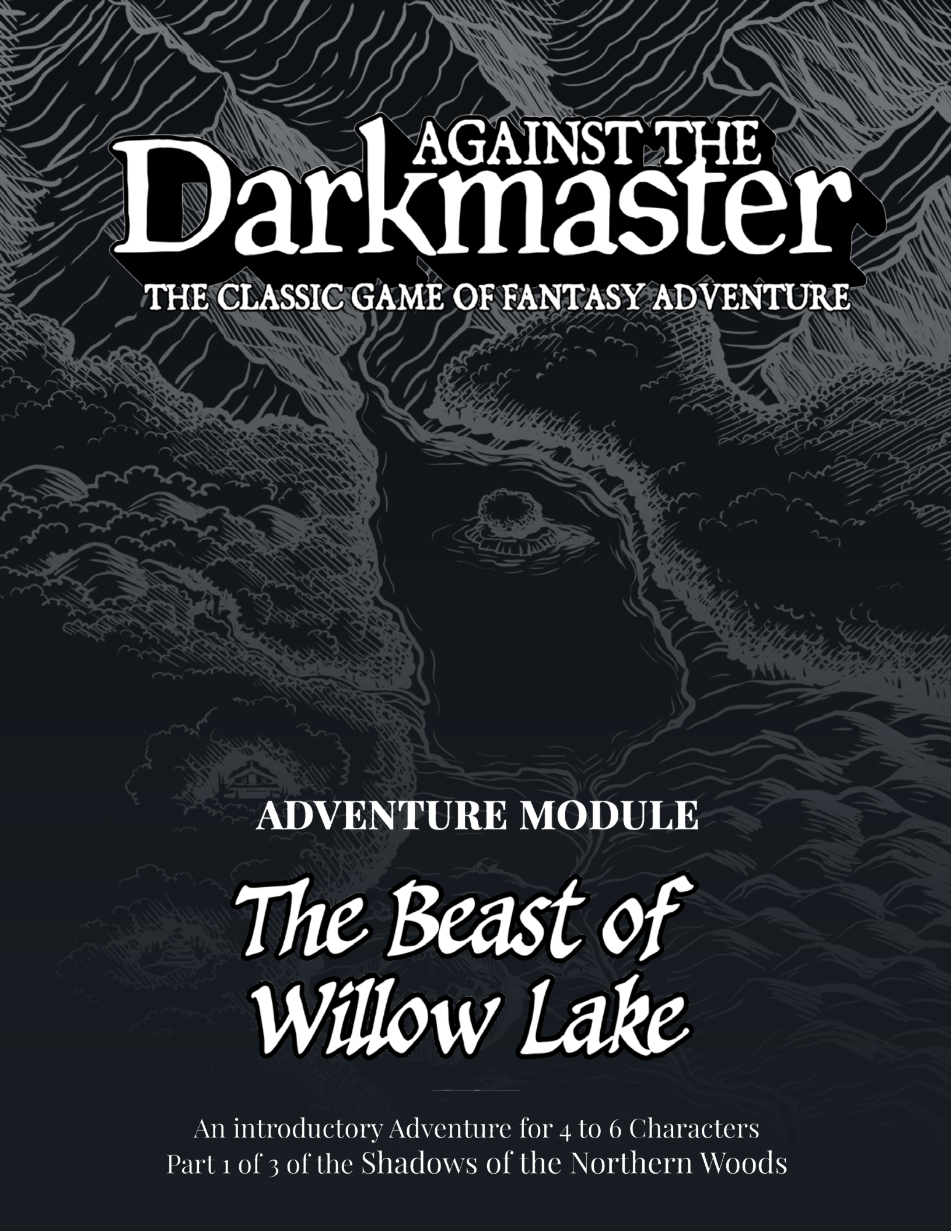




AGAINST THE Darkmaster

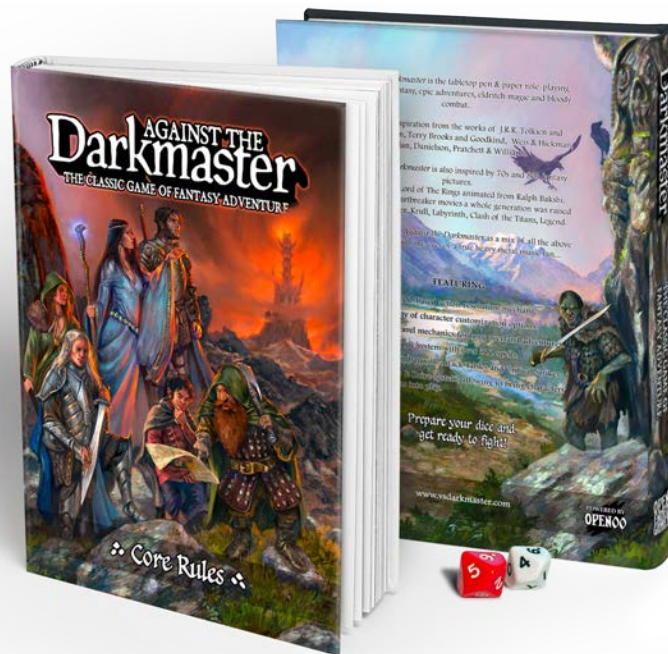
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The Beast of Willow Lake

An introductory Adventure for 4 to 6 Characters
Part 1 of 3 of the Shadows of the Northern Woods

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Part I

THE BEAST OF WILLOW LAKE

*An Adventure for 4-6 level 1-2 characters for
Against the Darkmaster*

THE TALE OF BLÀITHNAID

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

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

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

It was then that Blàithnaid had an idea to break the siege. The night before the last battle, she used her sorcery to slip through the ranks of the besieging army and seduced their General, a Dark Mage known as Saebeorht. She promised him – whom she knew was

infatuated of her – to surrender him the Elvenstone and become his betrothed, if he will have spared the lives of the people of Ouiuileigh. Saebeorht pretended to accept the deal, meaning to betray the pact later – but he was tricked himself instead.

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

Everyone had underestimated the extent of the natural catastrophe that would have hit the valley. Billions of liters of chilled, dark water submerged the vale of Ouiuileigh, killing anyone in their path being it man, elf, dwarf, minion of the Darkmaster, or animal. Tens of thousands perished that night, just while they were asleep. The whole vale was no more. Instead, when the churning waters stopped and stood still, there was now a deep, dark and cold lake at the center of the vale; and at the center of the lake only the hill on top of which raised the Dùn Tùr tower still stood, encircled by water – now an island.

Therefore Blàithnaid had been at the same time salvation and ruin of the valley of Ouiuileigh and its inhabitants. For this reason, lost the love of her people and the trust of the Woad, Dwarves and Men, she set herself alone, shut up in the ancient tower, driving away all those who still remained faithful and wanted to stay close to her, and in loneliness descended the steps

downwards the dungeons beneath the tower, never to be seen again. No one knows what happened to the beautiful Elven princess. Someone during the centuries that followed claimed to have seen her, in some dark night, standing atop the tower or on the shores of Willow Lake. Others told to have beheld eerie lights and whispering sounds from the lake, the island, and ultimately from inside the tower.

