Castles & Crusades™

The Mortality of Green

Troll Lord Games

The Mortality of Green

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This module is designed for characters of 4th-6th level with a challenge level of 3-5.

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Tis said of that ancient brooding forest that before the world grew accustomed to the light of day, that her stems had grown high and her eaves dark and contemplative. If ever those ancient trees pondered, however, then it was in silent expectancy, brooding on a bent known to none, for never since the Days before Days have they spoke with vocal tongue. Mayhap they ponder simple things, or maybe they wonder of the many creatures which have come from the Outlands to slip into obscurity underneath the shadowy vale of the Darkenfold.

HALT! WHO GOES? If Castle Keeper you be, then read on. If Player, stay your hand, eyes, ears and let the Castle Keeper sing the song!

Using this Module

The Mortality of Green is intended for 4-8 characters of levels 3-5. A well balanced party, though helpful, is not essential. The party, however, should possess a ranger, a druid, or a character class with specific forestry skills. All characters should be mid-level. Since the adventure involves the corruption of a forest, the presence of a druid could make the adventure more meaningful for the party and for the campaign.

Adventure Synopsis

The Druidic Council seeks to deliver the Darkenfold forest from evil. The reclamation of the forest shall be a long and arduous task. To offer the denizens of the Darkenfold hope, the Council has chosen Cornelius the White to carry a sapling of the Great Tree to the village of Ends Meet. There he shall deliver it to the woodsmen of the Rangers Knot. The Rangers have in turn agreed to plant the tree in a secret grove, where Cornelius shall sanctify the ground and use the power of the Great Tree's sapling to heal the Darkenfold.

Within the forest deeps lives an ancient sentient tree named Gristlebones. Old and corrupted, he keeps watch over a forest he claims as his own. News of the sapling's coming has not escaped Gristlebones. He has several allies in the forest. One ally, Quagmire the Troll, he sends to intercept Cornelius and take the sapling. Gristlebones intends to plant this off shoot of the Great Tree amidst his roots, take control of it, and thus corrupt it. He believes that with the sapling he can regain dominance over the Darkenfold.

When the party enters the picture, they find a dying Cornelius who tries to extract an oath from them to retrieve the sapling from the evil Troll. Though Cornelius has no knowledge of Gristlebones, it is obvious to him that the Troll has a fell purpose for the tree. For the safety of the forest, the sapling must be rescued. If the characters accept the task they become embroiled in a rapid paced overland adventure.

For the Castle Keeper

The Darkenfold

The Darkenfold forest stretches from the plains of Kayomar in the east several hundred miles to the doorsteps of the unexplored Rodope Mountains in the west. In the south, the Great Soup Marsh hems in the ancient trees, but the forest continues in ceaseless growth from there to the far off Shelves of the Mist in the distant north. The Darkenfold marks the beginning of the Wild Lands.

The edges of the forest are hemmed in by long lean oaks. These young trees' leafy green branches hang to the ground to mingle with the thick tangled thorns and bushes growing in the rich black soil. Travel here is not easy due to the thick bramble which oft times overgrows the few existing paths. The tangled growth at the forest edge makes entry to the forest arduous and maintains the dark, deep mysteries within.

Beyond the tangle lies the old wood. Here, giant oaks heavy with foliage mark the heart of the forest. These peculiar trees are native only to the Darkenfold and give it its name. The mature trees are covered in greyish black bark that absorbs light. A campfire's light, for instance, will not flicker off the tree but rather it vanishes into the bark, as if the trees drink the light. At night the forest is dark beyond imagining and infra-vision is effectively halved.

These great trees tower above moss covered ground, their leafy canopies blotting out the light of the sun. However, grassy knolls, open meadows and slow running brooks pocket the forest deeps and break the sinister visage cast by the old trees. Here, where the sun shines, lilies and other wild flowers bloom. At night the light of the moon and stars spills through, and when the evening is still, the fay come out to dance and sing and play.

Two main roads cut through the forest. The larger of the two, the Old Post Road, meanders through the upper reaches, suddenly veers north and emerges in the Broken Steppes. The Southern Way, a spur of the Old Post Road, is overgrown and weeded with small trees and is slowly vanishing back into the depths of the Darkenfold. Both roads are vestiges of the Age of Winter's Dark, when the Empire of the Horned God stretched even to these distant reaches.

Few men venture into the Darkenfold. Those who do are a hardy lot with stout axes and stouter wills. Some settle in the few clearings or along the old roads, and build strong wooden houses beneath the dark trees and along the meadow tracks. 'Tis unknown what motivates them. Whether some crime or want of justice has driven them, or whether they desire a piece of earth far away from the civilized world, they find a dangerous home in the Darkenfold.

Where the Old Post Road and Southern Way meet lies the small village of Ends Meet. The remnants of an old stone wall surround the village. The wall is in ruins and in a few places rises above three feet. A small inn and trading post, the Cockleburr Inn and Tavern, encompass the pride and joy of the slightly suspicious,

but overall friendly villagers, who number about three hundred. Another village resides under the folds of the wood, Greenbriar. Smaller than Ends Meet, sporting only a tavern, the Long House, Greenbriar sits astride the Westerling River. The fifty or so hearty souls who inhabit Greenbriar are a friendly, if cautious, bunch. The size of the village makes them far more vulnerable than their neighbors in Ends Meet, and thus more watchful.

A small band of dedicated Rangers have taken on the onerous task of protecting the forest and the folk who reside there. They call themselves the "Rangers of the Knot" for they meet in a glade wherein two ancient trees have wrapped their boles around each other. Only recently has the Druidic Council recognized the rangers. The Council promised to deliver them a sapling offspring of the Great Oak to heal the Darkenfold.

The rest of the vast forest provides hunting ground for those creatures whose motives and concerns are little bent towards the good of men. Evil goblins band together and roam the forest. The most notorious of these foul goblins have taken up residence in a thicket of bramble and trees to the south called Broken Vale. Their leader, Horntooth, is intelligently wicked and merciless.

Gristlebones

In the Days before Days the All Father brought trees into the world. The trees knew his mind and moved across the world, so that in time, great forests covered the land. The dwarves and goblins fought under the earth and in the high mountains and for many thousands of years the trees ruled the world without competition. Their seeds were carried to distant shores, and they reveled in the warmth of sun and wind. As they grew old, they rooted and gathered wisdom.

When men and elves emerged the old trees took refuge in the deeps of the younger forests. In time, their revels grew less frequent, and their kind began to die. The forests were left to less sentient trees with roots firmly in the ground.

Of these older trees, some few lived on. Bastions of the Days before Days they settled in quiet places. Some served as gateways to the land of Faerie, and some, like the Great Tree, were venerated. But others retreated into the wastes of the world. Gristlebones was one such tree.

His years of wandering ended in the deeps of the Darkenfold. There, he rooted in a foul nest at the base of a bottomless pool of stagnant water. The pool lay hidden in the cleft of a bramble covered hill, called Thorny Hollow. Within the Hollow the foul stench of decay hangs like morning dew. This place of ancient evil bears twisted briars upon broken ground of slate. Pools of slime and stagnant water pollute the area and attract little life.

Gristlebones's bole has grown hollow and rotten with age. Only a few of his limbs remain strong enough to throttle the life from those who trespass in his den. So great is Gristlebone's pain and so long his suffering, he has grown malicious in every thought and sits now in the Hollow, brooding on how to deliver unto the world his final evil seed. In time, Gristlebones came to know Quagmire the Troll.

Quagmire

Quagmire is a troll lord. As intelligent as he is large, it is speculated that Quagmire is the offspring of a giant and a magical weird, for his mind is quick and agile, unlike his slow witted ilk.

Quagmire accidently stumbled upon Gristlebones. After a harrowing battle with a band of elves, he escaped into the Hollow and fell into Gristlebones' pool. To avoid being killed he submitted to the old tree, they made a simple alliance. Quagmire feeds and keeps Gristlebones alive. Gristlebones guards Quagmire's treasure, listens to the forest, and imparts the information to the Troll.

