

Nightmare in Bonbonburg

As you fall asleep one winter's night, you find yourself in a strange place. A small town inhabited by toys is having trouble with a nearby colony of rats stealing their chocolate harvest year after year. But the poor toys aren't built to fight! Can you stop the rats from stealing the candy once and for all? And is that really all there is to the story?

Names in bold lettering refer to creatures whose stats can be found on pages 14–16.

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Intro

After falling asleep one quiet night, a hapless group of adventurers awakens to find themselves in a strange, snow-covered field. Where are they? How did they get there? At the very least, one question is answered with a quick look around. A large signpost mounted upon two candy canes acts as an archway. The sign reads “Bonbonburg” in common.

The peaceful town of Bonbonburg resides within the Candy Grasslands, a wide field where the inhabitants plant their chocolate crops during the growing season. While it may not seem real, Bonbonburg exists on a plane of existence comprised entirely of dreams. Walking through the town, you’ll find that every building is made from peppermint wood, gingerbread, and peanut brittle (if you’re allergic, best to stay away). Gentle snowfall paves the streets and roofs in frigid white. Dressed in warm and fluffy clothes are the townsfolk, each one seemingly a toy. Dolls, stuffed bears, wooden soldiers, walking around, talking, going about their days as any ordinary person would, oblivious to their existence as dreams.

The citizens of Bonbonburg are not used to outsiders but recognize humanoid creatures, excited about their arrival. Most citizens, when asked questions, will direct the players to Mayor Penelope Pristine. Something strange is going on and all the townsfolk can feel it. Perhaps these adventurers can put their minds at ease?

Investigations

Mayor Penelope Pristine

Penelope is an immaculate porcelain doll, Elven, who wears beautiful dresses and accessories. She lives in a large gingerbread dollhouse at the edge of town.

Mayor Pristine prides herself on keeping

the town neat and orderly, but for the past month or so, the rats have been stealing the town’s candy crops from the gingerbarn. The town guard, run by Fangstitch (a quilted dragon toy), has been thus far unable to stop them. She worries that the barbaric rats won’t be satisfied simply eating all the food the toys have stockpiled, and will soon come for their homes. She explains that the rats have the mysterious ability to eat even their building materials, such as gingerbread.

Penelope knows more about the situation than she lets on. Her true goal is to run the rats out of the forest, because she wants the peppermint, but also because she sees the rats as filthy. She has a secret lab on the edge of town where she keeps the heart of a monstrous toy bear named Cuddles who ran out of town in a rage a few months ago, after mysteriously going berserk. She did so in the hope that Cuddles would destroy the rats’ home so that she could force them to leave the peppermint forest, but



Cuddles was uncontrollable and is running wild in the forest instead. She's hoping that she'll be able to use Cuddles' heart to control him, but he was built to love everything, and experiments trying to force him to hate the rats have failed.

With these outsiders here, Penelope is hoping that she can manipulate the adventurers into forcing the rats away. But she's cunning and manipulative, and won't simply lay her cards on the table.

What Penelope Will Say:

- The rats are led by a mysterious and fearsome rat known as the Rat King. Fangstitch is the only one who has seen him in person.
- There's a dangerous toy in the forest. His name is Cuddles, and he's an enormously powerful bear who can't be defeated because his heart was stolen.
- Arcelia, the chef, has also been talking about missing ingredients to craft candy hearts. Penelope suspects the rats.



- If asked about the building at the edge of town, Penelope will simply say that she's got some theories she's working on regarding the town's problems, but it's a little dangerous, so she doesn't want the toys in town prying.

Arcelia the Chef

Arcelia is a bouncy jack-in-the-box without a box who always has a bright grin on her face. She's in charge of the kitchens, the head chocolatier of the village, and is obsessed with crafting new confections. She's working on something to utilize peppermint and chocolate together, but she can't get her hands on peppermint lately, since it grows in the forest. She and her staff work tirelessly to ensure everyone in town has enough food to eat. She's also the head gingermason, preparing the building materials that the townsfolk need to build their houses.