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

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

They appointed Ælfwine, chief of the Men, with the title of Warden of the Vale, entrusting him with the task of watching over the Place of the Submerged Queen and warning in case the Darkness should have returned. They gave him the Elven Medallion which served as a key to access the Dùn Tùr tower in the middle of the lake. For this reason Ælfwine chooses as a heraldic animal of his house a rampant hound – ever watchful against the enemy.

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

THE RECENT YEARS

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

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

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

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

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

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

WILLOW LAKE & SURROUNDINGS



ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

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

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

THE NPCs

NEVYNN THE WISE

Mornien's mentor came to Willow Lake following rumors about orcs tribes gathering in the North. He was to meet his pupil at the Dancing Trout Inn, but while staying there he received news that forced him to leave in a hurry, without the time to leave a note for Mornien.

No one in Willow Lake knows the reason for his visit, nor that the old man is in truth a wizard, but the elves from the nearby wood know him very well, as he helped them many times in the past.

The characters will be able to meet Nevynn later in the adventure, but for the time being his presence (or lack thereof) is used only as a mean to introduce some of them to the mystery of Willow Lake's disappearances.

WULFRIC, WILLOW LAKE THANE

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

As explained in the background section, Wulfric was seduced by the Darkmaster's promises of power years ago, and now serves Him in secret. He's obsessed by the stories about Blàithnaid, and strongly believes that her tomb hides a powerful magical artifact, which he intends to retrieve. He first tried to convince Eamon to help him in his task, promising to make him his right hand under the Darkmaster's rule in exchange. When the Warden refused and threatened to denounce his plans to the townspeople, he killed him and took his Medallion. Wulfric is a very dangerous man. Ruthless and cunning, he's a moderately skilled fighter and was secretly trained in the ways of Dark Sorcery by his Mas-

ter. Moreover, he has the complete support of his men, which will blindly follow any of his orders.

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

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

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

EAMON THE YOUNGER

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

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

"ONE-HAND" PADRAIG

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

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

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

If asked about Eamon's disappearance, Padraig will say that he's the last man with whom the Warden spoke.

That evening Eamon stopped by his cabin for a drink, but left very early, saying that he had something to check at the Lake. Padraig offered to help him, but Eamon insisted on going alone, saying that it was nothing to worry about.

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

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

EILEEN THE HERBWIFE

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

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

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

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

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

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

NIALL THE INNKEEPER

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

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

1 • Padraig was Eamon best friend, and often helped him patrolling the woods. He has a pair of hunting dogs, Padraig. They look nasty, but are actually scared of their own shadow, or so I hear.

2 • Last week a couple of weird fellows stopped by for a drink. Northerners, from the accent, I'd say. Never seen them before but they seemed to know their way about town. There was something shady about them, but I can't really tell what it was. They didn't talk to anybody, just quaffed their ale and were off.

3 • Padraig has always had a crush on Eileen, but he never made a move on her out of respect for his friend. Poor fellow, I think everyone in town but Eileen knows about it.

4 • If you see some weird looking stones in the forest, stay away from them. I don't know who placed them there, but they're cursed. A friend of my grandmother's uncle touched them on a dare once, and he died of dysentery that same year. Cursed, I tell you!

5 • The title of Warden of Willow Lake has a very long history. I think it goes back to the first men who came here. You should ask Thane Wulfric about it, he did a lot of research about this town history.

6 • You know about the beast in the Lake, right? My grandmother always told me stories about it. Back then they also made sacrifices to it, once a year or so. Not people, you fool, we're not savages! Just a lamb or something like that. Anyway, Eamon and that poor halfling, they disappeared around the Lake, didn't they? I'm just saying, maybe it's not a coincidence...

7 • Thane Wulfric is a great man, I don't know what we would do without him around here. He's quite learned, you know? Last year the sawmill axle got stuck, and no one was able to do anything about it. We thought we'd have to replace the whole thing, which would have taken a lot of time and quite a bit of money. Then the Thane went in, and fixed it all by himself, just like that! I don't know how he did it!

8 • Nevynn, you say? Oh, yeah I remember him well! An old fellow, very tall, long beard, right? He's been in town

quite a few times in the past, **I think he even bought the old tower, near the East Gate.** Now that I think about it, the last time I saw him was about two weeks ago, just before Eamon disappeared.

9 • Do you know the tale of the Woad Witches of the Woods? They say they were three beautiful witches of the Woad people, who made a deal with an elven queen but then betrayed her, turning against her in the hour of need. So the elven queen cursed them, turning them into great poisonous spiders and forcing them to hide forever in the depths of the woods. It's just an old tale, but maybe it's connected with all these disappearances, don't you think?

10 • There's an ancient barrow down South. Some say it holds the treasure of a lord of old, but if I wouldn't go near it for all the gold in the world. That place gives me the creeps.

ARCHIEBOLD RAVENLOCK

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

MIRABELLA "BELLA" RAVENLOCK

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

She lives in a small farm, just outside town, but at the moment Niall let her stay at his Inn, at least "until this whole situation settles down", he says.

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

IVARR, HARALD AND ROLF

Three mercenaries from the North, who came to bring a message to Wulfric from his Master. They're coarse, mean-spirited men, who respect only violence and gold. Ivarr, their chief, likes to picture himself as a brilliant strategist, but is in truth far less clever than he thinks. Harald, a big, burly man, is a heavy drinker and a decently skilled hunter. Rolf talks a lot, but only speaks the harsh dialect of their tribe, which makes him basically unintelligible by anyone save his companions. Characters listening to him can make a Challenging

(-10) Cultures roll to get the general gist of what he's saying, learning that he's worried about "the ugly ones" they met while traveling in the mountains.

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

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

They met with Wulfric once to deliver the letter, but they don't know his name, and haven't seen his face clearly, since it was night.

Unfortunately, a halfling interrupted their meeting, and the men ordered them to kill him and dispose of his body. They've been promised more silver and are trying to lay low, awaiting further instructions.

