



# THE MAN IN THE GRASS

*A roll and write, resource management, deduction game by Hankins Feichter*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1

<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>How to Play</b>	<b>2</b>
Introduction	2
Gameplay	2
Farming	3
Expeditions	4
Calendar	5
Setup	6
<b>Play Materials</b>	<b>7</b>
The Farm	7
Calendar	8
Map of New Prospect and Target List	10
Event Cards	12
<b>Storybook</b>	<b>15</b>
Target Entries	15
Introduction	15
1 – The Hills Beyond	16
2 – Shearwater Lake	17
3 – Grand Foxcatcher Inn	18
4 – Old Church	19
5 – Central Square	20
6 – Loblolly Springs Bathhouse	21
7 – Blueback Dairy	22
8 – Archives	23
9 – House of Personal Papers	25
10 – Councilhouse	26
11 – Land Office	27
12 – Office of Doctor Blanche Ivory	28
13 – Hiram Hall	29
14 – Home of Councilman Alonzo Day	30
15 – Glendale Field	31
End	32

## INTRODUCTION

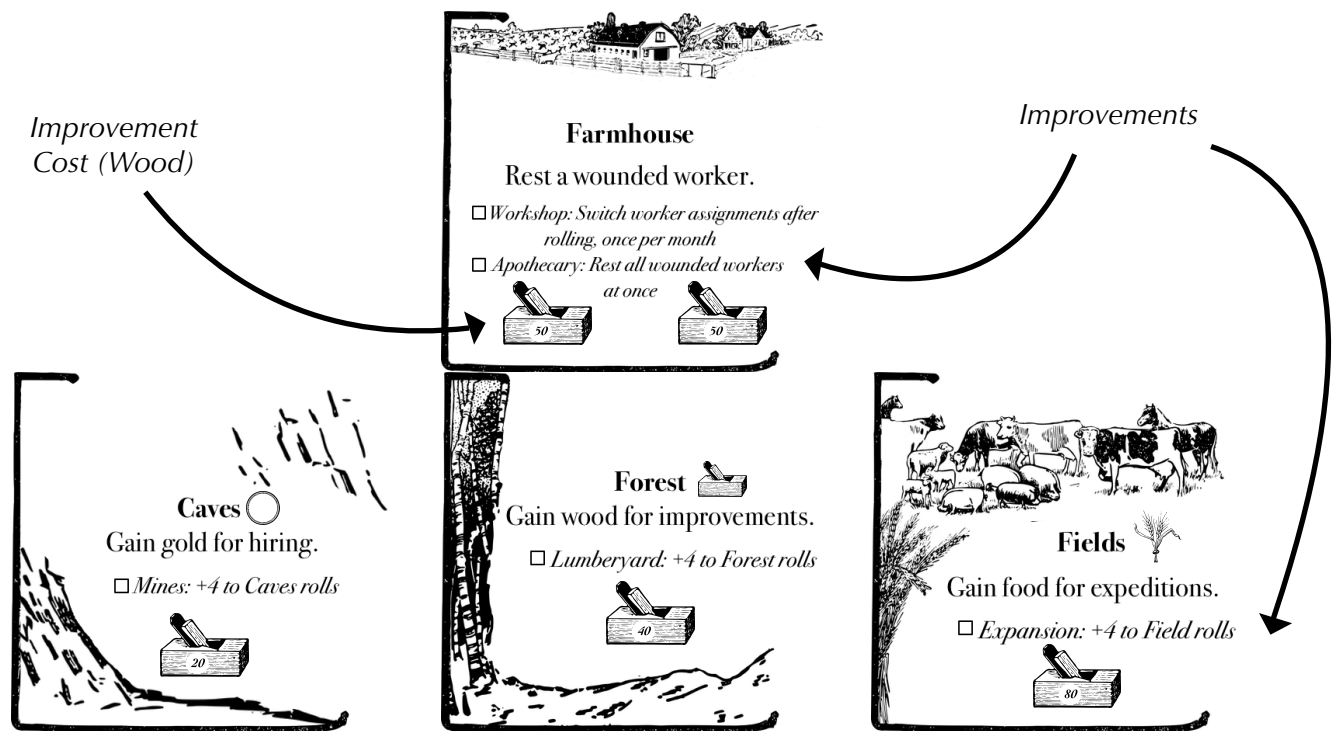
The idyllic village of New Prospect stands as a refuge from the harshness of the outer world. Its golden hills roll on almost into eternity, reaching up to meet the vast sky. In New Prospect's southern reaches, wide fields of wheat beckon. It is here that you, a farmer like your family before you, raise the food that feeds your village. It is from here that you discover an unimaginable dark secret.

*The Man in the Grass* doubles as a resource management and deduction game. While it requires input from only one player (called the Farmer), treating it as a collaborative experience can enhance the fun of it all.

Beware. In New Prospect, even the grass has eyes.

## GAMEPLAY

Through the game's four seasons (each split further into three months), Farmers choose how assign farm workers to the various workstations at the farm: the Caves, the Forest, and the Fields. These are for gathering ○ gold, 🪵 wood, and 🌾 food respectively. The Farmhouse serves as a place for wounded workers to recover before they continue working.




Workers are represented by dice with varying amounts of size, ranging from four to 12 sided dice. Farmers start with just two: a four sided die and a six sided die.

Month of New Seed			
PHASE	Gold	Wood	Food
Start			
A			
B			
C			
D			
Buy			
Purchases:			
Target:			

Each month is divided into five phases: A, B, C, D, and the Buy phase (“Start” is also listed under each month as a place to detail the amount of resources owned at the month’s beginning). For phases A through D, Farmers may assign their available worker dice to the three available tiles. Only one die may be assigned to each tile for each.

## Farming


In Phase A, the Farmer elects to put their six sided die in the Fields and their four sided die in the Mines. They roll both to gain the respective resources, rolling a four on the six sided die and a two on the four sided die. These values are recorded.




**Farmhouse**

Rest a wounded worker.

- ☐ Workshop: Switch worker assignments after rolling, once per month
- ☐ Apothecary: Rest all wounded workers at once








**Caves**

Gain gold for hiring.

- ☐ Mines: +4 to Caves rolls





**Forest**

Gain wood for improvements.

- ☐ Lumberyard: +4 to Forest rolls






**Fields**

Gain food for expeditions.

- ☐ Expansion: +4 to Field rolls



Month of New Seed			
PHASE	Gold	Wood	Food
Start	0	0	0
A	2	0	4
B	2	1	7
C	4	1	13
D	6	3	13
Buy	6	3	3
Purchases: None			
Target: 15 ✓			

The Farmer decides to switch in Phase B. Now, they move their four sided die to the Forest while leaving their six sided die in the Fields. For round B, they roll a one in the Forest and a three in the Fields.

This process of assigning dice strategically goes on through Phase C and D.

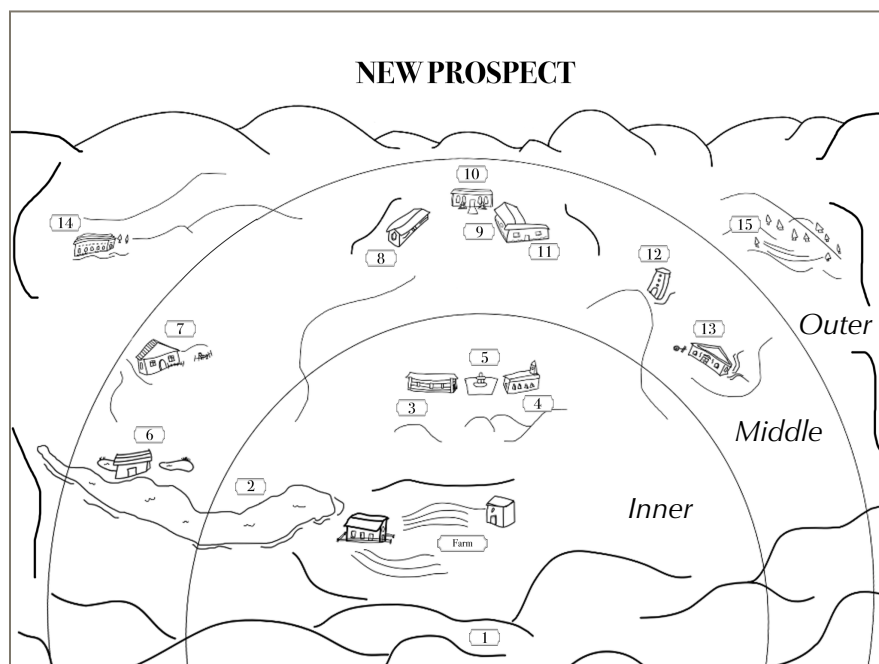
In the Buy Phase, the Farmer chooses how they want to spend their resources. 🔍 Gold can be used to hire new workers, while 📦 Wood can be used to construct improvements. The role of 🌾 Food is a bit different: it is used to go on Expeditions.