Quagmire has gathered together a strong pack of ruffians and thugs in hopes of one day ruling the Darkenfold. This band consists of 7 ungern, 4 ogres, 18 orcs and a pack of worgs. The orcs are captained by Mrodox the Shaman, who led his 'boys' away from the infamous Marauding Butchers and linked up with Quagmire for personal gain. Quagmire's closest friend is a malicious dark faerie named Gilliam.

Quagmire's band is maintained by his strength. The orcs owe their loyalty to their Shaman, and Gilliam to Quagmire only. The ungern are fiercely loyal to Quagmire and will serve him to the last. The ogres are indifferent, and so long as the going is not hard, they will stick it through. The Castle Keeper should keep these internal difficulties in mind when counteracting the players moves or planning further traps. Orc and ogre moral, always shaky, should be rolled regularly.

Quagmire settled his troop in a broken vale outside of Thorny Hollow. This swampy region is a damp, inhospitable place. Thick bramble and old trees mingle in broken gullies with pools of sludge and rancid water. Insects and reptiles abound, pestering any who become lost there. Quagmire named the vale the Flies Den, and built a fortified encampment. A small cleft, hidden by vines and brush, slices into the rear cliff of the Den. There Gristlebones resides.

Gilliam

Gilliam has only recently returned to Quagmire's side. Having learned of the sapling's transportation through the forest, he seeks to garner the aid of the troll lord in capturing the sapling and selling it to the highest bidder. Gilliam is unaware of Gristlebones' designs. Quagmire, however knows Gilliam's motives. Quagmire plans a joint lordship over the Darkenfold between himself and Gristlebones. He will use Gilliam's cunning to achieve it, and then will turn on Gilliam. For more details on Gilliam see Act III, The Flies Den.

Corrupting the Sapling

The sapling must grow at the feet of Gristlebones for seven days before it will meld with the old tree. After two weeks, the sapling will die if pulled from the ground. However, the sapling must remain undisturbed for a full month before Gristlebones gains complete control. In order to rescue the sapling after the melding has begun, the characters must destroy Gristlebones and rehabilitate the Hollow.

Travel in the Darkenfold

The roads through the Darkenfold offer easy travel. Leaving the roads, however, invites danger.

Numerous animal and brigand paths criss-cross the forest. These notorious trails end suddenly or lead travelers into the deeps of the forest where they become lost.

The Castle Keeper should take into account the old and young growth forest. Along the Darkenfold's edges, where the tree line meets either the plains, the Rodope Mountains, the Shelves of the Mist or the Soup Marsh, the forest is a mixed tangle of undergrowth and young trees. Travel there is drastically reduced. Branches and briars inflict numerous cuts and scraps, and offer continuous annoyance to those heavily armored.

Once past the forest's edges, the old growth offers easier travel. The large trees are spaced far apart, and have long since choked out any undergrowth. Here, the ground is not affected by the sun. Moss grows in abundance and small pools of water are common. The air is cool and fresh, the ground moist. Even so, the inexperienced can easily become lost. The shape of the forest does not change and seems to stretch on forever with few discernable trails.

Wandering monsters

The Darkenfold is deep and wild. There are many creatures, other than those mentioned, that live in the forest. The Castle Keeper should check for wandering monsters whether the characters are off trail or on the road. Only near Ends Meet are encounters unlikely. The Castle Keeper should be careful, however, because the pursuit of Quagmire is no easy task and the addition of too many wandering monsters could seriously slow or cripple the flow of the game. A 1 on a d12 signifies an encounter. Encounters should be rolled six times during the day and six at night.

Encounters in the Darkenfold

1 Ungern (see page 14.)

2 Hill Giant (*His vital stats are HD 9d8, HP 45, AC 17. He is chaotic evil. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks with 2 fists for 1d8 points of damage each or giant club for 2d8. He is able to throw boulders for 2d8 points of damage.*)

3 Human (see below)

4 Will-O-Wisp (*Its vital stats are HD 9d8, HP 50, AC 29. It is chaotic evil. Its primary attributes are mental. It has darkvision 60 ft, immunity to magic & natural invisibility. It attacks with a shock touch for 2d8 damage.*)

5 Wild animal (see below)

6 Spider, medium 1-4 (*Their vital stats are HD 3d8, HP 18, AC 15. They are neutral. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite that inflicts 1d6 points of damage + poison- save vs. constitution or take another 1d4 points of damage + paralyzation for 2d6 hours.*)

7 Horntooth's band (see page 10.)

8 Orcs (*Their vital stats are HD 1d8, HP 6, AC 13. They are chaotic evil. Their primary attributes are physical. They attacks with scimitar or axe for 1d6+1 points of damage. They carry leather armor, small wooden shield and 1d4 gp and 2d12 sp.*)

9 Exotic (see below)
10 Dark faerie (see page 14.)

A Human encounter consists of either a Ranger, a villager, or evil brigands. A ranger openly offers his aid as a guide. A villager requires a substantial reward and flees at the first sign of trouble. Brigands are always in encountered in groups of 2-8 and judge the relative strength of the party. They attack only if a reasonable chance of success exists. Otherwise, they run away.

Ranger (*These are chaotic good, human, level 1 rangers, whose vital stats are HD 1d10, HP 7, AC 14. His/her prime attributes are strength, dexterity and constitution. He/she carries a longsword that does 1d8 points of damage, a short bow & 12 arrows, studded leather armor, cloak and 1d12 sp in a belt pouch.*)

Villager (*These are neutral humans whose vital stats are HD 1d4, HP 3, AC 10. They have no primary attributes. He/she carries a club or knife that does 1d4 damage and 1d12 cp in a belt pouch.*)

Bandit (*This is a chaotic neutral, human level 1 Rogue whose vital stats are HD 1d6, HP 5, AC 12. His/her prime attributes are wisdom, constitution and dexterity. He/she carries a shortsword that does 1d6 points of damage, a short bow and 9 arrows, leather armor and 1d12 sp in a belt pouch.*)

Wild animal chart is as follows

1: Wild boar
2: Deer
3: Giant weasel
4: Wolf
5: Bear
6: Giant snake
7: Lynx
8: Worg

Exotic: The Castle Keeper can choose from any number of mythical creatures, such as unicorn, sprite or dryad. Such an encounter can be used by the Castle Keeper to guide the party back onto the trail if they become lost.

Mortality of Green is an overland adventure. There are several days of travel between encounter areas and the Castle Keeper should keep this in mind. The time is necessary for the characters to have a chance to recover hit points and spells. To maintain the high pace of the pursuit, however, the Castle Keeper should not hesitate to have Quagmire's minions, or other creatures of the Castle Keeper's choosing, ambush the party. This will keep the party on its toes and help maintain the fever of the chase.

ACT 1

Upon the Westerling

Greenbriar Village

The party arrives at the Darkenfold from the east, via the Old Post Road.

The Darkenfold swallows you in a sea of green. The tangles and briars of the forest's edge have given way to the rough roads of the hinterland. Giant trees with huge boles tower above you, cloaking you in a leafy mantle. The shadows cast by their broad expanse leave the ground beneath dark and moist. The road is rough and little used but affords easy movement through the forest and allows you to keep your direction, for the trees to the left and right grow with marked similarity across rolling broken ground. To leave the road would invite aimless travel and certain danger. You know from tales that these woods are the haunts of the famous Quagmire, a merciless rogue troll lord who, over his long career, has left a trail of death and destruction behind him.

It has been a two day journey from the eastern edge of the forest to Greenbriar. As the party approaches the village, they are greeted by the smell of burning wood:

Rounding a bend in the road, you come to a small stone bridge spanning the river Westerling. Your dry mouths water at the thought of the famous Long House Tavern that lies in the little village of Greenbriar. As you cross the bridge, however, you see the smoking remains of the village.

The Long House and several small cottages are blackened heaps. Clouds of smoke float lazily about, and an acrid stench hangs over the smoldering ruins of the once happy village. There are no villagers in sight. What you do see captures your breath and quickens your pulse. Six large worgs are sniffing about in the ruins. Two seem particularly bent on getting under an overturned cart.

