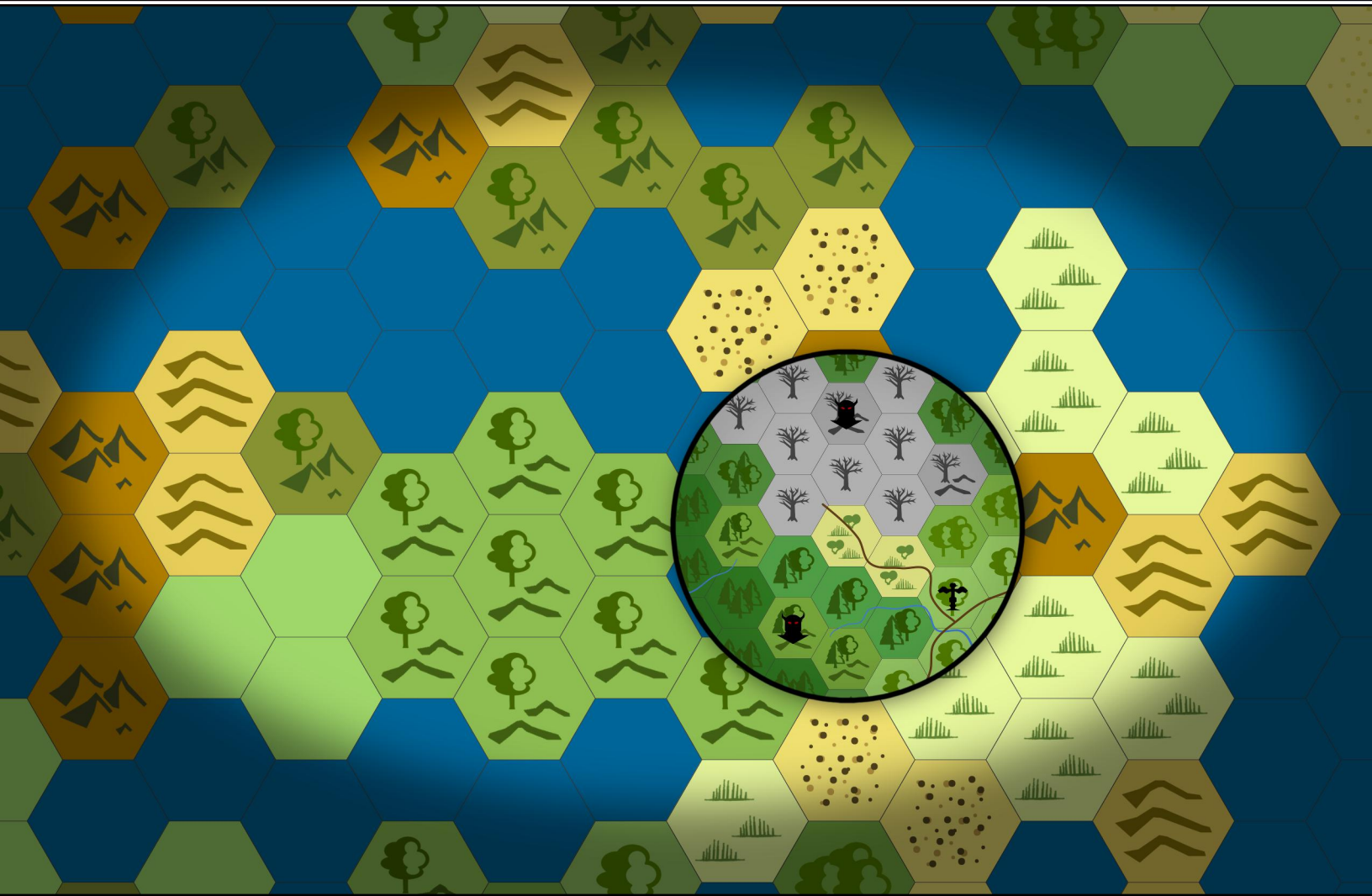


Hexed Places

Ash Wood



Created by Mark A. Thomas





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Ash Wood

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Artists

Artwork copyright by the following artists, used with permission:

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About Hexed Places

Hexed Places are outdoor locations and encounters based on the classic six-mile hex format and OSR sensibilities. Use these locales as a quick side adventure, to fill a blank spot in your campaign sandbox, or expand upon them to create a multi-session campaign. Each **Hexed Places** includes a regional overview; expanded one-mile per hex maps for players and GMs; encounter, treasure, and rumor lists and tables; and descriptions of individual locations, encounters, and features within the hex.