The Farmer cannot afford to hire any workers or construct any improvements with their current resources, but it is good that they have 13 🌾 Food; 10 or more are required to go on an Expedition.

## Expeditions

As *The Man in the Grass* is also a deduction game, the Farmer must visit locations around New Prospect to uncover the truth behind a macabre mystery.

15 such locations, referred to in the game as Targets, exist.



Targets are grouped into one of three ringed zones based on their distance from the farm. In the Inner Circle are those Targets close to the Farm, the Farmer's home base. Those in the Middle and Outer Circles are farther away and thus require more resources to travel to. The Inner Circle requires 10 🌾 Food, the Middle Circle required 20 🌾 Food, and the Outer Circle requires 30 🌾 Food.

Each Target also has a difficulty rating associated with it, from Easy to Medium to Hard. When visiting a Target, the Farmer rolls a six sided die. The difficulty rating determines the roll necessary to gather all relevant information from a Target.

In order to better their odds, the Farmer may roll additional dice by spending double (or triple, and so on) the 🌾 Food cost of the target. For example, choosing to investigate Target #1 in the Inner Circle and spending 20 🌾 Food to do so allows the Farmer to roll two dice. When rolling multiple dice, do not total them; the highest die rolled is the result.

When investigating a Target, open to its entry in the Storybook. The Farmer rolls their die/dice when the entry prompts them to.

If the Farmer fails a roll at a Target, they can choose to return in another month and automatically succeed. This still requires the Farmer to expend the minimum cost in 🌾 Food to investigate, however.

Some Targets may require a specific item to be fully investigated. The Farmer will know if they have the item based on past Targets visited. If the Farmer does not have the requisite item, they may come back to read the passage after finding it.

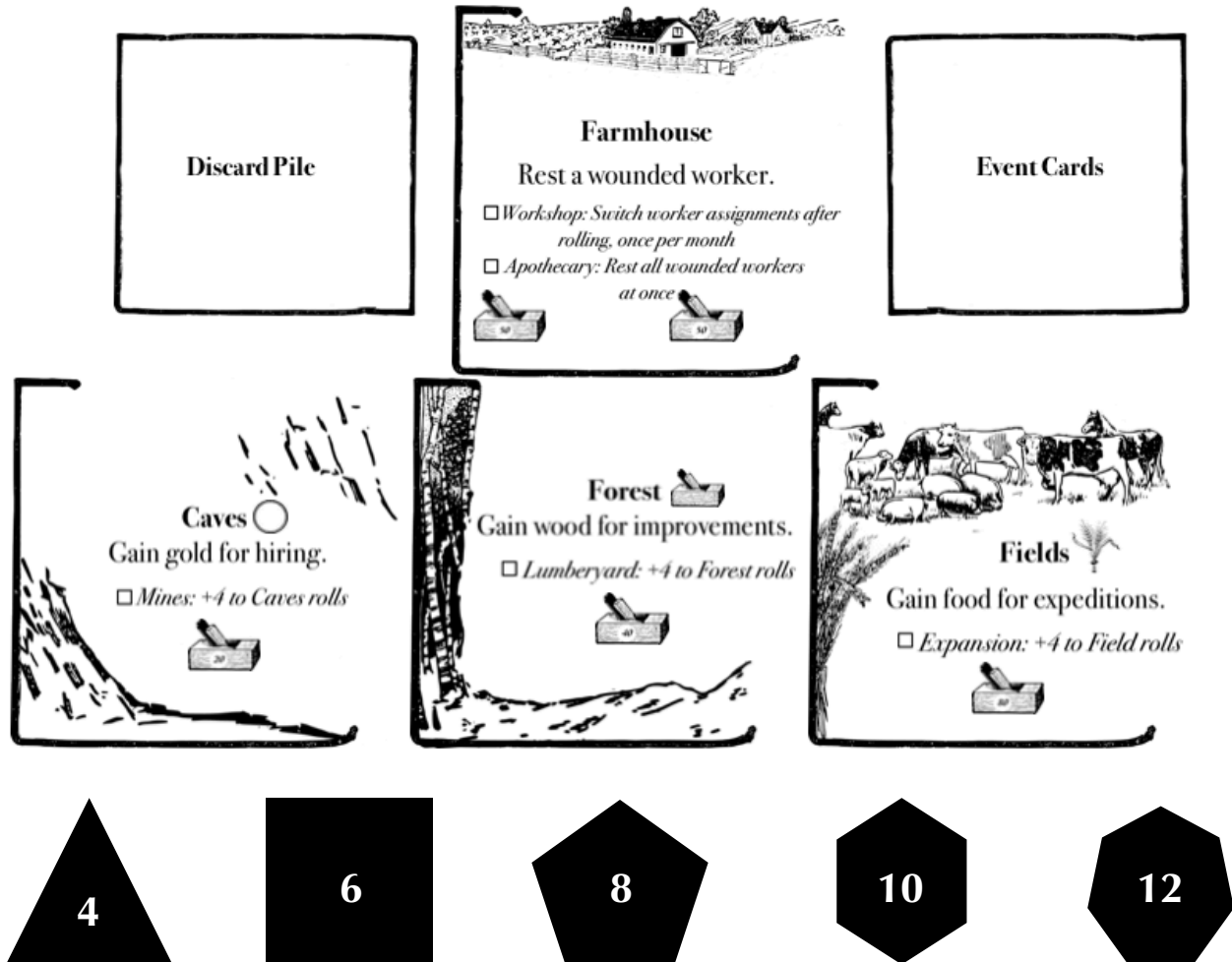
## Calendar

At the start of each of the game's 12 months, Farmers draw one of 30 Event Cards. Event Cards might result in the Farmer's 🌾 Food being requisitioned, or in an extra bountiful harvest. If the Farmer has no 🌾 Food to give, this card is null.

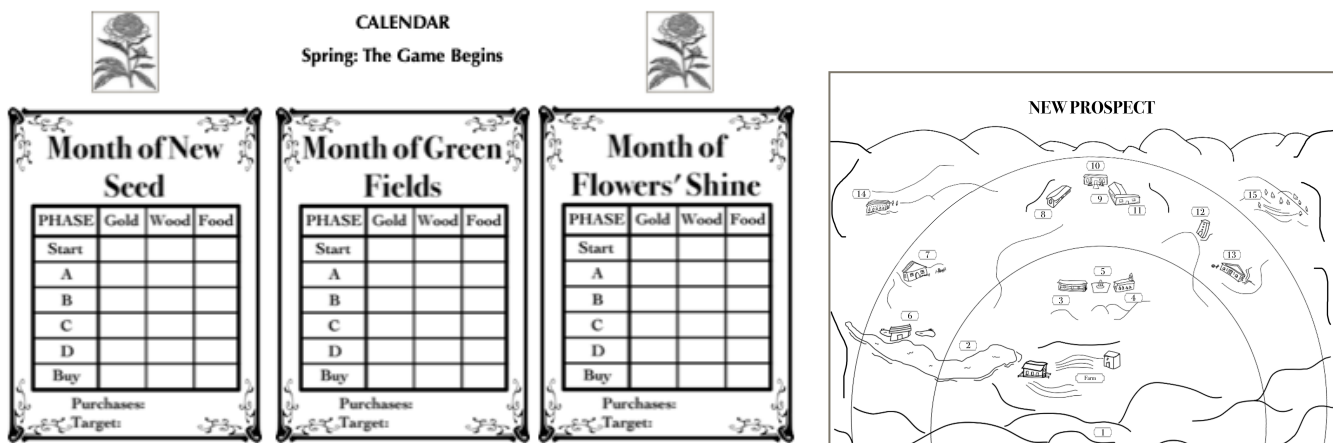
As the game intensifies, and the seasons change, new rules are introduced. Autumn brings an abundance of new opportunities and challenges, while Winter calls upon the earth to solidify. Be prepared for what Nature brings.