Worgs (*Their vital stats are HD 4d10, HP 25 x5, 29-leader, AC 14. The worg's primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite for 2d4 points of damage. Their special abilities include trip, darkvision 60 ft. and twilight vision.*)

The worgs are loyal to Quagmire only to a point. If their leader is killed there is a 40% chance the pack will desert Quagmire altogether.

Quagmire attacked Greenbriar the previous night. Cornelius was staying at the Long House Tavern. They sacked the town and scattered or killed everyone in it. Quagmire stole the sapling and is already several hours on the trail, headed for the Flies Den. Gilliam and the worgs have remained behind to scrounge for "left overs.

Gilliam (*This is a chaotic evil, dark fay level 4 rogue whose vital stats are HD 4d6, HP 21, AC 13. His prime attributes are intelligence and dexterity. His significant attributes are are intelligence 16, wisdom 14 and dexterity 15. His special abilities are darkvision 60 feet, Spells & Spell Resistance 18. Gilliam wields*

a mace and poisoned dagger that does an additional 1d4 points of damage if the victim fails their saving throw.

Dark Fairy take many shapes and forms. Generally, they are small winged creatures with mottled dark green skin. Frequently they take the shape of deformed gnomes. They are outcasts from the land of Fairy and for this reason, they hate beauty of any sort. Dark fairy have a hatred, which borders on fear, of birds. Why this is, no one knows. They work to undo all that is good in the world and they long for the return of Unklar and the Age of Winter's Dark.

Dark fairy rarely stand and fight unless they feel that they have a better than average chance of overcoming the enemy. They prefer hit and run tactics that keep an enemy unbalanced, gradually weakening them until chances of a successful attack improve. Dark fairy have the ability to polymorph self twice each day as a 7th level caster. They also have the following spell like abilities which they can perform once per day as 4th level casters: fairy fire, obscuring mist, entangle, pass without trace, light and silent image.)

Upon seeing the party, Gill iam takes cover as the party crosses the bridge. The worgs are busy trying to root out the wounded Cornelius, who has crawled under a cart for safety.

The party has a 1 in 12 chance of spotting Gilliam and 6 in 12 chance of surprising the worgs. If the party surprises the worgs and attacks them, the remaining worgs flee south after Quagmire (unless the leader is killed). If the worgs are not surprised, they attempt to drive off the party. If they become outclassed, they will flee. The worgs that manage to escape immediately return to Quagmire, and if the wolf leader is alive, it relates the party's existence to him. Gilliam will not fight but will instead use his power to escape into the forest after the troll lord.

Once you scatter the worgs and determine that the village is secure, you are drawn to the cart by a moaning voice. A quick investigation reveals a heavily wounded man lying underneath the overturned cart. His white robes are torn and soiled. His hand futilely clutches a scrap of parchment.

The man is Cornelius the White Druid, messenger of the High Council, who they entrusted with delivering the sapling to the Ranger's Knot. He is grievously wounded. He pleads with the party to listen to him:

"Time is pressing," he explains, "a troll has stolen my charge, the sapling, an offspring of the Great Tree. You have no doubt heard of Quagmire! A foul beastly troll who has stalked these woods for many a year. He is evil and powerful and commands a large following of rogue ogres and brigands. Worse still, Quagmire leagues with that vile and nefarious orc Shaman, Mrodox. Together, they shall unmake us all. Their evil knows no bounds and if they plant the sapling and raise it to their own wicked intent, then the Darkenfold, the whole of this wondrous forest will, in time, be corrupted. They will turn it into something altogether unspeakable. They will destroy all that is good here."

Coughing a little, he continues, his strength almost spent, "These are my final breaths, and I do most earnestly plead with you to take up the trail of the fiend, recapture the tree, and deliver it to the kind folk of Ends Meet and the noble rangers of the Knot. Beware of Quagmire, he is fast witted and tricky, and he will destroy you if he learns you cross him"

Cornelius desperately urges the piece of parchment toward you.

Refer to Handout 1 contained in the back of this book for the contents of the letter.

The party, particularly a ranger or druid, should be encouraged to heed Cornelius' plea for aid. Any good character should feel a sense of duty toward the fallen druid and for the captured sapling. They should be made to understand the consequences of the seed of the Great Tree being turned to evil. If, however, the party seems reluctant to pursue the giant, the CK should hint that Quagmire's band is rumored to possess a large treasure trove which includes magical items.

If the party heals Cornelius then he will join their band if asked. Otherwise, he continues to Ends Meet and tries to rally support from the rangers.

Cornelius (*He is a neutral good, human, level 3 druid whose vital stats are HD 3d6, HP 18, AC 15. His prime attributes are intelligence, wisdom and dexterity. His significant attributes are strength 14, intelligence 15, wisdom 15, dexterity 17, constitution 15. He wears +1 enchanted leather armor and uses an oak staff in combat. He can cast the following druidic spells 0-4, 1-2, 2-1.)*

At this point, the party has two choices. They can take up the trail left by Quagmire and his band, or they can continue along the Old Post Road to Ends Meet. If the latter is chosen, Quagmire's trail grows cold over the 4 day journey from Greenbriar to Ends Meet. Once in Ends Meet, if the party informs the villagers of their intent to rescue the sapling, they will be offered whatever food and

supplies they will need (within reason, any attempt to overburden the tiny community will make the inhabitants unruly and not very helpful). The Rangers will offer a guide, but he will only be able to navigate the center part of the forest having no knowledge of its southern stretches.

The Castle Keeper should strongly encourage the Players to immediately take up the trail and to use Ends Meet as a recuperating area only. If they pick up the trail, skip "Ends Meet" and go directly to "The Pursuit."

Ends Meet

It is a four day trip from Greenbriar to Ends Meet.

The scent of fresh baked bread becomes heavy in the air as you tramp along. The dark overhang and the gloomy forest give way to the quiet houses of Ends Meet. Nestled in the forest, behind an old moss covered wall, the town seems to blend with the forest in comforting shades of green and brown. Solid wooden cabins with high roofs, open windows and open doors promise a comfort you have not felt in days. The village is clean and orderly. Deep green grass grows along the road and footpaths which lead to various doorsteps. The hedges are thick and lush, and in places mingle with the overhanging branches of oak trees. Where the forest ends and village begins is confusing. A small bridge crosses a creek which flows through the town, and as you cross it, a few inhabitants come out and watch. On the other side of the creek stands a very large building, the Cockleburr Inn and Tavern.

The small village of Ends Meet is located where the Old Post Road crosses the Southern Way. The village consists of several dozen houses built close together along the road, and others nestled deeper in the forest. The remains of an old stone wall mark the southern edge of town, but the wall is so disused that many of the rocks have gone into local chimneys. The houses are low, thick-beamed structures with wooden shingle roofs. Heavy shutters and doors help keep out creatures of the night. Ends Meet is a clean and simple town where the people live in relative peace with the forest. A small creek, the Muddy Wash, crosses the road and runs through the town. A small bridge arcs over it.

Ends Meet sports a blacksmith shop owned by Benjamin and his wife Katrina. They live and work about a half mile beyond the southern wall. Closer to the bridge, a tanner and his family live next door to the weaver's clan, who brag on their oldest daughter who went away as a soldier to the wars in the east. The rest of the villagers make their living from the forest.

Benjamin (*He is a neutral good, human, level 8 fighter whose vital stats are HD 8d10, HP 69, AC 19. His attributes are strength, wisdom and charisma. His significant attributes are strength 17, wisdom 14, dexterity 15 and constitution 17. He wears +1 chainmail and carries a +1 shield. In combat he wields a +1 longsword. Benjamin serves as the sheriff of Ends Meet.*)

Ends Meet's most famous inhabitant, known even in the plains of Kayomar, is Otto Wagner, owner and proprietor of the Cockleburr Inn and Tavern. A jolly fellow who came to Ends Meet years ago, or so the locals say, after quitting a mercenary troop which served in the far off lands of Aachen. His beer is famous for its stout taste and flavor. "I never liked a Beer I couldn't chew!" He welcomes any and all to his tavern, charging a fair price for room and board. He has outbuildings for rent, but the tavern serves for most folk, who pay three silver and curl up in front of the great fire.

