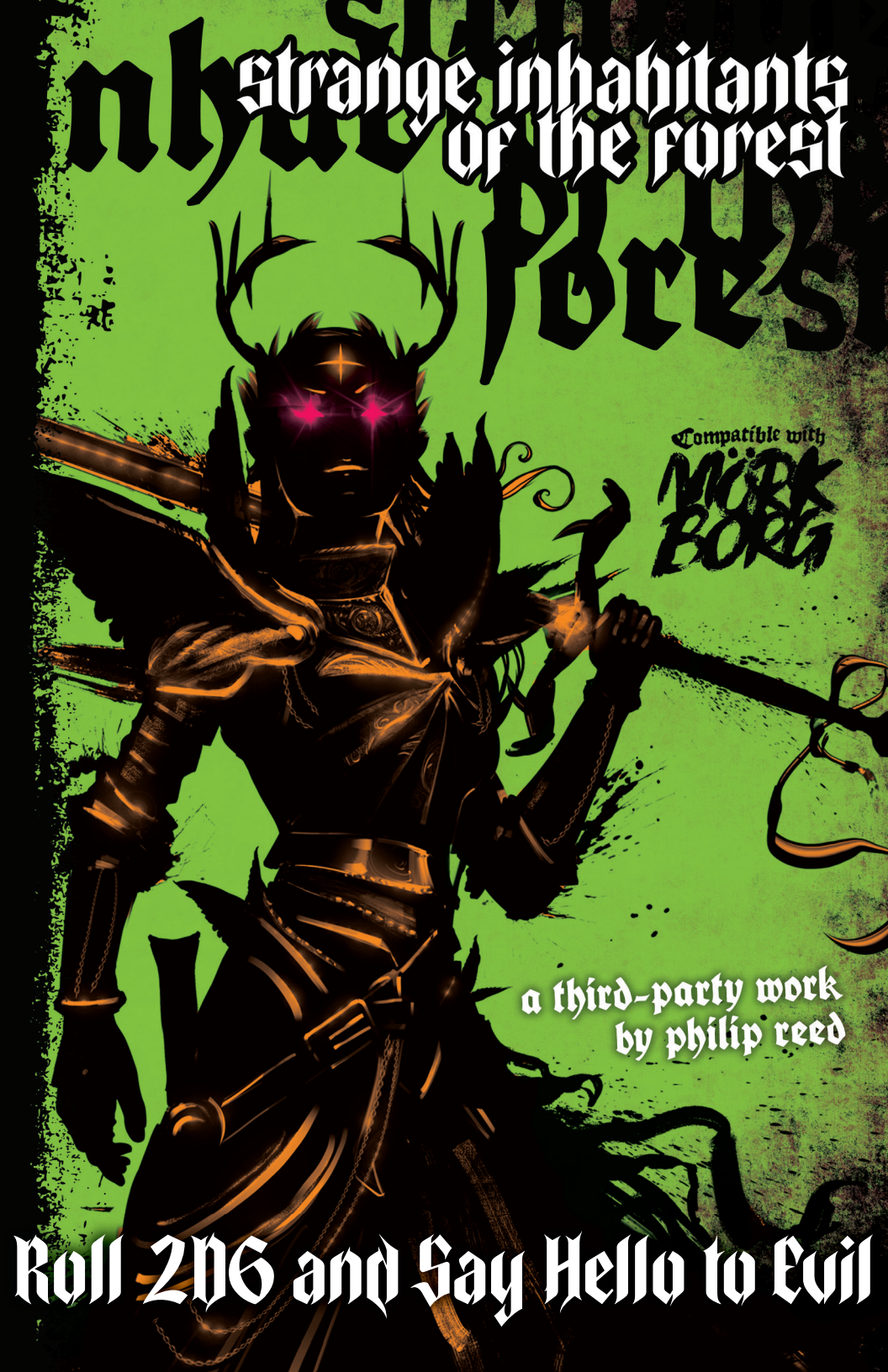


Strange Inhabitants of the Forest

Compatible with
**MURK
BORG**

a third-party work
by philip reed

Roll 2D6 and Say Hello to Evil



Alma Schenk, Self-Proclaimed Queen

Schenk isn't a mortal being, or even a humanoid creature, but rather a cosmic force that is forever captured within the *Crown of Command* that transforms the unwitting into the self-proclaimed queen. Schenk is immortal and unstoppable, so long as the crown remains intact and someone makes the mistake of placing it on their head. The second that it touches the head of another, Schenk's cosmic magic supplants the new host, transforming their physical form to match the image the cosmic force has determined is the proper "look" for its corporeal form.

Schenk lives in a crumbling lighthouse at the edge of the woods along the coast of the sea. The woman commands several skeletons (3d6+3), as well as 2d3 hired goons (see *Strange Citizens of the City* and *Strange Visitors to the City* for a selection of hired goons, or simply create your own). It is only the near-infinite power of the cosmic force that exists within the *Crown of Command* that prevents the lighthouse from slipping into the sea. If the monster's physical form is destroyed, the unnamed entity will lose its focus and the lighthouse will crash into the water within 2d4+1 minutes of the host body taking its dying breath.

Skeletons (2d3, separate from the force guarding the lighthouse) patrol the grounds near the lighthouse night and day. It is these skeletons that the PCs are most likely to encounter first if they stumble across the lighthouse and decide to investigate. The skeletons on patrol are as mindless as you may expect, though Schenk has planted a trigger within one of them that activates, warning her of approaching danger if the skeletal patrol should engage strangers in combat.

The woman's only desire is to inflict pain on others. Her hired goons sometimes go into the city to find innocent people to kidnap, bringing them back to the castle so that Schenk may torture and murder to her heart's content.

* Once captured, so long as the crown is not removed from her head, Schenk remains in her present state and the reward can be claimed by delivering her to the city watch. If the crown is removed, there is a 1 in 4 chance every hour that the woman will vanish into thin air. There is no reward for her capture if this happens before she is delivered.

Captured 25s*
Crown of Command
100s • Anyone who puts on Schenk's crown instantly becomes her; she is reincarnated and completely replaces the soul and body of the crown's wearer.

HP 18 Morale -
Plate Armor -d6
Great Sword d10

Special: Crown of Command (Schenk's crown is a magical artifact that gives her the power to control others. At the start of an encounter, any who fail a Presence DR12 test fall under her command and fight to protect her.) The enchantment is broken after 4d4 rounds and the inflicted are immune to the power forever after.