MORCANT THE OLD TROLL

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

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

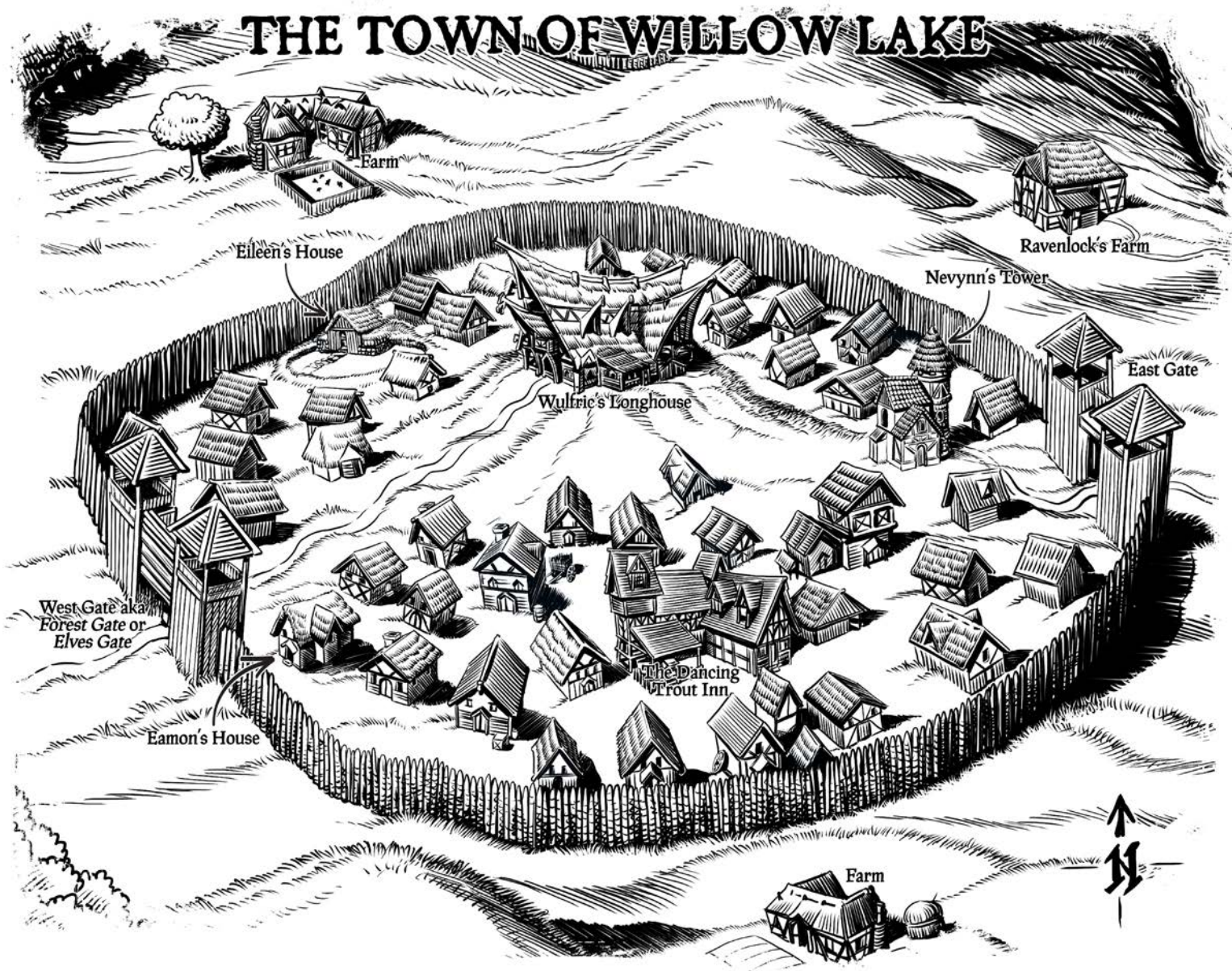
If cornered or attacked in his lair, Morcant will defend himself, but will ask his attackers what wrong did he do to them, hoping to confuse and throw them off guard.

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

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

Anyway, given the chance, Morcant will try to escape as soon as possible. His favorite tricks are feigning to be

THE TOWN OF WILLOW LAKE



wounded more severely than he actually is; and tricking the characters into entering his Treasury, only to close the door behind them and flee, leaving them there.

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

THE LAND

WILLOW LAKE LAYOUT

Walls: a sturdy wood palisade about 4 meters high, backed by lower, thick earth walls.

Town Gates: access to town is gained by one of these two heavy wooden gates, one at the East side, the other facing West. They're closed from sundown to the morning, and guarded by a man from the local militia during the day.

Dancing Trout Inn: a large two-storey building, with a small stable attached. Meals are served in the large hall at the first floor, which is used as a common sleeping room for the night. The upper floor is normally used by the innkeeper and his family as living quarters, but Niall can free a couple of rooms for wealthier patrons, should the need arise.

Wulfrie's Longhouse: erected on the top of the small hill around which the town was built, the Thane's house is easily the most imposing structure of Willows Lake. It's Great Hall is surrounded by a low timber stockade and guarded day and night by Wulfrie's men (there's thirteen of them in total, living in the barracks attached

to the Great Hall). Its interior is decorated with large tapestries, bearing the Thane's insignia (a rampant hound) and depicting his ancestors' deeds. A character examining these tapestries may make a Challenging (-10) Songs & Tales Roll to learn that Willow Lake's founding fathers were friends of the elves, and that the first Thane was also the first Warden.

Normally, only very important guests are received here, but once a month the Thane uses the Hall to administer his justice and grants audience to the populace, listening to the townspeople pleas and petitions.

Wulfric's living quarters are always guarded by at least two of his most loyal men. No one, apart from the Thane personal servants, is ever allowed here, and characters trying to break in will be immediately detained by guards. Access to Wulfric's personal chamber is gained through a heavy oaken door, which is always kept locked - picking the lock is a Heroic (-50) task - when he's not inside. Its contents are detailed in the second part of this adventures series.

Eileen's House: the herbalist's house can be recognized by its green painted shutters, and by the small well-tended garden on the backside. Most of the times, Eileen can be found here, either tending her garden or brewing some herbal remedy.

Warden's House: Eamon lived in a simple house near the western gate of the town. The house is obviously now empty, but the characters can find it very easily by asking around. Any villager will also tell them that the house has already been searched unsuccessfully by Wulfric and his men for clues about the Warden's whereabouts (he was in truth looking for clues about how to use his newly acquired Warden Medallion, but the townsfolk were easily convinced of his good intentions). If the PCs decide to investigate the house anyway, they'll find that the Thane has been very thorough in his search, and that the house interior has been basically turned upside down. Oddly enough a lone pigeon,

apparently flown in from a tiny opening on the roof, rests quietly on one of the ceiling beams. Tied to one of its legs there's a small piece of parchment with the following message: "It's as we feared. Don't go. Wait for me. N." Mornien and Gandrell will immediately recognize Nevynn's handwriting, but in town no one remembers seeing the odd old man and the Warden ever exchanging more than a few words.

Nevynn's Tower: initially used as a watchtower, this three-storey building was abandoned decades ago and fell in disrepair. Nevynn bought it some years ago, remodeling it to use it as a base for his journeys in the Willow Lake area. No one's home when the PCs arrive. The door is locked - Very Hard (-30) to pick - and all the shutters closed. There isn't much of interest in the first two floors of the tower, but the door to Nevynn's personal study on the third floor has been sealed with a spell by the old mage. The door can be broken down, but cannot otherwise be opened without using the proper key or without dispelling the spell (which is considered to be an 8th Weave magical effect) first. Climbing the tower walls and entering from the windows is possible, but will be frowned upon by the local residents, who'll try to stop the characters, unless they come up with a really valid reason for breaking into an old man's house. Inside the study the PCs will find several maps of the Willow Lake area spread upon a large wooden table, and a small desk with ink and paper near the window. The desk has a concealed compartment, Very Hard (-30) to find, hiding a small iron chest of golden coins (counts as a TV2 treasure). There are also a few books placed on a shelf on the wall (see the table below, each book takes 2d10 hours to be read).

Farms: most of Willow Lake's inhabitants are logger or lumbermen, but there's a few farms surrounding the town. Many of them have recently been the target of Morcant's attacks and lost at least a few sheep to the troll. The farmers will be more than happy to show the characters the damage done to their barns and point

· NEVYNN'S TOWER'S BOOKS ·

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

[1.1]

them the tracks left by the Troll (see the Tracking Morcant section below). Some may also give them vague descriptions of the hulking figure that attacked their animals. However, since it was night, no one managed to see the sheep thief clearly, so each farmer will describe him slightly differently from the others.

