

# THE ICE KINGDOMS



into the mournwood

ROLE PLAYING ADVENTURE  
BY  
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MAD MARTIAN GAMES PRESENTS

# INTO THE MOURNWOOD



An adventure for 4–6 characters levels 3–7

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# The West Wood



# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND & HISTORY OF MOURNWOOD

Since the first of days, after Uthin and his allies struck down Thrymtur's armies, forests have covered the land. Indeed, the creation myths of many tribes suggest forests once covered every inch of Erdegard. Many believe that all things, good and evil, including life itself, sprang from the heart of this ancient, long vanished forest. But there are nearly forgotten myths, unknown to many outside of the region, that say the heart of that primeval and progenitor forest has been preserved in Mournwood. Whether one believes in these old tales or not, there are places and things in the Hag Wood that are not easily explained. More than simple conjurer's tricks, some areas in Mournwood defy the mundane explanations of the common man.

Local superstitions claim Mournwood is haunted, while more knowledgeable sages debate whether a powerful, evil-aligned servant of Thrymtur has enchanted and possessed the forest, or it is simply cursed. However, none disagree that the forest, regardless of its dubious claim to ancient grandeur, is now filled with monsters, fey creatures, and ancient evil. Mournwood is home to a variety of trolls, giant spiders adapted to the cold, and other types of creatures that commonly inhabit any other deep, dark, haunted forest. However, the local storytellers use their most hushed tones when they tell the tales of the dread hags of Mournwood. Fear of the hags and their evil minions prevents most humans from settling in the forest or even living too near its edge.

Mournwood has never been fully explored, as the forest keeps its secrets well, and most who enter never return. Those who do, speak of great wealth and spiritual rewards for those who learn to survive the Hag Wood's many dangers. In addition to the standard promises of rare herbs, gold, gemstones, and magical items, it is said a cabal of druids painstakingly maintains a sacred grove within the depths of the forest, where they hold the darkness at bay and protect the Secrets of Life.

## MOURNWOOD

Mournwood is actually three separate forests that share common traits, borders, and curses. This adventure takes place primarily in the West Wood, the second most cursed section of Mournwood. The central area of Mournwood is called the Jarnvior Forest, and it is the most damned place in the Ice Kingdoms, home to evil magic, demons, hags, and worse. While the eastern portion is known as the Yggdraheim, home of the nature spirits such as the nymphs, dryads and Yggdra (treemen).

The bulk of this adventure takes place in the West Wood. The Jarnvior Forest is far more dangerous.

## WHERE DOES THE GAME MASTER START?

If the adventurers travel southward from the Ice Kingdoms, past the Vanir Mountains, they eventually find themselves at the edge of a large, forested realm of frost, with Thanegard, Wolfheim, and Rusgard to their west. The mapmakers name this region, Mournwood, but the locals have called it "the Hag Wood" or "Hags' Home" for longer than even the eldest among them can remember. The forest and mountains serve as a natural border between the Ice Kingdoms and the realm of Courbahl to the south.

The following paragraphs contain legends and myths, which the player characters may know before they enter the area of Mournwood or should learn soon after arriving. For expediency's sake, the GM may choose to simply read this information to the players. However, if there is a bard in the group (or a character with similar abilities or proficiencies), the GM may require one or more successful Local History attempts to recall specific legends. Or, the GM may wish the party to role-play meeting a survivor of a past expedition into the forest, overhearing rumors, listening to story-tellers (who are often paid dramatists) or a combination of the three (read some, allow a bard to recall some and role-play the rest).

Figure 1.1: Opposite Page: The Westwood



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## MORE NOTES FOR THE GAME MASTER

The GM may choose to share certain portions of the following information with the players. However, and this is very important, players who intend to partake of this adventure dare not read past this point.

Paragraphs in **boxed text** are meant to be read aloud to the players, and non-boxed text is meant as references for the GM to consider while running a particular encounter.

## THE ADVENTURE PATH

Into the Mournwood has an adventure built into it, one where the characters are on a quest to rescue some kidnapped children. This is not the only reason the characters can be in the Mournwood. GMs are encouraged to think of alternate ways and means to use this book. Characters could be here on another quest, perhaps to find rare healing herbs or in pursuit of bandits or orcs. The characters could be in the employ of a local thane or godi to help clear out the evil woods. Or the characters can simply be lost. If an alternate adventure is to be used then nothing

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changes in this book except encounters #1 and #2, which would be largely removed or greatly modified. Encounters #29, #33 and #35 remain unchanged. The characters may not be there to rescue any children, but the Hags still got to eat something!

GMs are encouraged to print out a copy of the map, pencil in some extra encounters at random hexes starting at #36 and work their own magic.

## ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The Hag Demi-Goddess sends her minions to kidnap children and turn them into bears to use as food. The party will track the children into the mysterious Mournwood, which will present a number of challenges, culminating in the destruction of the Hag and her allies and the liberation of the children.

## FLYING

Mournwood cannot be scouted from the air by any known means. Good-aligned aerial mounts and creatures will rear up and refuse to fly over the accursed land, while magical methods such as the *fly* spell, a *potion of flying*, *cloak of the bat*, *flying carpet* or similar items lose power and spirals to the ground at maximum speed just outside the edge of the forest. The flying creature, or the one controlling the flying magical item, must make a successful dexterity ability check in order to avoid an often fatal, crash landing.

## CURSES

When the Old Crone, a fallen demigoddess, settled into Mournwood, she changed the magical nature of the land to suit her style and temperament. From that night forward, everything in the forest was cursed in some way, and every being who walked into the forest gained a curse of one type or another. There are literally hundreds of different curses that influence beings as they come into the forest. It

Table 1.1: Curses

d10 Roll	Curses
1	<b>Sores and Rashes</b> The character is covered in sores and rashes that cause them to be uncomfortable and to itch. They suffer a -1 on all attempts to hit in combat.
2	<b>Unusual Smell</b> The cursed individual has a strange odor that caused heightened attraction from predators. For some reason the character is targeted by the animals of Mournwood. These animals seem to hate the character and attack savagely. They gain a +1 to hit the character and have their initiative bettered by 1.
3	<b>Swollen Joints</b> This affliction causes slowed initiative. The effects slow the character down in such a way that the character suffers a penalty of 3 on all initiative rolls. (This modifier is on a d10; the modifier for a d20 would be 6, for a d6 it would be 2).
4	<b>Necromantic Strike</b> No matter what the character does short of turning dead bodies to ash; anything that the character kills rises in the middle of the night and attack as zombies. These undead creatures follow the character that killed them and eventually catch up to the character. In the Mournwood the sun is blocked by the huge forest cover and the zombies never rest during the day.
5	<b>Unfocused Vision</b> The character has troubles focusing; they cannot discern subtle differences in the surrounding area and some colors and lines blur. The character rerolls all successful surprise, locate, find and avoid surprise rolls (and similar perception based rolls which could include tracking). The second result stands.
6	<b>Sensitive Skin and Muscles</b> Every strike that successfully hits the character inflicts an additional point of damage.
7	<b>Chills</b> Character takes one hit point of damage every time they have to make a save against any form of cold, natural or mundane. This damage is in addition to any normal damage suffered.
8	<b>Shakes</b> The character has uncontrollable shakes. When using edged weapons like swords, spears, and daggers and they miss their target they must make a saving throw against petrification; if they fail they manage to clumsily damage themselves for 1d3 points of damage.
9	<b>Magic Susceptibility</b> The character suffers a -1 penalty on all saves against magical effects/attacks.
10	<b>Blessed</b> The character avoids any curse that is noteworthy. The character is still cursed, but it is so small and minor no one notices in the Mournwood and it has no effect mechanically on the game.



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is the nature of those curses that the cursed being knows exactly what type of evil magic blankets those beings. The following is a short list of curses that can be used to randomly afflict player characters and their mounts coming into Mournwood. (Game Master, be sure to tell your players that their characters know full well that by taking one step into Mournwood every individual risks being cursed.)

It is the nature of the curses that spells to remove curses work 100% of the time. However, if the being comes out of Mournwood and goes back in again, they once more face the possibility of being cursed with some type of magical effect. Also, if a character runs from an encounter, they are once again risk being cursed by the Mournwood.

To resist being cursed, a character must make a saving throw against poison. If they pass, they are safe for the day, and must retest the next day with a -1 cumulative penalty for each day they have gone without being cursed. Once cursed, they do not need to check for further curses unless they leave the Mournwood and reenter or flee from an encounter.

## DRUIDS

Druids of both Vuth (Wuth) and Ymir have been working on the balance in the Mournwood forest for several centuries and have absolutely no success at all. Many of them roam in the forest and try to do good to compensate for all the deadly aggressiveness happening all over the woods. Only 8th level druids or higher are allowed to enter the forest (pc druids can ignore this rule). These druids constantly pray to have *remove curse* spells. These spells are used on other characters the druids are sworn to help.

The druids of the Mournwood spend a great deal of time properly burying those who meet their fate within the haunted forest. They place such bodies on pallets, bless the pallets so that the undead can't rise, and place the pallets high in the trees. Anyone trying to stop the druids from their burial duty discovers just how fierce a druid can be.

## THE HEART OF DARKNESS

Within the vast stretches of Mournwood, lie secrets long forgotten, or long avoided, by men and dwarf alike. The Hag Wood, with its canopy that blots out the sun, provides ample shadow for evil things to thrive. As one enters deeper into the forest, they lose all sense of time, as the woods are so thick, and its trees so tall and full that the sun never reaches most parts of the haunted forest.

Once players enter more than 5 or so miles into the Mournwood (roughly beyond 1 hex on the map), the light conditions should be treated as a moonless night, unless they are in an opening or higher ground. The general

penalties for darkness should be applied to all appropriate actions, unless artificial (or magical) light is available.

The darkness also applies to the spirit of the woods. Any attempt to use *detect evil* will simply be overloaded by the unnatural evil of the woods. The spell is essentially useless and any results are inconclusive in their accuracy. Everything reads as evil.

*Protection from evil* works remarkably well in the Mournwood. Characters under the spell's effect (or with another version of it, such as a paladin's class ability) are considered to be under the effects of a *pass without trace* spell as well since the roots and mud and tree limbs move slightly to avoid those under the spell's protection. Characters can still grab, touch, and contact elements of the forest such as the ground and trees, but incidental contact is reduced. These characters can still be tracked, but with a -4 modifier as the snow, mud, and dirt of the forest's floor has still been disturbed.

However, protected individuals stand out as beacons to the inhabitants and spirit of the woods. If a wandering encounter happens while under the spell's effect, the encounter is always with monsters.

## ICE WEBS

Toward the center of the Mournwood, giant ice spiders are common. They weave long threads of icy silk from their webs in the tops of the trees down to the forest floor. The invisible strands of webbing make it impossible to reach the center of the forest without being noticed. The ice spiders can use their tremor sense to know exactly how many characters are invading their wood and alert other creatures in the area. Every encounter that occurs after a group enters the webbed area, will always consist of at least one creature for every member of the adventuring group.

## RIVERS

Two large rivers flow through Mournwood. During the day, they are composed of water and run deep, however, as the sun sets, the rivers magically freeze. The ice is several feet thick, allowing easy crossing. Checking whether or not the rivers are frozen is one of the few ways to keep track of the passing of day and night in Mournwood.

On the map on page 6, the rivers are not drawn to scale. On average, these mighty rivers are anywhere from  $\frac{1}{3}$  a mile wide to 1 mile wide with extensive stretches of swamps, marshes, bogs, and wetlands extending out a few miles from their shores. Characters traveling in a hex that is crossed by a river will suffer the rules for **Swamp Effects** below.

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## SWAMP EFFECTS

The deeper one ventures into the forest, the warmer and more humid the air becomes. At the center of Mournwood's West Wood is a vast swamp where the unmoving air is hot and muggy, at around 80-85 degrees Fahrenheit and 90% humidity. At the center of this swamp is the strange palace of the Old Crone Demi-goddess. Those in heavy armor take 1d6 hit points of damage per day from heat exhaustion.

However, as the rivers freeze at night, the temperature drops, and the swamp areas fall under the **Winter Effects** rules below.

## WINTER EFFECTS

Think of Mournwood as having five concentric ovals around encounter 35. On the outside of the farthest oval, the winter is fierce and cold. If the characters aren't dressed for the cold and their mounts aren't dressed for the weather, they all take 1d8 points of damage a day from the cold alone. The next oval isn't as cold, and again if they



aren't dressed for the cold they take 1d4 points of damage a day from the cold alone. The second oval sees constant blinding snow storms.

A character that makes a successful save against breath weapon suffers only half damage (this applies to swamp effects as well).

## WANDERING ENCOUNTERS

The accursed forest teems with life. There are no aged and feeble creatures. Many powerful beings have taken to wandering the outskirts of the forest in search of foolish visitors coming into the forest for the first time.

Roll a d6 every 8 hours the characters are in the Mournwood. On a 6, there is a random encounter.

When a random encounter occurs, roll 1d6. On a result of 1-4, the encounter is a Mournwood Animal. Mournwood animals have the same stats as normal animals but if attacked will fight back with +5 to their morale and +1 to hit and damage (as long as they are M sized or larger and have at least 1 full hit die, creatures that are smaller or with fewer hit dice are unaffected. Creatures that are S in size but have 2 + 1 or greater hit dice are treated as M sized animals).

On a d6 roll of 5-6, roll 1d20 on the Wandering Encounters table. Use the monster entries in the Bestiary to prepare wandering encounters.

Table 1.2: Wandering Encounters

### d20 Roll

### Encounter

1	Haglings & Vargs
2	Ice Ogres
3	Ice Trolls
4	Vargs
5	Manticore
6	Ice Spiders (Giant)
7	Ice Hag
8	Hag Orcs
9	Wandering Druid
10	Varyag Berserkers
11	Goblins (33% chance of Vargs as well)
12	Hangman Tree
13	Cursed Bandits
14	Haglings
15	Dark Tree
16	Wolf In Sheep's Clothing
17	Grey Slime
18	Cobra Flower
19	Forester's Bane
20	Kampfult



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## TRAVELLING AND GETTING LOST

Because of the nature of the Mournwood, the party can travel one hex per eight hours of travel. At most, the characters can cover two hexes in a day but doing so is strenuous and dangerous. After the first eight hours of travel, the characters suffer a  $-1$  on all attack attempts and saving throws. This doubles after the next 8 hours. Furthermore, if they travel more than 8 hours in a day they do not recover any hit points suffered from damage unless the recovery is by magical means.

Each character must make a saving throw against poison every 8 hours of travel. Failure indicates the character has stumbled, been stung, twisted an ankle, run into thorns or briars, been hit in the face with a branch or otherwise harmed themselves while traversing the dangerous wilderness. They suffer  $1d4$  damage. Rangers, druids and elves gain a  $+2$  to this save (cumulative, so an elven ranger gets  $+4$ , a multi-classed ranger/druid gets  $+4$ , a dual classed ranger/druid gets  $+4$ , a multi classed elven ranger/druid gets  $+6$ ).



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The Mournwood is divided into sections, each one identified as a hex on the map. Each morning, the characters should state which direction (of the 6 available) they are heading in. Because of the nature of the Mournwood, there is a flat chance of 50% chance of the characters getting lost (1, 2, or 3 on a d6). This chance is reduced if over half the party is comprised of elves, rangers and druids (making the odds 33.33% or a 1 or 2 on a d6). Roll each day to see if the party is lost or not.

Characters with direction sense skills may check their skill to force a reroll on this check.

When the party gets lost, roll 1d6.

- On a 1-2, the party veers to the left of their original path.
- On a 3-4, the party veers to the right of their original path.
- On a 5, they wander in circles for most of the day travelling only half the distance they would normally cover in a single day and start the next morning in the same hex but are moving in the right direction.
- On a 6, they are likewise lost in a circular movement and while they may have moved a full day's distance they have advanced nowhere. Roll another d6 to determine their direction of travel rerolling 6s.

Consecutive days of being lost can eventually result in the party going in the completely opposite direction.

## OUTSIDERS

It is quite possible for this adventure to be used in settings and campaigns other than the Ice Kingdoms. No major retooling or modifications are required. But be warned, characters in the Ice Kingdoms tend to be a tad more legendary than in most normal games, with characters gaining racial bonuses on ability scores, usually in the value of +2 instead of +1 and gaining extra ability score points every even level of experience (2, 4, 6, 8 you get the picture). By the time characters are high enough level to partake in this adventure (if your GM sticks with the minimum level required), they should have modified their ability scores by +2 (this could be one ability improved by 2 points or two by 1 point each).

However, the number of elves and dwarves and other demi-humans in the Ice Kingdoms is quite considerably lower than the standard fantasy game setting, so the presence of these races may give unique advantages to the party that would usually be absent in a straight Ice Kingdoms campaign.



# CHAPTER 2: THE ADVENTURE

## 1. INTO THE MOURNWOOD ☆

For whatever reason, the player characters are travelling near the Mournwood, they may be travelling past the haunted forest going east to west or west to east, north to south or south to north. The only facts that matter is that the party is travelling on land (be it on foot, horse, carriage, wagon or other means) and passing extremely close to the western edges of Mournwood.

(Sections below in **boxed text** are to be read to the Players or paraphrased by the GM.)

GMs wishing to save time can hand the players handout 1 and just have the players read the information below instead of reading it to them.

Your character group encounters a wagon train of people going north. They are trying to escape the many warlords rising in the south near the edges of the Fang Coast. The train had stopped for the night and your group was invited to share their meal. As kids do, many went to play near the forest, but were strictly warned not to go into the woods by concerned mothers and overly protective fathers. Everyone knows that going into the Mournwood is deadly.

As the caravan begins to set up tents and prepare meals, an older man enters an open area between wagons. He draws forth his pipe and begins to smoke as people gather around him.

Dressed in the rags of a pauper, the grey bearded old skald passes his hat around the crowd to collect a handful of copper and silver. "...And in the forests of the dark, the deepest secrets, there do lurk," his voice rumbles with a practiced solemnity that almost makes the words of the well-known phrase rhyme. His listeners, many of who had heard the tale several times before, eagerly nudge each other for elbow space and settle in. "Somewhere near the center of Mournwood, if one were able to find it, such a place exists", he continues, finding the rhythm of the twisted tale, "This area has no name, for none among Uthín's folk have ventured there and returned. Still," he says, stretching the word as if in

thought, "it would seem obvious to even the most half-witted simpleton that someone, or maybe some-thing, must have once found this place, this place of deep se-crets, and lived long enough to tell the tale, else how would we among the skalds know of the tale, which I will tell you now?

"Firstly, you may ask, 'Where does this tale begin?', and I will say," his voice now dropping to barely above a hushed whisper, "It begins and ends with the Pohjolan." Nervous giggling, shuffling, and shushing are heard from the crowd, as a few more coins land in the skald's hat. "The men of the wilds and the men of the cities, all men, know of the Pohjolan. It is at once a place, a birthright, and a curse. The Pohjolan are born under the eyes of the Old Crone, the Great Hag, and defy their destinies as set out by the gods. The sons and daughters of Uthín cannot read the skein of fate that maps the life of the Pohjolan, for the old crone, and forces so sinister that mortals cannot imagine, guide their fates and corrupt their souls. Rare are those of the Pohjolan who can avoid this descent into evil." Some men in the crowd lift their tankards to the tortured and nearly forgotten souls of good-aligned Pohjolan. They drink deeply and bang the tankards on the table almost in practiced unison, as the storyteller, now sitting on a tall stool and speaking with his hands, continues.

