

Wondrous Expeditions



A GAME MASTERS' GUIDE TO ROLEPLAYING

- FORESTS -

Alex Clippinger, JVC Parry, Elf Vesala, Jeff Lee



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Special Thanks:

Thanks to all our crowdfunding supporters and Loresmyth customers, Christopher Haskins, Ralph Stickly and everyone at Nord Games, BackerKit team, New Energy Books, Karel Teurlings, and everyone else who helped along the way.

And most of all, to our families for their love and support.



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Softback ISBN: 9789493135161 | Hardback ISBN: 9789493135154

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A man with a beard and braided hair, wearing a brown tunic and a shoulder bag, stands in a forest. He is looking towards a large, gnarled tree trunk. In the foreground, a dragon with a glowing green eye and a sword in its mouth is visible. The background is a misty, hazy forest scene.

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Introduction

We're headed to a place called the Forest of Eons. I've heard it's a deathtrap, and not just because of the predators. Time is warped there, and you might spend a lifetime among those trees without knowing it. Somewhere in there is an amber sap that foretells the future—that's what we have to find.

— *Diary of Ezrian the Ranger, Day 1*

Among wild spaces, nothing conjures a sense of the untamed and the primal as strongly as the gnarled tangle of a forest. The close press of tree trunks can present a barrier between civilization and wilderness that feels as impassable as any mountain range, and the shadowed depths can seem as mysterious as the depths of the ocean.

Forests are more than a collection of trees—they are the feeling of dew-slicked moss yielding beneath your feet, the subtle smell of petrichor, and the beams of golden sunlight that filter through the canopy. It's the lively cacophony of birds and insects in a summer-soaked glen and the eerie, muffled silence of mist-covered deadwood broken only by the groans of dying beeches and the mocking squall of ravens.

Forests are as plentiful and varied across the realms as the flora and fauna they hold. They are the lungs of the earth, a source of bountiful resources

and thrilling danger. Constantly changing and evolving, even the most mundane forests endure the ravages of time and disaster to become places of history, mystery, and eventually...legend.

ADVENTURE WITH EVERY STEP

Somewhere in the forest, a single disturbed branch holds a vital clue to track a ranger's quarry, the dreaded **Groveghast**. Tricksome pixies dart between the towering heights of the **Feyspire Forest**, beckoning to a druid's companions. But are they leading travelers to a place of wonder or danger? Adventure, mystery, and peril could lie in wait behind any tree trunk.

Many adventurers are familiar with stories of the woods ruled by noble elves, resplendent with graceful Sylvan-grown architecture and light casting a warm glow as though liquid gold. Tavern tales speak of haunted forests, where werewolves and fouler things creep hungrily between the trees, and the woods themselves weep living blood. A great explorer may boast that she was the first in a thousand years to set foot in the **Forest of Eons** and commune with the ancient spirits dwelling there.

Journeys into these wild places promise ancient threats and miraculous wonders, just waiting to be discovered...



USING THIS BOOK

Wondrous Expeditions: Forests is designed to turn overland travel into an extraordinary and exciting experience for you and your players—we want the journey to be the adventure. This book is divided into three major sections that allow you to create, run and bring to life your own wondrous forest expeditions.

CHAPTER 1: RUNNING FOREST EXPEDITIONS

Make your wilderness journeys matter. New gameplay ideas and roleplaying opportunities will help you turn wilderness travel through a forest into a memorable adventure, complete with new encounters, foraging, and navigation challenges.

CHAPTER 2: CREATING FOREST ENVIRONMENTS

This chapter covers the unique traits of forests, outlines specific forest types, and gives you a plethora of topography, landmarks, and ideas to make your forests interesting and immersive locations that are more than just a backdrop. Turn your forests into places of intrigue, peril, and wonder.

CHAPTER 3: WONDROUS FORESTS

Our wayfarers have chronicled four wondrous forests that are ready to be used in your campaign world. These include tailored flora and fauna, roleplaying advice, and unique features that will help make these unique forests come to life.

CONTINUE YOUR EXPEDITION

In addition to the main chapters, you will find several appendices, which include the *Expedition System*, two forest-themed adventures, 5e monster stat blocks, and more.

APPENDIX I: THE EXPEDITION SYSTEM

This chapter outlines a new way to handle travel in your games, from planning the journey at a local tavern all the way to carving a path through the wilderness. It offers new rules, roles, and activities for party members, as well as the required tools for Game Masters to make wilderness expeditions truly epic.

APPENDIX II: THE ROOT OF SYLVANUS ADVENTURE

After finding themselves trapped in a forest by the vengeful spirit of a druid, the players must find a way to make peace with the spirit before blood is spilled... This adventure is designed for characters of all levels and can be easily slotted into an ongoing forest expedition.

APPENDIX III: SHADOWS OF THE MARROWGROVE ADVENTURE

The sequel to *Root of Sylvanus*, this adventure takes the players to the terrifying Marrowgrove forest where Sylvanus died and the only place where his spirit can be laid to rest. This adventure is designed for characters of all levels.

APPENDIX IV: 5TH EDITION STAT BLOCKS

This is our collection of 5e statistics for our menagerie of brand-new creatures. Bring your forests to life with dozens of cunning monsters and whimsical fauna.



TRAVEL IN ROLEPLAYING GAMES



n many roleplaying games, travel is a series of random encounters or hand-waved, fast-forwarded narration just to get to the next dungeon.

However, a wilderness journey done well can become one of the most exciting experiences at the table. It's the perfect opportunity to present new and varied encounters, challenge players to problem-solve in unusual ways, and of course, provide an engaging change of scenery.

Some approaches to travel try to avoid as much spontaneous complication as possible, opting for a travel montage just to move players onto the next adventure. The wilderness journey rarely becomes the adventure itself, which is a missed opportunity for roleplaying, memorable action and breathing life into your world. This book provides you an in-depth look at how to turn wilderness travel into wondrous expeditions, including a new optional gameplay system for it.

TRAVEL MONTAGE

One of the most common methods to handle travel is the montage approach. It requires the least amount of work on the Game Masters' part. Overland journeys are described with little more than a sentence or two of narrative summary, and perhaps a few rolls on a random encounter table. This is meant to get players from one point to the next, without much interaction.

Both new and experienced Game Masters use this approach when they want to move forward quickly and not dwell on the actual travel. While useful in certain situations, no one ever tells stories about their favorite, fast-forwarded, and quickly-summarized travel montage.

REALISM

The opposite of the travel montage is a 'realistic' approach to travel, that emphasizes practical aspects such as sustenance, encumbrance, survival, and navigation. Food and water supplies, carry weights and encumbrance, fatigue, travel times, and so on are all utilized in a 'realistic' approach. Many Game Masters and players relish the feeling of a gritty, measurable journey, but the interaction and upkeep of every single survival and travel rule on a day-to-day basis can involve a frustrating amount of bookkeeping for Game Masters and players alike. What seems exciting on paper can quickly become repetitive for players who aren't fans of this rules-heavy approach.

HEROIC

A fusion of the travel montage and realistic approach is aimed to strike a balance between emphasizing the arduous aspects of travel, all while infusing it with heroic moments the players will remember. Survival mechanics, narrative elements, and encounters are often rolled on a random table. Even for Game Masters with experience under their belt, achieving this best-of-both-worlds balance is no easy feat. Without a ready-made system, it requires quite some effort to engross your players in an engaging wilderness journey that keeps them thrilled just as much as a dungeon crawl.

THE WONDROUS EXPEDITION SYSTEM

From the heroes preparing and plotting a course, to wayfinding and keeping up party morale, this book places journeys on a center stage where player choices matter. With new landmarks, topography, dangers, boons, flora, and fauna included, these pages will help you make forest travels to be the adventure's most memorable aspect.

This book, along with other entries in the *Wondrous Expeditions* series, provides a complete wilderness travel system and many inspiring ingredients to turn your journeys into wondrous expeditions. This *Expedition System* (see Appendix) is an in-depth way to plan, run, and resolve wilderness journeys that create a sense of realism, time and place, as well as deep moments of wonder.

Now go, venture forth. Godspeed, and come back alive to tell the tale.

THE FOREST BECKONS



can feel the unfathomable strength of the trees, standing like bastions in the swirling eddies of time that move through this place. The animals have become old and wise enough to speak, but the spirits...the spirits of this place are wary of us. They know we seek the Fruit, and they are not yet sure if our hearts are pure.

— *Diary of Timagus the Druid, Day 12*

Sprawling forests are places of true wonder. Depending on the seasons, weather, locations, and myriad other factors, forests can be bountiful bouquets of spring flowers filling the air with a delicate perfume, or haunted, lifeless graveyards of rotting logs and twisting trunks. Forests are a wondrous environment because they teem with so many forms of life, and where there is life, there are strange creatures, rare monsters, precious flora, and wondrous magic. The character of a forest is much like that of a person, shifting subtly and changing over time, presenting different challenges to an adventuring party depending on its mood.

BOUNDLESS OPPORTUNITIES

Each clearing and copse is an opportunity to experiment with the atmosphere and introduce the bizarre and extraordinary alike: the choice of describing a clinging mist can be the narrative difference between a calming woodland bejeweled with dew and a silent grove where horrors move just out of sight. A stray splash of weird magic can turn a mundane ring of toadstools into a giant fungal grove. With so many different elements present, Game Masters have ample opportunities to craft experiences from the smallest detail to the grandest vista.

FORESTS OF THE WORLD

Any large area of land covered by trees and layers of undergrowth can be classified as a forest. Most forests play host to a panoply of natural life that defines them: A temperate needleleaf forest teems with wildlife and resplendent natural riches. The whispering confines of the *Marrowgrove* are covered in creeping thorn bushes and twisted husks, and strike fear into the hearts of even the most battle-hardened heroes.

Not all forests are natural. The prism-like branches of a crystal forest might refract sunlight into a rainbow that feeds magical creatures, while the towering mushrooms of a fungal forest could mimic a sylvan canopy. Meanwhile, bone groves might form when the skeletons of deceased creatures slowly bind together to form tree-like sculptures. Whatever form a forest takes, its defining elements are its trees.



WHAT MAKES FORESTS SPECIAL?

Forests are distinct from other environments because of their amazing variety, and this means the mood and atmosphere of a game can be entirely changed depending on the kind of forest the players enter. One can never truly predict what they'll encounter in the confined space of towering trunks and bustling undergrowth. However, a few key traits are common to most fantasy forests.

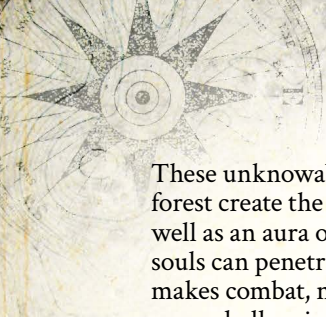
ANCIENT & MAGICAL

Typically, forests are slow-growing, and take centuries to establish themselves in a region. As forests grow, they cover whatever was there before them, shrouding it in secrecy. The trees serve as guardians for forgotten ruins, lost magical artifacts, and age-old beings who wander through the stands. Even as nature continues to thrive around these places, some forests can feel frozen in time for days, years, or even centuries before they are rediscovered.

Ancient forests are a wellspring of natural magic. Druids and rangers understand this well, and tap into such sources to fuel their spells. Sylvan magic is potent, can often be chaotic, and is frequently used by fey creatures and monstrosities alike. A fool might enter a forest without preparing themselves for this atavistic power. Only a daring fool would go on a quest to harness that same power.

LIVING LABYRINTHS

An inexperienced adventurer can look at a broad plain or windy moor and reasonably predict what awaits them, yet even a weathered ranger may look at the sprawl of a darkened forest with a shiver of trepidation, because anything could be waiting within those trees. Even when the trunks of trees stretch hundreds of feet into the air and the undergrowth is bathed in the warming light of the sun, forests can create a feeling of closeness and claustrophobia where it's easy to lose your way both physically and mentally.



These unknowable and labyrinthine qualities of a forest create the threat of danger at every turn, as well as an aura of mystery that only the bravest of souls can penetrate. The dense confines of Forests makes combat, navigation, and spotting threats more challenging and the challenges of traversing them can take a heavy toll on travelers' morale.

VIBRANT VISTAS

Every direction you look in a forest, you're confronted with a vibrant menagerie of natural life: new and exciting animals, potent herbs, and towering trees. Blossoming flowers unfurl, perfuming the air with their scent, while babbling brooks catch the light in their clear waters. As well as things of beauty, each of these marvels is a resource for adventurers to use — there is perhaps no environment denser in natural resources than a forest. Here, travelers can survive off the bounty of the land and even create magical concoctions from rare barks and plants. For those who have the right knowledge, a bountiful forest is far more valuable than a chest of treasure hauled up from a dungeon.

NATURE AGAINST CIVILIZATION

While the bounty of forests is freely given, they are often overexploited by humanoids of all varieties. Some hack down the oldest trees for lumber to build their homes, others turn the land into plantations for food, and some hunt the game until the ecosystem collapses. Due to the incessant growth of humanoid settlements and cultures, forests are often threatened. However, forests are not defenseless — the natural life within often seems to unify against the intruders. Natural predators such as wolves and bears keep the foolish out of their territory, and where bolder adventurers set foot, hydras and manticores may ward them away.

Where humanoids do leave their mark on a forest, the restoration process can often be painful. Sacred groves that have been cut down may cause their dryads to weep tears of sap upon the ragged stumps, and where a trophy stag has been gutted, poisonous toadstools may erupt from the bloody ground. All life in forests is in a delicate balance, and it can hold a grudge for generations.



fig. IIIc: The Antediluvian Trees



*“When you find yourself lost,
trust your friends to guide you back to the light.”*



CHAPTER ONE

Running Forest Expeditions

*“It cut through the howling wind like a pick through ice.
The chilling shriek of a yeti. We should never have lit that fire,
but we could stand the biting cold no longer.”*





Running Forest Expeditions

D've given up on keeping track of time, but I feel like this is the fifth or sixth attempt. We've found the Fruit, but every time we take it, we end up back at the beginning of the 21st day. Vatala's spell to stop time backfired and now she's aged fifteen years. I want to call this expedition off, but we can't leave without the Fruit.

— Dorgal the Paladin, Day 21

THE EXPEDITION OUTSET

The call to adventure is made, the heroes are ready to answer, and the woods await. Hidden among the trees are discoveries, dangers, horrors, and wonders for those with the courage and wits to pursue them. Carving a path through the undergrowth may leave eager adventurers battered, weary, and exhausted by the journey's end, but for now, they must prepare to take that first essential step.

GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS

Before setting out on a grand expedition, establishing player goals and expectations is an essential step both at the table and in-character.

SETTING PLAYER EXPECTATIONS

Players who aren't used to travel experiences being the main focus of the session tend to expect nothing more than a simple summary, a roll or two on an encounter table, and maybe a question about setting a watch for the night.

A journey using the expedition system and the ideas presented in this book are far more engaging than a simple travel engagement. Adequately conveying the intention of the travel system to the players is vital to ensure they're getting the most out of the upcoming expedition. Here are several things you can discuss in advance with your players:

Expedition Length - First and foremost, there should be a clear emphasis on the journey's length. An expedition may take several days, weeks, or even months of in-game time.

Expedition Depth - Players should be fully aware that the journey will involve significant interaction with the environment, including narration, challenges, and roleplaying opportunities. Especially when first introducing the expedition system's concepts of roles, morale, and goals, players should be given a sense of the decision-making involved in an expedition. In addition, thoughtful planning will benefit them throughout the excursion.

Instilling Reverence - Ancient and wild places are often filled with magic and creatures beyond the ken of even heroes. The power of these places should fill adventurers with a sense of awe and trepidation. As a Game Master, you should try to instill reverence for forests before and during the expedition by emphasizing that even the strongest (and most experienced) of heroes might still find themselves at the mercy of nature and its guardians.

There's nothing wrong with dropping out of a narrative voice to explain relevant mechanics or make sure players are fully informed about the challenges that lie before them. The most important part of starting an expedition is ensuring that everyone at the table is on the same page.

ESTABLISHING GOALS

Sometimes you'll give your players a quest that involves undertaking an expedition, but other times your players might naturally create their own expedition to achieve their goals.

Either way, you and your players should take a moment to clearly outline the party's primary goal, as well as important details. Are the players in agreement on their primary goal? Are there certain restrictions or requirements for success, such as speed or stealth? What are the consequences of failure or the stakes of the expedition?

Once the players figure out their goal, Game Masters may choose to throw in a subversion or twist to make the expedition more interesting. Some example goals, expectations, and subversions are listed in the table below. While not each and every stated goal can or should be subverted, always consider whether one or more subversions can delight or surprise players with a dramatic twist.



| Expedition Goal | Example Subversion |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| To reach a particular destination | The expected destination is impossible to reach due to a natural or magical disaster; a new secondary destination or route must be chosen. |
| To arrive at a destination undetected | Someone sees the heroes arrive or expects them; they need to sneak, bluff, bribe, or fight their way out of danger. |
| To escort or guard someone | The person in need turns out to be a wanted villain or switches sides, putting the heroes in danger. |
| To recover an item | The item has already been recovered, stolen, or even destroyed. |
| To destroy something | The heroes learn important context as to why their quarry cannot or should not be destroyed. |
| To meet with someone | Their contact is captured or killed, or is someone unexpected. |
| To acquire knowledge | The knowledge is dangerous in the wrong hands; now the heroes are targeted by those who want to suppress or acquire it. |
| To defend someone | The person in question is villainous and deserves to be brought to justice, but needs to be protected right now for the greater good. |

GATHERING KNOWLEDGE

Even more important than a general aptitude for navigation and survival is knowledge about the forest itself. For example, knowing how forest spirits ambush travelers is generally useful; knowing that a **spire guardian** specifically protects the crystals at elevated areas of particular forests is an even better means of avoiding a fight entirely. Other important information could include the current weather conditions and forecasts. Is an influx of rain likely to cause a mudslide or wipe out important trails? Uncovering potentially useful resources within the woodland could aid the expedition, such as the future-sight inducing **augury roots** that grow in the Marrowgrove.

REWARD PREPARATION

Reward player characters that take the effort to prepare for the journey in a meaningful way, by having their smart thinking pay off. They may discover a shortcut that takes several miles off the journey, or that a particular forest path is best avoided due to warring goblin tribes. Characters that depart haphazardly are likely to discover such ill-prepared ventures quickly drain supplies, valuable time, strength, and morale. A character with a backstory, background, race, or class relating to a specific woodland area might leverage their innate knowledge about certain forests, terrain, flora, and fauna. This information is a perfect opportunity to make a journey's key moments interactive through ability checks or roleplaying.

The following tables list various types of knowledge players can collect about a forest.

| Knowledge | Example |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Topography | Specific terrain that requires specialist equipment or precautions. |
| Monsters and creatures | Insights into weaknesses or habits, and how to exploit those. |
| Hazards | Particular hazards and how to avoid or overcome them, such as a Reclamation Marsh |
| Season and Weather | Seasonal weather patterns and dangers inform when to travel and how to dress appropriately. |
| Condition of trails and roads | Informs what methods of travel are possible, such as broad, flat trails for wagons. Some routes may be overgrown entirely. |
| Foraging | The variety and abundance of animals and edible/medicinal plants, such as nutritious tree roots |
| Magical effects and phenomena | Unusual magical effects or natural phenomena that might require special preparations. |

INFORMATION SOURCES

There are plenty of opportunities for players to learn more about a forest, including interviewing guides, hunters, and foragers who've worked there. Reading up on the specific woodland in a nearby library, communing with nature deities or fey patrons, or even taking short scouting excursions into the woods may also give advantages to the would-be adventurers.

For example, if characters want to know about large predators, they might be better off talking to a trophy hunter than a local farmer. Similarly, if the forest is on an island, they'll stand a better chance with sailors who have stopped there rather than druids who've never left the mainland.

| Information Source | Benefit |
|---|--|
| Talk to local woodcutters about the trails they use to transport their timber. | Advantage on checks made to navigate while on a trail for 1d4 + 1 days. |
| Pay merchants who ship goods through the forest to reveal the location of a resting place. | Reveal a useful waypoint on the map to the characters. |
| Buy a meal or drinks for local hikers to get rumors about the dangers of the forest. | Advantage on checks made to notice and overcome a specific forest hazard for 1d4 + 1 days. |
| Purchase a map from a local cartographer that has a detailed depiction of the forest. | Provide the characters with a map that has 1d4 + 1 landmarks detailed on it. |
| Converse with a ranger who knows the forest well and can warn you about what needs to be avoided. | Mark 1d4 + 1 potential hazards on a map for the characters. |
| Consult a druid whose sacred grove is in the forest, and who has conversed with its wildlife. | Advantage on checks made to interact peacefully with forest inhabitants for 1d4 + 1 days. |
| Conduct reconnaissance missions to scout out the edges of the woodland within a day of the origin location. | Automatic success on the first navigation check of the expedition. |
| Read wildlife guides detailing plants and animals within the forest. | Advantage on checks made to forage for food or medicine for 1d4 + 1 days. |

TRUTHS AND FALSEHOODS

Depending on the source of information, checks made by the characters to acquire information, and the amount of gold or resources spent to get information, the characters might come across either false or helpful information. False results could be the result of rumor, deliberate mistruths, or a simple misunderstanding, whereas helpful insights can greatly increase the heroes' luck on the road.

Consult the following tables for examples of such information:

| d6 | False Information |
|----|--|
| 1 | A creature, half-plant and half-beast, has been stalking the woods of late. It decapitates intruders and buries their heads by the trailside. |
| 2 | One of the major trails through the woods has been washed away by flooding thanks to high rainfall. |
| 3 | High winds have caused many trees to fall, obscuring the shortcuts that would normally be available. |
| 4 | Forest spirits have animated poisonous plants in the woodlands and are using them to barricade paths and stop carts and carriages passing through. |
| 5 | A blight is spreading through the trees. The last travelers that came through swore it was spreading onto them too. |
| 6 | Faeries have been leaving parcels of food and potable water for hikers passing through the woodlands. |

| d6 | Helpful Information |
|----|--|
| 1 | There is a shortcut around a hazardous piece of terrain that can be obtained from a local druid. |
| 2 | The main trail through the woods is frequently targeted by a bandit gang who live in the woods - avoid it if possible. |
| 3 | A specific plant has just spread to the area. Its fruit is delicious but causes hallucinations within a few hours unless you eat it with a handful of mud. |
| 4 | An injured dragon has taken up residence in a hazardous area of the forest. It could be a place to avoid, or a chance to defeat a great wyrm. |
| 5 | Although it's not on most maps, there is a river that flows through the woodland that can be used for rapid travel - take a canoe! |
| 6 | A bizarre gnome alchemist who lives in the forest has a recipe for potions of flying. He can be bribed with a certain variety of mushrooms. |

PLOTTING THE COURSE

Plotting the course of the expedition is a huge opportunity for the heroes to shape the expedition ahead. Long journeys may take several days, weeks, or even months, and careless planning can turn a normal trek into a perilous ordeal.

Characters are encouraged to use the knowledge they've acquired about the forest, including its terrain, wildlife, or other difficulties. For example, having a map of a forest's topography will make things much easier, or perhaps the adventurers took the effort to acquire a travelers' guide to the *Crystalspire Grove*.

Typically when plotting their course, adventurers will want to find the shortest distance, or fastest route to arrival, especially if there is a time constraint on their expedition. Possible exceptions to this might include avoiding dangerous, difficult, or impassable terrain, or specific areas such as monster lairs or regions frequented by bandits. Sometimes characters might deviate from the shortest course in order to use known landmarks to aid in navigation. They'll also need to plan suitable waypoints to recuperate, which might alter the route.

WHAT MAKES THE BEST ROUTE?

When planning an expedition's course, players should try to strike a balance between time, effort, and safety. For example, if the heroes learned from a local woodcutter that they could cut several days from their journey if they pass through the twilight valley in *Feyrise Forest*. Rumors whisper this place of eternal gloom is strange and dangerous, so the characters will need to choose between speed and safety.

Terrain, wildlife, weather conditions, and magic can all tip the balance of an expedition, so make sure players are aware of these factors when they're planning their route.

CHALLENGES AND TWISTS

As a Game Master, you should be thinking about opportunities and challenges to throw at your players as they plan their route. Consider the following questions to help you turn the expedition into an engaging adventure.

- What challenges are the characters likely to face along the way?
- What meaningful choices could the characters make?
- How can you take advantage of the forest's unique traits to make the expedition unique?



PREPARE, ADAPT AND OVERCOME

Planning is important to a successful expedition, but part of the fun is having players blaze new trails, and adapt to unexpected roadblocks. Reward characters who have carefully chosen a specific route, by experiencing a swift and uneventful trek. Subvert their expectations by having an essential navigational landmark shrouded from view by a lingering fog, challenging them to find ways to overcome a change of course. Introducing NPCs to help or harm players during the expedition is a fantastic way to infuse story. Listening attentively to your players' plans for an expedition almost always provides ideas on things they anticipate, what they hope to achieve, and what they seek to avoid.

REWARD PLAYER PREPARATION

If the characters have worked hard to gather knowledge about the coming expedition, they should fare much better than if they go in blind. Prepared characters might have brought repellent to avoid being bitten by plague-ridden insects, or climbing gear so they can traverse the trees and avoid the deadly ghavix vipers. Those who haven't prepared will be beset by challenges they may struggle to overcome. Without appropriate supplies, they can't cross a raging river or bribe the yellowgut goblins. This might mean they miss their rendezvous with the queen, or fail to deliver essential medicine to the injured soldiers in time.

MEANS OF TRAVEL

As well as determining where they're going to travel, and by what route, the characters will have to make a decision as to how they wish to travel. For a woodland, this would usually be on foot or on horseback.

As challenges and obstacles appear, the heroes might find their preferred method of travel impossible--the undergrowth might become impassable for a pulled supply sled, or the wildlife might scare the horses too much to continue. This is also why some methods of travel prohibit certain or all expedition activities--if you're gliding on a giant eagle, it's hard to stop and find water.

WALKING ON FOOT

Traveling by foot at a typical walking pace (covering around 3 miles per hour for 8 hours a day, for a total of 24 miles a day), is the most common means of travel through a forest. Despite this, walking is often slow going, fatiguing, and usually drains morale. It means that the characters will be carrying the supplies on their backs, which also limits their carrying capacity.

Difficult terrain can further impede traveling on foot, making a journey take longer, and thus requiring even more supplies to be carried. Traveling at a faster pace, where possible, can reduce travel times, as can a forced march, but both of these are likely to drain morale and increase the likelihood of being ambushed.



As well as being tough on the body and mind, walking is also the most dangerous method of travel, since the characters are likely to be exposed to forest hazards, wildlife, and monsters. Traveling on foot limits potential escape methods the characters could take, often requiring them to drop supplies if they need to flee at speed or climb trees or rock formations to get clear of a threat. Some hazards, such as arboreal landslides, are almost impossible to avoid on foot, and might create terrain so disruptive that it becomes impassable.

| d6 | Slowing factors while walking |
|----|---|
| 1 | Caustic fungi underfoot damage characters' boots, forcing them to stop for repairs. |
| 2 | A mudslide covers the trail ahead, forcing travelers to detour or dig themselves out. |
| 3 | The area is covered with sticky giant spider webs which must be hacked down. |
| 4 | High winds force the characters to brave strong gusts and climb over fallen trees. |
| 5 | A flash flood inundates the area, forcing you to swim or wait for the waters to recede. |
| 6 | Briars and brambles catch on the characters' clothing and bags slowing progress. |

| d6 | Fatigue & Morale factors |
|----|---|
| 1 | Rough terrain makes it difficult to walk with full packs, forcing you to rest more often. |
| 2 | The oppressive confines disrupt your circadian rhythms, hurting your morale. |
| 3 | You struggle to find fresh food, forcing you to eat inedibles. Small ailments occur. |
| 4 | It has been many days since you saw anyone. You hear and see things that are not there. |
| 5 | Flies and other insects swarm relentlessly, making you easily distracted to other dangers. |
| 6 | You've been unable to get dry due to the soaking rain. The cold affects your morale and skill checks. |

| d6 | Surprising factors |
|----|---|
| 1 | The party must shed their packs and supplies to outrun a dangerous creature. |
| 2 | A party member's leg becomes infected after a minor skirmish, causing them to become rabid and violent. |
| 3 | Lightning strikes a tree right beside the characters, causing it to explode. |
| 4 | The characters must quickly find refuge as a stampede of wildlife comes charging past. |
| 5 | The party must surrender their weapons lest they anger the forest's guardian spirit. |
| 6 | You accidentally step on a hunter's snare and are strung up in a net. |

HORSES & WAGONS

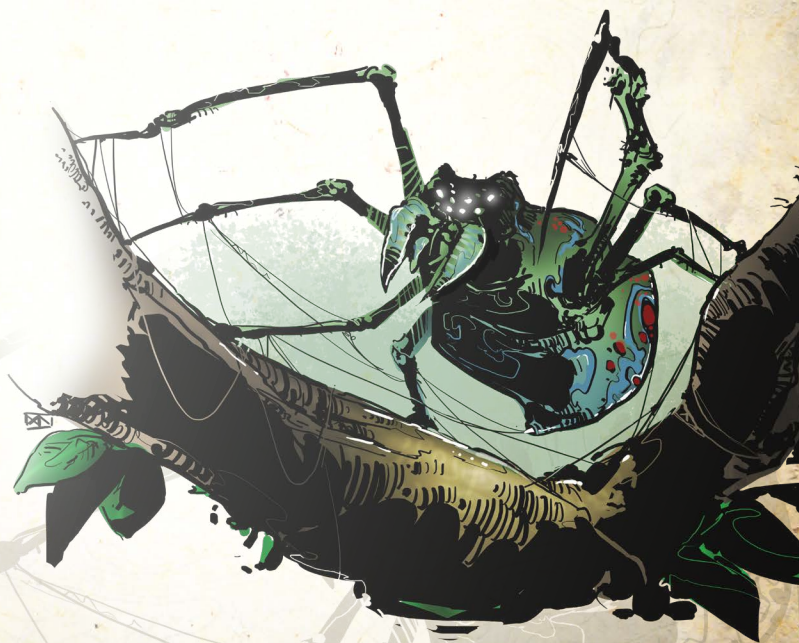
Traveling on horseback or in a wagon is another common way of navigating through forests. The advantage of mounted travel is an increase in carrying capacity and travel distance, as horses or ponies can typically walk for longer with greater weight upon them. Unfortunately, most equine mounts aren't particularly adept at walking off-trail, and wagons certainly cannot leave the broad paths created for them. Horses also require lots of food and water. Normally this isn't an issue in a forest where grazing is plentiful, but during winter or in unfamiliar areas it is wise to bring extra supplies to keep the mounts happy.

Worse still, horses can be particularly noisy during travel. This, as well as the smell of a sweaty horse, can attract hungry predators. Some horses are also rather skittish, so if a predator does come hunting they might throw their rider and cause serious injury, or bolt off into the undergrowth and become entirely lost. Horses can also suffer from injuries like any creature, and a lame horse can take days before it's ready to walk again.

| d6 | Slowing factors |
|----|--|
| 1 | You go over an unexpected bump on the path which snaps your wagon's axle. |
| 2 | Your horse develops an infection in an unnoticed wound on its foot, making it lame. |
| 3 | The well-traveled path up ahead has become degraded, preventing your wagon from passing. |
| 4 | Fallen branches litter the trail, forcing your horse to carefully pick its way through. |
| 5 | One of the characters' horses loses its shoe whilst walking through thick mud. |
| 6 | One of the wagon's wheels falls off after colliding into a tree stump. |

| d6 | Fatigue & Morale factors |
|----|---|
| 1 | The horses can't find enough to eat and become increasingly tired. |
| 2 | The wagon is in constant need of repair - a draining, tiresome process. |
| 3 | One of the characters drops a personal item, which falls under the wagon's wheel and is broken. |
| 4 | The horses are unsettled for nights on end and refuse to sleep, keeping the characters awake. |
| 5 | Something important falls out the back of the wagon while no one is paying attention. |
| 6 | One of the horses is badly injured and a character has to put it down. |

| d6 | Surprising factors |
|----|--|
| 1 | Your mount spots something in the undergrowth and bolts off-trail. |
| 2 | A dangerous creature has sequestered itself in your wagon. |
| 3 | One of the horses takes a tumble, scattering the supplies it was carrying. |
| 4 | A grumpy horse kicks one of the characters in the stomach, forcing them to rest and recover. |
| 5 | A foul mold begins growing over the wagon, poisoning everyone who rests in it. |
| 6 | The sound of the wagon draws in intelligent humanoids who demand a toll. |



TRAVEL METHODS & PACE

The following tables present common, uncommon, and wondrous modes of travel suitable for a forest. This typically means traveling across roads and trails, but why not fly above the forest canopy or swiftly traverse the wilds on the back of the mystical *Elk Riders*? These are guidelines. Factors such as weather and terrain may affect speed.

| Common Travel | Miles per Day | Notes |
|--|---------------|--|
| Walking (Slow Pace) | 12-18 | Able to use stealth. Some Expedition Activities are easier. |
| Walking (Normal Pace) | 24 | No advantages or disadvantages. |
| Walking (Fast Pace) | 30 | Penalty to spot checks. Some Expedition Activities are harder. |
| Running | 48 | As Walking (Fast Pace). No Expedition Activities. Impossible in difficult terrain. Exhaustion check each hour. |
| Dragged vehicle (travois, sled, etc.) | 32 | Impossible when not on trail. Limited Expedition Activities. |
| Wheeled vehicle (cart, carriage, etc.) | 32 | Impossible when not on trail. Limited Expedition Activities. |
| Pony (or a similar Medium mount) | 32 | Typical carrying capacity 200 lbs. Limited Expedition Activities. |
| Horse (or similar Large mount) | 48 | Typical carrying capacity 500 lbs. Limited Expedition Activities. |

| Uncommon Travel | Miles per Day | Notes |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|---|
| Climbing/Moving via Treetops | 8 | Can avoid some difficult terrain below. Exhaustion check each hour. |
| Gliding | 24 | Avoids some difficult terrain. Limited Expedition Activities. |
| Badger (or similar Tiny beast) | 20 | Typical carrying capacity 60 lbs. Limited Expedition Activities. |
| Giant Beetle (or similar Small beast) | 24 | Typical carrying capacity 100 lbs. Limited Expedition Activities. |
| Deer (or similar Medium beast) | 32 | Typical carrying capacity 140 lbs. Limited Expedition Activities. |
| Elk (or similar Large beast) | 48 | Typical carrying capacity 250 lbs. Limited Expedition Activities. |

| Wondrous Travel | Miles per Day | Notes |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|---|
| Flight (Over canopy) | 48 | Avoids some difficult terrain. Limited Expedition Activities. |
| Flight (Under canopy) | 32 | Avoids some difficult terrain. Limited Expedition Activities. |
| Giant Elk (or similar Huge beast) | 48 | Typical carrying capacity 500 lbs. Limited Expedition Activities. |
| Hippogriff (or similar flying mount) | 48 | Typical carrying capacity 200 lbs. Limited Expedition Activities. |
| Animated Tree | 16 | Typical carrying capacity 500 lbs. Limited Expedition Activities. |
| Burrowing Mount | 24 | Avoids some difficult terrain. No Expedition Activities. |

COMMON TRAVEL

Routinely available and most commonly used, these methods of travel consist of commonplace vehicles, mounts, and the use of one's own two feet. Heroes can usually rely on the nearest beacon of civilization to have a simple vehicle or standard mount available for a reasonable price. However, common methods of travel are used for well-traveled roads and may find the unpredictability of forest routes difficult or even impossible to overcome.

UNCOMMON TRAVEL

As heroes make new connections and discoveries, they may find animal allies or mounts who can help them navigate the forests or carry their burdens. Alternatively, adventurers might need to take to the trees, swinging between vines or clambering from branch to branch to avoid some impassable terrain on the forest floor.

WONDROUS TRAVEL

Wondrous travel methods are precious things, often earned through a combination of tenacity, luck, or animal handling. They might not be perfect or available for long, but they can completely change the expedition experience for a time by circumventing the challenges of travel. Clinging onto the back of a giant eagle might make completing some expedition tasks impossible, but it's a small price to pay for soaring unhindered over the treetops. These unusual methods of travel can be attained before or during the expedition.



fig. IXII: The elk riders steered me to safety.

THE JOURNEY

The plans have been laid and the route inked onto the map. The dotted line marks a path through lands both fair and foul, and now challenges and opportunities await. As the characters pull their backpack straps tight, they take the first steps on their wondrous expedition.

EXPEDITION ROLES

As the characters make their way along a forest trail, they might decide to stop for a while and collect the ripe raspberries that burst from the thickets on either side of them. Perhaps another character takes the opportunity to scout ahead for potential shortcuts or watches over the foragers to ensure they're not ambushed by meddlesome bugbears. In less dangerous parts of the forest, a character might tell a tale or sing a song to raise the morale of their companions. Each of these actions can be considered an *expedition activity* that aids the journey.

This section presents four expedition roles that are influenced most by the forest environment: crafter, forager, hunter, and navigator. It describes how the forest plays into each role, and provides examples of forest-themed challenges the Game Master might give to a character in that role. All expedition activities and related expedition roles can be found in the *Expedition System Appendix*.

◆ CRAFTER ROLE

Within a forest, a crafter has easy access to a variety of materials and resources that can be used to repair or create items. Mundane materials may include timber and feathers, while magical ones may include giant spider webs and prismatic crystals. Crafters can help their party overcome difficult terrain by fashioning rope swings or climbing gear, and can make the expedition easier by creating makeshift shelters and improvised weapons.

Challenge. The Crafter might be called on to fix a broken wagon, make a crude bridge to cross a dangerous gorge or create something crucial that helps the party overcome the terrain or the wildlife, like woven ropes or hunting traps.

◆ HUNTER ROLE

Wildlife is abundant in forests, which means that a skilled Hunter should have no trouble feeding their party, as well as finding new materials that can be used as spell components. Animal parts can also be given to Crafters and Foragers for use in the construction of items or the creation of potions.

Challenge. The Hunter might be tasked to kill a monstrous predator that can be dissected to yield crucial crafting components. The Hunter can leverage their deep knowledge about animal behavior to lead dangerous animals away from the party's camp or lure those monsters into a trap.

◆ NAVIGATOR ROLE

Navigation in a forest can be a nightmare: the undergrowth grows so fast that it might entirely cover a route that was well-traveled the year before. Depending on the season and canopy, it can also be difficult to get a view of the sun or stars, which prevents many traditional navigation methods. A Navigator has a key role in forest expeditions in keeping the party from getting lost or wandering into dangerous territory.

Challenge. *The Navigator may be confronted with weather effects such as thick fog that forces them to leave their pre-planned route. The Navigator helps guide the party through the unknown. Getting lost means more than just a delay; supplies and morale dwindle, and more time on the road means higher chances of encountering danger.*

◆ FORAGER ROLE

Forests provide a cornucopia of plant life that is ready and waiting to be harvested. The quantity and diversity of forageable plants and fungi here are probably higher than in any other expedition environment. This means foragers have a lot of opportunities to find new and rare ingredients including herbs, berries, mushrooms, bark, and sap. Foragers are crucial when looking for medicinal plants that can aid the characters when they're injured or suffering from disease.

Challenge. *The Forager might need to find a specific set of ingredients in order to brew a potion or poultice that counteracts the dangerous effects of another plant or animal in the forest. There are numerous venomous creatures and plants that can cause characters to become poisoned, diseased, or even paralyzed.*

WAYPOINTS

The trailside camps that adventurers make during a stretch are far less comfortable and safe than the temporary encampments they can erect at a waypoint, and unlike making camp during a stretch, resting at a waypoint gives explorers a chance to truly recuperate by relaxing and restoring their spirits.

Waypoints are ideally places of relative safety and shelter, such as an old hunting lodge, a dry cave, or even a populated outpost. Sometimes, they're the only respite from environmental hazards or local threats, such as a stony outcropping above the toxic fumes of a fungal forest, or an enforced neutral zone between the forest's warring elf clans. Safe places to camp aren't just about avoiding combat, either; from a roleplaying perspective, they're locations to recover, talk out recent events, or partake in important tasks like hunting or planning the next leg of the journey.

TRAVEL AND RESPITE

Waypoints help define the journey's rhythm; on days where the adventurers reach a planned campsite with energy and daylight to spare, do they dare to push forward and sacrifice a safer night's rest for greater progress? When the sun begins to sink below the horizon and their waypoint isn't yet within sight, do they push on after darkness falls to meet their goal?

As heroes are met with challenges and detours around obstacles, they may need to reassess and choose new waypoints.

THE CHALLENGES OF LONG EXPEDITIONS

When expeditions stretch on for weeks or even months, the dangers faced by weary travelers begin to compound. If the characters have a friendly ranger's outpost as their next waypoint, but discover that the path has been blocked by a landslide, the detour could mean slogging through unfamiliar territory, draining their energy. This, of course, has a knock-on effect on their morale.

One of the more dire challenges of long expeditions is the slow build-up of fatigue, which makes every action the characters undertake harder. Once fatigue and low morale set in, the characters are likely to run into the dangers of the forest; their perception of the environment might falter, leaving them prone to dangerous terrain, environmental hazards, and even ambush predators. Where before the lookout might have spotted a patch of rustling leaves from hundreds of feet away, now their tired eyes don't notice the threat until the giant boar's tusks erupt from the undergrowth.



fig XXV: Camping on the roadside proved harder than at our marked waypoint.

COMBAT IN FORESTS

Forests are not battlefields where opponents wheel for position on an open plain, or even a place where foes usually see one another approaching. The forest is a place for ambush and ever-changing line of sight. Traps and other dangers can be disguised under a carpet of fallen leaves, and any number of foes can be waiting behind tree trunks or ready to drop down from the shadowed branches overhead.

Even once a fight has broken out and enemies reveal themselves, skilled combatants are constantly using the trees for cover or ducking back out of sight. If the fight looks like it isn't going well, the attackers can attempt to disappear into the trees again. Forest predators are rarely desperate enough to fight to the death and will similarly slip away if the tide turns against them.

EVOLVING ODDS

A forest can work to hinder or help a combatant in a variety of ways. The forest floor is warped by roots and fallen branches that can trip a dashing ally. The undergrowth might be so thick as to slow or restrict movement, or even injure those moving through it. Stealth is hampered by crisp leaves underfoot that make it impossible to conceal your slinking steps. In some places, a forest might be so thick with trees that it's impossible to swing a two-handed weapon, or even anything longer than a dagger. Perhaps the trunks might also prevent line of sight to a foe with a ranged weapon or spell.



| d10 | Critical Fail Effects |
|-----|--|
| 1 | Blinding light shines through the canopy, causing you to miss. |
| 2 | The roots of a nearby tree trip you, leaving you open for attack. |
| 3 | Your weapon becomes wedged in a tree that was closer than you thought. |
| 4 | You turn quickly and whack your head against a branch, stunning you briefly. |
| 5 | You slip on wet leaves underfoot, causing you to slide into an adjacent space. |
| 6 | A bird flies in front of your foe just as you loose an arrow, taking the shot instead. |
| 7 | You charge through a patch of nettles and are overcome with stinging agony. |
| 8 | The branch you put your weight on snaps, sending you plummeting. |
| 9 | As you move, you become entangled in hanging vines. |
| 10 | A bird calls out as you disturb it, alerting your enemy to your attack. |

| d10 | Critical Success Effects |
|-----|---|
| 1 | Your strike lands with such force that your foe stumbles and trips over a stump. |
| 2 | Your strike snags in your foe's clothing, pinning them to a tree trunk. |
| 3 | You grab a sturdy vine and use it to swing toward your foe for a dramatic blow. |
| 4 | Your attack breaks a heavy bough above you, causing it to fall and pin your foe. |
| 5 | You stir up the leaves on the forest floor, making it harder for foes to hit you. |
| 6 | Your attack disturbs a flock of birds, who distract your opponents for a moment. |
| 7 | Your strike draws blood, causing a cloud of insects to swarm around your foe. |
| 8 | Your attack fells a tree that crushes an opponent under its weight. |
| 9 | A forest spirit comes to your aid, imbuing your weapon with elemental magic. |
| 10 | Your blow knocks your foe into a poisonous mushroom, which sprays them. |

FOREST NAVIGATION

Overgrown roads, wild magic, and the green veil of foliage can turn a forest into a labyrinth for the unprepared. Even using landmarks or the sun and stars to navigate becomes difficult once the forest canopy closes overhead. A journey into the darkest wood demands constant vigilance to avoid losing one's way.

SPOTTING & WAYFINDING

A naturally keen eye might easily follow the line of a path or spot a possible shortcut hidden behind the underbrush, but a clever scout can find those same game trails by following tracks and other animal signs. A skilled map-reader will track a party's progress with confidence, though climbing a tree to get a clear view of the surrounding landscape can be an essential way to double-check the group's progress relative to a recognizable landmark.

The difficulty of navigation checks in the forest is increased by the blocked lines of sight and obscuring canopy, which blocks out the sun and stars, essential keys for wayfinding. Landmarks and the trails which lead to them are often masked by dense growth, fallen leaves and brush.

THE GREEN VEIL

The greatest challenge to navigating a forest is line of sight. The sea of tree trunks limits visibility in every direction, from a few hundred feet in sparse pine barrens, to barely arm's reach in the gnarled tangle of an overgrown jungle. A thicket can render trails, creatures, and objects nigh-invisible, even when a character is within a step of stumbling over them!

The forest also has a way of making sounds deceptive. Noises can bounce strangely through the trees and obscure the true location of their source, while the foliage muffles the sound. Only in a forest can a shout of alarm be drowned out by a cacophony of birds and insects in one place, and the sound of a single twig snapping be a heart-stopping noise in another.

The natural camouflage of foliage and fallen leaves presents a serious challenge for lookouts, which is only made worse by the muffling and dulling of sounds. Checks made to spot natural forest denizens may even have disadvantage, unless the characters have prepared by researching the habits of specific creatures.

EVER-CHANGING, ALWAYS THE SAME

The woods are a living thing that is always growing, shifting, and changing. Old paths become overgrown, game trails shift and vanish as animal populations grow and shrink. Wind, rain, and snow wash out paths and footholds or hide them from view. As roots dig into the earth and flowing streams erode the soil, the forest slowly makes maps out-of-date and obsolete. At the same time, one stretch of forest may start to look like another, or the landscape may begin to blur together thanks to the masking of the seasons.

All of this means that it's easy for characters to become lost in forests without ways to confirm their course. In particularly thick woodlands, the navigation check for each day's travel may be difficult. On a failure, the characters may start walking in circles or deviate into dangerous territory.

FOREST LANDMARKS

Anything that breaks up the endless span of trees can serve as a landmark by which the characters can navigate. These can include a mountain peak that looms above the canopy, a floating castle that hovers over the western borders, a lone tree older than the forest itself that rises hundreds of feet into the cloud-strewn sky, or an obelisk etched with profane curses that glows with an eerie green aura.

These landmarks are usually known by the locals, and often have names. The mountain peak may be Jagged Tooth, the castle could be Yith's Flying Fortress, the ancient tree might be the Evertrunk, and the obelisk may be called the Column of Curses. Each should have lore surrounding it that can be uncovered by collecting rumors or reading guides. Each landmark should serve as more than just a navigation aid. In some cases, a landmark might be the entire reason for an expedition, as they are the perfect place to rendezvous, and often have magic associated with them.

Because landmarks can be natural or man-made, it's worth considering how the denizens of the forest view them. Guides in local settlements are likely to point the characters toward man-made landmarks whose history is known, and where there might be easy access to certain supplies like food and water. Conversely, druids and rangers who live in the woodlands might shun man-made landmarks and recommend natural ones such as gulleys or giant toadstools instead.



TRAVERSING THE WOODS

When adventurers' boots finally begin to tread beneath the boughs of a forest, unexpected meetings, treacherous terrain, and strange twists of fate can turn an expedition into a true adventure; sodden earth may cause trees to twist and fall atop unwitting caravans, or malicious dryads may protect their heart trees with gruesome curses.

HAZARDS AND LUCKY BREAKS

Crafting an engaging forest expedition means offering your players a mix of challenges and opportunities. If the "Creating Forest Environments" chapter functions as a toolbox for terrain, monsters, landmarks, and magic, it's up to you to put the hazards and boons they offer into play.

If the characters are making short work of their expedition (easily overcoming combat encounters, staying high on morale, and managing to hit their waypoints on time), hazards can be used to create drama by derailing their

journey. Terrain such as an Arboreal Landslide presents a risk to the characters in that they might be crushed beneath debris, but the aftermath can be just as disheartening; the trail that the characters were following may be blocked, preventing them from reaching the landmark they had intended for their next waypoint.

Conversely, if the characters are struggling to make headway in their expedition because they've failed to prepare or had a bad run of luck, you can alleviate their struggling by introducing *Lucky Breaks* (listed in the table below). You can even provide ways for the characters to turn a bad situation into a good one - if they encounter an awful piece of terrain, you could give them a chance to rescue an NPC trapped there. The NPC might be a local ranger who knows where to find much-needed game to hunt, or a druid capable of clearing difficult obstacles from their path.

| d20 | Lucky Break | Gameplay Effect |
|-----|---|--|
| 1 | You find a cache of supplies in a hollow stump. | Characters find 1d4 pieces of common traveling items. |
| 2 | You discover a spot full of aromatic, medicinal herbs and plants. | The materials can be brewed into 1d4 healing potions. |
| 3 | An elevated area provides a beautiful vista. | Taking a short rest here provides a small morale boost. |
| 4 | You discover an unmapped natural landmark. | Navigation checks made here have advantage. |
| 5 | You meet a friendly traveler on the road. | Characters receive some supplies or information. |
| 6 | You learn about a trail others don't know. | Travel at a fast pace for the day without the usual penalties. |
| 7 | A giant tree provides a wide view of the area. | Increase chances of spotting foes and dangers. |
| 8 | You find an ideal spot to setup camp. | Your next long rest restores maximum health and morale. |
| 9 | Fair weather replaces heavy wind and rain. | Characters restore their morale instantly. |
| 10 | You locate a bounty of edible fruit or fungi. | When cooked, the edibles temporary increase hitpoints. |
| 11 | The terrain changes and is easier to traverse. | Avoid the next patch of difficult terrain. |
| 12 | The weather is taking a turn for the better. | Move at a fast pace without penalty. Morale is increased. |
| 13 | You come across a clear, refreshing spring. | The water cures common diseases and restores hitpoints. |
| 14 | You spot the early signs of an ambush or attack. | Characters can't be surprised by the next encounter. |
| 15 | You unearth a crude or partial map. | The map provides new insights and aids navigation. |
| 16 | You come up with a great new song while walking along. | A character proficient in performance has advantage on their next attempt to boost morale. |
| 17 | You come across an animal in danger. | Saving the animal grants a safe and speedy passage. |
| 18 | You come across a person in danger. | Saving the person grants a boon, such as a map or a guide. |
| 19 | You glimpse a piece of equipment abandoned by the trailside. | Give the characters a piece of useful equipment specific to the environment. |
| 20 | You identify some naturally stimulating bark that can be chewed. | Characters can travel at a fast pace with no penalty today. |

ROLEPLAYING OPPORTUNITIES

Forest expeditions require problem-solving and diverse skill sets, allowing the Game Master opportunities to foster bonds between characters as they cooperate. A navigator might need an athletic character to climb a nearby rock formation to confirm the party is on the right track, or a forager might need a cleric to purify food and drink they have sourced from a tainted grove. These moments can become more than an exchange of abilities and roll of the dice, allowing the characters to create a memory together.