LAYOUT OF THE WOODS

Old Sawmill: everyone in town can give the characters directions to the Sawmill, but this large building can hardly be missed. Logs from the surrounding area are dragged here, where they are cut and prepared to be sent down the river. During the day, the old Sawmill is bustling with the activity of the men working here. At night, the characters will find only Padraig, sleeping in the attached cabin and watching over the facility with his dogs.

Hunter's Cabin: a simple wooden shack, originally built by the previous Thane as a base for his hunting trips. Even if it's slightly run-down, it's clear that someone has been living here recently. In fact, three Northmen mercenaries (Ivarr, Harald and Rolf) are hiding here at the moment, spending most of the day drinking and quarreling among themselves.

The first time the PCs arrive here, unless they've already met the three mercenaries somewhere else the GM should roll a percentile dice: on a roll of 60 or less the Northmen are home; a roll of 61 to 90 indicates that one of them is missing (probably out hunting or fishing); and a roll of 91 or more means that no one's at home at the moment, but the three will return in 2d10 minutes, carrying a freshly killed roe deer.

Harald set some simple traps all around the cabin: tripwires connected to rudimentary alarms. Characters approaching the building carelessly will surely trigger one of them, attracting the attention of whoever is in the cabin at the moment. Those advancing with more caution can make a Standard (+0) Perception roll to spot the tripwires.

Besides the Northmen's meager possessions, the cabin holds little of interest, but desperate characters rummaging through it will be able to scrounge an old hunting trap and a healer's kit, hidden inside a bench.

The Lake: the lake from which the nearby town took its name covers an area of about one square kilometer. Its waters are clear and apparently calm, but the locals will warn that swimming in it can be dangerous, due to strong undercurrents. Boats are also known to capsize unexpectedly and run into hidden obstacles in these waters, so they'll advise against sailing on them, too.

Characters will find several confused tracks on the western and south-western shores, and at least some

of them seems to belong to a large creature, like the one who attacked the farms (see the Tracking Morcant section below).

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

Island of the Mists: the small tree-filled island in the middle of the Lake is called "Island of the Mists" by the locals, because its shores are often enshrouded in a low-hanging fog. Legends say that a fair maiden dressed in white can be seen walking among the trees during moonless nights, looking for her lover. The young women of Willow Lake toss small flower garlands in the lake before marrying, asking for the blessing of the Lady of the Island.

Cairn: a moss covered cairn stands in the middle of this isolated glade since time immemorial. Locals avoid it, and will advise the PCs to stay away from the place, believing the cairn to be cursed and haunted by evil spirits. A murder of Gorcrows - huge, malicious ravens - nests here. They don't like intruders, and will caw threateningly from their trees at trespassers. They'll even attack lone travellers who enter the glade, but rarely risk doing so against numerous parties or well armed individuals.

To the Gorcrows delight, the Northmen chose this spot to dispose of Archiebold's body. The poor halfling's corpse has been savagely pecked by the evil birds, but it's still recognizable by the small silver locket, with a painting of his wife, kept in the pocket of his bright yellow jacket.

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

Dwarven Ruins: the crumbled half of a large stone arch is all that remains of the ancient gate that stood here. Characters can make a Standard (+0) Songs & Tales roll to recognize these ruins as an old dwarven border gate, destroyed long ago, during the last war against the Darkmaster (dwarves need no roll to identify the ruins, and will recognize this landmark immediately). Those examining the gate will notice large claw marks on the western side of the ruined stone arch. They were left by Morcant when he arrived in the Willow Lake region. Characters who lost the troll's tracks can use them as a new starting point for their search.

If characters linger near the gate, or decide to examine the entrance to the dark, damp tunnels that depart

from it, they could hear the echo of a small bell ringing in the distance. (See Appendix I - The Merlocks)

Mound: easily mistaken for a low hill from distance, the real nature of these overgrown ruins becomes more clear as one approaches them. The air here is damp and chilly, and strange shadows seem to loom over the area even in the brightest of days.

Entrance: usually the mound is sealed by thick stone door, Extremely Hard (-40) to open from the outside. However, from time to time, the evil spirits haunting it leave the door open, to lure curious and unwary travellers to their trap.

Low Passage: a stone walled passage with a very low ceiling, that'll force character higher than 160 cm to lower their heads to proceed. About halfway down there's a pit in the floor, about 3 meters long and 2 meters deep. Characters investigating the pit's bottom will notice that the stone slabs covering its walls are engraved with time-worn incisions, each in the shape of a different animal: a lion to the North; a fish to the East; a hound to the South; and a bear to the West. Hidden behind the slab bearing the sign of the hound there's an hidden passage, leading to the True Burial chamber.

The pit is uncovered, so it will be quite difficult for the characters to fall in it, unless they're particularly careless, or desperately fleeing from a pack of ravenous ghouls...

False Burial Chamber: a large round chamber with a vaulted ceiling. Several funerary recesses open on its stone walls, and a stone sarcophagus lies in the middle

of the room. A glint of silver sparkles from the sarcophagus half-opened lid.

Five ghouls lurk here; they remain hidden in the recesses until someone goes near the sarcophagus, then strike, trying to cut off their victims' only escape route. The sarcophagus appears to be holding a veritable silvery hoard, but in truth contains only worthless trash, covered by a powerful illusion. Moreover, the first character (and only the first) watching inside it will have to make a WSR against a third level attack, or suffer the effects of the Daze spell (from the Mind Control Spell Lore).