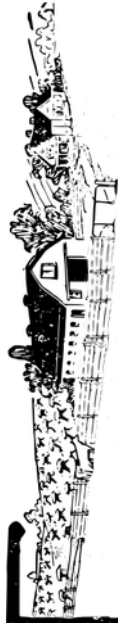
## SETUP



*Everything is included in this PDF aside from 4-12 sided dice.*



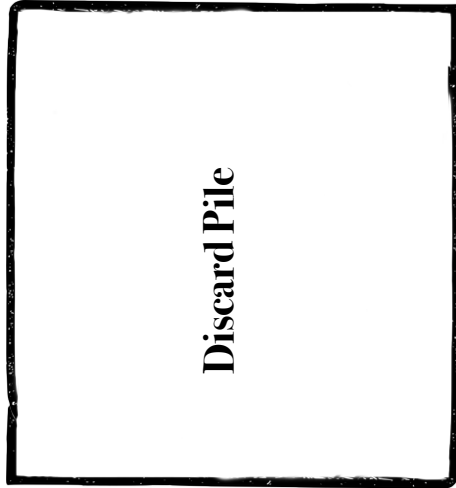
# THE FARM



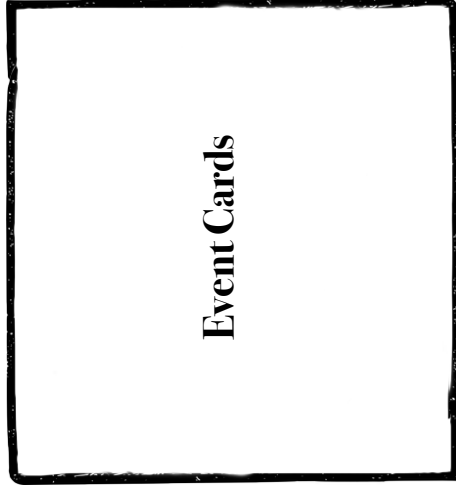
## Farmhouse

Rest a wounded worker.

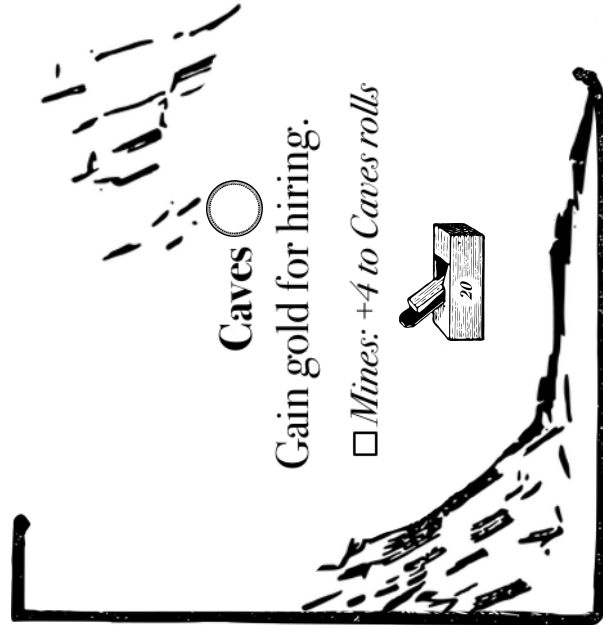
- ☐ Workshop: Switch worker assignments after rolling, once per month
- ☐ Apothecary: Rest all wounded workers at once



## Discard Pile



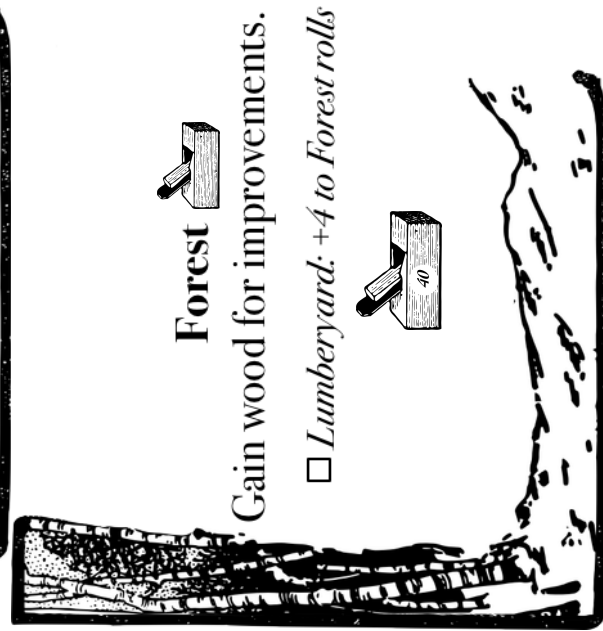
## Event Cards



## Caves

Gain gold for hiring.

- ☐ Mines: +4 to Caves rolls



## Forest

Gain wood for improvements.

- ☐ Lumberyard: +4 to Forest rolls



## Fields

Gain food for expeditions.

- ☐ Expansion: +4 to Field rolls







## CALENDAR

### Spring: The Game Begins



### Month of New Seed

PHASE	Gold	Wood	Food
Start	0	0	0
A			
B			
C			
D			
Buy			

Purchases:

Target:

### Month of Green Fields

PHASE	Gold	Wood	Food
Start			
A			
B			
C			
D			
Buy			

Purchases:

Target:

### Month of Flowers' Shine

PHASE	Gold	Wood	Food
Start			
A			
B			
C			
D			
Buy			

Purchases:

Target:



## Summer: The Work Hastens



### Month of Long Sky

PHASE	Gold	Wood	Food
Start			
A			
B			
C			
D			
Buy			

Purchases:

Target:

### Month of Dry Grass

PHASE	Gold	Wood	Food
Start			
A			
B			
C			
D			
Buy			

Purchases:

Target:

### Month of Red Clay

PHASE	Gold	Wood	Food
Start			
A			
B			
C			
D			
Buy			

Purchases:

Target:



## Autumn: The Harvest Abounds

*Draw two Event Cards each month*



### Month of Warm Breeze

PHASE	Gold	Wood	Food
Start			
A			
B			
C			
D			
Buy			

Purchases:  
Target:

### Month of Red Leaves

PHASE	Gold	Wood	Food
Start			
A			
B			
C			
D			
Buy			

Purchases:  
Target:

### Month of Golden Harvest

PHASE	Gold	Wood	Food
Start			
A			
B			
C			
D			
Buy			

Purchases:  
Target:



## Winter: The Earth Rebuffs

*All of your workers' dice are now four sided.*



### Month of Solid Earth

PHASE	Gold	Wood	Food
Start			
A			
B			
C			
D			
Buy			

Purchases:  
Target:

