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The Year That Came Apart | Scene 1 of 6

Four Seasons Before Lunch

The Top Gate

What the heroes want

Find out what is wrong with the valley, and why the frost at the bottom keeps climbing.

Ways to try it

1. Ask Grissel. What is that cord for?
2. Look closely. What is tied on the trees?
3. Ask about the frost. Why is the bottom so cold?

What did your heroes do? Write it or draw it here

Scene 1 of 6

Four Seasons Before Lunch

Read this scene in: Quick Quest, Short Session, One-Sitting Session, Full Session, Epic Session

Read aloud

You come over the top of the hill, and everybody stops. Something is wrong with this valley. At the top, the apple trees are white with blossom, like spring. In the middle, the hay stands tall and gold, like summer. Lower down, the beech wood glows copper, like autumn. And at the bottom, everything is white with frost. The wind smells of snow. A woman with a red-and-cream cord leans on the gate. "Right," says Grissel Hoy. "You've seen it. Come down, and I'll tell you the silly part."

What the heroes want

Find out what is wrong with the valley, and why the frost at the bottom keeps climbing.

Ask your players

Ask the quietest player	Grissel gives you a little card with a rhyme on it. Will you read it out for everyone? Hand over the Keeping-Cord Rhyme now. Its third line is the whole answer, and a table that spots it has earned it: knowing why the frost is there does not say which cord to cut.
Ask the table	Spring, summer, autumn and winter, all at once. Which part of the valley would you most like to visit?



Four Seasons Before Lunch

Ways to try it

Let Grissel talk

No roll

It works

Grissel makes keeping-cords. "Tie one on a branch at sunrise," she says, "and that day stays put until you cut it at sunset. One cord, one day." She sighs. "Nobody ever leaves one tied. Somebody has left three."

It doesn't

If nobody asks, Grissel tells them anyway. She has waited two weeks for somebody to listen.

Count the cords

Clever, DN 8

It works

You spot three bright cords on three low branches: one on the old apple tree in the orchard, one on the thorn tree in the hay field, one on the big beech by the wood. Nothing at all is tied at the White End, down by the frozen pond.

It doesn't

It is too far to see. Grissel points them out, one by one: three trees, three bright cords, and nothing at all tied at the White End.

Ask about the white end

No roll

It works

Grissel holds up a stick with twenty-nine notches, one for every morning. "On the first morning the frost stopped at the reed line at the pond. Today it is on the thistle bank, two hundred paces short of the meadow gate. It climbs nine paces a day, and it never goes back."

It doesn't

If the numbers are too many, count the notches out loud together: twenty-nine mornings, nine paces every day, and never once backwards.

Just for you, not to read out

Play Grissel warm, blunt and not mysterious at all. She is hiding nothing. She could have cut the three cords herself, but they are not hers to cut. Two facts must leave this scene with the heroes: three cords are tied in this valley, and the frost at the bottom is climbing. If a player hunts for a baddie, there is none: three kind people each tied one cord, and none of them told the others. Short on time? At the Quick Quest length, Grissel also tells them who tied each cord and why before they leave the gate.