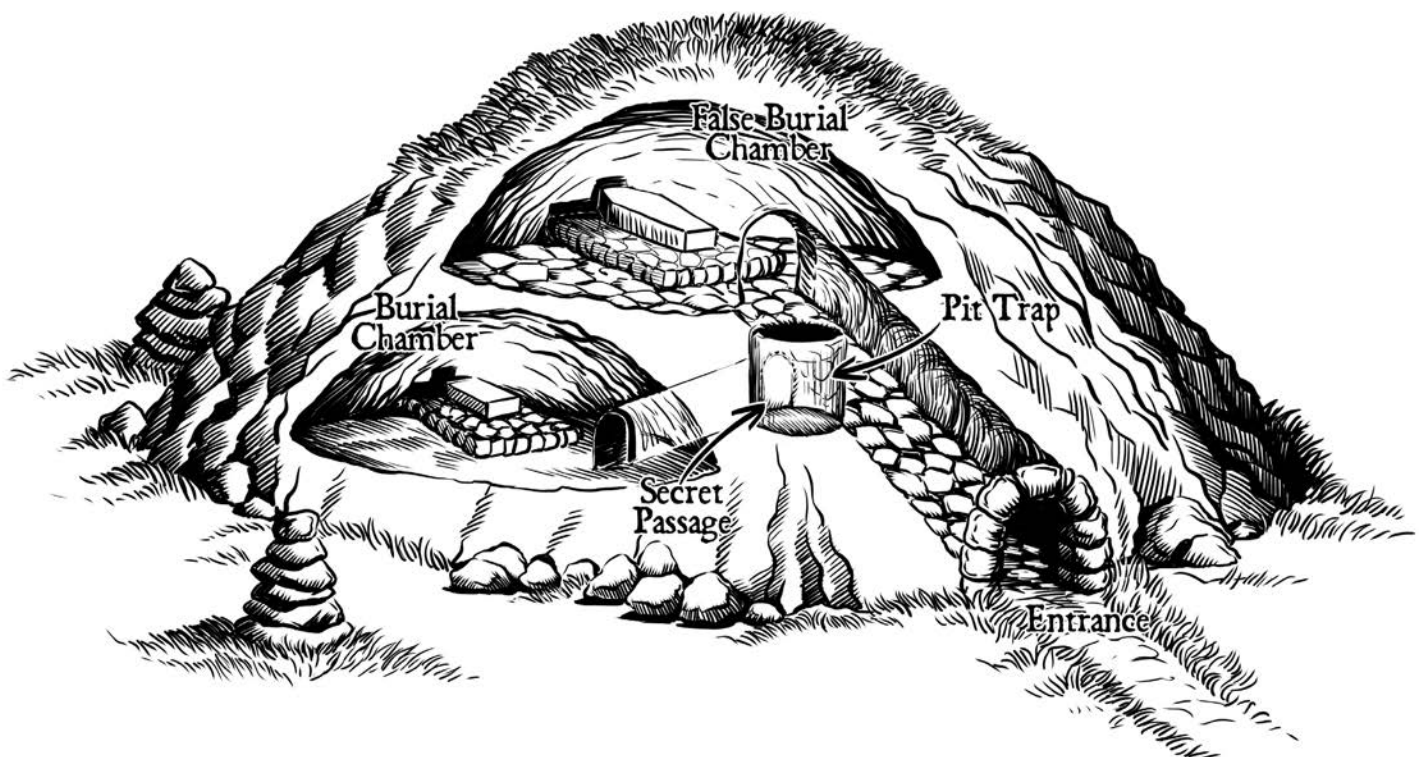
The light of the day will dispel the illusion on the sarcophagus contents, revealing their true nature.

Burial Chamber: buried in this chamber are the remains of Ælfwine, first Thane and first Warden of Willow Lake. The skeleton of the man, wearing an ancient bronze breastplate, lies inside a niche on the southernmost wall. Above it, written in elvish runes are his name and titles (elves will be able to read the inscription without problems, while other characters can make a Standard Cultures roll to understand its meaning).

His hands are crossed upon his chest, wielding a rusted bronze sword, and he wears a beautifully crafted silver bracelet, shaped in the guise of a hound biting his tail (a gift from the elves, permits wearer to cast *Magic Shield*, from the Eldritch Hand Spell Lore once a day, without spending MPs or making a Spell Casting Roll).

More importantly, around his neck is the true Warden's Medallion (of which the one currently in Wulfric's

THE MOUND



possession is but a copy). The significance of this item may escape the characters right now, but it will become clear later, as they progress in the adventure.

Characters entering this tomb for selfish reasons (such as greed and lust for treasure) will be filled by an overwhelming sense of dread. They must pass a WSR against an 8th level attack or be forced to flee and be unable to come back until they've gained at least a level of experience.

Morcant's Lair: this is the spot chosen by Morcant to hide his lair (see Layout of Morcant's Lair below).

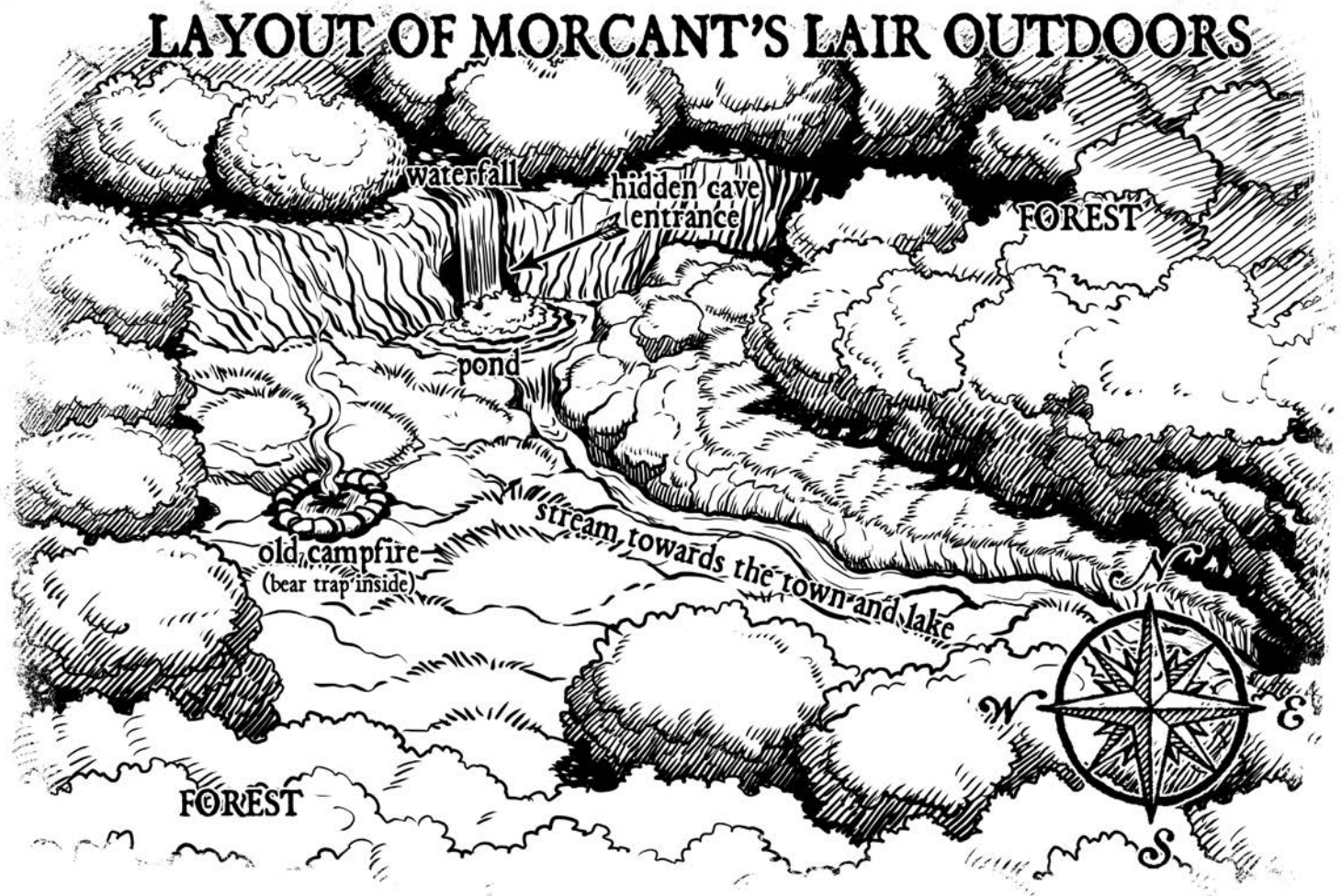
Tainted Trees: the air hangs heavy among the twisted branches of the trees in this area. The vegetation here is very thick, but has a sickly grayish color, as if stricken by some kind of blight. Several narrow paths wind among the ivy strangled trees, leading the traveller toward the deepest, darkest heart of the woods.

