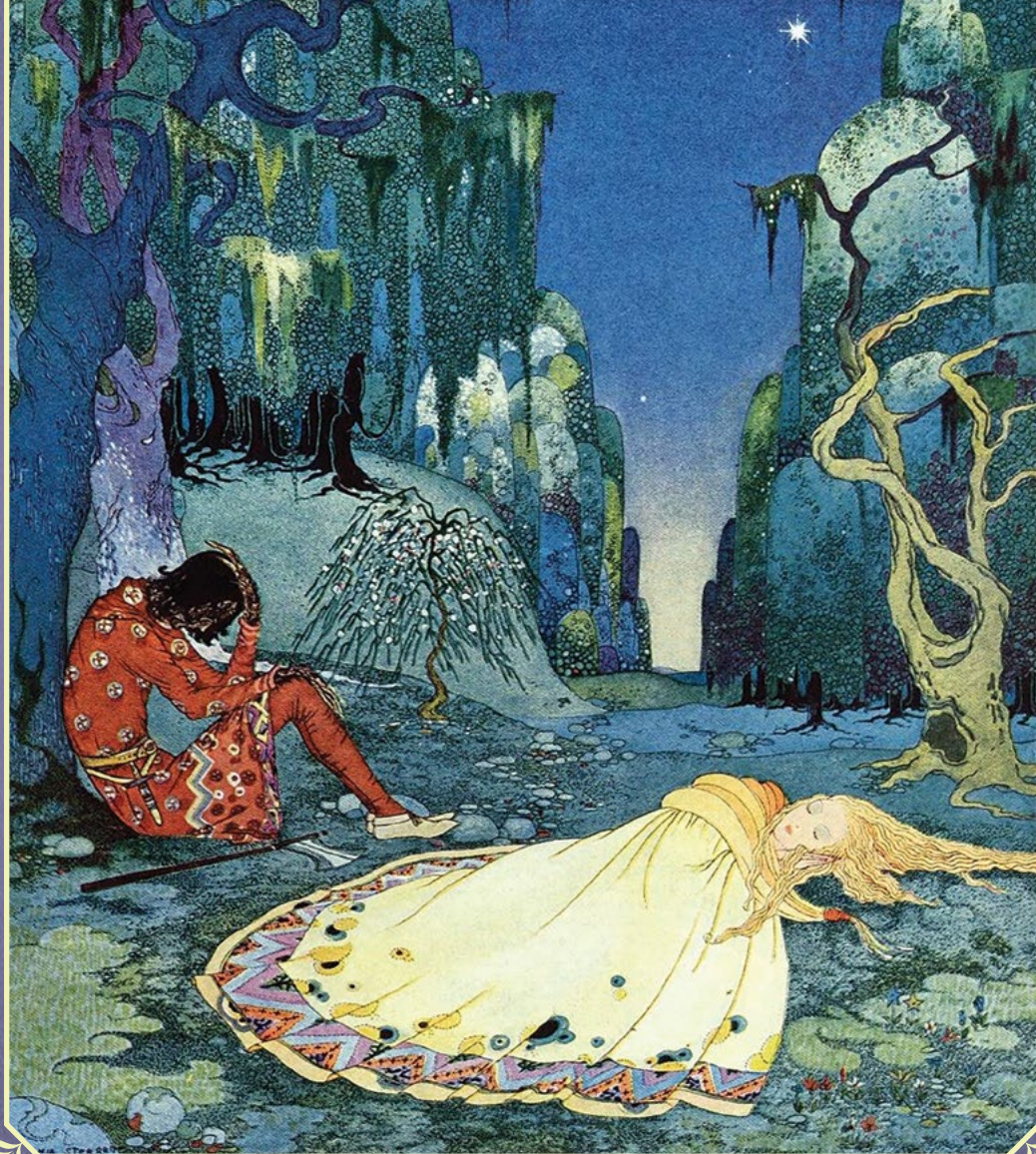


ISSUE NUMBER 8 | WINTER 2018

WORMSKIN



featuring WITCHES • FUNGAL MONSTERS
CAMPING IN DOLMENWOOD





WORMSKIN

VOLUME I NUMBER 8
WINTER 2018

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Wormskin — Issue Eight

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the eighth issue of the world's most acclaimed Dolmenwood zine! In this issue, we dive headlong into the secrets of one of the wood's heretofore most enigmatic factions: the witches. The origins, organisation, supernatural powers, and goals of this sisterhood are unveiled, along with a selection of snippets from the tales of common folk in which the witches are discussed.

Subsequently, you will find two articles related to wilderness exploration in Dolmenwood: firstly, some optional rules and charts to add flavour to camping out in the wilds, among the bracken and toadstools; secondly, a d30 generator (in the time honoured *Wormskin* fashion) for odd and mysterious pools and other kinds of water features infused with the weird energies of Dolmenwood. (This latter table ties in with the rules for hex-crawling presented in *Wormskin* issue five, but may of course also be used alone.)

Finally, the issue is rounded out with a selection of fungal monsters that roam the forest, especially in the regions (to be discussed in a future publication) where trees and green plants have been replaced by moulds and fungi of all kinds.

— Gavin Norman (*moss master and Dolmenwood editor in chief*)

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THE SISTERS OF THE CHALICE AND THE MOON



Presented in this article are the secret history and lore of the sisterhood that has carried the practices of witchcraft in Dolmenwood down from ancient times. The information in this article, save for the last section, *Rumours*, is not common knowledge. It should thus be guarded by the referee and only revealed according to the players' explorations in Dolmenwood.

I. Origins

Mortal men and women first stepped under the hoary eaves of Dolmenwood some 2,000 years past. At that time, the forest was the sole domain of fairies (as discussed in *Wormskin* issue three), whose reaction to the mortal immigrants was various: grudging disdain, gleeful welcome, cruel domination. In addition to contact with the fairy rulers of the forest, however, certain mortals of especially sensitive nature became aware of the presence of older and more powerful entities lurking, semi-dormant, on the peripheries of the wood, long ignored by the elf lords in their vanity. Contact with these ancient entities occurred, at first, purely by happenstance: a wanderer in untouched glades would enter into a fleeting communion with a mind vastly potent, wholly alien, and yet intrinsically a part of the forest. Menfolk who had such encounters always reported them as horrific — a brush with monstrous powers inimical to man — but some women (especially those of Drune blood) perceived instead a sensual beauty and sought a deeper contact with these entities.

These early seekers awoke the ancient, sleepy spirits of the wood — known as *gwyrigons* or *wood-gods* — and came to know and love them, establishing an esoteric symbiosis between god and mortal. This was the foundation of witchcraft in Dolmenwood.

II. Establishment in Dolmenwood

The first women to commune with the gwyrigons were alone in their discovery. Their contact with the Other changed them, making them unlike their fellow wood-folk, who came to fear them. These early witches were then shunned, cast out from their woodland villages into the wild woods. For the average mortal, such an exile would, in those times, have been a death sentence — no one could survive alone in the untamed wilds of Dolmenwood. These women, however, beloved of the wood-gods, prospered in the eldritch tangle of the forest, dwelling as hermits and spending their days in ever deeper communion with their Otherworldly companion.