### Month of White Snow

PHASE	Gold	Wood	Food
Start			
A			
B			
C			
D			
Buy			

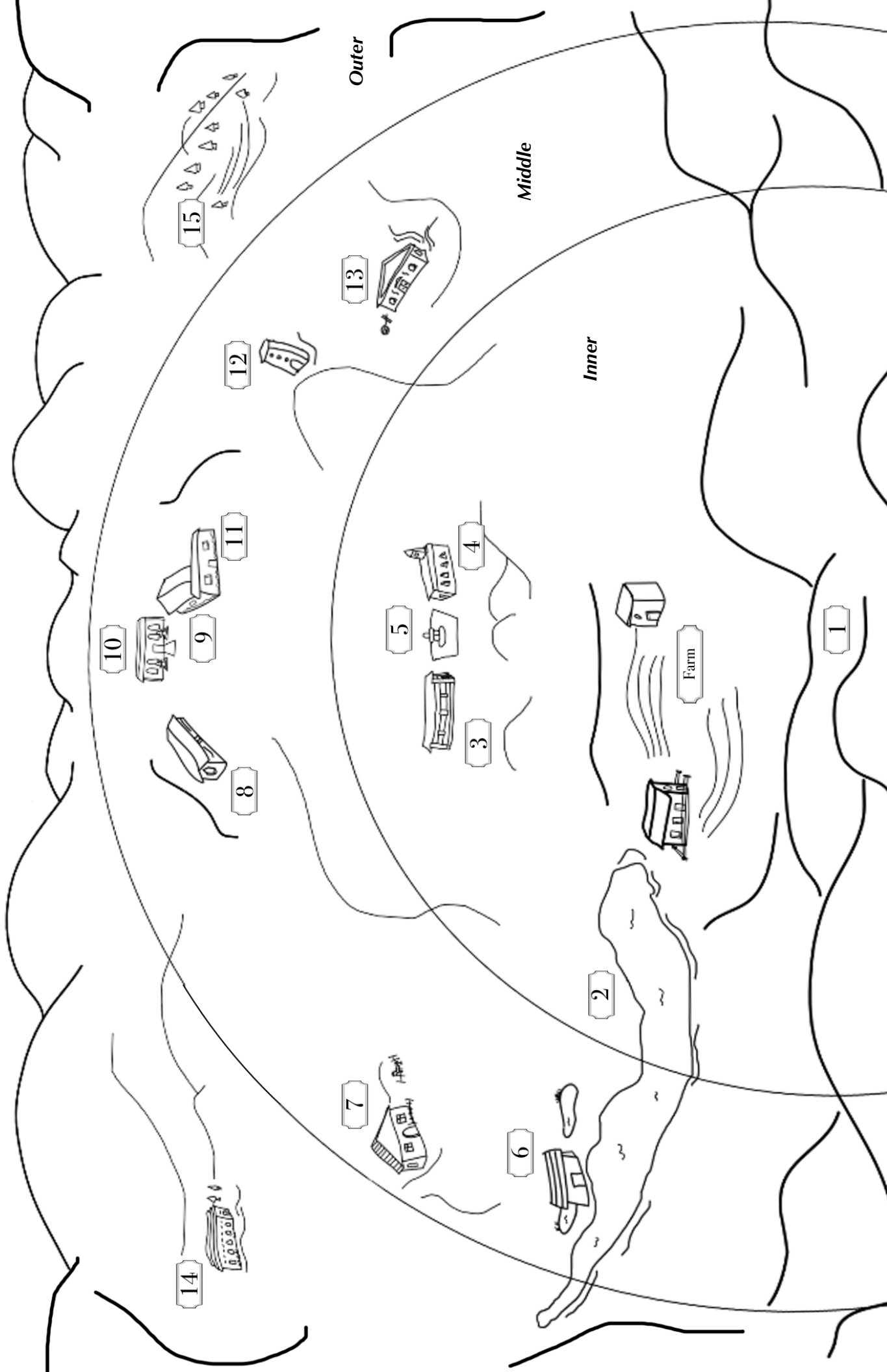
Purchases:  
Target:

### Month of Open Doors

PHASE	Gold	Wood	Food
Start			
A			
B			
C			
D			
Buy			

Purchases:  
Target:

# NEW PROSPECT



## INNER ZONE

1. **The Hills Beyond** – The rolling hills south of New Prospect's farmland. It is here that the Man in the Grass is said to roam, around a miraculously spotless shrine to his name. EASY.
2. **Shearwater Lake** – A large, beautiful lake nestled in a narrow valley between the southwestern hills. EASY.
3. **Grand Foxcatcher Inn** – The premier destination for the few outsiders that pass through New Prospect. EASY.
4. **Old Church** – The house of worship to the Man in the Grass. Managed by the milquetoast Deacon Alva. MEDIUM.
5. **Central Square** – A hotbed of commercial activity and, thus, rumors. EASY.

## MIDDLE ZONE

6. **Loblolly Springs Bathhouse** – Once a relaxing hot spring, now the scene of Bess Blue's untimely demise. EASY.
7. **Blueback Dairy** – The home of Bess Blue and New Prospect's premier dairy. EASY.
8. **Archives** – An official building where government records are kept. Off limits to the general public in most circumstances, but only to keep what should stay private. HARD.
9. **House of Personal Papers** – The storehouse for certificates of births, deaths, marriages and other personal matters. MEDIUM.
10. **The Councilhouse** – The meeting place for the city's illustrious twelve person Council, which organizes public works and works to keep all fed. HARD.
11. **Land Office** – A place for deeds, public works records, and more. MEDIUM.
12. **Office of Doctor Blanche Ivory** – The office of Dr. Blanche Ivory, New Prospect's medical doctor and chemist. MEDIUM.
13. **Hiram Hall** – A poorhouse in the east. Named for Councilwoman Eliza Hiram. MEDIUM.

## OUTER ZONE

14. **Home of Councilman Alonzo Day** – The home of Councilman Alonzo Day. HARD.
15. **Glendale Field** – A particularly beautiful forest far north of town. EASY.

## EVENT CARDS

Early in the morning,  
Councilwoman Eliza  
Hiram visits us. She is a  
warm woman, smiling at  
us as we guide her to our  
storehouse. It is time for a  
requisition of grain. *Give  
four Food to the Council.*

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four Food to the Council.*

Early in the morning,  
Councilwoman Alonzo  
Day visits us. He is a quiet  
man, and gets down to  
business. It is time for a  
requisition of grain. *Give  
six Food to the Council.*

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requisition of grain. *Give  
six Food to the Council.*

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Day visits us. He is a quiet  
man, and gets down to  
business. It is time for a  
requisition of grain. *Give  
six Food to the Council.*

Guardswoman Aphra  
Amos raps on our door,  
here to collect grain for  
the town of New Prospect.  
*Give ten Food to the  
Council.*

Guardswoman Aphra  
Amos raps on our door,  
here to collect grain for  
the town of New Prospect.  
*Give ten Food to the  
Council.*

As we all rise to work in  
the morning, a worker  
trips and falls down the  
stairs of the Farmhouse.  
*Your smallest die worker is  
wounded.*

As we all toil in the fields, a worker receives a gash from her scythe. *Your largest die worker is wounded.*

It has been a particularly successful month in the Caves. There is a great bounty of Gold to be mined. *Gain four bonus Gold.*

It has been a particularly successful month in the Forest. There is a great bounty of Wood to be gathered. *Gain four bonus Wood.*

It has been a particularly successful month in the Fields. There is a great bounty of Food to be harvested. *Gain four bonus Food.*

Production on the farm is as bountiful as it has ever been, and our efforts everywhere are rewarded.. *Gain three of each resource.*

Our efforts to improve upon old techniques have been rewarded, and our processes are even more fruitful. *Gain four of the resource of your choice.*

This month marks the Festival of the Grasses, the most merry of all times. We provide food for the Festival and take one week off. *Gain four bonus Food and take a week off.*

A strange person comes with an offer. They say they can make resources appear from thin air. *Pick an amount of a resource to gamble, and roll a six sided die. If you roll a 5+, double your bet. If not, lose it.*

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In the night, a strange dream overtakes us. We dream of a long hall-like building in a forest consumed by brilliant flames.

In the night, a strange dream overtakes us. A silhouette hangs over tall grasses. We get a closer look: a man with empty eyes hangs there, now flanked by worshippers.

In the night, a strange dream overtakes us. A group of people, clad in blue cloaks, sits around a table, angrily discussing some heavy matter.

In the night, a strange dream overtakes us. A key seems to hang underwater. The sight fades way to a small wooden door, surrounded by shelves of books.

In the night, a strange dream overtakes us. We go on a long journey through the woods, hunger nipping at our heels after days of travel.

In the night, a strange dream overtakes us. A town is in ruin, people driven to starvation by a famine. Its people look to a man on the horizon, but he is set aflame.

We await an exciting day, but find the coming hours to be largely tranquil. Nothing out of the ordinary occurs, giving us time to relax.

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## Introduction

The Month of New Seed brings with it freshly soft earth and soils ready to be seeded. To us, the new year promises the same challenge we have faced each year of our lives thus far: to grow small seeds into a bountiful harvest.

Yet this year, the promise of something else hangs in the air as we are visited by a host of town officials. First is Deacon Alva, of the Church of the Man in the Grass. We first suspect he might be here to perform a ritual of worship to the spirit of goodwill that blesses farmers. However, we notice he is followed by Councilwoman Eliza Hiram. She wears a heavy face, a look of dismay, as she steps from behind the Deacon and speaks to us.

“My friends... we come bearing some tragic news.” She seems to stifle a tear. “You know—knew the young Bess of the Blue family, yes? From the dairy?” We nod. “She has been found dead. We believe she drowned in the baths at Loblolly Springs, but we of the Council are conducting our own investigation.” She sighs deeply.

We notice that Deacon Alva has not looked up from the floor at all since entering, and seems intent on avoiding all eye contact. We ask if she will be given a proper funeral by the Church.

“Of course. I am seeing to that now,” says the Deacon without moving his eyes.