Reaction -4

The Armored Suit of Despair, Being of Animated Evil

Crafted in the deepest pits of the greatest of all hells, the Armored Suit of Despair is an ancient artifact that was unleashed on the world for a single purpose: to murder the living and make everyone it encounters tremble in fear at the powerful and unnatural evil of the demonic forces that control far too many worlds. The suit is treated like a monster, but it cannot be killed or destroyed and is certain to stalk the world until time itself collapses, and the cosmos dies at the hands of whatever dark force is breaking the seals that are recorded on *The Calendar of Nechrubel* (see the official rules).

When walking the forest road late at night, the PCs may be so unfortunate as to come across the Armored Suit of Despair as it is:

1. Consuming the heart of a goblin that it recently murdered. Surprisingly, the PCs find that they feel a small sense of sorrow for the goblin, even as they ready the weapons to face this unholy monster.
2. Standing rigid, obstructing the path of any who wish to use the little-traveled road-way. The Armored Suit of Despair raises its unholy blade and issues a challenge to the adventurers: *"Any of you brave enough to face me will be rewarded with a swift death. Those of you who attempt to escape my blade will be tormented until sunrise."*
3. Fighting a duplicate of itself. When one of the monsters notices the heroes, the second also turns to face them. Nodding to each other, the two Suits of Despair put aside their differences and turn their attention – and anger – on the PCs.
4. Eating the flesh from a human skull. Enough of the victim remains that the PCs recognize him as someone they recently met in the city. A shopkeep or tavern master, perhaps. The monster tosses the head into the woods and grabs for its sword.

In order to make the Armored Suit of Despair just a little more terrifying for the heroes, you may wish to lay the foundation of an encounter long before they meet the monster. Hearing rumors of the beast and its power when they are in the towns and villages near the forest, with hushed warnings to flee if they should see it, is one of many ways to introduce the monster to your campaign world.

HP 26 Morale –
Living Plate Armor -d6+1
Unholy Blade d12

No reward.

Special: Animated Evil (The armor itself is in command, the man within dead for centuries and nothing more than a structure to keep the bits of armor in place. "Killing" the suit stops the armor for 3d6 years, after which it rises again and

continues its destructive mission. The armor cannot be destroyed and it cannot be removed from the corpse. Burying the armor or otherwise dealing with it could delay its return, at the GM's discretion.

Midnight's Slayer, Unholy Apparition

The Midnight Slayer is a being of extreme hatred and unimaginable destruction, brought into existence whenever an unwitting character dons the Spirit-Reinforced Robes that grant the monster its power. The robes are a cursed magic item that were first introduced to the world when the sorcerer Elyor Mahkamov was put to death by the Knights of Righteous Stars. Mahkamov devoted his life to demonic forces, and it was the power of those demons that trapped the man's soul in his robes at the exact instant of his death.

The robes of Mahkamov were claimed by one of his killers, a knight by the name of Malik who thought that wearing them as a trophy of the sorcerer's demise would put fear into the hearts of all who may foolishly challenge the knight. Unfortunately for Malik, it was the sorcerer who had the last laugh. Within days, the knight's will was stripped away and his body became nothing more than a puppet of the sorcerer's soul that was in complete command of the magical robes.

Over the centuries, as the host body is destroyed, the soul of the puppet is trapped within the robes and subjugated by what remains of Mahkamov's soul and intelligence. The sorcerer may be gone, but his cruelty and inhumane desires remain to terrorize the living of the world.

Surprisingly, the truth behind the robes is a secret unknown to the living. Only the robes and the demons of eternity know of the power of the robes to bind and enslave the living, and to date it is the greed of people that has allowed the soul of Mahkamov to continue to stalk the realms. If the monster ever comes into conflict with one who chooses to cast off – possible even destroy! – the robes, then the chain will be broken and the soul of evil sorcerer will finally be sent to the hellish afterlife that it has earned.

Spirit-Reinforced Robes 99s • Anyone putting on these infernal robes is immediately murdered by the thousand spirits that are bound to the robes. The corpse is absorbed into the robes and the character becomes the new Midnight's Slayer.

HP 15 Morale 9
Spirit-Reinforced Robes* -d3
Sword d8, Spear d6

Reaction -1

Special:
Levitation (The Slayer has no legs and levitates a few feet above the ground, carried by its robes. It may cross rivers, ditches, and other obstacles without challenge.)



* The robes are infused with the souls of a thousand spirits, each one speaking at all times. The Slayer can be heard from several hundred feet away as the cacophony of voices refuse to be silenced.

HP 11 Morale 7 Special: Nothing.
Armor Scraps -d2
Sharp Knife d2, Bow d6, Spears d8

Jannick Pückler, Undead Huntsman

Reaction –

The fine people of the city have been taught since birth that the skeletal, undead horrors that plague the world are evil creatures that cannot be trusted. For the most part, this is true, and spotting a skeleton should be immediately followed by attacking it or running away (so that you can tell others where it is so that *they* can attack it.) In a few instances, though, the undead are something other than evil abominations that deserve only death.

Jannick Pückler was once a huntsman of the woods and reported only to the priestess who ruled the city closest to the forest. As one of a handful of the huntsmen in service to the priestess, he knew nothing more of life than the day-to-day grind of tracking and destroying unwanted monsters. Better to slaughter them in the woods, the priestess insisted, than to allow them to reach the city where they could inflict greater harm.

Last year, when on the trail of a murderous witch, Jannick was forever changed when he stepped into a trap and was bested by the woman and her servants. It was while investigating a small cottage, one that matched the description of the supposed home of the witch, that Jannick toppled into a pit trap. He was immediately doused in an unholy oil that ate away at his flesh, causing him indescribable pain for several moments until the foul oil ended his life. That should have been his demise . . . if he were lucky.

The witch animated Jannick's remains, transforming him into a skeletal monster that she was certain would become one of her loyal minions. A small part of the man's soul hung on, though, clinging to his mortal remains and overwhelming the magic spell that was cast by the witch. Jannick fought off the woman and her cohorts, killing several of them and escaped into the forest.

