







HUMBLEWOOD™

CAMPAIGN SETTING

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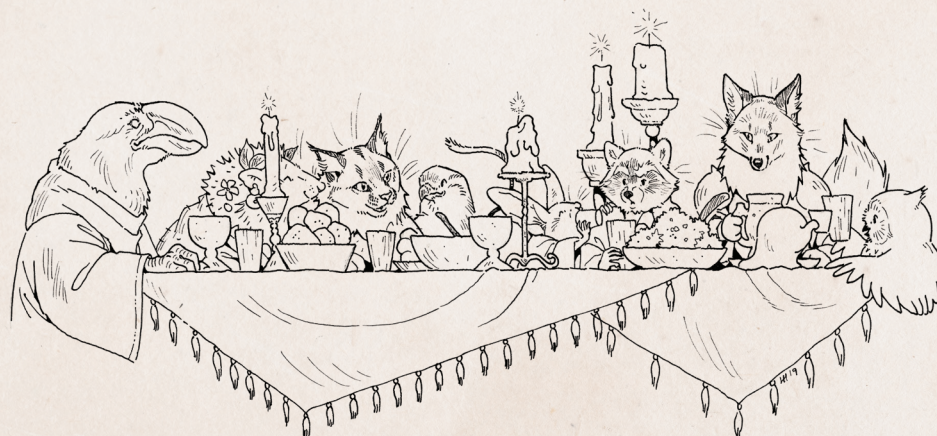
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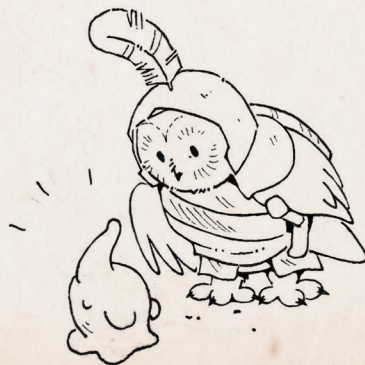


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Foreword

Nature, or the forest, might be quite the distance from our homes, Twitch streams, or stages where we play RPGs like *5th Edition* (because oddly enough that's the magical world we live in now). We throw dice onto surfaces made of trees whose history we are woefully clueless of. Did the tree have a story, or a family of owls living in it, or a fox kit that sheltered a storm beneath its branches? We don't know these tales as we weave our own, but the connection is still there. We're still tromping through the wilderness and smelling the fresh air and fearing its dangers, even if it's in our imagination.

Storytelling on its own has always been connected to nature. Legends of animals as gods or animals as human-like protagonists permeate all cultures. The Native American stories of the trickster Raven, the Medieval fable of the *Owl and the Nightingale*, or something as obvious and simple as *Grimm's Fairy Tales* are all examples of how the natural world around us has shaped storytelling. The magic of animals and their usually unseen lives intrigues us, sparks our imagination, and we see a lot of ourselves in them when we finally slow down enough to look. Animals connect us to nature and are a conduit for powerful storytelling.

This is why I believe roleplaying games have had such a resurgence in the past few years, because we're looking for a connection to the world around us. We're looking for a way to get away from screens, to forget about our complicated lives, and to live as heroes with problems we can solve, not just listen to on the news and worry about. We can help people, we can be heroes, and we have magic. Even in the imagination, these things are incredibly powerful.

In Humblewood, we're going back to our roots as storytellers, using nature and the animals around us to adventure in a world of fantasy. We have so much technology surrounding us every day, getting out into nature isn't an option for many. Our jobs are time consuming, our lives are hard and complicated, our food is grown in places we will never see and sits on a shelf for our consumption wrapped in plastic. These things disconnect us from the story of nature, from the story of life and the changing of seasons and our connection to the world around us. In reality, even the humble pigeon has an interesting life, we just don't see it as we pass them on city streets without giving them a second look.

I've loved birds since I can remember, they've always been how I connected to nature. I've rescued birds since I was 10 and I've worked with the smallest of hummingbirds to the massive moody, Red Tailed hawk named Ivan whose mew I cleaned in college. When I lived in Los Angeles, I began rescuing pigeons because they were everywhere, forgotten pets of colonists and invasive to the habitat they lived in. These birds were smart, funny, and ignored by almost every animal shelter you took them to. They were the lost and forgotten of the animal world, and that's why I fell in love with them. They had stories to tell, and every one of them has their own personality and quirks.

Humans are not that different from animals. If we pay attention to them, we can understand them, save them, live with them, and honor them. The more compassion we have for animals the better our world will be. Telling their stories is just as important as telling our own, and helps us connect to and have compassion for the other creatures on our planet. So I encourage you to make your own legends in Humblewood, and then go to the forest and see them for yourself. Maybe they'll have a story of their own to tell you, too.

Holly Conrad

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Holy you know Magic!