“We deemed it necessary to inform those of New Prospect so that they might pray for the Blue family in this time of tragedy.” The Councilwoman gives a few more consoling words, but seems unsure of what quite to say. She leaves with the Deacon in tow.

Before long, the Farmhouse is returned to its morning quiet. Yet now, there is no comfort in this peace.

That night, we have a disturbing dream. We hear Bess, a young woman of no more than 20 years, calling out for help. We resolve to do all we can to help her find her peace, and to expose that which caused this tragedy. For the safety of all our fellow citizens.

*The game now begins with Phase A of the Month of First Seed. Best of luck, and be ever-cautious, Farmer: the eyes in the grasses never cease to watch on.*



## 1 – The Hills Beyond

As the earth beneath us slowly steepens to meet the hills beyond, we begin to question what exactly we are looking for. The fields of wheat now at our back, we look into the vast expanse of hills, rising from the earth like gnarled scars. In a way none of us can quite understand, something seems to draw us forward to the horizon.

Up the crest of the next hill, there is something inexplicable. It is difficult to make out from a distance, but it seems like a silhouette shifting about something jutting out of the ground. Getting closer, the silhouette seems to sprint away. We look again at the grounded object: it is a wooden crucifix, thrust into the earth at an odd angle. The sight fills us with a grave unease, apparent despite any attempts to mask it with faux bravery.

It is then that we hear something behind us: the dry grass of the hills beyond seems to crunch, as if being walked through. Hastily, we turn, but we see nothing. We decide to continue on toward the crucifix to take a closer look.

*Roll now. If you receive a 3+, read 1A. Otherwise, read 1B.*

### 1A

As we prepare to hike the last expanse into the hills, the grass seems to crunch again. Then once more. If these are footsteps, they are hurried and agitated. We start hurrying forward, in the direction of the crucifix. The footsteps seem to fade to nothing as we get closer.

Finally in front of the crucifix, it is impossible not to notice. Mounted on its splintering wooden planks is a human skeleton, still pierced through the wrists and ankles by rusted nails. It seems to look down at us with its dead, empty eyes. Getting closer, we notice the skeleton is deeply charred. For some reason, though, it is dressed; the skeleton wears a long brown cloak, a tunic, and freshly shined boots.

Suddenly, there is a great crack causing us to stumble over. Our heads begin to ache. We fall to the floor, wholly unaware of our assailant.

The pitch black of sleep seems to transport us back to the farmhouse. Still wounded, we all figure it will be a while before we are ready to act again, should we even decide to do so.

Who was that? And why were we hurt? We are left with more questions than answers.

*All of your workers are wounded.*

### 1B

As we prepare to hike the last expanse into the hills, the grass seems to crunch again. Then once more. If these are footsteps, they are hurried and agitated. One of us breaks to the left, not stopping to turn again. We all follow.

Heaving, panting, we run sweat-covered back to the farm. The footsteps begin to fade soon enough. We then see our home, missing it more than ever before, sitting low in the valley.

## 2 – Shearwater Lake

The way to Shearwater Lake is peaceful, flanked on both sides by old pine trees, leftovers from a time long lost. There is a tranquil beauty in this journey, something enhanced by the slow sound of waves lapping gently against the shore.

Shearwater Lake is a briskly cold body of water. Its surface is stark blue, throwing warm light on us despite its frigidity. We are standing on a shore ringed by the same ancient pines.

We almost forget that we came for a reason beyond relaxation, and start combing the beach for interesting items.

*Roll now. If you receive a 3+, read 2A. Otherwise, read 2B.*

### 2A

We spread out to get a better hold of the area by the shore, looking through the forest, sands, and grasses by the lake. We are frustrated at the initial lack of luck, but keep plugging along.

An hour or so passes before one of us strikes metal after digging at the base of a withered old tree. A peculiar key gleams back at us in the late afternoon light. Tucking it away, we figure we have had enough of Shearwater for the day.

*You now have an Old Key.*

### 2B

Hunkering down to search the lake's perimeter, we hope to not be stuck by Shearwater for too long. We work in shifts, turning our eyes first to the reeds by the lake, then to the forest. Nothing turns up.

We give it a good few more hours, watching as the sun lowers to sit on the water's surface. A Shearwater sunset is unlike anything else, and the beautiful sight almost makes us feel less disappointed in our fruitless search.

### 3 – Grand Foxcatcher Inn

The rustic Grand Foxcatcher Inn rises above New Prospect's Central Square proudly, its distinctive signage bearing its name and a faded carved fox out front. We know the Grand Foxcatcher is the sole gathering place for out of town visitors, and thus the best destination for those hoping to get an outsider's perspective.

The inn's heavy door opens with a loud creak, but the sound isn't enough to disturb the ruckus inside. Throngs of locals and travelers alike drink, eat, and listen to Ed Cazador's fiddling. The scent of freshly roasted chicken hangs in the air and in our noses.

We decide to join a nearby table and get some information.

*Roll now. If you receive a 3+, read 3A. Otherwise, read 3B.*

#### 3A

We are welcomed to the table of one of the Grand Foxcatcher's quieter groups, a band of tired looking outsiders sitting in the inn's back corner. Ansel, Mercy, and Jane Mears are three siblings headed eastward to the coast. Jane sips slowly on a local tea, while her siblings seem content to enjoy the inn's warmth and the comfort of their stools.

"I tell you, New Prospect isn't anything like our Papa had said. Why would dozens of people be moving here? A better life? He made it sound like some town, but I'd sooner call this a village." Jane says between sips.

"Jane, that was some 15 years ago. Places change over time." Mercy speaks up.

"I just wonder if these folk have even heard of a city. You think they're allowed to leave?" Ansel doesn't even glance at us as he speaks.

Unsure of whether or not we should defend ourselves, we finish our drinks before curtly dismissing ourselves. We make sure to leave the tourists with the bill for good measure.

#### 3B

Looking desperately for a group to intrude on, we eventually settle with the first that caught our eye: the raucous party of dancers sat around Ed Cazador. The musician's fiddling at first drowns out our probing, but we soon learn to take it in stride.

A few songs later and we're all on tables, singing and dancing. The warm glow of a merry night follows us into the early morning, when we are respectfully asked to leave.

## 4 – Old Church

Moving under cover of night, we eye the Old Church's windows from a covert spot in the now empty Central Square. Most are darkened; only one candle flickers in the bedroom of the church's guardian, Deacon Alva. After some time, the candle is extinguished. We assume Alva turned in for the night.

The Deacon's room protrudes from the back of the building, a fact we figure will lend us some room for error as we sneak in through the unlocked front door.

Entering the chapel, we see the familiar sight of the Man in the Grass against a crucifix. We remember evenings spent praying before flickering candles and harvest scenes, wishing for a bountiful autumn. Compared to those times, the room is unfamiliar. Now the pews blend together in the cold darkness and the pulpit looms ominously.

We decide to search Deacon Alva's study, a cramped room by the church's library of books and tomes. Pushed to the side of a desk that would only suit the Deacon's slender frame is a leather-bound journal. Choosing to beg for forgiveness, we open it.

"According to the best of the thinkers I once studied alongside, putting pen to paper is one means to purge harmful thoughts. I turn here in a time of challenge, driven to an end by my own sin: I have begun to doubt the way of the Man in the Grass. It is blasphemous to even write, but even the pastor must confess from time to time.

This church was built less than two decades ago, around the time of our historic famine. As my friends who lived in New Prospect then tell it, the village's founder passed away in a tragic accident. Oscar Alldale, his name was. He has faded into distant memory among most, but it was his passing that created our church. They say he became a benevolent spirit out in the fields around town. People even say they've seen him.

But in this moment, I'm skeptical. A man ascending to spirithood? I shall continue to preach the good word and the way of kindness and fertility, but who can say?"

*Roll now. If you receive a 4+, read 4A. Otherwise, read 4B.*

### 4A

We hear footsteps in the hall. Deacon Alva must have awakened. Carefully, we place the journal where it was and hurry back through the main door.

### 4B

Hearing footsteps in the hall, we hurry out into the chapel with a stumble. One of us trips, as the Deacon shouts out at us to stop. We deign not to take his advice, and rush out of the church and far into the wilds.

*Your smallest die worker is wounded.*

## 5 – Central Square

We decide to head into town to visit the Central Square with the hope of overhearing something interesting.

The New Prospect Square is crowded but somber, as the townspeople go about their routine shopping with the cloud of Bess Blue's death hanging above them. Still, though, some people whisper rumors.