What Arcelia knows:

- Cuddles was once one of Arcelia's assistants and a good friend, but he went berserk one day and broke her box before running into the forest. She thinks it's because he's missing his heart, but she can't seem to hold on to her ingredients long enough to make him a new one. She suspects the rats stole Cuddles' heart as well as her supplies.
- Construction has slowed down significantly since the growing season is over and the forest is off-limits. They're running low on gingerbread and chocolate. They usually resort to peppermint when things get bad, but the rats control the peppermint forest, and Cuddles is loose in there as well.
- Fangstitch is a coward and won't be able to stop the rats or Cuddles. He's not a bad toy, he just has no confidence.



Fangstitch the Guard Captain

Fangstitch, or just Stitch to his friends, is an anxious quilted dragon stuffy of multiple colorful fabric patches and filled with beans. He knows he's not built for fighting and hopes that his intimidating draconic appearance is enough to deter crime, but it isn't because he's not intimidating at all. He has no experience in actual combat but leads a team of toy soldiers who are slightly more adept. The problem is that there are only three toy soldiers, and no other toys have come forward to help.

What Fangstitch knows:

- The rats' lair is deep inside the peppermint forest. The rats moved deeper into the forest after the toys' construction efforts began.
- The rats only became a problem after the Rat King appeared.
- Fangstitch is terrified of the Rat King. He knows magic and has black, beady eyes that stare into your very soul.
- Cuddles was once a peaceful bear but is now considered a monster, and a danger to the

town as a whole. Nobody is to go into the forest while Cuddles is loose.

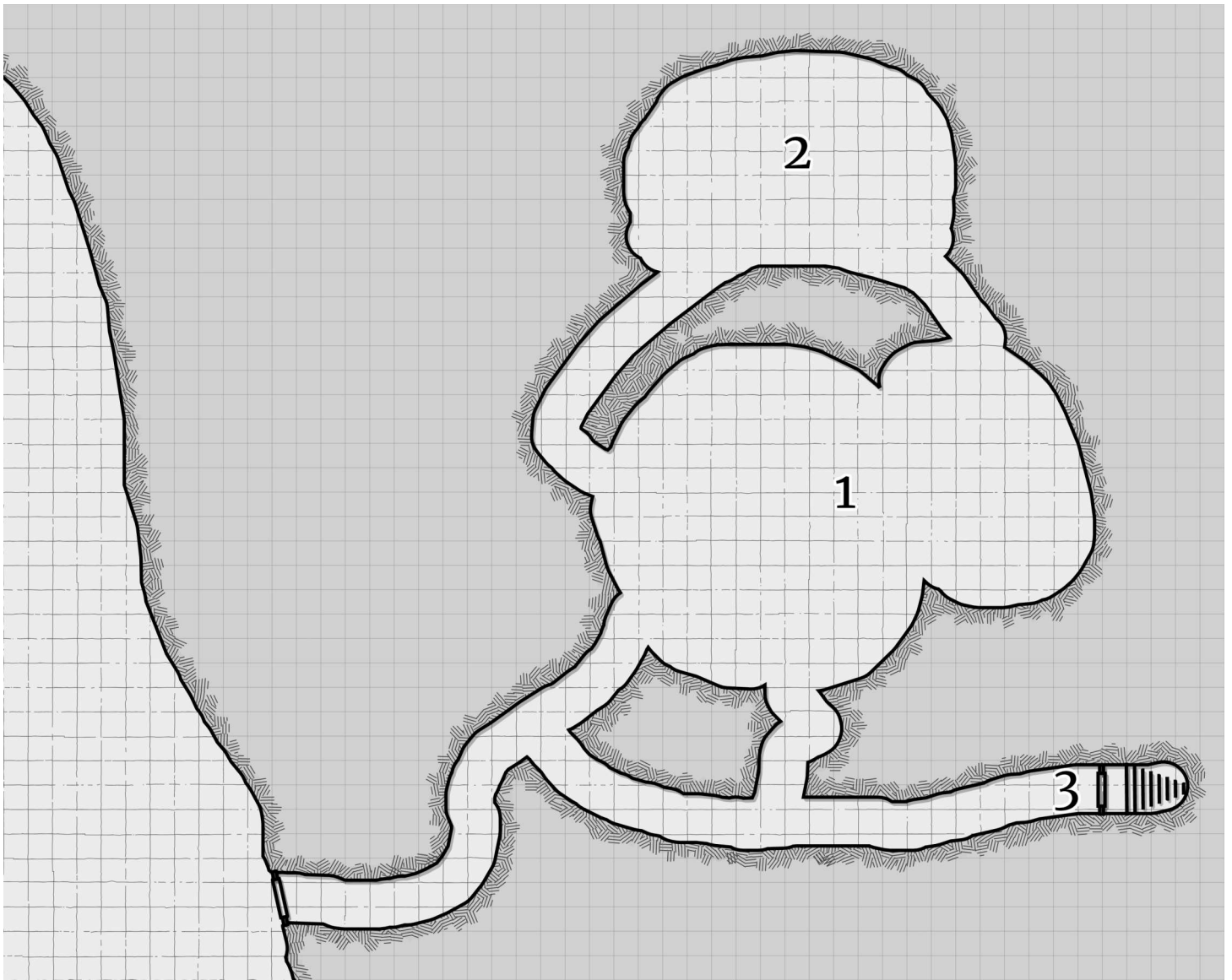
- His scouts report that the rats are planning to break into the gingerbarn again this very night.

