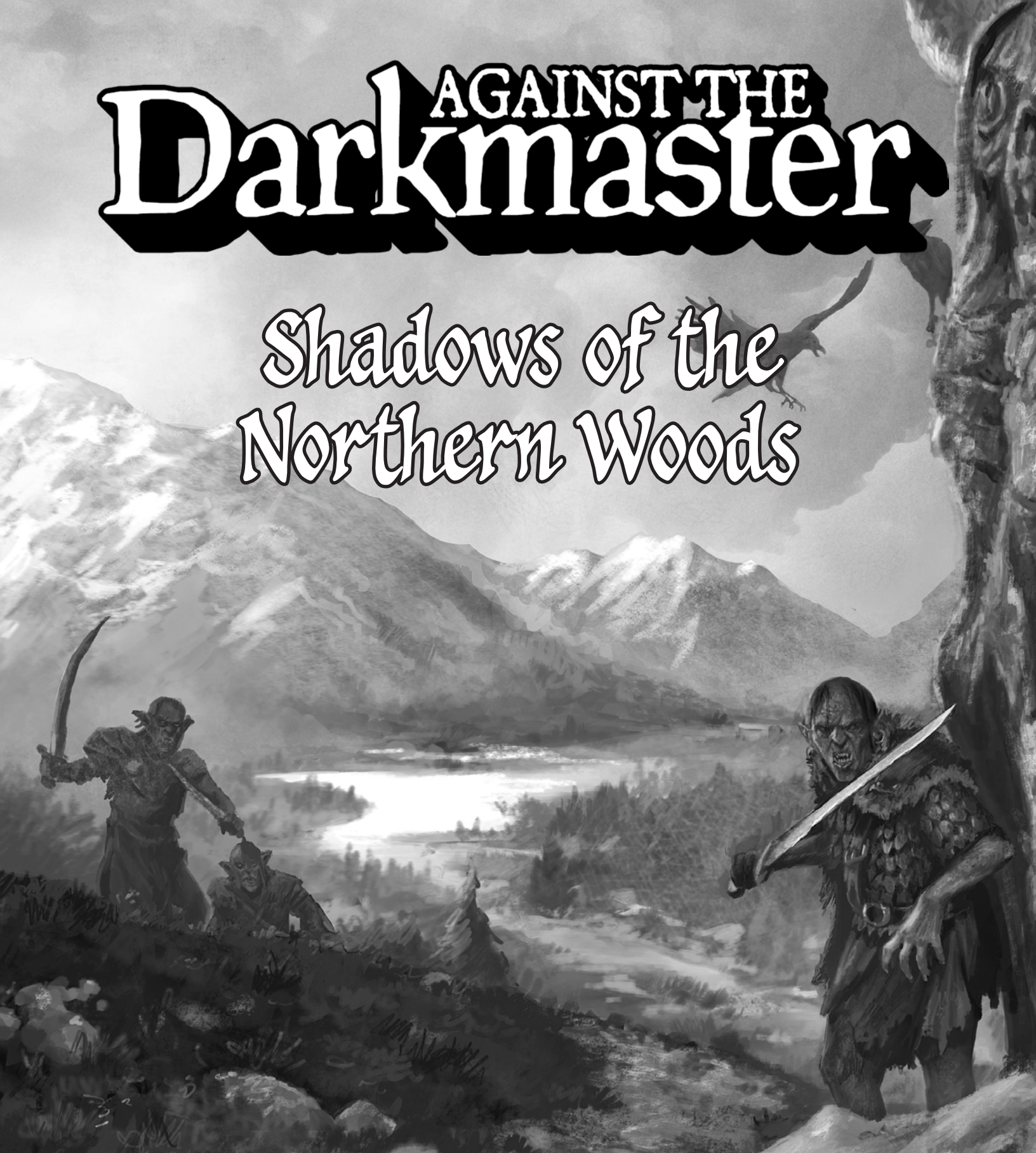


AGAINST THE Darkmaster

Shadows of the Northern Woods



• Adventure •

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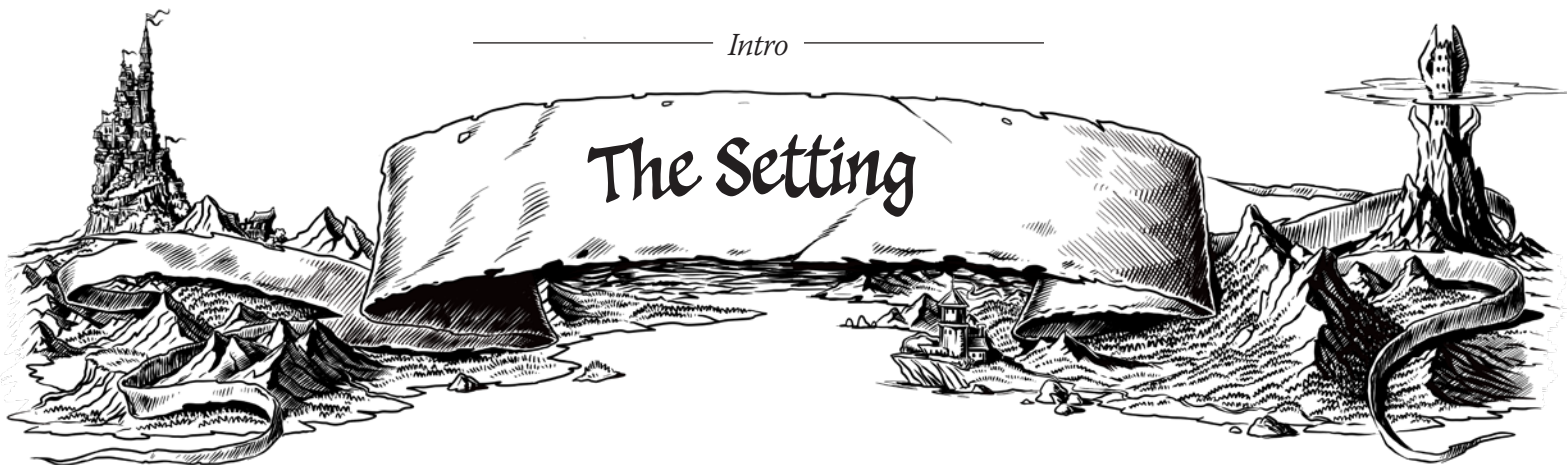


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Shadows of the Northern Woods is an introductory campaign for *Against the Darkmaster*. It can be used as an example to what a short campaign of *Against the Darkmaster* may look like or as a way to familiarize yourself with the rules of the game.

It is designed for 4 to 6 starting characters, but it can be easily adapted to groups of different sizes, or characters of higher levels.

CAMPAIGN STRUCTURE

The campaign is divided into three separate adventures that share the same setting, a small town called Willow Lake and its immediate surroundings. The adventures are interlinked and can be played in succession, forming a campaign that will keep the heroes busy for several sessions. But each of them can also be played as a stand-alone adventure and will contain suggestions on how to adapt it for shorter games.

ADAPTING THE CAMPAIGN TO YOUR TABLE

You can run *Shadows of the Northern Woods* as it is, using the pre-generated characters in this book, or modify it to adapt the adventures to your preferences or the setting you're using.

We've placed Willow Lake on the northern border of a realm called the Nine Kingdoms, but we've left the details vague to allow you to set the adventures wherever you like.

If you decide to create your heroes, instead of using the pre-generated ones, remember to follow the procedures described in the "Preparing for the Game" chapter, in the GM section of the Core Book. Make sure that each PC has at least one Passion tying them to the situation in Willow Lake.

You can have the players pick one from the list below, or use those presented here as an example to write your own Passions.

- Motivation: I'll learn the true nature of the shadow threatening Willow Lake;
- Motivation: I'll solve the mystery of the Island of Mists;
- Motivation: I'll prove myself as a worthy Warden;
- Motivation: My visions led me here, I must discover their meaning;
- Allegiance: I'll do my best to help the good people of Willow Lake;
- Allegiance: Eamon (or Nevynn) is my friend, I must find out what happened to him;
- Allegiance: Wulfric is a good man, but clearly needs my help to solve the current problems;
- Allegiance: My friend (choose a Willow Lake inhabitant, like Archiebold, Eamon, Eileen, Mirabella, or Niall) seemed distressed in her/his letter; I must find out what happened.

If you choose to play only part of the campaign, the "Starting the Players" section in each adventure will give you some ideas on how to introduce the characters to it. While the first adventure (The Beast of Willow Lake) is written for Level 1 characters, the other parts of the campaign are designed for more experienced heroes. *Winds of War* works better if the characters have reached at least the second Level of experience, and *The Islands of Mists* assumes the heroes will start at least at Level 3 or 4.

Finally, remember that, no matter what, this is your adventure. Feel free to leave out or modify anything you don't like, or improvise some details to flesh out the parts your players seem to be interested in the most.

The Tale of Blàithnaid

Willow Lake is the name by which both a small village and the nearby lake are known among the people of the Three Lands. Hundreds of years ago, the lake of Willow Lake was not in fact a lake but a foothill dale - hence comes its name, from the ancient Elven name of the valley Oúiuileigh or "Whispering Meadow". There are in fact quite no willows in Willow Lake, the trees of the nearby forest being mainly maples and oaks.

At the time when the Elves still lived in the dale of Oúiuileigh, they were led by a fair warrior-wizard princess, Blàithnaid (Elven for "Crowned with Flowers"). Blàithnaid was wise, powerful, and proud, and yet gentle and loving for her people, the land where they lived, and all the things of Nature with which they lived in peace.

Then came the armies of the Darkmaster. He sought the Elvenstone of Blàithnaid, an amulet of great power, and wanted to subjugate -or plainly wipe out- all of the peoples of the vale. The Elves of Oúiuileigh, led by Blàithnaid herself, aided by the Dwarves of the mountains and by the reclusive but mystical People of the Woods -the Woads- fought the hordes of the Darkmaster, counting Orcs, Redcaps, Trolls, Dwergars, and Vargr among their ranks. Despite the courage of the free Kins, the forces of the Darkmaster were too strong, and the last resistance was about to fall. Besieged in the ancient tower of Dùn Tùr, standing atop a rocky hill north of the vale of Oúiuileigh, the Elves and Dwarves and Men prepared for their last stand.

It was then that Blàithnaid had an idea to break the siege. The night before the last battle, she used her sorcery to slip through the ranks of the besieging army and seduced their General, a Dark Mage known as Sabeorht. She promised him -whom she knew was infatuated of her- to surrender him the Elvenstone and become his betrothed, if he would have spared the lives of the people of Oúiuileigh. Sabeorht pretended to accept the deal, meaning to betray the pact later - but he was tricked himself instead.

While he was magically asleep, the plan Blàithnaid had conceived set off. Thanks to the union of the powerful Elven magic and ritual incantations of the Woad animists, the ice of the mountains caps melted, and a ruinous avalanche of snow, ice, rocks, and cold water crashed upon the vale and onto the Darkmaster's hordes, wiping them away at once. Thanks to her magic, Blàithnaid had her life spared; unfortunately, though, the plan had been conceived too quickly and had crucial unintended consequences.

Everyone had underestimated the extent of the natural catastrophe that would have hit the valley. Millions of liters of chill, dark water submerged the vale of Oúiuileigh, killing everyone in its path, whether Man, Elf, Dwarf, minion of the Darkmaster, or animal. Tens of thousands perished that night, just while they were asleep. The whole vale was no more. Instead, when the churning waters stopped and stood still, there was now a deep, dark, and cold lake at the center of the vale; and at the center of the lake only the hill with the Dùn Tùr tower on top stood still, encircled by water - now an island.

Therefore, Blàithnaid brought at the same time salvation and ruin to the valley of Oúiuileigh and its inhabitants. For this reason, lost the love of her people and the trust of the Woad, Dwarves, and Men, she set herself alone, shut up in the ancient tower, driving away all those who still remained faithful and wanted to stay close to her, and in loneliness descended the steps downwards the dungeons beneath the tower, never to be seen again. No one knows what happened to the beautiful Elven princess. Someone during the centuries that followed claimed to have seen her, on some dark night, standing atop the tower or on the shores of Willow Lake. Others told to have beheld eerie lights and whispering sounds from the lake, the island, and ultimately from inside the tower.

Those became the corpus of the legends told by the people of Willow Lake in the ages after the disappearance of Blàithnaid. As of now, the ruins of the tower of Dùn Tùr, the island, and the lake itself are considered cursed by the vast majority of people living in the village of Willow Lake and the surrounding lands and forest.

Following the disaster that destroyed the vale, relationships between the Elves, the Woads, and Men of the North changed a lot. The Woads disappeared to the forests south and began emerging from there more and more rarely - nowadays it is very difficult to see any of them among the other people. The Elves wanted to do the same, having grown disaffected. So they made a pact with the Men of the North, giving them the right to occupy the lands around the lake and the forest and call them their home; in exchange for their gift, they requested the Men to watch over the land.

They appointed Ælfwine, chief of the Men, with the title of Warden of the Vale, entrusting him with the task of watching over the Place of the Submerged Queen and warning in case the Darkness

should return. They gave him the Elven Medallion, which served as a key to access the Dùn Tùr tower in the middle of the lake. For this reason Ælfwine chose the hound as a heraldic animal of his house - ever watchful against enemies.

The title of Warden should have been passed from generation to generation among the chiefs of Men who had inhabited the valley. But, with the disappearance of the Elves in the forest, the short memory of Men quickly went lost. The first Wardens still remembered the task of which they had been invested, but soon after a few generations the role of Warden of the Vale became nothing more than a hollow tradition. Still, the Darkmaster never attempted again to take over the vale of Willow Lake, and the people lived there in relative peace for centuries - and they still do. In more recent years, occasionally Dwarves from the Mountains and Halflings from the south came to live there alongside the descendants of those Men that helped the Elves and Woads against the Darkmaster.



Cast of Characters

SERVANTS OF DARKNESS

CROWSPEAKER GARMR

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|------------------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 3 | 17L | NA | 25 | 35 | 15 | 35 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +35 Wpn / Spells | | | NH | 30 | 5 | 45 |

Fear Dearth, access to Illusions, Master of Animals and Mind Control Spell Lores up to the Third Weave. He wears a pair of magical boots, enchanted with a constant Wanderer's Stride Spell.

Garmr is an old and wrinkled Fear Dearth, a member of the Redcap "nobility" claiming to descend directly from the mythical Crimson King. He joined Mokurz's band only recently, just before they left the main force of the army. Mokurz didn't really like it, but Garmr came bearing orders from the high-ups, so the chieftain was forced to begrudgingly accept his presence.

Goals

Garmr's official role is that of an aide-de-camp, making sure the other Redcaps stay disciplined and using his magic to help handle the company's Wolves. His real mission, though, is securing powerful allies in the vale for his Master.

Unbeknown to all, he carries a foul Brood-Egg, taken from the dead husk of a Mother of Spiders. He keeps it in a locked iron chest inside his tent, cloaked in a Chameleon Spell he renews each day.

He intends to offer the Brood-Egg to the Woad Witches of the Wood if they pledge to serve his Master, knowing well that consuming it will turn one of them into a new Mother of Spiders.

If he succeeds

The Woad Witches will poison the river and spin their webs around the borders of Dryv Covert. Ultimately, one of them will take the egg, devour her sisters, and become a Mother of Spiders over the course of a few years, turning the Woods into her blighted domain.

Fear Dearth, access to Illusions, Master of Animals and Mind Control Spell Lores up to the Third Weave. He wears a pair of magical boots, enchanted with a constant Wanderer's Stride Spell.

HAKON

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|--------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 5 | 15L | MEs | 40 | 45 | 40 | 100 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +100 Wpn / +60 Ran | | | NH | 30 | 60 | 10 |

Human Marauding Warrior. Chief of Wulfric's mercenaries band. Ignores penalties for being Bruised. Wears chainmail and is armed with a dwargar-made Longsword (+10 bonus, already factored in his CMB) and a shield.

Hakon is the leader of Wulfric's mercenaries. He is a tall, muscular man in his late thirties, with a long rugged beard and a scar over his left eye.

Although Wulfric's mercenary band is composed mainly of violent men of questionable morality, Hakon is the only true servant of the Darkmaster among them, and the only one who knows something about the Thane's plans. He's aware that their Master is coming with a great army to invade the Nine Kingdoms, and knows that Wulfric is looking for "some sort of Elven trinket," but he doesn't really care much about the details of their plan.

He rules Wulfric's men with an iron fist, expecting unquestioning obedience and dealing harsh punishment to those who disappoint him. The other mercenaries aren't too happy with Wulfric's choice for their leader, but are too afraid of Hakon to speak up.

Goals

Wulfric promised Willow Lake to Hakon, and the mercenary captain already sees himself as the new local lord. He plans to open the gates and surrender the town to the Darkmaster's forces, but first he wants insurance that his men will be spared and he'll be put in charge of things here.

If he succeeds

The town will be spared, but under Hakon's rule its people will suffer as much as under any Orcish chief.





— MOKURZ THE VENGEFUL —

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|--------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 6 | 15L | MEs | 45 | 60 | 15 | 100 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +110 Wpn / +75 Ran | | | NH | 45 | 75 | 5 |

Dark Orc Warrior. Becomes enraged if he ever becomes Bruised, or fails a Save Roll. While enraged, he gains +10 to his melee CMB, cannot Parry, and becomes immune to fear and effects that would calm him.

As the hosts of the Darkmaster gather north of the Blue Mountains, preparing to descend on the Nine Kingdoms, Mokurz's warband was sent ahead as an advance force of the main army.

His orders are to recon the area, quickly crush any form of opposition, and avoid news of the coming invasion from spreading south too fast.

They're expected to encounter virtually no resistance, since the Darkmaster's agent in the area (Wulfric) should already have made all the preparations necessary to ensure their victory. This is also part of the reason why the warband is composed mainly of light, highly mobile troops.

Bloodthirsty and hotheaded, Mokurz likes to rush into battle even when the odds aren't exactly in his favor. He isn't stupid, though, and knows when to sound a retreat if his forces are on the losing side.

He particularly hates Dwarves, having lost two fingers in one of his first skirmishes against their Kin, and keeps several Dwarfen beards tied to his belt as trophies. If there's one or more Dwarf characters among the heroes, Mokurz will most certainly concentrate his attacks on them, eager to expand his grim collection.

Goals

Mokurz sees this mission as an opportunity both to demonstrate his martial prowess and to grow his battle-hoard by pillaging the countryside before the other Orc chieftains can get here. He definitely doesn't want to share his war spoils with anyone else!

If he succeeds

Willow Lake will burn, its people will be enslaved, and the Darkmaster's army will soon establish the vale as a starting point for its invasion.

The Wolf Riders

Mokurz commands a force counting at least 20 Wolf-mounted Redcaps, 25 Redcap foot soldiers, and an elite guard of three Orc Soldiers. He also has his own personal mount, a highly trained Grey Vargr.

The warband will find a suitable place in the Woods to set up camp, but Mokurz will also send some warriors to watch over the paths leading out of the valley and intercept anyone trying to leave.

WULFRIC,
— THANE OF WILLOW LAKE —

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|-------------------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 6 | 15L | LA | 35 | 45 | 50 | 80 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +90 Wpn / +80 Ran | | | CH | 70 | 30 | 80 |

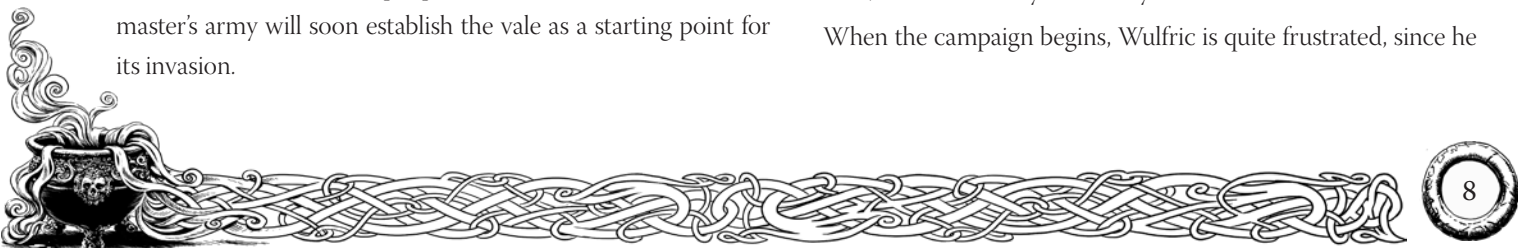
Human City Dabbler. Has a magical piece of reinforced Leather under his trench coat (negates any Move Actions or CMB penalties from armor). He carries a +10 arming sword and a silvered dagger (can attack with both at no penalties) and a short bow. He knows the following Spell Lores (use Lore bonus for Spell Casting Rolls) to 6th Weave: Illusions, Trickery, Sounds & Lights, and Dark Sorcery. He has 12 MPs

Wulfric is an athletic young man with magnetic eyes and a proud bearing. He's very sure of himself and obviously accustomed to giving orders.

He was seduced by the Darkmaster's promises of power years ago, and now he serves Him in secret. He's obsessed with the stories about Bläithnaid, and strongly believes that her tomb hides a powerful magical artifact, which he intends to retrieve. He tried to convince Eamon to help him in his task, promising to make him his right hand under the Darkmaster's rule in exchange. When the Warden refused and threatened to denounce his plans to the townspeople, he killed him and took his Medallion.

Wulfric is a very dangerous man. Ruthless and cunning, he's a moderately skilled fighter and was secretly trained in the ways of Dark Sorcery by his Master. He has the complete support of his men, who will blindly follow any of his orders.

When the campaign begins, Wulfric is quite frustrated, since he





finally got his hands on the Medallion that should open the way to the artifact he's seeking, but still hasn't found out how to use it. He feels closer than ever to his goal, yet victory still somehow eludes him.

He sees the PCs both as a nuisance and as a useful tool to keep the people of Willow Lake distracted while he finishes studying the Medallion.

He'll try to pass as a well-meaning but ultimately incompetent and powerless Thane. To keep everybody's attention focused on them, he'll put on a great show, begging them to help his town and naming them "the New Wardens of Willow Lake." At the same time, he'll feed them lies and false rumors, blaming the disappearances on the mysterious "Beast of Willow Lake" to make sure they stay well out of town until he's finished with his task.



Goals

Above all else, Wulfric wants to get his hands on Bláithnaid's Elvenstone. Retrieving it has become his obsession, and as the adventure progresses he'll take greater and greater risks to reach his goal.

If he succeeds

The Darkmaster will gain a powerful weapon, capable of overcoming most of the defenses the Free Kins may set up to stop His advance. No place in the Nine Kingdoms will be safe from His shadow.

— WULFRIC'S MERCENARIES —

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|-------------------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 3 | 15L | LA's | 25 | 25 | 20 | 60 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +70 Wpn / +55 Ran | | | NH | 20 | 30 | 0 |

Human Mercenaries, wearing boiled leather armors and are armed with spears, shields and swords or handaxes. About half of them also carry short bows.

Wulfric brought a total of thirteen warriors with him. One of them, a man called Hakon (see above), serves the same Master he serves. The others are simple mercenaries they hired in some town up north.

They're utterly loyal to Wulfric, since the Thane treats them well and knows how to win people's hearts, but not very fond of Hakon. They're very afraid of him, though, and won't disobey him unless they suspect he's betraying Wulfric.





INHABITANTS OF WILLOW LAKE

— ARCHIEBOLD RAVENLOCK —

A very unlucky Halfling farmer. He stumbled upon a secret meeting between Wulfric and his men at the Hunter’s Cabin while heading towards the Lake on a fishing trip. The Northmen murdered him, and dumped his body in the forest, near an ancient Cairn.

— BETHA AND RONAN —

A couple of elderly servants living in the Longhouse. They worked under the previous Thane, Adoryc the Second, and took care of the house after his death, so Wulfric decided to let them keep their job.

Betha’s meat pies are famous in Willow Lake but have become a rarity lately, since feeding Wulfric and his men takes most of the poor old woman’s time.