Preface

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When approaching the art direction for Humblewood, I wanted to express that this is a world full of vibrant, diverse characters, living in an expansive forest with a rich and intricate history. The driving force behind Humblewood as a concept was the desire to create a visually compelling world that felt alive, and that meant a world that could feel wonderful and welcoming, magical and mysterious. It also meant a world full of secrets, hidden dangers, and obstacles for a party of adventurers to overcome.

When I was young, the films and books I devoured with the most enthusiasm were the ones that appealed to audiences both young and old, whose characters may happen to be adorable woodland animals, but still bravely explored a mosaic of complex, confronting themes that we continue to puzzle over well into our adult years. These are the stories that left a significant impression on me, that I continue to revisit to this day.

Roleplaying games are wonderful for many reasons, one being that they can provide a form of escape, or they can mirror reality. They can help us understand and process experiences in our own lives through an entirely different lens, and they give you a unique kind of freedom to be whoever or whatever you want to be, options for which there is no shortage in Humblewood—whether you are a sneaky Mapach, a brave little Strig, or a cunning Corvum with a secret heart of gold, the only limit, as ever, is your imagination.

As artists we have to give careful consideration to every facet of the world, certainly the designs of our main characters and our myriad of monsters, but also what a character's home might look like, what kind of fabrics they might wear, and how should we design this bottle of vintage Vulpin-crafted Elderberry wine? We have illustrated forests flooded with beams of light, tangled and treacherous swamps you must battle your way through with determination, and cosy interiors where you can almost smell the Jerbeen-sized loaves baking in the oven. The love is very often in the details, just as some of the most significant moments in a campaign can be the quiet ones, the small words exchanged at the campfire, or the tiny clues indicating a much larger mystery to unravel.

Creating this project has been an unforgettable journey, full of as many surprises, twists and turns as the overgrown paths of Humblewood itself. I have had an affinity for nature and animals my entire life, which has been my primary source of inspiration for much of my personal work. I remember when I first sat down and sketched the first iteration of a brave little Knight Owl, who we have now named Riffin, and I could never have imagined in that moment how the idea behind this little owl would evolve into a fully realised world, lovingly crafted by our team of designers, writers and artists, for players to explore.

I am beyond excited for you all to take your first steps into this world, uncover some of its secrets during your adventures, experience its stories, and come away with many of your own stories to tell!

Leesha

Leesha Hannigan,
Art Director

Twitter: @LeeshaHannigan



Introduction

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In the far away world of Everden, on the eastern coast of a great continent, lies a vast forest nestled between the mountains and the sea. This is the Humblewood, an ancient and magical place that hums an endless song, sung to the Great Rhythm of life and death. The Wood, as it is known to its inhabitants, is not like any other forest. The trees are old and powerful, with rare specimens that reach as tall as small mountains. Here familiar beasts grow to unusual sizes, bearing markings and patterns unique to the Wood. This region is also home to two groups of animal-like humanoid races, the birdfolk and the humblefolk. Together they share the Wood and its bountiful resources.

In the early years, the birdfolk and humblefolk lived close to each other in small villages around the forest. These isolated communities were vulnerable to an organization of brigands and marauders who called themselves the “Bandit Coalition.” To protect themselves from the Coalition, the birdfolk built fortified cities in the forest’s canopy. Joining forces with the humblefolk, the birdfolk army, known as the “Perch Guard”, drove back the bandits, bringing peace and security to the region. Over time, birdfolk culture spread, and the capital city of Alderheart became the most politically influential place in the Wood.

But the Wood has also known sorrow. Not long after the founding of Alderheart, a massive forest fire known as “The Great Calamity” burned a portion of the Wood. The origins of the fire are unknown, but it left the area permanently damaged. To this day, it is called the “Scorched Grove,” an arid field of ash that has since become home to many strange flame-infused creatures.

The Tenders, an organization of druids and mystics, dedicate themselves to healing the Scorched Grove with natural magics. Set up in conclaves around the Wood, they provide aid whenever forest fires strike. Yet, since the Grove’s burning, the Wood has known relatively few fires. Nature’s balance, though, can be disrupted by a single spark.

Recently, fires have begun to rage through the Wood with a strength and fury not seen since ages past. Forest-dwellers are again being displaced from their homes, seeking refuge in Alderheart, and perch-dwellers are doing what they can to keep themselves safe up in their canopy sanctuaries. Relations between the humblefolk and birdfolk are tense. Moreover, a newly invigorated Bandit Coalition swells in numbers. Its sights are set upon Alderheart, where those displaced by the flames seek a means of survival.

You are a citizen of the Wood, caught up in this turmoil. Or perhaps you are a storyteller from another world. Either way, the future of the Wood is yours to write. Within this book you will find all the tools you need to build your character, travel the land, and create your own Humblewood story.

Whether or not Humblewood is able to survive the flames is up to you. Go forth and adventure! Only you can restore balance to the Wood.



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