"Some time ago, in ages past—though some say it was not that long ago—a girl-child was born. The exact loca-tion was perhaps one of the small, nameless villages that dot the northernmost shores of the Crown Sea, perhaps an island of that sea, no one can say with any certainty. Whichever is true, for not even I, whom you know of as, Willem the Wise, not even I", he repeats for emphasis, "know the truth, but most all among us agree that this girl came to being in the remotest part of Erdegard, and from that very moment, was marked by the Old Crone.

"The people of her village knew this girl to be Pohjolan and cast her out, along with her wretched mother. South, they fled, encountering many a wild beast and difficulty along the way, until they reached a city whose name is not remembered in any tale now told. At the lost city's



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gates, the mother died. The girl-child, found by a city watchman, he then brought her up as his own. She was a strong and gifted child, and her stepfather taught her the skills he knew, those of the warrior, and of the blade and shield." At once, a chorus of "huzzah" and the thump of tankards, sound from the crowd.

"In time, however, the girl, now in her teens, exhibited strange, arcane power, and like before, she was forced out of the city. For some time, she traveled alone in the Ice Kingdoms, leaving only rumors of her passing. As eventually they all do, the girl grew into full womanhood. Lost and alone, she was ready to submit to the constant call of the Pohjolan. The Pohjolan was strongest at night, when the cold winds blew from the peaks and she could not sleep. The evil, which she had resisted for years, bubbled at the surface, tearing at her soul, both night and day. Thereupon, she met a man that she did not want to kill. Their hearts were as one, each jagged and broken; yet the pieces fit together like the key into its lock. The two were not merely in love, for the merely mortal word, love, cannot adequately describe the feelings they had for one another. The burning goodness and purity of their bond kept the Pohjolan and the Old Crone at bay, and the young couple was happy, for some small while."

While he speaks, a tankard is delivered, compliments of a listener to his story. The old skald sips as he prepares to tell the next bit of his tale. "The Pohjolan did not stop its pursuit so easily," Willem continued, "and one night, it came to pass, that the couple's home, which they had built by their own hands, far distant from any village, fell under the onslaught of monsters, furious and foul. Hag orcs, goblins, mossmen and others beyond description attack their home. The two warriors, woman fighting beside her man, fended them off valiantly in a battle worthy of its own tale, were this tale to be about heroes, but as the moon rose to its full height in the sky, the man fell from many grievous wounds. Desperate and in despair, surrounded by bloodthirsty foes and the love of her life dying in a pool of blood, the woman did what she had sworn never to do", his voice becoming an evil hiss, "she allowed the Pohjolan to consume her. Such was the power in her blood that night, every foe was slain, and her husband healed. Yet in his eyes, he saw the truth of what she was and what she had always been, a monster far worse than any of those slain that night. She then fled their ruined home, and away from the lands of men, never to be seen there again. For many, and for those who wish to hear no more, that is the end of the tale, but I Willem the Wise of Mournwood, through my own research, have uncovered the rest of the story." He

pauses briefly to allow the crowd to express a collective 'Go on! Continue!'

Once a few more coins are tossed into Willem's hat, and the crowd resettles, he resumes, "The woman, it seems, crossed the trackless, frozen wastes for many years until she comes upon Mournwood, again alone, but now a monster in both heart and body. The ancient forest felt like the place that her life's journey, a journey pulled, pushed and twisted by the Old Crone's wickedness, had been leading her. She entered Mournwood, where the Pohjolan would draw her to its true center. And here, my fellows, our tale merges with the tales of the gods, and deep secrets are finally revealed, because there in Mournwood, it is said, she found the very Well-spring of Creation. At this place, deep in the woods, a mortal is like unto the gods, mere thoughts come to life, and any desire becomes real. Her husband that had rejected her so many years ago, was returned to her; the enchantment of creation flowed from the loam of the leaves and reached past the highest tree. Her beautiful home was recreated; even her mother and stepfather were there, and she was free to live out her days under this powerful illusion. Yet the woman, ever wary of the trap, knew that it was all but shadow magic and rejected it as part of the Old Crone's trickery and the Pohjolan. The woman, now reaching middle-age, forces herself to release all that she had lost, to stop thinking of the pleasantness of her former life outside of Mournwood and instead to summon the evils that plagued her darker side. Finding substance at the Well-spring of Creation, the demons of her mind became real. The woman fights these demons for a year and a day, but it was a war of attrition of both her body and soul. She encountered the darkest of foes, shadows behind shadows, but she realized then, as she knew the sun still rose and set beyond the dim halls of the deep forest, that with but a single thought she could create a horror unlike the world has seen since Uthin himself were a boy. Indeed, she realized that this was the real trap set for her by the Pohjolan, and she had been lead here for that very purpose. She realized she was the Old Crone and chose to walk away. On that last day of battle, beaten and horribly scarred but not completely defeated, the woman leaves the center of the wood and does not return. Yet the Well-spring of Creation does not forget, and all things from her mind, lurk there still. More so, it is said that any thought of the living that has ever entered the center of the wood still lives there, even thrives there in a shadow of our reality. The boundaries of the shadow creations reach to the edges of Mournwood, which has, forever after, been known as the Hag Wood. Since then, the Old Crone has stalked

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these woods, part lady, and part monster. Her remaining purpose is to ensure that no one finds the Wellspring of Creation, and she searches endlessly for the means to destroy it."

The storyteller, his voice now raspy, concludes, "My friends, this is meant as a cautionary tale. If you choose, like so many dozens of eager dreamers each summer before you, to enter into the Hag Wood in search of the place that will fulfill all of your loftiest fantasies of riches and arcane power, then do not be surprised when we find your gnawed bones, during next spring's thaw, fused with those of creatures, so evil, they can be counted as neither man nor beast."

And as if on cue from the old man's story, loud shrieks of children break the night. As you look around the camp and wagons toward the haunted forest you see the kids screaming as they run back as if they had seen a ghost.

If the characters explore what frightened the children, they discover five Hag Orcs and five leather clad human warriors dead at the outside edge of the forest. Their bodies are examined by the leaders of the wagon train, who conclude that they must have killed each other in combat and quickly return to the camp.

The characters go to sleep that night to the sound of a pleasant flute playing in the darkness. In the middle of the night, the dead bodies turn into zombies and attack the middle of the camp. There is a battle and the zombies (see Mournwood Zombies, page 53) are easily destroyed.

As the last zombie collapses to the ground, a loud shriek comes back from the caravan.

The people of the caravan are in a panic. Hysteria is setting in. One of the elders looks to you and says, "While the battle raged, it seems the children of the camp were spirited away into the forest for safety." The elder then points toward a set of tracks.

These tracks show several adults with at least a dozen children and where they went into the forest is clear.

"Please, you were sent to us by the gods. Please, we will pay you handsomely to go into the forest and save our children!"

No one from the wagon train other than Willem will join the characters on their quest into the Mournwood, though he remains silent and aloof while travelling into the haunted wood.

## 2. TRACKS IN THE MOURNWOOD ☆

A ranger (or another character capable of tracking) can easily follow the trail of the children initially.

The grass and weeds leading to the Mournwood are crushed and distorted from the carrying and the dragging of the children. Strange claw marks scratch the mud and earth beneath the grass until the trail crashes into the woods. Here fallen leaves, broken tree branches and gouged tree trunks create an easy trail to follow.

The tracks of the kids go eastward to encounter 3. From there, strange sets of tracks go due east and north. A skilled tracker can identify these tracks as that as a mix of young bears and human children. Approximately five bears and five human feet go north and another five of each go south.

The north group travels over the river and then due north to encounters 29 while the south group travels to encounter 33. In both situations the bears are placed in a corral. The children have been dressed in bear furs and forced magically to behave as young bears.

The player characters will never catch the children and will find them at the new encounter areas.

The eastern group is going to the demi-goddess at encounter 35.

At 29 and 33 the children can be saved without going into the encounter areas and meeting those creature encounters. The characters will know they are on the edge of Mournwood and can take the children quickly out of the wood and travel back to the wagon train. However, the children to the east are magically held and can't leave until the characters make the attempt to deal with the demi-goddess at encounter 35.

Traveling north and south will take many days in either direction. Going east takes the group to the final encounter in three days. Don't forget that the terrain goes from cold winter to extremely hot swamp.

Willem will go no further at this point. He is too scared to even head back out of the woods. He keeps repeating the words Crone and Pohjolan. After a few minutes of reassuring he will tell the characters the following.

There are tales of a crone who eats the flesh of bear young and uses the furs to trap children. She turns these children into bear cubs and eats their flesh as well, using the furs to trap more children. She will never be satiated. Only the destruction of her unholy symbol of Pohjola can save those she has transformed with the furs. A crescent moon carved from wicked stone covered in cursed runes and adorned with the foulest of treasures.



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## TREASURES OF THE FALLEN

There are treasures like this literally scattered all over Mournwood, but the Hag Wood covers such a huge area that the chances of discovering one by chance are slim to none. For the GM, encounters **4** to **22**, the treasures of the fallen, offer a way to provide any magical item that is needed to defeat a special encounter or to revive the player's flagging interest if the action of the story starts to drag. For the players, they are ugly representations of the deaths of powerful characters that entered this accursed forest and died attempting to complete their own quests for gold & glory. These Treasures of the Fallen have not been assigned to specific areas of the Mournwood; the GM is free to move their location as needed.

On their first day into the Hag Wood, the GM may wish to present the group with a random treasure hoard, discovered amidst a scene of horrific carnage. This can provide the group with any magical items they may lack to complete the adventure and demonstrate to them just how dangerous this forest can be.

(Be sure to make the description of the treasures gross and horrific, as the land is cursed and so are the treasures it rewards to adventurers.)

All magical items found in the Mournwood from encounters **4** to **22** are cursed by the evil forest. Upon leaving the forest each magical item must make a saving throw against disintegrate or be destroyed.



The crone moon, of course, is a Thanic phrase for the crescent moon.

He can also tell the characters that the most powerful hag of the West Wood dwells to the east, while her weaker daughters are each north and south.

If pressed for information about his sect and why he will not leave the area, he will inform the characters that his sect of druids are bound to their sacred groves within the Mournwood: leaving the grove would leave it unprotected to the wood's curses and the grove would fall to the crone's curse. The druids of Mournwood are only able to protect these small pockets of nature to help hold the tide of evil, but so far have been unable to push any of the tide back.

If pressed further he will tell of a legend of one druid who did try to cure the woods and in the process fell from his order and became one of the dark worshippers of the crone and no one in his sect will risk that happening again.

Thwin can also tell the characters about the Talisman of Pohjola and how destroying it will undo the transformation of the children.

Lastly, if the party is lost, Thwin can direct them back on course and they can start the next day in the right direction.

The game master should use the encounter when the characters need it the most, after a difficult encounter where they suffered great losses and damages or if the group has many curses inflicted upon its members.

## 3. THE LONE DRUID

As you enter this area, you see a druid sitting calmly on a fallen tree. As you approach him, he stands and says, "Hail, travelers. I am called Thwin of Vuth. You have all been cursed by the evil of this forest and it behooves you to flee this evil realm. I can remove the curses, but only from two among you. I can also tend to some of your wounded, if that is needed." He offers this help for no reward.

The druid uses all the spells he can to help the characters and then claims he must leave. As an 8th level druid he has *cure light wounds* ( $\times 3$ ), *remove curse* ( $\times 3$ ), and *cure serious wounds* ( $\times 2$ ). He has knowledge of the herds of enchanted bears and can tell characters that the foul hags of the woods torment their prey by transforming them into beasts and then consuming them at great unholy feats dedicated to the crone moon.

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## 4. THE CLERICS' TREASURE

It appears that five clerics were slaughtered in this area. All of them wear chain mail that was shredded by something huge. A hippogriff and two huge hounds are also among the slain. All of the victim's heads have been chopped off and cannot be found. When the victims were decapitated, large streams of blood gushed from their necks and left very noticeable stains on the equipment.

Amongst the debris the characters can find the following: *+1 mace*, a total of 40 gold, *+1 shield*, two *potions of healing*, a *ring of protection from fire*, and a *scroll of blade barrier*.

## 5. THE DRUIDESS' TREASURE

As you enter this area, you see a single female druidess lying slumped against a tree. Her yellowed, taugh flesh clearly indicates that she's quite dead and has been for many weeks. The druidess didn't go down easily; her leather armor and wooden shield display deep chop marks and have seen a great deal of combat use, but the only clue to the cause of her death is her empty, hollow eye sockets. The corpses of several animals surround hers, and they too have had their eyes gouged out. You note an eagle, a mountain lion, a bear, a fox, a large wolf, and several large hares.

When the characters start to search the druid's body the dead animals rise as zombies (for stats of Zombie Animals see Mournwood Zombies, page 53) to defend their master, once more. Regardless of their original species, they have the same abilities. Aside from their empty eye sockets, the animals show no other signs that they had already been killed in a brutal battle.

If any creature touches the druid's body or possessions, even for an instant, the undead animals rise from the ground and attack the group. The attacks stop only when the characters leave the area.

There will be no less than 10 zombie animals or one zombie animal per player character, whichever is higher. Every five zombie animals are treated as a single Mournwood Zombie.

Amongst the debris the characters can find the following: *+2 ring of protection*, a *+1 quarterstaff*, several large nuggets of gold worth 22 gold pieces in weight.

## 6. THE WIZARDS' TREASURE

It appears that four arcane spell casters were massacred in this area. Oddly, their corpses float two feet off the grassy mound where they must have made their final stand, and their bones protrude at odd angles, as if the now blackened flesh had been ripped from them. Each wears a backpack, but the packs have been ripped open and mundane items such as rope and extra sets of clothing can be seen. As you look around the area, it is clear that *lightning bolts*, *fireballs*, and other destructive spells were cast in the area not long ago and some of the trees appear to have been magically cut down. They are huge testaments to the terrible battle that killed the wizards.

Amongst the debris the characters can find the following: scroll of 3 *fireballs*, scroll of 4 *charm persons*, scroll of 4 *magic missiles*, *wand of paralyzation* (1 charge), and a *+3 dagger*.

## 7. THE FIGHTERS' TREASURE

You see the corpses of seven human warriors in this area, and the smell is horrific. The ground is covered in blood and broken bones. The chest cavities of each of the seven fallen warriors have been ripped open and the hearts and lungs have been ripped out and are missing. There are expressions of horror on the skeletal faces of the fallen. There are blood beetles and flies covering the equipment as the insects eat the dried blood.

Amongst the debris the characters can find the following: *Rune battle axe*, *+1 dagger*, *+1 chain mail* (damaged beyond repair but good for material), *+1 shield*, 1d10 in random gems, 100 in assorted silver and gold coins.

## 8. SMASHED ICE OGRES

You see seven large boulders in this area. Under each boulder are the smashed remains of an ice ogre. Blood, chunks of the creatures' internal organs and other oversized body parts are splattered in all directions and are everywhere. The group has not noticed any other boulders during their travels in the Hag Wood, and they are left wondering from where did the boulders come? What manner of creature could possibly have used them to crush the huge ice ogres?



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Each ogre has something very valuable on its person, but the characters will have to move the large boulders and search the bodies to find this material: *potion of fire giant strength, +1 mace, rune short sword, blue-white diamond worth 900 gp, 6 potions of healing* (broken but a clever player can mix the remains of the six bottles to create one potion), and a *+1 shield* of large size.

## 9. DEAD DWARVES

When entering this area, you see eight tall poles standing nearly upright in random locations. Mulch is piled high and obscures the base of the poles. As you move around the poles, you discover, much to your horror, that each pole is a giant-sized spear. Each spear pins a slowly petrifying dwarven warrior to the ground, straight through its heart, and continues deep into the earth.

The armor and equipment of these dwarves is all high quality material. There are no valuables except for one of the hammers and a shield. All the dwarves used high quality war hammers. One of them has a *+2 rune war hammer* and a *+1 shield*.

## 10. TREED ELVES

You see five elves tied to five different trees in this area, but they are long dead. Flies and other insects cover the corpses and have eaten much of the flesh as for some reason the Mournwood prevents these ethereal born creatures from dissipating from this world and into the next. All types of elegantly designed equipment, obviously of elven make, lie scattered, rotting and withered, on the ground and between the trees.

Under the leaf mulch, under one tree, is a magical elf bow. The bow string has rotted away, but the *bow is a +1 weapon that does +3 in damage versus giant types*. In a rotting leather sheath under another tree is a *rune long sword that does +3 versus undead types*. On the belt of each of the elves is a pouch of 5 emeralds worth 100 gold pieces each.

## 11. GHOSTLY GROUP

In the area, you see five human corpses lying side by side. There is a ghostly hooded figure with a shimmering golden line attached to each one of the dead bodies on the ground. The bodies have rotted to almost nothing and the equipment looks withered. The ghostly hooded figures turn to face your group. You all feel very uncomfortable in their presence.

These are the incorporeal ghosts of the bodies on the ground. When the characters enter the area, the ghosts will all have their hoods covering their faces.

The ghosts cannot leave the area. If the group passes through without approaching the bodies, the ghosts will not attack them and will not attempt to use magic jar against their opponents.

There is a great deal of wealth on the ring fingers and necks of all of these bodies. Each body has  $1d6\ 100$  gp jeweled rings, and a necklace worth 500 gp in different types of cut jewels.

If the characters loot the bodies then the ghosts will attack. Otherwise the ghosts only attack to defend themselves. However if a character may question the ghosts if they meet two or more of the following requirements: be of the appropriate race (Einheriar or standard human), class (cleric or paladin) or alignments (any good and LN).

The ghosts will tell their tragic tale. They too lost their children and came into the woods to rescue them from the hags. Upon finding the hag responsible they discovered their children had been turned into bear cubs and consumed by the wood witch. One child was saved by having the bear cloak ripped from her hide, the child then ran into the woods. Before they could escape with the child the hag attacked and killed them and then cursed them to forever dwell in the cursed forest. They have been here ever since.

The ghosts can give little guidance, but can be used to get the characters back on track if they are lost and they can start the next day in the right direction.

See Ghosts, page 42.

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## 12. ZOMBIE VARYAGS

In a corner of this area, you see a pile of human corpses almost 4 feet high. Their ceremonial war paint and black leather armor identifies them as Varyag warriors. You cannot be sure of the exact number, but there are at least 10 corpses in the pile. Each has an expensive looking targ on one wrist and a long sword still within its jeweled sheath.

There are 15 corpses in the pile. There is no evidence of what caused their deaths. If the characters come to search the corpses, the dead rise as zombies and attack (see Mournwood Zombies, page 53). If the characters leave the area, any surviving zombies will return to the corner and pile on top of each other.

## 13. THE GNOME CLUSTER

In this clearing, you see a pile of dead gnomes wearing full battle gear. There are many gnomish bodies in the pile. The corpses have been ripped, torn, flayed and shredded. Many, but not all, of the wounds had time to start healing before the gnomes died, indicating they were cruelly tortured while alive, but the torture didn't end with their deaths.

Searching the gnomes, the characters will discover that they have strange pouches containing a weird silvery dust. This dust will replace any needed component when casting illusion based magic. There is enough dust in all to fuel 3d6 spells. A double dose (counts as two spells) can be used to replace the components of non-illusion based magic at the GMs discretion.

## 14. THE ROGUES' TREASURE

You see a single human corpse lying on the ground in this area. It's wearing black leather armor and gloves. All of the gear matches and looks to be high quality.

Searching the body causes that searching character to gain another curse from the random list of curses. Anyone using one of the items found on the rogue's body also gains a curse.

The following are items on the rogue:

*Enchanted Gloves*—These increase all thief skill checks by 10% and cause the wearer to strike as if they were one level higher than they are (can only be used by thieves, assassins, rangers and those who have thief skills or similar abilities).

