, Peter leaps off the rock, reaching for the rope, and plunges into the water. After what feels to Arellia like an hour, Peter breaks the surface gasping for air and flailing like a fish out of water. Eidan and Rupert begin to pull but the current is strong - it pulls Peter back under and as the rope is pulled taut Arellia is knocked into the water as well!

Before she even realizes what's happening, a rush of bubbles and the terrifying sound of whooshing and gurgling envelops poor Ariella. The tumultuous waters feel like they're sending her tail in one direction and her head in the other, then sending both back the other way. She holds her breath and clutches the rope with one paw. *Just hold on. No matter what, don't let go!*

Diving for Ariella's disappearing feet, Rupert manages to catch an ankle. But the momentum leaves them both going into the water, and Rupert loses his grasp. Suddenly, up and down are foreign concepts. Rupert struggles to touch the bottom or reach the surface, anything to get his bearings and get pointed toward air and dry land.

Suddenly, Rupert feels the rope brush a paw. He grabs it. In a moment of calm, the rope slackens. Cleverly, Rupert pulls a loop of rope through his belt, and anchors it in place with the handle of his axe. *If one of us makes it to shore, we might all make it*, he reasons. Then the rope goes taut on both ends, ensuring him that, at least for now, there is a mouse attached to each end.

After a gulp of fresh water and a twist in some indeterminate direction, Ariella's head breaches the surface. With a big gasp, she finally takes in some air. She looks around to see chaos. Lapping water is barraging her face. Holding the rope more firmly now, she is completely

disoriented, but she can see a mouse on either side of her, also holding the rope. *Oh my! Who else fell in with me? It must be Rupert! I should get over to Rupert. He'll know what to do.* Her **farsightedness** and the incessant splashing prevent her from being able to tell who's who. She just picks a direction and moves that way, hand over hand, along the rope towards one of the mice.

Feeling tugs from one end of the rope, Rupert reasons that the mouse on the other end is trying to pull together. *Good idea.* Rupert begins reeling in the other side as well.

A few moments later, Ariella reaches a furry friend. "Rupert! Did you fall in too?" She hears Peter's voice...

On the shore, Eidan strains to maintain his hold on the rope as the mice in the water reach each other. ((Eidan can narrate something here.))

Grunting heavily with effort, Eidan digs his hind paws into the ground, trying to prevent the rope from being pulled out of his hands. The wound on his legs is screaming, and the bones on his back seem ready to pop. He looks around him for some place to anchor the rope, and sees the three trademice standing nearby, seemingly hesitant about what to do.

"You three... HELP... NOW!" he shouts at them in a commanding voice, learned over all his years as a **patrol leader** training new Guard recruits.

Ariella holds the rope tight and kicks as hard as she can, trying to swim through the current and make it easier for Eidan to pull the other end. Her **light armor** is making the struggle even harder. *How did this happen? How did I end up here choking and drowning? I hate the water!*

The three trademice, startled by Eidan's shout, rush over to where the Guardmice is struggling. They grab the end of the rope and start pulling on it.

"RUPERT! ARIELLA! HOLD ON AND SWIM HARDER!" Eidan bellows as loud as he can. "You three, PULL!"

Eidan can feel his old bones creaking, his **aging body** threatening to give up after all the exertion of the fight with the fox. His **wounded** leg burns and shakes.

Hang on! Lives are depending on you! He **toughens** himself against the pain and exhaustion, and pulls the rope with all his remaining strength.

The mice grunt, puff and curse under their breath as they slowly drag the rope out of the rushing water. After what seems an eternity, the two Guardmice and the stranded trader are laying on firm land, wet and coughing. Everybody is exhausted, but luckily, alive.

After coughing up a river and catching his breath, Rupert starts to reassess the situation. *A storm is coming. The fox is only caught temporarily. We need to find shelter. Shelter that is high enough not to get itself underwater if there is a flood.*

“Eidan, thank you!” Quietly: “Eidan, we should seek shelter *now*. I know everyone is tired, but there are too many dangers here.”

Rupert looks around for high ground. *That’s the place to start looking. Maybe we can find a hidey hole.*

Safely back on solid ground, Ariella lies there, sopping wet.

Taking a few steps forward towards the caravan, Rupert’s eyes scan his surroundings in search of shelter. ((Finding shelter for a group this large will take a Survivalist test at Ob 4.))

Eidan walks to Rupert’s side, and follows the other mouse’s gaze. He’s been in tight spots over the years while on patrol, and learned quite a few things about **surviving** in the wild. He quickly points out some possible routes they could go where they’d have a better chance to find a suitable spot to wait out the storm.