Contents and Usage

Player and GM Maps

The maps provide a detailed look at the region at a one-mile per hex scale. The player version of the map does not include roads / trails or locale icons.

Introduction and Rumors

This section provides a broad overview of the region, outlining major physical features and obstacles. It also includes a set of rumors that may or may not provide accurate information about the region.

Locations

The major locations in the region are detailed in this section. Each location is referenced by hex coordinates and a name. Locations are ordered by coordinates, left to right, top to bottom.

Encounters

This table reflects the typical creature population of the hex. Its primary purpose is to provide wandering monster encounters, but it can also be used to fill in blank spaces on the map, or as a tool for populating nearby locales.

Extras

The **Extras** section details any unique creatures, treasures, or magic items mentioned in the text. It also includes any tables referenced in the main document.

Stat Blocks

All creatures and NPCs in **Hexed Places** include simple stat blocks as a standard frame of reference. Here is a sample:

Orcs (5) - AC 6 (13), HD 1, #AT 1, D 1d6, MV 9

Hate the sun. Treasure: 2d6 GP, 2d6 SP each.

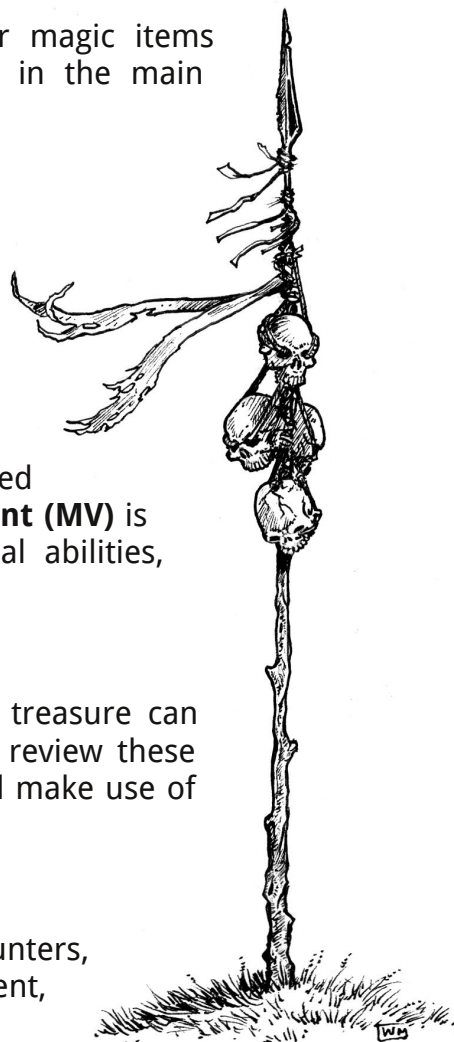
This stat block represents five, one hit-die Orcs. **Armor Class (AC)** values are given as **descending (ascending)**. An unarmored character is **AC 9 (10)** and chainmail provides **AC 5 (14)**. **Movement (MV)** is given in generic units. Unburdened humans are **MV 12**. Special abilities, class/level, and treasure are appended as needed.