If the players offer to help repel the rats tonight, Fangstitch is very grateful. He offers that the players should take the front, as he and his toy soldiers are planning to set a trap out back. The difficult part is defending both sides at once, so he says it'll be perfect.

The other townsfolk

If the players conduct their own investigations into the goings-on, they may find some new information from the townsfolk. This information is not necessary, but may begin to cast some doubt that what they've learned so far is all there is to the story. Have any player who wants to ask around make a DC 13 Investigation or Persuasion check. For every success, roll on Table A to see what the players learn, ignoring duplicate results.

Table A	
1d4	Result
1	Hickory the farmer has seen Mayor Pristine going in and out of a mysterious building at the edge of town. He suspects she's trying to solve the town's problems.
2	Bongo the dog hasn't seen Ollie around in a long time. He's a rat toy that was friends with Bongo.
3	Willamina the tailor will talk about how the mayor is her best customer, and how she orders the most beautiful dresses most of the time. She asked for some work clothes a short while ago but dresses other than that.
4	Some of the villagers mention that their new houses haven't been getting built since nobody can go into the peppermint forest to cut down the peppermint lumber.



2. The Throne Room

Three iron braziers line the Southern wall, burning brightly. The stone carvings at the Northern end of this chamber depict rats at peace, planting trees and playing. In the center of the room sits a tall throne with various blankets and cushions set on it.

Assuming the players haven't attracted much attention in the Commons, the **Rat King** sits on his throne, and two **Rat Guards** stand to either side. He speaks succinctly, his solid black eyes never blinking, asking what business the players have in his domain. He's more than happy to clear up any misinformation the players have been fed by the scheming mayor of Bonbonburg. But he's also willing to fight for his

people if that's what the adventurers want.

What the Rat King knows:

- Mayor Pristine wants the peppermint forest and is not above simply taking it. She's been moving the toys' expansion into rat territory for the past few years. The toys began to hate the rats for getting in their way when the rats were just protecting their land.
- The rats hate peppermint. They used to be able to harvest chocolate, but Cuddles has been ransacking the forest and taking every ounce of chocolate he can find. Now all they have is peppermint. Since it's the town's fault, they've been taking their chocolate.

- Mayor Penelope has the whole town turned against the rats, but they're rather nonviolent, so she stole Cuddles' heart to make an unstoppable monster to drive the rats from their home.
- Defeating Cuddles is a fool's errand so long as he's missing his heart. But the mayor keeps his heart under lock and key, and the rats haven't been able to find it. They hold no malice for the other toys in town who have simply been misled.
- The mayor has been offering to the rats for some time that if they simply leave the forest, she'll give Cuddles his heart back.
- The rat king is actually a toy. His name is Ollie, and he was run out of town by Penelope a while back because she doesn't like rats. After learning magic and helping the rats make ends meet, they made him their king.

If the players agree to help, the rat king urges them to stay in the commons until nightfall. Cuddles sleeps at night, and the forest is far less dangerous then. Once they've obtained Cuddles' heart, he's more than happy to either direct them to Cuddles' lair or simply tell them where it is now. Either way, the safety of his people is most important, and so he must stay here.

Treasure: The rat king, on his person, keeps two scrolls of Candy Cane Crash, a mint spear, and wears hide armor decorated to look like a normal rat's hide.

3. The Burrows

The door here leads underground to the rats' nests. This is where the commoners retreat to. All that's down there are rat families. The locked door requires a DC 17 check with Thieves' Tools to open. There are dozens of tunnels, and pursuing the rats may get the players lost. The rats will evacuate out of secret back tunnels, never to return.