Quiet and reserved, they know a lot about the Longhouse and its history, including the presence of the hidden underground sanctuary (even if they’ve never been down there themselves). They take their job very seriously, though, and would never reveal its existence to strangers, unless they’re certain it’s for the greater good of Willow Lake and its people.

Goals

Bertha and Ronan like Wulfric but think he spends too much time studying in his chambers, and they can’t stand Hakon and the other mercenaries. They’d like to see them gone and that Wulfric take a more active role in leading the town, as his predecessor did.



— EAMON THE YOUNGER —

Eamon was Willow Lake’s last Warden, before the character’s arrival. He was brutally murdered a couple of weeks ago by Wulfric, who wanted to get his hands on the Warden’s Medallion. Willow Lake’s residents believe he’s been taken by whatever attacked their sheep recently. They searched the woods for clues about his whereabouts but never found him.

Eamon was a quiet man and, despite being very well-liked by the people of Willow Lake, had few close friends and no family left. No one knew the woods around Willow Lake like him, and many find disturbingly odd the fact that he disappeared without a trace.

— EILEEN THE HERBWIFE —

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|---------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 2 | 12L | NA | 10 | 10 | 25 | 30 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +10 Wpn | | | NH | 10 | 15 | 25 |

Human Weald Animist. 6 Magic Points. Knows the Healing and Master of Plants Spell Lores to the 2nd Weave (use Lore bonus for Spell Casting Rolls).

Eileen is a fierce-looking young woman, with short blonde hair and deep, green eyes. Her arms are covered by intricate, coiling tattoos, which she makes no effort to hide.

Eileen’s mother was a local herbalist, but her father was a man from the Woad Woods. While she never knew her father, as she was raised alone by her mother in Willow Lake, she takes great pride in her Woad origins.

The adventurers will be pointed to her house, should they ever find themselves in need of healing herbs or any other kind of medical assistance.

Despite being quite beautiful, her mixed ancestry and independent spirit kept most of the local men away from her, and she never married. However, basically anyone at Willow Lake knows that Eileen and Eamon were lovers, though the two never made their relationship official.





Eileen may seem short-tempered, or even downright hostile from time to time, but is in truth kind-hearted, and will warm up quickly to the characters if she sees they're taking their job seriously.

She openly despises Wulfric, who she'll describe as an insufferable boor, and she'll accuse him of being partially responsible for Eamon's disappearance. If asked to elaborate, she'll tell the characters that Wulfric and Eamon had several arguments about the Warden's duties in the past, and that on one occasion the Thane even threatened to have him dismissed from his position. She believes that Wulfric overworked Eamon, forcing him to take unnecessary risks and ultimately leading him to his doom.

Goals

Eileen wants Wulfric to be blamed for Eamon's disappearance, even if she has no proof of the Thane's involvement.

She would also like to learn more about her Woad heritage and the customs of her father's people.

MIRABELLA

“BELLA” RAVENLOCK

A pudgy, dark-haired Halfling in her 40s, Bella is clearly very distressed by the disappearance of her husband, Archiebold. Pale and red eyed, she constantly clutches the big handkerchief she uses to dry her tears. After her initial moments of panic, she's managed to somehow pull herself together and she's trying to keep a calm demeanor.

She lives on a small farm, just outside town, but at the moment Niall lets her stay at his inn, at least “until this whole situation settles down” he says.

If asked about her husband, she'll be able to tell that he woke up very early to go fishing at the Lake, and never came back. She begs the characters to find her “Archie”, or whatever has taken him.

Goals

Mirabella demands justice for her husband, Archiebold.





NEVYNN THE WISE

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|------------------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 5 | 15L | NA | 0 | 25 | 55 | 45 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +25 Wpn / Spells | | | NH | 25 | 5 | 105 |

Human Noble Wizard. Access to Detections, Eldritch Visions, Eldritch Fire, Eldritch Wards, and Enchantment Spell Lores up to the 5th Weave; +70 Skill Bonus in each; 30 MPs.

Mornien's mentor has been studying the Willow Lake region for most of his life, fascinated by the secrets its ancient history seems to hold. He visited the town and the nearby woods on several occasions in the past years, and even bought an old tower as a residence there, though he never used it very much. Most of the people in Willow Lake think Nevyn is simply an old man from the big city who likes to visit the countryside from time to time. No one suspects that he's actually a wizard investigating the ancestral past of their vale.

What recently brought him to town, however, were rumors of troubles brewing up in the northern woods. Voices about Orc and Redcap clans on the move, and of sightings of strange creatures at the edges of the Nine Kingdoms.

Once there, he found that much has changed since his last visit. A new Thane named Wulfric ruled over the town, staying in the great longhouse that was left abandoned after the last Thane died without heirs. This wasn't unusual per se, as the town, however remote, couldn't stay without a ruler for long, but Nevynn couldn't help but feel suspicious towards the man.

Speaking with his friend Eamon, he learned that Wulfric had brought with him a small company of mercenaries from the north, and that he asked a lot of questions about the role of the Warden and the past of Willow Lake.

In a short time he discovered Wulfric's real intentions, but before he could expose him or leave a message to warn his pupil, the Thane overpowered the wizard and locked him in a secret cell under his residence.

Nevynn is in a pretty bad shape. Wulfric tortured him to learn what he knew about the Elvenstone and his plans. When the old man refused to speak, he decided to let him rot in his cell without

food for a few days.

Currently, Nevynn is Weary, Bruised, and suffers a -60 penalty to all actions due to the Crippling Lingering Injury he suffered.

Despite this, knowledge about Wulfric's plans and the Stone could prove critical to the PCs, should they rescue him.

Goals

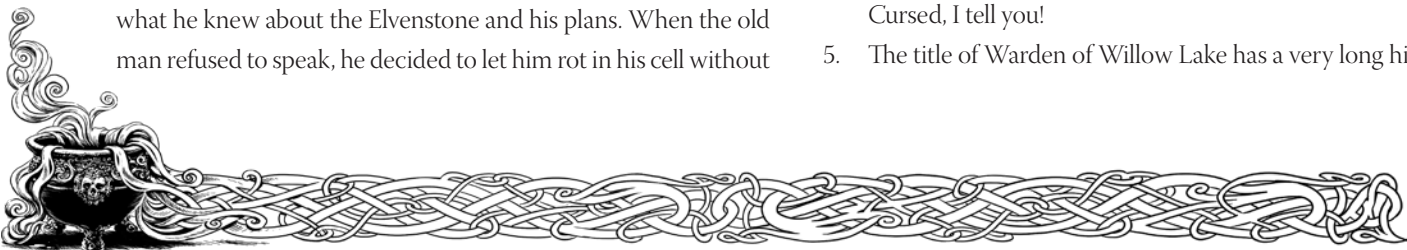
Nevynn doesn't want the Stone to fall into the hands of the Darkmaster. He would like to either use it to save Willow Lake and halt the advance of the Darkmaster's army or, if that proves impossible, find a way to destroy it.

NIALl THE INNKEEPER

The owner of the Dancing Trout Inn is a portly man with a thick beard and incredibly bushy eyebrows. Always in a hurry, he seems to have eyes everywhere and to know everything that happens both in his inn and around town.

He will gladly chat with the characters, and will often share with them news, rumors, and opinions, even when not solicited. Here's a list of the possible rumors the characters may learn from Niall (or any other Willow Lake inhabitant):

1. Padraig was Eamon's best friend, and often helped him patrol the woods. He has a pair of hunting dogs, Padraig. They look nasty, but are actually scared of their own shadow, or so I hear.
2. Last week a couple of weird fellows stopped by for a drink. Northerners, from the accent, I'd say. Never seen them before, but they seemed to know their way about town. There was something shady about them, but I can't really tell what it was. They didn't talk to anybody, just quaffed their ale and were off.
3. Padraig has always had a crush on Eileen, but he never made a move on her out of respect for his friend. Poor fellow, I think everyone in town but Eileen knows about it.
4. If you see some weird-looking stones in the forest, stay away from them. I don't know who placed them there, but they're cursed. A friend of my grandmother's uncle touched them on a dare once, and he died of dysentery that same year. Cursed, I tell you!
5. The title of Warden of Willow Lake has a very long history. I





think it goes back to the first men who came here. You should ask Thane Wulfric about it, he did a lot of research about the town's history.

6. You know about the beast in the Lake, right? My grandmother always told me stories about it. Back then they also made sacrifices to it, once a year or so. Not people, you fool, we're not savages! Just a lamb or something like that. Anyway, Eamon and that poor Halfling, they disappeared around the Lake, didn't they? I'm just saying, maybe, it's not a coincidence...
7. Thane Wulfric is a great man, I don't know what we would do without him around here. He's quite learned, you know? Last year the sawmill axle got stuck, and no one was able to do anything about it. We thought we'd have to replace the whole thing, which would have taken a lot of time and quite a bit of money. Then the Thane went in, and fixed it all by himself, just like that! I don't know how he did it!
8. Nevynn, you say? Oh, yeah I remember him well! An old fellow, very tall, long beard, right? He's been in town quite a few times in the past. I think he even bought the old tower, near the East Gate. Now that I think about it, the last time I saw him was about two weeks ago, just before Eamon disappeared.
9. Do you know the tale of the Woad Witches of the Woods? They say they were three beautiful witches of the Woad people, who made a deal with an Elven queen but then betrayed her, turning against her in the hour of need. So the Elven queen cursed them, turning them into great poisonous spiders and forcing them to hide forever in the depths of the woods. It's just an old tale, but maybe it's connected with all these disappearances, don't you think?
10. There's an ancient barrow down south. Some say it holds the treasure of a lord of old, but if I wouldn't go near it for all the gold in the world. That place gives me the creeps.

Goals

Niall wants things to get back to normal in Willow Lake, all this excitement is bad for business!

“ONE-HAND” PADRAIG

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|-------------------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1 | 15L | NA | 10 | 10 | 20 | 45 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +35 Wpn / +35 Ran | | | NH | 30 | 30 | 0 |

Human Weald Rogue. Carries a dagger under his tunic, cannot use two-handed weapons..

A lean, red-haired man with a long moustache and a stump where his left hand should be, Padraig was Eamon's best friend. He often followed him around and helped him with some of his Warden's duties, like patrolling the woods, clearing the forest's paths, or delivering messages.

Padraig lost his left hand when he was very young, in a wood-cutting incident. On that occasion, Eamon saved his life, carrying him on his back to the nearest farm, where his wounds could be tended to. Since then, the two became inseparable friends.

Eamon's death left Padraig devastated. Since the Warden disappeared he's mostly been staying in his shack near the Old Sawmill with his dogs, Shadow and Lucky.

If asked about Eamon's disappearance, Padraig will say that he's the last man with whom the Warden spoke. That evening Eamon stopped by his cabin for a drink, but left very early, saying that he had something to check at the Lake. Padraig offered to help him, but Eamon insisted on going alone, saying that it was nothing to worry about.

Padraig never saw him again, but says that the same night he heard some weird noises in the woods just out of his cabin. Since then his dogs have been nervous, often barking at nothing and refusing to follow him into the forest.

The characters will find Padraig's knowledge of the woods very useful, if they manage to persuade him to follow them in their adventure. He isn't a fighter though, and won't be able to do much in combat. His dogs are terrified by the Troll's scent, and will be Very Hard (-30) to convince them to leave the safety of their owner's house.

Goals

Padraig wants to find out what happened to his friend and make a good impression on Eileen, though he would never dream of revealing his true feelings to her.





THE ISLAND OF MISTS

BLÀITHNAID, — THE FLOWER-CROWNED QUEEN —

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|-------------------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 9 | 15L | NA | 60 | 55 | 70 | 100 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +100 Wpn / Spells | | | HH | 60 | 40 | 100 |

Banshee, see Bestiary for special abilities. She knows the following Spell Lore up to the 9th Weave, and can cast Spells from them without spending MPs (use her Lore Skill for the Spell Casting Roll): Elven Lore, Spell Songs, Eldritch Hand, Illusions, Eldritch Tide.

Blàithnaid suffered countless losses in her long life. She saw the strength of her people fade over the centuries; their beautiful kingdoms reduced to a few, isolated cities scattered across the land. She’s seen war and famine ravaging the realms, alliances broken, Kin turning upon Kin, and hallowed places corrupted by the foul touch of the Darkmaster.

In all this, she never gave up hope. Even when her mortal love was slain, and the armies of the Darkmaster besieged the walls of the tower, she stood up against them, using all her might to fight the coming shadow.

The tragedy of the Whispering Meadow, however, proved too much for her to bear. She had won the war, but the cost had been too high.

She quietly retired to her tower, leaving the world with its suffering behind. But despite her best intentions, she couldn’t blind herself completely to what was happening around her. Even in her isolation she could perceive a baneful presence drawing near; one that she thought defeated long ago. She recognized the foul shadow of the Darkmaster and fell into despair.

Suddenly, all her sacrifices, all her suffering had been for naught. If the Darkmaster was coming back, the world was doomed, and she could do nothing to stop Him.

At the same time, she was too proud and stubborn to simply give up. She decided she would once again save her vale from the clutches of the Darkmaster, no matter the cost. She took her mag-

ical Stone and, summoning all her power and mastery of the Arcane arts, began a ritual to drag the entire vale into the Annwn for all eternity.

Blàithnaid is tall and incredibly beautiful but carries with her a sadness that makes her almost painful to look at. Once a proud warrior-queen, she’s now a remorseful and pitiless Unseelie, cold fury burning in her eyes.

Goals

Blàithnaid wishes to exact revenge on the Darkmaster and His minions. She believes the world to be doomed and those who oppose the Darkmaster nothing but fools; and yet she wishes to spoil His victory as much as she can.

She cares nothing for the justness of her actions, or for whom she’ll hurt with them. She only wants to see the Darkmaster suffer as much as possible.

If she succeeds

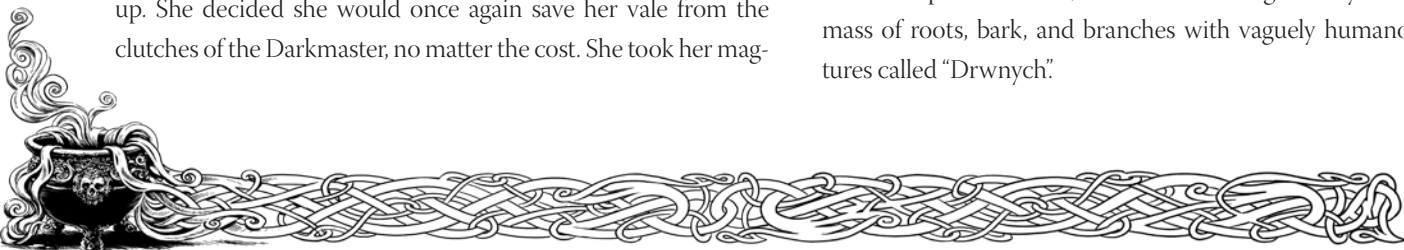
The entire vale surrounding Willow Lake will be dragged into the Annwn, leaving behind a huge rift that will slowly expand to claim more of the mortal world.

DRWNYCH

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|---------------------|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 20 | - | ME | 50 | 100 | 90 | 350 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +150 LGr / +150 LTr | | | EB | 75 | 120 | 90 |

Ancient Awakened Tree, Ænth special abilities

When their ritual brought ruin to the vale, the Woad Animists celebrating it were hit by a tremendous magical backlash. In a desperate attempt to save their lives, they bound their souls to the great trees that stood around them. Their bodies died that day, but their spirits lived on, coalesced in a single entity. A sentient mass of roots, bark, and branches with vaguely humanoid features called “Drwnych.”





It survives to this day, watching over the island's wood and populating it with tiny spirits made with fragments of its own essence. Drwnych cannot move about but can speak (albeit veery slooowly) and sees anything happening in its grove. It's not normally aggressive (unless something threatens its grove, or the well-being of its Saplings), but, should the need arise, it can defend itself by crushing aggressors with its powerful branches.

The old tree often behaves a bit oddly. It mumbles to itself quite a lot and always refers to itself in the third person. It will suddenly change opinion on a subject without any apparent reason or will send out its Sapling on some urgent task, only to completely forget about it moments later.

On the other hand, it will always remember those who help it or take care of its Saplings.

If Drwnych learns that the PCs are looking for Blàithnaid, it will offer them a deal: it will give them a Silver Branch that will allow them to cross the darkness of the Rift and get into the Annwn safely, if they promise to bring the Stone of Annwn to it. The tree has no way to ensure the heroes will keep their word, so it'll offer the deal only if they seem reliable enough.

Goals

Drwnych seems to care only about its grove, unconcerned about the fate of the outside world. Even the ancient tree, however, longs for the Stone of Annwn. It knows the Stone has the power to free the souls of the Woad Animists trapped within it, granting them their well-deserved final rest.

SAPLINGS

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|---------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 3 | 15L | ME | 20 | 20 | 15 | 30 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +30 SGr | | | NB | 35 | 20 | 5 |

Tiny Awakened Tree, reduce Piercing Critical Strikes received by one severity level, suffers double damage from Fire attacks.

To obviate its immobility, Drwnych creates Saplings, tiny entities similar to Awakened Trees the size of a toddler, sent around the island to scout or perform specific errands. They're made by

infusing a living branch or root with part of Drwnych's own essence, which returns to the tree once the Sapling has completed its duty or is destroyed. No more than 24 Saplings can exist at any given time.

SABEORHT

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|--------------------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 8 | 15F | NA | 60 | 50 | 70 | 100 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| Special / +100 Wpn | | | HH | 50 | 40 | 100 |

Undead, Specter special abilities and immunities, linked to Reaver; a +20 Elf-Slayer magic longsword.

Sabeorht was the general that led the Darkmaster's forces into the vale, a dark mage of great power and even greater malice. Tricked by the Elven queen's magic, he died long ago in the catastrophe that swept away both the Darkmaster's and the Elven armies.

Now his Specter haunts the Island of Mists, bound to the magic sword he carried in life, a fell blade named "Reaver".

His curse prevents him from leaving the place of his death on his own, but Sabeorht knows that he can circumvent this by possessing a living creature and having them carry his cursed sword for him.

He usually remains invisible but can also manifest as a dark-armored warrior, wearing an elaborate helm that conceals his features, and will use this form to interact with the heroes, should they choose to listen to his words.

Goals

Sabeorht deluded himself into thinking that his Master will bring him back to life, should he succeed in killing Blàithnaid and bringing Him the Stone of Annwn. He'll try to persuade the heroes (or any NPC he comes in contact with) that Blàithnaid is completely insane, and that only his sword can stop her. He'll then attempt to possess the first character that touches the sword and use them to carry out his plan.

If he succeeds

He'll have the possessed character bring Reaver into the Annwn, then he'll force them to use it to kill Blàithnaid and take the Stone.





OTHER CHARACTERS

ANNIS

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 4 | 15L | NAs | 40 | 25 | 20 | 70 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +80 Wpn / +70 Ran | | | NH | 25 | 40 | 15 |

Human Hill Warrior: Carries a superior quality spear (+5 bonus, already factored in her CMB), a handaxe and a shield.

TYPICAL HILLMAN WARRIOR

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 2 | 15L | NAs | 25 | 10 | 10 | 50 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +50 Wpn / +50 Ran | | | NH | 15 | 15 | 0 |

Human Hill Warrior: Usually armed with swords, short spears, or javelins and carrying a shield.

The daughter of a hillman clan chief, Annis took over the leadership of the Bear Clan when her husband died some years ago. This stout, red-haired woman commands a great deal of respect among her people. None in the Hills can match her political acumen and, despite not being in her prime anymore, she can still teach a lesson or two to most of the hillfolk warriors.

Annis’s people are currently involved in a blood feud with the Pike Clan, one of the other great families of the Hills.

The Bear Clan and the Pike Clan have fought one another for generations, but recently the woman succeeded where her predecessors always failed. She managed to put an end to the ancient enmity, forming an alliance with the Pike Clan.

To celebrate the peace and strengthen the bond between the two clans, her son Kendric was to marry Maeve, the daughter of the chief of the Pike Clan.

Unfortunately, the night before the marriage, a man of the Pike Clan was found murdered. Some of the Pike men screamed treason, and the hostilities between the two clans resumed, worse than ever.

Goals

Annis wants peace between her people and the Pike Clan. She worked hard for this alliance and doesn’t want to see it thrown away, but she won’t just stand and see her men murdered, either. She’s ready to fight, but will do anything in her power to avoid bloodshed, if there’s a chance.

IVARR, HARALD AND ROLF

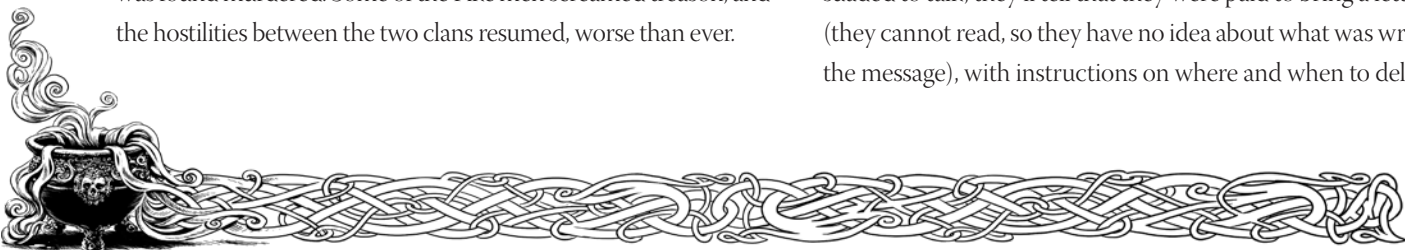
| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 4 | 16L | LAs | 25 | 25 | 20 | 70 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +70 Wpn / +50 Ran | | | NH | 20 | 30 | 0 |

Human weald bandits. Weapon melee attacks are Clubs & Knives; Ranged attacks are Short Bow (Harald only). Read description for more information

Three mercenaries from the north, who came to bring a message to Wulfric from his Master. They’re coarse, mean-spirited men, who respect only violence and gold. Ivarr, their chief, likes to picture himself as a brilliant strategist but is in truth far less clever than he thinks. Harald, a big, burly man, is a heavy drinker and a decently skilled hunter. Rolf talks a lot but only speaks the harsh dialect of their tribe, which makes him basically unintelligible by anyone save his companions. Characters listening to him can make a Challenging (-10) Cultures Roll to get the general gist of what he’s saying, learning that he’s worried about “the ugly ones” they met while travelling in the mountains.

They all wear very worn-out studded leather armor, covered by stained woolen tunics, and carry reinforced clubs and hunting knives. Ivarr also has a battered shield and a few silver coins in a small leather pouch. Harald always carries a short hunting bow and some arrows with him.

They don’t know much about what’s going on. If forced or persuaded to talk, they’ll tell that they were paid to bring a letter here (they cannot read, so they have no idea about what was written in the message), with instructions on where and when to deliver it.



They met with Wulfric once to deliver the letter, but they don't know his name, and haven't seen his face clearly, since it was night. Unfortunately, a Halfling interrupted their meeting, and Wulfric ordered them to kill him and dispose of his body. They've been promised more silver and are trying to lay low, awaiting further instructions.

Goals

Ivarr is starting to think that coming south wasn't such a great idea after all. He'd like to find an excuse to get back north without having to admit he was wrong in the first place.

— MORCANT THE OLD TROLL —

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|---------------------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 6 | 10L | LA | 10 | 85 | 20 | 150 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +110 LCL / +100 Wpn | | | HH | 60 | 70 | 0 |

Old Forest Troll Strider: Has a crippled leg (reduced land speed). +100 Wpn is a huge club (counts as a quarterstaff but max attack cap is 150). Has slightly better Rog and Adv Skills than a standard Troll. Immune to Stun from non magical attacks.

Morcant is a very old Stone Troll, with an extremely large, runny nose, and long moss-like hair covering most of his body. He came here from the mountains, in an attempt to escape the Darkmaster's hordes invasion of his homeland.

He's relatively bright for a Troll, but he's also quite a coward. He knows that members of the smaller Kins arm themselves with "nasty pointy metal things" and prefers to avoid fighting them, unless absolutely necessary or unless he's sure to win.