Once Ariella catches her breath, and after *quietly* cursing Peter under her breath, she helps out with the search for a suitable shelter. Being an *inquisitive* mouse, she’s comfortable poking ahead into the unexplored wilderness. Hopefully her **scouting** will help reveal a path or landmark that would help Rupert find cover large and strong enough to provide shelter for so many mice.

Despite frantic searching, the bedraggled mice found no shelter. Instead Ariella hears a mewling sound coming from the merchants’ overturned cart. She slowly moves aside bolts of cloth and baskets of food to reveal a fox pup. It’s entangled in a net and clearly injured. The trademouse dressed like a hunter shoots a furtive glance at Peter and the others before looking down and kicking at the dirt clods at his feet.

Oh no! Ariella sees the injured pup and calls out to Rupert and Eidan, letting them know about the situation so they can deal with Peter and the trademice.

Then she rushes to the pup’s side. She grabs the **lenses** from her pouch and examines the injury. She pulls out the **roll of bandages**, but it’s still sopping wet from earlier. She wants to do everything in her power to **heal** the hurt pup.

The fox pup is more than double Arellia’s size, but she isn’t afraid. She notices that the pup is favoring its right side. Arellia brushes its fur away to discover several small puncture wounds - perhaps the fox pup was prodded with a spear or a dagger. ((Please make a **Healer test at Ob 3** to tend to the pup’s wounds.))

She squeezes the **roll of bandages** as best she can. First, she reconfigures the fox in the net to be more comfortable, but makes sure it is still secure and unable to escape. She looks at her meager supplies. "Well, a soggy bandage is better than nothing," she sighs. Then she finds and wraps up an open wound. She also finds some sore spots where the fox was cramped up in the net and rubs them gently to ease the pain. The pup whimpers a bit, but seems to be at ease now. Ariella smiles, feeling proud and relieved that her **healer** training for the Guard was sufficient to treat the pup all by herself.

"What is the meaning of this?"

The patrol leader's voice is cold and hard, as he turns to the trademice. They look down, uncertain.

"ANSWER ME!" Eidan snarls, **angrily**, his good will quickly evaporating. "Are you mad? You bring a fox pup into the Mouse Territories, over the scent border, when you HAD to know the mother would follow? You risked not only your miserable lives, but also the lives of my patrol. Each one of us," he swings his arm towards Rupert and Ariella, "came very, very close to dying to save your hides. And not to mention endangering any mice living nearby. FOR WHAT?"

The hunter, Ellis, winces with each punctuation of Eidan's accusation but remains silent, his eyes hard. Peter's gaze is locked to the ground seemingly unable to make eye contact with you.

The caravan leader, Walmond, steps forward with eyes wide and manages to stammer, "Ellis - he said there's someone in Copperwood that would buy the beast. He said we'd be rich beyond our wildest dreams! Do you think I want to drive this cart for the rest of my life? I'm tired and..." Walmond quiets abruptly, realizing he's probably said too much.

Eidan turns to the hunter, his eyes narrowing. "Start. Talking. There are going to be consequences for this, so if I were you I'd start trying to get on our good side as much as you can."

Walking up to the hunter with a little stiffness on his **injured** leg, Eidan looks the other mouse right in the eyes.

"Look. I'm an **oldfur**, just about to retire from the Guard. I'm past the point of caring too much what happens to young, stupid mice. So I'm just going to report all of you for this mess, and *you*, specifically," and he pokes a claw on Ellis' chest, "for being the one who actually caught the pup. Unless, of course, I start hearing all the details about this whole operation right now."

Ariella knows she's just the tenderpaw of this patrol. She's not really in a position to chastise these merchants or boss them around. But she *does* know how to put on a show. Still damp in her light armor, she puts on her best sad and miserable face. She holds the fox pup close and hopes the fox pup helps the overall sight of pathetic and adorable.

She whispers, **quietly** at first, but with rising confidence as the stories sincerely inspire her. “I came out here to train. I want to be a legendary Guardmouse like the honourable Captain Erica who single-pawedly held off a band of weasels in the Darkheather and completed the scent border in 1104. I came out to help good mice of the territories and we found you folks, who aren’t acting like good mice at all.” Ariella looks at the trademice and frowns, hoping to appeal to them with **Legends of the Guard**.