As well as interacting with each other, the forest provides an amazing cast of NPCs the Game Master can use to draw exciting responses from the characters. Curious wildlife or mischievous fey can melt the heart of even the edgiest rogue, and lost explorers or injured couriers can draw even the most reserved cleric out of their shell.

The opportunity to help another living thing, especially something innocent such as an animal, can encourage interactions on a deeper level. Forests also provide an opportunity for otherwise overlooked characters to take the spotlight, or even the lead, for a time. Rangers who might feel out of place in a city are suddenly at the front of the expedition, finding paths and shortcuts for the rest of the characters. Druids are absolutely in their element surrounded by beasts and plants with whom they can converse to gain additional information. Even barbarians can show off their survival skills in such wildernesses.

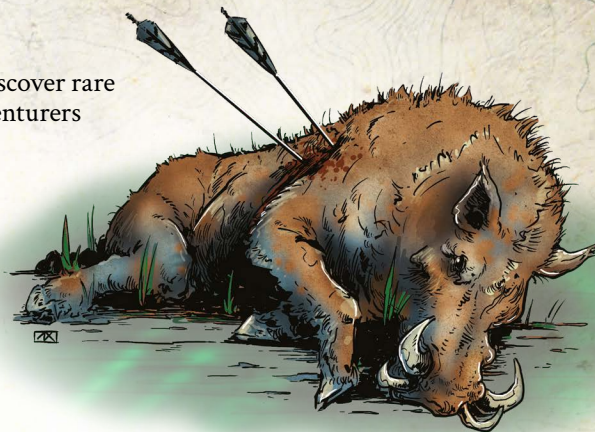


| d20 | NPC | Quest | Twist |
|-----|--------------------|---|--|
| 1 | Noble pilgrim | Find a rare herb to cure a disease. | The herb is guarded by a cruel dryad. |
| 2 | Caravan of clerics | Find a lost holy relic within the forest. | The relic is keeping the forest alive. |
| 3 | Traveling circus | Wants to find a way out of the woodland. | Are enchanted by fey creatures. |
| 4 | King's aide | Return to deliver important news. | The king's aide is actually an assassin. |
| 5 | Awakened fox | Help getting revenge on its enemies. | Its enemies are forest elves. |
| 6 | Injured ranger | Find their lost partner. | Their partner has been kidnapped by a dragon. |
| 7 | Angry lumberjack | Cut down a mystical tree that enchants travelers. | The tree is sentient and immune to magic. |
| 8 | Drunken vagabond | Hunt down a robber who mugged them. | The robber is actually a band of pixies. |
| 9 | Mysterious wizard | Capture and study a deadly basilisk. | They must do so before the next full moon. |
| 10 | Bloody barbarian | Slay a blighted druid killing the forest. | The druid is trying to grow a new fungal forest. |
| 11 | Circle of druids | Evict a coven of hags living in a woodland cottage. | The hags appear as beautiful maidens. |
| 12 | Sentient plant | Wishes to be transformed into a humanoid. | Transforms into an NPC the party knows. |
| 13 | Owlbear rider | Discover a lost, mythical shield. | They must not shed a drop of blood. |
| 14 | Knight errant | Free a trapped friend from a malicious fey. | The friend has fallen in love with the fey. |
| 15 | Trophy hunter | Hunt down a rare and powerful creature. | The creature is the guardian of the forest. |
| 16 | Poor shaman | Control a reveling band of rambunctious satyrs. | The satyrs are protected by a powerful forest spirit. |
| 17 | Werewolf | Rid the character of lycanthropy. | The full moon reveals a moonbridge that allows passage into an important area. |
| 18 | Nurturing dragon | Wants to raise a child of its own. | Demands a human child. |
| 19 | Dying treant | Stop a forest fire from spreading. | Fire elementals are the cause of the blaze. |
| 20 | Woodland spirit | Protect a sacred grove from an attack. | The attack is being carried out by druids. |

SURVIVAL, FORAGING, CRAFTING

While on an expedition, characters will have an opportunity to discover rare and useful natural resources within the forest. Well-prepared adventurers will know what to keep an eye out for--some things are obviously valuable because of their material or their rarity, but others are sought after for their practical use as spell components or alchemical ingredients.

Hunting game or foraging for plants can also help an adventuring party survive in the wilderness. Flora and fauna in a given area are often specially adapted to life there and may have unique properties that make them better able to withstand the harsher aspects of the forest.



HUNTING FOREST WILDLIFE

Adventurers are usually prudent enough to bring ample rations on an expedition, but the loss of supplies, delays, or even a desire to live off the land can cause adventurers to seek additional food from game animals. Common animals provide resources like meat, leather, and bone, but there are many beasts that provide unusual and even magical resources as well.

| d10 | Common Animals | Resources | Effect |
|-----|----------------|--|--|
| 1 | Boar | Leather (4sp), tusks (2gp), boar blood (1sp) | Boar tusks make a primitive weapon or trophy decoration. |
| 2 | Elk | Leather (1gp), antlers (8sp) | Elk antlers can be carved into sharp blades or worn as a ceremonial headpiece. |
| 3 | Rabbit | Pelt (1sp) | Rabbit fur is soft and makes for a good lining. Folk beliefs suggest rabbit feet bring good luck. |
| 4 | Fox | Pelt (1gp) | Fox fur is coveted for its quality and color. |
| 5 | Bear | Fat (4gp), pelt (8gp) | A bear's thick coat and fatty meat are a barrier against the winter cold. |
| 6 | Badger | Claws (2sp), fur (3sp) | Folk belief states that rattling a bag of badger bones discourages fey from playing pranks on travelers. |
| 7 | Moose | Pelt (2gp), meat (2gp), antlers (1gp) | Its antlers are a prized trophy, but moose meat is the most nutritious found among common flora. |
| 8 | Wolf | Pelt (1gp), meat (8sp) | The smell of a wolf pelt will discourage other packs from hunting adventurers. |
| 9 | Raccoon | Tail (3sp) | Sparse on good meat, but some thieves swear by carrying a raccoon tail for good luck. |
| 10 | Pheasant | Feathers (1gp) | This plump game bird's bright plumage fetches a handful of coins. |

“Whatever you need, any item you can envision, can be made from the cornucopia of a bountiful forest. Look around you and see not the land but the potential.”



| d20 | Wondrous Animals | Resources | Effect |
|-----|--------------------|---|--|
| 1 | Broadleaf Hulk | Amber Heart (80gp), Broadleaf Bark (40gp) | The amber heart can be turned into a potion that cures most diseases. |
| 2 | Whisperghast | Whispering Skull (50gp) | Once per day, the skull will truthfully answer a question about the forest where the Whisperghast lived, if it would have known the answer in life. |
| 3 | Berryback Bear | Berryback Pelt (30gp) | The symbiotic vines that grow in its thick pelt continue to produce nutritious berries for weeks after its death. |
| 4 | Cervydra | Antlers (10gp to 300gp per set) | Each head of this deer-hydra has antlers made of unusual material, including copper, gold, and sometimes gemstone. |
| 5 | Mosswolf | Moss (3gp) | Its mossy fur can be applied as a poultice to purge toxins and accelerate healing. |
| 6 | Hedge-Hog | Tusks (2gp) | With sufficient strength, cracking a tusk allows the breaker to create a magical barrier made of plants. |
| 7 | Eldritch Moose | Tentacles, obsidian antlers (350gp) | The tentacles of the moose's mouth are a hearty meal, but its glittering black antlers are the real prize. |
| 8 | Bark Glider | Fins (3gp), hide (5gp) | This manta-ray-like creature's hide blends in with tree bark and is used to make camouflage clothing. |
| 9 | Sableheart | Horns (10gp each), heart (30gp) | This bipedal goat-beast's heart is used in rituals. Undead and demonic creatures are allergic to a puff of its powdered horn. |
| 10 | The Nameless White | Eye (100gp), tongues (5gp each) | When you look into its dreadful eye, you will know its name. Do not speak it. |
| 11 | Pixie Thrush | Alive (120gp) | The song of this minuscule bird can break mind-clouding enchantments or end the grip of supernatural madness. |
| 12 | Zipmunk | Pelt (40gp) | These chipmunks transform into tiny bolts of electricity as they travel near-instantly through the canopy. Cleaning a weapon with its pelt grants a short-lived lightning shock enchantment. |
| 13 | Memento Vulpi | Eyes (50gp), fur (40gp) | The fur of this violet fox has an unusual effect: the moment it's out of sight, it takes enormous willpower to remember you ever saw it in the first place. |
| 14 | Emerald Eagle | Beak (450gp), talons (100gp each) | As its name implies, the beak and talons of these eagles are made from solid emerald. |
| 15 | Elder Stag | Antlers (40gp), hooves (5gp each) | Its antlers and hooves are used to reverse magical aging effects. |
| 16 | Mortar's Skunk | Glands (30gp), fur (10gp) | This skunk's stench is so powerful, victims will cough loudly for 1d4 hours, hurting their stealth chances. |
| 17 | Owl-o-Mist | Tailfeathers (10gp each) | These owls can teleport short distances to get the jump on prey. Their feathers are used as quills when scribing teleportation magic. |
| 18 | Hivecat | Venom sacs (4gp each) | These feral cats construct wasp-like hives for family groups of up to 20. Their bite contains painful venom. |
| 19 | Imperial Slug | Toxic Slime (5 gp/ vial) | Its gluey slime can preserve body parts and magical specimens for long periods of time. Can temporarily close wounds. |
| 20 | Revenant Rat | Brain (50gp) | This rat continuously revives and regenerates to plague adventuring parties by consuming their rations. Its brain is a coveted point of study in schools of healing and necromantic magics. |



FORAGING

An experienced druid or ranger is well-versed in the identification and use of many common flora, along with rarer species of plants from the region where they were raised or trained. Even a wide-traveled druid or well-researched sage can't predict what strange new flora or fungus the world may produce in the name of adaptation or at the whims of wild magic.

| d10 | Common Flora | Value | Effect |
|-----|-----------------|------------|--|
| 1 | Camille | 1sp | The large leaves of this common plant are burned in many folk rituals to cleanse places of negative auras and malevolent spells. |
| 2 | Throttlecreeper | 5sp/bundle | These tough, flexible vines can be easily woven together while camping to form a bulky but serviceable 20-foot-length of rope. |
| 3 | Birch Bark | 2sp/bundle | Birch Bark is well known for its use in combating pain and inflammation. |
| 4 | Marsh-mallow | 1sp/bundle | Used as a widespread staple in treating ulcers and respiratory illnesses. |
| 5 | Poppy | 5sp/bundle | Poppy extracts are used as pain depressants and sedatives. |
| 6 | Eucalyptus | 5sp/bundle | One of the most well-known plants used by apothecaries for pain relief tonics. |
| 7 | Feverfew | 8sp/bundle | Treats inflammation, headaches, and fevers. |
| 8 | Gingko | 4sp/bundle | Promotes mental acuity and perception. |
| 9 | Valerian | 3sp/bundle | This root is used to soothe nerves and reduce insomnia. |
| 10 | Watercress | 2sp/bundle | A widespread water-loving flower with mild disease-fighting properties. |

| d10 | Uncommon Flora | Value | Effect |
|-----|----------------------|-----------|--|
| 1 | Ghelseeker | 1sp | Worth little on its own, ghelseeker senses gold and often grows close to lost hoards or rich veins of ore. |
| 2 | Razorfern | 4sp | When the plant is threatened, its leaves become as rigid and sharp as a blade. |
| 3 | Arinam's Tears | 5sp | These orange irises hold a significant quantity of sweet nectar. One bunch satisfies the daily water intake of the average person. |
| 4 | Dreamer's Bugleweed | 4sp | This low creeping flower spreads in shady areas. It makes for a comfortable resting area and a creature sleeping on it can't be scryed or otherwise observed by magic. |
| 5 | Chimevine | 3sp | The seed pods of this tangling vine rattle like sleigh bells. Trappers and rogues like using them as a natural alarm-trap. |
| 6 | Hag's Hair | 2sp | This tough high grass can be boiled down to a noodle-like consistency, making it a good trail ration. |
| 7 | Forest Queen's Amber | 5sp/sap | Any fey-touched tree can produce this sap, which preserves any food it's applied to much longer than normal. |
| 8 | King's Buttons | 5sp/bunch | These small, uncommon mushrooms are coveted at wealthy tables for their succulence. |
| 9 | Resurrection Crocus | 5gp | Will return each year, even after natural or magical disasters. Their bulbs can be substituted or used as components in magic to restore a creature to life. |
| 10 | Wolf Eye | 3sp | This yellow-gold flower is like catnip for wolves and is used by rangers to discourage attacks. |

| d20 | Wondrous Flora | Value | Effect |
|-----|------------------------------|------------------------|--|
| 1 | Sorrowbell | Petals (1 gp) | A tea infused with sorrowbell helps recover repressed memories or soothe the sting of painful ones. |
| 2 | Corpse-Winder | Flowers (10gp) | These flowering vines grow through old skeletons and eventually puppet them, killing other creatures to provide new bodies for growth. Its flowers are used in rituals to ward against the undead. |
| 3 | Golic's Thistle | Golic Thorns (5gp) | This thistle creates a flash-freeze around itself when disturbed. Its spines are harvested for potions of fire resistance and the treatment of burns. |
| 4 | Gorgondrupe | Fruit (10gp) | A tree of living stone that grows peaches of solid rock. The soft pumice-like pit of the fruit is used to cure petrification. |
| 5 | True Blaze Maple | Leaves (20gp) | This ever-burning maple tree grows near dryad glades. Its leaves make a tonic that elevates one's speechcraft and singing for 1d4 days. |
| 6 | Clockwillow | Heartwood (50gp) | Time bends around these willows as they bend in the wind. Wands made from clockwillow are better at casting chronomancy spells. |
| 7 | Busterpuff | Seeds (2sp) | This tall reed-like plant sends seeds scattering when disturbed. The seeds grow into a full-sized busterpuff the instant they hit the ground. They can be used to provide instant cover. |
| 8 | Ghost Pine | Pinecones (8gp) | These pine trees are opaque and intangible except under the light of certain phases of the moon. Their pine cones are used to magically see and enter the ethereal plane. |
| 9 | Fate's Foxglove | Flowers (2gp) | A tea brewed from these gives the drinker flashes of insight into the next 24 hours of their life. |
| 10 | Dryad's Cry | Petals (2gp) | These flowers are used as components in magic to calm, control or speak with animals. |
| 11 | Selman's Walnut | Sap (5gp/vial) | Its sap is a symbiotic ooze that emerges to defend the tree when attacked. Boiled down, the sap-ooze becomes a sugary gum that suppresses fatigue for a few hours. |
| 12 | Walnut Beyond Time and Space | Pristine Walnut (20gp) | When a healthy walnut is cracked open, it teleports itself and anything around it into a time-suspended pocket dimension until it reappears as a sapling a short time later. |
| 13 | Wyvern Lily | Flower (5gp) | The wyvern lily's nectar is a deadly toxin. Assassins and criminals covet it. The petals change color from a grave-gray to a pallid purple. |
| 14 | Hydragea | Flowers (2gp) | The flowers have powerful disease-cleansing properties, but they're guarded by rapidly regenerating flytrap-like heads. |
| 15 | Morden's Shelf | Full shelf (8gp) | This shelf fungus hardens as it grows until it is as strong as steel. Forest denizens shape weapons and armor by controlling its growth. |
| 16 | Echo Oak | Echo Acorn (100gp) | Rare and difficult to grow, an echo oak remembers and repeats things said to them. A status symbol for noble families and royalty. |
| 17 | Tickthicket | Thorns (8gp) | This thorny bush actively digs into creatures and drains their blood for nutrients. It is most commonly used in crafting poisons. |
| 18 | Floating Yarrow | Petals (4gp) | This bright red cluster-flower floats above the ground. It is an essential component in flying magic. |
| 19 | Diamond Lilies | Bulb (10gp) | These silver-white lilies twinkle even in the darkest nights. Diamond lilies produce a small radius of dim light that can overcome even magical darkness. |
| 20 | Molarorel | Mushroom Camps (5gp) | The head of these mushrooms grows as teeth. They usually appear in haunted places and on cursed ground and are important for spells warding against elemental evil. |

DEFENSIVE SURVIVAL TACTICS

Adventurers familiar with the dangerous creatures of the forest may use special techniques to ward them off while traveling or resting. None of these methods are foolproof, but savvy travelers use them to reduce the chance of ambushes and other attacks. However, most of the common methods also involve a degree of risk.

Lighting a campfire is sure to scare off wolves and giant spiders, but reveals your location to intelligent creatures such as bugbear assassins or green dragons. Despite these potential risks, it might still be worth employing these defensive survival tactics, especially if you know the woods well enough to avoid areas where the downsides are exaggerated. Many of these defensive survival tactics might need to be prepared in advance, which should occur during the planning stage of the expedition system.



| d10 | Tactic or Preparation | Purpose | Potential Downsides |
|-----|--|---|---|
| 1 | Lighting a campfire | Keeps common beasts at bay. | Bolder monsters or intelligent residents will know your location. |
| 2 | Traveling noisily or carrying certain noise-makers | Animals are discouraged and will often flee from excessive noise or certain sounds. | Predators and intelligent residents will find you with ease. |
| 3 | Bring payment for residents to let you pass | An entire group or certain patrols might look the other way if you make it worth their while. | You may have limited time to leave the territory or be restricted to a specific route. |
| 4 | Wear a certain marker: a badge, a banner, or a cloth of a certain color | Specific factions or monsters recognize the badge and let the bearer pass unmolested. | Rival factions or those trying to secure passage for themselves may try to take the marker. |
| 5 | Make a pact with ghosts, spirits, or elemental entities | These entities usually have significant power; an offering can gain their neutrality or their protection. | Pacts may cost precious resources, such as magic items, blood, or even souls. |
| 6 | Carry a warding-pouch of herbs, rune-marked bones, and other ritualistic items | A powerful warding item can discourage incorporeal undead and similar creatures. | Charlatans selling completely ineffectual items are common. |
| 7 | Create illusions as a decoy | Creatures may attack the illusion, springing ambushes early and losing any element of surprise. | Illusion magic may expend resources and attract magic-attuned beings. |
| 8 | Scout with an animal companion | Animals are less likely to be noticed or appear out of place when scouting. | Animal scouts are vulnerable to predators and other creatures. |
| 9 | Scout or keep watch ahead or away from the main group | An individual, hidden or alone, can better avoid detection. | If either the main group or individual is threatened, the other takes time to reach them. |
| 10 | Apply camouflage appropriate for the terrain | Specific camouflage is better for concealment in the proper environment. | Camouflage in the wrong terrain can be worse than none at all. |

SEASONS AND WEATHER

Forests are ever-changing and the arrival of a new season can radically change their character. Likewise, weather can transform an otherwise peaceful expedition into a harrowing trek, or force players to make unique preparations. For example, there is little point in packing extra traps for catching rabbits in the dead of winter when they are hibernating. Similarly, strapping on layers of furs or heavy armor may cause heatstroke when the weather is hot and humid.

Ways in which the seasons and weather can affect planning and traveling are detailed in the sections below.

SPRING

Spring is perhaps the best season to travel - it's rarely too hot or too cold, new growth is appearing but isn't so thick as to hinder progress, and animals might not yet have emerged from their hibernation. It is a season of new growth and high hopes. Life emerges from the frost, restoring itself after the harsh winter has passed. As plants bloom and trees blossom, they fill the air with fragrances that cannot be rivaled by the perfumer, and the call to adventure can be felt in many a hero's heart. Travelers and traders alike take to the forest roads.

Springtime weather is somewhat less steady than autumn, but far more temperate than during summer or winter. This means that characters can be fairly certain that the trails will be intact when they set out. The only challenge is a surprise wet spring, which washes trails away and could even cause landslides or flash frosts.

The ground tends to be relatively clear as briar and bramble have not yet established themselves, even the brush often hugs the forest floor. This makes it easier to spot hunting predators stalking between the trees and to find prey of your own to hunt. Most of the challenge comes from foraging; newly sprouted plants are not easy to identify, and they are unlikely to bear fruit until summer or even autumn. Those well-versed in the bounty of the woodland will be able to sustain themselves and their party.



fig IIc: Our capes got soaked quickly by the heavy rainfall.

| d10 | Advantages of Springtime |
|-----|---|
| 1 | Lack of foliage makes it easier to hunt. |
| 2 | New undergrowth doesn't impede movement. |
| 3 | More individuals on the road gives an opportunity to restock while traveling. |
| 4 | Even temperatures remove the need for extra layers. |
| 5 | Most predators are still hibernating. |
| 6 | Days are starting to lengthen, allowing for extended travel time. |
| 7 | Some dangerous plants have not yet grown. |
| 8 | Fine flowers and fragrances boost morale. |
| 9 | Melting snow is a source of water. |
| 10 | Higher chance of finding dropped or damaged supplies and vehicles. |

| d10 | Challenges of Springtime |
|-----|--|
| 1 | Flash frosts create dangerously cold nights. |
| 2 | Sudden showers wash away an important trail. |
| 3 | New plants aren't easy to identify, so foraging is difficult. |
| 4 | Monsters that have emerged from hibernation are hungry. |
| 5 | Crowded trails slow the party's pace. |
| 6 | Flash floods can wash travelers off hillsides. |
| 7 | Lack of foliage makes it harder to hide. |
| 8 | Storms cause difficult weather conditions, such as heavy rain and lightning. |
| 9 | Heatwaves slow the pace and increase water requirements. |
| 10 | More people on the roads draws more monsters and criminal activity. |



SUMMER

Although summer is a boon thanks to its fair weather, warming sunshine, and long days, it can be deceptively dangerous. If the temperature rises too high, hiking can become an ordeal and hydration may become a serious concern. Forest fires start when the undergrowth dries out rapidly and even if the flames aren't close enough to impact an expedition, the smoke certainly will. Resources are plentiful during summer, but so is wildlife. Furthermore, there is more traffic on the main trails, meaning bandits and other marauders are especially common. Despite this, summer is truly a beautiful time to mount an expedition. If you know how to plot a course that is sheltered from the sun and heat, there's a great chance the journey will be easier than normal.

One of the main advantages of summer is the light. Although it can cause immense heat that drains the energy of hikers, it also means that days are much longer. These long days provide extra opportunities for walking, either spreading the miles out over more hours, or pushing yourself to keep up a demanding pace. These light hours also give the opportunity for more expedition activities, such as foraging, searching for campsites, and hunting.

Plentiful sunlight makes it harder to use stealth, but easier to spot foes. In some cases, the abundance of blossoming growth makes it easier to hide. Summer heat makes wearing heavy armor a nightmare and heatstroke can have a serious impact on long treks.

| d10 | Advantages of Summer |
|-----|--|
| 1 | Long days mean plenty of time for walking and extra activities. |
| 2 | Warmer temperatures mean less heavy clothing needs to be packed. |
| 3 | Other travelers are more common, so the chance of getting lost is lower. |
| 4 | Plants may begin to bear fruit, making foraging easier. |
| 5 | Bountiful foliage makes it easier to use stealth. |
| 6 | Plentiful rests in sunny glades boost morale. |
| 7 | Hot nights mean that tents are not always necessary. |
| 8 | Trade on the roads is at a high point, making resupplying easy. |
| 9 | Wood is drying, making it easier to build and start campfires. |
| 10 | A wide variety of wildlife is active, making hunting easier. |

| d10 | Challenges of Summer |
|-----|--|
| 1 | Wildlife and monsters are out in full force, which can be dangerous. |
| 2 | Temperatures can rise to uncomfortable or dangerous levels. |
| 3 | Increased traffic means increased criminal activity. |
| 4 | Dry undergrowth and strong sunshine can cause forest fires. |
| 5 | Droughts can seriously reduce the chance of finding fresh water. |
| 6 | Undergrowth and thickets have grown, slowing the pace of travel. |
| 7 | Tree branches are full of leaves, reducing line of sight. |
| 8 | Insects are at their most active and may spread disease or lower morale. |
| 9 | Increased temperatures mean food spoils faster. |
| 10 | Summer storms can be sudden and violent. |

AUTUMN

Autumn is the season of harvest; the food available in woodlands is at its peak. This varies wildly from bounties of berries and stone fruits to even fungi. Unfortunately, it is also mating season for many beasts and monsters of the forest, which means they become territorial and aggressive. The new blanket of fallen leaves means it's easier to see through what would have been verdant thickets, but also obscures pathways and trails. It also makes it much harder to sneak anywhere due to the telltale sound of crunching leaves underfoot.

Travel in autumn can be pleasant - the temperatures are usually moderate, but the weather is often poor thanks to the humidity and cold, causing thick fog and storms. As nature prepares for winter, so does civilization. There are usually fewer travelers on the roads at this time of year, reducing the chance of combat encounters with criminals or disturbed animals.

| d10 | Advantages of Autumn |
|-----|---|
| 1 | Bare trees make it easier to spot landmarks for navigation. |
| 2 | Trees still bear fruit and some shrubs still have berries. |
| 3 | Moderate temperatures mean heavy clothing usually isn't needed. |
| 4 | Fewer travelers mean less chance of bandit encounters. |
| 5 | Fruiting bodies of mushrooms are ready to harvest. |

| | |
|----|--|
| 6 | Clearer ground makes it easier for mounts. |
| 7 | Fallen wood is readily available, making it easier to start fires. |
| 8 | Fallen leaves make it difficult for monsters to ambush travelers. |
| 9 | Plentiful rainfall is a source of fresh water. |
| 10 | Prey is easier to hear thanks to crisp leaves underfoot. |

| d10 Challenges of Autumn | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Shorter days mean limited opportunity for expedition activities. |
| 2 | Fallen leaves obscure trails, making navigation harder. |
| 3 | Mating season for animals makes them more aggressive. |
| 4 | Cold snaps can be dangerous for the unprepared. |
| 5 | Frequent rain reduces morale and slows travel pace. |
| 6 | Leaf-covered ground makes it harder to use stealth. |
| 7 | Insects are still present and can pass on disease. |
| 8 | Monsters may want to feast on flesh before their hibernation. |
| 9 | Hazards are masked by fallen leaves. |
| 10 | Strong gales slow travel pace and can create difficult terrain. |

WINTER

Inclement weather, frozen ground, heavy snowfall, and short days make winter the worst season in which to undertake an expedition. Preparations for winter may include extra layers of clothing, goggles, snowshoes, shovels, torches, and even skis to help deal with the intense cold and heavy snow.

Despite these hardships, the views during winter are often glorious. Icicles may hang from trees and snow may cover some of the more difficult terrain which can make some stretches of the journey easier, provided the adventurers have skis or snowshoes. Snow also provides a constant supply of freshwater that only needs to be boiled to be safe to drink.

The two worst elements of winter travel are the cold and the burden of equipment. In the worst cases, snowstorms and whiteouts can cause a traveling party to become entirely lost or succumb to frostbite and hypothermia. However, bundling up in layers and carrying other cold-weather gear makes travel far more difficult and it often means that the characters are far less agile in dangerous

situations. Foraging and hunting usually result in meager returns and though there are fewer creatures in the woodlands, winter wolves and other creatures may still be hunting.

| d10 Advantages of Winter | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Insects have died off removing the need for repellent or cures. |
| 2 | Crunching snow underfoot makes it hard for monsters to ambush. |
| 3 | Snowfall makes for easy tracking of quarry or prey. |
| 4 | Low temperatures mean rations last for longer without spoiling. |
| 5 | Snow and ice make other means of travel, such as sleds, possible. |
| 6 | Most monsters are hibernating, so the risk of encounters is lower. |
| 7 | Higher chance of discovering abandoned supplies or vehicles. |
| 8 | Lack of foliage makes it easier to spot landmarks and navigate. |
| 9 | Snow can be melted to use as a water source. |
| 10 | Chance to scavenge dead animals that have not yet spoiled. |

| d10 Challenges of Winter | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Many animals are hibernating, meaning there is less to hunt. |
| 2 | Freezing temperatures necessitate the packing of extra layers. |
| 3 | Frequent precipitation and winds make travel difficult. |
| 4 | Deep snowfall and frozen ground can make for difficult terrain. |
| 5 | Potential for falling trees and rocks due to storms and rotting. |
| 6 | Very limited chance of meeting friendly or useful characters on trails. |
| 7 | Cold makes it harder to shake fevers and other diseases. |
| 8 | Frigid nights mean tents and fires are an absolute necessity. |
| 9 | Snowstorms can cause travelers to become entirely lost. |
| 10 | Near impossible to start fires due to lack of dry wood. |

WEATHER EFFECTS

Torrential rain, high winds, scorching heat, and heavy fog can turn a challenging expedition into a deadly one. Though not as tangible as a map or a piece of treacherous terrain, weather can have a major effect on an expedition by hampering travel--or making it easier.

FAIR WEATHER

Fair weather is what most travelers hope for; low levels of precipitation and wind, and a moderate temperature that doesn't require packing extra layers, but isn't so hot as to exhaust you. Characters should consider how to make the most of fair weather by packing or utilizing items that can give them an edge. For example, characters might consider taking a vehicle knowing that it won't become stuck in wet mud.

PRECIPITATION

Rain, hail, and snow are always the bane of the traveler. Even a light rain can drench you from head to toe if you're not properly prepared. Hail can tear through tents and turn the ground to slush. Snow covers trails and

obscures landmarks. No matter what the precipitation, it's essential to pack waterproofed tents and coats for the expedition. If precipitation gets dangerously bad, floods might occur, or mass snowfall could entirely bury the characters. In response, characters might wish to take boats, bring shovels, or water-proof their supplies.

STRONG WINDS

High winds can cause trees to fall, make tents impossible to pitch, and make walking and climbing slower. In extreme cases, winds might make magical flight and flying mounts dangerous or even impossible to use; the same is true for traveling through the canopy. Furthermore, high winds can cause boughs or entire trees to fall, which can cause injury or even death. Trees can also fall across trails or landmarks, obscuring them. In addition, wind can hamper communication and make it harder to hear encroaching threats.

| Weather Type | Effect on Expedition | Boon | Hazard |
|--------------|--|---|---|
| Fair Weather | Travel pace increased. | Checks made to Make Camp and Set Pace have advantage. | Increased likelihood of encounters with hostile humanoids. |
| Sunshine | None. | Checks made to restore morale have advantage. | Water requirements doubled. Failure to meet water requirements results in exhaustion. |
| Light Rain | None. | Checks made to cover your tracks have advantage. | Creatures have advantage on checks made to hide. |
| Heavy Rain | Travel pace slowed. Hearing- and sight-based checks have disadvantage. | Attempts made to Dowse for Water automatically succeed. | Increased chance that trails and characters could be swept away by flash floods. |
| Hailstorm | Travel pace slowed. Hearing- and sight-based checks have disadvantage. | Undergrowth flattened, removing some difficult terrain. | Extreme hail destroys tents and damages characters. |
| Fog/Mist | Travel pace reduced. Sight-based checks have disadvantage. | Checks made to hide have advantage. | High chance that hazardous terrain is obscured. |
| Lightning | None. | Magic items struck by lightning regain all spent charges. | Characters carrying metal equipment have a chance to be struck by lightning. |
| Strong Winds | Travel pace reduced. Hearing-based checks have disadvantage. | Chance of encounters drastically lowered. | Possibility of characters or tents blowing away. |
| Snow | Travel pace reduced. Terrain is obscured. | Attempts made to Dowse for Water automatically succeed. | Extreme cold means characters without extra layers become exhausted. |

EXPEDITION ARRIVAL

The arrival is the final stage of any journey and could be utterly joyous or totally crushing. Depending on the journey, the characters might have fond memories of crunching through fallen snow under a canopy hung with icicles, or miserable experiences of being snowed under in their freezing tents. Looking back on these memories, both fair and foul, serves to establish the journey within a party's ongoing tale, and provides a moment of poignancy that the end of a wondrous expedition deserves.

When narrating the arrival of the characters at their destination, consider how the journey went. Did the adventurers achieve their goal? Did it take much longer to get there than expected? Did something important occur, such as the death of an allied NPC or a favored animal companion? These questions and more inform the arrival stage of an expedition, and are covered in the *Appendix: Expedition System* in greater detail.

*“Rest up your tired feet, for the expedition is finished.
Think back on the challenges and hardships you’ve faced and remember.
It’s not about where you’ve been, but the wonders you’ve seen.”*



A dense, misty forest scene with large, gnarled trees and falling leaves. The atmosphere is ethereal and slightly dark, with soft light filtering through the canopy. The trees are thick and textured, with many bare branches in the foreground. The ground is covered in moss and fallen leaves. The overall mood is mysterious and ancient.

CHAPTER TWO

Creating Forest Scenes

*“We searched for the earth mote on the far side of the portal.
The air was thick with falling leaves and the smell of moss.
When we entered the circle of stones, the air seemed to crackle.”*





Creating Forest Scenes

Not is the first nightfall since we arrived two weeks ago. Deeper we plunge into the endless stands of trees, towering around us like the pillars of the halls of home. Yet there is no merriment in this place at night—no hearth-fires to light our way, no sound of song, save snapping twigs or a mournful howl. No, here in the forest, I could not feel further from home.”

— *Diary of Hardun Bronzeguts the Dwarf, Day 15*

This chapter of the book is designed to help the Game Master create unique and engaging forest scenes in which to set encounters, or to simply paint an amazing picture of the woodlands the characters are traveling through. It contains a wealth of descriptions, as well as optional rules that allow characters to interact with the scenery in a meaningful way.

FOREST TYPES

Forests can be classified into general types that give a rough idea of the flora and fauna, the weather conditions, the temperature, and the sort of hazards and boons the characters might encounter.

COMMON & UNCOMMON FORESTS

The following table contains several ideas to populate your fantasy world with common types of forests.

| d6 | Common Forest Types |
|-----|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | Colonizing Forest |
| 2 | Littoral Forest |
| 3 | Temperate Broad/Needleleaf Forest |
| 4 | Tropical Dry Forest |
| 5 | Tropical Moist Forest |
| 6 | Swamp Forest |
| d10 | Uncommon Forest Types |
| 1 | Bamboo Forest |
| 2 | Cloud Forest |
| 3 | Crystal Forest |
| 4 | Elysian Forest |
| 5 | Fungal Forest |
| 6 | Geode Forest |
| 7 | Laurisilva |
| 8 | Sacred Grove |
| 9 | Taiga |
| 10 | Underforest |

COLONIZING FOREST

When a forest is destroyed by wildfire, earthquakes, flooding, or some other means, the ground might lay bare for a time, but not for long. A colonizing forest is a place filled with new growth as young saplings and fresh plants rise up from the fertile earth. These young forests are often stalked by lingering earth or fire elementals, as well as child-like dryads who attempt to make the nascent forest flourish. Wild or natural magic is especially weak here, and harming any flora can invoke the wrath of the inhabitants. Druids may establish a circle in a colonizing forest, using elaborate rituals to help its growth and recovery.

Colonising Forest Features



Monsters: Elementals, young dryads, giant centipedes, squirrelfolk



Terrain: Moss fields, raging rivers, arboreal landslides, gorges, glades



Landmarks: Elemental fountain, forsaken boundary, lake, chasm, geyser

LITTORAL FOREST

Sprouting from sandy soil, tough plants grow along coastlines and beaches. Rarely reaching above six feet, the low canopies of these forests are often dense, especially in regions where sunlight is strong, making them difficult to traverse. Forests of this type that are enchanted or overseen by druids often have misdirecting magics that cause trespassers to become confused, wandering in circles. Some areas actively impede travelers, tangling them, tripping them up, and generally hindering movement in already difficult terrain. Pirates looking for forbidding places to cache their treasure may brave a littoral forest, burying their booty beneath or beside a notable landmark.

Littoral Forest Features



Monsters: Crocodiles, giant crabs, snakes, frogfolk, lizardfolk



Terrain: Enchanted waterfalls, reeking bog, metamorphosing glades



Landmarks: Wooden bridge, meditation circle, forlorn prison, rapids, levitating river

TEMPERATE BROADLEAF/ NEEDLELEAF FOREST

These forests are among the richest in terms of foraging, whether it's fragrant herbs or the meat of a wild boar. Broadleaf forests are mostly made of trees like ash, elm, maple, and oak, along with a layer of thick undergrowth, such as ferns and shrubs. Needleleaf forests are characterized by pines, firs, and spruce trees with less brush; though a mixture of broadleaf and needleleaf trees are common. In addition to the diversity of flora and fauna, these woodlands are often home to classic fantasy creatures, ranging from slumbering dragons to towering giants.

Temperate Broadleaf & Needleleaf Features



Monsters: Dragons (green, red, silver), giants, goblins, ogres, orcs, rocs, trolls, wyverns



Terrain: Moss field, splitroot canyon, arboreal landslide



Landmarks: Abandoned campsite, ranger's hut, cattle range, toadstool grove, heartseed

TROPICAL DRY FOREST

These forests are characterized by their dual nature: during the rainier seasons, they're lush and inviting, but during the seasonal drought, they become leafless and dormant, coating the ground with dead leaves. These forests are prone to wildfires, and such raging blazes can occasionally open rifts to the Elemental Plane of Fire, allowing elementals to come through and wreak havoc. During the growing season, the thick canopies provide cover and shelter for hunting monsters, which are especially hardy and deadly.

Tropical Dry Features



Monsters: Ankhegs, basilisks, ettercaps, fire elementals, giant wolf spiders, salamanders, weretigers



Terrain: Overgrown spires, farstride trees, overgrown spires



Landmarks: Ruined temple, tree houses, obelisk, prismatic crystal, behemoth skeleton



TROPICAL MOIST FOREST

Colloquially referred to as jungles, these verdant forests are always near rivers, oceans, or lakes, and sport impressive canopies of towering trees with dense foliage. Forests of this type can hold a wide variety of dangerous creatures; from dinosaurs to giant carnivorous plants or humanoid tribes to snake-human hybrids. The flowers and plants here are often poisonous and exotic. The dense vegetation may hide the ruins of ancient civilizations where weird, eldritch magics long forgotten by the world wait to be rediscovered.

Tropical Moist Features



Monsters: Dinosaurs, flying snakes, stirges, trolls, weretigers, megapedes



Terrain: Humus ponds, metamorphosing glades, twilight valleys



Landmarks: Bandit hideout, ruined tower, totem pole, hunting cabin, giant insect mounds

SWAMP FOREST

Where low-lying basins fill with boggy water and sucking muck, warped and hardy trees form dense groves filled with moss. Swamp Forests are a nightmare to navigate on foot and their complex networks of ponds and streams make canoeing or rafting treacherous. These forbidding forests are often the domains of hags who use powerful curses and warding magics to protect their territory. Cults that worship dark forces may also hide within a swamp forest, conjuring strange creatures from beyond with their eldritch rituals.

Swamp Forest Features



Monsters: Aquatic ghouls, black dragons, hags, lizardfolk, ogres, oozes, shambling mounds, trolls, will-o-wisps



Terrain: Humus ponds, reeking bog, webweaver terraces



Landmarks: Stranded caravan, ancient battlefield, toadstool grove, fungal mass, root bridge



UNCOMMON FOREST TYPES

The following section contains several ideas to populate your fantasy world with uncommon forests.

BAMBOO FOREST

In these forests, dusty trails lead through thickets of bamboo dozens of feet high, forming near-solid walls of stalks in places and shaded groves in others. The canopy of soft leaves above provides a respite from the sun, but makes the interior of the forest humid and sweaty. Creatures can often be glimpsed moving between the shoots, their footfall disguised by the creaking and clattering of the wind-stirred bamboo, whose colors may vary from lime green to lustrous gold to solid black.

Bamboo Forest Features



Monsters: Giant spiders, werbears, ettercaps, couatl, oni, deer



Terrain: Moss field, enchanted waterfall, farstride trees



Magic: Bamboo forms walls and mazes guiding creatures to spots they can safely rest



Landmarks: Cattle range, forsaken boundary, meditation circle, tree houses, dancing grove

CLOUD FOREST

These high-altitude evergreen forests are immersed in clouds, masking the canopy in impenetrable white fog. They often feature spruce and fir trees with thick ferns making up the undergrowth. The boundaries between the Elemental Plane of Air and the Material Plane are thin in areas like this, and elementals can sometimes be found wandering the mists. The thin planar boundaries also heighten the chance of magical weather events, while aerial monsters find these sorts of regions suitable as lairs or hunting grounds.

Cloud Forest Features



Monsters: Air elementals, dragons (brass, red, silver), giant eagles, manticores, pegasi



Terrain: Splitroot canyon, overgrown spires, webweaver terraces



Magic: Magical storms rage across the skies, magical lightning strikes creatures, cloud bridges provide shortcuts



Landmarks: Root bridge, lightning-struck tree, frozen waterfall, stone circle, moonbridge

CRYSTAL FOREST

In these forests, trees, plants, and even living animals are made of crystal-like glass. As sunlight pours into the forest, the crystalline forms absorb and refract it, taking energy for themselves to live and grow. The prismatic glow these forests create can create many magical effects depending on the color—blue light, for example, can cause sleep. Those that wander too deep into a crystal forest may become lost in the maze of reflecting surfaces, seeing themselves mirrored over and over in the crystalline groves.

Crystal Forest Features



Monsters: Crystal elementals, doppelgangers, mimics



Terrain: Raging rivers, chronotrees, elemental confluences



Magic: Reflections in the crystal trees are stolen, then birthed as crystal hunters that track down their originator.



Landmarks: Stranded caravan, elemental fountain, floating tower, mirror visions, prismatic crystal

ELYSIAN FOREST

Elysian Forests are places where the boundary between the afterlife and the mortal realm are thin. Ghosts walk between the blessed groves, providing wisdom to those who leave appropriate offerings. Ancient olive and ash trees form the sparse canopy of this forest, whose understory is composed of tall grasses and leafy shrubs. The creatures that live in the forests are often possessed by the spirits of the deceased and tend to have a calm demeanor. Even carnivorous creatures that live within the forest make sure to hunt outside its boundary, as violence in the woods is always punished.

Elysian Forest Features



Monsters: Centaur, chimeras, griffons, harpies, cyclopes, minotaurs, satyrs, pegasi



Terrain: Twilight valleys, wooded barrows, farstride trees



Magic: Creatures that act violently within the forest are cursed. It is easier to speak with and resurrect the dead here.







Landmarks: Ghost grove, forest gate, ghost town, sylvan temple, graveyard

FUNGAL FOREST

In these strange and disgusting forests, enormous mushrooms make up the canopy, toadstools provide mid-level cover, and slimes make up the undergrowth. Inhaling toxic spores is a major danger here, as are the poisonous plants and even animals. Fungus is the primary food source for much of the wildlife, but Fungal Forests have their own breed of horrific predators adapted for the dim conditions and toxic environment, such as oozes. Due to their flammable nature, these forests are often disturbed by fire, and may even attempt to smother or dispel flames through magic.





Fungal Forest Features

-  **Monsters:** Dark elves, shadow dragons, giant fire beetles, giant spiders, gray ooze, ropers, stirges, troglodytes
-  **Terrain:** Fungal canopies, grisly glade, webweaver terraces
-  **Magic:** Fire magic is less effective, rations become rotten or poisoned quickly.
-  **Landmarks:** Toadstool grove, fungal mass, primitive shelters, hot springs, faerie ring

GEODE FOREST

Slow-growing and unimaginably ancient, a geode forest is formed from dense mineral growths that tower overhead like trees. Their quartz-crystal leaves create dappled purple shadows that dance through the holes in the canopy. Oftentimes, these forests start in caves beneath the earth and slowly spread out over eons into the light of day. The undergrowth of these forests consists of stalagmites and crystalline shards, which are feasted upon by mineral-devouring monstrosities such as trolls, giants, and basilisks. Hidden between these shards are veins of precious metal and glittering gemstones of immense value, but mining them is sure to unsettle the forest's inhabitants.

Geode Forest Features

-  **Monsters:** Basilisk, grick, grimlock, roper, stone giant, troll
-  **Terrain:** Fungal canopies, elemental confluences, timestreams
-  **Magic:** Creatures that cut themselves on the minerals slowly begin to crystallize.
-  **Landmarks:** Levitating river, prismatic crystal, meteorite, collapsed mine shaft, stone circle

LAURISILVA

With low canopies of laurel trees, laurisilva forests are moist and mild, and often extremely old. The aged trees have warped and twisted trunks, and the forest floor is littered with their leaves. Sometimes, the ancient magic of the forest will animate certain plants, creating awakened shrubs or even groves of young dryads. Treants in such forests may have powers and spellcasting abilities similar to druids. Ancient laurels are said to provide potent components for protective magics, and hidden groves may have magical healing powers for those who rest within them.

Laurisilva Features


-  **Monsters:** Awakened shrubs and trees, dangerous fungi, giant bats, giant spiders, harpies, powerful treants
-  **Terrain:** Splitroot canyons, grisly glade
-  **Magic:** Fog-filled groves provide rapid healing, trees and plants animate and move, creating mazes.
-  **Landmarks:** Dancing grove, root spiral, moonbridge, graveyard, mirror visions





SACRED GROVE


Sacred groves are woodlands that have been touched by celestials or other deities. Often, these angelic beings take up residence within the woods, though usually in some disguised form. Though many forests play host to nature deities, sacred groves are different due to how they take on aspects of the being they house. This normally means that only followers of that being may enter without risk of capture or death, and that the forest changes to fit the deity's need, becoming sculpted or manicured as they see fit. They are places of intense magical power and extremely dangerous to trespassers.

Sacred Grove Features

 **Monsters:** Blink dogs, celestials, dragons (bronze, gold, silver), firbolgs, lamassu, pegasi, unicorns

 **Terrain:** Enchanted waterfall, farstride trees, wooded barrows


 **Magic:** Healing spirits in the form of balls of light bless good creatures, undead rapidly decay or are forced to flee.


 **Landmarks:** Woodland guardian, rock formation, obelisk, sylvan temple, reinvigoration pool


SNOW FOREST


Also called a boreal forest, these woodlands are usually covered in thick snow for most of the year. Unlike other forests, only a few types of animals can survive there, and most flora consists of needleleaf trees, moss, and lichen. However, monsters that thrive in cold environments often stalk such forests; tribes of yeti may dominate the area or packs of winter wolves may roam through the trees stalking game. These forests can be conducive to casting ice and snow-based magic, or for gathering ingredients that create or ward off cold.

Snow Forest Features

 **Monsters:** Giants (frost, storm), giant owls, mammoths, rocs, saber-toothed tigers, trolls, werebears, winter wolves, yetis

 **Terrain:** Raging rivers, arboreal landslide, wooded barrows


 **Magic:** Magical blizzards cause crippling cold and snow blindness.


 **Landmarks:** Ranger's hut, geyser, meteorite, singing tree, frozen waterfall

UNDERFOREST


Beneath the earth, in caverns that have never felt the warmth of the sun's light, grow dank Underforests. The albino trees, luminescent fungi, and strange slimes that grow here form weird canopies and bizarre undergrowth seen nowhere else in the mortal realms. Oozes and other predators stalk the forest floor, while bats—both normal types as well as the giant variety—fly above the canopy in search of insects and other prey. Fungus folk and other underground-dwelling sentient races often hunt the Underforests to harvest their flora and fauna. Not only does the underforest thrive without sunlight, it seems to sap the magic of light-generating magics, seeking to maintain the normal gloom of the forest.

Underforest Features

 **Monsters:** Cave giants, dark elves, shadow dragons, oozes, giant centipedes, purple worms, ropers, shadows

 **Terrain:** Fungal canopies, twilight valleys, webweaver terraces

 **Magic:** Light sources only produce dim light, inhaled fungal spores cause creatures to glow, preventing stealth.

 **Landmarks:** Fungal mass, prismatic crystal, cave network, collapsed mine shaft, sacrificial altar

WONDROUS FOREST TYPES

The following table contains several ideas to populate your fantasy world with wondrous forests.

| d10 | Wondrous Forest Types |
|-----|-----------------------|
| 1 | Animated Wood |
| 2 | Antediluvian Woods |
| 3 | Blightwood |
| 4 | Celestial Forest |
| 5 | Elemental Forest |
| 6 | Feyspire Forest |
| 7 | Floating Forest |
| 8 | Haunted Grove |
| 9 | Primeval Forest |
| 10 | Slumbering Forest |

Continued on the next page.

ANIMATED WOODS

These woodlands have been brought to life by natural magic that runs through their roots just as the wind blows through their branches. Almost impossible to navigate, the trees of these forests rise from the ground each night and wander aimlessly. While terrestrial creatures find such woods terrifying and strange, some avian and arboreal creatures have adapted to life in a forest on the move. They have thrived by developing an entire ecology suited to a constant life in the treetops, relocating with the woods as they move.

Animated Woods Features



Monsters: Blood hawks, flying snakes, harpies, stirges, treants



Terrain: Arboreal landslides, elemental confluences, metamorphosing glades,



Magic: Objects that are brought within the forest boundaries may spontaneously animate.



Landmarks: None, as any fixed landmarks are quickly left behind by the walking forest

ANTEDILUVIAN WOODS

Antediluvian Woods are forests so ancient that time itself has become warped around them. They exist almost within their own planes of existence, and their ancient magic is controlled by primal forest spirits who protect them. Aberrant creatures and powerful fey capable of controlling time flit between the trunks of magnificent trees, while twisting elemental cores create treants, change terrain, and offer glimpses of the past and future.