Otto (*This is a lawful good, human level 10 fighter whose vital stats are HD 10d10, HP 78, AC 21. His primary attributes are strength, dexterity and constitution. His significant attributes are strength 18, intelligence 14, dexterity 17, and constitution 16. He wears +3 splint mail and wields a +2 broadsword. Otto has a stash of gold, ranging anywhere from 220gp to 300gp that he keeps hidden in the brick facing behind the main hall's fire place. He uses this money to help those in need.*)

Otto serves as the defacto mayor of Ends Meet.

The tavern is mostly frequented by settlers and travelers, or adventurers out to earn a name. Occasionally, a wood elf comes in to sing and dance and enjoy the more mundane company of humans. The rangers of the Knot occasionally stop by.

Presently, two rangers are at the tavern, Athryn and his brother Andace.

Athryn (*Athryn is a chaotic good, level 5 human Ranger whose vital stats are HD 5d8, HP 41, AC 15. His primary attributes are strength, dexterity and charisma. His significant attributes strength 16, intelligence 14, wisdom 13, dexterity 14, constitution 15, charisma 17. He wears +1 leather and wields a +2 longbow and a normal battleaxe. He has 14gp he keeps in a belt pouch.*)

Andace (*He is a chaotic good, level 5 human Ranger whose vital stats are HD 4d10, HP 32, AC 14. His primary attributes are strength, intelligence and wisdom. His significant attributes are strength 15, wisdom 15, dexterity 16 and constitution 15. He wears leather armor and an enchanted ring of speed. He has a +2 short sword and a horned bow, 12 arrows and a belt pouch with 5gp.*)

They are anxiously awaiting the arrival of Cornelius and the sapling. Because the Druid is late, the brothers are very nervous.

Harbingers of Doom

When the party arrives with news of the burning of Greenbriar, word spreads quickly and the folk of Ends Meet gather in the tavern. Everyone is anxious to hear about the town. When the party speaks of the brutal attack, they are stunned.

Athryn immediately dispatches Andace to gather the other rangers for an attack on the troll. He will also turn to the party for aid, and try to convince them to return to Greenbriar and pick up the trail. If the party is reluctant he will drop hints of Quagmire's treasure, and if needed, offer them 100 golden crown apiece.

If the party unselfishly offers aid, the villagers of Ends Meet help to the best of their ability. They will offer free room and board at the tavern, to repair any damaged equipment and to aid them with

guides. But, if the party demands ransom in exchange for aid, there will be little forthcoming from the villagers.

If the party continues the adventure, the Castle Keeper should proceed to Act II, The Pursuit. The only alteration being the passage of the time it took to travel to Ends Meet.

ACT II

The Pursuit

If the group immediately pursues Quagmire, the Castle Keeper should remember that Gilliam is listening not far off. He will linger in the vicinity long enough to discover the party's intentions, then, as soon as opportunity allows, move off to warn Quagmire. He knows this part of the forest as well as the troll's plan of flight. Gilliam's knowledge and his thieving skills give him an increased chance to circumvent the party and thereby warn the giant. If the party is actively searching the battlefield, there is a 15% chance they will spot Gilliam, if not, only a 5% chance. If an elf is present and searching the opportunity increases by 5%. If Gilliam is discovered, he will attempt to escape by plying his thieving abilities and minor magic as best he can (see below).

In any event, Quagmire has a half day lead on the party. From Greenbriar the trip to the Flies Den takes five days overland, or three days by canoe on the Westerling River and Longspear Creek. Quagmire leads his troop south along the banks of the Westerling. He makes little attempt to disguise his trail. Any one with minor tracking skills can follow the troll lord and his band.

The tracks of the troll lord and his troop are plain to see. You follow them from the village's southern edge to the Westerling River. Booted heels have trampled the underbrush and left scores of footprints in the soft dirt. The smaller trees along the trail have suffered violence at the troll's passing and in places, older trees have been hacked and scarred. The trail continues due south along the river bank. The air is pregnant with danger, the forest dark and expectant, as if watching your passing in sullen anger.

Quagmire pushes his troop hard. By midnight of the first day, he reaches the Mound (see map). If Gilliam and the worgs fail to return by early morning, Quagmire becomes suspicious. If they do escape the party, they meet up with the troll at the Mound. Whether alerted by Gilliam and the worgs or not, Quagmire becomes nervous and lays a trap for any pursuers.

Once the trap is set (see 'The Mound' below), Quagmire turns south-east and heads for Longspear Creek. There, he retrieves canoes and sets off downstream. It is a day long journey by canoe to Mauser's Ridge. There he rests his troop. At dawn he leads his troop on the short half-day journey to the Flies Den. It should take the troll three days to arrive at his lair.

The Battle Mound

The Westerling River, widened to 30 yards, spills into a broad valley filled with bramble and a thick copse of maple trees. The river coils to the south and west. The trail turns from the river bank to the valley's center. As you approach, the trees give way to a wide clearing dominated by a hill sized mound of earth, no doubt, some long forgotten battle mound. The tracks lead to the mound's crest. Once there, you see the expanse of the valley as it cuts through the forest. A meadow of gentle grass and wild flowers stands in stark contrast to the forested valley to the left and right. The open sun is warm and bright, lifting spirits dampened by the forest's dark. The Westerling river continues in a south westerly direction, but then forks. The smaller fork, still 20 yards wide, flows into a gully and turns off to the south-east.

At the Mound, Quagmire divided his force. The main group, under his leadership, took canoes and continued down the Longspear Creek. Three canoes are left hidden between the forks of the two rivers. The smaller force, consisting of ungern and any remaining worgs hid the signs of Quagmire's exit by canoe. They then took cover beneath the trees on the southern edge of the clearing.

The mound itself is actually a mass grave dug in the height of the Winter Dark Wars. Here the Holy Defenders of the Flame fought a troop of giants, orcs and ungern. In the battle's aftermath the knights buried the fallen beneath the mound. A great deal of wealth was left behind. If the battle mound is searched old equipment, arms and armor will be found. In addition, there is a 1 in 8 chance that the characters will stumble across some type of treasure. If this occurs, roll on the following table:

1 luck-stone pendent (+1 to saving throws)
2 flask: with orc skrun (revitalizes and adds 1hp when fully consumed)
3 a potion of healing
4 a pouch with 2-20 gold
5 a gold ring, worth 25 gold
6 silver dagger
7 a silver sword (Castle Keeper's Choice)
8 a chalice worth 75 gold
9 +1 spear
10 +1 crowbill, mace, hammer or morningstar

A skilled ranger who actively searches the whole area hcan find the extra canoes on a successful tracking check (CL 2) and has a chance of discovering signs of the ruse and the troll's route on a second Tracking check (CL 7), i.e. signs of travel on the creek.

If the party discovers Quagmire's trail, skip the next section and go to Act III, The Flies Den.

Upon spying the party, the hidden ungern move south along the banks of the Westerling in an attempt to lead the party to Broken Vale, Horntooth's lair. They make an obvious trail to draw the party after them. It is a two day journey to the Vale, and the ungern will use the worgs to bait the party into following them.

South of the battle mound, you spy a worg lurking in the brush, upon seeing you it howls and barks and gnashes its teeth, but suddenly turns and dashes into the forest. Following the beast you find the troll's trail and you head along the banks of the Westerling River once again. As before the troll has made little attempt at hiding his tracks. The forest becomes thicker and more tangled as you leave the old growth and journey into marshy land. Briars and bramble catch at your clothes and tangle in your equipment. Insects begin to hound you. The trail wanders into the depths of the Darkenfold.

Upon the trail, less than a mile from the Battle Mound, the party comes across a crude sign nailed to a tree. It reads:

cowards
a bandan yu chase of us
yu cannot have the tree
try and yu die

A ranger notices that the number of the band has changed on a successful tracking check (CL 2).