In time, as these isolated proto-witches encountered one another in the depths of the wood, a secret tradition of communion with the gwyrigons evolved. By the time the Brackenwolders arrived in Dolmenwood, the practice of witchcraft was well-established, though it always remained a mystery tradition into which only a chosen few were initiated.



III. The Gwyrigons

The gods of the witches are entities that have dwelt on the astral fringes of Dolmenwood since the dawn of time. They are seemingly a manifestation of the spirit of the forest itself (or, seen the other way around, the forest is perhaps a physical manifestation of the gwyrigons). Though it is impossible to truly comprehend the motivations of such entities, they in some way feed off of the connection that witches establish with them.

The witches count seven extant gwyrigons, seven who have passed away¹, and one with whom contact has been lost (see *Schemes and Goals*). Among the seven who live, three are primary:

- ♦ **Ertta the Devouring Mother:** A sleepy power who has dominion over ageing, death, and decay. Ertta is associated with the sky and the winds and is most easily contacted on stormy days. Ertta's primary locus is in hex 0505, where the towers of the ancient fairy ruin pierce the canopy of the forest.
- ♦ **Hasturiel Thrice-Crowned:** Also known as "she from beyond". Hasturiel has dominion over metamorphosis, vision, and speech and is associated with fire. Hasturiel's primary locus is in the gargantuan granite pylon in hex 1404.
- ♦ **Limwdd the Quiet Brother:** Has dominion over stasis, growth, and rejuvenation. Limwdd is associated with seeds and the depths of the earth. Witches bound to this wood-god can feel the pulse of its energy in the ground when walking barefoot. Limwdd's primary locus is in hex 1006 (see *Wormskin* issue 6).

It should be noted that the gwyrigons are neither good nor evil. Also, despite the allusions in the names that mortals give to them, they are neither male nor female. As powerful entities of the Otherwold, they are transcendent of such dualities.

.....
1 It is not clear, even in the lore of the witches, what it means for a wood-god to pass away. It is surmised that the lost gwyrigons are not actually deceased, but rather have drifted off into the Otherwold, perhaps like a seed from a tree may float on the wind to distant regions.

IV. Initiation and Seeding

A witch's initiation into the sisterhood takes place upon her first encounter with one of the gwyrigons. As mentioned before, this may occur by happenstance, but, in modern times, is far more likely to happen as part of an intentional initiation ritual. Once contact has been established, a period of 13 lunar cycles follows, during which wood-god and woman come to know each other intimately, communing in dream and vision. During this period, the woman is regarded as an initiate, not yet a true witch. Upon the night of the full moon marking the end of the woman's initiation, she will be formally accepted into the sisterhood as part of a coven. This final initiation rite is known as "the seeding" and reveals to the novice the primary secret of the sisterhood.



The secret is this: that each witch is impregnated with the essence of the wood-god to which she is bound. This is the beginning of the true symbiosis of mortal woman and gwyrion, as the two become bound on a biological level. Henceforth, the wood-god is a constant presence in the witch's mind and body. The connection is akin to marriage (the witch is entitled a "bride" of the gwyrion), but also to motherhood and also to childhood². This is no normal impregnation, though, and does not bear fruit in the birth of a child (see *Schemes and Goals*, however.)

Through the seeding, the gwyrion gains direct access to the dream-stuff, sexual energy, and menstrual blood of the witch, upon which it feeds. The witch, in return, gains supernatural powers associated with the bound wood-god.

.....
2 Witches are perhaps unique among mortals in experiencing the curious sentiment of being the mother of one's own mother, who is also one's husband.

V. Tenets

As companions, guardians, and lovers of the wood-gods, witches live by a unique ethos:

- ♦ The communion of an individual witch and her bound gwyrion is sacred above all.
- ♦ A witch may never reveal the gwyrigons to non-witches. It is even preferable, if pressed, to confess to devil-worship.
- ♦ A witch may never speak to others of her dreams, these being the sole domain of the gwyrion.³
- ♦ Except upon the night of the summer solstice, when the witches cavort with avatars of the gwyrigons and other spirits of the Otherworld, sexual contact with males is strictly forbidden. Outside of the one sanctioned night, such behaviour would imperil the witch's connection to the gwyrion.⁴

Additional tenets have evolved around the practice of witchcraft that, while not essential to the craft, are upheld by all witches:

- ♦ A mortal woman who crosses a witch must be brought before her coven and exposed to the presence of a gwyrion. If the woman survives with her sanity intact, she is accepted into the sisterhood. (Witches who are initiated in this way are known as grey sisters.)
- ♦ One who steals the secrets of a witch is condemned to death.
- ♦ An unspoken pact of non-harm exists between all witches.

.....
3 Witches also shy away from discussion of others' dreams, regarding it as gauche.

4 Sexual contact with non-males is not forbidden, but is seldom sought. A witch's need for intimate contact is fulfilled by dream-communion with the gwyrion to which she is bound. Some rare coven rituals contain elements of sex-magick, whereby rising sexual energy is used to stimulate the gwyrion to manifest some great power.

VI. Symbolism

The witches secretly use the symbol of a crescent moon descending upon a silver chalice. The symbolism of this mark is as follows:

- ✦ The moon represents the night and the association of the gwyrigons with the dreamworld of mortals.
- ✦ The moon also carries the association of the menstrual cycle, upon which the gwyrigons feed.
- ✦ The chalice represents a mortal woman as an earthly vessel for the Otherworldly gwyrigon.



VII. Lifestyle and Organisation

In modern times, the lifestyles of individual witches varies greatly. No longer are all witches recluses outcast from the towns of men. Many witches dwell among other mortals, practicing their craft in secret⁵. However, whatever her lifestyle, a witch may never marry or have children.

The primary means of organisation among witches is the coven: a group of up to thirteen (aka a “witch’s dozen”) witches in a local area, loosely governed by a Priestess who determines the dates and conditions of their gatherings. All of the covens of Dolmenwood are at least nominally under the command of the High Coven, which consists of three High Priestesses. Witches also speak of a Queen of all Witches who commands the High Coven, though the veracity of her existence is unknown.

.....
⁵ It is even said that a streak of witchcraft runs in the nobles of Castle Brackenwold and that the castle contains secret libraries of witch lore.

VIII. Occult Powers

All things considered, witches occupy a position somewhere in-between traditional clerics and magic-users. On the one hand, they practice spellcraft, like magic-users, and a body of spells are passed among members of the sisterhood. On the other hand, as mortals who wield the power of an external entity, witches are somewhat akin to clerics. Being in symbiosis with a gwyrion, however, their relationship with the external power is quite different from that of the typical religious devotee and his or her deity.