Antediluvian Woods Features



Monsters: Legendary monsters, centaurs, green dragons, dryads, lycanthropes, nymphs, sprites, treants, worgs, unicorn



Terrain: Chronotrees, timestreams, farstride trees



Magic: Time passes differently—days equate to weeks or months in the outside world.



Landmarks: Portal, heartseed, faerie throne, ruined tower, forlorn prison



BLIGHTWOOD

A blightwood is a type of fungal forest that has gained a kind of primitive sentience. Made of a single organism with a vast web of mycelial networks that link its disparate parts, this connected mass consumes and assimilates anything that wanders into its grasp. These forests infest creatures with their spores, hybridizing them into the fungal body and creating mind-controlled fungal thralls. Disturbingly, a blightwood can puppet these creatures so expertly that it can even speak through them. Blightwoods can be wise and peaceful, or cruel and deadly, but they always seek to expand by spreading their spores.

Blightwood Features



Monsters: Fungi; shriekers, violet fungus, fungal hybrids, giant bats, giant spiders



Terrain: Fungal canopies, grisly glades, humus ponds



Magic: Blightwood spores have varying effects ranging from mind control to accelerated decomposition.



Landmarks: Forsaken boundary, fungal mass, root spiral, sacrificial altar, toadstool grove

CELESTIAL FOREST

These forests are intimately connected with the heavens, especially the stars. Their trees glow with internal starlight and their undergrowths are populated with medicinal plants that grant healing and regenerative properties. Each night, the forest transforms to resemble the firmament above; the fruit on the trees and the blooms of the plants become star-like jewels, while the streams and rivers take the form of flowing galaxies with droplet stars. Creatures who harvest the star-like jewels can channel their power to imbue items with divine or radiant magic, but the streams become bottomless demiplanes into which the unwise might fall.

Celestial Forest Features



Monsters: Angels; deva, planetars, solars, couatl, guardian nagas, pegasi, unicorns



Terrain: Enchanted waterfalls, Twilight valleys, wooded barrows



Magic: Creatures that attune with the forest can bless items they own.



Landmarks: Dancing grove, ghost grove, meditation circle, moonbridge, sylvan temple

ELEMENTAL FOREST

Here, the boundaries between elemental realms and the mortal realm have almost broken down. Thus, the plants and animals manifest elemental features such as burning leaves, stony hides, and watery vines. The weather here is heightened and varied, ranging from intense lightning storms to flash floods. Elemental spells, specifically ones that deal with the four main elements—air, earth, fire, and water—have their powers enhanced within the boundaries of this forest.

Elemental Forest Features



Monsters: Elementals, monsters commonly found in forest settings, but with elemental traits (fire-breathing dire wolves, rock-skinned trolls, sprites that radiate intense cold)



Terrain: Elemental confluences, grasping roots, metamorphosing glades



Magic: Elemental outbursts (flash fires, floods, windstorms, earthquakes)



Landmarks: Elemental fountain, floating tower, hot springs, levitating river, sacrificial altar

FEYRISE FOREST

Piercing the sky are hundreds of forested spires, ranging from hundreds of feet to miles high. The twisted pines and spruces that grow atop these spires take beautiful forms, as if sculpted by the gods. Circling above them are a panoply of flying creatures, including drakes and beautiful iridescent birds. These forests are the domain of powerful fey, though many other magical creatures live within their boundaries. Trespassers might encounter enchantments that misdirect, benign illusions hiding dangerous realities, or summoned guardian creatures that drive off intruders.

Feyrise Forest Features



Monsters: Blink dogs, dryads, fey lords and ladies, griffons, nymphs, owlbeats, satyrs, sprites, unicorns



Terrain: Fungal canopies, overgrown spires, twilight valleys



Magic: Waterfalls cure disease and poison but lead to labyrinthine valleys, doldrums cause depression and drain morale.



Landmarks: Dancing grove, faerie ring, faerie throne, root spiral, woodland guardian

FLOATING FOREST

As befits their namesake, these forests float through the air, their roots twisted together into a giant basket-shaped island that supports the entire forest. Dangling roots may drift behind the forest and even touch the ground, allowing creatures to grab on and climb into the forest itself, but this is difficult and dangerous. The forest survives by passing through clouds and soaking in the water, as well as periodically collecting soil with its dangling roots. These forests can change altitude and direction to get closer to the land or sun, but are normally out of reach for ground-dwellers.

Floating Forest Features



Monsters: Chimera, dragons, griffons, hippogriffs, rocs, wyverns



Terrain: Canopy roosts, grasping roots, arboreal landslides



Magic: Objects and living things may sporadically become weightless.



Landmarks: Floating tower, lightning-struck tree, root spiral, totem pole, tree houses

HAUNTED GROVE

Haunted Groves are forests where undead lurk beneath low boughs, reanimated by some necromantic force within the woods. Often, they are the result of gruesome battles that have tainted the forest, or due to a necromancer or death knight that has made their lair within. In addition to both corporeal and incorporeal undead, will-o-wisps often inhabit such places, feeding on the fear and despair of those they lure into the depths of the wood. Necromancy is powerful in such places and beings that die here may be reanimated again and again.

Haunted Grove Features



Monsters: Death knight, ghosts, ghosts, ghouls, liches, morgs, skeletons, specters, wights, will-o-wisps, wraiths, zombies



Terrain: Grisly glade, reeking bog, webweaver terraces



Magic: Undead creatures deal extra necrotic damage and cannot be turned, healing magic only restores half as many hit points.





Landmarks: Ancient battlefield, behemoth skeleton, ghost grove, ghost town, graveyard


PRIMEVAL FOREST


Typified by gigantic creatures and vegetation, Primeval Forests are wild, unpredictable places where the fight for survival is taken to the extreme and the landscape can transform itself in the blink of an eye. Both wildlife and plant life are prone to rapid mutations to deal with threats, and nearly anything can be a predator. Naturally, these forests are incredibly dangerous for even seasoned adventurers, but their rare and exotic flora and fauna can be powerful and valuable to the right people.

Primeval Forest Features

-  **Monsters:** Axe beaks, dinosaurs, giant animals (apes, bats, boars, centipedes, crocodiles, mammoths, saber-toothed tigers)

-  **Terrain:** Fungal canopies, metamorphosing glades, moss fields


-  **Magic:** Creatures rapidly evolve to gain new traits or natural weapons and armor, terrain transmutes randomly.


-  **Landmarks:** Behemoth skeleton, rapids, rock formations, singing tree, tree houses


SLUMBERING FOREST


These forests grow from the living flesh of a slumbering creature of enormous scale, such as a titan, giant, or dragon. The plants here feast on the flesh and blood of the host creature, as if its rough skin was the earth. Occasionally, the forest suffers from quakes and changes in topography when the slumbering creature shifts in its sleep. Animals may burrow into the creature's flesh, carving tunnel networks and even creating caves. Nearly all the creatures who live in a slumbering forest are carnivores, and most plants feed on blood instead of water. If something damages the forest on a large scale, such as a forest fire, the slumbering creature might awaken and destroy parts of the forest to remove the itch.

Slumbering Forest Features

-  **Monsters:** Vampiric creatures, ankhegs, badgers, bulettes, gnolls, stirges, giant wolf spiders

-  **Terrain:** Metamorphosing glades, splitroot canyons, webweaver terraces

-  **Magic:** Drinking the blood of the slumbering creature temporarily imparts a related ability, such as flight, scales, or extreme strength.

-  **Landmarks:** Heartseed, ghost town, lake, root bridge, ruined tower



| Parts of a Forest | Roleplaying Information |
|-------------------|--|
| Forest Edge | The edge of the forest is where animal life is usually the most sparse. It also acts as the outer boundary of a forest's natural magic, and can mark a change in atmosphere or magical influence. |
| Trails/Roads | Trails are usually avoided by most creatures due to the presence of travelers, but monsters may lay ambushes along them to strike at the unwary. Roads are usually safer from fey, magical effects, and dangerous terrain. |
| Forest Center | The center of a forest is usually where its magic is strongest, and where the oldest and most powerful creatures lurk. It's often the location of druidic groves or the home of beings such as fey. |
| Clearing | Clearings draw in herbivorous animals who munch on the sprawling undergrowth, which grows especially well thanks to the light afforded by a lack of canopy. They are typically suitable sites to rest. |
| Canopy | The canopy provides a great view over the forest below, as well as surrounding terrain. Flying and climbing creatures are more common here, and the risk of falling or attracting unwanted attention is high. |

FOREST TERRAIN



The physical features of the area that characters are traveling through has a tremendous impact on the type of journey and the encounters. A deep overgrown gorge has a different look, atmosphere, and roleplaying potential than a busy trade road crossing the forest. Differences in topography determine the kinds of plants and wildlife drawn to the area, and even influence the kinds of hazards or encounters. Here are several distinct parts of a forest, which can help inform what roleplaying opportunities they might provide.

No forest is made up entirely of blankets of fallen leaves and pine needles or green grass and bluebells sprouting from the earth. Each is a collage of different terrain types ranging from the mundane to magical and from beneficial to hazardous. The following terrain types can be thrown into forest environments to diversify the expedition experience for your characters.

| d20 | Forest Terrain |
|-----|-----------------------|
| 1 | Moss Field |
| 2 | Splitroot Canyons |
| 3 | Humus Ponds |
| 4 | Metamorphosing Glade |
| 5 | Fungal Canopies |
| 6 | Overgrown Spires |
| 7 | Twilight Valley |
| 8 | Enchanted Waterfall |
| 9 | Raging Rivers |
| 10 | Arboreal Landslide |
| 11 | Grisly Glade |
| 12 | Grasping Roots |
| 13 | Wooded Barrows |
| 14 | Reeking Bog |
| 15 | Chronotrees |
| 16 | Elemental Confluences |
| 17 | Timestreams |
| 18 | Farstride Trees |
| 19 | Bridges |
| 20 | Overgrown Gorge |

MOSS FIELD

Smothering the undergrowth or spilling across vast glades, this moss field forms a sprawling carpet of lush green vegetation. While these moss fields might initially seem like the perfect place to rest, careful observation of the surroundings reveals that some of the lumps beneath the verdant blanket aren't boulders or branches, but skeletons and suits of armor. These moss fields spread at an amazing rate, covering tents overnight and smothering the inhabitants, or attaching to boots and continuing to grow over an adventurer's clothes.

Insidious Spread: *Each hour a traveler moves through a moss field, there is a moderate chance that the moss will attach itself to the character in some hidden spot. From then on, the moss continues to grow, weighing the character down and using up their carrying capacity. Tents pitched on moss fields become overgrown and their inhabitants risk being smothered.*

SPLITROOT CANYONS

These deep, broad chasms are formed where ancient trees have been holding together the earth. Floodwaters have washed much of the soil away, leaving the rocky walls of a canyon and several thick roots crossing it. These canyons range from twenty to a hundred feet deep and usually have running water at the bottom, though some can be dry remains of a past flood. Their sides usually consist of stronger soil or rock and are usually difficult to climb. Splitroot Canyons can be treacherous to cross; typically one must find a way to swing across the chasm or carefully traverse the roots that span its breadth.

Dangerous Traversal: *Crossing a Splitroot Canyon via the thick roots demands good balance or careful crawling, and usually requires a check to execute successfully. On a failure, a creature may fall into the canyon below. Alternatively, putting too much weight on a root may cause it to collapse.*



HUMUS PONDS

Black sludgy pools filled with rancid water and decaying organic matter, humus ponds are some of the worst-smelling terrain found in forests. The noxious fumes exuding from the pools are bad enough, but these ponds often harbor diseases thanks to the rotting animals and plants trapped within them. If the viscous water contaminates food or water carried by explorers, it must be burnt and destroyed lest the disease spread rapidly onto other supplies. Falling into a humus pond can be a death sentence; the thick fluid sticks to limbs, hair, and clothing, and the steep sides of the ponds make it almost impossible to pull yourself out.

Rancid Reek: *Creatures that come too close to a pond must make saves to avoid retching. Plugging nostrils can prevent this.*

METAMORPHOSING GLADES

In a metamorphosing glade, boulders may suddenly erupt from soft soil or the earth may collapse in on itself, dragging trees down with them. These instances of rapid, volatile change are unique to metamorphosing glades, where the earth itself can fluctuate without warning. Though normal at first glance, a metamorphosing glade can be spotted by keeping an eye out for signs of violent upheavals or freshly exposed soil. Travelers who encounter them should take care to avoid being caught in the roiling flux, or else they might be crushed.

Transmuting Terrain: *Roll for a random terrain type each time travelers move through a metamorphosing glade. In 1d4 hours time, the terrain will change to what you rolled. Repeat the process every 1d4 hours.*

FUNGAL CANOPIES

In some forests, the verdant leafy canopy is replaced by the caps of mushrooms, their great gills spreading out like the beams of a feast hall. The stalks of these toadstools and mushrooms are as thick as those of trees, though tend to be much softer and therefore prone to collapse. The mushroom caps also block out far more light than a canopy of leaves would, cloaking the undergrowth in perpetual night. Sometimes, these fungal canopies disgorge spores onto the forest floor below, with dangerous effects on the creatures living there or traveling through.

Bewildering Light: *Fungal canopies sometimes scatter a colorful, bewildering light onto the forest below, playing tricks on traveler's eyes and making them prone to get lost or hallucinate.*

Spore Clouds: *Creatures that become immersed in a spore cloud must succeed on a save against poison or become nauseated, paralyzed, or confused by the particles.*

OVERGROWN SPIRES

Reaching up beyond the canopy of leaves is a jagged shard of rock, covered from base to tip in twisting vines and clinging ivy. These natural rock formations provide an amazing opportunity to view the forest from high above, making navigation incredibly easy. However, each climber runs the risk of getting caught in the wrapping vines or even causing the crumbling stone of the spire to collapse under their weight. Spires vary in length and width. Some barely pierce the understory, while others break through into the clouds. They might be as wide as a tavern, or as narrow as a cart.

Towering Vines: *Ascending an overgrown spire requires several challenging climbing checks to make it past the contorted lattice of vines, which can trip or catch on clothes and backpacks. Falling from a spire, depending on the height, could be lethal. Critical failures can cause spire collapses, putting all creatures nearby at risk.*



TWILIGHT VALLEYS

Where the trees grow thick and fast in deep gorges or vales, twilight valleys are formed. These regions are bathed in eternal night, barely becoming dusk-like in the middle of the day when the sun beats down on other parts of the forest. This profusion of darkness in these areas makes them prone to fungal growth, withered vegetation, and monstrous creatures whose vision allows them to lurk in dark places. The darkness makes navigation difficult and can cause travelers to lose their sense of time. Prolonged stay can cause anxiety and disorientation in those who linger there, sapping their physical and mental endurance.

Depressing Dusk: For each hour spent in a twilight valley, characters suffer a cumulative penalty to Morale Saves. Waypoints in twilight valleys don't restore morale.

ENCHANTED WATERFALL

Sparkling in the moonlight and cascading over the roots of the surrounding trees, this waterfall seems to glow with ethereal light. Its waters are cool and clean to drink. The pool at the bottom is as clear as glass, allowing travelers to glimpse strange and colorful shapes moving through the water. The waterfall may be a wellspring of natural magic beloved by forest spirits, or it might be the bathing place of forest nymphs. Whatever the source of its magic, it has the power to raise the spirits of mortals and even bestow boons on those who drink from or bathe in it.

Waters of Life: Upon drinking from the waterfall or bathing in it for 1 hour, players and NPCs regain Health Points rapidly and heal from all but the direst of wounds. In addition, their Morale improves greatly. If the waterfall is defiled or dammed, it places a curse on the perpetrator(s).

RAGING RIVERS

Sometimes, when floodwaters run fast, these rivers transport fallen branches or even entire felled trees with them, becoming obstructed by trunks that have collapsed in their path. These raging rivers are fast ways to cover a lot of distance, but the obstacles of broken tree limbs and slick rocks pose a serious challenge. Kayaking or canoeing down the rapids can be even more dangerous, with the risk of capsizing increased by rocks hidden beneath the splashing waters.

By Land: Travelling alongside riverbanks means adventurers are less likely to become lost, but the noise makes resting difficult, harder to spot foes, and the difficult terrain makes for slow going. Slippery rocks cause clumsy characters to fall into the rapids and fallen trees may block the path and line of sight.

By Water: Travelling down rivers by boat can be exciting, fast, and hazardous. Difficult checks are required to

dodge floating logs being carried by the river or rocks hidden by the spray. Successfully navigating these hazards allows movement at more than twice the normal walking pace and makes it harder for foes to hit you.

ARBOREAL LANDSLIDES

An arboreal landslide is an enormous barrage of soil and stone, held in place by the roots of trees and plants. When unleashed, the roots begin to give way, snapping in showers of splintering wood, dirt, and plant fiber. These dangerous masses of earth thunder down the slope in a landslide that snaps trees like matchsticks and pushes boulders aside. The aftermath is difficult and dangerous to traverse; the giant pile of soil is littered with debris and careless creatures may slip into a crevice or sink up to their chests in the soft dirt.

Earth's Passage: Creatures unfortunate enough to be caught in the path of an arboreal landslide must make checks to outpace the rolling earth and saves to dodge away from thrown boulders and toppling trees.

GRISLY GLADE

Grisly Glades are clearings created by undead powers, such as liches, wraiths, or mummy lords, that take the appearance of a normal forest but corrupt them. The trees here are made of bone and stretched sinew, the soil is moist with fresh blood and reeks with a pungent, ferrous tang. Horrifying to behold, the knowledge of its existence twists your gut. Travelers are known to be haunted by nightmares for weeks on end. Grisly glades are alive and attempt to attack those that foolishly stumble within, trying to trap the souls of the travelers. Those who are caught linger within, their distant voices constantly crying out for help.

Unholy Ambush: Creatures that set foot in the glade are attacked by it. The bone trees strike out, aiming to pierce the armor and skin of intruders and drain them of their blood.

Haunting Nightmares: Those that hear the mournful cries of the glade are haunted by it in their dreams for 2d4 days after, preventing them from getting the benefits of a proper rest.

GRASPING ROOTS

Grasping Roots are not connected to any tree or plant—instead, they exist on their own, crawling around the forest in search of living creatures or lying in wait beneath the soil. They can move surprisingly fast when ensnaring prey, wrapping them in a cocoon-like mass in seconds. When they find a creature, the roots immobilize their legs or wings and pierce their skin to leech their blood. Although the larger masses are big enough to take down an adult boar, smaller Grasping Root colonies might be mistaken for tree roots.

Leeching Radicles: *Creatures attacked by Grasping Roots can make escape or agility checks to escape their grasp, but the larger the colony, the more difficult it is. When they drain a creature's blood, that creature gains levels of exhaustion.*

WOODED BARROWS

Burial mounds are a common sight in many forests. These sacred places are where the dead of local settlements or communities are interred so that their bodies are recycled by the forest and their spirits set free into nature's embrace. Wooded barrows, however, are different. If a malignant creature is slowly bringing about the forest's demise, or a curse is causing it to wither, a forest can try to consume it as a last-ditch attempt to save itself. Roots might trap the creature or object, while the earth itself opens up to bury the source of the corruption. Finally, a bulging pile of grassy earth is the only marker.

Evil Excavation: *If anything uncovers the evil sealed in by the burial mound, it is released as if no time has passed for it. Alternatively, it may have decayed within the mound, becoming an undead version of itself.*

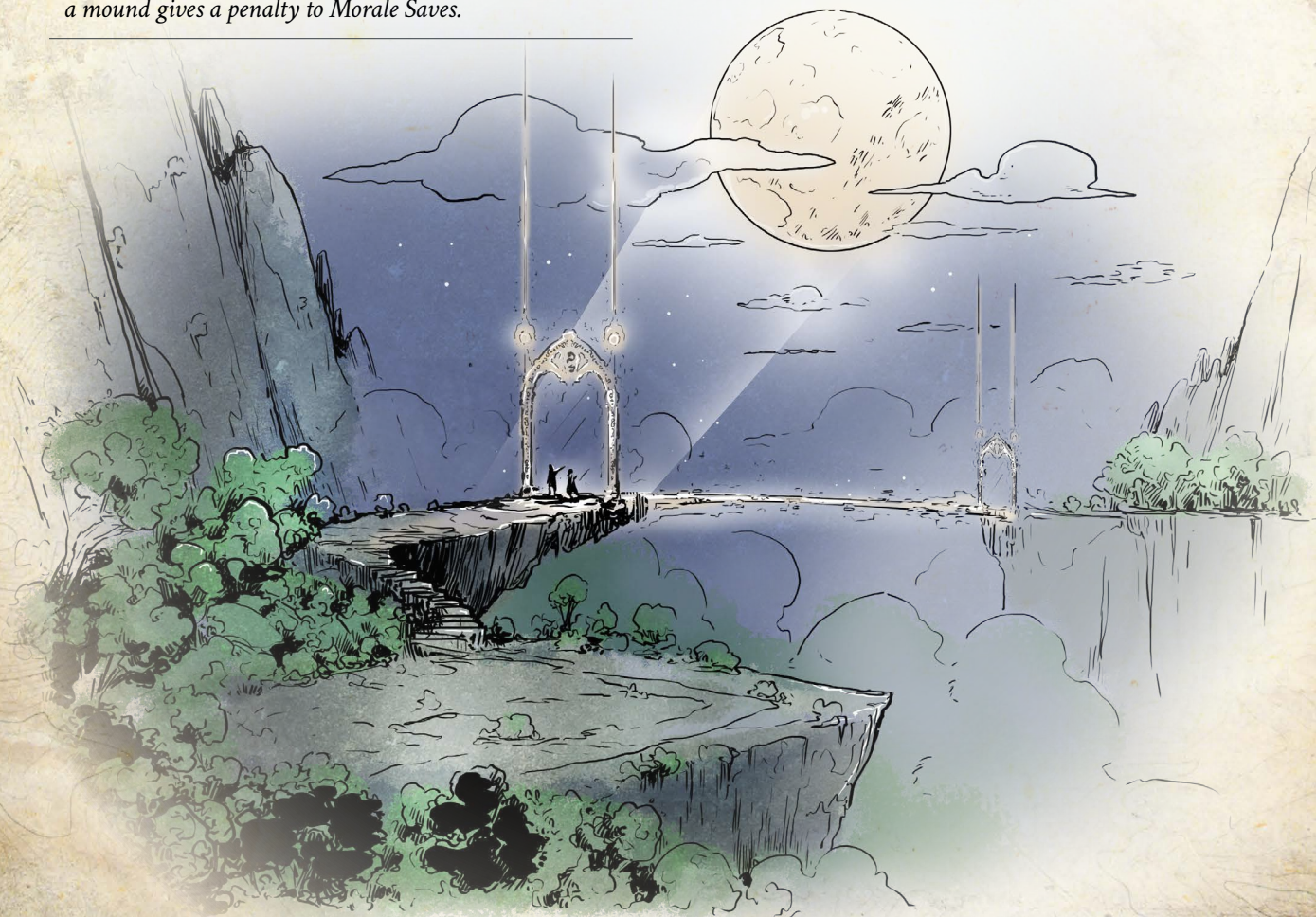
Malignant Aura: *The barrow manifests supernatural effects, such as ghostly animals, nightmarish visions, and cold breezes. Spending too long near a mound gives a penalty to Morale Saves.*

REEKING BOG

A Reeking Bog is marked by the rank, smoky stench of peat and decaying plant material. A Reeking Bog is one of the most formidable and dangerous pieces of forest terrain; more than a mere mire, Reeking Bogs are cursed with malicious magic. This terrain is imbued with necrotic energy that gives it a vague form of sentience, like a wild animal. It can emit a noxious miasma that causes drowsiness and confusion in those who inhale it. The bog itself then crawls across the forest floor and shoots out pseudopods of muck in an attempt to pull the disoriented creatures down into its acidic depths. The bog can then decompose them and spit them out as decayed corpses doomed to shamble across its surface.

Mystifying Miasma: *The bog emits a cloud of miasma which obscures the terrain around it. Creatures that inhale the miasma must make a save or become confused and disorientated.*

Creeping Threat: *The bog tries to drag disoriented creatures into its fluid, acidic form using pseudopods of dripping mud. Creatures pulled into the depths are digested and emerge as undead.*



CHRONOTREES

These magnificent trees are typically the oldest in the entire forest. Their gnarled branches curl upward and outwards like the goblet of a forest titan; contained within this twisting natural sculpture is a swirling vortex of disarrayed time. Strange sensory anomalies often leak forth from these trees—smells from long-lost times or sounds from the future. Chronotrees warp the flow of time around them for animals and plants alike and thus are normally avoided by travelers wherever possible. However, it is rumored that the roots of this tree, often called augury root, grant the power of foresight when brewed as a potion.

Time Warp. Time passes differently around these trees. Animals that walk nearby might find that time is slowed or sped up by hours, days, or even weeks. Animals that rest nearby sometimes find that time skips forward or backward, causing them to wake up days in the future or past.

ELEMENTAL CONFLUENCES

Elemental Confluences are formed by minor overlaps between the mortal and elemental planes. These confluences become attached to natural features such as ancient trees, natural rock formations, fast-flowing rivers, or deep caverns. These features serve as nexuses for elemental power which might manifest as torrential rain, raging winds, lightning strikes, and scorching fire. Each core has its own unique effect related to the type of forest it resides in and the plane which it intersects.

Elemental Manifestation: Consider what the confluence is (a tree stump, boulder, etc.), what plane it acts as a nexus for (earth, air, water, or fire), and how the two combine into an effect (a tree intersecting the Plane of Air might create a vortex of leaves for example). Determine whether this helps or hinders exploration; the leaves might blind characters or give them a temporary fly speed.

TIMESTREAMS

Sometimes a river, stream, or brook gets caught up with the flow of time through a forest. The two forces intertwine in an inseparable flow called a Timestream. They might seem normal to the uninitiated, but subtle signs reveal their true nature; currents flowing in reverse, near-invisible or perfectly clear water, and the presence of significantly older creatures and plants on the banks are the telltale signs. Any creature or plant that drinks of a Timestream's water is aged by the imbibing, but also gains a glimpse into the future.

Futuresight: Sentient creatures that drink the water get a vision that must be interpreted with an *arcana* or *magic* check. A success allows a character to interpret whether they're seeing the future or an alternate timeline.

FARSTRIDE TREES

Although they may look superficially unremarkable, Farstride trees are one of the most useful aids to a canny traveler. These trees are connected together in a vast network by their magical root systems, which can spread across miles and miles of forest. These roots are the only giveaway of a Farstride Tree and can only be interpreted by the most seasoned rangers. Touching a Farstride Tree causes creatures to be teleported to a connected trunk elsewhere in the woodland. Those who spend time deciphering the overground roots can see a vague map of the forest, made from all the connected trees.

Tree Stride. Touching a Farstride Tree causes a creature to be teleported to another, random Farstride Tree in the forest, which could be tens or even hundreds of miles away. Rangers who study the overground roots of farstride trees can decipher the topography of the forest they are in, and can tailor the teleportation to a connected tree of their choosing.

CANOPY ROOSTS

Where flying creatures settle to sleep for the night or care for their young, they create roosting spots. These might look like nests woven from branches or silk, or might be totally unique, such as a piled circle of stones or a knitted basket of humanoid hair. These roosts are typically found in the canopy or hanging from precipices. Sometimes they are humanoid-made and managed, where you can pay a handler to ride the flying animal that lives within.

Flying Mounts. Befriending the flying creature that roosts in these places might allow you to use them as a mount for a short period of time, avoiding hazardous terrain and accessing new landmarks. Sometimes you might need to pay for the service in some way.

WEBWEAVER TERRACES

Great strands of sticky web cross over the path, intersecting into a marvelous yet terrifying web; a sign of a creature that must be even greater in both regards. These sprawling terraces start in the undergrowth and reach up into the mid-story, typically stopping short of the canopy where it is too light for their arachnid weavers. Prey are easily trapped within the webs, where they are cocooned or left to starve until they're ready for consumption.

Alerting Tremor: Creatures that touch the webs become restrained and can only escape with a difficult *strength* check. Creatures in the web for 1d4 turns trigger a giant spider encounter, or an encounter with another web-weaving creature.

LANDMARKS

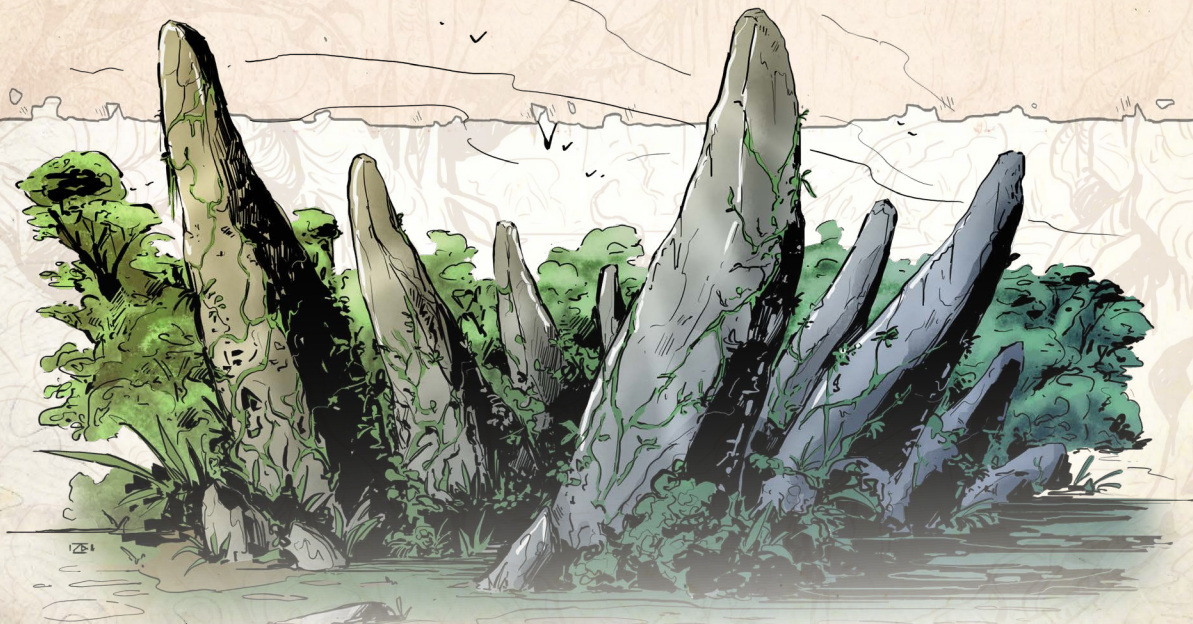
Landmarks can be used by characters to help them navigate while on their expedition. When characters reach a landmark, you can use the description provided to create a scene around it and use the interaction mechanics if an encounter takes place. Some landmarks are the work of mortal hands and can indicate the presence of other outsiders in the forest. Others are remains from the past, left behind to molder in the depths of the woods.

COMMON LANDMARKS

| d10 | Landmark | Description | Hazard or Boon |
|-----|--------------------|--|---|
| 1 | Abandoned Campsite | Tattered tents and a long-dead fire pit are all that remain of the campsite in this grove. | Roll a d6. On a 6, a magic item has been left in the camp, but there are monsters lurking nearby. |
| 2 | Ranger's Hut | Nestled in a nearby clearing is a moss-covered wooden shack, which appears to be uninhabited. | Roll a d6. On a 6, the hut contains useful supplies. Rangers who study the books within have advantage on their next expedition activity. |
| 3 | Well | A short circle of stones capped with a thatched gable surrounds a well that plunges deep into the earth. | Roll a d6. On a 1, the water harbors a foul disease. On a 6, the Dowse for Water expedition activity automatically succeeds. |
| 4 | Stranded Caravan | Sitting by the side of the trail is a cart; lost, forgotten, or abandoned. | Roll a d6. On a 6, the Hunt for Food expedition activity automatically succeeds as there is food left within. |
| 5 | Stone Wall | Spanning the woodlands ahead is a stone wall; crumbled and ancient, veined with ivy. | Roll a d6. On a 6, there are scrawled instructions for a shortcut written on the stones. The Search for Shortcuts expedition activity automatically succeeds. |
| 6 | Wooden Bridge | A rickety wooden bridge extends before you. Its boards are soft with rot. | The Search for Shortcuts expedition activity automatically succeeds. If a creature moves across the bridge roll a d6. On a 6, they break a rotten board and fall. |
| 7 | Abandoned Quarry | The earth has been cleared from this area, exposing the stone beneath. Resources have been quarried out of the ground some time ago. | Checks made to navigate using this landmark have advantage. Roll a d6. On a 6, there is a map of the local area left behind. |
| 8 | Primitive Bothy | A ramshackle hut of stones with a tiled ceiling provides some shelter from the biting cold. | The Make Camp expedition activity automatically succeeds. |
| 9 | Cattle Range | A tall wooden fence forms a boundary in the forest, keeping cattle or large animals contained. | Crossing the fence requires a moderate climb check. On the other side, the next Hunt for Food expedition activity has advantage. |
| 10 | Bandit Hideout | Hidden behind a natural stone crest is the entrance to a hollowed-out hideout. | Roll a d6. On a 1, the bandits return within 24 hours. On a 6, the hideout contains useful equipment. |

UNCOMMON LANDMARKS

| d10 | Landmarks | Description | Hazard or Boon |
|-----|----------------------|--|--|
| 1 | Elemental Fountain | Vines wrap tightly around a stone fountain that still spurts sporadically. | Roll a d6. On a 1, the waters contain an elemental. On a 6, the Dowse for Water expedition activity automatically succeeds. |
| 2 | Graveyard | Jutting up from the earth like petrified teeth are dozens of cracked gravestones. | Hostile undead rise from the graves here each night. This effect can be dispelled by holy magic. |
| 3 | Stone Circle | A wide ring of menhirs encloses this glade, their surfaces engraved with symbols. | Resting in the stone circle provides additional healing, but serves as an antimagic field. |
| 4 | Beacon | Spearing the sky is a twisted cage of iron, filled with dry firewood. | Roll a d6. On a 6, the fire is lit, and checks made to navigate using this landmark have advantage. |
| 5 | Forsaken Boundary | Wooden stakes driven into the ground have been topped with humanoid heads, forming a foreboding barrier. | The boundary marks the range of monsters or evil creatures. Crossing it increases the chance of combat encounters by 50%. |
| 6 | Ruined Tower | Tilting dangerously over the undergrowth is a ruined tower, its foundations crumbling and cracked. | Any weight applied to the tower causes it to topple. Creatures in its path must succeed on an agility save or be crushed beneath it. |
| 7 | Collapsed Mine Shaft | Where once was an entrance to a mine, now only shattered rubble and broken beams remain. | If a creature comes close to the mine shaft, roll a d6. On a 6, the earth beneath them gives way. |
| 8 | Meditation Circle | This enclosed ring of soft earth is decorated with colorful garlands and windchimes which tinkle in the wind. | A monk or druid can meditate in the shelter. Their next expedition activity has advantage. |
| 9 | Totem Pole | Rising high alongside the trees is a wooden pole carved with the likeness of animal faces. | Barbarians and druids can leave an offering at the pole. Their next expedition activity has advantage. |
| 10 | Reinvigoration Pool | A pool of invitingly bright blue water calls to you from the clearing. Surrounding it are marble blocks carved with floral motifs. | Creatures that bathe in the pool regain double hit points and automatically succeed on their next morale save. |



WONDROUS LANDMARKS

| d10 | Terrain | Description | Hazard or Boon |
|-----|---------------------|---|--|
| 1 | Ancient Battlefield | Skeletal remains and rusted armor and weapons dot the landscape around you. | Roll a d6. On a 1, undead rise from the battlefield. On a 6, there is magical treasure to be discovered with a successful search check. |
| 2 | Sylvan Temple | Through the trees you spot an alabaster temple of towering spires and arches. | Only paladins and clerics can enter the temple. Their morale is instantly restored. |
| 3 | Floating Tower | Floating ten feet off the ground ahead is a tower that rotates slowly on its vertical axis. | Checks made to navigate using this landmark have advantage. The tower contains magic items guarded by magical creatures, but can only be accessed by flight or climbing grappling hooks. |
| 4 | Ghost Town | All around you are empty buildings in various states of decay. They look as if they haven't been inhabited in some time. | Roll a d6. On a 6, ghosts haunt the ghost town and drain morale. |
| 5 | Tree Houses | High in the canopy above are dozens of houses, connected by rope bridges. | The houses could belong to elves, gnomes, or other woodland beings. They might be abandoned, or their inhabitants could be adversarial or welcoming. |
| 6 | Sacrificial Altar | Blood-stained and etched with dark sigils, the altar-like stone up ahead looks best avoided. | Resting near the sacrificial stone causes a creature to become temporarily mad, and try to sacrifice another creature or themselves on the stone. |
| 7 | Mirror Visions | Embedded in the loamy earth is a perfect cube with polished, mirrored sides. Visions swim in the reflections. | If a character views the reflections, roll a d6. On a 1, they become confused and attack their allies. On a 6, they gain advantage on their next navigation check. |
| 8 | Forlorn Prison | Built between pine stands is a great iron cage. It is sunk into the earth and rusted with age. Within, something stirs. | Roll a d6. On a 1, a demon is trapped within. On a 6, a fey is trapped within. Free them at your peril. |
| 9 | Giant Geoglyph | For centuries folk have kept this giant figure, a horse, man, dragon, or similar, cut into the forest ground. Many tales have been woven around it. | The Entertain your Allies expedition activity automatically succeeds at this landmark. |
| 10 | Hunting Cabin | Adorned with trophies, this well-maintained log cabin boasts a grand fireplace and comfortable beds. | The next Hunt for Food expedition activity automatically succeeds. On a 6, there are weapons in the cabin. |



NATURAL LANDMARKS

These landmarks are created by nature itself, either through natural processes or magical effects. Some are the creation of strange unnamed magic, while others may have stood there from the beginning of time. Natural landmarks can range from gigantic trees that are easily spotted from a distance to peculiar rock formations shaped through the ages.



COMMON NATURAL LANDMARKS

| d10 | Landmark | Description | Hazard or Boon |
|-----|-----------------------|--|---|
| 1 | Obelisk | Balanced precariously on a plinth is a looming column of onyx. | Checks made to navigate using this landmark have advantage. Studying the obelisk provides insight into the forest topography - the Draw a Map expedition activity automatically succeeds. |
| 2 | Giant Insect Mounds | A score of looming anthills breaks the canopy of the forest like the towers of a keep. Thankfully, there is no sign of their enormous architects. | Roll a d6. On a 1, the giant ants return. On a 6, the Hunt for Food expedition activity automatically succeeds thanks to fungal provisions within. |
| 3 | Hot Springs | Bubbling with soothing steam, these springs of warm water rise up from beneath the earth, enclosed by tree roots to form natural baths. | Resting by or bathing in the springs gives advantage to the next morale save. |
| 4 | Cave Network | A broad opening in the earth nearby provides access to a cave network. The entrance, hung with stalactites, looks too much like a maw for comfort. | Roll a d6. On a 1, a monster clan lairs in the cave. On a 6, the corpse of an adventurer in the cave grasps a magic item. |
| 5 | Primordial Monoliths | Rising from the leaf-covered earth are standing stones at bizarre, gravity-defying angles. | Studying the monoliths for long enough gives temporary insight into the forest's past or future, and advantage on the next navigation check. |
| 6 | Lake | Stretching before you is a beautiful lake, its surface mirror-like. It is bordered on all sides by rushes. | Checks made to navigate using this landmark have advantage. Crossing the lake requires a swim speed, swimming mount, or boat. |
| 7 | Lightning-Struck Tree | Scarred and stripped of bark, this tree has been struck by lightning. Internal burn marks let you know how recently the strike occurred. | Checks made to navigate using this landmark have advantage. Roll a d6. On a 6, the tree discharges lightning into characters, giving them a bonus to speed. |
| 8 | Rapids | The roar of the rapids can be heard from many feet away. The river rushes through a boulder-strewn gully, spouting foam that floats on the breeze. | The rapids can be navigated with a hard difficulty pilot check in a waterborne vehicle. Failure destroys the vehicle, deals bludgeoning damage to those within, and submerges them. |
| 9 | Chasm | Yawning like a mouth whose throat is the core of the world, a chasm opens up before you. | Checks made to navigate using this landmark have advantage. Crossing the chasm requires flight or ropes. Falling deals massive bludgeoning damage. |
| 10 | Rock Formation | A clump of unusually shaped rocks rises from the earth. Like clouds, they seem to take different forms depending on where you observe them from. | Checks made to navigate using this landmark have advantage. If characters come close, roll a d6. On a 6, they become lost. |

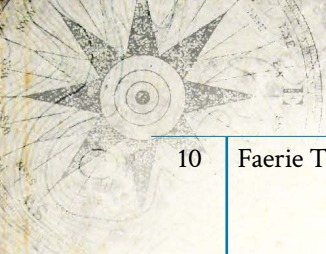
UNCOMMON NATURAL LANDMARKS

| d10 | Landmark | Description | Hazard or Boon |
|-----|-------------------|--|--|
| 1 | Toadstool Grove | Gigantic toadstool groves break the canopy with their brightly colored caps. Their iridescent glow makes them natural lighthouses once the sun has set. | Checks made to navigate using this landmark have advantage. Toadstool groves glow through the night, reducing the chance of encounters but making it harder to sleep. |
| 2 | Fungal Mass | Rupturing from the forest floor is a colossal mass of fungal bodies; lumps, bumps, and boils in a variety of toxic colors and noxious textures. | Creatures in a large radius around the mass must succeed on hard vitality check or become poisoned. |
| 3 | Geyser | A great vent of steam and water vapor explodes from the earth and streams up into the sky with a deafening clamor. | Checks made to navigate using this landmark have advantage. Crossing the geyser at the wrong time deals significant fire damage. |
| 4 | Meteorite | Sunk into the clearing, surrounded on all sides by trees leaning into the alien object, is a meteorite of glistening star metal. | Roll a d6. On a 6, the meteorite has attracted a covetous monster. |
| 5 | Dancing Grove | The trees here spiral and twist like dancers at play. Their trunks contort into strange shapes then uncoil, never taking the same form twice. | Checks made to navigate through this landmark have disadvantage. Alcoholic beverages consumed within are twice their usual strength and inspire dancing in the drinker. |
| 6 | Frozen Waterfall | An eerily silent sight to behold, a waterfall gushes over the cliff ahead. Rather than surging as nature intended, the outlet of nature's wrath is frozen. | Checks made to navigate using this landmark have advantage. Creatures that linger near the waterfall suffer from extreme cold. |
| 7 | Root Spiral | A strange, interconnected web of roots climbs up into the air, forming adjacent cells that can be climbed for a better view. | This landmark can be climbed with an easy check. From the top, navigation checks advantage. |
| 8 | Root Bridge | Twisting and clawing its way across the chasm is a bridge formed from the herculean roots of a brawny fig tree. | Crossing a root bridge means the Search for Shortcuts expedition activity automatically succeeds, but requires an agility check. Failure destroys the bridge and injures the failing creature, reducing their speed. |
| 9 | Prismatic Crystal | A colorful crystal juts up from the fallen leaves, refracting rainbows of light in kaleidoscopic patterns over the trunks of the nearby trees. | Checks made to navigate using this landmark have advantage. If creatures rest here, roll a d6. On a 6, they awaken blinded. |
| 10 | Forest Gate | The branches of nearby trees have been interwoven to form an arched gateway, large enough for a person to walk through. | One character can walk through the forest gate each day. Doing so gives advantage on their next morale save. |

WONDROUS NATURAL LANDMARKS

| d10 | Landmark | Description | Hazard or Boon |
|-----|-------------------|---|--|
| 1 | Behemoth Skeleton | Half-consumed by the moss-covered forest floor is the gigantic skeleton of some ancient behemoth. | Checks made to navigate using this landmark have advantage. Necromancy spells cast near the skeleton are empowered. |
| 2 | Faerie Ring | The ring of toadstools quivers with magical potential, as if obscured by heat haze. Butterflies flit around it in a state of perpetual joy. | Casting spells causes wild magic surges. Roll a d6. On a 6, faeries appear and create magical food and drink. |
| 3 | Moonbridge | You glimpse the vague, ethereal outline of an arched bridge up ahead. | Roll a d6. On a 6, it is a full moon and the bridge provides a shortcut; the Search for Shortcuts expedition activity automatically succeeds. |
| 4 | Heartseed | A vibrantly colored, oblong seed as tall as a wizard's tower provides life energy to everything in the forest. | You restore maximum hit points from healing and resting by the seed. Natural spellcasters roll a d6, learning a new spell on a 6. |
| 5 | Portal | Not far from the trail is a tree with a split trunk. In the gap is a portal of distorting energy. | Roll a d6. On a 1, passing through the portal gives a level of exhaustion. On a 6, it leads to a faerie realm. |
| 6 | Woodland Guardian | A grand statue-like construct made of timber looms high amongst the trees. It is inert, for now. | A certain action triggers the guardian to animate such as making fire or drawing weapons. It might obey or attack the triggering creature. |
| 7 | Levitating River | Passing through the air at shoulder height is a river, rippling just as if it were rushing along its rightful course. | Navigating the river with a hard difficulty pilot check in a waterborne vehicle works as a shortcut - the Search for Shortcuts expedition activity automatically succeeds. |
| 8 | Ghost Grove | Spectral animals and plants appear in this strange grove. Ghostly birds fly through the trees and ethereal bugs crawl through your boots. | Resting in a Ghost Grove does not restore morale or hit dice. |
| 9 | Singing Tree | This willow sings in beautiful tones that carry for miles, though only druids and fey can understand the song. | Roll a d6. On a 1, the song causes magical sleep. On a 6, it restores morale. |





| | | | |
|----|---------------|---|--|
| 10 | Faerie Throne | A high-backed chair has been carved from a tree stump and covered with foliage and flowers. Fey creatures hold court in the surrounding glades. | Sitting on the throne summons a fey creature who, depending on their reception, offers a miracle or curse or tricks the character. |
|----|---------------|---|--|

ATMOSPHERE



The atmosphere of a scene can be just as important as the individual elements that comprise it. Sometimes you might want to invoke a fearful vibe, other times you might want to inspire them with a wondrous feeling.

Such emotions, feelings, and ambiances have certain tropes that will automatically impart the feeling into the players' minds, and hopefully manifest through the behavior of the characters. A table of atmospheres and some of their associated elements are detailed below.

| d6 | Atmosphere | Elements |
|----|-------------------------|--|
| 1 | Beautiful/ Inspiring | enchanted, sweet nectar, mirror pools, crystals, bioluminescent plants |
| 2 | Peaceful/ Idyllic | babbling brook, tranquil birdsong, whistling wind, fragrant blossom |
| 3 | Vibrant/Alive | animated, teeming, overgrown, buzzing insects, pine sap, woodsmoke, petrichor, animal manure, animal marks |
| 4 | Mysterious/ Strange | cultivated, petrified, flooded, ethereal song, symbol, will-o'-wisp, forest throne, augury roots |
| 5 | Foreboding/ Tense | burnt, broken, infested, muddy, cracking twigs, creaking branches, rustling leaves, poisonous plants |

CONDITIONS

While the terrain defines the base aspect of a forest scene, conditions are a great way to add another dimension to the location. This includes making them more interesting or challenging, subverting expectations, or perhaps even turning them into lucky breaks that help the expedition along. Conditions are especially useful when describing wilderness locations in more intimate detail, and often inform the type of encounters that are about to occur. These can be natural hazards such as a flooded road that stranded a caravan or an animated gorge with chunks of rock floating mysteriously, forming ever-moving stepping stones.

Scene conditions, such as *flooded* or *muddy* can be applied to different parts of a scene as you see fit. The table below contains a wealth of different conditions, a description of how it could be applied to a scene, and a way for characters to interact with the condition if you're looking to deepen your encounter.

SENSORY STIMULATION

Suddenly my nostrils were filled with a fragrant odor. Something so sweet as to almost be sickly. I couldn't fathom what around me had caused such a musk. As I scanned the low bracken for a source, I realized the entire forest had fallen silent around me. I realized I was holding my breath and as I released it the leaves in the trees seemed to rustle as if caught in a breeze.

It can be very challenging to describe a wilderness scene beyond its visual appearance. Game masters often rely on sight alone to describe a scene. This serves well for speed and clarity but often falls short of the evocative descriptions that can be achieved by drawing on all the senses. The following section offers you inspiration to add detail to your forest location descriptions using sights, sounds, and smells.

SOUND

Sounds can be very important to a location, not only to describe its teeming wildlife and rushing river, but it can also offer subtle clues when visibility is limited. Sounds can be used for a number of roleplaying effects such as offering a clue to creatures nearby, the direction of a quarry, to hamper characters hearing advancing foes, or simply delight in the lush forest beauty. Sounds may not always be what they first appear, as the thick growth and trunks of a forest naturally muffle and distort sounds. Descriptive sounds are a great way to add mystery and intrigue. Consider using sound to give characters a reason to be curious and explore.



Sounds are a great way to add atmosphere to a scene but are also a refreshing way to offer vital clues to the players, who are normally conditioned to spot visual points of interest. Use the following table and descriptions to add sound to your scene descriptions:

| d20 | Sounds |
|-----|-------------------|
| 1 | Babbling Brook |
| 2 | Buzzing Insects |
| 3 | Cracking Twigs |
| 4 | Creaking Branches |
| 5 | Ethereal Song |
| 6 | Fighting Animals |
| 7 | Howling Monsters |
| 8 | Rustling Leaves |
| 9 | Tranquil Birdsong |
| 10 | Whistling Wind |

BABBLING BROOKS

The gentle babbling of a nearby brook fills your ears. The flowing water sounds like a mixture of carefree giggling and quiet chatter.

An infinitely pleasant sound, a babbling brook instantly evokes a picturesque forest and calming tranquil vibes. This could be used to lull characters into a false sense of security or indicate that they have a chance to rest and recover.

BUZZING INSECTS

The buzzing of bumblebees and other insects can be heard throughout the grove. Their humming flights whizz around you, the sound never coming from one direction for long.

Depending on what insect you choose, the sound of buzzing insects can be pleasant or mildly disturbing. Bumblebees, hoverflies, or dragonflies could be used to create a calming atmosphere, whereas cockroaches, bluebottles, or flies might be used to capture a more sinister scene.