If cornered or attacked in his lair, Morcant will defend himself but will ask his attackers what wrong he did to them, hoping to confuse and throw them off guard.

If the characters accuse him of the recent disappearances, he'll claim to have nothing to do with them. He'll admit to have snatched a few sheep from the nearby farms (claiming that he didn't know that he wasn't supposed to), but he'll say that he never harmed anyone. "Morcant knows" he'll say "that tiny people send big heroes if he hurts them, so Morcant never hurts tiny people."

If reduced to his Bruised Value, or badly injured, the Troll will try to surrender, even offering the heroes part of his treasure in exchange for his life. He'll start with what is in his treasury, and only in the most dire of circumstances will part with his precious Elven pendant.

Anyway, given the chance, Morcant will try to escape as soon as possible. His favorite tricks are feigning to be wounded more severely than he actually is and tricking the characters into entering his Treasury, only to close the door behind them and flee, leaving them there.

Morcant's has a companion animal - an older female Wolf named Lefty. She is very loyal to Morcant and will fight to the death if commanded to do so. Although generally Morcant will try to avoid fighting to death himself, he will eventually leave Lefty to fight in his place while he tries to flee, if forced to!

Goals

Morcant mostly just wants to be left alone. He'd like to find a place where he can get plenty to eat without being hunted down or having to fight too much for it.

THE WOAD WITCHES OF THE WOOD

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|--------------------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 8 | 15L | NA | 50 | 55 | 45 | 100 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +100 HSt / +90 LPi | | | HB | 70 | 60 | 30 |

Great Spiders. Poison: Creatures who suffer a Critical Strike from the Stinger attack of a Giant Spider must pass a TSR or become Held for 1d10 minutes. If they fail a SR against another dose of the same poison before its effects wear off, they'll be completely paralyzed, becoming Incapacitated for 2d10 minutes. Web: If one of them moves less than half its movement in a round, it can place a 3m radius web behind itself as a Free Action. The web counts as Arduous terrain for anyone but spiders. Non-spider creatures entering a web must pass a Challenging (-10) Athletics roll or become Held until the web is destroyed or they spend a Full Action and pass a Challenging (-10) Athletics roll to free themselves.

The so-called "Woad Witches" are in fact a trio of Giant Spiders who managed to escape the devastation caused by Bláithnaid's ritual and made their lair in the woods near Willow Lake. During the course of the centuries they spread lies and false rumors to





conceal their true nature, and became fat and bloated hiding in their small domain.

They're spiteful, deviously cunning creatures, who like to toy with their prey before finishing it. They know that drawing too much attention would probably bring Elven hunters from Dryv Covert upon them, so until now they've tried to keep a low profile.

If the characters enter their domain in the woods, the three will remain hidden at first, spying on them and trying to guess their intentions. Lone and lightly armed characters are likely to be seen as an easy prey and will be attacked, captured, and brought into their lair to be eaten. Large parties and well-armed travellers, on the other hand, will be treated with caution.

The Witches speak the Woad language fairly well and know a few words in Elven, too. If they choose to interact with the characters, they'll try to avoid being seen, posing as woodland spirits to gain their trust.

Goals

Each of the three spiders wants to grow bigger and stronger than their sisters. They live together and bear each other's presence out of necessity, but in truth each of them would love to get rid of her sisters and become the sole and only mistress of these woods.

In the first part of this campaign, they'll also want Morcant gone. They see the Troll as a poacher, trespassing in their woods and stealing their prey without asking for their permission, but they are too afraid to directly confront him. They'll gladly direct the characters towards him, should they get the chance. They don't know the exact location of his lair, but they are aware that it's in the northern part of the woods.



The Land

WILLOW LAKE LAYOUT

1. **Walls:** A sturdy wooden palisade about 4 meters high, backed by lower, thick earthen walls.
2. **Town Gates:** Access to town is gained by one of these two heavy wooden gates, one at the east side, the other facing west. They're closed from sundown until morning, and guarded by a man from the local militia during the day.
3. **Dancing Trout Inn:** A large two-storey building with a small stable attached. Meals are served in the large hall on the first floor, which is used as a common sleeping room for the night. The upper floor is normally used by the innkeeper and his family as living quarters, but *Niall* can free a couple of rooms for wealthier patrons, should the need arise.
4. **Wulfric's Longhouse:** Erected on the top of the small hill around which the town was built, the Thane's house is easily the most imposing structure of Willow Lake. See Layout of Wulfric's Longhouse below for a description of its contents.
5. **Eileen's House:** The herbalist's house can be recognized by its green painted shutters, and by the small well-tended garden on the backside. Most of the time, *Eileen* can be found here, either tending her garden or brewing some herbal remedy.
6. **Warden's House:** Eamon lived in a simple house near the western gate of the town. The house is now obviously empty, but the characters can find it very easily by asking around. Any villager will also tell them that the house has already been searched unsuccessfully by Wulfric and his men for clues about the Warden's whereabouts (he was in truth look-



Map 1.1

WILLOW LAKE



ing for clues about how to use his newly acquired Warden Medallion, but the townsfolk were easily convinced of his good intentions). If the PCs decide to investigate the house anyway, they'll find that the Thane has been very thorough in his search, and that the house interior has been basically turned upside down. Oddly enough, a **lone pigeon**, apparently flown in from a tiny opening on the roof, rests quietly on one of the ceiling beams. Tied to one of its legs there's a **small piece of parchment** with the following message: "It's as we feared. Don't go. Wait for me. N." Mornien and Gandrell will immediately recognize Nevynn's handwriting, but in town no one remembers seeing the odd old man and the Warden ever exchanging more than a few words.

- 7. **Nevynn's Tower:** Initially used as a watchtower, this three-storey building was abandoned decades ago and fell in disrepair. Nevynn bought it some years ago, remodeling it to use it as a base for his journeys in the Willow Lake area. No one's home when the PCs arrive. The door is locked, Very Hard (-30) to pick, and all the shutters closed. There isn't much of interest in the first two floors of the tower, but **the door to Nevynn's personal study** on the third floor has been **sealed with a 5th Weave Spell** by the old mage. The door can be broken down but cannot otherwise be opened without using the proper key or without dispelling the Spell first. It will **automatically open** for Mornien and Gandrell (or other PCs sharing a similar bond with Nevynn).

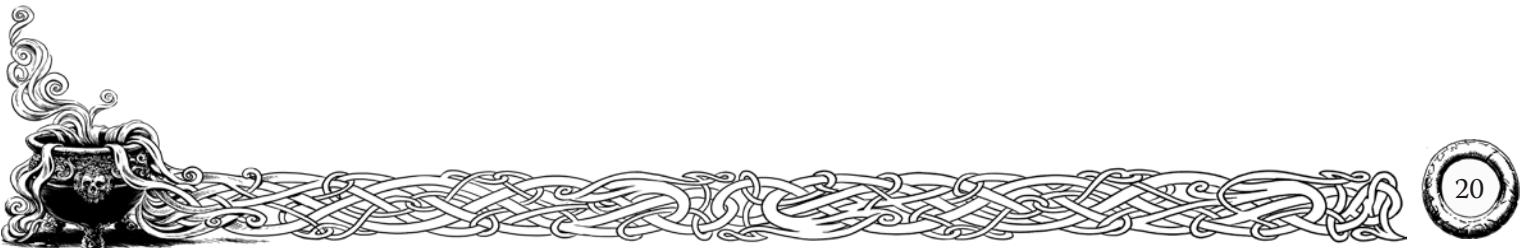
Climbing the tower walls and entering from the windows is possible, but will be frowned upon by the local residents, who'll try to stop the characters, unless they come up with a really good reason for breaking into an old man's house. Inside the study the PCs will find several maps of the Willow Lake area spread upon a large wooden table, and a small desk with ink and paper near the window. The desk has **a concealed compartment**, Very Hard (-30) to find, hiding a small iron chest of golden coins (counts as a TV2 treasure). There are also **a few books** placed on a shelf on the wall (see the table [5.1]; each book takes 2d10 hours to be read).

- 8. **Farms:** Most of Willow Lake's inhabitants are loggers or lumbermen, but there are a few farms surrounding the town. Many of them have recently been the target of Morcant's attacks and lost at least a few sheep to the Troll. The farmers will be more than happy to show the characters the damage done to their barns and point them the **tracks left by the Troll** (see the Tracking Morcant section below). Some may also give them vague descriptions of the hulking figure that attacked their animals. However, since it was night, no one managed to see the sheep thief clearly, so each farmer will describe him slightly differently from the others.

NEVYNN'S TOWER LIBRARY TABLE

| Title | Language | Contents |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|--|
| Isignia of the Nine Kingdoms, part IV | High Mannish | Describes the coats of arms and isignia of the various noble houses of the Nine Kingdom. Grants a +10 bonus to heraldry-related Songs & Tales Rolls. |
| Canticle of the Flower Crowned Queen | Elvish | Tells the tale of Blàithnaid, up to right before the arrival of the Darkmaster's armies. |
| The Warden's Doom | Common Mannish | Tells how Ælfwine, first Thane of Willow Lake, was betrayed and murdered by his envious cousin but finally avenged by his sons. Contains directions to the Ruined Burial Mound southeast of Willow Lake. |
| The Tower in the Reeds | Star Elvish | A long poem, telling the story of a beautiful lady, trapped in a tower beneath a lake by the curse of a shunned lover. |

[5.1]



LAYOUT OF WULFRIC'S LONGHOUSE

1. **Wooden Palisade:** A sturdy wooden stockade, about 1.5 meters high. It has a single entrance, guarded day and night by Wulfric's men.
2. **Courtyard:** Most of the *mercenaries* will be found here during the day, spending their free time sparring and wrestling among themselves, playing dice, drinking, or harassing *Betha* and *Ronan*.

WULFRIC'S MERCENARIES

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 3 | 15L | LAs | 25 | 25 | 20 | 60 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +70 Wpn / +55 Ran | | | NH | 20 | 30 | 0 |

Human Mercenaries, wearing boiled leather armors and are armed with spears, shields and swords or handaxes. About half of them also carry short bows.

3. **Great Hall:** The Great Hall interior is decorated with *large tapestries*, bearing the Thane's insignia (a rampant hound) and depicting his ancestors' deeds. A character examining these tapestries may make a Challenging (-10) Songs & Tales Roll to learn that Willow Lake's founding fathers were friends of the Elves, and that the first Thane was also the first Warden. Normally, only very important guests are received here, but once a month the Thane uses the Hall to administer his justice and grants audience to the populace, listening to the townspeople's pleas and petitions.
4. **Kitchens:** A cluttered room serving both as kitchen and as sleeping quarters for the two old servants living here, *Betha* and *Ronan*.
5. **Barracks:** An old storeroom Wulfric had recently cleaned up to make room for his men. There are no windows, so the air is a bit stale here. A dozen straw mattresses are scattered on the floor, and there's a huge stack of wood piled up against the wall opposite the front door.

Map 1.2

WULFRIC'S LONGHOUSE





6. **Stables:** The stables currently hold only Wulfric's horse (a piebald palfrey) and a cranky old mule Ronan sometimes uses to go shopping in town.
7. **Wulfric's Chamber:** Wulfric's living quarters are *always guarded* by at least two of his most loyal men. No one, apart from the Thane's personal servants, is ever allowed in here. Characters trying to break in will be immediately detained by guards. Access to Wulfric's personal chamber is gained through a **heavy oaken door**, which is always kept locked -picking the lock is a Heroic (-50) task- when he's not inside. Inside, the characters will find a very sumptuous bed, two large chests (one sporting a heavy lock), and a stand with an old ceremonial suit of mail armor. Hanging on the wall in front of the bed, there's an ancient-looking spear and a round shield, painted with the hound insignia.

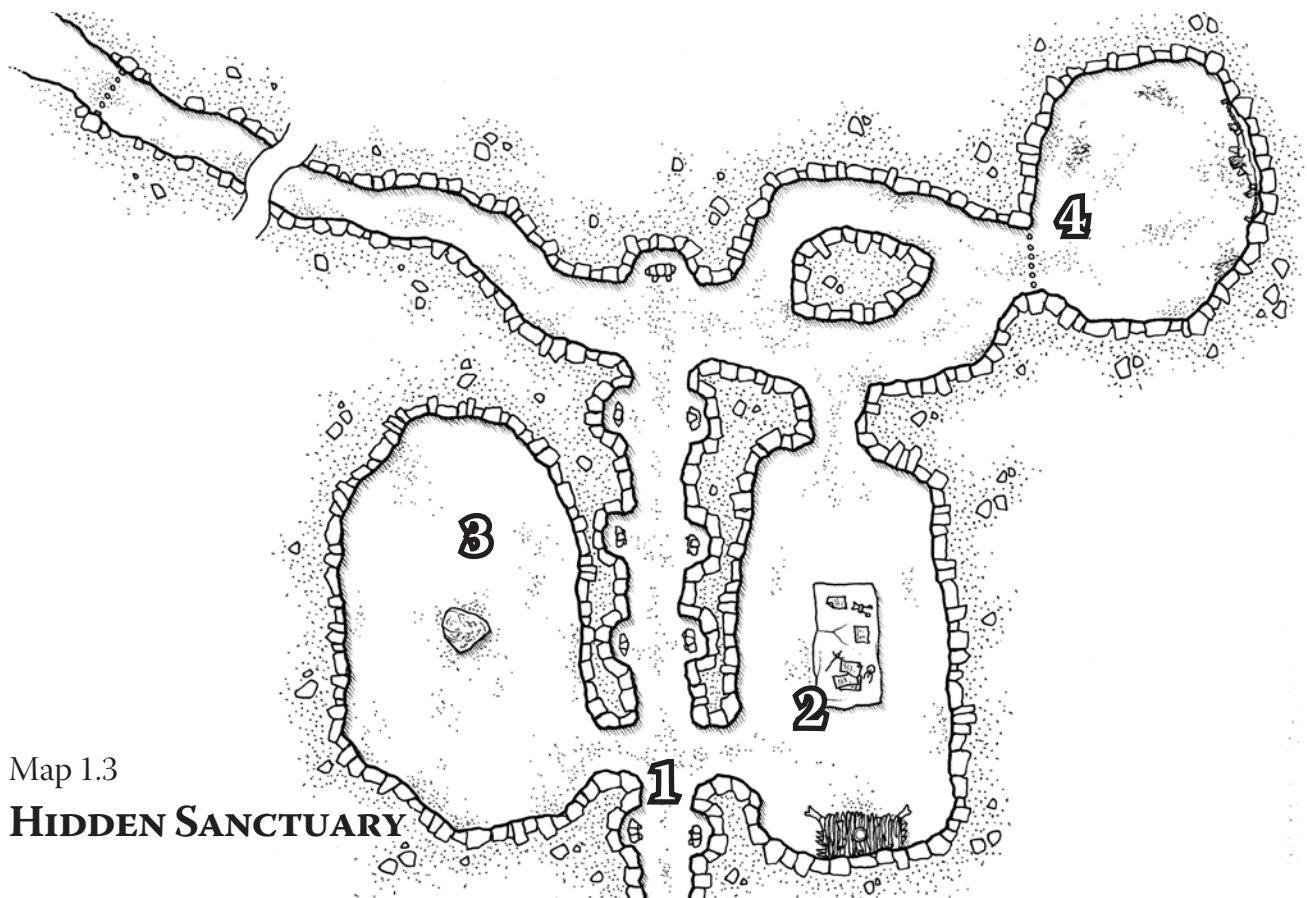
The floor is covered by rugs, concealing the **hidden trapdoor** that leads to the Hidden Sanctuary below, making it Very Hard (-30) to spot. If the rugs are removed, finding the hidden trapdoor becomes a Standard (+0) Roll.

Note that the trapdoor cannot be closed from the inside, so if Wulfric is in the Hidden Sanctuary (or has already escaped), the passage will be open and quite evident for anyone to see. The locked chest is Hard (-20) to open and contains the silver Wulfric uses to pay the mercenaries (TV3); the other is full with the Thane's clothes and personal belongings.

Heroes examining the items hung on **the wall** will notice that the wall near the hooks sustaining the spear **is scratched**, as if by frequent manipulation. **Pulling the hooks** will activate the mechanism that **opens the passage** leading to the Hidden Sanctuary.

LAYOUT OF THE HIDDEN SANCTUARY

1. **Passageway:** A dark and damp tunnel, barely wide enough for a grown man to walk in. Small niches carved on both sides of the corridor hold a series of crude **stone sculptures**. Characters passing a Challenging (-10) Cultures Roll will understand they represent the past Wardens of Willow Lake.



Map 1.3

HIDDEN SANCTUARY



2. **Wulfric's Secret Study:** Its original purpose lost to time, this room has been claimed by Wulfric as his personal study. Eldritch glyphs have been painted on the walls and floor. **An obscene altar** to the Darkmaster, made of animal and human bones, has been erected against the western wall. Upon it there's a **tarnished silver bowl**, covered in grotesque symbols and filled with a dark liquid. A Standard (+0) Arcana Roll reveals that it has been used for some sort of divination ritual. Several bizarre implements and **scrolls** covered in scrawled notes are scattered on a great stone table in the center of the room, next to a **leather-bound tome** titled "The Stone of Annwn." The notes cover Wulfric's various attempts to unlock the secret of the Warden's Medalion, while the book is a monograph on the ancient artifact in the Mannish tongue (the GM should quickly summarize its story and presumed powers to the characters reading it). Inside the book, acting as an improvised bookmark, there's a **letter in Dark Speech** reading: "The time is near. Soon you'll be reached by the first servants of our Master. I'll be right behind them, with the rest of our forces. Have the Stone ready for my arrival. Don't fail me."
3. **Shrine of the Wardens:** Centuries ago, the Wardens used to take their oath in this hidden shrine. The **ancient rune-stone** upon which they swore still stands in the middle of the room, bearing the following inscription in Mannish, Elvish, and Dwarvish: "I swear to keep watch over the Whispering Meadow. Over the Tower and over the Gate. Over the living and the dead. Until the Queen returns, until our watch ends." Characters reading this aloud **with a true heart** will feel their spirits lifted and their strengths renewed. They'll gain one Drive Point and hear a warm, powerful voice saying: "Steel yourself, brave Warden; your greatest trial lies ahead. Find your light at the elf-friend rest."
4. **Nevynn's Cell:** A set of iron manacles are set into a wall of this foul-smelling chamber. A half-unconscious **old man** dangles from them, his mouth gagged by a strap of leather, his body covered with wounds. Heroes familiar with him will immediately recognize the man as **Nevynn**. Nevynn will obviously be very grateful to his saviors, but as soon as he comes to his senses he'll warn them that Wulfric is working on a nefarious plot that could spell the end

of Willow Lake, and perhaps of all the Nine Kingdoms. He'll also answer some of the questions the PCs may have, but keep in mind that the old wizard is exhausted and severely wounded. He currently doesn't have the strength to sustain a prolonged conversation with the heroes. Here are some examples of answers Nevynn may give if the PCs question him.

- What happened to you?

I uncovered what Wulfric was planning, but I've underestimated the extent of his powers... and of his corruption. I was seized before I could warn anyone, and Wulfric has been torturing me since then.

- What is Wulfric planning?

He seeks the Elvenstone of Annwn, and intends to deliver it to the Darkmaster! This cannot be, he must be stopped at all costs!

- What's the Elvenstone of Annwn?

It's... a very ancient and powerful artifact. I can only imagine what the Darkmaster could do, should he seize the Stone for Himself.

- Where is it?

They say it's hidden in the Isle of Mists, in the middle of Willow Lake, but it's protected by powerful spells. No one can reach it without the proper key.

- Why did Wulfric torture you?

He wanted to learn what I know about the Stone. I think he has found the key but still hasn't figured out how to use it. He hoped I could solve his riddle for him.

- Where is he now?

I don't know for sure, but I think he's gone to a circle of standing stones, on the hills beyond the river. An old place of power. He was suddenly very scared by something, and I've heard him prepare for an arcane ritual of some sort. I think he intends to summon an ancient spirit to get the answer to his dilemma.

5. **Secret Exit:** This long, winding tunnel leads to a concealed exit outside town, near the edge of the forest. A few meters before the end of the tunnel, the way is blocked by an ancient **iron portcullis**, which can be opened with a **lever** hidden on the nearby wall, Challenging (-10) to find.





LAYOUT OF THE WOODS

- 1. Old Sawmill:** Everyone in town can give the characters directions to the Sawmill, but this large building can hardly be missed. Logs from the surrounding area are dragged here, where they are cut and prepared to be sent down the river. During the day, the old Sawmill is bustling with the activity of the men working here. At night, the characters will find only Padraig, sleeping in the attached cabin and watching over the facility with his dogs.
- 2. Hunter's Cabin:** A simple wooden shack, originally built by the previous Thane as a base for his hunting trips. Even if it's slightly run-down, it's clear that someone has been living here recently. In fact, three Northmen mercenaries (Ivarr, Harald, and Rolf) are hiding here at the moment, spending most of the day drinking and quarreling among themselves.

The first time the PCs arrive here, unless they've already met the three mercenaries somewhere else, the GM should **roll percentile dice**: on a roll of 60 or less the Northmen are home; a roll of 61 to 90 indicates that one of them is missing (probably out hunting or fishing); and a roll of 91 or more means that no one's at home at the moment, but the three will return in 2d10 minutes, carrying a freshly killed roe deer. Harald set some **simple traps** all around the cabin: tripwires connected to rudimental alarms. Characters approaching the building carelessly will surely trigger one of them, attracting the attention of whoever is in the cabin at the moment. Those advancing with more caution can make a Standard (+0) Perception Roll to spot the tripwires.

Besides the Northmen's meager possessions, the cabin holds little of interest, but desperate characters rummaging through it will be able to scrounge an old hunting trap and a healer's kit, hidden inside a bench.
- 3. The Lake:** The lake from which the nearby town took its name covers an area of about one square kilometer. Its waters are clear and apparently calm, but the locals will warn that **swimming in it can be dangerous**, due to strong undercurrents. Boats are also known to capsize unexpectedly and run into hidden obstacles in these waters, so they'll advise against sailing, too.

Characters will find several confused tracks on the western and southwestern shores, and at least some of them seem to belong to a large creature, like the one who attacked the farms (see the Tracking Morcant section below).

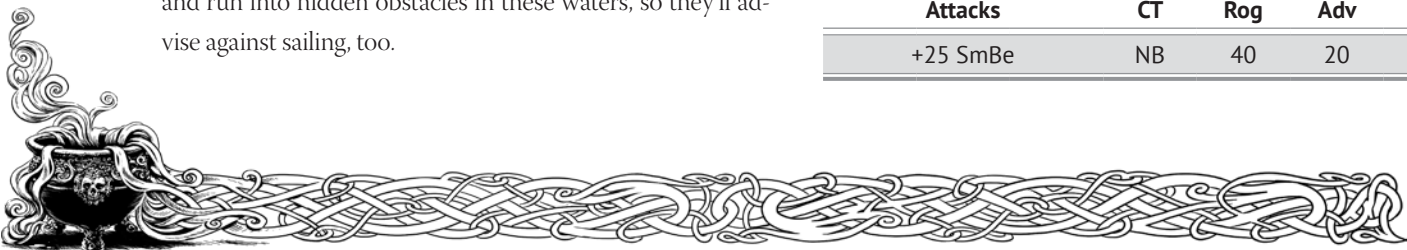
A thick, swirling mist rises from the lake after sundown. Characters staying here at night will see strange, flickering lights dancing in the fog, ever out of reach. People from Willow Lake call them "Fairy Lights", since according to a local legend they mark the site of an ancient battle fought by the Fair Folk. They appear almost every night, and are spooky but harmless. Unless one is such a fool as to try to catch them, that is.

- 4. Island of the Mists:** The small tree-filled island in the middle of the Lake is called "Island of the Mists" by the locals, because its shores are often enshrouded in a low-hanging fog. Legends say that a fair maiden dressed in white can be seen walking among the trees during moonless nights, looking for her lover. The young women of Willow Lake toss small flower garlands in the lake before marrying, asking for the blessing of the Lady of the Island. See the third part of this campaign (The Island of Mists) for an in-depth description of this location.
- 5. Cairn Glade:** A moss-covered cairn stands in the middle of this isolated glade since time immemorial. Locals avoid it, and will advise the PCs to stay away from the place, believing the cairn to be cursed and haunted by evil spirits. A murder of **Gorcrows** huge, malicious ravens- nests here. They don't like intruders and will caw threateningly from their trees at trespassers. They'll even attack lone travellers who enter the glade, but rarely risk doing so against numerous parties or well-armed individuals.

