

Things are Looking Grimm

An introductory adventure to the HORIZON: Grimm game for 3-6 players

It was a simple field trip to the Hillsborough nature center. Ms. Havershad's 5th grade class had come with their permission slips, their bagged lunches, their "Nature is Fun!" workbooks... and absolutely no idea what they were getting into.

What Is Grimm?

Grimm is an aptly named excursion, both dream and nightmare, to the classic fairytales of childhood. Yet these stories are not the ones we remember. Something has happened, and the fairytale worlds and their denizens have become dark, twisted, and dangerous. Players take on the roles of kids trapped in these horrid places with nothing but their wits and imagination to escape. Become the jock, the nerd, the popular kid, the dreamer, the bully, or the outcast. Deal with figures from Humpty Dumpty to Red Riding Hood's wolf, and try to figure out which want to have you over for dinner, and which want to have you for dinner. Get ready to make your own stories... and don't be surprised if the endings aren't happy.

How Do I Play?

Pre-generated characters, with all the rules you'll need to play them, are available at <http://www.fantasyflightgames.com/horizon.html>. Grimm itself will be available at your local game retailer in late October.

ENCOUNTER I: OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS

Read the following to the players:

*Everyone was pretty excited to come on this field trip to the Hillsborough nature center... the popular kid would get a chance to show off his new cell phone when Ms. Havershad wasn't looking, the nerd could get an up-close look at the beautiful *hypomyces lactifluorum*, and the bully would get a chance to push the nerd into the poisonous ivy. In fact, he had done just that, and you had all gathered around the classic spectacle of power and weakness to laugh at the nerd, help him up, or just watch.*

Let the PCs interact; any of the important roles not taken by players should be controlled by the GM. This is a perfect opportunity for the players to remember the predictable but no-less-entertaining playground dramas that we all endured as children. When the drama seems to have played itself out, or any of the surrounding kids makes an effort to tell on the bully, to look around at the rest of the class, or to inspect his surroundings, read the following:

You look up to notice that the rest of the class must've disappeared around a bend of the trail ahead, because you can't see any of them. You think you hear the park ranger droning on about some kind of boring plant stuff, and that's definitely Ms. Havershad's innocent young lilt telling some dawdlers to keep up... but they sound so far away... almost like they're in a different world.

If the players go off in search of the class, they will walk for at least 10 minutes without encountering any sign of them; in fact, the trail peters out after a few hundred yards. If they try to turn back to head towards the visitor's center, they will find that the trail peters out that way, as well. Once they discover that they can't go ahead, and

can't go back, the clouds will pass over the sun, everything will become dark and silent, and it will begin to get cold. The children will realize that they are lost and alone, and that something very strange is going on. The following events occur:

Characters that make a DC 10 Knowledge (science) or Woodlore check will be able to determine that the plants are subtly different than they were just minutes ago. The leaves are twice the size that they should be, the berries and cones have strange, wicked spines growing from them, and the roots of the trees seem unnaturally gnarled, as if reaching up to grasp unwary feet.

If this is pointed out to the group, the characters should make a DC 12 Will save, with each character suffering a -1 penalty to the roll per Imagination Point he has. Failure means that the character will start to see things, and hear things... faces in the trees, birds looking hungrily at him, his name whispered ominously in the swaying of the trees in the wind. This is a fear effect.



Anyone who fails that first save is going to have to make another one, DC 16, or be shaken for the next hour. This is a fear effect. Those who make the first save will be worried, but not terrified, and won't know what the other kids are talking about.

Finally, after pandemonium breaks out, anyone with her head still on straight (probably the jock, given her save bonuses against fear) may make a DC 10 Notice check. Success means that she hears Ms. Havershad's voice somewhere nearby in the woods, admonishing

kids for falling behind, calling out for the missing PCs, etc. The DC drops by one each minute, until someone hears her.

The characters, being lost and alone and terrified in the middle of the woods, are likely to make a beeline for their teacher. If they do not, but instead hold their ground, Ms. Havershad comes to them. If they wander off away from the voice, proceed to encounter 3.