*Giant Dagger*—The weapon does a normal 1d4 but against larger than man-sized creatures it does 1d10 points of damage per successful strike.

*Mask of the Gods*—Improves the wearer's armor class by 3 but only if not wearing armor.

*Gem Purse*—It holds several gems of all types and sizes and inside the purse are five blue-white diamonds worth 200 gold pieces each.



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## 15. THE SKELETONS' HOARD

As you enter this area, you see a four-foot tall pile of bloody bones. There are bits of warrior equipment among the bones, including swords, battle hammers, and shields.

If the characters dip into the bones, two magical blades float up from the pile and attack them. The blades don't leave the bones, can only each attack one character and the characters can always run away. The blades strike as if they were 6th level fighters with 1 attack each melee round inflicting  $2d4 - 1$  points of damage.

If the characters keep working into the bone pile while being attacked, they find the following at the rate of one item every other combat round: +1 *two-handed sword*, +1 *shield*, +1 *chain mail* that expands or shrinks to fit, a pouch of 11 black pearls at 100 gold pieces each, and a *wand of lightning* with 9 charges.



## 16. THE POOL OF GREY SLIME

A pool of grey slime dominates the center of this area (See Grey Slime, page 43). Body parts lie along the edge of the pool and are sticking out of the slime. You see various parts that were once attached to goblins, orcs, and ogres that died in this slime. You all start to wonder why these monsters fell into the pool.

Clever characters will look over the exposed body parts and discover rare treasures. The orc hand has a +2 *ring of protection*. The side of the dead ogre has a sack. Inside the sack are 240 gold pieces. The dead dwarf has a *cursed shield of missile attraction*.

## 17. THE FROZEN WOLF

As you enter this area, a giant wolf stands before you. You quickly realize it is dead and frozen solid in mid step. You see no evidence to indicate how this could have happened.

Careful inspection of the thick fur reveals a slender diamond collar around the neck of the wolf. It's a magical artifact that allows the wielder to gain control of a wild animal. Once the collar has been attached that wild animal and the wielder can talk and the creature will follow the orders of the collar user.

## 18. THE STATUE'S TREASURE

Upon entering this area, you see an impressive, white marble statue of a lovely warrior woman wielding a spear and shield. She appears to be one of Uthin's Shield Maidens, complete with a winged helmet. Around her neck is a jeweled necklace that glints in what sunlight comes through the canopy of the forest.

The statue is in the shape of a beautiful human female dressed in sleek chain mail. In one hand there is a spear and in the other hand is a shield. One hand displays a ring. It is wearing a necklace. There is a leather pouch lying at her feet. Her weapons, much like her, are made of stone.

It attacks as soon as a character tries to take one of its items but will not chase the characters. (See Living Statue, page 46.)

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Characters who can talk to her by some means (*speak with stone*, for example) can find out that she was a warrior maiden dedicated to Uthrin who attempted to slay the Crone but was defeated in combat with the foul hag and cursed by the hag's crescent moon staff and she has been stuck as guardian of this grove ever since. Her curse is unbreakable save in death and she must fight any who take or touch her possessions.

## 19. THE CURSED GEMSTONES

You see a small, black pedestal in this area, standing four feet tall. On top of the pedestal is a pile of ten gemstones. Each is exquisitely faceted. The top of the pedestal glows with some type of magical light. The gemstones display the colors of the rainbow.

First, each gemstone is razor sharp. Fingers that aren't covered with a metal gauntlet will be cut for 1 point of damage in handling one of the gemstones.

Second, whatever the gemstones are placed in will be

cut open with the movement of the person holding it.

Third, the current owner of each gemstone has a curse placed on them, unknown to them. For each gemstone from this pile of ten, that they own, they suffer a -1 penalty to hit. This penalty affects spells as well providing a +1 bonus to the target's save.

## 20. THE LARGE CHEST

A large chest, 3' long by 2' wide by 2' high, is in the center of this area. Burnt bones are spread in a ten-foot radius around the chest. The skulls and helms help identify the dead as elves, dwarves, and humans. These beings were clearly killed by fire and lightning attacks.

Most of the chest is made out of hard teak wood and there are iron bands riveted into the wood to give it additional strength. There are four brass locks; one in the middle of each side of the chest. If lifted, the chest weighs 150lbs and feels as if it is full of something, but the characters cannot tell what is inside without picking the locks or using magic.

Lock One on the west side of the chest has a deadly needle trap. The trap springs out 40% of the time. The struck victim must make a saving throw vs poison or take 2d10 points of poison damage. The needle itself only does 1 point of damage.

Locks Two and Three on the north and south side of the chest have a magical trap that explodes a *fireball* in a ten feet area around the chest 35% of the time as those locks are picked. The *fireball* can be saved to half damage and does 3d6 in fire.

Lock Four is a fake lock and the chest springs open when locks 1, 2, and 3 are unlocked. When the chest opens four daggers shoot out and each has a 25% chance of striking the people about the chest.

The chest is filled with 5,000 gold pieces (50 coins weigh 1 pound).

## 21. THE SMALL COFFER

The smell of spoiled meat reaches you even before you reach this area. Upon entering the area, you see a rather odiferous pile of uncured hides hanging from the trees. There are still bloody bits of flesh on one side of what must be twenty or more hides that were all lumped into a mass. Flies and blood beetles crawl all over the hides.



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Under the hides is a black teak coffer. It's a one-foot cube. A magical lock on the top keeps the cube locked. It takes magic to open the lock or the characters can inflict 40 points of damage to destroy the coffer. Inside is a rare set of matched jewels. The total worth of the jewels is 5,000 gold. Each piece is worth about 1,000 gold pieces and includes: A star ruby ring, a star ruby bracelet, a star ruby amulet, a star ruby necklace, and a star ruby diadem. If this treasure is used multiple times, feel free to change the star ruby to something like a star emerald, star topaz, or a star citrine.

## 22. THE CACHE OF WEAPONS

In this area, you see a collapsing small stone tower. Inside the remnants of this ancient building you see a large rack of weapons. There must be around 100 swords, hammers, pole arms and other melee weapons filling the rack. All of the weapons appear to be high quality and most types are represented in the mix.

The following magical weapons are difficult to pick out amongst all of the other quality weapons in the rack: +1 short sword, +2 war hammer, +2 mace, +2 two-handed sword,

and a +1 battle axe. Sadly, all of these weapons are cursed by the Mournwood, and, upon exiting the forest, they begin to rot and rust as if touched by a rust monster. Any non-rune weapon or armor (or other metal item) the character possesses (including magical ones) must make a save or suffer the same fate. Additionally, whenever these weapons are used and a natural 1 or 20 is rolled, they must make a save against magic or the weapon breaks losing all magical abilities instantly.

## 23. CAVE OF THE ICE HAG

Light powdery snow has piled up against a thick cluster of trees. In that pile is a large opening and the glow of firelight. Looking into the opening, you see a large ice cave. There is a huge bonfire of large logs burning brightly at the center of the cave. At one end of the fire sits a huge old woman dressed in white furs and rags. There are many piles of snow all around her.

Inside the cave dwells an Ice Hag (see Ice Hag (Greater), page 44) that appears as an old, hunched over woman sitting in front of a huge wood fire. The characters can't see



Figure 2.1: Cave of the Ice Hag

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the face of this old lady in the folds of the rags she is wearing. She cackles as the characters enter. She casts *detect lie* before speaking to the characters. She wants to know why they are bothering her.

The Ice Hag will not attack the characters unless they attack her first. She hates the other creatures of the Hag Wood. If she is rewarded with treasure totaling more than 1,000 gp, she will tell them everything she knows about the kidnapped children.

If she is attacked, she stands and reveals that she is the size and general appearance of a Ice Troll. The characters then realize that the rags they thought she was wearing are actually the folds of flesh of the troll creatures. She alternates casting a spell and physical attacks every other combat round.

There are 3 Ice Trolls (see page 51) that have camouflaged themselves as piles of snow around the hag, with a base 100% chance to successfully fool a mundane observer. Standing 8' tall, Ice Trolls have pale skin mostly covered with white fur.

The Ice Trolls won't reveal themselves until the adventuring group has attacked the hag, and then they try to position themselves between the characters and the hag. They have been trained to attack clerics in any given group. They always fight to the death.

The Ice Hag has the following spells available to cast as a 10th level spell caster:

- 6 Level 1: *cause light wounds* (×2), *command* (×2), *curse* (reverse of *bless*), *cause fear* (reverse of *remove fear*)
- 6 Level 2: *aid* (×3), *charm*, *hold person*, *obscurement*
- 4 Level 3: *animate dead*, *cause blindness or deafness*, *bewst curse* (reverse of *remove curse*) (×2)
- 3 Level 4: *cause serious wounds*, *detect lie*, *poison* (reverse of *neutralize poison*)
- 2 Level 5: *cause critical wounds*, *slay living* (reverse of *raise dead*)

## 24. THE NEST OF THE MANTICORES

Up in the packed trees you discover a large ice platform. There is a mound of snow leading to the opening of the platform in the trees. Some type of large winged feline creature is at the opening of the cave and it looks down at the character party. Suddenly it leaps down toward you followed by a second winged lion.

These are young manticores. They are horrid beasts combining a leonine legs, mane, and torso, leathery bat wings, a hairy humanoid head, and a mace-like tail studded with metal spikes. There is also a mother manticore

(see Manticores, page 46) and two more of her young in the nest.

Four additional young are roaming the forest. At the very least, two of the young manticores come down from the packed ice and attack and try to eat members of the character party.

The mother manticore is asleep in the lair and wakes only when she hears the sound of battle. There is a cumulative 30% chance she will awaken at the end of a combat round (30% the first round, 60% the second round, 90% the third round, automatic on the fourth round). On the round she awakens she leaps down into the center of the fray and is eligible for initiative and combat the following round. But first she will speak to the party.

She can speak in broken common and would rather chase the characters away than fight them. When she speaks large wisps of icy frost escape her nostrils. "Leave now, or I shall devour your flesh", she threatens, followed by a loud roar, which summons her four additional young. They arrive within 1d10 rounds.

Suddenly four more creamy white winged lion-like cubs arrive swooping down on the group from the sky. They have leathery, bat-like wings rising from of their backs and mace like tails tipped with metal spikes. Their jaws are lined with rows of sharp teeth.

They are mammalian carnivores with voracious appetites. They attack from above, attempting to snatch a victim off the ground.

If one among them is reduced to 8 hit points or less, these creatures must check morale. A successful check indicates only the badly injured manticore retreats; a failed check indicates all of them retreat.

## 25. SPIRE OF THE ICE HAGS

It's very hot in this part of the swamp. Suddenly you come across a large river valley. At the center of the river valley is an ice tower that looks like a reverse icicle on the floor of the valley. The spire looks to be at least 100 yards tall and at least 50 yards in circumference. As you get near the structure you note the cold coming off the walls of the ice spire. There is an opening about 20 yards up on the north end of the spire. There are no other openings to the tower that can be observed any where on the other parts of the structure.

The ice river is easy to traverse, even during the day. There is enough ice, snow, slush and other debris in the slowly flowing river to allow the characters to cross at half their normal speed.



# INT◊ THE MOURNWOOD

There is a huge chamber in the spire. At the center of this area is a magical sphere of total cold that damages any living body; doing 2d8 points of cold damage (save against breath weapon for half damage) as characters cross over the sphere.

Two hags are at a large bench. They are gorging on the dead body of an ice ogre.

The hags (see Ice Hag (Lesser), page 44) don't stop eating unless the character party attacks them. When the old hag dies, she turns into dust, while the young hag looks to be a pleasant human woman even in death.

The hags have the same spells available to them and cast them as 9th level mages.

- 4 Level 1: *burning hands, magic missile, shocking grasp, wall of fog*
- 3 Level 2: *darkness 15' radius, stinking cloud, summon swarm*

- 3 Level 3: *hold person, protection from good (10' radius), slow*
- 2 Level 4: *black tentacles, suggestion*
- 1 Level 5: *animate dead*

## 26. WEBS OF THE SPIDER HAG

The trees in this area are filled with icy webs. In the section in front of you, from the ground to the treetops, there is a huge wall of webs that appears to be very thick.

These webs do not burn because of the ice on them. Touching any one of the webs with anything brings out the huge spider hag and she begins throwing strands of webbing out to capture the characters. The spider hag (see Spider Hag, page 44) is accompanied by three giant ice spiders (see Giant Ice Spiders, page 45) who attack the round after the hag appears.

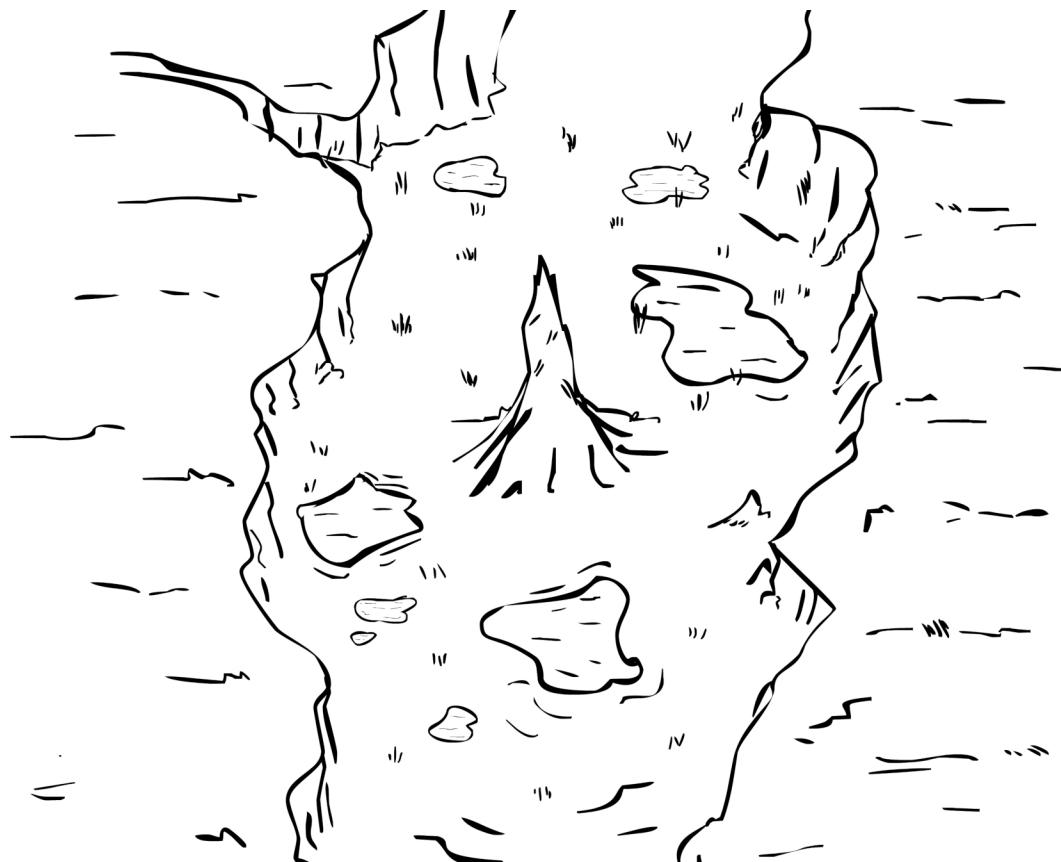


Figure 2.2: Spire of the Ice Hags

# INTO THE MOURNWOOD



Suddenly a large shadow emerges from the webbing. This creature stands ten feet tall. It has the body of a large spider with the head and upper body of a hag. She is accompanied by three giant spiders the color of cold white flesh, they move slower than the hag but still too quick to avoid.

In her lair, she doesn't allow any invaders to remain unmolested. She wants to web the characters and suck the blood from them at her leisure. When the hag is reduced to 20 or fewer hit points, two more giant ice spiders come

out to attack the group.

The spider hag's first attack is either a mundane web attack or *web* spell to capture the characters. If this tactic fails, she will cast spells, as applicable. She is a 9th level mage with the following spells memorized:

- 4 Level 1: *affect normal fires, chill touch, shocking grasp, wall of fog*
- 3 Level 2: *fog cloud, ray of enfeeblement, web*
- 3 Level 3: *gust of wind, protection from good (10' radius), wind wall*
- 2 Level 4: *ice storm, wall of ice*
- 1 Level 5: *cone of cold*





## INT◊ THE MOURNWOOD

If the GM wishes to make this encounter even *more* challenging, he or she may choose to make the spider hag a 9th level evoker. Assume the hag has a constitution score of 16 and give her the following additional memorized evocation spells, Level 1: *magic missile*, Level 2: *stinking cloud*, Level 3: *lightning bolt*, Level 4: one additional *ice storm*, Level 5: one additional *cone of cold*. One tactic could be to cast *fog cloud*, followed by *stinking cloud*.



### 27. VARYAG CLAN

You see some type of village hidden ahead in the forest as the rugged wood breaks free into a series of hills. There are strange rounded huts made of wood, hide, bone and rocks. You count at least fifteen of them. One of the huts is much larger than all of the rest.

Varyags of the Mournwood (see Varyag Berserkers, page 53) are cannibals who are known to steal children. It is necessary to not have anything on the characters backs as they bend to go into the huts. There are pieces of equipment and furs in all of the huts. The largest one is a communal area with village guards.

The large hut has a group of guards that have been left behind to take care of the village. All the rest of the vil-

# INTO THE MOURNWOOD

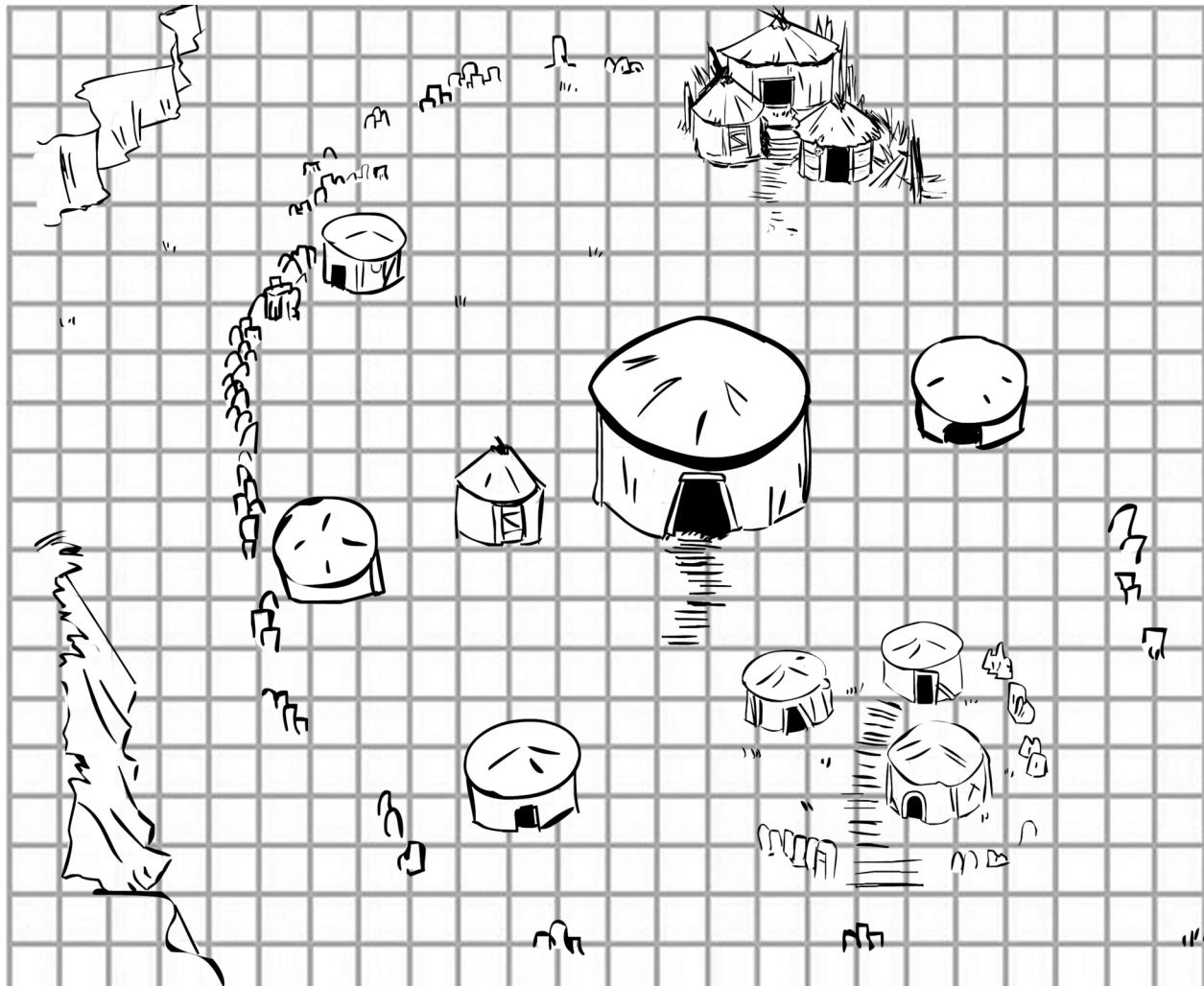


Figure 2.3: Varyag Clan

lagers have gone to take the enchanted children to the major encounter areas to the south, north, and east. The characters never see those villagers. The group left behind will at first talk to the characters to see what they are doing in the woods. Once they find out they are trying to save the children, the group attacks and fights to the death.