The Fisherman

The trail leads deeper into the forest. With darkness approaching the party is becoming exhausted.

As the party moves further south the forest becomes more inhospitable. The bramble grows thick and the trail hard to follow. Though they rarely see them, they know the worgs dog their every step. They weave in and out of the brush following trails unseen and bark to one another. As evening comes, the dark trees become darker still and the forest seems to crowd them, herding them along to an uncertain doom. Eerie howls echoe from the gloom. Stumbling along the trail they see little that would serve as a suitable camp site. The bramble is too thick, the briars too plentiful. Clouds of mosquitoes join them and hound them mercilessly.

As your frustration grows you are stricken by the smell of fire and cooking fish. A moment later you spy a small flickering light just off the path. Peering into the gloom you see an ancient gnarled oak leaning over the mouth of a small burbling creek, its bark, blackened with age, is chipped and hangs loosely upon its bole. The fire is at its feet.

This is the home of **Ian the gnome, the Fisherman**. Ian is old beyond reckoning, he claims to have been born in the Days before Days. He is mad beyond his years. He lives in the Darkenfold beneath an oak which was once a Sentient but has long since settled into that state of dormancy which comes to those creatures before death. Ian has burrowed a hole beneath the tree, the entrance to which lies underneath the creek.

Ian loves fish and is even now cooking a skillet full of his day's catch. There are bags of half eaten fish all around his home, hanging in the tree, piled on the ground and otherwise thrown haphazardly about.

As you approach the fire you spy a tiny man, a gnome, crouched over the flickering flames. He is sallow with a broad face, wide deep eyes and thin lips. He is naked but for a long orange hat placed haphazardly upon his head. He holds a skillet over the fire, the fish within are swimming in butter and sizzle and pop, emitting a mouth watering smell. He looks up at you, beckons you over with a wave of his hand. "Come, come," his gravely voice shouts to you, "come in to join me! Would ye be wantin some fish to eats?"

Ian welcomes the party and offers them all manner of fish, cooked, half cooked or raw. He talks incessantly, only pausing long enough to breath. If the characters interject then he waits for a moment and starts speaking again. Only mention of the sapling will bring him up short. Once the tree is mentioned, however, his demeanor changes and he becomes serious.

"Nie, tis not my business what ye do with your time but ye've taken up a goodly quest indeed. Loss of the stripling tree would be dire. The frost of the Winter's Dark would return to the forest and all would be frozen in time, as it was under the horned one. For ye see that the troll has darker allies than some fool orcs. He's bound himself to the service of an ancient and altogether evil tree, called in your tongue, Gristlebones. This malevolent creature has sat in the forest deeps for untold years brooding on the evil that was and the evil he will be. With the sapling, he'll be able to rule over the forest whole and maybe even beyond.

"But I say you're headed in the wrong but right direction. The troll lord and Gristlebones dwell to the east. Where your bound is to the lair of Horntooth the goblin in the north. A crafty fellow this one, but he hates the troll more than all other things and would see the troll killed and the Gristlebones cut to the root! So follow these fool worgs and their black masters to the lair of the Horntooth and see what right you can make of this wrong!"

Ian gives little more in the ways of information. He's grown tired and wishes to eat his fish. Besides, he is mad and cannot keep his mind focused on any one subject for very long. So he commences to babble about his fish, catching his fish, cooking his fish, and eating his fish. He offers the party use of the glade as a campsite. After eating he will dive into the creek, go beneath the bank and into his lair. He will not come out until the party leaves.

Ian will use a *vanish* spell if attacked, the only magical power left to him. He has nothing of value but for the fish in bags about his hole.

Broken Vale

The ungern are well acquainted with Horntooth, and are familiar with the surrounding area.

After leading the party through the forest for two days, they hide a short distance from Horntooth's lair and wait for the party's arrival. Once the party moves into sight, they rush the party in a false attack before turning and fleeing. As they run they spread out to make themselves difficult targets. They flee toward Horntooth with the party hot on their heels. Even if the party does not follow, the ungern warn Horntooth of the danger.

Horntooth is no fool and he prizes his life above everything. He has been at odds with Quagmire on a number of occasions and hates the troll. He immediately suspects the ungern's motives. This does not, however, remove the threat which the party poses. So he will raise his band for battle. If the opportunity presents itself Horntooth tries to make a deal with the party.

The fleeing ungern and worgs lead you into a dense part of the forest. The tangled underbrush slows your movement. The ground begins to slope and the briars become even thicker. As your frustration mounts, you break into a large clearing where a warren of small inter-connected mud and grass huts greets your astonished gaze. The ungern are plain to see, conversing with a small humanoid, carrying a short horn bow. His skin, as green as the leaves around him, is covered in blue tattoos. He wears a dark red hat, a shirt of mesh chain and curled boots. A black crow flaps around him, cawing at your presence. Slowly, the creature turns to you, peering at you with pale yellow eyes. Obviously you have been led into a trap, a goblin warren!

Horntooth's clan consists of 31 goblins and 5 wild boars. All 31 goblins will not be at the lair. A dozen goblins and two boars are out raiding or hunting. Horntooth and his goblins will flee into the surrounding woods to regroup. Due to their small size and knowledge of the area, the brush does not impede their movement. Once regrouped, the goblins harass the party under the cover of night and attempt to steal from them or overtake them. Three of the wild boars always stay with Horntooth.

Horntooth should be played carefully. He is intelligent and does not want to lose his band. Horntooth can be bought off and will offer his assistance against the troll. He knows about the Hollow where Gristlebones is rooted. He also knows a secret way into the Hollow which circumvents the Flies Den. Horntooth will supply guides or give directions to the secret entrance for a substantial reward, or for part of the troll's treasure.

Passage through Broken Vale is difficult. The undergrowth is thick and entangling. Unless a druid is able to help the party through the tangle, their movement will be halved (except for elves) and the goblins will receive a +1 on their surprise roles.

The ungern do not remain to learn the outcome of the encounter. They head to the Pig's Trail, which leads to the Flies Den. It is a two day journey along the Pig's trail to Quagmire's lair.

Horntooth (*He is a lawful evil, goblin whose vital stats are HD 2d8+2, HP 11, AC 15. His primary attributes are physical. His special ability is darkvision 60 feet. He carries a +2 horn bow. If forced to melee he fights two handed with a hand axe and a +1 dagger. He has a familiar as well, the crow Xilb. Xilb serves as Horntooth's eyes and ears when he is stalking prey. Horntooth's treasure is hidden in a chest, underneath a rubbish pile of the central hut (10 platinum, 350 gold, five gems worth 25 gold each, 600 silver, an enchanted +2 horn bow and a scroll with 3 magic spells.*)

In battle the goblins use darts, small crossbows and blowguns to harass the party. At close quarters, they use knives, axes and short swords. They will harry an enemy until they overcome them or drive them out of the Vale. At no time will the goblins stand and suffer losses. If some become bottled up, their comrades desert them. If Horntooth is killed, the goblins scatter. They fight using hit and run tactics and prefer to catch their victims in the open. There is nothing in the village they will die to defend.