CRACKING TWIGS

Sharp snaps echo through the grove as someone or something makes its way through the undergrowth. The cracking gets louder and louder as something draws near.

The cracking of twigs beneath a creature's feet is a great tool to quickly foreshadow the approach of

something dangerous. It has a sinister, anticipatory feel that should keep players on the edge of their seats and characters' hands on their blades. By using cracking twigs and not revealing what caused it, you can keep players guessing at what is to come.

CREAKING BRANCHES

Overhead, the branches of the swaying trees creak and groan as they are buffeted by the wind. The strain upon the great boughs is clear, and the creaking begins to turn into cracking.

Most commonly caused by heavy winds or the passage of arboreal creatures, creaking branches can be used to instill stress and paranoia in players. At any point a bough might break and fall down upon the characters, or a hideous monstrosity could swing down to ambush them.

ETHEREAL SONG

Drifting through the serene woods comes a hauntingly beautiful song. You can only make out a word here and there, but never a full verse; what does alight upon your ears brings tears to your eyes.

Often, we associate ghostly or otherworldly music in woodlands with mystery and alluring beauty. This music might come from elves or fey creatures, or it might be created by some melancholy spirit who wanders the woods. Either way, it can create a sense of eeriness or mysticality in a scene.

FIGHTING ANIMALS

The snarls and growls of a vicious scrap are carried to you on the wind. Something not far away is clearly fighting for its life.

The sound of animals fighting is heinous—a truly harrowing cacophony that is uncomfortable at best and disturbing at worst. Such a sound traveling through a woodland can be used to create an uneasy feeling or even foreshadow a coming encounter.

HOWLING MONSTERS

A piercing howl cuts through the stillness of the forest. It drones on for what seems like minutes, sending shivers down your spine.

The howling of monsters lets characters know that they are in danger and gives them the

opportunity to do something about it. They might try to identify the monster from its howling, conceal themselves, or prepare to attack. To add a twist, consider having the monster howl because it is injured or scared, rather than ready to hunt.

RUSTLING LEAVES

Leaves crunch and rustle all around you in a spattering of susurrations that seem like hundreds of tiny footsteps.

Rustling leaves is an ambiguous sound that could spell the entrance of a friend or foe, or simply a fresh breeze blowing through the woodland.

TRANQUIL BIRDSONG

The sweet melodies of birdsong flit through the canopy all around you; the creatures' singing to one another forms a bright chorus.

Birdsong can be used to great effect when describing forests. The presence of birdsong is definitely a calming factor in a scene, but suddenly cutting it off can lead to great moments of tension. Furthermore, discordant or screeching birdsong gives scenes a disturbing, uncanny feel.

WHISTLING WIND

A chilling gust howls through the forest, whistling as it is split by the bending tree trunks. The noise is like a metallic screech and it drowns out all other sounds.

Whistling wind can create a sense of tension from its uncanny sound, while more powerful shrieking gusts can create a feeling of oppressiveness as the wind chills

bones and steals words from lips. Use the wind wisely when describing scenes, as it might have impacts beyond the flavor of the scene. For example, a high wind could cause ranged attacks to miss their mark or might make it harder to hear other things in the woodland.

SMELLS

Smells are frequently underused when setting a scene, but they can be powerful and visceral when used well. By judiciously using smells, you can enhance the atmosphere of a scene, or hint at what's to come: a tranquil forest has a distinctly different feel if the scent of blood lingers in the air.

Use the following table and descriptions to add smell to your scene descriptions:

| d10 | Smells |
|-----|------------------|
| 1 | Animal Manure |
| 2 | Culinary Herbs |
| 3 | Fragrant Blossom |
| 4 | Chopped Wood |
| 5 | Petrichor |
| 6 | Pine Sap |
| 7 | Putrid Mud |
| 8 | Rotting Wood |
| 9 | Sweet Honey |
| 10 | Woodsmoke |

ANIMAL MANURE

The musty aroma of manure permeates throughout the woodland. The reek seems to seep into your clothes and hair.

The unmistakable scent of animal feces is unlikely to be missed by adventurers. It can be used to foreshadow the kinds of creatures that live in the forest, provided a character succeeds on an appropriate check, or it can be used to display decay. If the scent is overwhelmingly strong it might make it hard to discern other smells, or even be nauseating.

CULINARY HERBS

A complex, herbaceous scent rises from the creeping undergrowth. The aromatic smell makes your mouths water and your stomachs rumble.

In some parts of the forest, herbs that can be used in cooking grow in vast blankets or clustered pockets. These herbs, when in full leaf or flower, produce amazing smells that are activated simply by brushing against them or by the gentle flow of the wind. Consider whether the herbs could be used by a character to improve rations or to sell at their



next civilized waypoint. Common herbal smells include creeping thyme, which has a warming, vaguely citrusy smell, rosemary, which has a pine-like woody aroma, bay bushes, which has an earthy, floral scent, and mint, which has a sharp, cool tang.

FRAGRANT BLOSSOM

A fragrant, botanical smell floats down from the blossom-covered boughs up above. As you walk, you move through clouds of the bright fragrance.

Like with flowering plants, blossoms can be used to make a forest feel slightly magical, bright, and filled with life. You can use such a smell as a cue for characters to take a rest from their travels, or twist the trope and plan an ambush in an otherwise tranquil setting.

CHOPPED WOOD

The air around you is steeped in the odor of chopped wood. Around you are several trees whose branches have been removed and logged, now littering the forest floor around you.

Sometimes the overpowering smell of chopped wood can overwhelm a character's senses and should make them curious as to what has caused the damage to the trees. Be sure to think of a reason for the damage before including such a smell in your scenes.

PETRICHOR

Your nostrils are suddenly filled by the wholesome smell of petrichor emanating from the rain-slick grass beneath your feet.

Petrichor is the smell of freshly fallen rain and can often be smelled just after the first rain in a long period, or just before a storm as it carries on the wind. The fragrance can be used to foreshadow a change in the weather conditions, which might be something the characters desperately need, or wish to avoid. Alternatively, it can serve as a refreshing scent that sets the tone for a new turn of fortune.

PINE SAP

The heady aroma of pine sap fills the forest. In some places the scent is nearly overpowering, tickling the back of your throats and burning your nostrils. In other patches, the fragrance is much milder, like a calming incense.

Pine sap is an easily recognizable, strong smell that

can fill an evergreen woodland when the cones are out. In some cases, the smell might be a welcome accompaniment to travel, but if it becomes overpowering it might mask an important trail the characters are following, even giving them a distracting headache.

PUTRID MUD

The reek of putrefying bog mud lies throughout the woodland. Where the muck has been disturbed, the smell is intense, making you gag and splutter.

This disgusting smell can be used as a warning to characters that they have entered a dangerous and hazardous area of woodland, or that creatures who make their homes in swamps might be nearby. It can also just serve to evoke a sickening and uncomfortable atmosphere.

ROTTING WOOD

A pungent, earthy aroma rises up from the forest floor beneath your feet. The soft, loamy soil is made up of layer upon layer of rotting wood, through which insects scuttle and crawl.

Rotting wood might be just another facet of the natural cycle of forest life, or it might signify something wrong within the forest. Depending on how you use the smell, it could be worrisome or sinister, or simply remind the characters of the constant natural cycle of life and death.

SWEET HONEY

Sickly sweet and stifling, the scent of dripping honey from the bee's nests surrounding you is almost too much to bear. Your eyes water with the overpowering syrupy aroma that puts a lump in your throat.

Too much of a good thing can put a strange, eerie feeling into scenes. Something that one might assume to smell delicious, like sweet honey, that has been overexaggerated can create an uncomfortable feeling in a scene. The sickly sweet odor can even cause characters mechanical detriment if it becomes distracting or overwhelming.

WOODSMOKE

The instantly recognizable smell of smoke floats through the boughs of the trees around you. The source of the fire is unclear, but the choking vapor quickly builds and begins to catch in the back of your throat. Soon it obscures your vision and causes spluttering coughs.

There's no smoke without fire, so consider exactly where the forest fire is before introducing this smell into

your scenes. Perhaps the smoke comes from a raging inferno many miles away, from an explorer's small campfire, or a controlled burn by local woodcutters. The introduction of smoke is likely to cause alarm, or at least curiosity to the characters, so use it wisely.

FOREST DISCOVERIES

When heroes set out on a journey to go there and back again, it are the unexpected discoveries that sometimes are the most memorable. The large and small things found along the way can be the true treasure upon returning home. This section provides a variety of intriguing discoveries, minor loot, and sylvan treasures, some of which make perfect quest hooks to spark an entirely new expedition.

d50 Forest Discoveries

| | |
|----|--|
| 1 | Splattered red blood drips from the ferns nearby. |
| 2 | A pair of heavy fur boots covered in spiderwebs. |
| 3 | A snow-white ivory flute stashed in a tree stump. |
| 4 | Fragrant herbs left in a smoldering campfire. |
| 5 | An onyx wedding ring hanging from the canopy. |
| 6 | A frostbitten dragon saddle lying in a bush. |
| 7 | A sparkling obsidian crown at the bottom of a pond. |
| 8 | The black gleaming of a barbarian totem. |
| 9 | A dark love letter carved into a tree trunk. |
| 10 | An iridescent crystal shard hidden behind a stone circle. |
| 11 | An aged unicorn skull whose horn has turned pitch-black. |
| 12 | A crude, lichen-covered xylophone fashioned from the ribcage of a human. |
| 13 | An eerily glowing totem of a forest spirit that draws in wolves whenever used. |
| 14 | A broken silver lantern decorated with a leaf motif that can only be repaired by fairies. |
| 15 | An overgrown elk-horn helmet that covers its wearer in vines that serve as crude armor. |
| 16 | The remains of a campsite whose fire glows with ethereal starlight and appears to have a meteor in its embers. |
| 17 | A dust-covered black stone from which smoke continuously emanates. |
| 18 | A torn piece of silk robe decorated with flowers, caught on the briar by the trailside. |
| 19 | A ghostly wagon that trundles silently along the trail toward a wooded barrow. |
| 20 | Drag marks in the dirt that appear to be left behind by a giant owl. |
| 21 | A reeking fountain that has been corrupted with foul water. |
| 22 | A wooden watchtower of gnomish construction with a cauldron at its top. |
| 23 | A fragmented runic necklace that is missing some of its jewels. |
| 24 | An elven brooch of twisted silver in the shape of a lily. |
| 25 | A fungal grove that houses a ritual circle, with a pouch of strange ingredients nearby. |
| 26 | The lichen-covered corpse of a centaur. |
| 27 | A colossal sword ten feet in length, sculpted entirely out of jade and overgrown with roots. |
| 28 | A smoldering tree stump with a black iron axehead embedded in it. |
| 29 | A black flower with red markings whose stem weeps blood when plucked. |
| 30 | A moss-covered tombstone by the trailside with several bouquets of trilliums and foxgloves. |
| 31 | Crude boots made of leather stitched by goblins, with fishing line for laces. |
| 32 | A chestpiece inlaid with a mother-of-pearl crescent moon that can only be opened under the light of a crescent moon. |
| 33 | A quiver filled with masterfully made hunting arrows. |
| 34 | A magnetic lodestone that strongly pulls armor and metal weapons or implements toward it. |
| 35 | A wounded horse spattered with blood that has a luxurious but empty saddle. |
| 36 | A partially ruined hut with an ogre's club nearby. |
| 37 | A wooden hand that looks like it belongs to a nymph. |
| 38 | A pile of skulls placed in the roots of a dead tree. |
| 39 | Fragrant herbs that smell divine, but induce nightmares. |
| 40 | A troll hide hanging from an ancient oak tree. It is held in place by three silver elven daggers. |
| 41 | A moonflower that sings when its petals open at night. |
| 42 | A battered suit of rusted armor that appears to be made for a human child. |
| 43 | A foul-smelling cairn of stones surrounded by blackened soil. |
| 44 | A moss-covered grindstone that gives visions of the past to whomever touches it. |
| 45 | A bag of tanned skin that holds a collection of human and animal teeth, eyes, bird bones, and feathers. |
| 46 | A stone beacon marked with a sun symbol. |

| | |
|----|--|
| 47 | A slime pit from which vermin gnawed bones protrude. |
| 48 | A section of castle wall that seems to have been dropped in the middle of the woods. |
| 49 | Snow-covered banners from a winter festival long since passed. |
| 50 | A mud-splattered totem carved of ancient wood. |

*“At dawn and dusk my footsteps fall,
 on the floors of wooded halls.
 With each step I hope to see,
 nature’s wealth revealed to me.”*





CHAPTER THREE

Wondrous Forests

“I lifted the lantern higher, revealing a gruesome warped corpse. It was melding with the tree bark in some blasphemous manner, as if the forest was claiming s next prize.”





The Marrowgrove



blood-red moon rises above the needleless pines, causing them to stand out in silhouette against the night's sanguine glow. The skeletal stands clatter and rattle in the deathly cold wind that rushes through the grove, shuddering back and forth in rigor-mortised quivers. A terrible moan accompanies the howling of the wind, slowly rising in volume until it reaches a cacophonous climax and is cut off. An ethereal form moves toward you through the naked trunks--literally through them. The figure is bound in chains and wears an expression of unbridled woe.

The Marrowgrove is a forest where undead lurk beneath low boughs, reanimated by some necromantic force within the woods. The woodland is a cruel mockery of nature, mimicking life with undeath, and represents a true test of survival for experienced adventurers.

HISTORY

The Marrowgrove could have originated in numerous ways, but all of them involve necromantic magic in some shape or form. This evil magic is said to have infused the forest with a malignancy that will last for eternity - whether the characters can stand it for the duration of their expedition remains to be seen.

NOTABLE FEATURES

The Marrowgrove is a unique and terrifying environment for characters to explore and traverse. This section provides you with key elements that make the Marrowgrove special.

THE DEAD DON'T DIE

Beasts and humanoids killed in the forest often reanimate after their souls have left them. The undead corpses that remain take on a hideous semblance of life and a ravening appetite for humanoid flesh. These disgusting zombies sometimes band together in swarms that sweep through the forest consuming whatever living flesh they encounter. In other instances the dead might not animate until they are skeletal, their cadavers covered in twisting roots and grasping ivy.

Eventually, these creatures might fall apart entirely and return to the earth for a period of time, but the cycle of undeath never ends. Before long, the ground tainted by the festering remains takes on a 'life' in a new form. Perhaps a massive fungal bloom emerges that ejects deathly poisonous spores, or maybe the dirt itself rises as a warped homunculus with the skull of an animal. In the Marrowgrove, everything is eventually dragged back to the surface.

BLASPHEMOUS ORIGINS

THE MARROWGROVE IS A GHASTLY HAUNTED GROVE WHERE DREADFUL UNDEAD LURK AND THE MOURNFUL WAILS OF LOST SOULS DRIFT ON THE EERIE FOG. EVEN THE TERRAIN ITSELF IS OUT TO GET YOU. DEATH IS MORE PROMINENT THAN LIFE IN THIS HIDEOUS WOODLAND. NOTHING TRULY DIES, AS NATURE RECLAIMS AND REANIMATES.

- ◆ **Life Imitates Death:** Many of the creatures and even plants in the Marrowgrove are dead, or undead. Even the living things seem to mimic death in their anatomy and appearance.
- ◆ **Eternal Cycling:** When something dies in the Marrowgrove, it's only a matter of time before it returns as an undead. Even once the undead is destroyed, its essence seeps into the earth.
- ◆ **Misery Reigns:** There is rarely a glimmer of hope in the Marrowgrove. It's a depressing and disgusting place to travel through, and wears down those who inhabit it for too long.
- ◆ **Malice Manifest:** Even the terrain of the Marrowgrove has some sinister, malicious intellect. Everything within this haunted woodland is out to get the living.
- ◆ **Afterlife Echoes:** Intelligent creatures that die in the Marrowgrove leave echoes of their lives within it. These might be accessible through cursed touchstones, or manifest as ghosts.
- ◆ **Gruesome:** Everything looks revolting. Vines pulse and throb like blood vessels. Skeletons erupt with growths like trees of bone. Animals are

TERROR ABOUNDS

Even on the brightest noon of the warmest day, cold spots exist within the woods, shadows flicker and twist just beyond the penetrating sunbeams, and foul stench waft across the trails. Small disturbing sensory effects are found throughout the Marrowgrove—these might include clouds of fog that seem filled with faces, twisted tree limbs that look like clawing hands, chill winds that sound like the wails of the dead, or animals that are contorted and behave unusually.

DESPAIR RULES

Darkness, despair, desperation. These emotions are infused into the Marrowgrove by the necromantic magic that created it. Bleak scenes are common in these woodlands; animals that have died tragic deaths, ghostly phantasms that haunt the living travelers, poisonous plants that appear identical to their delicious counterparts, or patches of shadow that cannot be penetrated no matter the weather. There is no reprieve in the Marrowgrove. One can only press on in the hope that they can outpace the spirits of the damned.

SENSORY STIMULATION

The following sounds, sights, smells, and feelings can be used to bring the Marrowgrove to life, and create a dreadful atmosphere.

| d10 | Marrowgrove Sounds |
|-----|--|
| 1 | The gnawing of bones by some many-toothed creature just off the trail. |
| 2 | The distant howling of the wind, or perhaps a spirit caught between worlds. |
| 3 | The sudden crack of a branch snapping and falling to the ground. |
| 4 | A half-whispered conversation between shades. |
| 5 | The cawing cries of crows in between pecking at corpses. |
| 6 | Barely audible weeping of an innocent soul forever trapped in the twilight realm. |
| 7 | Hollow echoes of a dramatic event from a departed life, perhaps the last moments of some poor soul. |
| 8 | Icy whispers of the dead, blindly seeking a path back to the world of the living. |
| 9 | Insane laughter of a phantom whose inability to depart from the mortal realm has cost them their sanity. |
| 10 | Indecipherable, broken babble surrounds you, sounding vaguely like someone speaking, but indecipherable. |

| d10 | Marrowgrove Sights |
|-----|--|
| 1 | A humanoid cadaver covered by a carpet of fungal growth. |
| 2 | A half-buried animal skeleton with twisted limbs and still-staring eyeballs. |
| 3 | A heathen shrine consisting of a blood-splattered altar and a crucified goat. |
| 4 | Flickering shadows at the edge of your vision betraying ghostly figures that haunt your trail. |
| 5 | Footsteps imprinting on the path ahead with no visible source. |
| 6 | A shambling heap of putrefying flesh with except a gaping maw filled with rotting teeth. |
| 7 | A crawling mass of writhing maggots blindly searching for a new feast. |
| 8 | A dead adventurer, whose carcass is being reclaimed by the terrain. |
| 9 | Dried drops of blood-like, black liquid splattered across the trail. |
| 10 | A horribly deformed rat silently skitters in the footsteps of the party, as if anticipating its next meal. |



| d10 | Marrowgrove Smells |
|-----|--|
| 1 | The overpowering musk of decaying flesh burns your nostrils. |
| 2 | An ozone-tinted miasma hinting at the presence of those passed on to the next life. |
| 3 | A reeking, animal scent that makes you feel as if your nose is bleeding. |
| 4 | The unmistakable metallic scent of drying blood. |
| 5 | A waft of ashen air that seems to pump frozen air through your sinuses. |
| 6 | A rancid stench of something fetid, turning your stomach and making you feel ill. |
| 7 | The moist smell of recently dug earth, mixed with a rotting odor. |
| 8 | A mild, somewhat pleasant aroma of recently burned candles, or incense. |
| 9 | A whiff of cold, humid air carrying a hint of putrescence. |
| 10 | The smell of graves and long-buried corpses, starts as barely discernible but slowly grows stronger. |

| d10 | Marrowgrove Sensations |
|-----|--|
| 1 | Shivers run down your spine. |
| 2 | Your hair stands on end. |
| 3 | Goosebumps break out over your skin. |
| 4 | A sudden chill cuts to your bones. |
| 5 | A creeping nausea that slowly builds in the pit of your stomach until bile fills your mouth and you're forced to pause for air. |
| 6 | An asphyxiating feeling like an ethereal fist clenching around your throat and slowly tightening its grip, making breathing more and more difficult. |
| 7 | An inexplicable sense that something is not right, although you are not able to say what it is. |
| 8 | You start feeling like you're carrying a burden of great weight that keeps getting heavier and heavier. |
| 9 | You feel like something gently caresses your brow, although there is nothing there. |
| 10 | A crushing feeling of hopelessness overcomes you and you feel the gentle call of the otherworld beckoning you. |

HAZARDS & TERRAIN

The following terrain types and hazards are unique to the Marrowgrove. They can be used to create exciting roleplaying moments and put a dark spin on combat, survival, and exploration.

COLD SPOTS

When walking through the Marrowgrove, you might notice an area where frost coats the undergrowth and the leaves of low-hanging limbs are frozen solid. These patches are called cold spots, and are caused when spirits from the afterlife congregate in an area. Their presence lingers in these places, causing them to become freezing cold. Eventually, the frost lifts and the damaged vegetation begins to rot, but while the cold spot is still chilled, it can be a serious hazard.

***Crippling Chill** - deadly threat; 120 ft. sphere - The chill is cold enough to cause significant damage, but it also saps the strength and vigor of explorers. The crippling chill slows their travel pace, lowers their carrying capacity, and eventually causes unconsciousness or even death.*

CRYPT MIST

The Marrowgrove contains numerous burial sites within its borders. On moonless nights the corpses interred within the forest exhume themselves and begin wandering in search of humanoid flesh. As the undead rise, their shallow graves begin to spew forth a rank-smelling effluvia that collects among the undergrowth of the forest. This vapor is deadly on its own, but even more insidious is its ability to drive creatures mad with fear.

***Noxious Brume** - dangerous threat; 120 ft. sphere - Unless promptly stopped by holy rituals, the mist continues to amass until it rises above the low-lying plants and up to the canopy. At this point, the noxious fumes are potent enough to cause serious damage to living creatures. The charnel stench of the vapors causes hallucinations in those who breathe it, leading to a heightened sense of terror.*

CURSED TOUCHSTONES

Embedded in the earth beneath your feet, these smooth stones are sometimes concealed by patches of moss or mushrooms, or piles of fallen leaves. Brushing aside the debris reveals small, smooth rocks that are often etched with magical symbols or runes that give off an aura of necromantic magic. Luckily, the magic imbued into these stones is rarely dangerous. Adventures in the Marrowgrove might happen across a trail of cursed touchstones arranged as if they were stepping stones. Walking on these paths can transport you into the veil between the living and the dead, allowing you to communicate

with deceased and undead creatures as if they were still living. This can be extremely useful for those trying to avoid undead or help their souls pass to the next life, but is also fraught with danger.

Chief among these dangers is simply spending too long in the veil. Losing touch with the world of the living through exposure to the realm of the dead can cause a creature to become trapped in limbo. Their soul lingers in the veil, and their body becomes a wraith trapped within the bounds of the Marrowgrove.

Visions of Death - *mild threat; touch* - A creature that touches a cursed touchstone and focuses on its magical sigils becomes privy to a vision. These hallucinations are often prophetic in nature, but rarely are they simple to decipher. Some show glimpses of the future, others look into an alternate past, and others still, the lives and memories of creatures claimed by the Marrowgrove.

GRAVEMOUNDS

In some places the ground rises into a barren mound surrounded by withered trees that seem to beckon you closer. These mounds are where bodies have been interred and enclosed beneath the earth originally dug out for their grave. They may be small, containing only a single individual, or enormous, marking the mass grave created after a war, famine, plague, or similar catastrophic event. A circle of bleached stones may mark the entrance to a gravemound.

In the Marrowgrove, these barrows take on more sinister properties. The humanoids buried within the mounds rise as zombies, skeletons, ghouls and the like, but they are changed by the forest. Their bones and limbs branch out like those of a grisly tree, creating smaller offshoots of bone or flesh that resemble roots or branches. This horrific mimicry of nature is sickening to behold, and makes the undead far more dangerous.

Empowered Undead - *moderate threat; 1-mile radius* - The ritual magic imbued in gravemounds strengthens the undead around it, making them less vulnerable to radiant damage and holy turning magic. Living creatures that enter gravemounds are likely to awaken undead creatures from their rest.

RECLAMATION MARSH

In some places in the Marrowgrove, a thick, all-consuming bog of black fluid lies beneath the fallen leaves. Travelers might walk across the uneven surface of such a marsh for days before realizing that they are no longer standing on solid ground. Having strayed too far from solid ground, the traveler may learn why these reclamation marshes earn their name; creatures sucked down into their depths are eventually regurgitated as festering undead. Furthermore, creatures that spend too long walking over a reclamation marsh begin to have their minds warped. Such creatures gain an insatiable appetite that can cause them to consume moss, bark, mud, and, at its worst, humanoid flesh. This kind of magical insanity is difficult to cure once it takes hold.

A reclamation marsh can be recognized by a few signs, such as animals eating peculiar things around its periphery and soft spongy ground that gives off a sulfurous scent.

Engulfed by Sludge - *deadly threat; touch* - Creatures walking through a reclamation marsh must make dexterity saves every few miles or be sucked into the bog, where they begin drowning. The only means of escape is using strength or some anchoring mechanism. Creatures that rest in the marsh must make a will save after each rest or develop an insatiable, irrational appetite.



SPECIAL QUALITIES

See below for some special qualities that life forms (plant or animal) in the Marrowgrove may possess. These qualities can be combined with standard plants, animals, or monsters to create variants specific to the Marrowgrove, such as *Ethereal Maggots* or *Hellborn Vines*.

| d20 | Marrowgrove Flora & Fauna |
|-----|--|
| 1 | Carrion-Nesting. The creature's young or plant's seeds gestate in carcasses, bursting forth from the rotting remains when they grow large enough. |
| 2 | Corpse-Grinding. The living things here destroy the corpses of others to fuel their own growth. The more cadavers they consume, the more monstrous they appear. |
| 3 | Curse-Spreading. Everything in the Marrowgrove is touched by a curse. It could be as extreme as vampirism, or as mundane as bad luck, but, it is always contagious. |
| 4 | Ethereal. The lifeforms are not quite part of this world. Some parts of them exist in another plane, or in another time. Their bodies may not fully manifest in this realm. |
| 5 | Foul. Plants are withered and blighted, as if suffering from a malady. Animals are reeking and rancid, with patchy fur, putrefying skin, and yellowed bone. |
| 6 | Hellborn. The wildlife has a connection to the hells. Their eyes replaced with balls of fire, they have lava for blood, or their bite is as hard as black iron. |
| 7 | Hollow. Creatures have cracks in their skin that reveal a hollow interior like a porcelain doll. They seem to have no interest in life, wandering aimlessly. |
| 8 | Howling. The plants and beasts make horrific wailing noises that madden those who listen to them. |
| 9 | Nightmare-Inducing. The creatures and plants here disturb the mind, stirring up suppressed memories of past horrific events and causing nearby sentient creatures to have nightmares. |
| 10 | Plague-Bearing. Life here is diseased and virulent. Each creature seems to be infected or infested in some way and their contagion spreads like wildfire. |
| 11 | Revenant. Life forms killed in the Marrowgrove come back with vengeance. They animate after death, possessed by a spirit that lusts for revenge. |

| | |
|----|--|
| 12 | Rotten. Bark peels from trees in sodden sheets, flesh turns to mush as visceral fluid leaks from organs, flowers soften and wither on stems, and teeth decay within their maws. |
| 13 | Screeching. When a life form here finds suitable prey, they screech at the top of their lungs, alerting all other predators in a nearby radius. |
| 14 | Septic. The lifeforms spread a disease which causes organ failure, starting with shakes, then a stunned feeling, followed by paralysis and then death. |
| 15 | Soul-Leeching. The creatures and plants here don't drain nutrients, they drain souls. Their insatiable appetite for spirits results in withered husks wandering the woods. |
| 16 | Spiked. Plants and animals here have bone spurs, ragged antlers, twisting horns, monstrous tusks, keratinous spines, vicious thorns, or chitinous hooks. |
| 17 | Monstrous. Creatures and plants here look disfigured and uncanny. Consuming them causes the same to occur in the eater. |
| 18 | Twisted. Life here is a sick mockery of nature. Creatures walk on warped limbs, trees grow with their roots in the air and branches in the earth, while insects have shells made from skin instead of chitin. |
| 19 | Morale-Sapping. The mere presence of wildlife in the Marrowgrove causes nearby sentient creatures to feel depressed and exhausted. Their sapping auras are near-impossible to avoid. |
| 20 | Grisly Branching. Creatures in the Marrowgrove have eruptions of bone and flesh that protrude like branches, while the branches of plants look like blood vessels. |

BURROWBACK BEETLES

These insects get their moniker from their habit of burrowing into the backs of animals and humanoid, whether they're dead or alive. Here, the beetles lay clutches of writhing maggots that feed upon the living flesh or the viscera of the dead. These repulsive beetles are slightly iridescent and have dark red cases with vertical black stripes. They grow to about the size of a gold piece, though most are smaller. Although the process of harvesting them is disgusting, Burrowback Beetle larvae are a great source of protein for foraging explorers.

A creature that finds themselves with a swarm of Burrowback Beetles on their bodies will have to act fast to remove them. The massive trauma caused in such a short period by the insects can kill a creature in a matter of minutes. Burrowback Beetles can be deterred by mild acid, such as vinegar.

LEECHVINES

These crawling, ivy-like vines make their way through the Marrowgrove in search of decaying matter in which to implant their tendrils. The vines leech nutrients from dead creatures, helping them grow thicker and longer. Additionally, the energy leeched from the corpses allows them to move around, albeit slowly, in search of new feasts. The easiest way to distinguish a leechvine from ivy is the color of the leaves—where ivy has a green or variegated leaf, leechvine leaves are always black. Leechvines pose less danger to living, conscious creatures, but horror stories of leechvines crawling into tents and shooting their tendrils into sleeping adventurers are common around the Marrowgrove.

If a creature is targeted by a leechvine while unconscious, it must be quickly freed by an ally. The leechvine immediately begins draining their constitution score and the wound left behind must be treated with a medicine skill or the targeted creature will die of blood loss.

MARROWBONE TREES

These pale trees are often mistaken for dead oaks or beech trees because of their sparse leaves. Their central trunks usually have numerous smaller offshoot trunks nearby, connected by an elaborate root system. The main trunk serves as a store for excess sugar, which forms a thick, red fluid that gathers beneath the bark. This liquid is similar in taste to maple syrup but has an uncanny resemblance to blood. Savvy adventurers know to look out for the small bronze-leaved auxiliary trees of a marrowbone tree and trace the roots back to this excellent food source.

A creature that successfully locates a marrowbone tree can harvest a number of rations equal to 1d8 + their Wisdom modifier with a successful nature or equivalent skillcheck. Each ration also counts as a full waterskin.

UNDEAD ANIMALS

The necromantic energies in the Marrowgrove often prevent natural decomposition of dead creatures. This can result in a creature rising from the dead after the scavengers and insects have had their taste. These disturbing mockeries of life might carry

diseases or be unnaturally aggressive in their new form, making them a serious danger to explorers.

Undead animals use the game statistics of their living counterparts, but with greater brawn and endurance. Additionally, if such a creature is killed, it can make an endurance save based on the damage taken to stay alive as the body continues to reanimate. This might look like the body knitting itself back together, or simply carrying on fighting despite a grievous wound. This doesn't apply if the undead animal is killed by a holy source or a critical strike.

NEW MONSTERS

The following monsters are unique to the Marrowgrove. The full statblocks for these monsters, including their special abilities, can be found in the Appendix.

FLESHMELD

Type: Large undead, unaligned
Special Ability: Decomposing Spray
Mental: ♦♦♦♦♦
Physical: ♦♦♦♦♦
Magical: ♦♦♦♦♦

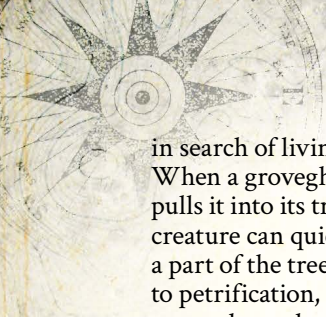
These hideous undead are amalgamations of flesh, sinew, bone, and gore. They are formed when an undead creature decomposes to the extent that it falls apart, but still remains animated. These crawling piles of viscera are capable of transforming other undead creatures into a similar state by accelerating their decomposition and amalgamating with them. Thus, over time, a fleshmeld slowly grows into an enormous pile of gore that shambles and splatters across the forest floor. As well as having great physical strength, caused by the knitting together of sinews and tendons in unnatural ways, fleshmelds have the ability to spray enzyme-filled blood over creatures that causes decomposition to start on living creatures.

GROVEGHAST

Type: Huge plant, chaotic evil
Special Ability: Petrifying Embrace
Mental: ♦♦♦♦♦
Physical: ♦♦♦♦♦
Magical: ♦♦♦♦♦

Some of the trees in the Marrowgrove have undergone a hideous transformation, becoming animated and evil. These trees are known as groveghasts and, to the untrained eye, are indistinguishable from regular trees. These plants move slowly through the Marrowgrove





in search of living beings or suitable ambush spots. When a groveghast encounters a living creature it pulls it into its trunk with its strong limbs. Unless the creature can quickly break free, they rapidly become a part of the tree. This process is somewhat similar to petrification, except the creature turns into bark-covered wood, not stone. Over time, groveghasts display the terrified visages of numerous beasts and humanoids on their trunks as their victims begin to mount—a tell-tale sign that the stony-barked tree is a groveghast and not just another withered trunk.

PREMONITION WRAITH

Type: Medium undead, chaotic neutral

Special Ability: Foresight

Mental: ◆◆◆◆◆

Physical: ◆◆◆◆◆

Magical: ◆◆◆◆◆

Spirits from beyond the grave, premonition wraiths are similar to ghosts or poltergeists, but they have the uncanny ability to predict the future. The visions of the future they create are often horrifying to behold but contain hints and clues of major events that will soon come to pass. Because of this, premonition wraiths are sought out by sages and scholars who are desperate to uncover new knowledge before their competitors. Unfortunately, the recipient of such a foresight must sacrifice their own life force to the premonition wraiths in the process of divination. This aging cannot be reversed except by extraordinary magical means. Those who abuse the foresight of the premonition wraith will find themselves losing their own memories, eventually becoming insane.

WHISPERGHOUL

Type: Medium undead, neutral evil

Special Ability: Whispering Aura

Mental: ◆◆◆◆◆

Physical: ◆◆◆◆◆

Magical: ◆◆◆◆◆

Whisperghouls are the spirits of restless humanoids who in life were poets, storytellers, bards, or songwriters. When one such artist dies under hideous circumstances, or with unresolved business in life, their souls might

be trapped on the material plane rather than ascending to the afterlife. If such a thing occurs, the soul quickly transforms into a whisperghoul, a vaguely humanoid spectral form shrouded in an aura of whispered sonnets, half-sung stanzas, and broken melodies. A creature who hears the mournful verses of a whisperghoul always suffers some dangerous effect that varies from uncontrollable shuddering to incurable madness. Only once the whisperghoul's unfinished business is resolved will those who heard the verses be cured.

QUEST HOOKS

The following quest hooks give you an easy way to draw characters into the Marrowgrove.

Each is specific to this forest and showcases one or more of its most unique elements.

FUTURE VISIONS

An oracle has predicted some awful event is going to occur, but they cannot tell exactly what that event is going to be. They need the characters to travel to the Marrowgrove and locate a linked series of cursed touchstones which should provide the final parts of the vision and give a clearer picture of what's to come. There are five touchstones in total. The characters need to discover three to get a general picture of what is to come, while any additional stones will give further detail. You can use this quest to foreshadow an event that is planned for your campaign, like the approach of a new threat or an attack by a major villain.

Once the characters reach the Marrowgrove, they realize they're not the only ones seeking out the touchstones. An evil group is also seeking out the stones to destroy them before their visions can be observed. The characters must deal with the undead creatures of the Marrowgrove as well as this rival group. The cursed touchstones are spread out across the Marrowgrove, but each is linked to the other by a series of runes engraved into its surface. The characters must navigate through crypt mist and gravemounds in order to find the stones and put the visions from the touchstones in the correct sequence.

RETURN TO THE EARTH

An undead horror has crawled from beneath the earth to threaten a nearby community. The militia are unable to destroy the creature using force, fire, magic, or any other means. Local clergy believe that the creature, an enormous fleshmeld the size of a small cottage, can only be killed in the land it came from - a reclamation marsh in the Marrowgrove. Outside of this area, the festering undead is immune to damage.



In order to save the community, the characters must lure the fleshmeld back into the Marrowgrove, locate the reclamation marsh, and kill the creature there.

Luring the fleshmeld back to the Marrowgrove is relatively easy as the creature doggedly follows the nearest form of life. However, this means that the characters cannot stop at any point, lest the fleshmeld catch up and devour them. Furthermore, they must ward off any other living creatures, especially humanoids, in case the fleshmeld follows them instead. Once they reach the Marrowgrove, they'll need to use their survival skills to discover the reclamation marsh it came from and fight the fleshmeld there.

Upon reaching the reclamation marsh, the characters have to avoid falling into sinkholes that threaten to swallow them and resist the mind-altering effects of the bog. Worse still, each blow they deal to the fleshmeld releases the memories of one of the creatures that was digested by the undead monstrosity, causing waves of mind-assaulting emotional distress.

GROVEGHAST ASSAULT

An ally of the characters was recently forced to travel through the Marrowgrove. When they fail to arrive at their destination, it becomes clear they never made it out of the forest. The characters must investigate in order to save their ally and recover important information that the ally holds. In order to find them, the characters must travel to the Marrowgrove themselves, use their survival skills to determine the path their ally took, and discover what has prevented them from leaving the forest.

When the characters arrive in the Marrowgrove they quickly discover that something evil is at work, crypt mist has spread out across almost the entirety of the woods, and there is a horde of skeletons ambling throughout. These skeletons seem to be searching for humanoids to take as captives, and the characters encounter at least one group of captives being taken to the heart of the Marrowgrove.

In the heart of the Marrowgrove is an enormous Groveghast; a tree-like creature that can pull living beings into its trunk. This particular specimen has grown enormous; the petrified faces of screaming humanoids, including the ally of the characters, are entombed within its bark. The sheer number of creatures it has consumed has given this groveghast heightened intelligence and it has been commanding the skeletons to bring more and more victims. Killing it will free the characters' ally and the rest of the victims.

THE LOST DIARY OF SYLVANUS

This quest hook is a tie-in to *Root of Sylvanus* and *The Shadows of the Marrowgrove*, the adventures included with this book. The characters are approached by a peculiar old sage who wishes to unlock alchemical knowledge related to future sight. The sage has

heard of a druid that possessed great alchemical knowledge, but went missing in the Marrowgrove. After revealing that they'd discovered the last known location of the druid within the forest, the sage asks the adventurers to help them recover the druid's diary and notes. If the characters agree, the sage will willingly brew potions for them at a great discount.

The characters must escort the sage through the Marrowgrove, keeping them safe from harm while also keeping the spirits of the entire party high. The sage directs the party, but will not reveal the destination, fearing the party might betray them. However, the sage is so decrepit that if their morale score drops too low, it sends them into spiraling despair that causes them to lose their memories and become unable to direct the characters to their destination. If their morale drops below a minimum threshold, the sage succumbs to terror and madness, and the last location of the druid is lost.

If the characters keep morale high and follow the directions of the sage, they discover a ruined tower that appears to have been burned. Here, in the ruined tower, they find the druid's alchemical notes describing the augur root—just what the sage was looking for.

BLADE FROM THE BONES

The characters hear a rumor about an immensely powerful sword wielded by a world-shaking titan many centuries ago. The blade had the ability to change its size to fit its wielder. It is whispered that the blade still rests in a black lake in the Marrowgrove, embedded in the remains of a behemoth.

If the players wish to obtain the sword, they must decipher the rumors and legends surrounding the blade, as well as do research of their own in libraries and scriptoriums to discover the exact location of the lake in the Marrowgrove. Once they set off, they must survive the undead monstrosities that haunt the forest, as well as the nightmare-inducing and soul-sapping wildlife that seems to plague their every step. The behemoth skeleton serves as a landmark, but it is difficult to find due to encroaching crypt mist.

If the characters locate the lake with the skeletal behemoth, they find the sword lodged in its giant skull. Unfortunately, the skeleton is half-sunk into the mud. The characters must avoid being sucked into the mud as they retrieve the enormous blade, which is over ten feet long and glistening with arcane runes. As soon as the blade is drawn from the skull, the behemoth skeleton begins to animate, though age and decay cause it to immediately begin deteriorating. Because the characters have no way to stop the behemoth—the sword requires a ritual to attune to its new master, so it is still ten feet long and lacking its magical power—they must flee the forest keeping up a fast pace to outrun the skeleton and allow it to fall to pieces before it reaches them.



Forest of Carbion



arbion The ferns around you bend and break as powerful fluttering rips through the otherwise tranquil woodland, deafening you momentarily. Shooting across the glade at immense speed comes an enormous dragonfly, as big as a pony, on wings wider than a man's height. As it surges over the burgeoning undergrowth, darting this way and that, its wings shimmer with a purple iridescence. As you're admiring the creature from behind the trunk of a broad tree, it is suddenly consumed by the snapping jaws of a colossal amphibious beast.

ALWAYS A BIGGER FISH

Characterized by giant, primitive creatures and plants, the Carbion Forest is a wild unpredictable place where the fight for survival is taken to the extreme and the landscape can transform itself in the blink of an eye. Both wildlife and plant life are prone to rapid evolution and spontaneous mutations are common. The cycle of life and death here proceeds at a break-neck pace, and the beautiful, vivid surroundings are often a stark contrast to the deadly secrets that lurk within.

At the top of the food chain are colossal amphibians capable of swallowing humanoids whole, and ruling the skies above are carnivorous dragonflies that steal unsuspecting creatures from the face of the earth in high-speed fly-bys.

PRIMORDIAL ECOSYSTEM

The flora and fauna of the Carbion Forest seem to be from another time. Looming tree ferns with fuzzy, moss-covered trunks, broad spiraling fronds, and towering fungus caps prevent light from reaching the forest floor, where giant insects and amphibians lurk in the gloom.

The forest floor itself is damp and swampy, and in some places it lies beneath several feet of brackish water, where bony fish and primitive reptiles swim. Algae and moss cover almost everything and spread rapidly, invigorated by the abundant life energy that flows through the forest. The fauna of the Carbion Forest often seem primitive, but are perfectly adapted to their carboniferous surroundings.

THE CRADLE OF LIFE

THE CARBION FOREST IS A PRIMEVAL PLACE WHERE BOTH LIVING THINGS AND THE ENVIRONMENT CONSTANTLY MUTATE.

- ◆ **Primeval Life:** The Carbion Forest is a wellspring of life in a myriad forms. The apex predators are megapedes, salamandrals, and griffonflies. Even the plants are voracious; fungi, ferns, and algae make up much of the flora.
- ◆ **Constant Change:** The living creatures and plants in the Carbion Forest are constantly adapting to their environment. Creatures might immediately grow horns when predators draw near, or grow wings if they're faced with hazardous terrain.
- ◆ **Roiling Terrain:** Even the topography of the forest alters constantly. Characters might camp by the edge of a tar pit one night, and awake the next morning to find a fern-covered hillock where it was.
- ◆ **Mega-size:** Life is large in the Carbion Forest. Insects grow to the size of horses, or even larger in the case of megapedes. Amphibians attain the size of bears or even wagons.
- ◆ **Unstable Earth:** Because the forest is constantly shifting, it's almost impossible to navigate and plot a course through the forest. Expeditions must be flexible to account for the changing terrain.
- ◆ **Bountiful:** Although it is deadly, the Carbion Forest contains life that could not exist elsewhere. There is no shortage of awesome sights within the forest - catch them quick before they change.

LARGER THAN LIFE

Plants and animals within the forest often grow to huge sizes, making them especially dangerous. Centipedes may be as long as carts, scuttling over the rotting forest floor on dozens of legs as long as humanoid forearms. Hot in pursuit are amphibious creatures whose mass far outweighs that of cattle, their powerful hind limbs firing them through the air like cannonballs. Cutting their way through the lofty tree ferns and fungi are dragonflies as large as ponies, with mandibles that open wider than a manticore's jaws. The buzzing and fluttering of their wings is deafening, ripping through the other sounds of the forest. Creatures the size of humanoids are massively overshadowed by the life forms present in the Carbion Forest, and they had better accept their place at the bottom of the food chain fast.

SENSORY STIMULATION

The following sounds, sights, smells, and feelings can be used to give depth to the Carbion Forest.

| d10 | Carbion Forest Sounds |
|-----|---|
| 1 | The cracking of a tree fern trunk as a lumbering toad forces its way through the undergrowth. |
| 2 | The staccato skittering of centipede feet rapping their way over a boulder nearby. |
| 3 | The telltale hum of an approaching giant dragonfly that quickly becomes a deafening roar. |
| 4 | The croaking of an amphibian mating call that rumbles like thunder through the night. |
| 5 | The soft, rhythmic bubbling of a tar pit spewing noxious gases into the atmosphere. |
| 6 | The rustling of an algal field expanding. |
| 7 | A rasping, throaty roar of a salamandrial preparing to attack its prey. |
| 8 | Splashing and slamming as a giant crocodile captures something between its immense jaws and smashes it into the banks of the swamp. |
| 9 | Mewling, mournful cries of a creature slowly sinking into a tar pit. |
| 10 | The rumbling, chaotic crashing of mutable terrain taking on a new form. |

| d10 | Carbion Forest Sights |
|-----|---|
| 1 | Two cow-sized salamanders swiping at each other in a competition for territory or prey. |
| 2 | A cluster of griffonflies fly through the densely packed ferns. |
| 3 | The corpse of a giant frog being pulled to pieces by a swarm of ants as large as dogs. |
| 4 | A lofty tree crumbles under its own weight and falls into a bog, sending ten-foot-high waves of swampy water up into the air. |
| 5 | Strange ancient life forms are seen fossilized in a boulder. |
| 6 | The mushroom canopy molders and rapidly decays, only to be replaced moments later by spiralling fern fronds. |
| 7 | Moss spreads over a man-sized newt as it scrambles to escape the vegetative grasp of the suffocating carpet. |
| 8 | The multitudinous legs of a megapede surging past, as large as tree trunks. |
| 9 | The earth opens up beneath as a sinkworm spreads wide its voluminous maw. |
| 10 | The bubbling, twisting skin of a swiftly mutating amphibian. |



d10 Carbion Forest Smells

- 1 The potently aromatic scent of fern spores drifting down from the canopy above.
- 2 The damp, musty musk of wet moss slowly drying in the heat.
- 3 The rank, acrid sourness of noxious fumes created by rotting vegetation in tar pits.
- 4 A sharp tang akin to fresh citrus that emanates from a disturbed beetle.
- 5 The thick, cloying smell of fresh mud.
- 6 The ferrous scent of fresh blood pumping from the veins of a dying salamandrial and spilling onto the moss-covered earth.
- 7 The overwhelming fishy odour of amphibian excrement drying on a swamp bank.
- 8 The musty fetor of giant insect frass.
- 9 The sickly sweet sap of a carnivorous plant.
- 10 The reviving perfume of fresh plant growth.

d10 Carbion Forest Sensations

- 1 The terrifying realization that you are no longer the apex predator in this ecosystem.
- 2 A petrifying sense of smallness as you take in the giant flora and fauna that surrounds you.
- 3 Your foot descends through the forest floor up to your knee as you sink into the rotting vegetation.
- 4 A feeling of freshness and vitality bestowed by the abundant life energy of the forest.
- 5 Disgust at the fungus, slime, and rotting plants that surround you.
- 6 Light-headedness from the oppressive heat and cloying humidity.
- 7 A sense of wonder at the exotic and bizarre mutations of the plants.
- 8 The clinging grip of a sticky slime attaching to your clothing.
- 9 Beads of sweat running down your back and soaking into your clothing.
- 10 Cooling mist brushing your skin and relieving some of the heat of the forest.

HAZARDS & TERRAIN

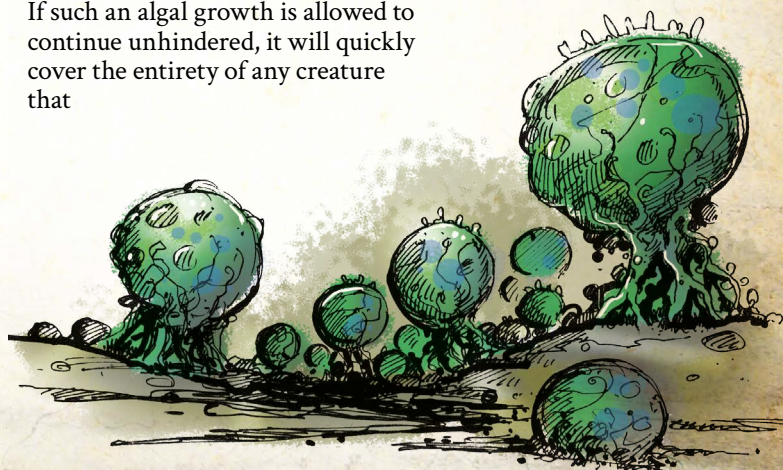
RABID EVOLUTION

Because of the immense quantity of natural energy in the Carbion Forest, things have a habit of changing. The landscape of the forest rapidly alters depending on a huge variety of factors including the weather, temperature, and season. Where there once stood a grove of fungal umbrellas, there might be a brackish lake a week later teeming with hard-headed, fish-like creatures with an appetite for mammalian flesh. The giant bloodsucking flies flitting overhead might rapidly adapt to be resistant to the fireballs slung at them, or could develop natural weapons such as scything forelimbs specially designed to slice off the hands of spellcasters. The speed at which things change in the Carbion Forest seems in stark contrast to their ancient nature, but the idea that these places are primitive is an illusion. In reality, the flora and fauna here adapt far faster than any other life forms. Cascading evolutionary changes sweep through the ecosystems like wildfire, altering the morphology of creatures in days. The following terrain types are unique to the Carbion Forest. They can be used to create exciting roleplaying moments and add a transmuting quality to combat, survival, and exploration.

ALGAL FIELD

A sprawling green carpet of lush algae flows across the landscape entirely covering everything beneath it. Where there were once boulders, rushes, and tree ferns, there is now only an alien landscape of verdant green. This overflowing algae is so fast-growing that it rapidly coats everything around it, but it has the beneficial effect of evening out terrain, and soaking up any bogs or brackish pools that might otherwise be difficult to traverse.