## 28. CAMP OF THE HAG ORCS

You see crude tents made from stretched furs on sticks. There must be a dozen of them. Most of the furs must be from large beasts as the huts are at least ten feet long

and wide. In front of these hides is a large hole in the ground. Looking at this hole, you can see a slanting path into the earth that descends into darkness. Near the hole lay four downed trees stripped of all branches. You can hear a gutteral growl and smell smoke and the scent of rancid meat.

The path is a pit trap for the hag orcs use to keep wild animals and captives. The slanted path into the pit has purposely been covered in slick ice and at the end of the slant is a ten foot drop to the bottom of the pit. If the characters don't have a means to hinder their travel, they end up sliding down out of control. At the bottom of the pit are four Vargs (see Vargs, page 52).

Most of the fur tents serve as a sleeping area for a single



## INT◊ THE MOURNWOOD



hag orc, while the remainder serve as storage areas for gear and food.

Observing the camp the characters will see the occasional hag orc guard exist a tent only to cross the camp to enter another tent or stop by the pit to throw something into it. There are eight massively muscled, 7-foot tall orcs (see Hag Orcs, page 43). They are armored in white leather armor, and their flesh has been painted white. The orcs must check morale when half their number has fallen and every round thereafter. After two rounds of combat the hag orcs will release the Vargs to join them in battle. This can be prevented if the characters can keep the hag orcs from pushing the downed trees near the pit into the pit to let the wolves out.

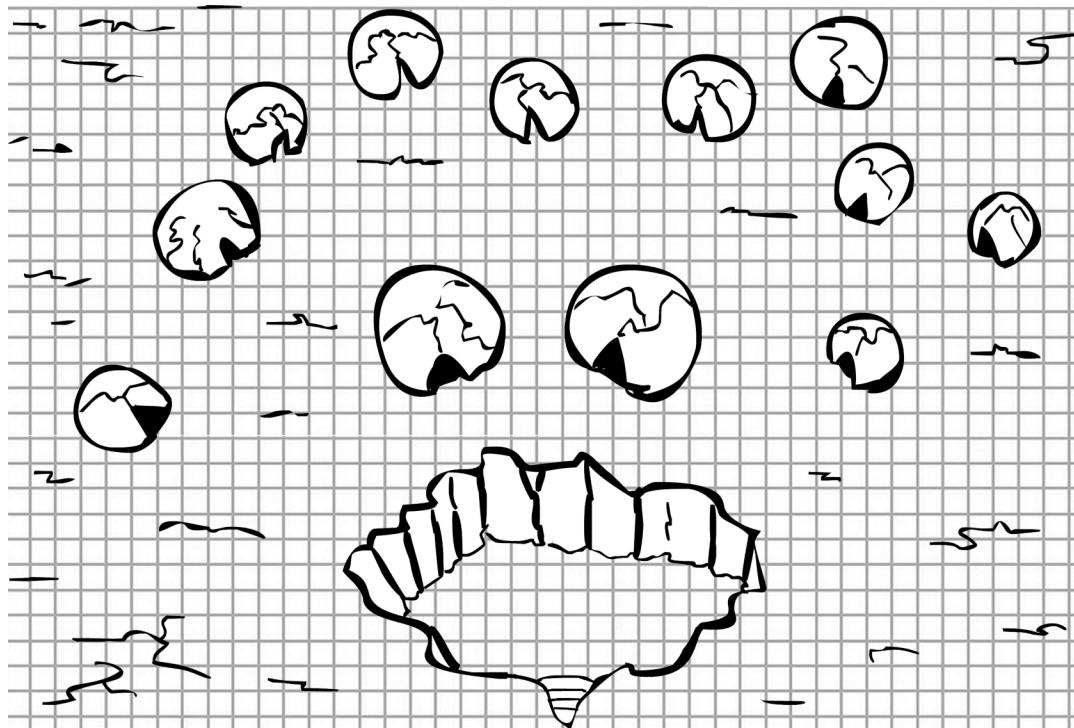


Figure 2.4: Camp of the Hag Orcs

# INTO THE MOURNWOOD

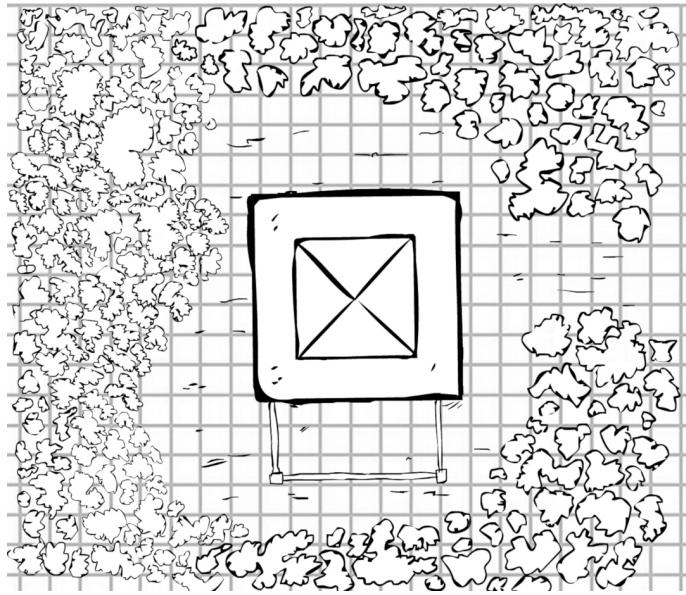


Figure 2.5: Tower of the Crone's Daughter, Exterior

## 29. TOWER OF THE OLD CRONE'S FIRST DAUGHTER ☆

A clearing opens up in the forest. In the middle of that clearing is a square tower two stories tall. Getting close you see that the tower has a wooden corral beside it with ten young bears.

As you draw closer to the tower you can see that the stones of the tower appear to be made out of solid ice. The north end of the tower has a large gate and it's open.

It's possible to free the bears and realize that these creatures are enchanted as the pelts of the bears are rough. It would be an easy thing to pull off the furs and free the children of the enchantment. The characters also know that they are close to the west edge of the forest.

### THE GROUND FLOOR

The ground floor is a large square chamber 40 yards tall, wide, and long. There is a set of stairs in the South wall extending to the upper chamber. There are several benches and tables and these have raw, half eaten cave bears.

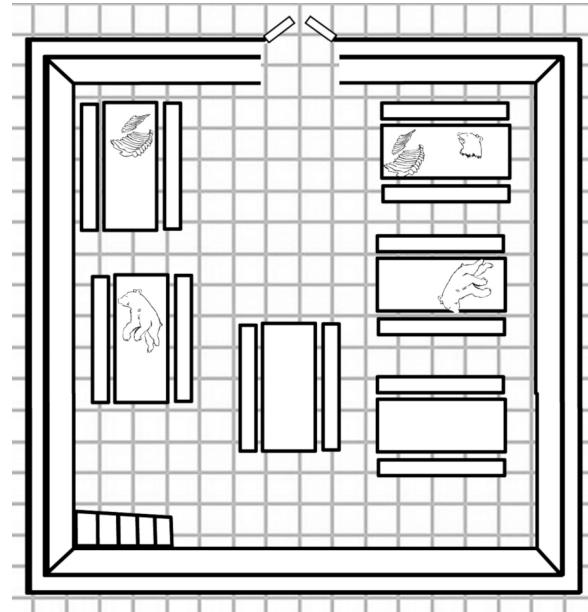


Figure 2.6: Tower of the Crone's Daughter, Ground Floor

### THE SECOND FLOOR

The second floor is another large chamber of the same dimensions as the lower level.

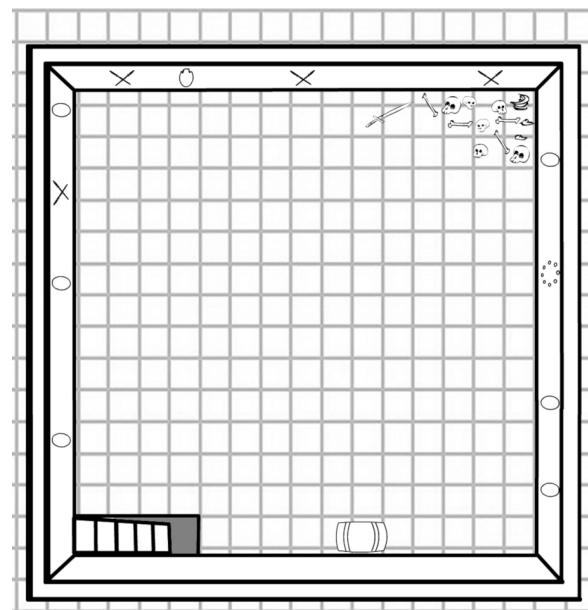
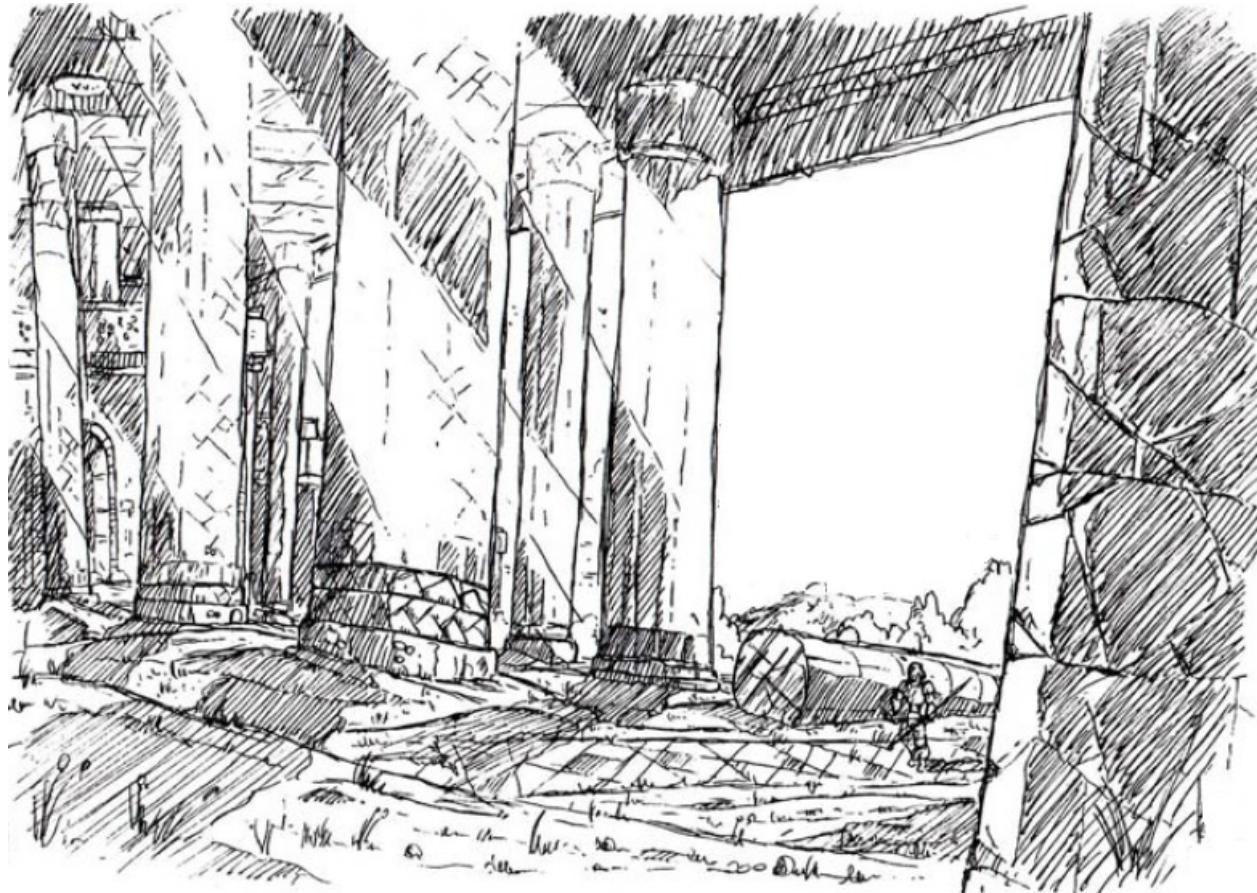


Figure 2.7: Tower of the Old Crone's Daughter, Second Floor



## INT◊ THE MOURNWOOD



Upon entering the second floor of the tower you see that on the east wall is a set of rainbow colored stones in a circle.

The walls of this upper chamber are covered in the shields and spears from the Ice Ogres in the forest.

Along the north wall is a mass of bloody bones with random equipment and old weapons scattered there.

On the south wall is a huge steel chest.

You see a monstrous troll in the center of the chamber she screeches at you. This hag is monstrous. She stands 11 feet tall. She is extremely muscular and the knuckles on her hands are huge rock-like things. Her eyes glow red. Her long red hair whips about her face. She is dressed in strange black leathers and wears a long leather black cloak.

She screams at you, "My minions and I can easily kill you all. Leave your weapons on the floor and go away and we will leave you alone."

The chest is trapped in several ways. The lock has a dagger trap shooting out three daggers to anyone trying

to pick the lock. Opening the chest causes a gas to fill the air and the poison does 2d6 points of damage to all who breathe the gas (save to half damage). Inside the chest are ten folds of cloth and these folds have hidden poison needles. There is a 50% chance per folded cloth that the needle will scratch the character and do 16 points of poison damage (save to half damage).

If the characters do anything else, they are attacked by this Crone (see Ice Hag (Greater), page 44).

The hag has the following spells as a 10th level mage.

- 4 Level 1: *affect normal fires, chill touch, spider climb, unseen servant*
- 4 Level 2: *ray of enfeeblement, spectral hand, strength, web*
- 3 Level 3: *monster summoning I, protection from good (10' radius), vampiric touch*
- 2 Level 4: *fumble, minor globe of invulnerability*
- 2 Level 5: *shadow magic*

Special: The cloak she wears prevents magical and non-magical missile weapons from striking her. Her hair attacks once per round as a 4th level fighter inflicting 1d4

# INTO THE MOURNWOOD

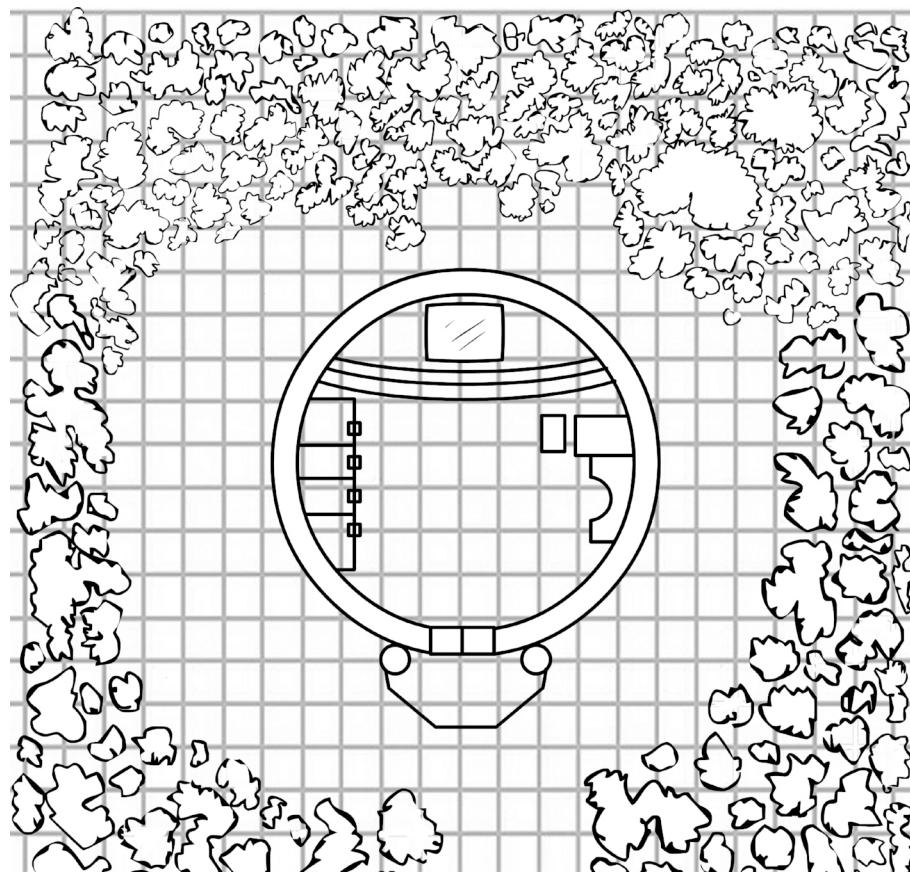


Figure 2.8: Ice Temple to the Old Crone

damage to a target within six feet of her, this is in addition to her normal attacks.

See Ice Ogre, page 51.

After the battle, the characters can find a set of tracks revealing that the bears/children have been led away from the tower. Following these tracks are easy (+3 to any necessary tracking rolls) and will lead the characters on a path to the river and from there the tracks go south along the river to encounter 35.

## 38. ICE TEMPLE TO THE OLD CRONE

The area opens up into a small valley. In the middle of that valley is an old structure. You see a ruined domed building. It appears to be made out of marble and other carved stones with large columns to the front of the structure, decaying carcasses of humanoids and

animals hang from various sections of the walls.

Double doors made of steel block the entrance.

It seems that it would be easy to just walk around this building, but faint music can be heard from inside.

Approaching the structure the steel doors swing open and reveal four men dressed in stained white robes, torn from duress. Each is armed with a small cudgel hanging from their crude rope belts. The four greet you with smiles and motion you into the chapel.

(Continue if the characters enter.)

The chapel is a very large chamber. The chamber is very cold. On the north wall there is a large block of ice. On the ice are piles of bloody bones.

On the west side of the area are four doors.

On the East wall there is a large fireplace and a kitchen area with a large bench and table. There is a huge man,



# INTO THE MOURNWOOD



eating something at the table. He is dressed in a similar fashion as the other four men but has ornamental decorations on his wrists and around his neck.