Now, Jannick continues his work as one of the huntsmen of the priestess, spending every day and night seeking out and destroying evil. He is aware of his new form and has had more than a few encounters with former companions and allies. So far, the skeleton has been unable to convince anyone of his true existence and his desire to continue serving the priestess. If the PCs run into the skeleton in the forest, will he get through to them before they turn his skeleton form into crumbled bones?

No reward.



Lighthouse Stalker, Terror Unleashed

At a distance, this foul creature may be easily mistaken for a wick-head (see the official game rules), but the truth becomes instantly clear once those who encounter the monster get close enough to make out the bleached white, cackling skull that shines with a brightness as intense as that of the strongest of lanterns. The thing throws its head back and laughs wildly when it spots possible prey, and then charges in swinging its war axe and seeking only blood.

The Lighthouse Stalker's radiant skull illuminates everything within 10' of the monster, making even the darkest of rooms almost as bright as the noonday sun. Particularly cruel gamemasters may rule that this light is so blinding in its intensity that the PCs suffer a -2 penalty on all attack rolls, though that modifier may fluctuate throughout the encounter as the light streaming from the thing's head waxes and wanes.

In battle, the Lighthouse Stalker is unforgiving and refuses to back down. The thing charges in with no thought to its safety and no knowledge of tactics, throwing strike after strike against the closest target. Fortunately for the party, there is only a 1 in 6 chance of encountering more than one of these evil monsters at a time. Running into two of these beasts on the forest road at night is a sure path to a bloodbath.

Though they are formidable opponents, the true threat of an encounter with the Lighthouse Stalker is if the PCs are unaware of the thing's *Cloak of Souls* and one of the player characters chooses to claim the monster's cloak as a trophy. If the PCs do defeat the monster, ask that each player roll a single d10: any of them who roll a 10 should be secretly warned about the danger of wearing the *Cloak of Souls*. Whether or not that share that knowledge with the party is up to the player in question.

HP 15 Morale –

Cloak of Souls -2d3, Spiked Helm -1d2-1

War Axe d8+2

Special: Blindingly Fast (The Lighthouse Stalker is unnaturally fast and may attack twice every round. The second attack must be against the same target and the unfortunate character gains a +2 bonus when rolling to defend against the second attack.)

Cloak of Souls* 50s
Spiked Helm 20s

Reaction -2

* The Cloak of Souls is a powerful magic item that slowly changes the wearer into a Lighthouse Stalker. Every day that the cloak is worn, there is a 1 in 4 chance the wearer is transformed and attacks the others.



HP 20 Morale 11
No Armor
Fists d2

Special: Powers (Filip may cast one Power every third round up to a total of six Powers in a single day. Each time he uses a Power, there is a 1 in 4 chance that he loses 1d4 hit points.)

Spellbook 75s
Strange Hat 4s

Reaction +1

Filip Buzou, Practitioner of Arcane Ways

A skilled sorcerer, Filip Ruzou prefers to keep to himself, spending the majority of his time in a hollowed out log that he has turned into a pleasant – if cramped – home. The log is all that remains of a giant treefolk warrior who gave his life to defend the forest against an onslaught of trolls several decades ago, a story that is still told at campfires to this very day.

Filip is happiest when left alone, though the man is kind to those strangers who are polite and mean him no harm. From time to time, Filip grows a little melancholic when left alone for months at a time. To combat the sadness, he travels to one of the main forest roads where he sets up a fire and stew pot in the hopes of strangers “accidentally” coming across him camped on the side of the road. Those who succeed at a DR16 Presence test see through the ruse; how they use the perceptive knowledge that Filip is lonely – and in need of conversation – is entirely on those PCs who see through the “I’m a simple camping man” facade.

Unlike many arcane practitioners in the land, Filip’s powers come from the spellbook that he carries at all times, not scrolls. If the spellbook is lost or destroyed, the man’s access to powers is completely eradicated and he will be incapable of performing magic until he acquires a new spellbook. Scrolls don’t do him a lot of good – there’s a 3 in 4 chance that any scroll he attempts to read is illegible and ineffective for the sorcerer – because he was trained at a young age that spellbooks are all that can grant him access to powers both sacred and unclean.

If the player characters should happen to get their hands on Filip’s spellbook, any of them capable of using the powers of scrolls find that they are in the exact opposite situation as the sorcerer: there’s a 3 in 4 chance that they are unable to use the spellbook to access unclean and sacred powers. If a PC gets the idea that tearing a page out of the book might make it a scroll, they merely damage the book and do not gain a power.

Filip will fight if attacked or threatened, but the man prefers to engage in friendly conversation when possible and will share his knowledge of the woods and magic in exchange for news of the outside world.

Zakari Echautz, Frustrated Angel

Just as devils and demons exist within the many lands of the campaign worlds, so are there also angels in the cosmos who . . . well, to be honest, angels are a standoffish bunch who are more concerned with in-fighting than they are protecting the weak and innocent of the universe. There may have been a time once, many centuries ago, when angels took up their swords to fight back the creatures from the darkest pits, but now all they do is hide in the stars between worlds and argue with each other over of which one of them is responsible for the oncoming apocalypse that is foretold in *The Calendar of Nechrubel* (see the official rules).

Zakari is one of the few angels who has grown tired of arguing and has decided to take action. Without the permission of the Heavenly Host that oversees the angels of the cosmos, Zakari has landed in the forest and made it his mission to stop whatever evil he should encounter in his time on this world. He cannot stop all evil in the universe, he reasons, but he can at least make this small corner safe from the diabolical monsters that threaten to kill everything that lands in their path.

In his eagerness to counteract the inaction of the other angels, Zakari has grown incapable of truly identifying evil, meaning that there is a strong chance he will see the player characters as monsters just as wicked and terrible as the goblins, trolls, witches, and giants that terrorize the lands. And, to be honest, he may very well be right. After all, did you see the look in their eyes the last time the heroes explored a dungeon and slaughtered everything that called the subterranean labyrinth home?

The longer that Zakari “defends” the forest from evil, the more the angel slides toward becoming the exact thing that he believes he is fighting. If you wish, adjust the character’s reaction modifier by -1 for every game sessions, even those where the PCs don’t interact with Zakari. The longer they go without meeting him, the more violent and dangerous he becomes. Perhaps a fortune teller in the city warns the heroes of the angel’s slide into cruel wickedness, encouraging them to find him before he goes too far down the path and becomes irredeemably evil.