To the Gorcrows' delight, the Northmen chose this spot to dispose of **Archiebold's body**. The poor Halfling's corpse has been savagely pecked by the evil birds, but it's still recog-

GORCROWS

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|----------|--------|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1 | 21F/3L | NA | 50 | 0 | 0 | 15 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +25 SmBe | | | NB | 40 | 20 | 0 |



Map 1.4

WILLOW LAKE AND SURROUNDINGS



to the
Dryv Covert
(elven Forest)



to the
Wood Territories



to the
Southern Kingdoms

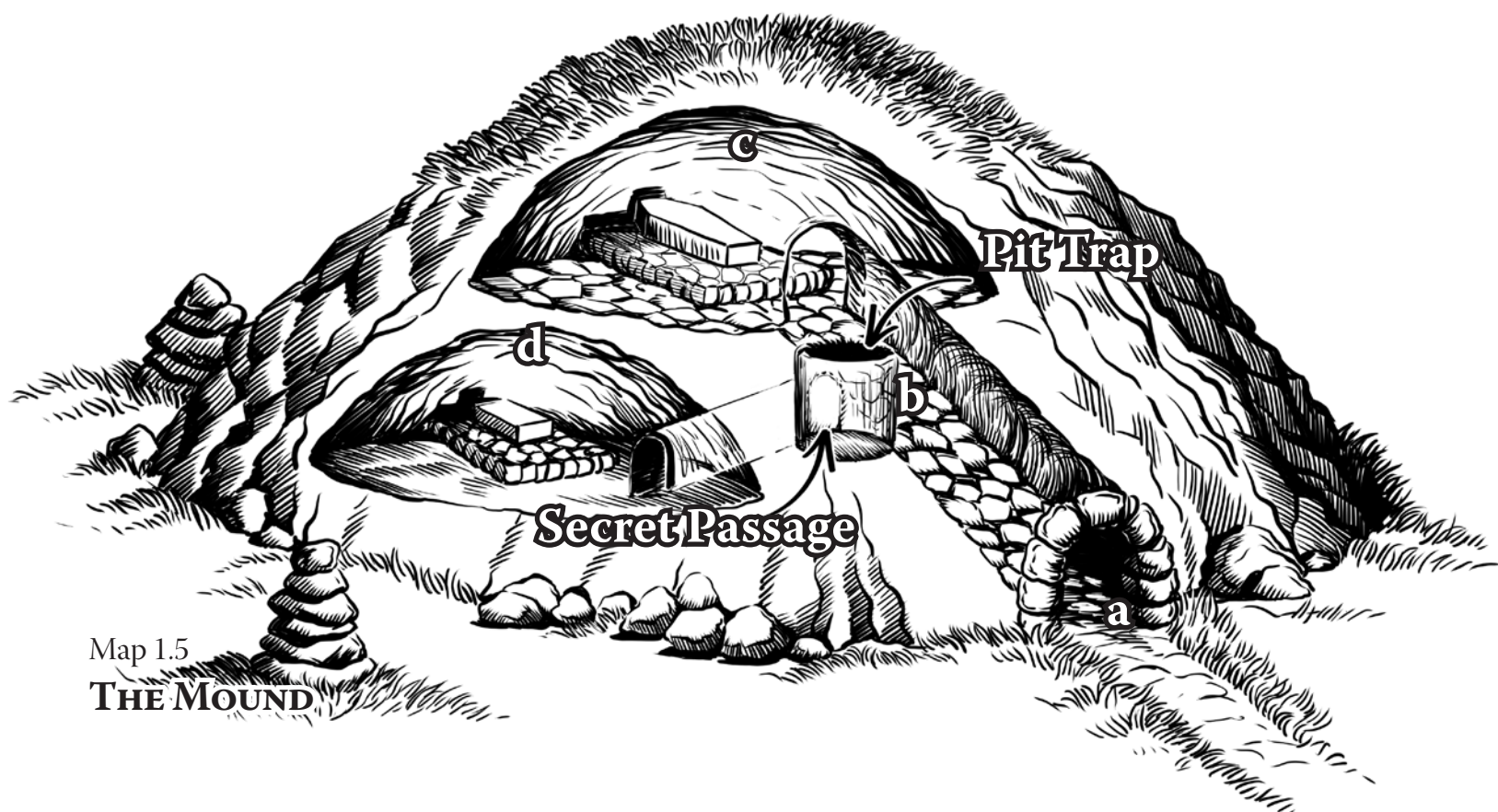




nizable by the small silver locket, with a painting of his wife, kept in the pocket of his bright yellow jacket.

Characters searching the glade for clues can make a Hard (-20) Hunting Roll to find a human-sized **set of tracks**, leading from here to the Hunter's Cabin.

6. **Dwarven Ruins:** The crumbled half of a large stone arch is all that remains of the ancient gate that stood here. Characters can make a Standard (+0) Songs & Tales Roll to recognize these ruins as an old Dwarven border gate, destroyed long ago, during the last war against the Darkmaster (Dwarves need no Roll to identify the ruins, and will recognize this landmark immediately). Those examining the gate will notice large **claw marks** on the western side of the ruined stone arch. They were left by Morcant when he arrived in the Willow Lake region. Characters who lost the Troll's tracks can use them as a new starting point for their search.
7. **Ruined Burial Mound:** Easily mistaken for a low hill from a distance, the real nature of these overgrown ruins becomes more clear as one approaches them. The air here is damp and chilly, and strange shadows seem to loom over the area even in the brightest of days.
 - a. **Entrance:** Usually the mound is sealed by a thick **stone door**, Extremely Hard (-40) to open from the outside. However, from time to time, the evil spirits haunting it leave the door open, to lure curious and unwary travelers to their trap.
 - b. **Low Passage:** A stone-walled passage with a **very low ceiling** that'll force character higher than 160 cm to lower their heads to proceed. About halfway down there is **a pit** in the floor, about 3 meters long and 2 meters deep. Characters investigating the pit's bottom will notice that the **stone slabs** covering its walls are engraved with **time-worn incisions**, each in the shape of a different animal: a lion to the north; a fish to the east; a hound to the south; and a bear to the west. Hidden behind the slab bearing the sign of the hound there's a **hidden passage**, leading to the True Burial chamber. The pit is uncovered, so it will be quite difficult for the characters to fall in it, unless they're particularly careless, or desperately fleeing from a pack of ravenous ghouls.
 - c. **Fake Burial:** A large round chamber with a vaulted ceiling. Several funerary recesses open on its stone walls, and a **stone sarcophagus** lies in the middle of



Map 1.5

THE MOUND

GHOUL

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|----------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 4 | 17L | NA | 35 | 40 | 10 | 60 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +80 MeCl | | | NH | 40 | 30 | 0 |

the room. A glint of silver sparkles from the sarcophagus's half-opened lid. **Five ghouls** lurk here; they remain hidden in the recesses until someone goes near the sarcophagus, then strike, trying to cut off their victims' only escape route. The sarcophagus appears to be holding a veritable silvery hoard, but in truth contains only worthless trash, covered by a **powerful illusion**. Moreover, the first character (and only the first) looking inside it will have to make a **WSR** against an Attack Level 3, or suffer the effects of the Daze Spell (from the Mind Control Spell Lore). The light of the day will dispel the illusion on the sarcophagus's contents, revealing their true nature.

- d. **True Burial:** Buried in this chamber are the **remains of Ælfwine**, first Thane and first Warden of Willow Lake. The skeleton of the man, wearing an ancient bronze breastplate, lies inside a niche on the southernmost wall. Above it, written in Elvish runes are his name and titles (Elves will be able to read the inscription without problems, while other characters can make a Standard (+0) Cultures Roll to understand its meaning). His hands are crossed upon his chest, wielding a rusted bronze sword, and he wears a beautifully crafted **silver bracelet**, shaped in the guise of a hound biting his tail (a gift from the Elves, permits wearer to cast Magic Shield, from the Eldritch Hand Spell Lore once a day without spending **MPs** or making a Spell Casting Roll). More importantly, around his neck is the **true Warden's Medallion** (of which the one currently in Wulfric's possession is but a copy). The significance of this item may escape the characters right now, but it will become clear later, as they progress in the adventure. Characters entering this tomb for **selfish reasons** (such as greed and lust for treasure) will be filled by an

overwhelming **sense of dread**. They must pass a **WSR** against an Attack Level 8 attack or be forced to flee and be unable to come back until they've gained at least a Level of experience.

8. **Troll's Lair:** This is the spot chosen by Morcant to hide his lair (see Layout of Morcant's Lair below).
9. **Tainted Trees:** The air hangs heavy among the twisted branches of the trees in this area. The vegetation here is very thick, but has a sickly grayish colour, as if stricken by some kind of blight. Several narrow paths wind among the ivy-strangled trees, leading the traveller toward the deepest, darkest heart of the woods. These are the hunting grounds of three very old Giant Spiders, known to the locals as the **Woad Witches of the Wood**, who have plagued this part of the woods for centuries. Inside their nest, on the top of the dessicated remains of their countless victims, there's an ancient **clay female figurine**, about 10 cm tall, that acts as a +2 **MPs** Focus (increasing the total **MPs** of its bearer by 2) for Animists only.

LAYOUT OF THE HILLS

10. **Ford:** This is the only point in which the river flowing from Willow Lake can be **traversed on foot**, without using a boat or some other vessel. During the second part of this campaign, a **lone Gorcrow** watches over the ford, perched upon a nearby tree. It has been sent by Garmr to spy on whoever tries to leave the vale. If it spots the PCs, it will try to fly back to the Fear Dearg to warn him. Should it succeed, Garmr will send a small band of wolfriders to hunt the heroes down.
11. **Annis's Farmstead:** A low stone building with a thatched roof, surrounded by a shallow ditch and a palisade. Annis's is one of the many **fortified farmsteads** scattered throughout the Hills. The inhabitants are currently preparing for war (see NPC section for details), so armed parties of travelers passing nearby will be viewed with suspicion, and are likely to be **stopped and questioned**.
12. **Ruined Wedding:** This pleasant spot, right on the border between the Bear Clan and the Pike Clan territories, was chosen to celebrate the wedding of Maeve and Kendric (see An-





nis's entry in NPC section). A few barrels of ale still lie here, among the trampled circle of flowers and the other wedding decorations. **Five men** from the Pike Clan watch the place from a safe distance, ready to spring if someone approaches it. Characters examining the scene closely can make a Very Hard (-30) Hunting Roll to spot **a trail** leading to the hideout of the **true culprits** of the murder happened on the wedding eve: two stray **Redcap wolfriders**. The two were spotted by a man as he left the wedding site to relieve himself, and killed him before he could raise the alarm. One of them has a **silver torc** he stole from their victim before fleeing.

TYPICAL HILLMAN WARRIOR

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| 2 | 15L | NAs | 25 | 10 | 10 | 50 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +50 Wpn / +50 Ran | | | NH | 15 | 15 | 0 |

Human Hill Warrior. Usually armed with swords, short spears, or javelins and carrying a shield.

WOLF

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|----------------|-----|----|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| 3 | 40L | NA | 30 | 15 | 5 | 110 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +70 MeB | | | NB | 30 | 50 | 0 |

REDCAP

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|----------------|-----|----|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| 1 | 17L | NA | 25 | 30 | -5 | 35 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +35Wpn | | | NH | 25 | 10 | 0 |

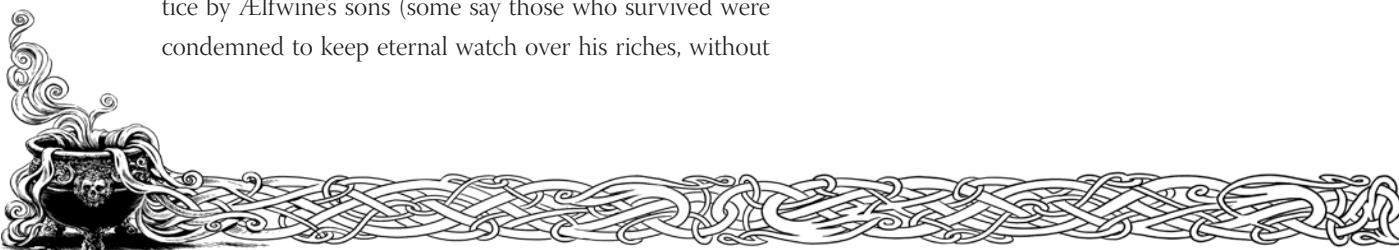
13. **The Stones:** A steep, barren hill, topped by the **ancient circle of standing stones** that gives the place its name. Here the Mannish chieftains swore loyalty to Ælfwine before riding into battle to aid the Elves; and here Ælfwine's brothers betrayed and murdered him to claim rulership over the lands the Elves granted him. The traitors were later brought to justice by Ælfwine's sons (some say those who survived were condemned to keep eternal watch over his riches, without

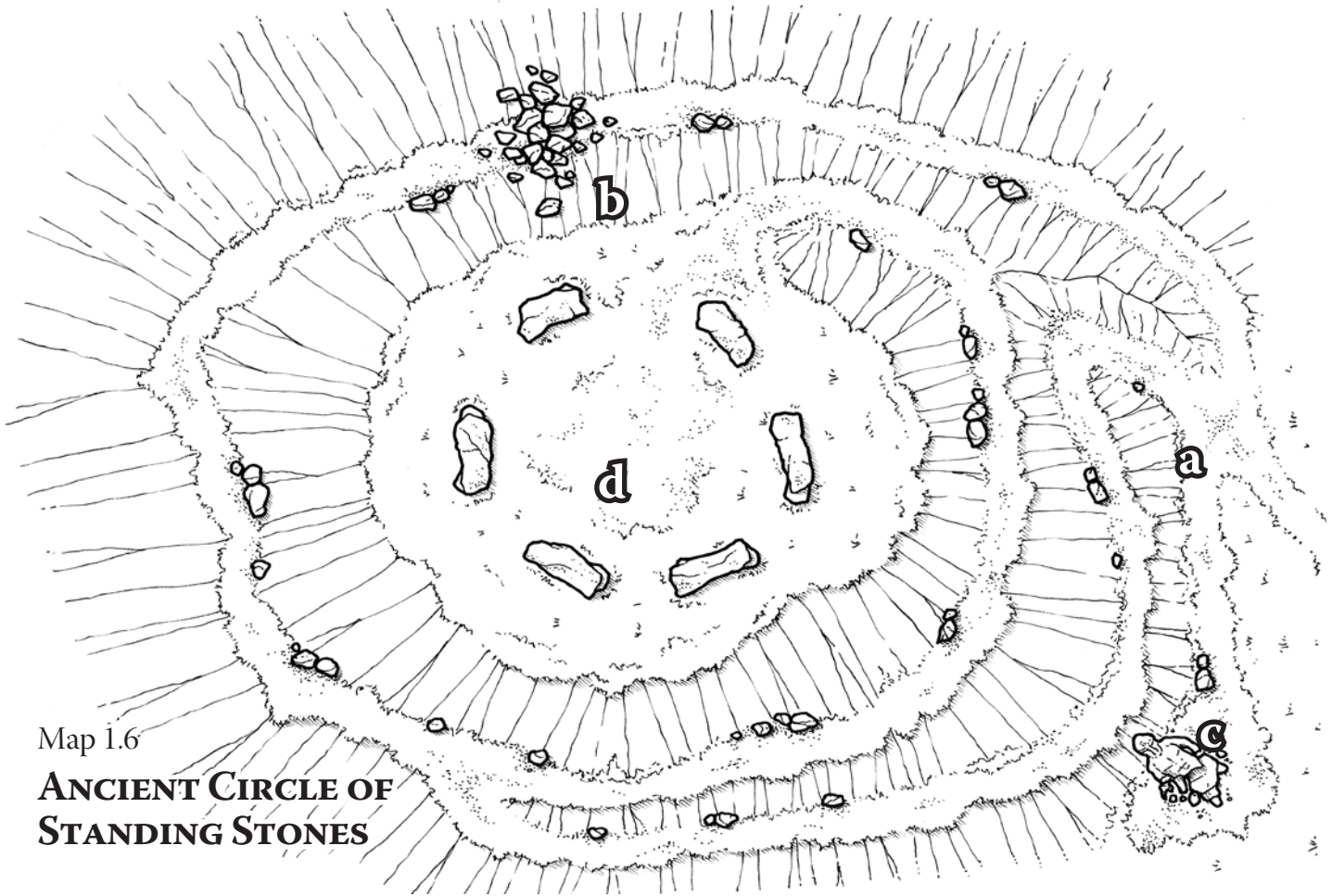
ever being able to touch them), but a shadow has since then fallen over the hill. **Animists, Elves**, and characters similarly attuned to the Spirit world will feel a **mild discomfort** as they get closer to the hill.

- Path:** A rocky path leads up to the top of the hill.
- Rockslide:** Here the path has **partially collapsed**, leaving a wide gap. Characters can attempt to cross it with a Standard (+0) Acrobatics Roll (assuming they're doing this by day, under normal weather conditions), but risk an 8-meter fall on the hard rocks below.
- Toppled Statue:** A weather-ravished **statue of a warrior**, covered in strong grayish vines, lies toppled on the side of the hill. **The vines** make it relatively easy to climb the statue and reach the path directly above it, but they are **poisonous**. A Standard (+0) Nature Roll identifies them as Greyroot, a plant commonly found in desolate places like this. Characters touching them unprotected must pass an Attack Level 1 **TSR** or develop a fastidious rash causing a -10 penalty to their Rolls (depending on the area of skin exposed, the actual penalty could be even worse) for 1d10 days or until cured.
- Standing Stones:** A ring of **six dolmens**, each as high as two men, stands on the top of the hill. The megaliths are obviously very ancient, but they seem to have been almost unaffected by the passage of time. If the heroes come here after Wulfric's ritual, one of the angry **Ghosts** he summoned will still be here and will attempt to drive away anyone from the top of the hill. It will rest only when a true Warden will grant it forgiveness for its treason.

GHOST

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|----------------|-----|----|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| 5 | 15F | NA | 50 | 30 | 45 | 70 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| Special | | | HH | 75 | 30 | 40 |





Map 1.6

ANCIENT CIRCLE OF STANDING STONES

— LAYOUT OF MORCANT'S LAIR —

The Troll's tracks will bring the characters to this clearing, where the forest opens against the rugged face of a hill.

1. **Stream:** Morcant's trail ends in this shallow stream, running southeast, toward the Lake.
2. **Old campfire:** What remains of a large campfire. In its ashes, Morcant hid a rusty *bear-trap* he found in the forest. Characters searching the campfire have a chance of setting it off, receiving a Superficial Cut Critical.
3. **Waterfall/Main entrance:** The Troll found this natural cave complex hidden *behind a waterfall* some time ago, and decided to set up his lair here. The entrance is Hard (-20) to spot unless someone is right before the waterfall. Small characters will have some trouble passing through it, and must make a Standard (+0) Athletics Roll or fall, receiving no damage but breaking a random fragile object they're carrying.
4. **Chimney:** A tight vertical shaft, connecting the *Larder* to the outside. Morcant isn't aware of its existence, as it's too small for him to pass through. Small (halfling-size), unencumbered characters can easily climb down the chimney with the aid of a rope or with an Athletics roll. Squeezing through the passage will be trickier for bigger characters -requiring a Challenging (-10) Acrobatics Roll- and flat out impossible for those wearing heavy armor or carrying cumbersome equipment.
5. **Slippery passage:** A damp limestone tunnel, slightly bent downward. The floor is muddy, and *very slippery*. Characters passing here must make a Challenging (-10) Acrobatics Roll to avoid falling down, directly in the Wolf's pit below!





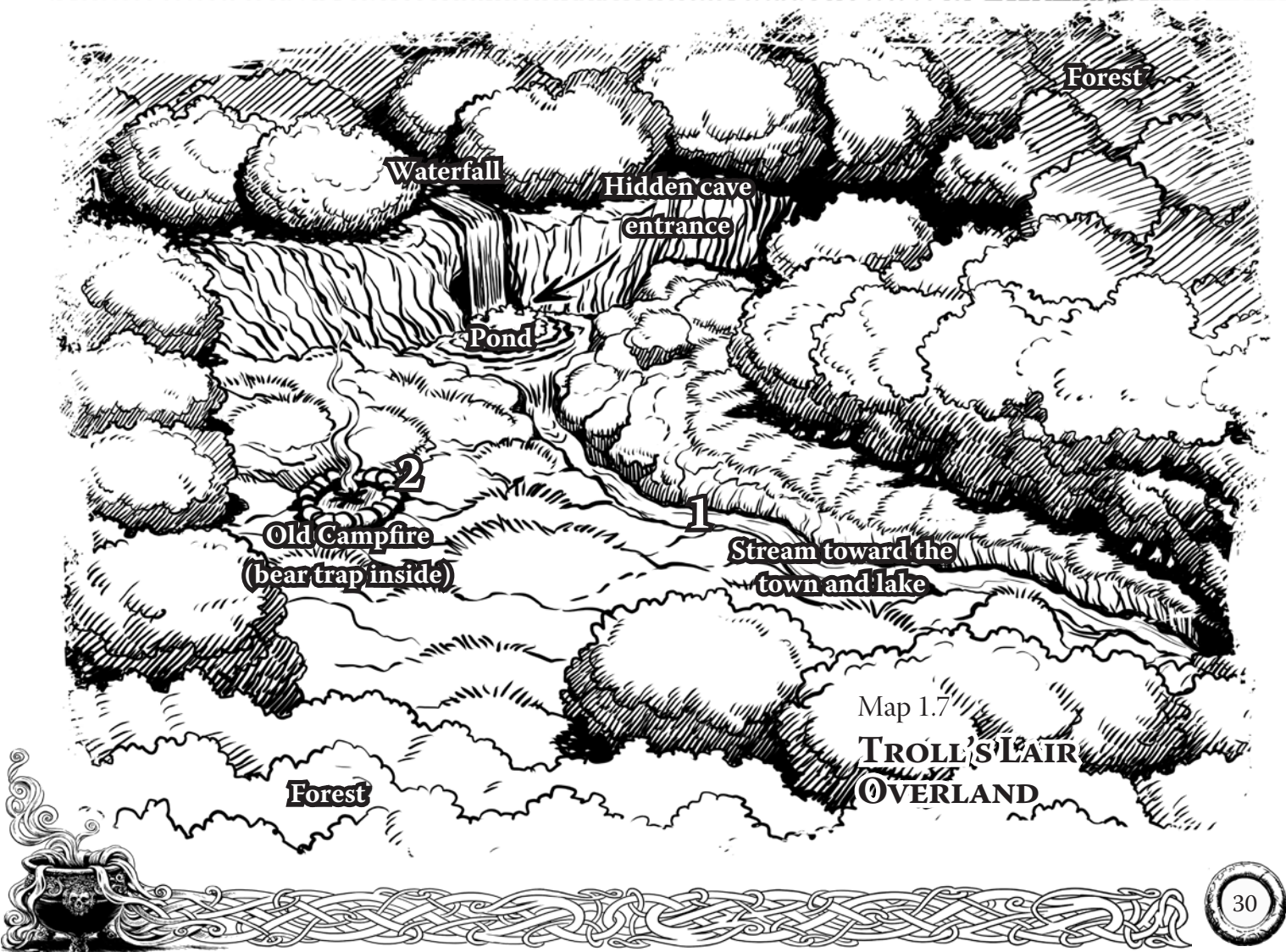
6. **Wolf's pit:** Morcant keeps his pet *female Wolf* (named Lefty) on the bottom of this pit. He found her wounded on his wanderings in the mountains, and decided to keep her for company, and because he thought she could be useful to chase his enemies away. He feeds her scraps from the hole in the Main room (Lefty cannot reach it, but characters can attempt to climb it with a Standard (+0) Athletics Roll, ending up in the Main room). The beast is always hungry and half mad from its confinement, but very loyal to Morcant. She will snap at anyone who looks down its pit, growling and

snarling and trying to jump at them. Luckily the pit is too high for the Wolf to jump out, but the noise is likely to attract Morcant's attention. Characters falling in the pit, however, can obviously be attacked freely by her.