Unfortunately, this tempering of the natural topography comes at a cost. The algae grows so rapidly that walking across it for even a few hours is likely to contaminate you with algal bodies that swiftly multiply. What first appears as a green smear on a boot suddenly envelops an entire leg and, before long, a torso and head to match. If such an algal growth is allowed to continue unhindered, it will quickly cover the entirety of any creature that



crosses the algal field. If these creatures are unable to get rid of the algae, they will be suffocated in short order—literally gagging on clumps of green vegetation. The time this takes varies depending on the size of the creature, but rarely longer than 24 hours. It is most dangerous when unnoticed, and a creature settles to rest without realising the green weed is slowly spreading up its back. Suffocated creatures are enveloped into the mass of an algal field within days, becoming entirely irretrievable. The only way to remove such an infestation is fire. The algae is highly combustible and cannot survive dry heat. If a fire breaks out in an algal field it rapidly spreads, destroying the entire landscape.

Overgrowth - dangerous threat; touch- *Touching an algal field might cause it to spread onto the creature. It then rapidly grows and spreads over their body, rapidly suffocating them. The algae can only be removed by dealing fire damage to it.*

TAR PIT

Bubbling and black, these pools of thick, treacle-like tar erupt spontaneously in the Carbion Forest. Although they appear to boil, the effervescence of a tar pit is simply due to noxious gases rising from within it. These gases make tar pits doubly dangerous; creatures that wander close to tar pits for too long and breathe in the poisonous fumes emanating from them become nauseated in a matter of minutes, and disorientated not long after. Even if they initially spotted the tar pit, their compromised state of mind might lead them to stumble and fall into the tar.

Once within a tar pit, it is very difficult to escape. The semi-fluid tar within the pits is sticky like honey, and doesn't dissolve in water. This means it clings to clothing, skin, and hair alike, and cannot easily be removed except by scraping. If a pit is deep enough, a creature could sink down over their head, but more often the unfortunate victim simply wades deeper in, confused by the ground giving way beneath them, and then cannot lift their feet high enough to escape. Eventually, the creature may die of exhaustion or dehydration. The surest way to escape a pit is by a thrown rope, though it must be done quickly lest the rope itself sink into the muck. Due to the terrifyingly rapid evolution in the Carbion Forest, some tar pits have become animated, while others have gained sentience. These oozes are perhaps the most dangerous monsters in the Carbion Forest.

Bubbling Bog - moderate threat; touch- *Creatures that breathe the fumes of the pit must make a constitution save or become poisoned and confused. Creatures are pulled into the tar pit if they step on it, at which point they become stuck. A stuck creature must be pulled out by another creature succeeding on a strength check. On a fail, that creature also becomes stuck.*

METAMORPHOSING GLADE

Metamorphosing glades are terrifying patches of terrain where the earth itself rapidly undergoes enormous changes in its topography and ecosystem. The ground roils and twists like a blanket caught in the wind. Vegetation erupts from the earth, rapidly ascends into the skies, then dies off and falls back to the ground in a rotting heap. A bog of brackish water might suddenly dry up and rise into the air, forming fern-covered hills. A forest of mushrooms might abruptly decay, covering the forest floor with rotting mush that is colonised by liverworts in a matter of hours. Such regions are near impossible to navigate and traverse, as their landmarks constantly shift causing the terrain to twist under the feet of travelers.

Topographic Evolution - moderate threat; 1 mile radius- *The earth within the area shifts form rapidly and unexpectedly causing cliffs to emerge and crumble, hills to erupt, gullies to form, or sinkholes to appear. A creature caught unawares by the change must make a dexterity save or be affected by the new terrain. Navigation checks have disadvantage.*

BRACKISH POOLS

Easily detected from miles away thanks to their repugnant fishy reek, brackish pools are reservoirs of slightly salty water occupied by stringy reeds, piscilithic fish, and territorial crocodiles. The water of these pools is saturated with claggy mud and decaying vegetation, making them cloudy and foul. This water cannot be consumed without extensive purification, including sieving and boiling, even then the smell is atrocious. Unfortunately, brackish pools are essentially the only bodies of water in the Carbion Forest. Streams and rivers are incredibly rare, and there is little rain. Most of the water in the Carbion Forest takes the form of thick mists and fogs that rise overnight and clear by midday.

Foul Waters - mild threat; ingested- *If a creature drinks from the brackish pool without first purifying the water by boiling, or some other means, they must make a constitution save or contract a disease which causes exhaustion over several days.*

FUNGAL CANOPIES

Areas of the Carbion Forest are shrouded by a canopy of mushroom caps that grow from fungal stalks as broad and tall as tree trunks. These strange canopies are not too dissimilar from those formed by looming pine stands, save that they are far less stable and they shed clouds of spores from their gills. Fungal anopies bend significantly in even weak winds, and are prone to breaking when the weather becomes blustery. Storms can cause entire patches of fungal forests to collapse, creating new ecosystems that grow on the moldering mushrooms. The spore clouds created by the mushrooms vary from

sweet-smelling and edible to highly poisonous and bitter. Savvy foragers can tell the difference and collect spores using nets to turn them into loaves of sugary bread.

Spore Clouds - deadly threat; 60 ft. sphere- Sometimes fungal canopies disgorge clouds of spores that are dangerous to inhale. Doing so requires the inhaler to make a wisdom save. On a failed save, the creature becomes controlled by the fungi, which infests their entire body. They try to climb to a high point in the forest and remain there for 24 hours, after which time their head explodes, spreading more fungal spores.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

Life in the Carbion Forest is incredibly diverse thanks to the constant mutability of the place. The list below is of common mutations that occur in the flora & fauna. These mutations can be combined with standard plants, animals, or monsters to create variants specific to the Carbion Forest. For example *cyclopean crocodiles* or *scorpion-tailed toads*.

| d20 | Carbion Forest Qualities |
|-----|---|
| 1 | Many-Headed. Animals have numerous heads sprouting from their necks or from other parts of their body. Fly-trap or pitcher plant-like heads emerge from the central stem or trunk of plants. |
| 2 | Scorpion-Tailed. Creatures grow scorpion-like tails filled with poison. Venomous thorns on long tendrils grow from the vegetation. |
| 3 | Cyclopean. Plants are enormous and lumpy, as if hastily designed by some enormous god incapable of understanding humanoid scale. Animals have a single eye in the center of their heads. |
| 4 | Disproportionate. Parts of plants and animals don't match up properly. Frogs might have immensely long tongues and large plants have tiny leaves. |
| 5 | Giant. Life that would otherwise be small is enormous here, especially insects. |
| 6 | Spiked. Everything here is spiked—bone spurs, ragged antlers, twisting horns, monstrous tusks, keratinous spines, vicious thorns, chitinous hooks. |
| 7 | Blood-Drinking. The flora and fauna here have a taste for humanoid blood. |
| 8 | Armoured. The wildlife has some kind of natural armour such as stone-like bark or keratinous plates. |
| 9 | Extending Mouths. The jaws, mandibles, or tongues of animals can extend to capture prey at a distance, while the roots of plants can grow rapidly to find new food sources. |

| | |
|----|--|
| 10 | Flight. The wildlife has developed the ability to fly, glide, or hover using wings, air sacs, or natural magic. |
| 11 | Scything Limbs. Long, blade-like limbs or branches emerge from the wildlife, capable of slashing through prey with ease. |
| 12 | Multi-Legged. Creatures' speed is massively increased thanks to the growth of additional legs, while vegetation can lift from the earth and scuttle along on its roots. |
| 13 | Amphibious. The wildlife gains the ability to breathe both air and water. |
| 14 | Symbiosis. Two creatures or plants often come together and form a bizarre combination that is twice as dangerous. |
| 15 | Venomous. The animals and plants are poisonous. They might have venom sacks allowing them to spit poison, poison-filled fangs, or flowers with noxious pollen. |
| 16 | Web-Weaver. The flora and fauna have the ability to secrete web-like strands that they use to capture prey or defend their nests against intruders. |
| 17 | Regenerative. The wildlife can regrow and repair itself, recovering from the most grievous of wounds in a matter of minutes. |
| 18 | Camouflage. The creatures and plants blend in with their surroundings seamlessly. |
| 19 | Resistant. When exposed to new forms of damage, such as fire or bludgeoning, the wildlife quickly becomes resistant to it. |
| 20 | Screeching. When a life form here finds suitable prey, they screech at the top of their lungs, alerting all other predators in a nearby radius. |

MUTABLE LIFEFORMS

In the Carbion Forest nothing stays as it appears for long. Colossal salamandrials struggling to get into the armored corpse of a giant insect develop lacerating claws to assist their endeavor. Piscilithic fish on the edge of a drying up pool suddenly mutate to breathe air and waddle around on their bony fins. Lifeforms in the Carbion Forest react rapidly to new situations, evolving to become better adapted to their environment within a period of as little as a few minutes. The rapid changes and mutations of the lifeforms are unpredictable. Creatures that seem mundane from a distance become terrifying predators when adventurers stray too close. Plants that lure in prey with sweet-smelling spores become poisonous in an instant—their roots reaching out to drag creatures under the earth for digestion. The most mundane of flora and fauna can become remarkable in moments.

MEGAPEDES

One of the more common animals spotted in the Carbion Forest are megapedes. These enormous centipedes make wagons seem like childrens toys and their passage through the landscape leaves enormous tracks in the soft ground, making them easy to follow. The strange paths often form patterns of concentric circles, leading creatures that follow in their wake to double-back on themselves, though why they take such circuitous routes is not clear. Although megapedes are primarily herbivorous, eating the vegetation that gets in the way of their ever-chomping mandibles, they have been known to rapidly mutate into acid-spitting carnivores when plentiful prey is nearby. Although taking down one of these immense insects is no mean feat, not least because of their armoured carapaces, their meat is splendid. The surest way to kill a megapede is to lie down low in front of it, so that you pass beneath its mandibles and between its dozens of surging legs. While it courses over you, its soft underside is exposed, which is vulnerable to most blades. However, killing a megapede is sure to attract scavengers.



HYDRASNAPS

Hydrasnaps are mobile plants that snake through the canopy. They have several serpentine stems that terminate in vegetative maws of protruding spines, all of which are attached to the same thick vine. As they wind and weave through the canopy, hydrasnaps search for fresh living prey, especially small animals. They are capable of picking up the trail of a variety of animals from a great distance and, once they come close, dart toward their quarry with immense speed. If a hydrasnap ever loses a head, that stem withers and dies, but two shoot forth where the original was lost.

AMBLING LIVERWORTS

Lucky adventurers might encounter an ambling liverwort, a giant plant that slithers around the Carbion Forest like a giant slug. Perhaps the liverwort seeks moister pastures, areas with better light for photosynthesis, or is simply curious in some subconscious way. Whatever the reason, these large plants look like a cross between a green slug and a wet carpet sliding across the forest floor. The most curious aspect of ambling liverworts is that they appear immune to most dangerous terrain. The mucus upon which they slide seems to neutralize acid, coat sharp rock spurs, repel water, and allow

for ascension of even the steepest of slopes. Adventurers have been known to ride liverworts by harnessing themselves to the plant using rope and pitons. Once affixed, they guide their mounts using crude reins made in the same fashion. Although the going is slow, adventurers will no longer have to deal with difficult or hazardous terrain of any variety, and can even travel over water. The only downfall of liverworts is their susceptibility to dry heat, a sunny day can spell disaster for such a plant.

PISCILITHIC FISH

An inhabitant of the Carbion Forest's fetid streams and ponds, this fish has a broad, spade-shaped exoskull as heavy and hard as stone. Piscilithic fish use these bulky heads to ram other creatures, stunning them for long enough for the fish to grab them in their relatively weak mouths and chew off chunks of meat. Piscilithic fish don't just eat other fish, but also take on smaller amphibians, reptiles, and insects that skirt the shores of their brackish home pools. The skulls of piscilithic fish are so sturdy that they can be converted into shields that, although heavy, can withstand the most powerful of blows. The meat of piscilithic fish is also edible, though somewhat unpalatable due to a muddy taste, mushy texture, and tendency to induce hallucinations if overcooked.

NEW MONSTERS

The following monsters are unique to the Carbion Forest.

GRIFFONFLIES

Type: *Large beast, unaligned*

Special Ability: *Ovipositor*

Mental: ♦♦♦♦♦

Physical: ♦♦♦♦♦

Magical: ♦♦♦♦♦

The largest of the giant dragonflies are griffonflies which rival wyverns in size. These enormous, carnivorous insects are more than capable of plucking a humanoid from the ground for their next meal. Although they can be heard coming from a great distance due to their wingbeats, their speed and agility mean they can strike in the blink of an eye. Catching such monstrous bugs normally requires strong nets strung from the trees, as well as sharp weapons to crack its carapace.

Perhaps worse than being ripped apart and eaten by a griffonfly is to become host for their young. Griffonflies lay their eggs in living creatures using ovipositors at the end of their long abdomens before dropping them back to the forest floor to live out the rest of their short, painful lives. Such a creature is doomed to die within the next 48 hours as the griffonfly eggs hatch inside their body and begin to consume the creature from within. The only merciful aspect of this gestation is that the ovipositor is coated with a painkiller, preventing the infected creature from knowing about the egg injection it has just received.

SINKWORMS

Type: *Huge monstrosity, unaligned*

Special Ability: *Engulf*

Mental: ◆◆◆◆

Physical: ◆◆◆◆

Magical: ◆◆◆◆

Sinkworms are blind, carnivorous ambush predators that burrow beneath the forest floor and lie in wait for other creatures to pass. They disguise their mouth under the debris of the forest floor, then open it suddenly, creating a ten-foot-wide hole like a yawning portal in the earth, sucking anything above them down into their enormous gullet. Their mouths are lined with cartilaginous ridges that contract and expand in a pulsing motion to keep prey from climbing out. Their digestive juices are also terrifyingly potent, dissolving bone within a matter of minutes and even stone or metal within a few hours. Little can be done to destroy a sinkworm, one can only hope they spot the ambush before they trigger it, or pray they have a way to fight their way out from inside the belly of the beast.

SALAMANDRIALS

Type: *Large monstrosity, unaligned*

Special Ability: *Spit Acid*

Mental: ◆◆◆◆

Physical: ◆◆◆◆

Magical: ◆◆◆◆

Bear-sized, neon-colored amphibians that can spit corrosive bile for dozens of feet, Salamandrials are one of the apex predators in the Caribion Forest. Salamandrials are unique because of their social intelligence. Although they do not have a language, they communicate complex ideas through gesticulation with their tails. There are salamandrial monarchs who command great swathes of territory, and to

whom others of their kind pay homage. These highly territorial creatures will defend their hunting ranges to the death, and can often be heard fighting in the distance of the Caribion Forest. Their rasping, throaty roars are immediately distinguishable from the myriad of other bawling beasts that echo through the night.

QUEST HOOKS

The following quest hooks give you an easy way to draw characters into the Caribion Forest. Each is specific to this forest and showcases one or more of its most unique elements.

STUDYING SALAMANDRIALS

A scholar from a nearby education institution wishes to enter the Caribion Forest and study the salamandrials; bear-sized, neon-colored amphibians that spit corrosive bile. Salamandrials are one of the apex predators in the Caribion Forest, but they are relatively unknown in the zoological world. The party will be rewarded with some rare knowledge or a magic scroll if they agree. The longer they can stay in the forest, the greater the reward. The scholar is a fussy old individual with no real survival skills, who would definitely not be able to undertake the trip

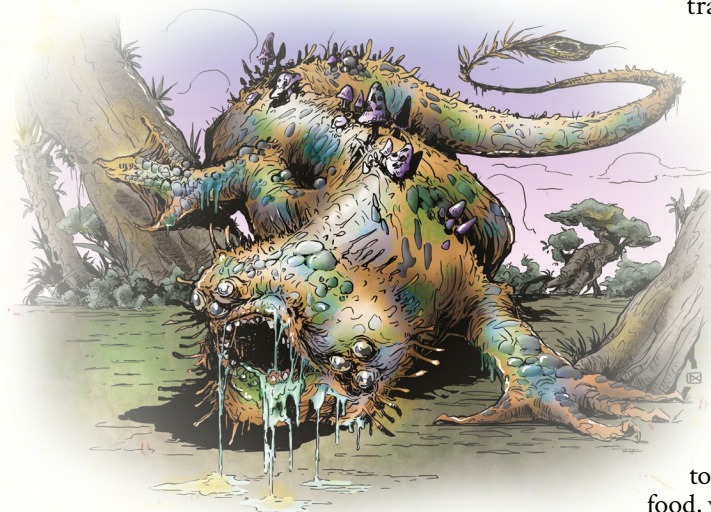
alone. They need help at every turn, though they are the best tracker of the salamandrials given that they have been studying them for so long. The scholar can track the amphibians back to their nesting site. Meanwhile, the characters have to protect the scholar from all manner of dangers including hydrasnaps, spore clouds from the fungal canopy, and griffonflies.

They will also need to be provided with food, water, and shelter.

At some point during the stay, the scholar steals a salamandrial egg without the characters finding out. They might sneak into a nest in the middle of the night, or go when the characters are distracted by another threat. The egg begins hatching while the party is leaving the forest with the scholar.

GOING NATIVE

The promising young assistant of a well-known scholar has disappeared while looking for samples of flora and fauna in the Caribion Forest (they could be an assistant of the scholar from the previous quest hook). If the characters agree to help find them, they'll be rewarded with a respectable pile of gold or a favor from the research institution. The reward will only



be delivered if the assistant is brought back alive. The characters must first use their navigation and survival skills to track down the assistant, which takes them into a metamorphosing glade. If the characters succeed by a significant margin on their tracking checks, they spot clues that something strange is happening. First of all, the assistant's footprints seem to be growing in size. Second, there seem to be extra sets of footprints. Over time, the assistant's tracks get weirder and weirder, displaying evidence of a long dragging tail, enormous leaps, or other strange mutations. The characters should

eventually find the assistant, nearly unrecognizable thanks to the number of mutations they have developed due to the magical nature of the forest. The characters need to capture and control the assistant despite their strange mutations and bring them back to their research institution.

METEORIC RITUAL

A peaceful tribe of lizardfolk approaches the characters while they're traveling through the Caribion Forest. The tribe is on a nomadic pilgrimage around the forest that takes many years and visits different holy sites. Unfortunately, they cannot find one of the key sites, a colossal ritual statue. The lizardfolk say they need to perform a ceremony at the statue before a certain comet passes overhead. The tribe knows roughly where the site should be, but need help finding it. When the characters search through the forest, various clues point toward the correct location, such as old signs carved by past generations into marker stones and enormous painted murals. The comet is expected very soon, so the players must move at a rapid pace to reach the location, but their progress is delayed by a sinkworm or griffonfly attack. The clues leading to the ritual site cease once the characters reach an algal field. The rapidly growing algae has entirely covered the enormous statue and surrounding area. The characters must excavate the ritual site and avoid falling prey to the carpet of mossy growth themselves before the comet arrives. Only at this point does the tribe reveal that if they fail to conduct their ritual, the meteor will crash into the forest.

THE CHRONOMANCER'S TIMEPIECE

Long ago, the Caribion Forest was a normal, temperate forest whose most dangerous inhabitants were wolves and bears. Unfortunately, all this was ruined when a gnomish chronomancer, obsessed with travelling through time, visited the forest. While there, they lost a magical timepiece that was used to turn back time, causing the Caribion Forest to transform into its current, prehistoric form. The forest also began to rapidly expand, spreading across the realm. A powerful NPC, such as a ruler or the gnome themselves, asks the characters to recover the timepiece so that the forest reverts, thus saving the realm.

Characters can search for the timepiece in the places the gnome chronomancer visited during their exploration of the forest, though the landscape has changed drastically. These locations may include algal fields, a sprawling tar pit, and a salamandrial-infested mangrove. The true resting place of the timepiece is the mangrove, but to recover it, the characters must capture an enormous piscilithic fish that will serve as an aquatic mount. Once deep underwater, the characters discover that the timepiece is in the possession of a covetous, intelligent, giant ammonite, nearly twenty feet across. The characters must distract it in order to recover the watch from the creature's hoard. Once it is returned to the chronomancer, they can revert the Caribion Forest back to its previous, docile form.

THE GREAT ASH STORM

While traveling through the Caribion Forest, the characters are caught in a monstrous stampede of salamandrials, giant insects, ambling liverworts, and mutated creatures with a wide variety of dangerous adaptations. The creatures are fleeing from an enormous ash storm that is surging across the forest, covering everything with a layer of dust and burning or suffocating those trapped within. The characters must avoid both the stampede of creatures and the storm in order to stay alive. Once the storm has passed, the characters discover an injured astronomer who had been observing the skies, but was trampled by a megapede. The astronomer explains that the ash storm was caused by a meteoric impact. If the characters are willing to protect the injured astronomer and recover a piece of the meteorite, they'll be rewarded greatly. Reaching the meteorite is somewhat easier than usual because the ash has scared off most of the wildlife, but the terrain still warps and changes randomly, as per usual. The characters are also slowed by their injured companion, who needs medical attention. Upon arriving at the impact site, the characters discover the meteorite is being worshipped by a cannibalistic clan of kobolds, who must be distracted or dispatched before the meteorite can be accessed.



Forest of Eons

Trees stand like ancient guardians in solemn vigilance. The towering trunks are as broad as any castle's watchtower and over twice as tall. Roots spiral out from their bases and intertwine with each other, creating a landscape of twisting bark that your eyes struggle to comprehend. A smell pervades the place, but not the decomposing leaf litter you might expect. The scent is mustier, like a bookshelf of forgotten tomes, or a dungeon chamber left unopened for centuries. Everything seems to move slower. Each wingbeat of the birds that swoop by seems to take at once an eternity and a split second. You feel ill at ease. The woods are watching.

The Forest of Eons is so ancient that time itself has become warped around it. It exists almost within its own plane of reality, and its ancient magic is controlled by forest spirits who protect the flora, fauna, and secrets within. Unprepared travelers might be taken by surprise when the birds fly in reverse around their heads, and deeply troubled when they find themselves waking up three days into their past. The immense power of this forest, manifested through the forest spirits, is something of which all expeditions should be wary.

THE DAWN OF TIME

The Forest of Eons was not created and cultivated by human hands, instead it was the evolution of a forest that originated when the world was born. Having lasted for unfathomable eons, powerful magic has been drawn therein, growing the trees to gargantuan size and touching everything within it. The Forest of Eons is both a wonder to behold as well as a treacherous and bewildering place to traverse. The guardian spirits living here are rarely downright malicious, but they are benevolent just as infrequently. Having lifespans of many human lifetimes, their interests and motivations are elevated beyond those of mere mortals. Their aims, first and foremost, are to protect the woods. Some of the younger, playful spirits still harbor some curiosity towards outsiders, occasionally endangering the forest by consorting with invaders of ill intent.

NOTABLE FEATURES

The Forest of Eons is both beautiful and dangerous. It offers adventurers many opportunities to explore not only its landscape but time itself.

THE MOVEMENT OF TIME

THE FOREST OF EONS IS A PLACE OF ANIMIST SPIRITS AND WARPED TIME. THE DAYS AND HOURS OF AN EXPEDITION DO NOT PASS CORRECTLY IN THIS STRANGE WOODLAND, AND THE CREATURES HERE ARE SUBJECT TO THE WHIMS OF THE CONFLUENCE OF DISTINCT TIMELINES.

- ◆ **Time Flows Strangely:** Travelers in the Forest of Eons quickly lose track of time, which typically passes slower inside the woodland than out. It also skips, reverses, and pauses.
- ◆ **Dawn of Time:** The majority of the plants and many of the animals within the forest are genuinely antediluvian, their origins stemming back to the dawn of time. Many tales tell of when the world was born, and the gods forged the landscape from elemental matter.
- ◆ **Guardian Spirits:** Watchful spirits guard the forest from harm. They trace every move of mortals who enter the forest, protecting the forest at all costs, specifically the center of the woods: *The Heart of Ages*.
- ◆ **Portals & Shortcuts:** Magic infuses this place, causing the creation of linked forest gates and moving root bridges that make traveling easier, if more confusing.
- ◆ **Magical Foraging:** Many of the plants in the Forest of Eons have magical properties that can be tapped into by those with the right knowledge. Harvesting them is the objective of many adventures.
- ◆ **Elemental Energy:** Where timelines cross each other, there is an outpouring of elemental energy. These spots manifest on a conflux where strange and often dangerous magical effects linger.

SPIRITS RULE

The Forest of Eons is protected by forest spirits that will suffer no threats against the woodland or its inhabitants. These spirits take a myriad of forms; some manifest as intelligent, talking animals, while others appear as ethereal humanoids that flit from tree to tree. Alternatively, they may take the form of elemental beings that move with uncharacteristic grace, or as invisible creatures whose presence is communicated through strange signs and symbols.

Each spirit wants to prevent the woods from harm, but they have their own personalities that change their approach. Some spirits might be aggressive and try to kill or maim any outsider that enters the forest. Others might reach out to travelers and seek their aid in solving crises in the woodland. Most of the spirits are cautiously curious and will watch explorers for a while before deciding whether to approach.

The spirits band together in times of need, but might come into conflict when there are no immediate threats to the woodlands. One spirit might want to protect a dying tree and bring it back to life, while another would rather it come down and fertilize the ground for new plants. One spirit might wish to encourage druids to come and help protect the forest, while another wants no humanoid interaction. These conflicts might seem petty, but ultimately influence the fate of the Forest of Eons. Mortals caught up in these conflicts are unwittingly made to serve the agenda of the forest spirits.

TIME OUT OF JOINT

In the Forest of Eons, time works differently. Hours within the woods pass at a different rate than outside, causing days, weeks, or even years to pass unnoticed. Sometimes, time is reversed causing creatures to move backwards, entirely oblivious of their strange circumstance. Those who choose to rest in the forest experience time jumps or skips, where they seem to have traveled forward or even backward in time with no memory of the in-between. These all cause *deja vu* in sentient creatures, who soon come to feel that they're losing track of reality.

Because time is so warped in the forest, moments sometimes overlap. Short sections of an area's past or future are laid over the present moment, causing those in the place to see both moments at once. Sometimes the moments are just seconds apart, like an echo. Other times the gap is far greater, allowing creatures to see far back into the past, or centuries into the future. These glimpses sometimes reveal hidden secrets.

HEART OF THE AGES

Legend tells of a giant seed in the center of the wood where all timelines merge. This central nexus is said to glow with a turquoise light and contain a 'timeknot' that ties together all of the disparate timelines. The nexus spirits of the forest are drawn to this central seed and surround it in droves, basking in the light of eons that exudes from it. Speculation abounds as to the relationship between the spirits and the seed.

Elder BeingSeveral bold scholars and adventurers have tried to reach the Heart of Ages, but none seem to have succeeded. Or, if they have, they have not returned. Most believe that reaching the nexus and casting your eyes upon it would drive you insane, the confluence of timelines melting your mind like fat in a pan. Only those with extreme mental fortitude would be able to look upon the seed and survive.



SENSORY STIMULATION

The following sounds, sights, smells, and feelings can be used to give depth to the Forest of Eons.

| d10 | Forest of Eons Sounds |
|-----|--|
| 1 | Whispers of spirits trail your every step. |
| 2 | A bough-shaking howl of some immense beast as old as time echoes around you. |
| 3 | The gentle grinding rumble as a tree uproots and repositions itself. |
| 4 | A beautiful birdsong stuck in an ever-so-sinister loop. |
| 5 | An uncanny groaning as the trees bend like old men in the wind. |
| 6 | An incessant ticking echoes throughout, bouncing off the boles of the trees. |
| 7 | The babbling of a brook that cannot be found no matter how hard you try. |
| 8 | The backward bark of a fox trapped in time. |
| 9 | The humming of strange insects flying backwards through the air. |
| 10 | A whoosh of air as some immense foot makes contact with the forest floor. |

| d10 | Forest of Eons Sights |
|-----|--|
| 1 | Ants walking backward in an incredibly long trail toward their nest. |
| 2 | Trees twisting their trunks as you travel toward them. |
| 3 | Orange leaves falling up toward the branches of the trees, then slowly become green as they attach themselves to the branches. |
| 4 | Animals stuck in strange behavioral loops. |
| 5 | A glittering stream of air flowing around the largest, most ancient trees. |
| 6 | Polished pebbles floating like a stream through the air. |
| 7 | Pine needles lined up on the forest floor in ordered rows. |
| 8 | Artifacts from a time gone by, which crumble to dust as soon as they are touched. |
| 9 | Raindrops paused in midair, hanging like twinkling droplets of glass. |
| 10 | Birds fly through the air with rapid wing beats, but make little progress like they are flying through syrup. |

| d10 | Forest of Eons Smells |
|-----|---|
| 1 | The scent of your fondest childhood memory. |
| 2 | The sweet scent of honey, which slowly becomes metallic and then suddenly disappears. |
| 3 | Waves of berry-scented breeze that linger for a few minutes before disappearing. |
| 4 | The subtle smell of decaying earth becomes so strong you have to plug your nose. |
| 5 | The musk of mud lingers in the air despite a bone-dry forest floor. |
| 6 | Pungent, aromatic sap drips from holes in the nearby trunks. |
| 7 | An overwhelming stench of smoke burns your nostrils but seems to have no source. |
| 8 | The musty scent of dusty old books. |
| 9 | A softly emerging scent of food that you cannot stand, which strangely twists into one that you love. |
| 10 | The unusual smell of ozone. |

| d10 | Forest of Eons Sensations |
|-----|--|
| 1 | A cold sweat despite the perfectly temperate climate. |
| 2 | A deep and serene sense of calm that lasts for hours, then suddenly stops, leaving you feeling nauseous. |
| 3 | A confusing sense of timelessness, making it so that you can't tell if you've been walking for ten minutes or ten hours. |
| 4 | A sudden and total loss of memory for a few terrifying minutes. |
| 5 | You develop a physical tic for a few hours that you can't remove. |
| 6 | Stomach cramps as you sporadically become intensely hungry, then feel bloated. |
| 7 | A sudden, confusing feeling of weightlessness, as if you're moving through water that offers no resistance. |
| 8 | Reeling dizziness causes you to periodically stumble. |
| 9 | Repeated <i>deja vu</i> of a certain place or event that you cannot shake. |
| 10 | Wearied aches that slow your pace but suddenly abate as soon as you stop to rest. |

HAZARDS & TERRAIN

PRIMORDIAL MONOLITHS

Rising up from the pine needle-covered earth are stones that stand at bizarre, gravity-defying angles. The geometry of these monoliths is perplexing at best, and maddening at worst. They take different forms depending on which angle you observe them from and seem to move whenever you take your eyes off of them. Some of these primordial stones are painted with petroglyphs that tell a tale of the forest's past, or perhaps its future, or both. A creature who studies such a monolith for long enough might gain some temporary insight into the Forest of Eons, though such knowledge might come at a cost.

Future Sight - boon, study - Taking time to decipher the primordial monoliths gives an insight into the forest, allowing creatures to reroll failed ability checks for the next 24 hours. However, it alerts the forest's spirits, who might interfere with their plans, to their presence.

ELEMENTAL CORES

Warping and twisting in the center of many clearings in the Forest of Eons are confluxes of elemental energy. They take myriad forms, such as roiling light trapped inside the hollow of a tree, the branches of which exhibit foliage and fruit from all four seasons at once. These strange cores often create odd sensory effects like kaleidoscopic lights, unusual sounds, and mismatched smells. These elemental cores are outpourings of the natural magic of the ancient forest and are used as places of rest by the forest spirits. Furthermore, these cores can be utilized by the spirits to create stronger magical effects, such as creating treants, changing swathes of terrain, or growing seeds into trees in a matter of moments.

Primordial Magic - boon, study - Individuals that can work out how to control the cores can tap into their natural magic, but failure to do so correctly can be catastrophic. At best, woodland guardians will be summoned to track down the individual. At worst, the character could become trapped in the cladding of the elemental source (be that a tree's hollow, a whirlpool, a standing stone with a natural hole, a hollow within tangled vines, etc.).

TIMESTREAMS

Not all streams in the Forest of Eons are as they seem. Some flow not just through space, but also through time. Those who know how to navigate the waters can travel along different timelines, seeing into the future of this and other dimensions. By following these timelines they can change their own fates, but it takes an extremely skilled navigator to be able to return to the current

time without spiraling out into a confusing timescape that can drive even the most stoic individual mad. Such timestreams are rare and difficult to tell apart from other streams. One telltale sign is that the waters of a timestream, when boiled, turn to liquid silver in a few minutes. Another sign is that a stone skimmed across the surface of a timestream chimes like the striking of a tiny bell

Reversal Flow - boon, touch - Wading into a timestream allows a creature to make an intelligence check. On a failed save, they lose track of time and might be lost for good. On a success, they can reverse time to a previous point.

CRYSTAL PORTALS

Placed seemingly at random throughout the woods, presumably by the forest spirits, are enormous purple crystals. These shimmering, angular planes of polished mineral are typically four to ten feet tall, and at least two feet across. Each glass-like plane of the crystal is unique, with a peculiar veining of pink and silver that makes a pattern you can't quite decipher. The crystals are all extremely cold to the touch, despite the air around them varying as expected with the weather and seasons. When used properly, these strange crystals serve as portals throughout the forest. Some are linked to other crystals, some to timestreams, and some to the interior dimension of the ancient trees that watch over the woodland. In order to enter one of these portals, an individual must learn how to comprehend the veining pattern, and then simply walk into the crystal's face with calm confidence while picturing the destination foretold by the veining.

If no destination is pictured, the creature will simply bump into the crystal. If the incorrect destination is pictured, the creature becomes sealed into the crystal until freed by the forest spirits. If the correct destination is pictured, the creature is transported there (though that could result in them traveling through time, in the case of a timestream, or becoming stuck inside a tree).



fig. IIX: Monolith with mysterious glyphs.



Crystalline Correlation - boon, study - If one holds the knowledge of all the crystal portals in the Forest of Eons and all the correct links between them, the diagram created by the interconnected dots and lines can be used to great effect in the production of natural magic, allowing characters to learn new spells.

ROOT & BRANCH BRIDGES

Almost stone-like in appearance, root and branch bridges are created by ancient trees shaped by forest spirits. The most common of these structures are bridges spanning rivers and chasms, but deeper into the woods, where the spirits walk openly without fear of discovery, far more complex structures are created. Here, hidden from the prying eyes of mortals, are immense temples and towering castles built from living trees. Their roots twist and pack together to create foundations, their trunks create thick, impenetrable walls, and their branches weave together forming walkways and roofs. Even more magical, these structures can shift and change on the whim of the forest spirits. They might bend and warp so that a bridge changes destination, or they can rapidly contract or expand, leaving a traveler stranded on a thin spit of cliff in the middle of a chasm.

Forest Shortcut - boon, use - Safely crossing a root structure gives characters a shortcut, allowing them to travel at a fast pace with none of the drawbacks for that day's travel.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

See below for some special qualities that life forms (plant or animal) in the Forest of Eons may have. These qualities can be combined with standard plants, animals, or monsters to create variants specific to the Forest of Eons; a time-frozen bird or reversing fern, for example.

| d20 | Forest of Eons Qualities |
|-----|--|
| 1 | Time-frozen. The wildlife appears partially frozen in time. This might mean their movements are massively slowed, they don't respond to the world around them, or they are entirely stationary and inert. |
| 2 | Reversing. These variants of flora and fauna move backward through time. Trees might be growing smaller or butterflies may be turning back into caterpillars. |
| 3 | Translucent. The outer layer of these creatures or plants has become translucent, allowing a glimpse at their interior. |
| 4 | Arcadian. Parts of the woodland are ideal and serene; almost perfect. In these areas, the wildlife matches the surroundings. |

| | |
|----|--|
| 5 | Eerie. Things are so old and ancient they defy reality. Animals seem to show a sinister intelligence and plants grow to cut off paths and cover landmarks. |
| 6 | Ethereal. Lifeforms are not quite in this world. Some part of them exists in another plane or in another time. Their bodies may not fully manifest in this realm. |
| 7 | Faded. Due to its age, the wildlife here has lost some of its vivacity. Colors and smells are dulled. |
| 8 | Warped. The living things in this forest are not put together in the way you'd expect. Limbs attach incorrectly or bend the wrong way. The flowers of plants grow from the base, their roots growing high above. |
| 9 | Sagacious. An air of wisdom permeates the forest, giving plants and animals greater intelligence and the ability to speak. |
| 10 | Oracular. In some way, the creatures and plants provide omens for what is to come. |
| 11 | Awakened. The plants move like animals, and the animals think like people. |
| 12 | Perceptive. Things in this forest like to watch and learn before interacting directly. |
| 13 | Labyrinthine. Plants grow into structures that almost seem cultivated. Often they turn into sprawling, maze-like thickets. |
| 14 | Maddening. The nature of the plants and animals is enough to send anyone into insanity. Maybe because of the hideous way they look, the psychotropic effects of their fruits or pollen, or simply their unceasing pursuit of you. |
| 15 | Stuttering. The wildlife seems to stutter forward and backward in time at irregular intervals. An adult bird scratching for seeds might suddenly become a hatchling. |
| 16 | Iridescent. Things here glow and glitter as if lit internally, reflecting any light that is cast upon them. |
| 17 | Disproportionate. The plants and animals are ten times larger or smaller than they should be. |
| 18 | Tenebrous. Plants and animals are immersed in shadows. Only hints of what lies within the darkness can be made out. |
| 19 | Crystalline. Things are part-organism, part-mineral. They move like living beings, but are clearly cut from gemstone. |
| 20 | Giant. Life is enormous here. Tree trunks grow as thick as wizard's towers and elk rival elephants in height. |

ANIMOSS

Lush green moss is a common sight in the Forest of Eons. Alongside lichen, it covers most boulders, trails, and tree trunks found in this forest. Numerous varieties exist, though none is so peculiar and sought after as animoss. Animoss generally forms a shape vaguely similar to a nine-pointed star, and has a slight blue tinge to its leaves. In the right conditions, animoss shoots up flower-like stalks which twinkle as if adorned by tiny sapphires. It is these spores that are the object of many an expedition.

Animoss spores are crystalline and weigh next to nothing. They can be harvested by wiping the sporophytes with a damp cloth, then rolling up the cloth and placing it inside a sealed container. They must be kept away from the air and remain moist, but not wet. Provided these conditions are maintained, the spores of animoss can be kept for up to six months.

Animoss spores are desirable because they have an absolutely unique curative quality. Grinding up the crystalline spores into a powder and then burning them in a small dish or brazier creates a thick indigo smoke that, if inhaled, reverses both natural and magical aging, though inhaling too deeply can regress a person to infancy.

BEAMGLIMMER GRASS

Growing up to ten feet high, these silver-green grasses are often found growing along the edge of streams and lakes in the Forest of Eons. Each individual blade of grass can be as broad as a human hand, and slightly folded so as to form a groove directing rainwater down to its base. Beamglimmer grass gets its name from the strange luminescence that it manifests under the light of the moon. If moonlight hits one of these plants, they reflect an aura of silver light that illuminates all around them for tens of feet.

Although difficult, some herbalists can preserve the blades of grass in such a way that the glowing effect remains even after the plant has been harvested. The leaves can then be thinned down into flat threads and woven into clothes, ropes, tapestries, or any number of other woven goods. These creations are known by the same name as their parent plant. These beamglimmer woven products are highly prized.

FLITTERWINGS

About the size of a copper coin, these insects have long, needle-like proboscises and impressively large wings around the size of a napkin. At rest, flitterwings roll their wings inside their exoskeleton to protect them from harm, but when in flight they flutter at amazing speeds. Flitterwings are desired by entomological collectors for their rarity. Tailors desire them for their wings which are surprisingly durable and can be used as lace. Additionally jewelers seek them for their glittery green exoskeletons which make delightful lockets when a delicate hinge is attached. However, experienced adventurers know that the real value of a flitterwing is while it is alive.

Unlike most butterflies and moths, flitterwings do not drink nectar, but blood. Most often they are content to feast upon the blood of animals, namely deer and boar, but they have been known, on rare occasions, to drink the blood of humanoids. When a flitterwing dines on humanoid blood, a miraculous magical event occurs; the wings of the insect are flooded with lymph and become stiffer, like two sheets of starched parchment. Then, the memories of the humanoid from the past 24 hours appear on the wings of the insect. They are not always in order, and are rarely displayed for more than a few minutes, but viewing them gives an insight into the creature's actions over the last day. Because of this, some druids and rangers keep flitterwings as pets, raising them from eggs in order to tap into the memories of other humanoids.



ELDER ANIMALS

Because of the strange time distortions that are so common in the Forest of Eons, some animals manage to live for centuries longer than expected. As well as bestowing extended lifespans upon otherwise mundane creatures, the woodlands or the forest spirits might grant an animal a boon, such as enormous antlers, the ability to speak common languages, the capacity to walk through the air as if they were on solid ground, immense growth, barkskin, vegetative growth on their backs and in their fur, or a wide variety of other supernatural gifts.

NEW MONSTERS

Strange creatures lurk in the timeless places within the Forest of Eons. Forest of Aeons and can be used to great roleplaying effect in your game sessions. The full statblocks for these monsters, including their special abilities, can be found in the Appendix.

NEXUS SPIRIT

Type: *Medium elemental, any alignment*
Special Ability: *Animate Elements*
Mental: ◆◆◆◆◆
Physical: ◆◆◆◆◆
Magical: ◆◆◆◆◆

Nexus Spirits are fundamental to the continued survival of the Forest of Eons. They protect the forest from harm any way they can, including by manipulating the creatures within and warping the forest itself. These spirits are born of the Heart of Ages, and work to protect it above all else. When working together, the power of these guardian spirits is almost limitless, but when separated they are bound by certain rules which prevent them from meddling too much in the nature of reality; they may not directly take the life of a mortal creature, for example. Despite this, the spirits are incredibly intelligent and find ways to influence other beings. They often come into conflict with each other and mortals have a habit of being unknowingly manipulated by spirits embroiling them in these conflicts. In times of dire need, a Nexus Spirit can animate the elements around them. This can cause the creation of elementals, animation of plants, or awakening animals.

GROUNDSHAKER TORTOISE

Type: *Gargantuan monstrosity, neutral*
Special Ability: *Earthquake*
Mental: ◆◆◆◆◆
Physical: ◆◆◆◆◆
Magical: ◆◆◆◆◆

The footsteps of these colossal reptilian creatures cause earth tremors that can be felt for miles. Their plodding gait shakes leaves from the trees and can even crack the ground beneath them. Seen from a distance, groundshaker tortoises look like entire portions of forest are rising from the earth and moving. Closer up, it becomes clear that beneath the forest-covered shell is a creature with the aspect of the tortoise, but with a spark of intelligence



fig. 43b: Gargantuan footsteps cause tremors.

in its emerald-green eyes. Entire ecosystems exist on the back of these majestic creature's shells and they can cause immense earthquakes with a well-timed stomp.

LEAFBUG

Type: *Medium monstrosity, unaligned*
Special Ability: *Grasping Roots*
Mental: ◆◆◆◆◆
Physical: ◆◆◆◆◆
Magical: ◆◆◆◆◆

These large creatures are not quite animal, not quite plant. Their shells, hard as bark, resemble giant leaves that vary in color from lime green to burnt orange, to an earthy brown, though they are always marked by a dusty-white stem-like pattern. These markings work to their advantage, as the beetles can simply bury their lower parts into the earth and be perfectly disguised as a large leaf fallen from one of the ancient trees. Each leafbug has its own food preference; some like cloudberry, others prefer pine sap. If an individual can determine what food a specific leafbug likes, they are likely to be able to tame the pony-sized creature and use it as a mount. If threatened, a leafbug can cause grasping roots to emerge from the earth around the predator, allowing the leafbug to scuttle to safety.

STRIDER

Type: *Huge aberration, neutral*
Special Ability: *Time Twist*
Mental: ◆◆◆◆◆
Physical: ◆◆◆◆◆
Magical: ◆◆◆◆◆

Towering between fifteen and twenty-five feet tall, striders are creatures that look like the forequarters of quadrupeds such as wolves, elk, or boar, but with the hind legs missing. They are far larger than their normal counterparts, and their front limbs extend far out of proportion. Their name comes from the gait that is characteristic to each of the creatures; long, loping strides that carry them through the lower canopy.

Strangely, the footfall of these aberrations is almost entirely silent. Striders are more intelligent than run-of-the-mill beasts, but not by much. They cannot speak common languages, but converse with the spirits of the forest and do their bidding. If they are endangered by a serious threat, they can warp time around them, slowing others down, but speeding themselves up, making them seem to teleport away.

QUEST HOOKS

ANIMOSS ACQUISITION

An ally of the party has been magically aged. In order to reverse their aging, the party is informed of the animoss plant in the Forest of Eons, which would be able to cure their ally. The characters must find, harvest, and return with animoss spores before their ally dies of infirmity.

When the characters reach the Forest of Eons, they must use their survival skills to locate a patch of animoss. This is made harder by the overlapping timelines that make the moss appear nearby, but then reveal they were there years ago, and have since died off. Once the moss is eventually found, a nexus spirit tries to prevent the characters from harvesting the spores, believing they are hurting the forest. The characters must persuade the spirit they mean no harm or kill the spirit and avoid the wrath of the forest while they flee with their animoss. Once they return with the spores, they can prepare the flammable powder and help their aged ally inhale the smoke, restoring them to their previous age, or younger.

TURN BACK TIME

One of the elemental cores in the Forest of Eons has become corrupted and has begun destroying everything around it. It threatens to not only damage the forest significantly but rip a hole in time itself. In order to help, the characters must enter the forest and investigate the core, but traversing the forest proves treacherous since the elder animals and striders have been driven wild by the influence of the core.

Once at the core, it becomes clear that there is nothing the characters can do to stop it. The elemental energies have been tainted by some unknown force and are spiraling out of control. They are approached by a nexus spirit who reveals to them that the only solution is to use a timestream to travel back in time and stop the elemental core from ever being created. The nexus spirit can control the flow of time in a timestream to send the characters back.

When they go back into the past, the characters discover that the elemental core was sabotaged by spirits who wished to spread primordial chaos over the world. Their past ritual must be stopped if the characters want to save the present.

MADNESS OF THE HEART

The family of a disappeared noble are looking to hire private investigators to find out what happened to them. The noble entered the Forest of Eons in the hope of returning with some impressive hunting trophies, perhaps even a strider, but has not returned. They were supposed to arrive back at their lodge several days ago and the family are offering a large reward for any news of their disappearance.

When the characters enter the woodlands themselves, they find that many of the usual magical aids to travel, such as the crystal portals and branch bridges, have been sealed off. They cannot be used by outsiders and the nexus spirits interfere at every step to prevent intruders from getting into the forest.

When the characters eventually find the noble, they are frozen in time, with no obvious signs of what occurred. Only by capturing a flutterwing and having the insect feast on the blood of the noble can they search the noble's memories. Doing so reveals that the noble came too close to the Heart of Ages, where they gained insight into how to use the forest to manipulate time. However, the revelation drove them insane, forcing the nexus spirits to trap them before they could wreak havoc.

To save the noble and keep them from threatening the forest, the characters must enter their mind with the help of the nexus spirits and help them reassemble their shattered sanity.



fig. IXc: Creatures age in reverse? Must study more..



Feyrise Forest

Fiercing the sky are hundreds of forested spires, ranging from hundreds of feet to miles high. The twisted pines and spruces that grow atop these spires take beautiful forms, as if sculpted by the gods. Circling above them are a panoply of flying creatures, some recognizable as beautiful birds of paradise, others whose forms defy explanation.

The Feyrise Forest is typified by stark contrast between the highs of the tree-studded spires and the lows of the misty Twilight Valleys. Prismatic crystals of immense power grow atop the spires. Reaching these crystals often requires adventurers to brave the forested valleys of eternal gloom in between the spires, which are filled with capricious fey.

HISTORY

Eons ago, powerful elementals clashed at the spot where the Feyrise Forest now stands. These primordial titans wiped each other out in an immense battle, the result of which was the dynamic landscape of spires and valleys that can be seen today. Remnants of this magic still linger and draw in fey creatures, empower the crystals atop the spires with magic, and cause the entire forest to twist and change depending on the alignment and actions of the creatures within it.

Notable Features

FOREST ATTUNEMENT

The most unique aspect of the Feyrise Forest is the way it responds to those who travel through it. The leaves of plants may change color based on the alignment of those who touch them, while animals may be able to sense a character's murderous intentions. This happens on a larger scale too; the forest may make way for good-natured travelers, clearing trails of creeping plants and providing ripe fruit just off the trail, but may block paths to evil-aligned characters or disrupt their sleep with howling gales and hailstorms.

As well as responding to alignment and intent, the forest may take dramatic action based on what travelers do; starting fires might cause an instantaneous deluge of rain that both extinguishes the flame and soaks characters to the bone. Stealing eggs from nests might cause flocks of birds to harry a character throughout their journey. Conversely, protecting plants and wildlife may be rewarded with root bridges that provide shortcuts to other spires or a ride on the back of a spire drake.

HIGH SPIRES

Unlike many other forests, the Feyrise Forest is incredibly vertical. The groves and thickets you'd find on ground level in a regular forest are elevated here onto magnificent Granite Spires that form a fractured skyline. The dizzying heights of these peaks are connected by rope bridges and vine swings,

PEAKED INTEREST

THE FEYRISE FOREST IS A DYNAMIC LANDSCAPE BOTH IN ITS TOPOGRAPHY AND ITS ADAPTATION TO THE TRAVELERS WITHIN IT. IT IS A FOREST OF TWO PARTS: THE FOREST-CAPPED SPIRES WHERE CRYSTALS GROW AND DRAKES NEST, AND THE TWILIGHT VALLEY BENEATH, RULED BY CAPRICIOUS FEY.

- ◆ **Mirrored Reality:** The forest changes based on the alignment, intent, and actions of travelers within. It opposes evil characters and aids good ones.
- ◆ **Towering Peaks:** Most of the forest is composed of towering spires that are interconnected by treacherous walkways, swings, and ladders.
- ◆ **Gloomy Depths:** Between the high spires is a twisting labyrinth of valleys where perpetual dusk lingers. Those who spend too long there go insane.
- ◆ **Magic Crystals:** At the top of the peaks, guarded by elemental spirits, are prismatic crystals highly sought after as spellcasting foci. They provide bonuses to spellcasters.
- ◆ **Flights & Falls:** Traveling between the spires is no easy task. Travelers must traverse toe-tingling rope bridges and ride spire drakes or mighty storks, trying not to fall.
- ◆ **Fickle Fey:** Fey live throughout the forest. Those of the peaks tend to be more mischievous and cheeky, while those in the twilight valley seek darker goals.

allowing creatures who know the spires to move between areas of the forest without ever setting foot in the mysterious Twilight Valleys below.