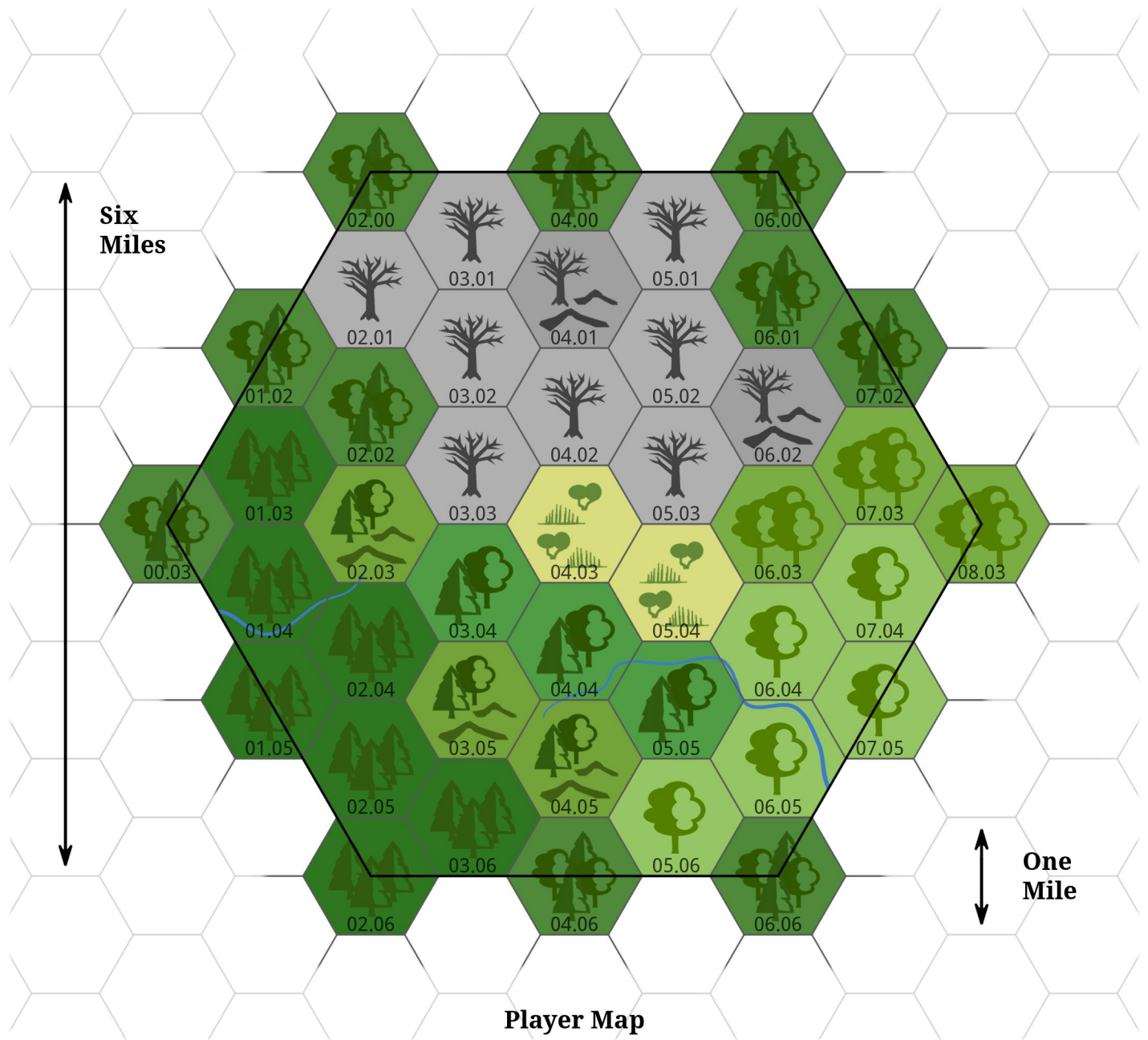
Treasure

Creature and locale descriptions include treasure listings. Since treasure can have a major impact on the campaign, the GM should carefully review these listings and adjust them to suit their game. Intelligent foes should make use of any treasure they carry.