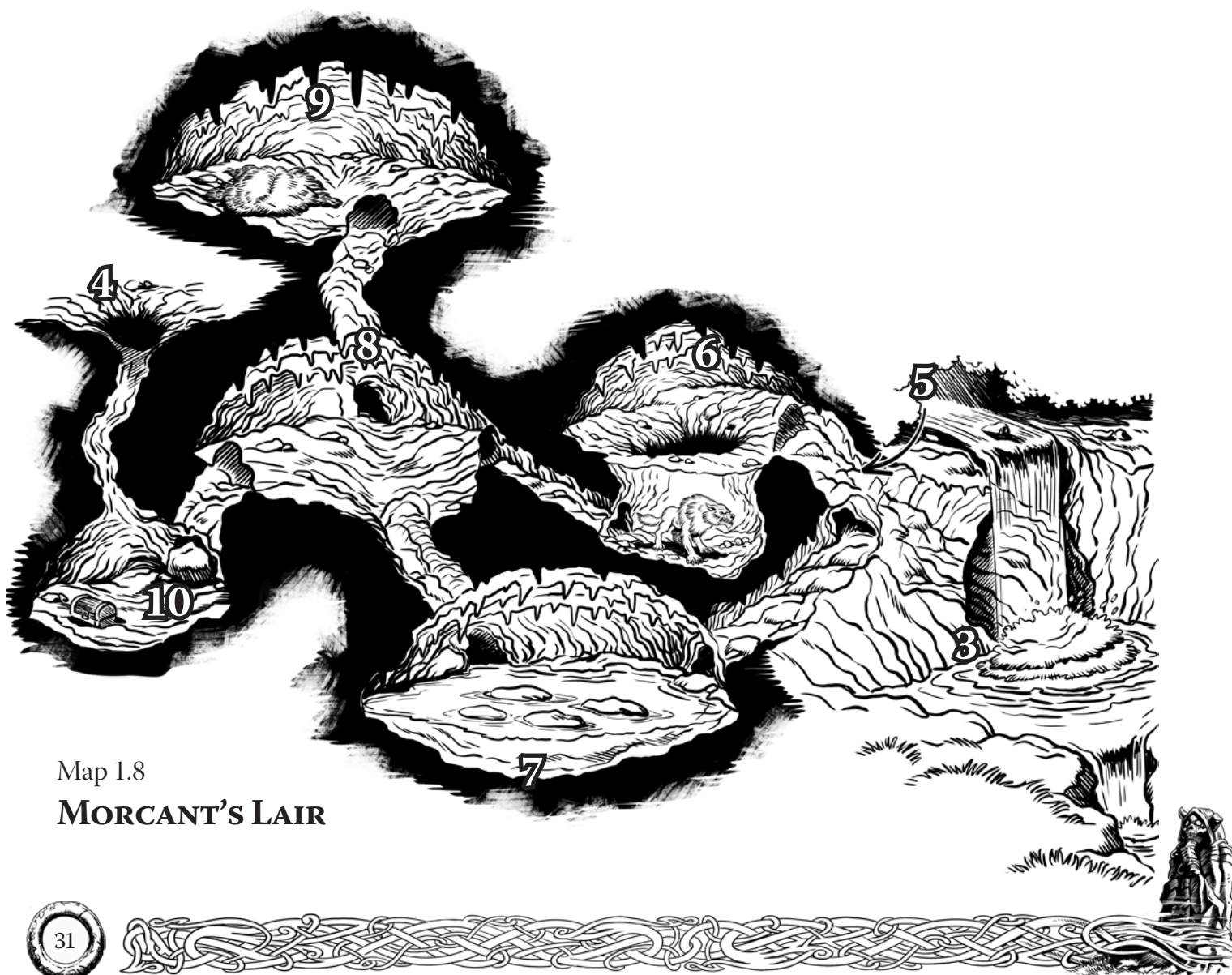
7. **Flooded cave:** This cave is almost completely occupied by a *wide pool* of very cold water. Four *flat stones* emerge from it, offering what seems to be an easy crossing. The water is not very deep (it's knee-high in its deepest point), but it's murky, so it's difficult to guess its depth without entering the pool. The stones were placed here by Morcant as a trap, and are actually *quite unstable*. Characters using them to cross the pool will fall in the water unless they make a Very Hard (-30) Acrobatics Roll. This causes no damage, but the noise will warn Morcant of the presence of intruders in his lair.

LEFTY

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|---------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 3 | 40L | NA | 30 | 15 | 5 | 110 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +70 MeB | | | NB | 30 | 50 | 0 |

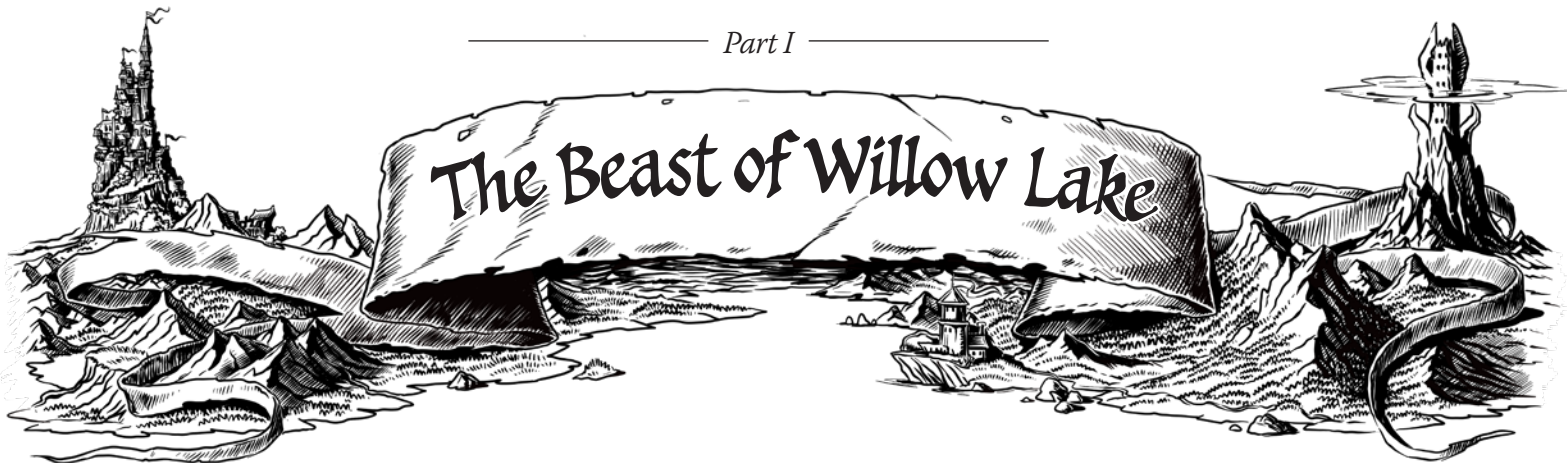


8. **Main room:** This room's floor is cluttered with filth and with several half-eaten sheep carcasses. A huge cleaver (treat as a -10 battle axe) leans against the western wall. A *stinking pit* opens on the floor in a corner of the cave, leading to the Wolf's pit. During the day, there's a **20% chance** that Morcant will be here, gnawing on an old bone.
9. **Sleeping room:** Most of the time (80% chance), Morcant will be here during the day. Hidden under the smelly bear skin he uses as bedroll there is his most prized possession: a *small silver pendant* with a tear-shaped green stone. The item is clearly of Elven design, and moderately enchanted. The stone will shine faintly in darkness and grants a magical +10 bonus to the wearer's **WSR**. If worn openly, the pendant will also grant a +10 bonus to the wearer's Charisma Rolls when dealing with enemies of the Darkmaster.
10. **Larder/Treasury:** This is where Morcant keeps most of his stuff. He blocked the entrance by placing a *large boulder* in front of it. The boulder can be pushed aside with a Very Hard (-30) Athletics Roll. Inside the PCs can find: the remains of several butchered sheeps; a couple of swords in their scabbards; a metal helmet, engraved with the motif of a horse; a half-empty cask of Dwarven mead; and a small wooden box with several silver coins (count as a TV2 value treasure).



Map 1.8

MORCANT'S LAIR



The Beast of Willow Lake will pit the Player Characters against a treacherous plot of murder and mislead. They will possibly be tricked into thinking that a wild beast -later revealed as an old troll -is responsible for the disappearance of some livestock and two people: Eamon the Warden and Archiebold the Halfling. Actually, the Troll was responsible for livestock theft, but not any of the two murders. Instead, both were somehow ordered by Wulfric, Willow Lake's Thane - one actually committed by himself, the other by his henchmen, a group of Northmen mercenaries hiding in the woods.

The characters will face both the Northmen, the hazards of the woods around Willow Lake (including a burial mound crawling with nasty things), and possibly the old Troll Morcant and his pet Wolf companion.

THE TALE

Some years ago a man came to Willow Lake, pretending to be a direct descendant of Ælfwine, the very first Warden of the vale. His name was Wulfric, he had a keen mind, was educated on the stories of the Past Ages, and had great charisma. He knew secrets about the past of the family of Ælfwine and the ancient traditions of the Wardens, so he could easily prove he was the man he was saying.

Whether his descent was true or not, he had secretly studied the Ways of Magic and was brought to the valley by the tale of a powerful artifact of ages past, hidden inside the depths of a ruined tower at the center of Willow Lake. His soul and mind had been for a long time already tainted by the soothing, twisted whispers of the Darkmaster, yet Wulfric had not come to realize it wholly, believing instead of acting on his free will.

Thanks to his personality, Wulfric soon became a prominent figure among the inhabitants of Willow Lake: willingly they gave him the title of Thane with all related powers. Wulfric took residence in the old Thane longhouse, and arranged a small court of town guards, both from locals and from foreign people he brought from outside the valley: highly trained soldiers and mercenaries from the north.

Then he turned his attention to his true goal: the Elvenstone buried somewhere under the ruins of the tower of Dùn Tùr. He knew that the key to the ruins -and thus to the Elvenstone- was the Elven amulet of the Town Warden. Therefore he tried to befriend Eamon, the last Warden in charge, hoping to convince him of handing him the medallion, promising great rewards and gratitude from his "Master".

Eamon, although a simple man, was not a fool at all and denied his help to Wulfric, threatening to openly denounce his attempt to bribe him. Disappointed, Wulfric killed Eamon by his own hands, took the amulet from him, and sunk his body in the lake. He then fabricated false evidence, suggesting that the Warden has gone wandering the countryside, got lost in the woods, and had perhaps fallen prey to some wild beasts.

Having known that recently a wild old Troll named Morcant had come to establish himself in the woods near Willow Lake, Wulfric began spreading rumors of "The Beast of Willow Lake". This way, he intended to both mislead any investigation on Eamon's disappearance, and instill fear in the villagers, to make them more controllable, in preparation for the final phase of his machinations.



THE TASK

The main objective of this adventure is to search the woods and discover who's behind the recent thefts and disappearances.

If the characters manage to track down Morcant, finding out his role in the incidents troubling Willow Lake, the task can be considered complete, and you can proceed to the second part of the adventure.

The adventure also ends after four days from its start. If the PCs are still investigating at sundown on the fourth day, you can still proceed to the second part, but must consider their task failed.

STARTING THE PLAYERS

It is suggested that the characters start already in Willow Lake at the beginning of the adventure, possibly sitting at the Dancing Trout Inn, or simply minding their own business about town.

The adventure starts with Bella Ravenlock running into town from her farm in tears, announcing the disappearance of her husband and crying for help.

Wulfric will grab the chance to offer a big reward (which he obviously has no intention of paying) to anyone who'll bring him the head of the vicious beast who stalks the woods, which he publicly blames for all recent troubles.

Heroes volunteering to help will be cheered by the bystanding crowd, and offered a free room at the Dancing Trout Inn for the duration of their hunt.

If the players are using the pregenerated characters, they'll find plenty of reasons to be interested in the adventure in their Passions and background. If, on the other hand, you're using your own characters, it is suggested that each of them ties at least one of his Passions to the situation at hand.

AIDS

Niall the innkeeper will offer the characters a free stay at his inn, and will provide them with rations at a reasonably discounted price (business is business, after all). Other than that, the inhabitants of Willow Lake will gladly give the characters any information they have about the disappearances, the lay of the land, and

the sightings of the beast of the woods.

Most of them are, however, too scared to follow them in their adventure, and none will risk entering the Troll's lair or traversing the woods at night.

OBSTACLES

Following the Troll's tracks and finding his lair won't be easy. He's a cunning and expert bushwhacker, and the years have made him a tad paranoid, so he's as careful as a Troll can be when leaving his hideout.

Moreover, the PCs will have to deal with the forest's natural hazards and treacherous terrain, and may even be ambushed by Wulfric's men or by a wild animal.

However, the characters' greatest enemy in this adventure will be time. The heroes cannot know it yet, but the hordes of the Darkmaster are marching toward Willow Lake. They only have a few days to solve the mystery before they arrive.

REWARDS

While Wulfric promises to pay a hefty fee for a solution to the town's problems, the real reward for this adventure will be the eternal gratitude of the inhabitants of Willow Lake.

Morcant will also offer part of his treasure (which the characters are of course free to plunder, if they manage to defeat him) in exchange for his life.

HAZARDS & ENCOUNTERS

TRACKING MORCANT

Characters can follow Morcant's tracks either from one of the attacked farms just out of town, or from the shores of the lake. However, the old Troll knows well that stealing from humans is bound to attract the attention of would be Troll-hunters, so he took some precautions to avoid being followed to his lair.

He made several false trails to lead eventual pursuers astray in the forest. Clueless hunters following these trails will find themselves walking in circles or even led to the den of some dangerous beast.





Tracking the Troll requires a Very Hard (-30) Hunting Roll. Remember that characters can cooperate to improve their chances of success, using the Helping rules. Should they manage to bring Padraig's dogs with them, the roll Difficulty drops to Challenging (-10).

In case of Failure or Partial Success, the GM can use any of the hazards presented below as a complication, but the most appropriate would probably be an encounter with Wild Beasts, some Natural Obstacles, or Perils from the Ancient World.

Baiting the Troll

Ingenious characters may think of baiting the Troll with food to lure him into a trap, instead of following him to his lair.

Willow Lake residents will tell them that they've already tried a similar solution without success but won't discourage this approach.

To lure Morcant the PCs will need a bait (hopefully a sheep or some other animal!) and a Hard (-20) Hunting Roll.

Keep in mind that the Troll will be extremely wary, and would rather flee than fight in an open field, particularly if outnumbered.

A failed roll could mean the characters lured a completely different kind of predator (like a bear or a pack of wolves) or that Morcant manages to snatch the bait right under their noses, avoiding their trap altogether.

— NAVIGATING THE FOREST —

Moving around the town of Willow Lake (to the Lake, or the Old Sawmill, for example) is quite easy, as long as the characters stay on the path.

However, navigating through the forest without a guide can be more problematic, and requires a Standard (+0) Wandering Roll. In case of Failure or Partial Success, the GM can use any of the Hazards presented below as a complication for the characters to face.

— EXAMPLE OF HAZARDS —

Weather

Characters could be caught in a sudden storm, soaking them to the bone and making them Weary unless they find shelter.

Alternatively, a thick mist could rise, enveloping them and making them lose their way. If this happens, the GM should simply select a random location from the map in secret, and have the PCs find their way out from there.





Natural Obstacles

The most common obstacle in the woods would be a large boulder or the fallen trunk of a tree, blocking the path and forcing the characters to either find a way around it (with a Wandering Roll), or some other means to pass it.

Wild Beasts

A small pack (4 to 6) of hungry Wolves could start following the PCs from distance while they're travelling in the forest, harassing them with quick hit and run assaults until chased off.

Lone or wounded characters could instead be attacked by some of the Gorcrows from the Cairn, seeing them as an easy prey.

Around the Lake, the character could encounter one of the local Tusked Boars, infamous for their territoriality and bad temper. Particularly unlucky characters, or those wandering too far north, near the mountain, could end up encountering a Dire Bear, which could prove an opponent even deadlier than the forest Troll.

Minions of Darkness

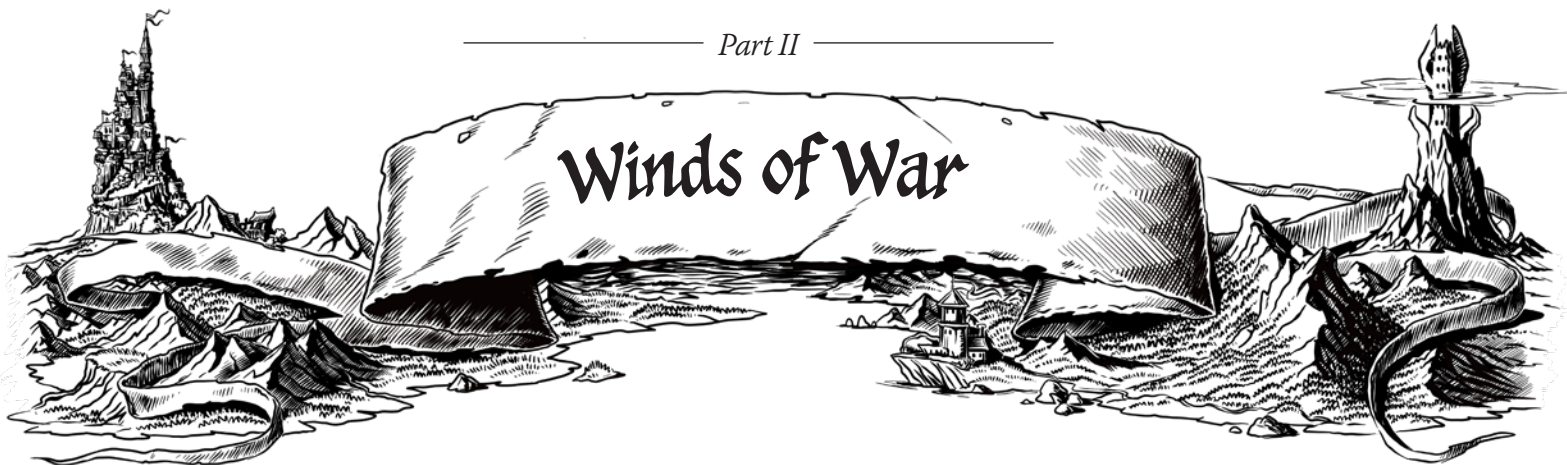
Characters exploring the northernmost side of the map can also meet small bands (3-5) of evil Northmen of the same tribe as Ivarr and his companions. Better equipped than the men staying at the Hunter's Cabin, they all carry wicked arming swords of black iron, shields, and short bows. They're scouting the area to pave the way for the Darkmaster's forces, and will try to kill anyone who spots them.

Perils from the Ancient World

Travellers in the forest sometimes find themselves following a path that leads them in front of the Ruined Burial Mound, its stone door mysteriously open, as if to invite them to enter the ancient tomb...

Alternatively, one wrong turn could bring the characters to the spiders' hunting ground in the Tainted Trees.





In *Winds of War*, the heroes will have to choose between running after Wulfric, the evil Thane of Willow Lake or saving the town from a Redcap incursion. Surrounded by enemies on all sides, they'll have to carefully consider their moves, and will soon realize that their actions could determine the fate of the Nine Kingdoms.

THE TALE

While the heroes were busy investigating the mystery surrounding The Beast of Willow Lake, a Redcap warband, led by a vicious Dark Orc known as Morkurz the Vengeful, sneaked into the valley. They're the advance force of a much larger army, the largest the Nine Kingdoms have seen in centuries, assembled by the Darkmaster with a single purpose: to crush the Free Kins once and for all.

Meanwhile, Wulfric's time is running short. Having failed to uncover the secret of the Warden's Medallion, and afraid of disappointing his unforgiving Master, the self-proclaimed Thane of Willow Lake decides to attempt a desperate gambit. Aided by magic, he sneaks out of town to perform a terrible necromantic ritual; one that will finally grant him what he's looking for.

THE TASK

The heroes will have to face several different problems in this adventure. They'll have to deal with Hakon and his mercenaries, find a way to stop Morkurz's warband, save Nevynn, and unveil Wulfric's diabolical plan, among other things.

The main goals of this part of the campaign, however, are to save Willow Lake from the Redcaps and learn of the huge army that's about to invade the Nine Kingdoms.

Proceed to the third part of the adventure if the heroes defeat all the present threats, or if they decide to head to the island in the middle of the lake.

STARTING THE PLAYERS

This adventure starts right where *The Beast of Willow Lake* ended. By now, the PCs should already be familiar with the town of Willow Lake, its inhabitants, and the woods surrounding it. They'll probably have solved the mystery of the disappearances, or at least realized that there's something wrong going on here, something far worse than a few missing sheep.

Depending on how the previous part of the campaign ended, you could start with the heroes coming back to town, only to find that Wulfric is "ill" and won't receive them (see "Dealing with Hakon" below), or by having them run into a group of Redcap wolfriders (see "Battle for Willow Lake").

If you haven't played *The Beast of Willow Lake*, start with the Redcaps attacking the windmill; it will immediately give them something to do, and will set all the other events in motion.

AIDS

Once they realise that the heroes are their only hope of surviving the coming onslaught, the people of Willow Lake will help them to the best of their capabilities. If freed, Nevynn will prove an invaluable source of information, despite his poor health conditions.

OBSTACLES

The heroes risk being overwhelmed by the sheer number of threats they'll be called to face. If the players use their head and tackle one problem at a time, they will have a chance of solving

them and achieving their goals. However, if they waste their time or underestimate their opponents, they'll find themselves attacked from multiple sides, and the situation could quickly escape their control.

REWARDS

The risks are great, but there's also much to be gained from this adventure. Not just in terms of monetary treasure, but also in the form of allies and personal status. If the character play their cards well, they're bound to become some of the most influential personalities in the area.





HAZARDS & ENCOUNTERS

There's much going on in this adventure, so we've decided to break down the major events here to aid the GM to keep track of what the villains are up to. However, keep in mind that this is not a script to be followed but simply a series of guidelines describing the villains' intentions.

The events portrayed here are bound to change once the heroes get involved. There's not a single "solution" to this adventure. Different groups could approach it in wildly different ways and get very different results.

GMs should be ready to improvise and adapt the material presented in this module to the choices of their groups.

— BATTLE FOR WILLOW LAKE —

The conflict against Mokurz and his band of Redcaps will probably be the most pressing problem the heroes are going to face in this adventure. Without the characters' help, the people of Willow Lake are doomed. They simply have neither the strength, nor the training to face a full assault from the Redcaps.

Use the Battle and War rules, treating Mokurz's warband as an enemy with a Menace Rating of 5.

Have the Redcaps start with a quick raid (6 to 8 Redcaps, depending on the size of the group, half of them wolfriders) against a minor location near town, like a farm or the windmill, to make the PCs aware of the coming danger. Make it clear that this isn't a random attack. The Redcaps could taunt the characters as they fight, saying that the great Mokurz has come and that their little town is doomed. Or they could spot more wolfriders watching them from a safe distance, running back into the woods if their companions are defeated.

Give the heroes some time to think and carry out their strategies before proceeding to the proper battle.

This could play out in a lot of different ways, but here's a few examples of plans the players could come up with, and their relative Menace Rating value:

- Arming and training the people of Willow Lake (Seven Samurai style), counts as a Minor Victory, reducing the enemy's Menace Rating by one point. It will keep at least one charac-

ter busy for the whole duration of the training, and will require a Challenging (-10) Charisma Roll.