The four doors on the west side of the area lead to small bedrooms.

The clerics (see Ice Acolytes, page 40) offer a meal to the characters. The clerics tell the group that their leader (see Ice Prefect, page 40) is eating right now and they should join him.

The characters can leave at any time but if they come to eat with the clerics their meal is raw meat (Ice Ogre). The clerics want to know why the characters have come into this area of the Mournwood.

The clerics have seen the young bears and the bear herders who went north of here. They are sure that group is going to the Crone Daughter's dwelling.

The Hag Orcs (see Hag Orcs, page 43) only appear if the characters do battle with the clerics.

## 31. LAIR OF THE BLACK VARG PACK

The trees cluster thickly here. The root systems rise up out of the earth and intertwine together making many a dark cave opening. From the darkness of those caves one can see the glowing red eyes of creatures moving in the darkness.

The wolves (see Varg, page 52) come out in twos and threes to the sound of fighting. They don't retreat from their lairs. A treasure can be found among the roots only if the characters kill off all 5 wolves.

## 32. FOUNTAIN OF LIFE

The bitter cold gives way to the feeling of normalcy and there is no snow on the ground. A large, white marble fountain is bubbling merrily among the trees. As you approach, a young man dressed in deep green robes greets you.

"Please do not be alarmed. I'm the druid Moseby. I can cure you of one of your curses. Drinking from the fountain will cure all the damage you might have taken in the past few days. You have missed those you have tracked and they are far ahead of you as they are using magical means to travel. You can continue to follow their prints and it will take you six days to reach the Crone's cave and the place where the children are captured. Is there anything else that I can do for you?"

The druid is there to help. He can give the characters a great number of non-magical supplies. He can't leave the fountain area. He can talk about the powers of the Crone's daughter. He also knows what is guarding the cave and can give warning about that. Moseby can also tell the characters about the Talisman of Pohjola and how destroying it will undo the transformation of the children.

If pressed for information about his sect and why he will not leave the area he will inform the characters that his sect of druids are bound to their sacred groves within the Mournwood, leaving the grove would leave it unprotected to the wood's curses and the grove would fall to the crone's curse. The druids of Mournwood are only able to protect these small pockets of nature to help hold the tide of evil, but so far have been unable to push any of the tide back. If pressed further he will tell of a legend of one druid who did try to cure the woods and in the process fell from his order and became one of the dark worshippers of the crone and no one in his sect will risk that happening again.

# INTO THE MOURNWOOD



Moseby is a 8th level druid with *cure light wounds* ( $\times 3$ ), *remove curse* ( $\times 3$ ) and *cure serious wounds* ( $\times 2$ ).

Characters who drink from the fountain recover 4d6 hit points. If the character is of a neutral alignment (CN, LN, N, NG, NE) they recover an additional 1d6 hit points. The fountain also *cures disease*, *cures blindness* and *neutralizes poison*. A person can only drink from the fountain one time a year. If they drink from it a second time within one year they must make a saving throw vs poison with a penalty of -12 or die. The penalty is reduced by 1 per month since they last drank from the fountain. If they make the save they only benefit from drinking water and do not gain any of the other bonuses, and will never again. Moseby will advise the characters to not attempt to drink the water again for doing so risks an almost certain death.

Clerics and druids will be allowed to take one vial each of the water which is treated as holy water.

When the characters leave, read the following.

As you leave the fountain and Moseby behind the frigid, bitter cold returns as does the traces of snow on the ground. The vibrant living forest around the fountain once again give way to the dark and dead trees of Mournwood.

## 33. ICE CAVE OF THE OLD CRONE'S SECOND DAUGHTER ☆

The ice rises from the river and forms a huge hill in the middle of the partly frozen body of water. On the north side of the hill is a large opening into a well lit cave entrance. On top of the hill is a corral with ten young bear cubs in the area.

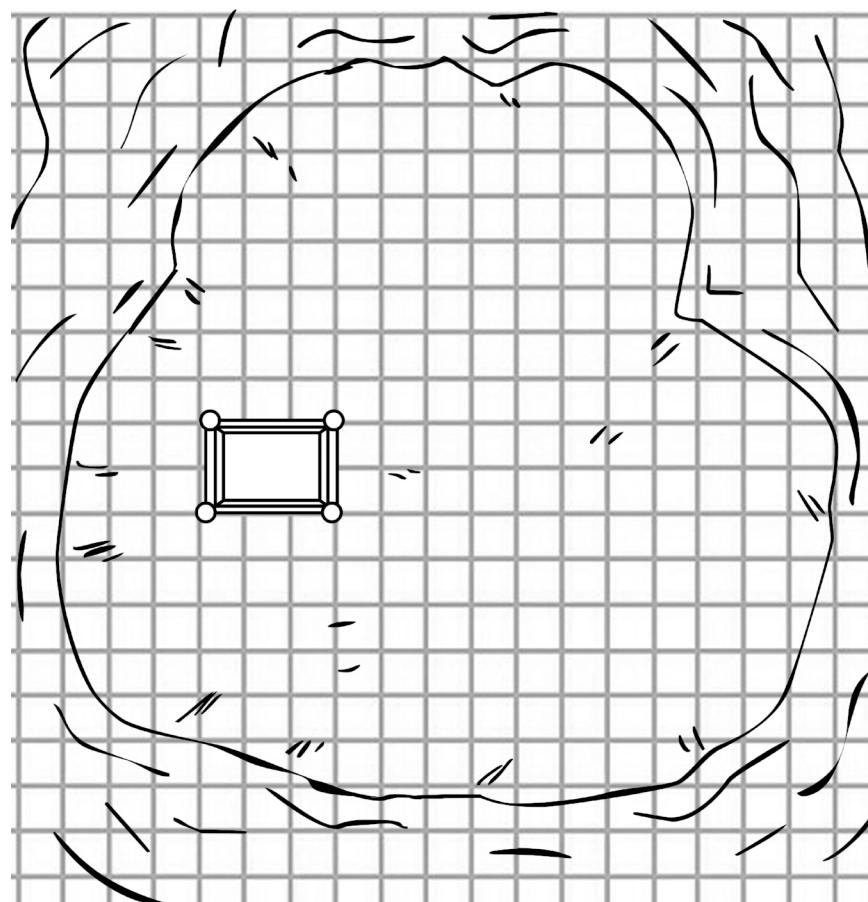


Figure 2.9: Ice Cave of the Old Crone's Second Daughter, Exterior



## INT◊ THE MOURNWOOD

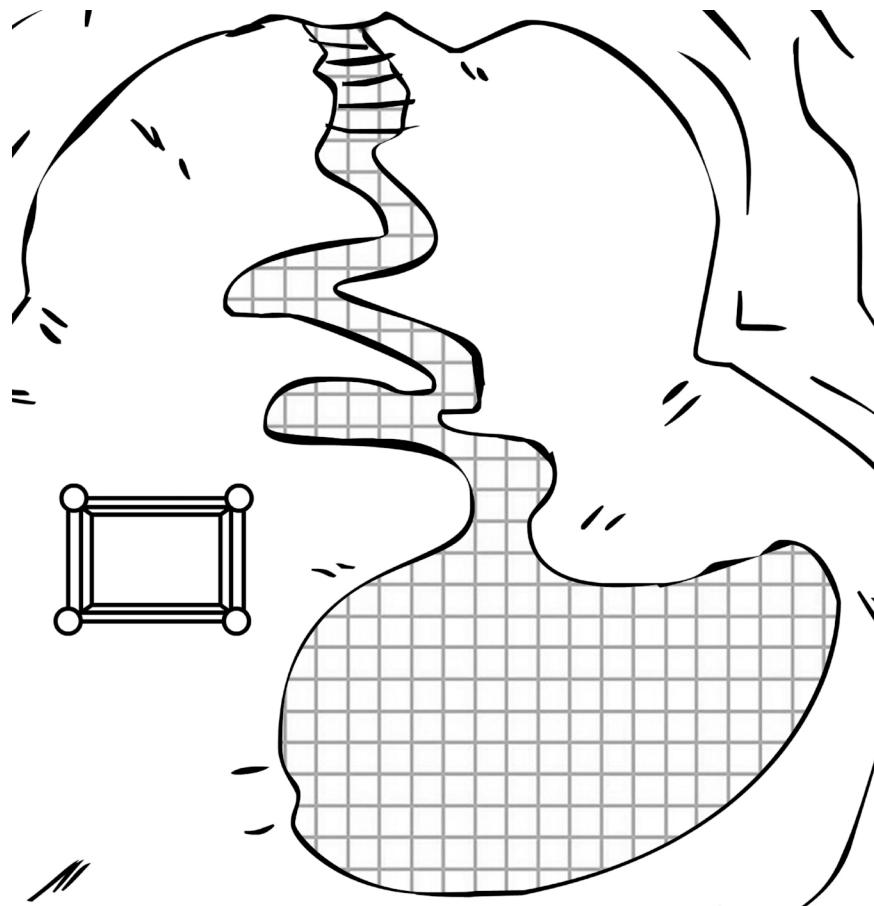


Figure 2.10: Ice Cave of the Old Crone's Second Daughter, Interior

At this time it is very possible to grab the ten young bears and rip off their enchanted furs and turn them back into children. The group realizes how close they are to the edge of Mournwood. They could leave the forest and rescue the children.

The cave entrance opens up into a wide tunnel. The area is very cold. It gets darker as the tunnel twists into the hill.

As the characters move twenty yards into the cave, they are attacked from behind by two giant ice spiders (see Giant Ice Spiders, page 45).

In complete darkness, you will have to use some sort of light source to move deeper into the tunnel.

Twenty yards further into the tunnel there is a large pile of bloody bones in front of you.

Eventually the tunnel opens into a large area. There is a frosty white pillar of light in the middle of this chamber.

On the east wall is a set of rainbow colored stones in a circle.

An old female confronts the group and demands to know why they have come into her home.

She is not going to like any answer the group gives her. After a short conversation she attacks and attempts to kill the characters. (See Ice Hag (Greater), page 44.)

The hag has the following spells as a 10th level mage.

- 4 Level 1: *armor, magic missile, shocking grasp, spook*
- 4 Level 2: *fog cloud, mirror image, uncontrollable hideous laughter, web*
- 3 Level 3: *blink, haste, protection from good (10' radius)*
- 2 Level 4: *fear, shadow monsters*
- 2 Level 5: *faithful hound*

# INTO THE MOURNWOOD



After the battle the characters can find a set of tracks revealing that other bears/children have been led away from the cave and corral. Following these tracks are easy (+3 to any necessary tracking rolls) and will lead the characters on a path to encounter 35.

## 34. FORTRESS OF THE ICE OGRES

From the edge of the river extending east is the length of a high hill. At the top of the hill is a tall tower. There is a 15-foot tall Ice Ogre as a guard at the huge portal to the tower. The guard has two Vargs for support.

The ogre (see Ogres, page 51) challenges the party if they come within 60 yards of the tower. He wants to know why the group is there. He is sympathetic to the quest the group is on and tells them about the herd of young bears and people that went north.

There are four more ogres inside the tower. They come out and attack if the characters have fought the guard. They bring 8 Vargs (see Vargs, page 52) into the fight.

## 35. HUT OF THE OLD CRONE, DEMI-GODDESS OF MOURNWOOD ☆

The heat is intense in this area. The swamp opens up into a sort of bog. In the middle of this area is a large corral with 20 bear cubs roaming inside. By the corral is a strange hut. This is a small thatch hut that couldn't be more than ten yards wide, tall, and long. However, the hut is on a huge tangle of roots that keep the hut slightly off the swampy ground, the hut displays a doorway made out of a solid piece of brown leather.

The bear cubs are the kidnapped children in magical furs that make them look and act like bear cubs. The corral is magically trapped to send ten point *lightning bolts* at any character trying to open the corral or get inside.

The only way to get the children out is to get in the larger hut and break the Talisman of Pohjola on a table in the hut.

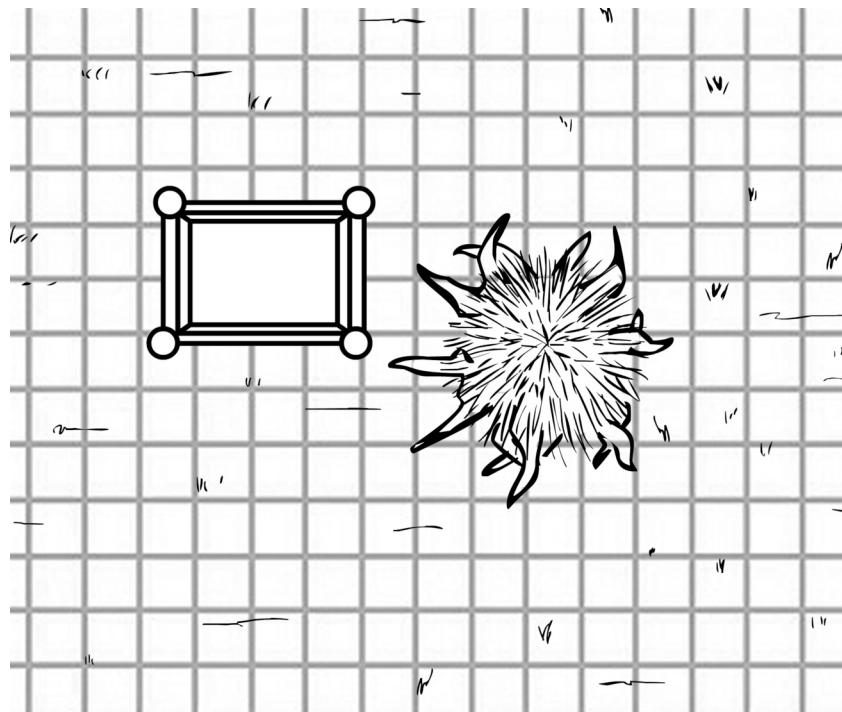


Figure 2.11: Hut of the Old Crone, Exterior



# INT◊ THE MOURNW◊OD

## INSIDE THE HUT

Beyond the doorway is a slimy entry way into the earth, roughly four foot wide and six high, the crude stairwell of tangle roots, grubs and mud descend until you come into a huge area beneath the earth, it appears to be forty yards long, wide, and tall which doesn't agree with the dimensions of the hut on the outside or the distance you descended on the roots. The chamber has walls made of muck, roots, mud, snakes and grubs and there is frost covering the floor of mud and ceiling of tangled roots.

Along the north wall is a table with some is a crescent moon shaped stone talisman carved with wicked runes and embedded with ugly gems and stones.

On the east wall is a set of rainbow colored stones in a circle.

Along the south wall is a large throne and two young girls are serving a lovely woman food. At the feet of the girls and woman are a total of six large fluffy white dogs.

The dogs are good sized and look to be capable guard animals.

There is a nasty odor about the chamber. It smells like fresh blood.

The woman appears young. At her side is a large staff with a white crescent moon at its top.

The two girls can't be older than ten. They are dressed in white frocks and each has long pig tails. The three of them have turned and are smiling at you all.

The woman motions you forward and the girls move to a side board and begin pouring wine into chalices and placing those drinks on silver trays.

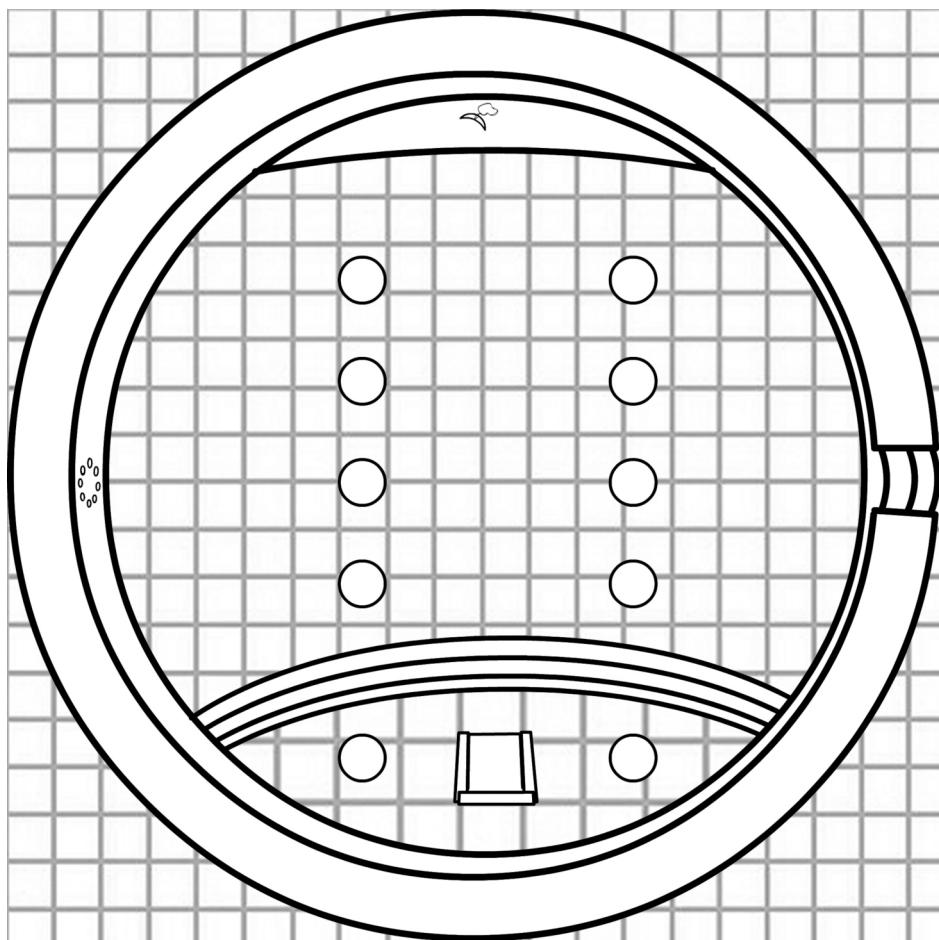


Figure 2.12: Hut of the Old Crone, Interior

# INTO THE MOURNWOOD



The young woman claims to be a wizard helping her two young cousins grow into learning how to cast magic. She claims to know nothing about the kidnapped children. She further says she raises young bears to have them for meals. She would be happy to have the characters eat with her that night. She and the girls turn savage and reveal their true selves if the characters give her grief.

Breaking the talisman frees the young bears and they are able to throw off their bear furs and become young children again.

In reality the young girls are haglings (see Haglings, page 44) polymorphed to look like young girls. One of them is the Ice Hag's (see Ice Hag (Old Crone), page 44) familiar and while within the presence of the hagling the Ice Hag has all of the bonuses of having a familiar (see the *find familiar* spell). The Ogres (see Ogres, page 51) don't come out and attack until it looks like the crone is going to lose the battle, they bring with them one Varg (see Vargs, page 52) each. There is one ogre per two characters in the party.

The Old Crone has the following spells cast as a 11th level mage.

- 4 Level 1: *affect normal fires, chill touch, find familiar, spider climb*
- 4 Level 2: *darkness 15' radius, ray of enfeeblement, strength, summon swarm*
- 4 Level 3: *monster summoning I, fireball, protection from good (10' radius), vampiric touch*
- 3 Level 4: *fumble, minor globe of invulnerability, Phantasmal Killer*
- 3 Level 5: *feeble mind, monster summoning III, shadow magic*



# CHAPTER 3: BESTIARY

## CLERIC OF THE ICE CRONE

Climate/Terrain:	Arctic (Ice Kingdoms/Mournwood)
Frequency:	Rare
Number Appearing:	1d6
Organization:	Sect
Activity Cycle:	Any
Intelligence:	12
Treasure:	Special
Alignment:	Chaotic Evil
Armor Class:	4
Movement:	12
Hit Dice:	1 (5 hp)
THAC0:	20
Attack:	Weapon (1d6)
Saving Throws:	Cleric 1
Special Traits:	+3 save vs. mundane and magical cold
Magic Resistance:	Standard
Size:	M (6')
Morale:	11
Experience:	120; 650 (prefect)

These clerics are dedicated to the worship of the Old Crone of Mournwood. They are led by a 5th level cleric (The Ice Prefect 23 HP, AC 2, 2d4 + 3 damage, THAC0 18).