These are the hunting grounds of three very old Giant Spiders (see stats on the Quickstart rules), who have plagued this part of the woods for centuries. They're spiteful, deviously cunning creatures, who like to toy with their prey before finishing it. They despise everyone and everything but right now, their hatred is di-

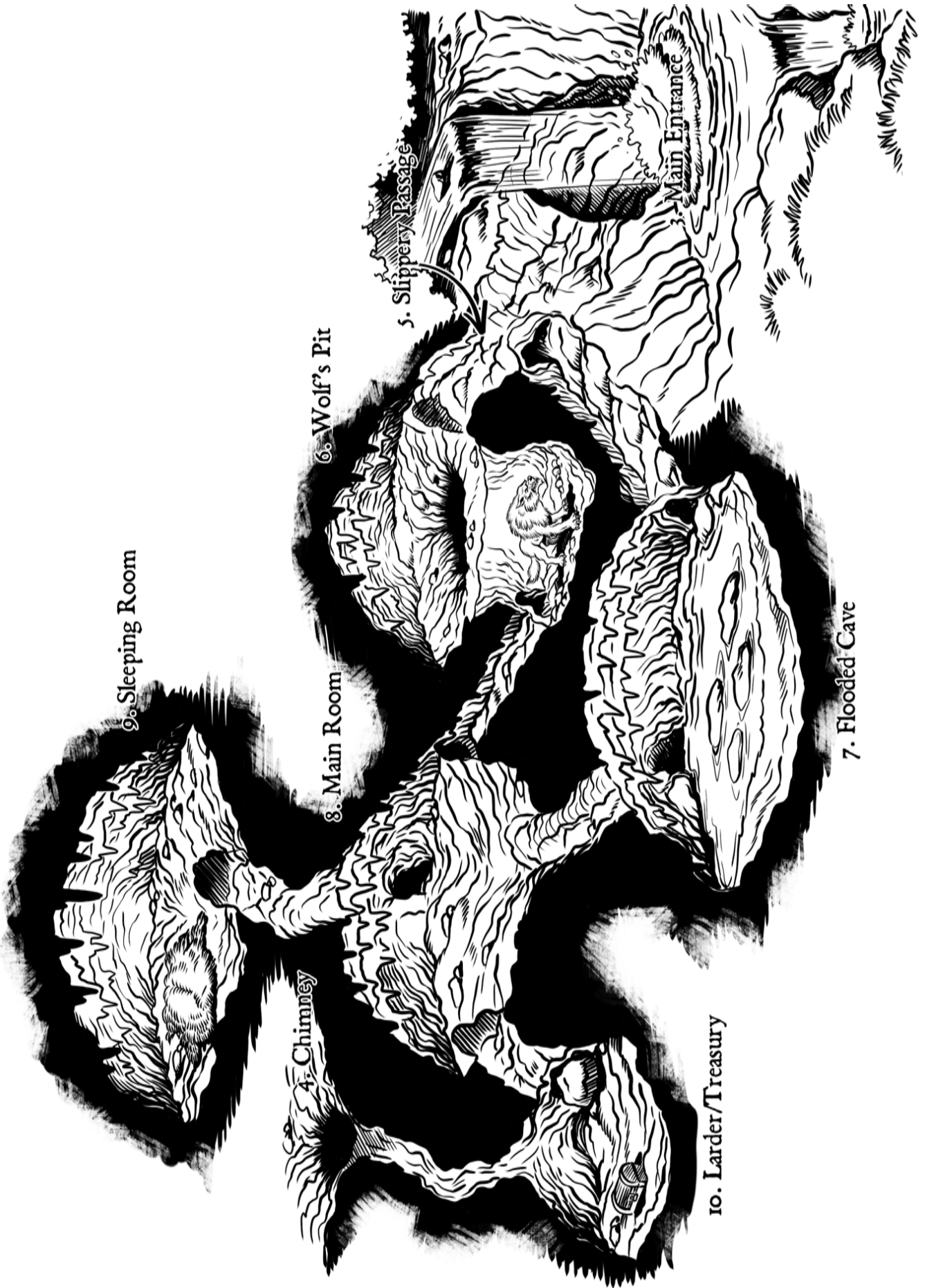
rected particularly towards Morcant. They see the troll as a poacher, trespassing in their woods and stealing their preys without asking for their permission, but are too afraid to directly confront him.

If the characters enter this part of the woods, the three will remain hidden at first, spying on them and trying to guess their intentions. Lone and lightly armed characters are likely to be seen as an easy prey and will be attacked, captured and brought into their lair to be eaten. On the other hand, should the spiders understand that the PCs are looking for the troll, they'll gladly direct them towards him. They don't know the exact location of its lair, but know that it's in the northern part of the woods. They speak the Woad language fairly well, and know a few words in elvish, too. If they choose to interact with the characters, they'll try to avoid been seen, posing as woodland spirits to gain their trust.

Inside their nest, on the top of the desiccated remains of their countless victims, there's an ancient clay female figurine, about 10 cm tall, that acts as a +2 MPs Focus (increasing the total MPs of its bearer by 2) for Animists only



MORCANT'S LAIR



MORCANT'S LAIR

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

Stream: Morcant's trail ends in this shallow stream, running South-East, toward the Lake.

Old campfire: what remains of a large campfire. In its ashes, Morcant hid a rusty bear-trap he found in the forest. Characters searching the campfire have a chance of setting it off, receiving a Superficial Cut Critical.

Waterfall/Hidden cave entrance: the Troll found this natural cave complex hidden behind a waterfall some time ago, and decided to set up his lair here. The entrance is Hard (-20) to spot unless someone is right before the waterfall. Small characters will have some trouble passing through it, and must make a Standard (+0) Athletics roll or fall, receiving no damage but breaking a random fragile object they're carrying.

Chimney to Surface: a tight vertical shaft, connecting the Larder to the outside. Morcant isn't aware of its existence, as it's too small for him to pass through. Small (halfling size), unencumbered characters can easily climb down the chimney with the aid of a rope or with an Athletics roll. Squeezing through the passage will be trickier for bigger characters - requiring a Challenging (-10) Acrobatics roll - and flat out impossible for those wearing heavy armor or carrying cumbersome equipment.

Slippery passage: a damp limestone tunnel, slightly bent downward. The floor is muddy, and very slippery. Characters passing here must make a Challenging (-10) Acrobatics roll to avoid falling down, directly in the Wolf's pit below!

Wolf's pit: Morcant keeps his pet female Wolf (named Lefty) on the bottom of this pit. He found her wounded in his wanderings on the mountains, and decided to keep her for company, and because he thought she could be useful to chase his enemies away. He feeds her scraps from the hole in the Main room (Lefty cannot reach it, but characters can attempt to climb it with an Athletics roll, ending up in the Main room). The beast is always hungry and half mad from its confinement, but very loyal to Morcant. She will snap at anyone who looks down its pit, growling and snarling and trying to jump at them. Luckily the pit is too high for the wolf to jump out, but the noise is likely to attract Morcant's attention. Characters falling in the pit, however, can obviously be attacked freely by her.