- Placing a series of traps around the town perimeter, digging trenches, or preparing similar tricks counts as Minor Victory. It'll require resources, the help of part of the villagers, and at least a successful Challenging (-10) Hunting or Locks & Traps Roll.
- Convincing the mercenaries to help defend Willow Lake also counts as a Minor Victory, but only if Hakon has been dealt with.
- Assassinating Mokurz counts as a Moderate Victory, reducing the Redcaps' Menace Rating by two points.
- Killing Garmr awards no victory, but prevents him from carrying out his scheme.
- Recruiting Annis and her clansmen to the town's cause awards a Moderate Victory.

The outcome of this battle will have a huge influence on the rest of the campaign. Winning will obviously make things much easier for the heroes, but, even if they lose, they'll still be able to carry on with the adventure and get a chance to save the town later on.

— WULFRIC'S PLAN —

Wulfric knows he has no time to lose. He has to fetch the Stone before his Master arrives. As a last resort, he decides to attempt a forbidden necromantic ritual and wrest the secrets of the Medallion in his possession from the dead. It's a risky move, because, once summoned, the spirits of the dead aren't easily put to rest, but the Thane is quickly running out of options.

He'll sneak out of Willow Lake through the secret passage under his Longhouse, leaving the town under the care of Hakon, his accomplice, and head toward the Hills. There, at the ancient circle of Standing Stones, he'll carry out his ritual.

From the hidden exit under the Longhouse, characters can follow his tracks with a Challenging (-10) Hunting Roll (or listen to Nevynn and head to the Standing Stones). Keep in mind that Wulfric is taking great precautions to ensure he's not being followed, and that he might well be invisible for the first 24 hours.





The Ritual

The ritual will start at dusk and take several hours, culminating around midnight. Icy winds will begin to blow, gathering dark thunderous clouds above the hill, as it progresses. When Wulfric will utter the final words of the necromantic formula, a terrible storm will break out, sweeping across the whole region. Characters with at least one rank in the Arcana Skill will understand the storm has no natural causes, and can make a Hard (-20) Roll to locate its epicenter over the Standing Stones.

If Wulfric isn't disturbed, the ritual will be successful. He'll learn that the medallion he got from Eamon is a fake and where to find the real one.

If the heroes interrupt Wulfric, he'll lose control of the ritual, releasing a bunch (1d5+1) of angry Ghosts in the circle of stones. They'll attack any living being within the circle of stones indiscriminately. Meanwhile, bolts of lightning will fall from the sky on the top of the hill (10% each Round of hitting a random character, treat as a +60 Bolt Spells Attack dealing Lightning damage, with no maximum result), in what will be remembered as the worst storm of the century.

Wulfric will try to use the ruckus to disappear (using his Invisibility Spell) and fall back, but he'll keep following the party from a distance, waiting for a chance to strike them down.

If the Ritual Succeeds

Wulfric will hurry back to the Woods. He'll first stop at the cabin and persuade Ivarr, Harald, and Rolf to follow him (if they aren't there, he'll be forced to proceed alone, but will carry on with his plan nonetheless), then he'll head for the burial mound.

With the true medallion in his hands, unless the characters stop him, he'll make his way to the lake and sail to the Island of Mists with a small rowboat.

If the heroes get to the mound before him, the GM can have Wulfric appear later in the adventure for a final showdown.

— DEALING WITH HAKON —

Before leaving town, Wulfric told Hakon that their Master was coming and left him in charge of business in his absence.

The mercenary captain isn't as subtle as Wulfric but will nevertheless attempt to hide the fact that the Thane is missing at first.

He'll announce that Wulfric is ill, saying that he can't leave his room and won't see anyone until he gets better. He'll also add, very matter-of-factly, that since he's Wulfric's second-in-command, he'll be taking on the leadership of the town until the Thane gets better.

If the PCs confront him, demand to see the Thane, or make a nuisance of themselves in any other way, he'll order his men to seize them and lock them in the barracks until he figures out what to do with them.





Hakon will become a real problem if he's still around when the Redcaps attack. He'll try to sabotage any plans the heroes may come up with, either directly or by feeding them false information. He'll also attempt to persuade the other mercenaries that resisting the assault is pointless, and that they would be better off by joining forces with the Orc chieftain.

— GARMR AND THE WITCHES —

It will take Garmr a few days to locate the Witches' lair, and by then he'll be prepared to make his move. The spiders will pretend to consider his offer, but in the end they'll accept. The Brood-Egg is just too tempting, and they know that should they refuse, one of their sisters would find a way of striking a deal with Garmr without them.

The dark alliance between Garmr and the Witches will set in motion a chain of events that will resolve in the following days.

One day later

Heroes traveling through the Woods will discover the dessicated remains of a local animal, such as a deer, a tusked boar, or a wolf.

It shouldn't take long for characters examining the corpse to understand that the animal was attacked by a Giant Spider. A Hard (-20) Nature Roll will reveal that Giant Spiders usually drag their prey into their lair before consuming them. Finding one abandoned like this would suggest that the spider who killed it was either starving, in a great hurry, or both.

Three days later

Travelers in the Woods will find huge cobwebs blocking their path (treat them as an additional Hazard all characters passing in the forested area must face). The webs are Challenging (-10) to spot, and strong enough to trap even a grown man. Cutting them down is a Very Hard (-30) task, but they burn pretty well (dealing a Light Fire Critical Strike to whoever is trapped inside them). Characters trapped in the webs can also attempt to free themselves with a Challenging (-10) Athletics Roll.

Tampering with the webs in any way will attract one of the Witches, who'll quietly arrive 1d10 Rounds later. Depending on the situation, the spider could attack the heroes, or attempt to use them to cheat her sisters and steal the Brood-Egg from Garmr.

She'll point them toward the Redcaps' camp, telling them that one of them stole her egg and threatens to smash it if she doesn't do as he says.

Five days later

The Witches will poison one of the streams flowing from the Woods into the Rushing River. People in Willow Lake will start getting sick from drinking the tainted water (characters drinking water from the river must pass a **TSR** against an Attack Level 3 poison or be seized by terrible cramps lasting 1d5 hours and inflicting a -30 penalty to all Rolls; poisoned characters who drink more water will start Dying in 1d10 hours).

A Standard (+0) Healing Roll is enough to identify the source of this new sickness spreading through town, but it's quite obvious that Willow Lake can't resist for long without water.

— EXAMPLES OF HAZARDS —

Weather

Unseasonably freezing winds from the north could bring a sudden cold snap with them, threatening unprepared heroes with Exhaustion.

After the storm caused by Wulfric's ritual, a persistent rain could plague the area, increasing the Difficulty of all Hunting and Wandering Rolls by one step.

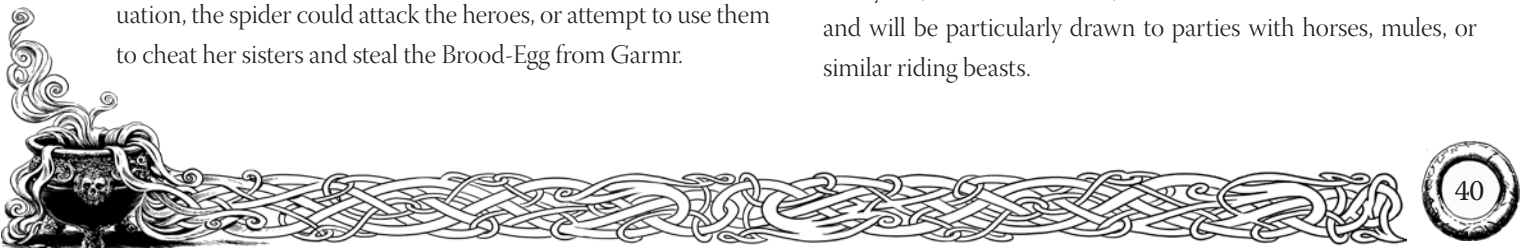
Natural Obstacles

The Hills are riddled with gullies, ravines, and tortuous passages. Without a guide, the heroes could easily become lost, or waste precious time following a path that leads to a dead end.

Wide patches of a poisonous plant known as Greyroot also grow in the area. Careless characters and those unfamiliar with the local flora could fail to recognize these dangerous plants and walk or lead their mount straight into them.

Wild Beasts

The eastern Hills are also the hunting grounds of the Great Spotted Lynx (use Great Cat stats). These animals aren't afraid of man, and will be particularly drawn to parties with horses, mules, or similar riding beasts.





Free People

Characters wandering through the Hills are likely to run into a group of local clansmen (2-6 individuals). There's a small chance (20%) that they'll be warriors belonging to the Viper Clan, who live further east in the Hills and are hostile to all outsiders. Otherwise, they'll be either from the Pike Clan (40%) or from the Bear Clan (40%), and will want to question the heroes to see if they're involved with their recent troubles.

Perils from the Ancient World

Some of the Hills are haunted by dark presences and echoes of tragedies long past. Locals avoid them and animals may refuse to step in their shadow, or suddenly bolt away frightened if they get too close to one of these places.





In this final part of the Shadows of the Northern Woods campaign, the heroes will travel to a mysterious island, face the wrath of a long-forgotten Elven queen, and save the vale from the powers of the legendary Stone of Annwn!

THE TALE

Swallowed each night by an eerie fog, the island at the center of Willow Lake has always been a place shrouded in mystery and legend. Some say it hides the tomb of a proud Elven queen, others that its mists are a door to the underworld.

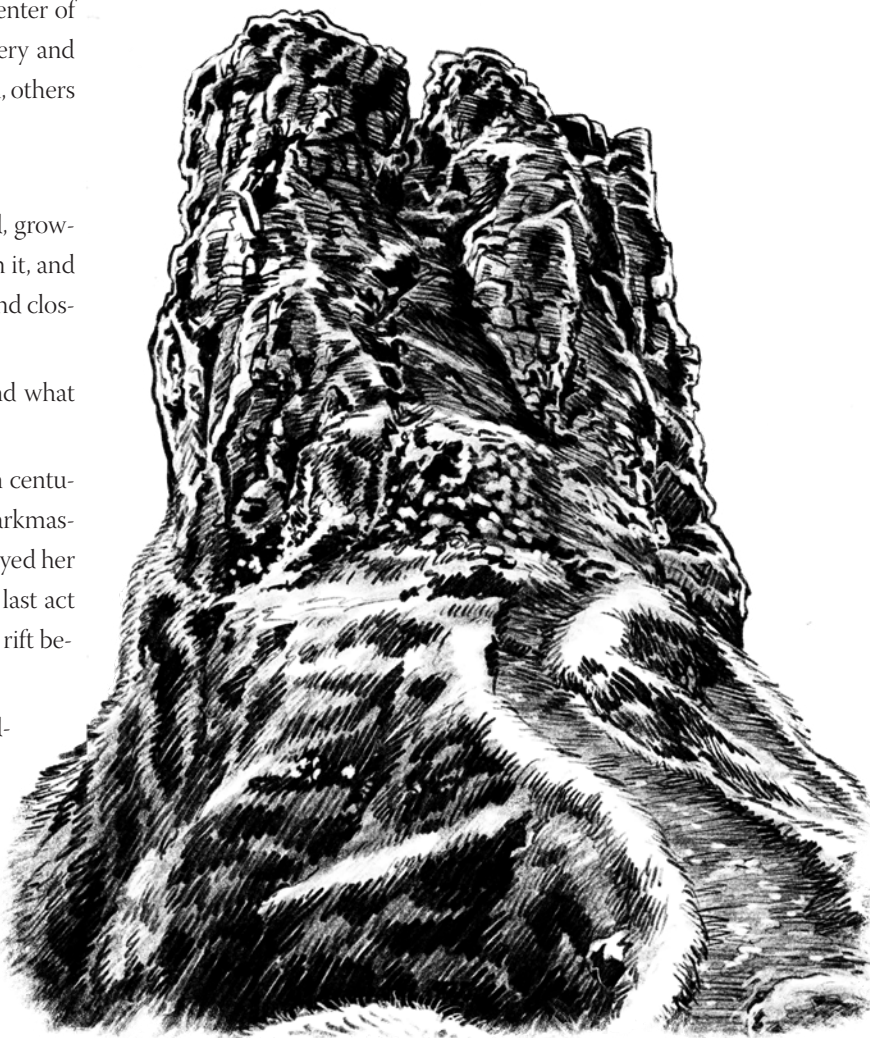
Usually the mists dissolve at dawn, but today they didn't.

A thick, swirling curtain of grey fog surrounds the island, growing visibly larger by the hour. Strange shapes move within it, and the distant baying of hunting hounds seem to get closer and closer as the mists spread.

What's the meaning of this unsettling phenomenon? And what will happen if the fog reaches the town of Willow Lake?

On the Island of Mists, Queen Bläithnaid has risen from centuries of self-imposed isolation. Sensing the armies of the Darkmaster approaching, and fearing a war like the one that destroyed her realm, she's fallen into despair and turned Unseelie. In a last act of defiance, she's decided to use her Elvenstone to open a rift between worlds and drag the entire vale into the Annwn.

If her plan succeeds, Willow Lake and all its surroundings will disappear forever, swallowed by the enchanted Mists of Annwn.



The Stone of Annwn

The Stone of Annwn (also known as the Tear of Annwn or the Elvenstone of Blàithnaid) is a relic of a forgotten age, a talisman of incredible power. It appears as a perfectly round jewel the size of a human fist, always uncomfortably cold to the touch.

The legends say it's the frozen tear of the True Lord of Annwn. The only tear known to have ever left his eye, cried when he heard Queen Blàithnaid's lament for the passing of her mortal beloved.

The Stone is rumored to possess a multitude of powers, from granting eternal youth and prosperity, to bringing the dead back to life. In truth, however, the Stone is a key to Annwn, the realm between the mortal world and the land of the dead.

It allows its wielder to open a gate and travel through this timeless realm, disappearing without leaving a trace, or covering even hundreds of kilometers in the mortal world in the blink of an eye.

The more skilled and powerful the wielder is, the larger the gate created by the Stone, the longer their permanence in the Annwn, and the more they can carry with them. An initiate of the mystical arts could use the Stone to vanish for a short time, while a master enchanter could take a whole contingent of soldiers with them and deploy them right in the middle of an enemy kingdom.

POWERS

The Stone's primary power is that of opening small passages through the Annwn, allowing its wielder to travel at almost instant speed to virtually any location in the mortal world.

Characters wishing to use the Stone must concentrate on their desired destination for a few minutes while holding it in their hands and make an Arcana Roll with a Difficulty based on how many people they wish to bring with them.

Very Hard (-30): just the character holding the Stone;

Extremely Hard (-40): the holder and a handful of nearby allies;

Heroic (-50): the holder and tens of followers;

Insane (-70): the holder and anyone they can see.

The result of this Roll determines what happens next:

Critical Failure: Disaster! You lose your grip on the Stone as you're traveling through the Annwn. You're thrown into a location chosen by the GM and the Stone is nowhere to be seen.

Failure: Your will isn't focused enough to channel the energy necessary to activate the Stone. Nothing happens, but you're made *Weary* by the effort.

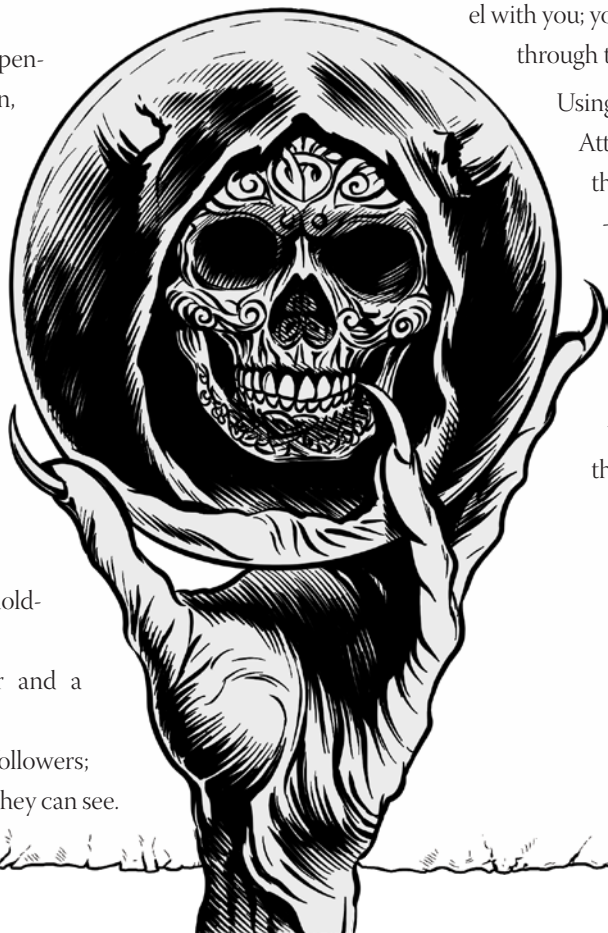
Partial Success: You manage to activate the Stone, but something goes wrong during the travel through the Annwn. Choose one of the following options: you arrive exactly where you were planning to; the companions you've chosen travel with you; you don't lose anything in your passage through the Annwn; you are not *Weary*.

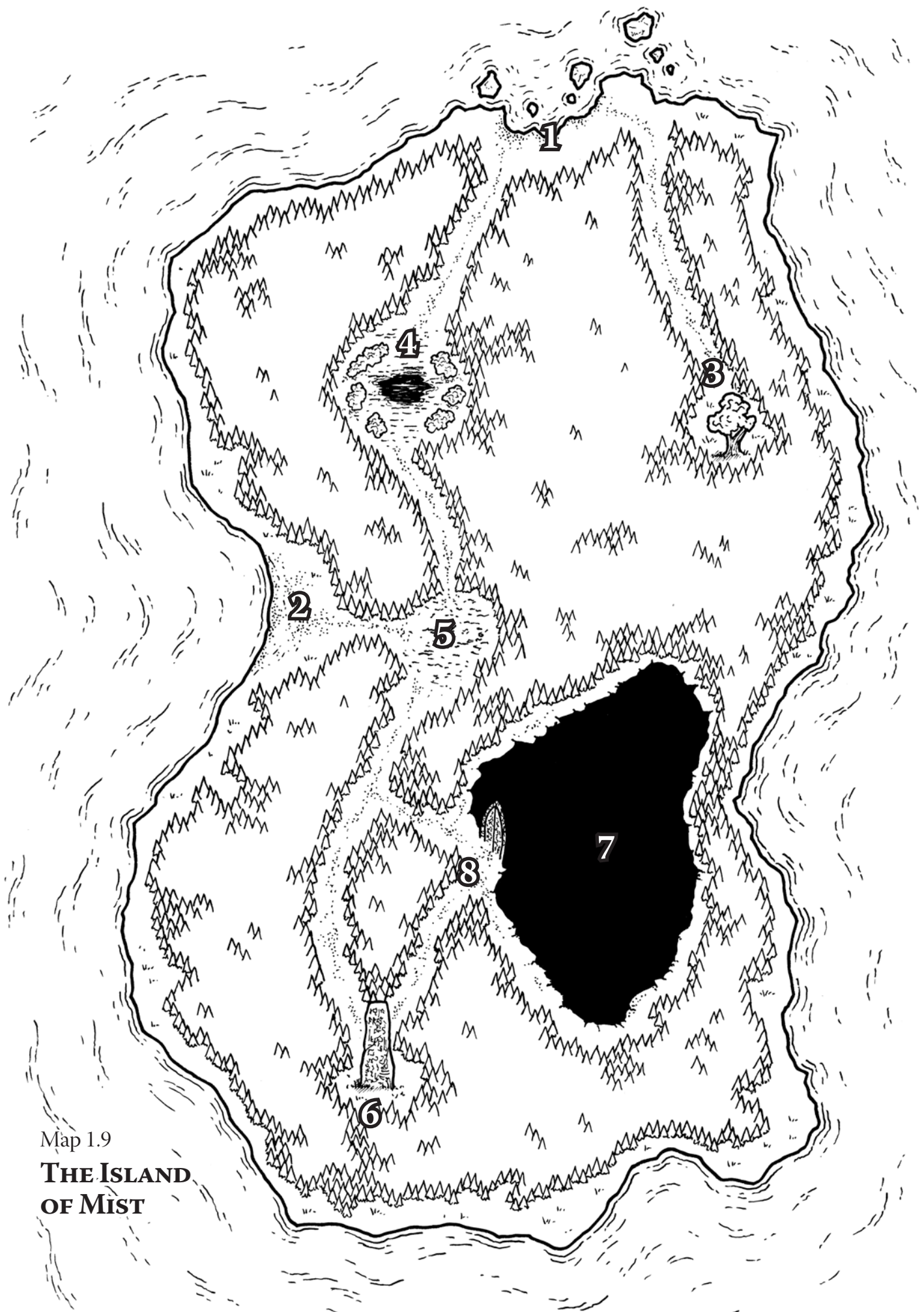
Success: You activate the Stone and travel through the Annwn suffering little consequences. Choose two of the following options: you arrive exactly where you were planning to; the companions you've chosen travel with you; you don't lose anything in your passage through the Annwn; you are not *Weary*.

Outstanding Success: Your mastery of the Stone's powers allows you to easily activate it and travel safely through the Annwn. Choose three of the following options: you arrive exactly where you were planning to; the companions you've chosen travel with you; you don't lose anything in your passage through the Annwn; you are not *Weary*.

Using the Stone of Annwn is exhausting. Attempts to channel its powers more than once in a day suffer a cumulative -20 penalties.

The artifact may well have other uses (as clearly demonstrated by Blàithnaid), and its possessor may undergo a Solo Adventure while in a Safe Haven to unearth them.





Map 1.9

**THE ISLAND
OF MIST**

Layout of the Island

1. **Rocky Shore:** Jagged rock formations jutting out of water makes this spot less than ideal for anchoring. Two small *pebbly paths* depart from the shore, diving into the trees.
2. **Desolate Lake Bank:** This small muddy beach is carpeted with hundreds of *rotten flower crowns*. The sweet stench of their decay fills the air, and a strange melancholy hangs over the place. Characters will receive *no benefits from resting here*.
3. **Ancient Grove:** *Drwnych* sits at the heart of the thick grove of ancient, mossy trees covering most of the island.
Roll on the *Drwnych Disposition Table* each time the heroes enter this area, to determine what *Drwnych*'s doing and its general disposition.
4. **Blighted Gardens:** The catastrophe turned these once beautiful gardens into a *putrid bog*. A stream of dark, fetid water crosses it, cutting it virtually in half and diving into a *black pool* that occupies the deepest point of the bog. Prolonged contact with its water will make characters sick (Attack Lev-

el 5 **TSR** or -30 to all Rolls for 1d10 hours), but the greatest danger here is the *Kelpie* that claimed the gardens as its domain. It never strays too far from its lair in the pool, but it's perpetually hungry and has a twisted sense of humor. *Drwnych* hates it, because it kills its Saplings whenever it can, and will be greatly pleased if someone brings it proof of the *Kelpie*'s demise. On the other hand, the *Kelpie* is a creature of the Annwn and can use the black stream to cross the Rift and return to its home. It could be convinced to transport the PCs into the Annwn, should they find a way to reason with it or offer it a suitable reward (fresh meat, particularly from sentient creatures, is greatly appreciated).