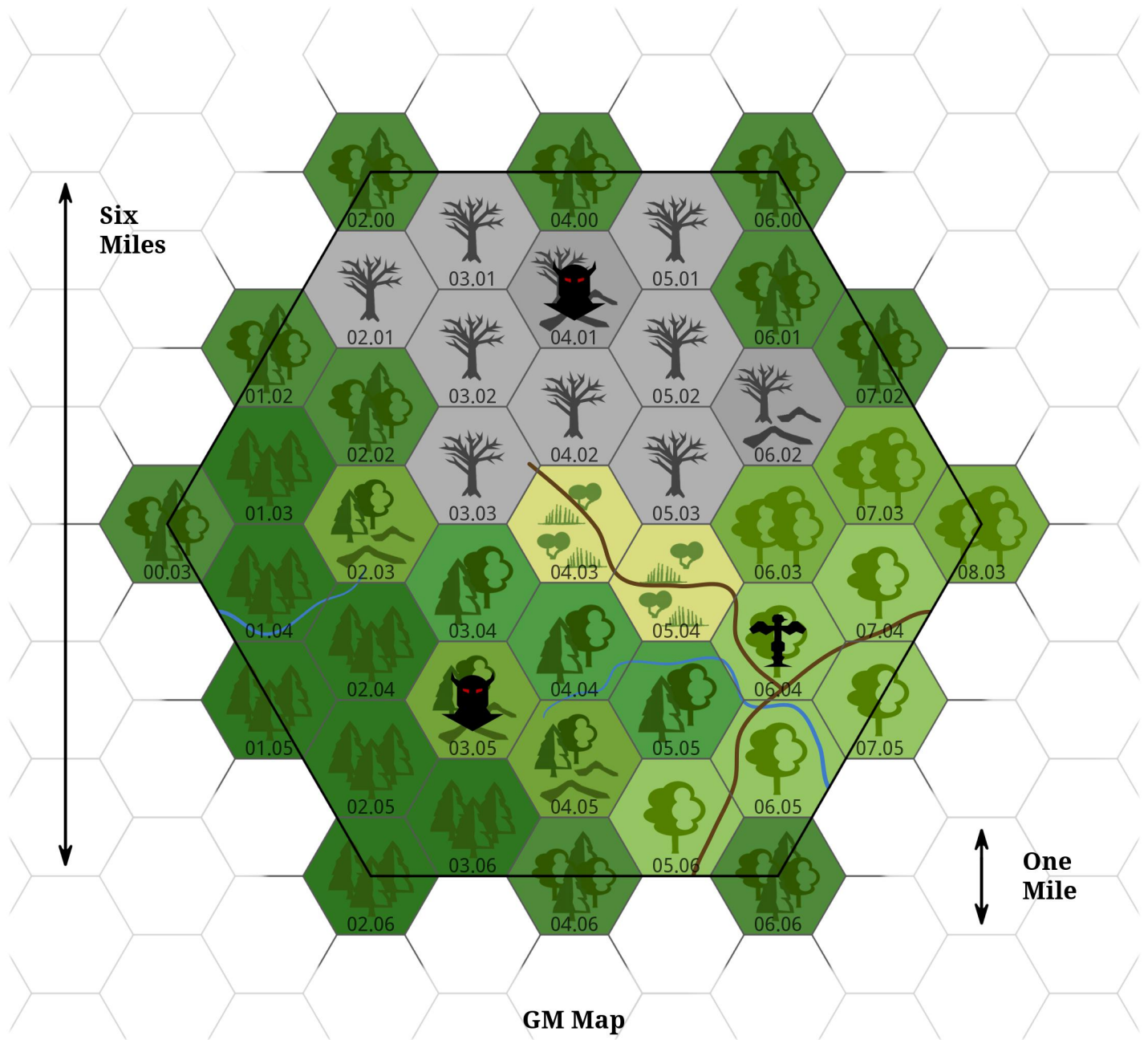
Experience

Hexed Places does not provide experience point values for encounters, foes, or treasure. This element is very system- and group-dependent, so it is left in the hands of the GM.





Notes:



Notes:

Ash Wood

Years ago a falling star landed in this densely wooded area, starting a fire that burned away much of the forest. The woods have grown back in many places, but the area around the landing site is still a burned and blackened ruin.

Most of this region is wooded. The southwestern section did not burn, and gigantic firs and hemlocks dominate there. The central and eastern sections are younger trees, a mixed lot of pines, locust, ash, and oak. There are two small streams that flow out of the low hills; one leads away west, one to the southeast. A road cuts across the southeast corner of the region, and an old logging trail dead ends near the center of the area.

Rumors

The fallen star was no star. It was an evil creature from the blackness of outer space. It lurks in its crater, slaying anyone that comes near.

Loggers used to haul timber out of the forested hills, but since the fire in the sky, those that enter the woods are never heard from again.