The primary forms of magic practiced by witches are as follows:

- ✦ Spellcraft in a manner similar to magic-users: the memorization of written formulae that bring about magical effects when uttered. Witches' spells mostly take the form of charms and curses.
- ✦ Innate powers derived from union with a wood-god. These powers vary depending on the wood-god with which the woman is bound. (See *Monsters of the Wood*, in *Wormskin* issue 7, for examples of the powers of witches bound with Errta, Hasturriel, and Limwdd.)
- ✦ Life extension and age reversal through contact with the gwyrigons.
- ✦ The crafting of potions, talismans, and charms.
- ✦ Ritual magic of divination, healing, and dispelling malign influence. This involves the use of potions and psychedelics⁶ to enter into a trance state wherein communion with external entities is possible. Usually this is a gwyrion, but witches also deal with other entities in the Otherwold. In modern times, witches have come into contact with beings whom they name *daemon nobles* — entities of questionable provenance that lurk in the Otherwold, seemingly drawn to the presence of the gwyrigons. They are amenable to responding to ritual invocation and (perhaps the main pro of dealing with them) remain contactable beyond the bounds of Dolmenwood.
- ✦ The summoning of familiars and animating of servitors. The latter often take the form of corn-dolls, stuffed animals, or wooden manikins.

.....
6 Witches are known for their expertise with and heavy use of the psychedelics of Dolmenwood. See *Wormskin* issue two for more details on these substances.

As can be seen, many of the powers wielded by a witch are derived from external forces in the Otherworld around Dolmenwood. Her power is thus greatly diminished, should she venture far from the forest.



IX. Relationships with Other Factions

Generally speaking, the witches of Dolmenwood remain enigmatic and aloof and do not form alliances with other powers. The current state of their relationship with others in the forest is as follows.

- ♦ **Elf Lords** (including the Cold Prince, see *Wormskin* issue three): The elf lords of the forest view themselves as its natural lieges, to whom all mortals must pay fealty. The witches' communion with the daemon nobles of the Otherwold is thus viewed as discourteous and even treacherous, leading to a general distrust of witches among fairy-kind. This is elevated to a sentiment of outright disgust, among the elf nobility. The witches have adopted a similar attitude in return, claiming all fairies to be fundamentally selfish and false.
- ♦ **The Duchy of Brackenwold and the Barony of the High Wold:** The aristocracy of the region pays little heed to the huge volume of ambiguous and wildly varying folk tales that surrounds the witches. The two factions regard each other as largely irrelevant to their own power plays. The Dukes' awareness of the vein of witchcraft that runs through their women-folk reinforces this attitude of neutrality and unspoken tolerance.
- ♦ **The Church of the One True God:** The witches have an essentially neutral attitude toward the Church, regarding the One True God whom they worship as largely irrelevant within Dolmenwood. The Church's push, over the last decades, to reestablish their power base in the forest has led to conflict, however, with witches sometimes falling into the utterly unsympathetic hands of zealots and inquisitors. Still, the general attitude of witches is one of avoiding and thwarting the Church, not of outright hostility.
- ♦ **Goatmen:** The wild goatmen of the north are a constant pest to the witches and are exterminated wherever possible. The goat-lords of the High Wold, like the human aristocracy, play no role in the struggles of the witches.

- ♦ **Atanuwe, King of the Wood:** To the witches, Atanuwe is an imposter and his servants a plague upon the forest. The High Coven regard the creeping influence of the Nag-Lord as the principal threat to their power in Dolmenwood and seek to confine him to his dominion in the North. This has led to a recent pact of collaboration between the High Coven and the Drune aegis, as both factions wish to depose the Nag-Lord (though for different reasons).
- ♦ **Ygraine the Sorceress:** Among witches, Ygraine is regarded as a traitor, for she was once (long ago) one of their number. It is said that she was corrupted by contact with fairies and absconded with a witch-artefact called the *crown of the forrogryn*. Ever and anon do young witches of bold temperament undertake to retrieve the crown from the sorceress, but ever are their actions thwarted.
- ♦ **Drune** (see *Wormskin* issue five): Though the Drune covet the power of the wood-gods, ancient pacts deter them from interfering with the activities of witches. Likewise, Witchkind gives Drune men a wide berth while actively seeking to subvert and enlist young braithmaids into their covens. This is a practice reluctantly tolerated by the aegis. Collaborations between the Drune and the Witches are historically somewhat rare, but not unheard of (see relationship with Atanuwe, above).
- ♦ **Adventurers:** Due to their limited numbers and sparse distribution, witches sometimes require assistance in achieving their aims. This means that they do, upon occasion, enlist the aid of bands of adventurers and mercenaries. Payment is often given in the form of charms, talismans, or dweomers. Indeed, it is known among adventurers in Dolmenwood that consultation with a witch is the simplest way of acquiring services such as a casting of *remove curse* (that is if a witch can be located, of course). Witches also sometimes trade psychedelic substances with adventurers. In all such cases, the true aims of the witch will remain carefully occluded.

X. Schemes and Goals

The primary aim of the witches is to pass their craft on to future generations, ensuring that communion with the wood-gods continues. This leads to an attitude of protectionism, whereby their teachings and lore are to be kept safe from outsiders' eyes and influence and the wood-gods themselves are to be guarded against external attack or tampering.

The High Coven has two additional schemes that some witches are involved in pursuing:

- ✦ The quest for the birth of a half-human, half-gwyrigyn child, known as a *hoaghryn*. The possibility of such a birth has been whispered of in witch lore since the beginnings of the sect. Witches who subscribe to this ideal use divination to locate the most auspicious girl-children to bring before the gwyrigons. Some profess this hypothetical being as a messiah of sorts and see this quest as the true aim of witchcraft.
- ✦ The re-establishment of communion with the lost gwyrigyn known as Embala of the Husk. Obscure branches of witch lore refer to this gwyrigyn as the lord of its kind, in ancient times — the mighty ruler of all Dolmenwood. A myth tells that Embala could only be directly contacted by the use of a set of three crystal mirrors of otherworldly beauty. One of these mirrors is said to be in the possession of the Queen of the Witches, but the other two are lost.