KELPIE

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|----------|-------|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 7 | 40S/L | LA | 40 | 50 | 50 | 180 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +100LaBi | | | NB | 35 | 50 | 0 |

DRWNYCH DISPOSITION TABLE

| Roll | Event |
|------|---|
| 1-2 | <i>Drwnych</i> is slumbering. It's almost indistinguishable from a normal tree in this state, save for the occasional moving branch or groaning noise. It will sleep for 2d5+2 hours, but can be awakened by prodding, loud noises, or similar interactions. |
| 3 | Pollen saturates the air around <i>Drwnych</i> , filling it with a sweet flowery scent. Dwarves and Trolls will keep sneezing (-20 to all activities while they're here and for 1d10 Rounds after they leave). Elves and Wildfolk will find it inebriating (will be unable to take Full Actions until they leave). Members of other Kins will suffer no ill effect from the pollen. |
| 4 | <i>Drwnych</i> is in a joyful and amicable mood. Heroes will find travel through the grove swift and pleasant, the very air within the trees somehow refreshing and invigorating (any Weary character will be healed of their Weary Condition).. |
| 5-6 | 2d10 Saplings are gathered around <i>Drwnych</i> , quietly listening to the tree's whispers. As long as they're here, they'll strongly oppose anyone entering the grove, resorting to violence if necessary. If they're not disturbed, the Saplings will leave about one hour later. |
| 7 | <i>Drwnych</i> is having an argument with itself about a complex, but ultimately pointless, philosophical matter (such as exactly how many different spirits could sit upon a single blade of grass; or if Saplings are to be considered individual manifestations of its own essence, or essential manifestation of its own individuality). It will go on muttering to itself for hours, growing increasingly frustrated. Characters can attempt to join the debate in order to gain <i>Drwnych</i> 's favor. Use role-playing and a series of Conflicting Actions with relevant Skills (Arcana, Deceive, and Charisma are good candidates) to play this out.. |
| 8 | <i>Drwnych</i> doesn't want to be disturbed and will rearrange all paths in the grove so that they'll lead those following them back from whence they came. |
| 9-10 | <i>Drwnych</i> is suspicious, and wants proof that the PCs aren't servants of the Darkmaster (it won't recall any previous meeting with the PCs). It will either silently observe their actions as long as they stay in the grove or demand they pass some kind of test to prove themselves. |

[5.3]





5. **Ancient Battlefield:** This is where Sabeorht's army made its camp and laid siege to the Tower's walls. Most of it was washed away when the glacier melted, or has been reclaimed by nature with the passing of centuries, but characters crossing the area can still see the signs of the great battle that was fought here, bones and pieces of weapons or armor littering the ground.

A **huge chunk of black ice** lies in the middle of the area, the shining handle of a **silver spear** sticking out of it, immaculate as if someone planted it just the day before the PCs' arrival. The air is **unnaturally cold** in the proximity of this bizarre ice formation, and living beings touching it will suffer a Light Frost Critical Strike.

Trapped within the ice, are the remains of the great Fellwing Sabeorht used to ride into battle. Characters examining it up close will be able to make out its shape, barely.

The spear can be pulled out with a Heroic (-50) Athletic Roll, but doing so will also free the beast, who'll attack any living creature nearby (treat it as a **Large Undead Thrall**, dealing an extra Frost Critical Strike with its Claw attack). The spear is called Moonsliver; it's a +20 magical weapon that will never rust or break, and once a day will inflict an additional Moderate Frost Critical Strike when thrown against a servant of the Darkmaster.

LARGE UNDEAD THRALL

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|---------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 8 | 12L | NA | 0 | 65 | -10 | 100 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| 90LaCl | | | NB | 0 | 0 | 0 |

6. **The Stele:** An ancient **alabaster stele**, carved with complex geometric and floral patterns, mud-splattered and half-sunk into the ground. Scholars well-versed in Elven arts (Extremely Hard Culture Roll) will recognize it as a cenotaph, probably left by Bläithnaid in memory of her deceased lover. Sabeorht and the Elven queen met before it the night of the ritual, and his **Specter**



still haunts the place, bound to it by dark magic and a burning desire for revenge. He'll attempt to deceive the heroes, feigning to be a benevolent ghost, and offering them his sword to help them in the fight against Bläithnaid. Should a character be so foolish to accept his offer, he'll immediately attempt to possess them.

SABEORTH

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|--------------------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 8 | 15F | NA | 60 | 50 | 70 | 100 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| Special / +100 Wpn | | | HH | 50 | 40 | 100 |

Undead, Specter special abilities and immunities, linked to Reaver; a +20 Elf-Slayer magic longsword.

7. **The Rift:** Dün Tūr, the ancient Eventide Tower that once held Bläithnaid's court vanished, leaving behind a **great black hole** in the ground, a rift between worlds, out of which the Mists of Annwn flow. The darkness of the pit is absolute and will give any character looking into it a sense of uneasiness, loss, and despair. It has no bottom, and no living creature can hope to cross it. Characters attempting to descend by normal means will **disappear into the darkness**, never to be seen again (though a magnanimous GM may have them be swallowed by the Mists and reappear into a different mist-claimed area instead).
8. **The Gate:** There's an imposing **gate of tarnished silver** at the edge of the abyss, standing against the darkness despite the lack of any support. The gate is shut and is carved with intertwined hound motifs. Upon closer inspection, the characters will notice a **small depression** on the Gate, where one of the carved dogs is missing. If they have the true Warden Medallion, they'll see it fits perfectly in it.

If the Medallion is placed in the slot, the Gate will vanish, leaving in its place a **bridge of solid mist** that will lead the heroes across the Rift and into the Annwn.



INTO THE ANNWN

There are several ways the heroes can cross the Rift and get into the Annwn. Some of them (the Gate, the Black Stream, the Silver Branch, and the Golden Apple) are detailed in this adventure, while others are left to the ingenuity of the players and the GM.

Regardless of the chosen method, the Rift will transport the characters to a specific location: a beautiful silver tower surrounded by a sea of mist.

Exploring the area surrounding the tower will yield little results, and characters wandering too far away from it risk losing themselves in the vast, formless realm of the Annwn.

Inside the tower, Blàithnaid awaits the completion of her ritual. If she's aware of the heroes' approach, she'll use her magic to test them and gauge their intentions (starting with some illusions to conceal her presence and study their attitude, but switching quickly to more aggressive Spells should they prove dangerous).

If they seem reasonable, she'll reveal herself and kindly ask them to leave her to her sorrow.

Appeals to higher ideals and pleads to join the fight against the Darkmaster will be met with derision and scorn, but Blàithnaid can be convinced to renounce her plan if the characters prove her that their way will cause the Darkmaster more harm.

BLÀITHNAID

| Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs |
|-------------------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 9 | 15L | NA | 60 | 55 | 70 | 100 |
| Attacks | | | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
| +100 Wpn / Spells | | | HH | 60 | 40 | 100 |

Banshee, see Bestiary for special abilities. She knows the following Spell Lores up to the 9th Weave, and can cast Spells from them without spending MPs (use her Lore Skill for the Spell Casting Roll): Elven Lore, Spell Songs, Eldritch Hand, Illusions, Eldritch Tide.





THE TASK

The goal of this adventure is quite straightforward: the heroes must find the source of the Mists and stop them from spreading before it's too late.

If the Mists cover the entire vale, their quest will fail; but that'll be the least of their concerns, as it'll probably mean that they'll be trapped in the Annwn without a clear way out.

STARTING THE PLAYERS

This adventure can take place right after the events of Winds of War, or as soon as the PCs get the true Warden's Medallion, or decide to head to the Island of Mists in the middle of the Lake (see "Reaching the Island" below).

If you're playing this as a stand-alone scenario, good ways of involving the characters are making them residents of Willow Lake or giving them personal reasons to search for the Stone of Annwn.

AIDS

If Nevynn is still alive, he'll help the party as much as he can. He'll probably be still too weak to follow them to the Island but can provide them with a couple of low-level Runes of Power, should they need them. He's most useful as a source of information, though. Having studied the subject for a long time, he'll be able to give the PCs some clues on Blàithnaid and the perils of the Annwn.

Injured characters will be assisted by Eileen, who'll dig into her healing herbs reserve to help them recover as quickly as possible.

OBSTACLES

To reach the Island, the characters will have to navigate the fog-covered areas and deal with the spirits of the Lake. Once there, they'll have to find a way of getting into the Annwn and stop Blàithnaid.

If Wulfric is still around, he may make another appearance before the end of the adventure for a final showdown with the heroes.

REWARDS

Heroes completing this adventure will have thoroughly proven themselves as true Wardens of Willow Lake, and may even be recognized as the new Thaness, should they wish to fill the vacant place and claim the title.

Moreover, they could come in possession of the fabled Stone of Annwn, an Elven artifact of wondrous power.

MIST PROGRESS TABLE

| Day | Area Covered |
|-----|--|
| 1 | Lake |
| 2 | Woods around Morcant's Lair and Hunter's Cabin |
| 3 | The Hills |
| 4 | Cairn and Old Sawmill |
| 5 | Tainted Trees and the Mound |
| 6 | Willow Lake |

[5.2]





HAZARDS & ENCOUNTERS

THE MISTS

The fog spreading from the island in the middle of the Lake is a manifestation of the Mists of Annwn, leaking out from the rift created by Bläithnaid with the Elvenstone. As the rift expands, the Mists advance, claiming more and more of the mortal world.

The Mists will creep out of the Island, slowly encircling Willow Lake. For each day since the start of the adventure check on the Mists Progress table to see which areas of the map get covered

by the Mists. If they reach Willow Lake, the whole area will be dragged into the Annwn and the adventure should be considered a failure.

Within the Mists, visibility is reduced to 1d5 meters for all, save those wearing a true Warden's Medallion, who'll be able to see up to about 20 meters.

Whenever the party crosses an area claimed by the Mists, the GM should have them face an additional special Hazard, picked or chosen randomly from the table below.

Some of these Hazards (marked by a *) are not-repeatable and can happen only once. Cross them off the list when the heroes face them, ignoring them if they're rolled again.

HAZARDS TABLE

| Roll | Hazards |
|------|---|
| 1* | A Great White Stag (treat it as a Sacred Beast) suddenly jumps right in front of the heroes. It will look straight at them for a moment, then run away. If they ignore it, they'll find its mangled carcass lying on their path a few hours later. A very bad omen. Unless a proper burial rite is performed, the heroes will be cursed to fail the first Save Roll they're called to make in the next 24 hours. Following it in its mad run, on the other hand, is an Extremely Hard (-40) task. Should the PCs succeed, before disappearing the White Stag will (roll 1d10) 1-3: Bless them, allowing them to automatically pass the first Save Roll they're called to make in the next 24 hours; 4-6: Truthfully answer a single "yes or no" question, as per Commune with the Spirits Spell, without Magical Resonance; 7-9: Gift them a single Golden Apple, miraculously growing from its antlers. The hero who'll eat the Golden Apple (and only that character) will be able to cross the Rift into the Annwn without any help.; 0: All of the above. |
| 2 | 1d5+2 Spectral Hounds (use Wolf stats, save that they're considered to be spirits rather than beasts and have the Otherworldly Special Ability) with a white coat and blood-red ears emerge from the Mists and attack savagely, unless one of the heroes is wearing the true Warden's Medallion. In that case, the Hounds simply watch the group from a safe distance, following them in complete silence for a while, before disappearing again into the Mists. |
| 3 | As the heroes advance, part of the Mists in front of them turns into a wall greenish, Foul-Smelling Vapors, blocking their path. The vapors are poisonous: animals will refuse to enter them, and vegetation in proximity of the wall gets sickly and quickly dies unless the fog is somehow dispersed. Characters breathing the vapors must pass an Attack Level 6 TSR or have their Total HPs reduced by 20% until cured. Avoiding the wall by going around it is possible, but will mean taking a long detour and losing several hours. |
| 4 | The PCs encounter a group of Orc Soldiers (2d5), coming from the mountains, who've been wandering in the Mists since they set foot in the vale. They're completely lost, and superstitious fear is slowly eroding their nerves. |
| 5 | The heroes are transported to another Random Location claimed by the Mists, regardless of the direction they were traveling to. |
| 6 | A deep, sudden Cold descends upon the area, covering everything in a thick layer of frost, as after a winter storm, and exposing unprotected characters to the dangers of frostbite and extreme weather. |
| 7* | 1d5 Northmen in blackened armors are fighting 2d5+1 Spectral Hounds. The Northmen are clearly losing, several of their companions already dead or dying on the ground. None of them speaks the local language. |
| 8 | The characters hear the Voice of someone they know in the Mists, pleading for help. It's just an illusion, and those following it are drawn deeper and deeper into the fog, until they're completely lost. |
| 9 | The area is mysteriously covered with knee-deep Dark Water, regardless of its position or closeness to a water source. |
| 10* | A random NPC from Willow Lake, looking disheveled and confused. They say they were dreaming of being chased by hounds, and have no memory of how they've got wherever they are. |

[5.3]





— REACHING THE ISLAND —

Reaching the Island of Mists is no simple matter. The Lake's waters aren't just turbulent, they're hostile. The spirits of the Lake resent Elves and mortals alike for the disaster they caused, and will actively oppose anyone trying to swim or sail across it.

Characters crossing the Lake will soon feel a malicious presence closing in on them; unseen, but with a clear murderous purpose. At the same time, they'll be beleaguered by a series of accidents and water-related obstacles, from strong opposing currents and whirlpools trying to suck them in, to hidden roots and branches entangling their feet underwater.

Treat the trip to the Island as a Chase (see the Movement and Traveling section of the Core Rules): the PCs against the water-spirits of the Lake.

Starting Distance is 1 for swimming characters and 3 for those on a boat. The water-spirits have a +80 general Adventuring bonus (used to oppose the characters with brute strength or test their endurance, for example by sending a powerful current against them) and a +70 Roguery bonus (used to play mischievous tricks, like suddenly snatching the oars from their hands).

Characters can try to identify their aggressor by making a Standard (+0) Arcana Skill Roll, which will confirm its supernatural nature and suggest it could be temporarily placated by a small sacrifice or offering.

An offering of fresh flowers counts as a single automatic Success in the Chase. A blood sacrifice (e.g. a lamb) counts as two Successes. Each of them has an effect only the first time it's made; additional offerings won't influence the Chase any further.

If the PCs lose the Chase, the water-spirits reach them and drag them underwater. They'll awaken Weary 1d10 hours later at the base of the Rocky Shore (Location 1), their boat gone (if they had one), and any non-waterproof piece of equipment they were carrying ruined.

If they win, the spirits will leave them be for the time being, and they'll be free to approach the Island however they want.

EPILOGUE

The end of this introductory campaign has been left intentionally open in order to allow the players and the GM to develop it as they see fit, in accordance with what happened during the game.

What they'll do with the Stone of Annwn and what happens next is completely up to them. If they managed to complete all three parts successfully, they'll have brought peace back to the vale (albeit temporarily) and should get a true heroes' welcome when they return to Willow Lake.

If, on the other hand, they've missed some of the objectives or failed to complete one or more adventures, the situation may be quite different, and the heroes may wish to solve unfinished business before moving on.

— FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS —

While Bláithnaid's threat may be over, and Wulfric's nefarious plans thwarted, there are still some questions left without a clear answer.

Who sent the letter in Dark Speech to Wulfric? How strong is the Darkmaster's army, and how can the Nine Kingdoms hope to survive its attack? What will the Elves of Dryv Covert do, now that the fate of their former Queen has been revealed? What will happen to the good people of Willow Lake?

You can use these questions (or other issues that came up during the game) as a starting point for your next adventures, either using the same characters who played *Shadows of the Northern Woods* or creating new heroes to explore different viewpoints.



NPCs STATS

| | Level | MR | AT | DEF | TSR | WSR | HPs | Attacks | CT | Rog | Adv | Lor |
|-------------------------------------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------------------|----|-----|-----|-----|
| Annis | 4 | 15L | NAs | 40 | 25 | 20 | 70 | +80 Wpn / +70 Ran | NH | 25 | 40 | 15 |
| Blàithnaid, | 9 | 15L | NA | 60 | 55 | 70 | 100 | +100 Wpn / Spells | HH | 60 | 40 | 100 |
| Crowspeaker Garmr | 3 | 17L | NA | 25 | 35 | 15 | 35 | +35 Wpn / Spells | NH | 30 | 5 | 45 |
| Drwnych | 20 | - | ME | 50 | 100 | 90 | 350 | +150 LGr / +150 LTr | EB | 75 | 120 | 90 |
| Eileen the Herbwife | 2 | 12L | NA | 10 | 10 | 25 | 30 | +10 Wpn / - | NH | 10 | 15 | 25 |
| Hakon | 5 | 15L | MEs | 40 | 45 | 40 | 100 | +110 Wpn / +60 Ran | NH | 30 | 60 | 10 |
| Ivarr, Harald and Rolf | 4 | 16L | LAs | 25 | 25 | 20 | 70 | +70 Wpn / +50 Ran | NH | 20 | 30 | 0 |
| Mokurz the Vengeful | 6 | 15L | MEs | 45 | 60 | 15 | 100 | +110 Wpn / +75 Ran | NH | 45 | 75 | 5 |
| Morcant the Old Troll | 6 | 10L | LA | 10 | 85 | 20 | 150 | +110 LCl / +100 Wpn | HH | 60 | 70 | 0 |
| Nevynn the Wise | 5 | 15L | NA | 0 | 25 | 55 | 45 | +25 Wpn / Spells | NH | 25 | 5 | 105 |
| One-Hand" Padraig | 1 | 15L | NA | 10 | 10 | 20 | 45 | +35 Wpn / +35 Ran | NH | 30 | 30 | 0 |
| Sabeorht | 8 | 15F | NA | 60 | 50 | 70 | 100 | Special / +100 Wpn | HH | 50 | 40 | 100 |
| Sapling | 3 | 15L | ME | 20 | 20 | 15 | 30 | +30SGr / - | NB | 35 | 20 | 5 |
| The Woad Witches of the Wood | 8 | 15L | NA | 50 | 55 | 45 | 100 | +100 HSt / +90 LPi | HB | 70 | 60 | 30 |
| Typical Hillman Warrior | 2 | 15L | NAs | 25 | 10 | 10 | 50 | +50 Wpn / +50 Ran | NH | 15 | 15 | 0 |
| Typical Mercenary | 3 | 15L | LAs | 25 | 25 | 20 | 60 | +70Wpn / +55 Ran | NH | 20 | 30 | 0 |
| Wulfric, | 6 | 15L | LA | 35 | 45 | 50 | 80 | +90 Wpn / +80 Ran | CH | 70 | 30 | 80 |



Athelstane the Black

Athelstane was born behind the walled defense of Castle Karthmere on the rocky cliffs of the Southern Reach of the Nine Kingdoms, cadet son to Lord Aethelred of House Crownsworth and Lady Eudelme of House Nanscaster.

Since he was born he was destined to assist his elder brother, Aethelbert, destined to rule over the joined lands of the two houses. He would have made for a great Guard Chieftain or Lord's Squire. With his father and brother's assent, he should have married a fair lady of a noble minor house, in order to to annex their lands and possessions to his House.

But this was not what Athelstane had in mind for himself. Considering himself far superior in physical qualities to his elder brother, Athelstane was convinced that he himself should have been the true heir of the House. His father advised him to tame his pride because not only strength and skill at arms does a ruler need to lead the household, but calmness, wisdom, and disposition; those last gifts his elder brother had instead inherited.

Yet Athelstane grew a deep resentment against his brother and father, because he felt wronged and underestimated. He refused all the official roles they offered him, considering them debasing for a man of his qualities. One evening during a banquet an altercation arose between him and a Knight from House Inverdean. Athelstane claimed his right to avenge the wrong in a duel. Vain were the attempts to solve the situation with diplomacy: Athelstane refused to withdraw his challenge, determined to prove his prowess and honor in the end.

So Redwald of Inverdean and Athelstane fought in a duel. The Knight was a veteran of many campaigns and quickly bested Athelstane. He was really angered by the young Lord's arrogance, determined to grant no mercy. Before he was able to land the killing strike, however, Aethelbert stepped into the battle himself and killed the Knight, saving his brother's life. This cost a strife between the two Houses that still rages on today. Athelstane was immediately exiled from his House's lands. From that day he dressed black and thus gained his epithet.

He moved to the capital of the Nine Kingdoms, the City of the White Walls. There he became one of the City Guard, trying to teach himself temperance and alle-

giance. He befriended (and soon fell in love with - apparently unpaid) a fair maiden: Mornien, an apprentice wizard.

One day Mornien received a message from her former mentor, the wizard Nevynn, summoning her for some unknown reason to a remote village to the northern border, Willow Lake. Athelstane decided to follow, to protect the lady and challenge danger.





Hit Points

85

Total

Current

Movement

Lightly
Encumbered

15

Encumbrance
Level

Move Rate

Wounds

Bleed _____ Stun ☐ Penalties _____

Conditions _____

Defense

SWI Bonus 15 Shield Bonus _____

Item Bonus _____ Spec Bonus _____

Wealth

3

Wealth Level

Gentry

Status

Melee Defense

15

Ranged Defense

15

Armor and Shield

| Armor / Shield | Type | Zones Protected | Max SWI to DEF | Move Penalty | CMB Penalty | Perception Penalty | Ranged Bonus | Melee Bonus | Qualities |
|----------------|--------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| Breastplate | Medium | Torso | +30 | -40 | | | | | Metal Rigid |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |

Weapons & Attack

| Weapons / Attacks | Hands | Length | Skill(s) Used | CR | Attack Table | Maximum Result | Primary Critical | Alternate Critical | Base Range | Qualities |
|-------------------|-------|--------|---------------|----|--------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|------------|-----------------|
| Greataxe | 2h | Long | Polearms | 6 | Edged | 175 | Cut | Impact | | Heavy, Mighty |
| Composite Bow | 2h | | Ranged | 5 | Missile | 150 | Pierce | | 25 | Load (1), Quick |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

Equipment

| Item & Description | Location | Item & Description | Location |
|----------------------------------|----------|--------------------------|----------|
| Enameled Breastplate | Worn | Greataxe +10 (Undamarth) | Hand |
| Composite Bow, Quiver and Arrows | Back | | |
| Horse (Orostar) | - | | |
| Arming Sword | Side | | |
| Black Velvet Cloak with Fur | Worn | | |

- [illegible]

Deirdre

Born under an auspicious moon, Deirdre has always shown an affinity with the spirits of Nature. During her early childhood, she was revealed to be a blessed Shapechanger, favored by the spirit of the fierce Mountain Lion, who protected her clan. She was separated from her family and became the pupil of the wise women of her village. With them, she learned to control her gifts, to ride the beast within her without losing herself in its rage and to call upon its strength to help her in time of need.

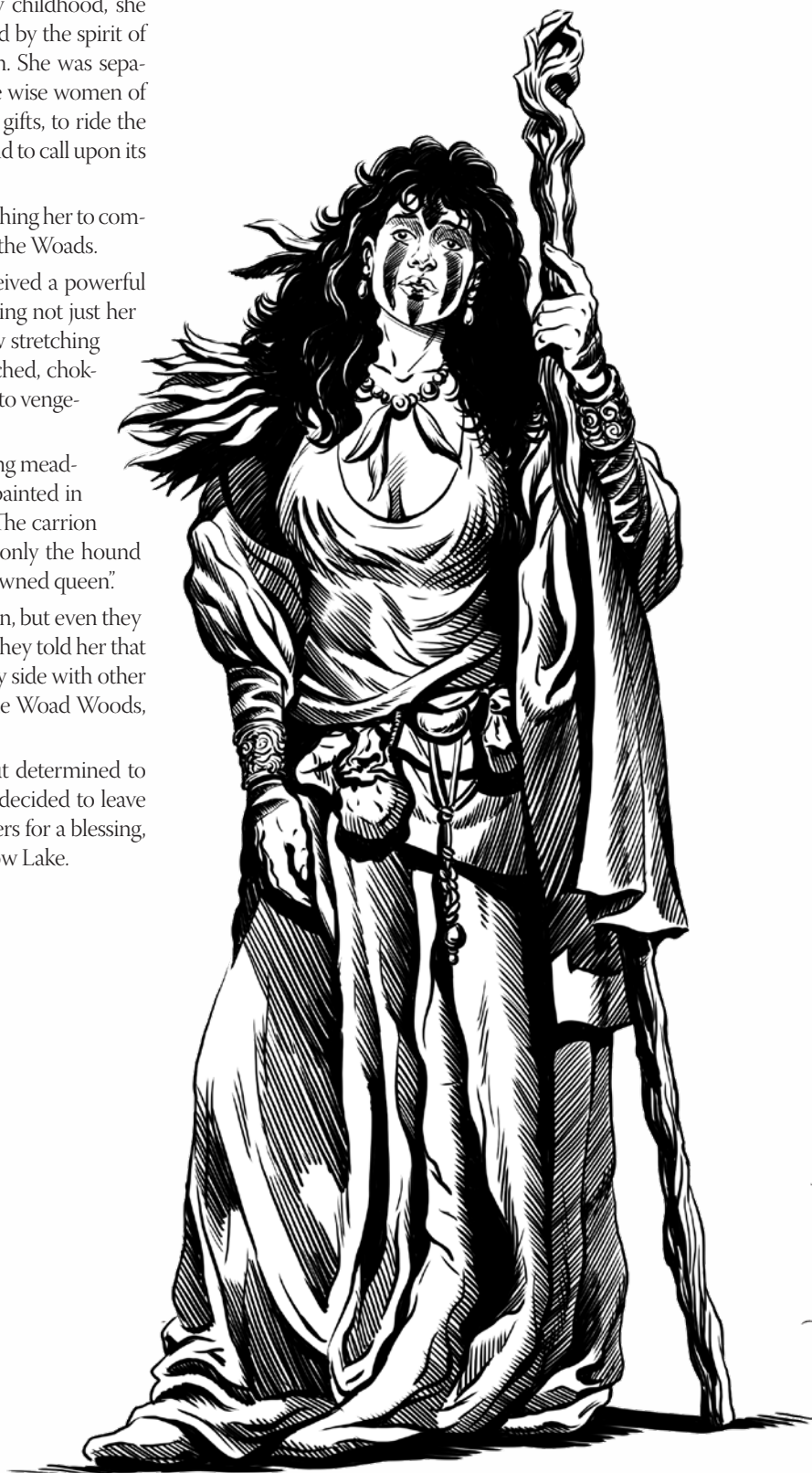
They also schooled her in the way of Animism, teaching her to commune with the spirits and the healing traditions of the Woads.