ENCOUNTER 2: MY, WHAT BIG EYES YOU HAVE

When the characters head for the sound of their teacher, or if they wait for her to come to them, read the following:

Uttering a cry of relief, your teacher, Ms. Havershad, spots you amidst the ferns and trees. Her proper hair is bound in its ever-present bun, and her smile is wide and warm. You hear the sound of what must be your other classmates thrashing through the brush behind her, trying to keep up. Your teacher opens her arms wide and says sweetly, "Oh, I've found you at last! Come to me, children, I was so worried for you!"

PCs that make a DC 18 Socialize check will realize that something's odd. She seems very eager, and happy to have found the children, but also... hungry? Those that make this check gain a +2 circumstance modifier to the subsequent Notice checks, below.

Any PC who rushes forward may make a DC 18 Notice check. If he succeeds, he will notice something odd about Ms. Havershad just before he reaches her welcoming hug. Her skin is very pasty, almost like dough, and with a shock he realizes that in place of eyes, she has large, shiny buttons. If he fails the Notice check, he is caught flat-footed as the creature shaped like Ms. Havershad reaches for him with a hideous smile.

Simultaneously, anyone who did not rush forward must make DC 13 Notice checks or be caught flat-footed as pasty-white, button-eyed versions of their classmates erupt from the woods around them.

☼ **Doughy Ms. Havershad:** Medium humanoid; CR 1; HD 1d8+2; hp 6; Initiative +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 12 (+2 Dex); Grp +2; Atks doughy slam +2 melee (1d4+2 and absorb); Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.; SA absorb; SQ damage reduction 5/slashing, doughy knowledge; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills & Feats: Notice +4, Sneak +6, Socialize+6, Trick +8; Manipulative, Weasely.

Absorb (Ex): When a doughy creature makes a successful slam attack, it may attempt to absorb creatures smaller than itself. Creatures subject to the attack must make a DC 12 Reflex save or be absorbed into the doughy creature's body and are considered grappled. The doughy creature may move and act normally while absorbing one child at a time, but absorbing more than one causes it to be considered grappled. Save DC is Strength-based.

Doughy Knowledge (Ex): Unlike its lesser brethren, a doughy creature has more than an instinctive awareness regarding the creature from the real world that it impersonates. Its voice mimics that creature's perfectly, and it has a basic level of knowledge of the kids it attacks (nicknames, especially feared punishments, especially favorite foods, etc.).

☼ **Lesser Doughy Kid (2 for each PC):** Small humanoid; CR 1/2; HD 1d8-3; hp 1; Initiative -3; Spd 10 ft.; AC 8 (+1 size, -3 Dex); Grp -2; Atks doughy slam -2 melee (1d4-3 and glom); Space/Reach: 5 ft./5ft.; SA glom; SQ dough-for-brains; AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref -1, Will -1; Str 5, Dex 5, Con 5, Int 5, Wis 5, Cha 5.



Skills & Feats: Sneak +3, Trick -1; Great Fortitude, Weasely

Glom (Ex): Lesser doughy kids automatically die and disintegrate into doughy masses after dealing any damage with their slam attacks, and glom onto their targets. Glommed targets lose 5 feet from their movement until they remove the dough as a full-round action (DC 8 Strength or Nimbleness check) or by someone else (no check required) as a move action.

Dough-for-Brains (Ex): A creature with the lesser doughy template is a poor reproduction of something or someone you know from the normal world. Its body is pasty and weak, its footsteps slow, its brain sluggish. They are easily tricked and easily outwitted, out-matched, and outrun: lesser doughy creatures automatically fail any Will save or opposed skill check.

Tactics: Doughy Ms. Havershad will attempt to absorb one of the children, then escape with him so she can gouge his eyes out and sew buttons on in their stead, making him her slave. The lesser doughy kids, if allowed, will quickly glom onto the other PCs and prevent their pursuit.

Development: If the PCs run away (as terrified kids faced with horrible monsters, this might be the most appropriate option), they can easily escape. If one of their number is absorbed and the doughy Ms. Havershad gets away, pursuing children will stumble after a few minutes onto the remains of the doughy Ms. Havershad, ripped into globs and eaten by some ravenous beast, and the child within unconscious but freed, unable to remember how he was saved. Finally, if the doughy creatures are all defeated, the children may simply continue on their way.