XI. Rumours

Witches feature heavily in local folklore, appearing in many different guises in the tales of simple folk. The following are some examples of the folklore and superstition surrounding witches:

1. Upon nights of the full moon and at the corners of the year's turning, the witches gather to work their magic and cavort with spirits. [*Basically true.*]
2. A witch will transform a man with whom she falls in love into a maiden, drawing him into her sisterhood. [*Not generally true, but has occurred in order to circumvent the witches' taboos around men.*]

3. Any man who falls in love with a witch is spurned and required to give her his hand — literally. The drug known as “witch dust” is produced by witches from the ground bones of the hands of such foolish men. *[Utterly false. See Wormskin issue two for details on the drug witch dust.]*
4. The witches are servants of a Witch Queen who lives in a crystal palace hidden in deep caverns. In ancient times, the Queen ruled the whole of Dolmenwood, but her magic mirror was stolen by a fairy prince, diminishing her powers. She seeks ever for the mirror and pays those who aid her in her quest generously. *[Largely false, though the talk of the Witch Queen and her mirror may be based on some fragment of witch lore.]*
5. Those who inherit the craft from their family keep the skulls of their ancestors, anointed with fragrant resins, as totems of power. *[True.]*
6. The witches’ secret sign is an owl in flight, with pentagram eyes. *[False. This is the drune-sign.]*
7. All witches have an unsightly birthmark somewhere on their body. *[False.]*
8. Witches are the mortal slaves and concubines of demon princes, to whom they have sold themselves in exchange for occult power. *[False. Though there is perhaps a grain of truth in connection with the daemon nobles that some witches make pacts with.]*
9. All witches are eternally young and beautiful and bathe in secret, moonlit pools. *[False. Though many witches do remain youthful beyond their years.]*
10. Witches know the secret of distilling a brew from pure moonlight. They consume this elixir during their secret ceremonies. *[True.]*
11. Witches possess powerful means of dispelling enchantments, curses, and beguilements. *[True.]*
12. A woman who crosses a coven of witches, whether knowingly or not, is subject to a wicked curse whereby her mind is devoured by the disembodied spirits of the witches’ familiars. *[Mostly false, though based on a grain of truth. See Tenets.]*



CAMPING IN DOLMENWOOD



As the region encompassed by the Dolmenwood campaign map is — for the most part — composed of uncivilised woodland, adventures within its bounds will often involve wilderness travel and wild camping. Procedures for overland travel in Dolmenwood were provided in *Wormskin* issue five. This article now presents a set of optional procedures that the referee may use to add a little extra spice and detail to the day-to-day activity of camping rough in the forest. The procedures may be applied or ignored based on the pacing needs of the game and the tastes of the group. Sometimes, it suffices to simply declare that the party has rested for a night and move on with the game; at other times, a little more detail is desired. The procedures can be mixed and matched as required.

The article also presents rules for getting a good night's rest. This is affected by various factors, which are summarised in the final section.

Finding a Campsite

The first step in camping for the night is to find a suitable location — ideally one with even ground of a not-too-hard consistency, enough space for the whole party to recline, and a relatively low density of brambles and other botanical nuisances. Depending on the terrain being traversed, this may not be trivial.

Searching for a decent site takes one hour, which is assumed to be a standard part of the evening phase (see *Hex Crawling in Dolmenwood*, in *Wormskin* issue five), when the party is beginning to settle down to rest. This search

may yield one, two, or no reasonable locations for campsites, with the degree of success determined by the bushcraft skill of the members of the party. The basic mechanic is a 2d6 roll, with results as follows:

2-5: No decent site*.

6-8: One decent site.

9-12: Two decent sites; party may choose between them.

* The party may opt to settle with an unsuitable location among fallen branches and pointy rocks. This incurs a rest penalty, see later.

A bonus should be applied to the roll if one of the following types of character are present in the party (if multiple different types are present, only the highest modifier is used — the bonuses are not cumulative):

- ♦ Friar, wayfarer: +1
- ♦ Woodsman, hunter: +2
- ♦ Ranger, druid: +3

The roll may be penalised by environmental conditions, as follows (these penalties are cumulative, if multiple apply):

- ♦ Heavy rain: -1
- ♦ Mist: -1
- ♦ Fog: -2
- ♦ Darkness (search by torch or lantern light only*): -2
- ♦ Difficult terrain: -2

* searching in complete darkness is fruitless and always fails.

The details of the discovered site or sites should be determined by rolling 2d30 and consulting the *Forest Campsite Table* (see page 21). If the player characters are unsatisfied with the result, they may decide to start searching anew, entailing another hour of searching. Each repeat attempt incurs a cumulative -1 rest modifier (see *Sleep*, page 18), when the party eventually get to sleep, due to the extra time spent exploring.

Setting Camp

Characters may engage in various different activities to help with setting up a campsite. The following are typical.

Fetching firewood: It is always possible to find wood with little suitability to building a fire (damp, rotting, frozen, etc). Finding decent wood is more difficult and depends especially on the weather. Each character who goes gathering wood can collect enough to keep a campfire burning for 1d6 hours, modified as follows for conditions:

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| ♦ City folk: -1 | ♦ Rain, snow: -2 |
| ♦ Damp, mist: -1 | ♦ Heavy rain: -4 |

Fetching water: Is assumed to be successful, in a damp, forest environment. The referee may optionally declare a 1-in-10 chance of the character discovering a source of *Strange Waters* (see page 24).

Fire building: Given a means of producing flame (e.g. a tinderbox or cantrip) and a stash of wood (either gathered from the forest by other characters, as described above, or carried in packs), a character may attempt to build a fire. Under favourable conditions, with decent wood and a relatively dry campsite, fire building is assumed to be successful; the campfire may be kept burning for as long as there is wood available to feed it. In more troublesome circumstances, the basic chance of successfully getting a fire going is 4-in-6, modified as follows:

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ♦ Extreme cold: -1-in-6 | ♦ Poor quality firewood: -2-in-6 |
| ♦ Wet: -2-in-6 | ♦ Hunter or woodsman: +1-in-6 |

Foraging, hunting, or fishing at dusk: These activities may be undertaken as normal during the hours while the camp is being set. The chance of finding anything is reduced by two thirds (due to the limited time available and the gathering darkness). A -1 rest penalty also optionally applies.

Resting: A character who lends no help to setting camp optionally gains a +2 rest bonus.

Evening Activities

Once the campsite is established, more restful activities may be undertaken before the party beds down for the night.

Camaraderie: Time spent around the fireside with one's companions may, given the correct conditions, lift the spirits and induce restful sleep. A character may attempt to entertain his comrades with music, song, stirring tales, jokes, and so forth. The referee may handle this with a simple CHA check, or may require the player to actually entertain the group. Success indicates that good cheer has been inspired in the party, whereas failure may fall flat or even, in the case of very poor (i.e. high) rolls, lead to ridicule, argument, and discord.

Cooking: Given a fire, cooking utensils, and ingredients, someone may cook a meal. A successful WIS check indicates that a palatable dish is produced, granting a rest bonus to those who eat it. A failed cooking check indicates that the meal is edible but distasteful. A natural 20 denotes a ruined meal (burned, spilled, etc) that is utterly inedible. Modifiers may apply to the check based on the quality and variety of the ingredients available, as well as the character background of the cook.

Planning: The party may use the evening hours to discuss plans for the following day. Generally this requires no checks and has no effect on resting, though if arguments occur, the referee may stipulate a rest penalty due to discord.

Effects of a Campfire

A fire which is kept burning through the night, in addition to the obvious effects of providing warmth and comfort, also influences the kind of creatures that may be encountered during the hours of darkness. Fire has the effect of warding off woodland animals, but may, on the contrary, prove attractive to more intelligent denizens of the woods. When a campfire is burning and a nighttime encounter with an animal is rolled, re-roll the encounter result once (i.e. if the second roll also indicates an animal, do not continue re-rolling).