After any encounter with Zakari, the PCs must check to see if another one of the Miseries of *The Calendar of Nechrubel* (see the official rules) immediately take place. Reduce the original die roll to determine whether or not a Misery happens by the angel’s current Reaction modifier.

Reaction –



HP 17 Morale –
Plate Armor -d6
Holy Sword 3d6
Special: Divine Word
 (once each day, Zakari may speak the holy words of his chosen god, inflicting 4d6 damage to any who fail to make a successful DR16 Presence test.

Holy Sword 90s
Corpse* 50s

* A wizard, priest, sage, or anyone interested in otherworldly beings will pay for a chance to hack into the body and study Zakari’s remains.

HP 18 Morale –
No Armor
Scythe 2d6

Special: Powers (Isaac has access to 2d4 Powers every day, as chosen by the GM.) Flight (up to 10' above the ground, no faster than a walk)

Scythe 20s
Skull 15s
Hood* 50s

* Isaac's hood is the source of his powers and his flight ability. Anyone wearing the hood gains the power of flight up to 10' above the ground and at a speed no faster than a walk. Each time the hood is used by someone other than Isaac, there is a 50% chance that the flight is their last; the wearer falls dead 3d6 rounds after taking flight.



Reaction –

Isaac Comnenus, Wizard from the Stars

Although Isaac claims to be from a distant world beneath an alien star, it is in truth his magic hood that comes from another plane of existence. Isaac Comnenus was born to a poor family in the city over thirty years ago, where he spent his first decade merely trying to stay alive. Once he reached the age of five, Isaac's parents stopped caring for him, sending him into the city's many crowded streets and markets with orders to steal whatever he could find. Isaac grew tough on the streets, learning to fight and fend for himself.

It was a decade ago, when Isaac followed a stranger to one of the city's many inns, that the man's life took a turn for the better. Strangely enticed by the man's bizarre hood and overly-large scythe, Isaac took a chance and broke into the room where the man slept. The stranger moved fast when startled by the intruder, but Isaac was faster and within moments, the stranger was dead and Isaac was fleeing the scene of the murder, hood and weapon grasped firmly in his hands.

It took Isaac several weeks of practice with the hood to unlock its potential, but unlock it he did and he soon used the hood's powers to greatly improve his life. At first, he tried to continue living as a thief and murderer, using the powers granted by the hood to go after wealthier and more dangerous targets. Isaac learned quickly, though, that it was a mistake when he attacked the wrong nobleman and was suddenly wanted by bounty hunters looking to claim the reward on his head.

Rather than remain in the city and find himself at the end of a noose, Isaac fled to the forest and made a home for himself in an abandoned hovel. Through hard work, Isaac fixed the hovel up enough to keep the rains and monsters out, but it is still nothing more than a ramshackle hut that few would believe is occupied.

These days, Isaac is a highwayman, continuing his life of crime and attacking merchant caravans and travelers on the forest's roadways. It is likely in this way that the PCs will encounter the wizard-bandit, and they had best defend themselves because Isaac cares only about two things: his survival and their silver.

Sergius Ingerinus, Infernal Engine

Ingerinus has only a single desire: to complete the infernal ritual that will grant him immortality and secure his place as one of the rulers of the forest. The man has devoted the last several years of his life to preparing the unspeakable ritual and now, only hours from completion of his work, he is forced to contend with the player characters' meddling ways.

When the PCs come across Ingerinus, the man has already succumbed to a twisted evil that has consumed his very soul. Long ago, before he was entrapped by the demonic spirits that live within his armor, Ingerinus was a wizard who dabbled in dangerous pursuits. If the player characters had met him then, they may have been able to persuade the man to take a different course of action. Now, though, the damage to his very soul is done and all the party can do is stop him before it is too late.

Ingerinus is in the uppermost level of a three-story tower in the forest, chanting the unholy prayers that will soon unleash a torrent of dark magic that will flood the sky and bury the forest in a destructive storm. If the man is successful in completing his task, the forest and nearby lands – including the city! – will be forced to endure 4d4+2 days of intense, violent storms and Ingerinus will be forever fused to his armor and transformed into an agent of evil. (His game statistics, shown on the facing page, are for his human form. If he should be changed, the GM will need to create stats for the more-powerful state that he assumes.)

The heroes must overcome Ingerinus' defenses – demonic imps as well as several skeletons (exact number determined by the GM) – and race to disrupt his chanting ritual before it is too late. The PCs have five minutes from when they smash down the door of the tower's first floor until the ritual is complete, so they will need to move fast. Ingerinus is stopped if he is successfully attacked and damaged before the five-minute timer has expired. If this happens, the man will switch to attempting to escape so that he may return to the tower and try the ritual another day.

If the PCs kill him, they may choose to claim his belongings and sell them in the city. If any of them try on the armor, there is a 1 in 6 chance that it kills the wearer immediately. If a PC survives putting on the suit, it will make for an excellent defense against the monsters of the land.

Reaction -3

Hell-Forged Plate Armor 100s
Skull 20s
Imp's Corpse 10s



HP 24 Morale -
Hell-Forged Plate Armor -d6
Hell's Touch 3d4 (once every other round), **Unholy Sword** d8
Special: Hell's Minions. (2d3 demonic imps, each willing to die to buy Ingerinus more time to complete his infernal ritual.
HP 8 Morale 7 Leathery Hide -d2 Clawed Swipe d4)

Reaction -2

Lady Jeni Dragomir,
Connoisseur of Blood

Captured 25s
Dead 50s


A vampire of sorts, Lady Jeni Dragomir dresses herself in only the finest of gowns and always looks remarkable. The magic ring she wears on her left hand projects an illusory aura that causes others to see her as a staggeringly beautiful woman in her mid-twenties. In truth, Lady Jeni is three centuries old and her body is rotting and disgusting to view; anyone with the power to see through illusions sees Lady Jeni as she truly is: a walking corpse with a sickly appearance that may cause even the most hardened of warriors to turn slightly green in the gills.

Lady Jeni's only illusion isn't her personal appearance. The "mansion" that she lives in is collapsing under the weight of neglect that has collected in the many years since she claimed the home as her own, and unsuspecting guests must make the occasional DR14 Agility test to avoid stepping through rotten wood and injuring themselves. Anyone harmed in the mansion automatically sees through the illusion that disguises the home's true condition . . . as well as the illusion that cloaks Lady Jeni's rotting body.

