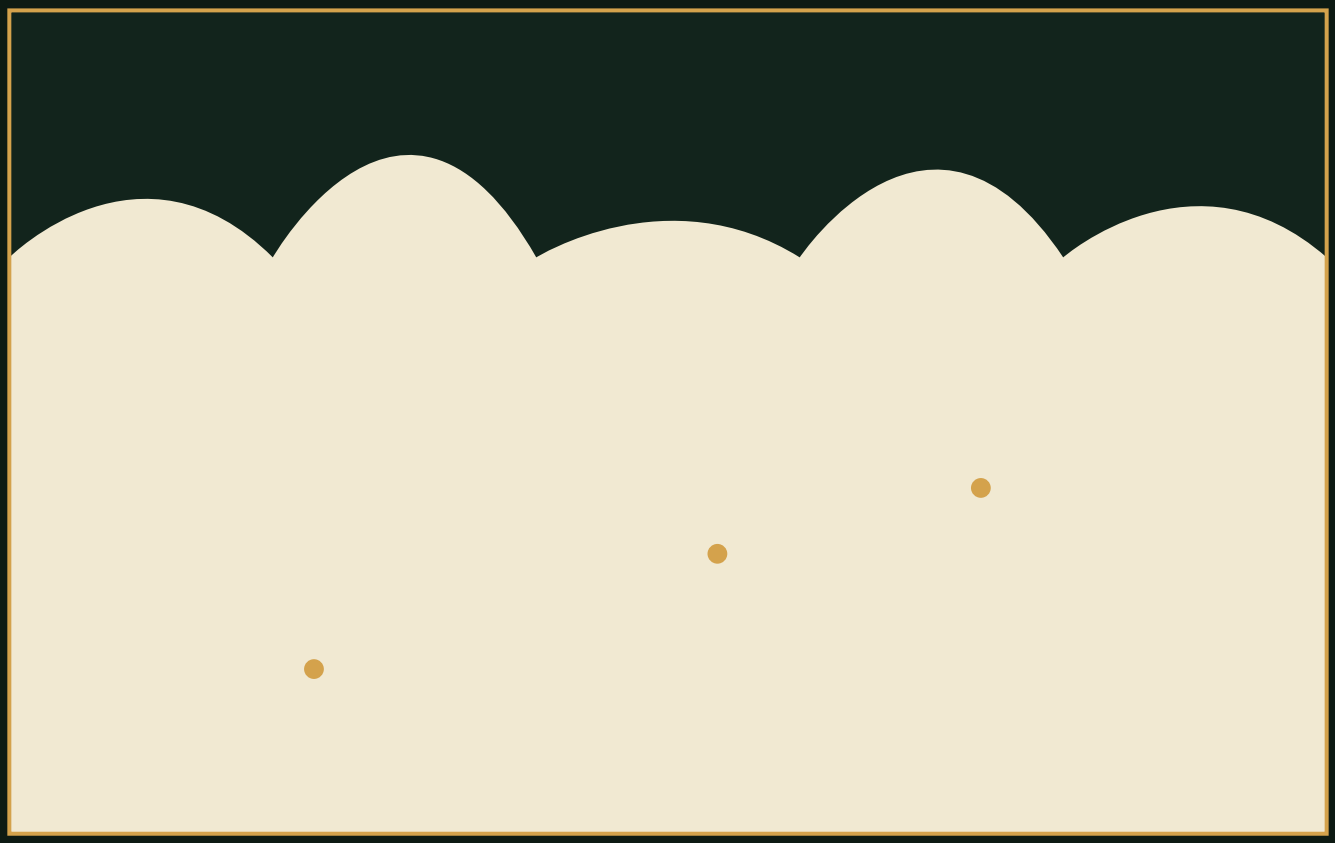
The Year That Came Apart

Pennythorn Coombe, in the Vale of Aldermoor



One small valley is running four seasons at once: blossom at the top, hay in the middle, falling leaves below and hard frost at the bottom. Every single one of them is somebody's kindness.

Talewick Quests — original content, free to print and play.

Read this to your players to start

Pennythorn Coombe is a little valley you can walk from end to end in twenty minutes, and right now it has four seasons at once. Three kind people have tied three keeping-cords on three trees, for three good reasons. The year has nowhere to go, so it is piling up at the bottom of the valley as frost, nine paces higher every day.

Who's in this adventure

The White End

Heart Points 29 · Guard 4

None. It has never come at a person in its life. It comes at the valley, at nine paces a day, and it has not missed a day yet.

A Keeping-Cord

Heart Points 1 · Guard 2

None. It is a plaited ribbon about as thick as a bootlace, in the coombe's own red and cream.

The Coombe's Bees

Heart Points 3 · Guard 13

None. They are five weeks tired and they have long since given up minding anybody.

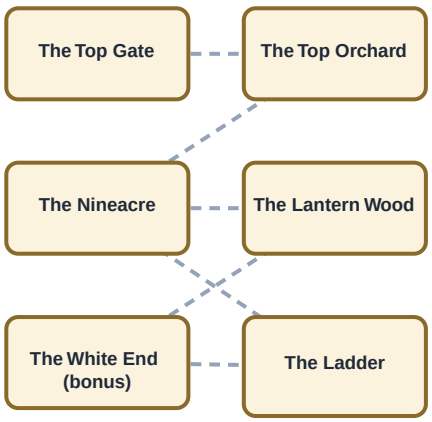
Tips for running this one

• Nobody in this valley is wrong, and that is the adventure. Three kind people each did one small, sensible thing, and none of them told the other two. The heroes' job is not to find someone to blame. It is to decide what comes undone, and to say it out loud.

• Every beat carries its own way of making a cut cost nothing: neighbours for Kit's hay, many hands for Wenna's cuttings, the ferry board for Pim. None of them is hidden, and the story tracker keeps count. A table that collects all three can end this with nobody losing anything.

• Tam Ashby is alive. He is four days behind the other crews with a broken raft, and the ferry board says so. That is not a GM option: it is what is true in this adventure. Never leave it hanging, and never play it as a maybe.

Map



The adventure walks one small valley downhill, then stops in the middle. In at the top gate, where you can see all four seasons at once; down through the Top Orchard, where the Coombe Pippin is still in blossom; across the Nineacre, a huge hay field with one strip cut; into the Lantern Wood, where no leaf has fallen. At the Epic length, on down to the frozen White End. The ending is back at the Ladder, halfway up: the one place you can see all three trees at once.

SHOW YOUR PLAYERS THIS

The Keeping-Cord Rhyme

A soft old card, given to everyone in the valley on the day they learn to braid a cord. "One cord, one day, and cut it at dusk. / Two cords, two days, and the stream runs slow. / Three cords tied, and the year can’t go, / so it heaps at the bottom, and it heaps as snow." Underneath, in small writing: "My grandma’s rhyme. Nobody has needed the third line in a hundred years, because we all talk to each other. G. Hoy."