*Roll now. If you receive a 3+, read 5A. Otherwise, read 5B.*

### 5A

A group of fishermongers have just brought in fresh catches from Shearwater. At their booth, we hear them gossip:

"I heard young Bess was at the baths 'fore she died. Strange, isn't it? She was too young to pass on." One says.

"That girl was always an odd one. Into others' business. And yet a bit of an outcast." Another adds.

"Enough, enough. We've got customers! Come on over, Shearwater's best is fresh for the day. Careful you don't eat too much, else you'll end up with Doctor Blanche!" The eldest calls out to us.

"Speaking of Blanche, I heard she's just gotten a new set of tools, yeah? Think she'd know where I got this nasty gash? They seem prepared to launch back into gossip at a second's notice.

"You're scaring them off, you idiot! Look!" We decide to shuffle off back into the crowd.

### 5B

A group of fishermongers have just brought in fresh catches from Shearwater. At their booth, we hear them gossip:

"I heard young Bess was at the baths 'fore she died. Strange, isn't it? She was too young to pass on." One says.

"Enough, enough. We've got customers! Come on over, Shearwater's best is fresh for the day. Careful you don't eat too much, else you'll end up with Doctor Blanche!" The eldest calls out to us.

"Speaking of Blanche, I heard she's just gotten a new set of tools, yeah? Think she'd know where I got this nasty gash? They seem prepared to launch back into gossip at a second's notice.

"You're scaring them off, you idiot! Look!" We decide to shuffle off back into the crowd.

## 6 – Loblolly Springs Bathhouse

The recent events at Loblolly Springs have cleared out the usually tranquil bathhouse. Now, its dark halls and cool floors are more eerie than anything.

It's difficult for us to believe that someone died here. When our fellow citizens die, we tend to spend weeks mourning them as one. Bess' passing, while just as tragic as so many others', carries with it an added horror. That someone so young could leave the world so suddenly...

We step into the main bath wondering what it is we'll see and preparing for the worst.

Luckily, the only sign Bess had been in the room is a thin robe piled at the water's edge. We decide to search the bath.

*Roll now. If you receive a 3+, read 6A. Otherwise, read 6B.*

### 6A

Tucked into the robe is a thin slip of weathered paper. We unfold it to read a message scribbled down hastily: "REMIND: Key to A by Shearwater". We aren't immediately able to make sense of it, but tuck it away for later regardless.

One of us glances into the bath's water and notices something strange: a few flecks of denim-esque cloth drift on the surface. It's impossible to tell where the cloth came from with just our eyes, but it is interesting nonetheless.

Having had our fill of the unlit room, we decide to make our leave. One last shudder overcomes us as we finally step out back into the light of day.

### 6B

Tucked into the robe is a thin slip of weathered paper. We unfold it to read a message scribbled down hastily: "REMIND: Key to A by Shearwater". We aren't immediately able to make sense of it, but tuck it away for later regardless.

Having had our fill of the unlit room, we decide to make our leave. One last shudder overcomes us as we finally step out back into the light of day.

## 7 – Blueback Dairy

The Blue family and their dairy are situated in the hills north of Shearwater Lake, overlooking vast fields for grazing. In the valley below idle several cows, slowly chewing on the soft grasses beneath them.

Bess Blue's father speaks to us through tears. "Bess was such a sweet girl. Wouldn't harm a fly. And she was so timid, too..." the man makes a face like he's swallowing nails. Intensely curious, we decide to broach the subject carefully. We ask if Bess had done anything unusual recently.

*Roll now. If you receive a 3+, read 7A. Otherwise, read 7B.*

### 7A

"Yes, now that you mention it... she seemed afraid. She was always going on about the Hills Beyond, south of town. She says she saw something there. It was frightening, I tell you. But I had no idea what to do beyond tell her everything would be okay." Her father says.

We wonder what else to ask, before inquiring as to Bess' routine as of late.

"Everything seemed usual, aside from the one night she went for a walk way far north. That way odd. She came back here before too late, though."

Having bothered the Blues enough, we thank the man and continue on, promising we will be with him and his family in this difficult time.

### 7B

"Yes, now that you mention it... she seemed afraid. She was always going on about the Hills Beyond, south of town. She says she saw something there. It was frightening, I tell you. But I had no idea what to do beyond tell her everything would be okay." Her father says.

We wonder what else to ask, before inquiring if Bess had been up to anything strange lately.

Bess' father looks at us, hurt. "How could you say that about our Bess? She would never stick her nose where it didn't belong! I know what people say, but this just goes to show: rumors are nothing but nonsense!"

He takes a deep breath before asking us to please leave. We solemnly nod and return to the farm.

## 8 – Archives

As a formality, the rules of New Prospect dictate that sensitive council buildings, like the town's Archives, are to be overseen at all times after nightfall by a town guard. The Council rarely employs armed guards, but in the interest of our information's security, an exception has been continuously made for official facilities.

Most nights, though, town guard Aphra Amos patrols around the north side for a few moments before taking a nap by the Councilhouse. We glance at that building's entrance through the moonlight, confirming Aphra is asleep, alongside her hunting hound Rufus. We decide to make our move on the Archives.

*Roll now. If you receive a 5+, read 8A. Otherwise, read 8B.*

### 8A

We move up the Archives' door carefully, opening it in much the same way. Save for a slight creak, we believe we have been mostly silent.

We have never been inside the Archives, and the building's unobtrusive exterior belies its size. Grand shelves line the walls and form dozens of rows up and down the floor, each stuffed with all manner of books, letters, and forms. We begin to search the place at once, rifling through the stacks quickly.

After perhaps an hour of mindless search, one of us turns up an interesting set of papers labeled "Outdated Bills". Packed into several boxes are hundreds of bills passed by the Council. Each has its stipulations, a list of signatories, and a column marked "AYE" filled with tallies. On several of them we see familiar names: Alonzo Day, Eliza Hiram, and Oscar Alldale are among them. The bills range from twenty to fifteen years old, according to the dates written on them. Another box of bills nearby continues where these left off, but lacks the signatory and "AYE" sections. We take a closer look, noting that the first bill, also from fifteen years ago, calls for the construction of the Old Church.

At the back of the room, we spot a small door. We check it: locked.

*If you have an Old Key, continue. If not, return to the farm.*

The door clicks open as we turn the key Bess Blue left behind. We figure whatever it is that is back here must be top secret, and thus move through the door with some anticipation.

Lying on an oaken table in the center of an empty room are several print newspapers. Their ink is faded, but we make out one interesting headline: "ALLDALE'S HEROISM: FOUNDER PERISHES IN FIRE AT GLENDALE EAST, SAVES DOZENS". Written in ink on the print are six words: "Less food burden. Step two now. "

Satisfied with everything we've seen, we close the door to the Archives cautiously behind us and make our way home.



**8B**

We move up the Archives' door carefully, attempting to open it in much the same way. It creaks wildly as we push it, giving us pause as we flick our eyes over to Aphra Amos' perch. She hasn't moved, but her hound... he begins to stir, sniffing the air as he does.

We run. The steep hill makes us stumble, and Rufus pounces at our heels. Two of us fall to the ground, but the rest of us rush back to carry them. We force Rufus away with our hands, lending an arm to our wounded friends as we hurry into the night.

*Your two largest die workers are now wounded.*

## 9 – House of Personal Papers

Hoping to find some helpful information in the documents detailing the people of New Prospect, we make our way to the north side of town. The House of Personal papers is a ramshackle building, worn by the comings and goings of locals filing and retrieving information.

Town guard Aphra Amos gives us a nod as we head through the sagging wooden doorframe and into the cramped room. Boxes of papers crowd lopsided shelves going down the room. We're intimidated, but decide to get to work at once.

Before too long, we find some interesting papers dating back to twenty years ago. Deeds and charters show that was the time when New Prospect was founded.

After a few hours of continuing to search tirelessly, Aphra Amos enters, looking frustrated. "I'm sorry, but is there a particular reason for your taking three hours in here? This won't look good, you know."

*Roll now. If you receive a 4+, read 9A. Otherwise, read 9B.*

### 9A

We immediately tell Amos that we are each simply conducting ancestry research. We fish for a semi-related paper from a nearby crate and wave it at her. Aphra looks peeved, but not majorly angry, and leaves the building with a start. We get back to work.