By day, the woman sleeps in a coffin that is hidden in the mansion's cellar. At night, Lady Jeni sends her minions – rats, bats, and spiders who are loyal to her and will obey her every command – into the forest to search for prey. Using the illusory powers of her ring, Lady Jeni creates the illusion of giant rats – hundreds of them! – to drive any located prey toward the mansion where she greets the strangers and suggests that they stay the night where they will be safe from the monsters that live in the forest.

If the strangers accept her offer, she will show them to private rooms that appear to be immaculate and furnished with the finest beds and linens imaginable. Anyone laying down in one of the beds will have a 1 in 4 chance of seeing through the illusions; the beds are made of hundreds of crawling rats and the blankets and pillows are thousands of spiders. Anyone who fails to see through the illusion is killed in their sleep by the creatures; Lady Jeni will consume their blood and leave the body to her minions.

It is common knowledge throughout the land that capturing or killing a vampire and delivering the corpse to the authorities is a certain way to earn silver, so if the PCs do learn of the woman's true nature, they will no doubt go through almost anything to haul the body back to the city. That is, if they can kill the monstrous woman.



HP 12 **Morale –**
No Armor
Razor Nails d3,
Fanged Bite d3,
Special: Blood Drain (If she inflicts damage with her bite attack, there is a 2 in 6 chance that Lady Jeni transfers d4 hit points from the victim to herself as she drains their blood. This can push her above her starting 12 hit points, which makes her a terrifying opponent.)

Simion Mihnea, Sorcerer from Elsewhen

The sorcerer is from Elsewhen, a strange universe where the dead unknowingly live on (see below). Simion has died dozens of times, every time the man's soul claiming the Arcane Lantern that grants his powers and continuing on as if nothing had gone wrong. Each death branches the timestream, creating a new universe that is similar to previous ones, but completely separate from those past worlds that the sorcerer had inhabited before his death.

Simion is inclined to be kind, possibly even helpful, if he encounters the PCs . . . so long as they treat the man with respect and do not attack him the instant they see him. He has lived in a hut in these very woods for several years now and knows many secrets; he could tell them where to find a dungeon or two, warn them of the true motives of one of the others characters in the forest, or generally be a tool the GM can use to share campaign history and setting information with the gamemasters.

If the PCs do attack the man, he will defend himself as best he can from their assault. If he is killed, so long as the lantern is left with his corpse, Simion will rise a few hours after death and the PCs may meet him again. If they take his lantern, the man is destroyed and is unlikely to return. (I hesitate to say never, because what do I know?)

Elsewhen. A small pocket dimension that exists in a universe separate from many of the known worlds, Elsewhen is a temporal mistake, an error made by the Cosmic Gods themselves at the dawn of time.

If a die rolls goes especially bad for the player characters and the GM is feeling generous, the death of the PCs could form a branching universe – a part of Elsewhen – where the dice were more favorable and the party survived. In such an instance, the PCs do not notice that they're somewhere new, but the inhabitants of Elsewhen sense that something is off about the heroes; all reaction rolls are at a -2 and everyone the PCs meet shy away from them, acting as if they are scared of the PCs.

At some point after their death, the PCs meet a wizard who immediately realizes that things are very wrong. The wizard tries to engage the PCs in conversation in an attempt to explain to them that they recently died on their homeworld and that, rather than proceed to the afterlife, they are now trapped on Elsewhen and cannot rest until they find a way to escape the strange land.

The PCs must retrace their steps and determine where the timestream was split. They soon find undead versions of themselves, their previous forms hunting them. If the PCs can kill the undead them, they continue on this world. If the undead win, the PCs are forever destroyed and may rest in peace.

HP 10 Morale 8
Sorcerer's Shield -d4
Cosmic Blast d6,
Arcane Touch d4

Reaction +1

Special: Arcane Lantern* (Simion has access to 2d3 Powers every day, as chosen by the GM.)

Arcane Lantern* 50s



* Arcane Lantern. The source of his power, Simion may use his magical armor and attacks, as well as his powers, only so long as he holds the lantern.

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When the PCs are exploring the dark forests that surround the city, they will be in search of sites that may hold riches and rewards. The 1d12 places that follow may prove useful in your next game session.

1

The Collapsed Bridge of Neumark. Almost a full day's ride from the city gates lies the Soullers River, dark rapids that threaten to murder any who are foolish enough to try and cross to the other side. Where once a bridge granted access to the opposite bank there now stands only the crumbling stones that tease of a better time, a time when travelers could reach the other side with ease. *Anyone attempting to cross the river must wade across, which requires a successful DR14 test (Agility or Toughness, which do you use?). If the test fails, the character must succeed a second DR14 test immediately or be snatched by the water's current and smashed into the many rocks (instant death!). If the second test is successful, the character makes it back to the side of the river where they started and may try again to cross the dangerous waters.*

strange encounters

2

The Untouched Crypt Beneath the Burned-Out Church. Though the ruins have been abandoned for many years, and it is clear that fire took down the place, even after its destruction, the PCs recognize the place as once a church. Sifting through the ashes and devastation in hopes of finding anything of value, the adventurers soon find a trap door that is stuck tight. *A successful DR16 Strength test is required to unstick the trap door which, if opened, reveals a crypt beneath the remains of the church. The cobwebs and dust suggest that the dungeon has not been touched in many years. Will the heroes choose to enter this unknown place and rob the dead?* The dungeon is as small or as large as the gamemaster wishes. Which dungeon is this? That is for you to decide.

3

The Shattered Remnants of the Traveler's Wagon. Off to the side of the road that winds its way through the woods, the heroes come across what remains of a traveler's vardo. In spite of the damage, the PCs can tell that this was once an attractive, majestic home on wheels. The weeds and vines that wrap around the ruins suggest that this wreck has been here for a long time. *Nothing of value remains, save for the ghost of the traveler who called the wagon home. The ghost is an angry, savage spirit that wishes only to murder the living. The ghost surprises the player characters and gets one free attack at each before the heroes can respond to the assault.* **Unnamed Spirit** HP 10, Morale -, Intangible Shell -d6, Ghostly Claws d4+1, Special: Phantom Form (DR14 and may only be harmed by iron and silver weapons). If the PCs flee, the spirit will not follow for more than 10d12' after which it returns to its destroyed vardo.