31 Goblins (*Their vital stats are HD 1d8, HP 3 each, AC 14. They are lawful evil. Their primary attributes are physical. Their have darkvision 60. They attack with claw for 1d4 points of damage or by weapon for 2-5 points of damage.*)

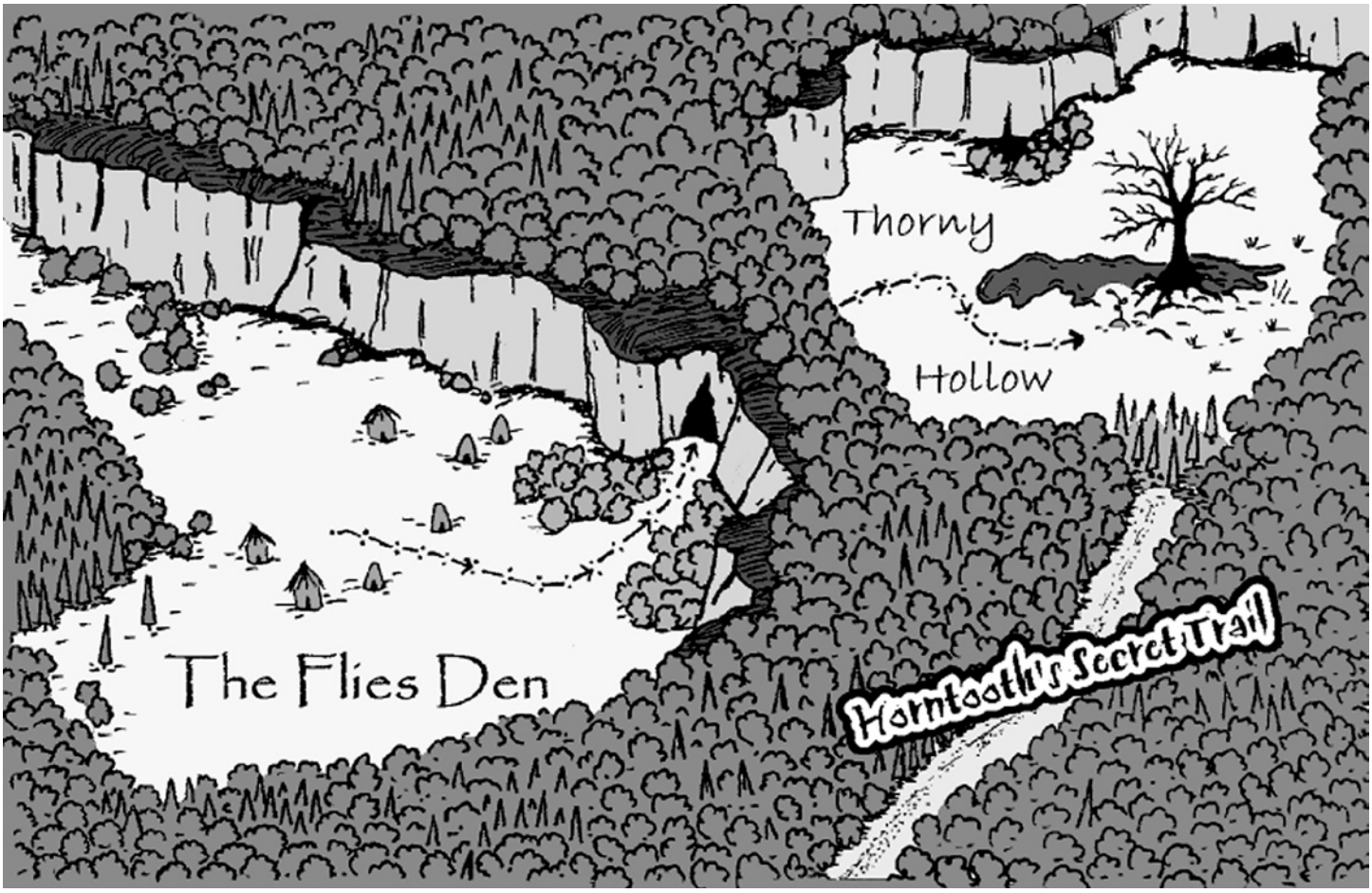
Three of the boars are always with Horntooth. He and two of his sub-chiefs can ride them if needed. Otherwise, they serve as watch dogs and guards.

5 Wild Boars (Their vital stats are HD 2d8, HP 9, 10, 10,12, 15, AC 16. They are neutral evil. Their primary attributes are physical. Their have twilight vision. A boar attacks with its tusks to gore for 2d6 points of damage.)

The Pig's Trail

Having dealt with the goblins, you pick up the trail south of the goblin lair. Here, a narrow foot path leads you into the dense undergrowth to which you have become accustomed. You follow the path as it winds along the edge of a broken cliff. Trees have grown up around the cliff, from crevices, and along the edge. Bravely you follow the easily discernable tracks before you.

The Pig's Trail is an east-west trail in the southern part of the Darkenfold. The path is narrow and skirts the edge of a broken cliff. The party must travel single file. It stretches from the Southern Way near Ends Meet, through the Broken Vale and the Downs, and on to the Flies Den (see map for details). In the Vale, the Pigs Trail offers many places for an ambush because the thick undergrowth crowds the path enough to allow even a large creature to hide almost completely unnoticed.



Once the trail winds into The Downs, the forest becomes old growth and the underbrush almost completely disappears. Travel is much easier and the party can spread out as they wish.

If still alive, the ungern take less than two days to reach the Flies Den. They rest only a few hours during the height of day, and they make no effort to disguise their trail. Any remaining worgs lag behind and watch for signs of pursuit. Upon sighting the party, the worgs slip back to Quagmire. To keep the party on their toes, the CK should allow one of the party members to spot a worg as it flees into the woods. Due to their speed and agility in the difficult terrain, pursuit and capture of the worgs will be impossible.

The party, however, will take four days, three if they force march, to arrive at the Flies Den. Unless forewarned, they unknowingly enter Quagmire's lair. Successful tracking will reveal an increased amount of foot traffic and refuse and should alert the party.

Act III

Flies Den

The trail curves into a valley of broken cliffs and thick boled trees. The foul stench of rotting meat gives you an unpleasant greeting. Footprints, garbage, discarded bones, and trees hewed by wickedly notched blades evidence obvious signs of passage. Pasty yellow light trickles through the overhanging branches. The sunlight does little to break the gloom. The valley stretches on into the distance, noticeable only as a dip in the forest. Thick growth and high bluffs belie any effort at finding another entrance. Everything is quiet.

Quagmire chose his den well. The valley has only two entrances, one in the west, where the party enters, and one in the east. The valley walls consist of steep cliffs and a thick tangle of trees and brush cultivated to keep out wandering monsters. These effectively bar the Player's from entering outside of magical means. A creek bubbles up in the valley's center, giving Quagmire fresh water. Though no traps are placed at the valley's door, Quagmire always keeps the entrance watched.

Being forewarned, Quagmire has increased his watch. Gilliam lies under some rocks with 4 ogres hidden in the trees a hundred yards behind him. The worgs, if any remain, have been placed outside the valley, to come at the dark faerie's call. If the party enters the valley, Gilliam will spring upon them at the last moment. At his call, the ogres and worgs emerge and rush into the fray. The worgs reach Gilliam in two rounds and the ogres in three.

Gilliam is a foul looking faerie, gnome-like in appearance. A plague scarred his already ugly face when he was a child. He covers his unkept armor in a mangy, once white, goatskin vest, the dirt and smell of which match the dirt and smell of Gilliam himself. His orange colored hair hangs about him in greasy curls and his beard is spiked into two forks. For Gilliams stats see Page 5-6.

He is a rogue, but very skilled in combat. His great speed allows him to use two weapons without penalty. He wields a mace and poisoned dagger.

Gilliam, next to the ungern, is Quagmire's most loyal follower. He serves the troll lord without question and unless he is in some manner ensorcelled, he cannot be convinced to turn on the troll. Gilliam possesses a general knowledge of the forest, and an intimate knowledge of the Flies Den and Quagmire's band. He has no love for Mrodox or the orcs, and little compassion for the ogres. He respects the ungern only for the sake of Quagmire. He cares little what happens to the sapling. Gilliam will attack elves, gnomes, and halflings first because, like all dark faeries, he possesses a passionate hatred of these races.

Gilliam fights to the death out of loyalty to Quagmire. The ogres and worgs, however, will break and run if the fight goes against them.