An interesting record turns up in our searching, but much of it seems blotted out. It concerns one "O■■■ A■■■" who passed away 15 years ago. The cause of death? "F■■■". The place? "G■■■■ E■■■". Everything seems blacked out, with a long chain of blacked out words under a subheading "Aftermath: C■■■■ Actions". It's strange, and we can't seem to puzzle it out.

We decide to leave, knowing what we do now.

### 9B

We stumble over our words for a moment, not quite knowing what to say to Amos. She detects our uncertainty and requests we leave immediately.

The idea of disciplinary action hanging over our heads, we hurry out the door. Rarely as such threats are used in New Prospect, one should take them seriously.

## 10 – The Councilhouse

New Prospect's most imposing building and the center of all its authority towers over the northern side of town. Cloaking ourselves in the dark, we note Aphra Amos, the guard responsible for patrolling the area, asleep on a stool by its entrance. We pull our makeshift hoods over our faces and deliberate how to approach.

*Roll now. If you receive a 5+, read 10A. Otherwise, read 10B.*

### 10A

We spot a trellis decorating the western wall of the Councilhouse, replete with tangled vines of ivy ascending and descending. It should make a perfect ladder.

One after another, we make our way up the trellis and into the upper floor window, jamming it open with a makeshift tool. Luckily, the Councilroom is just to our left as we land in the hallway.

The room is wide, with polished oaken desks forming a circle in its center. Stacked meticulously on one of the many desks is a pile of papers. Bills. We look them over and intuit that these are those most recently passed through the Council. Each is complete with a list of stipulations. According to one bill, Councilman Alonzo Day has been assigned to "field duty". Looking around, it is clear that none of us have any clue what that might mean.

A note left behind with the bills requests that they be "taken to Archives promptly". We figure those that have been passed are kept there.

Proud of ourselves, we creep back down the trellis and make our way home quietly.

### 10B

We spot a trellis decorating the western wall of the Councilhouse, replete with tangled vines of ivy ascending and descending. It should make a perfect ladder.

We scurry up the trellis in a flash. As the last of us steps onto its frame, disaster strikes: one of its beams snaps beneath us. With a crack, Aphra Amos is awoken. We make a break for it, aborting our mission; she follows, raising her rifle to shoot at us. A soft ball of iron breaks our skin, causing us to retch in pain. But we do not stop running. We will never stop running.

After what might have been hours, we stop and rest for a moment. Amos is no longer after us, but her shots have stung some of us seemingly irreparably.

*Your three largest die workers are wounded.*

## 11 – Land Office

The Land Office is a quaint building jutting out from the southern side of New Prospect's House of Personal Papers. Like the latter, it is a facility for use by the community to access records. Unlike the latter, it is rarely used. Most people in the village keep any proof of land ownership in their homes, a practice that comes from long before its founding.

Aphra Amos, the town guard, doesn't pay us any mind as we make our way in, though we tell her we are looking into acquiring new plots for sowing grain. We note that several portraits of established Council members, dressed in their characteristic blue garb, line the walls of this official building. A disinterested clerk gives us directions: upstairs are the official and high priority deeds, while residential deeds are divided between the ground floor and the basement. Unfortunately, the upstairs area is described as "for necessary use only" and thus unavailable to us.

*Roll now. If you receive a 4+, read 11A. Otherwise, read 11B.*

### 11A

Figuring the documents upstairs would be too insightful to neglect, we hatch a scheme to get to them undetected. One of us approaches the clerk to strike up conversation about land grants in the southern hills region. Understandably, this frustrates the clerk.

The rest of us glance up the stairwell, noting a large lock placed on the door at its end. We'll have to find a less obvious route, we think. It's good, then, that a small balcony looks over the main archive floor from above. If we can just scurry up a bookcase and onto the ledge...

Somehow, the plan works. We hoist ourselves over the banister and onto the second floor. Immediately, we begin searching through deeds. In a box marked "Gone or Destroyed" we find a rather interesting deed for "Glendale East," a hall style building replete with residential quarters. The home of one "Oscar Alldale" is also listed in this box.

The only other deed of interest that we find details the construction of the Old Church 15 years ago. Odd – considering the name, we thought it'd be older.

As we gently lower ourselves down from the balcony, one of us slips, falling to the ground with a soft thud. Despite a twisted ankle, it seems that everything is fine; we haven't been heard. Wearing our best innocent faces, we grab our friend from conversing (or rather talking at) the bored clerk and leave the Land Office.

*Your smallest die worker is now wounded.*

### 11B

We look for interesting information on the first floor, but can't seem to turn up anything of note. We leave, frustrated that a building full of deeds and legal documents hadn't been quite as engaging as we had hoped.

## 12 – Doctor Blanche Ivory’s Office

Doctor Blanche Ivory has constructed a thin tower of a home in the eastern portion of the valley, overlooking the Central Square from its stately balconies. Doctor Ivory has traditionally been seen as somewhat of an outcast for her peculiar interest in the sciences, but is respected nonetheless for her knowledge.

We stand in the entryway of her practice and home and speak loudly to make our presence known. At that, the doctor quickly swings open the door to her office while beckoning us to come in.

As we take our seats on some worn (and seemingly chemically stained) furniture, Doctor Ivory begins to ask us questions. “Ah, the farming ones! What, pray tell, brings you here?”

“We are looking into the strange death of Ms. Bess Blue. Would you know anything about that at all?” The doctor puts up a finger as she rifles through her papers.

“I have a few files on that mess, but they seem to have tried to escape me. Could you help me look for them?”

*Roll now. If you receive a 4+, read 12A. Otherwise, read 12B.*

### 12A

It takes a great deal of effort, but Doctor Ivory’s files on Bess Blue turn up before sundown, at least. “Ah, yes! Here!” She starts. “Just what I had thought. It’s frightening, really: several bruise marks on Ms. Blue’s body suggests she was gripped by another person and forced underwater.” The information comes as a shock. We knew most of our neighbors well, and can’t imagine any of them as being capable of something like this. The doctor notes our reactions. “It’s difficult to believe, truly, but the evidence suggests it. I also noted several flecks of navy cloth floating in the bathwater remaining, as well as some of the same cloth under her nails. That suggests a violent encounter with someone.”

We ask what the doctor thinks we should do with this information. “Don’t you worry about that. It’s good that you’re concerned, but it’s my responsibility to handle the logistics of this. I’ve already made an appointment with the Council to break the news.”

We nod at Doctor Ivory’s response, thanking her for her time before walking back down the steep hill into the valley.

### 12B

Doctor Ivory’s office has the chaos of a child’s bedroom. It is not long before we give up, wishing the doctor the best before we take our leave. She doesn’t even seem to notice us go, desperate as she is to find the files she seeks.

## 13 – Hiram Hall

Nestled low in a deep valley to the east of the Central Square lies Hiram Hall, a wide two story building surrounded by rolling fields of wheat. Hiram Hall is a poorhouse, a home for the most destitute of New Prospect. Here, dozens of residents can work in the collectively owned fields to feed themselves, as we see many doing now.

Our target is not the fields around Hiram Hall, though; we believe the people living here will have something to tell us.

Sat on Hiram Hall's rustic porch is an elderly man leaning slowly back and forth in an old rocking chair. We notice he's drinking spirits, and wonder what the Council would say about that.

The man introduces himself as Josiah, a resident of Hiram Hall for the past 15 or so years. We debate how to navigate a conversation with him.

*Roll now. If you receive a 4+, read 13A. Otherwise, read 13B.*

### 13A

We ask Josiah how he came to Hiram Hall. It's difficult to tell, but we seem to notice his mouth curl into a scowl as we do so.

"It wasn't a good day. I remember clearly, I swear it. My old home – the last poorhouse, a rotten place – burnt to ash before they sent us here. The way they tell it, Oscar evacuated the elderly and children. All lies." He spits. "Now, that's a name I ain't said in a while. What is it they call him these days?"

We have no idea how to respond, but thank Josiah for his words and empathize with the loss of his old home. He nods, that same look of disgust worn on his face the whole time.

### 13B

We elect to ask Josiah if he's seen anything strange lately, or perhaps knows anything about the death of Bess Blue.

"Ah, right, ole' Bess. Now that was a good kid. I remember her clearly, I swear it." We nod, leaning in to see what connection could possibly exist between this elderly man and our Bess Blue. "Grew to a fine goat, that one." Josiah nods, clearly satisfied with himself.

As Josiah continues to ramble on about Bess the goat, we politely excuse ourselves and leave Hiram Hall.