4

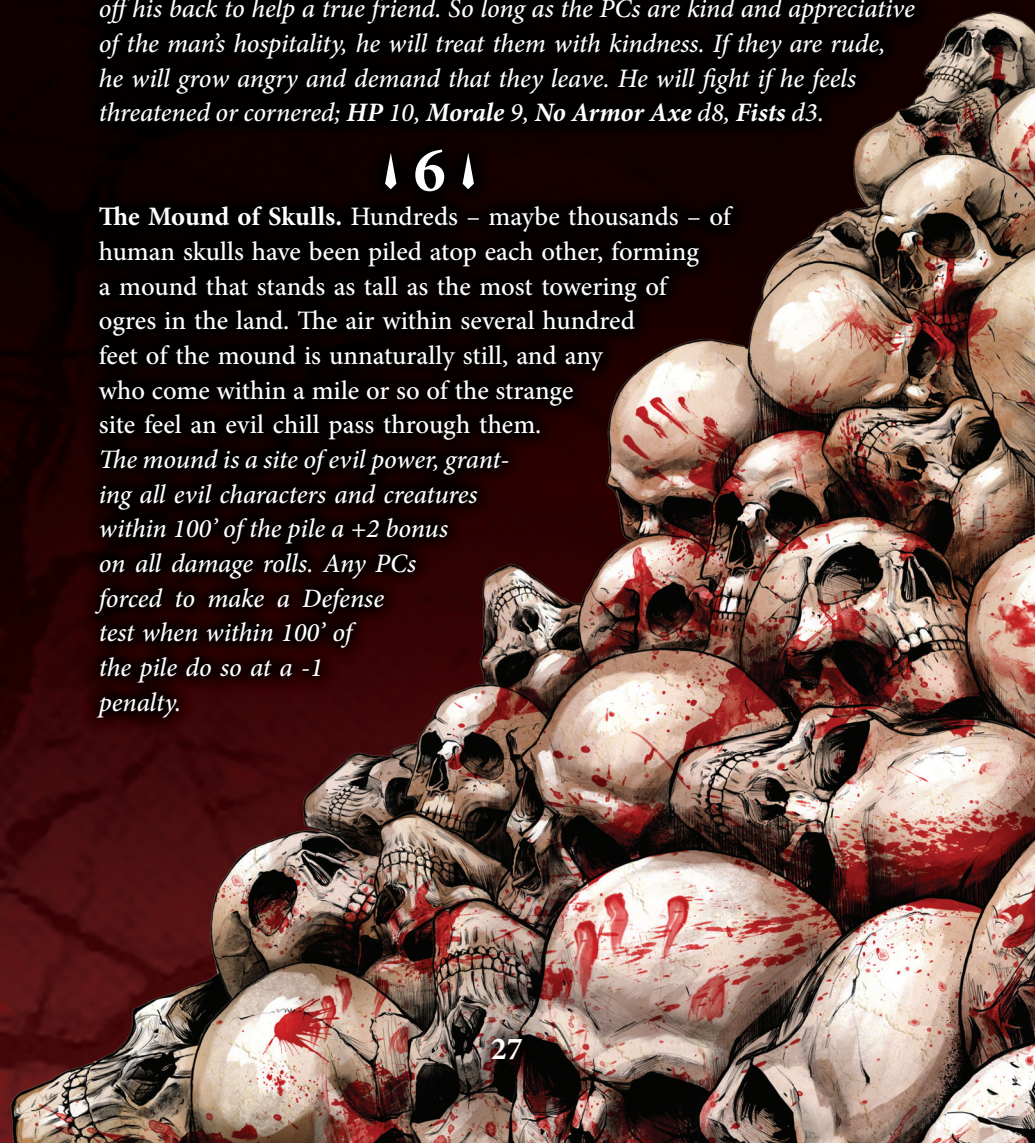
The Wizard's Walking Hut. The hut looks like any other. Constructed of rough-hewn planks of wood that are held together with wooden nails, the hut is archaic, but looks to be in good repair. And then, as their eyes settle over the hut, the PCs notice the wooden legs - dozens of them - that lift the hut a few feet from the ground. Inside, the heroes find a fairly average home with a bed, table and chair, 2d4+1 magical tomes, and a handful of scrolls. The cold, lifeless body of a dead wizard is still lying in the bed. *The hut is an inanimate magic item that has been trained to protect its master, the dead wizard Stephan Groben, from attack. Every round after the PCs discover the body, there is a 1 in 4 chance that the hut shakes violently, tossing them out of itself. Once free of the intruders, the hut starts running and won't stop for 2d6 minutes. How will they steal the wizard's belongings if the hut will not stay still?*

5

The Woodcutter's Cottage. A quaint, picturesque, single-room cottage nestled between two large trees, this is the home of Arno Schottenstein, a woodcutter who visits the outskirts of the city a few times each year to sell firewood and purchase supplies. Arno is a giant man who towers a full head over most anyone he meets. He is not the sort to greet guests warmly. If the PCs are wounded when they encounter the woodcutter, Arno will feed them and invite them to stay in his loft, but he will not be happy about the situation. *Arno isn't one to make friends easily, but he is a loyal man and will give the shirt off his back to help a true friend. So long as the PCs are kind and appreciative of the man's hospitality, he will treat them with kindness. If they are rude, he will grow angry and demand that they leave. He will fight if he feels threatened or cornered; HP 10, Morale 9, No Armor Axe d8, Fists d3.*

6

The Mound of Skulls. Hundreds - maybe thousands - of human skulls have been piled atop each other, forming a mound that stands as tall as the most towering of ogres in the land. The air within several hundred feet of the mound is unnaturally still, and any who come within a mile or so of the strange site feel an evil chill pass through them. *The mound is a site of evil power, granting all evil characters and creatures within 100' of the pile a +2 bonus on all damage rolls. Any PCs forced to make a Defense test when within 100' of the pile do so at a -1 penalty.*



The Sinner on the Eternally Burning Cross. Far from the road, in one of the countless clearings scattered about the woods, the PCs come across a burning crucifix upon which is secured a woman who laughs madly despite her terrible predicament. The woman is charred and blackened from decades of torture, though her body remains intact and she retains the ability to converse . . . if she can stop laughing. If asked, she will say that she is Astrid Wirths and has been cursed to burn for eternity as payment for her crimes against the city. She will not say what she did. *Astrid will answer any three questions about the forest and its inhabitants, with a 50% chance that she tells the truth. The woman has been affixed to this cross for so long that she knows almost everything about the forest. She cannot and will not fight, but she may prove to be a useful source of information.*

8

The Copse of Petrified Trolls. This small grouping of tall, ancient trees near the river looks perfectly natural . . . at first. As the heroes get closer to the trees, they notice that several of them are an unusual, unnatural shape that, upon inspection, are actually trolls. Stranger still is how very perfect each of the troll-like trees looks, almost as if they were once trolls that were somehow cursed and transformed into the state they are now. *These strange trees change at sunset, turning into 2d3 trolls that want nothing more than to eat and murder anyone they meet. At sunrise, the trolls turn back to trees. A troll that is chopped down during the day does not change back into its monstrous state that night.* **Petrified Troll** HP 22, Morale 10, Thick Skin -d2, Monstrous Fists 2d4+1.