**Ice Acolytes** Spells – 1st level: 1/day

Spells Known:

- Level 1 – *protection from good*, Shillelagh

**Ice Prefect** Spells – 1st level: 3/day, 2nd level: 3/day, 3rd level: 1/day, 4th level: 1/day

Spells Known:

- Level 1 – *command*, *cause light wounds*, *faerie fire*, *protection from good*, *sanctuary*
- Level 2 – *charm person*, *heat metal*, *hold person* (2)
- Level 3 – *animate dead*, *cause blindness*
- Level 4 – *sticks to snakes*

## CURSED BANDIT

Climate/Terrain:	Any
Frequency:	Rare
Number Appearing:	1d10
Organization:	Group
Activity Cycle:	Any
Intelligence:	9–12
Treasure:	L, M
Alignment:	Neutral Evil
Armor Class:	8
Movement:	12
Hit Dice:	1 (5 hp)
THAC0:	19
Attack:	1 by weapon
Saving Throws:	Fighter 1
Special Traits:	See Below
Magic Resistance:	None
Size:	Medium (6' tall)
Morale:	See Below
Experience:	35

Cursed Bandits are found in almost any area of the Mournwood, for whatever reason they have taken up refuge in the haunted forest and prey upon travelers who stray too near the woods or for some unknown reason enter the hag home. The cursed bandits all have a curse on them, with each batch sharing the same curse (see page 9).

# BESTIARY



## DARK TREE

Climate/Terrain:	Any forest
Frequency:	Very rare
Number Appearing:	1
Organization:	Solitary
Activity Cycle:	Any
Intelligence:	11-12
Treasure:	Q × 5, X
Alignment:	Chaotic evil
Armor Class:	0
Movement:	12
Hit Dice:	7 (32 hp)
THAC0:	13
Attack:	2 branches 2d8
Saving Throws:	Fighter 7
Special Traits:	Animate trees, fire vulnerability, siege damage
Magic Resistance:	None
Size:	Huge (13'-18' tall)
Morale:	15-16
Experience:	3,000

Dark Trees are similar to Yggdra and are intelligent trees, all but indistinguishable from trees when still. Upon closer inspection, their branches become arms and their roots feet, and their faces formed of creases and whorls in their bark become apparent. Dark Trees resemble the trees common to the areas in which they dwell—but they look old, knotted and often dead. While similar to Yggdra, Dark Trees are undead and have all the standard undead traits and immunities.

Dark Trees are solitary creatures, if two were to encounter each other they would strive to destroy one another. They despise most forms of life, but tolerate lesser undead (of the mindless variety) and vermin, such as rats, insects and worms of all types.

Existing for many centuries, Dark Trees find other races a nuisance and fortunately short-lived. As such, they tend to avoid other races—especially the elves that share their woodlands and seek to destroy them whenever possible. Dark Trees do not trust goblin-kind and will not work with them or tolerate their presence. Dark Trees speak their own language, and additionally speak at least the some common tongues of men, elves and orcs.

As kin to the trees, Dark Trees prefer to live in ancient and primordial forests which have never known the touch of the axe. They need no shelter, but live under sun and storm alike among the trees they haunt. Each Dark Tree stalks a territory in the forest, here they hunt the living.

Dark Trees are fearsome fighters. Each Dark Tree may animate up to 2d6 Mournwood zombies to assist them in combat.

Dark Trees are vulnerable to fire, and have a -6 penalty to all saves against fire-based attacks. Furthermore, all fire-based attacks against Dark Trees gain a +6 bonus to hit and double damage inflicted.

A Dark Tree may damage buildings and fortifications, with each strike inflicting siege damage to structures as per a battering ram.





# BESTIARY

## GOBLIN

Climate/Terrain:	Any
Frequency:	Very Rare
Number Appearing:	1d4
Organization:	Special
Activity Cycle:	Night (Darkness)
Intelligence:	13-14
Treasure:	Special
Alignment:	Lawful Evil
Armor Class:	0 or 8
Movement:	9
Hit Dice:	10 (45 hp)
THAC0:	11
Attack:	Touch (see below)
Saving Throws:	Fighter 10
Special Traits:	Fear, Aging
Magic Resistance:	Standard
Size:	M (6')
Morale:	Special
Experience:	6,000

Those on the Prime Material can attack a lesser ghost only during a round that it is attacking with its touch, but those on the Ethereal can attack a lesser ghost each round, where its AC is reduced to 8.

If a character approaches within 60' of the bodies, they are subject to the ghosts' fear aura.

While still mostly ethereal, a lesser ghost causes any human, humanoid or demi-human within 60 feet, other than a 6th level or higher priest, to roll a saving throw vs. spell. Those with more than 9 HD or levels gain a +2 bonus. If the save fails, the victim flees in terror for 2d12 rounds and will not return to the area where it encountered the ghost for 2d6 turns.

If a character continues to approach to within 30', the ghosts throw back their hoods to reveal their horrifically scarred heads and faces.

The first time that any human, humanoid or demi-human comes within 60 feet of an unhooded lesser ghost, he or she ages 10 years (20 years, if venerable age is 151 and 250 years, 30 years, if venerable age is 251 to 350 years, etc.).

If any character gets within 3' of a body, the attached ghost becomes semi-solid and attempts to make aging touch attacks against it.

A successful touch attack ages the victim  $1d4 \times 10$  years ( $2d4 \times 20$  years, if venerable age is 151 and 250 years,  $3d4 \times 10$  years, if venerable age is 251 to 350 years, etc.). Lesser ghosts must be semi-solid for an entire round to attack with their touch.

## GOBLIN

Climate/Terrain:	Any non-arctic
Frequency:	Uncommon
Number Appearing:	4d6
Organization:	Tribe
Activity Cycle:	Night
Intelligence:	5-10
Treasure:	C, K
Alignment:	Lawful evil
Armor Class:	6 (10 unarmored)
Movement:	6
Hit Dice:	1 - 1 (3 hp)
THAC0:	20
Attack:	By weapon
Saving Throws:	0-level character
Special Traits:	None
Magic Resistance:	None
Size:	Small (4' Tall)
Morale:	10
Experience:	15; 35 (chief, sub-chief)

Goblins are small humanoids with flat faces, glassy eyes, and fang-filled mouths. They are scrawny and short, and have gangly arms and bandy legs. Goblins are creatures of darkness, and have infravision out to 60 feet. They are sensitive to light, and suffer a -1 penalty to all attack rolls when in bright sunlight.

Notorious for breeding prolifically, goblins are often members of huge tribes. Although they have little loyalty to their kind, they are communal creatures and are rarely found alone. Goblin tribes lair in dark and disused places such as caverns or abandoned mines or ruins, and are able to detect unusual stonework in these areas 25% of the time. Tribes are led by chiefs with 2 HD and AC 4, who is usually guarded by sub-chiefs with 1 + 1 HD. Each tribe will also have several family and faction leaders with 1 HD. The shifting loyalties of the tribe's members leads to instability and a constant battle for leadership.

Although they are capable of industry, goblin workmanship is usually shoddy. Some tribes survive by mining and trade, especially in areas rich with natural resources, but most fall back to a lifestyle of stealing and plundering. They hate outsiders, including other tribes of goblins, but save their greatest hatred for gnomes and dwarves. Goblins speak their own language, and more intelligent individuals may also speak the tongues of orcs and kobolds.

Goblins often keep slaves, and a tribe may have dozens or hundreds. These slaves are worked harshly and subject to brutality at the slightest provocation. Goblins may keep vargs as pets, guardians, and mounts, and show an unusual affinity for these creatures.

Goblins fight with simple, crude tactics, and prefer to ambush their foes rather than face open battle.

# BESTIARY



## GREY SLIME

Climate/Terrain:	Arctic
Frequency:	Very Rare
Number Appearing:	1
Organization:	Solitary
Activity Cycle:	All
Intelligence:	0
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Neutral
Armor Class:	9
Movement:	0
Hit Dice:	2 + 2 (11 hp)
THAC0:	19
Attack:	Special
Saving Throws:	Fighter 2
Special Traits:	Special
Magic Resistance:	Immune to most spells
Size:	Large (4'-7' pool)
Morale:	N/A
Experience:	175

Grey Slime is an almost perfectly round pool of viscous dull grey slime about 6' across.

This pool is only about 6" deep and has no way to directly attack the characters, however it is a very dangerous beast. It is used by some of Mournwood's denizens to dispose of their rivals or punish their minions.

Grey slime has tremor sense and can detect any creatures that approach within 30' of the edge of the pool. It can dissolve and digest almost anything that it touches.

If a victim gets the grey slime on their flesh, the slime begins to dissolve the victim, inflicting 2d8 points of damage per round until the victim is dead and gone, leaving behind only odd bits, such as an arm, leg or even just a foot or hand.

Grey slime can also digest 1 cubic inch of wood or cloth in 3 turns, and acts as a strong, metal eating acid. A grey slime suffers full damage from weapons, but a mundane weapon made of metal that successfully strikes the grey slime dissolves at the end of the round. Even the small amount of the slime picked up from touching it is enough to dissolve an entire suit of mundane bronze plate, chain or scale mail in one round, a mundane suit of brigandine, leather, studded leather, banded, splint or plate mail in just two rounds, and mundane field plate in 3 rounds. Magical armor and weapons are granted 1 additional round for every plus of their enchantment bonuses. Once a victim's armor is gone the slime begins to dissolve the victim.

If the victim lost initiative during the round that the grey slime makes contact with its armor or skin, or if the victim wins initiative on the first round after the slime makes contact, the victim can quickly wipe off the slime and avoid

suffering damage to himself or his armor. Whatever the victim wipes it onto, with the exception of glass, crystal or ceramic, is not as fortunate and starts to dissolve immediately.

Once the victim begins to suffer damage, the slime must be cut or burned away. This procedure causes the victim to suffer 1d4 damage for each round that the slime was in contact with the victim. A *cure disease* spell will instantly kill a grey slime, but it is immune to mundane or magical fire and cold effects and all other spells.

Grey slime is the unusual and rare cross between green slime and grey ooze. The conditions necessary to create such a hybrid must be precisely correct. The process involves a fresh grey ooze embryo, several drops of green slime, a dash of common minerals and electricity. While it is possible to occur in nature, most scholars believe wizards working in their laboratories, possibly with the assistance of alchemists, created the few that have been reported.

## HAG ORC

Climate/Terrain:	Any
Frequency:	Very Rare
Number Appearing:	1d4
Organization:	Group
Activity Cycle:	Any
Intelligence:	8-10
Treasure:	C, (O), (Q x 10), (S), L
Alignment:	Neutral Evil
Armor Class:	7
Movement:	12
Hit Dice:	2 (9 hp)
THAC0:	19
Attack:	Bow ((1d6) x2) or Scythe (1d8)
Saving Throws:	Fighter 2
Special Traits:	Infravision 60', +4 save vs. Cold, +1 hit, +2 melee damage.
Magic Resistance:	Standard
Size:	M (7' tall)
Morale:	14
Experience:	65

Hag Orcs are massively muscled, 7-foot tall orcs. They are usually armored in white leather armor and their flesh has been painted white. They are fond of short bows and using wickedly sharp scythe like swords. Groups of Hag Orcs roam the forest and are used as guards in by the more organized and intelligent denizens of Mournwood.

Hag Orcs are very similar to their standard orc cousins and speak a similar dialect of Orcish (though hints of troll and hag languages have corrupted their ancestral tongue).



# BESTIARY

Hag Orcs are created by powerful clerics and magic users (including hags) who force interbreeding between normal orcs and orogs with hags and other hag offspring.

They have an equivalent strength score of 18 and gain a +1 to hit and +2 damage with their weapon attacks (including the bow). The orcs must check morale when half their number has fallen and every round thereafter.

## HAGLING

<b>Climate/Terrain:</b>	Any
<b>Frequency:</b>	Very Rare
<b>Number Appearing:</b>	1d4
<b>Organization:</b>	Group
<b>Activity Cycle:</b>	Any
<b>Intelligence:</b>	9-11
<b>Treasure:</b>	Nil
<b>Alignment:</b>	Chaotic evil
<b>Armor Class:</b>	3
<b>Movement:</b>	12
<b>Hit Dice:</b>	3 + 3 (17 hp)
<b>THAC0:</b>	17
<b>Attack:</b>	2 Claws (1d8) or Tail Stinger (1d4)
<b>Saving Throws:</b>	Fighter 3
<b>Special Traits:</b>	Spell-like Abilities, Poison, Immune to Mundane or Magical Cold, Regeneration
<b>Magic Resistance:</b>	Standard
<b>Size:</b>	S (3' tall)
<b>Morale:</b>	14
<b>Experience:</b>	1,400

Haglings are short and squat, with sickly green/gray skin that hangs slack from their tiny bones. Their noses are extra-long and often have a wart on it with reddish hair growing out of it. Their eyes are narrow slits with heavy black brows, and they have tufts of reddish-brown hair growing on their feet, on top of their heads and out of their ears. They look like a bizarre cross between a halfling and a troll with a scorpion like tail.

Haglings are unnatural creatures. Much like the troll's origin, it is believed that haglings are crossbreeds of hags, trolls and either gnomes, kobolds, human children or possibly even halflings. Haglings are soul worms formed by a hag for service as a familiar or servant. Haglings possess abilities similar to imps and quasits, and are the size of a kobold. Despite, or indeed due to, the unknown third element in their heritage, haglings are impish little trolls that serve as familiars and servants to hags and other spell casters. Extremely powerful hags and spell casters may have

multiple haglings as servants but rarely have more than one as a familiar.

Haglings are able to cast *detect good*, *detect magic* and *invisibility* at will. They will usually attack invisibly from behind with their tail stingers. The tail stinger contains a rare toxin known as zombie poison. Each time the victim is stung, it must make a successful save vs. poison. Failing even just one saving throw puts the victim at risk of rising as a zombie if they are killed. A *neutralize poison* will cure the afflicted. They must check morale if one of them falls below 25 hit points and each round thereafter. If pressed into face-to-face melee, a hagling can inflict deep wounds with their claws. Haglings within 50 yards of their hag matron can *polymorph self* but only into other humanoid forms that the hag desires.

Within three rounds of injury, a hagling heals damage at a rate of 3 hit points each round until completely healed. Even damage that would kill another creature does not stop the regeneration; a hagling reduced to 0 or fewer hit points falls into an comatose state and is unable to act, but continues to regenerate and rises again once it has more than 0 hit points. Only damage inflicted by fire or acid cannot be regenerated, such wounds must heal normally. A hagling reduced to 0 or fewer hit points with acid or fire, or a body treated with acid or burned dies permanently.

## ICE HAG

<b>Climate/Terrain:</b>	The Mournwood
<b>Frequency:</b>	Very rare
<b>Number Appearing:</b>	1 (1-3)
<b>Organization:</b>	Solitary (Coven)
<b>Activity Cycle:</b>	Any
<b>Intelligence:</b>	15-16
<b>Treasure:</b>	None
<b>Alignment:</b>	Neutral evil
<b>Armor Class:</b>	0 (see below)
<b>Movement:</b>	9 (see below)
<b>Hit Dice:</b>	8 (36 hp) (see below)
<b>THAC0:</b>	13 (see below)
<b>Attack:</b>	Claw 2d6 (see below)
<b>Saving Throws:</b>	Fighter 8 (see below)
<b>Special Traits:</b>	Cause disease, spells, +1 or better weapon needed to hit (see below) 65% (see below)
<b>Magic Resistance:</b>	Man-sized (5-6' tall)
<b>Size:</b>	8-10 (see below)
<b>Morale:</b>	9,000; 10,000 (greater); 12,000 (the Old Crone); 9,500 (Spider Hag)
<b>Experience:</b>	

# BESTIARY



Ice Hags are powerful beings whose power and cruelty belie their appearances. Their natural forms resemble nothing more than withered old women with diseased violet skin, brittle black hair, and wicked red eyes, though their magic allows them to take other shapes as they choose.

As merchants of souls, Ice Hags wield enormous influence on the evil planes. It is their wares that provide the raw materials for the armies of the demons and devils, and they sell to both alike. Others, such as powerful liches, also deal with them, trading secrets and magic for their souls and the power they provide. Through their dealings, Ice Hags collect vast amounts of knowledge and lore, and are sometimes sought for their council.

Ever curious, Ice Hags sometimes consort with the powers of the evil planes or, using their shape changing ability, great and powerful mortals. Here again, they seek knowledge and secrets. Any children born of such liaisons are Ice Hags themselves, and do not take after their fathers.

Though Ice Hags prefer subterfuge to combat, they are nevertheless capable combatants. Their great strength belies their withered frames. Their razor sharp claw like nails carry sickness; victims scratched by a hag must save vs. poison or contract a disease. They also are incredibly strong, treat an Ice Hag as if it had a strength of 17 (+1 to hit in melee combat and +1 to damage) including when using their claws.

Ice Hags possess potent magic, and cast spells as 9th level mages (or higher). A hag can cast *know alignment*, *polymorph self*, and *sleep* once each turn, *magic missile* five times each day, and *ray of enfeeblement* three times each day.

Ice Hags are immune to *charm*, *fear*, and *sleep* spells, and cannot be harmed by fire or cold. They can only be damaged by rune, silver or cold iron weapons or weapons enchanted with a +1 bonus or greater.

Ice Hags are in direct opposition of Uthin and his order. They suffer from extreme vulnerability to runes and rune magic. Rune weapons can always hurt a hag, even if the weapon has no magical modifiers. They suffer a -2 to save against spells cast using runes and only have an AC of 4 against rune weapons. In addition, anyone with a rune item is considered to be under the effects of a *protection from evil* spell when it comes to facing an ice hag.

There are four varieties of Ice Hags. Lesser, Greater, Old Crone and Spider-Hag.

Lesser Ice hags are the basic Ice Hags as described above.

Greater Ice Hags are identical to lesser Ice Hags except they cast spells as 10th level mages, require +2 magical items or better to be hit and have a 70% magic resistance, have a -1 AC, a strength of 18 (+1 to hit in melee combat and +2 to damage) and have 9 hit dice (41 hp) so they save as 9th level fighters.

The Old Crone is the same as the other Ice Hags save

she casts spells as an 11th level mage, requires +3 magical items or better to be hit and has a 75% magic resistance, has a -1 AC, a strength of 18 (01) (+1 to hit in melee combat and +3 to damage) and has 10 hit dice (45 hp) so she saves as a 10th level fighter.

A Spider Hag is a lesser hag with the lower body of a spider. They have the move in webs and special traits (including poison and immunities) of an Ice Spider (Giant). Otherwise they are identical to a standard lesser Ice Hag.

## ICE SPIDER (GIANT)

Climate/Terrain:	Arctic
Frequency:	Very Rare
Number Appearing:	1d6
Organization:	Group
Activity Cycle:	Night
Intelligence:	5-7
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Chaotic Evil
Armor Class:	3
Movement:	3, 12 web
Hit Dice:	3 + 3 (17 hp)
THAC0:	17
Attack:	Bite (1d8)
Saving Throws:	Fighter 4
Special Traits:	Infravision 60', Immune to Mundane or Magical Cold, Poison
Magic Resistance:	None
Size:	Large (12' tall diameter)
Morale:	13
Experience:	650

These five-foot tall spiders like hiding in the trees. The giant ice spider is a web-spinning spider that has adapted to the cold. They live in groups of 1d6. Unlike most web-spinning spiders, they are covered in thick, but short, white fur with light black and gray horizontal stripes.