The forests atop the spires are all similar; groves of pines and spruces with the occasional juniper tree and cloudberry or bearberry bush. In some cases, the trees spill out over the edges of the peaks, growing out of cracks in the stone on the near-vertical slopes. In addition to trees, many spires

feature outcroppings of prismatic crystals. These crystals are imbued with elemental energy that makes them extremely powerful.

TWILIGHT VALLEY

The gulleys between the spires are all connected into one enormous, forested lowland called The Twilight Valley. Little can grow in this place of eternal gloom - it is kept in a state of perpetual twilight by both its canopy and the dwindling elemental magic that created the forest. Fog sweeps through the place, providing plenty of cover for the nefarious fey that linger in *the twilight*, as well as the beasts that stalk between the trees.

The Twilight Valley also possesses a strange attunement property, similar to the crystals of the spires. Evil creatures tend to be able to see further through the mists, hear encroaching danger from further afield, and even suffer less from weather effects, like crippling chill and soaking rain. Chaotic creatures seem less affected by the maddening magic of the fey. This flips the normal forest attunement; here, evil and chaotic creatures fare better, unlike in the spires, where good and lawful creatures excel.

PRISMATIC CRYSTALS

The crystals of the Feyrise Forest are sought out by spellcasters from across the realms. Their unique attunement magic makes them incredibly powerful spellcasting foci. Mages who are unable to acquire these powerful implements personally are more than happy to pay exorbitant sums for these magnificent shards of power.

When first encountered, the prismatic crystals are entirely translucent, refracting whatever scene is beyond them like frosted glass. This refraction can cause strange illusions if the crystals grow large enough, even causing confusion in those who become enchanted by their prismatic light. Once the crystals are mined they lose their translucence, becoming opaque and taking on a hue based on the alignment of the creature that mined them. This color defines the school of magic the crystal is associated with and an additional effect that the crystal imparts when used to cast spells from that school. Once determined, the color of the crystal cannot be changed.

| Color | Alignment | School | Effect |
|--------|-----------------|---------------|---|
| White | Lawful Good | Abjuration | Spell duration is extended. |
| Yellow | Neutral Good | Restoration | Health points restored are increased. |
| Green | Chaotic Good | Divination | Resistance to mundane damage while concentrating on a spell. |
| Orange | Lawful Neutral | Conjuration | Summoned creatures have extra health points. |
| Grey | Neutral | Illusion | Difficulty to discern reality is increased. |
| Blue | Chaotic Neutral | Transmutation | Spell duration is extended. |
| Red | Lawful Evil | Enchantment | Creatures charmed by you don't realize it after the effect wears off. |
| Purple | Neutral Evil | Necromancy | Summoned undead have extra health points. |
| Black | Chaotic Evil | Evocation | Elemental damage dealt is increased. |

SENSORY STIMULATION

The following sounds, sights, smells, and feelings can be used to give depth to the Feyrise Forest.

| d10 | Feyrise Sounds |
|-----|---|
| 1 | Elated, harmonic birdsong that crescendos into an unbearable cacophony of discordant squawks and suddenly dies off. |
| 2 | A rumbling rockslide cascading down the sheer edge of a spire. |
| 3 | The delicate trickling of rainwater from the spires above. |
| 4 | The jibing laughter of malicious sprites. |
| 5 | The rustling of juniper leaves as a blissfully cool wind moves through the branches. |
| 6 | An ominous howling from the mist-filled ravines below. |
| 7 | The rat-a-tat-a of colossal storks clacking their beaks at each other on distant granite spires. |
| 8 | A wafting wing-beat as a spire drake swoops low over your heads. |
| 9 | High-pitched, rapid songs of pixies engaged in a jolly dance within a pine tree. |
| 10 | Low, steady creaking of rope bridges. |

| d10 | Feyrise Sights |
|-----|---|
| 1 | The dazzling plumage of a spire drake soaring over the mist of the valleys. |
| 2 | Bonsai-like silhouettes of dwarfed trees against a brilliant sunset painted in strokes of tangerine and rose. |
| 3 | Glittering powdered snow that has mounded up on the spires. |
| 4 | Complex carvings left by past societies of ruokkas. |
| 5 | A pock-marked cliff face created by the anxious tapping of knockers. |
| 6 | Garlands of faded flowers woven with silver thread hanging on either side of the trail. |
| 7 | The flitting form of a sprite that circles through the mists around you. |
| 8 | A stone spire sloughing off old layers of rock, sending debris sliding into the twilight valley below. |
| 9 | A vine swing snapping just as a ruokka reaches the lowest point of its arc, plunging them into the fog-filled valley below. |
| 10 | An illuminated line of flickering flames as a bundle of wickies waver whilst traversing a narrow ridge. |

| d10 | Feyrise Forest Smells |
|-----|---|
| 1 | The gin-tinted aroma of merrimaking mountain satyrs, drunk off fermented juniper berries. |
| 2 | Nose-clogging dust from a rockslide on a nearby peak. |
| 3 | A honey-sweet breeze carried along by benevolent spire guardians. |
| 4 | The pungent smell of ozone as lightning strikes a Granite Spire not far from you. |
| 5 | The nostril-searing scent of guano from a stork nest. |
| 6 | Pine sap being drained and chewed by hungry wickies. |
| 7 | A hearty aroma of stork stew being boiled up by a community of ruokkas. |
| 8 | The ferrous scent of blood rising from a deceased stork. |
| 9 | The delicious aroma of culinary herbs growing by the trailside. |
| 10 | The rank smell of hound's breath lingering in the miasma of the Twilight Valley. |

| d10 | Feyrise Sensations |
|-----|--|
| 1 | Vertigo as you gaze up at the towering heights of a granite spire. |
| 2 | Cool winds blowing between the spires and coursing over your skin. |
| 3 | Chilling fear as something howls in the mists of the Twilight Valley. |
| 4 | A sense of creeping dread that makes you believe you are being watched. |
| 5 | A rumbling beneath your feet as debris slides from a nearby spire. |
| 6 | A chill that cuts to the bone as a gale howls through the Twilight Valley. |
| 7 | The warming touch of sunlight cutting through the shadow of a spire. |
| 8 | Calm and serenity as you feel yourself attune to the forest around you. |
| 9 | A gnawing at the back of your mind that begins to turn to paranoia. |
| 10 | A strange sense of connection to the plants and animals around you. |

HAZARDS & TERRAIN

SPIRE ASCENT

Nothing compares to the view from the top of a Granite Spire. However, reaching the top is no mean feat. Many spires have spiraling stairs cut into the circumference of the rock that can provide a treacherous ascent, but some must be climbed using tools and ropes. Most spires have wooden platforms built into them which provide rest points for climbers, but others have little more than crumbling cavities carved out of the rock. Connecting the platforms and spire tops are rope swings, vine ladders, and root bridges. Using these can massively speed up expeditions, but the danger of falling is ever-present.

Long Drop - moderate threat; touch - At any time while scaling the spires or moving between them, something could go wrong; a rope might snap, a rotten plank might crumble, or a gust of wind might blow through. An affected creature must make a moderate dexterity save or fall into the twilight valley below.

MADDENING GLOOM

In the Twilight Valley, where permanent dusk lingers, madness lies. This dark place is haunted by malignant fey creatures who whisper foul curses into the fog, which saturate the minds of those who linger here too long. This madness can cause confusion and disorientation or, if created by a more powerful fey, can even cause creatures to fall under their control. Furthermore, this place is attuned to those traveling through it, meaning that the madness each creature feels draws on their nightmares and conjures up their worst fears.

Whispers of the Fey - dangerous threat; 100-foot radius sphere - While in the twilight valley, fey creatures can speak words of madness that imbue the mists with mind-altering magic. Each non-fey creature must succeed on a difficult wisdom saving throw or gain a level of madness. Creatures with fey ancestry have advantage. While the madness persists, the creature might also become confused, disoriented, frightened, or charmed.

CANOPY ROOSTS

Hanging from spurs of rock on the side of the spires are great nests of avian creatures. These nests can serve as vantage points for those in need of a lookout spot, but can also be used to procure travel between the spires. Characters who are positively attuned to the forest might be able to coax the creature within a nest, typically a spire drake or mighty stork, for a ride. There are a few canopy roosts where fey and other arboreal races have set up arrival points for paid travel, which can be used by those who have a negative reputation with the forest.

Forest Flight - boon; attunement or pay - Creatures who have acted in the forest's favor can attempt a moderate difficulty animal handling check to coax the flying creature within the roost for a ride. If the creature has negative favor with the forest, they must pay instead or find another way. A creature who gains a ride on a flying creature is only entitled to a single flight from one spire to another.

EXUBERANT FALLS

Coursing over the edge of a spire is a gushing waterfall that casts a cloud of spray around it. The droplets catch the light, creating a rainbow whose vibrancy is unrivaled in the mortal realm. These beautiful falls are imbued with magic that serves to cleanse creatures of disease or poison, heal their wounds, and restore morale to those who are bold enough to bathe in them.

These waterfalls usually appear after heavy rainfall. Many of the spires are capped with pools and lakes that are formed by rainwater accumulating. When storms deposit even more water into these pools, they begin to overflow, causing waterfalls to form around the edge of the peaks.

Magical Waters - boon; touch - The water of the falls can cure diseases, remove curses, heal hit points, neutralize poison, and restore morale. A creature can only benefit from a single such effect once per day.



SPECIAL QUALITIES

Below are some special qualities that life forms (plant or animal) in the Feyrise Forest may have. These qualities can be combined with standard plants, animals, or monsters to create variants specific to the Feyrise Forest (for example *awakened finches* or *musical pines*).

| d20 | Feyrise Qualities |
|-----|---|
| 1 | Vibrant. The flora and fauna here are vividly and fantastically colored, often in shades that their normal counterparts could never display. |
| 2 | Changeable. The plants and animals here reflect the emotions of sentient creatures around them in behavior and morphology. |
| 3 | Ethereal. Lifeforms are not quite in this world. Some part of them exists in another plane, or in another time. Their bodies may not fully manifest in this realm. |
| 4 | Awakened. The plants move like animals, and the animals think like people. |
| 5 | Iridescent. Things here glow and glitter as if lit internally, or reflect any light that is cast upon them. |
| 6 | Flight. The wildlife has developed the ability to fly, glide, or hover using wings, air sacs, or natural magic. |
| 7 | Mischievous. The creatures in this forest find ways to goad the characters, such as throwing rocks or mimicking voices. The plants in this forest might smell beautiful from afar, but stink up close. |
| 8 | Adaptive. The living things in the forest take on the personality traits of travelers if they remain nearby for an hour or more. |
| 9 | Tiny. Life here has a tendency to be dwarfed or stunted. |
| 10 | Reflective. Lifeforms mirror what's occurring around them. Shrubs might change shape to become topiaries of travelers and animals might mimic their voices. |
| 11 | Musical. Harmonies exude from the creatures and plants in this woodland. They might originate from peculiar places. |
| 12 | Aromatic. The living things here smell twice as strong as they ought to. Sometimes this is delightful, sometimes it is repulsive. |
| 13 | Joyous. The plants of the forest are adorned with blossoms and flowers. The creatures frolic freely and are unafraid. |

| | |
|----|---|
| 14 | Ornamented. Creatures of these woods decorate themselves with items they use as clothes. Plants grow additional petals and leaves to accentuate their appearance. |
| 15 | Curious. The wildlife here takes a heightened interest in the events occurring around them, poking their noses or tendrils into tents and backpacks. |
| 16 | Telepathic. The plants and animals here have a limited ability to communicate their emotions through telepathic means. |
| 17 | Enchanting. The wildlife and fey creatures of the forest are alluring; they might simply be beautiful, or trying to charm using magic. |
| 18 | Unaffected. The life here has a remarkable resistance to magical effects. |
| 19 | Gregarious. The flora and fauna of this place have a tendency to gather together in groups. |
| 20 | Vivacious. The wildlife here is verdant and filled with life. There is quarry in abundance and there always seems to be ripe fruits, nuts, or vegetables to harvest. |

BIRDS OF ARDOUR

Birds of ardour are delightful, finch-sized birds that display a wide variety of different forms, each of which has amazingly vibrant and striking plumage. The coloration, pattern, and arrangement of their feathers can shift and change based on the emotions of sapient creatures nearby, making them soothing companions and familiars. Because of this, the birds are highly sought after. Birds of ardour are also incredibly confident and daring, putting on amazing displays such as melodic song, spectacular dances, and twisting flights.

The traditional methods for capturing birds of ardour are mist nets. These thin, almost invisible nets woven from spider silk can be strung up between two spires by hunters and left overnight. The hunters then return the following morning, using complex rope and pulley systems with leather harnesses to allow them to access the birds caught in the nets. A lucky poacher might catch five or six birds in this way; an unlucky one might lose their net to an errant spire drake or mighty stork.

UMBRAL HOUNDS

Rumored to be prophetic harbingers of doom, the umbral hounds are wild, deep purple dogs with green eyes and curling horns that stand as high as a pony and hunt in the ravines and lowlands of the Twilight Valley. These scavenging carnivores can teleport between the shadows of their fog-filled territories with

a flare of their viridescent eyes, always arriving when they're least welcome. Their sleek coats and drool-dripping maws are a motif repeated in the works of the ruokkas, who fear the hounds above all else.

When umbral hounds hunt, they tend to do so in small packs of three or four dogs. They use their innate teleporting abilities and natural climbing skills to surround their quarry, then drive them into an area of the lowlands that they know is difficult to escape, such as a cramped corner of a ravine or in the bend of a foul river. The hounds can see through the thick mists that confuse lost travelers, and thus have no trouble hunting in them. Once their quarry has been cornered, they slowly circle in, then strike from all directions at once.

MIGHTY STORKS

Soaring high above the spires are mighty storks; akin in appearance to their smaller cousins, but large enough for several humans to sit astride. One can never fail to spot at least half a dozen circling or swooping through the low-hanging clouds, skimming the spire tops with their immense wings, whose span rivals those of dragons.

These storks, ranging from brilliant white to dappled grey are relatively tame beasts. If one knows the right calls to pique a stork's curiosity, or can find their roosting places, one can attempt to persuade a stork into companionship. Storks are obsessed with bundles and if a pioneering adventurer or explorer can bundle up a handful of suitably interesting trinkets, the stork to which they are proffered might offer a flight in return.

RUOKKA

Possessed of surprising intelligence, ruokkas are gnome-like creatures with gnarled, lumpy skin that live in scattered arboreal villages hanging from the spires in small familial societies. They are capable of basic building and tool use, and it is they who construct the rickety rope bridges and gut-dropping vine swings that connect the peaks. Ruokkas are superb climbers and tunnelers even without the aid of tools. They can be seen throughout the Feysire Forest ascending pines to gather the cones, harvesting berries from the boughs of juniper trees, or digging for roots in the granite. Ruokkas also like to leave marks in places they've been, which take the form of pigmented patterns painted onto rocks with a thumb-like, padded digit that stands apart from their claws.

Ruokka cultures happily trade with and entertain explorers and travelers, provided they have something

to offer. Ruokkas delight in new experiences, especially new foods, songs, dances, and art. In return for such novel gifts, ruokkas can serve as guides, provide a safe place to rest in their arboreal villages, give sustenance in the form of a vegetable stew, or even construct new routes for explorers to take advantage of.

TWILIGHT VALLEY WILDLIFE

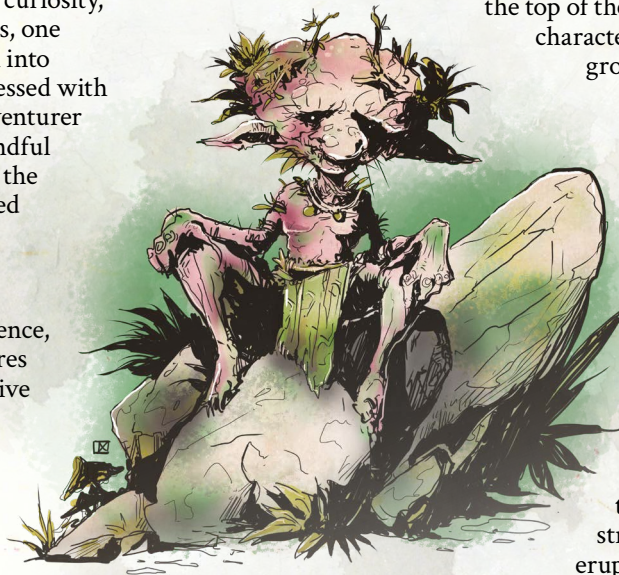
The flora and fauna of the Twilight Valley change based on the alignment, intent, and actions of the travelers that pass through them. Their responses to alignment are usually weak and constrained to color and appearance. For example, good-aligned travelers might find that the brambles seem to have a bruised purple tone to their thorns, or that the birdsong is strangely discordant. The wildlife responds far more strongly to intents and actions. Wicked acts, in particular, tend to draw in wildlife that may seek to help an evil traveler; ravens might flock to them and serve as a familiar for a short while, while thorny roses may move out of the traveler's path. A traveler that acts in a benvolent fashion will find their progress hindered; the stunted trees of the valley might trip them with their roots.

CRYSTALLINE WILDLIFE

The prismatic crystals naturally occur at the top of the Granite Spires that are characteristic of the Feysire Forest; growing in clumps of three to nine, they always grow in an odd number. They're infused with elemental essence, which is the source of their power, and can be harnessed in other ways by those who know ancient crafts.

Animals and plants that spend time near the crystals also take on some of their qualities. They might become translucent themselves, or appear to have strange crystalline growths erupting from their bodies.

Often they too group together in odd-numbered packs, or even manifest some of the elemental magic that powers the crystals, such as leaving scorch marks with their tracks, or having a thunderous howl that rivals the fiercest storm. Some suggest that wildlife infused with the elemental essence could be tapped into just like the crystals themselves, potentially by druids or rangers who work closely with such wildlife, but this is little more than a rumor.



NEW MONSTERS

SPIRE DRAKE

Type: Large dragon, neutral

Special Ability: Coruscating Flyby

Mental: ◆◆◆◆◆

Physical: ◆◆◆◆◆

Magical: ◆◆◆◆◆

Covered in scintillating plumage that rivals even those of the birds of ardor, spire drakes are dragon-like creatures that hunt the mighty storks of the Feyrise Forest. Although they don't possess the intelligence of true dragons, the drakes are swift and agile airborne predators capable of hunting at high speeds and pursuing prey through the forested peaks. The most common tactic of a hunting drake is to fly in front of its quarry at high speed while spinning. This spiraling swoop of vibrant color can temporarily blind or even stun their prey, giving them the opportunity to grasp it with their wicked curved talons and carry them off to their nest. Spire drakes tend to hoard prey in their nests atop the spires until they are hungry enough to eat. A full drake cannot fly anywhere near the speeds of a hungry one, thus they eat only when they are sure they have enough food stored to last a few days.

KNOCKERS

Type: Tiny fey, neutral

Special Ability: Drill

Mental: ◆◆◆◆◆

Physical: ◆◆◆◆◆

Magical: ◆◆◆◆◆

Constantly tapping their conical heads against the spires, knockers are tiny fey creatures that embody impatience and anxiety. If they become overly nervous, they can work together to knock down entire spires. These fey have ossified exteriors, so that they look like skinny little beardless dwarves covered in a thin layer of grey gravel. Their heads bear only the vaguest semblance of humanoid features, contorted and pointed into a cone. Knockers live in burrows that they carve out the spires using their conical heads and tend to aggregate in colonies of a dozen or more. The agitated tapping of knockers can often be heard throughout the Feyrise Forest and if several colonies are present in the same area, their knocking can drown out all other sounds. When threatened, knockers put their cone-heads to deadly use, drilling into the skin of their assailants before dashing away at high speed.



WICKIES

Type: Tiny fey, neutral good

Special Ability: Death Burst

Mental: ◆◆◆◆◆

Physical: ◆◆◆◆◆

Magical: ◆◆◆◆◆

Diminutive, candle-like fairies, wickies can be found lighting up ledges, ridges, and boughs throughout the Feyrise Forest. These fairies look like a mixture of candle and humanoid with waxy skin and lithe limbs attached to cylindrical bodies that are capped with a flicker of flame.

The light they emit can be seen throughout the forest, as they tend to make lines with each other along naturally occurring ridges. The color of a wickie's flame indicates the emotion it is feeling at the time;

typically this is a warm orange of excitement, but it can flash through all colors of the visible spectrum—purples for depression, greens for envy, gray for confusion, bright orange for curiosity, and so on. Wickies, like all life in the Feyrise Forest, are particularly sensitive to travelers and may take on their alignment or personality traits. If a wickie is killed, it explodes in a burst of searing flame.

SPIRE GUARDIAN

Type: Medium elemental, neutral

Special Ability: Whirlwind Wrap

Mental: ◆◆◆◆◆

Physical: ◆◆◆◆◆

Magical: ◆◆◆◆◆

Spire guardians are vaguely humanoid fey creatures that embody the winds of the Feyrise Forest. They cause howling gales when they're upset, calm breezes when they're happy, or gusts when they feel mischievous. Travelers often mistake the guardians for other explorers high up on the peaks, but should a humanoid come too close, the guardian simply disperses. Spire guardians are so-called because they protect the prismatic crystals growing from the rocky granite towers. Although they harbor no malice toward explorers, guardians are easily offended and should a creature disrespect the guardian's home in some way, they'll soon

find themselves at the mercy of squalls and tempests that threaten to throw them from the spires into the Twilight Valley below. On the other hand, if a guardian is feeling generous, it might wrap a creature in a whirlwind when they're about to slip, dampening their fall. This whirlwind wrap can be used to devastating effect if a guardian is threatened through crushing the air out of a humanoid's lungs and pinning them in place.

QUEST HOOKS

CRYSTAL FRONTIER

Several groups are searching for prismatic crystals within the Feyrise Forest. The first group is a society of magical researchers called the Order of the Gleaming Aegis. They are dedicated to unlocking new methods of abjuration and they desire white (abjuration; lawful good) crystals. The second group is a mercenary war wizard company who hire themselves out to warring factions called the Company of the Blazing Staff. They require orange (conjunction; lawful neutral) crystals. The final faction is the Cult of the Sanguine Moon, a group of necromancers who are working to create an undying war machine. They wish for purple (necromancy; neutral evil) crystals. The characters must choose a faction they wish to work for. Each is offering similar rewards, be it in gold, services, or treasure.

Once characters arrive at the Feyrise Forest, they'll need to reach the spire tops by some means, such as the cut stone stairs or rope ladders, with the agents of their chosen faction. This part of the expedition is made harder by one of the rival groups, who attempts to stop the characters using their particular magic. For example, the Company of the Blazing Staff might conjure clouds of daggers to slash ropes the characters are climbing, or the Cult of the Sanguine Moon might send undead bats to harass the characters.

When the characters reach the top, they'll need to search for the crystals and defend their faction allies while they mine the crystals. During this process, the third faction tries to stop the characters.

UNCOVERED HISTORY

An archaeologist hires the characters as an escort. They wish to do some research on a legendary ruin within the Feyrise Forest, but are nervous to go on their own. Furthermore, they know of the ruins' existence, but not the exact location. They'll need the characters' help to interview the native humanoids for information. Threats such as the umbral hounds and the maddening gloom of the Twilight Valley threaten the archaeologist and the characters alike.

Once the characters have reached the safety of the Granite Spires, they'll need to reach out to different communities, including wood elves, ruokkas, sprites, pixies, and other fey, in order

to close in on the location of the ruins. Some of these communities might want something in return, such as trade goods, supplies, or a favor.

Upon arriving at the ruin's location in the Twilight Valley, the characters find that it is a grand stone arch, which provides a portal to the realm of the fey each new moon. The portal is imbued with fey magic and offers a boon to those with a chaotic alignment. Those who step through the empty arch may charm nearly any creature to be their companion or familiar, but may do so only once. However, the fey of the Twilight Valley learn of the intrusion into their territory and attempt to drive the members of the expedition to madness before they can escape the forest.

FAERIE ALLIANCE

The characters' kingdom, realm, nation, or community is threatened. They need a powerful ally to help them overcome the impending doom and their best option is a fey noble from the Feyrise Forest. Most of the powerful fey lurk in the Twilight Valley, where mortals struggle to remain for long before going insane, but a few inhabit the groves on top of the spires.

First, the characters must gather information about the different fey nobles in the forest. Some are more amiable to certain humanoids, others have specific prices for forging alliances with mortals, some require tests of faith or skill before they commit, and others will want enormous favors in return. The characters can learn about the fey nobles through libraries of lore, local druids and rangers, other fey creatures in the forest, and the native wood elves and ruokkas. From there, the characters must reach their chosen noble, overcoming hazards associated with either the granite spires or Twilight Valley in the process.

Once characters reach the fey noble they're interested in, they'll need to prove themselves worthy in some way, or incentivize the fey to join in the alliance. This could be something as easy as competing in an aerial race between the spires on the back of mighty storks, or something harder, like reclaiming an area of the Twilight Valley from a rival fey noble.



CHAPTER FOUR

The Appendixes

“The great city of Tam’Buran was unmatched in its beauty and wisdom. The twisting roots that hold its ruins aloft remain, but do the hidden libraries they once protected?”





The Expedition System

The Expedition System is a framework for creating interesting and meaningful journeys in your tabletop roleplaying games. Both the game master and players actively take part in shaping their next expedition. The heroes declare their goals, what route they plan to take, and what roles their characters will take on during the travels.

The game master uses the system to define the difficulty of the journey, what types of terrain the heroes will traverse, and how conditions such as, season, weather, and character choices influence the journey.

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

The Expedition System is built with the most recent tabletop rpg rules in mind and may need adapting to the game system you run. We've used generic language wherever possible in an aim to point you to the correct element of your chosen game system. We encourage you to use the parts you like and adapt them to your game system of choice.

THE EXPEDITION PHASES

The system consists of three main phases; *Planning*, *Travel*, and *Arrival*. The travel phase is split into two sub-phases, *Stretches* and *Waypoints*, which occur together in a cycle. Each of these expedition phases is described in detail in its own chapter.

PLANNING THE EXPEDITION

The planning phase of the expedition sees the players and game master determine which course they are intending to take, how they will undertake the journey, and what preparations they will make. Based on this, the game master determines the *Expedition Difficulty*, which is a guide of how difficult the journey will be. To plan their expedition, the players and game master each take the following steps:

PLAYERS:

- Mark their current location and decide their destination
- Determine the route they intend to take and make preparations
- Optionally choose *Expedition Roles*

GAME MASTER:

- Determine the number of *Stretches* and *Waypoints*
- Determine the *Expedition Difficulty*

PLANNING

- Mark your origin and *Destination*
- Split the expedition into *Stretches* and *Waypoints*
- Make adequate *Preparations*
- Choose *Expedition Roles*
- Determine the *Expedition Score*

TRAVEL

- **Stretches:** Follow the daily travel cycle
 - Determine the location. When lost make a *navigation check*
 - Pick a direction and destination
 - Undertake *Expedition Activities*
 - The Expedition Difficulty is reduced by one step
 - Make a *Morale Save*
 - Deal with encounters and challenges
- **Waypoints:** Take a day to rest and re-plan
 - Undertake *Expedition Activities*
 - Restore morale, spells, and hitpoints
 - Deal with encounters and challenges
 - Change *Expedition Roles*
 - Confirm next *Stretch*
- **Repeat** until the destination is reached

ARRIVAL

- Reflect on the *Hardships and Discoveries* of the expedition.

OUTSET & DESTINATION

Characters consult a map and determine where they wish to travel to (their destination) and where they currently are (their origin or outset).

STRETCHES & WAYPOINTS

Once characters have a rough idea of the route they'll take from their origin to their destination, encourage them to mark it on the map (a laminated map with dry-erase markers can be useful here). Characters must then split the journey into at least two smaller lines, called stretches, separated by large dots, called waypoints.

Stretches mark parts of the journey where characters are traveling and sleeping rough. Each Stretch can be no shorter than 1 day's travel, and no longer than 10 days. The distance covered during these days depends on the terrain. During Stretches, the characters are likely to contend with encounters (either random or linked to Expedition Arcs), terrain challenges, and navigational issues. Characters also have the chance to undertake Expedition Activities during Stretches, such as hunting for food or scouting for foes on the trail ahead.

Waypoints are times of extended rest and recuperation where characters remain relatively stationary, giving them the opportunity to confirm

their next Stretch, recover from detrimental effects generated during the last Stretch, and deal with loss of morale. These places could be forest glades, riversides, or open fields; any location that could be stayed at for several consecutive days. Characters also have the chance to change the Expedition Role they'll assume on the next stretch, undertake Expedition Activities, and deal with encounters. Landmarks (see the "Creating Forest Environments" chapter) make excellent Waypoints.

On a meta-level, stretches are opportunities for the characters to experience the terrain through which they are traveling and to be faced with encounters. Most of what occurs during a Stretch is under the game master's control, and the interest lies in how the characters respond. Conversely, Waypoints give characters more agency to affect the next stretch of the journey and to recover from the last.

PREPARATIONS

Preparations can be made by the characters, but only if they have some knowledge of what's to come.

Knowledge. What do the characters know about the land between their origin and destination? Do maps exist of the journey they are going to take, or will they have to muddle through on their own? Can they contact local guides for information about the surrounding lands? Do the local farmers have any tips about traversing the marsh on the edge of the village? Does the aged druid know something about the forest the characters might not?

It is important to establish what level of knowledge the characters have access to. It is essential that the game master uses a map with 12-mile or 24-mile, but the characters might not have access to such a thing. There are three general levels of knowledge they might possess:

- **Exact.** Characters with exact knowledge either have a map or can buy one, have access to a guide who knows the area well or know it themselves, or be able to see the journey ahead from above by means of flight, scrying spells, or the like.
- **Approximate.** Characters with approximate knowledge have some limited knowledge of the journey ahead. Perhaps they have a map that is *mostly* accurate, or have spoken to someone with a little knowledge of the lands around them.
- **None.** Characters with no knowledge have no map, can speak to no one about their journey, and have no means other than their senses to determine what lies ahead.

Characters with at least approximate knowledge can think about their journey in more detail. If they're traveling through a jungle, perhaps they'll move down the rivers rather than through the heart of the jungle. Maybe they've taken effort to learn that the mountain range ahead has passes which are notorious for their avalanches and are best avoided.

Character choices impact the evolution and outcome of the expedition, including but not limited to the following:

- Encounter frequency, hazards, and boons
- The duration of the expedition
- Ease of navigation and **Expedition Activities**
- Loss of **Morale** due to long travel and hardships

Luckily, once characters have a general idea of the route they'll take, they can put their knowledge to even better use by making preparations and splitting their journey into favorable Stretches and Waypoints.

Preparations. Characters with approximate or exact knowledge of the journey ahead can take time to make preparations in their planning. If they know they'll be ascending mountains, they might buy climber's kits. If they know they'll be trekking through a desert, they might acquire hot weather gear and extra waterskins. The number of possible preparations they could take is endless, but in a scenario where they have prepared for something and make an ability check or saving throw, they should have advantage on the roll. Make a note of whether the characters have made no, some, or many preparations.

Means of Travel. Often, characters will be traveling on foot for their journey, but this is not always the case. As part of their preparations, characters might consider numerous means of travel ranging from horses to flying carpets. Characters must make sure to take into account the terrain they're traveling over with reference to their means of travel, and in some cases make additional preparations based on this.

EXPEDITION ROLES

Before they set off on their journey, characters can choose an **Expedition Role** for the first stretch of their journey. Each such role offers a unique perk for succeeding activities linked to the expedition role. For example, a character with the **Scout** role may make an extra attack on their next surprise round if they successfully make a check to spot ambushes ahead.

Characters cannot take the same **Expedition Role** as another character during the same stretch, though they can decide to change roles at every **Waypoint** they visit.

THE EXPEDITION DIFFICULTY

Once the characters have set up for the journey ahead, the game master must determine the **Expedition Difficulty** for the entire expedition. This rating varies from safe to extreme and influences the likelihood of encounters, hazards or boons, as well as the difficulty of undertaking **Expedition Activities** and **Morale Saves**.

Expedition Difficulty

Safe

Moderate

Challenging

Daunting

Extreme

The total value is determined by taking the base difficulty of the most predominantly occurring terrain during the journey, and modifying it as follows:

EXPEDITION DIFFICULTY RATING

Base Difficulty = predominant terrain value

Modified by: season, weather, and level of preparation

TERRAIN TYPES & OTHER MODIFIERS

Determine the most common terrain type on the journey. If multiple terrain types are equally common, choose that with the highest base difficulty.

| Terrain Type | Base Difficulty |
|--------------|-----------------|
| Arctic | Moderate |
| Coastal | Safe |
| Desert | Moderate |
| Forest | Challenging |
| Grassland | Safe |
| Hill | Moderate |
| Mountain | Challenging |
| Subterranean | Daunting |
| Swamp | Challenging |
| Underwater | Daunting |
| Urban | Moderate |

Consult the tables for season, weather, and preparation. Adjust the **Base Difficulty** up (↑) and down (↓) from safe to extreme. Only use the tables that suit your expedition. For example, if the season is unlikely to have an effect, ignore that modifier.

| Season | Modifier |
|--------|----------|
| Spring | ↓ |
| Summer | — |
| Autumn | ↑↑ |
| Winter | ↑↑ |

| Precipitation | Modifier |
|------------------------|----------|
| Clear | ↓ |
| Light clouds | — |
| Overcast or ground fog | ↑ |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Rain, hail, or snow | ↑↑ |
| Torrential rain, driving hail, or blizzard | ↑↑↑ |
| Strong Wind | ↑↑ |
| Storm | ↑↑↑ |

| Temperature | Modifier |
|-----------------|----------|
| Unbearable heat | ↑↑↑ |
| Hot | ↑↑ |
| Warm | — |
| Cool | — |
| Cold | ↑↑ |
| Arctic cold | ↑↑↑ |

| Wind | Modifier |
|---------------|----------|
| Calm | — |
| Moderate Wind | ↑ |
| Strong Wind | ↑↑ |
| Gale | ↑↑↑ |
| Storm | ↑↑↑↑ |

| Preparations | Modifier |
|--------------|----------|
| None | ↑↑↑ |
| Some | — |
| Thorough | ↑↑↑ |

THE FINAL EXPEDITION SCORE

Once you have taken into account the terrain, season, weather, and level of preparation by the heroes, you have the final *Expedition Difficulty*, ranging from safe to extreme. This score should be used in conjunction with your RPG system to determine the aforementioned properties of the journey.

Expedition Difficulty is not set in stone and external factors and player choices are likely to cause changes. When the characters arrive at a Waypoint you'll have the opportunity to adjust the expedition difficulty and make it easier or harder for the characters.

EXPEDITION ROLES & ACTIVITIES

Expedition Roles are specific responsibilities the characters take on while traveling. They can be chosen at the journey's outset and then changed at each *Waypoint*. *Expedition Activities* are related to and complement the expedition roles. Characters get a bonus for succeeding.

When a character chooses or changes a role, it represents them brushing up on skills related to that role in some way, such as practicing, reading through old notes or guides, consulting with experts, spirits, gods, or even meditating and reflecting on the hardships of the expedition. Characters cannot take the same *Expedition Role* as another character during the same Stretch.

EXPEDITION ACTIVITY BONUS

Each role offers a unique perk for succeeding by a large amount at any activity linked to the role.

| Role | Expedition Activity Bonus |
|-------------|--|
| Camper | On a strong success made to Make Camp, you also provide a small bonus to each party member's next Morale Save. |
| Crafter | On a strong success made to Repair, you can repair one additional non-magical item or terrain. |
| Entertainer | On a strong success made to Entertain your Allies, each member of your party can also reroll their next failed ability check. |
| Forager | On a strong success made to Forage for Medicinals, you also discover a number of rations equal to your Intelligence modifier. |
| Hunter | On a strong success made to Hunt for Food, you also discover a number of spell components or crafting resources equal to your Wisdom modifier. |
| Lookout | On a strong success made to Spot Foes, you also gain a bonus die to your next group sneak check. |
| Navigator | On a strong success made to Navigate, you also discover a landmark. |
| Scout | On a strong success made to Scout Ahead, you gain a small bonus to your attack on your next surprise round. |
| Trainer | On a strong success made to Set Pace, you also provide a small bonus to each party's next Morale Save. |

EXPEDITION ACTIVITIES

Expedition Activities are specific journey actions the characters can take that give them a chance to keep up on the ever-changing expedition that they are on. Some activities are essential and done during traveling, such as Spotting Foes, Navigating and Locating Resources. Other activities are more likely to succeed while resting at a *Waypoint*. Any character can undertake any activity, though some are more likely to be better suited to one class than another. Failing an activity by a significant margin can result in major setbacks, requiring the careful balancing of risk and reward. A character is not forced to undertake activities, except for Navigation, which is done at the start of each day of a Stretch.

Expedition activities can be complemented by *Expedition Roles*. If characters undertake an activity that is related to their role, and succeed by a good margin, they gain an additional perk awarded by their role. Navigate and other special activities are detailed in the table below:

DIFFICULTIES

The difficulty of achieving success at a certain expedition activity can be determined in multiple ways. Some might vary based on terrain, weather, season, the ability of a monster to hide or search, and some might seem far too complex to approximate successfully. Whenever you're about the difficulty, you could use the *Expedition Difficulty* generated at the start of the journey.

STRETCHES VERSUS WAYPOINTS

Expedition activities, as mentioned above, vary in difficulty based on a range of variables. One major variable to keep in mind is whether the activity is being undertaken at a Stretch or a Waypoint. Those marked with an * in the table are easier at a Waypoint. In this instance, reduce the difficulty to accompany the activity by a moderate amount.

| Activity | Success | Failure |
|-------------------|---|--|
| Clear a Path | You clear the trail ahead, removing any difficult terrain. | Your efforts yield nothing save tiredness. You take a small penalty to your next <i>Morale Save</i> . |
| Dowse* | You discover 1d6 + Wisdom modifier gallons of water. | You are unable to find water, but lost a lot of time. You only travel half the distance you normally would. |
| Draw a Map | You create a map that provides a small bonus to tomorrow's <i>Navigation</i> attempt. | You create a flawed map that gives a small penalty to tomorrow's <i>Navigation</i> attempt. |
| Entertain Allies* | You boost the morale of your allies. They gain a small bonus to their next <i>Morale Save</i> . | Your attempts to raise spirits annoys the others, who take a small penalty to their next <i>Morale Save</i> . |
| Follow Tracks | You follow a creature you're hunting, deviating you from your destination. | You lose your quarry and draw the attention of something. You must face an encounter or lose a resource. |
| Forage Medicine* | You discover plants that can restore 1d6 + Intelligence modifier as an action. | You discover plants that you believe are medicinal, but are poisonous, dealing 1d6 poison damage when consumed. |
| Forecasting | You predict the weather, providing a small bonus to tomorrow's <i>Navigation</i> attempt. | You fail to accurately predict the weather, giving a small penalty to tomorrow's <i>Navigation</i> attempt. |
| Hunt* | You discover or acquire rations: 1d6 + Wisdom modifier. | While searching for food you attract the attention of something. You must face an encounter. |
| Make Camp* | You improve camping conditions. Rested characters can reroll a failed ability check. | You ruin your camp. Resting only yields half the usual benefits, and your next <i>Morale Save</i> has a penalty. |
| Navigate | You avoid becoming lost and head in the direction of your destination. | You become lost. You cannot identify your location on a map. Roll a d6 to determine which direction you travel in. |
| Pack Bags* | The carrying capacity of one party member increases by 10 times your Intelligence modifier in pounds. | You poorly distribute the weight between bags, making it hard going. You have to stop multiple times to adjust. You only travel half the distance you Challengingly would. |
| Repair* | You repair one piece of non-magical equipment or terrain. | The object or terrain is destroyed, or you are disheartened and take a small penalty to your next <i>Morale Save</i> . |
| Scout Ahead | You gain the opportunity to surprise creatures in your next combat encounter. | You reveal yourself to creatures ahead, roll a random combat encounter. |
| Search Shortcuts | You discover a shortcut. You may travel at fast pace tomorrow with no drawbacks. | The exertion takes its toll on you. Immediately make a moderate endurance saving throw against exhaustion. |
| Set Pace | You spur your allies on. You may travel at fast pace today with no drawbacks. | You exhaust yourself and your allies. Each gains a small penalty to their next <i>Morale Save</i> . |
| Spot Foes* | You see what lies ahead, preventing you and your party from being surprised. | You deem the route ahead to be clear, even if it may not be. Creatures have advantage to hide from you. |

*The *Expedition Difficulty* for these activities is reduced by one step at a *Waypoint*

THE TRAVEL PHASE

As previously mentioned, the Travel phase is split into two sub-phases which cycle together; Stretch and Waypoint. Stretches are the times when characters are traveling on their journey and sleeping rough. Waypoints are the times that characters stop for a day or more to recover, rest their tired legs, and adjust their plans.

STRETCH

The Stretch sub-phase of a journey follows a relatively set cycle that is repeated each day.

- Determine location, or if you are lost
- Pick a direction and pace
- Make a navigation check
- Undertake Expedition Activities
- Deal with encounters and challenges
- Make a Morale Save

This daily travel cycle is made interesting by the challenges the game master provides to the characters through the means of encounters and terrain challenges, but also by the choices the characters make in their expedition activities. Furthermore, guidance is given in the Stretch chapter about how to bring an environment and journey to life for the characters through rich descriptions.

1. DETERMINE LOCATION

At the start of each day of a Stretch, consult the map. If the characters know where they are, point to their location on said map. If they are lost, don't reveal their location to them. Characters will have planned their Stretch to reach a Waypoint (or their destination) and thus need to know where they are in order to follow their planned route. If they don't know where they are, they'll need to make a successful navigation check to get back on track (see 3. Navigation Check).

2. PICK DIRECTION & PACE

Once the characters know where they are, they'll know which direction they need to travel. Let them pick their direction and at what pace they intend to travel.

Next, the characters pick a pace at which to travel. Their pace has several effects, as displayed in the table below.

| Pace | Distance per Day (on foot) | Effect | Navigation DC Modifier |
|--------|----------------------------|--|------------------------|
| Fast | 32 miles | Large penalty to spot foes; no expedition activities | Large increase |
| Medium | 18-24 miles | No Effect | No effect |
| Slow | 12 miles | Gives a small bonus to all expedition activities | Large decrease |

DIFFICULT TERRAIN

The travel speeds given in the Travel Pace table assume relatively simple terrain: roads, open plains, or clear dungeon corridors. Adventurers often face dense forests, deep swamps, rubble-filled ruins, steep mountains, and ice-covered ground—all considered difficult terrain.

You move at half speed in difficult terrain. Moving 1 foot in difficult terrain costs 2 feet of movement; you can cover only half the Challenging distance in a minute, an hour, or a day. Some terrain might be *extra* difficult meaning you move at quarter your normal movement. Moving 1 foot in extra difficult terrain costs 4 feet of movement; you can only cover a quarter of the Challenging distance in a minute, an hour, or a day.

3. NAVIGATION CHECK

Once the characters have decided which direction they are going to travel in and at what pace, one member of the party must make a navigation check. The DC of this check depends on the terrain they are in, the seasons, and the weather. (continued next page)

Use the tables from *1. The Planning Phase* and *5. Determine Expedition Difficulty*, to determine the difficulty for the navigation check.

On a success, the characters travel as intended i.e. in the correct direction at the correct pace. On a failure, the characters travel in a random direction (roll a d6 to determine) at the pace they intended. This could mean they end up three hexes off in the wrong direction. If the navigation check is successful and the party was previously lost, they now know where they are.

4. EXPEDITION ACTIVITIES

No longer does one party member navigate and another search for rations while the rest amble along without anything to do. The expanded list of Expedition Activities provided in *2. Expedition Roles & Activities* gives characters many more options for ways to contribute to the journey. These should be heavily linked to Expedition Roles which they choose during Waypoints and at the start of their first Stretch. These activities range from foraging for medicine, entertaining your allies, or to scouting ahead.

A character can undertake any Expedition Activity they wish at any time, though only one per day. They may choose not to undertake an activity at all, or undertake the same activity as another character. Remember that pace influences activities, as does the Expedition Difficulty.

5. ENCOUNTERS & CHALLENGES

While the characters are undertaking their Expedition Activities, the game master should introduce a challenge based on the terrain they are in, and check for encounters.

Encounters. Encounters during Stretches are either randomly determined based on terrain or are chosen by the game master based on the Expedition Arc they want to put the characters through. They typically focus on the combat and roleplay pillars of play, as exploration is covered by terrain challenges and Expedition Activities. The number of encounters that might occur during a day varies depending on your RPG system, but use the Expedition Difficulty to guide your hand.

Challenges. Each day, the characters are presented with a challenge based on the terrain they are traveling through. These vary from hampered progress due to overgrown thickets, to a loss of memories thanks to foul bogs that sap your mental and physical energy. These challenges give characters another chance to shine during their journey.

6. MORALE SAVE

Journeying for long periods of time is hard on both body and mind. This is represented by a character's **Morale Score**. At the end of each day of a stretch, each character must make a **Morale Save** to see if they have the physical and mental endurance to continue. The penalties for failing a this check varies depending on the result of the saving throw. In the worst-case scenario, failure leads to increasing levels of exhaustion.

The morale save is an endurance save where the base difficulty is dependent upon the **Expedition Difficulty**, and the number of days since the characters last rested properly at a waypoint (called the **Waypoint Modifier**). However, the difficulty of the morale save can also be modified by some actions within the characters' control, such as **Expedition Activities** undertaken to reduce fatigue and improve morale. As a general rule, use the following equation:

MORALE SAVE CHECK

$$\text{Morale Save Check} = \text{Expedition Difficulty} + \text{Waypoint Modifier}$$

The waypoint modifier is based on the number of days since the characters last rested at a waypoint. Consult the table below:

| Days since last Waypoint | Waypoint Modifier |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| 1-4 | — |
| 5-6 | ↑ |
| 7-10 | ↑↑ |

Once a character has made their morale save, compare the result against the following table:

| Morale Save Result | Outcome |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Success by 5 or more | Morale Score +1 |
| Success | No change |
| Failure by 1-4 | Morale Score -1 |
| Failure by 5-9 | Morale Score -2 |
| Failure by 10 or more | Morale Score -3 |

MORALE SCORE

A character's **Morale Score** can range from 10 to -60. Each character starts an expedition with a morale score of 0, although this can be raised by thorough preparations. Throughout an expedition, a character's morale is likely to change, especially during a long stretch of travel. The lower a character's morale, the more they're going to struggle with the journey. A low morale indicates mental and physical fatigue. The mechanical effects of are detailed below.

| Morale Score | Effect |
|---------------|---|
| 5 or higher | Bonus die on the first check made during an Expedition Activity the following day |
| 0 to 4 | None |
| -1 to -3 | Minor penalty on all ability checks |
| -4 to -6 | Big penalty on all ability checks |
| -7 to -9 | Major penalty on all ability checks |
| -10 and lower | As above, but a character gains a level of exhaustion each time their Morale Score drops by 10 (-10 = 1 level of exhaustion, -20 = 2 levels of exhaustion, -30 = 3 levels of exhaustion, etc.)* |

*Exhaustion levels gained by losing Morale stack with exhaustion from other sources, such as from not taking long rests or from exposure to extreme heat.

WAYPOINTS

Between each tiring stretch of a journey is a waypoint. These give the characters an opportunity to recover from the previous stretch, and prepare for the road ahead. Characters can influence the shape of the journey ahead through the following actions:

- Undertake **Expedition Activities**, some of which are more potent while at a waypoint.
- Restore the **Morale Score** to improve one's chances of success
- Change **Expedition Roles** to suit the challenges ahead
- **Make preparations** for the next stretch

Waypoints are extraordinarily important for the success of a journey. Without a chance to consolidate and properly rest, characters are unlikely to be able

to make their full journey without losing morale, which can be deadly. The new elements involved in resting at a Waypoint can give characters some control over what they're going to undertake next.

1. MAKING CAMP & EXPEDITION ACTIVITIES

At this point, the characters can describe in detail what they're doing to set up a more long-term camp. Characters will be staying here for at least one night and one day, so give them time to fill in the small details about what they do.

After this, characters can undertake Expedition Activities in much the same way as they would during a Stretch (see 4. Expedition Activities and 2. Expedition Roles & Activities). These activities give characters the chance to prepare or what is to come. Some activities are almost essential, such as spotting foes and locating water, while others are more likely to succeed while at a Waypoint than during a Stretch.

2. ENCOUNTERS & CHALLENGES

Just like during a Stretch, characters may have to deal with encounters and challenges based on the terrain they are in. Refer to 5. *Encounters and Challenges* for more information.

3. RESTORE MORALE

When the characters finish a long rest while at a waypoint, they regain morale points. This reflects them taking efforts to recover from physical and mental stress, such as entertainment to bolster confidence or shake off fears for a while. The amount of morale they restore is based on the *Expedition Difficulty*.

| Expedition Difficulty | Morale Restored |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Safe | 25 |
| Moderate | 20 |
| Challenging | 15 |
| Daunting | 10 |
| Extreme | 5 |

4. CHANGE EXPEDITION ROLES

At the outset of an expedition, characters can choose which *Expedition Role* they'd like to take responsibility for. While resting at a waypoint, characters can deliberate and choose new roles, or stick with their current role, provided that no two characters have the same role.

5. CONFIRM NEXT STRETCH

Depending on what happened on the previous stretch, the state of the characters' morale scores, and expected hardships, the characters might decide to adjust their waypoint and route. If they've been struggling in the mountains, they might choose to descend into the foothills to avoid the biting winds. If they're having

a hard time navigating through the dense forest, they might opt to travel along the riverbank instead, choosing cover over speed. Once the characters have confirmed their next Stretch, the next phase begins.

You may need to alter the *Expedition Difficulty* rating when big changes in terrain occur, the weather shifts dramatically or other circumstances indicate an increase or decrease in difficulty. A waypoint is a good time to communicate this change to the players.