During her coming of age ceremony, Deirdre received a powerful vision, warning her about a grave danger, threatening not just her people but the whole land. She saw a dark shadow stretching over the woods and corrupting everything it touched, choking the life out of the trees and turning the spirits into vengeful ghosts.

Then a mighty voice spoke to her: "In the whispering meadow where the painted joined the ranks of the unpainted in battle, allies you'll find against the coming storm. The carrion crows gather where the starving wolf howls, but only the hound will guide you to the resting place of the flower-crowned queen."

She questioned her elderly teachers about her vision, but even they could not fully understand its meaning. However, they told her that the only place where the Woad once fought side by side with other "unpainted" people they knew was northeast of the Woad Woods, near a town named Willow Lake.

Still uncertain about the vision's true meaning, but determined to prevent the disaster she witnessed there, Deirdre decided to leave her home. She packed her things, asked her teachers for a blessing, and set out on her quest towards the town of Willow Lake.



Body (FOR)

Hit Points

55

Total

Current

Movement

Unencumbered

15

Encumbrance
Level

Move Rate

Wounds

Bleed _____ Stun ☐ Penalties _____

Conditions _____

Defense

SWI Bonus 0 Shield Bonus 0

Item Bonus _____ Spec Bonus _____

Wealth

0

Wealth Level

Outcast

Status

Melee Defense

0

Ranged Defense

0

Armor and Shield

| Armor / Shield | Type | Zones Protected | Max SWI to DEF | Move Penalty | CMB Penalty | Perception Penalty | Ranged Bonus | Melee Bonus | Qualities |
|----------------|------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |

Weapons & Attack

| Weapons / Attacks | Hands | Length | Skill(s) Used | CR | Attack Table | Maximum Result | Primary Critical | Alternate Critical | Base Range | Qualities |
|-------------------|-------|--------|---------------|----|--------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|------------|-----------|
| Quarterstaff | 2h | Long | Polearms | 6 | Blunt | 130 | Impact | | | |
| Dagger | 1h | Hand | Brawl | 1 | Edged | 120 | Pierce | | | Backstab |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

Equipment

| Item & Description | Location | Item & Description | Location |
|-------------------------|----------|--------------------|----------|
| Swirling Tattoos | Body | | |
| Simple Tunic | Worn | | |
| Quarterstaff | Hand | | |
| Bundle of Healing Herbs | Pouch | | |
| Dagger | Belt | | |

Magic Points

| Kin | Stat | Spec | Stat Gain/Lvl | Voc Gain/Lvl | TOT | Spent |
|-----|------------|------|---------------|--------------|-----|-------|
| — | <i>WSD</i> | — | 2 | 2 | 4 | |

Spell Lores

[illegible]

Companion Animal

| Name | | Animal Type |
|------|-----|-------------|
| Move | | Attack Type |
| HP | CMB | DEF |

Riding Animal

| Name | | Animal Type |
|------------|------|-------------|
| Ride Bonus | Move | Attack Type |
| HP | CMB | DEF |

Experience Points Tracking

- ☐ You travelled to or explored a location you've never seen before.
- ☐ You faced dangerous foes and/or difficult situations.
- ☐ You completed a mission or quest, or ended a significant story arc.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Maedoc the Cunning

Maedoc is a Rover, one of the irregulars who patrol the borders of the Dwarven Kingdom, keeping the roads safe from bandits and wild animals, and watching out for enemies and other dangers.

As such, he often traveled to the Mannish lands, together with his master Feargus Stoutbeard, either to escort a merchant's caravan or hunt some troublesome beast.

It was on one of these travels that he met Eamon the Warden. He was pursuing the leader of a gang of bandits, who escaped capture in the mountains and was trying to hide in the woods around Willow Lake.

When Feargus recruited the young Eamon to help them catch the fugitive, Maedoc was initially skeptical, doubting that a short-bearded Man could succeed where Dwarves had failed. However, when Eamon's knowledge of the territory led to the swift capture of the bandit, Maedoc had to change his mind about the man's capabilities.

Since that episode, the two ended up helping each other on multiple occasions and soon became very close friends.

Having completed his apprenticeship years with Feargus, now Maedoc works mostly alone. A few days ago, returning from a long scouting trip in the mountains, he found a carrier pigeon waiting for him, bearing a short message: "Dear friend, please come to Willow Lake as soon as you can; there's something I need to show you. Eamon."

Wondering why his friend couldn't be more specific, and troubled by the urgent tone of the message, Maedoc decided to leave immediately, heading towards Willow Lake.



Hit Points

75

Total

Current

Movement

Lightly
Encumbered

15

Encumbrance
Level

Move Rate

Wounds

Bleed _____ Stun ☐ Penalties _____

Conditions _____

Defense

SWI Bonus 20 Shield Bonus 15/5

Item Bonus _____ Spec Bonus _____

Wealth

2

Wealth Level

Commoner

Status

Melee Defense

35

Ranged Defense

25

Armor and Shield

| Armor / Shield | Type | Zones Protected | Max SWI to DEF | Move Penalty | CMB Penalty | Perception Penalty | Ranged Bonus | Melee Bonus | Qualities |
|----------------|--------|-------------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|
| Leather Armor | Light | Torso, Arms, Legs | 30 | -20 | -5 | | | | |
| Target Shield | Shield | Shield arm | | | | | | | Rigid |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |

Weapons & Attack

| Weapons / Attacks | Hands | Length | Skill(s) Used | CR | Attack Table | Maximum Result | Primary Critical | Alternate Critical | Base Range | Qualities |
|-------------------|-------|--------|---------------|----|--------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|------------|-----------|
| Handaxe | 1 | Hand | Blunt | 2 | Blunt | 130 | Cut | Impact | | |
| Thrown Axe | 1 | | Ranged | 4 | Missile | 120 | Cut | | 3 | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

Equipment

| Item & Description | Location | Item & Description | Location |
|--------------------|----------|--------------------|-----------|
| Leather Armor | Worn | Backpack | Shoulders |
| Handaxe +10 | Hand | | |
| Target Shield | Hand | | |
| Wineskin | Backpack | | |
| Twice-Backed Cakes | Backpack | | |

Gandrell Windblade

Gandrell Windblade was born in the secluded Elven village of Dàr Entheas. Despite being the son of an important academic figure, and having his life path open toward an eternity of research and lectures, Gandrell started to show a strong inclination toward the art of war since his early adolescence. It was with resignation that Adamar, his father, let him join the rangers that were in charge of patrolling the Elven Forest also known as Dryv Covert, keeping intruders out and escorting visitors safely to their destination.

Among those few welcomed visitors there was Nevynn, an old wizard who used to visit Gandrell's father to discuss the ancient legends and history of the Elven people.

It was during Nevynn's frequent visits that Gandrell not only grew fond of the old man, laying the foundation of a long friendship, but also learned about the legends surrounding the nearby human town of Willow Lake. According to the old man, Willow Lake was once an Elven settlement, but Adamar strongly rejected the notion, calling it a baseless rumor and refusing to discuss it.

Gandrell found his father's behavior quite strange, and became fascinated by Nevynn's stories about the small town and its mysteries. In the following years, he began to wander closer and closer to the Manish territories, meeting with Nevynn from time to time, to listen to his stories about the land beyond Dryv Covert. He also became acquainted with Nevynn's niece, Mornien, a funny little girl who followed him on his travels.

The years passed quickly, and Nevynn's visits became less frequent, but Gandrell never forgot the old man and his stories. One day Gandrell was out hunting alone, when a great white owl swooshed down from a tree, dropping a small roll of parchment right in front of him. Picking it up, with great surprise he discovered that it was a letter from Nevynn:

"My dear friend Gandrell,

Pardon me if I haven't contacted you in a while, but unfortunately I've been very busy. There's something I'd like to show you; please come to Willow Lake as soon as you receive this letter, I'm sure you'll find it very interesting. I'll be staying at the old tower. If I'm not there, ask Eamon, the local Warden. He's a friend of mine and will surely know where to find me.

Mornien, my niece, will be there, too. I've already reserved her a room at the Dancing Trout inn. You'll find that she's grown up quite a bit since the last time you saw her.

Thank you,

Your old friend
Nevynn"



Hit Points

65

Total

Current

Movement

Lightly
Encumbered

15

Encumbrance
Level

Move Rate

Wounds

Bleed _____ Stun ☐ Penalties _____

Conditions _____

Defense

SWI Bonus 30 Shield Bonus 30

Item Bonus _____ Spec Bonus _____

Wealth

3

Wealth Level

Gentry

Status

Melee Defense

30

Ranged Defense

30

Armor and Shield

| Armor / Shield | Type | Zones Protected | Max SWI to DEF | Move Penalty | CMB Penalty | Perception Penalty | Ranged Bonus | Melee Bonus | Qualities |
|----------------|-------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|
| Leather Jerkin | Light | Torso | - | -10 | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |

Weapons & Attack

| Weapons / Attacks | Hands | Length | Skill(s) Used | CR | Attack Table | Maximum Result | Primary Critical | Alternate Critical | Base Range | Qualities |
|-------------------|-------|--------|---------------|----|--------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|------------|------------|
| Longsword | 1h | Long | Blades | 4 | Edged | 150 | Cut | Pierce | | Hand and a |
| Long Bow | 2h | | Ranged | 6 | Missile | 175 | Pierce | | 35 | Load (1) |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

Equipment

| Item & Description | Location | Item & Description | Location |
|------------------------------|----------|--------------------|----------|
| Short Tunic and Flowing Cape | Worn | | |
| Long Bow, Quiver and Arrows | Back | | |
| Reviving Cordial | Pouch | | |
| Leather Jerkin | Worn | | |
| Longsword | Belt | | |

Experience Points Tracking

☐ You travelled to or explored a location you've never seen before.

☐ You faced dangerous foes and/or difficult situations.

☐ You completed a mission or quest, or ended a significant story arc.

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

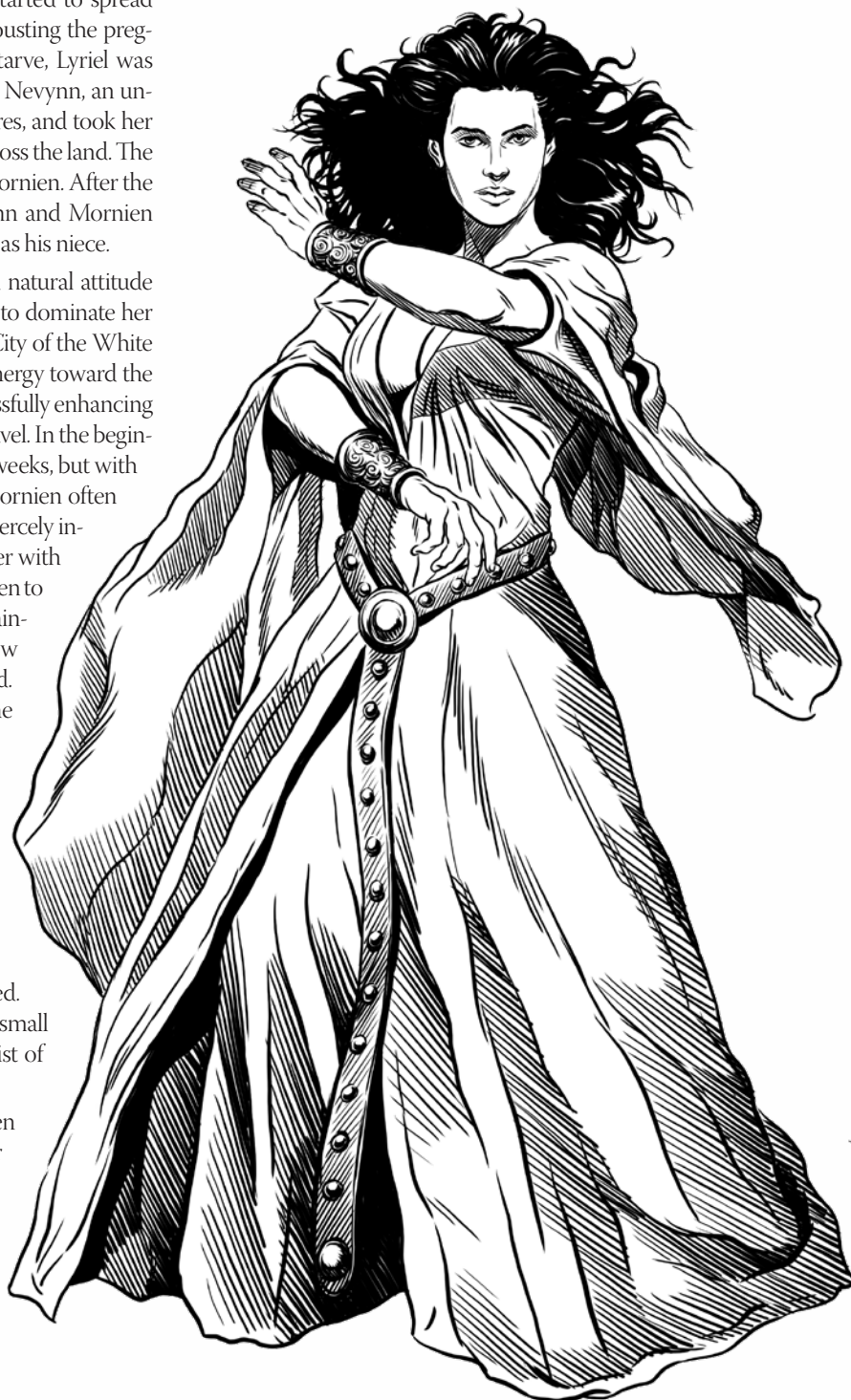
❧ Mornien the Fair ❧

Mornien was born in the City of the White Walls in the Southern Realm of the Nine Kingdoms. Since the day she was born her life has not been easy. She was the illegitimate child of a secret relationship between a high ranked city nobleman and Lyriel, one of his courtesans. Rumors about the unwanted pregnancy started to spread quickly, leaving the nobleman the only choice of ousting the pregnant courtesan from the court. Condemned to starve, Lyriel was sheltered by the nobleman's unconventional uncle Nevynn, an unmarried scholar who shunned the nobilities' fanfares, and took her and her daughter with him on his long journeys across the land. The old man soon grew fond of the young and quick Mornien. After the premature departure of the child's mother, Nevynn and Mornien became inseparable, and he always introduced her as his niece.

Around the age of 14 Mornien started to show a natural attitude toward the arcane arts. In order to teach her how to dominate her nature, Nevynn decided to bring her back to the City of the White Walls, so that she could completely channel her energy toward the study of the arcane arts. While Mornien was successfully enhancing her skills as an apprentice, Nevynn continued to travel. In the beginning, his journeys would not last more than a few weeks, but with time they started to become longer and longer. Mornien often found herself alone, growing into a strong-willed, fiercely independent woman. Her strong personality, together with the very little free time due to her studies, led Mornien to conduct a very poor social life, made of many acquaintances but very few friends. Among these very few friends there is Athelstane the Black, a City Guard. She started to grow fond of the young man after he started to help her with the heaviest housework. Quickly he became her confidant and whenever they get a chance they enjoy their friendship with long walks and meaningful chats.

Nevynn's most recent journey was ongoing for more than a year and a half when, one morning, Mornien received a letter from him. To her great joy, in the letter her uncle told her that he missed his niece, and was eager to see how much she's learned. He then asked her to reach him in Willow Lake, a small town on the northern border, leaving her a long list of directions on how to get there.

Having to leave the city in a great rush, Mornien stopped by Athelstane for the farewells, but to her great surprise and pleasure, the young city guard decided to quit his job and swore to protect her during her perilous journey to Willow Lake.



Body (FOR)

Hit Points

30

Total

Current

Movement

Unencumbered

15

Encumbrance
Level

Move Rate

Wounds

Bleed _____ Stun ☐ Penalties _____

Conditions _____

Defense

SWI Bonus 0 Shield Bonus _____

Item Bonus _____ Spec Bonus _____

Wealth

1

Wealth Level

Struggling

Status

Melee Defense

0

Ranged Defense

0

Armor and Shield

| Armor / Shield | Type | Zones Protected | Max SWI to DEF | Move Penalty | CMB Penalty | Perception Penalty | Ranged Bonus | Melee Bonus | Qualities |
|----------------|------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |

Weapons & Attack

| Weapons / Attacks | Hands | Length | Skill(s) Used | CR | Attack Table | Maximum Result | Primary Critical | Alternate Critical | Base Range | Qualities |
|-------------------|-------|--------|---------------|----|--------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|------------|-----------|
| Short Sword | 1h | Short | Blades | 2 | Edged | 130 | Cut | Pierce | | Backstab |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

Equipment

| Item & Description | Location | Item & Description | Location |
|--------------------------------|----------|--------------------|----------|
| Plain Clothing | Worn | | |
| Short Sword | Side | | |
| Lantern and Oil | Backpack | | |
| Small Backpack | Shoulder | | |
| Nevynn's Notes (+10 to Arcana) | Backpack | | |

| | Kin | Stat | Spec | Stat Gain/Lvl | Voc Gain/Lvl | TOT | Spent |
|---------------------|-----|------------|------|---------------|--------------|-----|-------|
| <i>Magic Points</i> | ___ | <i>WIT</i> | ___ | 2 | 3 | 5 | |

[illegible]

Companion Animal

| Name | | Animal Type |
|------|-----|-------------|
| Move | | Attack Type |
| HP | CMB | DEF |

Riding Animal

| Name | | Animal Type |
|------------|------|-------------|
| Ride Bonus | Move | Attack Type |
| HP | CMB | DEF |

Experience Points Tracking

- ☐ You travelled to or explored a location you've never seen before.
- ☐ You faced dangerous foes and/or difficult situations.
- ☐ You completed a mission or quest, or ended a significant story arc.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Tobold “The Ferret” Mistletoe

Tobold was born in the pleasant town of Grassy Hills in the Bailiwick, home to the Halfling people. His family was a wealthy and well renowned one, having contributed to the community a long series of Bailiffs and Sheriffs. Since Tobold was a child, he always was the smartest and quickest guy around: he was incomparably deft at purloining cookies, cakes, and fruits; hiding any traces of his passage; or diverting the blame on some of the other brats in his gang. Soon enough his presence became synonymous with mischief among the good people of Grassy Hills. They started to call him “Ferret”, as he was shifty and mischievous as a little animal.

Being the local Sheriff, his father was doubly exasperated by Tobold’s behavior. So, one day, he decided to bring his son with him whenever he went to work. “This way, if you’re gonna cause trouble” he said “at least I’ll be there to stop your nonsense.”

At first, Tobold was cast down by his father’s decision, but soon discovered that the Sheriff’s job was far more interesting than running around with the other kids. Solving other people’s problems and finding out where something disappeared or who committed a theft or other misdeed became a game to him. After a few weeks, he was already better than most of the Bailiwick’s Sheriffs at their job.

Proud of his son’s turnaround, his father encouraged him, teaching him not only the secrets of his trade, but also what it meant to be a Sheriff.

Finally, when Tobold gained the rank of Undersheriff, his parents threw a great party, and jokingly gifted him a pet ferret, as a reminder of his troublesome childhood. Tobold named her Raffles, and the two became inseparable friends.

People still called him “Ferret”, but now it had an affectionate meaning. If something was missing or stolen in the Bailiwick, “The Ferret” could find it.

A couple of weeks ago, Tobold received a letter from his dearest cousin Mirabella, who followed her husband to settle in the Mannish realms, in the distant town of Willow Lake. Mirabella asked for his help, explaining that her sheep have been stolen, and that the local town guards weren’t able to find neither the animals nor the culprit. Shocked by the incompetence of the Mannish guards, and intrigued by the perspective of a short vacation abroad, Tobold decided to pay his cousin a visit. He prepared his luggage, picked up Raffles, and jumped on the first coach headed out of the Bailiwick.



| | | | | | | | | |
|------------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Body (FOR) | <u>10</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>10</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>20</u> | <u> </u> | <u> </u> | <u>45</u> |
|------------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|

Hit Points

45

Total

Current

Movement

Lightly
Encumbered

15

Encumbrance
Level

Move Rate

Wounds

Bleed _____ Stun ☐ Penalties _____

Conditions _____

Defense

SWI Bonus 40 Shield Bonus _____

Item Bonus _____ Spec Bonus _____

Wealth

Wealth Level

Status

Melee Defense

40

Ranged Defense

40

Armor and Shield

| Armor / Shield | Type | Zones Protected | Max SWI to DEF | Move Penalty | CMB Penalty | Perception Penalty | Ranged Bonus | Melee Bonus | Qualities |
|----------------|------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |

Weapons & Attack

| Weapons / Attacks | Hands | Length | Skill(s) Used | CR | Attack Table | Maximum Result | Primary Critical | Alternate Critical | Base Range | Qualities |
|-------------------|-------|--------|---------------|----|--------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|------------|-----------|
| Sling | 1h | | Ranged | 7 | Missile | 110/130 | Impact | | 15 | Load (1) |
| Dagger | 1h | Hand | Brawl Blades | 1 | Edged | 120 | Pierce | | | Backstab |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

Equipment

| Item & Description | Location | Item & Description | Location |
|----------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|----------|
| Traveling Clothes | Worn | | |
| Shepherd's Sling | Pocket | | |
| Pipe, tobacco and Bagful of Food | Backpack | | |
| Dagger | Belt | | |
| Backpack | Shoulders | | |

| | Kin | Stat | Spec | Stat Gain/Lvl | Voc Gain/Lvl | TOT | Spent |
|---------------------|-------|------------|-------|---------------|--------------|----------|-------|
| Magic Points | _____ | <u>BEA</u> | _____ | <u>0</u> | _____ | <u>0</u> | |

Spell Lores

| Stat | #Ranks & Bonus | Voc | Kin | Spec | Item | TOT |
|------------------------------|----------------|-----|-----|------|------|-----|
| Development Points Per Level | | | | | | |

[illegible]

Companion Animal

| | | |
|----------------|-----------|-------------------|
| <i>Raffles</i> | | <i>Ferret</i> |
| Name | | Animal Type |
| <i>15</i> | | <i>Small Bite</i> |
| Move | | Attack Type |
| <i>10</i> | <i>10</i> | <i>40</i> |
| HP | CMB | DEF |

Riding Animal

| Name | | Animal Type |
|------------|------|-------------|
| Ride Bonus | Move | Attack Type |
| HP | CMB | DEF |

Experience Points Tracking

- ☐ You travelled to or explored a location you've never seen before.
- ☐ You faced dangerous foes and/or difficult situations.
- ☐ You completed a mission or quest, or ended a significant story arc.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

SHADOWS OF THE NORTHERN WOODS

People are disappearing in the sleepy town of Willow Lake. The terrified villagers speak of a terrible beast stalking the woods at night. But is the small town as peaceful as it seems?

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