They will eventually tire, however, and, lost in the woods, will have to spend a harrowing night in a dark and creepy forest. Generate as much terror or roleplaying fodder as you like; this will



be a good time for the party's leader-to-be to assert him or herself, and the party's troublemakers to begin sewing discord. The kids all have bagged lunches with them, and can eat that food if they like, or save some for later. In any case, despite the best of intentions, kids are kids, and these kids are tired out. They eventually all fall asleep. They awake to a disgusting odor of rotten eggs, and find that they are someplace else altogether.

ENCOUNTER 3: SOMETHING'S ROTTEN IN DENMARK

Read the following: *As you awake to a bright, sunny morning, you realize that you're not where you were last night. Somehow, you've ended up in a clearing. What's more, there are people or... something... all around you, watching you with various levels of interest. Whether that interest is good or bad for you remains to be seen.*

There are several horses that stand like men, wearing sickly yellow tabards, each with an image of an egg embroidered on the front. The men in rags that are next to them, as if waiting to be ridden, are down on all fours, with bits and bridles jammed into their mouths in what must be a painful manner. Several dwarves have stopped their work on some large statue of an egg nearby, while a host of goblins and redcaps cease their game of soccer and flock over to see you. One of them holds the object they were using as a ball... a decapitated human head. All of them, and you, are in a grand clearing, bordered on all sides by the dark forest you fell asleep in. In the clearing are tents, playing fields, and bandstands. It appears to be a traveling festival.

More absurd than any of the other denizens, however, appears to be the king of this troupe, a giant... egg. Its spindly arms and legs jut out from an ovoid torso, which is draped with gaudy silks and chains of gold and silver. The jewelry seems strategically placed to cover specific areas of the egg's body. The thing reclines on a strangely shaped throne, something that appears to be a piece of a castle wall that has been ripped away and had a rounded depression smashed into the back and bottom. The creature speaks, and you're suddenly overwhelmed by an eye-watering smell of rotten eggs. The thing's voice is burbly and clogged, as if coming through a thick yolk before reaching the creature's mouth.

"Wellll, another batch of children," it says with a smile. "I'm glad you could join us. You see," the egg says, turning to a teenage boy standing next to him, "I told you more would come. There are always more." You hadn't noticed the boy he speaks to until now; he seemed so quiet and mundane that he escaped your attention completely. Even as you look at him, you feel your eyes sliding away.

"I," the egg creature continues, "am King Humpdy the First. Welcome to the Grimm Lands. I'm sure you have many questions, of which I plan to answer none. But before I do, you must be hungry. Please, be my guest."

With that, it waves its hand to the side, drawing your eyes to a small table with a scrumptious-looking cake. One of the standing horses is cutting it, revealing that the cake is chocolate, vanilla, caramel, coconut, cherry, and every other flavor you can imagine. There are several pieces cut for your group already, and among them is a piece with your favorite flavor. Your stomach grumbles, and you realize it's been a long time since you've eaten.

The PCs are about to receive their first lesson in the Grimm Lands: temptation is bad. Some may choose to eat the cake immediately. It is delicious, but when they're done they feel strangely heavy. Those

that choose not to eat the cake must make a DC 14 Will save or eat it anyway. Kids who saved some of their bagged lunch from the night before may eat their leftovers instead, receiving a +4 circumstance bonus to their Will saves. This is a temptation effect.

PCs that eat the cake will not be affected immediately; indeed, the effects will not be felt in this adventure at all. However, what they will realize later is that one of the major ingredients of cake is egg. In eating the cake, they have eaten some of Humpdy Dumpdy, the rotten overlord of this realm, and it may give him power over them in the future at the GM's discretion. Regardless of the outcome, read the following to the players:

"Eggs-cellent, eggs-cellent," King Humpdy burbles, "well, you may as well know that you're mine. I'll let you live for a few weeks, but I like to plan ahead for what I do to my victims. Let me see, let me see, what shall I do with you? Perhaps I'll put you in cages and feed you to starving weasels. Or cut off your arms and make you fight each other to the death with just golf shoes for weapons. Or perhaps you can be decoys for my acid orangutan hunt..."