## 14 – Alonzo Day's Home

Our stomachs lurch at every crackling leaf as we approach the home of Alonzo Day through the woods. We planned cautiously, such that the day of our mission would coincide with the end of month Council meeting, for which Councilman Day would surely be gone.

It is sunset, and the orange gleam of twilight allows us to navigate the path forward to the Councilman's home. There is a garden immediately behind the house, its elegantly pruned greenery separated from us by a five or six foot tall fence. Climbing over it is easy enough on account of its convenient latticing, and we quickly make our way down the garden's gravel paths up to the door into Day's study. We prepare to make our way inside.

*Roll now. If you receive a 5+, read 14A. Otherwise, read 14B.*

### 14A

Though we are confident in our plan's logistics, we decide to be careful as we make our way into the house. We open the study door quietly, not allowing it to creak as we slip inside.

Alonzo Day's study is elegantly and exquisitely furnished. Marble busts of himself and his idols sit atop pedestals beneath the room's four grand windows. A mahogany desk is the room's central feature, and all its others furnishings spiral out from there: a bookshelf replete with leather-bound legal tomes, a map of New Prospect framed on the wall, and a set of comfortable visitors' chairs.

By the study's door is a pair of farmer's boots, stained with dirt and full of dry blades of grass. A brownish cloak is hung above. We search through the cloak's deep pockets, finding a folded slip of paper that reads "FIELD DUTY + HANDLE IVORY," along with a small key. We elect to take the key just before we hear something shift in a nearby room. Not wishing to remain in the study any longer, we rush through the garden and back over the fence to safety.

*You now have an Old Key.*

### 14B

The door creaks as we open it, causing us to wince as the sound echoes through the seemingly empty house.

We begin to search the office and its grand mahogany desk, before hearing footsteps. Outside, a man coughs. The study's doorknob begins to turn. Alonzo Day is here.

We tuck our hoods over our heads and fling ourselves toward the door to the outside. We hear the Councilman call for us to stop, but we don't. One of us feels something heavy against their head as the rest of us hear a loud crack. We look back at to see a jagged rock fall into the leaves. Terrified, we grab our friend and carry them home, not stopping to see what Councilman Day will do next.

*Your largest and smallest die workers are now wounded.*

## 15 – Glendale Field

Glendale Field is a wild place. Here, the grasses grow uncontrolled, reaching up to our knees like the trees around us stretch to meet the sky. There is a tranquility to Glendale, enhanced by the drifting sounds of the natural world. A cool wind rustles the grasses gently as we walk. We realize that we have no idea just how to search Glendale Field, and so take a moment to breathe in the natural air. Soon, though, we decide it is time to get searching.

*Roll now. If you receive a 3+, read 15A. Otherwise, read 15B.*

### 15A

We turn to the earth below us, thinking we may find something of interest beneath our feet. Around Glendale is an unnatural looking mound of dirt which we believe might hide something interesting.

Beneath the grass and soil, we soon strike something solid. We work tirelessly to uncover this dark object, finding it to be a piece of crumbling, charred wood. More digging reveals it to be some sort of message board; miraculously, some of its tattered postings survive, suggesting that we identified it correctly.

All we can read are a select few words from two papers. The first reads “Os r All ale to v it Gle le E st,” while the second contains the following words: “D RING T E ONG ING FAMI E, PROD TION Q OTA WILL BE RA SED”.

The decaying postings, like the board, seem slightly charred at the edges. We make note of them, and decide to return home through the woods.

### 15B

We choose to search the creek running through Glendale as well as the tall patches of grass which crop up here and there. It is a daunting task, but we figure this is as good a way to spend time as any.

Unfortunately, aside from some charming woodland critters, we are unable to find anything of note. Unsure what to make of the experience, we return home.



## End

As it always does, the Month of Open Doors brings a chance to ask ourselves many questions. Sitting at the grand oaken table in our kitchen, we ponder the following:

1. *Who killed Bess Blue?*
2. *Why was she killed?*
3. *Who was Oscar Alldale?*
4. *How did he die?*
5. *What was Alonzo Day assigned to do?*
6. *Why did Glendale East burn down and how was it used?*
7. *Who roams the Hills Beyond?*

*For each question you answer (more or less) correctly, roll +1 six sided die in the final story passage. See the answers on the next page.*

1. *The Council, specifically Alonzo Day.*
2. *Blue was looking into the conspiracy, having investigated Alonzo Day's house after encountering him in the Hills Beyond.*
3. *The founder of New Prospect and the Man in the Grass.*
4. *He was killed in a fire at Glendale East.*
5. *Alonzo Day was assigned both to "field duty" (tending to the shrine of the Man in the Grass) and to silence Blanche Ivory.*
6. *The Council killed Alldale and others to cease democratic processes, deify Oscar Alldale, and ease the burden of the famine.*
7. *Alonzo Day, fulfilling his "field duty" responsibilities.*

Treason is a horrifying thing. But even more terrifying is what might happen to New Prospect if things go unchanged. We decide to take the knowledge we have acquired and put it to good use.

*Roll now. If you receive a 4+, read Ending One. Otherwise, read Ending Two.*

## Ending One

At our Farmhouse, we have gathered some familiar faces. Deacon Alva, the Blues, and Blanche Ivory, and others have gathered in our parlor.

"What's this all about, then? I have much business to attend to. If this really is 'of grave importance'..." We assure Dr. Ivory that there is much to go over, and that it is truly important. Deacon Alva looks up at us curiously. He seems afraid at first, but unable to leave without hearing what we have to say.

For too long, the truth had been hidden from us. 20 years ago, the Man in the Grass, Oscar Alldale, left civilization behind to found New Prospect, a beacon of hope and prosperity located out in our hills. The settlement flourished for a time, offering truly equal treatment and a grounded, interdependent lifestyle. Needless to say, Alldale's project was incredibly popular, attracting new settlers in droves.

Alldale first ran the Council democratically. Soon, though a horrid famine presented a challenge. Hoping to use the crisis for their own ends, a select few senior members of the Council set a plan into motion. One night, Alldale visited Glendale East, New Prospect's largest poorhouse. The Councilmen set Glendale aflame, killing hundreds of settlers.

In one moment, the Councilmen eased the burden placed on New Prospect's farmers and created a catastrophe to use to increase their own power. They began casting Alldale as a hero who attempted to save the residents of Glendale. Soon, this became deification; Oscar Alldale became a benevolent spirit who watched over New Prospect from the grasses outside of town. This is how he became the Man in the Grass. In between taking care of Blanche

Ivory for her interfering in Bess Blue's killing, Alonzo Day and the Council made sure to tend to the Man in the Grass' shrine, keeping the legend alive.

It was for her curiosity that Bess Blue was killed. In the Hills Beyond, she stumbled onto a Councilman on "field duty," tending to the shrine, and decided to look into the matter. She soon found her way to the home of Alonzo Day. For that, she had to die.

As we conclude our story, our companions seem unsure how to respond. Should we feel indignant? Betrayed? Even we, after spending the year looking into the matter, do not have quite an answer.

But before long, the gears begin turning in our heads. While the past 15 years have kept those of New Prospect hostage, it is the next 15 that shall define us. May the future New Prospect shine brighter than ever before. Without the Man in the Grass to guide us forward, we will have to carve our own path into the future.

THE END.

## Ending Two

While we fear we haven't quite enough information to determine what exactly has been happening to New Prospect over the years, we can think of no other option but to approach the Council with our findings.

Alonzo Day welcomes us in his study at the Councilhouse, smiling. "Go ahead, then. What did you want to speak about?"

We stumble over our words, mentioning what we know about Bess' killing, the Man in the Grass, and the past 15 years in New Prospect. Alonzo Day raises a brow, and calls for Guardswoman Aphra Amos to enter.

"I'd love to continue our discussion further, but I fear that simply won't be an option. In fact, we're all out of options here, my friends. Aphra, could you please?" Day makes an intimidating gesture to Aphra Amos.

A sharp pain pierces our abdomens, our shirts are stained red. The world seems to fade to a distant black as we glance up at Alonzo Day above us, a distant look in his eyes as he motions for Aphra Amos to carry us away.

What did we do wrong? Certainly, there were more secrets hidden beneath the surface than we ever could have guessed.

THE END

*Having already seen both the questions and answers, feel free to now read Ending One to understand the truth behind the story of The Man in the Grass.*