4 Ogres (*Their vital stats are HD 4d8, HP 12, 14, 17, 21, AC 16. They are chaotic evil. Their primary attributes are physical. They have darkvision 60 feet and twilight vision. They attack with fists for 1d10 or hurl boulders up to 100 feet for 1d8 damage. They are carrying pouches and animal skin sacks. Collectively the ogres carry 15 pp, 120 gp, 300 silver and a necklace worth 150 gp.*)

Quagmire's Last Stand

It seems your long hunted quarry has at last grown overconfident. You peer out of the brush and broken rock into a clearing of broken slate. Stagnant pools of cess emit a rancid odor which hangs in the air. A few ramshackle huts dot the clearing and a fire pit smolders in its center. A dozen orcs lay about indifferently, counting their treasures, eating, and gambling. The ungern are hanging about the far side of the clearing against a cliff face covered by a tapestry of dried brush and briars. The area smells of ancient decay, and the earth seems tired and broken, corrupted by evil memories.

If the characters defeat Gilliam and the guards, they can move unwatched into the thick copse of trees that house Quagmire's lair. Quagmire is both confident his henchmen will hold the pass, and quite enamored with his new charge, the sapling. Gristlebones has also turned himself away from the forest by bending his mind upon the little tree recently planted at his feet.

The Players must now decide how to tackle the lair and recover the sapling. Twelve of the orcs are within a 20 yard area, bickering amongst one another. Their chieftain, Mrodox, is with Quagmire just beyond the tapestry of dried brush and briars. Mrodox's three personal orc guards, left behind, have returned to their huts. The whole encampment can be easily surprised.

If the party makes a determined show of force or uses an area of affect spell, the orcs, leaderless for the moment, scramble for the cliffs, trying to climb out. If left alone, they will eventually scramble out; if not, they turn and fight until they are overcome. The three orc guards rush for their master in the Hollow. They will only return to the fight if Mrodox leads them (see below). As soon as Mrodox returns, any orcs remaining in the hollow rally around him. They fight until he is killed or a third of their number falls, at which time they flee.

The remaining ungern rush the party and call for Quagmire. If any orc guards happen in the way, the ungern set upon them until they run or perish. The ungern will not give ground nor flee until told to do so by Quagmire.

7 Ungern (*Their vital stats are HD 2d8, HP 8, 9, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, AC 14. They are lawful evil. Their primary attributes are physical. Ungern have twilight vision and a spell resistance of 2. They attack with either 2 claws for 1-2 points of damage, or gore for 1-6+2 points of damage, or with weapon. They always favor chopping or cutting weapons, i.e. axes, bardiches, cleavers and the like. All the ungern are armed with battle axes and maces. The leader fights two handed wielding a broken glaive and an axe in combat. They are wearing bits and pieces of chain, scale and leather armor. Collectively the ungern have 7 platinum, 45 gold and 200 silver, the leader has a jeweled ear ring worth 25 gold.*)

18 Orcs (*Their vital stats are HD 1d8, HP 4 each, AC 13 They are chaotic evil. Their primary attributes are physical. Orcs have darkvision 60 feet and light sensitivity. They attack with either claw for 1d4 points of damage or scimitar for 1d6 points of damage. They generally use cleaving weapons in combat. Collectively the orcs have 36 gold and 129 silver.*)

Quagmire (*He is a lawful evil troll lord whose vital stats are HD 8d10, HP 44, AC 18. His primary attributes are physical. His special abilities are bear hug for 3d6 points of damage and dark vision 60 feet. He carries a club that does 2-16 points of damage. For more information see Troll Lord on page 14-15.*)

Once alerted, Quagmire hefts his huge club and rushes out of the Hollow to join the battle. In a ferocious attack, he attempts to drive off the characters to keep his treasure and the sapling safe. He fights to the death. He possesses 3 magical boulders which explode upon impact for 1d8 damage each. However, he does not want to use them because he is saving them for Gristlebones when the time is right. Quagmire's treasure is kept in Gristlebone's lair.

Mrodox, the orc shaman, waits before attacking. Peering out of the canopy of vines, he assesses the melee and calculates his actions. If the battle goes well for the troll, he throws his considerable weight into the fight. If things fair badly, he turns and rushes along the path to the Hollow to take the sapling for his own. There is a 50% chance that Gristlebones will attack him, having already grown attached to the little seedling. If this happens, the Shaman flees. If Gristlebones allows the digging, it will take Mrodox at least 20 minutes to extract the sapling, roots and all. Mrodox hopes to flee with the sapling, but he will fight if cornered. His three orc guards will stay with him.

Mrodox (*He is a chaotic evil level 3 orc shaman/cleric whose vital stats are HD 3d8, HP 14, AC 14. His primary attributes are physical. His special abilities are dark vision 60 feet and light sensitivity. He wields a +2 crowbill (hammer) in combat and wears scale mail armor. He carries a holy symbol of the god Unklar on a leather thong, hanging off his wrist. He has this same symbol tattooed on his forearms. His cleric spells are 0-3, 1-2, 2-1; 0-Detect Good, Detect Magic, Light; 1st-Curse, Command, Protection from Good; 2nd-Darkness. He also has the orc band's treasure in a chest in his hut: 25 platinum, 300 gold, and 400 silver.*)

The Mortality of Green

The Hollow

Once the party has overcome Quagmire and Mrodox, they easily locate the path which leads to Thorny Hollow from the many tracks leading under the canopy of hanging brush and briars. The path cuts through a thin valley of broken slate and rock for about a mile. Horntooth's secret trail leads into this path (see map). It ends in an enclosed box canyon filled with refuse. Gristlebones will be inattentive at first, so his cloud of gas will not be expelled prior to the party seeing him.

Pushing aside the thorny curtain exposes a wide cleft in the rocks. Beyond you see the sapling, its tiny stem thrusting up toward the light which shines into the canyon. The sapling stands about two feet high, its budding green leaves sprouting from small branches. It nestles at the foot of an old, leafless tree which twists above you, thirty feet high. Long vines hang limp from its high canopy. A great split at its summit looks sinister and emits a small cloud of steam. The valley's ancient decay originates here.

Gristlebones is not a strong Sentient. He will be easy to catch unaware, 5 in 6 chance, for his attention is on the little sapling. His fighting abilities are greatly reduced due to extreme age. He will fight to keep the sapling. If he feels that he cannot win alone, he emits a loud shrill shriek as if calling for aid. None will be forthcoming because the Quagmire was the last of his allies.

Though Sentients can normally move, Gristlebones is so old and decrepit that he cannot. He would have fallen over, doomed to a life of slow rot, had Quagmire not saved him. He has sat in Thorny Hollow for so long that his shallow roots have dug into the muck beneath the small pool of stagnant water.

His age has also affected his defense. His normally thick bark has rotted away and only a pulpy shell remains.

Gristlebones (*He is a chaotic evil sentient tree whose vital stats are HD 12d8, HP 58, AC 13. Its primary attributes are both physical and mental. Despite his age, Gristlebones is still very powerful. Four of his branches remain strong enough and limber enough for attacking. The branches can take up to 2d8 hit points of damage, this is separate from the trees overall hit points. They each have an armor class of 13. The sentient has a tremendous magic resistance due to his age, SR 12. Elemental attacks, however, (such as lightning) do double damage; extreme cold shocks the tree into a state of dormancy until it is thawed. Due to his vile nature, Gristlebones is particularly vulnerable to purification spells. A purify water spell cast in the pool where Gristlebones is rooted will cause the old tree to lapse into a dormant state unable to defend himself or the sapling.*)

Conclusion

You have proven yourselves foresters of great skill and have bested the greatest of the Darkenfold's evil inhabitants. The rescued sapling can at last be delivered to the rangers at Ends Meet or, at the very least, allowed to grow here in the Hollow. And if that is not reward enough, amidst the tangled webs of the old tree's roots, you find Quagmire's horde.

Quagmire's horde rests in heavy sacks stuffed beneath the tree's roots (*In all he has the following: 6,000 gold, 12,000 silver +2long sword, +1 spear, +3 chain mail, everburning candle (gives clerics a +1 to wisdom), boots of stealth, and a spell-slingers book; Rachel's Mystic Tome: four 1st level spells, one 2nd level spell and one 3rd level spell.*)

The Castle Keeper should take note of the amount of time which has passed as mentioned in "Corrupting the Sapling" in the Synopsis.