Flooded Cave: this cave is almost completely occupied by a wide pool of very cold water. Four flat stones emerge from it, offering what seems to be an easy

crossing. The water is not very deep (it's knee-high in its deepest point), but it's murky, so it's difficult to guess its depth without entering the pool. The stones were placed here by Morcant as a trap, and are actually quite unstable. Characters using them to cross the pool will fall in the water unless they make a Very Hard (-30) Acrobatics roll. This causes no damage, but the noise will warn Morcant of the presence of intruders in his lair.

Main Room: this room's floor is cluttered with filth and with several half-eaten sheep carcasses. A huge cleaver (treat as a -10 Battle Axe) leans against the western wall. A stinking pit opens on the floor in a corner of the cave, leading to the Wolf's pit. During the day, there's a 20% chance that Morcant will be here, gnawing on an old bone.

Sleeping Room: most of the time (80% chance), Morcant will be here during the day. Hidden under the smelly bear skin he uses as bedroll there's his most prized possession: a small silver pendant with a tear shaped green stone. The item is clearly of elvish design, and moderately enchanted. The stone will shine faintly in darkness and grants a magical +10 bonus to the wearer's WSR. If worn openly, the pendant will also grant a +10 bonus to all wearer's Charisma rolls when dealing with enemies of the Darkmaster.

Larder/Treasury: this is where Morcant keeps most of his stuff. He blocked the entrance by placing a large boulder in front of it. Characters with a combined Brawn stat of 40 or more can free the entrance by pushing the boulder aside. Inside the PCs can find: the remains of several butchered sheeps; a couple of swords in their scabbards; a metal helmet, engraved with the motif of a horse; a half-empty cask of dwarven mead; a small wooden box with several silver coins (count as a TV2 value treasure).

THE TASK

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

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

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

STARTING THE PLAYERS

It is suggested that the characters start already in Wil-

low Lake at the beginning of the adventure. Possibly sitting at the Dancing Trout Inn, or simply minding their own business about town.

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

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

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

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

AIDS

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

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

OBSTACLES

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

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

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

REWARDS

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

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



HAZARDS & ENCOUNTERS

TRACKING MORCANT

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

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

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

In case of failure or partial success, the GM can use any of the hazards presented below as a complication, but the most appropriate would probably be an encounter with Wild Beasts or some Natural Obstacles.

BAITING THE TROLL

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

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

To lure Morcant the PCs will need a bait (hopefully a sheep or some other animal!) and a Hard (-20) Hunting roll. Keep in mind that the troll will be extremely wary, and will rather flee than fight in an open field, particularly if outnumbered.

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

NAVIGATING THE FOREST

Moving around the town of Willow Lake (to the Lake, or the Old Sawmill, for example) is quite easy, as long as the characters stay on the path. However, navigating through the forest without a guide can be more problematic, and requires a Standard (+0) Wandering roll. In case of Failure or Partial Success, the GM can use any of the Hazards presented below as a complication for the characters to face.

EXAMPLE OF HAZARDS

WEATHER

Characters could be caught in a sudden storm, soaking them to the bone and making them Weary unless they find shelter. Alternatively, a thick mist could rise, enveloping them and making them lose their way. If this happens, the GM should simply select a random location from the map in secret, and have the PCs find their way out from there.

NATURAL OBSTACLES

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

WILD BEASTS

A small pack (4 to 6) of hungry wolves could start following the PCs from distance while they're traveling in the forest, harassing them with quick hit and run assaults until chased off. Lone or wounded characters could instead be attacked by some of the Gorcrows from the Cairn, seeing them as an easy prey.

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

MINIONS OF DARKNESS

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

PERILS FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD

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

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

· **MORCANT THE OLD TROLL** ·

Level	MR	AT	DEF	TSR	WSR	HPs	Attacks		Crit	Rog	Adv	Lor
6	10L	LA	+10	+85	+20	150	+110 LCl	+100 Wpn	HH	+60	+70	+0

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

· **IVARR, HARALD AND ROLF** ·

Level	MR	AT	DEF	TSR	WSR	HPs	Attacks		Crit	Rog	Adv	Lor
4	16L	LA	+25	+25	+20	70	+70Wpn	+50 Ran	NH	+20	+30	+0

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

· **"ONE-HAND" PADRAIG** ·

Level	MR	AT	DEF	TSR	WSR	HPs	Attacks		Crit	Rog	Adv	Lor
1	16L	NA	+10	+10	+20	45	+35 Wpn	-	NH	+10	+15	+25

Human weald scout. Carries a dagger under his tunic, cannot use two-handed weapons.

· **EILEEN THE HERBWIFE** ·

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

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

· **NIALL THE INNKEEPER** ·

Level	MR	AT	DEF	TSR	WSR	HPs	Attacks		Crit	Rog	Adv	Lor
1	12L	NA	+5	+5	+10	30	+0 Brawl	-	NH	+10	+0	+5

Human weald no vocation. Will call for help or beg for his life if attacked.

· **WULFRIC, WILLOW LAKE THANE AND AGENT OF THE DARKMASTER** ·

Level	MR	AT	DEF	TSR	WSR	HPs	Attacks		Crit	Rog	Adv	Lor
6	15L	RL	+35	+45	+50	80	+90 We	+80 Ran	CH	+70	+30	+80

Human City Dabbler. Has a magical piece of Reinforced Leather under his trench coat. He carries a +10 arming sword and a silvered dagger (can attack with both) and a short bow. He knows 5 Dabbler's Vocational Spell Lores (use Lore bonus for Spell Casting Rolls) to 6th Weave and has 12 MPs.

Appendix I

MERLOCKS' LAIR

THE TALE

It was with treason that Saebeorht's invasion of Ouiruileigh started. The Dark Mage used cursed gold to bribe three dwarves, whose names are lost to history, to open the gate leading to the vale for his army. When disaster struck, the three dwarves drowned in the tunnels beneath the gate, but their greed caused them to raise as Merlocks: twisted, gold-obsessed undead.

STARTING THE PLAYERS

This encounter can be used as a consequence for a failed Wandering or Hunting roll. The heroes could be forced to take refuge from a sudden storm under the gate traveling near the mountains, or follow a weird set of tracks to it while looking for Morcant. They could hear the faint sound of a small bell coming from a dark, damp tunnel just beyond the gate; or see the light of a single candle burning in the darkness, reflected by what seems to be an abandoned pile of gold coins.

AIDS

Niall the Innkeeper or another villager could help the PCs remember an old nursery rhyme, which reveals one of the Merlock's weaknesses (they are bound to count riches).

Gunter the hunter (nursery rhyme)

*The dwarves dug the hole
And got their heart stole'
They count all the gold
But now they're cold
One day old Gunter
A lousy hunter
Tracked three toads
On unfamiliar roads
A bell was in the mud
Eyes, laughs and blood
And then he found
That he has drowned*

OBSTACLES

The three Merlocks will try to ambush and murder every character that enters their tunnels. They know the layout of their underground lair very well, and will use their knowledge to surprise the heroes with attacks from the flanks or from the rear, possibly separating them and picking them out one by one.

They've built several traps, mainly consisting in tripwires and quicksand-covered pits, which are Extremely Hard (-40) to detect in dim light. Characters who fall into one of these pits become Held and start sinking into the quicksand, becoming completely submerged in 1d5 - their Encumbrance Level rounds (minimum 1 round). Sinking characters can try to drag themselves out of the pit with a Very Hard (-30) Athletics Skill Roll, and submerged characters will die unless rescued.