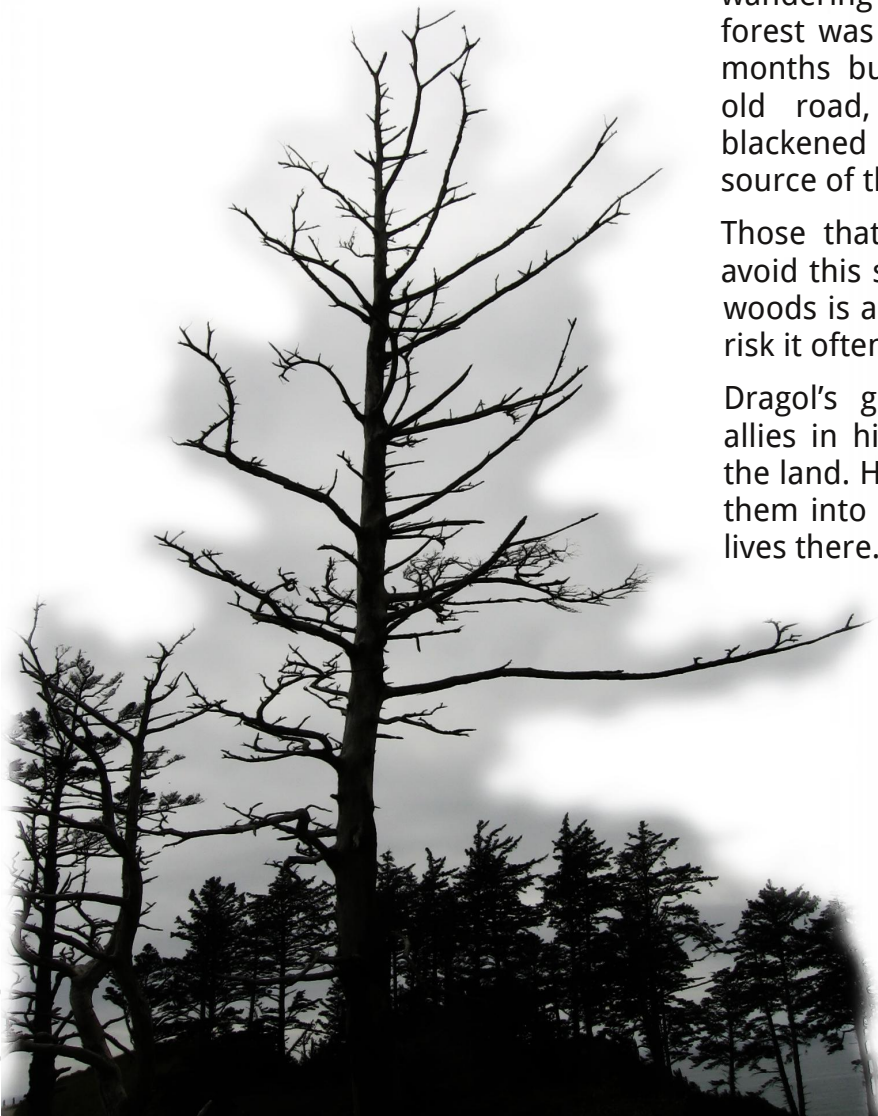
A few years after the great fire, **Dragol**, a wandering shaman, claimed the burned out forest was cursed. He and his followers spent months building a protective totem near the old road, then Dragol ventured into the blackened wood, intent on banishing the source of the curse. He was never seen again.

Those that travel the road would do well to avoid this section after dark. Camping near the woods is a dangerous business, and those who risk it often vanish without a trace.

Dragol's ghost wanders the woods, seeking allies in his fight against the curse that taints the land. He charms anyone he finds and sends them into the black valley to fight the evil that lives there.

There is a long-abandoned camp in the hills south of the burned woods. It is little more than a few crude cabins near a small cave with a spring-fed pool of good water.

The acolytes of Dragol make an annual pilgrimage to the Ash Wood, paying homage to their vanished leader and offering sacrifices at the totem he built. They believe this keeps the curse that afflicts this forest at bay.



Locations

Hex 02.03 – Dryad Vale

This small, isolated valley contrasts sharply with the barren waste to the northeast. Spring-fed creeks pour into a larger stream that flows between the scattered clumps of silver-barked beech and mossy oaks. The forest floor beneath these huge trees is oddly clear of undergrowth, and the air is filled with the song of birds.



Three **Dryads** watch over this woodland vale, aided by a small colony of **Pixies**. These creatures will use any means necessary to protect their forest sanctuary from intruders.

Dryad (3) – AC 8 (11), HD 2, #AT 1, D dagger, M 12

One with the trees. Powerful charms.