What I want to know is, ‘Who is the buyer?’” Sensing Ellis is going to clam up, Rupert shifts tactics. He starts leading the hunter conspiratorially out of earshot of Eidan. “I know you’re just trying to take the “big score” and make money. Who can blame you. I get it. I can probably convince Eidan not to involve you with the... *investigation*... that will come from it. You’d be clear of it. But I can’t do that if I don’t know all the facts. If we have to come ask you more later, well, I’m afraid your good name would be dragged into this... fiasco. Help me out here. Help me help *you*. Who is the buyer? Why does he want the fox cub? Whoever it is, nearly got you killed. You know what a friend is? A friend is the person who pulls you out of deep trouble. Kinda like we did, back there with the fox. Boy, she was gonna gobble you all up! Lucky your friends came along when we did!” Rupert continues to work on Ellis, teasing out what information he can **persuade** him to reveal. After a few moments, he leads the hunter back to the group, making sure to give Eidan and Ariella a meaningful glance.

Despite your best efforts at convincing Ellis to reveal what he knows, the hunter doesn’t budge. He locks eyes with Eidan, his face showing nothing but grim determination. When Rupert leads him away from the group to try a different tack, Ellis’ demeanor softens somewhat but he still does not give up the information you seek. “Look,” he says, “whatever punishment you have in store for me can’t compare to what’ll happen if I tell you what you want to know. I can’t.” Then looking to Eidan, “Let’s get on with it then.” **What do you do?**

“Killing an animal, even a *predator* like a fox, seems wrong to me, Eidan. Not in cold blood. But it’s a fox, and it has seen this side of the scent border. It knows the scent border is a lie. There is no choice to make, really. If we allow the mother to live, innocent mice will die from it. If we kill the mother, then killing the cub is a mercy. Damn you for this, all of of you. Ellis, you especially. You know the consequence. I can tell that you are a mouse with honor, but you have forsaken it. What could make a mouse of your calibre do such a thing? I don’t understand. But then, maybe I do; did someone threaten your family?” Knowing Ellis won’t talk, Rupert still does not see Ellis as evil. *Nomouse could do such a thing for mere coin*. Rupert lays a hand on Ellis’ shoulder, and gives a sad, knowing look. “I will do what I can to get to the bottom of this without endangering your family further, if that is the case. If it is, tell me--this much at least! ‘Nomouse is beyond hope unless he has abandoned that hope.’ My Senior Artisan Alain, said this often. Words to live by.”

“Now, two foxes in traps and cages. How do we put them down mercifully? This makes me sick in my stomach.” *Though in fact that feeling is as much hunger as sympathy.*

Ariella looks up from the now calm and comfortable fox pup. "Uh... this pup is still very small. I think it's not yet capable of hunting and feeding itself. It's not a threat right now, but if we release her, I don't think she'll be able to survive without her mother. I think if we release the pup outside the border, the mother will follow." *I sure hope that she will follow.*

"Clever! But will she come back? Do you think you can communicate with her? Do you speak Fox at all? I know you have studied with a lore master. Do you remember any Fox words? If you can get her to agree not to return, then we might all climb to safety and then cut her down from the trap."

Rupert retrieves his journeybook and begins jotting notes; he makes a list of pros and cons, weighing decisions, and documents events while it is still fresh in his mind. He tries to sketch a map showing where everything occurred, lamenting the loss of the cartographer's map. "Stupid. This whole affair is just such a waste. Why did that stupid fox *eat my map*?"

How are we going to move this pup across the border? And then we're need to lure the mother all the way there. I agree with Rupert. This is a deathwish. Ariella thinks about this plan for a moment, then an idea strikes her. "What if we move the scent border?!" She blurts out excitedly.

"I don't think we can move the mother fox and her baby all the way outside without risking our lives *again*. But if we redraw the scent border over that way, then we can move this area where we're standing to the outside of the territories! Rupert, you'll need to create an accurate new map. And we'll need everybody's help to get it done quickly. [*She glares at Peter and the tradesmice.*] But I think we can do it safely."

"Hmm," ponders Eidan. He scratches his chin with a claw for a few moments, then looks at Ariella. "Ariella, that was a great idea. I think that's the best course of action. The territories won't suffer for the loss of just this small area, and I don't have the heart to kill both animals in cold blood, especially since they were put in this situation **by mice**." He glares at the trademice.

"Let's do what she suggests," he says to the others. "Ariella and myself will help Rupert redraw the border, and you four can make yourselves useful by helping us with the barrels of scent concoction. You should find our cart over there a ways." and he points to the direction the patrol came from. "We were in a hurry so our trail should be pretty obvious to follow."

