

RAGING SWAN PRESS

GM'S SCREEN #2:
BORDERLAND FOREST



SYSTEM
NEUTRAL



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GM'S SCREEN #2: BORDERLAND FOREST

Space behind your GM's screen is precious (and limited). You've got dice, figures, the adventure, reference books—obviously a drink and snacks—as well as pencils, pens, a notebook and more! Often times a GM needs to be a juggler to make it all fit. That's why we created the GM's Screen line. Most GM screens focus on presenting the rules. This GM's Screen line is different. Instead of rules, each instalment presents hyper-focused pages of dressing, minor events and more all designed to add depth and flavour to an adventure. (And better yet, you can use the tables without your players realising what you are doing!)

This instalment of GM's Screen comprises three tables designed to bring to life the forest adventures in your campaign and is compatible with virtually any roleplaying game.

DESIGN CREDITS

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HOW TO USE THIS SUPPLEMENT

Using this supplement is easy. Simply print out page 2 and pin it to the inside of your GM's screen. (You can also print it out and cut it up before clipping it to your screen so you do not obscure vital tables printed on the screen itself).

When play calls for it, roll on the relevant table and use the result to build verisimilitude, detail and flavour into your game. Always re-roll inappropriate results, but consider any given result as a starting point. Describe the situation and see how the players react!

Because words have power, we've also added some flavoursome examples to help you bring the setting alive in your players' minds.

SYSTEM NEUTRAL EDITION

Welcome to this Raging Swan Press System Neutral Edition supplement. Herein you'll find evocative, inspiring text designed to help you—the busy GM—run better, quicker and easier games.

This book is compatible with most fantasy roleplaying games. It's impossible to create a truly system neutral book, though, and some generic game terms—wizard, fighter, human, elf and so on—lurk within. These generic terms are easily modified to the GM's system of choice.

One special note about the NPCs in this supplement. While some are wizards, fighters, clerics and so on, others are simply normal folk. Because different game systems handle normal folk differently we've made no attempt to note their "class" leaving them simply as "female human" and so on.

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BORDERLAND FOREST

DRESSING

1. The ground in this low-lying area is boggy and wet. The party's boots quickly get muddy and sodden.
2. A huge, gnarled oak tree looms over its fellows like a giant, throwing them into shade. Nearby trees are stunted and sickly-looking.
3. The pathway runs along a steep bank. Gnarled and twisted tree roots quest from the bank like petrified serpents—seemingly frozen in the act of reaching for travellers passing by.
4. Small bones—tied together with thin cord—hang from a tree's branches and clack softly in the breeze.
5. The pathway cuts through a mossy bank. A muddy puddle blocks progress. Indistinct tracks heading into the puddle are evident, but they do not emerge on the other side.
6. A small stone cairn stands in a clearing. A hollow within the pile holds three half-burnt candles and a weather-worn portrait. The elements have effaced the picture.
7. A riot of bramble bushes fills a clearing in the trees. Several game trails twist and turn through the thorns while the main path skirts the clearing.
8. A wolf howls from somewhere behind the party. Twenty minutes later it howls again...this time from much closer.
9. The trunk of a large fallen tree hides a makeshift survival shelter. The shelter is old—the wood is rotten—and has partially collapsed.
10. A human's mouldering remains sit against a tree, held in place by three black-fletched arrows. About him lies rusted and rotten equipment.

EVENTS

1. Birds perched in a nearby tree suddenly take flight. They alight nearby and begin singing.
2. A squirrel dashes across the path and up a tree. It sits on a high branch and chitters angrily at the party. If they approach, it hurls nuts at them before scampering away.
3. A fox darts from the undergrowth, dashes passed the party and disappears into a thicket. Perceptive PCs notice the fox's ear is badly lacerated.
4. The sound of soft laughter reaches the party from somewhere up ahead. Minutes later, the party hear a distant shriek of pain from the direction in which they are travelling.
5. A tree's branches shade the path. As the PCs pass underneath, the branches creak as if caught in a strong wind...but there is no wind.
6. Faint snatches of otherworldly, but surprisingly pleasing, pipe music reach the party's ears. Later, a distant, multi-coloured light weaves gracefully through the trees, but stays maddeningly out of reach of even the fleetest runners.
7. A deer emerges from the undergrowth. At sight of the party, it freezes. If approached, it bolts.
8. With a muted crash, a dead branch falls to the ground.
9. The faint smell of smoke reaches the party.
10. A swarm of flies—or other harmless flying insects—briefly engulfs the party.

UNEVENTFUL DAY'S TRAVEL

1. The path leads into a shallow, mist-drenched valley. Here, sounds are strangely muted and fewer animals seem in evidence.
2. A cold wind scours the trees, whipping them into a frenzy. Dark grey clouds loom threateningly on the horizon but retreat in the afternoon.
3. A cold, heartless rain pours from the sky turning the earth into a boot-sucking morass. The sun does not show itself this day.
4. A constant chill fog refuses to give ground all day but is not dense enough to obscure vision.
5. A heavy wind tousles the tree-tops, shaking free a few loose branches which crash heavily to the ground. The wind dies down in the late evening.
6. Animals catcall the party all day. A wild energy hangs in the air but never seems to erupt. At dusk, the sun slips away in a blaze of vibrant colour.
7. A bright sun shines in a cloudless blue sky though the canopy overhead provides shade. A brief thunderstorm rolls in quickly during the evening before moving off.
8. The bustle of bird song and small critters fills the day. A wan sunlight filters through the leaves.
9. Chattering bird song accompanies the soft scurrying of critters in the undergrowth. The sun slinks away behind fast moving clouds to the raucous croaking of frogs.
10. The distant sounds of hunting horns shatters the peace and quiet. The yips and yaps of hunting dogs reach the party's ears around dusk.

WORDS & DETAILS HAVE POWER—USE THEM TO ADD FLAVOUR AND ATMOSPHERE TO YOUR GAME

Trees (Descriptors): tall, huge, vast, towering, majestic, stunted; **Trees (Types):** alder, ash, beech, dogwood, hazel, oak, elm, holly, ash, bay, fir, hawthorn, ironwood, lime, pine, poplar, rowan, silver birch, willow, yew; **Flowers (Types):** bluebells, snowdrops, daffodils, poppies, gorse, heather, hawthorn, honeysuckle, primrose, ramsons (wild garlic), rhododendrons; **Vegetation (Dead):** rotting, decayed, mouldering, diseased; **Vegetation (Descriptors):** knotted, tangled, twisted, choked, strangled, sharp, thorny, spiky, gnarled, twisted, bent, thick, dense, impenetrable; **Vegetation (Parts):** leaves, buds, berries, blossoms, twigs, branches, vines, creepers, ivy, brambles, thorns, trunk.

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