The Merlocks' gold is very tempting (it counts as a TV3 treasure), but cursed. Those who take it gain a new special Passion, which they can erase only by breaking their curse: "this gold is mine and mine only, I must protect it at all costs". Until they have this Passion, they cannot gain Drive Points from any other Passion.

The curse can be lifted by magic, or by convincing the cursed characters to donate all their belonging to a NPC in need. A character that dies under the Merlocks' gold curse will rise as a Merlock the following night.

REWARDS

Laying forgotten in a half-collapsed tunnel the heroes will find the skeleton of a dwarven warrior, still holding a perfectly preserved warhammer. It's the body of the Merlocks' sister, who was murdered by her cruel brothers when she tried to persuade them to refuse the Dark Mage's offer.

The warhammer is an enchanted weapon, the work of dwarven master rune-smiths. It grants a magical +10 bonus to its wielder CMB and counts as a Long weapon for the purpose of determining striking order.

MERLOCK

DESCRIPTION

On rare occasions, when someone dies consumed by greed, with a heart full of treachery, their corpse rises as a Merlock, a twisted undead parody of what they were in life.

Merlocks are gaunt, hideous creatures, with large webbed feet, red burning eyes and sickly green, rubbery skin. Their clothes are ragged and rotten, but they often carry with them large sacks or chests of gold, ei-

ther tied to their back or dragged across the floor as they move around. Each Merlock also carries a single, small golden bell, that turns to foul, black mud if its owner is slain.

Unable to bear sunlight and obsessed by gold and riches, they hide in dark, remote places, endlessly counting their coins. Those unfortunate enough to trespass on their lair, or unknowingly wander near its entrance, are seen by Merlocks as thieves, coming to plunder their riches, and immediately attacked.

COMBAT TACTICS

Merlocks are sly and insidious opponents. They prefer to hide and ambush their preys, luring them into traps or to muddy ground, where they have the advantage. Their favourite tactic is sounding their bell from a hidden position, watching as their victims helplessly sink into some mud-covered hole they've dug.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

UNDEAD NATURE

Due to their undead nature, Merlocks do not need to breathe, rest or eat, are immune to Stun and never Bleed. Their large, webbed feet let them cross mud and quicksand as if they were normal terrain. They can see perfectly well in dim light and total darkness, but are blinded by sunlight and other bright lights (suffering a -80 penalty to all their Skill and Attack Rolls when exposed to a source of bright light).

MESMERIZING BELL

They can spend a Full Action to sound the small golden bell they carry, forcing any living creature within a 6 meters radius that can hear it to make a WSR. Those who fail are mesmerized by the bell sound and Held for 1 round for every 5 points of failure of their Save Roll, or until they are shaken, prodded or harmed in any way.

Skilled ambushers, Merlocks can add their level to all their Critical Strike rolls they deal with their Grappling attack against a foe that is Held or unaware of their presence.

WEAKNESSES

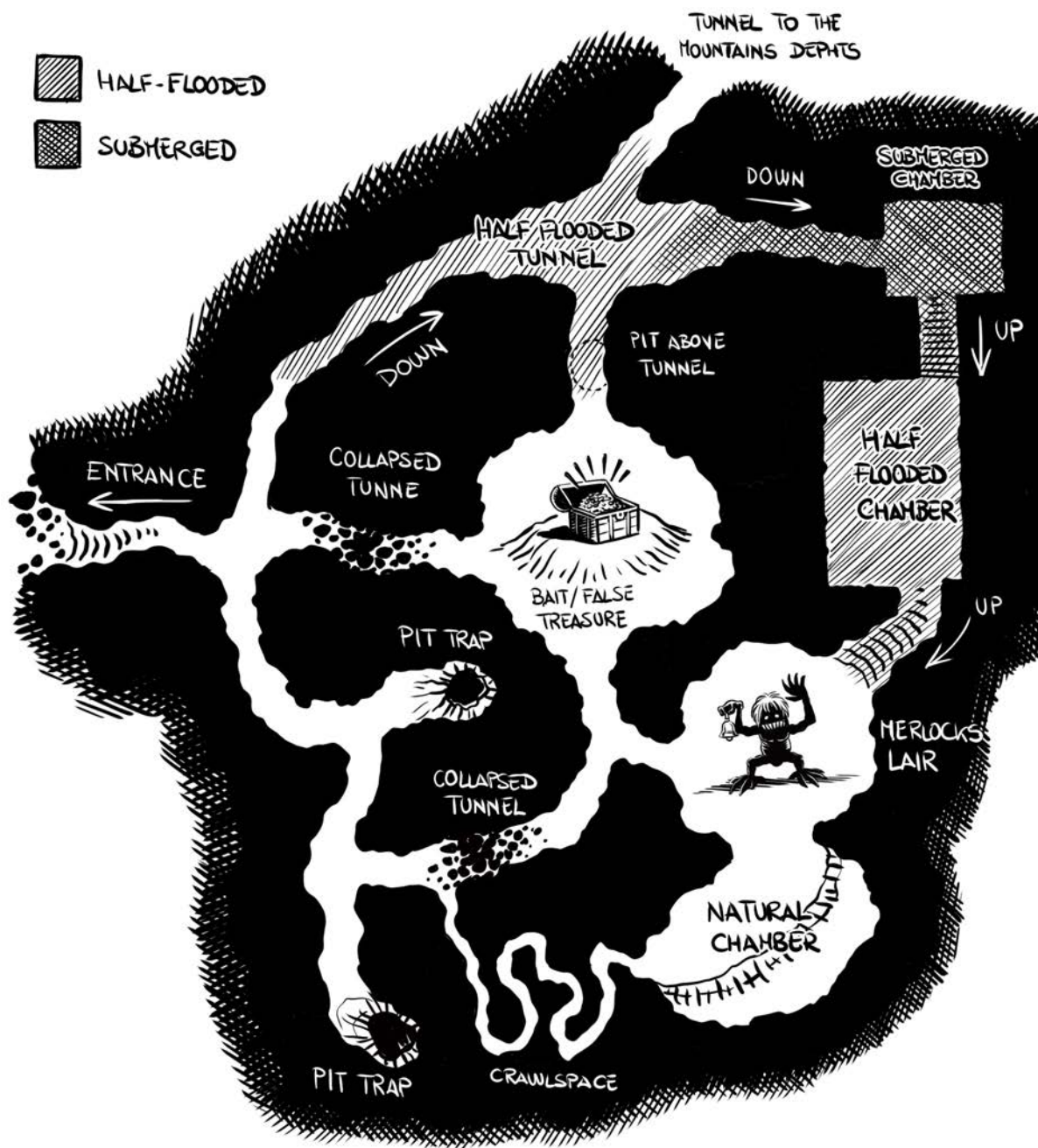
Gold is Merlocks' main weakness, since their curse forces them to count all the riches they see. Tossing a handful of coins before a group of Merlocks will make them freeze for a round, wasting their action to count them.

· MERLOCK ·

Level	4
MR	15L
AT	NA
DEF	35
TSR	40
WSR	40
HP	60
1st Attack	75 MGr
2nd Attack	50 We
Special	Mesmerizing Bell, Ambush
CT	NH
Rog	60
Adv	20
Lor	10

[1.2]





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