Rupert sets to work, drawing diagrams and making adjustments as information comes in from Eidan, and sets the merchants toward the labor. At first, the distraction of the merchants causes Rupert to miss some key locations, but **of course**, he sets the loudest merchant to work removing the extra traps, and once the merchant was busy enough to not be squeaking nearby, Rupert reviewed his work and caught his errors. With the corrections made, the re-routing of the border quickly finished.

Whew. Whew. Whew.

With the scent border redrawn, Ariella thinks about how to convince the mother fox to stay away from the territories. *Communicating with a fox isn't going to be easy. Foxes are sharp, natural predators. But this mother was acting only to protect her pup. What in the world would convince mama fox and her baby to stay far far away? A threat? A reward? A trick?*

The baby will be easier to scare off permanently than the mother. It's small so it's still learning associations. We can make it never want to come near the scent border again. A concentrated dose of concoction should be enough of a signal.

"Rupert, do we have any concoction left at all? Can you figure out a way to collect some scent and concentrate it? Maybe there's something left stuck to the inside of the barrels. If we can administer a strong dose directly to the nose, the pup just might learn to run far as it can from the scent border. I'm sure mother will follow."

"Ariella, you can do this," Eidan says, putting his paw on the young mouse's shoulder. "**Predators** are usually averse to risk. Try to let the fox know that the smell means injury to her and the baby. They know that if they're hurt they can't hunt, and will die."

"If she seems to agree, tell her to swing back and forth north-to-south; that will wear through the cording fastest and release her fairly quickly."

As Rupert and Eidan do their part to prepare some of the concentrated concoction, Ariella makes her way to the mother fox. Her **inquisitive** nature draws her close the ensnared fox.

Ariella cocks her head to the side and stares deeply into the fox's eyes and tries to really understand her. *She loves her baby and would do anything to protect him. She's angry, but she doesn't want to eat us. She's tired, and she wants her baby.*

Lost in the big keen eyes of the fox, Ariella snaps back to reality when she hears Rupert call out that the concoction is ready. *Let's set this plan in motion.* By drawing the fox's gaze back and forth north to south as Eidan suggested, the cording starts to wear. *It seems like she's got the right idea. Let's get to the baby. I hope the fox understood me as well as I understand her. This plan will work. It has to.* Ariella darts off to rejoin the others before waiting to see if the fox can free herself.

Taking a gop of gooey scent from Rupert, Ariella approaches the baby fox. It's twice her size, but it's clearly scared. She smears the concoction through the net directly into the nostrils of the helpless pup. As it yelps in pain, Ariella whispers, "I'm sorry, Baby. We need to make sure you hate the scent so much that you never come back in your whole life." She looks into the pup's eyes, and using what she learned from gazing into the mother's eyes, she can feel that the pup will run away, exactly as the mice want.

"Ok, he's learned." Ariella tells the others. "When you release him from the net, he'll run away. Let's not waste any time. Mama will break out of the trap any minute now and race to her baby."

Eidan pulls out his knife and deftly cuts several threads around the net, as he's done many times when helping the fishermice from his town as a young mouse. He then grabs the net and with a quick pull, tears it neatly open, freeing the little fox.

The kit takes a few seconds to realize it's free, then jumps out of the remains of the net and bounces away from the mice, yelping for its mother.

"We should get away quickly, back to the other side of the new scent border, before the mother fox decides she's not done with us."

He turns to the tradesmice. "You should follow us back to Sprucetuck, so we can all have a good talk with the Magistrate, where you'll explain exactly what you were doing with the fox cub. Or you can run away and become fugitives. It's really your choice."

And with that he turns, signals his companions to follow, and heads back to their cart.

On the journey back to Sprucetuck, with the merchants in the carriage, Ariella sees Eidan hiding the severity of his injury. *He needs help, and I can treat a cut like that!*

She whispers to Rupert, "Please keep an eye out (**scientist**) for herbs that might be able to help seal Eidan's wounds. He's hurt worse than he's letting on."

[Rupert helping]

With some herbs and mud, Ariella does her best to craft a poultice that will ease Eidan's recovery. The gooey mixture isn't holding together as well as it needs to, so Ariella hops off the carriage and grabs a handful of some nearby pollen to bind it. It serves its purpose well holding the mixture quite effectively, but as she pats the package together and goes to hand the gift to Eidan, her head becomes dizzy and she feels the recognizable trickle of illness creep through her weakening body.

Uh oh. I don't feel so well.

Eidan takes the poultice from Ariella paw.

"You didn't have to worry, this is not..." His first instinct is just to wave his injuries off as minimal, but then he notices the look of concern on the young mouse's face.