Dryads are reclusive female tree sprites who are permanently bonded to a specific tree in their woodland homes. They avoid conflict when possible, but will defend their tree if threatened. Dryads have perfect knowledge of the woods within a mile of their home tree, and can step into and transport themselves between any trees within this area. They often ally themselves with other fairy-folk. If threatened (or attracted to a high-charisma human) they will use their powerful charm ability to negate the threat or trap the object of their desire.

Pixies (16) - AC 5 (14), HD 1/2, #AT 1, D dagger/bow/Special, M 6 / 12 flying

Mischievous. Invisible. Superb shots. Cause confusion. Magic users.

Pixies are tiny winged humanoids that prefer to fight from a distance, using poison arrows that cause sleep or permanent memory loss. They can create phantasmal illusions, change their own form, and cause permanent confusion by touch. They can also dispel magic at will.

Hex 03.02 – The Pit

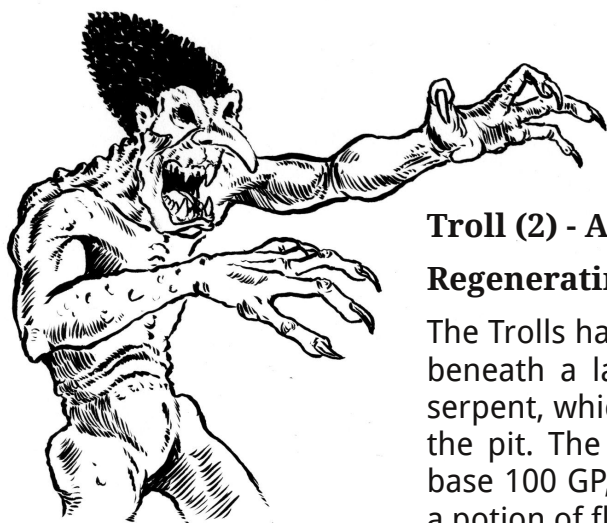
A broad depression surrounded by blasted earth and rock marks the impact site of the fallen star. The deep pit in the center is half-filled with black water, but the glimmering, silver-gray meteorite in the center of the pool can still be seen beneath the water's surface.

The meteorite is made from a mixture of high-quality iron and **Skysteel** (see **Extras**). The evil thing that it carried here has moved to the caves in the **Black Valley (Hex 04.01)**.

Locations (continued)

Hex 03.05 – Abandoned Camp

This logging camp is long-abandoned. Old tents, little more than scraps of canvas hanging off weather-warped wooden frames, a low-walled well, and a few fire pits are all that remain of the old site. The cave is a different matter. It's clear that something fairly large and probably humanoid makes regular use of this rocky hole. Tracks lead to the well and to several small trails that wander through the surrounding woods. One of these trails leads to a refuse heap in a shallow ravine to the northwest, another leads away east to the stream in **Hex 04.05**.



The cave is occupied by a pair of hideous **Trolls**. These powerful creatures prowl the surrounding woods and the roadway, usually at night, attacking anything they encounter. They are aggressive fighters, fearing only fire.

Troll (2) - AC 4 (15), HD 6+6 #AT 3, D 1d4+4/1d4+4/2d6, MV 12
Regenerating. Aggressive. Afraid of fire.

The Trolls have a cache of treasure within their cave, hidden in a pit beneath a large boulder. The cache is protected by a venomous serpent, which will bite anyone foolish enough to stick their hand in the pit. The cache contains 1100 CP, 1260 SP, 890 GP, 9 gems (4 base 100 GP, 3 base 250 GP, 2 base 500 GP), a potion of invisibility, a potion of flying, and a +2 ring of protection.

Hex 04.01 - Black Valley

The barren slopes and blackened trees of this desolate area mark the heart of all that is wrong with **Ash Wood**. The **Crawling Horror** that arrived on the meteorite lairs in the many shallow caves in these hills, guarded by its animated **Mind Pawns**. Both of these creatures are detailed in the **Extras** section.

Hex 06.04 – Dragol's Totem

Dragol's totem stands atop a man-made hill next to the road intersection. The totem itself is cut from a single massive log, thirty feet high, six feet in diameter. The lower sections are covered in carvings, row after row of soldiers marching around the pillar. The topmost section is decorated with six huge bestial faces. This central pillar is surrounded by piles of stacked stones and the scattered remains of old offerings.