These creatures delight in attacking from above. As the characters pass under the trees where the spiders are hiding, the spiders fire webs at the group. The webs have a 30' range. A successful attack roll indicates the victim is entangled in webs. However, the victim's strength score determines how long the victim remains entangled. A creature with a strength score of 18/76 or higher can easily break free from the webs in under a minute. The webs merely act as a *slow* spell for a single round after a successful web attack. A creature with a strength score of 18 or an exceptional strength score between 18/01 and 18/75 is only entangled for a single round following a successful web attack. Each reduced point of strength increases the time re-



# BESTIARY

quired to break free of the webs by one additional round. A creature with a strength score of 17 requires 2 rounds after a successful web attack to break free, strength score of 11 requires 7 rounds after a successful web attack, etc. Those entangled in the web lose all dexterity score modifiers and suffer an additional +4 penalty to their AC.

It will not risk entering melee combat, but if a victim appears to be entangled and not surrounded by allies, the spider who successfully attacked it will climb down from the tree and attempt to bite the victim until it fails a saving throw vs. poison. The spider will then drag it back up the tree to drain it of fluids later. The giant ice spider injects a deadly Type F poison into its bite, but a victim gains a +1 bonus to its saving throw. If the victim fails its saving throw, it is immediately paralyzed, followed by death in 2-8 rounds.

*Slow poison* or *neutralize poison* must be cast upon the victim before death occurs to be effective.

## LIVING STATUE

Climate/Terrain:	Any
Frequency:	Very Rare
Number Appearing:	1
Organization:	Solitary
Activity Cycle:	All
Intelligence:	5-7
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Neutral
Armor Class:	3
Movement:	12
Hit Dice:	5 (33 hp)
THACO:	15
Attack:	By weapon +3 (1d8 + 3)
Saving Throws:	Fighter 5
Special Traits:	Infravision 60', Immune to Magical or Mundane Cold
Magic Resistance:	Standard
Size:	M (6' tall)
Morale:	N/A
Experience:	975

The statue is in the shape of a beautiful human female dressed in sleek fitting chain mail. In one hand there is a +2 spear and in the other hand is a shield +1, +3 versus trolls. One hand displays a +1 ring of protection. It is wearing a necklace of 8 missiles. In a leather pouch lying at her feet is a scroll of undead control, a scroll of clerical hold person, and a scroll of resistance of all dragon breath. Her weapons, much like her, are made of stone and are part of her body, they may not be taken and are useless once she is destroyed. The necklace and ring, however, can be removed and she

will not use the necklace on the characters.

The Living Statue attacks as soon as a character tries to take one of its items but will not chase the characters. The first successful strike from every character inflicts no damage; thereafter it suffers damage as normal. She has a Strength of 17 (+1 to hit/+1 to damage, already calculated in her Attack profile).

## MANTICORE

Climate/Terrain:	Any
Frequency:	Uncommon
Number Appearing:	1d4
Organization:	Family
Activity Cycle:	Any
Intelligence:	5-7
Treasure:	E
Alignment:	Lawful evil
Armor Class:	4
Movement:	12, fly 18 (MC 5)
Hit Dice:	6 + 3 (30 hp)
THACO:	13
Attack:	2 claws 1d3, bite 1d8
Saving Throws:	Fighter 6
Special Traits:	Tail spikes
Magic Resistance:	None
Size:	Huge (15' long)
Morale:	13-14
Experience:	975

Manticores are horrid beasts combining a leonine legs, mane, and torso, leathery bat wings, a hairy humanoid head, and a mace-like tail studded with metal spikes. Manticores speak their own language, and rarely speak the common tongue as well.

Typically cruel and sadistic, manticores have insatiable appetites. Most prefer the flesh of humanoids over other kinds. Despite their cruelty and predatory nature, they sometimes ally themselves with other evil creatures for mutual protection. Amongst their own kind, manticores mate for life and form tightly-knit relationships, and work together for the benefit of their families.

Manticores typically live in the higher mountains of the Ice Kingdoms, common in the Balor Mountains and the Plains of Gagorok. These particular manticores however, are refugees from Mount Surtur and have fled south avoiding some greater menace. They often live close to humanoid cities and towns, which they maraud for prey. Manticores stake out their own territories, although these often overlap with the territories of other manticores. They lair in caves and other natural shelters; these lairs often

# BESTIARY



contain treasure and other items that have caught the curiosity of their occupants.

**Combat:** Manticores often hunt in coordination with their mates and employ stealth and ambush to capture their prey. Though they use their flight to their advantage in combat, they are clumsy fliers and cannot bite while flying.

Four times each day, a manticore can attack with a volley of 1d6 tail spikes. Each spike has a range of 180 yards with no range penalties, and inflicts 1d6 points of damage on a successful attack.

Manticore cubs have 3 + 3 hit dice, THAC0 17, intelli-

gence 5, and armor class 6. Their claws inflict 1d2 damage and their bite does 1d6. Cubs can fire 1d4 barbs that do 1d4 damage each, otherwise they function identically to adult manticores. Cubs are worth 270 XP each.

## PLANT (CARNIVOROUS)

Carnivorous plants are immune to mind-influencing effects, standard poisons, sleep, paralysis, stun and polymorph. In addition, they are not subject to critical hits.

## PLANT (CARNIVOROUS)

Climate/Terrain:	Cobra Flower	Forester's Bane	Hangman Tree	Kampfult	Wolf-in-Sheep's-Clothing
Frequency:	Swamps, Marshes, Fields	Forests & Woods	Forests & Woods	Subterranean	Forests, Woods, & Meadows
Number Appearing:	Rare	Very Rare	Very Rare	Very Rare	Very Rare
Organization:	1d4 + 2	1d2	1	1	1
Activity Cycle:	Cluster	Solitary	Solitary	Solitary	Solitary
Intelligence:	Day	Both	Day	Both	Both
Treasure:	1	0	5-7	5-7	5-7
Alignment:	None	None	Insignificant	See below	None
	Chaotic Neutral	Neutral	Neutral Evil	Neutral Evil	Neutral
Armor Class:	4	9 (Bush)/4 (Stalks)/7 (Leaves)	3 to -1 (Trunk)/5 to 1 (Vines)	4	3 (Roots)/5 (Trunk)/7 (Eyestalks)
Movement:	3	0	0 (See below)	3	1
Hit Dice:	6 + 2 (29 hp)	Bush: 5 (23 hp), Each Leaf: 1 + 8 (13 hp), Each Stalk: 1 + 16 (21 hp)	See below	Trunk: 2 (9 hp), Tendrils: 2 hp	Trunk 9 (41 hp), Roots: 19-22 hp, Eyestalks: 13-16 hp
THAC0:	15	15	7 or 3	19	11
Attack:	Bite (1d6)	Up to 6 saw-toothed stalks (1d4 + 1)	3 vines/age group (1d3/age group)	6 tendrils (1)	1-3 roots (1d4), bite (1d6 + 6)
Saving Throws:	Fighter 6	Fighter 5	Fighter 13 or 17	Fighter 2	Fighter 9
Special Traits:	Acidic enzymes, hold prey	Hold prey	See below	Inflicts -3 penalty to surprise	None
Magic Resistance:	None	None	0.5% per year (95% max)	None	None
Size:	M (4 1/2')	L (9')	L-G (12'-28')	S-M (4')	S (3')
Morale:	16	Never check	15	Never check	Never check
Experience:	1,400	270 (3 stalks), 420 (4-5 stalks), 650 (6 stalks)	8,000 (sprout), 14,000 (sapling), 20,000 (mature), 26,000 (old), 32,000 (ancient)	175	4,000



# BESTIARY

## COBRA FLOWER

The cobra flower is a tall, slender, mobile plant with a large flowering yellow bulb topping its brownish-green roots. Two large green leaves flank the flowering top, giving the appearance of a hood. The leaves are thin and have transparent splotches on them. Cobra flowers draw nutrients from sunlight, the soil, and water, but enjoy a diet of insects, rodents, animals, and even humans, demi-humans or humanoids when available.

The cobra flower is most commonly encountered in the Mournwood; however, they can also be found in wooded areas along the coastline between Palo and Krongin.

**Combat** Cobra flowers have no visual organs but can detect potential victims within 20' using sound, scent, and vibration. When the cobra flower detects a living creature, it remains motionless until its victim is within 5'. It then spreads its leafy hood, opens its flowery bulb, and bites its prey, secreting acidic enzymes to break down and digest the victim.

If the cobra flower hits a victim of large size or smaller with its bite attack and rolls a natural 19 or 20, it grabs the victim in its mouth and inflicts automatic bite damage and 1d6 points of acid damage each round that the hold is maintained. The victim's items must also save vs. acid each round with a +4 modifier or deteriorate. The cobra flower's hold can be broken with a successful Strength—Bend Bars/Lift Portcullis check. The victim is allowed a new check at the start of each round.

Their digestive acids break down everything including items made of metal and minerals. Depending on the size of the victim, the digestive process takes 1d4 days during which time the plant is dormant. It remains closed and resembles a large, erect and slightly lumpy ear of corn. It may move but makes no attacks during this time.

## FORESTER'S BANE (AKA SNAPPER SAW)

The forester's bane is a huge, dark green, immobile, carnivorous shrub. Closer inspection reveals large, tough leaves radiating 1d3 + 4' from its central stalk. These dark green leaves hide 1d4 + 2 purple serrated stalks. At the center of this low-growing shrub is a 3-foot diameter, yellowish orb from which sprout many small green branches. Every spring and throughout the summer, bunches of large, grape-like berries grow on its branches. The berries are in various colors ranging from white to green to golden yellow. The berries are edible and highly nutritious. Each plant produces enough berries to feed a single person for 2 weeks.

Forester's bane can be encountered in most areas of the Ice Kingdoms. However, they do not grow in the mountains, nor are they found in the furthest northern reaches

where the intense cold and lack of sunlight, even during spring and summer, prevents them from producing berries.

**Combat** The forester's bane has no sensory organs, but when a living creature, man-sized or smaller, touches its leaves, it immediately and automatically engulfs the victim. Trapped victims are then subjected to 1d4 + 2 slashing attacks from the serrated stalks that round and each round thereafter. A victim has a 5% chance per point of its Str score each round after the first to escape. A Str score between 18/01 and 18/50 provides a 95% chance, and escape is automatic if the victim has a Strength score greater than 18/50. Otherwise, the forester's bane releases a trapped victim only if the plant is killed or all of its stalks are destroyed. The bushy part of the plant can be attacked, or its leaves and stalks can be attacked individually. Attacks that hit any part of a forester's bane that has engulfed a victim inflict half their damage to the plant and half to the trapped victim. A plant that is not killed can replace any lost leaves or stalks within 2d4 weeks. Depending on the season, lost berries grow back 3d4 days after the plant replaces its leaves and stalks.

If they succeed in killing a victim, they go dormant and remain closed, resembling a giant head of lettuce or cabbage, for 1d3 + 2 days depending on the size of its victim. The plant digests all material including metals and minerals.

## HANGMAN TREE

Hangman trees are extremely dangerous. Sages believe they are the descendants of a degenerate race of treants. They resemble a thick oak tree with very few leaves and branches. Close inspection reveals a scar-like marking near the top of main trunk, which opens into the plant's stomach, and another on the lower part of the trunk where indigestible parts of creatures and their gear are expelled. Rope-like vines can be seen throughout the hangman tree's branches and leaves.

Due to their size, shallow roots and sparse foliage, they must augment their diet of soil, water and sun with any Small-sized or larger creatures that they can catch. They seem to be stationary but actually move at least a few feet every day. Hangman trees prefer temperate to sub-tropical climates. They anchor themselves into the ground and go dormant if the temperature drops to freezing.

Mature and older hangman trees can speak broken Common. They are most commonly encountered in the Mournwood, but it is possible to encounter a hangman tree almost anywhere other trees grow. They do not like the extreme cold of the far north, however, nor do they grow in the mountains.

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Years/Group	Height	AC	HD (hp)	Penalty	M R	Move
2–9 Sprout	12'	3/5	Trunk: 13 HD (59 hp) Vine: 1 + 12 HD (17 hp)	None	1%–4%	18'/hour
10–24 Sapling	16'	2/4	Trunk: 19 HD (86 hp) Vine: 1 + 14 HD (19 hp)	-1	5%–12%	6'/hour
25–74 Mature	20'	1/3	Trunk: 25 HD (113 hp) Vine: 1 + 16 HD (21 hp)	-2	12%–37%	2'/hour
75–149 Old	24'	0/2	Trunk: 31 HD (140 hp) Vine: 1 + 18 HD (23 hp)	-3	37%–74%	2'/3 hours
150–200 Ancient	28'	-1/1	Trunk: 37 HD (167 hp) Vine: 1 + 20 HD (25 hp)	-4	75%–95%	2'/6 hours

**Combat** Hangman trees can't see but can detect potential victims within 100' using sound, scent, and vibration. When a potential victim comes within  $10d6 + 20'$  from a hangman tree, it releases a cloud of hallucinogenic spores that causes all creatures within 120' to make a saving throw vs. poison (with a penalty based on the tree's age) or believe the tree to be a friendly treant or simply an ordinary oak tree.

For each age group, the tree grows  $1d4 + 5$  prehensile vines, and it can control up to 3 of these vines at a time per age group to attack its victims. The hangman tree attacks any creature that is at least 3' tall but not taller than half its own height plus 1'. If the victim has failed its save vs. poison against the spores, the attack gains a bonus of +4. A successful attack indicates that the tree has dropped a noose-shaped vine around the neck of a victim and yanked it off the ground. This immediately counteracts the effects of the spores, if any, and inflicts  $1d3$  damage per age group (up to  $5d3$ ) each round for 4 rounds, unless someone who has not been grabbed can sever the vine or the victim can break free. The vine's hold can be broken with a successful Strength—Bend Bars/Lift Portcullis check; however, the victim is only allowed one check. Because it seizes its victims by the neck, a creature in the hangman tree's grasp cannot speak or cast spells with verbal components.

On the 5th round, the victim is dropped into the tree's acid-filled stomach, where escape is impossible unless the tree can be killed. Its stomach can hold up to 3 creatures of the maximum size. For example, an ancient tree is 28' tall. It can hold 3 creatures that are 15' tall (the maximum size), 6 creatures that are 8' tall or 12 creatures that are 4' tall. A swallowed victim suffers  $3d4$  points of acid damage each round. Sharp inward pointing growths around the mouth opening prevent climbing back out, but the victim can attack from the inside using any weapon meant to be wielded with only one hand.

The hangman tree suffers double damage from electrical attacks, and cold-based attacks cause it to go dormant (treat as a *hold monster* spell with a duration in rounds equal to the amount of damage suffered). Dark-

ness (whether mundane or magical) causes it to act as if affected by a *slow* spell.

They have no interest in collecting treasure, and indigestible items are expelled and left behind about once per a number of weeks equal to its age group, i.e. an ancient hangman tree expels waste about once every 5 weeks. Those attempting to track a hangman tree to find expelled items suffer a -4 penalty due to the tree's slow movement and reluctance to disturb its natural surroundings.

## KAMPFULT (AKA SINEWY MUGGER)

Kampfults are mobile, carnivorous creatures that haunt subterranean realms in search of prey, grabbing any Tiny-sized living creature that passes by. They usually subsist on mice, rats, bats, birds, giant centipedes, large spiders and other tiny animals, but when hungry will attack gnomes or halflings. They will only attack creatures larger than this if defending themselves or they are very desperate for food.

They resemble rotted dark gray or greenish gray tree stumps and weigh about 300 pounds. Six dark gray and green, prehensile tendrils, each about 6' long, are spaced evenly around the upper portion of its body, while another six tendrils, each about 1' long, are located at the base of its trunk-like body and are used for movement.

The base of their body is where food is absorbed. Once they have made a kill, they move until they are sitting on top of the corpse and spray acidic digestive juices onto it. They only digest organic material so that any metal or mineral items are left behind intact.

Sages believe that the original habitat of the kampfults was forests and dense woodlands where they could blend in amongst the tree trunks and hide their tendrils amongst ordinary vines and creepers. However, when discovered by humans or other civilized races, such as elves, they were actively hunted and destroyed until eventually the few that survived retreated into ruins, caves and other dark subterranean areas. Kampfults can be encountered anywhere in the Ice Kingdoms where deep caverns, abandoned mines



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or other ruins are found.

**Combat** Kampfults attempt to attack by surprise. They arrange their body and tendrils to appear as innocuous ropes or discarded netting and wait for a victim to move within reach. Then they lash out with their tendrils, attempting to grab and entangle the victim. Unless they are seen moving or there is some other indication that something is amiss, kampfults inflict a -3 penalty to their victim's surprise rolls.

All 6 tendrils can attack a single victim or up to 6 victims may be attacked at once. If a tendril hits a victim, the victim suffers 1hp of damage and is entangled until the kampfult is killed, the tendril is cut from the kampfult's body or the victim breaks free. The victim is automatically freed after the first round if it possesses a Strength score of 16 or higher, otherwise the victim must roll a successful Strength check. A kampfult dies when its trunk is killed, and a tendril can be cut off of the body by inflicting 2 hp of slicing damage. The tendril does not take damage from piercing or bludgeoning weapons. Cutting off all of its tendrils neutralizes the kampfult but does not kill it.

## WOLF-IN-SHEEP'S-CLOTHING

The wolf-in-sheep's clothing is perhaps the single strangest creature that sages have ever cataloged. This mobile, carnivorous plant appears as a brown and gray tree stump between 2 and 4' in diameter like those typically found in its native habitat. It can absorb some nourishment from the sun, soil and earth, but it is mainly a predator that prefers to prey on other predators, including (some say, especially) the two-legged varieties.

A wolf-in-sheep's-clothing has two or three brown and green stalks between 10 and 15' long, each topped with violet flower-like eyes, protruding from the creature's base. These give the creature excellent vision covering a wide area. The creature moves by means of its 7' long, black and brown roots. Its mouth is disguised as a thick, black vertical scar on its trunk-like body and opens to reveal razor-sharp, jagged greenish-white teeth. Its strangest and perhaps deadliest characteristic is its ability to grow a bud that resembles a small furry animal (such as a rabbit, wood-chuck or squirrel). This is intended to lure unsuspecting prey close enough to be attacked by the creature's roots. Victims are granted a saving throw vs. spell. If the save is successful, the victim realizes that the animal is actually just part of the plant.

The wolf-in-sheep's clothing is the most ubiquitous of all the carnivorous plants. They can be encountered in any region where trees exist, even the far north and sides of mountains, and are very numerous in the Mournwood.