9

The Home of the Girl with No Eyes. A cottage sits several hundred feet from one of the few side roads that branch off from the main forest roadway that leads to the city. This particular side road is in a state of disrepair, overgrown with vines and its cobblestones so broken that movement is slowed when navigating the path. The cottage door is locked tight and if the PCs knock, they are answered by the voice of a small girl asking them to kindly leave and not return. If the PCs force the issue, or push their way into the cottage, they find a young girl of no more than twelve who has no eyes. She's rather plain in appearance other than the smooth, featureless skin that grows over where her eyes should be. Nancy Kirchen again asks that the PCs leave. *Kirchen was cursed at a young age, her eyes removed from her face because her father failed to give a demon a bite of his apple. She has been alone for five years now, surviving only because the demon has enchanted the home; enough food, water, and other necessities magically appear every morning to keep her alive.* She asks repeatedly to be left alone. Anyone other than her in the house at sunset falls to ash and dies as the demon's curse cleanses the home of all others at the end of every day.

10

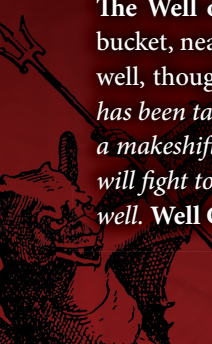
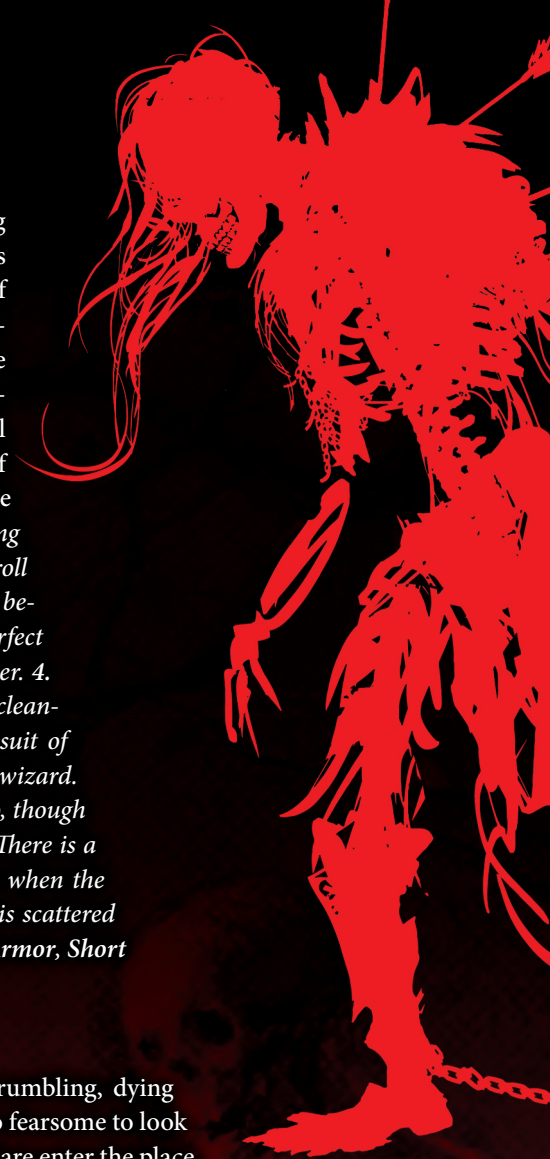
The Well of Brackish Water. A traditional stone well, complete with wooden bucket, near the road is far too inviting to ignore. If the PCs draw water from the well, though, they find that it is in a salty, dirty state that is undrinkable. *The well has been tainted by a goblin that lives at the bottom of the well, spending its days on a makeshift raft that floats on the underground lake that feeds the well. The goblin will fight to stop anyone from taking more than a single bucketful of water from the well.* **Well Goblin** HP 7, Morale 6, No Armor, Dagger d4.

11

The Glade of the Dead. This clearing is soaked with blood, the tall grasses a rusted orange in color. An aura of death permeates the souls of any living characters who step foot in the glade. The discarded weapons and armor scattered across the area, as well as the skeletal remains of dozens of soldiers, suggest that this was once the site of a terrible battle. *When exploring the glade to see what may be found, roll 1d6: 1. A rusted sword that shatters beneath the first blow. 2. A knife in perfect condition. 3. A small sack of 4d12 silver. 4. A suit of chainmail that, with some cleaning and mending, will make a great suit of armor for someone. 5. The skull of a wizard. The skull talks, knows some useful info, though it possesses no powers. 6. 1d3 scrolls. There is a 50% chance that 2d3 skeletons attack when the PCs are sifting through the junk that is scattered across the glade.* **HP 5, Morale 7, No Armor, Short Sword d4+1.**

12

The Tower of Liesel Kurrat. This crumbling, dying tower stands four-stories tall and is so fearsome to look upon that only the bravest of heroes dare enter the place. Inside, the winding stairs lead ever upward, with each level of the tower filled with danger. *The tower is decomposing right before the very eyes of the PCs, with a stone crashing to the floor once every 1d3+1 minutes that they explore this place of evil.* Before her death, Kurrat was a wicked sorceress and the tower now holds whatever belongings she left . . . including her undead corpse that seeks only to defend her home from intruders. *Kurrat will fight to the (second?) death. HP 12, Morale -, No Armor, Silver Dagger d4, Special: 1d3+1 Unclean Powers; if killed, her body explodes in an arcane blast that destroys her scrolls, though the silver dagger falls to the floor, undamaged.*



1d12 travelers on the road

As the party journeys along the forest road, they may encounter a few of these unusual travelers from other places.