Dragol's followers are few in number, but those that remain still make an annual pilgrimage to the site. They spend three days cleaning away the old offerings, restacking stones, and repairing any damage to the main totem. On midsummer's eve they offer a sacrifice to Dragol's memory, and depart at sunrise the next day.

The totem site is holy ground, and radiates a powerful aura of protection from evil in a 500 foot radius. Anyone who makes an offering before the totem is granted a blessed aura that lasts until sunrise of the following day. They are also afflicted with a great desire to see the evil that inhabits the **Ash Wood** destroyed.

Encounters (roll 1d20)

1-3 Trolls

The pair of **Trolls** that inhabit the **Abandoned Camp (Hex 03.05)** are on the prowl. These creatures are tough and aggressive, fearing only fire.

Troll (2) - AC 4 (15), HD 6+6 #AT 3, D 1d4+4/1d4+4/2d6, MV 12

Regenerating. Aggressive. Afraid of fire.

4-6 Pixie Hunters

A group of 1d4+1 **Pixies** from **Dryad Vale (Hex 02.03)**. These creatures will avoid direct contact, but being pixies, they are not above playing tricks or misdirecting anyone they encounter. They will attempt to divert anyone they encounter away from the Vale, and any hostile force will be misdirected toward the trolls in the **Abandoned Camp (Hex 03.05)**.

Pixies (16) - AC 5 (14), HD 1/2, #AT 1, D dagger/bow/Special, M 6 / 12 flying

Mischievous. Invisible. Superb shots. Cause confusion. Magic users.

Pixies are tiny winged humanoids that prefer to fight from a distance, using poison arrows that cause sleep or permanent memory loss. They can create phantasmal illusions, change their own form, and cause permanent confusion by touch. They dispel magic at will.

7-8 Bemused Victim

This unfortunate logger or hunter has been charmed by one of the dryads from **Dryad Vale (Hex 02.03)**, and set to wandering, with a compulsion to head toward **Dragol's Totem (Hex 06.04)**. They have no clear recollection of what's happened for the past few days.

Bemused Victim (1) - AC 9 (10), HD 1, #AT 1, D 1d4, MV 9

Confused. Lost.

9-10 Lone Mind Pawn

A single roaming **Mind Pawn**. Roll 1d4 to determine its physical form: 1 Bemused Victim, 2 Grizzly Bear, 3 Giant Spider, 4 Wild Boar. See the appropriate **Encounter Table** entry for details of these creatures, and the **Extras** section for details of Mind Pawn behavior. There is a 50% chance this Mind Pawn will be actively controlled by the **Crawling Horror**.

11-12 Mind Pawn Pack

A group of 1d4 **Mind Pawns**. Roll 1d4 to determine their physical form: 1-2 Deer, 3 Wild Boars, 4 Pixies. See the appropriate **Encounter Table** entry for details of these creatures, and the **Extras** section for details of Mind Pawn behavior. There is a 50% chance these Mind Pawns will be actively controlled by the **Crawling Horror**.

13-14 Deer Herd

This is a simple herd of deer. These creatures are elusive and swift, and will avoid contact if possible. If pressed, does and bucks will defend the herd.

Deer (2d6) - AC 7 (12), HD 2, #AT 1, D 1d4 hooves or 1d6 antlers, MV 18

Buck charge. Trample attack.

Encounters (continued)

15-16 Grizzly Bear

This highly territorial creature will attack intruders on sight, focusing its rage on a single target. The bear's hide, if it can be harvested intact, is worth 100 GP.

Grizzly Bear (1) - AC 6 (13) HD 6+6 #AT 3, D 1d8/1d8/1d12, MV 12

Hug attack, aggressive.

17 Crawling Horror (night only, treat as a Lone Mind Pawn during the day)

The **Crawling Horror** is on the prowl, looking for new victims. See the **Extras** section for details of this creature.

18 Wild Boars

These omnivores roam the woods, eating anything they can get their snouts on. The best way to deal with these beasts is to avoid them. Once angered they use their tusks to attack aggressively, and fight on for three rounds after being fatally wounded.

Wild Boar (1d12) - AC 7 (12), HD 3+3, #AT 1, D 2d6, MV 15

Irritable. Charge attack. Fight after death.

19 Giant Spider

A huge venomous spider has spun its web in the trees and undergrowth here, and now it hides among the upper branches, waiting for something to stumble into its trap.