Sleep

The campsite set and any evening camaraderie come to an end, the party settles down to sleep. Bedding down among the roots and bracken of the forest brings no guarantee of comfort or decent sleep, however. After any nighttime events have been resolved, each character must make a CON check, modified by the various factors listed below, to determine whether a good night's rest was achieved.

Sleeping in the Daytime

A party may choose to travel at night and sleep during the day. This incurs a -3 penalty to rest, unless the characters are accustomed to this routine (have been following it for at least a fortnight).

Failure of the rest check has the following effects:

- + Difficulty memorising spells. The character may attempt to memorise new spells, with a successful WIS check, per spell, indicating success at memorisation.
- + Hit point recovery halved. If any rules state that a character gains hit points by resting overnight, the total gained is halved.
- + -1 penalty to saving throws and ability checks, until a decent night's rest (or at least a two-hour nap) is had.

Optionally, the referee may rule that characters who do get a good night's rest recover one hit point.

Location

- + Sleeping in an unsuitable site (i.e. the roll to locate a decent campsite failed): -4
- + Location modifier: Varies (see table of forest campsites)

Season and weather:

- + Autumn or spring, no campfire: -2
- + Winter, no campfire: -4
- + Winter, with campfire: -2
- + Rain or snow: -2

Equipment:

- + Bedroll: +2
- + Tent: +2
- + Sleeping in light armour: -4
- + Sleeping in medium armour: -10
- + Sleeping in heavy armour: Automatic failure

Advanced Rest Modifiers

Referees with a taste for more detailed, complex rules systems may wish to also apply the following modifiers.

Activity:

- For every extra hour spent searching for a campsite: -1
- Foraging, hunting, or fishing at dusk: -1
- Resting while others establish camp: +2
- Not participating in a watch shift: +2
- Awakening during the night (per occurrence, not including watch shifts): -1
- Encounter during the night: -3

Environment:

- Disturbing sounds (e.g. howling wind, thunder, or babbling spirits): -1
- Soothing sounds (e.g. a waterfall or bubbling stream): +1

Mood and food:

- Good cheer: +2
- Discord (arguing, grudges, etc): -1
- Hearty fare: +2
- Meagre rations (includes dried trail rations): -1
- No supper: -2

Condition:

- Sickness or poison: -2
- Wounded or fatigued (less than half hit points): -1
- Drunk: +2
- Soporific drugs: +4

Race:

- True fairy (e.g. elves, grimalkin; require less rest): +4
- Halfling (lazy): -2

(Character personality traits such as "sensitive disposition" or "can sleep through anything" are generally indicated by the CON score, but the referee may apply additional modifiers if deemed appropriate.)

Sleeping in the Road

A party travelling along one of the main roads noted on the campaign map may decide to forgo the search for a campsite and simply set up camp in the middle of the road. In this case, the normal camping random events check is made, but an encounter is additionally indicated on a roll of 1 or 2.



Watches

It is common for characters camping in the wilderness to establish a series of watches through the night, with at least one character remaining awake at all times. The following rules may be used to handle this.

Falling asleep on watch: There is a basic 1-in-10 chance of this happening. (Note that if one character falls asleep on watch, this may throw off the whole sequence of watches, as the character does not remember to wake the next person in line, and so on.) Characters with CON above 14 have only a 1-in-20 chance of falling asleep, while characters with CON below 7 have a 1-in-6 chance. The referee may apply other modifiers as appropriate.

Sleeping characters: If an encounter occurs, all characters who are asleep are automatically surprised. (This may mean that some characters in the party are surprised while others are not.)

Forest Campsites

d30	Site	Features
1	Clearing ringed with eerie, looming trees with spooky, twisted branches. -2 rest modifier.	Spoor of a random creature is present. (In the case of intelligent creatures, this may indicate signs of a campsite.) If an encounter occurs, it is 50% likely to be with the creature indicated. Its lair may be nearby.
2	Dank, mossy clearing. Soft ground grants a +1 rest modifier, but dampness makes fire building difficult.	Long beards of moss hang from the trees.
3	Fern-filled dale. +1 rest modifier.	Concealed by dense thickets. On a roll of 11 on the random event table (<i>Wormskin</i> issue five), a creature passes nearby but does not encounter the party.
4	Small glade close to a fetid bog. -1 rest modifier due to the stench.	Nest of ants or hornets. 2-in-6 chance of the party being attacked in the night.
5	Stretch of bracken and heather.	Burrows of small animals (rats, badgers, moles, rabbits).
6	Wide, treeless ditch; party must sleep in a line.	Beneath a rocky overhang. Complete protection from rain.
7	Clearing among fallen trees, covered with lichen and moss.	An unusual stone stands here. Roll on the table of lesser stones (see <i>Wormskin</i> issue four).
8	Clearing overgrown with brambles. -1 rest modifier due to discomfort.	The corpse of a random creature. (1. freshly killed, 2. decaying, 3. bones.)
9	Clearing with domed roof of interwoven branches, concealing the sky.	Hidden between large rocks. On a roll of 11 on the random event table (<i>Wormskin</i> issue five), a creature passes nearby but does not encounter the party.
10	Disturbed earth where a large tree has fallen.	Plants here grow zealously and in unnatural, twisted formations.
11	Clearing criss-crossed with gnarly roots. -1 rest modifier.	Atop a rocky outcropping. Encounter distance is doubled.

continued overleaf

d30	Site	Features
12	Opening with soft, even earth. +1 rest modifier.	Beside a pathway. A roll of 1 or 2 on the random event table (<i>Wormskin</i> issue five) indicates an encounter.
13	Clearing carpeted with thick, springy grass. +2 rest modifier.	Wide open. Encounter distance is doubled and a roll of 1 or 2 on the random event table (<i>Wormskin</i> issue five) indicates an encounter.
14	On a narrow ledge. -1 rest modifier due to fear of rolling off the edge.	Mushroom-riddled. Roll on the fungi table (<i>Wormskin</i> issue one) to determine their qualities.
15	Soft, sandy depression. +1 rest modifier.	Cramped, only sufficient space for 1d4+1 humans to sleep comfortably.
16	Small clearing, filled with sweet-smelling woodland flowers. +1 rest modifier.	Surrounded by thick brambles. When entering or leaving, those wearing light or no armour must save versus death or suffer one point of damage (cannot be fatal). Clothing may be ruined.
17	Glade permeated by an indefinite sense of well-being. +2 rest modifier.	An unusual colouration pervades the area's plants or soil (1. violet, 2. black, 3. silver, 4. aquamarine, 5. ochre, 6. transparent).
18	Ring of trees, all of the same species.	Prominent sound. 50% pleasant (+1 rest modifier; 1. a waterfall or river, 2. distant chimes, 3. beautiful birdsong), 50% disturbing (-1 rest modifier; 1. cawing birds, 2. screeching insects, 3. disembodied wailing, 4. grinding stones).
19	Barren area razed by fire.	A large, noteworthy tree stands here, alone. (33% chance of the tree having some special feature).
20	Large tree with cosy nooks between its roots. +1 rest modifier.	Markings on rocks or trees (1. gnawing, 2. clawing, 3. burning, 4. warning, 5. sigil, 6. direction, 7. graffiti, 8. odd word).
21	Glade littered with numerous small, sharp stones. -2 rest modifier.	A small, randomly determined trinket is found.
22	Muddy glade. -1 rest modifier due to dampness.	Ringed with toadstools. Any random encounters will be with fairies.
23	Cosy dell.	Felled trees in the area.