"I... thank you, Ariella. I'll use this as soon as we get to Sprucetuck. I'm an oldfur but I can hold on a little longer, I'm tougher than I look," he winks. "But you don't look so well yourself, are you ill? Injured?"

“I feel a bit faint. We’ve been through a lot. I’m glad we’ll be home soon. Mom’s soup will help.” Thinking of home warms Ariella’s spirit. She feels comforted in anticipation, despite the onset of sickness.

After an uneventful journey, the group arrives in Sprucetuck. The gates of the town are a very welcome sight to the weary patrol members, but the merchants accompanying them don’t seem very happy. They all head straight to the Magistrate’s office, where Eidan delivers a report of the events at the scent border and leaves the trademice to deal with the consequences of their poor choices.

Outside, the patrol leader turns to Ariella and Rupert. “Well, I think we earned a little bit of rest. I’ll draft a report to Gwendolyn, and will check with you later for additional details. In the meantime...”

“Eidan, you must stay with my family again. You are always welcome, and like I mentioned earlier, Mom’s soup is the best!”

“Well...” the older mouse scratches his head, a little embarrassed. “I **was** going to ask if they could put me up for the night... thank you.”

“Of course. I’ll go tell them to prepare a bed for you.” Struggling to maintain her poise and professionalism in front of Eidan, Ariella can’t wait to be relieved of the mission. She can feel her body ache as a fever sets in. She makes her way home to meet her parents as quickly as she can.

Player’s Turn 2

Mama Patricia and Papa Stewart are thrilled to see Ariella. They notice right away that she seems ill, so they tuck her into bed and start a pot of soup. They are happy when they hear Eidan will be staying with them again, but they insist that Ariella rest before telling them how the mission went.

Eidan and Rupert pull the cart back to the Mayor’s representative’s office near the town entrance.

“Thanks, Rupert. I think we’re done for now... go see your family. We’ll meet tomorrow mid-morning at the market.”

He then goes in to talk to the mouse in charge, and get a receipt for the cart and empty barrels. The bureaucrat looks over the items, complains about some scratches and spilled concoction, but in the end accepts everything and hands Eidan the document.

The old patrol leader stares at the square for a few minutes, looking at the crowd moving about, going through their business. *If they only knew what's just a short distance from here*, he thinks. A sense of accomplishment settles in, but he finds himself still not at peace. He did his duty, but his stomach is rumbling with **hunger**, he's still **angry** with the greedy mice that almost got his patrol killed, and the **injury** on his leg is bothering him. *I need to get some rest, try and recover.*

Moving a little stiffly on his wounded leg, Eidan makes his way to Ariella's parent's house.

"Please make yourself at home, Eidan. After I bring some soup for my sick little baby Ariella, we can all have supper together." Mama Patricia gestured Eidan to a comfortable chair, and she disappeared into Ariella's room.

The hot soup and comfort of her mother's love eased Ariella's **hunger and anger**. Mentally, the tenderpaw felt clear for the first time in a long while. Physically, however, she still felt weak from the **sickness**.

A little later, after a delicious and filling meal, Eidan feels a little better. Ariella's parents him eat his fill before trying to start any conversation. They move to the chairs near the fire again, and Eidan tells them about the work on the scent border, the meeting with the merchants, the fight with the fox... Steward and Patricia exchange many worried glances when they hear about the fight, and how close the fox got to killing their daughter.

Eidan doesn't try to sugarcoat the truth, though. "You two deserve to know what Ariella will face as a member of the Guard. Your daughter was very brave and selfless. Be proud of her."

And thinking at Ariella risking her life for the merchant Peter, even though the two don't seem to see eye to eye, brings Eidan's focus back to their sworn duty to protect all mice, deserving or not. He breathes deeply, trying to let his **anger** subside and bring some peace to his mind... and, just like that, the anger is gone.

Bedridden, Ariella struggles to fight the **sickness** that pervades her whole body. She uses the **sick poultice** she crafted before the team's mission and lies motionless in bed. Her mind and body are in rough shape as the fever causes her to hallucinate and she feels weaker and weaker.

A couple days later, Ariella is fully **recovered**, the **Sickness** having ran its course. Given the ample time to rest and reflect, Ariella is ready again to embark on a mission in service to the guard. She is forever changed from her first mission - more worldly and capable for dealing with the dangerous life of a guard mouse, but slightly less mousy; her mouse **Nature** is waning and she's growing up. ((Reducing max **Nature** by 1 to recover from Sickness without treatment.))

<Current Location>