Giant Spider (1) - AC 5 (14) HD 2, #AT 1, D 1d6, MV 6 / 9 climbing

Poison bite. Ambush hunter. Sticky webs.

20 GM Choice

Choose from the entries above, add an encounter of your own, or use something from an adjacent locale.

Notes:

Extras

Skysteel

This lightweight metal emits a gentle silvery light and rings like a bell when struck. When mixed with iron this substance adds immense strength and hardness to the resulting alloy. Furthermore, Skysteel easily absorbs magical energy, making it a perfect vehicle for permanent enchantments.

A metalworker with the proper understanding of Skysteel's characteristics can forge potent weapons and armor that can be enchanted with exceptional magical abilities and powers, vorpal blades, ethereal armor, and reflective shields. Similarly, jewelers can mix Skysteel with gold, silver, or platinum to make jewelry capable of holding the most powerful enchantments.



Crawling Horror

This extra-dimensional horror arrived with the fallen star in **The Pit (Hex 03.02)**. In this plane it appears as a huge, oozing mass of translucent, silvery goo. When in motion it pulls itself along with thick tentacles that form and vanish with surprising speed.

The Crawling Horror has a strong connection to a twisted, parallel plane of negative energy. This connection allows it to split itself into multiple pieces in the mundane realm but still act as a single organism. The Horror uses this ability to create **Mind Pawns** (below). It injects a piece of itself into its victim and seizes control of their physical form, leaving the original owner aware but helpless. It can also shift its central intelligence to any of its Mind Pawns at will. The Crawling Horror can control many Mind Pawns at once, but the total wisdom of controlled creatures cannot exceed 32. To destroy the Crawling Horror, all fragments must be destroyed.

Crawling Horror (continued)

The Horror is cunning, but not particularly intelligent. If it takes control of an intelligent being, it can speak, but barely. Its primary concern is with its own survival, and it will use its Mind Pawns to spread itself as far as possible to insure a single strike does not end its existence.

Crawling Horror (1) – AC 4 (15), HD 12, #AT 3 D 1d8/Special, MV 9 / 6 swimming

Magic weapons required. Scattered intelligence. Sunlight burns. Create Mind Pawns. Negative energy aura.

The creature's connection to the alternate plane also generates an aura of life-draining energy in a 120-foot radius around each fragment of the creature. This aura negates all healing magic, and drains 1 hit point per turn from any living creature or plant within the area of effect.

Those slain by the Crawling Horror's aura add to its power. Each 20 hit dice of creatures slain grant the creature one hit die and increase the points of wisdom it can control by one.

If the Crawling Horror scores a hit with a roll of 19 or 20, it injects a piece of itself into its target and seizes control of their physical form, leaving the victim aware but helpless, a Mind Pawn. The creature can infect dozens of creatures, but it can actively control Mind Pawns whose total wisdom is less than 32.

The Crawling Horror is damaged by direct sunlight, suffering 1d4 damage per turn of exposure. It actively seeks shelter during the day; its amorphous form allows it to creep into narrow caves or hollows with ease. The creature has no permanent lair, though it favors the caves in the **Black Valley (Hex 04.01)**. It does not value physical goods, and has no treasure.

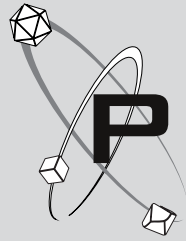
Mind Pawns

Mind Pawns are victims of the Crawling Horror, each infected with a fragment of the original creature. These unfortunate beings have no control over their physical form while actively controlled. Victims who are not actively controlled will only have a hazy understanding of their status. Fragments can be destroyed while a Mind Pawn is uncontrolled. They can be excised, a process that causes 2d6 damage, or they can also be destroyed with a cure disease spell.

Mind Pawns have the physical attributes and senses of their original form, but the victim's intellect is fully suppressed. All Mind Pawns radiate the Crawling Horror's aura of negative energy.

Dragol

Dragol was the shaman who created the totem in **Hex 06.04**. Shortly after he finished his work he disappeared into the Ash Wood, never to be seen again. The GM should feel free to interpret his current status as he or she sees fit. It seems very unlikely that Dragol is still alive, and rumors that his ghost walks the woods may or may not be true.



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