If the PCs don't begin negotiating for their lives, they are done for. Humpdy and his horses and men, not to mention the hordes of red-caps and goblins, are much too powerful for the kids to win a fight against, nor would they have any hope of escape. However, they may attempt to convince Humpdy of their long-term entertainment value, issue a challenge to him, pose a trade, or anything else they can think of. Regardless of their suggestion, he warps it into an idea of his own: that they run the Gauntlet of Doom. If the kids make a successful DC 20 Socialize or Trick check (giving them bonuses to the roll as appropriate for roleplaying what they say to Humpdy), he will allow them to put forth conditions of their own. The most obvious of these are that, if they win, they may go free. If they lose, however, regardless of what they ask for from winning, they will be killed today, rather than in a few weeks.

ENCOUNTER 4: YOU CAN RUN, BUT YOU CAN'T HIDE

When Humpdy announces that the kids shall run the gauntlet, there is a rousing cheer from the crowd. He pushes forward the boy, Jack, from his side, saying that he shall be his champion, and will run all three sections of the gauntlet. The kids must choose a different member of their group to run each section of the gauntlet. The gauntlet itself, which several of the goblins will unpack from a shoebox, unfolds into a huge, sprawling, complicated mechanical contraption of timber, ropes, and blades.

While Jack is a superb athlete (this is the Jack that climbs giant beanstalks and leaps over candlesticks, after all), he seems to be easily distracted thanks to a recent head injury. The bandage across his brow may tip the PCs off to this. Anyone making a DC 12 Socialize check amongst the crowd on the way to the start of the gauntlet can find out that he recently fell down and broke his crown, and since then he hasn't really remembered who he was. That's how Humpdy got ahold of him and can make him do whatever he wants. He was always a bit flighty to begin with, in any case... he seems to have existed in so many stories, he's never really been sure which Jack he was supposed to be.

In any case, this means that the PCs have advantages over their opponent. Whereas he will simply be attempting to run the gauntlet and win, they may pull as many tricks as they like (short of physically attacking him) while competing. The bully may attempt to intimidate him, the outsider may attempt to sabotage the course, the popular kid may attempt to persuade him to let her win, etc. Even characters from the sidelines can interact in this way.

The DM should keep track of the number of rounds a character takes to make it past each stage. As soon as one PC finishes his stage, the next PC may begin. A character who falls is disqualified, but another character can immediately take his place. If the PCs beat Jack to the end or somehow prevent him from finishing, they win. Humpdy will let them go, though he will vow to capture them again... if any of them ate the cake, he will look particularly smug as he says this. If they do not beat Jack overall but do beat him in at least one stage, Humpdy will grant them a reprieve of a few days, but will keep them as prisoners. Their horrible demise may be delayed until the next adventure, giving them another chance to escape. If they lose every stage, they are done for.

FIRST STAGE

A knotted rope leads from the ground to a wooden platform about 30 feet overhead. Jack and the PC each make Athletics checks; they climb one foot for every point over a DC of 12. A failed check indicates that the character makes no progress that round; the character falls if he fails the check by 5 or more.

SECOND STAGE

From the platform, there is a narrow wooden beam running about 30 feet to the next platform. Jack and the PC each make Nimbleness checks; they proceed two feet for every point over a DC of 12. A failed check indicates that the character makes no progress that round; the character falls if he fails the check by 5 or more.

THIRD STAGE

From the second platform, there is a narrow walkway running 10 feet to the finish. Three pendulums are suspended from a crossbeam and swing back and forth perpendicular to the walkway. Dodging the pendulums requires three successive DC 12 Notice checks (for awareness of the positions of the pendulums) or DC 12 Puzzle checks (to calculate the timing of the swings). A failed check means the character loses a round as he narrowly avoids a pendulum. A check failed by 5 or more means the character is hit by a pendulum and must make a DC 10 Reflex save to avoid being knocked off the walkway.

☀ **Jack:** Jock3; Small humanoid; CR 3; HD 3d10+6; hp 28; Initiative +2; Spd 30 ft; AC 12 (+2 Dex); Grp +5; Atks unarmed strike +5 melee (1d3+2 subdual, provokes AoO); Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 4.

Skills & Feats: Athletics +6, Nimbleness +6, Notice -1, Woodslore +1; Fearless, Rural Kid, Sporty.



Robert Vaughn is an Associate RPG Developer for Fantasy Flight Games, and is the Lead Developer for its new Horizon line of d20 RPGs.

Grimm RPG (FFG HR-02) can be found at your favorite retail store.