MULTIPLE STRETCHES

A wilderness journey is usually more than one stretch long. Stretches and waypoints follow each other until the characters arrive at their final destination. This might mean repeating the cycle of stretch and waypoint several times before the characters end up at their destination. This shouldn't make the journey any harder for the game master to prepare, just keep following the cycle.

ARRIVAL

Finally, the last Stretch of the journey is behind them. The characters have, for better or for worse, reached their destination. Now that they're here, there are a few things to consider, which provide excellent roleplaying opportunities.

MORALE

Determine the *Morale Score* of each of the characters, at the moment of arriving at their final destination. This impacts how characters reflect on their expedition, and the impacts the journey has had on their mental and physical states. Each character that ends the expedition with a positive morale score of 0 or higher gets to reflect on a *Discovery* that occurred during the journey. Each character with a negative morale score gets to reflect on a *Hardship* they suffered during the journey.

REFLECTION

When the expedition has finished and the characters are at their destination, they may have some time to think back on their journey. Whether they like to admit it or not, oftentimes a wilderness journey will affect the characters. Typically, this realisation takes place around the warming hearth of a crowded inn, with fellow patrons listening in to the stories with ale in hand. This period of reflection can take place anywhere and at any time, but preferably within several weeks of the expedition's end. The newfound realisations can prove to be pivotal in shaping the ongoing campaign story.

At the gaming table, *Reflection* can be a relatively short process. Each character determines whether they will reflect on a *Discovery* or *Hardship* based on their final *Morale Score*. Then, work around the table, giving each character an opportunity to remember and discuss aloud a particular event that happened during the journey.

DISCOVERIES

Characters with a positive morale reflect back on something they discovered during the expedition. This can be anything such as a physical landmark, new knowledge, a magical effect, procured item, defeated monster, or even a powerful feeling, revelation, or epiphany they had during the journey. This provides fantastic roleplaying opportunities, and often revolve around the wondrous aspects of an expedition. Once the reflection has taken place, roll on or choose from the following table to determine the mechanical outcome:

| d6 | Reflection Outcome |
|----|--|
| 1 | The character starts their next expedition with a Morale Score of 5. |
| 2 | The character gains a small bonus to each ability check made in the next 24 hours. |
| 3 | The character gains a small bonus to each saving throw made in the next 24 hours. |
| 4 | The character gains a new contact from their Reflection who can be called upon in times of need. |
| 5 | The character gains a small, permanent bonus to a skill related to their Reflection. |
| 6 | The character can recover from one lingering injury, disease, exhaustion, or other condition gained during the Expedition. |

HARDSHIPS

Characters with a negative morale at the end of the journal will have to recall an event that caused them harm, be it physical or mental. They might think back on what they learned from a dire situation, how they handled a moral dilemma, or how they overcame seemingly insurmountable odds. After the reflection has taken place, roll on or choose from the following table to determine the mechanical outcome:

| d6 | Hardship Outcome |
|----|--|
| 1 | The character cannot gain or lose Morale for 1d4 days at the start of their next Expedition. |
| 2 | The character can reroll one failed ability check made within the next 24 hours. |
| 3 | The character can reroll one failed saving throw made within the next 24 hours. |
| 4 | The character gains a temporary resistance to a particular hazard, such as extreme cold, linked to their Reflection. |
| 5 | The character gains a small quantity of temporary hit points that last for the next 24 hours or until depleted. |
| 6 | The character gains a small bonus to recovering from one lingering injury, disease, exhaustion, or other condition gained during the Expedition. |



Journal entry - summer day twelve - Unfortunately, the creature didn't understand me when I asked about its bespoke hairstylist. I parted ways without ever knowing.

Expedition System

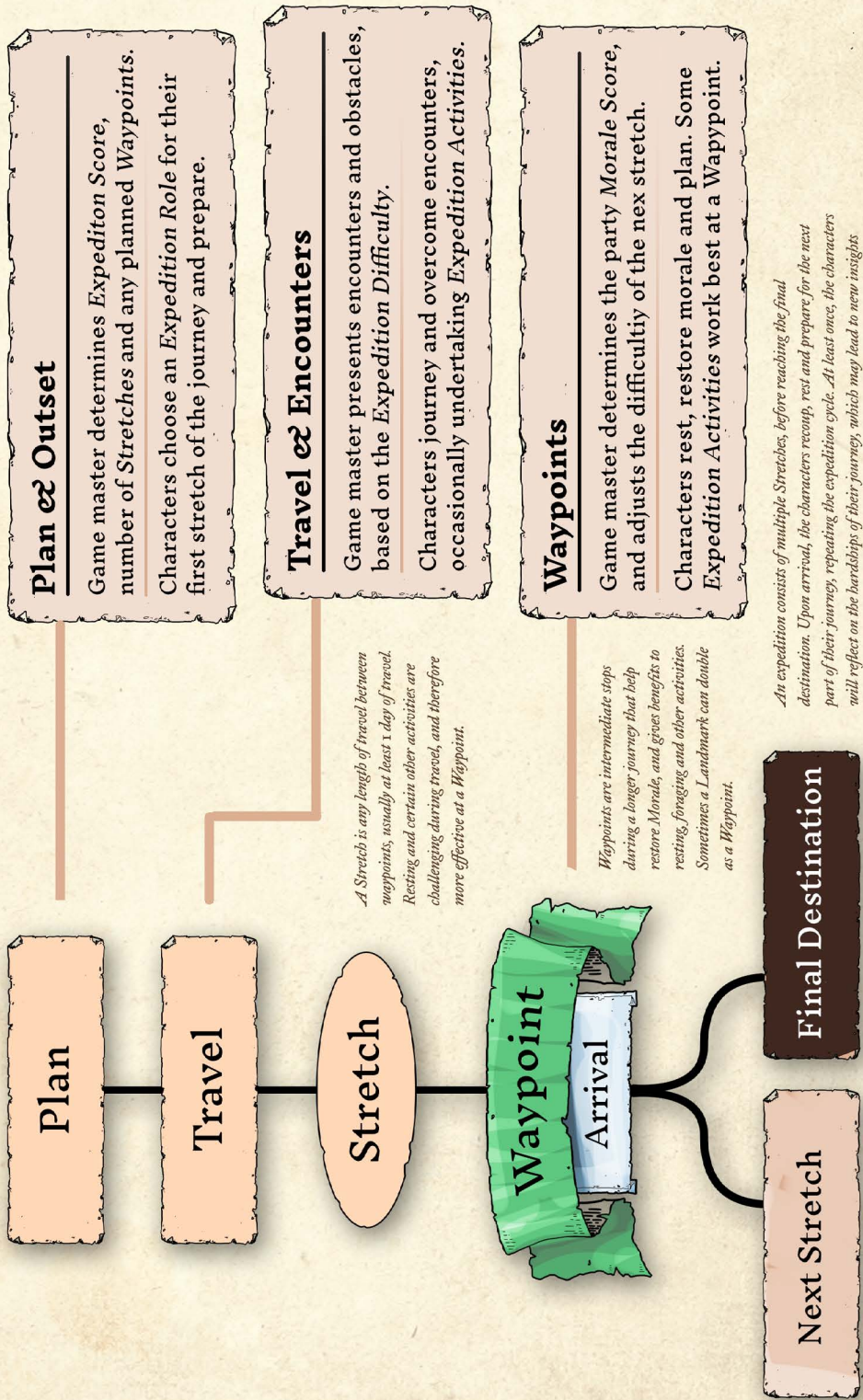




fig. 1: Roots of Sylvanus ?

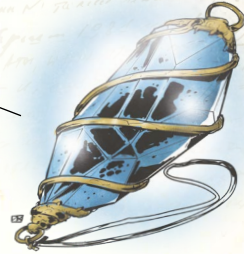


fig. 2: Augury Sap Vial

The Root of Sylvanus



The Root of Sylvanus is a scalable 5th edition adventure using materials from this book. The adventure sees the characters becoming trapped within the woods through which they are traveling when thick trunks close together to form a border around the forest's heart. This growth is caused by the Spirit of Sylvanus, an ethereal woodland guardian who was once a druid. The spirit was trying to trap a clan of dwarves who are threatening to destroy the forest with their industrial activity, but the characters were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The characters must solve the mystery of their internment if they hope to escape. In doing so, they discover from fairy creatures in the forest that the spirit is corrupted and, even if the dwarves are stopped, the Spirit of Sylvanus could strike again. Dealing with this corruption is covered in *Shadows of the Marrowgrove*.

ADJUSTING ENCOUNTERS

This adventure is 5e compatible and designed to be played by characters of any level. Encounters that need to be adjusted for different level characters have an 'Adjusting the Encounter' sidebar, which provides details of changes that need to be made.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

"When first I set foot into the woods, I felt the very trees embrace me. Their boughs bent low to brush my hair. I knew then that this would be my sacred grove."

— *Diary of Sylvanus Beechwarden*

Unbeknownst to them, the characters are wandering through a forest whose heart is the sacred grove of **Sylvanus Beechwarden**, a now-deceased druid. Sylvanus protected this wood, toiling endlessly to encourage it to flourish and fend off the worst threats that assaulted it. Sylvanus found his sacred grove as a young man, but as the years turned to decades he began to worry for the fate of the wood—what did the future hold for this most sacred of places? To put his mind at ease, Sylvanus opted to undertake an expedition to the Marrowgrove, a woodland haunted by undead, some weeks' travel away. There, he had heard, grew the **augury root**, which could be steeped in a brew to provide visions of the future.

Sylvanus' journey was successful, to a point, as he arrived at the Marrowgrove in good time. The druid found and drank of the root, but saw that his forest would become corrupted, just like the Marrowgrove, fated for undeath and despair. With the portent burned into his mind's eye, Sylvanus tried to flee the Marrowgrove.

Wracked by grief and anxiety, the druid failed to pay proper attention to the hazards of the wood and was killed after losing his mind in a **reclamation marsh**.

At first, Sylvanus' returned spirit was as benevolent and caring as the druid was during life, but with the passing years, his spirit became less and less tolerant of intruders into the forest, transforming into a malicious phantasm driven by jealousy and rage. The malevolent actions of the spirit cause corruption wherever it resides, causing nearby plants and animals to wither or mutate so that they resemble those found in the Marrowgrove. Now, while Sylvanus' reanimated body stalks the Marrowgrove, his spirit, devoted as it was to his own sacred grove, has returned to haunt this forest - closing the circle on the self-fulfilling prophecy he received.

SYNOPSIS

In recent months, a clan of dwarves has discovered bountiful ores beneath the forest and begun to mine them with complete disregard for the damage caused. This encroachment has enraged the spirit of Sylvanus to a dangerous degree. The adventure begins with the spirit erecting an impassable wall of trees and roots around the heart of the wood, entrapping both the dwarves and the characters. While the spirit of Sylvanus seeks to kill the industrious dwarves, his old friends, the fairies, want to see the dwarves leave the forest peacefully. They are scared that Sylvanus will only become more malevolent if further bloodshed occurs.

The characters, trapped as they are, must discover what has caused Sylvanus to erect the wall of trees and make a decision - assist the corrupted spirit, or help the peaceful fairies. Hopefully, the characters can get the dwarves to leave before the spirit of Sylvanus brings vengeance upon them. By uncovering clues about Sylvanus' fate, they should also realize that they must show Sylvanus' spirit that peace, negotiation, and mercy can still work. If the characters are successful, the fairies pose the characters with a quest that is covered in this adventure's sequel, *Shadows of the Marrowgrove*.

SIDING WITH SYLVANUS

This adventure assumes, for the most part, that the characters side with the fairies and attempt to show the spirit of Sylvanus that peace and harmony are the way to restore and protect the sacred grove. However, if the characters decide that the spirit has got it right - vengeance and violence are the way to go - there's no reason not to continue. Rather than assisting the characters, the fairies try to stop them from spreading the corruption that would doom the forest to a Marrowgrove fate. Examples of this include:

- Dryads using their Fey Charm to manipulate the characters toward protecting the forest, or casting spells such as **entangle** to make it harder for the characters to travel through the wood.
- Satyr ambushing the characters from the shadows and attempting to tie them to tree trunks as a restraint, or playing enrapturing songs that function like the **confusion** or **sleep** spell to stop them from spreading corruption.
- Sprites using their **Heart Sight** to learn the true motives of the characters, and their poisoned arrows to incapacitate them.

DARK REWARD

If the characters follow this path and end up killing the dwarves, each character gains a dark boon from the spirit of Sylvanus as a reward:

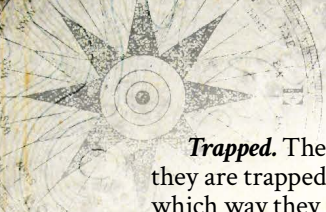
Sanguine Spirit. Whenever you reduce a creature to 0 hit points, you gain temporary hit points equal to your level as your spirit feasts upon the bloodshed.

INTRODUCTION

This adventure takes place in the heart of any forest of the Game Masters' choice. The area in question should be at least 240 feet across at its smallest measure. While the characters are traveling through the center of the wood, they notice that the trees are moving to prevent their egress. Read or paraphrase the following:

As you pass through a grove at the heart of the forest, you begin to hear a strange rumbling and creaking. It sounds like trees bending in a gale even though there is no wind present. As you press on, you notice movement in your peripheral vision. The trees are moving. Before you know it, the trail ahead is blocked by a mass of rugged trunks and wrapping roots. No matter which way you turn, it seems you cannot leave the forest's heart.





Trapped. The characters should quickly realize they are trapped in the center of the forest. No matter which way they turn, or which route they take, the trees uproot themselves and form a barrier that blocks their path. If the characters attempt to fly or levitate over the trees, the branches grow into a cage-like shape that prevents them from doing so.

Investigation. Characters who wish to better understand what's occurring might try to investigate the trees. The following ability checks provide information:

- A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals that they are normal trees, predominantly beech.
 - If the check succeeds by 5 or more, or the characters succeed on a subsequent DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check, they can tell that the trees are being animated by some form of natural magic.
- A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that the trees all around them are moving, not just this one copse.
- A successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) check allows a character to recall that this wood was home to a druid named Sylvanus.
- A successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check allows a character to climb a tree, but if they try to escape over the barrier, the tree's limbs move to prevent them from doing so.

Assault. After the characters have spent time investigating, or if the characters do anything to harm a tree, the spirit of Sylvanus comes to deal with them. Read or paraphrase the following:

Suddenly, you see a green figure flitting from tree to tree in your direction. The creature seems ethereal, making it hard to see, but you can tell it is humanoid in form, with a proud pair of antlers crowning its head. As it gets closer, the ghostly being lets out a hideous howl of rage and despair before disappearing. Suddenly, the surrounding trees uproot themselves and barrel toward you.

The characters are attacked by four walking trees. When the characters reduce the last tree to 0 hit points, the **Spirit of Sylvanus** appears from within it and attacks. When the Spirit of Sylvanus is reduced to 0 hit points, he lets out a mournful wail and disappears into another nearby tree.

ADJUSTING ENCOUNTER

Walking Trees

Tier 1: Use **warhorse skeleton** statistics but change their type to plant

Tier 2: Use **awakened tree** statistics

Tier 3: Use **elephant** statistics but change type to plant

Tier 4: Use **treant** statistics

Spirit of Sylvanus

Tier 1: Use **shadow** statistics

Tier 2: Use **dryad** statistics but change their type to undead

Tier 3: Use **ghost** statistics

Tier 4: Use **wraith** statistics

FAIRY ALLIES

Once the characters have overcome the introductory encounter, read or paraphrase the following:

The ethereal spirit dashes away from you into a nearby tree, which shivers as it enters. Before you can gather your wits after the battle, a buzzing fills the air around your heads. Seemingly from nowhere a cloud of sprites has appeared. One flies to the fore of the cloud and addresses you.

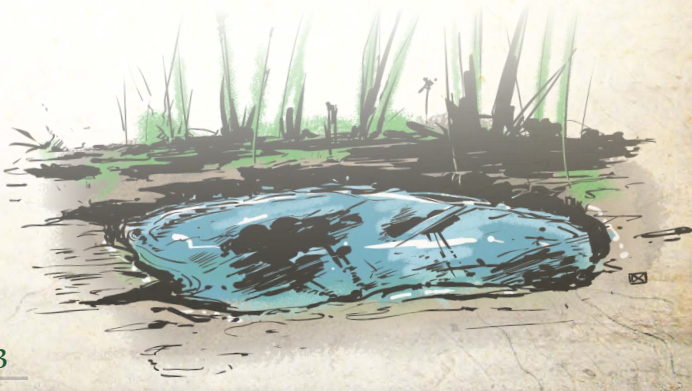
"Carefull! He's angry enough as it is - we need to sort this whole thing out peacefully, and quick!"

The leader of the sprites is **Adelina Flitterwing**, an excitable and anxious creature who truly cares for the forest and for Sylvanus. She wears a boiler suit made from an autumnal leaf and has a shock of short white hair. She tells the characters a brief overview of what's been occurring in the woods over the past years.

- Sylvanus the druid left, and only his spirit returned.
- More recently, he's been angrier and angrier, not just defending the forest but killing those who damage it.
- The fairies want to help Sylvanus rediscover his caring nature, and are scared that the more he kills, the worse he'll become.
- Something must be endangering the forest other than the characters - the sprites need help finding out what if they're to prevent Sylvanus from killing it.
- The characters won't be able to leave until the threat is dealt with peacefully. If the characters try to solve the problem with violence, the spirit of Sylvanus will be lost to bloodlust, and the forest will be corrupted.

When the characters agree to help, the sprites advise them to search the forest for any signs of damage or destruction. If they discover anything not native to the forest, they should investigate and see if they can get whatever is damaging the forest to leave peacefully. Meanwhile, the sprites will try to calm the enraged Sylvanus.

Adelina gives the characters a tiny polished stone that is etched with an engraving of the forest and explains that wetting the stone and placing it atop any other stone in the woods will conjure up a larger illusion of the forest for them to navigate by. Using this stone provides advantage on Wisdom (Survival) checks made to navigate in the forest.



SEARCHING THE WOODS

The characters must now search the woods for signs of damage. Using the stone shows that there is a sinkhole, a clearing of fallen trees, and a dwarven idol in the forest - each of these would constitute damage, or anger Sylvanus in some way. The characters must travel from their location on the edge of the woods to these locations in order to discover clues as to what is harming the woodland.

TRAVELING

Traveling through the forest can be handled just like a small expedition. Rather than taking days to traverse, the heart of the woods only takes hours. Each hex on the map of the wood constitutes an hour of walking. Use the *Expedition System* to help characters undertake their journey with the following changes:

- Characters cannot make preparations
- Each character can undertake an Expedition Activity only once every 4 hours
- Characters must make a Morale save at the end of every 4 hours
- Characters can set up a Waypoint for a Short Rest every 8 hours

Furthermore, due to Sylvanus' growing corruption, the weather changes rapidly in the forest. Normally the temperate woodland is pleasant to reside in, but in recent weeks it has become more and more changeable. Use the weather rules from the *Expedition System* every four hours to determine how the weather changes. If it becomes particularly bad, the characters might have to use the navigation rules to get their bearings once more, or have to deal with the consequences of extreme weather such as thunderstorms and gales.

FAIRY ASSISTANCE

If at any time, the characters become seriously lost during their expedition, they can be brought back on track by Adelina Flitterwing and her sprites. They know the forest like the veins of their wings, and can get the characters back on track with ease.

ACTS OF VIOLENCE

As the characters travel through the wood, they might find themselves in situations where they feel bloodshed is necessary. Whenever the characters act in a violent manner, they encourage the spirit of Sylvanus to continue down a path of vengeance, which spreads corruption within the woods. This manifests as plants and animals becoming withered and deathly. If it continues, the plants and animals themselves become more aggressive. Finally, if the characters continue to pursue aggressive solutions, Sylvanus' spirit is lost to corruption and the sacred grove is doomed.

The more acts of violence the characters take, the more corrupted the forest becomes. However, this also occurs if the characters spend too long searching or exploring the forest. As the spirit of Sylvanus slowly sinks into corruption, the forest begins to change. The characters are trapped, and the living noose is slowly tightening around them. Examples of the growing corruption include:

- Plants withering and dying, becoming inedible, or growing twisting roots and grasping vines.
- Animals turning albino or mangy, stalking or attacking the characters, or even speaking with Sylvanus' enraged voice.
- Fresh water becoming stagnant and foul in the forest, including water kept in waterskins by the characters.
- The spirit of Sylvanus appearing if the characters do anything to threaten the woods, such as cutting through undergrowth or starting fires.
- Everything in the woodland becomes prone to outbursts of bloodlust. Not just the plants and animals, but also the fairies - who begin to lose their grasp on reality, and the characters - who might have to make Wisdom saves to resist attacking each other as the corruption continues to spread.

If you want to make the spreading corruption a larger part of your gameplay, consider using a *Corruption Score* which tracks Sylvanus' mood and the aura of the forest. The Corruption Score starts at 5. Increase or decrease the Corruption Score as follows:

- Increase the Corruption Score by 1 for each 2 hours the characters spend in the forest.
- Increase the Corruption Score by 1 each time the characters initiate combat in the forest.
- Increase the Corruption Score by 2 each time the characters kill another creature in the forest.
- Decrease the Corruption Score by 1 each time the characters resolve a conflict peacefully in the forest.
- Decrease the Corruption Score by 1 each time the characters show mercy in the forest.

As the forest becomes more and more corrupted (see the examples above), Sylvanus begins to interfere with the characters. At a Corruption Score of 13, the druid's spirit appears and attacks the characters again. At a Corruption Score of 15, the spirit of Sylvanus begins interfering with the characters whenever they have an encounter, attempting to lead them down a more sinister path. At a Corruption Score of 18, everything within the forest turns against the characters. Wild animals attack, and plants animate and try to strangle the characters in their sleep. At a Corruption Score of 20, the forest falls entirely to corruption and begins turning into a Marrowgrove. The characters are doomed.



ADDITIONAL DISCOVERY

At any time during their travels, the characters can stumble across a small hut in the woods which contains information about Sylvanus. Read or paraphrase the following:

Suddenly, you find yourself in a delightful clearing. Only a moment ago the thick woods hid this place from view. Settled neatly against a moss-covered rock outcropping is a cottage on staddle stones with a thatched roof. Although quaint and picturesque, the cottage looks as if it's been abandoned for some time.

This cottage was once home to Sylvanus. It still contains his belongings and furniture, including notes about the Marrowgrove forest, a diary which details his mission to head to the Marrowgrove and drink of the augury root to see what lies in the forest's future, specifically whether it would remain protected when he eventually died. Also, lying forgotten and dust-covered on a desk, is a smooth granite stone with a hole through its center; it is a **stone of good luck**.

When the characters leave the cottage, they find Adelina Flitterwing sobbing, perched on the edge of a staddle stone. She explains that the cottage was Sylvanus'. His spirit never returns to this clearing, but Adelina comes here often to think about what could be causing Sylvanus' anger.

SINKHOLE

When characters arrive at the sinkhole, read or paraphrase the following:

Up ahead, the earth has fallen in on itself, revealing a cavity below and destroying an ancient shrine that once stood in the forest. Crumpled shrubs and saplings have been caught in the collapse, broken and crushed beneath the stone and mud. The trees around the sinkhole lean in at dangerous angles, and every few moments some more debris slides into the cavity, sending up a plume of choking dust. The shrine was clearly once crescent-shaped, formed of sculpted granite blocks. Here and there you can see broken antler sconces that were attached to the walls, which would have held burning incense. The ruin has mostly collapsed, but some of the eons-old stones bearing amazing etchings of wildlife scenes still rise up around the hole.

Hazard. Characters can notice that the area around the sinkhole is unstable with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. Characters that come within 10 feet of the sinkhole must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or fall into the sinkhole, taking bludgeoning damage from the fall and tumbling debris, and landing prone. If a character is inside the sinkhole when a character on the edge fails, they take half as much bludgeoning damage also. Characters that move at half speed have advantage on the Dexterity saving throw.

Characters can descend into the sinkhole carefully by using climbing gear, or spells such as *fly* or *featherfall*.

Sylvanus' Spite. The ancient ruin was created by Sylvanus when he took this forest as his sacred grove. Now that it has been destroyed, it serves as a focus for his hatred and drive for vengeance. This manifests as the presence of ghostly beasts that seep out of the wildlife reliefs on the remaining stones and attack intruders.

The ghostly beasts that attack can be beasts of any variety, though suggestions are included in the "Adjusting the Encounter" sidebar. Change the beasts' type to undead, and give them the following ability:

Incorporeal Movement. The ghost can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

The ghostly beasts defend the shrine against intruders, even though it has been destroyed. They can be destroyed by reducing them to 0 hit points, by casting *dispel magic* (DC 15) on each of the stones the ghosts emerged from (one for each stone), or by trying to calm them with a DC 20 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check (one per beast). Characters that refuse to fight the beasts and lay down their arms are no longer recognized as a threat by the beasts, as are those who offer a libation such as a waterskin of ale, wine, honey, or other valuable liquid.

Clues. Characters inside the sinkhole can take a look around. The following ability checks provide information:

- A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a boot sticking out from the rubble.
 - A subsequent successful DC 15 Strength check allows a character to clear the rubble, revealing an entire leg severed by the collapse.
 - A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals the leg to be of a Medium humanoid. If the check succeeds by 5 or more, they can tell it is a dwarf.
- A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check made while examining the walls reveals that they have been made by mining picks.
- A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check allows a character to determine that the sinkhole was once a tunnel, leading from roughly north to south.

ENTERING THE TUNNELS

The characters might think to enter the tunnels beneath the forest in order to discover what's making them. Unfortunately for the characters, the extent of the tunneling is immense and peppered with cave-ins and passages that have been sealed shut. It's impossible to navigate through the twisting, three-dimensional landscape of mud and stone without a map, and is a dead-end for the characters. Attempts to do so result in the characters encountering burrowing monsters (see "Dwarven Idol" for examples), or becoming lost. Lost characters must use the navigation rules presented in *Wondrous Expeditions: Forests* to retrace their steps and get out of the tunnels where they entered.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

Sinkhole Hazard

Tier 1: The DC for the Dexterity saving throw is 10, the damage is 1d6

Tier 2: The DC for the Dexterity saving throw is 13, the damage is 2d6

Tier 3: The DC for the Dexterity saving throw is 15, the damage is 4d6

Tier 4: The DC for the Dexterity saving throw is 18, the damage is 8d6

Ghostly Beasts

Tier 1: Use three *black bears*

Tier 2: Use three *brown bears*, and give them resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks

Tier 3: Use four *saber-toothed tigers*, and give them immunity to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks

Tier 4: Use four *giant apes*, and give them immunity to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks

FALLEN TREES

When the characters arrive at the fallen trees, read or paraphrase the following:

From beneath the fallen trees, you hear a plaintive, pained whimpering. Although you can't decipher exactly what's making the noise, it is clear something is trapped beneath the wall of toppled trunks. The enormous stands seem poised to collapse further - not even a finch will land on them for long. As you get closer to the toppled trunks, you realize they have begun to rapidly wither and change - stained white puffball fungi that resemble humanoid skulls grow from every crack and crevice, releasing corrupted spores into the air.

Puffskulls. The corruption of Sylvanus has caused magical fungi to grow over the fallen tree trunks. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check allows a character to identify the fungi as puffskulls; fungi that release magical, necrotizing spores that normally grow in Marrowgroves. A creature that

starts its turn within 10 feet of a puffskull must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or take necrotic damage and suffer further conditions (DC and damage varies, see "Adjusting the Encounter").

Trapped Owlbear. Trapped beneath the fallen trees is an owlbear. In order to free the owlbear, the characters must succeed on a certain number of ability checks before failing a certain number. Characters can make any check of their choice provided they can justify it. Examples include:

- A Strength (Sleight of Hand) check to lift out a fallen trunk and replace it with an upright branch.
- A Dexterity (Medicine) check to administer first aid while in cramped quarters.
- A Constitution check to hold up a fallen tree for an extended period.
- An Intelligence (Investigation) check to determine which order the trees should be moved in.
- A Wisdom (Perception) check to find the owlbear caught between the trunks.
- A Charisma (Animal Handling) check to calm the frightened animal.

Depending on how well the characters did in the encounter, the following occurs:

Success with No Failed Checks. The characters extricate the owlbear unharmed, though somewhat distressed. The owlbear calms down and is willing to serve as a mount or pack animal for the characters while they remain in the woods. The characters have advantage on Morale saves while with the owlbear. Furthermore, the spirit of Sylvanus notices the actions of the characters, giving them the chance to show that peace and mercy are useful tools.

Success with One or More Failed Checks. The characters manage to free the owlbear. It is injured, but seems capable of looking after itself, and lopes off into the forest. Furthermore, the spirit of Sylvanus notices the actions of the characters, giving them the chance to show that peace and mercy are useful tools.

Failure with One or More Successful Checks. The characters free the owlbear but the distressed creature lashes out and attacks them. It can be calmed only after the characters succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check, give it some food, or drop their weapons.

Failure with No Successful Checks. The characters are unable to free the owlbear before it succumbs to its injuries. Furthermore, each character that failed a check gains a level of exhaustion from their excursions.

Clues. Characters can investigate what caused the trees to fall. The following ability checks provide information:

- A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check allows a character to spot the supports of a tunnel beneath the roots of the trees. If the check succeeds by 5 or more, the characters notice an iron talisman hanging from one of the supports.
 - The talisman can be recovered with a successful DC 12 Dexterity check. Failure causes the character to drop the talisman, making it unobtainable.
 - A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check reveals it to be a holy symbol of the dwarven goddess of mines.
 - A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check allows a character to determine that the tunnel leads from roughly north to south.
- A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals no damage to the trees prior to their fall. Rather, their roots have pulled out from loose earth.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

Puffskulls

Tier 1: The DC is 10. Characters take 5 (1d10) necrotic damage on a failed save and are poisoned for 1 minute. Success means a character is immune to the puffskull spores for 1 hour.

Tier 2: The DC is 15. Characters take 11 (2d10) necrotic damage on a failed save and are poisoned for 1 hour on failed save, or take half as much damage on a successful save. Success means a character is immune to the puffskull spores for 1 hour.

Tier 3: The DC is 20. Characters take 22 (4d10) necrotic damage on a failed save and are poisoned for 1 hour on failed save, or take half as much damage on a successful save. Success means a character is immune to the puffskull spores for 1 hour.

Tier 4: The DC is 25. Characters take 44 (8d10) necrotic damage on a failed save and are poisoned for 1 hour on failed save, or take half as much damage on a successful save.

Characters poisoned by the spores are incapacitated with spasms for the first minute of their poisoning.

Encounter

Tier 1: The characters must succeed on 5 DC 10 checks before failing 5.

Tier 2: The characters must succeed on 5 DC 13 checks before failing 5.

Tier 3: The characters must succeed on 5 DC 15 checks before failing 3.

Tier 4: The characters must succeed on 5 DC 18 checks before failing 3.

DWARVEN IDOL

When the characters arrive at the dwarven idol, read or paraphrase the following:

Piled up high in a man-made clearing is a heap of rubble and scrap. Broken tool handles, lumps of jagged rock, and mounds of gravel all come together in a hideous monument to industry, which seeps dirty water into the surrounding forest. Crudely erected next to the pile of refuse is some kind of idol wrought in stone. No wildlife can be heard in this part of the forest, and the stumps that surround the heap weep tears of sap. As you watch, the tears of sap begin to coalesce into haunting dryads whose wailing is awful to behold. They crowd around the idol in an ululating ring.

Sap Spirits. The spirits mourn for the destruction and pollution that has occurred here and lament the presence of the dwarven idol. They are powerless to do anything about it because the idol has been sanctified by a dwarven priestess. Characters that succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check realize the emotional spirits will lash out at any who come close, lest they cause more damage.

The spirits can be destroyed by reducing them to 0 hit points, or by calming them with a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Spells such as *calm emotions* also work. If the characters succeed in calming the spirits, they heal each character for a number of hit points equal to twice their character level.

Furthermore, hiding within the mound is a **burrowing monster** that has come up from the earth below. It awaits prey to return to the mound which it can ambush and devour. Characters with a certain passive Wisdom (Perception) score notice the monster before it can surprise them.

Once the characters have overcome the sap spirits and burrowing monster, they are faced with the idol. Characters that succeed on a DC 12 Intelligence (Religion) check recognize the idol as a dwarven mining goddess, made from the rubble as a good luck charm, or symbol of protection in the tunnels. It should be clear to the characters that Sylvanus would see this as a rival deity's presence in his sacred grove, but because the monument is sanctified, he cannot destroy it.

The characters must make a choice: destroy the mining goddess's shrine and fuel Sylvanus' spite, or pray to the mining goddess and ask to remove the monument on



Sylvanus' behalf. If the characters choose to destroy it, the monument takes on a semblance of life as an animated idol and retaliates against the characters.

Clues. Characters can search the rubble pile and monster's lair for clues. The following ability checks provide information:

- A DC 10 Strength check allows characters to retrieve rusted and broken mining tools from the rubble.
- A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check reveals tracks heading from the pile to the north. If the check succeeds by 5 or more, the character can tell the tracks are dwarven.
- A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check allows a character to discover the burrowing monster's lair, which contains scattered bones and an iron token engraved with symbols.
 - A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals the bones to be dwarven.
 - A successful DC 10 Intelligence (History) check reveals the iron token to be a dwarven token good luck token.
- A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Religion) check allows a character to recognize the idol as a dwarven mining goddess.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

Sap Spirits

Tier 1: Two *spectres*.

Tier 2: Four *dryads*.

Tier 3: Four *dryads* with 50 hit points, resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks, and the following attack option:

Wail (1/Day). The spirit releases a mournful wail that has no effect on constructs and undead. All other creatures within 30 feet of the spirit that can hear it must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, a creature drops to 0 hit points. On a success, a creature takes 44 (8d10) psychic damage.

Tier 4: Eight *dryads* with 100 hit points, immunity to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks, and the Wail attack option presented above.

Burrowing Monster

Tier 1: Use *ankheg* statistics. The passive Wisdom (Perception) score required is 13.

Tier 2: Use *remorhaz* statistics. The passive Wisdom (Perception) score required is 15.

Tier 3: Use *bullette* statistics. The passive Wisdom (Perception) score required is 20.

Tier 4: Use *purple worm* statistics. The passive Wisdom (Perception) score required is 25.

Animated Idol

Tier 1: Use *gargoyle* statistics, but remove its fly speed.

Tier 2: Use *earth elemental* statistics.

Tier 3: Use *clay golem* statistics.

Tier 4: Use *stone golem* statistics.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

The characters might manage to determine that dwarven miners are to blame after investigating just the first scene, but by the time they've investigated all three they absolutely should have come to that conclusion. They should also see that the dwarven encampment is somewhere in the north of the forest's heart, as all tunnels and tracks lead in those directions. If the characters are struggling to put together the clues, allow them to make a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check to determine it, or provide extra clues as they search through the forest such as forgotten pickaxes, dwarf-sized footprints, or even dropped notes.

DISCOVERING THE DWARVES

Once the characters have investigated the aforementioned scenes, they come to the conclusion that there are dwarves mining beneath the forest, causing the earth to collapse into sinkholes, and undermining the trees. From clues at each location, they should deduce that the dwarves have their encampment on the northern edge of the forest's heart. Once they have this information, they should travel there to confront the dwarves about the harm they're causing, and try to get them to leave the forest peacefully, lest Sylvanus slay them all. Once the characters arrive at the dwarven encampment, read or paraphrase the following:

You emerge through the low boughs of the trees and discover an encampment nestled between the undergrowth. It consists mostly of cloth tents, though there is a finely constructed, low, wooden tower rising from the center. Working hard between the canvas structures are several dwarves breaking rocks and packing crates with ore. Now that the cushioning of the forest and leaves is behind you, the ringing sound of metal on stone is abundantly clear.

Dwarves. The dwarves readily greet the characters provided they approach with weapons sheathed. If the characters ask to talk to someone about what's going on here, one of the working dwarves escorts them to a larger, pelt-covered tent and introduces them to the forewoman, Scotia Hammerarm. Read or paraphrase the following:

The dwarf calls a greeting and pushes aside the tent flaps, revealing an interior filled with desks and mine blueprints. A dwarven woman turns toward you, her iron leg clinking as she heads in your direction.

"Ah, adventurers! Pleasure to meet you. You didnae happen to find my leg? I'm Scotia Hammerarm by the way, of Hammerarm Enterprises."

Scotia is a high-spirited dwarf with an unfortunately short temper and, after a recent mining accident, an artificial leg. She is a mercenary sort, valuing her profits over anything else, and has little understanding of or care for the damage her operations are causing to the forest. Scotia happily answers the questions of the characters, though if they start to push her on anything she gets cross with them.

What are you doing here? “You cannae see that we’re running a mining operation? There’s a rich vein of iron running beneath this forest, one of the best I’ve come across!”

Do you realize that you’re causing damage to the forest? “Oh aye. What’s the odd sinkhole here and there though eh? I’ve paid the price!” (she indicates to her artificial leg) “Though I must say, I think I prefer this contraption to the fleshy one.”

Do you know about the spirit of Sylvanus? “The what? Oooh, that green ghostie? He’s been no end of trouble, stealing tools, hurling rocks, making the scrub grow up around us. Aye, he’s a fair nightmare.”

You’ve pushed him too far, and he’s looking for blood. “What a wee spirit? He can come and take it if he likes. I’ve no fear of the undead.”

Did you know we’re trapped here in the forest? “Aye, but I cannae imagine a wall of trees will bother us beneath the earth. Our pickaxes will make short work of any roots - finest dwarven iron in production. I’ve spared no expense here - I’ll be making my gold back though, thrice over!”

Aren’t you going to stop mining? “Stop mining?! Over my dead body! I’ve invested a hefty purse into this expedition, and there’s no way I’m stopping before I’ve made that back!”

After talking with Scotia, it should become clear that the dwarves aren’t going to pack up their operation in any kind of hurry. Characters can go about resolving this by any means they feel necessary, though examples are provided below. If the characters fail at one approach, they can take another, but can’t repeat the same approach.

THE DARK PATH

If the characters come to the encampment with murder in their hearts, there is little to stop them from massacring the miners. The group consists of *Scotia Hammerarm*, her two *bodyguards*, a *priestess*, and twenty *commoners*. If the characters kill any dwarves, they have failed in their quest to remove the dwarves peacefully. Sylvanus appears before them in a terrifying aspect, and cackles with glee as he transforms the characters into oaken enforcers fated to guard the woods for eternity.

Alternatively, if you want to continue the adventure, refer back to the Synopsis for a “dark reward”, to proceed with players and characters keeping their agency.

BRIBERY

Characters that succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check realize that all Scotia truly wants is gold, and she doesn’t care too much how she gets it. In order to bribe her, they’ll need to know roughly how much she’s hoping to make from the iron ore. Characters can persuade Scotia to let them look at her mine plans with a successful DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check, or steal them with a successful DC 14 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. A character with the plans can make a DC 18 Intelligence check, coming up with the correct value of roughly 5,000 gp.

In order to make up this value, the characters could amass treasure from previous adventures, give up an Uncommon magic item, or search for something in the forest of similar value, such as rare herbs or the golden antlers of a rare stag. This should be resolved at the Game Masters’ discretion. Characters might also try to dupe Scotia by giving her an item that they claim is worth more than it really is. Scotia accepts the trade if a character succeeds on a DC 20 Charisma (Deception) check. If given goods are worth roughly 5,000 gp, Scotia agrees to leave.

DIPLOMACY

Characters might try to convince Scotia to leave through argument and persuasion. Firstly, the characters need to convince Scotia of the seriousness of the situation with a successful DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check. They’ll then need to provide moving evidence of Sylvanus’ attacks, requiring a successful DC 16 Charisma (Performance) check. The characters then need to illustrate to Scotia that the cost she’ll have to pay bereaved families would far outweigh the profits



from the ore with a successful DC 16 Intelligence check. A final DC 16 Charisma (Intimidation) check drives home that the characters are serious about getting the dwarves to leave. If the characters succeed in each of these checks, Scotia agrees to leave.

USING FORCE

If the characters run out of options, they might resort to moving the dwarves by force, which inevitably results in combat. If the characters can get past two **bodyguards** and knock out **Scotia Hammerarm**, she agrees to leave out of shame.

If the characters kill any dwarves, they have failed in their quest to remove the dwarves peacefully. Sylvanus appears before them in a terrifying aspect, and cackles with glee as he transforms the characters into oaken enforcers fated to guard the woods for eternity.

THE SPIRIT OF SYLVANUS STIRS

If you want to up the ante of the final encounter, have the spirit of Sylvanus appear while the characters are trying to deal with the dwarves. The angry spirit's sole aim is to kill the dwarves through whatever means it can - using its own abilities, animating the forest, calling upon corrupted animals, etc. The characters must either join sides with the spirit and attack the dwarves, or defend the dwarves while trying to convince them to leave, or try to persuade the spirit of Sylvanus that violence and bloodshed aren't the answer. If the characters have previously acted mercifully in the encounters leading up to this point, they can make pleas to Sylvanus to stop his malevolent actions. The characters should make a group Charisma (Persuasion) check (DC varies, see "Adjusting the Encounter"). The check can be made with advantage for good roleplaying, bringing up examples of their merciful behavior in the forest, or by taking significant actions to defend the dwarves, such as throwing themselves in front of Scotia to save her. On a success, Sylvanus' anger is quelled, at least for the time being, and he permits the dwarves to remain in the forest.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

Scotia Hammerarm

Tier 1: Use **bandit captain** statistics.

Tier 2: Use **veteran** statistics.

Tier 3: Use **giant ape** statistics but change their type to humanoid, and size to Medium

Tier 4: Use **archmage** statistics.

Bodyguards

Tier 1: Use **bandit** statistics.

Tier 2: Use **thug** statistics.

Tier 3: Use **gladiator** statistics.

Tier 4: Use **frost giant** statistics but change their type to humanoid, and size to Medium.

Priestess

Tier 1: Use **acolyte** statistics.

Tier 2: Use **priest** statistics.

Tier 3: Use **guardian naga** statistics.

Tier 4: Use **androsphinx** statistics.

Persuading Sylvanus

Tier 1: The DC for the Charisma (Persuasion) check is 15.

Tier 2: The DC for the Charisma (Persuasion) check is 18.

Tier 3: The DC for the Charisma (Persuasion) check is 20.

Tier 4: The DC for the Charisma (Persuasion) check is 25.

SABOTAGE

The characters might choose to make it impossible for the mining operation to continue by sabotaging or stealing equipment or the mine itself. In order to do so, the characters will need to sneak into the camp with a successful DC 14 group Dexterity (Stealth) check. Once in camp, the characters need to find a piece of essential equipment with a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check. Once they've found it, they need to determine how to disable it with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Finally, they need to disable or steal it with a successful DC 16 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check.

CONCLUSION

Once the characters have arranged it so that the dwarves will pack up their mining operation and leave the forest, the spirit of Sylvanus appears before the characters. Read or paraphrase the following:

As the dwarves finish packing up their tools, the same antler-bearing spirit appears before you, his green aura creating emerald shadows between the trees. The spirit of Sylvanus regards the leaving dwarves with satisfaction, then turns toward you. For a moment, you think you notice a serene gratitude pass across their features but, just as the spirit disappears into a nearby tree, their features contort into a maddening sneer. It's clear that Sylvanus' malevolence has been quelled, but it's not clear how long it will last. As before, it's not long until the sprites arrive.

Adelina Flitterwing thanks the characters wholeheartedly for their efforts to get rid of the dwarves, explaining they could never have managed it on their own. With Sylvanus placated, at least for the time being, the sprites can investigate what happened to Sylvanus when he left the forest. If the characters are willing to help, the sprites reveal that the last journey Sylvanus made alive was to the Marrowgrove, an undead-haunted forest not far from here. The events of what occurs in that forest are covered in this adventure's sequel; **Shadows of the Marrowgrove**. As a reward for undertaking this second adventure, the sprites promise to teach each character the **conjure feyspell**, which they can use once per day to summon the sprites when the characters are in need.

— *The End*

-Dwarven Idol Site-



1 square = 5 feet



-Hammerarm Mining Camp-

1 square = 5 feet



Shadows of the Marrowgrove



Shadows of the Marrowgrove is a scalable 5th Edition adventure using materials from this book and is designed as a sequel to Root of Sylvanus. After discovering the corrupted Spirit of Sylvanus in his sacred grove, the characters are beseeched by the fairies to seek out a haunted forest called the Marrowgrove. Cursed touchstones mark the way, chronicling his travels. The characters must seek out Sylvanus' body, located deep inside the dark, terrifying forest.

Only by delving deep into the forsaken woodland, as well as into the memories of the deceased Sylvanus, can the characters discover the fate of the druid's corpse, which has been reanimated as a dark and twisted version of his previous self. Destroying the corpse frees the spirit of corruption, allowing Sylvanus' home to be restored to peace.

Adjusting Encounters

This adventure is 5e compatible and designed to be played by characters of any level. Encounters that need to be adjusted for different level characters have an 'Adjusting the Encounter' sidebar, which provides details of changes that need to be made.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

When I drank of the augury root, I saw that my sacred grove would become corrupted, just like the Marrowgrove in which I stood. I knew I could never recover from such a vision.

—Diary of Sylvanus Beechwarden

In the previous adventure, *Root of Sylvanus*, the characters defend the deceased druid's sacred grove from exploitative miners who were destroying the forest. While there, they become caught up in the story of the druid Sylvanus who, in search of future sight, traveled to an undead-infested woodland called the Marrowgrove and drank a brew made from **augury root**. This vision showed him that his sacred grove would fall into corruption, just as the Marrowgrove did. Disturbed by the vision, Sylvanus raced back to his sacred grove, but accidentally stumbled into a reclamation marsh within the Marrowgrove and died there.

Because Sylvanus was completely consumed by the marsh, his identity has become one with the Marrowgrove forest. Although his spirit has returned to the sacred grove, with dangerous repercussions, his reanimated corpse and memories

are trapped here. In order to free Sylvanus' spirit, and allow it to pass peacefully into the afterlife, the characters must destroy Sylvanus' corpse. To do so they must re-live his memories to discover where the corpse resides within the Marrowgrove.

SYNOPSIS

When the characters arrive at the Marrowgrove, they quickly realize the forest is not just an undead-infested place of corruption, but that it has been infused with the memories of the deceased Sylvanus. In order to find the corpse of the druid, they must search notable locations in the Marrowgrove. At these locations, they'll be taken on a journey through Sylvanus' memories, and forced to face the trials of his past. Only once they've achieved this will they discover the location of Sylvanus' corpse.

Once Sylvanus' resting place in the restoration marsh has been uncovered by the characters, they must travel there and face off against the druid's reanimated corpse. Rather than being purely undead, his corpse has grown into a plant-like hybrid creature that lairs in a region of the reclamation marsh that is almost impenetrable. Only by defeating Sylvanus can the characters free his spirit from the sacred grove in which he is trapped, and honor the quest bestowed upon them by the fairies.

INTRODUCTION

This adventure takes place in a forest called the Marrowgrove, to which characters will have to travel from the sacred grove detailed in *Root of Sylvanus*. When the characters reach the edge of the Marrowgrove, read or paraphrase the following:

You arrive on a high ridge overlooking the Marrowgrove. The bleak, fog-shrouded forest spills out before you. Bleached, needle-less pines rise up from the mist like the broken bones of colossal creatures. Even from this distance, you can spot shambling figures stumbling through the forest, mindlessly lurching between the trunks. From this vantage point, you can see several landmarks: a ruined tower collapsing near the forest's center, a bridge of bones crossing the stagnant creek that cuts the forest in half, and a grove of enormous, dead trees whose limbs have twisted together to form a cage of branches.

TOUCHSTONES

Each of these locations contains a cursed touchstone that serves as a clue to the resting place of Sylvanus. Characters should travel between the locations through the Marrowgrove to search for these touchstones. When discovered and activated, sets of ghostly lights appear through the forest.

AUGURY ROOTS

The grove of dead trees is the site at which Sylvanus harvested the **augury roots**. The ruined tower contains an alchemist's laboratory where he prepared the augury root brew. The bone bridge is the route Sylvanus took while fleeing the woods, and has his abandoned campsite beside it.

TRAVELING

Traveling through the Marrowgrove can be handled just like a small expedition. The Marrowgrove might take a few days to traverse, or only a matter of hours depending on your desired adventure length. Each hex on the map of the wood can constitute either a day or an hour of walking. Use the **Expedition System** to help characters plan and undertake their journey. If using hours rather than days, make the following changes:

- Characters cannot make proper preparations
- Each character can undertake an **Expedition Activity** only once every 4 hours
- Characters must make a **Morale save** at the end of every 4 hours
- Characters can set up a **Waypoint** for a short rest every 8 hours

THE WHISPERGHOUL

If, at any time during the adventure, the characters seem lost and aimless, introduce the **Whisperghoul**. This undead spirit was once a traveling companion of Sylvanus, a storyteller who wished to chronicle his epic adventure, but died during their journey alongside the druid. The whisperghoul can follow the characters before finally making contact, singing half-written dirges through the trees, or filling their campsites with ominous whispers.

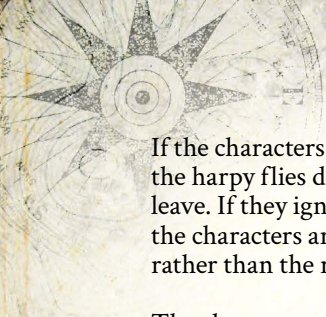
When the whisperghoul finally confronts the characters, it cannot convey the information about Sylvanus' fate that it wishes to. Rather, it can only point characters in the right direction, wailing mournfully and singing haunting melodies that slowly drive the characters mad. The characters can choose to use the whisperghoul as their flawless navigator - it cannot fail a Wisdom (Survival) check made to navigate while within the Marrowgrove.

AUGURY TREE GROVE

When the characters reach the augury tree grove, read or paraphrase the following:

The grove of dead trees rises high above you, the limbs of the trees forming a cage in the air. Their gnarled trunks are covered with ivory bark that drips amber between the cracks. High above the cage of branches disappears into the mist, though you can hear the sound of flapping from within. The coiling roots of the trees weave through the grove, and seem to be burrowing toward a stone in the clearing's center that glows with magical, turquoise light.