If the players decided to chase the rats out of the forest instead of communicating with them, they still completed the adventure! The mayor will welcome them back to town with open arms, accolades, and a special reward. In such an event, skip to the Conclusions section.



Back to Town

If the players decide to return to town with the information they've gathered, there are several ways to go about it. Some of them are more direct, but may not work so well.

The toys back in town are all skeptical if the players try to convince them that the mayor has Cuddles' heart. Trying to turn the toys against their mayor is a very quick way to get them to distrust the party. The mayor feigns ignorance if approached in public, and she's quite convincing. She's not above claiming that the rats have misled them, or even charmed them. In private, she'll acknowledge that what the rats said is true, but comment that your job was merely to drive the rats away, or at least prevent them from taking the town's chocolate.

The mayor is a porcelain doll, and therefore, fragile. She's more than willing to use this to her advantage, especially since the toys in town can repair her. If the adventurers threaten violence against her, she refuses to tell them anything until after they've damaged her. Then she'll reveal that the heart is in her secret lab. While the adventurers are busy breaking in and collecting it, she plans to rally the toys against them. This might result in a battle between the players and the town guard, consisting of **Fangstitch** and four **Toy Soldiers**.

If the players attempt to gather information more stealthily, they may find documents in the mayor's house referring to her lab, or even find townsfolk who have seen her going in and out of a strange building (see Table A). The mayor's house is undefended since the town is safe and the toys trust her implicitly. The key to the lab is in her room. The most notable features of the mayor's house are her enormous closet and the fact that each room is kept perfectly pristine.

The Secret Lab

A small building with boarded-up windows, the lab is relatively new. The walls are made of peppermint wood, and the place looks abandoned from the outside. The door is locked, requiring a DC 15 check with Thieves' Tools to open without the key. Because the windows are boarded up, breaking and entering through them requires a DC 12 Climb check to get up to them (they're about 10 feet up) and a DC 14 Strength check to break through the peppermint boards.

Inside the lab are all manner of things. Alchemical and cooking implements line the countertops, two chocolate-flavored Potions of Healing sit on a shelf next to four spell scrolls (one of each of the new spells from this book), and two blank parchments. A notebook full of formulae lays open on the desk. Sitting in a sealed glass container with a blanket over it is a large 8lbs chocolate heart. The word "Cuddles" is carved into it. It beats slowly and warmly, and it looks like several liquids have been poured onto it that have since dried.

The Townsfolk

If the players produce the heart to the townsfolk and show them the mayor's secret lab, some of the townspeople will reveal that they've seen her coming in and out of that building. As a result, they'll begin to realize that they've been deceived by her. They'll ask questions about why she did it, and she'll defend her actions with lies, at the very least until the party begins to reveal her true plan. The party may avoid a fight like this.

Once everything has been cleared up, Fangstitch will tell the adventurers that he and his guards will handle things here in town. He'll ask that the players take care of Cuddles, but try to bring him back alive. There will be a reward waiting for them when they return.

The players may also just sneak out

without alerting the town. In either case, the players can pursue Cuddles whenever they wish. They may choose to go straight out, but it may be wiser to wait until dark.

Confronting Cuddles

Tracking Cuddles is not difficult, and all it will take is some wandering around or a Survival check of 12 or more to find him. During this time, the players find that Cuddles' heart is a source of warmth. Whenever players need to make a Constitution save against the cold, the player holding Cuddles' heart automatically succeeds.

Deep in the forest, where the trees get sparse, Cuddles' territory is marked by several peppermint trees that have been knocked to the ground. In the center of a clearing is a pile of

chocolate, peppermint, and various other trinkets. Something they all have in common, upon closer inspection, is that they're all vaguely heart-shaped, and each of them is covered in bite marks and claw marks. An Insight check of 13 or more tells onlookers that Cuddles is searching for a heart, but he doesn't know how to use it.

If it is night time, **Cuddles** is sleeping off to the side of these hearts. He is easily awoken and plagued by nightmares. He thrashes about in his sleep, making attack rolls at disadvantage against anyone within 5 feet of him. He is immune to being surprised.

If it is daytime, **Cuddles** will return within a few minutes of the players, smelling that someone is in his territory. He carries a heart made of peppermint and roars violently,