d30	Site	Features
24	Calm woodland meadow.	Atop a small hillock. Encounter distance is doubled.
25	Dingy clearing.	Crossed by many small paths. A roll of 1 or 2 on the random event table (<i>Wormskin</i> issue five) indicates an encounter.
26	Clearing littered with fallen trees. -1 rest modifier due to the inconvenient trunks.	Ground and trees covered in bird droppings.
27	Treeless area with flat, stone slabs. -1 rest modifier.	Beside a small brook or spring.
28	Deep piles of leaves accumulated beneath tall trees. +1 rest modifier.	A pool or stream is nearby. There is a 1 in 4 chance of the pool possessing special qualities (roll on the table of strange waters).
29	Verdant clearing.	Signs of ancient habitation (pile of rocks, remnants of old wall, etc).
30	Leafy glade.	Low-growing branches restrict headroom ($d3+4'$).



STRANGE WATERS

Dolmenwood is a place infused with magic of many different kinds: ley-lines criss-cross the forest, their fizzing Otherworldly energies bending the rule of nature; wood-gods sleep inside hills and pools, whispering to those who can hear; standing stones mark sites of occult potency, cultivated by sorcerers who tap the flow; paths and doors to Fairy allow the mortal and immortal realms to mingle. As a result of this melange of supernatural influences, the waters of Dolmenwood are weird: sipping from a charming brook may result in more than just quenched thirst.

Referees may use the following chart to quickly generate encounters with unutil water sources. Like all the generator charts in *Wormskin*, a single d30 roll produces a ready-to-use result, while rolling separately on each column produces a wider variety of possible results.

d30	Form	Appearance of Water	Taste	Effect if Waters Consumed
1	Large puddle	Fizzy	Rusty	An insatiably lascivious urge to remove clothing
2	Bubbling stream crossing a path	Bubbly	Bile	No need to eat for 7 days
3	Vigorous spring gushing from the base of a cliff	Frothy	Bitter	Expands in the stomach, causing 1d6 damage and excruciating pain and vomiting for 1 turn (-2 to attacks and saves)

d30	Form	Appearance of Water	Taste	Effect if Waters Consumed
4	Pool gathered in a hollow tree trunk	Murky	Blossom scented	The pool's sentient trout guardian is angered
5	Stone basin, carved with lions' heads	Crystal clear	Woody	Loses the ability to digest meat; prefers to subsist on wood or fungus
6	Great marble slab, engraved with geomantic sigils, a basin at its centre	Shimmering with dappled light, even if no natural light falls upon it	Acerbic	Cursed! Lips seal shut
7	Puddle at the feet of a melting ice statue of a horned goddess	Perfect mirror	Clean, very cold	Blessed; +1 to attacks and saving throws for 24 hours
8	Marble statue of a lady bearing a bowl, filled with water	Purest, midnight black	Delightfully fresh	Skin turns transparent at night
9	Pool fed by liquid dripping from the trees above	Thick like honey	Nectar	A random bodily organ swells permanently to double size
10	Pond choked with rushes	Teeming with small, silver fish	Yeasty	Cursed! Function of lungs dwindles, replaced by gills
11	Thick fog that condenses on anything it touches, forming drops and rivulets	Pale violet	Sour	Cures common ailments
12	Floating sphere of liquid	Unnatural cyan	Nectarine liqueur	Liquid floats in the stomach, pulling the character aloft to drift on the wind

continued overleaf

d30	Form	Appearance of Water	Taste	Effect if Waters Consumed
13	Well with bucket and windlass	Silver sludge	Bitter medicinal herbs	CON check or vomit it straight back up. Anyone who can hold it down grows a coat of silver fur over the next three days
14	Rivulet in a steep-sided ditch	Sparkling	Mouldy	Two random ability scores swapped
15	Deep cistern in a rocky cleft	Milky white	Spirituous and evaporating	Heals 1d4 hit points and grants +1 WIS for 24 hours
16	Pond buzzing with mosquitoes	Shifting slowly from lime green to violet	Fresh	Raging drunkenness coming on within 2d6 minutes
17	Pissing gargoyle or cherub, poised atop a boulder	Refracting rainbow light	Salty like blood	Libido becomes entirely focused on statuary
18	Basin formed of giant stone hands	Swarming with insect larvae	Salty like the ocean	Tongue throbs and turns blue
19	Pond overhung with willows	Fresh and clear	Orangey	Shed skin like a snake; beneath are silvery scales
20	Muddy puddles in a glade where it perpetually rains	Vibrating	Cucumber	Next urination produces an uncharacteristically charming water weird
21	Small waterfall, cascading from a steep cliff above	Emits a dull yellow radiance	Roast pork	Pungent body odour attracts hungry animals. The referee should roll twice for encounters in each period where a roll is stipulated
22	Elegant, marble fountain upon a stepped dais	Turbulent; face-like forms emerge	Earthy	Increases a random ability score by one point. Only the first person to drink the water is blessed so
23	Small pool, surrounded by animal tracks	Steaming	Perfumed	Urine carries incredibly potent pheromones for the next week

d30	Form	Appearance of Water	Taste	Effect if Waters Consumed
24	The freshly decapitated head of a giant, cranium opened and brain removed to form a receptacle. Small ladders and ropes provide access to the waters within	Stirred up mud	Greasy	Cures a magical condition such as a curse, energy drain (one level), or ability score loss
25	Granite statue of a fat animal with its mouth wide open and filled with water	Pearlescent	Minty	Haunted by nightmares of drowning in a the mouth of a gargantuan beast. Unable to get decent rest for 7 days
26	Shallow, muddy pool, inhabited by lilies and amphibians	Glistening ice crystals	Like bread	Voice decreases or increases in pitch and/or volume, permanently
27	Well shaft, stone surround long crumbled to rubble	Swirling with coloured sand	Acidic	Infected with parasites! Each day, make a CON check or lose 1hp
28	Mouth in the earth, rimmed with teeth, appears dead or dormant. The gullet is filled with water	Flecked with gold	Faintly aromatic	Heals 1d6 hit points
29	Pool bubbling up from a subterranean source, the water dripping upwards into the sky	Orange oil on surface	Sulphurous	Grants the ability to levitate for 1d6 hours
30	Font from a church, standing intact among rubble	Blood red	Like wine	Epiphany

MONSTERS OF THE WOOD

This issue presents the first of a two part monster folio describing some of the sentient fungi and fungal monstrosities that lurk in the deeps of Dolmenwood.