♣ 1 ♣

Reiner Hettich, Inhuman Visitor. Though he looks human, Reiner is truly an alien visitor from another plane of existence. He is curious and asks a lot of questions. The man will try to steal an item from one of the PCs if given the chance. *The spell that disguises Reiner will fail if he is attacked by a magical weapon or power. His true form is that of an insect-like humanoid. If unmasked, he will try to escape with whatever he has managed to steal.*

♣ 2 ♣

Soli Kamolov, Cheesemaker. Soli is traveling from his small cottage to the city, carrying with him several pounds of his finest hard cheese to sell in the market. The man is eager to avoid whatever dangers may stand between him and the marketplace. *If asked, Soli will tell the party that he is a cheesemaker and will sell them a block of cheese for a single silver coin. If they attack and try to steal his cheese, he will drop his bag and run home.*

♣ 3 ♣

Torok Arpad, Disillusioned Guardsman. Standing tall and proud, looking as impressive as the greatest of warriors in his plate armor, Torok was once a city guardsman who loved his work. Unfortunately, after being assigned to a councilman, Torok witnessed bribery and corruption and fled the city. He no longer believes that the city is a place of justice and honesty. *The man will not fight if attacked, having lost his will to live.*

♣ 4 ♣

Jacqueline Faehlmann, Spell-Touched Unfortunate. Thirty winters of age, she is a warrior who has seen better days. Yesterday, Jacqueline faced off against an evil wizard who was clearly the victor in their battle. After the wizard defeated her, all Jacqueline was left with was a terrible arcane affliction. *Any who get too close to the woman run the risk of catching a magical malady. There is a 2 in 6 chance every hour that someone is near the woman that they catch the sickness, for which there is no known cure. The magical disease drains 1d3 HP each day and the loss cannot be healed.*

♣ 5 ♣

Vilem Podlezl, Escaped Apprentice. Roughly fourteen years of age, Vilem fled from his master – the cruel wizard Ruslan Taqtas – only days ago. The lad acts nervous and guilty, possibly trying to hide from the PCs if he sees them on the road before they see him. He is on his way to the city to sell a magical dagger that he stole from Taqtas . . . but maybe the PCs will buy it? *The apprentice is hoping to get a dozen or so silver in exchange for the dagger. The weapon inflicts double damage when used and, if purchased by one of the heroes, it will be a source of trouble when Taqtas tracks down his missing dagger.*

♣ 6 ♣

Karolina Strle, Terrified Deserter. As recently as a week ago, Karolina was a soldier in the army of a powerful warlord. During battle with a necromancer's forces, the woman was wounded and fled the conflict. Now, after regaining her wits, she realizes what she has done and is afraid that the warlord will seek her out and punish her for deserting during battle. *The woman's black plate armor and hefty two-handed sword are valuable, although they do identify her as a soldier of the warlord. She will happily sell both for a very low price. Of course, she is unlikely to point out that the warlord may be searching for someone wearing such armor.*

♣ 7 ♣

Zana Teres, Ashamed Survivor. When she last saw her companions, they were being ripped to shreds by an indescribable horror from another dimension. The thing's many tentacles had her friends trapped and the monster's great strength was tearing limbs off and eating the unlucky adventurers. *Zana is deeply afraid of whatever she encountered, but her fear cannot equal the shame she feels for abandoning her friends. Perhaps the PCs will follow her to the nearby dungeon where she last saw the other members of her party?*

♣ 8 ♣

Ulfat Soliyev, Starving Artist. Unbelievably old, Ulfat is easily eighty winters of age . . . and very much looks it. He is muttering to himself, unaware of the PCs as they approach the artist who is hard at work painting a massive canvas. He keeps looking down the road and back to his painting, almost as if he is working on recording the area as a work of art. Looking at the man's work, though, shows only a giant, nameless horror made of wings and many heads. *If the PCs interrupt the artist, he asks that they stand back because he has work to finish. He points in the direction they are traveling and says: "Please don't attack that thing until I have finished my work." The PCs see nothing ahead.*



9

Miro Erzingan, Undead Soldier. Dressed in silver, shimmering plate armor and carrying a giant sword, the skeletal warrior Miro Erzingan shouts a warning to the PCs when he spots them on the forest road. “Keep your distance,” the warrior yells, raising his sword before him. “We’ve no need to fight. Simply go about your business and I will continue on my way.” The skeleton stops on the road and waits to see how the PCs react. *Miro will engage the PCs in conversation, though he constantly warns them to stay back. He is a knight in the service of an unnamed God and on a mission; the skeleton must find the mound of skulls (p. 27) and recover a specific skull. He won’t explain why, but he will offer 50 silver if the party brings him the azure skull with a ruby eye.*

10


Nusret Oblak, Bamboozled Merchant. Dressed in fine robes, Nusret is happy to meet the adventurers on the forest road. The man explains that he is a merchant who was recently swindled; men he hired in the city to guard his wagon and his person turned on him a few miles back and told him to leave and not look back if he wants to live. *Nusret has no coin on him, but promises to pay each PC 25 silver coins if they will track down the traitors who have stolen his wagon, horses, and merchandise.*

11

Nazmi Sever, Solitary Sorceress. Appearing as a beautiful maiden of no more than twenty winters of age, Nazmi is in fact an evil sorceress who has lived on this world for hundreds of years. The foul sorcery she practices has kept her looking young, but any with the power of true sight will see the woman as she really is: a withered, evil mass of wrinkles and frail bones. *Use the lich stats (found in the official rules). The woman will try to convince the PCs that she is lost and needs help getting back to her father’s cottage in the woods. In truth, she only wants to kill them and steal their possessions.*

12

Sha’ol Shu-Hubur, Friendly Fisherman. Sha’ol is on his way to the Soulless River (p. 25) to fish and invites the PCs to join him. The man is happy, and talkative. He lives in a small hut near the road and, if the PCs accept his offer, will spend the day telling them of the woods and those who dwell within the forest. *There is a 1 in 10 chance that the man knows something of a particular character, creature, or place in the forest and – if the party thinks to ask detailed questions – will share all that he knows. The man could be an incredible source of information and a way to guide the PCs to the next encounter.*



There is an infinite number of unusual, dangerous characters in the forests that surround the city.

This book details a handful of them.

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