**Combat** The wolf-in-sheep's-clothing cannot be flanked and is only surprised on a 1 or 2. When a man-sized or smaller creature comes within range, usually around 10', the plant lashes out with 1 or more of its roots. Since its roots are buried under a thin layer of earth, the creature gains surprise on a victim on a 9 or less. If an attack is successful, the victim suffers 1d4 damage and is entangled. The victim must break free or someone who is not entangled can attempt to destroy the root or roots holding the victim. To break free a victim must have a minimum Str score of 13. Each point of the victim's Strength score above 12 provides a 5% chance to escape so that a victim with a Strength score of 18 has a 30% chance to break free. Each percentile point above 18 provides an additional 1% chance, until the chance to break free is 100% at 18/70 or higher. A fighter with an exceptional Strength score or higher who is not entangled can break a root in one round with his bare hands, or the root can be destroyed with normal weapons. If a root has a victim entangled when it is struck, half of the damage is inflicted to the root and half is inflicted to the victim. If the victim is not freed within one round, it suffers another 1d4 constrictive damage from each root holding it, any roots not involved in the initial attack automatically entangle it, and it is dragged into the creature's mouth where it suffers additional 1d6+6 damage from a bite. Destroying the roots after the victim is in the creature's mouth only stops the constrictive damage and the victim will continue to be bitten automatically each round thereafter until the victim dies and is swallowed or the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing is killed. It can swallow 1 Man-sized, 2 Small-sized or 4 Tiny-sized creatures before becoming full, at which point it retracts its lure and eyestalks, buries its roots and becomes dormant for 1d3 days. It consumes all organic, metallic and mineral materials. Damaged or destroyed eyestalks and roots can be regenerated within 1-4 weeks.

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## OGRE

Climate/Terrain:	Any
Frequency:	Common
Number Appearing:	2d10
Organization:	Tribe
Activity Cycle:	Any
Intelligence:	8
Treasure:	B, (Q), (S), M
Alignment:	Chaotic evil
Armor Class:	5
Movement:	9
Hit Dice:	4 + 1 (19 hp)
THAC0:	17
Attack:	Slam 1d10 or by weapon + 6
Saving Throws:	Fighter 4
Special Traits:	None
Magic Resistance:	None
Size:	Large (9' tall)
Morale:	11-12
Experience:	175; 420 (leader, chieftain)

Ogres are brutish humanoids, not quite the size of true giants but towering above lesser humanoids. They are ugly by human standards, with dull earth-toned skin covered in warts, thick oily hair, and heavy features. Though they have impressive physiques, ogres have hunched postures and knuckle-dragging gaits.

Though they are prone to fighting amongst themselves, ogres live in crude tribal societies. These tribes are led by the strongest member, who bullies the rest of the tribe into doing his bidding. Typical tribes have 14 + 4d8 members, one-quarter of which are children. Few tribes grow beyond these numbers, as only the most brutal and canny chieftains are able to control the infighting that comes with additional tribe members. Most chieftains have 7 HD, an AC of 3, and inflict 2d6 + 6 point of damage per hit with their fists. Smaller factions of each ogre tribe have their own leaders, who have 7 HD, an AC of 4, and inflict 2d6 + 3 points of damage per hit with their fists.

Ogres often capture other humanoids for slaves and food, and make little distinction between the two. They occasionally ally themselves with tribes of other savage humanoids or hire themselves out as mercenaries, and get along well with hill giants and trolls. Ogres speak their own language, and more intelligent ogres may learn the languages of orcs, trolls, stone giants, and gnolls. Only rarely do ogres learn the common tongue.

Hardy and adaptable, ogres are found everywhere. They rarely build cities or towns, and more often make do with crude camps as they roam the countryside for plunder and battle.

Ogres love battle, and rush headlong into a fight given any chance. They fight with little organization, but make up in brutality and enthusiasm what they lack in strategy.

## ICE OGRES

Small numbers of ice ogres are known to dwell within the Hag Wood. Ice ogres are larger cousins of hag orcs and therefore also related to goblins and according to some scholars, kobolds, as well. They share the general craftsmanship of their smaller kin, but not the intellect (Intelligence is usually 5-6). An ice ogre is able to blend into natural snowy and icy conditions as a thief is able to hide in shadows with a 90% chance of success, but it is feared most for its ability to hurt things easily and to resist pain and minor injury. This temperament works well in small barbaric clans and groups of raiders but poorly in larger communities, resulting in few ogre tribes exceeding more than ten or so members. However, they appear in large numbers when dwelling with orcs and goblins, with several tribes of ogres integrated into the horde. Hag orcs tend to keep goblins as servants and slaves, but also allow the ice ogres eat a few exceptionally small or skinny goblins rather than to eat a valuable orc warrior.

## TROLL, ICE

Climate/Terrain:	Arctic
Frequency:	Rare
Number Appearing:	1d6
Organization:	Group
Activity Cycle:	Night
Intelligence:	5-7
Treasure:	See Below
Alignment:	Chaotic Evil
Armor Class:	8
Movement:	9
Hit Dice:	2 (9 hp)
THAC0:	19
Attack:	2 claws 1d8 each
Saving Throws:	Fighter 2
Special Traits:	Regeneration, impervious to cold, magical weapons to hit
Magic Resistance:	None
Size:	Large (9' tall)
Morale:	14
Experience:	70

Ice trolls look like standard trolls that have been infused with ice elemental essence, and indeed, some sages claim they are the result of experimentation, either by the



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dragon elves or the Witch-King of the Frozen Thrones. They are slightly smaller than standard trolls and have semi-transparent, ice-cold skin. However, ice trolls are far more intelligent than standard trolls and are known to keep humans and demi-humans in the same way men keep cattle or chickens. Ice trolls will only be encountered near a lake, river or other source of unfrozen water. They may serve a family of frost giants in Jotunreach, assuming the giants provide a pool of water for them, but they are found in their greatest numbers on the islands and shores of the Crown Sea, and along the shores of Saga Lake. Here they will set traps for the unwary, using treasure taken from previous victims as bait. During the spring thaw they are most active, following the swollen streams and rivers deep into the Thanelands in search of humans and demi-humans to add to their herds. If two-legged prey is scarce or gives too much resistance, they will raid farms and ranches for cattle, pigs and horses.

Ice trolls form small tribes of no less than 7 and no more than 12. If a tribe grows too large, it splits and forms a new tribe. The tribe's most intelligent member acts as leader. Ice troll lairs are often an ice cave or cluster of large igloos near their source of water. Their lair contains all of their treasure and 5d4 humans or demi-human prisoners.

The clear fluid that passes as their blood is used to craft rings of cold resistance and frost brand swords.

**Combat** Ice trolls are immune to mundane weapons and any type of cold attack whether mundane or magical, however suffer double damage from any sort of fire damage. Unless the damage is caused by fire or acid, they regenerate 2 hp per round, even after being reduced to 0 hp or less, but only while touching water. They will often retreat if combat starts to take them away from their water source. The only way to permanently destroy an ice troll is to reduce it to 0 hp or less and burn it with fire or acid.

Most ice trolls attack with two claws per round, but 10% carry a weapon. If using their claws, they can attack more than one opponent at a time. If wielding a weapon, they gain bonuses to hit and damage due to their high strength scores.

Their favored strategy is to attack one victim at a time and attempt to capture as many alive as possible. Their lairs are always surrounded by a shallow moat that the trolls stand in while fighting. The moat may also be set with net traps meant to capture their opponents alive.

Their bodies are so brittle that if an opponent rolls a natural 20 to hit an ice troll with a slashing weapon, one of the troll's arms or legs is severed. Severed limbs will move up to 30' to immerse itself in water. If successful in reaching water, the limb can be re-attached within 24 hours. If the limb is not re-attached, the ice troll can grow another within a week, as long as the ice troll stays in contact with water.

## VARG

<b>Climate/Terrain:</b>	Any forest
<b>Frequency:</b>	Rare
<b>Number Appearing:</b>	3d4
<b>Organization:</b>	Pack
<b>Activity Cycle:</b>	Any
<b>Intelligence:</b>	5-7
<b>Treasure:</b>	None
<b>Alignment:</b>	Neutral evil
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<b>Armor Class:</b>	6
<b>Movement:</b>	18
<b>Hit Dice:</b>	3 + 3 (16 hp)
<b>THAC0:</b>	17
<b>Attack:</b>	Bite 2d4
<b>Saving Throws:</b>	Fighter 3
<b>Special Traits:</b>	None
<b>Magic Resistance:</b>	None
<b>Size:</b>	Man-sized (4'-7' long)
<b>Morale:</b>	11
<b>Experience:</b>	120

Vargs are gigantic relatives of normal wolves which possess an unusual cunning. They resemble hulking, muscular wolves the size of ponies, with flat snouts and wary, calculating eyes.

Like normal wolves, vargs form packs led by the strongest and meanest individual. Packs of vargs are most often on poor terms with other packs, and fighting often erupts when rival packs meet.

Although vargs consider most humanoids as prey, they get along well with goblins. Varg packs often ally themselves with goblin tribes, providing each other with mutual protection. Vargs often serve as mounts for goblins, and are always willing to assist them in combat. Vargs speak their own language, but can often understand goblin speech.

When not lairing with goblins, vargs make their homes in dank, dark forests. They usually dig dens or claim existing caves as their own, driving off their previous occupants if necessary.

Vargs fight and hunt in packs, much like normal wolves.

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## VARYAG BERSERKER

Climate/Terrain:	Any
Frequency:	Rare
Number Appearing:	1d10
Organization:	Group
Activity Cycle:	Any
Intelligence:	8-10
Treasure:	M
Alignment:	Chaotic Evil
Armor Class:	7
Movement:	12
Hit Dice:	2 (9 hp)
THAC0:	19
Attack:	1 by weapon (See Below)
Saving Throws:	Fighter 2
Special Traits:	See Below
Magic Resistance:	None
Size:	Medium (6' tall)
Morale:	See Below
Experience:	65

Varyag Berserkers are roaming bands of cannibalistic warriors. They fight with a fierce battle-lust, and as a result they may strike twice in a round or make one attack at +2. They never roll for morale checks once engaged in battle. The Varyags found in Mournwood are a particularly nasty tribe of outcasts having fled their original homes in the Vanir Mountians after a brutal clan civil war. These Varyags have not been touched by the curse of the Hag Wood, instead they are protected by the powers of the Crone whom they have made a pact with. The Varyags freely serve her and provide their greatest warriors and women to participate in the breeding ceremonies to create the Hag Orcs. They are fearless in her service and never check morale against Man sized or smaller foes.



## ZOMBIE, MOURNWOOD

Climate/Terrain:	Any
Frequency:	Rare
Number Appearing:	3d8
Organization:	None
Activity Cycle:	Night
Intelligence:	0
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Neutral
Armor Class:	5
Movement:	6
Hit Dice:	2 + 2 (11 hp)
THAC0:	19
Attack:	Slam 1d8
Saving Throws:	Fighter 2
Special Traits:	Slow movement, spell immunities
Magic Resistance:	None
Size:	Man-sized (6' tall)
Morale:	See below
Experience:	80

Mournwood Zombies are mindless animated corpses controlled by the vile curse of the forest. As the magic that animates them does not prevent their decay, Mournwood Zombies are often bloated, rotting, or desiccated, depending on their surrounding environment. Mournwood Zombies vary in size depending on the kind of corpses they are animated from, however, they all have the same basic characteristic of vines and roots growing through their bodies, as if the very forest were using the dead bodies as puppets. The presence of these roots and vines account for the Mournwood Zombies' enhanced armor class and hit points from a standard zombie.

As mindless creatures, Mournwood Zombies have no society and make no contact with other creatures unless ordered to by their creators. With no intelligence of their own, and carry out any orders given to them in a literal manner. Mournwood Zombies cannot speak.

When they attack, Mournwood Zombies do so without fear and as directly as possible. Mournwood Zombies are immune to *charm*, *death spell*, *hold person*, and *sleep* spells, and are unaffected by poison or cold-based attacks. They are vulnerable to holy water, and take 2d4 points of damage per vial. Mournwood Zombies do not check for initiative, and always act last in a round. Mournwood Zombies never check for morale.

Mournwood Zombie Animals use the same stats as a standard Mournwood Zombie, treating each five animated animals as one Zombie. The five attack a single target using a single Mournwood Zombie's attack profile. If there are more than five zombie animals, they attack as two Mournwood Zombies for every fraction of five present.

# HANDOUT 1

Your character group encounters a wagon train of people going north. They are trying to escape the many warlords rising in the south near the edges of the Fang Coast. The train had stopped for the night and your group was invited to share their meal. As kids do, many went to play near the forest, but were strictly warned not to go into the woods by concerned mothers and overly protective fathers. Everyone knows that going into the Mournwood is deadly.

As the caravan begins to set up tents and prepare meals, an older man enters an open area between wagons. He draws forth his pipe and begins to smoke as people gather around him.

Dressed in the rags of a pauper, the grey bearded old skald passes his hat around the crowd to collect a handful of copper and silver. "...And in the forests of the dark, the deepest secrets, there do lurk," his voice rumbles with a practiced solemnity that almost makes the words of the well-known phrase rhyme. His listeners, many of who had heard the tale several times before, eagerly nudge each other for elbow space and settle in. "Somewhere near the center of Mournwood, if one were able to find it, such a place exists", he continues, finding the rhythm of the twisted tale, "This area has no name, for none among Uthin's folk have ventured there and returned. Still," he says, stretching the word as if in thought, "it would seem obvious to even the most half-witted simpleton that someone, or maybe some-thing, must have once found this place, this place of deep secrets, and lived long enough to tell the tale, else how would we among the skalds know of the tale, which I will tell you now?"

"Firstly, you may ask, 'Where does this tale begin?', and I will say," his voice now dropping to barely above a hushed whisper, "It begins and ends with the Pohjolan." Nervous giggling, shuffling, and shushing are heard from the crowd, as a few more coins land in the skald's hat. "The men of the wilds and the men of the cities, all men, know of the Pohjolan. It is at once a place, a birthright, and a curse. The Pohjolan are born under the eyes of the Old Crone, the Great Hag, and defy their destinies as set out by the gods. The sons and daughters of Uthin cannot read the skein of fate that maps the life of the Pohjolan, for the old crone, and forces so sinister that mortals cannot imagine, guide their fates and corrupt their souls. Rare are those of the Pohjolan who can avoid this descent into evil." Some men in the crowd lift their tankards to the tortured and nearly forgotten souls of good-aligned Pohjolan. They drink deeply and bang the tankards on the table almost in practiced unison, as the storyteller, now sitting on a tall stool and speaking with his hands, continues.

"Some time ago, in ages past—though some say it was not that long ago—a girl-child was born. The exact location was perhaps one of the small, nameless villages that dot the northernmost shores of the Crown Sea, perhaps an island of that sea, no one can say with any certainty. Whichever is true, for not even I, whom you know of as, Willem the Wise, not even I", he repeats for emphasis, "know the truth, but most all among us agree that this girl came to being in the remotest part of Erdegar, and from that very moment, was marked by the Old Crone.

"The people of her village knew this girl to be Pohjolan and cast her out, along with her wretched mother. South, they fled, encountering many a wild beast and difficulty along the way, until they reached a city whose name is not remembered in any tale now told. At the lost city's gates, the mother died. The girl-child, found by a city watchman, he then brought her up as his own. She was a strong and gifted child, and her stepfather taught her the skills he knew, those of the warrior, and of the blade and shield." At once, a chorus of "huzzah" and the thump of tankards, sound from the crowd.

"In time, however, the girl, now in her teens, exhibited strange, arcane power, and like before, she was forced out of the city. For some time, she traveled alone in the Ice Kingdoms, leaving only rumors of her passing. As eventually they all do, the girl grew into full womanhood. Lost and alone, she was ready to submit to the constant call of the Pohjolan. The Pohjolan was strongest at night, when the cold winds blew from the peaks and she could not sleep. The evil, which she had resisted for years, bubbled at the surface, tearing at her soul, both night and day. Thereupon, she met a man that she did not want to kill. Their hearts were as one, each jagged and broken; yet the pieces fit together like the key into its lock. The two were not merely in love, for the merely mortal word, love, cannot adequately describe the feelings they had for one another. The burning goodness and purity of their bond kept the Pohjolan and the Old Crone at bay, and the young couple was happy, for some small while."

While he speaks, a tankard is delivered, compliments of a listener to his story. The old skald sips as he prepares to tell the next bit of his tale. "The Pohjolan did not stop its pursuit so easily," Willem continued, "and one night,

it came to pass, that the couple's home, which they had built by their own hands, far distant from any village, fell under the onslaught of monsters, furious and foul. Hag orcs, goblins, mossmen and others beyond description attack their home. The two warriors, woman fighting beside her man, fended them off valiantly in a battle worthy of its own tale, were this tale to be about heroes, but as the moon rose to its full height in the sky, the man fell from many grievous wounds. Desperate and in despair, surrounded by bloodthirsty foes and the love of her life dying in a pool of blood, the woman did what she had sworn never to do", his voice becoming an evil hiss, "she allowed the Pohjolan to consume her. Such was the power in her blood that night, every foe was slain, and her husband healed. Yet in his eyes, he saw the truth of what she was and what she had always been, a monster far worse than any of those slain that night. She then fled their ruined home, and away from the lands of men, never to be seen there again. For many, and for those who wish to hear no more, that is the end of the tale, but I Willem the Wise of Mournwood, through my own research, have uncovered the rest of the story." He pauses briefly to allow the crowd to express a collective 'Go on! Continue!'

Once a few more coins are tossed into Willem's hat, and the crowd resettles, he resumes, "The woman, it seems, crossed the trackless, frozen wastes for many years until she comes upon Mournwood, again alone, but now a monster in both heart and body. The ancient forest felt like the place that her life's journey, a journey pulled, pushed and twisted by the Old Crone's wickedness, had been leading her. She entered Mournwood, where the Pohjolan would draw her to its true center. And here, my fellows, our tale merges with the tales of the gods, and deep secrets are finally revealed, because there in Mournwood, it is said, she found the very Wellspring of Creation. At this place, deep in the woods, a mortal is like unto the gods, mere thoughts come to life, and any desire becomes real. Her husband that had rejected her so many years ago, was returned to her; the enchantment of creation flowed from the loam of the leaves and reached past the highest tree. Her beautiful home was recreated; even her mother and stepfather were there, and she was free to live out her days under this powerful illusion. Yet the woman, ever wary of the trap, knew that it was all but shadow magic and rejected it as part of the Old Crone's trickery and the Pohjolan. The woman, now reaching middle-age, forces herself to release all that she had lost, to stop thinking of the pleasantness of her former life outside of Mournwood and instead to summon the evils that plagued her darker side. Finding substance at the Wellspring of Creation, the demons of her mind became real. The woman fights these demons for a year and a day, but it was a war of attrition of both her body and soul. She encountered the darkest of foes, shadows behind shadows, but she realized then, as she knew the sun still rose and set beyond the dim halls of the deep forest, that with but a single thought she could create a horror unlike the world has seen since Uthin himself were a boy. Indeed, she realized that this was the real trap set for her by the Pohjolan, and she had been lead here for that very purpose. She realized she was the Old Crone and chose to walk away. On that last day of battle, beaten and horribly scarred but not completely defeated, the woman leaves the center of the wood and does not return. Yet the Wellspring of Creation does not forget, and all things from her mind, lurk there still. More so, it is said that any thought of the living that has ever entered the center of the wood still lives there, even thrives there in a shadow of our reality. The boundaries of the shadow creations reach to the edges of Mournwood, which has, forever after, been known as the Hag Wood. Since then, the Old Crone has stalked these woods, part lady, and part monster. Her remaining purpose is to ensure that no one finds the Wellspring of Creation, and she searches endlessly for the means to destroy it."

The storyteller, his voice now raspy, concludes, "My friends, this is meant as a cautionary tale. If you choose, like so many dozens of eager dreamers each summer before you, to enter into the Hag Wood in search of the place that will fulfill all of your loftiest fantasies of riches and arcane power, then do not be surprised when we find your gnawed bones, during next spring's thaw, fused with those of creatures, so evil, they can be counted as neither man nor beast."

And as if on cue from the old man's story, loud shrieks of children break the night. As you look around the camp and wagons toward the haunted forest you see the kids screaming as they run back as if they had seen a ghost.



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