Continuing the Adventure

After the defeat of Quagmire and the rescue of the sapling, the party may wish to further explore the Darkenfold. The forest offers many opportunities for adventure. These include: delivering the sapling to the rangers and assisting them in planting it, complicated by the machinations of Mrodox (if he escaped); tracking down and driving Horntooth's band out of the forest; and an exploration of the Broken Steppes region.

Appendix

DARK FAERIE
NO. APPEARING: 1, 6-12, 20-100
SIZE: Medium
HD: 3d8
MOVE: 20 ft., 30 ft. (fly)
AC: 15
ATTACKS: Weapon (weapon)
SPECIAL: Darkvision 60 ft., Twilight Vision, Spell-Like Abilities, Hide, Rogue traits
SAVES: M, P
INT: High
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil
TYPE: Fey
TREASURE: 3
XP: 90+3

Dark Faerie are outcasts from the land of Faerie and for this reason, they hate beauty of any sort. Dark Faerie take many shapes and forms. Their natural form is that of a small winged, humanoid creature, mottled dark green in color. They have long faces, with deep set eyes and usually horrible teeth. Occasionaly, they take on the shape of deformed gnomes. They are found in most climes and almost any terrain, however, the much prefer deep, temperate forests where they live in dens or warrens dug beneath the roots of very old trees. Dark fey are violent creatures and do not work well with one another. When encountered in large groups there are always several factions that frequently fight one another.

Dark fey work to undo all that is good in the world and they long for the return of Unklar and the Age of Winter's Dark. They tend to seek out powerful, evil creatures and aid them against other lesser folk. They love to steal and rob human establishments and are frequently responsible for kidnaping the young.

Dark Faerie have an inexplicable hatred, which borders on fear, of birds.

Combat: Dark Faerie rarely stand and fight unless they feel that they have a better than average chance of overcoming the enemy. The prefer hit and run tactics that keep an enemy unbalanced, gradually weakening them until chances of a successful attack improve.

Polymorph: Dark Faerie have the ability to *Polymorph Self* twice each day as a 7th level caster.

Spell-like Abilities: They can cast, as a 6th level wizard, the following spells once per day – *obscuring mist*, *entangle, pass without trace, light* and *silence image*.

Rogue Traits: Dark Fey have all first level rogue abilities and act as 5th level rogues.

Troll Lord

NO. APPEARING: 1-4
SIZE: Large
HD: 9d10
MOVE: 30 ft.
AC: 18
ATTACKS: 2 fists (1-4), Bite 2d6, Weapon (weapon)
SPECIAL: Rend, Darkvision 60 ft., Twilight Vision, Regeneration 2
SAVES: P
INT: Average
ALIGNMENT: Evil
TYPE: Giant
TREASURE: 9
XP: 1700+9

Troll Lords are rare, solitary creatures, never traveling in groups larger than four. They are massive, averaging about 12 feet tall, their huge bellies only matched by their large hands and feet. They take pride in the great tusks that sprout from the tops and bottoms of their jaws, often decorating them with bands of gold, iron, silver or other precious metals. They prefer little clothing, usually restricting themselves to loose pants, loin clothes and the like. They hang their battle trophies from chains or ropes they loop about their arms, legs, chests or shoulders.

Troll lords inhabit wilderness regions where they are not likely to be disturbed. Occasionally they raid farming communities for their favorite food, billy goats. They much prefer raw meat to cooked, but on occasion make large stews of rotten vegetables, meats and spices. Troll lords are evil with a mean disposition. They keep to themselves and avoid contact with others. They are of average intelligence, but can see in the dark as easily as they can in the day and have keen senses of smell.

Troll lords are immortal. Though they can be slain by mortal means, they do not die. Rather, as they age they become weighted down with their life's accumulated evil so that eventually they cannot move. In time they root the weight of their life's work becomes so great that they are unable to move. They become still as trees, waking only long enough to visit some evil on whatever unfortunate creature happens to sit upon their rooted feet.

Combat: In combat they use small trees for clubs or crude stone axes. They also use their huge fists to pummel an opponent senseless or squeeze them like fruit.

Rend: If the troll lord scores two successful hits with his fists, he can grab an opponent an opponent in a bear hug or pummel him (CK's choice) for an extra 3d6 points of damage.

Regeneration: Three rounds after a troll lord suffers damage, its body begins to repair itself. Trolls regenerate at a rate of two hit points per round. Trolls cannot heal damage caused by fire or acid. Unlike other trolls if a troll lord is killed, dropping to below negative 10, regardless of the method of being killed he does not regenerate. Meaning to say that it is not necessary to burn troll lords to destroy them.

Ungern

NO. APPEARING: 1-8, 10-100
SIZE: Medium
HD: 2d8
MOVE: 30 ft.
AC: 14
ATTACKS: 2 claw (1-2), or gore (1-6+2), or by Weapon (weapon)
SPECIAL: Twilight Vision, Spell Resistance 2, Hide
SAVES: P
INT: Average
ALIGNMENT: Lawful Evil
TYPE: Humanoid
TREASURE: 1
XP: 30+2/chief 120+4/battle lord 200+5

In the black days of the Winter Dark when the Horned God, Unklar, ruled the land, the ungern issued forth from the fortress of Aufstrag. They served Unklar as soldiers and captains, and spread his evil throughout the lands. Some say that they were born of a union between the dark fay and wild evil men enslaved in Unklar's service, but this is not true, for the ungern are the children of the horned god. They were created from his own malice and caste in his image. In those far off days Unklar bore with him a great despite of power from the Void and with it he fashioned the ungern. He caste their molds and breathed life into them. So they are still born, in the deep pits of Aufstrag by the Witch Queens and other servants of his that remain in the world.

Whatever their origin, they are always the same, possessing an evil and an undying lust for destruction. The ungern are devil like in appearance. Their shape mimics the guise of their maker, Unklar. They stand about 6 feet on average and are generally humanoid in shape. They have dark brown or red skin. Their hands are clawed, their feet cloven hooves. They have wolf like heads with long tooth-filled snouts. Long black horns adorn their brows.

Ungern travel in organized units ranging from 10-100. For every 10 encountered there is at least one sub-chief with maximum hit points and an AC of 15. If two or more of these sub-chiefs are encountered there is always a chief with 4d8 hit points (minimum 18 hit points) and an AC of 16. If 100 are encountered there is an ungern battle lord with 56 hit points, AC 18 whose weapon does 2-12 points of damage. Battle lords are extremely intelligent with a superior intelligence and are skilled tacticians.

Combat: In battle, they are always dress in armor, helms and shields. They wield axes and other heavy cleaving weapons such as bardiches or halberds. Their archers are famed for using great horned bows, and though they can only fire one arrow a round the damage they do, 2-16, more than makes up for it. If there are more than one they always fight as a unit, speaking their own guttural language to communicate actions. They do not surrender unless ordered to by one of their captains and will always fight to the death. They hate dwarves above all creatures and spare them little mercy. Ungern are not prone to unnecessary cruelty, nor do they torture their enemy. Rather, the slay them out of hand.

Unto Cornelius the White,

Written this first day of the high year. As you know, the Darkenfold is an ancient wood, wondrous deep, which we have long intended to bring into the safe keeping of our order. It is with glad tiding that we announce our successful discovery of a band of rangers who have gathered in those fell woods at the village of Ends Meet. So, we bid you hasten down the Old Post Road, bring yourself and your charge, the young sapling, to the village, and deliver it up to the ranger's safekeeping.

Be wary on the road, for it is known that Quagmire the troll has settled in the southern wood and his evil deeds are well known to all. If he were to gain the sapling he could influence the Great Tree itself, and this would be incomprehensible disaster.

This mission is of great importance for the forest is in desperate need of our aid. Protect the young sprout with all your power for the loss of the sapling is unthinkable. It is young yet and unrooted so that it would be easy for any who possess it to turn it to their own designs. We bid you take care and have caution of strangers on the road for we have not the strength to rescue the sapling should you fail.

Daladon Lothian
Lord Protector of the Formidwood
The High Council