Brainconk

HD: 1+1 **

AC: 6

Attacks: 1 × claws (1d3)

Move: 90' (30') — climbing or creeping

Morale: 7

Number Appearing: Abroad (1d8); no lair

Alignment: N

Intelligence: Mischievous

Size: T (1')

XP: 27

Languages: Sylvan (basic understanding)

Possessions: None

Hoard: None

Bright orange, semi-sentient, carnivorous bracket fungi which lurk high upon tree trunks during the day, waiting for night to fall. When darkness prevails, the presence of warm-blooded creatures sleeping below lures brainconks to creep down to ground level. They pounce upon sleeping victims, aiming for the head and the juicy brains on which they subsist. After eating the brains of a victim, the brainconks migrate back to the tree tops to digest, usually moving to a different glade, so that the corpse of their victim does not hint at their presence.

Traits

1. Keens and purrs when attacking.
2. Tiny human faces (of victims) on upper side.
3. Giggles when spotted.
4. Upper side striated black.
5. Several mouths with tiny, shiny teeth.
6. Covered in symbiotic, purple mould.



From beneath, immobile brainconks are impossible to distinguish from mundane bracket fungi. Characters with a keen sense of smell may (2-in-6) detect their scent: a waft of sulphur.

Creepy: When creeping along tree trunks, brainconks move almost completely silently. They surprise on a 1-4. (Sleeping characters are always surprised.)

Brain slurp: Upon a successful attack roll dealing 3 damage against a character not wearing a helmet¹, the brainconk has latched onto the scalp of the victim and starts sucking out the brain. In subsequent rounds, the victim suffers automatic damage and a permanent loss of 1 INT or WIS (select at random each round).

.....
1 It is assumed that a sleeping character is not wearing a helmet, unless the player specifically states otherwise.

Jack-o'-Lantern

HD: 3 **

AC: 8

Attacks: 1 × thumping (1d3) +
strobing gaze

Move: 90' (30')

Morale: 7

Number Appearing: 1-7: abroad
(1d8), 8: lair (2d6)

Alignment: N (E)

Intelligence: Alien

Size: M (4')

XP: 80

Languages: Telepathic projection

Possessions: None

Hoard: I/XIV (eerie)

Ancient, brown-fleshed, humanoid mushrooms with great, wobbly caps and inscrutable pits for eyes. Jack-o'-lanterns are rare and reclusive, dwelling in secret grottoes in the trackless depths of the forest. Despite being infrequently encountered, jack-o'-lanterns are well-known in folklore, being famed as guardians of obscure knowledge and long lost secrets and infamous as wicked slavers who delight in capturing mortal folk. Both these reputations are true.

Jack-o'-lanterns love riddles and word games and always favour parley over violence. When encountering other intelligent beings, they attempt to enter into conversation and offer to reveal deep secrets of the wood via their communion ability.

The flesh of a jack-o'-lantern can be distilled down by an alchemist to produce a potion of diminution.

Strobing gaze: In combat or when otherwise threatened, jack-o'-lanterns' eyes emit a sickening green/blue strobe that dazzles other beings within 30'. At the start of each round, targets must save versus paralysis or be stunned, unable to act for the round. Those who make the save may act normally, but suffer a -2 penalty to attack rolls and Armour Class.

Traits

1. Cap peaked like a wizard's hat.
2. Twisted, talon-like fingers.
3. Eyes pulse purple and pink when communicating.
4. Blubbering, oozing, black maw.
5. Semi-transparent flesh reveals an inner illumination (green).
6. Cap crawling with delicate, magenta worms.



Communion: Jack-o'-lanterns have the ability to trigger a hypnotic state (lasting 1d4 hours) in willing humanoids via a gently pulsing green glow emitted from their eyes and cap. Hypnotised subjects are immobilised for the duration and experience a phantasmagoric sequence of visions. A WIS check is required. Success indicates that the answer to a riddle or puzzle is revealed, as deep secrets are dredged up from the collective memory of mushroom-kind. Failure indicates that the subject has come under the mushroom's thrall, shrinking to 1" tall. Such victims are scooped up by the mushroom and carried to its lair, where they are imprisoned in miniature towns or other dioramas.

Ochre Slime-Hulk

HD: 7**	Alignment: N
AC: 7	Intelligence: Instinctive
Attacks: 2 × claws (2d4)	Size: L (8')
Move: 120' (40')	XP: 1,140
Morale: 10	Languages: None
Number Appearing: Solitary, no lair	Possessions: None
	Hoard: None

Hulking, semi-humanoid mounds of white fungal flesh, covered with webs, networks, and lattices of ochre slime and bristling with spore-laden stalks. Ochre slime-hulks are rapacious hunters of indiscriminate brutality that seek out animal life (including sentients) whose corpses form a nutrient substrate for the monster's spores. Slime-hulks frequent the deepest, dankest regions of Dolmenwood, where their gestative form — pools of oozing, dripping yellow slime — are found festooned over dead trees and gathered in natural depressions. When a slime pool has grown to sufficient size (approximately 10' diameter) and is exposed to heat, light, or flooding, a slime-hulk will begin to form, emerging 12 hours later.

Traits

1. Skull-like face.
2. Dripping with slime.
3. Acidic, citrus reek.
4. Spore-stalks are hand-like and eye-like.
5. Hollow lattice at centre of torso; contains a humanoid skeleton.
6. No discernable head.

Damage reduction: Damage from mundane weapons is reduced by half.

Acid spores: When a slime-hulk takes damage (except by fire), it releases a cloud of spores. All within 10' must save versus poison or suffer 1d4 damage for the next three rounds, as the acidic spores burn away at skin and lungs.



Corpse consumption: If left in peace with a fresh corpse, a slime-hulk will release a cloud of spores that will engulf the body, processing it into a pool of yellow slime (the gestative form of the organism, as described above) within 1d6 minutes. This process prevents magical restoration of life via *raise dead*.

Flammable: Fire inflicts double damage on a slime-hulk.

Pook Morel

HD: 1d3 hit points

AC: 3 (tiny)

Attacks: 1 × *psychic horror*

Move: 90' (30')

Morale: 7

Number Appearing: 1-6: abroad
(2d10), 7-8: lair (4d20)

Alignment: N

Intelligence: Mischievous

Size: T (6")

XP: 7

Languages: Sylvan (basic)

Possessions: 25% chance of Q/II,
25% chance of a trinket

Hoard: V/VII, 1d6 trinkets

Tiny, humanoid mushrooms with creamy-white trunks and crinkled, spongy, yellow caps. Pook morels frequent well-trodden tracts of woodland, lying in wait to accost passersby. Despite their tiny size, pook morels are able to cause great mischief with their ability to project psychic horrors, causing victims to drop their possessions. Items discarded in this way will be quickly scooped up and whisked off to the pook morels' lair (typically a burrow in the bole of a tree).