Harpies. Protecting the roots of the augury trees is a **harpy** who wears a pair of **gloves of missile snaring**. The harpy is a wise and stalwart guardian of the trees, but can be bribed to allow a creature to harvest the roots of the tree with an offering of blood, which she uses in rituals to create magic items.



If the characters try to enter the grove of augury trees, the harpy flies down to them and commands them to leave. If they ignore her warnings, she attacks. Even if the characters are aiming for the cursed touchstone, rather than the roots, she continues her assault.

The characters can convince the harpy they mean no harm to the trees with a successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check. If each character cuts their palm and offers the blood to the harpy, she lets them do as they wish. Cutting a palm in this way deals 10 slashing damage to the character. Characters can also sneak past the harpy with a successful DC 16 Dexterity (Stealth) check.

Augury Trees. Surrounding the clearing are enormous augury trees whose branches twist together into a cage-like structure. If the characters fail to sneak past or convince the harpy to let them pass, the trees animate. Their cage of branches untwists, and they use their limbs to try and block the character's path into the clearing.

Each initiative count 20 and 10, a tree slams a branch down into the clearing in a 5-foot wide, 30-foot long line. Each creature in the area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking bludgeoning damage (see "Adjusting the Encounter") on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one. The branch remains there until the harpy is convinced to let the characters pass. A branches' space is difficult terrain and requires a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to climb over.

The roots of an augury tree can be harvested with an edged tool such as a trowel or dagger. The process takes 1 minute, after which the character must make a DC 15 Wisdom (Nature) check. On a successful check, they gain a piece of **augury root** (see "Augury Root Sidebar"). On a failed save, the root is destroyed, and one of the character's hands is covered in sticky, black sap that gunks their fingers together. Such a character can no longer hold anything with two hands, and can hold only a single object at a time. The sap can be removed by dealing any amount of acid damage to it.

Cursed Touchstone. In the center of the clearing is a cursed touchstone - a smooth rock that glows with ghostly turquoise symbols. Characters can reach the touchstone by sneaking past the harpy and augury trees (see above), or by convincing the harpy to let them pass.

Touching the rock places characters in a version of the **time stop** spell, and gives them a vision of the past. Read or paraphrase the following:

Suddenly the world around you turns a misty grey. Time slows to a crawl for all but yourselves. As you watch, a ghostly version of the world you know begins to form around you from luminescent turquoise smoke. You see Sylvanus, the cloaked druid, sneaking toward the roots of an augury tree nearby. He begins digging for the roots of the trees with a

sharp trowel, carving through the earth. Where his trowel cuts through the roots, thick, black sap erupts forth, slathering his hands. Just as he rises with a root, he is spotted by a harpy flying high above, who screams with wrath. With a beat of her enormous wings and a screeching call, she summons a flock of ravens, which flies straight toward Sylvanus.

At this point, it becomes clear to the characters that the phantasmal **swarms of ravens** from the vision are going to attack them as well. There is one swarm for each character, and their attacks deal psychic damage instead of their normal type. Only after the swarms are defeated does the vision continue.

Just as the ravens are about to tear into Sylvanus' flesh, he bares a palm and slices through his skin with a blade, then offers the blood to the harpy as penance. As the vision disappears, and time resumes its normal flow, you spot a ghostly trail of lights leading from the clearing.

Trail of Lights. These ghostly lights were left by the whisperghoul, and play a haunting melody when walked through. They lead in a roughly straight line through the Marrowgrove, which characters can surmise with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check, or by following them for an hour or more. They clearly are not the route that Sylvanus took through the forest. Rather, they serve as one of three sets of trails that allow characters to triangulate Sylvanus' resting place once the other cursed touchstones have been activated.

Adjusting The Encounter

Swarm of Ravens

Tier 1: Use **swarm of ravens** statistics but change their type to undead

Tier 2: Use **swarm of quippers** statistics with a 50 ft. fly speed but change their type to undead

Tier 3: Use **manticore** statistics without tail spikes but change their type to undead

Tier 4: Use **invisible stalker** statistics but change their type to undead

Harpy

Tier 1: Use **harpy** statistics

Tier 2: Use **vrock** statistics

Tier 3: Use **gynosphinx** statistics

Tier 4: Use **androsphinx** statistics

Augury Tree Damage

Tier 1: 5 (1d10) bludgeoning damage

Tier 2: 11 (2d10) bludgeoning damage

Tier 3: 22 (4d10) bludgeoning damage

Tier 4: 55 (10d10) bludgeoning damage

AUGURY ROOT

The root of the augury tree is a potent thing. It can be used in a brew that allows one to see the events of the future in detail, or ingested immediately to give temporary prescience for a few moments into the future.

Brew. A character proficient in alchemist's supplies can spend 10 minutes making augury root brew. At the end of the time, they must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom check. On a success, they create the brew. On a failure, the brew is spoiled and the root wasted. Drinking augury root brew allows a casting of the *divination* spell where the character gets to see one event from the future.

Root. Eating the root directly is powerful but dangerous. A creature that eats the root gains the effects of the *foresight* spell for 1 minute. After this time, they must make a Constitution saving throw. On a 20+ or more, nothing happens. On a 16-19, the creature gains one level of exhaustion. On a 12-15, the creature gains two levels of exhaustion. On an 8-11, the creature gains three levels of exhaustion. On a 4-7, the creature gains four levels of exhaustion. On a 3-0, the creature gains five levels of exhaustion. On a result of less than 0, the creature gains six levels of exhaustion.

RUINED TOWER

When the characters reach the ruined tower, read or paraphrase the following:

Crumbling before your very eyes, the leaning tower of granite blocks seems to shudder with even the slightest gust of wind. The entire roof and most of the upper floors have been entirely ruined and, given the blackening of stones and still-falling ash, burned out. There appears only one entrance to the looming structure; an open archway whose keystone glows with turquoise light.

Cursed Touchstone. The keystone of the tower's entrance is a cursed touchstone - a smooth rock that glows with ghostly turquoise symbols. Characters can reach the touchstone with ease. Touching the rock places characters in a version of the *time stop* spell, and gives them a vision of the past. Read or paraphrase the following:

The falling ash around you slows to a crawl as your surroundings fade into a grey mist. A ghostly version of the tower before you, this time intact, emerges wreathed in turquoise smoke. You see a cloaked figure, Sylvanus, stumbling toward the tower clutching something in his hands - a piece of root. You feel compelled to follow. He ascends the spiral stair of the tower to a room that contains a battered iron cauldron and set of alchemist's supplies. The druid works to produce a brew from the root, which he imbibes. The shock on the man's face is awful to behold. When his own visions have concluded, he tries to rise but stumbles, spilling the cauldron across the floor, and causing the flames beneath it to leap up and consume the hearth. Suddenly the flames are burning around you too.

At this point, it becomes clear to the characters that the fire is a threat to them as well. Each character must take an action to make an ability check (DC varies, see "Adjusting the Encounter: Cursed Vision Stone DCs"). Once a specific ability check has been used by a character, it cannot be repeated by that

character or any other character. The characters must succeed on five checks before failing three.

Complete Success. If the characters succeed on five checks and fail none, the vision continues.

Partial Success. If the characters succeed on five checks but fail one or two, the vision continues, but the tower is damaged. When the characters enter the tower, start the d6 on 4 instead of 6 (see below).


Failure. If the characters fail three checks before accruing five successes, but get at least one success, the vision continues, but the tower is damaged and the characters burned. Each character takes half the psychic damage (see "Adjusting the Encounter"). When the characters enter the tower, start the d6 on 4 instead of 6 (see below).

Total Failure. If the characters fail three checks before accruing any successes, the vision continues, but the tower is destroyed and the characters burned. Each character takes full psychic damage (see "Adjusting the Encounter") and the tower collapses (see "Tower").

As you attempt to evade the blaze, Sylvanus flees, stamping out flames that erupt around him as he goes. Eventually, he makes it out of the tower safely. As the vision disappears, and time resumes its normal flow, you spot a ghostly trail of lights leading away from the tower.

Trail of Lights. These ghostly lights were left by the whispermourner, and play a haunting melody when walked through. They lead in a roughly straight line through the Marrowgrove, which characters can surmise with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check, or by following them for an hour or more. They clearly are not the route that Sylvanus took through the forest. Rather, they serve as one of three sets of trails that allow characters to triangulate Sylvanus' resting place once the other cursed touchstones have been activated.

Tower. The tower is a crumbling wreck. Any character that enters it runs the risk of bringing the entire structure to the ground. The first time a character enters the tower, place a d6 on the table with the 6 facing up. If a character moves through the tower, they must make a Dexterity check. On a success, the character can walk softly, without causing further damage. On a failure, the character causes some disturbance, causing the tower to crumble slightly. That character takes 5 (1d10) bludgeoning damage from falling debris, and you should subtract 1 from the d6, taking it down a step. If the dice would be reduced below 0, the tower collapses. The check can be made with advantage by characters treating the area as difficult terrain. A creature that Dashes makes the check with disadvantage.



When the tower collapses, each character inside must make a DC 20 Strength saving throw, taking bludgeoning damage (see “Adjusting the Encounter”) on a failure, or half as much on a success. Furthermore, any creature that fails the save is buried beneath the tower and suffocating. They take the bludgeoning damage again at the start of each of their turns. They can be freed with a successful DC 15 Strength check made by themselves or another character outside the rubble.

Alchemist’s Laboratory. Sylvanus used this chamber to create his augury root brew (see “Augury Root” sidebar). There still remains a set of alchemist’s supplies in the chamber that are in relatively good condition. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 14 or higher also notice a satchel concealed beneath the workbench. Inside the satchel are two **potions of greater healing**, three vials of acid, a **potion of flying**, a **potion of climbing**, and a **potion of frost giant strength**.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

Cursed Touchstone Vision DC

Tier 1: DC 10

Tier 2: DC 15

Tier 3: DC 20

Tier 4: DC 25

Psychic Damage

Tier 1: 7 (2d6) psychic damage

Tier 2: 14 (4d6) psychic damage

Tier 3: 24 (7d6) psychic damage

Tier 4: 56 (16d6) psychic damage

Collapsing Tower Damage

Tier 1: 22 (4d10) bludgeoning damage

Tier 2: 55 (10d10) bludgeoning damage

Tier 3: 99 (18d10) bludgeoning damage

Tier 4: 132 (24d10) bludgeoning damage

BONE BRIDGE

When the characters reach the bone bridge, read or paraphrase the following:

Spanning a stagnant creek that bisects the Marrowgrove is a bridge built entirely from the bones of giants. Its construction seems sound, even though there are great holes in the deck where the bones haven’t fused correctly. Plugging one of these holes, roughly in the center of the bridge is a stone that glows with turquoise magic. A vague scuttling or scratching can be heard somewhere nearby. On the far side of the bridge is an abandoned campsite.

Burrowback Beetles. Any creature that sets foot on the bridge summons a swarm of burrowback beetles. These beetles live beneath the bridge and feed on creatures that try to cross it. If a character starts their turn on the bridge, they are attacked by the swarm (see “Adjusting the Encounter”). If a character is hit by the swarm on three consecutive turns, the beetles burrow

into their flesh. If they do not remove the beetles the following turn by dealing acid damage to the beetles, the beetles burrow into their vital organs and kill them.

The swarm is hit by any attack, but only by dealing acid damage on three occasions to the swarm can it be killed. Characters who succeed on a DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check recall that burrowback beetles despise acid, and remember that a specific nearby tree can be tapped for its acidic sap as an action, which creates a vial of acid.

Cloak. Stuck on the near side of the bridge is Sylvanus’ **cloak of elvenkind**.

Stagnant Creek. The water of the stagnant creek is repugnant, but not necessarily dangerous. A creature that moves through the water stirs up the sludgy bottom, bringing with it a noxious scent. If a creature that can smell the creek starts its turn within 10 feet of it, they must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On the first failed save, they are poisoned for 1 hour. On the next failed save, they become nauseated. After this, they no longer need to make the saving throw. A nauseated creature must succeed on a Constitution saving throw (DC varies, see “Adjusting the Encounter”) at the start of each of its turns. On a failed save, the creature is incapacitated until the start of its next turn as it wretches and vomits. A creature can be cured of nausea with a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Medicine) check, or a casting of **lesser restoration**.

Cursed Touchstone. In the center of the bridge is a cursed touchstone - a smooth rock that glows with ghostly turquoise symbols. Characters can reach the touchstone if they make it halfway across the bridge.

Touching the rock places characters in a version of the **time stop** spell, and gives them a vision of the past. Read or paraphrase the following:

The beetles swarming around you slow to a crawl, their chittering mandibles and scuttling legs moving as if trapped in treacle. The world around you fades into a grey mist. Rising from the fog is a replica of the bone bridge formed of turquoise fire. Across this, pursued by ethereal beetles, is Sylvanus. He stumbles and trips as the swarm pursues him, his cloak catching on the bridge. The druid rapidly pulls a vial of acid from his pocket and splashes it before him, fending off the beetles for a moment. Sylvanus then speaks to the animals in a strange, chittering voice - his druidic powers convincing them to let him pass. Once he reaches the far side of the bridge, he begins setting up camp. Time jumps forward. It is night. The sobs of the distraught man can be heard within the tent. Time flashes forward again. Sylvanus stumbles from the campsite, exhausted, his mind clearly a blur. He wanders aimlessly into the woods. As the vision disappears, and time resumes its normal flow, you spot a ghostly trail of lights leading into the forest from the far side of the bridge.

Each creature that witnesses the vision is overcome with Sylvanus' sadness, exhaustion, and imminent insanity. They must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or succumb to temporary madness themselves. A creature that fails the save should roll on the following table:

| d6 | Temporary Madness - Lasts 1d4 Minutes |
|----|--|
| 1 | The character cannot stop crying, effectively blinding them for the duration. |
| 2 | The character cannot bring themselves to harm another living creature for the duration. |
| 3 | The character is crippled with tiredness. They can move only at half speed for the duration. |
| 4 | The character becomes frightened of the trail of lights for the duration. |
| 5 | The character gets uncontrollable shudders. They have disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws made using Strength or Dexterity for the duration. |
| 6 | The character's mind is blurred. They have disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws made using Intelligence or Wisdom for the duration. |

Campsite. The campsite, which belonged to Sylvanus, is now abandoned. Creatures can take one rest here without the chance of a random encounter.

Trail of Lights. These ghostly lights were left by the whisperghoul, and play a haunting melody when walked through. They lead in a roughly straight line through the Marrowgrove, which characters can surmise with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check, or by following them for an hour or more. They clearly are not the route that Sylvanus took through the forest. Rather, they serve as one of three sets of trails that allow characters to triangulate Sylvanus' resting place once the other cursed touchstones have been activated.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

Burrowback Beetles

Tier 1: +3 to hit, 5 (1d10) piercing damage

Tier 2: +5 to hit, 11 (2d10) piercing damage

Tier 3: +8 to hit, 22 (4d10) piercing damage

Tier 4: +12 to hit, 44 (8d10) piercing damage

Nauseated Constitution Saving Throw DC

Tier 1: DC 10

Tier 2: DC 15

Tier 3: DC 20

Tier 4: DC 25

RECLAMATION MARSH

Once characters have activated all three of the cursed touchstones from the landmark locations, they are able to easily trace Sylvanus' journey and triangulate the location of the reclamation marsh, where his corpse currently lairs. When the characters reach the reclamation marsh, read or paraphrase the following:

Ahead of you is a patch of land without trees, only withered-looking shrubs. The ground is shrouded in a miasma, and the vaguely sulfurous scent that pervades the air is unpleasant, but not sickening. It is here, at some point in the distant fog, that the three sets of ghostly lights converge.

Deer. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 10 or higher notice something strange - a herd of sickly deer eating the mud not far from the edge of the trees. The deer appear oblivious of the characters.

Reclamation Marsh. Characters who succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check recognize this region as a Reclamation Marsh. The DC is reduced by 5 if they have spotted the deer. These marshes have a solid layer of moss and peat that on their surface that can give way at any minute, plunging the creature into liquid mud beneath. Furthermore, creatures that spend too long on the marsh's surface gain a desire to consume anything nearby.

RECLAMATION MARSH EFFECT

At any time, a creature walking atop a Reclamation Marsh might be pulled down into its muddy bowels. Such a creature must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw (made with advantage if they have some form of anchoring mechanism to prevent themselves from being consumed) or be enveloped by the marsh. Such a creature is considered drowning, and can only be saved by another creature succeeding on a DC 15 Strength check. A creature that dies in this way rises as a **zombie** within the hour.

Creatures that take a rest while in the marsh must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or have their minds warped. On a failed save, they are overcome with a desire to consume. Such creatures gain an insatiable appetite that, at its worst, can spread to consuming moss, bark, mud, and even humanoid flesh. This kind of magical insanity can be suppressed with a **calm emotions** spell, but only a **greater restoration** spell can rid a character of it permanently.

SYLVANUS' RESTING PLACE

Characters can spot the place where the lights converge with ease once the cursed touchstones have been activated, but getting through the marsh itself may pose some problems. Limit the number of saves caused by the marsh to a total of half the number of characters (rounded up). Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 14 or higher notice a half-submerged bridge used by worshippers who come to the circle of stones. Walking atop this prevents the marsh from swallowing up characters.

Once characters arrive, read or paraphrase the following:

Rising up from the bog is a circle of standing stones, each one covered with twisting vines and ivy. The stench here is almost unbearable - a charnel reek that catches in the back of your throat. Circling above are carrion crows, eager to find a scrap of flesh to peel off the bleached bones that surround your feet. One of the standing stones has sunk into the marsh, and its top now plays host to a dark shrine covered with dried roots, green ribbon, and humanoid skulls. The ghostly lights that led you to this place converge just beyond the shrine, outside the circle of stones. As you watch, you see something rise from the swamp inside the stones. Half undead, half plant. A warped mass of coiling roots and rotten flesh. The decaying face of Sylvanus, barely recognizable, affixed by some morbid means to the front of a shambling mound of interwoven vines and sinew.

Corpse of Sylvanus. The *Corpse of Sylvanus* lairs here, near his resting place. As far as it can, the corpse stays within the bounds of the circle of stones, where other creatures in the marsh come to worship it. The corpse contains no trace of his former life, memories, sentiments, or personality. It is a disgusting hybrid of plant and undead, totally devoid of goodness in any form. In order for Sylvanus' spirit to be freed, the corpse must be destroyed.

Stone Circle. The stone circle is desecrated ground, which can be detected by a *detect evil and good* spell. Undead standing on desecrated ground have advantage on all saving throws. A vial of holy water purifies a 10-foot-square area of desecrated ground when sprinkled on it, and a *hallow* spell purifies desecrated ground within its area.

Light Convergence. The ghostly lights left by the cursed touchstones meet at the place outside the stones where Sylvanus originally fell. Since then his corpse has been reanimated by the marsh, but at the exact spot where the prints converge a single, verdant tree has sprouted.

The small beech tree is imbued with natural power. While within 15 feet of the tree, Sylvanus loses his damage resistances and immunities. Furthermore, good-aligned creatures within 10 feet of the tree gain 10 temporary hit points at the start of each of their turns.

Adjusting The Encounter

Corpse of Sylvanus

Tier 1: use *Corpse of Sylvanus - Tier 1* statistics

Tier 2: use *Corpse of Sylvanus - Tier 2* statistics

Tier 3: use *Corpse of Sylvanus - Tier 3* statistics

Tier 4: use *Corpse of Sylvanus - Tier 4* statistics

CONCLUSION

Once characters destroy the *Corpse of Sylvanus*, read or paraphrase the following:

Your final blow rends the shambling mound into pieces. As the roots uncoil and wither, it reveals the Corpse of Sylvanus within - decayed and twisted. As the druid's body touches the swamp, its decomposition accelerates rapidly, turning into a skeleton before your eyes. The perpetual mists break for a moment, allowing a ray of sun to shine down on the druid's skull as two daisies sprout from its eye sockets. You hear an ethereal voice whisper the word 'freedom' before disappearing in the breeze.

If the characters return to the sacred grove from *Root of Sylvanus*, they are welcomed with a majestic feast by the fairies of the forest. Sylvanus' spirit has left the sacred grove, making it safe for folk to travel through once again. The fairies hope that now the place is cleansed of Sylvanus' disembodied rage, a new druid or ranger will claim the forest as their own to protect. If one of the characters expresses an interest, the fairies are delighted that the grove will have a new guardian. They place a magical crown of beech twigs around the character's head. While wearing the crown, the creature is permanently under the effects of a *barkskin* spell, and they can cast the *conjure fey* spell once per day.

— *The End*



CORPSE OF SYLVANUS MONSTER TEMPLATE

This appendix contains the 5e statistics this the Corpse of Sylvanus, as well as his lair.

CORPSE OF SYLVANUS - TIER I

Large plant and *undead, neutral evil*

Armour Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 85 (10d10 + 30)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 18 (+4) | 8 (-1) | 16 (+3) | 10 (+0) | 10 (+0) | 5 (-3) |

Skills Stealth +2

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Necrotic Absorption. Whenever the Corpse of Sylvanus is subjected to necrotic damage, it takes no damage and regains a number of hit points equal to the necrotic damage dealt.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Corpse of Sylvanus makes two slam attacks. If both attacks hit a Medium or smaller target, the target is grappled (escape DC 12), and the Corpse of Sylvanus uses its Engulf on it.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Engulf. The Corpse of Sylvanus engulfs a Medium or smaller creature grappled by it. The engulfed target is blinded, restrained, and unable to breathe, and it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw at the start of each of the mound's turns or take 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the Corpse of Sylvanus moves, the engulfed target moves with it. The Corpse of Sylvanus can only have one creature engulfed at a time.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The Corpse of Sylvanus can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The Corpse of Sylvanus regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Slam. The Corpse of Sylvanus makes one slam attack.

Meld with Mud. The Corpse of Sylvanus, along with any creature engulfed by it, melds with the swamp and teleports 30 feet to an unoccupied space it can see.

Sinking Sludge (Costs 2 Actions). The Corpse of Sylvanus targets a 10-foot radius sphere of ground that it can see within 60 ft. of it. The ground in that area turns to sludge and becomes difficult terrain until the start of the Corpse of Sylvanus' next turn. Each creature that starts its turn in that area must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or have its speed reduced to 0 until the start of its next turn.

CORPSE OF SYLVANUS - TIER 2

Large plant and *undead, neutral evil*

Armour Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 136 (16d10 + 48)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 18 (+4) | 8 (-1) | 16 (+3) | 10 (+0) | 10 (+0) | 5 (-3) |

Skills Stealth +2

Damage Resistances cold, fire

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Magic Resistance. The Corpse of Sylvanus has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The Corpse of Sylvanus' weapon attacks are magical.

Necrotic Absorption. Whenever the Corpse of Sylvanus is subjected to necrotic damage, it takes no damage and regains a number of hit points equal to the necrotic damage dealt.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Corpse of Sylvanus makes two slam attacks. If both attacks hit a Medium or smaller target, the target is grappled (escape DC 14), and the Corpse of Sylvanus uses its Engulf on it.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Engulf. The Corpse of Sylvanus engulfs a Medium or smaller creature grappled by it. The engulfed target is blinded, restrained, and unable to breathe, and it must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw at the start of each of the mound's turns or take 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the Corpse of Sylvanus moves, the engulfed target moves with it. The Corpse of Sylvanus can only have one creature engulfed at a time.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The Corpse of Sylvanus can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The Corpse of Sylvanus regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Slam. The Corpse of Sylvanus makes one slam attack.
Meld with Mud. The Corpse of Sylvanus, along with any creature engulfed by it, melds with the swamp and teleports 30 feet to an unoccupied space it can see.
Sinking Sludge (Costs 2 Actions). The Corpse of Sylvanus targets a 10-foot radius sphere of ground that it can see within 60 ft. of it. The ground in that area turns to sludge and becomes difficult terrain until the start of the Corpse of Sylvanus' next turn. Each creature that starts its turn in that area must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or have its speed reduced to 0 until the start of its next turn.

CORPSE OF SYLVANUS - TIER 3

Large plant and undead, neutral evil

Armour Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 136 (16d10 + 48)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 18 (+4) | 14 (+2) | 16 (+3) | 10 (+0) | 10 (+0) | 5 (-3) |

Saving Throws Con +8, Int +5, Wis +5

Skills Stealth +7, Perception +5

Damage Resistances cold, fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

Magic Resistance. The Corpse of Sylvanus has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The Corpse of Sylvanus' weapon attacks are magical.

Necrotic Absorption. Whenever the Corpse of Sylvanus is subjected to necrotic damage, it takes no damage and regains a number of hit points equal to twice the necrotic damage dealt.

Stench. Any creature other than an undead that starts its turn within 5 feet of the Corpse of Sylvanus must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of the creature's next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to the Corpse of Sylvanus for 1 hour.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Corpse of Sylvanus makes two slam attacks. If both attacks hit a Medium or smaller target, the target is grappled (escape DC 19), and the Corpse of Sylvanus uses its Engulf on it.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 17 (3d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Engulf. The Corpse of Sylvanus engulfs a Medium or smaller creature grappled by it. The engulfed target is blinded, restrained, and unable to breathe, and it must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution saving throw at the start of each of the mound's turns or take 17 (3d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the Corpse of Sylvanus moves, the engulfed target moves with it. The Corpse of Sylvanus can only have one creature engulfed at a time.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The Corpse of Sylvanus can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The Corpse of Sylvanus regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Slam. The Corpse of Sylvanus makes one slam attack.
Meld with Mud. The Corpse of Sylvanus, along with any creature engulfed by it, melds with the swamp and teleports 30 feet to an unoccupied space it can see.
Sinking Sludge (Costs 2 Actions). The Corpse of Sylvanus targets a 10-foot radius sphere of ground that it can see within 60 ft. of it. The ground in that area turns to sludge and becomes difficult terrain until the start of the Corpse of Sylvanus' next turn. Each creature that starts its turn in that area must succeed on a DC 19 Strength saving throw or have its speed reduced to 0 until the start of its next turn.

CORPSE OF SYLVANUS - TIER 4

Large plant and undead, neutral evil

Armour Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 168 (16d10 + 80)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 20 (+5) | 14 (+2) | 20 (+5) | 10 (+0) | 10 (+0) | 5 (-3) |

Saving Throws Dex +8, Con +11, Int +6, Wis +6

Skills Stealth +8, Perception +6

Damage Resistances cold, fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Challenge 20 (25,000 XP)

Magic Resistance. The Corpse of Sylvanus has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The Corpse of Sylvanus' weapon attacks are magical.

Necrotic Absorption. Whenever the Corpse of Sylvanus is subjected to necrotic damage, it takes no damage and regains a number of hit points equal to twice the necrotic damage dealt.

Stench of Death. Each creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of the Corpse of Sylvanus or one of the zombies created by its lair actions must make a DC 22 Constitution saving throw, unless the creature is a construct or undead. On a failed save, the creature is incapacitated until the end of the turn. Creatures that are immune to poison damage or the poisoned condition automatically succeed on this saving throw. On a successful save, the creature is immune to the stench of the Corpse of Sylvanus for 24 hours.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Corpse of Sylvanus makes two slam attacks. If both attacks hit a Medium or smaller target, the target is grappled (escape DC 22), and the Corpse of Sylvanus uses its Engulf on it.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 23 (4d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage plus 10 (3d6) acid damage.

Engulf. The Corpse of Sylvanus engulfs a Medium or smaller creature grappled by it. The engulfed target is blinded, restrained, and unable to breathe, and it must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution saving throw at the start of each of the mound's turns or take 23 (4d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage. If the Corpse of Sylvanus moves, the engulfed target moves with it. The Corpse of Sylvanus can only have one creature engulfed at a time.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The Corpse of Sylvanus can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The Corpse of Sylvanus regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Slam. The Corpse of Sylvanus makes one slam attack.

Meld with Mud. The Corpse of Sylvanus, along with any creature engulfed by it, melds with the swamp and teleports 30 feet to an unoccupied space it can see. An engulfed creature that teleports in this way takes 23 (4d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Sinking Sludge (Costs 2 Actions). The Corpse of Sylvanus targets a 10-foot radius sphere of ground that it can see within 60 ft. of it. The ground in that area turns to sludge and becomes difficult terrain until the start of the Corpse of Sylvanus' next turn. Each creature that starts its turn in that area must succeed on a DC 22 Strength saving throw or have its speed reduced to 0 until the start of its next turn.

THE CORPSE OF SYLVANUS' LAIR

The Corpse of Sylvanus' lair is a region of reclamation marsh marked by standing stones where the druid fell during his escape from the Marrowgrove. Twisting vines and ivy cover the stones, and the swamp underfoot is unstable and stagnant. The following lair actions can be taken by the Corpse of Sylvanus, irrespective of the tier.

LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the Corpse of Sylvanus can take a lair action to cause one of the following magical effects. If the effect forces creatures to make a saving throw, the DC equals that listed in the Corpse of Sylvanus' multiattack ability. The Corpse of Sylvanus can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- The Corpse of Sylvanus calls up a corpse from the swamp beneath it that appears as a **zombie** within 60 feet of the Corpse of Sylvanus. The zombie acts immediately after this action in the initiative order. After a zombie is summoned, roll a d6. On a roll of 1, the Corpse of Sylvanus can summon no further zombies.
- The Corpse of Sylvanus targets a corpse within 30 feet of it which explodes in a burst of slime and offal. Creatures within 10 feet of the corpse must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or take 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.
- The Corpse of Sylvanus creates a 20-foot-radius sphere of fog centered on a point anywhere in its lair. The sphere spreads around corners, and its area is heavily obscured. The fog lasts until the Corpse of Sylvanus disperses it (no action required), and it can't be dispersed by wind.

-Bone Bridge-



1 square = 5 feet



-Reclamation Marsh-

1 square = 5 feet

Appendix: Monster Statblocks

FLESHMELD

Large undead, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 136 (16d10 + 48)

Speed 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 18 (+4) | 8 (-1) | 16 (+3) | 5 (-3) | 10 (+0) | 5 (-3) |

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +2

Damage Resistances Cold, Fire

Damage Immunities Necrotic, Poison

Condition Immunities Blinded,

Deafened, Exhaustion, Poisoned

Senses Blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond

this radius), Passive Perception 10

Languages -

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Necrotic Absorption. Whenever the fleshmeld is subjected to necrotic damage, it takes no damage and regains a number of hit points equal to the necrotic damage dealt.

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the fleshmeld to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the fleshmeld drops to 1 hit point instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The fleshmeld makes two slam attacks. If both attacks hit a Medium or smaller target, the target is grappled (escape DC 14), and the fleshmeld uses its Engulf on it.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Engulf. The fleshmeld engulfs a Medium or smaller creature grappled by it. The engulfed target is blinded, restrained, and unable to breathe, and it must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw at the start of each of the fleshmeld's turns or take 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the fleshmeld moves, the engulfed target moves with it. The fleshmeld can have only one creature engulfed at a time.

A creature engulfed in this manner has disadvantage on death saving throws. If it dies while imprisoned, it becomes undead, and merges with the fleshmeld, and the fleshmeld regains 25 hit points.

Decomposing Spray (Recharge 6). The fleshmeld spits enzyme-filled fluid in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 27 (5d10) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.



GROVEGHAST

Huge plant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 138 (12d12 + 60)

Speed 15 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 20 (+5) | 8 (-1) | 21 (+5) | 5 (-3) | 10 (+0) | 8 (-1) |

Damage Vulnerabilities Fire

Damage Resistances Bludgeoning, Necrotic, Piercing

Condition Immunities Petrified

Senses Passive Perception 10

Languages -

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +4

False Appearance. While the groveghast remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a withered tree unless a character succeeds on a DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Nature) check.

Siege Monster. The groveghast deals double damage to objects and structures.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The groveghast makes two grasp attacks. It can replace one grasp attack with Petrifying Embrace.

Grasp. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. **Hit:** 15 (3d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it is grappled (escape DC 19). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the groveghast can't grasp another target.

Petrifying Embrace. The groveghast makes one grasp attack against a Medium or smaller creature it is grappling. If the attack hits, that creature takes the grasp's damage and is embraced, pulled within the groveghast's trunk, and the grapple ends. While embraced, the creature is restrained and has half cover against attacks and other effects outside the groveghast,

and must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw at the start of each of the groveghast's turns. On a failed save, the creature becomes petrified (as wood instead of stone), and the groveghast can adhere the target to its trunk.

Greater restoration spells and other magic that can undo petrification have no effect on a petrified creature on the groveghast unless the groveghast is dead, in which case the magic works normally, freeing the petrified creature as well as ending the petrified condition on it.



If the groveghast takes 30 damage or more on a single turn from a non-petrified creature inside it, the groveghast must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate all non-petrified embraced creatures, which fall prone in a space within 10 feet of the groveghast. If the groveghast dies, a non-petrified embraced creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse using 15 feet of movement, exiting prone.

fig. a: Petrifying Embrace with grappling claws.

fig. b: Metamorphosing Roots

GROUNDShAKER TORTOISE

Gargantuan monstrosity, neutral

Armor Class 20 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 341 (22d20 + 110)

Speed 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 25 (+7) | 8 (-1) | 20 (+5) | 14 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 12 (+1) |

Saving Throws DEX +5, CON +11, WIS +7

Senses darkvision 120 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Primordial

Challenge 18 (20,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +6

Groundshaking Stride. As a bonus action after moving at least 10 feet on the ground, the tortoise can send a shockwave through the ground in a 120-foot-radius circle centered on itself. That area becomes difficult terrain for 1 minute. Each creature on the ground must make a DC 20 Strength saving throw, taking 16 (3d10) bludgeoning damage and falling prone on a failed save, or taking half as much damage on a success. A creature that is concentrating that takes the damage must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or have their concentration broken.

Siege Monster. The groundshaker tortoise deals double damage to objects and structures.

Trampling Charge. If the tortoise moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a bite attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 20 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the tortoise can make another attack with its stomp against it as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The groundshaker tortoise makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its stomp.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +13 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. **Hit:** 25 (4d8 + 7) piercing damage.

Stomp. Melee Weapon Attack: +17 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. **Hit:** 23 (3d10 + 7) bludgeoning damage.



GRIFFONFLY

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 110 (13d10 + 39)

Speed 10 ft., fly 80 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 19 (+4) | 15 (+2) | 16 (+3) | 5 (-3) | 12 (+1) | 6 (-2) |

Skills Perception +4

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 14

Languages -

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Flyby. The griffonfly doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The griffonfly makes two attacks, only one of which can be an ovipositor attack.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. **Hit:** 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 15).

Ovipositor. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature grappled by the griffonfly, incapacitated, or restrained. **Hit:** 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be infected with a disease - a griffonfly egg.

A humanoid host can carry only one griffonfly egg to term at a time. Over 48 hours, the egg moves to the chest cavity, gestates, and forms a young griffonfly.

In the 24-hour period before giving birth, the host starts to feel unwell, its speed is halved, and it has disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws. At birth, the griffonfly chews its way through vital organs and out of the host's chest in 1 round, killing the host in the process.

If the disease is cured before the griffonfly's emergence, the unborn griffonfly is disintegrated.

KNOCKER

Tiny fey, neutral

Armor Class 17 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 7 (2d4 + 2)

Speed 20 ft., burrow 20 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 6 (-2) | 12 (+1) | 12 (+1) | 10 (+0) | 12 (+1) | 8 (-1) |

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Tremorsense 60 ft., Passive Perception 11

Languages Sylvan, Terran

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Drill & Dash. If the knocker hits with a drill attack, it can take the Dash action as a bonus action and doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it moves out of an enemy's reach.

Stone Camouflage. The knocker has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in rocky terrain.

Tunneler. The knocker can burrow through solid rock at half its burrow speed and leaves a 1-foot-diameter tunnel in its wake.

ACTIONS

Drill. Melee Weapon Attack: +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

LEAFBUG

Medium monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (Natural Armour)

Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)

Speed 40 ft., burrow 20 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 15 (+2) | 10 (+0) | 13 (+1) | 2 (-4) | 11 (+1) | 7 (-2) |

Senses Tremorsense 30 ft., Passive Perception 10

Languages -

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

False Appearance. While the leafbug is partially burrowed into the earth and remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a giant leaf.

ACTIONS

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 7 (2d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Grasping Roots (1/Day). Grasping roots sprout from the ground in a 20-foot radius around the leafbug which

last for 1 minute. These roots turn the ground in the area into difficult terrain for all creatures other than the leafbug. A creature in the area when the roots emerge must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or be restrained by the entangling roots. A creature restrained by the roots can use its action to make a DC 12 Strength check, freeing itself on a success.

NEXUS SPIRIT

Medium elemental, any alignment

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 90 (20d8)

Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 7 (-2) | 15 (+2) | 11 (+0) | 18 (+4) | 18 (+4) | 16 (+3) |

Damage Resistances Acid, Fire, Lightning, Thunder; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks

Damage Immunities Cold, Necrotic, Poison

Condition Immunities Charmed, Exhaustion, Frightened, Grappled, Paralyzed, Petrified, Poisoned, Prone, Restrained

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Sylvan

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +4

Incorporeal Movement. The spirit can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Innate Spellcasting. The spirit's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15). It can innately cast the following spells.

At will: *druidcraft*

3/day each: *detect evil and good, detect thoughts, entangle, plant growth, sleep, suggestion*

1/day each: *awaken, conjure elemental, mass suggestion, transport via plants*

ACTIONS

Aging Touch. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 18 (4d6 + 4) psychic damage and the target must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be aged 1d4 × 10 years.

Animate Elements (1/Day). The spirit changes the weather or surroundings around it in a 100 ft. radius provided they are part of a forest environment. It can alter the precipitation, temperature, and wind as it sees fit, creating effects such as pouring rain, searing heat, and blasting gales.

SPIRE DRAKE

Large dragon, neutral
Armor Class 13
Hit Points 26 (4d10 + 4)
Speed 10 ft., fly 80 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| 16 (+3) | 17 (+3) | 13 (+1) | 8 (-1) | 14 (+2) | 10 (+0) |

Skills Perception +4
Senses Passive Perception 14
Languages Understands Common and Draconic but can't speak them
Challenge 2 (450 XP)
Proficiency Bonus +2

Coruscating Flyby. The drake doesn't provoke an opportunity attack when it flies out of an enemy's reach. When the drake flies into and out of a creature's reach on

the same turn, the creature must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is blinded until the end of the drake's next turn. If the save fails by 5 or more, the creature is stunned while blinded in this way.

Keen Sight. The drake has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The drake makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its talons.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Talons. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

SPIRE GUARDIAN

Medium elemental, neutral
Armor Class 13
Hit Points 54 (12d8)
Speed 0 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 10 (+0) | 18 (+4) | 10 (+0) | 10 (+0) | 15 (+2) | 15 (+2) |

Skills Perception +4, Persuasion +4, Insight +4, Stealth +6
Damage Resistances Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks
Damage Immunities Poison
Condition Immunities Exhaustion, Grappled, Paralyzed, Petrified, Poisoned, Prone, Restrained, Unconscious
Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 18
Languages Auran, understands Common but doesn't speak it
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)
Proficiency Bonus +2

Damage Transfer. While it is grappling a creature, the guardian takes only half the damage dealt to it, and the creature grappled by the guardian takes the other half.

Elemental Form. The guardian can use its action to take one of two forms; a visible, vaguely humanoid form, or an invisible, dispersed form. Its statistics are the same in each form. In either form, the guardian can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. It can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Innate Spellcasting. The guardian's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12). It can innately cast the following spells.

At will: *feather fall*, *gust of wind*
1/day each: *fog cloud*, *wind walk*, *wind wall*

ACTIONS

Whirlwind Wrap (Visible form only). Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. **Hit:** 18 (4d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage, and the guardian envelops the target. While enveloped, the target is grappled, restrained, immediately runs out of breath, and is unable to breathe.

While enveloping a target, the guardian can attack no other creature except the target, but has advantage on its attack rolls. The guardian's speed also becomes 0, it can't benefit from any bonus to its speed, and it moves with the target. A creature can break the guardian's wrap by making a successful DC 14 Strength check as an action. On its turn, the guardian can break the wrap itself by using 5 feet of movement.



PREMONITION WRAITH

Medium undead, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 22 (5d8)

Speed 0 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1 (-5) | 14 (+2) | 11 (+0) | 17 (+3) | 16 (+3) | 12 (+1) |

Damage Resistances Acid, Cold, Fire, Lightning, Thunder; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks

Damage Immunities Necrotic, Poison

Condition Immunities Charmed, Exhaustion, Grappled, Paralyzed, Petrified, Poisoned, Prone, Restrained, Unconscious

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 10

Languages Understands all languages it knew in life but can't speak

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Incorporeal Movement.

The wraith can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Sunlight Sensitivity.

While in sunlight, the wraith has disadvantage on attack rolls and Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight, and cannot use its foresight.

ACTIONS

Life Drain. Melee Spell Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. **Hit:** 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the creature finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Foresight (1/Day). The wraith draws life energy from a living creature within 30 feet of it. That creature must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or age $1d4 \times 10$ years and see a vision of the future that occurs within the years lost. A creature can willingly fail the save to receive the vision. The vision doesn't take into account any possible circumstances that might change the outcome, such as actions taken by the creature in response to the vision.



SALAMANDRIAL

Large monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 12 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 42 (5d10 + 15)

Speed 40 ft., swim 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 18 (+4) | 12 (+1) | 16 (+3) | 5 (-3) | 13 (+1) | 7 (-2) |

Skills Perception +3

Damage Resistances Acid

Senses Passive Perception 13

Languages -

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Amphibious. The salamandrial can breathe air and water.

Regeneration. The salamandrial regains 5 hit points at the start of its turn.

If the salamandrial takes lightning damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the salamandrial's next turn. The salamandrial dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate. If the salamandrial loses a body part, it regrows after 1d6 + 1 days provided the salamandrial has at least 1 hit point the entire time.

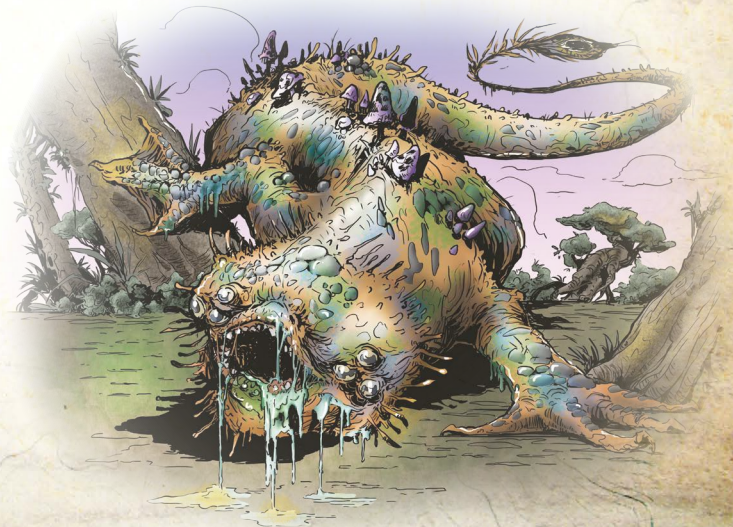
ACTIONS

Multiattack. The salamandrial makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claws. It can replace its bite attack with Spit Acid.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 9 (1d10 + 4) piercing damage.

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Spit Acid. Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. **Hit:** 10 (4d4) acid damage.



SINKWORM

Huge monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 133 (14d12 + 42)

Speed 10 ft., burrow 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| 16 (+3) | 7 (-2) | 16 (+3) | 2 (-4) | 6 (-2) | 2 (-4) |

Senses Blindsight 30 ft., Tremorsense 30 ft., Passive Perception 8

Languages -

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

False Appearance. While the sinkworm is buried beneath the ground with its mouth closed and remains motionless, its closed mouth is indistinguishable from the earth around it.

Tunneler. The sinkworm can burrow through solid rock at half its burrow speed and leaves a 10-foot-diameter tunnel in its wake.

ACTIONS

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 25 (4d10 + 3) piercing damage, and if the target is a Small or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or be swallowed by the sinkworm. A swallowed creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the sinkworm, and it takes 10 (3d6) acid damage at the start of each of the sinkworm's turns.

If the sinkworm takes 10 damage or more on a single turn from a creature inside it, the sinkworm must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, which fall prone in a space within 10 feet of the sinkworm. If the sinkworm dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse by using 5 feet of movement, exiting prone.

Engulf. If a creature comes within 5 feet of the sinkworm's closed mouth while the sinkworm is entirely buried, it can open its maw and suck nearby creatures into its gullet. Each creature within 5 feet of the sinkworm's mouth (a 5-foot-radius circle) must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or be swallowed by the sinkworm (see Bite).

SYLVAN STRIDER

Huge aberration, neutral

Armor Class 13 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 105 (10d12 + 40)

Speed 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 20 (+5) | 10 (+0) | 18 (+4) | 10 (+0) | 14 (+2) | 10 (+0) |

Skills Arcana +3, History +3, Nature +3, Perception +5, Stealth +3

Senses Darkvision 120 ft., Passive Perception 15

Languages Strider, Sylvan

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

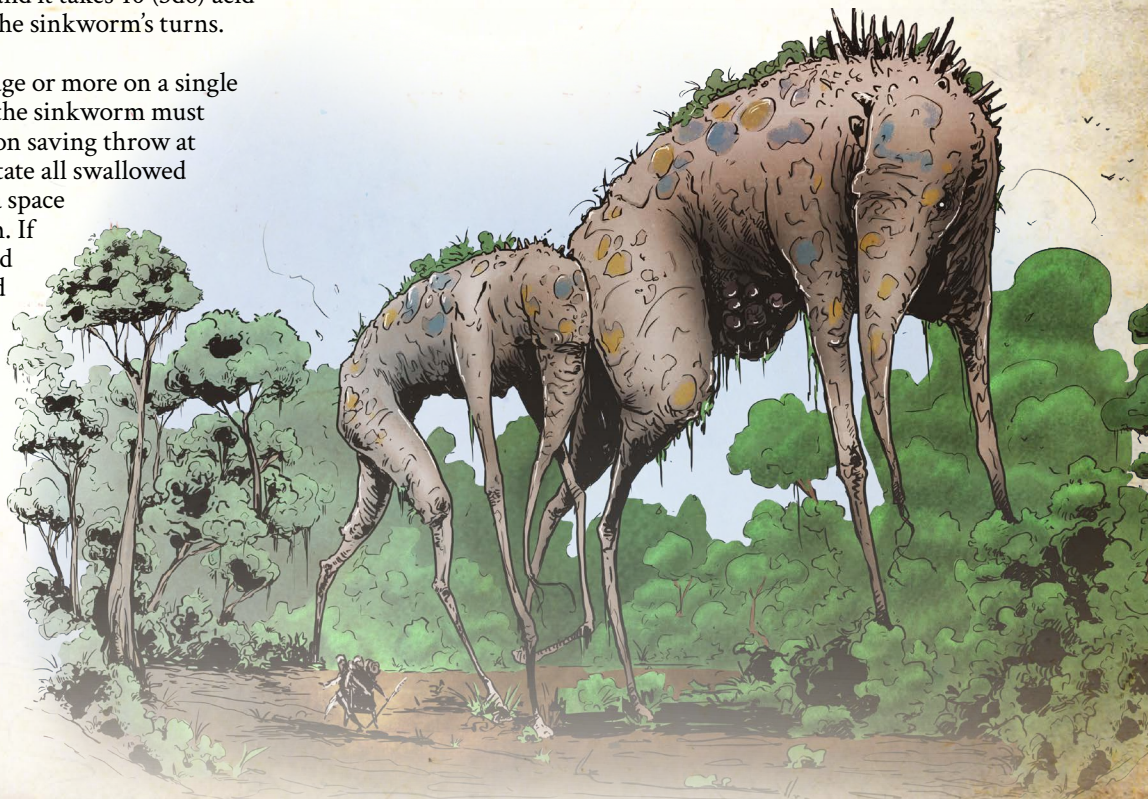
Proficiency Bonus +3

Charge. If the strider moves at least 20 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a stomp attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 9 (2d8) damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Keen Hearing and Smell. The strider has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Magic Resistance. The strider has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Silent Steps. A strider can move freely while hidden and not reveal its location.



ACTIONS

Multiattack. The strider makes two stomp attacks.

Stomp. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. **Hit:** 18 (3d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Time Twist (5-6). The strider slows time around it in a 60-foot-radius sphere for 1 minute. Each creature other than the strider in that area must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw against this magic. On a failed save, a target can't use reactions, its speed is halved, and it can't make more than one attack on its turn. In addition, the target can take either an action or a bonus action on its turn, not both. A target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. Events occurring in the area are slowed for the duration, giving non-slowed creatures advantage on Strength and Dexterity saving throws against their effects.

WHISPERGHOUL

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 67 (9d8 + 27)

Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 6 (-2) | 16 (+3) | 16 (+3) | 12 (+1) | 14 (+2) | 18 (+4) |

Skills Performance +7

Damage Resistances Acid, Cold, Fire, Lightning, Thunder; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks that aren't Silvered

Damage Immunities Necrotic, Poison

Condition Immunities Charmed, Exhaustion, Grappled, Paralyzed, Petrified, Poisoned, Prone, Restrained

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 12

Languages The languages it knew in life

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Incorporeal Movement. The whisperghoul can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Innate Spellcasting. The whisperghoul's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 17). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *prestidigitation, comprehend languages, hideous laughter*

1/day each: *dream, irresistible dance, silence*

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the whisperghoul has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Whispering Aura. The whisperghoul can activate or deactivate this feature as a bonus action. While active, the aura deals 5 psychic damage to any creature that ends its turn within 30 feet of the whisperghoul. A creature that takes this damage must make a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature begins to shudder uncontrollably, giving them disadvantage on ability checks and saving throws for 1 minute. Undead ignore this effect.

ACTIONS

Life Drain. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. **Hit:** 21 (4d8 + 3) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Haunting Sleep (Recharge 5-6). The whisperghoul sings a haunting melody. Every humanoid within 300 feet of the whisperghoul that can hear the song must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or fall unconscious until the song ends, the sleeper takes damage, or someone uses an action to shake or slap the sleeper awake. The whisperghoul must take a bonus action on its subsequent turns to continue singing. It can stop singing at any time. The song ends if the whisperghoul is incapacitated.

A sleeping creature that starts its turn while the whisperghoul is still singing takes 10 (3d6) psychic damage - this damage doesn't wake the sleeper. A target that successfully saves is immune to this whisperghoul's song for the next 24 hours.






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