Hide in woods: Pook morels are able to disappear with ease into forest underbrush. They have a 4-in-6 of surprising others and a 3-in-6 chance (per round) of escaping any pursuit by larger creatures.

Psychic horror: A pook morel may target a creature within 20' with its psychic attack. The target experiences a brief, unsettling hallucination wherein an item on its person appears to come alive — sprouting wriggling, insectoid limbs and gnashing mandibles. The target must save versus spells or instinctively throw the item to the ground in horror.

Traits

1. Formations on cap that resemble human faces.
2. Cap oozes nectar that attracts ants and wasps.
3. Dressed in a stolen silk glove.
4. Wears a lady's purse, adapted into a backpack.
5. Feathery cap; lifted up by breezes.
6. Wears thimbles as shoes.

St Horace and the Pook Morel — A Popular Dolmenwood Folktale

As a young (and ample-bellied) friar, St Horace wandered the paths of Dolmenwood, bringing the light of the One True God to isolated hamlets, in addition to the delights of his sackfull of mushrooms, caerfully foraged



along his way. (Indeed, in those days, the future saint was known as "Brother Windbag", due to his curious taste for windcap mushrooms.)

One evening, as Horace said his bedtime prayers, a pook morel jumped out from behind a mossy log. With a squeak of "*cymmly malongly lantty thwoup!*", the pook caused the friar's rosary to turn into a wriggling centipede, before his very eyes. As is natural, he recoiled in horror, dropping the insect into the grasp of the giggling pook. The mushroom's delight was short-lived, however. As it fled into a thicket of elder, Horace prayed for retribution. The rosary transformed once more: this time into a hissing adder, which grabbed the pook in its fangs and brought it to the friar's feet. After a night of penance within Horace's mushroom sack, the pook morel was released, under the condition that it would spread the word of the One True God Of All Creatures among its kind. It is said that, since that day, pook morels, though they cannot change their nature, will not steal from friars.

Wronguncle

HD: 2

AC: 8

Attacks: 1 × staff or cudgel (1d6)

Move: 120' (40')

Morale: 7

Number Appearing: Solitary, no lair

Alignment: N

Intelligence: Befuddled

Size: M (5' tall)

XP: 20

Languages: Woldish

Possessions: Trinkets

Hoard: None

Humanoid toadstools with white bodies and red/white speckled caps. Wronguncle spores take root in the corpses of mortals laying in the vicinity of a ley line. The Otherworldly energy of the ley triggers a rapid growth of the giant fungus and imprints its primitive sentience with the deceased person's memories. Thus, when fully grown, wronguncles take on the (somewhat garbled) mental semblance, voice, and habits of the person whose corpse they fed on.

A yearning for home (i.e. the home of their deceased host) compels these toadstools to wander, picking up basic travelling gear where they can find it and seeking the companionship of other travellers along the way. If a wronguncle succeeds in finding its way back home, it is compelled to murder its former loved ones. This last, tragic deed accomplished, the toadstool explodes in a cloud of spores that drift along on the winds until they settle on a new host.

Turnable: As an odd form of symbiosis between fungal growth and revenant spirit, wronguncles may be turned — as 5 HD monsters — by clerics. A successful turning results in the expulsion of the mental energies imprinted in the toadstool, causing it to lose its sentience and become a normal, immobile, giant mushroom.

Traits

1. Desperate to get its old hat back; wears a dead squirrel instead, in the meantime.
2. Sings jolly songs of its hometown.
3. Asks everyone it meets if they know Matilda (or another name of a loved one).
4. Wretchedly weeps and sniffles.
5. Endlessly repeats its name, rank, and hometown.
6. Two souls in one; the toadstool switches personalities at intervals.



Home

The following chart may be used to determine the goal of a wronguncle's travels:

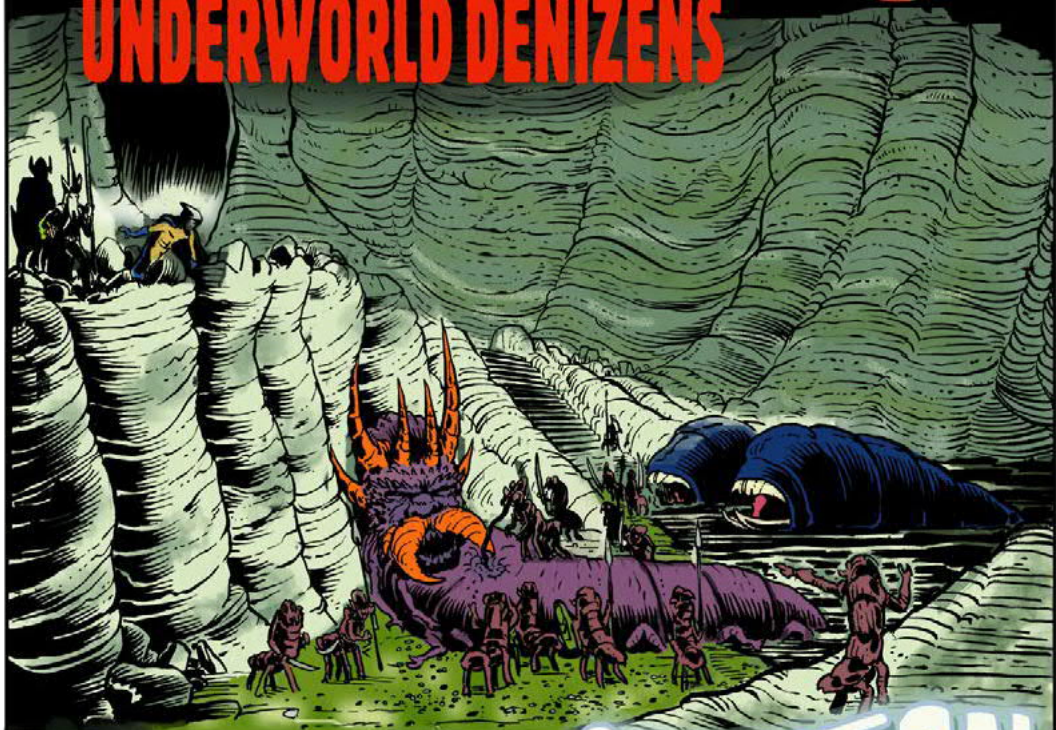
1. Castle Brackenwold (1508)
2. Dreg (1110)
3. Drigbolton (0702)
4. Fort Vulgar (0604)
5. Lankshorn (0710)
6. Meagre's Reach (1703)
7. Odd (1403)
8. Prigwort (1106)
9. Woodcutter's encampment (1109)
10. Servant at: 1. Bogwitt Manse (1210), 2. Hall of Sleep (1304), 3. Harrowmoor Keep (1105), 4. Nodding Castle (0210).
11. Homeless wanderer
12. Beyond Dolmenwood

100

OR MORE



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*"Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd.
Thrice and once, the hedge-pig whin'd.
Harpier cries: —— 'tis time! 'tis time!"*

